



ANNUAL REPORTS
OF
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS
~
2008

**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MALTA**

Annual Reports
Of
Government Departments
~
2008

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**House of
Representatives**

House of Representatives

HOUSE BUSINESS

Overview

2008 was a truly eventful year for the Maltese House of Representatives. Proclamation No. 1 of 2008 by the President of Malta, HE Dr Edward Fenech Adami, called for the dissolution of the 10th Parliament on 4 February. The Prime Minister, Hon Lawrence Gonzi, then called for General Elections to be held on 8 March. Until its dissolution on 4 February, the House met 12 times. As provided by subsection (1) of Section 75 of the Constitution, that is, not later than two months after the publication of the official result of a general election, the 11th Parliament was convened on 10 May 2008 by way of Proclamation No. 4.

Since no political party obtained more than 50% of the valid votes cast in the election, a constitutional corrective mechanism that increases the number of seats to reflect the relative majority was triggered in accordance with the proviso of subsection (1) of section 52 of the Constitution of Malta resulting in 69 Members of Parliament elected to the House, 35 representing the *Partit Nazzjonalista* and 34 representing the *Partit Laburista*. The 11th Legislature comprises 15 new Members of Parliament, seven from the Government side and eight from the Opposition. Six of the Members are female, two from the Government side and four from the Opposition.

Since the beginning of the 11th Legislature, the House met 67 times, sitting an average of three times a week. Sittings were more frequent during discussions on the 2009 budget allocations to the various ministries. This year, the financial statement for 2009 was presented in Parliament in November.

On 29 January, which was the last sitting of the 10th Legislature, the House ratified the Lisbon Treaty following a debate in the Foreign and European Affairs Committee which recommended that the House approve the motion.

Since Parliament was convened on 10 May, a number of motions were approved. Hon Louis Galea and Hon Carmelo Abela were unanimously elected by the House, as Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively. Other motions included the setting up of the Standing Committees of the House, the composition of the various parliamentary delegations, as well as other administrative matters.

An important motion calling for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House, moved by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi in July and seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Hon Angelo Farrugia, was approved unanimously by the House. The resolution established the main themes to be considered by the Select Committee:

- strengthening of Parliament;
- strengthening transparency and accountability, including public financing of political parties, the Commission against Corruption, the Office of the Ombudsman, conflicts of interest of the Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Secretaries and Ministers; and
- strengthening the Constitution.

In July, the House approved a resolution on the transfer of government property in exchange for a collection of rare hand-painted as well as printed maps of Malta owned by Dr Albert Ganado. Also in July,

the House unanimously approved the appointment of the Auditor General, Mr Anthony C. Mifsud, and of the Deputy Auditor General, Mr Charles Deguara.

On 29 September, a motion was moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Charles Mangion, in terms of Standing Order 13 for the House to adjourn in order to discuss the alleged leak of confidential information by officials of the Malta Information Technology and Training Services Ltd (MITTS). The sitting was suspended until the Speaker ruled that this motion did not fall within the parameters of Standing Order 13.

On 1 October, Dr Joseph Muscat - recently elected Leader of the *Partit Laburista* - was co-opted to the House of Representatives in order to take up the seat vacated following the resignation of Hon Joseph Cuschieri. He was then sworn in as Leader of the Opposition by the President of the Republic. Also in October, the House approved the transfer of land in Benghajsja limits of Birzebbuga, with a 33-year sub-empyteusis from the Enemalta Corporation to Gasco Energy Limited.

On 14 October, Hon Alfred Sant raised a case of alleged breach of privilege against Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications. Following a ruling by the Speaker that there was a *prima facie* breach of privilege, the case was referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges for its consideration.

On 3 November, Hon Gino Cauchi took his Oath of Office in terms of Article 68 of the Constitution of Malta. This followed the demise of Hon Karl Chircop on 12 October, which resulted in a vacant seat in the 4th District.

During 2008, adjournment was availed of on 62 occasions, 50 of which pertained to the current Legislature. The adjournments alternated equally between Government and Opposition members.

Quorum was called once. In this instance, the sitting was resumed after the interval of five minutes as provided for in the Standing Orders after the Speaker ascertained that there was the necessary quorum of 15 Members in the House.

During the year under review, the Speaker of the House delivered four rulings, two of which related to parliamentary questions, one concerned security issues at the MITTS and one related to an alleged case of breach of privilege.

Legislative Programme

During 2008, Parliament enacted 16 acts, four of which were new acts and 12 amendment acts. The first five Acts enacted this year pertained to the previous legislature.

A. New Legislation and Objectives Behind the Respective Bills

Act IV of 2008 – The Adoption Administration Act

To make special provision for the administration of adoption proceedings, to establish the Adoption Board, the Board of Appeal and the central authority and to provide for the duties and obligations of accredited agencies. This Bill also made consequential amendments to provisions of the Civil Code relating to adoption.

Act XI of 2008 – The Appropriation (2009) Act

The application of a sum not exceeding €1,698,946,008 for the service of the Financial Year 2009 to meet expenditure under the different Votes in the Schedule to this Bill.

Act XII of 2008 – The Second Appropriation (2008) Act

The application of a sum not exceeding €282,986,992 for the service of the Financial Year 2008 to meet expenditure under the Votes specified in the First Schedule to the Bill in addition to €1,596,053,093 appropriated by Act No. XXV of 2007 and for the appropriation of a further €9 for the service of the financial year 2008 to repay an equivalent amount withdrawn from the Contingencies Fund during the financial year 2008 under the Votes specified in the Second Schedule to the Bill.

Act XVI of 2008 – The Freedom of Information Act

To establish a right to information held by public authorities in order to promote added transparency and accountability in government.

B. Amendment Acts and Objectives Behind the Respective Bills

<p>Act I of 2008 – The Income Tax Management (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To give powers to the Commissioner of Inland Revenue to collect the information which he is required to provide to foreign tax authorities in terms of reciprocal international arrangements for the exchange of information.</p>
<p>Act II of 2008 – The Consumer Affairs (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To amend the Consumer Affairs Act, the Commercial Code, and the Doorstep Contracts Act in order to address Malta's obligations as a Member State to ensure the proper transposition of a number of EC Directives, principally Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market.</p>
<p>Act III of 2008 – The Various Laws (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To enable the filing of an action for disavowal after the time limit provided in Article 73 of the Civil Code in cases where the Court, after considering the rights of the father and of the child considers it appropriate to authorise the filing of such an action, to clarify, in line with case law, the issue regarding the surname to be assumed by some natural children, to avoid conflicting interpretations of Article 382 of the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure and Article 101(2) of the Social Security Act, to authorise the conclusion of civil marriages in international waters on board passenger vessels registered in Malta, to validate minor defects in public deeds in certain cases, disallow the holder of an identity card in certain specific cases from using such card as a travel document, and regulate the internal structure of notarial services in the Government Property Division.</p>
<p>Act V of 2008 – The Malta Transport Authority (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To broaden and better define the functions of the Malta Transport Authority, including that of appointing Enforcement Officers with the power to carry out roadside inspections, stop vehicles and issue prohibition orders and of regulating traffic management and traffic safety and to provide for the establishment of a Transport Appeals Board.</p>
<p>Act VI of 2008 – The Ġieħ ir-Repubblika (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To increase the number of awards and decorations with respect to certain grades of The National Order of Merit and with regard to the <i>Midalja għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika</i>, and to give recognition to distinct service given by members of the disciplined forces.</p>
<p>Act VII of 2008 – The Refugees (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To update the provisions of the Refugees Act and incorporate the provisions of Council Directive 2004/83/EC of the 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and Council Directive 2005/85/EC of 1 December 2005 on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status.</p>
<p>Act VIII of 2008 – The Explosives Ordinance (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To make stricter provisions and to increase penalties for offences under the Explosives Ordinance according to the recommendations of the Pyrotechnics Commission Report.</p>
<p>Act IX of 2008 – The Accountancy Profession Act and other Laws (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To amend the Companies Act and the Accountancy Profession Act so as to bring them in line with Directive 2006/43/EC.</p>
<p>Act X of 2008 – The Malta Freeports (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To broaden the powers of the Freeport Authority under the relative provision of the law to include the creation of servitudes and similar rights under certain conditions.</p>
<p>Act XIII of 2008 – The Commercial Code (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To amend the Commercial Code in view of the amalgamation of organisations involved in the commercial and industrial sector.</p>
<p>Act XIV of 2008 – The Malta Standards Authority (Amendment) Act</p> <p>To amend the Malta Standards Authority Act, following the amendments to the Commercial Code in view of the amalgamation of organisations involved in the commercial and industrial sector.</p>
<p>Act XV of 2008 – The Various Laws (Civil Matters) (Amendment No 2) Act</p> <p>To extend to movables, besides immovables, the provisions of the amended articles of the Civil Code, and to introduce further amendments to the Code of Organization and Civil Procedure and to the Refugees (Amendment) Act, 2005, prior to the said amending Act coming into force.</p>

Parliamentary Questions

During the year under review, 6,100 parliamentary questions requiring an oral reply and 11 requiring a written reply were answered. 1,331 oral questions and one written question related to the 10th Legislature.

Ministerial Statements

The following seven ministerial statements were made to the House:

On 7 January - The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Hon Lawrence Gonzi, delivered a statement on the introduction of the euro on 1 January 2008 as the official currency in Malta. This statement was delivered in the 10th Legislature.

On 2 July - The Prime Minister delivered a statement on the privatisation of the Malta Shipyards.

On 6 October - The Prime Minister delivered a statement on the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

On 8 October - The Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, Hon Tonio Fenech, delivered a statement on the prevailing international financial situation.

On 14 October - The Prime Minister delivered a statement on the discussions and results of the Summit of the Eurozone countries which took place on Sunday, 12 October 2008 in Paris on the recent developments in the international financial markets.

On 14 October - The Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, Hon Austin Gatt, delivered a statement on the investigations being carried out at the MITTS Ltd.

On 15 December - The Prime Minister delivered a statement on the Conclusions of the European Council that was held in Brussels on 11 and 12 December 2008, which discussed the Lisbon Treaty, energy and climate change and the European Economic Recovery Plan.

Petitions

Two petitions by Hon Silvio Parnis were deposited in Parliament as follows:

On 14 October – a petition signed by residents of Palm Street, Paola, regarding the installation of a mobile phone antenna on the roof of a residence in Palm Street.

On 3 November – a petition signed by residents of Żabbar Road, Paola, regarding the cleaning of the sewage system.

Motions

In 2008, the Office of the Clerk received six motions pertaining to the 10th Legislature. Three of these were in respect of First Readings of Bills. The last motion to be moved in the 10th Legislature was a resolution for the House to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon. This motion was approved unanimously.

73 motions pertaining to the 11th Legislature were received, 19 of which were for First Reading of Bills and three private Members' motions.

A considerable number of the motions moved in the first part of the 11th Legislature related to administrative matters in terms of the Standing Orders of the House, such as the nomination of the Speaker, the nomination of the Deputy Speaker, the setting up of the Standing Committees of the House and the composition of various parliamentary delegations.

The private Members' motions presented were:

- a motion on the need for legislation on climate change submitted by Hon Leo Brincat;
- a Bill to amend the Criminal Code, Cap. 9 of the Laws of Malta, submitted by Hon José Herrera; and

- a motion to amend Legal Notice No. 280 of 2008 on Court Practice and Procedure and Good Order (Criminal Code) Rules of Court submitted by Hon José Herrera and Hon Justyne Caruana.

Papers Laid

In 2008, a total of 1,483 documents were laid on the Table of the House, 376 of which were legal notices. On 30 January (10th Legislature) the Speaker tabled a report entitled *Strengthening the House of Representatives – A Case for Autonomy* dated 8 February 2005, based on a study by the Management Efficiency Unit at the request of the Speaker's Office.

The information tabled by the Speaker during the 11th Legislature comprised a judgement by the Constitutional Court on 29 February 2008, replies to parliamentary questions submitted to Mr Speaker, correspondence received from the Ombudsman, reports of the National Audit Office and the interim report dated 31 October 2008 on the work of the Select Committee set up by way of Motion 34 of 16 July 2008.

Divisions

Divisions called and taken in 2008 totalled 33, of which 32 related to the current Legislature.

Parliamentary Whips

Whips are Members of Parliament appointed by each political party represented in the House of Representatives to facilitate their party's contribution to parliamentary business. One of their responsibilities is to ensure the regular presence in the House of their Parliamentary Groups especially when divisions are called.

Hon David Agius is the Government Whip whilst Hon Joe Mizzi is the Opposition Whip.

SELECT COMMITTEE

An important motion in terms of Standing Order 121, calling for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House, was moved by the Prime Minister on 16 July and was approved unanimously by the House.

“121. The House may appoint a Select Committee of its Members for the purpose of investigating any subject. It shall be competent for the Speaker to be appointed a Member of any Select Committee of the House.”

The resolution established the main themes to be considered by the Committee:

- strengthening of Parliament;
- strengthening transparency and accountability, including public financing of political parties, the Commission against Corruption, the Office of the Ombudsman, conflicts of interest of the Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Secretaries and Ministers; and
- strengthening the Constitution.

The Committee is composed as follows:

<i>Chairperson:</i>	Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives
<i>Substitute:</i>	Hon Carmelo Abela, Deputy Speaker of the House
<i>Members from the Government:</i>	Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications Hon Francis Zammit Dimech
<i>Substitutes:</i>	Hon Charlò Bonnici Hon Beppe Fenech Adami

	Hon Michael Frendo
<i>Members from the Opposition:</i>	Hon Angelo Farrugia
	Hon Charles Mangion
	Hon Karmenu Vella
<i>Substitutes:</i>	Hon Evarist Bartolo
	Hon Michael Falzon
	Hon George Vella

In addition to the six Committee meetings held in 2008, the Committee launched a public consultation process and held a public hearing, during which the public was invited to submit its views on the issue of strengthening Parliament.

As required by the parliamentary resolution setting up the Select Committee, in October, the Speaker made an interim report to the House on the progress made on the discussions within the Committee. The House was informed that in the last Committee meeting, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker presented a draft document on the strengthening of Parliament to the Members of the Committee. Reports on other issues being discussed by the Select Committee were being drafted.

STANDING COMMITTEES

The Standing Committees of the House, established with the co-operation and approval of both sides of the House in 1995, are of particular relevance in the workings of the House of Representatives. The Standing Committees which are an extension of the House itself, have provided that professional touch by which various issues are discussed in committee and recommendations may be submitted to the House for its consideration.

The Standing Committees have introduced an element of consultation with civil society. Technical experts and representatives from various organisations are invited to discuss and contribute through their expertise on particular subjects. More than that, meetings of the Standing Committees are open to the public and the media and are streamed on the Internet, thus facilitating an even closer relationship between the people and their elected representatives in Parliament.

The House has six Standing Committees, namely,

- Standing Committee on House Business
- Standing Committee on Privileges
- Standing Committee on Public Accounts
- Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs
- Standing Committee for Social Affairs
- Standing Committee for Consideration of Bills.

The Standing Committee on Development Planning and the National Audit Office Accounts Committee ensue from the Development Planning Act (1992) (Cap. 356) and from the Auditor General and National Audit Office Act (1997) (Cap. 396), respectively.

Standing Committee on House Business

The Standing Committee on House Business was set up by way of Motion No 9 of 12 May and is composed as follows:

<i>Chairperson:</i>	Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives
<i>Members:</i>	Hon Tonio Borg, Leader of the House and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
	Hon David Agius
	Hon Frederick Azzopardi

Hon Angelo Farrugia
Hon Joe Mizzi

- “120C. (1) The Standing Committee on House Business shall have power to:
- (a) distribute Bills and other business among the Standing Committees appointed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders 96, 120A and 120B;
 - (b) (i) determine the number of sittings to be allotted for the consideration of a Bill by a Standing Committee;
 - (ii) allocate business to each sitting of a Standing Committee; and
 - (iii) determine the time when any business, if not previously concluded, shall be concluded by a Standing Committee; and
 - (c) consider all matters of procedure and business of the House, and report its opinion thereon to the House from time to time.
- (2) A report of all resolutions carried by the Standing Committee on House Business shall be made to the House at the next sitting after a resolution is carried, immediately after Question time, and shall be recorded in the Minutes of the proceedings of the House.
- (3) (a) The Standing Committee on House Business shall be constituted of the Leader of the House, two members nominated by the Prime Minister and two members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.
- (b) Three members in attendance shall constitute a quorum.
- (4) Substitute members shall also be appointed for each member of the Standing Committee on House Business and the provisions of paragraph (4) of Standing Order 120B shall also apply.
- (5) The Standing Committee on House Business shall be chaired by the Speaker who shall not vote unless on any question the votes are equally divided, in which case he shall have and exercise a casting vote.”

The principal task of the House Business Committee is to organise the business before the House. The House Business Committee met four times during the year under review and in its first meeting, the Committee established a number of practices that would be followed in the sittings, both those in plenary as well as in the committees. The issue of a pairing agreement relating to the votes taken in the House, the setting up of the parliamentary committees, as well as other administrative matters, were discussed.

In subsequent meetings, the Committee discussed the co-option of Dr Joseph Muscat to Parliament, the discussions held in the Select Committee, the possibility for the Members to donate blood on 30 September as well as on the participation of the House of Representatives in the *Notte Bianca* activity to be held on 4 October.

Other than the organisation of the sittings in the House, the Committee also discussed the schedule relating to the budgetary estimates, requests made under Standing Order 13 on the adjournment of the House on matters of definite urgent public importance and the request made by the National Commission Persons with Disability to hold a sitting in the Committee Room on 10 December.

Standing Committee on Privileges

The Standing Committee on Privileges was set up by way of motion No 17 of 2 June. It is composed as follows:

Chairperson: Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives
Members: Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon Owen Bonnici
 Hon Angelo Farrugia
 Hon Beppe Fenech Adami
 Hon Francis Zammit Dimech

- “120D. (1) The Standing Committee on Privileges shall have power to consider cases referred to it by the Speaker or by the House and to take such decisions and to make such recommendations as provided in the Standing Orders and in the House of Representatives (Privileges and Powers) Ordinance or in any law from time to time substituting the said Ordinance.
- (2) The Standing Committee shall be constituted of the Leader of the House, two Members nominated by the Prime Minister and two members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition.
- (3) The provisions of paragraphs (3), (4), and (5) of Standing Order 120C shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to the Standing Committee on Privileges.
- (4) The Standing Committee on Privileges shall, without prejudice to the provision of the Standing Order 164, have power and authority to summon witnesses and order the production of documents before it. The Standing Committee on Privileges may request the attendance of the Attorney General or of his representative, who may also be authorised to participate in the proceedings, but he shall in no case have a vote thereat.”

In 2008, the Committee on Privileges met once to discuss the alleged breach of privilege raised by Hon Alfred Sant against Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, on which the Speaker had ruled that there was a *prima facie* breach. The Committee agreed that Hon Austin Gatt would be entitled to legal aid if desired, however no conclusion was reached as to whether Hon Alfred Sant was entitled to such aid. Such decision was to be reached before the Committee’s next meeting on the matter.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts was set up by Motion No 16 of 2 June and is composed as follows:

Chairperson: Hon Charles Mangion
Members: Hon Austin Gatt, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications
 Hon Tonio Fenech, Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment
 Hon Robert Arrigo
 Hon Helena Dalli
 Hon Philip Mifsud
 Hon Alfred Sant

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is chaired by a Member nominated by the Opposition. This follows the system adopted in the UK House of Commons.

- “120E. (1) The Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall have the power to:
- (a) inquire into matters relating to public accounts referred to it by the House, a Minister or the Director of Audit;
 - (b) inquire into expenditure as is referred to in subsection (3) of section 103 and section 104 of the Constitution;
 - (c) examine the accounts of statutory authorities, including parastatal organisations, whose accounts are presented to Parliament;

- (d) request the Director of Audit to submit memoranda on any matter where a request for such submission is made by at least three members of the Standing Committee;
 - (e) consider memoranda submitted by the Director of Audit, made upon a request made to him in virtue of paragraph (d) hereof, or on his own initiative;
 - (f) examine reports, and related documents, made by the Director of Audit;
 - (g) report to the House on any accounts, reports or documents referred in the previous paragraphs hereof;
 - (h) report to the House on any change that it considers desirable in the form of the accounts, on the manner in which they are kept, on revenue or expenditure or the control of money; and
 - (i) to discuss Malta's monetary policy and receive reports thereon from the Governor of the Central Bank of Malta.
- (2) The Public Accounts Committee shall consist of not more than seven members of whom four shall constitute a quorum. The members shall be chosen so as to fairly represent the House in general and the proportion of Government and Opposition members in particular.
- (3) The provisions of paragraphs (3) and (4) of Standing Order 120B shall apply to the Public Accounts Committee.
- (4) On of the members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and so designated by him after consultation with the Leader of the House shall be appointed Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The Chairman shall have an original vote but shall not have a casting vote.”

In 2008, the Public Accounts Committee met three times. The Committee started discussing the Annual Report of the Auditor General for the Year 2006, with particular reference to the ‘goods withheld process’ of the Customs Department. Various officials from the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment participated in these meetings. The Committee agreed that a brief on the procedures that could be applied to improve the ‘goods withheld process’ was to be presented to the Committee by the Ministry.

The Committee also discussed the reports on the enquiry on the purchase of air tickets in connection with official travel abroad and on travel abroad on official government business, as well as the monetary policy of the Central Bank which was presented by the Governor of the Central Bank of Malta.

Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs

The Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs Committee was set up by Motion No 18 of 2 June and is composed as follows:

Chairperson: Hon Michael Frendo
Members: Hon Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
 Hon Francis Agius
 Hon Charlò Bonnici
 Hon Leo Brincat
 Hon Luciano Busuttil
 Hon Marie Louise Coleiro Preca
 Hon Beppe Fenech Adami
 Hon George Vella

- “120F. (1) The Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs shall consist of not more than nine members of whom five shall constitute a quorum. The members shall be chosen so as fairly to represent the House in general and the proportion of Government and Opposition members in particular:

Provided that the Government members appointed on the Standing Committee shall include the Minister for Foreign Affairs who shall have the right to participate and to vote:

Provided further that members of the European Parliament elected from Malta shall have the right to participate in the work of the Standing Committee but shall not have the right to vote or to move motions and amendments.

- (2) The Chairperson of the Committee shall be nominated by the Leader of the House from amongst the members representing the Government side, provided that any member of the Committee may, at any time, be appointed by the Leader of the House to act as Chairperson in case of the unavoidable absence of the Chairperson.
- (3) The Standing Committee shall have the power to appoint select sub-committees and to delegate any of its functions to such sub-committees.

Provided that the composition of any sub-committee appointed by the Standing Committee shall be determined by the Standing Committee so as fairly to represent the House in general and the proportion of Government and Opposition members in particular.

- (4) Subject to what is stated in this Standing Order, the provisions of paragraphs (3) and (4) of Standing Order 120B shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.
- (5) The Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs shall have the following functions:
 - (i) to deal with matters relating to foreign and European Union affairs which may be referred to it by the House or by the Standing Committee on House Business.
 - (ii) in the context of European Union issues and measures to be taken by the Council of Ministers of the European Union, to scrutinise on its own initiative:
 - (a) any proposals under the Community treaties for legislation by the Council or the Council acting jointly with the European Parliament;
 - (b) any document which is published for submission to the European Council, the Council or the European Central Bank;
 - (c) any proposal for a common strategy, a joint action or a common position under Title V of the Treaty on European Union which is prepared for submission to the Council or to the European Council;
 - (d) any proposal for a common position, framework, decision or a convention under Title VI of the Treaty on European Union which is prepared for submission to the Council;
 - (e) any document (not falling within (b), (c) or (d) above) which is published by one Union institution and which does not relate exclusively to the consideration of any proposal for legislation; and
 - (f) any other document relating to European Union matters placed on the Table of the House by any Minister; and
 - (iii) to represent the House of Representatives of Malta at the Conference of European Affairs Committees (COSAC)."

Apart from the tasks listed above, the committee scrutinises on its own initiative legislative proposals or documents that emanate from European Union institutions dealing with EU issues and measures to be taken by the Council of Ministers.

The Plenary SCFEA scrutinises topics in relation to constitutional affairs, enlargement, development, external relations and trade, enterprise and information society, and competition.

The Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs was convened nine times (one of which during the previous legislature). The topics discussed during these meetings dealt with foreign as well as European affairs. Issues debated by the Committee Members included the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (during the previous legislature), the recognition of Kosovo as an independent State, the situation in Zimbabwe, Malta's decision to reactivate Malta's participation in the Partnership for Peace, and the October Presidency Conclusions of the European Council. The exchanges with foreign counterparts in the meetings held with incoming delegations underlined the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and co-operation.

The Committee met with Mr Libor Sečka, Director General for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic as part of the consultation process undertaken by the Czech Republic in drawing up its work programme for the Presidency of the European Union for the period January/June 2009.

Prof Bichara Khader, Director of the Contemporary Arab World Study Centre at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and Prof Stephen Calleya, Director of the Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies were invited to address the Committee. In his presentation, Prof Bichara Khader explained the proposal for the setting up of the Union of Mediterranean States where he made reference to his published paper titled "*De l' "Union Méditerranéenne" au "Processus de Barcelone: Union pour la Méditerranée": européanisation d'une idée française*".

The meeting held with Senator Lamberto Dini, President of the Commission for Foreign Affairs and Emigration of the Italian Senate, covered several international issues. In particular, the Committee discussed the situation in the Mediterranean and the Balkan Region, illegal immigration, relations between the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation, the international financial crisis, the initiatives taken by Malta at European Union level and the first declarations made by President-Elect Barack Obama.

The Committee met also with a parliamentary delegation from the Parliament of the Russian Federation headed by Liudmila Narusova, Chairperson of the Commission on Information Policy and with H E Gideon Meir, Ambassador of Israel.

Furthermore, the Committee held a meeting *in camera* with Dr Peter Altmaier, State Parliamentary Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany, on matters related to illegal migration, the Lisbon Treaty and the Union of Mediterranean States.

Sub-Committees

In accordance with paragraph 3 of Standing Order 120F, four Working Groups were set up:

Working Group 1

Chairperson: Hon Michael Frendo
Members: Hon Luciano Busuttil
 Hon Jean Pierre Farrugia
 Hon Beppe Fenech Adami
 Hon George Vella

The objective of this Working Group is to analyse the EU *pipeline acquis* in preliminary scrutiny, that is, to determine those documents of political or legal importance and to reach a decision on whether a particular document should be cleared without reserve or referred for debate at the plenary SCFEA, Working Group 2, Working Group 3, Working Group 4 or the Social Affairs Committee.

In 2008, Working Group 1 met five times and scrutinised a total of 265 new EU legislative and non-legislative proposals. The documents comprised EU Commission communications, reports, staff working documents, White Papers, Green Papers as well as Proposals for Council Decisions, Directives and Regulations and Draft Framework Decisions.

Working Group 2

Chairperson: Hon Jean Pierre Farrugia
Members: Hon Francis Agius
 Hon Roderick Galdes
 Hon Gavin Gulia
 Minister responsible for the *acquis*
 Member *ad hoc* from Government
 Member *ad hoc* from Opposition

Working Group 2 addresses issues related to economic and monetary affairs, taxation, transport and energy, budget, internal market and customs union.

Working Group 3

Chairperson: Hon Beppe Fenech Adami
Members: Hon Joseph Falzon
 Hon Noel Farrugia
 Hon Joseph Sammut
 Minister responsible for the *acquis*
 Member *ad hoc* from Government
 Member *ad hoc* from Opposition

The areas of competence of Working Group 3 include health, development and humanitarian aid, rural development, agriculture and fisheries, and justice and home affairs.

Working Group 4

Chairperson: Hon Charlò Bonnici
Members: Hon Chris Agius
 Hon Evarist Bartolo
 Hon Francis Zammit Dimech
 Minister responsible for the *acquis*
 Member *ad hoc* from Government
 Member *ad hoc* from Opposition

The areas of competence of Working Group 4 include research, employment and culture, consumer protection, environment, and regional policy.

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs was set up by Motion No 19 of 2 June and is composed as follows:

Chairperson: Hon Edwin Vassallo
Members: Hon Frederick Azzopardi
 Hon Justyne Caruana
 Hon Michael Farrugia
 Hon Michael Gonzi
 Hon Stephen Spiteri
 Hon Anthony Zammit

In addition to Motion 19, Motions 53 and 71 determined the current list of Committee Members, as it is shown above. As from its inception, 2 June 2008, the Standing Committee for Social Affairs for the 11th Legislature was convened 10 times. During the first meeting, all Committee Members approved an unconditional commitment to Standing Order 120G:

- “120G. (1) The Committee for Social Affairs shall deal with all matters relating to social policy, including social assistance and family matters, which may be referred to it by the House or by the Standing Committee on House Business.
- (2) The provisions of paragraphs (2) and (3) of Standing Order 120E shall *mutatis mutandis* apply to the Social Affairs Committee.”

Members agreed to list relevant social policy issues that could be discussed during this legislature, which issues were drafted and compiled in a tentative working programme. An invitation for public hearing was issued to start a consultation process on the working programme. At the end of the consultation process the Committee established a mission statement to show its responsibilities, values and purpose for the new legislature. It was agreed that “*whilst the Social Affairs Committee will keep the Standing Orders high on the Committee’s agenda, Members will instil responsibility towards better quality of life of Maltese society by means of evidence-based documents and support to all entities that provide social policies and services in Malta.*”

The Committee agreed on five objectives to:

- continuously evaluate the Maltese social policy system in order to assess how this is responding to society’s new needs and choices;
- keep discussions focused on a person-centred approach;
- stress the importance of persons’ dignity and how this could be achieved;
- be accessible to all, by means of planned meetings, and keep Committee Members in touch with realities being faced by society; and
- build up a network with Ministries, Government departments, experts, service providers and users, thus acquiring the necessary information and knowledge on social policy issues prior to issuing Committee documents.

The Social Affairs Committee keeps good communication channels with all local media and issued a press release after each meeting, giving particular attention to conclusions that could send a message to society. The Committee met with Hon John Dalli, Minister for Social Policy, where the working programme for the 11th Legislature was discussed. During this meeting, the Committee’s objective to discuss family issues and the need for more collaboration were highlighted. The Minister was presented with the report on biotechnology drawn up in the 10th Legislature.

The first meeting on family issues dealt with the media influence and its effects on the family. Experts acknowledged that the level of media influence depends on various factors such as, the amount of time and credibility given by families to media, and the socio-educational background. The Committee agreed on more IT and media education; a national family policy that educate society on the universal family values, including media use; more quality programmes for children; the habit of having different forms of media in different family rooms thus limiting time together; and the need for more research. Subsequently, a call for media researchers was issued to shed more light on the subject. Four researchers forwarded their abstracts of study’s findings and recommendations for the Committee’s perusal. Moreover, an *e*-resource centre on family issues was set up on the Committee’s webpage. The *e*-resource centre comprised around 150 evidence-based articles on family issues, and practices on how this important structure could be strengthened.

The Committee discussed how domestic violence affects the family. Together with experts, Committee Members concluded that domestic violence is a violation of human rights and that lack of gender equality in Maltese society is a determinant for domestic violence. Whilst acknowledging Malta’s socio-political

and economical development in gender equality, the Committee urged for more gender balance within Maltese families. The necessity for more legal action on perpetrators and protection of victims was highlighted. Another meeting with experts is planned for 2009.

The National Strategic Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2008-2010 was another item on the Committee's agenda during the year under review. On the initiative of Hon John Dalli, Committee Members met the authors of the report and discussed it comprehensively. A concluding meeting is planned for 2009. The report covered all areas of social policy and took into account the lessons learnt from Malta's experience in the implementation of its previous reports. In line with the Commissioner for Children Act, the Committee met with Children's Commissioner Ms Carmen Zammit. Ms Zammit presented the annual report of her office, highlighting the pending issues of the report. The Committee embarked on a plan of meetings with government officials in order to further explore these pending issues and find solutions. These issues mainly included children in courts, the Children's Act, children's health and education, residential care and inclusion.

The Social Affairs Committee held two meetings with experts in the field of sexual health. During the meetings, Committee Members discussed the preoccupying annual report of the Genitourinary Clinic and the need for a national sexual health policy. In view of rising sexually-transmittable diseases incidence in Malta, the necessity for a bold and uniform sexual health policy with a clear message to society was outlined. The Committee proposed to organise a national conference to address this matter. The Committee discussed the issue of poverty and children and were presented with an in-depth study commissioned by the National Commission for the Family. Experts discussed with Committee Members the issue of inter-generational poverty, persons in poverty/benefit trap and the risks of poverty for families on a minimum wage. A holistic approach is necessary to minimise the effects of relative poverty on each family member, thus regaining self-esteem. The government service *Access* was appraised as a good practice in the field, as it offers the necessary individualised attention to families. The Committee held one meeting *in camera*, where the Council for the Voluntary Sectors nominations was discussed.

2008 saw the demise of Hon Karl Chircop, a veteran and valuable member of the Social Affairs Committee. Hon Chircop had been a member of the Committee from the Committee's inception in the 8th Legislature in 1997. The Members expressed their profound grief at the loss of Hon Karl Chircop.

Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills

The Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills was set up by Motion No 20 of 2 June and is composed as follows:

Chairperson: Hon Francis Zammit Dimech

Members: Seven Members, four Government Members including the Chairperson, and three Opposition Members appointed according to the Bill under discussion

“120B. (1) In addition to the Standing Committees listed in Standing Order 120A, the House may, on motion made after notice, appoint such Standing Committee as may be necessary for the consideration of Bills or other business committed or referred by the House to a Standing Committee.

- (2) A motion as is referred to in paragraph (1) of this Standing Order shall:
- (a) fix the number of members to serve on the Standing Committee which is to be so composed in such manner as appears practicable to the House as fairly to represent the House in general and the proportion of Government and Opposition members in the House in particular; and
 - (b) name the Chairman who shall preside the Standing Committee.

- (3) Each side of the House shall nominate the members representing it on a Standing Committee, and shall also nominate alternate members for any members so appointed. The members and alternate members representing the Government side shall be nominated by the Leader of the House while the members and alternate members representing the Opposition side shall be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition. The name of members and alternate members so nominated and appointed by the House shall be recorded in the Minutes of the sitting.
- (4) Each side of the House may substitute any member or alternate member nominated by it in accordance with paragraph (3) hereof to represent it on a Standing Committee. Such substitution shall only have effect after the Speaker is notified therewith. The Speaker shall, at the first available opportunity, notify the House, or, if the House is in recess, the Standing Committee on House Business.
- (5) Government Bills referred to a Standing Committee shall have precedence over the other business of the Standing Committee and shall unless otherwise ordered by the House, be considered in such order as the Standing Committee on House Business may determine.”

During 2008, the Standing Committee for the Consideration of Bills met 11 times to discuss in committee stage Bills which had been referred to it by a resolution of the House. Nine Bills were discussed, approved and referred back to the House for Third Reading.

National Audit Office Accounts Committee

The National Audit Office Accounts Committee was set up by Motion No 21 of 2 June and is composed as follows:

- Chairperson:* Hon Tonio Borg, Leader of the House and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Members:* Hon Charles Mangion, Chairman Public Accounts Committee
 Hon Chris Agius
 Hon Philip Mifsud
 Hon Jesmond Mugliett

The National Audit Office Accounts Committee met three times in 2008. In its first meeting, the Committee discussed the transfer of Government property in Valletta to Dr Albert Ganado in exchange for a collection of rare hand-painted as well as printed maps of Malta, as well as the NAO Estimates for the Financial Year 2008. In its second meeting, the Committee discussed a resolution on the transfer of Government property in Benghajsa with a 33-year sub-empyteusis to Gasco Energy Ltd. During its last meeting of 2008, the Committee approved the appointment of persons to audit the accounts of the National Audit Office in terms of Part 5, Article 18 of the Second Schedule of the Auditor General and National Audit Office Act; Ernst and Young were selected to audit the accounts of the NAO.

Development Planning Committee

The Development Planning Committee was set up by Motion No 57 of 30 September and is composed as follows:

- Chairperson:* Hon Lawrence Gonzi, Prime Minister
- Members:* Hon Franco Debono
 Hon Joseph Falzon
 Hon Roderick Galdes
 Hon Anthony Zammit

The Development Planning Committee did not meet in 2008.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Mr Speaker

During the 10th Legislature, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Anton Tabone, participated in the Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), held in the first week of January in London, UK. During the Conference, the delegates discussed topics pertaining to privilege and the right of reply, keeping order and fostering decorum, standards and ethics for parliamentarians and parliament's relations with the public.

During the 11th Legislature, Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives, participated in the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments held in Lisbon, Portugal. The Speakers' Conference which was held in June, was for the first time ever divided into two parts with the first part explicitly reserved to the Speakers from the Parliaments of the EU Member States and the European Parliament, in order to allow a direct exchange of views in an informal environment on the process of the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon. The second part consisted on formal presentations and debates amongst the Speakers on different items on the agenda including the process of ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon; the strengthening of the European Construction: new responsibilities of national parliaments and partnership with the European Parliament; women's participation in political life; the new functionalities of IPEX; conclusions of the Working Groups on Inter-Parliamentary Co-operation and Assistance to new emerging democracies; and the challenges and priorities of the European Agenda.

Since the appointment of the new legislature, Mr Speaker had the opportunity to meet both resident and non-resident Ambassadors accredited to Malta as well as representatives from Maltese civil society. Furthermore, Mr Speaker received other foreign dignitaries including Mr Rocco Buttiglione, Vice President of the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*; Mr Alexander V Grushko, Deputy Foreign Minister for European Affairs of the Russian Federation; Mr Peter Altmaier, Parliamentary State Secretary at the German Ministry of Interior; Mr John Aquilina, Leader of the House in the New South Wales state parliament in Australia; and HE Senator Lamberto Dini, President of the Foreign Affairs and Emigration Commission of the Italian Senate. Hon Louis Galea also received a farewell call by HE Dr Saad A F Elshlmani, Secretary of the Libyan People's Bureau and courtesy calls by HRH Prince Seeiso Bereng Seeiso, High Commissioner of the Kingdom of Lesotho, as well as by HE Mr Alhaji Isa Aliyu Mohammed, High Commissioner of the Republic of Nigeria.

Moreover, Mr Speaker also held talks with a delegation of the Council of Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation led by Ms Liudmila B Nurusova, Chairperson of the Council of the Federation Commission for Information Policy as well as with a delegation from the Hungarian Parliament's Constitutional, Justice and House Affairs Committee led by Dr Miklós Hanko-Farago, Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

Deputy Speaker

In November, Hon Carmelo Abela, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, participated in the Third Small European States' Conference of Presidents of Parliament held in Liechtenstein. During the conference, issues pertaining to conditions for individuals to enter and reside in European small states and the consequences thereof; tourism as an important point in the economy of European small states; and particularities of the labour markets of the European small states were debated.

Outgoing Visits of Maltese Parliamentary Delegations

Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs (SCFEA)

During 2008, the Chairman and designated Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs (SCFEA) participated in the Conference of European Affairs Committees (COSAC) meetings. COSAC was created in May 1989 where the Speakers of the Parliaments of the EU member states agreed to strengthen the role of national parliaments in relation to the Community process by bringing together the committees dealing with EU affairs. COSAC meetings are held biannually in the capital of the country holding the EU Presidency.

In July, Hon Francis Agius attended the COSAC Chairpersons' meeting which was held in the French capital, Paris. Amongst the topics included on the agenda, the delegates discussed the priorities of the French Presidency of the European Union and the Barcelona Process: a Union for the Mediterranean.

In November, Hon George Vella attended the XL COSAC meeting held in Paris, which included amongst others, discussions on the French Presidency of the European Union, energy security and the European Union, bringing Europe closer to its citizens and the role of parliaments, as well as the association of national parliaments to the area of freedom, security and justice, and in particular to the scrutiny of Europol's activities and the evaluation of Eurojust's activities.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Delegation during the 10th Legislature:

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, Leader of the delegation Hon Robert Arrigo Hon Joe Debono Grech
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Leo Brincat Hon Helen D'Amato Hon Joseph Falzon

January	Hon Joe Debono Grech	First Part of the 2008 Session of the PACE held in Strasbourg
April	Hon Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando Hon Robert Arrigo Hon Leo Brincat Hon Joe Debono Grech	Second Part of the 2008 Session of the PACE held in Strasbourg

Delegation during the 11th Legislature (as on 31 December 2008):

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Francis Agius, Leader of the delegation Hon Robert Arrigo Hon Joe Debono Grech
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Marie Louise Coleiro Preca Hon Joseph Falzon Hon Beppe Fenech Adami

June	Hon Francis Agius Hon Joe Debono Grech Hon Leo Brincat Hon Joseph Falzon	Third Part of the 2008 Session of the PACE held in Strasbourg
September	Hon Francis Agius Hon Joseph Falzon Hon Joe Debono Grech Hon Marie Louise Coleiro Preca Hon Beppe Fenech Adami	Fourth Part of the 2008 Session of the PACE, held in Strasbourg

September	Hon Francis Agius	Meeting of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population held in Kiev, Ukraine and the meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Political Affairs Committee held in Paris, France
September	Hon Joseph Falzon	Meeting of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs held in Madrid and Zaragoza, Spain
October	Hon Marie Louise Coleiro Preca	Meeting of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee held in Lisbon, Portugal
November	Hon Francis Agius Hon Joe Debono Grech	Meeting of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population held in Geneva, Switzerland
November	Hon Marie Louise Coleiro Preca	Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Health held in Geneva, Switzerland as well as the meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development held in Paris, France
December	Hon Francis Agius Hon Joe Debono Grech	Meeting of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population held in Las Palmas, Canary Islands
December	Hon Joe Debono Grech	Meeting of the Political Affairs Committee held in Paris and the meeting of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs held in Reims and Paris, France

European Parliament

On the invitation of the European Parliament, Maltese parliamentarians had the opportunity to participate at various parliamentary meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg as follows:

May	Hon Joseph Falzon Hon Noel Farrugia	Joint parliamentary meeting on the Western Balkans held in Brussels
September	Hon Jean Pierre Farrugia Hon Michael Falzon	Joint parliamentary meeting on 'European Migration and Integration' held in Brussels
November	Hon Joseph Sammut	Meeting on the 'Future of European Agriculture and its Global Role' held in Brussels
November	Hon Philip Mifsud Hon Joe Mizzi	Joint parliamentary meeting on energy and sustainable development held in Strasbourg
December	Hon Francis Agius Hon Owen Bonnici	Joint parliamentary meeting on education and culture held in Brussels

European Union

Maltese parliamentarians had the opportunity to participate in various meetings hosted by the Slovenian Presidency and the French Presidency of the European Union as follows:

January	Hon Joe Mizzi	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the parliamentary committees responsible for energy and environmental issues, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia
June	Hon Joseph Falzon Hon Noel Farrugia	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the agricultural affairs committees, held in Ljubljana, Slovenia
July	Hon Edwin Vassallo, Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee	Inter-parliamentary meeting of the Presidents of the social affairs committees of the EU Member States, held in Paris, France
July	Hon Franco Debono Hon Anthony Agius Decelis	Inter-parliamentary meeting organised by the Economic Affairs Committees of the French National Assembly and the Senate, held in Paris, France
September	Hon Charles Mangion Hon Robert Arrigo	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the finance committees, held in Paris, France
September	Hon Francis Zammit Dimech Hon Michael Falzon	Meeting of the Chairpersons of the justice and home affairs committees, held in Paris, France

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)

Maltese parliamentarians participated in various meetings organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association:

August	Hon Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando Hon David Agius Hon Joe Mizzi	54 th CPA Conference and the 28 th Small Branches Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Amongst the topics for discussion were water and waste management in sustainable development, dealing with conflicts of interest and corruption in small states, meeting the challenges to the holding of democratic elections and promoting the interest of small states in international institutions.
November	Hon Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando Hon Luciano Busuttil	CPA UK Branch International Conference on International Development held in London. The Conference addressed amongst others, issues such as progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, donor and partner country experiences, accounting for development fund spending and the role of parliamentarians in tackling corruption in aid.

Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA)

Delegation during the 10th Legislature:

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Mario Galea, Leader of the delegation Hon Michael Ascjak Hon George Vella
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Joseph Cassar Hon Helena Dalli Hon Joseph Falzon

January	Hon George Vella	Meeting of the Committee of Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights, held in Brussels, which included debates on EU Presidency statements on Lebanon, the Annapolis conference and the Paris Donor's conference as well as on the latest events in and near Gaza; the Barcelona Process and on the first Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference on Migration.
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Delegation during the 11th Legislature (as on 31 December 2008):

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Ċensu Galea, Leader of the delegation Hon Jean Pierre Farrugia Hon George Vella
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Leo Brincat Hon Edwin Vassallo Hon Ninu Zammit

The Maltese parliamentary delegation to EMPA are members of the four committees of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, namely, the Committee on the Promotion of the Quality of Life, Human Exchanges and Culture; the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights; the Committee on Economic, Financial, Social Affairs and Education; and the Women's Rights Committee.

June	Hon George Vella	Meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights held in Brussels. Amongst the topics discussed were Lebanon after the presidential election, migration policies and the respect of human rights. An exchange of views on the Barcelona Process: a Union for the Mediterranean, as well as on sending an EMPA fact-finding delegation to Gaza and Sderot, were also on the agenda.
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October	Hon Ċensu Galea Hon Jean Pierre Farrugia Hon George Vella	EMPA Extraordinary Session held in Jordan. The EMPA extraordinary plenary meeting discussed the role and the status of the EMPA within the Barcelona Process: a Union for the Mediterranean and the evolutions regarding the Middle East Peace Process. The plenary also took note and expressed support for the proposal made by the Ad-hoc Committee of Energy and Environment of the EMPA, regarding the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Energy Community (EMEC).
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Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Executive Committee of the National Group

<i>President:</i>	Speaker of the House of Representatives
<i>Vice Presidents:</i>	Prime Minister Leader of the Opposition
<i>Members:</i>	Hon Michael Gonzi Hon George Vella
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Philip Mifsud Hon Joe Mizzi

October	Hon Michael Gonzi Hon Joe Mizzi	119 th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union which was held in Geneva, Switzerland. The meetings held included panel discussions on the subjects chosen for debate by the three Standing Committees during the forthcoming 120 th Assembly, namely, the role of parliaments in advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; climate change, sustainable development models and renewable energies and freedom of expression and the right to information.
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Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA)

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Louis Deguara, Leader of the delegation Hon Frederick Azzopardi Hon Angelo Farrugia
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The Maltese parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE attended the meetings organised by the Assembly as follows:

June/July	Hon Angelo Farrugia Hon Frederick Azzopardi	17 th Annual Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Astana, Kazakhstan
September	Hon Louis Deguara Hon Frederick Azzopardi Hon Angelo Farrugia	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly 2008 Fall Meetings held in Toronto, Canada

Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM)

Delegations during the 10th Legislature:

<i>Members:</i>	Hon Michael Gonzi, Leader of the delegation Hon Michael Asciaq Hon Mario Galea Hon Joe Mizzi Hon George Vella
<i>Substitute Members:</i>	Hon Justyne Caruana Hon Joseph Cassar

In April, a meeting of the European Co-operation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST) network on Health and Social Care of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in Europe (HOME) was organised on the initiative of the Maltese parliamentary delegation within PAM and the PAM Secretariat. The meeting which was held in the general headquarters of the PAM in St. Julian's, was concluded with a number of proposals which were endorsed and transcribed into a resolution in the subsequent months.

Delegation during the 11th Legislature (as at 31 December 2008):

Members: Hon Jesmond Mugliett, Leader of the delegation
 Hon Franco Debono
 Hon Louis Deguara
 Hon Joe Mizzi
 Hon George Vella

Substitute Members: Hon Justyne Caruana
 Hon Stephen Spiteri

June	Hon Jesmond Mugliett	Meeting of the Special Task Force on Dialogue among Religions and on Migration, held in Fez, Morocco
November	Hon Jesmond Mugliett Hon Justyne Caruana Hon George Vella	Third Plenary Session, held in Monaco

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean was set up in Nafplion, Greece, in February 2005, on the initiative of Maltese parliamentary delegations participating within the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In November 2007, during the Second Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly which was held in Malta, the Headquarters Agreement was signed - officially recognising Spinola Palace as the seat of the Secretariat of the Assembly. The aim of the Parliamentary Assembly is to provide the Mediterranean with a unique parliamentary forum of its own and bring together, on an equal footing, the national parliaments on the Mediterranean littoral. The detailed work of the Assembly is carried out by three Standing Committees which draw up opinions and recommendations. Furthermore, in early 2008, the Standing Committees set up a number of working groups under the form of *Ad hoc* Committees and Special Task Forces.

In September, parliamentary delegations from around the Mediterranean met in Malta for the final stage of the Standing Committees' calendar in preparation of the Annual Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. During the meetings of the First, Second and Third Standing Committees, the Maltese parliamentary delegation contributed in the drafting of a number of resolutions including those pertaining to gender and equality issues, security, environment and climate change as well as dialogue among cultures and religions. The resolutions and high level reports debated during these meetings aimed at providing the necessary guidance and an updated strategy plan for the activities to be undertaken until 2012 and also for the launching of the Mediterranean Charter as well as declaring 21 March as the Mediterranean Day. These were endorsed during the Plenary Session of the PAM that met in Monaco in November.

During the meetings of the Standing Committees, Hon Jesmond Mugliett was elected vice-president of the Second Standing Committee of the PAM dealing with issues related to economic, social and environmental co-operation – co-development and partnership. During these meetings, the Maltese House of Representatives, represented by the Speaker of the House, Hon Louis Galea, was also presented with the Cannes International Prize for Water and Co-operation. The prize was awarded to the Republic of Malta in recognition of the commitment to and involvement in the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

During the year under review, the Maltese parliamentary delegation further participated in various meetings of the *Ad hoc* Committees and Special Task Forces forming part of the Assembly. In particular, Hon George Vella was appointed *rapporteur* on the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Regional Issues: the Middle East.

Following the discussions held, Hon George Vella prepared a concise report on the topic discussed in order for the Parliamentary Assembly to have a clear strategy promoting peace in the Middle East. Amongst the salient points of the strategy, Hon George Vella suggested an official visit by a delegation of the PAM in the Middle East in order to raise awareness of the situation in the region, which suggestion was approved in the meeting of the Third Plenary Session held in November in Monaco. The official visit is proposed to be held in the third week of May 2009.

The Third Plenary Session of the PAM which was held in Monaco in November consolidated the role of the PAM as the legitimate forum for Mediterranean parliamentary diplomacy. In Monaco, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean adopted the 'Charter of the Mediterranean', the political manifesto where the commitment to the peace, security and prosperity process is now enshrined in the name of the Mediterranean populations. The document defines the identity of the Mediterranean and acts as a road map for the region's future.

Others

January	Hon Joe Mizzi	EUFORES Inter-Parliamentary Meeting on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency at the EU Sustainable Energy Week 2008 held in Brussels, Belgium
September	Hon Ċensu Galea Hon Joe Mizzi	3 rd Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Road Safety in Europe held in Lisbon, Portugal
November	Hon Joe Mizzi Hon David Agius	EUFORES 8 th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency held in Budapest, Hungary
December	Hon Joseph Falzon	55 th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union held in Paris, France

Parliamentary Friendship Groups

Apart from official international activities, international links are also maintained by the Parliamentary Friendship Groups. In November 2008, a delegation from the Malta-France Parliamentary Friendship Group, led by Hon David Agius, head of delegation, and composed of Hon Evarist Bartolo, Hon Leo Brincat, Hon Franco Debono, Hon Noel Farrugia and Hon Stephen Spiteri visited France with the aim of further enhancing the existing good bilateral relations between the two countries as well as to promote other areas of co-operation. During the meetings held in Paris and Bordeaux, the Maltese delegation discussed topics of particular relevance to both sides, including energy, the financial crisis, illegal immigration, EU affairs and the Euro, climate change and renewable energy as well as the EU Presidency held by the Czech Republic as from January 2009.

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

During 2008, the Association of Former Members of Parliament held several meetings at the House of Representatives. The Association is a member of the European Association of Former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe or the European Union.

Mr Lino Debono and Dr Joseph Buttigieg participated in the meetings of the Bureau of the European Association of Former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe or the European Union held in Paris in March and in Brussels in June. In October, Mr Lino Debono and Dr Joseph Buttigieg also attended the European Colloquy in Athens, organised by the same Association.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Official Opening of the 11th Legislature

Following the general elections held on 8 March, the official opening of the 11th Legislature was held on 10 May. The event commenced with a mass concelebrated by Archbishop Paul Cremona. At the beginning of the Parliamentary sitting, the Acting Clerk of the House read the President's proclamation summoning Parliament, the results of the election and the casual elections. The House then proceeded to elect the Speaker of the House. The Prime Minister, Hon Lawrence Gonzi, proposed Dr Louis Galea, Speaker of the House. Hon Alfred Sant, Leader of the Opposition, seconded the motion which was subsequently unanimously approved. The new Speaker was then escorted to the Chamber by Hon Gonzi and Hon Sant and took the oath of allegiance. The motion to elect Hon Carmelo Abela, Deputy Speaker, moved by the Prime Minister and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, was also unanimously approved.

In a short address, Hon Galea stated that the new appointment was a new experience for him after serving the House for 32 years. Deputy Speaker, Hon Carmelo Abela promised to continue to serve the House with loyalty as he had done during the past legislature. All 69 members of the House then took their oath of allegiance. The House was then addressed by the President who presented the government's plan for the five years ahead. The youngest MP, Hon Franco Debono, gave notice of a motion to thank the President for his address. Former presidents, members of the diplomatic corps, MPs' spouses, the members of the judiciary and senior civil servants were among those invited to this event.

Parliamentary Session to Commemorate Europe Day

On 9 May, the Committee Room of the House of Representatives provided the setting for a number of students to commemorate Europe Day. Maltese students together with policy makers debated climate change and intercultural dialogue. Chaired by the Speaker of the House, Hon Anton Tabone, the debate aimed at securing a commitment on how climate change could be tackled and sought to foster intercultural dialogue.

Students urged politicians to stand up and combat the challenge of global warming. Students also pointed out that policies should be targeted towards climate change as an issue to be tackled and energy to be conserved. This could be achieved by investing in sustainable energy. Throughout the debate, various subjects were tackled such as carbon dioxide released by the burning fossil fuels, the effects of deforestation on the absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, the effects of rising global temperatures, extreme weather manifestations and the health risks posed by climate change. The importance of education was highlighted as was the fact that global warming was a global concern and it was up to each and every individual to contribute to reducing its effects.

EkoSkola Parliament

The fourth session of the *EkoSkola* Parliament, an annual event that brings together students participating in the *EkoSkola* programme face to face with the country's official policy makers, was held in the Parliamentary Chamber on 3 June.

Students from among 76 schools discussed issues relating to ways of improving the quality of life on a local and national level. The session was organised by Nature Trust Malta and the local representatives of the Federation of Environmental Education (FEE).

Students outlined several measures that the country should embark on in order to improve its quality of life, including the increase in use of alternative sources of energy. The *EkoSkola* programme is an international environmental education programme with the participation of around five million boys and girls from more than 13,000 schools in 33 different countries. Through the *EkoSkola* programme children take an active part in the decisions, planning and the implementation of environmental activities with the aim of

improving the quality of life in their schools and the surrounding communities. Schools that successfully achieve this goal are awarded a Green Flag – a prestigious eco-label testifying the school's commitment to fostering sustainable lifestyles.

Sette Giugno

In his address at the *Sette Giugno* activity held under the *Sette Giugno* monument in St George's Square in Valletta, Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives, remarked that the elections held in March 2008 offered an opportunity to reflect and work together towards a process of strengthening democracy and its structures.

The Speaker outlined that the strengthening of democracy should be achieved by first and foremost improving the House of Representatives itself and its structures. As the role of the national parliament in the EU was getting more important, it was essential to have better and more resources to be effective in the EU.

The Speaker also stated that there was a need to improve other key elements of democracy in our country, namely political parties, broadcasting and the role of civil society. The historical importance of the *Sette Giugno* showed that if we worked together as a nation, it became less difficult to adopt such important reforms. This event honours the hard work of the Maltese people that led to the development of a parliamentary system which is still in place today.

Intercultural Dialogue Activity

The year 2008 was declared the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue. On the initiative of the Speaker and the Indian High Commissioner to Malta and the St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, the Festival of Indian Dance and Music was organised on 26, 27 and 28 July. In a press conference launching the cultural event, Hon Speaker said that the most effective way of facing today's and tomorrow's challenges, both at national and international level, was through well-informed and genuine dialogue. Hon Louis Galea stated that Maltese people continued to experience Indian culture through the Indian community in Malta that is now fully integrated in Maltese society. This was a living experience of how two cultures, so distant and diverse, drew closer over time and came to treat each other with the respect and dignity that each and every culture deserved.

The dance troupe led by Vyjayanthi Kashi performed *Kuchipudi* that is one of the six classical forms of traditional Indian dance, while Anupriya Deotale performed Indian cultural music fused with contemporary sounds and instruments.

National Youth Parliament

On 16 September, the National Youth Council organised the fifth edition of the National Youth Parliament in the Parliamentary Chamber, an event focusing on active participation and aiming at familiarising youths with politics and introducing them to parliamentary procedures. The two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, were chaired by Hon Louis Galea, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Hon Carmelo Abela, Deputy Speaker, respectively.

Students discussed themes of substance aimed at improving the quality of life. Mr Speaker stated that the huge response by youth to participate in this initiative showed that youth were well aware and interested in the important issues that affect the quality of life of the citizen. The Deputy Speaker spoke about the need of the Parliament to be closer to the citizen and urged youth to be active and to participate in society. The Deputy Speaker mentioned the usefulness of youth expressing their ideas and the advantages that a society gained when youth contributed towards the development of a country.

Notte Bianca Activity

For the second year running, the House of Representatives opened its doors and participated in the 2008 *Notte Bianca* activity, held on 4 October. The Parliament was again a popular venue with the general public and large crowds of people visited the Parliamentary Chamber. A number of Members of Parliament were present during the evening and had the opportunity to meet the public, while the staff at the House guided visitors around the Parliament's building and the parliamentary committee rooms.

National Book Fair

A parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the House of Representatives paid an official visit to the National Book Fair on 13 November as a sign of recognition and to encourage the love of reading and books in Malta. The National Book Fair aimed at creating more awareness about the importance of reading, and gave the opportunity to the local book industry to demonstrate its achievements.

Blood Donation

On 1 December, Members from both sides of the House of Representatives, together with the Speaker, donated blood in the committee room which was turned into a temporary clinic for this occasion. This was the second year in a row in which Members of Parliament donated blood in order to give a concrete example and encourage citizens to embark on such a noble activity. The Speaker, Hon Louis Galea, stated that the health services in Malta and Gozo needed a constant amount of blood provisions in order to meet demands.

Parliament for Persons with Disability

On 10 December the Parliamentary Committee Room was again the venue of the annual Parliament for Persons with Disability. People with disability and their relatives had the chance to voice their concerns and aspirations during this special parliamentary session.

During the session, Members of Parliament from both sides of the House participated in the discussion and agreed on accessibility which benefited everyone. They agreed that it was not enough to ratify the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability without the necessary resources to implement it. Members of Parliament appealed to private employers and government institutions to believe more in the capabilities of these persons.

The Parliament for Persons with Disability is organised annually by the National Commission Persons with Disability as part of the activities held to mark the week dedicated to persons with disability. The Commission also took the opportunity to highlight the lack of work opportunities and appealed to include in the workforce persons with disability who can also contribute to society. The Commission also emphasised that accessibility was not just physical, but that persons with disability deserve access to cultural life, media and politics, apart from employment and education.

OBITUARIES

On 7 January, the House expressed its grief at the loss of Dr Robert Naudi, ex-Member of Parliament, who passed away on 2 January.

On 28 January, the House observed a minute's silence to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust following the United Nations resolution of 21 November 2005 designating 27 January as the annual international day of commemoration to honour Holocaust victims.

On 12 May, the House expressed its grief at the loss of President Emeritus Sir Anthony Mamo, who passed away on 1 May and Mr Carm Lino Spiteri, ex-Member of Parliament, who passed away on 9 February.

On 29 September, the House expressed its grief at the loss of Mr Carmelo Abela, father of Hon Helena Dalli, who passed away on 11 August.

On 13 October, the House expressed its grief at the loss of Hon Karl Chircop, Member of Parliament, who passed away on 12 October. As a mark of respect at the beginning of the sitting, the Prime Minister proposed that the House, after observing a moment of silence, be adjourned to the following day.

On 24 November, the House expressed its grief at the loss of Mrs Inez Gonzi, mother of the Prime Minister, Hon Lawrence Gonzi, and of Hon Michael Gonzi, who passed away on 24 November.

PAULINE ABELA
Clerk to the House

Electoral Office

Electoral Office

RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY CARDS

The Commissioner of Police is the authorised officer designated to issue the Identity Card; however, the Electoral Office deals directly with it, administers the whole process and is responsible for its maintenance. The Electoral Office receives applications for the issue of ID cards, registers the changes resulting from transfer of residence, change of status or other particulars and prints the ID cards. The whole process for each individual takes only a few minutes: the computer system prints the plastic ID card with the required security features conforming to international standards and this is given to the applicant on the spot. Personnel from the Electoral Office also go to hospitals, institutions for old-age people and in private residences where the sick and aged persons residing there applied for the issue or renewal of their ID card.

From 1 May 2004 onwards, the Maltese ID card has been accepted as a travel document in all EU member states. In December 2004, the Council of the European Union issued regulations regarding additional security features including biometrics in travel documents and consequently the Maltese ID card had to conform to these regulations and necessarily undergo significant changes. Several discussions were held on the matter during the year and in view of the forthcoming general election, it was decided to finalise the matter after this event. A legal notice was published in January whereby expired ID Cards were to remain valid up to 31 December 2008. This measure avoided waste of resources and duplication of work until the competent authorities took the appropriate decisions on the matter. Naturally, persons who decided to use the ID Card as a travel document had to call at the Electoral Office and renew their ID Card to have the appropriate expiry date printed on the ID Card.

COMPILATION AND PUBLICATION OF THE ELECTORAL REGISTERS

Applications for registration as voters and for transfer of residence were received daily at the Electoral Office. These were initially verified against records held at this Office, the Public Registry, the Department for Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs and at any other appropriate department. The applications were processed and included in the Electoral Registers published in April and October, provided that the applicants had the requisite qualifications in terms of the provisions of the Constitution of Malta. The information collected in connection with the ID card was also used as the basis for the compilation of the Electoral Registers. Confirmation from the competent authorities was obtained prior to deleting from the Electoral Registers those persons reported to be deceased, of unsound mind, or sentenced to more than one year imprisonment. Investigations in conjunction with police officers were also carried out regarding emigrated persons prior to their deletion from the Electoral Registers. At the end of each month, a list showing the additions, changes and deletions to the Electoral Registers was given to the delegates of the political parties as laid down in Article 28 of the General Elections Act, 1991, and Regulation 7 (Third Schedule) of the Local Councils Act, 1993.

When Malta became a member of the European Union, nationals of other Member States who resided in Malta and had the necessary qualifications became eligible to vote in elections for local councils and elections for members of the European Parliament. Consequently, a separate register was also compiled to include the names of persons eligible to vote in these elections according to the European Parliament Act approved by the House of Representatives.

UPDATING OF INFORMATION

The information held at the Electoral Office is kept regularly updated. This process comprises the inclusion of new voters, the transfer of voters from one locality to another and the deletion of deceased persons, emigrants and other voters who lose their qualifications according to law. The Electoral Office also updates regularly the Identity Card database that contains information on all persons aged from 14 years upwards who were issued with an ID card and this process includes changes due to new street names and door re-numbering. The information is then copied at regular intervals to the Director of Civil Registration who maintains the Government Common Database that is accessed by all government departments on a daily basis. During the year inspections were carried out to verify the correct address of persons and to ensure that voters were included under the correct street names, localities and electoral divisions.

The computer system at the Electoral Office is built on a relational database and the particulars of voters and their digitised images both form an integral part of the system. All textual and image data is checked before being computerised as this is used for the printing of identity cards, compilation and updating of electoral registers, printing of voting documents, lists of persons entitled to vote, and other documentation as well as for other electoral processes. Regular consolidation exercises are carried out to ensure that the data is correct and appropriate measures are taken, including proper back-up facilities, to protect the data and comply with the Data Protection Act.

HOLDING OF ELECTIONS

The main task of the Electoral Office during 2008 was the holding of a general election and elections in 23 local councils on 8 March. Preparations for these elections began in late 2007 and personnel from other departments were deployed at various stages to assist the staff of the Electoral Office. The counting complex at Ta' Qali that had been used as a counting hall since 1992 was demolished so that the site could be used for other purposes. The Electoral Commission, after studying various options, decided that the ex-Trade Fair Grounds at Naxxar was the best alternative site for the counting of votes. This meant payment for lease of the site for one year, substantial structural changes at the Trade Fair Grounds including a new counting hall layout, setting up quarters for the political parties, Police, AFM and the Media, installation of many additional services, transport of heavy items, and a re-assessment of security requirements to make the Trade Fair Grounds fully functional as a counting complex and compliant with the electoral laws. Most of the work had been carried out by the end of 2007 and was completed by January 2008.

When the date for the general election was announced, 565 polling booths were set up in Government schools and other premises and instruction booklets, forms and other publications used during elections were reviewed and printed again where necessary. Following recent Constitutional amendments, the Electoral Commission provided special templates with Braille script and a recorder to facilitate voting by visually impaired persons. The Electoral Commission received 260 nominations from candidates for the general election, 241 nominations from candidates for Local Councils elections, as well as over 5,000 applications for Assistant Commissioners to supervise the poll and over 3,500 applications for Counting Staff to count the votes. The results of the general election were presented to the President of the Republic and to the Clerk of the House on Tuesday 11 March. The counting of votes for the Local Councils elections was held on Saturday 15 March and the results were presented to the Prime Minister on Monday 17 March. After these elections were over, ancillary work still had to be done including 12 casual elections held on 17 April to fill the seats vacated by Members who were elected from two electoral divisions, dismantling of polling booths, payment to personnel who were assigned tasks during the electoral processes, payment to suppliers for services rendered during elections, compilation of statistical information, reports and other work. During the later part of 2008 discussions were held regarding the possibility of using the ex-Trade Fair Grounds as a counting complex for the European Parliament elections scheduled for 6 June 2009 and a decision was taken to retain and lease the site for another year.

Following dissolution of the Local Council of Mtarfa by the Minister responsible for Local Government, an election was held on 24 May to elect councillors for this locality. A casual election was held on 24 October to elect a Member for the European Parliament and a casual election was held on 31 October to elect a Member of the House of Representatives. The Electoral Office also organised an election for a representative on the Board of the Chamber of Architects.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The Electoral Commission that conducted the general election and the elections for local councils during 2008 was appointed on 29 August 2003 for a period of three years; the same Commissioners were re-appointed on 29 August 2006 for a further period of three years. During the year under review the Commission met regularly each week and more frequently during election periods, and discussed matters covering different topics, and also held meetings with the delegates of political parties and representatives of organisations and public institutions. The Commission took decisions on the registration and deletion of voters, on matters related to the compilation of the Electoral Registers and on the conduct of the elections. Members of the Commission participated in seminars and conferences held abroad where the main themes of discussions were electoral processes and related issues.

OTHER MATTERS

The Electoral Office has a Section in Gozo where facilities are provided for the issue and renewal of ID cards and for any other information requested by persons residing there. This Section also serves as the focal point in Gozo whenever elections are held there.

A previous study showed that many households in Malta and Gozo had either a house name only or a wrong house number and this situation created problems in identifying correctly the address of a person. The Electoral Office in conjunction with the Police and the Works Division of the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure continued with an exercise whereby every door in Malta and Gozo would eventually be assigned an official door number. This long-term exercise which began in 1998 was initially expected to affect over 60,000 households; however, this number is likely to increase in the future. During 2008 about 30 streets in various localities were either re-named or given an official name and about 1,500 households were either assigned a door number or re-numbered. Persons residing in those households were then required to change their ID card to reflect changes and corrections resulting from this exercise.

During the year under review, female employees took an active participatory role in the day-to-day running of the Electoral Office and currently, they outnumber their male colleagues in most sections within the Office. They were assigned various major exercises throughout the year, supervised and participated in electoral processes and attended board meetings and court sittings as necessary. Statistics and information on electoral processes continued to be compiled and published on a gender basis. The satisfactory outcome in all these cases confirms that this trend should be continued in the future.

Staff from the Electoral Office participated in seminars held locally and abroad, attended courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation of the Office of the Prime Minister and MITTS Ltd, and were often appointed on various boards. They were also asked to give advice and support to other departments, particularly by printing the *Kartanzjan* card on a regular basis for the Department for the Care of the Elderly and by providing updated information to the Police, the Public Registry and to the Department for Local Government.

The Electoral Office always took initiatives to provide a good service to the public and the Service Quality Charter that was launched in November 2004 provided a basis for an efficient customer service. The services provided by the Electoral Office were given with courtesy, within defined time frames, and in an efficient manner. Following the positive outcome of discussions held towards the end of 2006 to introduce new opening hours at the Electoral Office, the same office hours were also retained during 2008. This

measure was welcomed very well by the public because it provided an even better and more convenient service.

The Electoral Office has had its own website since 2004 and this was regularly updated with relevant information throughout the year. This facility proved very useful particularly during the period covering the general election and local councils elections.

EDWARD R GATT

Chief Electoral Commissioner

**Office of the
Prime Minister**

Management and Personnel Office

Mission Statement

To formulate, develop and promote in close collaboration with line ministries and departments, progressive human resource policies, strategies and management systems in support of the business of Government and to assist and support line ministries/departments to achieve government plans and programmes and to render an efficient service to the public.

THE ORGANISATION

The Management & Personnel Office (MPO) forms an integral part of the Office of the Prime Minister and serves as the Public Administration's central HR Unit. The MPO is composed of three separate, yet interrelated directorates, namely the Resourcing, the Employee Relations and the HR Systems & Data Management Directorates - each of which contributes directly to the achievement of the Management & Personnel Office's strategic direction. In mid-2008, the Management & Personnel Office was absorbed under the direct remit of the Principal Permanent Secretary.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Amongst various initiatives and activities, the main challenges undertaken by the Management & Personnel Office were the implementation of LN 51/2007 entitled *Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulations 2007*, the implementation of the teleworking policy in the Public Administration and the PMP compliance audits for government employees.

RESOURCING DIRECTORATE

INTRODUCTION

During 2008, the Directorate continued to focus on the implications of LN 51/2007 *Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulations, 2007*, amended by LN 239/2008, and intensified its focus on the necessary preparation for the delegation of recruitment to line ministries as provided by the imminent Public Administration Act, starting with a plan for the delegation of the setting up and conducting of selection boards.

The Directorate also continued to facilitate recruitment at EU level, as well as recruitment at local level to strengthen the capacity of ministries in their management of EU Funds. Work also continued to enhance the human resource capacity at other levels. At administrative level, for example, successful candidates in the selection exercises for the posts of Clerk and Executive Officer took up appointment, whilst the selection exercises for the posts of Principal and Senior Principal were concluded. At sectoral level, the Directorate continued to process – subject to the direction established in the capacity-building fora – requests for recruitment in various professional and other departmental grades to enable line departments to meet their national/international commitments. Moreover, 19 employees were redeployed from one public entity to another in terms of Art 15A of the Employment and Training Services Act.

SECTORAL ANALYSIS – PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

Rationalisation of Human Resources

The Resourcing Directorate continued to participate in the biannual Capacity-Building Meetings held with the Ministry of Finance and each line ministry, with the aim of addressing human resource requirements in a holistic, structured and effective manner rather than evaluating the submission of *ad hoc* requests throughout the year.

Public Sector Recruitment

During the year in question, 431 requests from 53 different government-funded entities were processed. 201 requests were for new positions which created 617 new vacancies, whilst a further 230 requests were for replacement of staff, which involved 369 employees who resigned or retired from service. 37 requests for new positions were approved for ESF funded projects. These requests were granted approval by the RRAG for the entities concerned to commence recruitment procedures with the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC).

These requests for new positions/replacements involved 537 full-timers and 449 part-timers.

The Directorate, in liaison with the ETC, also approved the extension of the statutory validity periods of work permits issued to entities that had expired. Before approvals for extensions of work permits are issued, the Directorate investigates the reasons leading to why the selection process and eventual recruitment was not effected within the stipulated time period. Approvals for requests for recruitment of personnel on short definite contracts or on replacement basis, as in the case of temporary replacements, were also given on several occasions after careful consideration.

At the start of 2008, the public sector, that is all government funded entities, being either independent statutory bodies or companies with public majority shareholding, totalled 11,703. By the end of August, according to the latest available figures from the ETC, the figures declined to 11,647. Also at the end of August, the public sector had 1,795 public officers on its books who were either detailed/attached on grounds of public policy, or on contract.

Redeployment

Nineteen requests were processed for the redeployment of employees within the public sector, in terms of Art 15A of Act No VII of 2006 to amend the Employment and Training Services Act.

EU Recruitment

Work in connection with recruitment at EU level concerned: recruitment in the positions of Technical Attaché and Research Officer; the secondment of National Experts; advertisement of EPSO calls on the media; launching of traineeship programme with SDO for public officers to increase their knowledge of EU Institutions and their procedures; the recruitment of Junior Experts; the appointment of Judges to the EU Civil Service Tribunal; the Diplomatic Exchange and Secondment Programme with EU Member States for 2008 in relation to the exchange of Commission personnel with the diplomatic services of the Member States; and vacancy notices for various Directors in the EU Commission.

EU Fund Management Related Recruitment

Whilst continuing to process the recruitment of EU Fund Officers and Support Officers initiated in 2007, another call for applications was issued for the position of EU Fund Officer and another for that of EU Fund Manager. Furthermore, other positions were created to facilitate the management of EU Funds and

related projects, such as: EU Payments Manager at the Treasury; Programme Managers at the EU Paying Authority; Procurement Manager at the Contracts Division; and Project Manager dealing with the Restoration and Rehabilitation of Historic Fortification of Malta and Gozo.

Clerk Entrance Examination

238 candidates who were successful in the Clerk examination took up appointment. 76 requested a postponement exceeding two months. 50 refused appointment.

Examination for Promotion to the grade of Executive Officer

305 candidates were appointed Executive Officers with effect from 22 January.

Principal/Senior Principals' Selection Exercise – 2007

Both the Principals and Senior Principals Selection Exercises were concluded. Part one – the written examination – was held in February in both cases. Part two – the interviewing stage – was carried out between May and July.

Appointments in Assistant Director and Headship Positions

Following MPO Circular No. 72/08 issued on 20 June, appointments in the position of Assistant Director after this date are made for a three-year instead of a five-year term and appointees retain the substantive grade held prior to their appointment as Assistant Director throughout the first two terms. Upon successful completion of the two three-year terms, incumbents choose whether to take up the substantive grade of *Office in Grade 5* or else retain the substantive grade pertaining to their career stream (non-General Service). Incumbents may apply for a lateral move after two years in the second or subsequent terms in the same Assistant Director position, unless such a change or else a change of designation is required by the exigencies of the Service.

By means of MPO Circular No. 85/08 issued on 7 October, officers appointed Assistant Directors prior to the issue of MPO Circular No. 72/08 – who were concurrently appointed Assistant Directors and *Officers in Grade 5* – who terminate their appointment during the initial five-year term unless for promotion, family-friendly reasons as outlined in the Public Service Management Code or on grounds of public policy, shall have their *Officer in Grade 5* appointment rescinded on the basis that such termination is considered an abandonment of the post. This also applies in the case of headship posts. MPO Circular No. 85/08 also provides that headship appointees who avail of unpaid leave not on grounds of public policy to work with institutions, bodies and agencies of the EU and international organisations, and Assistant Directors appointed on a five-year performance agreement (that is, prior to the issue of MPO Circular No. 72/08) who avail of such leave during their initial five-year term, shall, in view of the beneficial exposure to be gained both in the interests of the officer concerned and of the Service, retain the grade of *Officer in Grade 5* subject to resumption of duties in the Malta Public Service immediately upon expiry of the one-year leave.

Eligibility for Assistant Director positions was extended to all public officers holding a substantive grade not below scale 7. Previously, this applied only to Assistant Director positions of a technical nature (T), with other Assistant Director positions open to Principals in Scale 7, Senior Principals and Officers in Grade 5.

Succession Planning Principle

The policy of succession planning applicable in the case of headships was extended to Assistant Director positions. Hence, six months in advance of an incumbent's retirement, a call for applications may be issued to select an understudy as designate. This system will enhance the smooth handover of duties.

Certification of Performance – General Service/Messengerial Progressions and Promotions

In order to expedite the processing of progressions and promotions of General Service/Messengerial officers, a new procedure, in collaboration with the HR Systems and Data Management Directorate, has been adopted whereby Directors Corporate Services and officers are both prompted three months before progression/promotion date for the submission of reports. These are verified by the HR Systems and Data Management Directorate, which shall monitor the incidence of reports not received by the stipulated deadline. Reports shall no longer be re-routed to the Public Service Commission as customary.

Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulations, 2007

The implications of LN 51/2007 *Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term Regulations, 2007*, amended by LN 239/2008 on 26 September 2008, on recruitment matters continued to be a primary focus of Resourcing's work throughout the year. For example, contractual agreements have been upgraded to clarify the distinction between persons employed only on a fixed-term basis, and are hence given a 'contract of employment', and persons who have an indefinite contract of employment and are meanwhile appointed to a different position for a defined duration and are referred to as having been given an 'assignment'.

As part of one of the regular fora held for Directors Corporate Services, on 17 September, DCSs were brought up to date with the current recruitment scenario in the context of the Fixed Term Regulations.

Delegation of the Setting up and Conducting of Selection Boards

It is envisaged that, as a first step towards the implementation of the imminent Public Administration Act, the setting up and conducting of selection boards for recruitment in the Public Service be delegated to line ministries. Hence, it is planned that (i) the composition and conducting of selection boards for recruitment (non-General Service grades and positions) be delegated to line ministries; (ii) the concept of there being a Panel Member (non-technical) be done away with; (iii) Chairpersons/Members be appointed primarily from amongst a pool of retired public officers; and (iv) MPO assumes the role of Regulator. Detailed guidelines have been prepared for further discussion and fine-tuning.

Questionnaires

Resourcing liaised with the Staff Development Organisation, ETC, EU Commission (Malta Office) and EU Parliament (Malta Office) in the compilation of data for a questionnaire regarding citizens' requests for information about the EU recruitment policy. The Directorate also replied to an extensive questionnaire from the Civil Service Department of the Republic of Lithuania on methods of recruitment in general within the Malta Public Service and the recruitment, selection, promotion and other ancillary procedures with regard to top public officers.

Codification of Policies

Together with the other directorates within MPO, Resourcing has codified those policies/established practices which are neither included in the Public Service Management Code nor are published as OPM/MPO circulars.

Review of Chapter I of the Public Service Management Code

Chapter 1 of the Public Service Management Code, which concerns resourcing matters, together with the respective Appendices, was reviewed both to incorporate new policies/policy updates and to make the document more user-friendly both as a management tool and for use by public officers in general.

Capacity Building of Information Management Unit

Contractual engagements were effected in early 2008, following a service-wide call for applications in 2007, in the positions of ICT Governance Officer, ICT Applications Officer, ICT Contracts and Services Officer, and Management Information Systems Officer, with the aim to support the Chief Information Officers set up in each ministry in 2007.

Deployment of Public Officers with Public Entities

During 2008, 130 public officers were detailed with public entities whereas 20 officers had their detailing order revoked as a result of demand driven requests or through officers' selection for posts in the Public Service. The following table shows the number of public officers who, on 31 December 2008, were deployed, attached or detailed with public entities:

Water Services Corporation	Detailed	753
Malta Transport Authority	Detailed	16
Occupational Health and Safety Authority	Detailed	5
Malta Environment and Planning Authority	Detailed	96
Malta Maritime Authority	Detailed	12
Malta Resources Authority	Detailed	5
Malta Standards Authority	Detailed	3
Malta Statistics Authority	Detailed	59
Lotteries and Gaming Authority	Detailed	4
Superintendence Cultural Heritage	Detailed	7
Malta Communications Authority	Detailed	12
Heritage Malta	Detailed	167
Kunsill Malti għall-Isport	Detailed	41
Malta Council for Culture and the Arts	Detailed	24
National Commission for Persons with Disability (KNPD)	Detailed	5
Office of the Attorney General	Detailed	33
Medicines Authority	Detailed	14
National Archives for Malta	Detailed	10
Education Directorates	Detailed	25
Housing Authority	Detailed	85
Enemalta Corporation	Detailed	1
European Union Programmes Agency	Detailed	3
Maltco Lotteries	Deployed	1
MATS Ltd (includes ex-AFM personnel)	Attached	132
Foundation for Medical Services	Deployed	9
MCAST	Deployed	76
WasteServ	Deployed	15
St John Co-Cathedral Foundation	Deployed	1
Barriera Tax Warehouses Ltd	Deployed	3
Foundation for Social Welfare Services	Deployed	90
IPSL	Deployed	1
Office of the Commissioner for Children	Deployed	1
Malta Enterprise	Deployed	1
Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools	Deployed	1
Total		1,711

ONGOING ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES

Data on ongoing ancillary activities during 2008 is shown in the following tables:

General Service progressions to a higher salary scale with the same grade subject to satisfactory performance	
Position	No
Senior Principal (Scale 7 to 6)	3
Principal (Scale 8 to 7)	19
(Scale 9 to 8)	93
(Scale 10 to 9)	81
Assistant Principal (Scale 11 to 10)	16
Executive Officer (Scale 14 to 13)	71
Clerk (Scale 16 to 15)	2
Messenger (Scale 17 to 16)	-

Engagement of Consultants/Advisers on contract processed	
New Contracts	23
Renewals	55
Terminations	40

Movement of Staff to & from Private Secretariats	
General Service Grades	127
Departmental Grades	36
Technical Grades	19
Industrial Grades	23
Others	4

Appointment in Departmental, Technical & Industrial Grades and Contractual Positions	
Method	No
Following public calls for application	726
Following selection from service-wide calls	465
Following selection from departmental calls	124
After a number of years service in the grade	63
Direct recommendations	3
Others	-

Movement of Staff approved by MPO	
General Service Grades	202
Departmental Grades	58
Technical Grades	14
Industrial Grades	30
Others	10

Public Officers from Maltapost Plc	
Public Officers returned from Maltapost plc	103

Attainment of Indefinite Status in Contractual Position	
Employees who attained indefinite status	776

Category 'A' Appointments (*)	
Position	No
Principal Permanent Secretary	-
Permanent Secretary	1
Permanent Secretary-Designate	-
Director General	5
Director General-Designate	1
Director	14
Director-Designate	1
Others	-
In an Acting Capacity	13
Assistant Director	26

General Service Appointments	
Grade	No
Senior Principal	-
Principal	8
Assistant Principal	171
Executive Officer	306
Senior Clerk	17
Clerk	238

Calls for applications issued for Departmental, Technical & Industrial Grades and Contractual Positions	
Type of advert	No
Government Gazette	95
Service-wide MPO Circular	94
Department Circular	7

Recommendations to PSC in respect of Departmental/Technical/Industrial Grades and Contractual Positions	
Local Personnel	219
Expatriate Personnel	19

Movement of Staff within same Ministry approved by respective Permanent Secretary	
General Service Grades	25
Departmental Grades	3
Technical Grades	10
Industrial Grades	12

Pension Files processed by the Department	
Departmental, Tech & Industrial Grades	457
General Service Grades	100

Others	
Assimilations	647
Redesignations	482
Renewals of contract	9

(*) The figures shown in the Category 'A' Appointments table from 'Principal Permanent Secretary' to 'Others' are as at 28 July 2008, since recruitment in headship positions was taken over by the Management Support Directorate (OPM).

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS DIRECTORATE

The prime objective of the Employee Relations Directorate (ERD) is to advise ministries and line departments in the development of effective management of the HR function especially with regard to employee relations. In line with this objective, the Directorate implemented the following initiatives.

Teleworking Policy in the Public Administration

Another milestone in Government's policy to promote (i) a more family-friendly working environment; (ii) the Lisbon Agenda for more equality and employment; and (iii) more use of ICT facilities, was the launching of the teleworking policy.

The teleworking arrangement is meant to develop a win-win situation where the Directorate's output is maintained and possibly improved while the employee is supported in combining work and family responsibilities. For these objectives to be reached, however, careful consideration must be given to the job and the teleworker. Particular employees and specific jobs may not be suitable for telework. The teleworking arrangement is entirely voluntary and may not be imposed by the Head nor demanded as of right by the employee.

The formal policy on teleworking which is applicable to employees in the public service and public sector outlines the general principles on which telework should be administered and it also includes guidelines intended to facilitate the implementation of telework as a flexible working arrangement.

Public Service Management Code (PSMC)

The 9th edition of the PSMC was published in electronic format. This edition incorporated all the regulations and policies in the sphere of employee relations and resourcing which came into effect up to 1 June 2008.

In order to bring forward Government's agenda on Better Regulation, the PSMC is being restructured to make it more user-friendly. The re-structuring of the PSMC will be ongoing. It will also continue to be updated. Concurrently different policies, both in the PSMC and other documents, will be issued in the form of user-friendly manuals. In fact, so far, four manuals have been issued. These are *Manual on Family-Friendly measures*, *Manual on allowances payable to public officers*; *Treasury Pensions Manual*, and *Glossary of Organisational and Management terms*.

Discipline

An audit on the application of the Disciplinary Regulations by line departments during 2007 was carried out on the basis of the returns on discipline submitted by line departments. The results were collated in a report entitled *Survey and report on disciplinary cases in the Public Service for 2007*. This report, apart from giving a statistical digest of disciplinary cases initiated in 2007, identifies trends and also compares the 2007 figures with the figures of previous years.

The ERD also continued to extend support to line departments in the management of disciplinary cases. This was done in the following ways:

- issued directives and advice to line departments on the interpretation, management and processing of disciplinary cases;
- regularly monitored the application of the Disciplinary Regulations in line departments and taken the corrective action whenever necessary;
- consulted with the Public Service Commission on the interpretation of a number of provisions of the Disciplinary Regulations; delivered lectures organised by SDO to newly-appointed Clerks and Executive Officers on the *Disciplinary Regulations applicable in the Public Service*;

- organised two seminars for DCSs, HR Managers and officers responsible for the processing of disciplinary cases in line departments during which presentations were made on: (i) the findings of the report for 2007 on discipline; (ii) the salient points of the current Disciplinary Regulations; and (iii) the administrative disciplinary measures utilised by line departments; and
- participated in an HR Forum during which a presentation was made on the draft new handbook on disciplinary procedures which the Department intends to publish to assist officers responsible for the management of disciplinary cases in line departments.

In order to ensure that the police authorities will inform Heads of Department about the criminal proceedings instituted against public officers without undue delay, it was agreed that the following measures be adopted by the police authorities, namely: (i) that the police authorities will inform Heads of Department within 48 hours from when a public officer is arraigned in Court; (ii) the police authorities be given access to HRIMS in order to be able to immediately verify whether the suspected officer is a public officer or not; and (iii) the police authorities will expedite the criminal cases involving public officers so that the prosecution procedures will be concluded as soon as possible.

Conditions of Service

The following conditions of service were introduced:

- headship position appointees and pre-June 2008 appointed Assistant Directors in their initial term will have their position terminated when they are allowed special leave not on grounds of public interest in order to take up employment with institutions, bodies and agencies of the EU and other international organisations. However, these officers will be allowed to retain the grade of Officer in Grade 5, provided that they resume their duties within a period of one year;
- when the period of parental leave does not exceed three months, public officers may give three weeks notice to their Head of Department instead of the previous three months; three months of the total parental leave may be broken up in periods of one month at a time; three months from either the one year parental leave or from the five years career break may be utilised by employees until the child reaches eight years of age; and
- public officers are allowed to donate part of their vacation leave to their colleagues for humanitarian reasons subject to a number of parameters, amongst which is a proviso that a maximum of 40 hours vacation leave may be donated by any officer. The donated vacation leave will be pooled in a vacation leave fund. It will be used by public officers themselves who require the leave personally or to assist members of their family. Moreover, public officers may donate all their vacation leave to members of their family, up to the fourth degree, by consanguinity and affinity if these members are public officers.

Voluntary Organisation (VOs)

A notice was published in the Government Gazette inviting VOs to request the release of public officers to work with them, including the renewal of the release of public officers already working with them. This year's notice specified that to be eligible for such release, VOs must be registered with the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations, as established by the Voluntary Organisations Act. The Commissioner will appoint a liaison officer who will monitor the release, including the ongoing progress of the presented project/activity. The liaison officer will also be the recipient of the reports submitted by VOs upon which the Commissioner will make a recommendation to MPO as to whether the additional period of release should be approved or not.

Following the publication of this notice, 30 applications from VOs requesting the release of a total of 36 officers to work with VOs were received. After evaluating these applications according to the established criteria, 23 public officers were released. 18 of these public officers were already released last year.

Overseas Development Assistance (ODA)

In line with Government's commitment to foster an inclusive society, not only locally but also in a global capacity, last year the Public Service introduced a policy which provided that full-time public officers may be granted special paid leave on grounds of public policy to perform overseas development work in countries that are recipients of ODA.

During the period under review, 15 public officers have benefited from this arrangement and the countries visited were five namely: Brazil, Albania, Guatemala, Ethiopia, and Kenya. The total amount of salaries paid to the officers who were released under this arrangement amount to approximately €50,000.

Treasury Pensions Rights

Two separate legal notices were published declaring MCAST and MEPA as public entities falling under Article 8A of the Pensions Ordinance. By virtue of these legal notices, the service of pensionable public officers who take up permanent employment with these two entities will be reckoned as service with the Public Service. Thus, public officers who take up permanent employment with MCAST will, on retirement, be entitled to a Treasury pension based on the analogous public service substantive grade, capped at Salary Scale 3. Public officers retiring from MEPA will be entitled to a Treasury pension based on their last salary earned from MEPA, also capped at Salary Scale 3.

Other Measures

During the period under review, the following action was taken by the Employee Relations Directorate:

- announced that the notification of absence due to sick leave should be made by employees to their superior at the very start of the working time. Supervisory officers are now responsible to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place for timely notification to be possible. In those areas when it is essential that a replacement is immediately available, supervisory officers may also establish time-limits prior to starting time when such notifications should be made;
- clarified that public officers who are engaged through the PSC, are entitled to all the conditions of service stipulated in the PSMC whether they are engaged on a fixed term or indefinite contract and whether they are working on a part-time or full-time basis;
- invited employees to contribute on a voluntary and once only basis, the sum of €5 from their salary to the Strina Campaign;
- granted paid leave for one year, renewable to a maximum of eight years to an officer who is to be seconded with the Local Councils Association to work with Malta Committee of Regions Representatives;
- encouraged Heads of Department to nominate suitable officers to attend Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) courses organised by the OHS Authority; and
- drew the attention of Heads of Department/Parastatal Organisations that public employees may not be authorised to perform private work, even after official hours, if they are on parental leave, reduced hours or telework as this goes against the very basis as to why these family-friendly measures were granted. Also new requests for permission to perform private work from officers who are on other long term family-friendly measures should not be approved.

Surveys

In order to plan new policies and also furnish information on different aspects of HR management, the following surveys were carried out:

- the number of public officers who availed themselves of donated vacation leave during 2008;
- the number of officers who are on teleworking; and

- the number of child care centres in government departments and public entities that were opened and upgraded since 2004 and the EU funds spent on these projects.

Privatisation of Maltapost

In order to implement the agreement reached with UHM regarding the reversion of a number of public officers to the Public Service following the full privatisation of Maltapost, a Working Committee was set up to carry out an exercise for the absorption of these public officers within the public service structures.

The Working Committee which was composed of representatives from the Employee Relations Directorate, the Resourcing Directorate, the Treasury Division and UHM have concluded the pegging to a salary scale of all the officers who reverted to the Public Service from Maltapost since 2003. The arrears which were due to these officers were issued by the Treasury Division.

Industrial Relations

The Industrial Relations Unit continued to cultivate the good relations that exist between Government as an employer and the various unions representing the employees of the Public Service.

In order to maintain this relationship, the Unit maintained a proactive approach in the management of industrial relations. To facilitate this proactive approach, various meetings were carried out on a regular basis with the unions which meetings proved to be fruitful in curtailing unwarranted escalation of industrial disputes.

During the period under review, the Industrial Relations Unit was involved in the negotiation and successful conclusion of the following:

- Memorandum of Understanding with UHM regarding the Probation class;
- Memorandum of Understanding with UHM regarding the Social Work class;
- Memorandum of Understanding with UHM regarding the Customs class;
- Addendum with UHM regarding the Dental class;
- Memorandum of Understanding with UHM regarding employees on a fixed term contract;
- Interim Agreement with UHM regarding Care Workers;
- Memorandum of Understanding with UHM regarding the Customs Auxiliaries;
- Interim Agreement with UHM regarding the Nursing Aides;
- Agreement with MAM regarding the General Practitioners deployed at Gozo General Hospital; and
- Addendum with MAM regarding the Medical class.

Clause 5.2 of the Collective Agreement for Employees in the Public Service established a conciliatory structure with a view to encourage the prompt and amicable resolution of any potential difference between the Government and the unions. During the period under review, this structure proved beneficial in maintaining and fostering harmonious industrial relations. In this respect, the conciliatory structure facilitated mutual agreement between Government and UHM on the interpretation of the Agreement regarding the Nursing Aides.

The Joint Negotiating Team (JNT) was re-confirmed. The aim of the JNT is to strengthen Government's negotiating position by assisting ministries and line departments in their negotiations with the unions.

The Unit actively participated in the discussions and eventual drawing up of a report entitled *Flexicurity Pathway for Malta?*. The report was discussed in the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development and the final version of this report is to be included in the National Reform Programme.

Statistics

The following tables show the number of cases handled by the Employee Relations Directorate during 2008.

Cases handled by Employee Relations Directorate	
Conditions of Service	1,454
Discipline & Staff Welfare	281
Pensions	102
Total	1,837

Disciplinary cases initiated in 2007 under the 1999 Disciplinary Regulations by line departments	
Description of Punishments	No
Regulation 18 Admonishment	70
Regulation 19 Summary Warning	196
Regulation 20 Minor	114
Regulation 20 Serious	69
Total	449

Cases of Conditions of Service handled	
Deputising Allowance	30
Qualification Allowance	44
Unpaid Leave	111
Cultural Leave	65
Remuneration to Gov Boards & Committees	12
Medical Boards	171
Trade Union Activities	77
Overseas Development Aid	30
VOs	69
Unpaid Leave - EU	72
Re-integration	35
Gender Issues	167
Others	571
Total	1,454

HR DATA & SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE

The functions of the HR Systems and Data Management Directorate for the year under review included the following:

- offered support to line departments who are using the Human Resource Information Management System (HRIMS);
- finalised the preparatory work for the new HR/Payroll system which will replace the present systems;
- implemented the Performance Management Programme (PMP) to improve employee performance against approved output and pre-determined quality standards, while striving to improve the Programme as a whole;
- administration and support of the Public Service Recruitment Portal;
- improved the competence of Human Resource Management through regular fora for Human Resource Managers and Directors of Corporate Services.

Performance Management Programme (PMP)

During the second half of 2008, the Directorate initiated the PMP compliance audits for government employees. As in the previous year, these were carried out in conjunction with the HR Managers of the respective ministries. This year these audits had to be carried out later in the year because of changes in ministerial portfolios after the general elections. This exercise was profitable, yet it confirmed that there are delays in PMP compliance by General Service grades, and these could have been avoided with appropriately drawn PMP reports.

PMP Quality Audits for General Service Grades were also carried out throughout the year. A total of 579 documents were received from the Resourcing Directorate for auditing as part of the promotion/promotion processes. The majority of PMP documents submitted were properly filled. A small percentage had the performance measurements section either empty or not properly filled. The respective supervisors were duly informed and suggestions on how to fill in the document properly were given.

Fora for Directors (Corporate Services) and Human Resources Managers

The HR Systems & Data Management Directorate held one forum for Directors of Corporate Services, which was held on 17 September 2008. The Principal Permanent Secretary spoke on the role of MPO vis-

à-vis Directors of Corporate Services in line ministries. MITTS' CEO and the Desktop Services Programme Manager spoke on the procurement of personal computers under the Desktop Services Programme. Subsequently, the three MPO Directors gave presentations on matters relating to their respective departments.

On the other hand, five Human Resources Managers' fora were held throughout the year. The following were the topics discussed:

- The new SDO Prospectus;
- The new Handbook on Disciplinary Procedures;
- EU Funds and how the Public Service can benefit from such funds;
- Health and Safety at the Workplace;
- Gender Mainstreaming as a tool for Policy Development.

Procurement of new HR/Payroll System

On 5 May, MITTS issued a tender for the Procurement, Maintenance and Support of a Payroll System for the Public Service. Following the issue of the tender, an Adjudication Board was set up. The Board met several times in order to establish which of the two bidders appeared to be the most advantageous. Several meetings were held at MITTS, where both companies made the necessary demonstrations of their systems to the Board members and other MITTS technical personnel. The Project Board selected a preferred bidder, DAKAR Software.

MITTS, Treasury and MPO have conducted testing of the system to ascertain that it is in line with the contents of the tender and that it facilitates the business processes of Treasury, MPO and the whole Public Service. The first testing phase was conducted from the offices of DAKAR Systems during December. Each module was tested, and a dummy payroll, containing circa 50,000 employees was successfully run. Other modules, particularly those related to HR, were also successfully tested. The second phase of testing will take place later on during 2009.

MITTS purchased several file servers on which the new system will be installed. As soon as these are commissioned and there would be the necessary network set up, bandwidth and database testing, and functionality and performance testing will be carried out from the MITTS offices at Blata l-Bajda, and from other four remote sites. If this testing will prove that DAKAR's HR system performs well on the government infrastructure, MITTS will move towards the award of the tender.

A Project Team was also set up with representatives from MITTS, Treasury, the Ministry for Gozo and MPO. This team, whose main objectives are to ensure that the project is moving ahead in the right direction and within the agreed time frames, met several times during the year.

Other Matters/Activities

During the year, Director HR Systems and Data Management participated in three meetings of the Human Resource Working Group (HRWG), which were held in Slovenia, Brussels and Paris. The meetings focused on various subjects ranging from leadership competencies to recruitment, mobility of public officers and the EUPAN network.

The Director also attended the Social Dialogue meeting, with the main point of discussion being *Stress at Work*.

This Directorate, in conjunction with the Management Efficiency Unit (MEU) and the Employment & Training Corporation (ETC) has laid the groundwork for a skills profiling exercise for the Public Service and the wider Public Sector. This office is also liaising with the Office of the CEO, MEU so that

questionnaires for this exercise will be sent and received electronically, thus avoiding the need to key in returns at a later stage.

The popularity of the Government Recruitment Portal has gradually gained ground during the year. Since its launching in June 2007, the system has acquired 162 e-ID users and 318 non-e-ID users who registered and filled their profiles. Around 438 OPM, MPO, departmental and Government Gazette notices have been posted on this site since then. Most of the persons registered applied online through the Portal. During the year, this Directorate continued to offer support and training for users. In fact, 63 persons from various departments were given hands-on training specifically on the back-end of this system.

The Family-Friendly Measures and Sick Leave Utilisation Surveys were completed. Statistical analyses for both surveys were forwarded to the Director, Employee Relations for further analysis. Furthermore, the Directorate carried out another survey regarding disabled persons employed within the Public Service. This survey was also completed and the results were forwarded to the National Commission Persons with Disability (NCPD).

As a representative of MPO on data protection matters, the HR Systems & Data Management Directorate attended a two-day study visit in Dresden, Germany. During this short stay, various institutions were visited and the Data Protection Officers of these institutions described in detail and highlighted the various data protection issues affecting their organisations. This study visit was part of the Twinning Agreement that Malta had with Germany on Data Protection.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

Appendices A to D show:

- A Public Service Workforce (inc. AFM uniformed personnel and public service employees seconded/detailed to authorities/public entities) December 2007/2008;
- B Distribution of public service employees by category and gender as on December 2008;
Average age by grade and gender in the General Service Class as on December 2008;
- C Employees who terminated their employment from the Public Service January-December 2008;
PMP compliance by Employees in the General Service Class during 2008;
- D Recruitment against terminations in the Public Service (1998-2008).

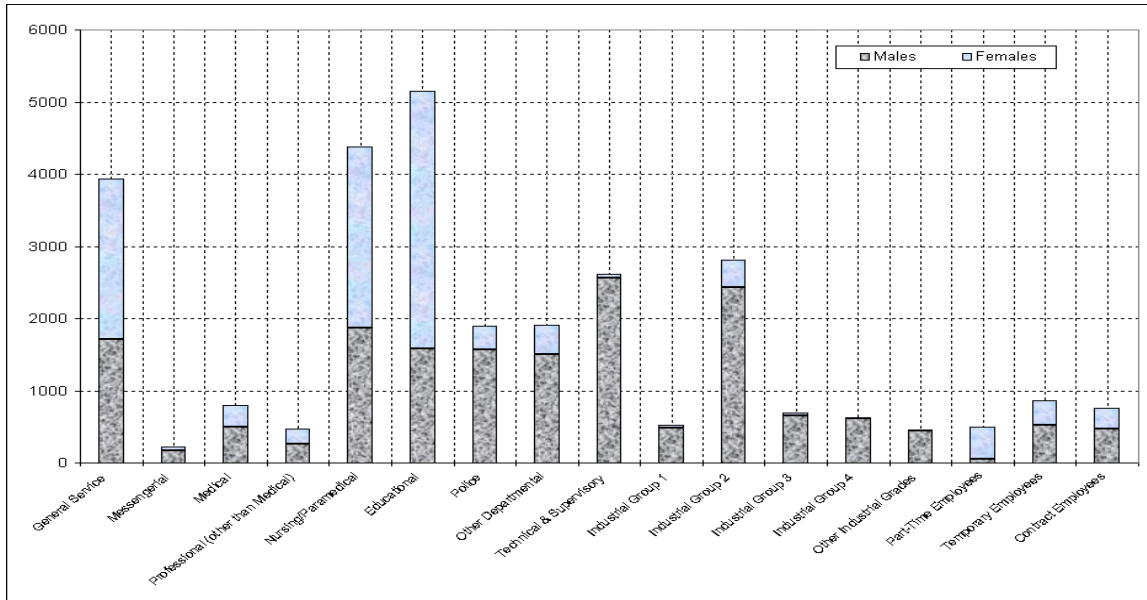
DR GODWIN GRIMA
Principal Permanent Secretary

APPENDIX A

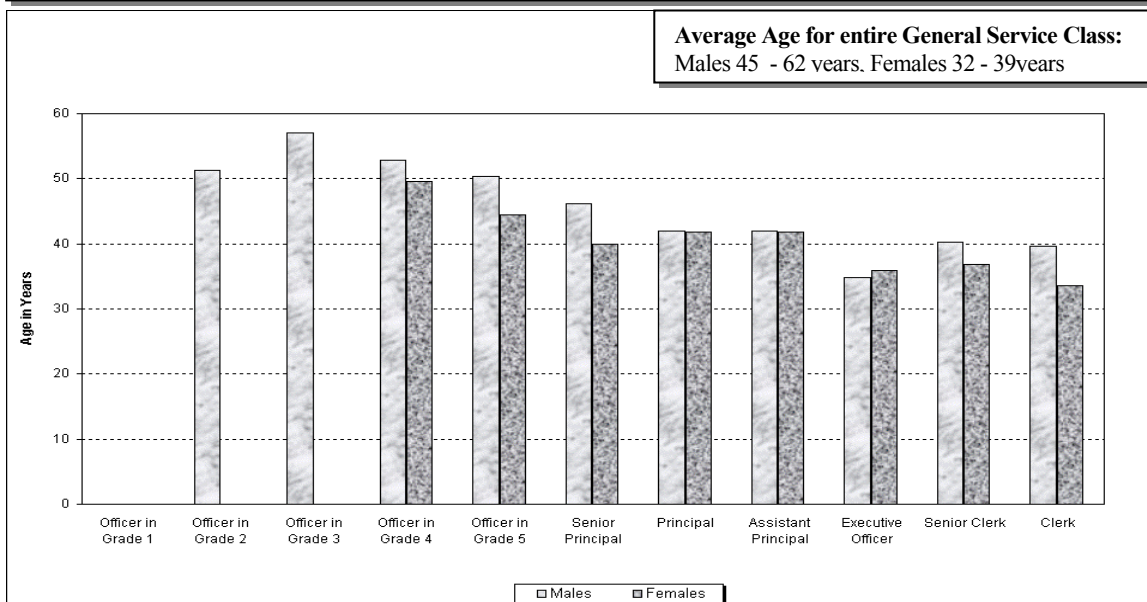
Public Service Workforce (including AFM uniformed personnel and Public Service employees seconded/detailed to authorities/ public entities) December 2007/2008			
Category	Dec 2007	Dec 2008	
Full-time Public Service Employees			
Administrative & Clerical	3,427	3,751	
Messengerial	227	216	
Police Force	1,937	1,888	
Technical	2,105	2,027	
Professional (Other than Medical)	423	422	
Nursing/Paramedical	4,217	4,380	
Medical	781	783	
Educational	5,186	5,153	
Other Departmental Grades	1,785	1,628	
Industrial	<u>4,826</u>	24,914	<u>4,460</u> 24,708
Armed Forces (Uniformed)			
Regular Force	1,495	1,504	
Revenue Security Corps	132	124	
Reserve Force	47	46	
Volunteer Force	<u>31</u>	1,705	<u>24</u> 1,698
Temporary Employees			
Part-Time	315	494	
Casual	1,432	1,284	
On contract (Local and Foreign)	823	847	
Trainees	<u>0</u>	2,570	<u>3</u> 2,628
Public Officers with Authorities/Public Entities		1,783	1,746
GRAND TOTAL	<u>30,972</u>		<u>30,780</u>

APPENDIX B

Distribution of Public Service employees by Category and Gender as on December 2008

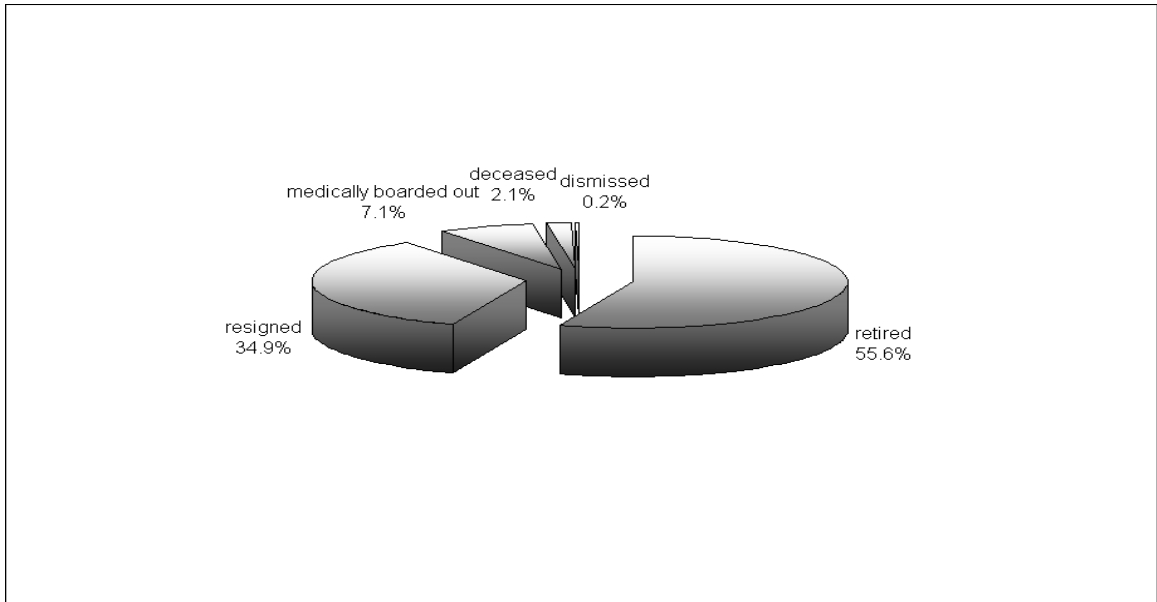


Average age by Grade and Gender in the General Service Class as on December 2008

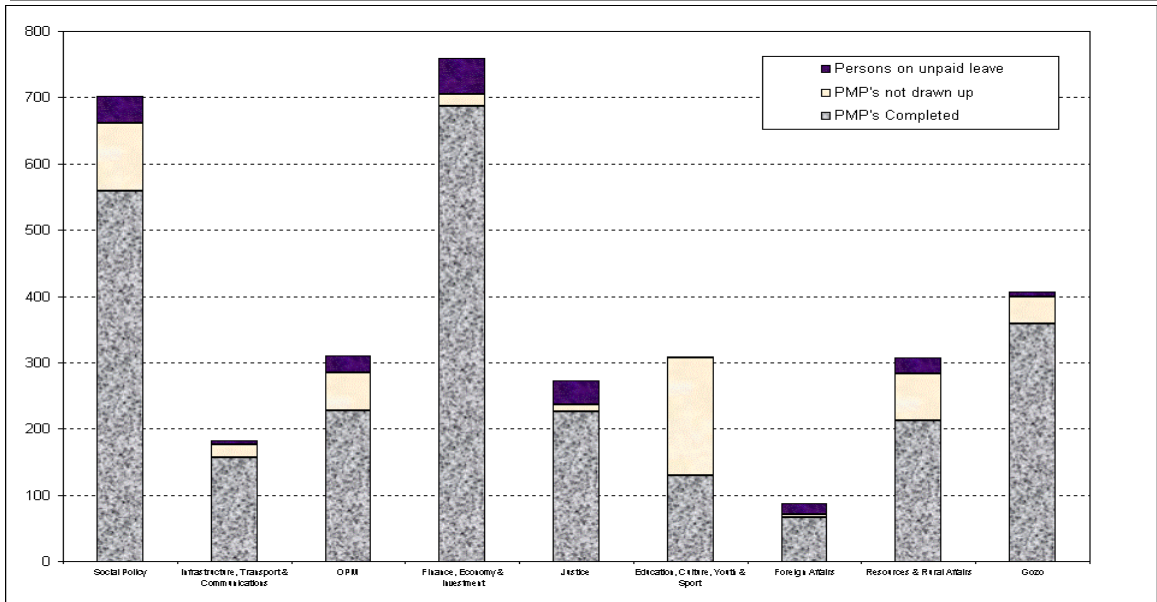


APPENDIX C

**Employees who terminated their employment from the Public Service
January - December 2008**



PMP Compliance by Employees in the General Service Class during 2008



APPENDIX D

Recruitment against terminations in the Public Service (1998-2008)

Armed Forces of Malta

GENERAL

With the Force restructuring of 2006/7 in place and consolidated, in the past twelve months the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) focused on developing its operational capabilities and on enhancing its presence on the international scene. In fact, 2008 saw the AFM participating for the first time in EU-led missions, reactivating its membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace and increasing its efforts to engage neighbouring countries, particularly through the 5+5 Initiative and Blue Border Control.

From a local perspective, the AFM's primary role was that of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Maltese Islands and the safeguard of national interests, a task achieved through constant surveillance on land, in the air and out at sea by both physical and electronic means. With the influx of illegal migrants reaching unprecedented peaks and FRONTEX operations extended to cover the whole migrant season (May to October), considerable strain was exerted on the AFM's operational and logistical capabilities. The AFM was also called upon to support Government in the transition from the Maltese lira to the euro at the beginning of the year, in providing extensive security during the general elections held in March and to provide assistance as required during the public transport strike in July. These major events, together with the routine tasks assigned, have kept the AFM considerably busy throughout the year.

THE ROLES

The AFM is tasked to perform two defence roles:

- *Primary Defence Role:* The AFM is responsible for the external security and integrity of the Maltese Islands in peacetime and in crisis.
- *Secondary Defence Role:* The AFM provides military support in specified areas to the Police Force on a regular basis and to other government departments when required.

The demands placed on the AFM by these defence roles can be broken down into individual mission tasks:

Primary Defence Role

- Maintain territorial integrity (particularly at the Malta International Airport and other sensitive locations);
- Maintain integrity of Maltese waters (physical and electronic surveillance against smuggling, illegal trafficking of immigrants and law-breaking at sea);
- Provide for the limited surveillance of the Maltese airspace;
- Provide a search and rescue service in Malta and its Search and Rescue Region;
- Provide Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) cover;
- Contribute towards international peace and stability by participating in the EU-led Peace Support operations.

Secondary Defence Role

- Provide military assistance to government departments and the civil community;
- Provide civil emergency protection support (explosives, marine pollution, floods and other disasters);
- Provide military aid to the Police and Security Services (internal security, anti-narcotic patrols and vehicles check-points);
- Provide state ceremonial and other public duties.

OPERATIONS

Local

Throughout the year, the AFM conducted a number of operations in fulfilment of its roles. Security with locations of strategic importance has been kept throughout the year. This was augmented on particular occasions as warranted by the situation. The euro changeover implied extra security with commercial bank branches and cash escorts by ground and air assets. The general elections held in March also called on the AFM to provide its services at the Counting Hall in Naxxar and to keep personnel on stand-by in case security measures needed to be stepped up.

Illegal immigration reached unprecedented heights in summer with a total of 2,775 illegal immigrants arriving on Maltese shores throughout the year. FRONTEX operations started in May and came to an end in October. With the influx of such a large number of immigrants, the majority of whom were housed on AFM premises, certain security issues had to be taken into consideration.

Vehicle checkpoints and patrols were conducted throughout the year with the aim of curbing illegal activities with particular emphasis on drug trafficking. Special attention was also devoted to illegal hunting with extensive dusk and dawn patrols in collaboration with the Malta Police.

Law enforcement was also carried out at sea with regard to both illegal hunting and drug trafficking. Of particular note is the operation conducted in conjunction with the Police in December which resulted in the apprehension of around ten kilograms of what was suspected to be cannabis, as well as the extensive patrolling and inspections on the high sea in connection with the blue fin tuna fishing season.

Overseas

2008 was a ground-breaking year as regards operations overseas. In fact, for the first time in its history, the AFM deployed personnel on United Nations and European Union missions. One officer was deployed as part of the Italian contingent on the UN mission in Lebanon. During this deployment, the officer concerned was employed on Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) duties and was to serve as practical experience for his eventual posting on the European Union's Military Staff (EUMS). In fact, the said officer was subsequently posted to the EUMS in Brussels and has taken up his duties within the Crises Response Planning Current Operations Branch.

In late September, one officer and one senior non-commissioned officer were deployed to Gori, Georgia as part of the EU's Monitoring Mission deployed there following the earlier crisis in this country. This constituted the first deployment of AFM personnel on an EU mission. The two are deployed with the Polish contingent in the French area of responsibility. This mission is envisioned to continue throughout 2009. In the last quarter of 2008, the AFM deployed an officer to the Operational Headquarters of Operation ATALANTA, the EU's maritime mission deployed in the Gulf of Aden and off the coasts of Somalia tasked to protect merchant shipping transiting the area from the continuous attacks by pirates. This Operational Headquarters is in Northwood, UK and the deployment is expected to continue well into 2009.

As in previous years, the AFM has maintained its commitment to support the OSCE by providing qualified inspectors to act as assistants during inspections in the Balkan region in support of the Dayton Accords. Throughout 2008, two officers were deployed for this purpose – one in the Republic of Serbia and the other in Montenegro.

Once again, AFM personnel were deployed in the Greek Aegean islands in order to assist the Greek authorities in their efforts to contain the flow of illegal immigrants from the East. AFM personnel were tasked with the manning of observation posts along the coastline in order to report any activity out at sea.

TRAINING

Recruitment

The introduction of a two-scheme system for recruiting soldiers in 2008 proved to be a success. Under this system, those prospective recruits who are in possession of Ordinary Level certificates in Mathematics, Maltese and English language are exempted from sitting for entry examinations (denominated Scheme A). This has shortened considerably the selection process for these candidates and the first intake of 2008, consisting of the 22 recruits who passed the selection process under scheme A, started their basic course in February. Another 98 recruits, who passed the selection process after having applied to join under Scheme B, started their course in August. Therefore, a total of 120 new soldiers had joined the AFM by the end of the year.

In addition, six Officer Cadets terminated their one-year long commissioning course on 5 November and were commissioned as Second Lieutenants. This course included training in various fields that are relevant for prospective Officers. The newly-appointed Second Lieutenants were posted to the various AFM Units and will, eventually, continue their training abroad.

Exercises

For the first time, in 2008 the AFM participated in Exercise PHOENIX EXPRESS, an annual multilateral maritime exercise held in the Central Mediterranean region. The aim of this exercise is to improve interoperability between navies in the region – in particular with regard to law enforcement and interdiction. Malta's participation consisted of a boarding team from Maritime Squadron which operated off a US Navy Aircraft Carrier and two Search and Rescue Co-ordinators from Air Wing. In fact, the search and rescue component in this exercise was introduced thanks to the Maltese co-ordinators. Malta also hosted the Operational Headquarters for this exercise which was stationed at Luqa Barracks and included two AFM officers. The actual exercise took place in Souda Bay, Crete and in the stretch of sea between Crete and Sicily.

This year's edition of Exercise CANALE, a bilateral maritime exercise organised between Malta and Italy and to which all 5+5 Initiative countries are invited, was held in Maltese waters between 30 May and 7 June. The aim of this exercise is to train personnel in joint search and rescue, law enforcement operations at sea and explosive ordnance disposal. This year's participants included all 5+5 member countries with the exception of Libya.

In June, the AFM participated in Exercise SQUALO 2008 which took place in Northern Italy. This exercise is a joint Search and Rescue exercise organised by Italy and with the participation of a number of Mediterranean countries. The AFM participated by means of a Search and Rescue Co-ordinator and a helicopter crew onboard the IMM's AB212 Helicopter stationed in Malta. For the first time, AFM personnel were exposed to mountain rescue training, apart from that carried out at sea.

Exercise TERRA FERMA 2008 was once again organised in two phases. In the first phase, Italian and Maltese troops exercised together in Malta while the second phase consisted of training at the Italian Army training facility in Torre di Nebbia, Italy. The aim of this exercise is to train Italian and Maltese troops in joint peace support operations and to test the interoperability of the two Forces.

This year's training attachment of a Maltese platoon with the Italian Army was held between November and December. The Maltese platoon was attached with the 6th (Alpini) Regiment and the training conducted centred around peace support operations in a cold weather environment.

For the first time, AFM snipers had the opportunity to train with their Italian counterparts from the 9th (Special Forces) Regiment. The training took place in two phases; first at the 9th Regiment's training grounds in Livorno, Italy and the second on Pembroke Ranges in Malta. A total of nine Maltese and four

Italian snipers took part in this training and these were joined by six Italian instructors. The training was deemed to be a success and similar exchanges will be sought for next year.

Education and Trades

As in previous years, in 2008 the AFM sought to further qualify its personnel by improving their education level and providing training in the various trades available within the Force. Lectures in Mathematics, Maltese, English Language and Map Reading continued throughout the 2007/08 scholastic year culminating in the examinations held in June and September. A total of 300 AFM personnel participated in this year's training. All results were published by the end of September.

Several trade testing boards were convened to assess AFM personnel in their proficiency in their respective trade. These were either soldiers who had recently enlisted in the AFM and who were undergoing initial training in their trades (Class III) or seasoned soldiers who were seeking to improve their proficiency and reach instructor level (Class I and II). A total of 27 boards were convened throughout the year for this purpose.

Training Overseas

The AFM has, once again, taken advantage of the opportunities offered by friendly nations to train its personnel in academies and institutions abroad. With the reactivation of the IMET programme, a number of officers and non-commissioned officers were able to attend courses in the United States once again. Leadership and Peace Support Operations training were conducted in the Czech Republic at the British training centre stationed there. Various training opportunities were offered by the Italian Armed Forces with particular emphasis on logistics, engineering, VIP protection and sniping.

Training Local

Besides training its personnel overseas, the AFM seeks continuously to organise courses that help its personnel develop the competencies required for their current job and future advancement. Such courses held in 2008 include the Assistant Drill Instructor Course, the Assistant Physical Fitness Instructor course, Key Point Protection and VIP Escort courses, a course for officers who will be employed as Arms Verification Inspectors in the Balkans and various other courses. Some of these courses were held by the AFM on its own while others were organised with the assistance of the Italian Military Mission in Malta or by mobile training teams which were brought from abroad for this purpose.

Search and Rescue Training Centre

The AFM Search and Rescue Training Centre has been operating for the last three years and offers specialised training in search and rescue operations. The centre is operated by the AFM and funded by the US Coast Guard and organises courses for both Maltese and foreign Search and Rescue operators. In 2008, the Centre organised a number of courses which, apart from Maltese students, included students from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Montenegro, Algeria, Libya and the United Kingdom. The courses offered have been diversified to fit the requirements of participants and further developments are envisioned for 2009.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)

Over the past twelve months, there were significant developments in Malta's involvement in European Defence matters – ESDP in particular. The Malta Quota Post on the EU's Military Staff was taken up for the first time in April. Moreover, the AFM's participation in the EU's missions in Georgia and in the Gulf of Aden demonstrates the commitment Malta has in furthering ESDP. In order to support this effort, a post

of Deputy Military Representative was established at Malta's Permanent Representation to the EU. His job is to assist the Military Representative in ESDP and Partnership for Peace matters.

NATO/Partnership for Peace (PfP)

On 3 April 2008, NATO formally accepted Malta's application to reactivate its participation in Partnership for Peace (PfP). Following the formal acceptance, the process of accreditation involving the "Agreement on the Security of Information with NATO" and associated code of conduct was initiated. Following a certification visit to Malta by the NATO Office of Security in July, Malta was certified to receive and handle NATO/PfP released classified information. Work on the Individual Partnership Programme is in progress.

United Nations

In 2008, Malta participated for the first time in a UN mission. This was achieved with the support of the Italian Ministry of Defence who allowed an AFM officer to be deployed as part of the Italian contingent in Lebanon where he was employed in the Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Branch. The experience gained on this mission was essential for the officer's preparation to take up Malta's quota post on the EU's military staff later on in the year.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The AFM regularly contributes to OSCE by sending qualified personnel as part of inspection teams in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and other confidence building measures undertaken by the this organisation. This year's contribution consisted of two AFM officers participating in such inspections and one officer participating in an inspection visit to Italian military facilities in accordance with the Vienna Document 99. All OSCE-related documentation was duly filled and forwarded.

FINABEL

Following the visit to Malta by the Luxembourg Chief of Defence in December 2007 in his capacity as Chairman of FINABEL, in order to brief the AFM on the benefits and obligations of membership in this organisation, the AFM obtained OPM's approval to seek an observer status in FINABEL with the view of joining as a full member in 2010.

5+5 Defence Initiative

Malta's participation in the 5+5 Defence Initiative goes back to December 2004 when, together with the other Western Mediterranean Littoral Countries, it signed the Declaration of Intent which established this initiative. The Defence Initiative provides a framework for dialogue and co-operation in the field of security between member states. Throughout 2008, the 5+5 was under Libyan presidency and Malta participated in 13 activities that were organised as part of the 2008 Action Plan, between meeting, seminars and training exercises.

LOGISTICS

Projects

Over the past twelve months, a number of projects were terminated and others are still in progress. Significant progress was registered in the Waste Water project undertaken at Lyster Barracks where the barrack's sewer system was linked to the main drainage system. By December, this project was in its very final stages and it is expected to be fully functional in the first few weeks of 2009, providing significant relief both in terms of hygiene and costs. The conversion of the former Boiler House at Luqa Barracks into

a maintenance workshop and the resurfacing of the Other Ranks Car Park have also been terminated and are now fully functional.

On the other hand, works on the Administration Block and Quay at Maritime Squadron and on the project at Pembroke Barracks are still underway. While the Administration Block and the Pembroke Barracks projects are nearing completion, the Quay project has been somewhat hampered by delays and setback from the contractor's side. However, it is now back on track and completion is expected in 2009.

Tenders

Throughout 2008, the AFM issued a total of 18 major tenders, all of which have been adjudicated. These include military clothing, slipping of vessels, disposal of unserviceable vehicles and obsolete stores, and spare parts for the Microwave Link. The specifications for a number of tenders to be issued in 2009 have already been drawn up.

Major Procurement

In 2009, the AFM initiated a total of 108 procurement demands and 14 demands for repairs from overseas amounting to €600,000. This included the procurement of eight new staff cars and six surplus military trucks from the United Kingdom which were shipped to Malta onboard HMS Illustrious. A comparative study has been carried out on the procurement of new or pre-owned helicopters and various avenues have been considered. This study is still underway. The procurement of new in-shore patrol vessels, a maritime patrol aircraft, a secure communications system, as well as the installation of a modern Coast Radio Station were also on the agenda. By the end of the year, these procurement projects were in various stages of development.

ADMINISTRATION AND PERSONNEL

Strength

On 8 January, the directive of compulsory retirement at the age of 55 came into force. This resulted in the retirement of 77 individuals at the same time. There were a number of other discharges on various grounds bringing the total of personnel who were discharged from the AFM in 2008 to 121. Incidentally, this amount was off-set exactly by the number of personnel who joined the AFM in 2008. In fact, 22 and 98 new recruits joined in March and August.

Promotions

During 2008, seven Captains were promoted to Majors, eight Lieutenants were promoted to Captains and six Second Lieutenants were promoted to Lieutenants. As regards Non-Commissioned Officers and Gunners, the process of assessment for promotions was initiated and is due to be completed in early 2009. This exercise saw the introduction of time-promotions which are promotions based on one's length of service. In fact, Gunners with 14 years of service and Lance Bombardiers with 22 years of service will be promoted to the next rank if they satisfy the minimum requirements and if they are recommended for promotion, irrespective of their placing in the order of merit.

In addition, lectures in Military History and International Relations are currently underway for Captains who will be sitting for their Captain to Major promotion examination in June 2009.

Pay and Allowance

As from 1 January 2008, remuneration for duties carried out by AFM personnel on Sundays and public holidays are being paid on a monthly basis as opposed to the previous system where these were paid

quarterly and in arrear. In addition, the pay review announced in the Budget Speech for 2008 was implemented, resulting in better pay conditions for all AFM ranks.

Decorations

Four individuals were awarded the Long & Efficient Service Medal or Clasp on 1 October 2008. In addition, on Republic Day, the AFM's Maritime Squadron was awarded the *Midalja Għall-Qadi tar-Repubblika* by HE the President of Malta in recognition of the service rendered to the Nation and the perilous situations with which they are faced during the performance of their duties.

Sports

In 2008, the AFM became the 131st member of the *Conseil International Du Sport Militaire* (CISM), an international organisation which aims to enhance the relations between military establishments of different countries through sports. It is envisioned that the participation in this organisation will help AFM members develop their sports abilities with the possibility of participating in international sports events. On the local scene, the sports programme for 2008 came to an end in December with the presentation of awards won throughout the year. Preparations for the 2009 programme are well underway.

CEREMONIAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The AFM is also tasked with providing for all the state ceremonial duties that are required. Of particular note in this sense in the last twelve months is the State Funeral given to the late President Emeritus Sir Anthony Mamo, the state and official visits by the Governor General of Australia, the Greek Prime Minister and the President of the Palestinian Authority, and the Opening of Parliament ceremony which was held following the March general elections. In addition, a number of Quarter Guards were mounted at the Presidential Palace in connection with the Presentation of Credentials of various ambassadors. The AFM Band was engaged in various activities which ranged from state occasions to participation in music festivals both locally and abroad.

On 5 October, the AFM organised the AFM Open Day to mark its 38th Anniversary which, this year, coincided with the 35th Anniversary of the *Missione Italiana di Assistenza Tecnico Militare* (MIATM), more commonly known as the Italian Military Mission (IMM), presence in Malta. This year's Open Day was a huge success with thousands of people flocking to Luqa Barracks. Distinguished visitors to the Open Day included the Hon Prime Minister of Malta and the Italian Chief of Defence in representation of the Italian Defence Minister.

Considerable effort was put into enhancing the AFM's public image and in encouraging recruitment. This was done through articles on local newspapers and magazines, reports and interviews on television and radio stations and through school visits and career orientation talks with students in various educational institutions. This effort seems to be paying off as more than 400 applications were distributed following the publication of the last call for applications for recruitment issued towards the end of 2008.

VISITS

In 2008, the AFM hosted a number of distinguished visitors. These included the French and German Ministers for the Interior and the German Minister for European Affairs who visited the AFM during the summer months in connection with the Illegal Migration issue and FRONTEX operations. The Hon Prime Minister visited Maritime Squadron in August where he was briefed about the Squadron's ongoing operations and where he had the chance to address and meet AFM personnel posted thereat. Other important visitors include the Italian Chief of Defence, General Vincenzo Camporini, who visited the AFM on the occasion of the AFM Open Day and to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the *Missione Italiana di Assistenza Tecnico Militare* in Malta, the Assistant Chief of General Staff of the Chinese People's

Liberation Army, Lieutenant General Yang Zhiqi, and United States Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman who were taken on a tour of the Grand Harbour on board one of the AFM Patrol Boats.

CONCLUSION

2008 has surely been a busy year. The AFM's engagement in operations abroad was only made possible through the hard work and commitment of the past years at all levels and is the achievement of a much desired goal. Such participation will not only enhance Malta's reputation on the international scene but also enhance the Maltese soldier's reputation as a professional in his field. The challenges faced locally are equally important. The surveillance of Maltese territory and the provision of search and rescue services at sea have taken an entirely new dimension with the increase in the flow illegal migrants and the issue of fisheries control. The AFM's good relation with foreign Forces has permitted AFM personnel to train in some of the major military institutions that exist and this has provided the Force with a well prepared Officers and NCO corps. Every effort is being made to modernise the AFM's equipment in order to render its operations more effective. No stone is left unturned is a constant effort to ensure funding for this purpose.

The prospects for the next year seem to be of an even busier year with the sustainment of current operations both locally and abroad, the possible development of new missions, the enhancement of the Force both in terms of personnel and equipment and a more active role on the international scene with the presidency of the 5+5 Defence Initiative. The objectives are clearly set and the AFM will ensure their achievement in the best of national interest.

BRIGADIER CARMEL VASSALLO
Commander AFM

Staff Development Organisation

INTRODUCTION

During the year, 302 courses were organised for 4,166 participants. With a schedule of varied training initiatives ranging from basic skills to senior management programmes to seminars and courses for foreign delegates, 2008 saw the department's strategy being adapted to suit an ever-changing environment not least through SDO's role in the setting up of the new Centre for Policy Research and Training.

SDO STRATEGY

Centre for Policy Research and Training

At the beginning of the year under review, SDO had been tasked with the co-ordination of the setting up of a National School of Government for the Maltese Public Service to be called Centre for Policy Research and Training (CPRT). Apart from enhancing the existent SDO training standards, the new CPRT would also consolidate the policy research function together with training and academic development.

SDO Restructuring

Keeping up with current training needs and policy developments, SDO restructured its training sections introducing a Policy and Government training section and widening the remit of the Finance training section to cover all training pertinent to Corporate Services.

ESF Proposal

With a view to taking training to another level, SDO submitted three applications under ESF PA IV:

- Maximising Leadership Potential and Ongoing Public Health Sector Reform;
- Strengthening IMUs and other related functions through Specialist Training Programmes ;
- Developing Core Skills in the Public Service.

In all, the proposals amount to seven million euro.

Launching of Mentoring Programme

February 2008 saw the launching of a Mentoring programme for newly recruited clerks. The idea behind this initiative was to help new clerks become imbued with a positive organisational culture, transmitted to them by experienced public officers who were selected for their aptitude and trained for their role as mentors. The six half-days mentoring skills programme was based on standards developed from UK accredited programmes. The programme was held twice for a total of 29 mentors who in turn were each responsible for about three mentees.

HR Managers Meeting with Foundation for Human Resources Development

An HR practitioners meeting was launched by the FHRD and SDO in which HR managers from the private and public sector met to discuss various common issues. Topics included motivation, training, employee benefits and others.

Accreditation

Meetings with the Malta Qualifications Council were the start of a process leading to fulfilling one of SDO's goals – that of accrediting its courses according to the national framework. A protocol was being drafted and should be ready early in 2009

Assessments

In order to be able to accredit training, the courses need to be in line with certain standards including those related to duration and tutor qualification. The courses would also, possibly, need to be assessed. Assessment is part of SDO's vision for evaluation which is being steadily improved every year. In fact, 2008 ushered in the first assessed courses within the ICT section and assessment has been included as part of the requisites in the 2009 training tender.

CORE TRAINING

Apart from the above initiatives, training has also been improved with attention being given to two important aspects: further customisation of training based on the work schedule of the participant; and focusing training more on ministries and departments rather than individuals.

The first gave rise to programmes such as the Senior Managers workshops while a number of ministries and departments benefited from the second as can be seen below.

Effective Presentation and Managing Meetings and Negotiating Effectively

Two tailor-made training programmes for a group of Social Workers were organised by SDO in conjunction with the Ministry for Social Policy on an initiative of the Director, Social Welfare Standards.

Training Course for Communications Co-ordinators

During June, SDO, in collaboration with the Communications Office in the Office of the Prime Minister, organised a one-day training event targeted at Communications Co-ordinators in government ministries. This programme served as an introduction to the role of a Communications Co-ordinator and to the Public Service in general. It was also intended to impart knowledge and basic tools and skills by providing practical sessions and networking opportunities both for those who were newly appointed to the post as well as those who already had some experience in carrying out this role. 17 Co-ordinators participated in this training event.

Course for Newly-appointed Executive Officers

At the beginning of the year SDO launched a training programme for 218 newly-appointed Executive Officers. This course enabled the participants to enhance their knowledge and acquire skills for effective performance in their new role.

Induction Course for Newly-recruited Clerks

Towards the end of March, the Induction Course for newly-recruited Clerks kicked off. This multi-disciplinary course was attended by 191 officials. During their tour of Castille, which was part of the programme, all the Clerks were welcomed to the Public Service by the Principal Permanent Secretary.

Training Strategy for Malta's Structural Funds Stakeholders

SDO, in collaboration with the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division, designed and circulated a questionnaire amongst all public officials whose work is directly related to the planning or implementation of projects under EU Structural Funds (2004-2006) and/or EU Cohesion Policy (2007 – 2013), including Community Initiatives (Equal and Interred) and the Territorial Co-operation Programmes, to gauge different levels of skills/knowledge on EU Funds. The questionnaire was sent to approximately 500 persons and 350 replies were received. All the data was inputted and final results were extracted by SDO. Data and results were submitted to the Director General, PPCD for a training strategy to be drawn up.

Training Programmes for Maltese Nationals Sitting for the Recruitment Competitions

During the year SDO organised two training programmes to help Maltese participants effectively compete in the recruitment competitions (*Concours*) organised by the European Personnel Selection Office.

In April, SDO organised a one-day training event to help those who were sitting for the *Concours* for the post of Administrators in the field of translation, whilst in December this training event was held to assist those sitting for the post of Linguist Administrators (Conference Interpreters).

The aim of these courses was to help participants broaden their knowledge of the EU, its institutions and policies, while familiarising them with the multiple choice portion of the exam that deals with verbal and numerical reasoning. In both instances these training programmes were open to the public and private sectors.

Induction Course for IMU Officers

An Induction Course for IMU Officers was organised by SDO in collaboration with Management Efficiency Unit (MEU) and Malta Information Technology and Training Services (MITTS). This four-day training programme, targeted at newly-recruited officers forming part of the Information Management Unit within each ministry, was deemed an essential part of the officers' development as it covered all areas outlined in their position description. Through this course these officials were made aware of:

- the units within the public sector that have an important role to play in defining or managing ICT investment and the IT operational environment;
- government ICT (GMICT) standards; protocols; policies and procedures; the project/service management procedures and the corporate government systems that impinge the ICT operational environment within the public sector;
- the various laws and regulations that define the parameters of ICT application, with particular reference to eCommerce, computer misuse and cyber crime;
- the primary technical features and characteristics of the ICT operational environment within the public sector; and
- the necessary skills and management aptitude needed to meet the challenges they would face as a result of the roles, responsibilities and stresses resulting from the occupation of an important middle management post.

An assessment was held at the end of the training programme and all 34 officials obtained high marks.

Training Strategy for Malta's Structural Funds Stakeholders

During 2008, SDO, in collaboration with the PPCD, organised various *Capacity Building on Structural Funds* programmes as part of a five-year training plan titled *Training Strategy for Malta's Structural Funds Stakeholders*.

These included an eight half day *Induction Programme* aimed at new recruits in the grades of Projects Managers, EU Fund Officers and EU Fund Support Officers or equivalent whose duties were related to the management, monitoring and control of Cohesion Policy programmes and projects; *National Procurement and Drafting and Researching and Terms of Reference and Specifications* both targeted at Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 stakeholders and beneficiaries; *Project Management* targeted at beneficiaries implementing projects funded by Operational Programmes I and II; *Introduction to Payment Procedures*; and *Guidelines on the VAT implementing projects financed through EU Structural Funds*.

Accrual Accounting

During the second quarter of 2008, the two-year Accrual Accounting course co-ordinated in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance came to an end, with 44 participants achieving very promising results for their end of term assignment, 11 of whom sat for their 'A' Level Accounting Examination.

Teleworking Training Programme for Teleworkers and Supervisors

Teleworking may be defined as a way of working that involves a considerable proportion of an employee's working time spent away from the department's premises or from where the output is delivered. Teleworking necessitates specific training to ensure that employees and their supervisors understand the implications of teleworking and acquire the relevant skills and competences.

SDO designed and co-ordinated a training programme to prepare both teleworkers as well as supervisors for telework after the publication of OPM Circular 6/2008 regarding teleworking, as well as the teleworking policy in the Public Administration.

Senior Management Workshop (Breakfast Series)

During 2007, SDO had conducted a series of one-to-one questionnaires to a sample of Directors in order to identify specific areas that were to be addressed through training. One of the priority areas identified by the Directors themselves revolved around the Public Administration Bill (mainly Regulation, Quality Standards and Policies). Since, from past experience, it was always somewhat difficult to organise training for senior managers due to their time constraints and other commitments, SDO proposed to address these priority areas through a series of regular breakfast seminars spread throughout the year under review, averaging one session per month.

It was deemed beneficial if these workshops were to be "chaired" by public officials in order to maximise effectiveness through sharing of ideas and networking. These seminars provided participants with a forum to hear and interact with leading speakers on issues which were directly relevant to their work. They also offered an opportunity to meet with senior colleagues on a regular basis.

Leadership Skills Programme for Middle Managers

SDO has started on a series of training programmes on leadership skills targeted as a refresher course for middle managers.

This programme, which is divided in two modules, has been specifically designed to help participants develop further their leadership skills. The first module tackles some intrapersonal skills including leadership, understanding one's communication styles, and emotional intelligence. The second goes into

interpersonal skills such as motivation, building your team, managing people, managing change and handling problems and decision making. The first module runs over three half-days while the second covers two half-days.

With the invitation letter, the participants were sent a *Briefing Manager's Guidelines* which their manager was to discuss with them and which included both a pre-course and a post-course briefing. These guidelines encouraged, among other things, a discussion on issues such as why the participant was attending this particular course and also the setting of personal learning objectives.

After the course the Manager was to seek feedback on the key learning points gained; discuss the action plans the participant had returned with; provide support in terms of resources and coaching to help achieve these plans; agree measures of performance which would demonstrate the application of learning gained during the course; and agree a process for monitoring progress and arrange a follow-up meeting.

Departmental Accounting System

Following close collaboration between SDO, the Government Accounts Directorate at the Treasury and the Armed Forces of Malta, three ad-hoc *Departmental Accounting System (DAS)* courses were co-ordinated by SDO specifically for 38 members of the Armed Forces of Malta.

The New Customer Care Programme

During November, SDO, in collaboration with the Charter Support Unit, co-ordinated an introductory course about the Government's *New Customer Care System* for public officers in government ministries and departments and other officers using the same customer care software, particularly in local councils. Four programmes were held in Malta and one in Gozo.

Management Development

The new programme *Introduction to Planning, Quality and Change* was launched. The primary objective of this programme was to provide public officers with insight into the following areas: service standards, maintaining a productive environment and continuous development, understanding the quality culture and concepts, and carrying out and following up on a basic audit.

Following discussions between the Director at the Plant Health Department and SDO, a tailor-made training programme was organised targeted at all the staff in the Department. The objective of this programme was to help middle management be more effective and enable them to enhance a quality management environment within their organisation.

Another two similar programmes were held for 22 officials coming from various ministries/departments.

A new programme was *Project Management*. The primary objective of this programme was to provide public officers with the necessary skills and tools to effectively manage projects, information regarding the preparation of effective financing proposals, the Logical Framework technique, the methods and instruments to be used at different stages of a project, the benefits of effective project monitoring, evaluations and impact assessment as well as the instruments to be used in these processes.

Other programmes held were *Team Building; Introduction to Planning, Quality and Change; and Practical Benchmarking*.

Continuous Development

The new programme *Developing Assertiveness & Self-Confidence* kicked off in March 2008. This programme provided the 13 participants with guidance to develop their assertiveness skills for a range of

workplace situations. They were also shown techniques to boost their confidence and build their self-esteem.

The first programme *Building Interpersonal Communications Skills in the Workplace* was held in April. The aim of this three half-day programme was to foster an understanding and appreciation of effective interpersonal skills. It addressed self-awareness, effective communication, conflict resolution and teambuilding. It explained basic communication theory as applied to the workplace, and offered ‘real-life’ scenarios that demonstrated the use of effective interpersonal communication.

Another new programme was *Towards a Better Work-Life Balance* whose objective was for participants to gain an understanding of how to achieve a sustainable work-life balance, manage stress, and develop personally and at work in the least abrasive manner and without creating friction with those around them. Two programmes with a total of 33 participants were held.

Following the programme titled *Building a Personal Development Plan*, participants were able to identify their development needs and to draw up a list prioritising these needs. Participants were shown how to produce a personal development plan, how to set objectives and how to measure progress.

Four programmes on *Developing Assertiveness & Self-Confidence* were held in Malta and another one in Gozo.

Other programmes held were *Data Protection; Pre-retirement programme; Using Emotional Intelligence at Work – module 2; and Interpersonal Skills*.

Departmental and Finance Training

The new programme *Improving Customer Relations* was launched. The aim of this course was to enable participants to communicate an attitude of ‘quality service’ and to provide the skills necessary to create the right impression and show customers that they really matter.

Following discussions between SDO and the Director Local Government, five training programmes in *Improving Customer Relations* were held targeted at 69 front desk officers coming from the Department for Local Government and various local councils. One programme was held in Gozo.

During the second quarter of the year, the programme *Secretarial Skills* was launched. The course content included effective communication, telephone skills, organising meetings and managing appointments.

The objectives of the programme *Reception Skills* were to make participants become aware of their role as front desk staff and help them acquire the skills required to give the expected appropriate attention and assistance to customers. One programme was organised specifically for support staff at the Customs Department and another two courses targeting supporting staff at the Law Courts.

Two programmes in *Receptionist Skills* were held for 26 employees (support staff) coming from the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs. These training events were specifically designed and facilitated for these particular participants and included significant input by the MRRA Human Resources Management.

Three programmes in *Registry Services* were held.

EU Training

During the course titled *External Consultations – making your policy-making process receptive to civil society’s concerns*, the 36 participants were made aware of the need to conduct consultations with public and non-public sector entities and were given practical tips on how to go about it.

Thirty government officials participated in the programme *EU Budget Reform 2008/9: its necessity and role in improving the European Union*. During this programme, participants were provided with a background to issues related to the EU budget, an update on developments taking place and indications to the direction being taken by the Union.

The *Introductory Course on the European Union* aimed to provide participants with a practical understanding of how the European Union operates, the Institutions of the EU, the individuals and their roles, how it is financed and how it spends its budgets.

The aim of the programme *How will the new Reform Treaty affect the structure and functioning of European Union Institutions* was to provide participants with an analysis of the institutions of the EU and why their functioning and composition need to be upgraded to reflect the new realities of a Union of 27 Member States. This was linked to the new Reform Treaty and how this will reform the way the EU functions.

At the end of June, a half-day training event in *Procurement* was organised. During this programme participants were introduced to the Government Accounting System and learned about the latest public procurement guidelines and how to prepare EU public tenders.

An intensive course on *National Procurement* spread over six days was organised for government employees working in procurement. During this course participants learnt about the latest public procurement regulations, how to prepare public tenders using updated templates as well as the evaluation and appeals process.

During the second quarter of the year, a course on *Freedom, Security and Justice: how and why is the EU involved* was organised. During this half-day event two separate panels of experts discussed the topics on *Asylum and Immigration and Freedom of Movement*, and *Schengen and Police Co-operation*. The topics enabled participants to learn more about the management of external borders, asylum, immigration of third countries nationals, rights of EU/non-EU nationals, illegal immigration, the Schengen area policies, the Schengen Information System, the free movement of European citizens within the Union, and police co-operation. Most of the 76 participants were from the Malta Police Force, officials from the Customs Department, and the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

IT Training

An introduction to ICT in the Public Service Course

Besides a myriad of IT courses, a new programme titled *Introduction to ICT in the Public Service* was organised by SDO targeted at newly-recruited public officers who were introduced to information security and information management policies as well as the Government Intranet and the customisations in MS Outlook 2003.

Another new IT programme was *MS Word Workshop*. During this workshop participants were given the opportunity to learn about specific functions and features of MS Word. This course was specifically designed for those who needed help with any difficulties that arise when performing certain tasks on this application.

Languages

The circular regarding language training was issued during August inviting applications from government employees to start a language training course in Italian, French, German or Spanish.

EXTERNAL TRAINING

Masters Degrees

A total of 12 applicants were chosen to read a Masters degree in various areas including Public Policy, Finance, HR and others. The total number of applicants interested in the sponsorship exceeded 60 public officers.

DPA

The Institute of Public Administration within the University of Malta launched the Diploma in Public Administration for which about 30 public officers were sponsored to attend.

Seminars Organised by the European Institute of Public Administration, Maastricht

During the year, senior government officials participated in each of the following seminars, one participant per programme, organised by EIPA in Maastricht; *Value for Money Audit*; *Project Cycle Management: a Technical Guide*; *European Decision Making in the Budgetary Field*; *e-Inclusion 2008: Improving sustainability for all in Europe*; *Developing the Project Pipeline for EU Structural Funds*; *ESF Support for Public Administrations and Social Partners 2007-2013*; and *Measuring Customer Care Satisfaction*.

Training Programmes Funded by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs

For the eighth year running, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, through the Institute of Public Administration, Ireland offered the new EU Member States various EU-related training programmes, that is *EU Skills*; *Financial Management and control of Structural Funds*; and *Management and Monitoring of EU-Funded Operational Programmes*. Nine Maltese public officials benefited from these training events which were held in Dublin.

Structural Traineeships within EU Institutions

After a call for structural traineeships with EU institutions, one candidate was selected to attend the December 2008 session. The *stage* was only for 10 days.

THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Representation of SDO in Meetings Abroad

Director SDO participated in a number of meetings abroad, particularly in her capacity as Chairman, Standing Conference of European Public Service Training Agencies (SCEPSTA) and as Malta's representative on the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) Board of Governors. Other meetings were related to the European Public Administration (EUPAN) and EUROMED networks.

Study Visit to Malta by a Group of Government Officials from the Republic of Kyrgyz

Prof Stephen J Avalyan Newton, the team leader of an EU project on *Food Safety* in the Republic of Kyrgyz requested SDO to organise a study visit for 16 senior government officials, including a Deputy Minister, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and the Processing Industry and technical officials.

An intensive participative programme was designed which included forum discussions on subjects as requested by the participants, followed by site visits to the Malta Standards Authority, the Public Health

Laboratory, MITTS Ltd, and Valle del Miele - a meat processing plant, among others. Besides other activities, these senior officials were also taken on a one-day study visit to Gozo.

This programme served as a vision-building visit focusing on the regulatory aspects of standards, agriculture, veterinary services, food safety, trade, consumer affairs and IT. After programme comments by participants were very good while the comment received from the Project Leader, was that this was a “First class job by SDO and all involved.”

Hosting of Cypriot Delegates at SDO

A group of four delegates hailing from various professional and economic spheres from Cyprus visited SDO on the initiative of the Foundation for Human Resources Development. A number of issues related to training and the public service in general were discussed.

SDO PUBLICATIONS

At the beginning of the year, a newly revised and updated *Manual on Staff Development* was launched on the SDO website sdo.gov.mt. This second edition of the manual contains a number of changes which are based on the experience gained by SDO since the launching of the first version in 1999. The new version also makes use of online facilities by allowing the downloading of templates for forms of undertaking and conditions of service, thus facilitating the sponsorship process. Training Review 2006-2007 titled *What's in a Team?* was distributed to top management across the Public Service. It was also sent to various entities and other contacts SDO has with local and foreign training institutions.

CHARTER SUPPORT UNIT (CSU)

INTRODUCTION

During 2008, the Charter Support Unit (CSU) maintained the development process of a number of Quality Service Charters. With regard to maintenance, apart from the co-ordination of the annual Service Standard self-assessment exercise, the Unit also commenced the compliance audit of all QSCs according to an approved strategy. The CSU also managed and maintained the Customer Care System (CCS), servizz.gov.mt, while redeveloping the same system on a web-based platform in liaison with the OPM Chief Information Officer, MITTS, and a private contractor.

Functions and Responsibilities

Quality Service Charters

During the year under review, CSU continued with the development process of new Quality Service Charters, namely for the Department for Social Welfare Standards and St Benedict College, the latter incorporating 13 A, B and C schools. With a view to attaining a better understanding of the services and standards within these entities, and identifying areas of improvement, the Unit consulted both staff and clients. Subsequently, an Assessment Report was issued addressing the respective entities, presenting recommendations for consideration prior to the publication of an eventual Charter. Meetings were also held with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Government Property Division, the Notifications Section within the Public Registry, and the Plant Health Department to assess the potential development of new Quality Service Charters.

Compliance Audits

As established in OPM Circular 10/2006, the Unit was delegated to carry out compliance audits of existing Quality Service Charters. To this effect, the Unit drew up a Compliance Audit strategy which was approved in July. The Audit exercise is being led by the two Programme Managers (Charters) within the Unit, complemented by customer surveys being carried out by another two members of staff within the CSU.

The responsibility for the development and review of QSCs falls under the remit of Directors, Programme Implementation. In this respect, a meeting with all Directors was held in August to outline the salient steps in the compliance audit process the Unit would embark on. Further to the nomination of contact persons for chartered departments, the CSU drafted a Compliance Audit Schedule. During 2008, a number of compliance audits were finalised and audit reports sent to the respective Ministry. Moreover, draft reports have been forwarded to other departments in respect of which the Unit is awaiting feedback. Compliance audits are scheduled to be finalised by the second quarter of 2009.

Service Standards Follow-up

As per OPM Circular 2/2006 and OPM Circular 7/2006, line managers are responsible for the implementation of Service Standards within their respective office, with the overall ministry responsibility falling within the remit of the Programme Implementation Directorates.

In this respect, the CSU oversees the adherence to Service Standards, in liaison with Programme Implementation Directorates within all ministries. During 2008, the CSU finalised the annual assessment exercise in this regard. Subsequently, a consolidated report was drawn up and escalated accordingly.

Moreover, the Unit commenced the assessment exercise for 2008. To facilitate this process, the Unit prepared templates and corresponding checklists to be circulated (and completed) amongst all Programme Implementation Directorates within the Service.

Customer Care System – Management

CSU manages the Customer Care System (www.servizz.gov.mt) and thus is responsible for seeing that all requests submitted via www.servizz.gov.mt are duly investigated by the relative ministry/department/authority/local council. During 2008, requests were submitted at an average rate of 120 a day.

Statistics of CCS requests registered during 2008 are found in Appendix A.

Customer Care System – Redevelopment

During 2008, and ongoing, CSU was involved in the redevelopment of the CCS on a web-enabled platform. This development is intended to highly increase CCS efficiency and to include enhancements that would be of added value to both users and customers.

The redevelopment of the CCS was planned according to two phases. Phase 1 would include the development of the system front-end and back-end while Phase 2 would include the development of the maintenance (reporting) module. Following the drafting of business requirements and the technical document, a working group including a select number of ministry and local council users was set up to evaluate the proposals for the redeveloped CCS. Business requirements and the technical document were then updated to include the working group's proposals, and the development process started. Development and user acceptance testing were scheduled to be finalised by end 2008 according to an agreed Gantt chart.

In conjunction with user acceptance testing, CSU staff populated a number of modules and managers included in the CCS front-end and back-end. Also, training for all users was organised in conjunction with

the SDO and the developer. This training was conducted in November during three sessions for Malta users and one session for Gozo users. In all, 215 CCS users received training. Further hands-on training is being planned.

Communication and Training

Seminars abroad

A member of CSU staff attended a Customer Satisfaction Management *Ad Hoc* Group Meeting held in Slovenia on 3 April. During this meeting, Malta confirmed its position that it welcomes the EU Primer as a non-binding guide. Malta also gave a brief history of Customer Service Improvement initiatives taken by the Malta Public Service, with particular reference to Quality Service Charters. Malta presented a number of case examples related to Staff Surveys, Customer Satisfaction Measurement, Consultation, Complaint Systems and Charters. These case examples will be taken in consideration for eventual inclusion in the EU Primer.

JOANNA GENOVESE
Director (Staff Development)

APPENDIX A

CCS Statistics			
Ministries by Theme	Count	Ministries by Theme	Count
Agriculture & Fisheries	148	Housing & Property	496
Competitiveness & Communication	647	Investment, Industry and IT	35
Consumer Affairs	115	Law & Order	1,006
Culture, Youth & Sports	89	Power and Energy	6,135
Department of Information	9	Requests for Gozo	349
Education	37	Rescue and Security	1
Elderly & Special Needs	12	Resources and Infrastructure	44
Environment	6,615	Status and Registration	28
Family and Social Solidarity	46	Tourism	37
Finance	114	Trade and Industry	26
Government Information	317	Transport	6,644
Health, Elderly & Community Care	1,576	Water & Sewerage	4,835
Local Council			
Local Council	Count	Local Council	Count
Kunsill Lokali Attard	449	Kunsill Lokali Mtarfa	159
Kunsill Lokali Balzan	810	Kunsill Lokali Munxar	32
Kunsill Lokali Birgu	65	Kunsill Lokali Nadur	276
Kunsill Lokali Birkirkara	467	Kunsill Lokali Naxxar	1,093
Kunsill Lokali Birzebbugia	247	Kunsill Lokali Paola	81
Kunsill Lokali Bormla	182	Kunsill Lokali Pembroke	139
Kunsill Lokali Dingli	160	Kunsill Lokali Pieta`	72
Kunsill Lokali Fgura	4,661	Kunsill Lokali Qala	152
Kunsill Lokali Floriana	76	Kunsill Lokali Qormi	604
Kunsill Lokali Fontana	6	Kunsill Lokali Qrendi	516
Kunsill Lokali Ghajnsielem	39	Kunsill Lokali Rabat (Gozo)	186
Kunsill Lokali Gharb	29	Kunsill Lokali Rabat (Malta)	574
Kunsill Lokali Gharghur	169	Kunsill Lokali San Pawl il-Bahar	2,859
Kunsill Lokali Ghasri	37	Kunsill Lokali Safi	64
Kunsill Lokali Ghaxaq	32	Kunsill Lokali San Giljan	272
Kunsill Lokali Gudja	262	Kunsill Lokali San Gwann	339
Kunsill Lokali Gzira	50	Kunsill Lokali San Lawrenz	7
Kunsill Lokali Hamrun	95	Kunsill Lokali Sannat	71
Kunsill Lokali Iklin	333	Kunsill Lokali Santa Lucija	187
Kunsill Lokali Isla	157	Kunsill Lokali Santa Venera	817
Kunsill Lokali Kalkara	79	Kunsill Lokali Siggiewi	607
Kunsill Lokali Kerċem	37	Kunsill Lokali Sliema	302
Kunsill Lokali Kirkop	91	Kunsill Lokali Swieqi	152
Kunsill Lokali Lija	221	Kunsill Lokali Ta' Xbiex	73
Kunsill Lokali Luqa	106	Kunsill Lokali Tarxien	144
Kunsill Lokali Marsa	166	Kunsill Lokali Valletta	205
Kunsill Lokali Marsascula	824	Kunsill Lokali Xaghra	243
Kunsill Lokali Marsaxlokk	188	Kunsill Lokali Xewkija	98
Kunsill Lokali Mdina	23	Kunsill Lokali Xghajra	99
Kunsill Lokali Mellieha	638	Kunsill Lokali Zabbar	1,348
Kunsill Lokali Mgarr	460	Kunsill Lokali Żebbuġ	258
Kunsill Lokali Mosta	403	Kunsill Lokali Żebbuġ (Gozo)	72
Kunsill Lokali Mqabba	612	Kunsill Lokali Żejtun	391
Kunsill Lokali Msida	337	Kunsill Lokali Żurrieq	1,208
Total		26,211	

Management Efficiency Unit

Mission Statement

To facilitate the improvement of government services.

INTRODUCTION

The Management Efficiency Unit, set up in 1997 as a separate organisational entity within OPM, endeavours to be the Public Service's entity of first choice for the sourcing of management consultancy services. In this respect, the MEU seeks to be recognised as a value-based, service-oriented entity that excels in the field of public sector management consultancy and that is able to respond effectively to the changing needs of the wider public sector.

The MEU believes that the adoption of sound practical values is the cornerstone of effective business delivery. In seeking to achieve its mission, the Unit has endeavoured to:

- maintain a professional and participative relationship with its clients;
- ensure that initiatives undertaken are reflective of Government's broader policy objectives;
- honour commitments and take responsibility for advice provided;
- operate within time and budgetary constraints;
- utilise its budget efficiently and effectively;
- deliver a top quality product;
- achieve and maintain a healthy and productive work environment that is based on respect and trust; and
- maintain an adequately resourced knowledge-based organisation through the adoption of a proactive retention, recruitment and development staffing strategy.

SERVICES

To deliver its operational thrust, the Management Efficiency Unit has, through its multi-disciplined base of professionals, offered and provided the following services:

- *Formulation and Implementation of cross-Government Programmes* - where the client's operative thrust is enhanced through strategic policy design and active managerial input in order to develop a speedier and more effective mechanism with which to deliver specific priority initiatives.
- *Policy Development* - where areas of activity are reviewed in order to create and critique alternative stratagems and provide policy makers with the necessary information to set parameters that guide future decisions and courses of action.
- *Strategic Planning and Reviews* - where a thorough analysis of projected deliverables in the medium to long-term is carried out within the context of the mission objective and the realities of operational environment. Proposals on how the strategic vision may be implemented are then developed and presented.
- *Mandate Reviews, Organisational Consolidation and Restructuring* - where a framework is designed to provide the mandate and legal context with which to guide the establishment and management of an entity, or are required to provide parameters for the regulation and control of particular operations.

- *Re-engineering of Business Processes* - where specific operations and the processes necessary for its delivery are examined and enhanced or added upon in order to improve productivity, efficiency and effectiveness.
- *Consultation and Communications Strategies* - where programmes for the effective consultation and communication of a message by a government entity are developed.

AGENDA

During 2008, MEU sought to focus its programme of works in accordance with Government's strategic objectives. This was primarily achieved through the following key thrusts:

- the provision of advice and support to the Principal Permanent Secretary in conceptualising and implementing a programme for the continuous updating and regeneration of the Public Service;
- the development and delivery of national and major projects in line with Government's priorities;
- the increased participation and involvement on strategic boards and committees;
- supporting the delivery of the Public Service Change programme through the delivery of corporate initiatives that will lead to the strengthening of the Public Service's administrative capacity.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2008

As a central agency within the Office of the Prime Minister, MEU was pivotal in the implementation of a number of government-wide initiatives, securing better co-ordination and consultation and to further Malta's involvement in EU decision-making and international affairs. The Unit had a good start during 2008 with the completion of hassle-free implementations of the euro changeover within the wider Public Sector and Schengen projects. The key programmes were:

- completion of Malta's Second National Reform Programme 2008-2010 (Lisbon Strategy);
- continuing implementation of Government's simplification agenda (Better Regulation);
- supporting local councils' reform with detailed studies on the funding formula and the role of the Department for Local Government; and,
- strategic review of the directorates within the core business of the Public Administration.

Therefore, the Unit's major achievements in 2008 include the delivery of national and major projects such as the:

Joined-up Government Initiatives and Policy Co-ordination/Implementation

- Formulating *Malta's Second National Reform Programme (NRP) 2008-2010*. The NRP is one of Government's key strategic documents through which the country's sustainable socio-economic development challenges will be addressed in the medium-term.

MEU was tasked by the Ministry for Finance, the Economy and Investment with the executive co-ordination of the formulation and monitoring the implementation of the National Reform Programme and to report to the Commission on Malta's progress. The Commission in its assessments has repeatedly confirmed that Malta's governance model is commendable. It regards Malta's governance structure as a key strength in its process of reform.

Apart from the Third Annual Progress Report (the final one for the first Lisbon Governance Cycle) and the usual support provided throughout the Lisbon governance cycle, there were three Commission visits in 2008. Moreover, MEU was closely involved in consultation meetings with social partners and the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), internal stakeholder consultation practically with every line ministry's Permanent Secretary on the first NRP's 55 measures and the formulation of the new programme 2008-2010. The Unit regularly and frequently inputs and validates Lisbon-related Malta positions in Council formations.

Better Regulation

- Implementation of the *Action Plan for Simplification* which currently stands at 50% completion. The Better Regulation Unit is also working with the constituted bodies in MCESD to further inputs into simplification and to close the remaining measures of this plan.
- Formulation of a three-year *Better Regulation Plan 2008-2010*. The plan is an integrated roadmap to improve regulatory environment and reduce administrative burden and information obligations on businesses and citizens so as to achieve Malta's 15% administrative burden reduction target by 2012. This plan has been developed in conjunction with the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information and has been recently approved by Cabinet.
- Completion of a *Twinning Light Project on Better Regulation Capacity Building within the Public Sector* with the UK Government (and Northern Ireland). The project deliverables include a manual describing principles and processes for simplification, better policy making and the Standard Cost Model, which is the tool with which the measurement of administrative burden will be measured. The project included training to key ministry personnel and representatives from regulatory authorities.
- Completion of a detailed *ESF application for further capacity building in Better Regulation* under the Capacity Building priority axis.
- Participation in *EU fora – Administrative burden reduction for citizens working group within the EU Public Administration Network*.

Local Councils Reform

- *Completion of a review of the Local Councils Funding Formula*. The current formula was analysed in detail and a simplified funding framework has been put forward for consideration. The report is a key input into the Local Councils Reform and public consultation presently underway.
- Complementary to the above, a *strategic review of the Department for Local Government* was carried out so as to promote more its regulatory aspect.

The Core Business of the Public Administration

- Completion of a *Strategic Review of the Management & Personnel Office, OPM* so as to improve the strategic human resource framework of Government.
- Conclusion of a *Review of Directorates responsible for EU Affairs, Policy Development and Programme Implementation* within line ministries, recommending improvement proposals in the core business of Government within respective line ministries.
- Development of a number of *action papers and recommendations related to implementation of the Public Administration Act* so as to strengthen values, management systems and capacity of the public sector.
- Supporting e-Government initiative by providing input and proposals related to taxonomy of services, eforms and life-events.
- Formulating a programme of works for the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act within the public sector.
- Creation of a *Skills Profiling Manual* for eliciting, recording and analysing skills and competencies within the public administration.
- Planning a holistic skills audit within the public sector.
- *Document and records management* in the public administration in the light of relevant legislation such as Data Protection, the National Archives and the Freedom of Information Acts.
- Proposing an action plan for customer care systems improvement.
- Research into Performance Management Systems.

Other Interventions

- Completion of operational reviews of the Planning & Priorities Co-ordination Division and other directorates within OPM.
- An organisational design for the Ministry for Gozo to achieve its sustainable development goals.
- The business process re-engineering associated with the new Central Registry Act.
- The formulation of Terms of Reference for the setting up of a National Information Security Agency.
- Formulated a programme of works related to MEPA reform to improve efficiency, service delivery, consistency and governance.
- Participation in EU fora – Common Assessment Framework EU Public Administrations Network.
- Supporting healthcare reform.
- Completion of a staff opinion survey at the Government Property Division, MFEI.

Involvement in Strategic Boards and Committees

MEU is present on strategic boards/committees, including:

- the Recruitment and Redeployment Advisory Group;
- MITTS Ltd Board of Directors and Malta Electronic Certification Services Lt Board of Directors;
- the Core Information Technology Advisory Committee;
- the National Commission on Sustainable Development representing OPM;
- the Project Selection Committee for ERDF Funding 2007-2013;
- the pre-selection committee on Senior Appointments within the Public Service; and
- various large adjudication committees.

Organisational Development

- *Training:* MEU staff was given opportunities for training in line with the Unit's needs, utilising as appropriate the programmes offered by SDO, local conferences and events. A member of staff was granted a one-year paid study leave to pursue post-graduate studies in the UK. Another member of staff was granted a secondment as national expert with the Commission. Staff was trained in project management, EU funding opportunities, law, and HR issues. Three members of staff are being supported in their post-graduate part-time studies. Some four members of staff have taken active part on Twinning projects. Two members of staff have attended an International Conference on Better Regulation Trends and Developments.
- *Organisational flexibility:* During 2008, MEU complied with OPM directives to retain flexibility in work schedules and arrangements to balance work with personal life. Being a project-based organisation, MEU is capable of being flexible in its work schedules, particularly when balancing the personal lives of those MEU employees who are either parents or currently pursuing University post-graduate studies without affecting project delivery or quality. Flexibility arrangements such as pro-rated hours of work, flexible working schedules, working from home and job sharing (in the support ranks) have been satisfactorily utilised.
- *Environmental actions:* MEU continues in improving its green initiatives whenever possible. Measures pursued include: timers to automatically switch off lights in the building; reusing envelopes; using MITTS Ltd shuttle bus service; direct credit; teleworking (reduced vehicle use); reusable water dispensers; paper waste separation; battery disposal; control on colour laser printer use and consumables; quasi-non use of fax machine; double page printing; 100% degradable garbage bags; and housekeeping rules through green leader.

JOHN W AQUILINA
 Chief Executive Officer, MEU

Defence Matters Directorate

GENERAL

The Defence Matters Directorate was set up in May 2003 to upgrade, consolidate and formalise the defence function of the OPM, a function which has been in existence almost continuously since 1964. The main responsibilities of the Directorate are:

- to provide objective technical and policy advice as well as timely analysis on all aspects of military matters affecting the Government's defence policy;
- to monitor and analyse the implementation of Cabinet decisions and government policies on defence matters and to report on the extent to which policy and performance targets are met;
- to develop new policy initiatives and concepts on all AFM matters with a view to improving the operational, logistic and administrative effectiveness of the AFM;
- in co-ordination with other stakeholders within OPM, and in liaison with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conduct defence diplomacy, to manage bilateral as well as multilateral defence relations with other countries and international organisations.

European Security and Defence Policy

Ongoing Monitoring of Development in the ESDP

This Directorate continuously monitored developments in the ESDP. The average of EU papers and reports that were staffed during 2008 were 13 documents per working day.

A number of exchanges were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs, Veterinary Affairs and Fisheries Department within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, AFM, the Principal Permanent Secretary and with Malta's Permanent Representation in Brussels in relation to the position to be adopted by Malta on various formal EU documents. Major exchanges concerned:

- the European Security Strategy review;
- the ATHENA (mechanism of the financing of common costs of EU military operations) review – defined Malta's national position and ensured that items eligible for common costs would be kept as low as possible;
- Defence Directives – ongoing communication with MJHA, MFEI to ensure new directive does not compromise national security interests and flexibility in defence procurement;
- European Defence Agency Work Programme and Budget for 2009 – minimise the increase of costs to Malta and at the same time ensuring access to capability development efforts of interest to Malta;
- the Defence Directorate continuously monitored the situation in Somalia and the EU missions (EU NAVCO and EU NAVFOR ATALANTA) in the seas off the Horn of Africa through the various periodical reports from the mission and through a continuous monitoring of international news websites. Bilateral discussions were also conducted with a number of countries in view of the possibility of sending a Boarding team to participate in EU NAVFOR ATALANTA.

The Directorate ensured that Malta's interests as an EU Member State were properly safeguarded, particularly by ensuring appropriate wording in texts defining the relationship between the EU and NATO in ESDP matters.

EU Operations

This Directorate has monitored closely and provided input to work undertaken within the different Council bodies leading to the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia and the EU naval mission off Somalia's coast. Prime Minister's approval was also obtained for the participation of Malta with two personnel from the AFM in EUMM Georgia and one officer in EUNAVFOR ATALANTA off the coast of Somalia. One AFM officer was also sent on a 3-month mission with UNFIL Lebanon. Malta also followed the EU Mission in Chad and the Central African Republic, and following Prime Minister's approval paid €15,000 over and above its share of common costs towards a humanitarian project as part of the same operation.

Participation in EU Defence Fora

Director Defence Matters represented Malta at the various meetings of Defence Policy Directors as well as the Meeting of EU Defence Ministers. Items discussed included the current operations and missions, capability projects, European Defence and Citizens, and the European Security Strategy amongst other things.

Director Defence Matters attended the meetings of EDA's Steering Board in Ministerial Formation, the meeting of European Defence Ministers and the joint GAERC meeting. All meetings were held back-to-back in Brussels. Items discussed in the GAERC meeting included the European Defence Industry (based on the Deauville meeting), Maritime Surveillance, European Multinational forces, and evacuation of nationals.

In April, Director Defence Matters accompanied the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister to the Euro Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) luncheon held during the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania.

The Director also held several meetings with ambassadors, resident and visiting defence attachés to discuss bilateral defence matters and to enhance the AFM's international co-operation as well as to seek military assistance and training opportunities for the AFM.

Other meetings include:

- EDA course on the Intelligence Understanding the Mission Environment, attended by Colonel David Attard, AFM.
- EDA Steering Board in National Armament Directors and Research and Technology Directors, held in April and attended by Director Defence, and an EDA Steering Board in NADs formation in October attended by Assistant Director.
- Meetings at EUSEC & MJHA respectively with representatives of all the stakeholders interested in the Defence Procurement Package being launched by the EU, attended by Director Defence.
- EDA's preparatory meeting in advance of the meeting of European Defence Ministers, attended by Director Defence.
- EDA Steering Board in Ministerial Formations, the meeting of European Defence Ministers and the joint GAERC meeting. All meetings were held back-to-back held in May and November in Brussels, attended by Director Defence
- EDA Special Preparatory Committee Meetings held in September Brussels.
- EU Security Policy Directors' Meetings attended by Assistant Director Defence.
- EU Defence Policy Directors' Meetings attended by Director Defence.
- 5+5 Defence Initiative Steering Committee Meeting held in Tripoli attended by a Maltese delegation, led by Director Defence.
- EU Commission forum on the restructuring of the Defence Industry, attended by Assistant Director Defence.
- Participated in the meetings of the Malta-Libya Joint Commission.
- Meeting to discuss the bilateral agreement between the AFM and the *Guardia di Finanza*.

Post of ESDP/CFSP Attaché and Deputy Mil Rep to the EUMC

On 21 January, interviews were held for the four applicants who applied for the post of ESDP/CFSP attaché based in Malta's Permanent representation to the EU in Brussels. The selected officer assumed the position in February.

With the reactivation of Malta's membership in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) earlier this year, the need was felt to create the post of Deputy Military Representative who would focus on Partnership for Peace (PfP) matters and assist the ESDP/CFSP attaché. Following an internal call for applications for the selection of a Deputy Military Representative in October 2008, interviews were then held for the five applicants who applied for the post and the selected officer assumed his duties in December.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

In view of the ongoing work by the EU Commission and the European Defence Agency to achieve the insertion of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in the regulated airspace, a meeting was held at OPM bringing together various national stakeholders including the AFM, Department of Civil Aviation, Malta Air Traffic Services as well as respective ministries: MITC and MFEL. An update was given about the status of the initiative, and a discussion ensued on how each entity could contribute its expertise towards a national position on the different work-strands involved.

Contributions to EU Agencies and ESDP Related Expenses

In 2008 Malta paid its share of common costs of EU institutions as follows:

- EU Satellite Centre Operational Budget + SATCEN Pensions Budget - €4,632
- EDA Budget - €7,982
- Common costs for ESDP Operations (Athena) - €41,556
- In addition, Malta also made a one-off payment of €15,000, being a voluntary contribution towards a CIMIC project as part of the ESDP operation in CHAD/CAR.

Malta's Participation in the 5+5 Defence Initiative

During 2008, the Defence Matters Directorate liaised between the AFM's ESDP and International Relations Branch and 5+5 Defence Point of Contacts (PoCs) to ensure the best participation by the AFM in the 5+5 Defence Initiative.

Malta participated in both Steering Committees of the 5+5 Defence Initiative held in Tripoli, the first was held in March and the other in December 2009. Malta will hold the Presidency of the rotating 5+5 Defence Initiative. To this end, the Defence Matters Directorate and the AFM set up a working group to prepare for the presidency. As part of this Presidency, Malta will be organising and hosting two Steering Committee meetings, one meeting for the 5+5 Chiefs of Navy, a Search and Rescue Workshop, and a Ministerial Conference.

Logistical preparations were in full swing by the end of 2008. Italy, which held the Presidency in 2007, offered to share its expertise and information with Malta. For this purpose, between 24 and 26 November, Commander Raffaele Cerrettini, the Italian point of contact for the 5+5 Defence Initiative visited Malta to share the experience of the Italian 5+5 Presidency. During this visit, a delegation headed by Director Defence discussed in detail with Commander Cerrettini the administrative and logistical preparations required for the Presidency.

Exercise Canale 2008

As agreed during the 5+5 Defence Initiative Ministerial meeting that was held in Cagliari, in December 2007 and in accordance with the 2008 Action Plan, Exercise CANALE 2008, an aero-maritime Italo-Maltese exercise within the 5+5 Initiative, was this year held in Malta between 30 May and 7 June. The exercise Main Planning Conference was held in Rome between 5 and 6 March 2008. Malta and Italy had agreed during this conference that representatives from the 5+5 member states were invited to participate in the second day of the MPC.

Exercise Canale was this year hosted by the AFM between 30 May and 7 June. Exercise Canale is one of the confidence building measures aimed at enhancing dialogue between the North Western and South Western Mediterranean countries. Besides Maltese and Italian naval elements, France and Spain also took part in this annual bilateral exercise by sending naval and air assets. Similar to 2007, participation in Exercise Canale was limited to countries from 5+5 Defence Initiative. Nations from the 5+5 members took part in this exercise with the exception of Libya. The Defence Directorate was involved in the drafting of the Prime Minister's speaking points for the VIP day. The Prime Minister observed the exercise and addressed the local press on board the Italian Naval ship ITS ALISEO during the VIP day that was held on 6 June.

Partnership for Peace

In March, the Cabinet of Ministers agreed to the Prime Minister's proposal for Malta to reactivate its PfP membership. The Directorate was involved in preparing documentation for ministers and for the press following this decision. The Directorate also prepared position papers for all Maltese ambassadors to assist them in tackling questions they may be asked on this issue, and made all the necessary preparations for the Prime Minister's participation in the NATO Summit held in Bucharest on 2 – 4 April 2008.

During the year, the Directorate was again involved in preparing briefs and position papers relating to relations with NATO/PfP for bilateral meetings and to assist in tackling questions that might be asked on the issue. The Directorate also liaised with MFA for the final draft of the PfP Presentation Document and Individual Partnership Programme to be presented to Cabinet and subsequently to the Foreign and European Affairs Committee.

The Director Defence Matters also liaised between NATO's Office of Security and various Malta Government bodies to ensure the successful re-certification of Malta's Security Agreement with NATO relating to exchange of classified documentation.

Director Defence Matters represented Malta in the monthly meetings of the EAPC Ambassador's meeting held at NATO HQ in Brussels.

A pan-ministerial structure was approved for Malta's utilisation of the NATO ePRIME website.

Bluemed

The Directorate participated in a number of meetings hosted by MITC concerning the Bluemed initiative, whereby Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Egypt and Tunisia are seeking to implement the Single European Sky in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean. This office helped identify potential sovereignty shortfalls in the proposals emerging from the feasibility study.

Bilateral Visits

During the year, Defence Directorate staff participated in a number of meetings with representatives from foreign missions accredited to Malta and attended several meetings, both locally and abroad, on defence related issues. Among these meetings were:

- meetings on UN sanctions attended by Director Defence as a member of the Sanctions Monitoring Committee;
- participation at a PSI Conference organised by the US Department of State, in Washington DC;
- an IMO meeting on Search and Rescue, COMSAR;
- meetings with officials from the embassies of Egypt, Spain, the United States and France;
- bilateral talks with delegations from Libya, the Italian Ministry of Defence, and China;
- participation in a meeting of the Malta-Libya Joint Commission;
- meetings with officials from various government ministries and departments; and
- courtesy visits by defence attaches representing various countries.

Visits by Director Defence Matters to AFM Units

Gozo Troop

The Director Defence Matters, who was accompanied by the AFM liaison officer at OPM, visited Gozo Troop at the Qortin base Gozo. Primarily, the aim of this visit was linked with the explosives store located thereat. The Prime Minister directed this Office to study the situation with the aim of forwarding possible courses of actions geared towards reducing risk for both AFM personnel and the public. Following this visit, Director Defence together with Commander AFM submitted a proposal for the Prime Minister's consideration.

Familiarisation Visits

During the months of November and December, Director Defence visited almost all AFM Units namely Air Wing, Maritime Squadron, 3rd and 4th Regiments. Primarily the aim of these visits was to familiarise Directorate staff with the various roles and capabilities of AFM Units. Moreover, such visits enable Director Defence to obtain first-hand information from the persons on the ground and to be in a better position to facilitate the implementation of new measures.

Visit by Hon Prime Minister to Maritime Squadron

In connection with the Prime Minister's visit to Maritime Squadron on 6 August, the Defence Directorate was tasked to prepare speaking notes for the occasion. This Office highlighted personal qualities such as selfless service, courage and the high level of motivation that is usually displayed by the members of Maritime Squadron when carrying out their duties, which are usually performed in adverse conditions. Director Defence and the AFM liaison officer accompanied the Prime Minister during this visit.

Arabic Language Module for EDA Pilot Project

Following the successful organisation in Malta of the Arabic language module as part of the Intelligence Understanding of the Mission Environment (Middle East) course in 2007, efforts are underway for holding a similar course in 2009. A number of meetings were held with the AFM and the Department of Arabic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Malta, the Department of Education as well as with the EDA on the logistics for such a course.

Monitoring & Facilitating the implementation of Policies relating to Irregular Immigration

Director Defence Matters liaised between Detention Services and MJHA concerning the implementation of a number of projects and policies, including EU-funded projects.

Review of Security Measures at OPM

In view of the process of certifying a security agreement with NATO, this Office has been tasked to review the security measures at Castille. The first draft of the bomb threat procedure has been completed and this Directorate is currently working together with the Department of Corporate Services in OPM on drafting of Fire Evacuation Procedures.

Defence Directive

A number of exchanges were made with MJHA, MSS, and MCMP on the European Commission's proposals on defence procurement directives. Some areas of concern were identified and the national position consolidated in this way.

Fisheries Patrols

During the period under review, meetings were held between the AFM and the Fisheries Department, with the participation of the Defence Director, to discuss the patrols the AFM will conduct on behalf of the Fisheries department to prevent illegal fishing of Blue Fin Tuna.

Legislative and Policy Changes

In co-ordination with the AFM, the Defence Matters Directorate issued a number of legal notices throughout 2008 to amend/update the AFM legislation and policies. Such notices include one to amend subsidiary legislation of the AFM to remove and reference to 'boy leaders'. Policy changes to update the recruitment into the AFM included one to remove any reference to defective colour perception as a criterion which makes a person ineligible to be engaged as an Officer Cadet. Another was to raise the maximum age for recruitment as an Officer Cadet from 23 years of age to 25 years and as a Gunner/Bandsman to 30 years of age. Another amendment to the recruitment procedure was to recruit Gunners in the AFM under Scheme A or Scheme B depending on the academic qualifications of applicants. A policy of time promotions for soldiers in the AFM under certain conditions was also introduced.

EU Peer Evaluation Visit to Malta on Anti Terrorism Preparedness

The Malta Security Service co-ordinated the preparations in connection with an EU peer evaluation visit on anti terrorism preparedness by Malta. The AFM Liaison Officer delivered a presentation on 18 September at HQ AFM explaining the role of the Defence Matters Directorate when establishing the Government Contingency Centre (GCC) in response to a major terrorist incident in Malta. Prior to the visit this Office submitted recommendations for the reactivation of the GCC.

Assistance to MFA in Training Security Guards

Following a request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the AFM liaison officer held meetings with HQ AFM Staff Officers and MFA in drafting the training requirements for the training of Security Guards, who will be employed by MFA to perform security duties at Palazzo Parisio.

Landing and Over Flights of Foreign State

Following the direction imparted in November 2005, this Directorate continued to make recommendations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about requests from foreign countries who ask for permission to use Maltese airspace for their aircraft, either for landing or over flights.

AFM ISSUES

- *AFM Recruits Passing Out Parade:* On 27 November, a passing out parade was held at Luqa Barracks for 123 recruits who were confirmed in the rank of Gunner after they were recruited from two different schemes. The Prime Minister who was the guest of honour on this occasion delivered a speech during which he conveyed a message of appreciation to the AFM and congratulated the newly appointed Gunnery and Lieutenants on their successful completion of their course. This office was involved in drafting the Prime Minister's speech
- *FRONTEX SNE:* The Directorate requested the AFM to issue an internal call for applications amongst AFM officers in the rank of Major to seek a candidate for a FRONTEX SNE post in the Sea Border Sector of the Operations Unit. Interviews were held at HQFM on 28 November and a suitable applicant was nominated for the post.
- *Retirement of AFM Personnel at the age of 55 years:* Defence Matters continued to closely monitor the retirement scheme of AFM personnel reaching the age of 55. Meetings with AFM, the office of the Attorney General, and MPO eventually led to the issue of a legal notice specifying that all AFM personnel reaching the age of 55 by 8 January 2008 would be terminated from military duty. For those members of the AFM who had not completed 25 years of service, the option to complete the outstanding years with Detention Service was offered.
- *AFM Salary Review:* As announced in the 2008 Budget speech, the present salaries and conditions of service of all ranks in the AFM have been reviewed. The new structure came into effect on 1 January 2008 and the Directorate liaised with the AFM Administration Branch and the Ministry of Finance to ensure the correct computation of pensions due to AFM personnel who were forced to retire at the age of 55 as of 8 January 2008.
- *AFM Travel:* The Directorate continued to monitor and approve as necessary all requests for AFM travel overseas.
- *AFM Tenders:* The Directorate continued to monitor and approve as necessary all requests for the issue and/or awarding of AFM tenders.
- *OSCE Communications Network:* During the period under review this Office ensured the effective monitoring of the OSCE Communications Network and the timely return of documents which member states are obliged to compile and submit to OSCE from time to time.
- *Parliamentary Questions:* During the period under review, this Office in liaison with HQ AFM in the processing of parliamentary questions pertaining to AFM matters and forwarded draft replies to Permanent Secretary OPM for necessary approval.
- *Search and Rescue Training Centre:* In November, Director Defence attended the graduation ceremony of the AFM Search and Rescue Training Centre. The Search and Rescue Training Centre (SARTC) is modelled on the USCG SAR School and aims to enhance co-operation and interoperability in SAR. The Centre offers training to international students and since 2006, has successfully trained operatives from over 33 countries.

TRAINING OF DEFENCE DIRECTORATE STAFF

The AFM's liaison officer participated in the 6th International Euro-Mediterranean Session *Security issues in tomorrow's Mediterranean: a union between the two shores?* in Paris between 13 and 20 February. The topics chosen for discussion and reflection concerned the Mediterranean Union Project in particular, as well as security issues regarding development, the environment and the economy. Furthermore, in the context of this topic, lectures were delivered on related subjects such as the 5+5 Defence Initiative and the European Security and Defence Policy. A presentation was also delivered on the French perspectives for the next EU presidency. The seminar proved to be very beneficial and informative since the topics that were discussed were related to the 5+5 work carried out by the AFM liaison officer.

Assistant Director together with the Principal Officer attended the NATO IMS/PCC Partner Staff Officers Familiarisation Programme – a two-week course held in Brussels between 15 and 25 September 2008. This course was divided in two modules, one module was held at NATO HQ in Brussels whilst the other was held at SHAPE Military Compound in Mons, Belgium. The programme provided a detailed overview of PfP issues. Subjects covered included PfP Tools, NATO's Standardisation and Interoperability, PfP Trust Fund Policy, NATO's Policy on Arms Control, TEEP, ePRIME, and EAPWP/IPP Procedure and Developments amongst other things. The course contents were essential for these two officers, since they will be dealing with PfP issues in their daily work, after Malta reactivated its' partnership programme with NATO in April this year.

The AFM liaison officer successfully completed the Arms Verification Course at Luqa Barracks, which was conducted by a group of Italian armed forces' instructors from the Joint Arms Verification Centre. AFM Officers are required to participate in OSCE (Vienna Document) Inspections, as Assistant Weapons Inspectors. The course included historical overview of the OSCE Vienna Document, the protocol of inspections as well as military equipment/weapons recognition sessions and post-inspection evaluation procedures.

Other staff in the office attended other courses such as those for the H&S Representative, Leadership Skills for Principals and a course on Stress and Workplace Well-being.

VANESSA FRAZIER
Director (Defence Matters)

Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division

INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the main functions of the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division (PPCD) were:

- to act as the National Aid Co-ordinator in respect of the EU Transition Facility and the accession-related bilateral technical assistance made available to Malta;
- to act as Managing Authority for the Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund 2004 - 2006;
- to act as Managing Authority for Community Initiative EQUAL and as National Contact Point for Community Initiative Interreg III;
- to act as co-ordinating body of the EU Solidarity Fund grant;
- to act as Managing Authority for the European Globalisation Fund;
- to act as Managing Authority for the Cohesion Policy Funds 2007 – 2013;
- to steer the project selection process for Operational Programmes I and II (2007 – 2013);
- to close the fifth Italo-Maltese Financial Protocol;
- to act as the National Focal Point (NFP) for the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms;
- to act as the National Co-ordination Unit (NCU) for the Swiss-Maltese Cooperation Programme;
- the strengthening of the Division's administrative capacity in view of the 2007-2013 Cohesion Policy financial perspective.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Transition Facility

Projects under the 2005 programme (total value €6,217,125 [Malta €317,125, EU €5.90 million]) continued to be progressively implemented through to their conclusion. The contract execution deadline expired on 15 December 2008 and by end of year 81.5% of EU funds contracted had been disbursed.

Meanwhile, projects under the 2006 programme (total value €3,688,500 [Malta €373,500, EU €3.315 million]) also continued their implementation. The contracting deadline expired on 15 December 2008 and by that date 93.89% of the EU funds allocated had been contracted.

Individual projects are given publicity – mostly in the form of press conferences or newspaper articles – during the course of their implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Pre-accession and Transition Facility Programmes

The first round of Monitoring Sub-Committee (MSC) for the year was held in March 2008. At the MSC the implementation progress of each project was reviewed and discussed. The 11th Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) was executed by written procedure during May 2008. The second round of MSC for 2008 took place in September and this was followed by the 12th JMC which was carried out by written procedure in November 2008.

For each JMC a detailed Implementation Status Report was drawn up by PPCD. Independent evaluation (co-ordinated by PPCD) of the projects being monitored was carried out and reports were presented to the authorities in April 2008 and November 2008 in time for the two JMCs mentioned above.

Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund 2004 - 2006

Single Programming Document

In 2008, the implementation and monitoring of Malta's Single Programming Document (SPD) entered its final year. As in previous years, PPCD continued providing the secretarial support to the Monitoring Committee; participating in the Sectoral Monitoring Sub-Committees; the drafting and submission to the European Commission of the Annual Implementation Report; the first level of control of all projects as well as preparation of requests for interim payments to the European Commission and the ongoing promotion of the Structural Funds programme.

The emphasis during the year was on the continued implementation of the projects co-financed through the various Measures of the SPD. A good number of projects were completed in 2008 while others continued to progress steadily throughout the reporting period.

Monitoring Committee meetings for Structural Funds were held in February, May and October 2008. The Annual Implementation Report was presented to the Monitoring Committees in May and submitted formally to the European Commission in June. Furthermore, an annual meeting on Structural Funds took place in December 2008. During this meeting the European Commission announced that in view of the global economic downturn, it was granting the possibility for Member States to request a six-month extension. Malta submitted the request within the stipulated deadline with the relevant justification.

Three payment requests for reimbursement of eligible expenditure under the SPD were made to the Commission: in March, June and September 2008. In 2008 alone, a total of €11,452,137.99 (EU share) was verified as part of the reimbursement process.

The Division continued to undertake the implementation of Article 4 of EC Regulation 438/2001 relating to management and control systems in order to verify the delivery of the supplies and services co-financed by the Structural Funds. A total of 47 on-the-spot checks were executed in 2008 on Final Beneficiaries. The Managing Authority also accompanied Final Beneficiaries administering aid schemes to 14 checks on Final Recipients (enterprises). In addition, two documentary spot checks were executed on the Intermediate Bodies for EAGGF and FIFG.

The Managing Authority finalised the audit report following the Commission audit on the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund held in November 2007.

PPCD participated in a number of evaluations that were carried out during 2008 as part of the European Commission's ex-post evaluation of the 2000-2006 programmes in all Member States. In addition, the Division also liaised with the National Audit Office on the audit exercise undertaken on ERDF projects implemented under Measure 1.1 of the SPD.

To mark the closure of the programme, a one-week outdoor exhibition was mounted during October in Great Siege Square, Valletta. A similar exhibition was also held in November at the Ministry for Gozo, Victoria. A companion pictorial booklet showcasing a broad selection of projects implemented under the 2004-2006 Structural Funds Programme was also produced for distribution. As part of the closure process, PPCD also organised a Closure Conference in November. The aim of the conference was to draw lessons from the experience of those involved in the implementation of the first programme period for Malta and to improve the implementation system for the 2007-2013 period.

Cohesion Fund

Works on all three stretches of TEN-T road were completed by December 2008 (although additional reinforcement works by a third party on one of the roads was still ongoing). In 2008, Malta submitted a

total of €1,061,655.57 (EU share) for reimbursement to the European Commission. A request to modify the European Commission Decision was submitted to the European Commission in June.

Upgrading of the Sant'Antnin Waste Treatment Plant continued at a significant pace in 2008. In 2008, Malta submitted a total of €5,943,587.05 (EU share) for reimbursement to the European Commission. A request to modify the European Commission Decision submitted in January was approved in August.

Preparatory studies on future projects related to the management of storm water and treatment of solid waste also advanced. In 2008, Malta submitted a total of €29,795.23 (EU share) for reimbursement to the European Commission. A request to modify the European Commission Decision submitted in January was approved in July.

Monitoring Committee meetings for the Cohesion Fund were held in February, May and October. Annual Reports were submitted to the European Commission in April for the Environment and Technical Assistance projects and in July for the TEN-T Roads project. An on-site visit by the European Commission to the Sant'Antnin Waste Treatment Plant was also organised in May.

During 2008, on-the-spot checks on all three Cohesion Fund projects were carried out by the Managing Authority.

EQUAL

All five EQUAL projects were completed. The Monitoring Committee for EQUAL met three times – in February, May and October. The 2007 Annual Implementation Report was approved by the Monitoring Committee in May 2008. The same Committee also approved the Final Report of the ongoing evaluation of the EQUAL Programme in October. This report was subsequently transmitted to the European Commission.

EU Cohesion Policy 2007 - 2013

In 2008, the main responsibility in this area was the steering of the project selection process, the setting up of the implementation system (including procedures, manuals and electronic database) and commencement of the implementation phase.

Twenty-seven proposals were accepted out of the 74 which had been received in response to the first call launched in July 2007 under Priority Axis 1 (Enhancing Knowledge and Innovation), Priority Axis 2 (Promoting Sustainable Tourism) and Priority Axis 6 (Urban Regeneration and Improving the Quality of Life) of the Operational Programme I (OP I).

A second call, issued in January 2008, under Priority Axis 1, Priority Axis 4 (Upgrading Services of General Economic Interest) and Priority Axis 6 generated 40 proposals, 16 of which were approved. A third call, designed specifically for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary organisations, was launched in July 2008 and 19 project proposals were received by the closing date in September.

Seven projects were accepted out of the 21 that had been submitted in response to the first two calls for proposals launched in 2007 under Priority Axis 1 (Improving Education and Skills) and Priority Axis 2 (Investing in the Employability and Adaptability of the Workforce) of the Operational Programme II (OP II).

A third call was issued in January 2008 under Priority Axis 1 and Priority Axis 3 (Promoting an Equal and Inclusive Labour Market). A total of 40 proposals were submitted, with 25 projects gaining approval. A fourth call, aimed specifically at NGOs and social partners, was launched in February 2008, generating six project proposals. A fifth call, covering Priority Axis 2 and Priority Axis 4 (Strengthening of Institutional and Administrative Capacity) was launched in October 2008.

During the year, two Monitoring Committees were held for each OP: in May and October. Both the OP I and OP II Committees took note of the progress of the Programmes as well as approved the Annual Implementation Reports for 2007, the criteria for the Technical Assistance Axes, the criteria (or modifications thereof) for the aid schemes and changes to the Programmes. Six entities (five for OP I and one for OP II) were nominated (by PPCD) as Intermediate Bodies (IBs) and were asked to present an application to manage and implement aid schemes under Article 87 of the Treaty. PPCD also prepared a covenant regulating the functions of the IBs.

A Manual of Procedures for the two OPs was compiled and made available online. The description of the Management and Control System (including the national eligibility rules) was drafted and submitted to the European Commission in June and approved in December 2008. An Evaluation Plan was presented to the Monitoring Committee in May 2008 and was subsequently sent to the European Commission.

In terms of publicity, the European Commission approved the Communication Plan for OP I and OP II in January 2008. The first major annual information event took place in November 2008 at City Gate, Valletta. The event was complemented by the distribution of promotional and information material. In addition, the lists of beneficiaries under both OPs were uploaded on the Division's website, which was revamped in February 2008.

Territorial Co-operation

Interreg III (2004 – 2006)

In 2008, PPCD monitored the implementation of the 52 projects which were being co-financed under the Interreg 2004-2006 programmes. A third call for project proposals was launched in connection with the ARCHIMED programme, under which an additional four projects were selected for funding. During the year, over €1 million worth of claims was verified by the Division, bringing the total amount verified in connection with Interreg projects to €3 million, which is 36% over and above Malta's original contribution to the Programmes (€ 2.2 million). During 2008, 18 projects were subjected to an on-the-spot check, whilst external checks were carried out on two projects. Besides such checks, two audits were held at PPCD (as the body responsible for first level control) on the MEDOCC and IIIC programmes. PPCD was also involved in the process to bring the Interreg programmes to closure; however these could now be extended until June 2009 due to the global economic downturn.

Territorial Co-operation Programmes 2007 – 2013

PPCD participated actively in the implementation of the six programmes being co-financed under the new Territorial Co-operation Programmes. To this end, two Operational Programmes were finalised and submitted to the European Commission for approval. Further to the approval of such Programmes, the Division was involved in setting up the framework required in order to launch calls for project proposals. A number of calls were launched in connection with three of the Territorial Co-operation Programmes in which Malta participates. In this regard, PPCD organised sessions in order to provide information to potential partners. The Division was also involved in the selection of the new projects, five of which include Maltese partners.

Bilateral Assistance

European Economic Area (EEA) and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms

During 2008, Implementation Agreements were signed for six of the eight projects approved for funding. The PPCD is the Project Promoter for the MT0013 Technical Assistance Fund for Malta and, as the National Focal Point for the EEA/NO funds, does not require to sign an Implementation Agreement, while one Grant Agreement is still to be signed since amendments were made to the project during the period under review. Meanwhile, PPCD forwarded to the Donors a request for the de-commitment of savings

arising from some of the projects and for the reallocation of same (savings) and of the Reserve Funds (which had not been allocated at the programming stage) to a project in the cultural heritage sector, where scope existed for additional works to be undertaken.

The Monitoring Committee was convened in October 2008. This was followed by the annual meeting, which took place in November. Most of the projects were at an advanced stage of implementation. The project *Implementation of Schengen acquis requirements at Malta International Airport* had been successfully concluded in 2007.

During 2008, the relevant Project Implementation Reports were drawn up to the start of processing of reimbursement requests to the Donors.

Swiss-Maltese Co-operation Programme

The allocation committed by Switzerland for Malta is CHF 2.994 million. The thematic focus of the Swiss-Maltese Co-operation Programme is the health sector with an indicative financial allocation of CHF 2.794 million. Up to CHF 0.15 million is being retained by Switzerland to cover its administration costs of the Programme while the remaining CHF 0.05 million have been allocated to technical assistance and administration of the Programme on the Maltese side.

During the reporting period, three outline project proposals in the health sector and one for technical assistance were submitted to the Swiss authorities for consideration. Consultations with the Swiss authorities were still ongoing until the end of the year with the aim of selecting the projects to be funded.

V Italo-Maltese Financial Protocol

During 2008, PPCD was involved in the closure of the V Italo-Maltese Financial Protocol. To the end, the Division monitored any pending issues in connection with the projects financed under this Protocol and provided information to the Italian authorities accordingly. PPCD also compiled the Final Report, which was submitted to the Italian authorities in June 2008.

EU Globalisation Fund

In 2008, the Division closely monitored the implementation of the European Globalisation Fund (EGF) by holding Steering Committee meetings (for stakeholders), conducting on-the-spot checks and continuous liaison with the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) as the implementing body of EGF actions. The implementation period of this Fund elapsed on 12 September and following this, PPCD set in motion the closure process in co-ordination with ETC and the Certifying Authority.

The Division also made available information and publicity guidelines for use by EGF-funded projects.

EU Affairs Directorate

During 2008, the EU Affairs Directorate continued to perform its main role of managing and co-ordinating OPM's participation in EU structures and processes. To this effect, it regularly represented OPM in the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for EU Affairs. Besides it also took part in various other EU-related meetings, both locally and abroad, aimed at drawing up and consolidating the Malta position on the different EU legislative proposals. The Directorate also formed part of the Flexicurity Working Group, the Single European Sky and Blue Med Steering Committee, as well as the Policies and Measures (PAMs) Working Group.

Administrative Capacity

Due to the continuing growth of PPCD as well as the high staff turnover, the administrative capacity of the Division was further strengthened. Structural and maintenance works have also been carried out in the premises at N^o. 12 and N^o. 13 St Paul Street.

Marlene Bonnici
Director General (Planning & Priorities Co-ordination)

Information Management Unit

INTRODUCTION

The Information Management Unit (IMU) is the primary ICT business driver at OPM, providing advice and support to all OPM departments and authorities. The main IMU business functions include, drawing up of OPM ICT strategic plans; the management of ICT project design, procurement and financing; management of information systems policy; application development and open source/standards research; management of hardware inventories; authorisation and provision of information services; liaison with suppliers providing information technology services including MITTS; manage data centre facilities; provide first-hand operational support on infrastructure.

IMU Restructuring

Following the ministerial portfolio restructuring post March elections 2008, the Information Management Unit increased its complement by two additional ICT officers. Amalgamation of ICT operations kicked off in April 2008, followed by actual office space consolidation in September 2008. The new ministerial set-up brought about new and different challenges on all fronts of ICT management. New ways of working started being put together through the implementation of information systems, to include task handling and collaboration, financial and project management.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

LAN Improvements

The OPM local area network was upgraded by replacing a substantial amount of long-standing active equipment. The main tasks with respect to LAN improvements include procurement of networking hardware and liaising with third party suppliers, laying of appropriate infrastructure, configuration of active equipment, implementation of security standards such as port locking, segregation of VLANs for increased security, reorganisation of networking cabinet by putting in place apposite cable management hardware. Works were completed at a number of sites including the Department for Local Government, PPCD, DOI, Villa Francia, and Auberge de Castille.

At Auberge d'Italie, a number of network hubs were replaced with new network switches resulting in faster and more reliable connectivity, improved security features and providing the facility of connecting new users to the network. To accommodate for this change, new network cabinets had to be procured and installed.

Secure wireless points were implemented at the MTA's meeting offices within Auberge d'Italie. Such set-up allows easier access to network facilities during meetings. Additionally, network infrastructure was replaced at the Valletta Tourist Information Office and at the Enforcement Office in Msida.

Telephony

The two PABXs hosted at Auberge de Castille and Auberge d'Italie were linked to one another allowing complete access from one system to the other with relative ease. The new set-up allows for greater

portability having officers/users connected directly to each other via their respective extension number. The new set-up allows for extensions at both Auberges to connect to one another for free.

At MTA, the analogue line connecting the Enforcement Office outpost in Msida was replaced with a digital connection allowing for the use of VoIP and connected operational cost savings.

Voice over IP

Further use of VoIP technology was made over the past year. By having now most OPM departments connected over VoIP, considerable cost savings were registered in 2008. In 2008, some remote OPM departments still making use of analogue PABXs were migrated to the VoIP set-up and connected to the OPM PABX. Upgrades in both hardware and software of the OPM central PABX were completed in 2008. A department with this setup was the Government Printing Press. The switch to a digital system is in most instances accomplished through the implementation of remote shelves.

The new central PABX configuration has brought about savings on two counts namely, through reduced operational costs by eliminating direct lines and hardware/license upgrades done centrally at the OPM PABX at to the benefit of all departments. The departments benefiting from the VoIP set-up include AFM, MEUSAC, MCESD, 3 Castille Place, CPRT Head Office, and Villa Francia.

ICT Portfolio Management

Last year saw the implementation of an ICT Ministerial Portfolio Management application, designed to draw together all the information assets within the Ministry and ensure they are appropriately administered. Information assets refer to the software applications that are in use by all departments and entities including the hardware over which the software resides. The application includes network management, includes network layouts and related hardware specifications. The new ICT portfolio also includes information about printing equipment within departments and access control information within buildings.

The objective of a ministerial ICT portfolio management solution is the quantification and specification of ICT assets to enable objective evaluation of investment scenarios, thus assisting the decision-making process relating to new IT systems and technology investments. Other benefits emanating from the system include desktop management, along with standardisation of procedures and methods relating to ICT resources.

Provision of MITTS Services

In 2008, circa 3,000 requests for MITTS services were vetted and registered. Provision of services for all OPM users is provided through the MITTS ERFs (Electronic Request for Service) system. Provision standard MITTS services include, creation/deletion of e-mail/internet/corp accounts; creation/deletion of shared folders; provide/revoke access to shared folders; creation/deletion of generic e-mail accounts; provision of fast remote connections.

The provision of services is continuously monitored to ensure that it is in line with government policy and that a satisfactory service is rendered.

Information Security Audit

In 2008, an Information Security Audit was carried out by the Compliance Unit within MITTS in line with the requirements of section 4.1 of Government's Compliance Policy and Directive (GMICT P 0018:2007).

The audit focused on the Ministry's specific compliance requirements with respect to the Information Security Organisation Policy and Directive (CIMU P 0017:2003 and CIMU D 0017:2003) that was set up to meet the requirements of the Public Service Information Security Framework.

The salient aspects of the audit include the vetting of standard security management procedures; the information security strategy adopted by the Ministry; business continuity planning and standards relating to physical security.

New OPM Website

The new opm.gov.mt was launched towards the end of 2008. The site was redesigned to reflect the changes in the Ministry's portfolio and changes in the administration, new requirements submitted by the Secretariat, as well as information about the new entities including the Tourism and Sustainable Development Unit, Department for Local Government, MEPA, and Malta Tourism Authority.

The website was successfully launched following EAU (MITTS) approval and QA (MITTS) quality assurance testing relating to Government Website Standards, Security Checks, and FITA Compliance.

The new website aims to provide a more dynamic and interactive environment with the general public. This is evident in the newly introduced Interact section which also includes a kids' area. In addition, a user-friendly content management system that can be embraced by many was adopted, significantly reducing the heavy dependency on technology-aware officers that are generally indispensable in website upkeep.

OPM-Central

The OPM-Central Database is the core of the IMU's initiative to renovate and update all OPM websites in both design and information content and management. The project aims to improve the look and feel of OPM websites, while addressing issues of duplicated resources, incomplete, and conflicting information across the Ministry's websites.

The OPM-Central incorporates a common Content Management System, which among several functions provides shared modular resources which include the following: News Manager; Press Releases Manager; File Manager; Employment/Scholarship Manager; Public Tenders Manager; Photo Gallery Manager; Survey Manager; Podcast Manager.

The application set-up was launched in February 2008. Currently the database is being utilised by ppcd.gov.mt and opm.gov.mt. The new site president.gov.mt is now also integrated to the central database. In addition, connected to the central CMS, there are websites that are currently undergoing development (doi.gov.mt; eusec.gov.mt) and new websites developments are in the pipeline (cppt.gov.mt; mpo.gov.mt).

New Government IntraNet

Last year saw the development from scratch of the current Government Intranet for the Public Service. This project was an innovative one given that the new system is designed using open source/standards technology. The new IntraNet includes a number of fresh features such as restricted areas, online forms and RSS feeds support. Substantial research and effort was put into the setting up of the system, which was entirely put together by the IMU. Various products were tested in order to meet the broad business requirements that were drawn up. Off-the-shelf products were also tested but the investment in such applications is relatively high. The investment in an open source solution provides for a licence free solution. Hosting requirements were drawn up in agreement with MITTS who shall be hosting the application. The hosting environment is also based on an open-source product and therefore significant licensing cost savings were met. Support on the hosting environment is supplied by MITTS whereas the

maintenance side of the application is done in-house. The main driver to the development of this new IntraNet solution is that of setting up a more engaging utility and a sleek design allowing for increased user interaction. External and additional applications and solutions can be procured or developed and easily integrated. Bespoke modules can be developed to cater for ministerial needs such as an OPM transport booking system.

Digital Asset Management System for MTA

The MTA finalised the procurement of a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) which allows the public to access published digital media through an apposite web portal. The DAMS is intended to:

- effectively increase the efficiency in how to promote the Maltese islands as a tourist destination;
- provide a computerised management platform to organise and manage digital media currently in use within the Malta Tourism Authority;
- make available through a web portal, published digital media to various stakeholders;
- reduce to a minimum the need to publish and distribute digital media on removable storage medium;
- allow designated users to upload media directly on the system;
- have the facility to protect all previews and original files with a watermark to prevent illegal or unauthorised use of publishing.

Additionally, the new system includes media sharing with other MTA online initiatives, improved media security, 24/7 availability, reduction in physical storage space and better visibility of media assets. The application shall also be deployed within other departments within OPM.

Web Portal for Local Councils

The main objective of this project is to provide a central repository of information about all local councils from a single portal. The new portal will consist of some general information as well as a link to a dedicated sub-site for each local council. Each sub-site will consist of pages made available through the portal. This way, all local sub-site councils will have a similar website with a standard template and standard information. Local councils will in turn have the facility to modify the text and information in their sub-sites. For this reason, the new system will be immediately designed to allow the client to easily maintain and update information.

Phase 2 of the project, to be rolled out in 2009, will include the following enhancements namely, Photo Gallery, Interactive Map, Events and Newsletter functionality. In Phase 2, the Local Council sub-sites will also have the option to go multilingual.

Malta Goes Rural Website

A sister website of the VisitMalta portal focusing on rural Malta is currently being developed for the EU Section within the Tourism and Sustainable Development Unit. This site will include all the information available about a number of rural areas in Malta mainly targeted towards tourists and visitors planning their trip and excursions to the Maltese islands.

The new website will be designed to act as the main platform of information about villages, walks, what to do, events and more. The site shall also include a personalised section called *My Rural Malta* where tourists having visited our shores can upload images of rural Malta and communicate their experiences with other visitors.

PPCD Website

The new PPCD website was launched in February 2008 to replace the dated ppcd.gov.mt which was built on dated technology and presented difficulties when updates were required. The website was designed on

top of OPM-Central database and utilises a user-friendly content management system promoting timely and frequent updates to reflect current project status and new calls for project proposals.

GPP PrePress Upgrade

The Prepress Department at the Government Printing Press has been upgraded and now is operating more efficiently in creating, editing, and processing plated templates for print. The PrePress section was facing several problems due to software compatibility versions given that the printing industry and design companies were using more recent software versions of commonly used applications such as Adobe PageMaker, Fireworks, and Photoshop. The new hardware was delivered and installed towards the end of last year.

GPP Management Information System

A new Government Printing Press bespoke solution was developed last year to replace an unsupported system used for job management. The old system had been developed years ago and therefore a technology refresh as well as a revision of the business process was required. The new Management Information System integrated a number of automated processes that were handled manually. The system brought together a number of functions ranging from procurement to sales orders and delivery notes. The system developed is very comprehensive, easy to use and update. The application shall be hosted at MITTS in line with government standards.

New OPR Website

A new site for the President of Malta was designed to replace the old president.gov.mt site built on dated technology. The website was also developed on top of OPM-Central including the following common modules, news and events, press releases, and a photo gallery. In addition, the website aims to provide information about the President and previous Presidents, and the Presidential Palaces are all included in a number of virtual tours.

Visit Malta Portal

The visitmalta.com e-tourism portal continued to be developed and enhanced. New content was added, increasing the depth and breadth of information available on the website. Several new sections were introduced, including the Maltese islands as a filming destination, a medical tourism section, a separate conference & incentive section for the UK market, and new pages relating to MTA's partnership with Sheffield United FC. Continuous updating of information included events featuring prominently on the portal, each with its own information page. The most important events such as Gozo 1234 and Isle of MTV were promoted through a dedicated sub-site.

Enhancements to the site included the introduction of webcams, currently installed in two distinct locations – the Grand Harbour and Golden Bay – with a third being planned for Gozo. Eight new videos, several electronic brochures, and e-tours for Valletta and Cottonera were also uploaded. Special offers provided by foreign tour operators were highlighted in a new section developed specifically for this purpose. Additional information listing special deals available exclusively for travel agents was added.

Four new language versions of the website, namely Dutch, Swedish, Russian, and Japanese, were added to the existing five (that is, English, Italian, German, French and Spanish) bringing the total number of languages to nine.

The hotel booking functionality on the portal was customised to include third-party commercial booking sites as alternative options, listed randomly without giving an advantage to Visitmalta.

A system of paid banner advertising was launched with initial results indicating a high level of interest amongst local and foreign companies.

A new consumer e-Newsletter in six languages was developed and e-mailed to addresses on MTA's database according to country of residence and language preference. The contacts database was also used to e-mail several Air Malta special offers to specific target markets.

During 2008, Visitmalta.com attracted over three million visitors, with a daily average of more than 8,500 visitors, and with peaks of more than 18,000 visits a day. The most active countries were Italy, UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden.

New Customer Care System

The new Customer Care System (CCS) will replace servizz.gov.mt. The CCS applies a workflow system which electronically links most public sector organisations including all local councils, ministries, the Police Department, authorities, and corporations. The resulting technological network enables live communication and transferring of data (in the form of complaints, suggestions and requests for information) between all the connected entities.

The current CCS utilises StaffWare which has been marked for divestment by MITTS. Consequently, developments kicked off last year to develop a new CCS utilising a web interface. The new CCS will also contain a knowledge base and a news portal that would address generic requests without the customer having to register a CCS request and wait for a reply.

The following enhancements are to be added:

- electronic identity management tool;
- enhancement of enquiry and reports module, including search facility;
- remote access to CCS by ministry users, LC root users (executive secretaries), and CSU;
- greater facility to amend acknowledgement/settlement letter by CSU and use of Maltese fonts;
- facility for customers to include attachments with CCS request;
- at local council level, facility to re-classify requests erroneously sent instead of having to recreate request.

The new system will enable Government to manage and monitor complaints submitted by the general public more effectively. The newly-added knowledge base will provide more timely information and mitigate the workload of the CSU by addressing general requests immediately. In addition, doing away with StaffWare licensing costs implies cost savings for Government.

New DOI Website

The restructuring of the DOI portal to meet the new web-framework requirements as stipulated by MITTS was launched in 2008. The new DOI site will incorporate three e-Gov initiatives, namely the Government Gazette Subscription, the Government Publications Online, and an Online Photographic Reprints module.

Following a number of changes in the website's design requested by DOI management, a new design was commissioned. Development and site rollout shall proceed once the design is approved.

Tourism & Sustainable Development and Local Government sub-site

Information from the Tourism & Sustainable Development Unit has been collected so that a sub-site for this unit will be included within the new opm.gov.mt website. The new OPM site was launched end of 2008 and the inclusion of sub-sites are currently undergoing test prior to be released to the live environment.

An additional sub-site within opm.gov.mt has been created for the Department for Local Government, to include information that was previously available within the mjha.gov.mt site. This sub-site is being developed in tandem with the tourism sub-site.

User Communication

Monthly snippets with ICT best practices and policies are being circulated via e-mail to all users to all at OPM. The concept behind the circulation of such snippets is to make users aware of a number of policies, procedures and obligations in a simplified way. The snippets are mostly drawn up based on GMICT policy.

Government Information Service (153)

The 153 freephone service is a facility provided by Government to supply information to the general public at no cost. The freephone system makes use of Lotus Notes clients and Lotus Domino backend. To ensure information consistency, the information source used by officers at the 153 call centre shall be merged with the back-end database of the customer care system.

Printing

As part of the Green Initiative Programme, seven network capable multi-functional photocopiers were procured throughout 2008. The heavy-duty printers/copiers replaced a number of inefficient home desk printers. The heavy-duty printers were installed at the MTA Accounts section, MTA Marketing Section, MTA Human Resource section, the IMU, OPM Accounts section, PPCD, and SDO. The work-centres are not only used to print in duplex mode and therefore making better use of the paper resource, but also allow users to scan and send documents to specific e-mail accounts or shared server folders and thus working more efficiently.

Better Regulation

Last year saw the integration of invoices issued by the MTA for the payment of licence and contribution fees. The integration of invoice payments issued to tourism establishments were integrated into one single database, resulting into a simpler process of producing one invoice per licensee.

All licence holders received one consolidated bill for: all respective licences; all sub-licences; and all contributions. Bills can now be settled at the MTA offices through the e-licensing payment gateway or at any local council.

Prior to 2008, MTA used to collect contribution fees from the Transport section independently for coaches, mini-buses, taxis, car leasing etc. As from 2008, MTA reached an agreement with ADT whereby ADT started collecting such fees on MTA's behalf as part of the normal routine.

Currently MTA is in the process of establishing the same arrangements for ADT with respect to the maritime sector to include pleasure boats, ferry boats etc. MTA has also started the process of offloading these fees to the Malta Maritime Authority.

ROBERT DEBONO
Chief Information Officer

Corporate Services Directorate

INTRODUCTION

The primary function of the Directorate of Corporate Services is to provide the main support services to the secretariats, divisions, departments, and entities at the Office of the Prime Minister. The Department also provides a service on a corporate level to the departments and entities which form part of the Ministry. The increase in the Prime Minister's portfolio after the 2008 general election resulted in a wider service being provided by the Directorate to the departments and entities which now form part of the Office of the Prime Minister.

In order to provide these functions, the Directorate is made up of four branches, namely:

- Finance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Office Management
- Registry.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Finance and Administration Branch responsibilities in the field of finance continued during 2008 and provided the service to the secretariats, divisions, and entities that form part of the OPM.

The Branch was responsible for the administration of funds provided under Vote 5 – Office of the Prime Minister and during the year was also given the responsibility for the administration of Vote 32 – Tourism. The management of the funds included the raising of the monthly revised estimates and co-ordinating the funds allocated under all other Votes of the departments under the Ministry. The Branch was also involved in the drafting of the Ministry's 2009 financial estimates.

During 2008, 18 tenders were issued by the Directorate, the majority of which regarded tenders for the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division. Only one tender was issued during the previous year.

The Branch also played a key part in the issue of advances for overseas travel and during the year a total number of 221 advances were issued to officers at this Office.

The Branch continued to issue commitments for the supply of goods and services by not later than one day of having received the request and settled invoices within one month of being received. The total number of transactions effected on the Departmental Accounting System was 6,533, a decrease of 16% from the previous year.

The Branch also closely worked with other departments, including the Chief Information Office, regarding the procurement of hardware for office needs.

Other work carried out by the Branch during 2008 consisted of:

- raising information on a quarterly basis related to Accrual Accounting;
- raising of financial returns as requested by the Ministry of Finance and Treasury;
- submitting a list of suppliers who do not provide the Directorate with a VAT fiscal receipt;

- recording items of an inventory nature and informing departments to include details of the respective asset inventory records;
- replying to parliamentary questions.

HUMAN RESOURCES

During 2008, the Human Resources Branch continued with the renewals of contracts of staff at the Secretariats which from March 2008 also included the staff at the Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism. Furthermore, the Branch also started to administer the HR functions of the Internal Audit and Investigations Division, Tourism Department, MEUSAC, and public officers at MEPA.

The Branch held ongoing discussions with the various divisions and departments for the maximising of the available human resources. In addition, staff in the Ministry were issued with letters of appointments and progressions from one scale to another after ensuring the regulations were fully adhered to.

Three calls for the position of Assistant Director at the Office of the Prime Minister were issued to appoint officers in: Defence Matters Directorate; Human Resources – Corporate Services Directorate; and Office Management – Corporate Services Directorate.

The Branch also worked on the four weekly salary payments to staff and personnel at OPM whilst also working with the Finance and Administration Branch regarding financial budgeting for personal emoluments paid in 2008 and also on the financial resources required for 2009.

Support was also given by the Branch for the issue of a tender for the supply of watchman/security service at the Swatar ex-computer centre premises.

Other work carried out by the Branch included:

- co-ordinating work related to flexi hours and teleworking;
- the request for the service of a private medical firm to visit staff and personnel on sick leave;
- matters related to data protection, gender issues, and health and safety;
- administering the Performance Management Programmes;
- updating the Ministry's staff list for both industrial and non-industrial staff;
- co-ordinating the quarterly approvals for the performance of overtime.

OFFICE MANAGEMENT

The Office Management Branch continued with its ongoing programme regarding the maintenance of premises housing the Office of the Prime Minister. Furthermore, as a result of the increase in portfolio, the Branch added further property used by the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate and MEUSAC. The Branch also provides support regarding the maintenance of Girgenti Palace and Villa Francia. Other work related to the replacing of a ceiling at the premises housing the PPCD.

In accordance with regulations issued on the transfer of assets of Secretariats prior to the holding of the general election in March, the Branch carried out the necessary work in relation to the inventory of moveable and immovable assets held by the Secretariats prior to the election date.

The Branch also carried out work related to the appointment of a Board of Survey which functions were to dispose the unserviceable stores situated at the basement of the Auberge de Castille and Ospizio stores.

The migration of the Information Management Unit offices to Auberge d'Italie and the Tourism Corporate Services to Auberge de Castille were also administered by the Branch.

The lifts at the St Paul's side of the Auberge de Castille were also replaced during the year.

The Branch continued to administer the maintenance of the Office's motor vehicle fleet. Performance statistics of each vehicle were collected and service for vehicles were scheduled. Other work related to the fleet management included consultation with the Attorney General's office regarding traffic collisions with third parties.

Another service provided by the Branch was the handling of the Reception work at the Auberge de Castille, the assistance given during the press conferences held by the Prime Minister and the support during the holding of the *Notte Bianca* event.

The Branch is also responsible for the administration of the Inventory of the Directorate and assists in the Boards of Survey appointed to dispose of unserviceable assets in the Ministry.

REGISTRY

The Registry Section took over the responsibilities of the Registry service previously carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and the space for additional files had to be found within the premises.

During the year, the Section handled the following:

Letters registered on the DOCREG system	4,586
New OPM files	1,731
New MPO files	499
New Personal files	1,638
New PQ files	681
Distribution of OPM/MPO Circulars	150
Insertion of letters in various files	9,346

ALEXANDER MAGRO
Director (Corporate Services)

Operations and Programme Implementation Directorate

INTRODUCTION

The main responsibilities of the Operations and Programme Implementation Directorate (OPI) in 2008 were the following:

- to manage the implementation of corporate initiatives, among which the Public Service Data Protection Implementation Project;
- to monitor and report on the implementation of change initiatives within OPM;
- to perform the programme implementation and customer care functions within OPM; and
- to fulfil the role of Senior Programming Manager in respect of 2007-2013 Structural Funds projects undertaken by OPM departments and entities.

POLICY ISSUES

The Directorate provides support in monitoring the implementation of certain policy decisions and initiatives across the Public Service. This includes regular co-ordination with other ministries and departments to provide clarification and interpretation of policies that affect their operations. In the course of 2008, these functions included the monitoring of the correct use of the National Coat of Arms and other state emblems. Guidelines on the graphical specifications of the National Flag of Malta were finalised and arrangements were made with DOI for their inclusion on the Flags, Symbols and their Use section of the DOI website.

The OPI Directorate was closely involved in the preparatory legal and administrative work connected with the holding of the general election in March and the appointment of the Leader of the Opposition. The Office supported the Principal Permanent Secretary in the preparation of the letters of appointment and oaths of office for the Prime Minister, Ministers, and Parliamentary Secretaries as well as the subsequent administrative work connected with the allocation of ministerial portfolios.

During the year, Director OPI continued to be involved in matters related to the national identity card and a national identity management strategy, serving as member on the Adjudication Committee set up to oversee the evaluation process of the NIDMS Request for Proposals.

Annual Reports of Government Departments

Another task of this Office entails the compilation, vetting, design, and editing of reports submitted by government departments concerning their annual activities. The consolidated publication *2007 Annual Report of Government Departments* was finalised in October 2008 and issued on CD and posted on the Public Service Intranet for greater diffusion amongst departments and public officers.

Boards and Committees

The OPI Directorate processes all appointments of constitutional commissions as well as appointments on boards and committees which require the approval of the President of Malta and/or the Prime Minister. It

also keeps a detailed record of all government entities, boards, and committees through liaison with the various other ministries, and regularly monitors the media and the government gazette to maintain its database of official boards current and updated. The procedure of triggering off reminders to ministries a month in advance of any expiry date has again been successful in keeping to a minimum the number of boards and committees with lapsed appointments.

Broadcasting

One of the responsibilities of the Office of the Prime Minister is the regulatory aspect of Broadcasting. During 2008, this Directorate liaised with the Broadcasting Authority on issues relating to legal and procedural matters which require reference to the Prime Minister in terms of the Constitution and the Broadcasting Act (CAP 350), particularly the publication of subsidiary broadcasting legislation.

The 43rd meeting of the Council of Europe Standing Committee on Trans-Frontier Television was held in Strasbourg, France on 12-14 November and was attended by the Assistant Director within the Directorate. The meeting dealt mainly with the aligning of the Convention with current EU related directives.

DATA PROTECTION

Data Protection compliance in the Public Service remains the primary corporate initiative under the responsibility of the Directorate. By means of this project, the OPM Data Protection Team (composed of OPI and MITTS personnel) offers advice and assistance to ministries and departments in the field of data protection. It also provides advisory support to departments in case of queries received from the Data Protection Commissioner and acts as intermediary between the Office of the DP Commissioner and the relevant departments. One ongoing initiative in this area is the provision of support to the state education sector in meetings of the Education Sector Working Group chaired by the Data Protection Commissioner.

Data Protection Audits

During the year, the Data Protection Team concentrated on the carrying out of data protection internal audits in a number of ministries. These audits delve into all aspects of a department's activities and conduct a review of the extent of compliance with the Data Protection Act. In the past year, 15 data protection full audits were conducted in five different ministries (two at the Ministry for Gozo; two at the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs; four at the Ministry for Social Policy; three at the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment; four at the Ministry for Justice & Home Affairs).

Data Protection Training

In view of the running of the twinning light project in the earlier part of the year, data protection training organised in conjunction with SDO was suspended until September. In the last quarter of 2008, the OPM team facilitated 14 half-day sessions on the Data Protection Act organised by the SDO and attended by a total of 224 public officers, including a specialised DP presentation delivered to the Government Property Division Directors and Assistant Directors.

Data Protection Twinning Light Project

A Twinning Light project, *Data Protection Training in the Malta Public Service*, was successfully undertaken during 2008 in conjunction with German partners. The project, which was financed by the EU 2005 Transition Facility Programme for Malta, received an allocation of around €82,240 to provide for the provision of training in data protection to a large number of public officers. The project which was led by the Independent Centre for Privacy Protection in Kiel of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, together with the Operations and Programme Implementation Directorate, was implemented between January and July.

Besides enhancing data protection skills and practices across the public service, the training activities organised were envisaged to improve data protection general awareness of participants, both as users of personal data and also as data subjects themselves. Data protection issues were also covered in specific sectors that process significant volumes of personal data in the public service (health, education, police, social welfare, amongst others). Other focused sessions focused on internal data protection auditing skills and on strengthening the skills of Data Protection Officers in government departments. In addition, two study visits were organised to administrative offices in Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, where some DPOs had the opportunity to exchange and share knowledge of their duties and responsibilities with their counterparts in Germany. The primary objective of the project was the provision of intensive training to a projected total of 800 public officers.

The 51 training sessions/workshops held were facilitated by competent short-term experts, mainly from Germany but also including a few from Austria and Hungary. The total number of public officers who participated in training activities organised within the framework of the twinning light project reached 1,014, exceeding the estimated target of 800 by about 27%.

A log has now been compiled of standard and specific data protection issues raised during the training sessions and the Data Protection Team will in 2009 be assessing the steps required to follow up on these issues in conjunction with the Data Protection Officers.

On 9 October, a special session of the Data Protection Officers' Forum was held to mark the official closure of the Data Protection Twinning Light. The forum was addressed by Dr Godwin Grima, Principal Permanent Secretary and Ms Marit Hansen, Deputy Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of Eco-friendly Initiatives

Throughout the year, this Directorate continued to monitor the implementation of environment practices across the Office of the Prime Minister and to extend assistance and support to the Green Focal Points (GFPs) in OPM departments and entities.

Following the general election and the consequent changes in ministerial portfolios, the OPM Green Focal Point network was extended to include representation from new departments/entities joining the OPM portfolio. Action was subsequently taken to organise briefing sessions for the new GFPs. Furthermore, this Office held a number of meetings with all GFPs in order to discuss the application of existing OPM green measures and the enhancement of green practices within the Ministry as a whole.

The projects launched in the previous years to promote eco-friendly practices in the workplace were sustained and further extended in 2008 through the application of added initiatives such as:

- organising a Waste Management talk and a visit to Sant' Antnin Waste Treatment Plant for all OPM GFPs;
- conducting an energy audit at the premises situated at 3, Castille Place. The audit report indicated that the Building Energy Performance and Cost Index are relatively higher than normal. The report lists a number of recommendations to cut down on energy consumption. These are being considered and appropriate follow-up action on the recommendations will be taken in the course of the year 2009;
- preparation of templates for the maintenance of 'green' statistics, intended to monitor electricity and water consumption, procurement of paper and envelopes, number of cartridges and toners returned to WasteServ and to suppliers, and amount of separated waste collected by WasteServ. These templates were distributed to GFPs for a trial period during December so that comprehensive statistics will start being collected as from January 2009.

Euro Changeover

Following the introduction of the euro in January 2008, this Office continued to monitor the implementation of reverse dual display on OPM websites and publications and to liaise between OPM 'impact' entities and the National Euro Changeover Committee concerning the dual display of pricing.

Co-ordination of 2007-2013 Cohesion Funds

As one of its line ministry functions in relation to 2007-2013 EU projects, the OPI Directorate in 2008 started processing payments (Invoice Status Certificates) on the Structural Fund Database related to the ESF/ERDF Technical Assistance programmes of PPCD. In total, 212 payments were checked, processed and sent to Treasury.

Moreover, during the year, besides ensuring that timely information was circulated among OPM departments and entities on issues related to the Structural Funds, OPI continued with the vetting and endorsement of project proposals for the call for funding programmes in February 2008 and January 2009. In all, 12 project proposals, both ERDF and ESF, were vetted several times before the deadline for submission of applications, to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria. Various one-to-one meetings were held with OPM line departments and entities in order to provide support on the development and preparation of project documents.

In the course of 2008, three tourism-related proposals were selected for EU Funding. The approved projects are:

Tourism & Sustainable Development Unit, OPM

ERDF Grant Scheme for Sustainable Tourism Projects by Enterprises

Malta Tourism Authority

ERDF 1.25 Upgrade of Two Tourism Coastal stretches in Qawra and Sliema

ERDF 1.33 Tourism Zone Upgrade with landscaped urban spaces and other facilities

ESF 2.11 Developing Leaders for Change and Innovation in Tourism

Although implementation of these projects is still in the initial phase, OPI in its line ministry function is involved in monitoring the management and compliance of these projects. This includes vetting of tender documents, signature of commitment forms, selection of evaluation committees and the retention of documents as per procedures. Fortnightly meetings of all stakeholders are held in order to facilitate its role.

During 2008, the EU Fund Manager continued with training related to EU funding, mainly on Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 and Tendering and Procurement Procedures. In addition information sessions and seminars were attended relating to EU funding in relation to future requests for funding by the departments and entities within the remit of OPM.

Customer Care Function

A total of 603 customer care requests, representing 143 from foreigners and 460 from locals, were processed by the OPM Customer Care Co-ordinator in 2008. All were settled within 10 days or passed to the Prime Minister's Secretariat the same day of receipt. A further 42 requests were received through the computerised Customer Care System.

OPM Website

Following the organisational restructuring within OPM, the contents of the OPM website were updated as necessary to reflect the new responsibilities. An evaluation of existing OPM websites by the OPM

Information Management Unit and the formulation of a strategy aimed at achieving a more cohesive framework for all OPM websites was carried out and work was undertaken in recent months on the redesign of the OPM website *opm.gov.mt*. This Directorate is responsible for the content management of the 'Office of the Prime Minister' section of the website. During the last quarter of the year, the relevant information was inputted onto the new website and corrections communicated to the developers for amendment. The new *opm.gov.mt* website was uploaded towards the end of the year.

MARIE-LOURDES GRECH

Director (Operations and Programme Implementation)

Tourism

The aim of the Department of Tourism is to offer support and advice on issues related to human resource management, finance and administration to the Ministry for Tourism and Culture, the Permanent Secretary and other departments and entities falling under the Ministry. It also supports the Ministry in promoting the importance of tourism to the national economy at all community levels and the public sector.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Following the reassignment of ministerial portfolios after the general election held in March, the Department of Tourism and Corporate Services was incorporated within the Corporate Services Directorate of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Up till August, the Department provided the required support services to the Ministry's Secretariat, the Permanent Secretary's Office and the EU Affairs, Policy Development and Programme Implementation in the procurement of goods and services, after which the function was taken over by DCS OPM.

The Department dealt with, amongst other issues, the compilation of information in connection with the drafting of replies to parliamentary questions, the co-ordination of replies for information requested from the Office of the Prime Minister, Finance and Treasury, and the preparation of documents related to travel abroad on official business for all ministry officials.

The Human Resources branch of the Department provided support services to the Ministry and other sections in the field of human resource management and development. The section provided the necessary support to the Permanent Secretary in the recruitment procedures. The HR section was responsible for the provision of data and other information required by the central government as well as identifying and nominating officers for selected training programmes as organised by the SDO in various topics. One officer successfully graduated from a DPA course at the University of Malta, while another requested and was granted teleworking arrangements.

The Department maintained the records of all appointments to various boards and committees falling under the Ministry's responsibility. It ensured that the Minister was informed in a timely manner of the expiry of the terms of office of these boards and committees.

The events section during the year under review successfully undertook the production of major events such as the International Fireworks Festival, Gozo 1234, and the International Choir Festival. The Department assisted in the Isle of MTV concert, the Military Tattoo as well as the *In Guardia Allarme* parades that take place throughout the year in Fort St Elmo.

During 2008, the Department continued to implement green initiatives through the use of small engine vehicles of recent manufactures, and the gradual replacement of traditional light fittings with energy saving ones.

During the year, the service of a private medical firm was again made use of consistently to check on the possibility of abuses by officers who reported sick.

The Registry section, which caters also for the requirements of the Ministry's Secretariat and the Permanent Secretary's Office, continued to maintain all active files, and open new files as required. As from July, this section has been incorporated with the OPM registry.

BEACH CLEANING

The main task of the Beach Cleaning Section of the Department of Tourism is the upkeep of sandy, rocky beaches, and shores in the island. The work force of the Beach Cleaning Section is organised into three areas, North, Central and South, a back up group and a group for maintenance duties.

North	19 employees
Central	26 employees
South	23 employees
Back up	9 employees
Workshop	7 employees

During the summer period, cleaning and maintenance of beaches was carried out throughout the week, including Saturdays and Sundays to ensure a welcoming environment. In summer, work starts very early in the morning, to ensure bathers find a clean and healthy environment. The cleaning of the beaches consisted mainly of the removal of seaweed in the early months of the year and litter picking, emptying of litter bins, and raking of the beach. During summer 2008, beach cleaners were, as happened last year, assigned duties after normal working hours, at Ghadira Bay, Bugibba perched beach, and St George's Bay, keeping these three beaches manned all day till 6.00pm including Saturdays and Sundays as part of MTA's beaches management programme.

The work schedule in the winter period consisted of the immediate removal of seaweed and other debris deposited on our beaches. This is done through the use of machinery, namely mechanical shovels and trucks, although in certain areas manual intervention is necessary. All seaweed and debris drifted ashore was immediately removed and dumped.

Beach furniture, namely litter bins and ladders, are manufactured at this section's workshop. Drums were cut and sprayed in different colours, and then used as litter bins. Through collaboration with MRRA special bins for the disposal of the remains of charcoal left over from barbecues were introduced. During the year, over 1500 bins were made and placed on beaches and shores.

Other beach furniture manufactured at the workshop consists of ladders and railings, which facilitate access to and from the sea to bathers. During 2008, over 250 ladders and railings were made, painted and fixed on beaches where access to the sea is a difficult. In one case where accession was particularly difficult, a small bridge was designed, manufactured and installed successfully. This furniture was removed by the end of October for the necessary maintenance and repair and is to be replaced by the beginning of May 2009.

This section is also involved in the various outdoor events organised by the Malta Tourism Authority and various NGOs, local councils, and other government departments by providing support services and by erecting and dismantling various stages and gazebos in use during events.

OIL POLLUTION RESPONSE MODULE

The Oil Pollution Response Module (OPRM) is established to protect Malta's coastline and harbours from oil pollution and other hazards that may be caused by oil spills (that originate both on land or sea) or floating debris and other materials. It is the responsibility of this module to collect debris and flotsam from the sea on a routine basis either by scooping or by gathering pollutants and hazards manually or by using the vessel *Ambjent* which is fitted with a hydraulic/mechanical arm.

The unit maintained constant contact with the Malta Maritime Authority and the Armed Forces of Malta.

Special attention was given to cleaning the Viset/Pinto Wharf and Grand Harbour Marina areas in the Grand Harbour. The Unit participated in the co-ordination of underwater clean-ups organised by various diving schools and centres on request.

In July, the OPRM was involved in the cleaning and containment of pollutants caused by a sunken vessel in the Sliema ferry area.

On 21 October, this Unit took part in the Oil Pollution Response Exercise organised by the Malta Maritime Authority through the European Maritime and Safety Agency and Tankship Management Malta.

During the year, the OPRM responded to 16 significant oil spillage reports and dealt with approximately 23 tons of reported oil. The amount of flotsam and debris collected both manually and mechanically by this Unit was around 26 tons.

Oil Spills 2008				
Date	Place	Type	Qty	Action Taken
8 Jan	Coal Wharf	Oily Debris	200 lts	Manual collection
17 Jan	MOBC	Seeping Oil	55 lts	Manual/absorbents
29 Jan	Marsa/Regatta	Oily Debris	200 lts	Manual/mechanical
4 Feb	Pixkerija	Bilge Oil	250 lts	Mechanical
7 Mar	Menqa	Diesel	300 lts	Mechanical
10 Apr	Marsa Slipway	Fuel Oil	250 lts	Manual/absorbents
20 Apr	N/E of Malta	Report of slick	500 lts	Surveillance
22 Apr	Ramla Bay	Oil Sludge	300 lts	Assistance
5 May	Ta' Xbiex	Light Fuel Oil	160 lts	Standby
12 May	Chalet Sliema	Fuel Oil	400 lts	Survey/monitor
29 June	Fisheries Valletta	Oily Debris	200 lts	Manual/mechanical
1 July	Riviera Hotel	Diesel Slick	400 lts	Surveillance
24 July	Sliema Ferries	Oil/Debris	250 lts	Mechanical/manual
31 July	Bridge Wharf	Debris/Sludge	300 lts	Manual/absorbents
1 Aug	Menqa	Diesel Oil	500 mts ²	Mechanical
23 Oct	Pinto Wharf	Diesel Oil/slick	200 lts	Mechanical

WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION

During 2008, the ongoing exchange with UNWTO also involved participation in a wide number of surveys relating to data exchange and members' benchmarking. Foremost amongst these surveys was a detailed survey on Tourism Employment in preparation for a major UNWTO Statistical Conference on Tourism and Employment Generation scheduled for March 2009.

The Department through its representatives also attended and actively participated in the UNWTO's Commission for Europe meeting in Prague in October 2008.

FRANCIS ALBANI
Director (Tourism)

Department of Information

MEDIA FACILITIES DURING GENERAL ELECTION

Close liaison and collaboration was kept with the Electoral Commission to provide a professional set-up for the local and foreign media at the Counting Hall Complex at Naxxar during the general and local elections held in March. These included Department of Information (DOI) Offices, Press Rooms for the print media, three television studios, radio studios, and a press conference area. The whole media centre was supplied with free WI-FI and wired internet access, free telephone local communication, a number of PCs and monitors displaying election results on the DOI website. The press rooms and the radio studios also had the facility of cable TV transmission. DOI personnel were in attendance at the press centre to assist the media throughout the whole of the counting process. Arrangements were also made to put online the election results as soon as these were confirmed by the Electoral Commission. Feedback from the media persons who made use of the Media Centre at Naxxar Counting Complex was extremely positive.

MALTA PAVILION AT THE INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF MALTA

As in previous years, the Government participated in the International Fair of Malta. Action had to be taken in a very restricted time, first to prepare the tender documents according to the concept and the theme, as well as to conclude the selection process within a very tight timeframe. This year's theme focussed on environmental issues. This Department provided the necessary assistance to the public during the opening days of the Fair. Handouts and other promotional material, including posters focusing on local environment matters, as well as forms encouraging the public to participate in a competition, were distributed to the public to enhance more awareness on the subject matter. Air Malta sponsored two air tickets to a destination in a European country, to two winners of the competition, on each day of the Fair.

GOBELIN COLLECTION PRINTS

On 9 December, the Department of Information issued a limited number of photographic prints depicting the Gobelin tapestries at the Presidential Palace Council Chamber. This set of prints was limited to 500 copies, numbered individually and intended for collectors and also for the public in general. Each set of 10 prints was presented in a special designed folder and carried a certificate of authenticity together with special security features, which makes these prints unique. The *Tenture des Indes* prints came into fruition on an initiative by the DOI, with the photography being undertaken by a DOI photographer. This is the first time ever that the Department embarked on such a project to highlight one of Malta's priceless works of art. A set of these prints was used by the Prime Minister to give as an official gift to the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic in December 2008. Sales of these sets covered all expenses involved in the production, and also generated revenue over and above the expenses.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCT

In order to encourage a proactive approach by DOI photographers in the quality of the images shot during photo coverages, the printed media was encouraged to credit the photographer concerned, with the published photos. This had a positive effect on the quality of the pictures referred to the media for publication, so much so that various were the positive remarks received following the introduction of this initiative. The Department has also recognised the need to upgrade the digital facilities for image capture,

editing and storage at the Photography section and a plan to this effect has been prepared. The first step is the improvement of the photographic equipment used by the photographers, and in this respect, towards the end of the year, a tender was issued for the purchase of six new digital cameras which have the required technical specifications. This process will end early in 2009, when the purchases should be effected.

PAN-EUROPEAN PORTAL FOR EU CITIZENS AND ENTERPRISE

During 2008, the YourEurope editorial board focused on totally revamping the structure and outlook of the Business section of the YourEurope portal, concerning mainly, changes on the translation on the Citizens section. A total of 50 national documents (AT, CY, FI, DE, HU, IT, MT) were translated and published on the portal.

- *Community Content:* entry procedures and residence rights factsheets (Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU) were updated taking into consideration the latest developments taking place in the enlargement of Schengen area. They were translated in the languages of all EU countries and sent for verification before being published on YourEurope portal. Update of all Community content that was on YourEurope portal started in March 2008, and was completed by May of the same year.
- *National Content:* there are 96 factsheets on YourEurope portal that contain national information. In 2008, the focus was on providing all the missing content for each Member State. No major changes to the structure of the YourEurope citizens section were reported, although it was emphasised that there should be a need for further online promotional work for visitor rates to increase and it was concluded that there should be a focus on further promotion.

INTRODUCTION OF A PAYMENT GATEWAY ON THE DOI WEBSITE

The e-Government services related to the online payment of photo reprints and publications are to be integrated with the new Digital Asset Management System. The system which is currently in place has to be scrutinised by MITTS for security issues. Government Gazette online subscription should be addressed with the launch of the new doi.gov.mt. As regards the online application for press cards, it is envisaged that a third party supplier is identified to build the application during the coming year.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW DOI WEBSITE

This Department has revised the final content prepared for the new website following some aesthetical adjustments which were pointed out to the contractor before the last fine-tuning. Once the system is tested from this end, after feedback is referred by the developer, the User Acceptance Testing from MITTS will be required to consolidate the whole issue before the launch takes place.

AMENDMENTS TO THE PRESS ACT

Consideration was given to certain areas in the current Press Act which needed regulation. A proposal to amend the Press Act, particularly to include references to the material published by media organisations on the web, was formulated and in liaison with the Office of the Attorney General, certain amendments were prepared accordingly. A final draft bill was endorsed by the Attorney General's Office but in the meantime other considerations are being dealt with for more amendments.

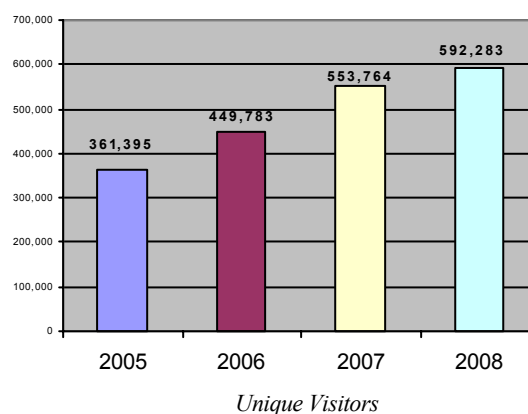
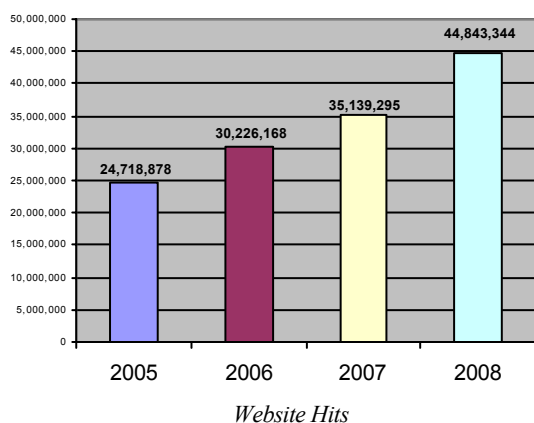
DIGITISATION PROCESS OF DOI FILMS

The Department has taken stock of the archival film material in its possession and has embarked on a laborious process of cleaning each film reel individually. The Department has also initiated a pilot project to have a compilation album on DVD format to be available to the public. The subject under review for

processing is Carnival in Malta throughout the past five decades since there is enough material in hand to make a thorough and complementary product on a subject which is quite popular with the public. The Department has also roped in external help from experts on the matter.

STATISTICAL DATA

Press Releases issued	2,072
Press notices issued	344
DOI Photo Coverages	2,005
Replies to the Press	10
New Registrations with the Press Registry	13
Confirmation of Editors' certificates for libel cases in Court	44
Incoming calls on Freephone 153	63,886
e-Mail replies to the general public	2,072
New subscribers to the DOI Direct Mailing Services	850
DOI Website hits	44,843,344



MARTIN BUGELLI

Director General (Information, Local Government and Public Consultation)

Government Printing Press

During 2008, the Government Press continued to provide an efficient printing service to ministries, government departments and other agencies. All demands were met even though there were various instances where the Press was given very short lead times.

PRINTING OF GOVERNMENT GAZETTE AND SUPPLEMENTS

The following table shows the number of issues of Government Gazette and supplements printed in 2008:

	Issues	Pages		Issues	Pages
Government Gazette	191	12,534	Legal Notices	361	4,454
Bills	18	626	KLBL (Bye Laws)	3	34
Acts	16	452			

All supplements are published together with the Government Gazette which is the main publication. Apart from the twice weekly (Tuesdays and Fridays) publications, other extraordinary editions of the gazette are printed according to exigencies.

Other major jobs undertaken during the year included:

- Electoral Register for General, local councils and European Parliament Elections (April & October 2007);
- Ballot papers and other related material for March 2008 General and Local Council Elections;
- Annual reports of various departments including Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ombudsman, House of Representatives, Auditor General etc;
- Printing of mail shots for the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the Prime Minister;
- NSO Statistical publications and questionnaires;
- Education Department Books for Primary and Secondary Schools,
- Past papers for Junior Lyceum Entrance Exams;
- Budget Publications (Financial Estimates, Budget Speech, Economic Survey);
- Pre Budget Document and Mail shot (160,000 copies).

GENERAL/LOCAL COUNCILS ELECTIONS (MARCH 2008)

General/local council elections were held during the month of March. The Government Press undertook all the printing requirements connected with these elections. The preparations start early with the printing of all the stationery needed by the Electoral Commission and counting hall, followed by the printing, counting and sealing of the ballot papers. Voluminous extraordinary Government Gazettes were published in connection with the voting document accounts. The election results were published in two extraordinary editions of the Government Gazette.

BUDGET 2008

The usual publications in connection with the presentation of the Budget, that is, the Financial Estimates, Economic Survey, Budget Speech and *Diskors tal-Budget*, were delivered on time with very tight schedules. The Pre Budget Document (*Together for a Sustainable Future*) was printed during the month of July followed by a mail shot for every household.

ADMINISTRATION

- Implemented staff flexibility to offset the impact of retiring staff who are not being replaced, thus maintaining a high level of production with a smaller complement.
- Performed stock-taking exercise of existing paper in store to avoid unnecessary expenditure on idle and slow moving stock.
- Total refurbishment of the Administration Offices was carried out and the GPP also embarked on a general maintenance programme of the premises, including sub-station, water pumps, generator and industrial air-conditioners.
- During 2008 the Press successfully continued to reduce arrears of revenue due to the GPP by other government departments and entities.

ADDITIONAL MACHINERY

- A new folding machine was installed in the Finishing Section, through an investment of €124,000. Training of staff was carried out at the Press by foreign instructors.
- Replaced all hardware (Macs) and software programmes in the Typesetting Section, to keep abreast with the fast moving printing technology. Outdated versions of PageMaker were phased out and plans are envisaged to retrain staff in the latest CS3 package (In Design, Photoshop, Illustrator etc.)

ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES

- Promoting the use of recycled/ecological paper to government departments and ministries. As from January 2009 the Government Gazette and supplements will be printed on recycled paper.
- Paper waste is being separated at the Press and sent for recycling.
- Used aluminium printing plates are being sold by tender to be recycled.
- Changed the packaging system by the introduction of two strapping machines to reduce the use of carton boxes. This system reduced the use of cardboard boxes by 80%. This measure besides being environment friendly is saving the Press approximately €5,000 annually.
- Changed all lighting tubes from T8 to Energy Saving T5 Tubes (approx 700 units). Estimated savings of 40% in consumption.

HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

- Reduced excessive noise pollution by covering and repositioning the machines' compressors.
- Two staff members attended courses in first-aid and measures were taken to have a fully-equipped clinic, to deal with minor emergencies in the shop floor.

STATISTICS

Tenders Awarded in 2008	
<i>Description</i>	<i>Supplier</i>
Tender for Offset Plates & Developer	Attard & Co Imaging Ltd
Tender for the Provision of Cleaning Service	Gafasavey Ltd
Tender for Offset Cartridge Paper 70gsm & 120gsm	Kasco Trading Ltd
Tender for White & Pink Bristol Board	Arrowswift Contacts Ltd
Tender for Offset Cartridge Paper 80gsm	Kasco Trading Ltd
Tender for Recycled Paper 80gsm	Fortuna Enterprises Ltd

Production Report by Category - 2008						
Category	Jobs Delivered	Total (€)		Category	Jobs Delivered	Total (€)
Letterheads A4	128	24,987		Labels	3	278
Complimentary Slips	66	4,349		Enumerated Forms	3	1,276
Visiting Cards	285	20,118		Government Gazette	194	623,927
File Covers	126	33,198		Act	16	25,688
Forms	591	262,180		Legal Notices	304	226,216
Envelopes	57	10,205		Bill	21	46,551
Invitations	56	1,849		LCBL	4	2,273
Books (16pp +)	51	79,809		State Visits Stationery	18	1,459
Multiple sets	52	40,705		Past Papers 2004/7	46	11,202
Magazines	3	21,221		School Books	39	8,147
Leaflets/Brochures	29	22,251		Miscellaneous	156	25,400
Posters	5	340		General Forms	181	19,356
Vouchers/Tickets	3	1,622		Xmas Card/Calendar	45	8,361
Booklets (-16pp)	106	99,076		Total	2,588	1,622,044

The listed jobs were ordered by 168 different departments, schools and other entities.

CARMEL R SAMMUT
Director (Printing Press)

Department for Local Government

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

The major highlight with respect to local government during 2008 was the launch of the local government reform process that consisted of a consultation process involving all stakeholders.

The process was launched on 23 May 2008 by means of a press conference by the Prime Minister, attended by Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Executive Secretaries. In his speech, the Prime Minister highlighted several local government issues that needed to be addressed in the reform process, including a co-ordinated approach between central and local government authorities, sustainable development considerations in all local policies, transparency and accountability at local level, good governance, environmental considerations, citizen education and discipline, ongoing training for elected local councillors, executive secretaries and council staff, and maximisation of EU membership.

A small Reform Unit was also set up to attend all consultation meetings, take notes, and compile all comments and suggestions received. The Reform Unit also took note of the complaints received and took action to forward the complaints to the competent authorities, giving feedback to the complainant. At the end of the consultation process, a report was compiled comprising all the recommendations received.

Information Campaign

The local government reform process started off with the launch of a website <http://www.kunsillilokali2015.gov.mt>, freephone, and e-mail facilities so that the general public would be in a position to give their comments and suggestions. A new logo was also launched to signify Government's vision for the Local Government Reform in line with its stated objective to achieve excellence in several areas by 2015. A questionnaire was later on posted to all households, which resulted in around 3,000 written proposals. These measures also helped in putting local government high on the national agenda.

Consultation Process

The first phase of consultations was held with local council members, Executive Secretaries, and staff. Meetings were held with in all the 68 local councils in Malta and Gozo, where all council members, Executive Secretaries and staff had the opportunity to give their recommendations for improving the functions and operations of local government.

The second phase consisted of a series of consultations with government agencies, corporations, and authorities. These included the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), Enemalta, Water Services Corporation (WSC), non-government organisations (NGOs), as well as people from various sectors of society (such as people in old homes and school children). In addition, consultations were also held with the general public. Consultation meetings were held in Rabat (Malta), Marsascala, and Marsalforn, where the public participated fully and had the opportunity to give their comments and recommendations. The consultation process came to a close in November 2008.

All the comments and recommendations were recorded by the Reform Unit and compiled for eventual evaluation.

Seminar on the Reform of the Local Enforcement System (LES)

A one-day seminar was organised jointly between the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Dialogue and Information and the DLG in Gozo for local enforcement system (LES) stakeholders. These included: chairmen of LES Joint Committees, authorised officers, local tribunal registrars, local prosecutors, local warden agencies, members of the Board of Petitions, LES software maintenance providers, the General Workers Union (representing local wardens), the Local Councils Association (LCA), and representatives from the Police and Malta Transport Authority. During this seminar, three workshops were held, each discussing a different theme, and the report of each workshop was presented at the close of the seminar in the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.

Activities to Mark the 15th Anniversary of Local Government in Malta

In order to bring to an end the local government consultation process as well as to mark the fifteen years of local government in Malta, a steering committee was set up to plan a week of activities. The steering committee, chaired by the Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, comprised also representatives from the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Consultation and Information, the DLG, and the LCA. The programme of activities, held in the first week of December, consisted of: planting of trees in Malta and in Gozo by all the Mayors, a roundtable discussion of key local government stakeholders on the subject of the Future of Local Government in Malta, a reception hosted by the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Consultation and Information to former councillors and executive secretaries, blood donation by Mayors, Deputy Mayors and Councillors, activities organised jointly between several local councils and primary schools, courtesy visit by the Executive Committees of the LCA and ASKLM to the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary for Public Consultation and Information, a visit by the Prime Minister to the offices of the DLG, opening of a Gozo talent exhibition and public discussion in Gozo.

The activities came to an end with a march by all council members from Floriana to St John's Co-Cathedral. The march was led by the band of the Armed Forces of Malta. A solemn mass celebrated by His Excellency the Archbishop of Malta was held at the St John's Co-Cathedral, which was followed by a reception at the Auberge de Castille, hosted by the Prime Minister.

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES

As a result of the consultation process, it was deemed necessary to implement certain measures without the need to await the finalisation of the reform process. The new policies implemented during 2008 were the following:

Twinning Policy

Following an intensive consultation process with key stakeholders, foremost being the LCA, a new Twinning Policy was issued in June 2008. This new policy provides clear guidelines, such as definitions as well as procedural modalities with respect to Twinning objectives, the submission of a Twinning Work Plan at the start of the arrangement and the submission of an annual report, as well as financial obligations.

Vacant Sites Policy

A new policy document was issued during 2008 (substituting the original one) that establishes the action to be taken by local councils in order to eliminate inconveniences caused by vacant sites. The policy document was issued after discussions were held with key stakeholders, including the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Consultation and Information, MEPA, and the LCA. The new policy guidelines are

based on the need to address a serious environmental issue that is also a threat to the health and safety of citizens. The policy document addresses the issues of: cleanliness of the vacant sites, the specifications for the erection and alignment of a wall, and other specifications.

Publication of Tenders Policy

In September, a new policy was established whereby, in line with the basic competition rules, local councils were instructed to forward all calls for tenders and quotations for publication in a local daily newspaper chosen by the Department. The newspaper was the one that offered the most advantageous package chosen following a call for quotations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Local Council Financing

The central government financial allocation to local councils for financial year 2008/2009 amounts to €28.01 million. Central government also assists local councils through the assignment of IPSL workers (currently 136) as well as Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs workers (amounting to 40 workers) to all Malta councils as well as 34 public officials (formerly detailed with WSC in Gozo) assigned to Gozo local councils, for a total of 210 workers. The salaries of these workers amount to approximately €2.88 million. Thus, central government's financial contribution to local government, both direct and indirect funds, amount to €30.89 million.

The DLG provides assistance to the LCA and to the ASKLM as part of Government's commitment to assist both associations. The LCA is given an annual financial allocation of €69,882 whereas the ASKLM is given an annual financial allocation of €9,318. In addition, the LCA is provided with the services of a former PBS worker and a DLG worker, whereas a public officer has been detailed with the LCA in the position of Committee of the Regions liaison officer. The DLG also sponsored part of the expenses incurred by the LCA for its participation during the European Open Days for the amount of €2,500. Central government has, therefore, provided indirect financial assistance to the LCA amounting to €44,500. Central government's assistance to the both associations in both direct and indirect financial allocation amounts to approximately €123,700. Thus, the total amount of direct and indirect central government funding for the functions and operations of local government is of approximately €31.01 million.

The DLG is responsible for the allocation of central government's subvention to councils. The table below illustrates the direct and indirect financial allocation to local councils since the setting up of local councils in 1994.

Direct and Indirect Financial Allocation to Local Councils by Central Government 1994 – 2008				
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Direct Financial Allocation (in million)</i>	<i>Salaries of government employees and IPSL workers seconded with local councils (in million)</i>	<i>Funds for special needs 1994-2000 (in million)</i>	<i>Total funds from central Government (in million)</i>
	€	€	€	€
1994-1995	10.48	0.00	0.07	10.55
1995-1996	14.68	0.00	2.96	17.63
1996-1997	16.89	0.00	5.82	22.71
1997-1998	14.56	0.00	5.82	20.38
1998-1999	13.58	0.00	5.82	19.40
1999-2000	15.14	0.00	5.82	20.96
2000-2001	22.53	0.00	0.00	22.53
2001-2002	23.85	0.00	0.00	23.85

2002-2003	24.55	0.00	0.00	24.55
2003-2004	24.93	0.00	0.00	24.93
2004-2005	24.91	1.40	0.00	26.33
2005-2006	23.76	2.66	0.00	26.42
2006-2007	23.88	2.80	0.00	26.67
2007-2008	23.93	2.88	0.00	26.81
2008-2009	28.01	2.88	0.00	30.89
Total	305.68	12.62	26.31	344.61

HUMAN RESOURCES – MAJOR ACTIVITIES

Training and Sponsorship of DLG Employees

During 2008, DLG employees were given training in specific areas. These included training in Customer Relations, Data Protection and training on Proper Use of the Maltese Language in Official Documentation. This training was organised in collaboration with the Staff Development Organisation (SDO), the Operations and Programme Implementation Directorate within the Office of the Prime Minister and the *Kunsill Nazzjonali ta' l-Ilsien Malti* (National Council for the Maltese Language), respectively.

The DLG also benefited from work placement of students undergoing tertiary education. During 2008, a University of Malta student reading for a BA (Hons) in Social Policy and a French language student carried out a work placement at the Department for a number of weeks.

In line with the DLG's commitment towards developing human capital through further education, during this period two DLG employees successfully terminated their tertiary education, one in BA (Hons) studies from the University of Malta and another in MSc (Human & Personal Development) from the University of Leicester.

Training for Local Councillors

In October and November, the DLG organised a structured training programme for Local Councillors who were elected during the 2008 local elections. The course was organised both in Malta and in Gozo and a total of 30 Councillors participated in both courses. Several Mayors also participated in this training programme. The modules included: the Local Councils Act including subsidiary legislation on financial and audit regulations and the Standing Orders, the Role of the Local Councillor, as well as interpersonal skills such as Teamwork and Leadership skills. A certificate of attendance was presented to participants by the Parliamentary Secretary Dr Chris Said at the end of the training programme.

Training for Local Council Executive Secretaries

During the year under review, the DLG organised two training seminars for local council Executive Secretaries. These were a seminar on Data Protection (organised in collaboration with the Operations and Programme Implementation Directorate) and another seminar on Proper Use of the Maltese Language in Official Documentation organised in collaboration with the National Council for the Maltese Language.

Training for Local Council Employees

For the first time ever, the DLG also embarked on training for local council employees in its endeavour to strengthen and improve the competences of employees at local government level. A training course on Customer Relations was organised for council employees dealing with customer care. Participation at this course was high. In fact, around 70 council employees (representing 50% of all council employees) participated in this highly interactive course facilitated by trainers provided by the SDO. A certificate of attendance was presented to participants at the end of the training programme.

LOCAL DEVOLUTION ACTIVITIES

Delegation of Local Enforcement

During 2008, the Local Enforcement System (LES) was extended to all localities within Malta and Gozo. This was done following extensive discussions between all parties that finally led to the Marsa, Birżebbuġa and Gudja local councils accepting the delegation of local enforcement (that is, the delegation of local enforcement through local wardens).

Devolution of Public Property

During 2008, the Devolution Unit with the DLG was instrumental in the realisation of the formal agreements for the devolution of government-owned property to eight local councils. The devolution agreements were the following: playing field and recreational area to the Santa Lucija Local Council, playing field, community hall and civic centre to the Fontana Local Council, site for administrative offices to the Msida Local Council, site for administrative offices, playground, public garden and parking space to the Hamrun Local Council, recreational area to the Floriana Local Council, public garden to the Birgu Local Council, premises to be used as a cultural centre to the Żejtun Local Council, and public convenience to the Santa Venera Local Council.

Devolution of Public Libraries

The year under review also saw the addition of devolution of public libraries to local councils. During 2008, three more councils undertook to assume the devolution of administration of branch libraries. These were the Pembroke, Kalkara and Tarxien Local Councils. Today, there are 47 councils that have assumed this responsibility of the administration of local libraries (six regional libraries and 41 branch libraries).

LOCAL ENFORCEMENT

Local Enforcement System (LES)

All the 68 local councils in Malta and Gozo now form part of the LES. The DLG is responsible to oversee that the system works as flawlessly as possible. As part of its oversight, the Department offers a customer care service with respect to LES issues. As part of the local government reform process, the LES system is also under review. Proposals have been put forward by the DLG to regulate the Local Tribunal sittings, including the establishing of clear roles and responsibilities of the Authorised Officer and Tribunal Registrar. An online payment service of contraventions is also available on the webpage <https://les.gov.mt/contraventions.aspx>.

Board of Petitions

The introduction of the Petitions Board in January 2006 has been instrumental in easing citizen frustrations brought about by erroneous issue of notices of contraventions. In addition, the Board of Petitions is also empowered to waive contraventions when it is satisfied that it should do so on humanitarian grounds. Since its inception till end of November 2008, the Registry, Board of Petitions (which is administered by the DLG) has received 35,203 petitions, that is, an average of 977 petitions per month. In view of the ever increasing volume of work as well as the addition of staff within the Registry, during 2008 office space was made available on one floor and additional IT and other office furniture bought. This was made possible in view of cost cutting measures adopted by the DLG in other items of expenditure.

The table below gives a breakdown of petitions received and their status as at end of year 2008.

Status	2006	2007	2008	Total	% of Petitions Considered
Accepted	4,001	5,361	2,100	11,462	53.8%
Partially accepted	257	51	3	311	1.5%
Refused	2,617	3,620	2,997	9,234	43.4%
Abstained	160	23	12	195	0.9%
Cancelled/others	16	21	54	91	0.4%
Decided Petitions	7,051	9,076	5,166	21,293	100%
					% of Petitions Received
Decided Petitions	7,051	9,076	5,166	21,293	60%
Undecided petitions	815	2,841	10,254	13,910	40%
Petitions Received	7,866	11,917	15,420	35,203	100%

MONITORING OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Monitoring of Local Councils and Action Taken

The Monitoring Unit with the DLG, notwithstanding the lack of resources, continued with its efforts to monitor local councils' functions and operations, in particular in order to ensure the submission of statutory documents, such as the Annual Budget, the Business Plan and the Quarterly Financial Reports. The Monitoring Unit also provides advice on the proper submission of financial estimates as well as on other financial queries.

Monitoring is done by scrutinising council minutes of meetings, schedule of payments, as well as investigating allegations of irregularities by council members or council employees. As a result of investigations carried out during 2008, several councils had payments withheld from their financial allocation until statutory documents were submitted. In addition, punitive measures were taken against several councils for making illegal donations, through deductions from their financial allocation. Investigations carried out by the Department with respect to familiar disclosure and pecuniary interest led to both cases being forwarded to the Police for further investigation and eventual prosecution. In another case, the Department gave its recommendation to the Minister for the approval of dismissal of a council employee and in another two occasions interim audits were carried out to establish whether there were financial irregularities by council employees.

The Monitoring Unit also liaises closely with the National Audit Office, in particular with respect to action to be taken following the receipt of the Audit Reports and the replies by the council to the local government auditors' Management Letter.

On the basis of its operational experience, the Monitoring Unit has also submitted extensive proposals with respect to financial reporting and budgeting as part of the local government reform process.

Recommendations for New Budget and Quarterly Financial Report Templates

The Monitoring Unit also carried out a review of existing Budget and Quarterly Financial Report templates, both templates being obligatory in terms of the Local Councils Financial Procedures. These templates had never been amended since their inclusion in the procedures in 1996, and the changes proposed by the Department are intended to render them in line with current practices, in particular with a view to cater for the accrual accounting system that is operated by local councils. The proposals were also made following extensive consultation with the National Audit Office and the Association of Local Council Executive Secretaries.

LOCAL COUNCIL APPRAISAL

Efficiency Reports

The Department's Field Services Unit (FSU) carried out inspections in all localities in Malta and Gozo with respect to the statutory functions of road maintenance, street sweeping, street cleaning, upkeep of public conveniences, upkeep and maintenance of gardens, road signs and markings, and footways.

These inspections were compiled in three Efficiency Reports that were tabled in the House of Representatives. The reports included also a comparative study with the inspection reports carried out during the previous year. Whilst notable improvements were noted in several councils, the same could not be reported for other councils where the service efficiency did not improve. In the case of those councils where no marked improvement was noted, meetings were held between DLG officials and the council to identify the major difficulties and offer assistance.

Updating of Local Councils Asset Inventory

The Department also carried out field surveys with respect to updating the local government assets in the localities of Hamrun, Iklin, Kalkara, Kirkop, Lija, Luqa, Marsa, Qormi, Floriana, Siġġiewi, Birżebbuġa, Bormla, Birkirkara, Santa Venera, Dingli, San Pawl il-Baħar, Mellieħa, Msida, Żabbar, Marsaxlokk, Naxxar, Mellieħa, Fontana, Xewkija, Nadur, Qala, San Lawrenz, Xagħra (G), and Żebbuġ (G). This data is required as part of the funding formula established in the Tenth Schedule to the Local Councils Act.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION

Legal Notices

During 2008, the Legal Section of the DLG was responsible for the preparation, vetting and publication of 11 local government legal notices. These legal notices regulate: the inclusion of SmartCity as a zone excluded from the jurisdiction of local councils, amendments to the coat-of-arms of the Floriana locality, the coming into force of the power of Mayors to officiate during civil marriages, the inclusion of an NGO as an organisation that can receive donations from local councils, the extension of the term of office of the current Local Councils Association executive body by one year, the publication of public property devolved to eight local councils, the delegation of local enforcement to the Gudja, Marsa, and Birżebbuġa Local Councils (whereby all the 68 local councils have now been delegated local enforcement), and the dissolution of Mtarfa Local Council following official notice for persistent breaches of the Local Councils Act.

Approval of New Bye-Laws

In 2008, three councils submitted proposals for bye-laws that were approved by the minister. These were the following: the *Xatt is-Sajjieda* (San Ġiljan Local Council) Bye-Laws 2008 that regulate access to and the placement of boats on *Xatt is-Sajjieda* under conditions imposed by the council; the Beverages in Glass Containers and Consumption of Alcohol in Public Places (San Ġiljan Local Council) Bye-Laws 2008 that regulate the carrying and consumption of alcohol in public places as well as scheduling the streets within San Ġiljan wherein no alcohol or beverages in glass containers shall be consumed; and the Use of Facilities (Santa Luċija Local Council) Bye-Laws 2008 that regulate the use of the 5-a-side football pitch or the display, placement or fixing of any advertisement on any wall or equipment in the said pitch which is under the responsibility of the Santa Luċija Local Council.

NEW INITIATIVES

Waste Separation from Households

In line with central government's national waste strategy, all the local councils have, since May 2008, started participating in the waste separation strategy. All councils have contributed towards the distribution of free waste separation (grey) bags. In addition, they also undertook to include an additional waste collection service on Tuesdays for separated waste. Following discussions between the Ministry of Finance, the LCA, the GRTU, and the DLG, central government undertook to make good for the cost of the additional waste collection service until a new contract document for both organic and separated waste is issued.

Local Government Website

On the initiative of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Consultation and Information, the DLG was involved in the co-ordination of the Local Government website that will also include links to all local councils' sub-websites. The general website, owned by the DLG, will be launched in January 2009.

Assistance to Local Councils by MEUSAC

In August 2008, the DLG issued a circular to all councils informing them that the Funding Unit within MEUSAC (the Malta-EU Steering Action Committee) would be assisting those councils that wished to avail themselves of EU programmes not forming part of the ERDF or the ESF. This service to local councils is free of charge.

Facility to Local Councils for Free Advertising

In October 2008, the Department informed all councils that agreement was made with a local newspaper to dedicate a full page to advertise local council activities. This gave an excellent opportunity to all local councils to advertise any forthcoming local events or past events organised by them.

Cultural Events Scheme

In December, the DLG issued a circular to all councils informing them of the launch of a new scheme to promote cultural events within their localities. The circular was accompanied by guidance notes (including eligibility criteria) and an application form. This scheme is one of the measures undertaken by central government for the development of "sustainable localities" by giving an incentive to those councils that propose initiatives aiming at improving their localities' cultural heritage whilst promoting it to domestic and foreign visitors alike. All applications for grant assistance under this scheme will be assessed by an independent evaluation board. A fund of €93,000 has been allocated for this scheme.

Scheme for Energy Saving Projects by Local Councils

In December, another scheme was launched to all councils. This scheme is aimed at giving an incentive to those councils that propose a feasible energy saving scheme. The scheme also signifies central government's commitment in effectively supporting such initiatives. The circular was accompanied by guidance notes and an application form. All applications for grant assistance under this scheme will be assessed by an independent evaluation board and each successful council will be eligible for financial assistance of a maximum of €10,000. The fund allocated for this scheme is of €150,000.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

European Union Commitments

URBACT Programme

The DLG is the national representative on the URBACT Programme (an EU programme funded by the European Regional Development Fund). This programme aims to foster the exchange of experience amongst European cities and the capitalisation and dissemination of knowledge on sustainable urban development related issues. The current programme (URBACT II) is aimed at improving the effectiveness of sustainable integrated urban development in Europe with a view to implementing the European Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy (that addresses the issues of competitiveness, growth and jobs).

Participation at National Level

On a local level, the DLG is a partner in the EU project *Promoting Equal Opportunities through Empowerment* that is led by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). The objectives of the project are to reach out to the inactive segment of the Maltese population, and to effectively make use of role models. The input of the Department was to assist the NCPE in the dissemination of information to all councils on activities that promote gender mainstreaming and seminars during which examples of good practice were given.

Council of Europe Commitments

Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy

As member in the Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR), the Director participated in the plenary session held between 2 and 4 June 2008 wherein several reports prepared by the sub-committees were discussed, including reports on regionalisation in Europe, a draft additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, reports of activities by member states on democratic participation at local level, public ethics at local level, transfrontier co-operation, the Council of Europe (CoE) strategy for innovation and good governance at local level, the European Democracy Week (held during the month of October in all CoE member states, and preparatory work for the Ministerial Conference due in October/November 2009).

NATALINO ATTARD

Director (Local Government)

**Ministry of
Foreign Affairs**

Directorate General – European and Economic Affairs

The work of the Directorate General continues to be focused on making a success of European Union membership by carefully identifying what can be of benefit to Malta and its citizens keeping in mind the interests and concerns of Malta. This Directorate General spearheads the actions to be taken in this regard in order to be tackled adequately and at the appropriate level at the various EU fora.

In general terms, this Directorate General was responsible for the development, co-ordination and execution of policy with regard to general European affairs, relations with EU Member States, EFTA States, EU Candidate States and States within the European perspective and relations with European multilateral organisations. It was also responsible for the co-ordination of efforts in the holistic promotion of Malta with European economies, other neighbouring economies as well as existing and emerging major economies through the optimisation of the Ministry's international network of embassies and consulates.

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE

This Directorate continued to foster and promote further the bilateral relations between Malta and the Member States of the European Union, and other European countries that are involved in the process of EU integration, giving due attention and priority mostly to those countries with which Malta has close political, economic and commercial ties. The Directorate also continued to co-ordinate matters with regard to Malta's participation in the European structures and processes, namely within the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

During 2008, officials from this Directorate participated in the meetings of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Working Groups of COSCE (Council of Europe and OSCE) and COWEB (Western Balkans). Documentation and briefs were prepared for the monthly EU General Affairs and External Relations (GAERC) agenda items concerning EU relations with the Western Balkans and with regard to the EU Council meetings and EU Summits.

This Directorate was also responsible for compiling the necessary documentation consisting of country profiles for a number of ministerial and parliamentary level visits to Malta from France, Italy, the Slovak Republic, Greece, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, and Germany, as well as in connection with a number of visits relating to presentation of credentials and farewell calls by Ambassadors accredited to Malta and the presentation of credentials by Maltese Ambassadors to Estonia, Switzerland, Latvia, Hungary, and Poland. Officials from the Directorate accompanied and assisted Maltese Ambassadors during the presentation of credentials.

Country profiles were also made available to the Chairman of the Foreign and European Affairs Committee with regard to incoming official working visits. A brief on Kosovo, with regard to Malta's decision to recognise Kosovo, following the latter's declaration of independence, was also submitted to the Chairman of the said Committee. This was done in view of the discussion held at the Committee on this subject.

The Directorate co-ordinated matters with regard to the submission of the country brief to the Office of the President in connection with the Official Visit to Portugal by the President of Malta, which was held in November 2008.

During the period under consideration the Minister of Foreign Affairs held meetings in Malta and abroad with his European counterparts and/or Secretaries of State for European Affairs from the following countries: Italy, Spain, Estonia, Greece, The Netherlands, Cyprus, Luxembourg, UK, France, Germany, and Switzerland.

This Directorate also co-ordinated matters with OPM in the preparation of country briefs in view of the Prime Minister's official visits to Italy and the Czech Republic and a meeting with the Belgian Prime Minister in Brussels as well as for the incoming visits by the Prime Ministers of France, Italy, Slovak Republic and Greece, and in connection with the visits to Malta by a number of Heads of Government and several Deputy Foreign Ministers for the celebrations of Malta's entry into the eurozone, held on 11-12 January 2008, in view of bilateral meetings that were held in the margins of these celebrations.

With regard to OSCE, the Directorate was involved in the preparations in connection with Malta's participation at the 16th OSCE Ministerial Council meeting held in Helsinki on 4-5 December 2008, during which a statement was delivered by Malta. During this period, two Conventions of the Council of Europe were ratified and Malta was elected as member of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA).

In its efforts to strengthen the bilateral juridical framework, during the period under consideration, the Directorate co-ordinated with other relevant Ministries with a view to conclude, sign and/or ratify the following bilateral agreements:

State	Agreement and date of Signature and/or Ratification
Italy	Memorandum of Understanding between Malta and Italy on Defence Co-operation - Ratified: 11 June 2008
Italy	Italo-Maltese Cultural and Educational Agreement - Ratified: 11 June 2008
Ireland	Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income - Signed: 14 November 2008; Ratified: 18 November 2008
Greece	Agreement between Malta and Greece on Co-operation in the Field of Search and Rescue – Signed: 12 January 2008; Ratified: 3 April 2008
Greece	Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income – Entered into force for Malta and Greece: 30 August 2008
Montenegro	Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income – Signed: 4 November 2008
Montenegro	Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States of the one part and Montenegro, of the other part – Instrument of Ratification signed: 17 November 2008; Deposited with the Council of the EU: 28 November 2008
Latvia	Co-operation Agreement on Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Substances and Organised Crime – Signed: 24 July 2008
Switzerland	Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income – Signed: 18 December 2008
Switzerland	Framework Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council and Malta concerning the implementation of the Swiss-Maltese Co-operation Programme to reduce Economic and Social disparities within the enlarged European Union – Ratified: 11 March 2008; Entered into force: 29 April 2008
Switzerland	Agreement (through exchange of <i>Notes Verbales</i>) between Malta and Switzerland on the accreditation of the Swiss Liaison Officer located at the Swiss Embassy in Rome – Entered into force: 13 June 2008
Spain	Memorandum of Understanding between the MFA of Malta and the MFA of Spain on the Representation of Malta by Spanish Consular Authorities for the Issuance of Transit and Short-Stay Visas – Signed and entered into force: 17 January 2008
Spain	Specific Memorandum of Understanding between the MFA of Malta and the MFA of Spain to allow the use of the facilities and infrastructure of the Spanish Consulate-General in Algiers by a Maltese Diplomat – Signed and entered into force: 18 July 2008
Spain	Specific Memorandum of Understanding between the MFA of Malta and the MFA of Spain to allow the use of the facilities and infrastructure of the Spanish Embassy in Serbia by a Maltese Diplomat – Signed and entered into force: 18 July 2008

GENERAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE DIRECTORATE

During 2008, the General Affairs and International Trade Directorate continued to ensure that Malta's positions and interests are safeguarded within European fora on general European affairs in particular enlargement, treaty evolution, and the future of Europe debate. Special focus was given in areas or issues which although were the responsibility of other ministries as lead ministries, they were issues of particular political sensitivity.

This Directorate continued to follow closely the accession negotiations of Croatia and Turkey with the continuous input to the Permanent Representation in Brussels on chapter negotiations. The Directorate pushed forward the enlargement strategy of the Union in that it gave feedback where required, to the Common Positions of EU Member States and through the regular participation in the monthly Council Working Party on Enlargement and Countries negotiating Accession.

This Directorate also followed the developments in the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty and formulated positions on the various institutional repercussions in the debate that ensued following the Irish negative referendum result. This Directorate contributed in the formulation of a Malta position when Ireland consulted with its partners on the way forward.

The Directorate continued to be the representative of the Ministry in the Inter-Ministerial Committee for EU affairs and in this capacity was responsible for the legal transposition of the legislative proposals of which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the lead ministry. The Directorate monitored the pipeline *acquis* and subsequently drew up the necessary memoranda for the eventual approval by the Minister and the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

Throughout 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remained active as regards economic/commercial diplomacy. Through its vast network of diplomatic and consular representation (ambassadors, resident and non-resident, embassies, consulates and honorary consuls abroad) and also through its foreign missions in and accredited to Malta (diplomatic and consular), the Ministry continued to play an important role in promoting Malta's business sector and Malta's economic interests abroad.

Fully aware of the fact that Malta's external trade relations increasingly determine the growth and development of the island, the Ministry in 2008 consolidated its overall efforts to promote and strengthen bilateral trade relations with various countries, including new and emerging economies with the aim of increasing the presence of Malta's goods and services in these markets and attracting inward investment to Malta. In this regard, throughout the year under review, the Directorate was in regular touch with Malta Enterprise, the Chamber for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (GRTU), Finance Malta, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In August 2008, with the aim of attaining more co-ordination and synergy among the key players in the field of trade and investment, the Ministry established an Internationalisation Committee, which held regular meetings between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malta Enterprise and the Chamber of Commerce with the aim of co-ordinating the role played by these entities in this field.

Besides, the General Affairs and International Trade Directorate at the Ministry was responsible for the monitoring of international economic relations, the handling of business enquiries emanating from Malta's diplomatic/consular corps and the preparation of trade and other economic statistics/reports and the organisation of business delegations in conjunction with presidential official/state visits.

In July 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with Malta Enterprise organised a business delegation which accompanied the President of Malta and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs on an official visit to Ukraine. Business seminars highlighting business opportunities and pre-arranged business one-to-one meetings were also organised in the course of this visit. Similarly in

November 2008, another business delegation accompanied the President of Malta on his official visit to Portugal.

Within the Cultural Diplomacy Unit, work continued to promote Maltese culture abroad through a number of actions. The actions were either a response to direct invitations from governmental and non-governmental institutions abroad or requests forwarded by our embassies to assist them in organising particular cultural events. During 2008, the major part of invitations came from Italy and this Unit liaised with the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts, Heritage Malta, St James Cavalier, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (MEDC) in order to organise, whenever possible, participation by Maltese artists and students in these events.

Furthermore, this year was marked by the 40th anniversary of bilateral relations between Malta and the Czech Republic. In this regard, this Unit worked in proximity with MEDC to finalise the negotiations regarding the Programme of Co-operation in the field of Education, Culture, Science, Youth and Sport for the years 2009-2011. The revised programme was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Prague on 9 December 2008.

Amongst the initiatives that materialised there were features about Malta aired on international television networks, participation in international or Mediterranean-based art exhibitions, participation in historic *in guardia* celebrations abroad such as the one marking the 1571 Battle of Lepanto and participation in various European Charity Bazaars organised annually by the foreign diplomatic communities abroad and in a UN Charity Bazaar.

This Unit also assisted to secure a number of visits to Malta by European companies who chose Malta for their staff development seminars cum cultural visits. In these events, this Unit co-ordinated intensely with the Maltese embassies abroad, the Malta Enterprise, and the Malta Tourism Authority to come up with a fully-fledged programme for the said visits.

During 2008, this Unit also assisted St James Cavalier in its development of a web portal aimed to serve as a platform for cultural diversity in Malta and the Maltese abroad. The web portal which is financed by the European Union marking 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue will serve as a unique opportunity for embassies, cultural institutes, organisations of Maltese communities abroad and associations of international communities in Malta to provide information about their community and promote their events through a common portal. The portal is scheduled to be officially launched in the beginning of 2009.

The Cultural Diplomacy Unit started organising once again Information Visits for Foreign Diplomats based in Malta. These visits took the foreign diplomats stationed in Malta to several sites of commercial and cultural interest.

During the past year, the Directorate continued to fulfil its objective related to the workings of the Sanctions Monitoring Board, with the Director General for European and Economic Affairs acting as Chairman. This Directorate regularly monitored developments with respect to the sanctions regime both at the level of the United Nations as well as at the European Union. During 2008, the Sanctions Monitoring Board transposed further sanctions on Iran into Maltese law. The Secretary of the Sanctions Monitoring Board attended regularly the COMEM/CONOP Council Working Group and RELEX (Sanctions) Meetings in Brussels.

CHARLES INGUANEZ
Director General (Economic and European Affairs)

Directorate General – Political

From a general perspective, the Directorate General focused efforts on ensuring that Malta's foreign policy objectives on bilateral (non-EU), regional and global issues were pursued, not least through active participation in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). These efforts included the preparation of positions for interventions at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), Coreper, PSC, and relevant working group meetings. Inputs were provided to the formulation of EU positions both on issues relating to Malta's immediate neighbourhood, in particular the North Africa and the Middle East Peace Process, and also in areas of primary international importance outside Malta's neighbourhood. Briefing sessions were conducted in the run-up to GAERC to communicate Malta's positions on the various agenda items to the diplomatic representation of other Member States in Malta.

GLOBAL ISSUES DIRECTORATE

During 2008, the Global Issues Directorate continued with its mission to enhance relations with international organisations, such as the United Nations and its agencies, the Commonwealth, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Organisation for Migration, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the Hague Convention.

It was also involved in bilateral contacts with various African countries, namely, South Africa, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Nigeria aimed at improving Malta's relations with these countries and particularly focusing on migration issues.

The Directorate co-ordinated the visit of the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to New York to attend the 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2008. It was also actively involved in preparing the necessary documentation in respect of the meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government and Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, both held in New York in September 2008.

Six training programmes were held under the Malta/Commonwealth Third Country Programmes in the following areas:

- Coastal Management
- IT and Diplomacy
- Insurance Management
- Banking and Finance Policies in Small States
- Competitive Strategies for Small States (in alternation)
- Freeport Operations Management
- Cyber law.

Particular attention was devoted to addressing the international aspects of irregular immigration, with the Directorate actively involved in pursuing Malta's interest in this regard within the EU and other international entities. The Directorate gave its contribution during the negotiating process dealing the finalising of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. It actively participated in the four preparatory meetings held in Morocco, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and France leading to the holding of the Second Euro-African Ministerial Meeting that took place in Paris, France on 25 September.

During the year, 176 refugees and persons accorded humanitarian protection were resettled in the United States.

In line with Malta's development policy, the Directorate co-ordinated the process leading to the part-financing of three projects by local voluntary organisations in Africa. These three projects concern the setting up of a computer laboratory and upgrading of educational facilities for Kenyan children; the harvesting of water in Ethiopia and the setting up of a training centre in Benin.

The Directorate, together with the Department for Local Government and two local non-governmental organisations, co-ordinated Malta's participation in the European Development Days held in Strasbourg on 15-17 November.

In collaboration with the European Commission, the Directorate organised a three-day seminar in Malta on *Civil Society Involvement in Development Co-operation*. The seminar was held on 2-4 December 2008.

Officials from the Directorate regularly attended ten CFSP Working Groups meetings held in Brussels, apart from participating in various international meetings. The ten Working Groups attended by this Directorate are the following: CONUN (United Nations), CODUN (Disarmament), CONOP (Non-Proliferation), COMAR (Law of the Sea), COHOM (Human Rights), COARM (Arms Control), COAFR (Africa), COJUR/ICC (Jurists Working Group dealing with the International Criminal Court), COTER (Terrorism) and the High Level Working Group on Migration and Development. The Directorate also covers the EU/Africa Partnerships on Migration, Employment and Mobility as well as on the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2008, a number of Maltese officials participated in election observation missions held by the EU in Pakistan, Cambodia, and Rwanda.

The following treaties were signed, acceded to or ratified by Malta during 2008:

Accession	
30 October	International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001 adopted in London on 23 March 2001
Ratifications	
31 January	Acts of the 2004 Bucharest Congress of the Universal Postal Union done on 5 October 2004
8 April	United Nations Convention against Corruption
Signatures	
23 June	World Health Organisation Charter on Health Systems
3 December	United Nations Convention on Cluster Munitions
Agreements	
10 January	Co-operation Agreement between the Government of Malta and the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN)
18 February	Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the DiploFoundation on Climate Change Diplomacy Project

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND MEDITERRANEAN AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE

Malta's relations with non-European countries and its position on a number of international political issues have been co-ordinated by the Directorate. Such positions were also expressed, where appropriate, at the EU level within the relevant Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) structures during the Slovenian and French Presidencies of the EU.

Directorate officers participated in capitals-formation meetings of the following Working Groups: COMAG (Mashrek/Maghreb), COMEM (Middle East and Gulf), COMEP (Middle East Peace Process), COEST (Easter Europe), COASI (Asia), COTRA (Transatlantic – USA & Canada) and COLAT (Latin America) contributing to common positions and reflecting Malta's national interests and political realities.

Active participation in regional fora and initiatives of direct relevance to the Mediterranean region, namely the Euro-Mediterranean Process and more recently the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Western Mediterranean (5+5) Dialogue and the Med Forum was also ensured together with timely contributions to the largely thematic approach of the Mediterranean agenda adopted by these fora.

In consonance with the Ministry's strategic objective of strengthening bilateral relations, particularly with neighbouring countries, the Directorate continued to actively nurture Malta's external relations on a wider bilateral level while ensuring focus on matters of direct relevance and importance to Malta's policies.

The Directorate was involved in the compilation of the necessary documentation for outgoing and incoming ministerial visits. Official visits by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt underscore a focused attention on countries with a high political relevance to Malta. The Directorate was also involved in the co-ordination of briefing material for HE the President of the Republic during visits to Libya and Ukraine. These high-level visits also reflect the enhanced political profile the Ministry is seeking to carve in its ongoing diplomatic performance, also in order to maximise economic benefits.

Malta's initiative on establishing a structured political dialogue with enhanced visibility between the EU and the League of Arab States has been strongly promoted within the EU and the LAS structures. The initiative culminated in the EU-AL Ministerial Meeting held in Malta on 11-12 February and resulted in the 'Malta Communiqué' which underscored the importance that both the EU and Arab governments attach to strengthened dialogue. Foreign Ministers convening in Malta discussed issues of a global nature such as climate change, energy security, the situation in the Middle East region and dialogue between cultures. Earlier in the year, the LAS had welcomed the nomination of Malta's Ambassador in Cairo as Liaison Officer to the League.

Very much in line with Malta's contribution to inter-cultural understanding, the Directorate closely followed up on Malta's membership of the Alliance of Civilisations Group of Friends in January 2008. The Alliance seeks to motivate international action against extremism through the forging of international, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and co-operation.

New regional initiatives such as the French proposal for establishing a project-based Union for the Mediterranean incorporating the participation by all littoral Mediterranean States to serve as a co-operation engine that will implement practical projects have been closely followed by the Directorate with a view to ensure that Malta may be an active participant in this project. The Directorate was actively involved in the preparations and negotiations leading to the Union for the Mediterranean Summit held in Paris on 13 July. At the Marseille Ministerial Meeting held in November, Malta was allocated a seat of Deputy Secretary-General and designated to host a liaison office for dialogue between the EU and the Arab League.

Malta was officially admitted to the US Visa Waiver Program in December, following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Malta and the US earlier in the year. The Visa Waiver Program was introduced in 1986 with the aim of facilitating tourism and short-term business visits to the US.

The Directorate continued to follow closely the developments in the long-standing Middle East conflict and contributed to the formulation of policy stances through effective participation in the pertinent Council structures. The Directorate followed closely Malta's participation at the Conference on Palestinian Rule of Law in June 2008, where the Government of Malta made an offer for Palestinian police officers to receive training in the different divisions of the Malta Police Forces.

Contributions were also made by Malta to the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Burma, China, and Georgia in different periods of the year.

The parliamentary dimension of diplomacy in the Mediterranean continued to operate smoothly following the setting up in Malta of the General Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean. The second PAM session was held in Malta on 22-24 November. On Malta's insistence, PAM was invited to participate in the launching of the Union for the Mediterranean Summit that was held in Paris on 13 July. The Directorate continues to assist the Office of Clerk to the House of Representatives in the realisation of this pan-Mediterranean parliamentary project.

During the course of the year, the Directorate co-ordinated the negotiation and conclusion of a number of bilateral agreements with countries falling under its responsibility:

State	Date	Agreement
China	12 December	Plan of co-operation in the fields of health and medicine
Libya	31 July	MoU in the field of medical services and public health
	28 December	Convention for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income
Pakistan	8 July	MoU on bilateral consultations
Palestinian Authority	12 February	MoU on political consultations
	5 May	MoU on Malta's financial contribution to PEGASE
	24 June	MoU on training of police officers
Ukraine	9 August	Agreement on Co-operation in the Sphere of Law Enforcement
	9 August	Agreement on Co-operation in the Field of Tourism
United Arab Emirates	20 December	Co-operation Agreement on the Fight Against the Illicit Trafficking and against Organised Crime
United States of America	11 April	MoU regarding the Visa Waiver Program and related enhanced security measures
	8 August	Convention for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income
	3 October	Agreement on Enhancing Co-operation in Preventing and Combating Serious Crime

JOHN INGUANEZ
Director General (Political)

Central Visa Unit

EU-ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL MEETING

The Central Visa Unit co-ordinated matters with regard to visa issuance to the delegates of the EU-League of Arab States Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting, held in Malta between 11 and 12 February 2008.

RELOCATION OF CENTRAL VISA UNIT PREMISES

In April 2008, the Central Visa Unit moved from its former premises in Republic Street to the newly-refurbished premises in Pjazza San Kalcidonju, Floriana. Works on the refurbishment had commenced in October 2007 in collaboration with the Building & Engineering Department of the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure.

SCHENGEN EVALUATION OF SWISS CONSULATES

In May 2008, the Acting Head of the Central Visa Unit was selected as the first Maltese expert to participate in an EU Council Schengen Evaluation Team to evaluate the Swiss Consulates in Moscow and Istanbul, as part of the Swiss Confederation's preparations for accession to Schengen.

PARTICIPATION AT CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

In June 2008, the Acting Head was a guest speaker at the *Asylum and Immigration – Freedom of Movement – Schengen and Police Co-operation* Conference organised by the Staff Development Organisation (Office of the Prime Minister). As in previous years and regularly since 2003, the Acting Head also participated at the monthly Visa Working Party Meetings in Brussels.

RECRUITMENT

Following a call for applications in May, for the deployment of public officers to perform visa/consular duties in the Central Visa Unit, six officers were deployed with the Central Visa Unit as of November 2008. The strengthening of the Unit's management structure continued through a call for the post of Head, Central Visa Unit which was published in August.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

During 2008, Central Visa Unit officials held various meetings with officials from the Malta Tourism Authority, Air Malta, SmartCity Malta, FELTOM, the University of Malta, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and the Government Services Unit of the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications.

US VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

In August and September 2008, the Central Visa Unit was involved in the discussions held with the US Department of Homeland Security in relation to Malta's road to accession to the US Visa Waiver Program.

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

In December 2008, a Service Level Agreement was signed between the Central Visa Unit and the Government Services Unit within the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications articulating the commitment of both parties to the processing of visa applications within specific timeframes.

PAUL DEMAJO

Acting Head (Central Visa Unit)

Department of Citizenship & Expatriate Affairs

During 2008, the Department continued to administer and implement the provisions of the Citizenship and Immigration legislation and relative policies, moving from the portfolio of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs to that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the establishment of the new legislature in March 2008.

CITIZENSHIP

With the enactment of the 2007 amendments to the Maltese Citizenship Act (Cap 188) by means of Act X of 2007, which came into force on 1 August 2007, the possibility for a person born abroad acquiring Maltese citizenship was given new dimensions. As a result of such legislation, children born outside Malta, prior to Independence, of mothers who were born in Malta and who became citizens of Malta, as well as second and subsequent generations of Maltese migrants, became eligible to acquire Maltese citizenship by registration, that is, as of right, following the submission of the relative application.

During 2008, the Department, mainly through Malta's missions abroad, continued to receive a steady flow of applications from persons in the said categories. The majority of such applications, as was expected, were from the Australian continent. In May, on the initiative of the Maltese Consulate in Melbourne, a direct telephone link was set up and the Department participated in a conference organised by the Consulate and the Maltese Community Council in Victoria for the purpose of explaining the provisions of the above-mentioned amendments.

The Department received numerous enquiries, mainly by means of electronic mail, from persons of Maltese descent seeking information on their eligibility (or otherwise) and on the procedure to follow in order to acquire Maltese citizenship. At times, interested persons who are of a third or fourth generation born abroad have to trace documentation, going as far back as the early nineteenth century to prove their descent and eligibility in order to apply for registration as citizens of Malta.

In spite of the added workload that resulted from such legislation, the Department maintained a consistent output.

MIGRATION

During 2008, the migration - which had started in late 2006 - of the functions concerning the issue of residence documents to EU and non-EU nationals from the Police Immigration Authorities to the Department, was completed.

In late December 2007, the Department had started offering a one-stop-shop service to persons entitled to hold exempt person status/freedom of movement, that is, the foreign spouses of citizens of Malta and their dependents. Following the provision of this service, the persons concerned were no longer required to call at the Police Immigration Office to have their passports stamped with the relative endorsement that reflected such immigration position.

The request for this service gathered momentum in 2008, in view that when this task used to be performed by the Police Immigration Office, the immigration status was reflected by means of a rubber-stamp

endorsement. The C&EA Department is issuing, in lieu of such stamp, a residence document in the form of a sticker affixed in the holder's passport. Following Malta's entry into Schengen, the holders of such document are exempt from the requirement of a visa when travelling into Schengen. Persons who therefore held the rubber-stamp endorsement in their passport are requesting the Directorate (in view that such endorsements are no longer appropriate) to issue them with such documentation in order to facilitate their travel through Schengen.

By means of Legal notice 28 of 2008 regarding the regulations concerning the admittance of third country nationals for the purpose of study, the Department assumed responsibility for the issue of residence permits to students (mainly university students) who proceed to Malta to follow courses leading to higher qualifications. Furthermore, in April of the same year, the Department also became responsible for the issue of residence permits, where these are required, to all third country nationals who come to study in Malta. Such students mainly attend courses at English Language schools in Malta.

During 2008, the Department, which is responsible for the issue of residence documents to EU nationals and their family members, has, in this regard, produced secure documents. EU nationals are issued with a card on which a sticker with security features is attached showing details of the holder. In the case of a family member of an EU national, who is a third country national, this sticker is affixed in his/her passport.

The Department's function still requires the support of the Police Immigration Office, with whom it continued to work in full co-operation, especially to clear applications from a security point of view and to curb abuse, where this emerges, when processing applications for residence permits.

PRESENT/FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT

The number of potential applicants who are eligible to apply for registration as citizens of Malta on the basis of the year 2007 amendments is huge, considering the hundreds of thousands of Maltese migrants who left our shores in the past. The Department would, therefore, have to be fully prepared to deal with the demand for information about Maltese citizenship and with the relative applications for registration in an expeditious manner.

The Department's role concerning migration has now widened to the extent that it encompasses totally the categories of foreigners involved in the process concerning legal migration. The mobility through Schengen territory, by means of the uniform residence permit, has increased the number of exigent requests for applications to be processed. It is intended to design a new work process and to revisit the existing IT system to manage the said tasks with due expediency.

In view of recently adopted EU legislation, Malta would have to adopt biometric residence documents which are issued to third country nationals, by 2010. The Department would be making preparations to have such documentation available as required by the said legislation.

EU RELATED MATTERS

In view of the Department's role in the migration process and the emerging EU legislation in this regard, the Director has participated in the Council's *ad hoc* technical committees, which examined proposals concerning the admittance of highly-skilled workers, rights of workers from third countries and long-term resident status to beneficiaries of international protection.

Moreover, he participated in the meetings of the Commission's Technical and Advisory Committees on the free movement of workers as well as in other committees of experts on migration.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Nationality

The Department continued to deal with enquiries regarding the national status of both Maltese and non-Maltese citizens and with applications for the acquisition of the citizenship of Malta under the provisions of the Maltese Citizenship Act (Cap 188). During the year, 594 persons were registered as citizens of Malta whilst 50 others were naturalised as citizens of Malta, as shown in Appendices A and B.

Applications for naturalisation made under the Maltese Citizenship Act (Cap 188) are considered in the light of the established Citizenship Guidelines for the grant (or refusal) of citizenship: 11 applications for citizenship were refused in 2008.

The number of persons who acquired Maltese citizenship during the past five years is as follows:

Year	Registration	Naturalisation	Total
2004	514	70	584
2005	490	72	562
2006	406	68	474
2007	460	93	553
2008	594	50	644

Dual Nationality

During the year, the Department continued to deal with quite a number of enquiries concerning dual citizenship. Former Maltese citizens, who have resided abroad for more than six years, may hold dual nationality, provided the relative conditions laid down in the Maltese Citizenship Act are satisfied. A breakdown of the number of confirmations issued up to the end of 2008 is given at Appendix C.

EXPATRIATES

Persons who enjoy 'Freedom of Movement'

This Department is responsible also for confirming that persons to whom Section 44 of the Constitution refers enjoy freedom of movement, that is, the right to remain in Malta and to work here (without the necessity of a work permit). Confirmations issued by this Department during the year cover 87 persons. Details of confirmations issued during the past five years are shown at Appendix B.

'Exempt Person' Status to the Foreign Husband of a Citizen of Malta

As from 1 August 1989, the foreign husband of a female citizen of Malta enjoys *exempt person* status. This means that if the said husband wishes to work in Malta, he does not require a work permit whereas if he merely wishes to reside here he is not required to have his permit to reside in Malta renewed periodically. The number of persons to whom such status was confirmed during 2008 was 72.

'Exempt Person' Status to the Foreign Wife of a Citizen of Malta

As from 24 April 2001, the foreign wife of a citizen of Malta enjoys freedom of movement only after five years from the date of marriage. Until then she enjoys *exempt person* status which nevertheless gives her the right to remain and to work in Malta. During the year, 112 wives of citizens of Malta were informed that they enjoy *exempt person* status.

UNIFORM RESIDENCE PERMITS

During the year, 6,983 applications were received from third country nationals for the issue of a uniform residence permit. The number of such permits issued during the period under review was 5,667. The said number includes 118 permits issued to third country nationals enjoying long term residence status.

The Department received also 1,194 applications for residence documents in respect of EU citizens and their family members, who are third country nationals, for the necessary processing.

REVENUE

During 2008, the Department derived €225,101 from fees charged for various services.

JOSEPH MIZZI

Director (Citizenship & Expatriate Affairs)

APPENDIX A

FOREIGNERS REGISTERED AS CITIZENS OF MALTA UNDER THE MALTESE CITIZENSHIP ACT, CAP 188 - 2008

Nationality	Husbands of Citizens of Malta	Wives of Citizens of Malta	Former Citizens of Malta	Children of a Maltese Mother	Minor Children of Maltese Descent	Persons of Maltese Descent	Total
Australian	14	13	8	80	26	85	226
Bahamian	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Bahraini	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Belarus	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Belgian	1	-	-	3	1	-	5
Brazilian	-	1	-	-	1	-	2
British	9	24	5	41	10	15	104
British Overseas	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Bulgarian	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Canadian	2	7	3	10	4	8	34
Chinese	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Dutch	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Ecuadorian	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Egyptian	5	-	-	3	-	2	10
Filipino	-	6	1	1	-	-	8
French	1	-	-	5	1	16	23
German	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
Honduras	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Indian	1	2	-	-	-	-	3
Irish	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Israeli	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Italian	3	1	-	14	1	7	26
Japanese	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Kuwait	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Lebanese	1	-	-	-	-	1	2
Libyan	7	1	-	5	-	-	13
Mexican	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Moroccan	2	3	3	-	-	-	8
New Zealand	-	1	-	1	-	1	3
Nigerian	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
Polish	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
Russian	1	11	-	1	-	-	13
Serbian	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Slovak	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
South African	1	-	-	2	4	14	21
Spanish	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Swedish	1	-	-	1	1	-	3
Swiss	-	-	-	1	1	-	2
Syrian	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
Thai	-	4	-	-	1	-	5
Tunisian	1	-	1	-	2	-	4
Turkish	2	1	-	-	-	-	3
Ukrainian	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
United States of America	3	5	4	14	6	11	43
Stateless	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	66	94	25	184	62	163	594

APPENDIX B

FOREIGNERS NATURALISED AS CITIZENS OF MALTA UNDER THE MALTESE CITIZENSHIP ACT, CAP 188 - 2008

Nationality	Males	Females	Total
Algerian	1	-	1
Belarus	-	1	1
Bosnian	1	-	1
British	1	4	5
Chinese	3	3	6
Dutch	-	1	1
Egyptian	1	-	1
German	1	2	3
Indian	1	-	1
Italian	1	-	1
Lebanese	2	1	3
Libyan	1	-	1
Moroccan	-	2	2
Polish	-	2	2
Romanian	-	1	1
Russian	5	1	6
Serbian	1	-	1
Swedish	1	-	1
Syrian	1	3	4
Tunisian	1	-	1
Ukrainian	2	-	2
United States of America	1	-	1
Uzbekistani	1	-	1
Stateless	1	2	3
Total	27	23	50

PERSONS INFORMED THAT THEY ENJOY 'FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT'

Category of Persons / Year	Persons born in Malta who ceased to be Maltese citizens whilst being emigrated (Sections 3(1) and 5(1) of the Maltese Citizenship Act)	Children of Maltese Emigrants (Column 1) or of Citizens of Malta, who are under 21 years of age and who hold another citizenship	Non-Maltese Wives of Maltese Citizens or of Persons appearing in Column 1	Non-Maltese Husbands of Maltese Citizens or of Persons appearing in Column 1*	Total
2002	10	138	40	23	211
2003	8	202	29	23	262
2004	3	114	7	23	147
2005	2	54	8	11	75
2006	9	46	5	9	69
2007	2	48	17	5	72
2008	-	46	17	24	87

* As from 24/04/2001 (and provided they have been married for at least 5 years)

APPENDIX C

CITIZENS OF MALTA ALSO HOLDING CITIZENSHIP OF THE COUNTRY INDICATED – 2008

Country	Confirmations Issued during					Total
	1989-1999*	2000- 2005**	2006	2007	2008	
Algeria	-	1	-	-	-	1
Australia	1,594	1,767	150	196	202	3,909
Austria	1	1	-	-	-	2
Belgium	4	1	-	-	-	5
Brazil	14	12	-	-	-	26
Canada	1,894	1,188	142	161	196	3,581
Denmark	1	-	-	-	-	1
Egypt	-	5	-	-	1	6
Finland	1	-	-	-	-	1
France	13	19	4	3	1	40
Germany	4	19	-	1	1	25
Greece	6	5	-	-	-	11
Holland	13	8	1	-	1	23
India	-	1	-	-	-	1
Ireland	3	10	2	2	2	19
Israel	1	1	-	-	-	2
Italy	271	190	7	5	9	482
Jamaica	1	-	-	-	-	1
Jordan	-	-	1	-	-	1
Libya	-	28	1	4	4	37
Mexico	-	3	-	-	-	3
New Zealand	21	10	-	1	4	36
Nigeria	-	2	-	-	-	2
Norway	2	-	-	-	-	2
Pakistan	-	4	-	-	-	4
Poland	-	1	-	-	-	1
Sierra Leone	-	-	1	-	-	1
Singapore	-	1	-	-	-	1
South Africa	7	17	5	4	6	39
Spain	1	1	-	-	-	2
St Christopher	1	-	-	-	-	1
Sweden	-	5	1	-	-	6
Switzerland	21	10	-	1	-	32
Syria	-	1	-	-	-	1
Tunisia	2	1	-	-	-	3
United Kingdom	906	1,557	74	99	106	2,742
United States	918	788	108	78	103	1,995
Zimbabwe	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	5,700	5,658	497	555	636	13,046

* For year by year details see Report for 2000

** For year by year details see Reports for 2005 and 2006

Protocol and Consular Directorate

VISITS

During 2008, the Directorate was responsible for assisting in the preparatory organisational work and in the implementation of visits to Malta by foreign dignitaries, notably HE Ms Quentin Bryce, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia; HE Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority; HE Mr Kostas Karamalnis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic; HE Mr Dusan Caplovic, Vice Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic; HE Senator Lamberto Dini, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

A number of EU Commissioners also paid official visits to Malta. These included HE Mr Charlie McCreevy, responsible for Internal Market and Services; HE Ms Neelie Kroes, responsible for Competition; HE Mr Leonard Orban, responsible for Multilingualism.

Other ministers who visited Malta were HE Mrs Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus; HE Dr Abdullah Al-Taweel, Minister for Health of Kuwait; HE Mr Michel Barnier, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of France; HE Mr Markos Kyprianou, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus; the Hon Eric Woerth, Minister for the Budget, Public Accounts and the Civil Service of France; HE Mr Günter Gloser, State Minister for European Affairs of the German Federal Foreign Office; HE Mr Abdul-Rahman Mohamed Shalgem, Foreign Minister of Libya; HE Mr Diego López Garrido, State Secretary of Spanish Foreign Affairs; HE Ms Micheline Calmy-Rey, Foreign Minister of the Swiss Federation.

Visits by high-level officials included HE Mr Alexander Grushko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; HE Mr Akbar Zeb, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan; HE Mr Milan Hovorka, Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic; HE Mr Peter Altmaier, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany; HE Ms Grażyna Bernatowics, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland; and the Hon Dr Miklos Hango-Farago MP, the Hon Dr Karoly Kontrat MP and the Hon Dr Anett Borbely, Members of the Hungarian Parliamentarian Committee.

The Directorate assisted during private visits by His Majesty King Mswati III, Head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland; and HE Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Togolese Republic.

In addition to the above, the Directorate prepared a number of programmes for routine visits and farewell calls by non-resident ambassadors as well as co-ordinated the visit to Malta by 24 non-resident ambassadors in connection with the exchange of New Year's Greetings in January 2008.

ACCREDITATIONS

This Directorate sought and obtained the *agrément*s for the following Malta Ambassadors: Mr Leslie Agius, non-resident Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation; Mr Karl Xuereb, non-resident High Commissioner to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and non-resident Ambassador to Japan; Mr Ian J Mizzi, non-resident Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco; Mr Laurence Grech, non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia, non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania and non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Latvia; Mr Christopher Grima, non-resident Ambassador to Hungary and non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Slovakia; Mr Anthony Miceli Demajo, Ambassador to Romania; Mr Gaetan Naudi, Ambassador to Poland; Dr Tanya Vella, Ambassador of the Kingdom of

Spain; Mr Joseph Bonello, non-resident Ambassador to Albania; Mr Richard Vella Laurenti, non-resident High Commissioner to the Republic of Cyprus; Mr Pierre Clive Agius, Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium; Mr Mark Miceli Farrugia, High Commissioner to Canada; and Dr Vicky Ann Cremona, Ambassador to Tunisia.

Furthermore, this Directorate received and processed a total of 21 requests for foreign accreditation to Malta from the following countries: Hungary, Nigeria, Lesotho, Ecuador, Andorra, Angola, Moldova, Greece, Sweden, France, Mauritania, Belgium, Serbia, Portugal, Afghanistan, Japan, Georgia, UNITED KINGDOM, Indonesia, Sudan and Morocco

CREDENTIALS

During 2008, Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the following countries presented their credentials to the President of Malta: Mexico, Poland, India, Thailand, South Korea, Cambodia, Spain, Romania, Kuwait, Sri Lanka, Hungary, France, Belgium, Lesotho, Oman, Greece, Serbia, Portugal, Nigeria and Sweden.

HONORARY CONSULS

During the year a number of new nominations for consular posts abroad, together with a number of upgrades, and Letters of Commission were issued to: *New Appointments* - Mr Dinesh Shrestha, Honorary Consul in Nepal; Sir Brooke Charles Boothby, Honorary Consul in Wales; Mr Tom Kelly, Honorary Consul in Northern Ireland; Mr Roberto Biete Montoya, Hon. Vice Consul in Barcelona; Mr Eric Mayer-Schaller, Honorary Consul for Strasbourg; Mr Joseph Vella, Honorary Consul in Cairns; Ms Carmel Baretta, Honorary Consul in Mackay; Mr Varatit Benjavilas, Honorary Consul in Bangkok; Mr Detlef Bischoff, Honorary Consul in Magdeburg; Mr Arthur Aleksanyan, Honorary Consul in Yerevan; Mr Matti Juhani Onnelainen, Honorary Consul in Helsinki; Mr Håkan Pihl, Honorary Consul in Gothenburg; Mr Bjorn Andersson, Honorary Consul in Stockholm; Mr Patrick Barthet, Honorary Consul in Miami; Dr Allain Muller, Honorary Consul in Lille; Ms. Simona Soldati Zanetti, Honorary Vice Consul in Lugano. *Upgrades* - Mr John Galea, Honorary Consul General in Florida; Mr Thomas Stoecker, Honorary Consul General in Bremen; Mr Paul Cools, Honorary Consul General in Antwerp; Capt Ashok Batura, Honorary Consul General in Singapore; Mr Hugh Cassar, Honorary Consul General in Los Angeles; Mr Steel Juel Nielsen, Honorary Consul General in Copenhagen; Dr. David Reuben Harris, Honorary Consul General in Costa Rica. *Exequaturs* - Mr Hermann Mallia, Honorary Consul of Malaysia; Ms Sara Grech, Honorary Consul General of The Philippines; Mr Eric Fenech Pace, Honorary Consul of Namibia; Mr Keith Roberts-Sampson Bristol, Honorary Consul of Mauritius; Mr Ernest E. Sullivan, Honorary Consul of Indonesia (renewal).

DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCES

During the year under review, the Directorate processed clearances for visiting 59 naval vessels from the UK, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, USA, Greece, Denmark, Romania, Ukraine, Libya, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, Canada, the Russian Federation and India.

Further, the Directorate processed 607 diplomatic clearances for state/military aircrafts to overfly and/or land in Malta during the same period. The requests for diplomatic clearance were received from the following countries: Italy, USA, France, Switzerland, Palestine, China, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Serbia, Germany, Russian Federation, Greece, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, UK, Canada, Brazil, Togo, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Portugal, Turkey, Sudan, South Africa, Poland, Morocco, Sweden, Egypt, Ireland, Belgium, Benin, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine, India, Israel, Bangladesh, Jordan, Nigeria, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkmenistan, Uruguay, Yemen, Kuwait, Qatar, Swaziland, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Argentina, Congo and Iran.

During the same period, the Directorate issued 41 clearances for the wearing of uniforms during military-related occasions by military personnel of the USA, Germany, Tunisia, Italy and the UK.

Clearances were also issued to 32 visits by military personnel from the UK and the Federal Republic of Germany.

This Directorate also issued accreditation for seven Defence Attachés or Deputy Defence Attachés from Poland, USA, Germany, China, Greece and Canada.

The Directorate processed 15 requests from France, Poland, the Holy See, Spain, Austria, Italy, Ukraine and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta for the conferment decorations on Maltese citizens.

Furthermore, it also transmitted numerous greeting messages and national day messages from the President of Malta to various Heads of State and vice versa.

PROTOCOL SERVICE TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO MALTA

The Directorate continued to administer the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic relations of 1961 with respect to the diplomatic corps accredited to Malta by ensuring that the diplomatic privileges and immunities are being respected and implemented. In this context this Directorate processed 720 claims for VAT refund and referred them to the VAT Department for reimbursement.

The Directorate processed 145 requests from various resident missions for duty free entitlements on the purchase of cigarettes, spirits, alcohol and other specific purchases.

The Directorate also processed 108 requests for exempt person stamps (EP stamps), 66 requests for the issuance/renewal of driving licences, 54 requests for the issuance of CD/DMS/TF plates, 25 requests for vehicle registration transfers and 33 renewal of road licenses.

Certificates of Identity issued during 2008 were as follows: 76 certificates for Diplomats, 52 certificates for Administrative Staff, 13 certificates for Honorary Consuls abroad, two certificates for Honorary Consuls in Malta, and six certificates for staff working in international organisations.

OTHER SERVICES

This Directorate processed one request concerning a person proposed to the Cabinet Office for a Maltese decoration. The Directorate also processed 780 requests for VIP and Ministerial Lounge facilities at the Malta International Airport. This Directorate attended regularly the COPRO meetings held in Brussels.

CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

The Directorate gives consular assistance on a regular basis to Maltese nationals in distress while they are abroad. Cases involve injury, theft, loss of travel documents and also arrest and detention by foreign authorities. In this regard, the Ministry acts as the medium between the detained and his/her relatives in Malta. Wherever possible, assistance is co-ordinated with Maltese missions and honorary consulates.

This office also gives general information to the public which includes information regarding travel advice.

Assistance is also offered to Maltese citizens seeking the whereabouts of missing Maltese nationals. The Maltese embassies and consulates abroad are fundamental in this regard.

The Consular Directorate also deals with crisis management. The Department was particularly active during the Sofia Airport nearby explosion in July 2008.

Similarly, this Directorate assisted stranded Maltese nationals abroad during the crisis at Bangkok airport and the bombing in Mumbai in December.

AUTHENTICATIONS

A total of 21,547 documents/certificates were authenticated during 2008, resulting in the collection of €242,907 in revenue.

VISAS

During the year, 328 visa applications of Maltese nationals were processed through Malta missions in Rome, Tripoli and London. Another 90 documents requiring legalisation abroad were also processed mainly through the missions in Rome and Tripoli.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The following countries offered scholarships to Maltese students: Belgium, Italy, United Kingdom, Ireland, Tunisia, Japan, Czech, Singapore, Slovakia, Germany, Peru, France and Spain. The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC), the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) and the International Ocean Institute (IOI) also offered scholarships to Maltese students.

In all, 48 applications were received and 31 individuals were awarded a scholarship distributed as follows: Belgium (3), Italy (20), MEDAC (1), IMLI (3), Tunisia (1) and Germany (3).

ILLEGAL MIGRATION

During 2008, the Consular Directorate requested the issuance of 637 Emergency Travel Documents for the repatriation of third country nationals as follows: 99 – Ivory Coast; 81 – Somalia; 79 – Eritrea; 64 – Sudan; 53 – Ethiopia; 42 – Mali; 37 – Ghana; 30 – Nigeria; 30 – Niger; 27 – Togo; 18 – Liberia; 17 – Democratic Republic of Congo; 15 – Burkina Faso; 12 – Palestine; 8 – Sierra Leone; 6 – Chad ; 6 – Senegal; 3 – India ; 2 – Benin; 1 each – Algeria, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Mauritania, Tanzania, Gambia, Pakistan, Cameroon.

Emergency travel documents were ultimately issued for 4 Chad nationals, 26 Mali nationals, and 5 Nigeria nationals.

LIAISON WITH EMBASSIES ON CONSULAR CASES

Deaths of Foreigners

The Directorate informs foreign missions as to the demise of their nationals in Malta and makes requests to Maltese authorities to obtain certificates and reports in regard to their demise. In 2008, information was communicated in regard to 52 foreigners.

Arrest of Foreigners

Upon receipt of a report from the Police of an arrest of a foreign national in Malta, the embassy concerned is informed of such arrest. The Directorate follows up on the case and also on requests received by the respective embassy. Notifications on 13 arrests were processed in this period. A request for the transfer of a foreign person detained in CCF was also made.

Incidents Involving Foreigners

Police reports were conveyed to foreign missions in regard to nine incidents, which occurred in Malta involving citizens of a foreign country. Subsequently, the Directorate followed up on information and requests on the case.

Other Requests Involving Foreign Nationals

The Directorate processes queries and requests by embassies or Maltese authorities concerning nationals of their country who are either resident or on holiday in Malta. The 80 requests processed in 2008 included complaints, loss of documentation, whereabouts, refusals of entry into Malta, reports of bigamy, and requests for extradition.

TRAVEL ADVICE

The Directorate issued travel advice for Maltese travellers in accordance to current situations in the particular countries, which advice would be in harmonisation with those offered by other EU Member States.

CONTRAVENTIONS BY MALTA – FLAGGED SHIPS IN FOREIGN WATERS

The Directorate transmits notifications of contraventions committed by vessels flying the Malta Flag to the Malta Maritime Authority, and subsequently informs the respective embassies of the outcome of the authorities' investigations. Thirty-eight alleged contraventions of navigation regulations and a collision with a foreign vessel were processed in 2008.

JUDICIAL DOCUMENTATION AND LETTERS OF REQUEST

Judicial documents were transmitted to Maltese or foreign authorities in regard to court cases involving a foreign interest or when Maltese interests were involved in a legal process taking place in a foreign jurisdiction. The legal officer in charge attended court hearings to testify as to stage of requests. During 2008, this Directorate was involved in 69 cases pending before Courts of Law, domestic or foreign.

DATA PROTECTION

The Data Protection Officer within this Directorate participated in a number of seminars held as part of the Twinning Light Project – Data Protection Training in the Malta Public Service.

Furthermore, the Ministry was undergoing a Full Data Protection Audit, which was being carried out by MITTS Ltd on behalf of OPM.

CONSULAR WORKING PARTY (COCON)

This Directorate attended regularly the Consular Co-operation (COCON) meetings held in Brussels. Within this framework, the Directorate co-ordinated Malta's position on the Green Paper on the Consular and Diplomatic Protection of Union Citizens in Third Countries and drafted Malta's position paper. The Directorate also co-ordinated with Malta's missions in third countries on developments with regard to the Lead State initiative.

OLAPH TERRIBILE

Director (Protocol and Consular Affairs)

Information Management Unit

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

The International Connectivity Project is an ongoing project which in 2008 has seen the connection to the MAGNET of the Embassy of Malta in Beijing. This was a difficult site to establish due to Internet restrictions enforced by the Chinese Government. The Information Management Unit has however made contact with potential service providers for the following sites: The Hague, Copenhagen, New Delhi, and Istanbul. These sites will be connected by Q1 2009.

VISA SYSTEM

As new Schengen members, the national visa system has played an important role in 2008. The system has been successful in facilitating the issuance of visas throughout this first year as Schengen members and has proved to be technically stable and resilient. Having said that, the system was constantly being monitored and enhanced as necessary to ensure maximum performance. Staff members at IMU have participated actively in EU meetings related to the subject, thus keeping abreast with other Schengen partners.

Work has started towards the biometric phase of the national visa system. In late 2009, the visa system will be connected to a central EU visa system where all Schengen members will be obliged to submit visa application requests in a central pool. Such visa requests will be accompanied with the capture of biometric fingerprints. Apart from the preparation of the visa system itself, infrastructural enhancements are required within embassies to take on board the required biometric equipment.

The IMU has facilitated the introduction of the use of external service providers in respect of visa application collection. In 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with an external service provider for the collection of visa applications in the Russian Federation. With this agreement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be in a position to collect/process visa applications not only from Moscow, where Malta has its diplomatic presence, but also from St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg. The agreement will give the Ministry further outreach and more efficiency. The aim of the Ministry is to reduce the processing time of visa applications down to as little as 24-48 hours and reducing the amount of staff required to manage the processing itself. Moreover, the staff employed will now be in a more advantageous position to scrutinise applications and thus ensuring that only *bona fide* applications are granted a Schengen visa.

The Ministry has signed similar agreements to cover a number of regions in the People's Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. These will start operation in Q1 2009. Discussions have also been underway to sign a similar agreement to cover a number of regions in India.

WEBSITE

This year the Ministry website was totally overhauled and given a new facelift. The website is more user-friendly and offers the visitor more valuable information. The new website also caters for individual websites for Malta's missions abroad. Each mission now has its own space giving the visitor more focused information.

E-PASSPORTS

During 2008, Malta introduced its first biometric passports. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs played an important role in the introduction of such passports to Maltese citizens living abroad. The project is still in its first phase and Maltese embassies have been equipped with the necessary training to facilitate the processing of e-passports. The IMU worked on phase two of the project which involves the installation of biometric work stations in each embassy. This will facilitate the capture of facial images and fingerprints which will then be forwarded to the passport office for processing together with the application itself. The High Commission of Malta in London will be the first mission to pilot this project.

RESIDENCY PERMIT SYSTEM

With the ever increasing demand of residence permits, the system currently utilised to issue such permits was under scrutiny in 2008. The Information Management Unit has analysed the current processes and has recommended ways how the system may be enhanced to ensure efficiency of the entire process. The workflow of the current process was also scrutinised and a new workflow was also recommended to work hand in hand with the new system.

The IMU participated actively in EU meetings in relation to the new biometric residence cards. Such cards will be introduced EU-wide by end 2010.

SCHOLARSHIPS

An e-Scholarship web portal has been in use since September 2008. This portal provides information of current scholarships being offered by foreign governments. It also allows the applicant the facility to apply for a particular scholarship online and to be able to track his/her application while it is being processed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

INFORMATION SECURITY

Information Security was paramount in 2008. With the virus outbreak in the Permanent Representation to the EU and the security breach in Cairo, the Information Management Unit was heavily involved in taking immediate and prompt action to contain both incidents. These incidents have proved to be an eye-opener for the Ministry and action has been underway to enhance security within all missions.

The Unit has been actively involved and has concluded the installation of security measures in line with Schengen requirements in a number of embassies such as London, Riyadh, Istanbul and Moscow.

Security within the Ministry itself has also been enhanced with the introduction of a number of CCTV and the recruitment of permanent security officers.

ANNA CATANIA
Chief Information Officer

Corporate Services Directorate

HUMAN RESOURCES

During 2008, the Directorate Corporate Services processed and set in motion the necessary processes for calls in the following posts and positions: Head, Central Visa Unit; Counsellors; First Counsellors; Assistant Director (DCS); Security Officers; EU Security Communicator; Deployment of Visa Officers at the Central Visa Unit.

Furthermore, the call for the engagement of Second Secretaries was issued and the first part of the selection process – the written part – was held in late November 2008, under the responsibility of the Examination Department.

Casual clerks were also engaged to replace officers currently on unpaid leave; furthermore, the Ministry continued to support family friendly measures and processed request for teleworking. During 2008, three officers availed themselves of this opportunity; officers were also given necessary support with the approval of reduced hours and flexi-hours systems.

TRAINING

During 2008, Ministry staff continued to avail themselves of the training opportunities offered by the Staff Development Organisation (SDO). Staff members were given the opportunity to attend courses dealing with the European Union, as well as human resource development. In all, 47 staff members attended some 19 courses organised by the SDO. Staff from the Human Resources section also attended seminars organised by the Foundation for Human Resources Development and the National Council for the Promotion of Equality.

In anticipation of the launch of the Electronic Cash Management System, the Directorate also provided training for accounting staff in mission abroad – staff members from the Malta missions in Cairo, Strasbourg, Madrid, and Geneva attended these training sessions.

REFURBISHING WORKS

The Directorate ensured that necessary maintenance works were carried out in all the premises housing offices falling within the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Directorate moved premises in May 2008, vacating the Old University Building, and moved its offices to 331 St Paul's Street, Valletta.

GREEN INITIATIVES

The solar photovoltaic panels set up in 2007 were connected to the Ministry's electricity network. In its energy saving efforts, the Ministry ensured the replacement of [normal] electricity bulbs by energy savings ones continued throughout the year.

The Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Director Corporate Services, and the Green Leader attended a one-day seminar during which green initiatives were discussed. In an effort to continue with its endeavours to

install environmental awareness amongst its staff members, the Ministry drew up its green action programme for 2009; the plan's main focus will be on the strengthening of the Ministry's waste disposal policy, as well as securing savings on the use energy and water – this will be done via the introduction of certain measures, as well as the organisation of seminars for staff members.

NEW MISSIONS AND CONSULATES

The DCS was directly involved in the setting up of the new missions in Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Warsaw, as well as the consulates in Moscow and Istanbul. In the case of Warsaw, the Directorate was entrusted with the identification of the premises to house the Chancery and Official Residence.

The Directorate was also involved in the upgrading of various missions abroad; most refurbishment works were necessary in view of Schengen requirements, as well as the introduction of biometric passports.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

With the aim of making the financial management in missions more efficient and effective, the Electronic Cash Management System (which links the accounting systems of the Malta missions to Head Office) has now entered into its pilot stage. Four embassies were selected for this stage.

CHARLES MIFSUD
Director (Corporate Services)

**Ministry for
Gozo**

Directorate General Operations

OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the Directorate General (Operations) are:

- to participate actively in the development and implementation of the Ministry's strategic, operational and resource plans and co-operate and collaborate with senior staff towards the achievement of the Ministry's goals by sharing resources, providing support and assistance, disseminating information of mutual interest, etc;
- to provide direction to Heads of Directorates, including the Chief Information Officer within the Office of the Permanent Secretary, in the preparation of operational plans to support the Ministry in the implementation of policy directives;
- in liaison with respective Heads of Directorates, to plan, develop and ensure the implementation of work standards within the Office of the Permanent Secretary to ensure quality, timeliness and cost-effective results;
- to establish and maintain effective channels of communication with client groups, and with other ministries, departments and agencies to enhance the exchange of information and ideas on matters of common interest and to ensure that services and programmes are appropriate to the needs of clients, as well as being compatible and complementary to other service initiatives;
- to co-ordinate the operations and activities of the line departments of the Ministry;
- to manage the day-to-day operations of the Back Office Unit as well as those of the Gozo Offices of the Land Registry, Public Registry and Notary to Government.

NOTARY TO GOVERNMENT OFFICE

The Office of the Notary to Government in Gozo prepares, drafts and publishes deeds to which the Government, including parastatal bodies, are a party.

This Office is also responsible for the conservation of Notarial Acts according to law and for their safe-keeping and custody regarding immovables situated in Gozo and Comino. Such acts can be inspected by the public who can also demand a copy of relevant deeds according to the relevant laws. During the year, 864 individuals requested copies of relevant deeds. Revenue collected amounted to €4,338.29.

The majority of notaries practising in Malta continued to send copies of deeds published in Malta relating to transfers of immovables situated in Gozo and Comino.

This Office also has a storage room in the Gozo Administration Centre, where registers of deeds deposited at this Office are kept.

CIVIL STATUS REPORTING OFFICE

The functions of the Civil Status Reporting Office are to input data regarding birth certificates.

During 2008, the total of birth certificates inputted was 123,506. Moreover, 57,328 birth certificates were verified during the same period.

In the course of the year, 14 employees attached to this section started to work on telework.

LAND REGISTRY OFFICE

This section deals with applications regarding the registration of property in Gozo. The following applications were received during the year:

Applications LRAs	1,665
Charges	584
Official searches	520
Site plans	2,000

Compared to previous years, there was a record number of applications for both charges and official charges. There was a slight decrease in the number of applications for registration of properties whereas the number of site plans issued was the same as in previous years.

PUBLIC REGISTRY OFFICE

During the year, 2,498 Notes of Enrolment and 1,734 Notes of Hypothec were registered in this Office. Notes of References relating to hypothecs amounted to 677 while 28 Legal Hypothecs were registered. The number of Schedules of Deposit relating to redemption of ground rent of immovables in Gozo and Comino was 85. There were also 20 Warrants of Prohibitory Injunctions and 18 sales by auction (*subbasti*).

The acts registered by the Civil Status Section were the following:

Births	315
Marriages	194
Deaths	246

The certificates issued by this section were:

Extract Certificates	7,376
Full Certificates	233

The Marriage Registry processed 199 marriage applications. During the same year there were:

Religious Marriages	150
Civil Marriages	43
Other Religions	Nil

During 2008, searches regarding transfers and hypothecs, as well as their input and testamentary searches were ordered through the Gozo Public Registry. The official searches were delivered through the Public Registry.

SALARIES SECTION (HEALTH DIVISION)

The main functions of this section are to:

- pay the salaries due to personnel within the Health Division after the required amendments or adjustments are received by the respective sections within the same Division; subsequently provide the Treasury Department with the necessary information via the computer-based network program *Payper*;
- co-ordinate with the Personnel Section on matters concerning the attendance, transfers, resignations and change in working hours of the employees;
- issue reports relative to the Personal Emoluments block on a regular basis; and

- effect the required payments to governmental and non-governmental entities which provide their services to the Health Division.

THE TREASURY SALARIES AND PENSIONS SECTION

This Section is responsible for:

- the proper processing of salary and the timely issue of payrolls thereof;
- the proper maintenance of adequate records of promotions, progressions and appointments of all employees on the government payroll;
- the correct interpretation of the various government collective agreements, MPO and Finance circulars and the relevant paragraphs in the Public Service Management Code;
- the processing of data supplied by the salaries officers in every department to ensure the timely printing of payroll and cheques;
- the introduction of a new Payroll system in conjunction with the Section's Payroll Administrator (IT System) and the Malta Information Technology Agency;
- liaising with departments in order to attend to queries raised by employees and the public in general;
- the payment of Treasury pensions on a monthly basis; and
- the issue of gratuity to eligible retirees.

During the year the Treasury Salaries and Pensions Section succeeded in ensuring the timely processing of salaries and pensions and the timely issue of payrolls.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICE SECTION

The Freephone 153 helpline forms part of the Government Information Service. The helpline provides the general public as well as government entities, with information ranging from a simple query, such as the contact details of a particular office, to more complex requests on current government policies.

During 2008, a total of 65,777 calls were manually logged by the operators working on Freephone153. Requests by e-mail averaged five per working day. Average messages recorded after office hours and replied to on the following working day involved ten queries daily. However, the Unit often refers directly to government departments and entities particularly on matters that are directly affected by changing policies and procedures.

CONSUMER UNIT

The Consumer Unit deals with consumer complaints. The office offers the freephone service to both Maltese and Gozitan customers. Complaints may arise when buying a product and even when getting a service from a particular establishment. It is to be noted that this office accepts complaints amounting to €3,494 only. Complaints exceeding this amount will be dealt with at the Civil Court.

Complaints are registered on the Complaints Handling system, where all the details of both the customer and the trader are registered together with the details of the complaint.

The following is a table showing the number of cases received every month during 2008 via the freephone service:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
377	155	463	550	733	774	1,047	1,316	766	861	1,057	1,195

ENERGY BENEFIT SECTION

The main functions of this section are:

- keying of energy benefit applications which are then assessed and authorised;
- authorisation of Humanitarian cases;
- dealing with PA 109's and call letters forwarded by A/O's;
- carrying out the necessary amendments on SABS as regards EB application details;
- paying arrears wherever applicable;
- providing responses to queries raised by the Social Security Department, District Offices and the Social Policy Information Centre;
- dealing with error/warning reports issued with every voucher generation process; and
- dealing with MITA regarding the running of the Energy Benefit System.

The following table outlines the work performed by the section during 2008:

	Total
Authorised Applications	3,074
Assessed Applications	2,648
Humanitarian Assessed	53
Humanitarian Authorised	51
PA 109 's Assessed	1,626
PA 109 Authorised	1,562
Overpayments Created	24
Arrears Created	213
Vouchers for Re-dating	650
Incoming Mail: <i>Call Letters</i>	1,511
<i>PA 109</i>	2,206
<i>New Applications</i>	2,854

INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT (CALL CENTRE)

The Call Centre's main objective is to answer all incoming telephone and e-mail queries relating to Income Tax and Social Security Contributions. Queries are made by all categories of taxpayers, namely individuals, companies, employers and expatriates.

On 4 January, 2008 the Call Centre started receiving its first live telephone queries. In May the Call Centre also started receiving general correspondence regarding changes to be made to Taxpayers Personal Index. The following table is a breakdown of telephone calls, e-mails and correspondence answered by the Call Centre during 2008:

Month	Telephone calls	E-mails	Correspondence
Total	90,561	6,744	3,168

The feedback received through the Call Centre is used to help the Inland Revenue Department update its policies, procedures and legislation.

MARIO CALLEJA
Director General (Operations)

Corporate Services Directorate

Mission Statement

To provide through the Permanent Secretary a central support service and to co-ordinate the corporate activities of the departments falling under the Ministry for Gozo.

During 2008, the Directorate of Corporate Services (DCS) continued to improve the quality of the support services provided to the other departments and branches of the Ministry for Gozo, particularly in the areas of financial planning and management, human resources management, information technology development and office services. The Directorate co-ordinates the compilation of the Business Plans and Financial Estimates and ensures the timely and accurate preparation of management information. It contributes to the collective management of the Ministry through policy development.

Other works carried out by the Directorate during 2008 consisted of:

- compiling information related to replies to parliamentary questions;
- co-ordinating progressions and promotions of staff in the Ministry and line departments;
- approving advance payments made by the various departments under the Ministry;
- raising financial returns as requested by the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury Department and the National Statistics Office;
- raising quarterly returns of suppliers who do not provide the department with a fiscal receipt;
- facilitating the implementation of central and ministerial policies and initiatives across the Ministry;
- vetting requests for the receipt of a 'qualification allowance';
- updating monthly returns regarding commitments raised under the various capital projects;
- recording Inventory items procured by this Office and making the necessary information available to the departments in order to update their respective asset records;
- co-ordinating requests for information made by the central agencies; and
- raising on a quarterly basis financial information regarding Accrual Accounting.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The DCS liaised with the other departments to ensure the effective implementation of corporate human resources policies, systems and procedures prescribed by the Management and Personnel Office. It also continued to provide support and assistance to the Ministry's line departments in the recruitment and deployment of human resources. In all, 48 appointments were issued during the year and the Directorate co-ordinated the promotion exercise in respect of one officer as well as the progression of two Senior Principals, two Principals, 16 Assistant Principals, one Staff Nurse, one Enrolled Nurse, one Court Messenger, one Supervisor and one employee in Group II. Moreover, the DCS processed the confirmation of appointment of four employees.

In particular, the Directorate provided support services in the field of human resources management and development. It also ensured conformity with policies, systems and procedures and the provision of data and other information required by central government agencies. As part of its task to ensure the effective implementation of corporate human resource policies, systems and procedures, the DCS continued liaising with the Ministry's other line departments. In this connection the staff complement of the Ministry was monitored and vacancies were filled in accordance with the requirements of the departments.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

During the year staff development continued to be given a high priority by the Directorate. Training programmes on the following topics were organised, in collaboration with the Staff Development Organisation and other departments, for government employees serving in Gozo in order to enhance and upgrade their competence level in accordance with today's needs and challenges:

- MS Word Introduction
- MS Word Advanced
- MS Windows XP
- MS Access XP
- MS Excel XP Introduction
- MS Excel XP Advanced
- MS PowerPoint XP
- Introductory course to the Internet
- Introductory course to Government Mail
- Admitting and Emergency Department: on Infection Control Standard
- Mentorship
- For newly appointed Executive Officers
- Developing Assertiveness and Self-confidence
- Hyperbaric Unit
- Accrual Accounting
- Data Protection
- Building the Future
- Environment Assessment Past, Present and Future
- Basic Life Support Provider and Renewal
- Orthopaedic and Trauma Nursing
- Occupational Health and Safety Principles and Risk Assessment
- Basic Life Support Provider

CO-ORDINATING ACTIVITIES

During 2008, the Directorate took measures to ensure that government services in Gozo are provided in an efficient and effective manner. *Inter alia*, the DCS was responsible for the co-ordination of the verification of sick leave availed of by government employees with a view to curbing abuses, on which initiative the DCS maintained a database. During the year, the DCS asked for 4,126 medical visits to be carried out.

The DCS was also involved in a number of initiatives in accordance with the legal obligations stipulated in the Data Protection Act as well as the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The Directorate continued to maintain inventory lists and temporarily store and dispose of obsolete, unserviceable and surplus items within the Ministry as provided by the Financial Regulations.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Since November 2007, information systems and information technology related matters fall under the responsibility of the Information Management Unit (IMU) headed by the CIO (Chief Information Officer).

During 2008, IT infrastructure and services were expanded and improved. The whole network infrastructure available within many departmental branches has been enhanced.

This was done through 25 separate Local Area Network extension works in several sites including the Passports Office, Sentinella, Gozo General Hospital and the new ITS Training School. This involved trunking, cabling and patching works which were carried out both by third party contractors and in-house resources depending on the magnitude of the works.

Wide Area Network (fibre) connectivity was also provided to new leased premises at the Downtown Hotel. LAN works in this location have already gone through the design stage.

Extensive LAN extension works were also carried out in various sections at the administration building with a view to connect all users via CAT5 cabling to the new PABX. This is to support the other telephone related initiative involving the laying of multi-core cables (GO) connecting the PAPX and the various data cabinets.

The PABX was upgraded with over 200 extensions and two PRA 32-channel digital external line connections over fibre were installed replacing a number of analogue lines. This represented a substantial improvement in the service complemented with substantial cost savings.

Teleworking facilities were provided to users at the Public Registry Inputting Section and various other sections. Around 20 employees are benefiting from this family friendly measure. The provision of these facilities involved, in most cases, broadband and VPN installations at the users' residence.

During the year, new users were given access to e-mail and internet accounts. At the end of the year the number of e-mail account users and internet account users were 695 and 211 respectively. Five generic email accounts were opened for various sections/departments.

In addition, the IMU, within severe financial constraints, started the process of replacement of PCs under the government wide PC Leasing programme. A total of 84 new PCs, including 26 procured through EU co-funded projects at the new ITS training school, were installed, among which total site hardware replacement at the Private Secretariat (17) and the Gozo Law Courts (21).

Furthermore 30 of the replaced PCs were upgraded/refurbished and redeployed at other sites, in turn replacing even older hardware. This means that a total of 116 users had their hardware upgraded/renewed.

Four videoconferencing sessions were held mainly involving the Gozo and Malta Law Courts and Australian and UK Law Courts/sites.

During the year the department continued to fund and monitor the contracts for the provision of support for technical infrastructure and software applications entered into with MITA.

E-PROCUREMENT

The Chief Information Officer introduced a policy for the leasing of monochrome laser printers. Only one quotation was awarded in the e-procurement system during 2008.

SCHEMES

The Directorate of Corporate Services processed 34 applications for special passes submitted by Gozitans who reside in Malta and have either one of their partners or a close relative residing permanently in Gozo.

The DCS also administered the scheme for the payment of a monthly accommodation subsidy of €116.47 to Gozitan students following University courses in Malta on a full-time basis – 669 students benefited from this subsidy in 2008. A subsidy of €1.26 is also paid to Gozitan employees with government-funded or government-owned institutions for every day of attendance at their workplace – 3,446 applications were received.

The scheme aimed at giving financial assistance to non-government organisations continued to operate in 2008 – 49 Gozitan voluntary organisations have benefited from this scheme which should help them in their endeavours to strengthen the social fabric of the Gozitan community.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

During 2008, the Directorate continued to monitor the expenditure performance under both the Capital and Recurrent Votes of the Ministry for Gozo and to keep a constant watch to maintain financial accountability in the Ministry. The DCS was involved in the processing of Gozo Treasury Pensions; stocking and distribution of counterfoil books; accounting for receipts of all government departments in Gozo and winding up of bank accounts held with the Government Savings Bank. The following figures show revenue/expenditure of the Ministry and the number of Treasury pensioners in Gozo as at end 2008:

Revenue	€	Treasury Pensions	
Fees on contracts/Notarial fees	4,512	Civil	1,082
Court Fees	275,211	Police	138
Services rendered to Local Council	58,640	Widows	147
Miscellaneous Reimbursement	10,498	P.I.S.	2
Miscellaneous Receipts	74	Total	1,369
Expenditure			
Recurrent	€52,967,779.13		
Capital	€4,337,092.00		

Another very important task carried out by this section is the DAS consolidated function in Gozo including the vetting and processing of the Ministry's financial transactions and the performance of the cheque run routine. This office also continued to deal with requests from the general public regarding, *inter alia*, the division of holdings between the heirs of deceased stock holders, changes of addresses, power of attorney, re-dating of dividend warrants and the application of the 15% Final Withholding Tax on dividends.

EMANUEL GRECH
Director (Corporate Services)

Department of Customer Services

INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the Department of Customer Services are to:

- ensure a liaison system among the various operation centres with the objective of improving customer services for the population;
- ensure proper planning relating to customer services;
- manage the branches, offices and sections of the Ministry for Gozo which provide a direct service to the public, ensuring that customers are always given a service of high quality;
- provide a quality health service to Gozitans and visitors to Gozo; and
- co-ordinate and support initiatives of a cultural and/or social nature taken by NGO's, local councils and other organisations.

During 2008, the Department of Customer Services was directly responsible for 23 sections and liaised with the Gozo branches of the Inland Revenue Department, VAT Office and Electoral Office.

EDUCATION OFFICE

The Education Office in Gozo provides a wide range of services to the Gozo College Schools (state schools), church schools and to the three special schools namely the Art School, School of Music and Drama School. Pupils and the public in general were offered services which throughout 2008 were also improved by new initiatives.

Construction works, refurbishment and maintenance works were carried out in practically all the Gozitan schools.

- Construction works at the Agius de Soldanis Girls' Secondary and Junior Lyceum included the finishing of the lift installation and the Technology labs and the Hairdressing room. Two toilets were also refurbished.
- Ninu Cremona Lyceum Complex was given maintenance needed but was kept to a minimum since with the building of the New School the old premises would be demolished in a short time.
- Routine maintenance works were carried out in Nadur Primary School in connection with roofs. Works to start refurbishing the other wing were started.
- Corridor at School of Drama was closed with aluminium apertures to match the primary wing.
- Minor routine works were carried out at Ghajnsielem Primary to render an area safe. New office furniture was manufactured at Gharb carpentry workshop.
- A room for watchman was erected at School of Art. Landscaping was carried out on school ground.
- School hall apertures at Gharb Primary school were replaced by aluminium apertures and other maintenance works involving painting and plastering were carried out.
- Refurbishment works at Xaghra Primary School Hall were finalised.
- Routine roof maintenance was carried out at Żebbuġ Primary
- New electrical installation with energy saving fittings was undertaken at San Lawrenz School corridors.
- Lift at Victoria Primary School was constructed and commissioned
- Lift was constructed and commissioned at Sir M A Refalo.
- A playroom for kinder was constructed at Kerċem Primary. Garden boundary wall was also constructed.
- At Sannat Primary School the ramp for handicapped vans finished and other routine works were carried out.

- Various works were carried out by the carpentry and blacksmith sections for different schools.
- Carpenters constructed toilet furniture for Xewkija Primary.

The Literacy Centre was further equipped with books and periodicals and all schools could make use of its resources throughout the whole scholastic year. This Centre is now open all the time by assignment of a person to supervise when the teacher in charge is performing duties in schools

Peripatetic teachers posted at the Education Office continued to offer their services to all primary schools. Exhibitions were held by the Science Group and the Health and Safety Group.

The YSO section is responsible for the holding of Adult Education courses in Gozo. This section is responsible for the organisation of evening classes in a number of subjects both at Ordinary and Advanced level. This unit also provided the necessary support for the organisation of the Children's Carnival, the Annual Sports Rally and other extracurricular activities. The YSO Section is also responsible for the organisation of weekly visits by students from primary schools to the Environmental Centre at Lunzjata. Programmes are also being organised regularly throughout the scholastic year.

The Hands-on Farming section continued to give regular programmes for all Gozitan schools and there were also visits by schools from Malta.

Education Salaries Section

As in previous years, this section continued to offer its services to all employees who fall under the Education Division in Malta.

Correspondence and communications received by e-mails and telephone calls from Leaves and Records Sections were dealt with efficiency due to Service Standards, and amendments were sent to the Treasury Department in time. Around 674 returns in respect of casual staff were received every four weeks and wage sheets were then issued to every casual employee. Throughout the year, the section processed around 15,275 mid-day break supervision claims which were paid on a quarterly basis. There was an increase in professional development claims which numbered 8,155. The section also processed new entries, mostly pertaining to new teachers and supply teachers.

TAS and ESTS students were also paid by this section.

Two employees commenced teleworking in August and October.

The staff monitored incoming requests for information and complaints, and provided the public with the best service possible. Staff dealt effectively and efficiently with a large volume of incoming queries and requests which were forwarded by the Ministry and other departments.

EXAMINATIONS CENTRE

The Examinations Centre in Gozo is responsible for the running of all local and external examinations held in Gozo. During 2008, the Centre handled the following work:

- *Applications (Local, Matriculation and External Examinations)*: 1,675 local examinations and 324 foreign were received (679 Matsec May; 228 Matsec September; 22 London January; 247 Ordinary May; 310 Matric May; 127 Matric September; 20 LCCI Series 2; 26 LCCI Series 3; 12 English as a Foreign Language; 160 ECDL applications; 21 Wireman Licence A & B; 59 Regular Soldiers in AFM; 9 Foreign University degrees; 63 Principals and 16 Senior Principals). On average, 24,000 examination sittings were held.

Both local and external examination applications were vetted and acknowledged. As this office is connected to the Examinations Department network in Floriana, all Gozo candidates are invoiced through this office and the waiting period from application to payment date is two days.

- *Examination sessions:* There were 450 examination sessions (External, Matriculation and Local Examinations). When the number of candidates was more than 40, outside help was sought by engaging invigilators from other departments to ensure the smooth running of the examinations in session.
- *Certificates:* Over 1,350 certificates were received for distribution to successful students who had sat for the London, ECDL, Degrees and London Chamber of Commerce examinations.
- *Information:* Information is provided regarding the various local, Matsec and external examinations to the hundreds of students who call at the Centre. Examination timetables, syllabuses, results, applications and other related data are also available for ease of reference. In October, various lectures were held in the secondary schools to familiarise students with examination procedures.
- *ECDL examinations:* For the 6th year running this section has been nominated to co-ordinate the European Computer Driving Licence examinations. These examinations are now being held in Gozo.
- *English as a Foreign Language:* Two sessions of this examination were held at the centre. Around 27 sat for these papers.

CULTURE SECTION

Administration

During 2008, the principal efforts of the Culture Section included the following:

- restructuring the administrative set-up at the Gozo Culture Office to assure maximum output of each of the Section's employees;
- initial framework and draft document to establish a Cultural Policy for Gozo and a change in role of the Gozo Cultural Council from an event organiser to a policy co-ordinator;
- close collaboration with Gozitan local councils and other cultural entities on the island to consolidate an Annual Cultural Calendar for Gozo; and
- launching the Cittadella Centre for Culture & Arts as a centre for innovation and creativity as well as a cultural space for artistic expressions of all genres.

During 2008, the Gozo Cultural Council held five committee meetings to discuss and plan the various cultural initiatives held throughout the year.

Organisation of Activities

During 2008, the Culture Section was responsible for the organisation of the following activities:

- The commemoration of five annual National Days, together with the 30 October 1948 tragedy anniversary and the commemoration of victims in the two world wars in November (better known as Poppy Day). This year the *Jum Ghawdex* was celebrated on 24 October in collaboration and with full participation of the Gozo College.
- Two evenings as part of the initiatives called *Bajjiet* were held in Xlendi and Marsalforn Bay during the summer months and were very well received by those present.
- Three days of jam packed activities, co-ordinated by WE together with the Ministry for Gozo and the Ministry of Tourism were held in Gozo between 1 and 4 May 2008. *Gozo 1234* combined together the Malta International Fireworks Festival and *Notte Gozitana*.
- Around 36 art exhibitions were held in collaboration with Gozitan, Maltese or foreign artists at the exhibition venues at the Ministry for Gozo, the Banca Giuratale foyer and the Cittadella Centre for Culture and Crafts.

- The Christmas season was marked with a concert held at the Ministry Hall. The concert presided by HE the President was conducted by Mro John Galea with the participation of the Chorus Urbanus choir. The Subsidy Scheme for Static and Mechanical cribs attracted 37 participants.
- The first edition of *Gastro Gozo* was organised in collaboration with Associazione Tipico of the Abruzzo Region. This gastronomic festival brought together the culinary and artistic culture of the Mediterranean during a series of popular manifestations and informative seminars.

Carnival 2008

Six triumphal floats, King Carnival and three tractors, four musical bands, two sets of grotesque masks, three dance groups, 14 school companies, seven hilarious companies, nine individual costumes, and three individual costumes with grotesque masks took part in the Gozo 2008 Regional Carnival which was celebrated between 25 January and 5 February. For the first time, the regional programme was also organised and included all local carnivals organised in Gozitan villages by their respective local councils.

Grants

Besides thousands of euros being distributed as grants by the Gozo Cultural Council to local artists, musicians, actors, crib builders, the Ministry for Gozo kept its annual commitment with the two Gozo opera theatres. A grant of €17,470 was given to each theatre as a subsidy towards the expenses involved in organising the annual opera performances. Part of the grant was given through the Gozo Attractions Incentive Scheme.

GOZO PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Gozo Public Library network consists of the Gozo Public Library, the Gozo Lending Library and 12 local branch libraries, including one library at the Gozo General Hospital. The Gozo Public Library acquires and preserves for prosperity the national collection of printed material and provides academic books and other related material in printed and electronic form for research. The Gozo Lending Library and the local branch libraries provide educational information and recreational books for home reading.

Equipment

Avantech Ltd donated a Canon photocopier NP1550 to cope with the research work at the Gozo Public Library.

Collections

- *Legal Deposits:* The Melitensia collection incorporates books, journals, newspapers and magazines published in the Maltese Islands, acquired by means of the Legal Deposit Act of 1925. In 2008, a total of 763 books were deposited at the Gozo Public Library.
- *New acquisitions:* The sum of €8,639 was spent on the acquisition of 1,224 new books (721 for the Gozo Public Library and the Gozo Lending Library, 503 for the Local Branch Libraries). The sum of €500 was spent on subscriptions of foreign magazines.
- *Donations:* 2,935 books were donated by various persons and entities: 442 to the Gozo Public Library, 467 books to the Gozo Lending Library, and 2,026 to the Local Branch Libraries.

Readers' Service

- *Internet service:* 8,374 persons availed themselves of the Internet Service (Gozo Public Library – 2,710 persons; Gozo Lending Library – 5,664 persons).

- *Photocopying services*: 2,312 persons requested a total number of 42,425 prints at the Gozo Public Library. This yielded an income of €4,967. All prints were made available on the same day of request.
- *New members*: 602 persons requested to borrow books for home reading (Gozo Lending Library – 281; Local Branch Libraries – 321).
- *Book loans*: A total of 117,741 books were issued for home reading (Gozo Lending Library – 62,769; Local Branch Libraries – 54,972).

Publicity and Promotion

- *Community Information*: At the Gozo Public Library, the public can view a notice board which covers such items as job vacancies, courses and other related topics of educational and cultural interests.
- *Library orientation visits*: During the scholastic year, orientation visits to the Gozo Public Library were held in collaboration with the Gozo College. The students' participation during these visits included prose and poetry reading and also the playing of musical instruments. 1,299 students attended for these visits together with their respective teachers. On several occasions, students were accompanied by their parents. Students had the opportunity to express themselves about their reading interests and to browse amongst a wide selection of books that are put on display for each visit.
- *Storytelling*: One-hour storytelling sessions are held every Wednesday afternoons at the Gozo Lending Library. A total of 337 primary school students attended.
- *Publicity Campaign*: The services offered at the Gozo Public Library were further publicised through interviews on TV stations and press coverage.

Exhibitions

- *World Book Day 2008*: World Book Day was commemorated by an exhibition of new books which covered a range of topics addressed towards the recreational, educational and academic needs of the students, from primary to tertiary levels and also the general public. A range of Melitensia books and publications used in the promotional campaign for the introduction of the euro currency were also put on display. This event included also a seminar and storytelling sessions.
- *Gozo 1234 Notte Gozitana*: For the second consecutive year, the Gozo Public Library was opened on 3 May for the general public during this annual cultural event. The main reading hall was the venue of an exhibition of new books ranging from academic to Melitensia books.

Other Activities

Refurbishment works were carried out at the Gozo Public Library by the CMU Section of the Ministry. This included the painting of all external doors and windows, the railings of staircases, the whitewashing of the kitchenette and the book-bindery and the upgrading of the staff and public toilets.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Introduction

The National Archives (Gozo Section) (NAG) is the public record office for the documentation produced and received by past and present government departments and establishments of the islands of Gozo and Comino.

Act V (2005) *The National Archives Act* enacted by the Parliament of Malta on 10 May 2005 laid out the constitution, composition, and functions of the National Archives establishing it as an entity or agency in its own right. It also made provisions for the appointment of a National Archivist and an Assistant National Archivist for Gozo together with other dispositions ancillary thereto.

The NAG is a sub-agency within this government entity. As such, the National Archives, as the Agency, is the *regulator*; the Ministry of Gozo is the *administrator*. The NAG, up to 31 December 2007, held deposits from 25 different entities, each of which is subdivided to reflect the diverse activity carried out by those entities. No new entity was added during the year.

Tasks

The Assistant National Archivist and his assistants carry out a four-fold task.

- The management of the archives – a most important task for the preservation of the national memory of the Maltese nation.
- Visits by the Assistant National Archivist to government establishments to make an appraisal of the documents preserved therein. During the year, these on-the-spot checks were carried out at the Law Courts-Gozo and the Gozo General Hospital. A number of registers were identified for transfer from the entities to the NAG, but could not be transferred due to lack of space at the NAG premises.
- Cataloguing of documents transferred to the Archives. This task takes up most of the time as the majority of documents are transferred to the NAG without any pre-established order. The analysis of the oldest section of the Archives, the records of the old Universitas, the administrative body of Gozo during the rule of the Knights continues.
- Making the general public conscious of this written memory of the Maltese nation. In this regard, the Assistant National Archivist proceeded with the publication of a document every month from the registers of the Universitas, the oldest section of the NAG. Serialised in the monthly magazine *Il-Ħajja f'Għawdex*, a Gozo magazine for local consumption, under the designation *Għawdex tliet mitt sena ilu* – Gozo three hundred years ago, the series has proved very popular and will be retained for the seventeenth consecutive year. Up to end year, 169 documents had been transcribed, translated, and published with an explanation. Besides, two exhibitions were held during 2008 to make the general public aware to this heritage.

International Fora

The Assistant National Archivist represented the National Archives in two international fora in 2008.

On 8-9 May, he took part in a meeting of a project codenamed *Aristot/Internum - Sciences of the Mediterranean* held at Moncada, Valencia. This was the fifth reunion conference and the last of the project. The aim of the project was the better organisation of the scientific heritage common to both sides of the Mediterranean littoral. It is hoped that this aim will be achieved by easing the access to the Mediterranean common heritage through the use of IT, that is, the digitisation of science-related texts. The Archivist provided a general overview of the work carried out vis-à-vis the project by the National Archives of Malta and its input in the project. This input was provided by three different deposits, namely, the National Archives of Malta, the National Archives of Gozo, and the Wignacourt Museum.

On 7-8 October, the Archivist attended the bureau meeting of CITRA, the *Conférence Internationale de la Table Ronde des Archives*, in Vienna. The Bureau discussed the international conference of the round table of archives that will take place in Malta from 17 to 21 November 2009 with the theme *Imagining Archiving in the twenty first century: New strategies for education and training*. The Archivist gave a detailed description of the preparatory work being done in preparation for the Conference.

Teamwork

The NAG is a three-person department. The Assistant National Archivist decides on the registers that are to be tackled, draws a preliminary report, and proceeds to their cataloguing. The functions of the NAG staff include preparing the catalogue labelling of the documents; filling the cataloguing sheets; helping in

the classification of records; renewing the binding of worn out volumes; and binding bundles of previously unbound documents. Processing the thousands of photos brought over from the Ministry of Gozo is nearing completion. This photo collection now spans 80 albums. Members of staff also deal with requests from researchers.

New Deposits

During 2008, the NAG was enriched with deposits of new items in the following entities:

- *AG Archives Gozo (National Archives – Gozo section)*: Items were added in the following sections: AG/01 - Correspondence (1 vol); AG/04 - Exhibition Catalogues (7 vols); AG/05- Miscellanea (20 vols).
- *CC Civic Council*: Items were added in section CC/06 - Miscellanea (2 vols).
- *CG Curia Gubernatoriali (Courts of Law)*: One new section was added: CG/27 – Commissioner for Justice – Lawsuits.
- *CI Charitable Institutions*: Items were added in the following sections: CI/02 – Accounts and Expenditure (1 vol); CI/04 – Gozo Prisons (39 vols).
- *CP Circulars and Posters*: Items were added in section CP/03 - Posters (1 vol).
- *HI Hospitals and other Institutions*: Items were added in section HI/20 - Miscellanea (2 vols).
- *LC Local Councils*: Items were added in the following sections: LC/02 – Fontana (1 vol); LC/03 – Ghajnsielem (1 vol); LC/05 Ghasri (1 vol); LC/08 - Nadur (1 vol); LC/13 - Xewkija (1 vol).
- *PA Photographs. Albums*: Items were added in the following sections: PA/01 - Historic Places and Events (2 vols); PA/04 - Ministry of Gozo - Miscellaneous (4 vols).
- *PM Plans and maps*: Two new sections were added: PM/09 – Reproductions; PM/10 – Historical Buildings – restoration (Dept of Projects and Development).
- *SS State Schools*: Items were added in the following sections: SS/29 – Xaghra/Admission – Attendance - Log-Books (14 vols); SS/30 – Xaghra/Miscellanea (9 vols).
- *ZM Miscellanea*: Items were added in the following sections: ZM/01 - Misc volumes (70 items); ZM/02 – Misc Papers/French occupation (4 items).

During the year, a total of 402 volumes/items were transferred to the NAG and catalogued. It must be noted that each single item of the Miscellanea section had to be examined and newly bound.

Researchers and Accessions

The number of researchers at the NAG during 2008 decreased to 288 from 401 in the previous year. The number of items consulted was 1,145 and the number of research hours decreased to 283 from the previous year. This decrease was expected due to the exceptional increase during 2007. The volumes handled throughout the year amounts to about 11% of the NAG holdings. The following table shows the total number of accessions from each section.

AG	CC	CG	CI	HI	LC	MH	MP	
15	22	3	63	14	2	62	4	
PA	PD	PM	PW	SS	ST	UG	ZM	Total
270	38	119	1	90	117	205	120	1,145

Exhibitions

During 2008, the NAG-Gozo mounted two exhibitions. The first was held between six in the evening and midnight of 3 May 2008 to coincide with *Gozo 1234 - Notte Gozitana* – the Gozitan version of *Notte Bianca*. The exhibition, mounted within the premises of the National Archives, was designated *Images of*

Gozo Past II – an exhibition of old photographs. Forty large photographs from the 1,500 plus collection that the Gozo section of the National Archives has amassed over the years were put on display. Each photo carried a short description in large print and an approximate dating.

The second exhibition was held on the occasion of the Archive Awareness Week, by now an established annual event. This year the exhibition featured *The Coastal Defences of Gozo* and it was open from 30 October to 15 November. The exhibition highlighted the former and present defences of the island. It was divided into two main sections. The *first* consisted of twenty documents – all conserved at the NAG – related to coastal defences ranging from 1595 to 1804. The earliest, over four hundred years old, refers to two lookout posts; the last is a British report on the requirements of the coastal fortifications. The *second* section of the exhibition consisted of a set of photographs of the major coastal fortifications of Gozo: the towers, the batteries, the redoubts, the underwater obstruction, and the fougasses. A segment of this section was dedicated to philately. All exhibits were selected from several of the 25 entities whose records are deposited at the Archives.

An exhibition catalogue with detailed information on the NAG and all the exhibits, published for the occasion, was sponsored by HSBC (Gozo). This catalogue in English was also made available online on the NAG webpage hosted on the Ministry for Gozo website. A souvenir postcard (No 2), depicting the former Garzes Tower in Mġarr, was issued for the occasion.

A number of local and foreigner visitors as well as a number of secondary and senior primary school children from both the government and the church sector visited the exhibition.

Webpage

The webpage of the National Archives Gozo Section is hosted on the Ministry for Gozo website at <http://www.gozo.gov.mt>. A new section – State of the Archives Report – was added on 22 October 2008.

GOZO SPORTS COMPLEX

The Gozo Sports Complex's main objectives for 2008 were reached successfully.

Sport Activities

During 2008, sport activities at the Gozo Sports Complex took place on a regular basis. Sport disciplines such as basketball, volleyball, table and lawn tennis, squash, karate, kick-boxing, spirit combat, kendo and akido were practised mainly through Gozitan sport associations.

Tournaments

The five-a-side football (Futsal) increased in popularity, and in August, the National Futsal Association (Malta) organised a tournament spread over three consecutive days in a twelve-team competition. During 2008, the Complex was also used as the home venue for the Football Tournament organised by the SK Victoria Wanderers and for the organisation of a three-day training camp organised by the Malta National Handball Association. During the year, the Gozo Sports Complex was the show case for the organisation of several Martial Arts tournaments. The Gozo Sports Complex sponsored the second edition of the Martial Arts Festival featuring the participation of several promising local athletes. International athletes participated in the Akido Tournament held in September, while in November and December a Karate and a Kendo competition were held in the main hall of the Gozo Sports Complex. For the first time, the Gozo Sports Complex organised a one-day Racket Tournament featuring competitions in squash, table and lawn tennis. The event was a success and it is the intention of the Gozo Sports Complex to make this tournament a yearly event.

Classes

In 2008, the Gozo Sports Complex started organising fitness classes in yoga, aerobics, body tonification and pilates. On a general request, the eight-week course was repeated for three times and attendance was very satisfactory. Dancing, hip-hop, break dance, gymnastics and ballet classes were organised by private tuition. Physical Education teachers of secondary schools used the Complex for their PE lessons. Annual sports day activities and Christmas concerts by several private and state schools were held. The OASI Foundation and the Eden Foundation kept their annual appointment to organise their annual fund-raising event at the Gozo Sports Complex. The Gozo College made use of the Complex to hold the annual graduation ceremony for Year 6 (Primary) students. For this occasion Gozo's primary school students population attended besides their parents and distinguished guests.

Cultural Activities

The Sports Complex is the centre for community activities, besides its primary sport functions. During 2008, the venue hosted various cultural activities like the Gozo Bird Breeders bird show and the Children's Carnival. In May the Gozo Sports Complex participated in the 1234 *Notte Magica* celebrations by hosting a Kendo performance.

Skolasport

Skola Sport entered into its tenth consecutive season, offering 15 different sports disciplines to school children every Saturday from November to May. Attendance was satisfactory and encouraging. To mark the tenth anniversary of Skolasport, a special programme spread over the scholastic year was organised. Several visits to sport facilities in Gozo and a day inclusion with Skolasport (Malta) at the Marsa Sport Complex were held. Besides, during 2008, the Gozo Sport Complex invested considerably in new equipment and instructors were sent for training sessions in Malta. It is intended to develop Skolasport into a school of sport where particular sport disciplines are taught and from where athletes can step-up in developing and intensifying their sport abilities professionally in sport associations.

Initiatives

During 2008, the human resource capacity at the Gozo Sports Complex was utilised to continue in the refurbishment process. An isolated area next to the main hall was refurbished and transformed into a gym and weight lifting area, with new changing rooms, showers, and sanitary facilities. All plastering works, whitewashing, electrical and water installation and tile laying were carried out by staff employed at the Gozo Sports Complex. As in previous years the Complex continued to invest in new gym machinery to replace old and outdated equipment.

LAND SECTION

One of the main functions of this section is associated with information regarding Gozo Rents of the Government Property Division. Reference is also made due to site plans, reference of records and communicating with the Department of Lands in Malta. Accounting matters are also performed such as filing, returns, payrolls, leave and postage records, typing, among others.

SOCIAL HOUSING OFFICE

The objectives of the Social Housing Office are:

- to assist financially owner-occupiers to upgrade their housing standards;
- to provide social accommodation to needy families;
- to encourage married and engaged couples to become owners of their own place of abode.

The number of new applications received and the subsidies paid in 2008 were:

Scheme	Details	Applications	Amount Paid €
-	Alternative Accommodation	25	-
K,P,Q	Ground Rent Redemption	2	-
R	Rent Subsidisation	11	7,185
W	Adaptation Works – Government Dwellings	4	2,967
Z	Cash Grants/Loan Subsidy/Owner Occupied Private Dwellings	6	2,151
5	Adaptation Works – Leased Dwellings	1	-
7	Adaptation Works – Handicapped Persons	5	2,143
GFR	Grants First Residence (VAT Subsidy) *	58	170,276
RTB	Right to Buy	3	-
ESS	Equity Sharing Scheme	24	395,924
ISS	Interest Subsidy Scheme	5	-
-	Adaptation Works on Allocation of Government Premises	2	5,318
-	To Open a Shop on ex-Housing Property	1	-
Total		147	585,964

*Paid by VAT Department

During the year, 62 requests were received from tenants at Taç-Ċawla Housing Estate, for repairs and maintenance works. Most of these works were approved and carried out during the same period, by workers from the Gozo Works Division and the Housing Construction and Maintenance Department.

The Gozo Section in 2008 carried out an exercise to de-requisition premises that were listed as requisitioned on the Housing books. A total of 474 de-requisition orders was issued while 30 premises are still in the process of being de-requisitioned.

INFORMATION OFFICE

The year proved to be another eventful year for the Gozo Information Office. The office continued to fulfil its basis role of serving as an effective link between the public administration and the general public. During the year, the Information Office issued 50 press releases, the majority accompanied by photographs or video clips.

The Office is also responsible for the sale of all government publications, the major publication being the Government Gazette. Although the latter remained the major publication in demand, the number of copies sold continued to dwindle.

The Office has continued to receive applications for E111, E121 and scholarships for their eventual transmission to the competent ministries for processing.

PASSPORT OFFICE

The aim of the Passport Office is to provide the necessary services relative to the issue of passports. During the year, 2,198 new passports for adults and children were issued.

Other services provided to the general public included issuing of collective passports; issuing of identity documents not otherwise provided for in lieu of a passport; administering of oaths for lost passports; Arabic translation on a Maltese passport; applications for electronic identity cards, and providing information to persons enquiring about dual citizenship.

Notification of births and deaths was also dealt with by this office. During the year, notifications for 311 births and 240 deaths were received. Such notifications were then referred to the Public Registry for registration purposes.

As from March, the e-ID (electronic identity card) was introduced, enabling the public to have access to many government services offered online.

In 2008, the necessary refurbishment was carried at the office, to allow for the installation of the new Passport System (Biometric Capture Passports). For added security, a CCTV system and an intruder alarm were also installed. The new system started functioning from 1 October.

LICENSING AND TESTING OFFICE

During the past year, the Licensing and Testing Section in Gozo has continued to improve the services offered to visiting customers. Although, since 1 July 2008, the annual circulation licence for various vehicle categories has ceased to be renewed at the Section and has been transferred to sub-insurance agencies, frequent daily queries have been referred to the Section by insurance agencies. Thus, all queries concerning renewal licences are still being handled by the Section. Other numerous transactions have been effected through both the new Vera System and the Driving Licence System.

The Driving Licence System introduced towards the end of 2007 gathered momentum during 2008. Exchange of Driving Licence applications for EU citizens residing in Gozo have ceased to be sent over to Malta for processing. In 2008 arrangements were made for direct faxes to be sent to all EU countries to verify any restrictions held on such driving licences due for exchange. This has both enhanced the service that was usually being offered and provided the minimal possible delay for applicants. The following transactions were processed by the Section during the year:

Exchange of Driving Licence for foreign residents in Gozo	60
Renewal of Driving Licences	2,710
Driving Licence Inclusions	73
New Driving Licences	402

Other numerous manual applications were introduced and effected through the system until final process. As in past years, new driving licence applications submitted were booked with their respective Gozo motoring schools to sit for their driving practical test. This involves both time and patience and provides a help desk advice for motoring schools especially when negotiating Gozo weekly requirements with the ADT Driving Section in Malta. Presently three driving examiners are being sent over to Gozo to carry out practical driving tests once a week.

TRADE OFFICE

This office offers the same services normally offered at the Commerce Department in Malta, which include issuing of import/export licences, processing of trading licences for manufacture activities, wholesale and retail activities, construction services, professional and business services, social and personal services as well as street hawker licences. These licences are received at this office and referred to the Commerce Department in Malta, while trademark applications are referred to the Industrial Property Office. The Malta Financial Services Authority registry of companies is another service offered by the office. This includes registration of new companies, receiving fees and documents that may be required for the running of a registered company.

During the year the following activities were undertaken:

Import Licences	8
Export Licences	2
Trading Licence Applications	123
Trade Marks	15
MFSA	
New companies	8
Annual General Meeting (AGM)	395
Companies update	436

GOZO CRAFTS CENTRE AND TA' DBIEGI CRAFTS VILLAGE

Gozo Crafts Centre

The aim of the Crafts Centre is to revamp the lost interest in the local handcrafts sector which forms part of the national heritage. To carry out this task, a permanent exhibition of locally handmade products is on show at the Crafts Centre in Victoria, Gozo.

As at end November 2008, local handmade crafts exhibited totalled over 1,300 items, while the number of firms and craftsmen was 55, of which 33 firms are Gozitan while the rest are Maltese-owned. 42% of the total exhibited items belong to Gozitan firms.

During the year, a large number of visitors visited the Crafts Centre. These included foreign visitors, local people and students from various schools who were on cultural and educational visits to the Centre. Moreover, during November and December, the Gozo Culture Section used the centre for cultural activities and exhibitions.

In 2008, several firms and craftsmen changed or added new handmade crafts while action was taken to encourage more firms and craftsmen to make use of the Gozo Crafts Centre by holding individual exhibitions. Direct information about the crafts, firms, and the place was passed to all those interested, while a leaflet about the history of the place and the aim of the Centre was distributed both to local and foreign visitors.

Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village

Work on the construction of new workshops continued at Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village, with a new workshop opening for business in 2008. The majority of the workshops opened to the public. To keep this place attractive to visitors, trees and shrubs were regularly trimmed and flower plants were planted all year round.

GOZO GENERAL HOSPITAL

Gozo General Hospital has a total bed complement of 291 distributed as follows: Acute Wards - 104 beds; Geriatric Wards - 121 beds; Psychiatric Wards - 54 beds; Nursery Cots - 12. The total staff complement at the end of the year consisted of 686 full-time workers, 14 part-time workers and one casual substitute.

Major Works Carried Out

Projects waiting in the pipeline have been put on hold pending availability of funds. Only two minor refurbishment projects were undertaken in 2008:

- *Physiotherapy Department.* Works involved new plumbing works, new chinaware and redecoration of the section.
- *Outpatients Department.* Works involved new plumbing works, new chinaware and redecoration of the section.

General Statistical Information

- The average number of beds occupied was 196.81 or 64.95%.
- The average length of stay in hospital (excluding the chronic ward) was 3.23 days per person.
- The average turnover (the mean number of patients occupying any one bed) in 2008 was 21.33 patients.
- The average turnover interval (the mean time, in days, that a hospital bed was left empty between successive patients) was 3.77 days (chronic wards excluded).

	Admissions	Population
Male Ward	2,148	7,482
Female Ward	2,039	7,460
Male Geriatric Ward	39	11,648
Female Geriatric Ward	44	26,602
Paediatric Ward	372	799
Maternity Ward	341	1,089
Coronary Care Unit	599	1,787
Gynae Ward	455	619
Nursing	111	340
Long Stay Ward	68	11,429
Short Stay Ward	254	2,776
Total	6,470	72,031

Attendance of patients

Out-patients		41,985
New Cases	12,050	
Follow-ups	29,935	
Emergency and Admitting Department		15,709
Admitted to wards	4,631	
Transferred to SLH	46	
Discharged to home or Out-Patients	11,032	
Fresh Trauma Clinic Patients		1,275
New cases	974	
Follow-ups	217	
Failed to attend	84	
Physiotherapy (treatment sessions)		23,041
Out-Patients	8,032	
In-Patients	15,009	
Occupational Therapy (patients)		6,064
Speech Therapy (treatment sessions)		3,042
Obstetrics (registered deliveries) (309 infants)		305
Renal Unit (treatment sessions)		1,020
Podology (patients) (new cases - 361)		5,178
Blood donation (donors)		1,679
Male	1,089	
Female	590	
Acupuncture Clinic		660
New cases	41	

Operations Performed

	Intermediate	Minor	Major	Major Plus	Major Complex	Total
Surgical	201	432	90	7	8	738
Orthopaedic	87	29	35	73	-	224
ENT	47	16	-	-	-	63
Ophthalmic	-	100	147	-	-	247
Gynaecology	69	215	174	1	-	459
Dental	13	-	-	-	-	13
Pace-maker	-	-	18	-	-	18
Endoscopies	441	168	8	1	-	618
Total	858	960	472	82	8	2,380

Investigations carried out

X-Rays	12,662
Ultrasounds general	1,975
Ultrasounds gynae	291
Electrocardiograms	7,181
Echocardiograms	140
Holter Monitoring	157
Laboratory Tests	479,662
Lab Samples sent to Malta	23,780
Stress ECG	262
Lung Functions Tests	17

GOZO HEALTH CENTRE

Primary Health Care Centre

Attendance at Primary Health Care - Gozo	
General Practitioner	45,345
Treatment	22,080
Home Visits	38
Foreigners	507
Immunisation	3,903
<i>Bereġ</i> (GP)	14,850
Medicine	1,396
Total	88,119

Attendance at <i>Bereġ</i> – Gozo		
	<i>GP</i>	<i>Medicine</i>
Xewkija	1,515	246
Ghasri	607	43
Gharb	927	60
St Lawrence	798	76
Nadur	3,854	224
Qala	1,465	98
Ghajnsielem	1,461	112
Munxar	368	-
Kerċem	641	39
Żebbuġ	455	24
Sannat	682	48
Xaghra	2,077	111
Total	14,850	1,081

Immunisation Service	
<i>Type of Cases</i>	<i>No</i>
Di Te Per	180
Polio	295
Hib	183
MMR	202
Yellow Fever	6
Thypoid	6
Meningitis	6
Hepatitis B	228
Hepatitis A	2
Adult Dip	272
Di Tetanus (Paed)	2
Tetanus	32
Rabies	1
Flu Inj	2,401
Pentaxim	6
Tetract Hib	81

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICE

The Gozo Regional Office provides the services that are normally offered by various units in Malta such as the Drug Control Unit, Environmental Health Unit, Food Safety Unit, Burials Administration Unit and Diving Cards (Licences) section. In liaison with the Administrative Unit of the Department for Environmental Health in Malta, this office is responsible for maintaining strict surveillance on the priority communicable diseases, food safety, non-communicable disease, risk factors and environmental hazards and to take the necessary measures to remove or reduce these threats to the health of the population of the islands.

The services provided by this office are: Health Inspectorate Services, Burials (St Mary's Cemetery), Pest Control, and Diving Permits.

This region deploys six Health Inspectors who are assigned to two sections namely: Food Control and Environmental Health Control. These sections fall under the charge of the Principal Health Inspector.

Food Control Section

This includes maintaining constant supervision over food premises (catering establishments, food manufacturers, food retail outlets), and exercising control on the preparation of food, thus ascertaining that food reaches the consumer in a safe and wholesome condition. Inspections are carried out in premises engaged in the preparation, processing, storage and sale of food and drink by using a Risk Assessment Monitoring system in order to ensure compliance with the Food Safety Act 2002 and the standing regulations.

Complaints with regard to the Food Safety Act 2002 are investigated in order to ascertain that food and drink are of the nature, substance and quality demanded by the purchaser and are safe and fit for human

consumption and that the premises are kept in a high standard of hygiene and in compliance with the standing Public Health laws and regulations.

Environmental Health Control Section

The role of this section is to investigate complaints in connection with public health issues and to ensure the abatement of nuisances by preventive and remedial action.

Stoppages in drains and accumulations of litter in open spaces were the foremost amongst the complaints submitted. Other complaints received include alleged infringements of certain provisions of the Code of Police Laws such as keeping of animals in inhabited areas, state of cleanliness of refuse skips and pest control as well as others that constitute a health hazard or nuisance in breach of the Public Health Act 2003.

This section is also responsible for monitoring the quality of the public water supply from boreholes, reservoirs, reverse osmosis plants and various points through regular sampling. In collaboration with the Environmental Health Unit, this section monitors the popular bathing areas in Gozo and Comino by sampling and analysis of seawater.

Inspections performed at food premises by category and grading by Risk Assessment Monitoring Programme

Nature of Food Premises	No of Inspections	Grade %					
		A	B	C	D	E	F
Retail Outlets	215	59.1	32.0	8.4	0.5	-	-
Food Manufacturers	141	37.6	54.0	8.4	-	-	-
Catering outlets	191	73.3	23.0	3.7	-	-	-
Hotels	9	89.0	11.0	-	-	-	-

Inspections and samples taken in connection with investigations/follow-up cases of Food Poisoning

Inspections	9
Samples Taken	19

Miscellaneous

Inspections of premises icw MEPA applications for development permission	70
Inspections of pharmacies, clinics, private hospitals, old people's homes	46
Fumigation of premises	1

Other inspections of Food Premises

Routine Inspections:	343
Follow-up inspections re deficiencies/contraventions	74
Product recall	77
Labelling of foodstuffs	19
Inspection re refrigeration of dairy products	108
Other inspections in connection with:	
a) Sampling programme	167
b) Undertakings	8
c) Emergency Control Orders	-
d) Emergency Prohibition Orders	-
Inspection of premises in connection with licensing	
a) Department of Health	34
b) Department of Trade	42
c) Malta Tourism Authority	26
d) Department of Customs	2
Total	900

Contraventions

Food related	2
Environment related	1

Samples taken by category

Food	535
Beverages	1
Drinking Water	2
Other Samples	-

Environmental Issues

Service Water – Direct Mains	11
Service Water – Other Sources	-
Infiltration Water	45
Bathing Water	560
Swimming Pools	-
Other Samples	16

Investigation of Complaints

	No of Complaints	No of Inspections
<i>In connection with Food:</i>		
Unhygienic premises & unhygienic practices	8	15
Food unfit or past durability date	4	7
Labelling	14	27
Other food complaints	13	21
Total	39	70
<i>In connection with Environment:</i>		
Defective drains	12	20
Blockages in drains	11	19
Premises or sites dirty or containing accumulations	28	56
Infiltrations	54	115
Other complaints (rat sightings)	413	457
Re Tobacco (Sanitary Control Act)	2	4
Total	520	671

Nuisance reports issued

Defective drains	16
Blockages in drains	4
Premises or sites dirty or containing accumulations	26
Total	46

Undertakings

Total no. of undertakings	8
Number concluded	4
Still pending	4

Destruction of Food Items

2.4 kilos of food items were destroyed by this office.

Pest Control

The Pest Control Section has adopted a programme of preventive baiting and attends to complaints of rat sightings by the general public. The section carries out regular routine rat baiting of sewers and public open spaces throughout the island so as to keep the rats and mice population on our island under control.

Operatives in the Section attended to complaints regarding insect infestations in public areas. Various disinfestations by spraying with effective insecticide were carried out in many localities during the year.

	No. of Areas	No. of Baits
Localities	717	15,387
Complaints	374	6,737
Sewers	156 (947 manholes)	2,020
Insect disinfection by spraying	20	-
Cases of Murine Typhus	-	-
Packets delivered to the Public	10,591 packets	

Control Cards for Narcotic/Psychotropic Drugs

1,686 applications for the issuing and renewal of control cards for narcotic/psychotropic drugs were processed and issued by this office.

Burials Section

This section is responsible for the administration and management of St Mary's Cemetery, Xewkija and Tal-Għonq Cemetery in Victoria, and the application of various laws and regulations related to internments. This involves the administration and management of personnel, the general upkeep of cemeteries, proposed extension of cemetery and construction of new additional graves and research work to establish burial and grave ownership rights.

The number of burials effected at St Mary's Cemetery, Xewkija during 2008 was 46 in private graves and 18 in state-owned (common) graves. 11 transfers of remains were carried out from one grave to another or from St Mary's Cemetery to other cemeteries in Malta and Gozo. There were also 32 cases of cleaning of graves. During the year restoration works were undertaken on the façade and boundary walls of St Mary's Cemetery. Pruning of trees and other maintenance works were also carried out in the cemetery.

Conclusion

During the past year, the adoption of the Food Control System and that involving the Environment have again contributed in no small way to an improvement in both areas. Those involved in the manufacture of food, both operators and food handlers, have become more conscious of good hygienic practices and of all the necessary measures to prevent problems in the food safety. In this regard food establishments have been refurbished and thus upgraded.

As to the environment, complaints are handled in the shortest possible time to the satisfaction of the general public always thanks to the current system adopted. To keep abreast with the latest policies and strategies in both these sectors, constant liaison is maintained with the Head Office in Malta.

Moreover, it is to be pointed out that the services rendered by the Health Inspectorate in Gozo are governed by new Service Standards and this to the benefit of the public.

SECTION FOR THE CARE OF THE ELDERLY

This Section is responsible for a number of support services aimed at enhancing the quality of life of elderly persons and those with special needs and to support independent living in the community.

- *Home Help Care Service:* This is the main service offered by this Section, which at the end of the year had 825 beneficiaries in 649 households. The service is delivered by 83 part-time social assistants. Home Help Care Service (Gozo) is allocated by a Board, which in 2008 held 12 sittings, during which all adjustments in hours were decided, together with the policy governing this service. As stipulated in the Quality Service Charter, the Board is meeting regularly every two weeks.
- *Handyman Service:* This service provides maintenance works and sundry jobs in the homes of the elderly and special needs clients in collaboration with the Construction and Maintenance Unit. During 2008, a total of 43 applications were received while 23 jobs were carried out. Twelve applications were cancelled. Although the time frames for delivering this service according to our Quality Service Charter are meant to be same day service for urgent works and all others within 24 hours, eight applications are still pending since the Handyman is not always available to cater for the needs of the section.
- *Telecare Service:* A Care Worker is assigned responsibility for this service. During the year, 74 applications were received and 70 were installed. Regular home visits are carried out on a weekly basis following installation, to ensure the correct use of the service.
- *Incontinence Service:* The incontinence service is also the responsibility of this office, although it is administered by a clerk from the Family Welfare Section. During 2008, eight new applications were received under Scheme A while 67 new applications were received under Scheme B. There are 76 clients who benefit regularly from this service under Scheme A while 327 clients benefit under Scheme B.
- *Meals on Wheels:* This service operates as a joint venture between the Ministry for Gozo, the *Moviment Azzjoni Soċjali* and the Society of the Friends of the Sick and the Elderly in Gozo. This service provides a daily mid-day hot meal delivered to the clients' homes. A total number of 4,193 meals were delivered in 2008.
- *Social Activities:* Mother's Day Mass and Christmas Party.
- *U3E Gozo:* This section runs the U3E in Gozo in collaboration with the University Gozo Centre and the Division of Gerontology. Transport is provided and to date 44 persons are attending these courses.
- *Day Centre:* This Centre has been running as a joint venture between the Ministry for Gozo, Caritas and 12 local councils since 1999. In February 2008, the Day Centre moved to the *Moviment Azzjoni Soċjali* (MAS) Complex in Ghajnsielem, as per new agreement signed by the Ministry for Gozo, the MAS and the local councils. The Day Centre is at present operating on a four-day weekly basis. Overall attendance in 2008 was 7,146 elderly persons. Transport is provided by contributions from the local councils. Older persons who attend benefit from the services of a doctor, nurse and hairdresser on request, as well as from social and cultural outings both in Malta and Gozo and recreational activities. During Easter, the Day Centre organised mass at Marsalforn, a competition for the best decorated *figolla* and an Easter Dinner. In September, a seven-day tour to the Italian Alps was organised by the Day Centre. The attendance of this tour was 44 elderly persons and helpers. The Day Centre organised a Christmas activity for the elderly which consisted of a Mass, a competition for the best decorated Christmas cake and a Christmas dinner.

ADULT TRAINING CENTRE

- *Structure:* The Elderly and Special Needs Office manages the administrative section in close co-ordination with the Adult Training Centre Head. 40 persons with various disabilities attend the centre regularly. Members are organised in seven units with the aim of giving more individual attention to those most in need. Lunch is provided from Gozo General Hospital daily for all members. Through a structured life skills programme, members are trained for better independent living. The centre caters for intellectual, physical and emotional disabilities.
- *Liaison with other agencies:* A healthy co-ordination exists with most agencies for people with special needs in particular some ATCs in Malta, *Kummissjoni Nazzjonali Persuni b'Diżabilita`* (KNPD), Support

Living Division, National Parents Society of Persons with Disability (NPSPD), Eden Foundation Gozo, Educationally Sub-Normal (ESN) Sannat and Association for the Deaf Gozo while first-hand support is being given to GAVI, Enabled Housing Association Derbyshire, UK, Gozo Federation Persons with Disabilities. The Centre also has ongoing contacts with agencies in America, Poland, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Austria.

- *Referrals:* Normally referrals are made through the Head. For 2008, one person was referred from Arka Foundation.
- *Services:* Services of Personal Aids were given to 20 individuals – these included physiotherapy (32 sessions); communication therapy at the ATC (40 sessions); art and lace at School of Art Ghajnsielem (40 and 32 sessions respectively); lace and weaving at ATC (60 sessions); ophthalmic at GGH (8 sessions) and podology at GGH (10 sessions); a weekly mass service; and dentistry services to all members.
- *Placements:* the following students had placements during the year - 10 from MCAST; three student-facilitators from University (40-hour); 21 students from Holy Cross University in Manchester (15-day); two students from the University of Derbyshire through the Enabled Living Foundation (ELF) (EDGE Programme) (7 weeks). For the latter placement, the ELF in conjunction with the Centre won First Place Accolades Award for Best Provider in Teaching and Providing Training Programmes for Social Work Students out of 400 entities that were nominated throughout England.
- *Cordial Visits at the Centre:* One of the highlights for the Centre this year was the official visit to the delegations from Derbyshire and Sheffield and six groups from Malta, nine visits from different European countries, one visit by an American group, 10 visits from different Gozitan organisations. In addition, the Centre was visited by a number of persons during the year - 4 persons from Poland in conjunction with the KNPD organisation from Malta; 6 persons from EDGE programme; 15 persons with disabilities from different European countries; 20 persons from ARKA; and visits by the KNPD Chairman and Executive Director.
- *Support Group:* A support group consisting of parents and volunteers was organised. Through the group and with the help of JCR Ltd, a Bazaar is run in Victoria. Members from the centre, train, help and participate in the running of the outlet. Social help to people in need is provided from this point. Dancing, horse riding therapy, weaving, lace and craft sessions were organised.
- *Gozo Federation Office.* On 4 March 2008, an office for the Gozo Federation for Persons with Disabilities was established and started operating from the Centre.
- *Outwork:* Work was done for Ta' Ċenċ Hotel, San Lawrenz Resort, NGO, Enable Living Foundation flat in Gozo, ETC, Eden Foundation in Gozo. Support in the transportation of rehabilitation equipment and maintenance on accessories was done at primary schools, members' residences and other entities. The courier service was continued in liaison with Commercial Couriers Company Ltd. Work was done for Magro Brothers. Five persons did some work at MAS apartments.
- *Gardening:* A gardening workshop at the Centre is in progress all year round. Gardening is also held on a regular basis next to NGO Xewkija.
- *Cultural Activities:* Members took part in cultural activities in Malta and Gozo such as Carnival, Fun Games, Crafts Exhibition and Crib Exhibition. Members went on day outings to various places of interest in Malta. Two morning outings are organised on a weekly basis in Gozo. A visit to the Malta Police Headquarters was also organised. Methode plc hosted a party at the Centre for all the ATC's service users.
- *Transport:* Service was given by two mini buses on contractual basis, and two tail lift vans provided by the Support Group Friends of ATC.
- *In-service Training Courses:* A one-week course about self-esteem was held at the Centre. A health and safety course and management course was also organised. Through EDGE, two staff members attended a 4-day course in Derbyshire. All expenses were paid by Enabled Living Foundation.

- *Public Information:* On the Programme *Ghawdex Illum* on PBS, coverage was given of the functions of the ATC and other activities and various talk shows on the local community radio were held. This participation was given in liaison with other agencies.
- *Achievements:* Together with Enable Housing Association of Derbyshire England, the Centre strengthened the twinning project EDGE (Enabled Derbyshire Gozo Exchange).
- *Activities:* The Centre continued the pool therapy programme at Arka Foundation. Numerous social events were also organised especially during summer, Christmas and Easter time such as parents outing, day camp in Comino, swimming at various bays, etc.

FAMILY WELFARE (GOZO SOCIAL WORK UNIT)

The Gozo Social Work Unit offers social work intervention with a generalist approach. As from 2007, social work in Gozo is being delivered on a decentralised basis, with two support social workers and one casual welfare officer being assigned residential work at the Psychiatric Hospital, Ta' l-Ibraġġ GGH. Otherwise, social work is delivered from the main SW Unit at St Francis Square, Victoria. There were 164 new cases during the year - 118 new cases were dealt with by the Generic SW Unit while 46 new cases were dealt with by the support social workers at the Psychiatric Gozo Hospital.

Generic Social Work Unit

- *Follow-up cases:* By the end of 2008 the Generic SW Unit had dealt with 316 cases that required follow-up interventions. These follow-up cases were classified as follows: 112 cases that required weekly intervention and 106 cases that required intervention on a fortnightly basis whilst 35 cases were terminated. 63 cases required other periodical intervention.
- *One-time intervention:* 65 cases which required one-time intervention were dealt with by the Intake section. Such cases are not considered as part of the Unit's caseload and therefore not recorded therein.
- *Telephone interventions:* Such service is delivered daily, and thus it is difficult to record and quantify such interventions.
- *On-call Service:* This service entails the service of a social worker after office hours. 95 calls needed outside intervention. There were also a considerable number of telephone interventions that is difficult to quantify.
- *Case conferences:* 35 case conferences were attended by staff members.
- *Supervision:* Supervision was carried out on a monthly basis with all staff members at the Unit.
- *Staff meetings:* Daily briefing is held each morning to maintain monitoring of the cases, while bi-monthly staff meetings are held for all staff.
- *University placements:* three university students and four MCAST students had their social work practical placements with the Unit during spring/autumn and summer respectively.
- *Detox:* SW service was delivered at the Detox Centre, and GGH.
- *Juvenile Court:* five sessions were held.
- *Court appearances:* 54 court appearances by the social work staff were carried out. These included giving evidence, writing up social reports and seeking legal advice.
- *Supervised access visits:* 11 cases of supervised access visits ordered by Court were carried out. Such cases involve weekly visits at the Ċentru Ħidma Soċjali/community.
- *Carer's pension:* two applications were processed by the Unit. These applications require home and personal assessment followed by written reports.
- *Social administrators:* two persons benefited from this service every month.
- *Social reports:* 63 written social reports were done by the Unit to various departments, agencies, courts and places of work.

- *In-service training*: during 2008, the staff of the Unit attended several training sessions to enhance their performance as social workers.
- *Psychiatric/Gozo General Hospital*: Social work was delivered to the psychiatric wards at Ta' I-Ibraġġ Hospital by the two support social workers who are assigned on a full-time basis there.
- *Community Chest Fund*: 26 applications were submitted to the CCF by the Unit.
- *National Commission of Disabled Persons*: 31 persons benefited from services given by the Commission after the Unit's intervention.
- *Elderly*: Social work interventions were carried out with the elderly and upon request from the 'agencies' concerned or by relatives in the community.
- *Talks*: 55 talks related to social work were delivered by SW staff in various localities and on various community radio stations.
- *Sub-committee domestic violence*: The senior social worker sits on the national sub-committee on domestic violence. Six meetings were held on a bi-monthly basis.

Hospital Social Work Services

New cases were referred to the section as follows:

Psychiatric	36
Child Guidance Clinic	6
Social Support	4
Follow ups	43
Reactivated	8
Put away cases	24
Deceased	2

The following activities were also carried out:

- Staff formed part of the multi-disciplinary team during ward rounds on a regular basis at short stay ward.
- Participated regularly in Psychiatric Out-Patients and Child Guidance Clinic.
- Staff also participated in several case conferences, case reviews and IEPs.
- Regular home visits were carried out to psychiatric patients who live in the community.
- Home visits were carried out with the occupational therapist for the benefit of those patients who desired to return to the community.
- School visits were also made since referrals from Child Guidance Clinic request such visits to liaise with head of school teachers and facilitators for the benefit of our clients.
- Liaised with other hospital personnel in organising social activities at Gozo General Hospital and Ta' I-Ibraġġ Hospital.
- Supervision was given to four student care workers placed at the hospital.
- Case conference and case reviews at Villa Chelsea.
- Regular contact was kept with Social Services, ETC, Housing, Public Registry, ID Office and other agencies. The aim of these contacts was to keep up-to-date on certain benefits, opportunities and schemes, which data was passed over to clients seeking assistance from these departments.
- Took part in local community radio programmes to promote the service.
- Liaised with the Malta Community Chest Fund, Caritas, Friends of the Sick and the Elderly, Sovereign Military Order of Malta. SMOM was involved in taking a group of residents from St Anne Residence to Lourdes, France in May 2008.
- Delivered Easter eggs to children at the Paediatric Ward (GGH), psychiatric patients and clients attending Child Guidance Clinic, Caritas, and: supported clients in their requirements.
- Supervision was carried out regularly in connection with social work delivery. Such supervision has been effective and provided the possibility of exploring different ways to be applied in practice.

SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE

Victoria District Office

This Office deals directly with the general public in connection with National Insurance Pensions and other contributory and non-contributory Social Security benefits and assistance. Work carried out at this office mainly comprises financial investigations; the raising of applications for contributory and non-contributory pensions, benefits and assistance; dealing with customers' queries, and registration under the Social Security Act of newly-employed workers.

The following are the main activities:

- *Non-Contributory Pensions/Assistance/Benefits*: responsible for applications and monitoring of non-contributory assistance, review for current benefits and financial investigations for free medical aid (Pink Form).
- *Contributory/Foreign Pension*: deals with applications in connection with pensions for which NI contributions have been paid or credited. It is also responsible for raising of Foreign Pension applications from Australia, the UK, Canada and all EU countries.
- *Children's & Supplementary Allowance/Marriage Grant/Maternity Benefit*: processes applications, declarations and queries in connection with these benefits; also responsible for filling of marriage grants and maternity benefit applications.
- *New Registrants/Medical Certificates*: registration under the Social Security Act of newly employed workers (NI 3). Medical certificates (SB) referred to this Section are entered daily on the computer system.
- *Medical Boards*: medical boards in connection with Medical Assistance, Social Assistance, Disability Pension, Sickness Benefit, Injury Benefit and Australian Pension were held on alternate Thursdays at the Gozo General Hospital.
- *Statistics*: During 2008, the number of claimants who made use of the above services at Victoria District Office was 21,659. The following table gives a breakdown of claimants visiting and calling at the office, and new applications raised as well as queries lodged during the year:

	Total	Query	Application	In Person	By Telephone
Non-Contributory Pension					
Age Pension (AP)	650	586	64	533	117
Blind Pension (BLD)	7	5	2	7	-
Carer's Pension (CP)	33	32	1	32	1
Disability Pension (HP)	103	91	12	87	16
Contributory & Foreign Pension					
Retirement Pension (RP)	2,860	2,619	241	2,417	443
Widows' Pension (WP)	510	463	47	409	101
Invalidity Pension (IP)	1,689	1,615	74	1,432	257
Foreign Pensions (FP)	988	902	86	892	96
Social Assistance					
Social Assistance (SA)	990	944	46	783	207
Social Assistance Carers (SAC)	104	95	9	86	18
Drug Addicts (DAD)	85	65	20	49	36
Single Unmarried Parent (SUP)	149	130	19	128	21
Unemployment Assistance (UA)	2,771	2,589	182	2,435	336
Social Assistance Board (SAB)	8	7	1	2	6
Short-term Benefits					
Marriage Grant (MRG)	93	19	74	92	1
Injury Benefit (IB)	33	31	2	27	6
Special/Unemployment Benefit (SUB/UB)	809	806	3	771	38
Milk Grant (MG)	5	4	1	5	-
Sickness Benefit (SB)	998	998	-	855	143
Child Benefits					
Disabled Child Allowance (DCA)	12	8	4	11	1
Children's Allowance (CA)	1,972	1,606	366	1,729	243

Maternity Benefit (MB)	135	28	107	132	3
Foster Care (FC)	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Assistance/Aid					
Tuberculosis Assistance (TA)	-	-	-	-	-
Leprosy Assistance (LA)	6	5	1	6	-
Sickness Allowance (SKA)	559	477	82	468	91
Pink Form/Card (PF)	1,685	941	744	1,649	36
Supplementary Allowance (SPA)	1,500	1,192	308	1,351	149
Admission to Elderly Homes	-	-	-	-	-
Insurability (NI3)	1,031	623	408	891	140
Energy Benefit (ENRG)	501	392	109	435	66
SVB	2	1	1	2	-
NI Contributions	954	954	-	742	212
Foreign Bonus	401	124	277	373	28
Exemptions	3	3	-	3	-
Waiving of Examination Fees	13	-	13	13	-
Total	21,659	18,355	3,304	18,847	2,812
Total SB Certificates	20,826				

- *Training:* During the year, training was organised for all personnel at Victoria District Office, in Pensions and other benefits, and IT. In addition, personnel attended other training courses on various topics organised by the Staff Development Organisation.

Nadur District Office

The Area Office had no problems with the euro conversion - the changeover was smooth and apart from beneficiaries checking about their actual amount in euros from Maltese lira, there were no other problems.

During the year, NDO personnel attended various training courses organised by both the Department of Social Security and the Ministry for Gozo.

As the office caters for the villages of Nadur, Qala and Ghajnsielem every effort is made to provide clients a one-stop-shop service. In addition to providing information about Social Security benefits, clients who called at the office and were in need of other particular services, were referred to those agencies, non-governmental organisations and other government departments within the Ministry for Social Policy and the Ministry for Gozo responsible for the provision of specific services. Booklets and leaflets about specific benefits and other services are kept on display in the waiting area of our office to help inform the public about existing benefits applications and services offered by different departments and organisation.

INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

During the year this Section carried out 74 routine inspections, during which employees were interviewed and 14 irregularities were detected. Action was taken to have these irregularities rectified; 119 follow-up/special visits were undertaken.

51 claims amounting to €82,450 were issued in respect of arrears in wages, wages below the Wage Regulation Order/National Standing Order, vacation leave, bonuses, overtime remuneration, and weekly allowance not granted. Two officers from this Section attended 22 court sittings/*perizias*.

CENTRE FOR NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

During the year, the number of non-government organisations and voluntary groups making use of the service offered once again increased. The number of registered members with the NGO Association surpassed 162 and these organisations held 475 meetings. All registered organisations benefited from almost 21,703 photocopies at a heavily subsidised rate. The tribunals for Wardens and for underage children's rights as well as the ADT (for the driving test) made use of the NGO Centre. Apart from this,

the Centre - in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo - was responsible for the co-ordination of the Annual Subsidy Scheme for all Gozitan NGOs.

UNIVERSITY GOZO OFFICE

During 2008, the following courses were organised:

- *Completed:*
 - Course leading to the Post-graduate Diploma in Education (Administration and Management) (ended June 2008) - 27 students successfully completed the course and were conferred with the diploma in November/December at the University of Malta;
 - Course leading to the Bachelor of Commerce (ended June 2008) - four students successfully completed the course and were conferred with the degree in November/December at the University of Malta;
 - Diploma in Commerce course (ended June 2008) - 13 students successfully completed the course and were conferred with the diploma in November/December at the University of Malta;
 - MA in Islands and Small States Studies – 3 students successfully completed the course and were conferred with a degree in November/December at the University of Malta.
- *New Degree/Diploma/Certificate Courses:*
 - A two-year course leading to a Diploma in Commerce (commenced October) - 13 students;
 - A two-year course leading to an MA in Islands and Small States Studies (commenced October) - three students;
- *Short courses:* the following short courses were offered at the University Gozo Centre during 2008 – Introduction to Criminology; Inclusive Education – Transforming Schools into Communities; Understanding Young People in Today’s Society.
- *Courses part-financed by the European Union:* 167 participants completed a set of courses offered by the Ministry for Gozo and co-financed under the European Social Fund. Other five courses in agriculture were offered during November and December.

Extra Curricular Activities

- On 6 April, the Lace-Making Programme at the University Gozo Centre organised the annual event *Gozo Lace Day* for the twelfth consecutive year. Ms Kate Gonzi, wife of the Prime Minister, attended this event where she distributed certificates to students who completed the advanced lace-making course. When addressing those present, Ms Gonzi said that she was impressed by the work carried out at the University Gozo Centre stating that the centre has been instrumental in reviving the craft and giving it an academic dimension. Present for the occasion were Hon Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, Prof Lino Briguglio Director of the University Gozo Centre and Hon Anton Tabone, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and Ms Consiglia Azzopardi, co-ordinator of the Lace-Making Programme.
- On 5 April the Italian Ambassador for Malta paid a second visit to the University Gozo Centre where he met with Gozitan artists, Members of Parliament, mayors and others persons who are involved in the cultural scene. The aim of this visit was the launching of a competition for Gozitan artists, *L’Italiano in Piazza*, organised by the Embassy of Italy in Malta in order to commemorate the 8th edition of the week of the Italian Language in the World that took place in October.
- In July Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University of Malta, accompanied by the Minister for Gozo, visited the University Gozo Centre, where they met the Director of the Centre. Prof Briguglio explained the importance of the presence of this Centre in Gozo and how this has had a positive effect on higher education in Gozo. The Minister stressed the importance of maintaining and increasing the services offered by the University in Gozo, which should result in the strengthening of human resources through lifelong learning in Gozo. The Rector spoke favourably about the Centre and the facilities it offers. He acknowledged the importance of the Centre to the Gozitan community and stated that Gozo will need more trained people in order to help it achieve the eco-island status.
- On 5 September the Centre organised its annual summer activity entitled *An Evening with Island Brass*. The event was attended by an audience of about 200 persons.

Publications

- The 18th and 19th edition of the *Gozo Observer* were published in June and December 2008 respectively.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT (GOZO)

The Inland Revenue Department is responsible for the administration of the Income Tax and Capital Transfer Duty Acts and the enforcement of Social Security contributions. The Gozo Branch deals specifically with Gozitan individual taxpayers as well as bodies of persons and it offers assistance and information to the general public in complying with their fiscal obligations. Moreover, in January the Call Centre started processing all telephone calls, e-mails and other correspondence received by the whole Department.

FSS and Provisional Tax

FSS deductions, as well as Provisional Tax paid are as a rule first set off against tax assessed for the previous year of assessment, any balance remaining is then credited against outstanding tax for earlier years, if any, or else refunded. During 2008, the number of employers who submitted the FSS annual reconciliation documents for 2007 was 764. The FSS Division captured and reconciled data covering 3,124 employees for 2007. FSS collected by the Gozo Cash Office amounted to €1,430,592 as against the €1,483,431 collected in 2007. Provisional Tax collected during 2008 amounted to €2,966,823 as against the amount of €2,997,233 in 2007. Provisional capital gains tax withheld on deeds of sales decreased from €8,066,750 in 2007 to €5,158,114 in 2008.

Revenue

Revenue from Income Tax collected during the year ending 31 December 2008 amounted to €11,833,937. The following schedule is a breakdown of revenue by system of collection as received through the Gozo Office.

	2008 €	2007 € equivalent
PAYE/FSS (Private Employees only)	1,430,592	1,483,431
Provisional Tax	2,966,823	2,997,223
Provisional Tax (Capital Gains Tax)	5,158,114	8,066,750
Provisional Tax (Self-Assessment)	1,496,801	1,965,509
Part-Time Self-Employed	137,453	132,150
Penalties	70,239	153,967
Agricultural Scheme	39,524	56,343
Miscellaneous	343	1,237
Settlement Tax	534,048	675,607
Total Income Tax Receipts	11,833,937	15,532,217
Social Security Contributions	7,113,790	7,068,397
Total Income Tax & Social Security Contributions	18,947,727	22,600,614
Duty on Documents Acts	5,277,975	7,724,468
Death and Donation Duty	8,956	40,191
Miscellaneous	541	485
Total Capital transfer Duty	5,287,472	7,765,144
Grand Total	24,235,199	30,365,758

Social Security Contributions are received at the Gozo Cash Office on behalf of the Social Security Department in respect of Gozitan self-employed persons and Gozitan private employees. Receipts performed by the Cash Office in respect of Income Tax and Social Security Contributions were as follows:

	2008	2007
Income Tax	9,486	10,631
Social Security	<u>13,083</u>	<u>13,014</u>
Total Receipts	22,569	23,645

Collection of Tax

As part of the Department's drive to collect outstanding tax balances, a 1% per month additional tax is being imposed on any outstanding balances. Settlement tax receipts amounted to €534,048 however tax withheld by means of the FSS system vis-à-vis Gozitan government and parastatal employees is paid in Malta and is not included with receipts recorded by the Gozo Branch.

Tax and Other Clearances

During 2008, the Branch processed 155 authorisations for tax clearances in connection with the repatriation of funds from Malta. It also issued 15 approvals for the exemption or reduction of the 7% Capital Gains Tax rate on deeds of sale. These approvals are requested prior to deeds of sale in those cases where a rate lesser than the statutory 7% tax will be enough to cover any ensuing capital gains tax. 111 pension scheme applications were issued to the Department of Social Security.

Self-Assessments and Declarations

The Branch acknowledged electronically 5,063 Self-assessment returns during 2008 (420 of which were for previous years) and 11,827 automatic assessments were raised vis-à-vis Gozitan taxpayers under the Free-Filers system. 300 Correction Forms were raised against Self-Assessments.

Agriculture Scheme

This scheme which was introduced during 2005 enables farmers to opt to be charged at source a Final Withholding Tax of 3% when selling their products to registered payers. During 2008, the Branch acknowledged electronically 384 Part-timer and 144 Full-timer Agricultural Scheme returns.

IRD Call Centre

The Call Centre's main objective is to answer all incoming telephone and e-mail queries relating to income tax and social security contributions. Queries are made by all categories of taxpayers - individuals, companies, employers and expatriates. The IRD Call Centre also receives general correspondence regarding changes to be made to Taxpayers Personal Index. The IRD Call Centre started receiving its first live telephone queries on 4 January 2008. During the year, the Centre replied to 90,561 telephone calls and 6,744 e-mails and processed 3,168 letters of correspondence.

Duty on Documents – Transfers *Inter Vivos*

During the year this Branch examined 1,268 deeds of sales and other transfers of immovable property, of which 1,244 were inspected by the Department's engineers. As a result, 612 original claims were raised. Stamp duty on such transfers amounted to €3,107,941. During the year, 119 new objections were registered and 77 cases were concluded. Besides duty on transfer of immovable property, €10,465 was collected in respect of share transfers. Duty collected from additional claims issued amounted to €153,174. Additional duty on such claims amounted to €43,368. Outstanding balance of assessed duty, including disputed duty amounted to €1,652,020. During the period under review, 672 promises of sale were registered with the Department. Provisional stamp duty paid on these promises of sale amounted to €667,742 (€189,620 in 2007).

Duty on Documents – Transfers *Causa Mortis*

The number of returns *causa mortis* filed during 2008 was 344, of which 26 cases were inspected by the Department's engineers. 229 original claims were raised during the year. Stamp duty on such declarations amounted to €1,250,396. Six new objections were registered and 11 cases were concluded during 2008. Revenue collected from additional claims issued amounted to €32,315. Additional duty on such claims amounted to €540. Outstanding balance of assessed duty, including disputed duty, amounted to €236,626.

Death and Donation Duty

31 additional returns were filed during 2007/8. 15 assessments were raised, whilst 16 transmissions were found to be exempt from tax. Duty claimed during the period was €4,477, and revenue collected totalled €8,955 (including €4,478 interest). Outstanding balance of assessed duty, including disputed duty up to and including 31 December 2008 amounted to €196,851.

VAT OFFICE

- *New Applications:* This Office received and processed 415 applications for a new VAT registration number.
- *Returns:* VAT returns from Gozo taxpayers were received regularly throughout the year. These returns numbered 9,514.
- *Fiscal Receipt Books:* 7,251 personalised fiscal receipts books were distributed to VAT registration holders. 6,210 personalised and 321 non-personalised fiscal receipts books were collected from taxpayers.
- *Cancellations:* 193 taxpayers applied for de-registration of their VAT number.
- *Appeals:* Eight appeals were received at this office from Gozitan taxpayers. These appeals were acknowledged and relative papers were forwarded to Secretary Appeals Board.
- *Courts:* During the year, several court sittings in connection with VAT returns were attended.
- The officers of this section helped taxpayers in filling the returns; authorised 75 fiscal cash register transfers; received 260 applications for grants on funerals, 65 on weddings, 30 on musical instruments and 35 on bicycles; and dealt with numerous queries from the general public.

ELECTORAL OFFICE (GOZO)

The Electoral Office (Gozo Section) receives applications for the registration of voters, transfer of residence, change of status, or other required corrections to be included in the revised electoral register.

In conjunction with the Commissioner of Police, the office deals with the issue, renewal and distribution of identity cards.

The staff of the Electoral Office in Gozo regularly carries out street inspections in connection with naming/renaming of streets to ensure that the names of voters listed under old street names are correctly registered under the new street names in the electoral register and to change ID cards. The Office also provides a service to housebound and bed-ridden patients in hospitals and institutions for the aged and in many private residences where the sick and aged persons residing there request new identity cards and voting registrations.

The general election as well as elections for the Local Councils of Munxar, Kerċem, Qala, San Lawrenz, Xagħra and Żebbuġ were held on 8 March 2008. This Office was involved in the preparations for such elections, which included the setting up and inspection of polling places, distribution of undelivered voting documents, issuing of special voting documents, receiving applications regarding AECs, counting staff and other related matters.

Before the elections were held, the Electoral Commission assigned one of its members at the Gozo Electoral Office to receive nominations from interested candidates for the elections. During polling day the Commission sent its representatives in Gozo to supervise and to settle matters that arose and to ensure, by its presence, the smooth running of the elections.

The number of transactions carried out in connection with the Electoral Register and ID cards were as follows:

New Registrations:	
(Electoral Register April 2008)	275
(Electoral Register October 2008)	243
Change of address	730
Change of status (due to marriage)	172
Corrections	155
Replacement of lost and damaged ID cards	559
Issuing of ID cards for foreigners (Aliens)	364

JOYCE DIMECH

Director (Customer Services)

Department for Projects & Development

The Department for Projects and Development incorporates the Works Branch, the Construction and Maintenance Unit, the Public Cleansing Section, the MRRA Salaries Section and the Agriculture and Fisheries Branch.

The main objectives of the Department for Projects and Development are:

- to ensure that Gozo has the proper infrastructure required for the island's development;
- to protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage of Gozo;
- to provide the proper environment and extend the necessary services in the agricultural and fisheries sectors so that progress and growth can be achieved in these industries;
- to support investment; and
- to ensure that progress in Gozo follows the principles of sustainable development.

WORKS BRANCH

Finance and Administration

The main functions of the Finance and Administration Section are the management of human resources, contracts, stores and registry and the provision of administrative support to all the other sections within the branch.

Districts Section

This Section is primarily concerned with the provision of services to local councils on a contractual basis. In addition, however, it is also involved in carrying out work which falls within the responsibility of central government.

During the year under review, the works carried out by this Section consisted in the maintenance and embellishment of playing fields, construction and maintenance of pavements, concrete works on farm access roads, patching of streets in different localities, building and maintenance of retaining rubble and *franka* stone walls and the building and cleaning of water culverts.

Roads Section

The Roads Section is responsible for the general upkeep and maintenance of roads in Gozo. The Section was engaged in the construction of retaining walls and pavements, construction of water culverts, repair of rubble walls, maintenance on roundabouts and central strips, patching with hot and cold asphalt in all arterial and distributary roads, the fixing and maintenance of traffic signs and applying of road marking paint.

This Section is responsible for the issuing of tenders for new roads and for the supervision of works carried out by the various contractors. During 2008, a number of new roads were completed: Triq ix-Xemmiex and Triq Caraffa in Nadur; Triq Qighan, Triq Imrejbiet and Triq Merkanti in Ghajnsielem; and Triq Santa Marta in Victoria.

Building and Engineering Section

This section is responsible for the provision of services which include the preparation of specifications for tenders, expropriations, draughtsmanship, quantity surveying and the issuing of trenching permits. It is also responsible for the various works carried out by direct labour.

Direct labour mainly consisted of undertaking new projects and general maintenance works. During 2008, this unit continued with its programme of carrying out alterations, maintenance and improvement works at the Administration Centre in Victoria. Refurbishment works were carried out at the Government Cold Stores and along Marsalforn Road Victoria. This Section was also involved in the building of premises at Gozo General Hospital to house the CT Scan Unit. Employees from this Section were deployed to fix chain-link fencing works at various sites, clean water culverts and carry out embellishment and maintenance work in various localities and on government-owned property.

Building, Maintenance and Restoration Section

This section, stationed at the Ċittadella, is mainly responsible for the carrying out of restoration, maintenance, and construction works.

During 2008, this section carried out the following work:

- structural stabilisation works at Sta Cecilia Chapel, l/o Ghajnsielem: works involved the uprooting of damaging vegetation and the erection of temporary internal and external buttress walls to prevent further collapse;
- restoration works at Mġarr ix-Xini tower: works involved partial reconstruction of the internal spiral staircase, replacement of fractured stone slabs, general consolidation and pointing works;
- laying of flagstones (*ċangatura*) along a number of pathways located within the Ċittadella precincts;
- restoration of parish cross located within St Francis Square, Victoria: works involved the temporary dismantling of the highly deteriorated cross, consolidation of those individual column drums that could be retained, cleaning of the same drums and other stone elements from biological soiling, manufacture/working of new column drums to replace the original ones which exhibited extensive deterioration, re-erection works and the installation of protective bollards; and
- various works carried out by the marbler, relating to the manufacture and/or restoration of marble inscriptions at various sites.

CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE UNIT

The Construction and Maintenance Unit renders services to government departments, NGOs, local councils and to the general public.

During 2008 the Unit undertook embellishment projects on belvederes, playing fields, football grounds and other public areas. Construction works were carried out at public areas such as parking sites, at the Institute of Tourism Studies at Xewkija and Qala, on various government tenements and on NGOs' premises. Maintenance works, including plastering and painting of rooms and painting of wooden and iron apertures was carried out in various schools, at the Gozo General Hospital and in other government departments. CMU employees were also deployed in schools and government departments to carry out installations of new water and drainage systems and the laying of new tiles in public conveniences. A water reservoir at the Horse Racing Track in Xewkija was also constructed by CMU employees.

CMU masons carried out construction works on retaining and boundary *franka* stone walls in fields and non-urban areas, at times requiring excavation works and building of solid foundations. During the year under review, an average of 850.50 x 8 courses of retaining walls and around 60m x 4 courses of boundary walls were constructed.

Due to damages caused to rubble walls primarily as a result of heavy rainfall, the Unit continued with its programme of maintaining and rebuilding rubble walls around the island. Rubble wall builders attached to the Unit reconstructed approximately 983.70m x 2m of rubble walls during 2008.

Other works carried out in rural areas included the levelling and surfacing of passages, ramps and farm roads in order to provide easier access to farmers to their fields. An average of 615m x 3.50m of farm access roads and passages and around 356.60 x 5m of ramps were surfaced by this Unit.

The Unit constructed some 578 metres in length of pavements and ramps in various localities. In certain arterial roads, protective pipes were fixed around pavements and footpaths to provide safety to pedestrians. CMU operatives carried out repair works on water culverts which at times required the replacement of damaged iron grates. The Unit also constructed new culverts. Iron grates and other iron railings and gates were manufactured at the CMU blacksmiths' workshop.

Other general maintenance was carried out by CMU employees who are currently on loan with Qala and Xewkija local councils or other departments such as the Adult Training Centre. The running of the Handyman Service scheme and installation of cabling and trunking in connection with IT in various government offices continued to be carried out by the Unit as in previous years. Other sundry work such as weed cutting and road cleaning was also undertaken by CMU workers where and when requested.

CLEANSING SERVICES BRANCH

Public Cleansing

This section's main responsibility is the upkeep and maintenance of cleanliness in public areas.

During 2008, scavenging was provided on a daily basis, except Sundays, in the urban localities of Żebbuġ, Għarb, Kerċem, Munxar and Sannat. The other urban localities opted to be serviced by private contractors. Additionally, this service was even provided on Sundays in the core area of Victoria, in Mgarr, Marsalforn and Xlendi and in localities celebrating the parish feasts.

The Public Cleansing Section is responsible for the removal and disposal of cumbersome refuse. During 2008, the Department attended to around 671 requests to remove and dispose of bulky material.

Furthermore, the Section was responsible for the running of 13 public conveniences in Gozo and one in Comino. Maintenance and repair works were carried out regularly by the section's maintenance team. During the summer months, the public conveniences at Marsalforn, Xlendi, Dwejra, Ramla and Hondoq ir-Rummien were kept open for longer periods in order to cater for residents and tourists alike who frequent those resorts.

Other operations carried out by the section included the cutting of weeds and clearing of debris from valleys, urban areas and arterial roads which fall under the direct responsibility of the central government and where the section has a contractual obligation with local councils. The Section liaised with MTA on initiatives to clean the island and reinstate country lanes and footpaths, beaches and other areas of scenic beauty, thus enhancing the image of the island.

Beach Cleaning

The Beach Cleaning Section is responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and cleaning of beaches in Gozo and Comino. These services are delivered to local councils free of charge on the basis of a contractual agreement which covers 12 beaches and bays in Gozo and three beaches in Comino. During the summer season these services are even provided on Sundays and public holidays, and additional rounds of collection were carried out in the afternoons in Ramla, Xlendi and Marsalforn bays.

Employees from this Section were deployed to carry out general cleaning and embellishment works particularly at popular summer resorts like Xlendi, Marsalforn, Dwejra, Mgarr ix-Xini, Ramla and Hondoq ir-Rummien. Other duties included the carrying out of maintenance works on street and beach furniture.

The Section was also responsible for the cleaning of beaches from seaweed and litter and the removal of tar. A thorough clean-up and reinstatement of Marsalforn Valley was taken up by the Section in order to facilitate the flow of runoff rainwater and prevent flooding. All waste generated on Comino was transported over to Gozo, thus eliminating the need for a waste dump on the island.

SEWERAGE MASTER PLAN

The Sewage Treatment Plant project at Ras il-Hobz was officially inaugurated in 2008. Calls for tenders for the construction of the Wied il-Mielah (Gharb) Pumping Station were published during the year and work is planned to start in 2009.

MRRA SALARIES SECTION

The main function of this Section is to process the salaries including allowances and overtime of all the employees of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES BRANCH

Veterinary Services

This section is responsible for the regulation of animal husbandry and slaughter in Gozo, and incorporates the Civil Abattoir, field work, Imgarr inspectorate, and prevention of diseases.

Civil Abattoir

As the refurbishment process at the Gozo Civil Abattoir was still not concluded, the slaughter of live stock had to be carried out at the Civil Abattoir in Malta. The number of livestock slaughtered in Malta amounted to 1,501 cattle (713 cows and 788 bulls) and 5,401 swine. All fallen animals, condemned meat and offal were disposed of by means of incineration.

Dead animals are incinerated at the Civil Abattoir facilities. During the year, 886 bovines, 566 ovines, 14 equines and 492 pigs were incinerated. Another 44,575kgs of material were also disposed of by the same method. During 2008 various maintenance works were carried out on the incinerator.

Field Work

During 2008, all farms supplying milk to Malta Dairy Products (MDP) were tested for TB and brucellosis. Testing was carried out on 92 cattle herds as follows:

TB Tests	6,310
Brucella Tests	6,310
Leukosis	5,464

Additionally, TB/brucella testing was also carried out on other farms which do not supply milk to the MDP. In all, 523 units were checked as follows:

Brucella tests on sheep	4,213
Brucella tests on goats	1,057

All blood tests in connection with the preceding testing were carried out at the Malta Diagnostic Laboratory as no adequate facilities exist at the Civil Abattoir laboratory in Gozo.

Blood Tests			
	<i>Bovines</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Goats</i>
MDP	6,310	-	-
Non-MDP	-	4,213	1,057

Pig Tattooing	
No. of tattoos	5,719
Registration of Deaths	905
Registration of slaughtered animals	5,401

All pig units were inspected and a technical report and census made.

During 2008, inspections were carried out on all poultry cutting establishments on a frequent basis. Emphasis was made with the owners of these establishments on the need to abide by the respective regulations governing their trade. Poultry farms too were subjected to routine inspections. Prior to the slaughter of broilers, an inspector carried out an exhaustive ante-mortem inspection to ensure that broilers were fit for consumption. Laboratory analyses were conducted on a regular basis on random samples of faeces and eggs collected from various units in order to detect any diseases, should they manifest themselves, at an early stage.

Mgarr Inspectorate

One of the functions of the Mgarr Inspectorate is to prevent contagious diseases from reaching Gozo. In this regard inspections were carried out on a shift basis during the entire week on vehicles crossing over to and from Malta. As in previous years, extra care was taken by the inspectorate in not allowing certain palm trees to be brought over to Gozo in order to keep in check the red palm weevil outbreak. Additionally, strict control and monitoring of the movement of animals between the islands was maintained.

Extensive Service Division

During the year, dairy farmers sought advice from the Division on various matters concerning their industry. Farmers were given advice on methods how to upgrade their farms to be in line with existing regulations. At times, employees from the Division conducted on-site inspections to be in a better position to assess farmers' needs. The Division liaised with MEPA on farm permits and plans on behalf of farmers, and employees attended MEPA meetings to keep abreast of developments.

Prevention of Diseases

The Veterinary Services in Gozo take the necessary measures to monitor and control contagious diseases.

- *Salmonella and avian influenza.* All layer farms were inspected. Faeces and blood samples were taken and sent to laboratory for analyses.
- *Blue tongue disease.* In order to better control this disease, all farms on Gozo were divided into four quadrants. Blood samples were periodically taken from four to six randomly chosen cattle farms and sent for laboratory analyses.
- *Rigid control of animal movement.* With the inter trace in place all animal movements were recorded and cross checked to see that all farms were disease free.

Gozo Marketing Centre

The total value of produce sold through the Gozo Marketing Centre during 2008 amounted to €1,118,214, representing an increase in value of €12,414 and a decrease in weight of 38,892 kg, when compared with the previous year.

Sale of Agricultural Produce through the Gozo Pitkali Centre				
	2007		2008	
	Kgs	€	Kgs	€
Pitkali	64,415	41,840	110,184	84,576
Co-operative	1,819,817	1,063,960	1,735,156	1,033,638
Totals	1,884,232	1,105,800	1,845,340	1,118,214

Gozitan farmers, apart from selling their produce in Gozo, also make use of the Marketing Centre in Malta. The total value of produce sold by Gozitan farmers through both Marketing Centres during 2008 was of €2,621,853, a decrease of €103,807 over the previous year.

The Gozo Marketing Centre is directly linked to the Pitkali Markets Management System (PMMS) in Malta. This enables instant inputting of data on deliveries by farmers, sales from each Pitkali store and issuing of invoices to farmers and greengrocers. Through this system, queries about deliveries and farmers' sales can be traced and checked from the Gozo Centre.

During 2008, a new and more flexible timetable was introduced which provided additional options when farmers can bring in their produce. Additionally, some minor works were carried out on the galvanized tents in order to afford better protection to the fruits and vegetables on offer, especially during the summer months.

Afforestation, Parks and Public Gardens

Afforestation

This section is responsible for the maintenance of various public gardens in Gozo, namely Villa Rundle in Victoria, Ulysses Grove in Xewkija and Papa Ġwanni XXIII in Mgarr. It is also responsible for the landscaping and upkeep of central strips, roundabouts, street verges and other soft areas.

During the past year, a total of 38,612 ornamental trees and shrubs and seasonal flowering plants propagated at the Department's own nurseries, were planted all over Gozo. These consisted of 36,763 seasonal plants, 1,087 decorative, 16 medicinal and 746 standard trees.

The Afforestation Section was involved in carrying out other work such as weeding, soil cultivation and watering. Another function of the Unit is the pruning of trees which is carried out throughout the year. The section had some contractual obligations with four local councils namely, Munxar, Żebbuġ, Qala and Ġħajsielem to maintain their soft areas, as per contracts signed between the local councils and the Department for Projects and Development. Income derived from these contracts amounted to €2,498. Some 43 bags of logs and some palm fronds and olive leaves were sold to the general public netting €340 in revenue.

As in previous years, the Gozo Agricultural, Industrial and Cultural Show and the Flower Show were held at the Villa Rundle Gardens in August and May respectively.

Nurseries

The Agriculture Branch runs two ornamental nurseries - Tad-Dawwara and Tal-Hlewwa - where thousands of decorative trees, shrubs and seasonal flowering bedding plants, as well as some indigenous species such as carob and olive trees, were propagated in 2008. Production is principally intended for use at the

Department's afforestation sites, public gardens as well as central strips and roundabouts. The following table shows the number of plants supplied to the Afforestation Unit in the last three years:

Plants Supplied to the Afforestation Unit					
<i>Year</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Decorative</i>	<i>Seasonal</i>	<i>Medicinal</i>	<i>Total</i>
2006	500	665	24,360	14	25,539
2007	549	1,251	20,787	26	22,613
2008	746	1,087	36,763	16	38,612

The nurseries supplied plants and shrubs to the "Greening of Gozo" trial project which was launched by the Ministry for Gozo some years ago. This project involves the reclaiming of idle land, prevents soil erosion and embellishes the environment with a greener landscape. Additionally, 2,352 plants were donated to various local councils, schools and NGOs.

These nurseries supplied hundreds of potted plants on return basis to various entities in order to embellish their premises when holding cultural and similar activities. The number of seasonal plants and cuttings of decorative shrubs propagated in the greenhouses increased considerably in the past year.

The number of trees sold, and consequently revenue, decreased during 2008. Revenue from sales of ornamental trees and shrubs (231 plants, 222 standard trees, 2 decorative and 7 medicinal) to the general public amounted to €3,443.

Gozo General Hospital Gardens

The responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of these gardens was handed over to this Section in July 2008. The Section undertook as an initial task the pruning of trees, hedges and shrubs and the clearing of debris and weeds which were growing in the gardens. Other works carried out included the planting of bedding plants, which were propagated at the Dawwara nursery, watering and the cultivation of soil.

Government Experimental Farm

The Government Experimental Farm is mainly concerned with the cultivation of crops and trees using the latest techniques. Crops are cultivated both in the open and in glasshouses.

Protected Cropping

Protected cropping at the Government Experimental Farm was carried out in three metal glasshouses and two poly-tunnels, none of which are heated. In 2008, the following trials were made: green peppers (Maccabi); cucumbers (Marumba); melons (DRT F1, Brigante, Rotary); vegetable marrow (Jamila); watermelon (Madera); tomatoes (Chenoa). These crops were mainly planted in autumn 2007, with the exception of melons and watermelons, which were grown as a second crop after cucumbers and peppers. Harvesting was completed in 2008 with the exception of cucumbers and vegetable marrows.

In 2008, 1,346kgs of vegetable marrows, 932kgs of peppers, 879kgs of tomatoes, 399kgs of cucumbers, 177kgs of melons and 537kgs of watermelons were harvested for a total value of €2,020. Additionally, some 346kgs of watermelons were donated to charity homes due to the saturated market and a very poor selling price.

Soil solarisation was practised in all greenhouses during the summer months.

Sale of vegetable seedlings, fruits and fruit trees

In 2008, more than 32,000 onion and cabbage seedlings were sold to local farmers and amateurs. It is also to be noted that during the year under review, artichoke seedlings were propagated for the first time in the Government Farm in order to be sold to interested individuals. A small quantity of soft fruit, mainly

nectarines, apricots and plums as well as 371kgs of citrus fruit comprising lemons, oranges, and tangerines were sold. Additionally, 284 fruit trees, mainly olive trees, nectarines, peaches, plums and apricots as well as 526 rootstocks, were purchased from the farm. The total revenue generated from these sales amounted to €1,860.

Livestock and Birds Section

The Government Experimental Farm houses some animals, notably sheep, goats, ducks, and hens, for the purpose of educating school children in connection with the Hands-on Farming Programme. During 2008, some 43 school classes from Gozo attended the premises to gain first-hand experience on farming methods. The Government Farm is also responsible implementing the Captive Breeding Programme which consists of rearing finches in captivity. During the last year, 27 greenfinch offspring were sold for €370.

Fields

In 2008, an artichoke trial was carried out with the scope of producing early artichokes for export. However, due to the limitation of water supplies at the farm, harvesting did not start as early as expected. There was a very good response from local consumers for this type of artichoke. This variety produces large artichokes which are green/violet in colour. In 2008, some 2,000 artichoke heads were sold at the local market for a total value of €474.

During the year under review, 20 tumoli of land were propagated with wheat which was sold for €1,258. In autumn, three new forage varieties were sown at the Farm for trials.

Visits

During 2008, various visits were conducted at the Government Experimental Farm. The Minister for Gozo, the University of Malta Rector, the Director of the Institute for Agriculture and a delegation from the Ministry for Gozo visited the premises on 4 July.

An official from St Vincent de Paule visited the premises and gave a demonstration on grafting citrus trees. Students from the Gozo Centre of the University, accompanied by a lecturer, visited the premises to gain some practical experience while several farmers visited the premises to seek advice on various matters related to their trade.

Seminars

A number of seminars were organised at the Guzè Micallef Hall. One of these, about the Citrus Tristeza Virus, was organised with the collaboration of the Plant Health Department. A course on *Pesticides Use* for farmers was organised with the collaboration of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs and the Plant Health Department. The course was well attended and a certificate was issued to the successful participants.

Other work/activities

A compound Citrus Tristeza Virus (CTV) survey was carried out on all citrus trees at the Farm by Plant Health Department officials. Two citrus trees which were suspected to be infected by CTV were immediately destroyed. Fruit-fly traps were placed in the citrus orchards to attract and kill fruit flies and as a result fewer insecticide sprays were applied. Bumble bees were introduced in greenhouses to enhance pollination.

An open day was organised at the Government Experimental Farm between 1 and 3 May as part of the *Gozo 1234* event. A powerpoint presentation on the operations of the farm was held in the main hall and

interested persons were taken around for a tour around the premises. Some light maintenance works were carried out around the premises whilst the main hall was totally refurbished.

Land and Water Use Section

One of the functions of this section is the monitoring and preservation of soil resources in accordance with the Fertile Soil Preservation Act of 1973. When there is a demand for the removal of soil from a site, normally prior to the commencement of construction works, officers from this section call on site to ascertain that all fertile soil is removed and kept in storage or is used in gardens, fields and reclamation of poor land. During the year, this section processed 30 applications for the removal of approximately 14,470 cubic metres of soil.

This Section is also responsible for the issuing of transportation permits to farmers, fishermen, couriers, egg and poultry and pig breeders to carry their produce free of charge to Malta and carried on-site assessments in connection with the compensation for damages to crops and land. Additionally, land inspections were carried out in connection with applications for development permits and repair of rubble walls.

During 2008, this section received 62 applications for the purchase of fruit trees and vine and issued licences to four commercial vintners. During the year, two vintners pressed some 48,219 kgs of grapes. A meeting was held at the Government Farm for persons interested in Apiculture.

Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS)

The main function of the Integrated Administrative and Control System (IACS) is to register and keep records of land under cultivation and to support farmers in their bid to access the various schemes that may be available.

Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS)

The LPIS is a computerised system in which data pertaining to all land under cultivation is inputted. The LPIS is continuously updated through adjustments of land ownership transfers and the registration of new land. Site plans of all parcels of land being cultivated are kept in order to facilitate identification. This Unit dealt with and solved a number of problems regarding the overlapping and incorrect location of land. Some problems which could not be solved by the Unit were forwarded to the Board of Disputes.

Farmer's Aid Applications

During 2008, the following aid schemes were made available to farmers: Arable Aid; Fruit and Vegetables for Production; Fruit and Tomatoes for Processing; Autochthonous; Vines; Less Favoured Area; and *Ad Hoc* measure for full-time farmers.

148 full-time farmers and 1,119 part-time farmers filed 1,344 applications in connection with the above-mentioned schemes. It is to be borne in mind that a single application can be made out for more than one aid scheme. During 2008, payments made to farmers were effected under the Single Payment System. This scheme establishes the financial aid payable to farmers and is divided into two sections, namely, authorised entitlements and normal entitlements. Authorised entitlements are intended for the horticulture sector which includes all vegetables and tomatoes for processing. Normal entitlements cover arable land, set-aside fields and olive tree fields. Fruit and vine trees were not included in this scheme.

The Control Unit

This Unit is responsible for carrying out on-the-spot checks in order to verify that declarations made by farmers actually agree with what is found on the spot. During the year under review, employees from the Unit selected in a random method a number of parcels of land for inspection. Some parcels were inspected

on the spot whereas other parcels, used mainly for arable crop, were inspected by remote sensing. The information gathered from inspections was inputted into a computerised system and resulting anomalies were addressed.

Other office work carried out during 2008 included the registration of new farmers and the updating of farmers' registration cards (FRCs) which are inputted in a computerised database. The unit also processed 30 applications for agricultural land development permits referred to it by MEPA.

Fisheries Section

- *Fishing population:* During 2008 the number of registered fishermen stood at 403. Though there was an increase of 39 registrations overall, there was a significant decrease in the number of full-time and part-time fishermen.

<i>Fishermen</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Full-time	107	93
Part-time	177	154
Recreational	80	156
Total	364	403

- *Licences:* 31 fishermen were given a licence to lay *kannizzati* in four districts as follows - Xlendi (17); Marsalforn (9); Mgarr-Grigal (3); Mgarr-Lbiç (2). In addition six full-time fishermen were issued with tuna fishing licences and set surface long line licences (*irmiġġi*) were issued to six part-time fishermen.
- *Crafts:* The bulk of the fishing vessels are located at Mgarr Harbour whereas Marsalforn and Xlendi and Dwejra Bays hold smaller numbers. A very small percentage of vessels are distributed in other small bays.
- *Maintenance works:* During 2008, maintenance and repair works were carried out on the electric winches at Mgarr, Marsalforn and Xlendi Bays while sundry maintenance work was carried out on all other winches located in various bays. Other works included the changing of berthing rings and the cleaning of sand in front of the slipway at Mgarr Harbour, replacement of fenders on Xlendi Bay quay and the replacement of sleepers at Marsalforn main slipway. Additionally, regular inspections were carried out in all fishing centres.

JOSEPH A PORTELLI

Director (Projects & Development)

EU Affairs, Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate

The EU Affairs, Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate incorporates the management of aspects relating to EU affairs, domestic and EU related policy development and programme implementation.

The overall objectives of the Directorate are:

- managing the Ministry's participation in EU structures and processes, as well as, ensuring effective co-ordination of EU-related matters at a domestic level and with other EU stakeholders;
- co-ordinating the formulation of the Ministry's position on domestic policies and those proposed by the EU;
- facilitating the implementation of the Ministry's policies and strategies;
- carrying out SPO functions for EU co-funded projects and initiatives; and
- monitoring the implementation of programmes and projects including Customer Care.

EU AFFAIRS

EU Policy Co-ordination

During 2008, the Directorate continued to manage the Ministry's participation in EU structures and processes as well as, ensuring effective coordination of EU-related matters at a domestic level and with other EU stakeholders. It provided input to various EU proposals and European Commission communications that were of relevance to the Ministry's portfolio. It also provided input to the consultation process that the Commission for the Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) carries out on EU communications and proposals that are of relevance to island regions like Gozo.

Management of EU Funds

The Directorate also manages the EU funds allocated to the Ministry, in particular, managing the implementation of EU financed/co-financed projects to successful completion. Throughout the past year the Directorate continued to work closely with the project leaders who are leading the implementation of EU funded/co-financed projects, providing guidance and support on an ongoing basis and ensuring that funds are utilised in an effective manner and disbursed in accordance with regulations and established procedures. The Directorate continued to fulfil the role of Senior Programming Officer for the projects led by the Ministry for Gozo.

Under the Structural Funds Programme for Malta 2004-2006, the Directorate continued to manage the projects that were still underway during 2008. These included one project co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) aimed to improve the employability of the labour force, one co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) aimed to upgrade the basic infrastructure in the tourism sector and one under the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG) intended to upgrade the basic infrastructure in the fisheries sector.

By the end of 2008, all three projects were completed. These include:

- Training Courses to Enhance the Employability of the Workforce in Gozo;
- A Training Institute for the Tourism Industry in Gozo; and
- Provision of Cold Storage Facilities.

The project entitled *Master Plan for the Cittadella - the Old Fortified City of the Island of Gozo*, co-financed under the EEA Financial mechanism, is still under way.

The Directorate has also sourced opportunities for the co-financing of projects that contribute to Gozo's socio-economic development. It has secured co-financing for five projects, three under ERDF and two under ESF. It has provided guidance and assistance to line departments and interested parties including local councils, NGOs, private sector organisations and individuals on the application for funds under different funding instruments.

Dissemination of Information

An important function of this Directorate is the provision of assistance, advice and the dissemination of information on EU-related matters to line departments and interested parties, including NGOs, private sector organisations and the general public. This Directorate receives a significant number of queries as well as requests for information. Queries arise from both internal and external stakeholders for which the Directorate responds expeditiously. Besides the extensive use of e-mail to inform identified internal/external stakeholders, the Directorate holds meetings with these stakeholders as may be required. It also maintains contact with a number of officials from regions of other EU Member States through CPMR. This has created a two-way information exchange channel with this Directorate.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

During the past year the Directorate continued to monitor on a continuous basis EU developments, in particular, Commission and Council proposals in the areas of relevance to the Ministry's portfolio including regional policy, state aids, tourism, human resources, and business support, in order to co-ordinate the formulation of domestic policies in these areas. The Directorate has been instrumental in initiating internal debate and consultations with the relevant stakeholders on these areas, particularly, human resource development, state aids and tourism which are of crucial importance to Gozo.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The Directorate continued to co-ordinate the implementation of the Ministry's programmes and projects. It has held meetings with the relevant officials and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation. To manage the EU co-financed projects effectively, it has worked in close co-operation with the project leaders who are leading the implementation of the projects for which the Ministry is final beneficiary.

Under the 2007-2013 programming period the Directorate is managing the following projects:

- Upgrading of Villa Rundle Gardens;
- Reconstruction of part of Xlendi and Ta' Pinu roads;
- Upgrading of the Operating Theatre and Setting up of a Radiology Unit at the Gozo General Hospital;
- Training Courses to Enhance the Employability and Adaptability of the Workforce;
- Higher Education Courses to Address Skill Mismatches in Gozo.

Besides the projects listed above, this Directorate is working on the project for the Upgrading of Żewwieqa Waterfront and on the preparation of other projects for Gozo which will be submitted for potential EU co-financing.

The Directorate also monitors the preparation/implementation of projects that other ministries and public entities will be implementing in Gozo. In particular, the Directorate monitors the implementation of these projects through its participation in committee meetings and by maintaining close contacts with the ministries/entities concerned.

National Reform Programme

Under the National Reform Programme for 2008-2010, this Directorate has submitted ten measures/initiatives under the different priority areas, namely, Education and Training, Employment, Environment and Tourism.

Green Initiatives

The Directorate, in collaboration with the Ministry Green Leader, has continued to pursue a number of green initiatives for the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste generated within the Ministry, including waste separation and alternative energy generation within the Ministry's administrative block. During the year, other initiatives aimed to reduce consumption of resources, in particular energy and water, were introduced and are actively being followed.

Customer Care Co-ordination

Quality Service Standards

The Directorate is co-ordinating the audit of the 12 quality service charters currently in place in different sections within this Ministry. During the past year, meetings were held with the Charter Support Unit on the matter. The audits are planned to start in April 2009.

This office monitors the implementation of the new service standards introduced in 2006. In those sections where there is no quality service charter in place, a list of the service standards that each section has committed itself to meet has been displayed prominently in each section. This Directorate maintains ongoing contact with the officials responsible for service standards in each department to ensure their effective implementation.

Queries/Complaints Handling

During 2008, the Directorate handled 760 queries, complaints and requests for assistance of a generic, as well as, of a specific nature, received through the electronic system, via e-mail, telephones and walk-ins. Most of these queries/complaints were dealt with expeditiously with responses provided either through the Customer Care System (CCS) or through e-mail. In most cases responses were supplemented by direct telephone contact. The majority of the walk-ins were provided with immediate response.

The Directorate continued to carry out an in-depth analysis of the queries, complaints and requests forwarded to it and subsequently took the following initiatives to improve upon the existing system:

- Continued to maintain ongoing co-ordination with local councils in Gozo. This has led to improved efficiency and effectiveness of the complaints forwarded to the Ministry.
- Held meetings with officials from OPM and MITTS to provide user input in connection with the redevelopment of the CCS system, to help reduce bottlenecks and improve its functionality, as well as to improve upon the system's effectiveness in the delivery of customer complaints to the appropriate ministry/entity.
- The Directorate co-ordinated two training sessions held by OPM for CCS users in Gozo. 27 participants from local councils and officials from this Ministry attended the training related to the redevelopment of the CCS system. Hands-on training of the CCS system is envisaged to be carried out during 2009

RITA CUTAJAR

Director (EU Affairs, Policy Development & Programme Implementation)

**Ministry for Infrastructure,
Transport & Communications**

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes. A large, light beige shape dominates the lower half. A dark blue shape is positioned on the right side, partially overlapping the beige one. A lighter blue shape is also visible, overlapping the dark blue one. The overall design is clean and modern.

Permanent Secretariat

OVERVIEW

The Office of the Permanent Secretary plays a crucial role in the implementation of Government's agenda for the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport & Communications (MITC) by ensuring the provision of relevant, effective and timely policy advice and general management support and policy implementation capabilities for the purposes of enabling the fulfilment of such agenda. Within this context the Office of the Permanent Secretary provides leadership and general co-ordination of the operations of the following MITC departments and entities:

Departments/Directorates: Corporate Services Directorate, Policy Development Directorate, Programme Implementation Directorate, EU Affairs Directorate, Information Management Unit, Government Services Unit, Project Development & Co-ordination Unit, Land & Public Registry Division, and Civil Aviation Division.

Entities: Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), Malta Maritime Authority, Malta Freeport Corporation, Malta Transport Authority, Network Infrastructure Directorate, Malta Communications Authority, Malta Shipyards, Water Services Corporation, Enemalta Corporation, and Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation.

The year 2008 saw a number of strategic developments across the portfolio entrusted to the MITC including the setting up of the Malta Information Technology Agency that took up a number of functions previously undertaken directly by the Ministry, the creation of a new Policy Development Directorate and the appointment of a Director General Operations to strengthen the top management structure of the Permanent Secretariat.

MITA & MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

In July, Government set up the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) to take over responsibility for the implementation of Malta's Information and Communication Technology policy and the execution of the Smart Island Strategy 2010. As a result, there is to be a permanent public sector agency to drive forward IT both within the public sector as well as within the wider community and this emphasises the increasing importance being assigned to the longer term development of this significant aspect of the country's future economic and social well-being. MITA is to take over the operational functions of the Malta Information Technology & Training Services Ltd (including provision of ICT infrastructure and services, project management and consulting services), as well as a number of roles previously undertaken by the Ministry itself including the Information Society Secretariat and the ICT in Government Unit.

During 2008, Government also decided to empower the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) to take over from the Ministry the direct implementation of the efforts to upgrade Malta's external ICT environment, to eliminate the digital divide, and to promote e-commerce.

INFORMATION SOCIETY SECRETARIAT (ISS)

During 2008, the ISS continued with initiatives aimed at expanding the development of the information society in Malta. In early 2008, a PC Leasing Agreement was signed by Government with a number of

private sector players. This agreement was instrumental in facilitating the implementation of a number of actions under the Smart Learning Strategy that aims, amongst other things, to develop a holistic e-learning environment in all schools around Malta and Gozo. As part of the PC Leasing Agreement, some 3,800 new laptops were distributed to teachers and school management teams, whilst a further 6,000 PCs were replaced in primary and secondary schools.

In February 2008, another initiative was undertaken whereby, with the assistance of a number of sponsors, three schools were re-branded as the True Schools of the Future. This involved putting in place all necessary infrastructural works that enabled fast fibre-optic-based Internet connectivity, the introduction of interactive whiteboards and a PC:Student ratio of 1:4 which (together with the UK and Luxembourg) is the highest ratio in the European Union. These three schools are St Elmo Primary School in Valletta, Victoria Primary School in Gozo and the Maria Regina Girls Secondary School in Blata l-Bajda.

As part of the National ICT Strategy, the ISS was also involved in the development of teleworking operational guidelines aimed at encouraging the take-up of flexible working arrangements in the public sector. The result was the publication by the Management and Personnel Office, in February 2008, of the policy document 'Teleworking Policy in the Public Administration'. This document provides a formal framework for the administration of telework in the Maltese public administration.

In continuation of the policy of providing ICT training services across society, an additional three Community Technology and Learning Centres were opened during 2008 with the aim of improving access to ICT in the community, increasing digital literacy, and promoting ICT as an equalising instrument for the integration of disadvantaged target groups and people with disabilities. More than 1,000 persons followed the MyWeb basic ICT awareness course or the MyWeb Plus course which is geared for elderly people.

The SmartStart project on the other hand offered persons with disability (KNPD), persons benefiting from social or unemployment assistance benefits, and NGOs the opportunity to purchase refurbished PCs in good working condition at an affordable price. By May 2008, before being fully integrated into MITA, the ISS had received over 1,600 applications under this scheme. A total of nearly 1,000 refurbished PCs were distributed by the end of the year to persons with disability and persons under social/unemployment assistance. Distribution of refurbished PCs to NGOs will take place in the first quarter of 2009.

In early 2008, MITC also launched the Computer for €0.99c Per Day Scheme that made brand new PCs available to the public at the affordable rate of €0.99 per day. Under this scheme, loans with a repayment cost of €0.99 per day were offered following *ad hoc* arrangements made with the major banks, thus making it possible for low-income households to procure new PCs. In addition to this advantageous loan facility, any Maltese household that purchased new computing equipment from any local authorised re-seller between February and July 2008 was refunded 16% of the purchase price by the Government. By the end of the initiative, around 9,500 households benefited from this scheme.

Project Blue Skies complements the Computer for €0.99 Per Day Scheme by providing an affordable opportunity to experience broadband Internet at home for a whole year at a mere €3 per month. This project was continued during 2008 and as at end 2008 a total of 5,500 households were benefiting from the scheme.

Under an agreement that was reached with the ISS in 2006, the Malta Chamber of Commerce manages the Euro-Label Trustmark for e-commerce websites by virtue of which websites displaying this Euro-label are certified to be trusted as a reliable trader. This initiative is aimed at instilling further consumer confidence in e-commerce. The Euro-Label Trustmark shows that online commercial transactions are following a code of conduct which is applied all over Europe. The European dimension gives added value by enabling businesses to trade in Europe and not only in Malta. By the end of 2008, a total of 20 local websites had been awarded this label.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES UNIT (GSU)

The remit of the Government Services Unit is to create a single point of interface which will serve as an administrative one-stop-shop for the provision of services to business entities operating from, or seeking to operate from SmartCity and, eventually from any place in Malta. The targets set for the GSU have thus been focused on:

- the provision of a single point of reference from which businesses and individuals seeking to engage in business activities from the Maltese Islands may source Government Services;
- the identification, review, and adjustment of those operational structures and activities that are necessary for the provision of Government Services in a manner that meets client expectations and conforms to legislative and administrative requirements and generally leads to the delivery of more efficient and effective Government Services.

In this context, the GSU has, during 2008, continued with a process leading to the formalisation of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between government entities offering a number of predefined services. The scope of these agreements is to formalise the actual deliverable and more importantly establish the minimum turnaround time for the provision of these services by the said government entities to the clients of the GSU. To date, 32 SLAs have been concluded in 14 service areas.

Service provision against these SLAs is targeted for commencement in line with the pace of development at SmartCity. However, consideration is being given to the possibility of the GSU starting to service the needs of investors in other parts of the Maltese Islands prior to the availability of facilities at Smart City. It is felt that bringing this on track prior to the completion of the SmartCity development rather than later would complement the SmartCity initiative and generally enhance the quality of services offered by the various government departments to potential investors in our economy.

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS UNIT

This unit plays a very important role in enabling parliamentary scrutiny over the workings of the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport & Communications by facilitating the timely preparation of replies to questions put in Parliament by members of the House of Representatives. During 2008, this unit handled no less than 1,010 parliamentary questions, each involving careful research into past similar questions and background information and continual liaison and collaboration with Ministry departments and entities and vetting of draft responses for consistency and completeness.

JOHN GATT

Permanent Secretary, MITC

Corporate Services Directorate

OVERVIEW

The role of the Corporate Services Directorate (CSD) is that of providing essential support services to departments and entities falling within the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport & Communications (MITC) across a range of corporate functions including finance and administration (accounts, procurement, asset management), human resources, registry services, and health and safety. The CSD is, in terms of the Radiocommunications Act, also assigned responsibility for broadcast receiving apparatus which mainly relates to the licensing of televisions as managed by the Television Licensing Unit.

The Directorate also provides support services to the various secretariats, directorates, authorities, corporations and other entities falling within the MITC's portfolio in matters related to financial planning, public procurement, travel abroad on official business, and recruitment.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

To the extent that finances are needed to secure the successful implementation of the various activities within the MITC's portfolio of responsibilities, it can be said that management of the Ministry's finances is the most important role of the CSD. The Directorate handles all financial matters related to the Minister's Secretariat, the Office of the Permanent Secretary, the EU Affairs Directorate, the Programme Implementation Directorate, the Policy Development Directorate, and also the Project Development & Co-ordination Unit. It also offers support services to the Civil Aviation Division and the Land & Public Registry Division. In this context, as in previous years, the CSD co-ordinated the Ministry's 2008 Revised Estimates exercise as well as the preparation of the Business and Financial Plans for 2009.

During 2008, the CSD also managed requests for the release of approved Capital and Recurrent budgetary subventions and other financial allocations submitted by Ministry entities including Malta Enterprise, Malta Industrial Parks, Public Broadcasting Services, Malta Air Traffic Services, Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, Privatisation Unit, Malta National Laboratory as well as Enemalta Corporation, Water Services Corporation, Malta Freeport Corporation, Malta Shipyards, Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation, the Malta Communications Authority, the Malta Maritime Authority, the Malta Transport Authority, and MITTS Ltd/MITA. After the March 2008 general elections, the first seven of these entities were hived off to other ministries whilst the last four entities were added to MITC's portfolio. The change in portfolio brought about a host of new challenges for the CSD which must now support such range of activities as maritime affairs, land transport, shipyards, development projects, road infrastructure, communications, Malta's information technology vision and urban regeneration.

During 2008, the Directorate was also involved in:

- leading and enhancing the process of awarding tenders and direct orders;
- compiling information related to the drafting of replies to parliamentary questions;
- co-ordinating replies to several requests and queries from the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Finance, the Treasury, National Audit Office and the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate;
- assisting in the preparation of travel documents required by ministry officials when travelling abroad on official business;

- monitoring expenditure from capital, recurrent and other approved financial allocations to ensure full compliance with financial regulations;
- assisting the Public Registry and Civil Registration departments in the complex exercise that saw the departments being relocated to the Evans Building in Valletta, an exercise that required substantial effort in terms of planning of all logistics, transfer of all office equipment and ensuring business continuity;
- assisting the Permanent Secretary and contributing to the collective management of the Ministry by providing personnel to serve as chairpersons or members in several interviewing boards or tender evaluation committees.

HUMAN RESOURCES

During 2008, the CSD continued to liaise with the various MITC departments and entities for purposes of ensuring the effective implementation of corporate human resource policies, systems and procedures as set by Government. The Human Resources Section also provided the necessary support for the recruitment of new personnel at the MITC's departments and entities by compiling and issuing calls for applications as appropriate or otherwise by channelling requests to the apposite approving authorities. During 2008, a number of call for applications were issued to fill vacancies and new posts including those for Director General Operations, Director Policy Development as well as a number of assistant director positions within MITC's directorates that had come up for renewal. This was a direct consequence of a capacity building exercise carried out by MITC and OPM during 2008.

During 2008, the Human Resources Section was also responsible for ensuring that all paperwork necessary for staff progressions was completed on time apart from following up the compilation of staff performance management reports and plans. The section also undertook all necessary preparatory work to ensure the introduction of an automated attendance recording system as from January 2009.

Training

In 2009, several employees were encouraged and offered the chance to attend training seminars organised by the Staff Development Organisation and other private training institutions. The Directorate also supported members of staff in undertaking diploma courses by providing part-financing. On-the-job training was also encouraged via the involvement of several officers in the various ministry initiatives including those related to gender equality and occupational health and safety issues. Courses in life-saving were also organised.

REGISTRY SERVICES

Registry services are another core function of the CSD in that it ensures the proper recording, tracking, and retrieval of all correspondence received at MITC head office and its directorates. The Registry Section utilises a corporate computerised Document Registry System to acknowledge and track correspondence and files throughout the whole operational system. After the 2008 general elections and the subsequent absorption by MITC of most of the roles of the former Ministry for Urban Development & Roads and Ministry for Communications & Competitiveness, the Registry Section was entrusted with the complex task of amalgamating the three separate respective registries into a single one. This task involves several thousands of files and as at the end of year, is still currently underway.

TELEVISION LICENSING UNIT

The Television Licensing Unit (TLU) is the only non-corporate function falling within the CSD in that it performs a line department role and more specifically the issuance of licences and collection of relative annual fees for broadcast receiving apparatus (mainly televisions). Until 2004, this role was performed by the Public Broadcasting Services Ltd but was then transferred to the Director Corporate Services of the ministry responsible for communications by virtue of a legal notice under the Radiocommunications Act.

The TLU manages over 120,000 television licences and collects an average of €4.8 million yearly in licensing fees. For this purpose the TLU operates a fee collection service that has been sub-contracted to Maltapost so as to ensure an easier and more convenient licence payment facility to customers. Subsequent to the general elections and in view of Government's electoral promise to do away with television licences, during 2008 the TLU experienced a considerable increase in defaulters and concomitant reduction in fees collected, since many licensees assumed that the fee was no longer payable.

To counter the post-election downward trend in revenue collection, the TVLU undertook a series of measures aimed at ensuring the continued recoverability of licence fees as well as to maximise actual collection. As a first step, action was taken to amend the law so as to discourage the practice whereby defaulters would declare on oath that their TV set was destroyed a number of years back in an attempt to have the respective licence fees declared as not due. Following advice from the Attorney General, a legal notice was issued providing for a tighter provision of law such that this type of declaration would only have effect from the date of declaration and not retroactively. In this manner the possibility of defaulters renegeing on their dues was avoided.

In parallel to the legislative initiative, during the last quarter of 2008, the TVLU also undertook an arrears collection drive during which no less than 35,000 reminders were sent to defaulters. The unit's efforts bore fruit in that revenue decline was stopped, as evidenced through a comparison of revenue generated in 2007 and 2008. As a matter of fact, revenue for the first nine months of 2008 was €3.2 million as opposed to €3.8 million for the same period in 2007, representing a reduction of 16%. On the other hand revenue for the last three months of 2008 was slightly over €1 million whilst revenue for the same period in 2007 was slightly less than €1 million representing an increase of slightly less than 2%. The TVLU's efforts will continue so as to maintain the positive trend.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

During 2008, the Directorate - in spite of being burdened with a host of other issues resulting from the increase in the Ministry's post election portfolio - also managed to give due attention to issues of health and safety so as to ensure a safer environment for staff. Particular attention in this respect was undertaken during the relocation exercise of the Public Registry and Civil Registration departments to the Evans Building in Valletta.

The relocation of the Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate and the EU Affairs Directorate to new premises in Zachary Street, Valletta was also undertaken with health and safety issues in mind except that the rather good condition of these premises reduced relative risks, apart from providing standard safe amenities for an office environment. It was however ensured that the lease contract contained robust provisions for property and lift maintenance.

The lease of a factory in San Ġwann from MIP Ltd enabled the Ministry to organise the storage of old archives as well as unused furniture and in this manner, unnecessary office clutter that could pose a risk to health and safety was removed.

DENNIS ATTARD

Director (Corporate Services)

Information Management Unit

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Information Management Unit (IMU) was set up in the first quarter of 2008 with the aim of establishing and enhancing MITC's primary business drivers in order to champion the development of corporate Ministerial ICT and e-Government policies and strategies, become key players in the active application of ICTs for improvement in service delivery and realisation of efficiency gains, develop nodes for the dissemination of best practices, and also become a primary feedback channel. As a result new staff roles have been developed including an ICT Governance Officer, an ICT Applications Officer and a Management Information Systems Officer. The role of Contracts and Services Officer is still vacant.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE MITC PORTFOLIO

Following the general elections of March 2008, the Ministry for Investment, Industry & Information Technology was entrusted with additional functions and now has responsibility for the Infrastructure, Transport and Communications (MITC). The revised portfolio absorbed new departments and entities which translated into an increased number of knowledge workers, software applications and ICT corporate systems.

Knowledge Workers

MITC's workforce has increased by 200% and now amounts to 300. This has also increased the related IT costs especially those under the PC leasing programme. In the meantime an extensive exercise was launched so as to upgrade all the relevant equipment and also the relative knowledge base. Some of the major ICT applications within Government now also fall under MITC's responsibility. These include amongst others the operations and administrative applications at the Malta Transport Authority, the Licensing & Testing Directorate, the Department of Civil Aviation, and the Land and Public Registry Division.

THE CORE SERVICES CONTRACT

The Core Services Contract (CSC) is a contractual obligation for the delivery of core ICT services between, on the one hand MITC on behalf of the Government and, on the other hand, MITTS Ltd. This is an annual rolling contract that is calendar-year based and was initiated on 1 January 2006 and covers the period ending December 2015. The contract places MITTS (later MITA) as the core technology and operational driver responsible for the provision of core services to all line ministries and public entities as well as for the management, development and compliance monitoring of the ICT governance function besides being the primary technology and ICT operations adviser. The Core Services Contract incorporates a total of 25 core services covering ICT infrastructure (such as e-Government, Internet and network implementation), business and operational efficiency (such as quality assurance, disaster recovery and consultancy) and maintenance and support of corporate and strategic application software. In December 2008, MITC initiated a Performance and Financial Review of the CSC provisions for purposes of continuing to streamline the operation so as to optimise the services supplied whilst ensuring that the full benefits of such an agreement are reaped. The report is expected to be completed by the first quarter of 2009.

PC LEASING PROGRAMME

During 2008, the Government of Malta through MITC, embarked on the implementation of a PC leasing framework within the Public Service and government schools. The objective is to have a more efficient and effective ICT service by implementing a programme entailing the replacement of existing equipment through the deployment, under title of lease, of personal computers and laptops as well as the provision of maintenance and support services to all workstations across the Public Service, including government schools. In parallel with this initiative, Government engaged MITTS to provide all ICT services required during the successful bidder's implementation of the PC leasing tender.

E-GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Under the established Alliance Agreement (an enabling contract entered into with a number of business partners), MITC on behalf of the various government ministries, departments and authorities, engaged a number of contractors for purposes of developing new e-Government solutions in conjunction with the various ministries, departments and authorities. Some of these services were launched during 2008, while others will be completed during 2009 as follows:

Programmes launched during 2008

Owner	Application	Owner	Application
MSOC	CommCare Assessment Unit	MITC	myGov Portal Contract - The Proposal Phase II
OPM/MTA	Digital Asset Management System	MITC	National ICT Strategy Portal
OPM	DOI online (Gov Publ./Photographic reprints)	MITC/ADT	Online renewal of Driving Licence
MITC	e-Democracy Portal	MFIN	Overpayments
MRRA	Energy Performance of Building Certificates (EPC)	MEYE	Scholarships
MJHA	EORS - Supporting MJHA with project financing	MITC	Setting of the R&A part of e-ID Phase 2
MEYE	Integrated Public Libraries Portal	MEYE	Sports Online Services
MJHA	MJHA New Portal	MRRA	Veterinary Services Portal
MITC	Moving Home Portal	MITC	myGov Portal Contract - The Proposal Phase II

Programmes carried forward for 2009

Owner	Application	Owner	Application
MRRA	Agricultural related services including Livestock	MFRI/MSA	MSA Portal
MFEI	All Warrants Portal	MEYE	National Archives project
MITC/ Public Reg.	Certificates Portal	MEYE	National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE)
OPM	Customer Care of One Government	MITC	Notifications Alert Portal
MJHA	e-Gov - Judiciary Portal	MSOC	Online Application for Pensions
OPM	e-Gov - Recruitment Portal for the Public Sector	MJHA	Online Aviation Security Services
MSOC	e-Health portal services Phase II	MFEI	Online Registration of Patents and Trademarks
MITC	Enemalta online services	MJHA	Police Conduct Certificates
MJHA	Malta Arbitration Centre	MJHA	Police Portal
MITC	MITC New Portal Phase 2	MITC	Roads Permits System - NID (ADT)

ONLINE ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

In 2008, the commercial banks mandated that as from 1 December 2008, the use of the CVC2/CVV2 security code for electronic payment transactions was to become obligatory. To enable web-based systems to continue accepting and processing online payments beyond 30 November 2008, modifications were required to all e-Government applications making use of the Government Payment Gateway so as to ensure

that the CVC2/CVV2 security code is required as a compulsory input during electronic transactions. MITC undertook all necessary action to ensure systems continuation under this new security regime.

Sites Enhanced

Driving Licences Online (<http://licenzji-tas-sewqan.gov.mt>)
 Online Registration of Vehicles (<http://www.ereg.gov.mt>)
 Enemalta Online Procurement (<http://emcservices.gov.mt>)
 Water Services Corporation (<http://wsc.com.mt>)
 National ICT Strategy for Malta (<http://thesmartisland.gov.mt>)
 Passports Office (<http://passaporti.gov.mt>)
 Public Registry Online Certificates (<http://www.certifikati.gov.mt>)
 Controlled Vehicular Access (<http://cva.gov.mt>)

ASSIGNMENT AND MONITORING OF THE 116 HARMONISED EUROPEAN SHORT CODES (HESC)

The European Commission has designated a harmonised range of 6-digit telephone numbers beginning with 116 to be used for accessing the same services of social value across Europe. According to Article 2 of the Commission Decision, this type of service should meet a common description across all Member States and answer a specific social need. Its objective is to contribute to the well-being or safety of citizens, or particular groups of citizens, and to help citizens who find themselves in particular difficult situations. The benefit of these services is that European citizens, including travellers and disabled persons, will now be able to reach these social value services by using the same recognisable telephone number in any EU Member State. This would however depend on the implementation of the particular service by the Member States.

A Cabinet Decision taken in September 2007 established an inter-ministerial process to guide the implementation of this project. A co-ordinating ministry would oversee the implementation of the whole process whilst different lead ministries, as determined by the nature of the service, would be responsible for assigning particular 116XXX services to a service provider. MITC has been established as the co-ordinating ministry and it has set the following targets so as to drive this project:

Project Steps

- Consultation with Interested Government Entities and the Issuing of a Call for Applications
- Publication of a Call for Applications
- The Adjudication Process
- Assignment of the HESC code
- Monitoring of HESC Assignees
- Provision of Information by the Lead Ministry
- Roles and Responsibilities

MITC started the rollout of this project in 2008. So far the following numbers have been reserved at an EU level for the specific purposes indicated:

- 116 000 (Missing Children Helpline)
- 116 111 (Child Helpline)
- 116 123 (Emotional Support Hotline)

The Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs and the Ministry for Social Policy have been identified as the lead ministries for the above helplines. A road map is being charted to identify owners for the different helpline services. The possibility of direct government provision of such services is also being considered.

IMU PARTICIPATION IN BOARDS & COMMITTEES

During 2008, MITC's Chief Information Officer (CIO) also participated in various other projects not only in relation to the IMU's information function but also in connection with several major ministerial ICT projects. This included participation in a number of tender adjudication boards and also selection boards. In addition the CIO is also an active member of several high level committees both at ministry and inter-ministerial level, for instance chairperson of the National Identity Management Project Review Board and the CIO Forum.

IMU INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS

Following the reorganisation of the ministerial portfolios, it became crucial for MITC to reshuffle its resources and to relocate a number of offices and thus make available much needed space whilst utilising its work force in the most effective manner. MITC absorbed responsibilities previously falling under MCMP, MUDR and MJHA. MITC's IMU was instrumental in supporting this programme.

The Government Services (GSU) Unit and the Malta Government Technology Investments Limited	This unit was relocated to an office opposite the Ministry in Strait Street, Valletta. Most works were carried out by IMU personnel with the support of MITA. This move created new space to absorb a number of officers who were redeployed from new entities that joined MITC (MMA, ADT and MCA).
Passport Office	With the implementation of the biometric passports, MITC required a more adequate area to host the new business process envisaged under the National Identity Management System (NIDMS) project. The previous building at St Paul's Street in Valletta required extensive alterations and time was not available. The offices at the Evans building in Valletta that housed MITC's Television Licensing Unit (TVLU) were earmarked as an ideal premises to host NIDMS. The TVLU was moved to one side of the EVANS building thus creating the required space to host the new passport office. Extensive work took place to make the offices both secure and adequate for the new activity.
Television Licensing Unit (TVLU)	Hosted at the right wing of Evans Building, the TVLU was later on moved to a Pieta' office that belonged to the Malta Maritime Authority and was not in use. The operations of TVLU were streamlined resulting in the release of a number of officers that were redeployed to other MITC functions. The wing freed by TVLU was then made available for the relocation of the Public Registry from Merchants Street in Valletta in December 2008.
Relocation of the EU Directorate, Programme Implementation and Policy Development Departments	Originally scattered within a number of MITC buildings these departments were relocated to rented premises in Zachary Street, Valletta most of which were vacated by the previous officers who moved to their new respective head offices within MITA or MCA. A Registry Section, as well as an Administration/Service Office, was set up within the Zachary Street premises to provide necessary support services to the relocated directorates and to the Project Development & Co-ordination Unit which already resided thereat. Since MCA was not ready to host the ISS unit now falling under its remit, an office in Floriana previously utilised by the Policy Development Directorate within MUDR was temporarily made available.
Factory in San Ġwann	To accommodate the moves, an area was required to store additional furniture which was being left behind but planned to be utilised elsewhere. A factory in San Ġwann was leased for this purpose from MIP Ltd and converted into a storage and archiving facility.
The Public Registry	Hosted at Merchant Street, the Public Registry was in late 2008 moved to the wing at Evans building vacated by the TVLU. The Public Registry Accounts function was moved to the Land Registry Department in West Street, Valletta, whilst the idle files were moved to the new stores at San Ġwann. Other manual files will be sent to their new functional owners in terms of the redistributed ministerial portfolios.
Reorganisation of Local Area Network and Telephony Systems	During 2008, MITC also reorganised the Local Area Networks and telephony systems within its remit with the aim of introducing VoIP so as to increase efficiency and reduce communication costs. The use of Wi-Fi is being introduced both in Palazzo Verdellin and the Secretariat in Strait Street, Valletta.

JOE MAMO
Chief Information Officer

Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate

OVERVIEW

The role of the Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate (PDPID) is to facilitate the effective development of policy options related to MITC's portfolio of responsibilities as well as to ensure the effective implementation of individual projects entrusted to the different entities falling within the MITC. The PDPID is also responsible for such corporate programmes as Customer Care, Green Initiatives, the Transposition of EU legislation into local laws and the implementation of National Reform Programme within the Ministry's areas of responsibility.

In late November 2008, a separate Policy Development Directorate was set up within MITC to take up responsibility for issues related to policy development and also those connected with the NRP.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Directorate provides ongoing support to project leaders from the planning and pre-application stage, up to closure stage. The Directorate provides assistance from the very outset by helping departments/entities properly fill in any application for EU project funding so as to ensure that EU programme objectives are adequately catered for in the application. This will enhance the chances of a funding request being favourably met.

During the year under review, entities were actively supported and a number of issues arising from management and audit checks were effectively resolved. The Directorate organised and facilitated a number of meetings between project leaders and regulatory bodies so as to ensure smoother transitions between project cycles. In addition, the Directorate maintained active participation in the EuroMed Transport project, TEN-T Committees and Marco Polo II programme. During 2008, the Directorate was instrumental in guiding forward the projects/or project proposals mentioned hereunder:

Maritime Sector Projects

- Refurbishment of the Marsaxlokk Breakwater
- Refurbishment and Upgrading of Deep Water Quay
- Refurbishment and Restoration of Valletta Port Breakwaters
- Development of Bridge Wharf
- Extension of Fuel Wharf to Laboratory Wharf
- Mġarr Cruise Liner Berth
- East-Med Motorways of the Sea Masterplan
- West-Med Motorways of the Sea Masterplan
- Setting up of Oil Response Capability for the protection of our seas

Land Transport Projects

- Upgrading of arterial and distributor roads including Marsaskala Bypass and Żabbar Road
- Upgrading of sections of the Trans European Network - Transport (TEN-T) including Mġarr Road, M A Vassalli Road, Marfa Road, Sea Passenger Link Road, Council of Europe Road, Mellieha By-pass, and Coastal Road

Urban Regeneration

- Stronger Cottonera Communities

Information Technology

- The Second Step
- Maltese Text to Speech Synthesis
- Various other IT related projects as per National ICT Strategy for Malta 2008-2010 The Smart Island to be co-financed by ERDF/ESF

Utilities

- Reduction of Emissions from the Delimara Power Station
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Plant and Infrastructure for the South of Malta

CUSTOMER CARE

During the year, 70 complaints were handled through the Customer Care system ranging from such matters as disconnection/failure of electricity supply, to drainage problems, Ombudsman complaints, and lack of replies by entities. The Directorate's role is to facilitate timely resolution of issues thereby ensuring customer care satisfaction. For this purpose effective co-ordination was maintained with desk officers in different departments, authorities and entities thereby assisting replies and satisfactory resolution of all incoming queries and complaints.

GREEN INITIATIVES

The Programme Implementation Directorate is also responsible for all environmental initiatives undertaken by the MITC. For this purpose, the Directorate hosts the Ministry's Green Leader who is responsible for spearheading and maintaining such initiatives as:

- installation of window film to reduce summer heat;
- installation of solar water heaters;
- installation of door springs, to reduce draught and thereby save on air conditioning costs;
- ensuring continued adequate insulation of hot water plumbing;
- promotion of energy saving awareness;
- promotion of effective use of water and office resources;
- ensuring continued availability of waste separation bins;
- recycling of paper and envelopes;
- reduction in printing needs via the electronic distribution of documents.

Departmental staff has also attended information and training sessions on the subject.

In this context the directorate is also responsible for the continued evolution and implementation of the Ministry's Green Action Plan that aims to ensure a sustained programme of initiatives to reduce energy consumption.

TRANSPOSITION OF EU DIRECTIVES

The follow-up of the successful transposition of EU Directives into national legislation is another important task carried out by the Directorate intended to ensure that Malta fulfils its legislative obligations as an EU Member State. During 2008, the Directorate successfully monitored and ensured the timely transposition of the following EU legislation, and regulations:

- Community air traffic controller licence (2006/23/EC)
- The charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures (Eurovignette Directive) (2006/38/EC)
- Criteria for the conduct of ramp inspection on aircraft using Community airports (2008/49/EC)
- Harmonised conditions of spectrum use for the operation of mobile communication service on aircraft in the Community (2008/249/EC).

NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME

During 2008, the Directorate also contributed towards the achievement of the NRP goals by ensuring that all projects are managed in line with the NRP strategies of promoting sustainable public finances, enhancing competitiveness and employment, improving education and training, and protecting the environment.

ANGELO MALLIA

Director (Programme Implementation)

EU Affairs Directorate

OVERVIEW

The EU Affairs Directorate (EUAD) is responsible for managing MITC's participation in EU structures and processes, as well as for ensuring effective co-ordination of all EU-related issues between the Ministry's departments, entities and authorities as well as with other EU stakeholders, including other ministries, the Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU and the EU Secretariat within the Office of the Prime Minister.

The Directorate also gives regular information to the MITC's entities and policy managers about important documents received from the EU institutions and, in addition, co-ordinates and participates in the preparation of positions and standpoints within the competence of the Ministry with regard to the active and complete participation of ministry officials in the EU policy-making process and decision-making by the European institutions.

The Director (EU Affairs) also represents MITC in various EU-related committees both locally and abroad.

PORTFOLIO CHANGES

The 2008 general elections brought about substantial changes in the Ministry's portfolio which now caters for such varied and wide sectors as infrastructure, transport, communications and information technology. Following the change in the Ministry's portfolio, the EUAD took stock of the new areas of responsibility, and after making the necessary changes in the Directorate's structure, continued its role of ensuring that the entities within the Ministry's portfolio were kept informed and well-advised of EU initiatives, enabling the most favourable outcomes to be obtained from EU opportunities. Consultation at Ministry level and related entities, but also at an inter-ministerial level was undertaken on a variety of EU initiatives. As a result of these consultations, the concerns of various entities were catered for in national positions taken at various levels of EU decision-making fora. The EUAD actively participated in the meetings with the entities organised by the Ministry, providing its input on the decision making processes.

PARTICIPATION IN WORKING GROUPS

During 2008, the EUAD continued to ensure adequate participation in all areas within its competence. As a result of the increase in the areas of responsibilities, the Directorate's participation in working groups and EU fora saw a parallel increase. Nonetheless, the Directorate managed to ensure adequate preparation and reporting related to meetings of working groups both at Commission and Council level. The Directorate provided assistance to the entities with their participation in the relevant expert groups and committees, by acting as co-ordinator between the EU Secretariat and entities and by ensuring consultations with other ministries.

By working in constant liaison with the OPM's EU Secretariat and the technical attachés in Brussels, the Directorate ensured a smooth flow of information and adequate co-ordination. The year saw an increase of 78 proposals in the field of transport and communications. The Directorate was instrumental in ensuring the timely dissemination of information and the preparation of instruction notes for the relative meetings. The Directorate also prepared instruction notes for the meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and briefing notes for the Minister ahead of meetings of the TTE Councils on Transport

and Communications. Briefing notes and talking points were also prepared for particular bilateral meetings held by the Prime Minister and the Permanent Representative as requested.

The Directorate was actively involved in the drawing up of a number of explanatory memoranda. Fifty one of these were subsequently submitted to the Inter-Ministerial Committee, the Cabinet and the Foreign and European Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. These memoranda included those relating to proposals on the Single European Sky II Package and the Greening Transport Package.

Consultations and EU Decision Making

The Directorate continued in its role as the ministry's focal point between other ministries on a myriad of technical matters that were the subject of EU proposals. The Directorate gave its contribution to various memoranda presented to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on EU Affairs and Instruction Notes for use by the Technical Attachés. These included proposals of the Environment/Energy Package and the Proposal on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control).

The Directorate is also the Euromed contact point for the Ministry.

HARMONISATION WITH THE EU ACQUIS

The Directorate continued to monitor the implementation of the *acquis* by the entities within its remit as well as the various projects financed by EU funds (2004-2006). The year saw the completion of the sewage treatment plants in Gozo and in the North of Malta, the former financed by EU Pre-accession funds and the latter financed by the Vth Italo-Maltese Financial Protocol.

The Ministry was also involved in various aspects of environmental *acquis*, which involved its various entities in implementation measures and reporting to the local regulator. The Directorate liaised with its counterparts on these various issues, also attending *ad hoc* Commission Package meetings. The Directorate gave its contribution in the drafting of replies to Commission infringement correspondence, correspondence relating to state aid notification, questionnaires and reports related to areas within the Ministry's remit.

PROJECTS FINANCED BY EU FUNDS (2004 - 2006)

In the course of the year, the responsibility for funds shifted from the EUAD to the Programme Implementation Directorate, although the EUAD continued to be responsible for the projects financed by the 2004-2006 structural funds. Therefore, throughout 2008, the Directorate continued to provide assistance, monitor and ensure the proper implementation of the various projects financed by the 2004-2006 structural funds. Furthermore, following the 2008 general elections, the projects financed by the 2004-2006 programme and that previously were the responsibility of the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications or of the Ministry for Urban Development and Roads, now became the responsibility of the MITC and therefore the Directorate's role was extended to cover these projects.

The project financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) (co-financing rate of 75% EU, 25% Malta) providing for a study commissioned to highlight which ICT certifications shall be required by our industry in the years to come, was completed. Another project which was successfully concluded was the ICT Training Ecosystem project. This project, which was co-financed under the ESF, successfully trained over 1,000 individuals on the basics of Information Communication Technology.

The Regional Road Bridge project was completed on 20 July 2008. In the same vein, the MMA successfully completed two projects, that is, Vessel Tracking Monitoring System (VTMS) and Digital Security Infrastructure which were co-financed under the Structural Funds Programme. Both these projects were concluded by the end of December 2008. As a result of these projects a VTMS was put in place and the security of the main ports of Malta was strengthened. The year also saw the conclusion of the project

by Water Service Corporation financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which led to the implementation of upgrading Malta's RO plants thus making them more efficient. In the case of the Cohesion Funds, the Malta Transport Authority concluded physical works concerning those road projects which were co-financed under this Fund. The targeted roads were Civil Aviation Avenue, Mgarr Road Ghajnsielem and St Paul's Bay By-Pass.

MITC also co-ordinated two projects which were co-financed by the Transitional Facility Programme 2005 and the Pre-Accession, the final beneficiaries being the Malta Transport Authority and the Water Services Corporation respectively. Both these projects were successfully concluded. Moreover, the Malta Transport Authority is currently participating in another capacity building project co-financed under the Transitional Facility Programme of 2006. The scope of this project is to assist the Authority to be in a position to issue Certificates of Professional Competencies to all those motoring schools that are offering courses to operators of heavy duty vehicles. The external expert has already been selected and the project will commence in the first months of 2009.

PROGRAMME FUNDS

Following the completion of the First Phase (Feasibility Study) of the Blue Med Project which was funded by TEN-T funds, the Directorate in collaboration with the Department of Civil Aviation and the Programme Implementation Directorate, was involved in ensuring Malta's participation in the next, so-called, Definition phase of this project. The Directorate has ensured that even at this early stage, all relevant government entities are kept informed, and the Directorate chairs the steering committee set up for this purpose.

LUCIENNE MEILAK
Director (EU Affairs)

Project Development & Co-ordination Unit

OVERVIEW

The Project Development & Co-ordination Unit (PDCU) was initially developed as a small team of professionals for the purposes of co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of development obligations of a series of large-scale urban development projects involving multi-million euro investments by private entrepreneurs on land granted to them on temporary emphyteusis by the Government. In this role the PDCU acts as a single point of reference for such projects as Viset, MIDI Consortium, Cottonera Development, Grand Harbour Marina and others so as to ensure that any issues cropping up which could hinder project development, would be immediately trashed out with the relative government department or entity.

Typically the projects monitored by the PDCU would have been negotiated by the Ministry responsible for such projects in what would normally have been very complex discussions about development issues and obligations of the grantee and then approved in a resolution of the House of Representatives, subsequent to which a contract of emphyteusis would have been signed with the Commissioner of Land. The PDCU would subsequently monitor contractual obligations and then liaise with the relevant government agencies including MEPA, Malta Transport Authority, Land Department, Attorney General, Works Division, Water Services Corporation, Enemalta Corporation, WasteServ, and the Malta Communications Authority for purposes of ensuring that benchmarks and set parameters are duly met. The Unit also liaises with the private stakeholders in the negotiation of tender submissions and deed obligations.

Over time, the PDCU also developed a role of creating project concepts, turning them into a project brief, drawing up relative development and building plans for submission to MEPA. Once approved by MEPA tenders would be issued in conjunction with the Commissioner of Land for private development of the project.

The MITC took over responsibility for the PDCU following the changes in the ministerial portfolios made after the 2008 general elections.

POLICY AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The PDCU was also responsible for the development of a Transit Oriented Development Policy (2005-06) integrating the transport and regeneration dimension. This has been implemented for the past year as an integral part of the Action Plan and Project Brief Development. The strategic policy is geared at sustainable transport and urban regeneration and covers the integration of capital projects, multi-modal transit systems and infrastructural projects. This strategy was presented to the EU Commission in 2007 as part of the documentation for the Leipzig Charter. The PDCU has constantly and consistently been contributing in EU Affairs in relation to the Urban Development Group and has been involved in the ministerial discussions related to Urban Development. It has also made an input in all related directives that affected the Ministry during the 2008 Slovenian and French Presidency terms. The unit has also managed to develop close ties with ASC, the EUKN and with the UK Royal Town Planning Institute's Task Force for Sustainable Island States.

During 2008 the PDCU participated in EU Interreg and Urbact programmes projects, for further development of best practices, the application of EU policy and directives in the realm of transport and

urban development and the funding of research and pilot projects. The PDCU is also represents the Maltese Islands on the EU Urban Development Group meetings.

EU FUNDED PROJECTS

The PDCU prepared, formulated and submitted the ERDF application for a €10 million project for Cottonera Sustainable Communities and, as leader representing the project stakeholders, has sustained its management and administration and was also involved in the whole process from the outset, including initial submission, participation in meetings with the Project Selection Committee and the Planning & Priorities Co-ordination Division, and provision of required clarifications. The Unit also formulated the Terms of Reference for the Cost Benefit Analysis, designed the relative tenders and also prepared the relative Memoranda of Understanding.

The PDCU has also explored possibilities of further participation in the Urbact and Interreg Programmes via projects involving the participation of local councils and the Malta Transport Authority. As part of its research and planning remit the PDCU is also seeking new proposals to develop further the project ideas under its Strategic Policy for Transit Oriented Development. The Ministry has supported further discussions with JESSICA representatives.

LOCAL ACTION PLANS

The PDCU has also been active in the compilation, development and consultation process of three Local Action Plans geared towards the regeneration of three areas in Malta: Marsa, Marsascalea and Cottonera. The regeneration plans, based on the principles of Transit Oriented Development and the Leipzig Charter, direct the regeneration strategy in a holistic and integrated approach that follows International and European benchmarking on the development of sustainable communities. The 'Marsascalea - A Transit Village for a Sustainable Community' project was presented and launched through an exhibition and seminar in September 2008. Further consultations on the final draft for the Cottonera project were also continued whilst the Marsa Action Plan was continued via a consultation brief issued by MEPA in September 2008.

Current Projects

Manoel Island & Tigné Project

The Manoel Island and Tigné project is, in terms of area, investment and planning terms the most extensive project handled by the PDCU. The project involves the redevelopment of Tigné point and Manoel Island, the restoration of historical assets in the area and the development of new residential areas, tourism facilities and shopping malls. The development aims to be an attractive and dynamic development comparable with international benchmarks in urban planning.

The project is currently in the final phases as regards the Tigné side whilst the restoration phase as regards Manoel Island was in full swing in 2008. The PDCU was involved in intensive discussions concerning the project re-phasing of the Manoel Island redevelopment as per contracted terms.

Cruise Liner Passenger Terminal

The Cruise Liner Terminal Project in Valletta and Floriana was the most rapidly developed project on the island both in terms of investment as well as in terms of operations. The final phases of development were completed in 2007 and this saw the opening of cultural and business facilities. The forecasts for this project are very positive and expansion of cruise liner activities are being contemplated that will require extension of mooring and home-porting facilities together with related ancillary services. The PDCU is heavily involved, together with ADT, in facilitating transport modes to and from the Terminal.

Cottonera Waterfront Redevelopment Project

The Cottonera Waterfront Redevelopment Project has catalysed regeneration in the area of the Three Cities. The PDCU has been instrumental in spurring the closure of the final phases of this project.

Cottonera Waterfront Landscaping Project

The first phase of the project has now been completed and incorporates a continuous promenade from the Xatt Ir-Rizq area up to Senglea point as contemplated in the Grand Harbour Vision report. This project will be dovetailed with the developments of the Supermarket, Santa Margherita Car Park, Boiler Wharf Cruise Liner berth and the Dock No 1 development.

Projects in the Making

Valletta Vertical Connection

The Valletta Vertical Connection was launched in 2006 with a Development Brief and a tender incorporating an approved Outline Development Permit. Further work and project design has been underway with the development of a lift system to rehabilitate the old hydraulic lift connection from the Lascaris and Landfront Ditch in Valletta.

Dock No 1 Regeneration Project

During 2008, further discussions were undertaken on the Dock No 1 project. Towards the end of 2008, Government decided to abandon its original thoughts for this project and is currently evaluating the possibility of redeveloping the site as a crafts centre possibly utilising ERDF funding.

Schreiber Regeneration Project

The PDCU has been extensively involved in the Schreiber Project both in terms of concept development and development applications. The intention is to launch the project in 2009 via the presentation of a MEPA full development brief which is something the PDCU has long worked for. The PDCU has been actively involved in closing off all issues pending with MEPA, particularly in relation to the Environment Impact Assessment, the completion of consultations with stakeholders and the issue of the Development Permit.

Ta' Qali Exhibition and Convention Centre

The Ta' Qali Exhibition and Convention Centre was launched in 2007 with an Invitation for Submission of Proposals. This project was awarded to MFCC. The PDCU has in 2008 continued to be involved in discussions with the consortium and stakeholders particularly in relation to the detail design schemes of the project.

Marsamxett and St. Elmo

A preliminary brief, survey and report have been compiled for the Marsamxett projects as envisaged in the Marsamxett Harbour Regeneration Report. This preliminary data will feed the development and compilation of the Project and Planning brief for the area.

St. Elmo and Environs

Discussions have been held, that are still underway, about the type of development brief for the project and its components and about the possibility of tapping of EU funding through the Priority Axis 6 for Urban Regeneration.

The Opera House Site and Freedom Square

The brief and plan have been revisited and the unit has supported the Ministry in the compilation of data and surveys for the area. This project is still in its early phases.

AMALGAMATION INTO THE GRAND HARBOUR REGENERATION CORPORATION

The Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation (GHRC) has been set up by Government for purposes of setting up and implementing the necessary project structures that are to see the implementation of the regeneration projects contemplated in the Grand Harbour and the Marsamxett Harbour. At the same time during 2008, MITC, in consultation with the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment (MFEI), decided that the monitoring of existing/contracted projects be passed on to the latter. The PDCU shall therefore be handing over the co-ordination and monitoring of the existing projects to MIMCOL who shall be acting on behalf of MFEI. The PDCU shall on the other hand be amalgamated into the GHRC for purposes of enabling the commencement of new regeneration projects that are still in the offing.

HECTOR CHETCUTI

Head of Unit (Project Co-ordination & Monitoring)

Department of Civil Aviation

OVERVIEW

The Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) is the regulator of civil aviation in Malta and its primary role is therefore to facilitate a safe, secure and efficient operation of the aviation industry in Malta in line with international standards and practices as adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC), EUROCONTROL and the Joint Aviation Authorities of Europe (JAA). The DCA is also responsible for relations with international aviation organisations, obtaining traffic rights for commercial air transport operators and approving aircraft operations into and out of Malta.

The Government's vision in the aviation sector is to go beyond the regulatory aspect and drive the aviation sector to create wealth and a contribution towards the economic development of the country. In this context the DCA strives to further develop Malta into a reputable international aviation register. While maintaining the best standards as regards safety of operations, the DCA also acts as a catalyst for the creation of aviation clusters that will include business aviation, aviation training and other sub-sectors.

The DCA is organised around two main branches, the Safety Regulation and Air Transport Directorate which is responsible for the regulatory aspect of aviation operations and the Administration Section that provides essential administrative and supportive services in finance and human resource management.

SAFETY REGULATION & TRANSPORT DIRECTORATE (SRATD)

As regulator, the DCA's SRATD oversees all safety considerations related to aircraft, aircraft and aerodrome operators and air navigation service providers, as well as the licensing of aeronautical personnel and the conclusion of international air services agreements. The department must therefore ensure that all aviation activities are carried out safely and in conformity with international standards Malta has subscribed to by virtue of its membership in the EU, ICAO, ECAC, EUROCONTROL and JAA. This involves such tasks as the regulation of air transport services; overseeing and issuing airworthiness certificates, certification of aircraft operators, licensing of aeronautical personnel, determination of international air navigation obligations, monitoring the operations of Malta International Airport plc as provider of aerodrome services and also those of Malta Air Traffic Services Ltd as provider of air navigation services within the Malta Flight Information Region.

The DCA is responsible for issuing Air Service Licences and Air Operator's Certificates to commercial air transport operators, as well as for the issue of licences to aircraft engineers and aircraft crew. Licensed commercial aircraft operators include Air Malta, Medavia, European 2000, Eurojet, Europe Executive Jet Services and Comlux. The Department also oversees the aerial work and the flight training activities carried out by two registered facilities offering Private Pilot Licensing services.

The Department is also responsible for sanctioning organisations offering aircraft maintenance services and for this purpose regularly carries out inspections of their management, procedures, equipment and staff. These organisations include Air Malta maintenance, Medavia, Aeromaritime, Lufthansa Technik (Malta) and Falcon Engineering, all of which have been granted approvals under EASA Part 145.

The DCA also oversees aerodrome services and air navigation services to ensure that they are provided in accordance with international standards.

AVIATION PERSONNEL LICENSING

The Personnel Licensing Section is responsible for issuing licences and validation certificates to aircraft pilots, air traffic controllers and apron controllers. The Unit conducts the theoretical examinations for the Airline Transport Pilot Licence and is also responsible for the issue of licences and validation certificates to private and professional pilots in accordance with the standards of the Joint Aviation Authorities. It is responsible, jointly with the Flight Operations Inspectorate Section, for the approval of training courses, Flight training organisations and Type training organisations for flight crew.

Furthermore, the Personnel Licensing Unit is responsible for the issue of air traffic controller licences in accordance with the standards of Eurocontrol and the EU Directive and for the issue of apron controller licences. It is also jointly responsible with the Air Navigation Services Section to approve the training and competency scheme of the local Training Provider and Air Navigation Service Provider.

During 2008, the Personnel Licensing Section managed and issued the following number of licences and certificates:

- 143 JAR-FCL Airline Transport Pilot Licences (ATPL)
- 66 JAR-FCL Commercial Pilot Licences (CPL);
- 75 JAR-FCL Private Pilot Licences (PPL);
- 56 Air Traffic Controller Licences;
- 57 Apron Controller Licences;
- 29 Certificates of validation of foreign pilot licences including microlight pilot licences.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS INSPECTORATE

The DCA's Flight Operations Inspectorate (FOI) is primarily responsible for the issuance of air operator certificates under the Civil Aviation (Air Operators' Certificates) Act (Chapter 218). During 2008, an air operator certificate was issued to Comlux Malta Ltd bringing the total to seven operators certified for commercial air transport operations. FOI carries out regular operational surveillance of these seven air operators involving inspections and follow-up action including:

- Checks of returned flight documents related to aircraft loading, fuel management, performance calculations, operational flight plans and technical records. The inspections also included flight deck and cabin crew training and flight time limitations records;
- Quality System inspections including review of operators' Occurrence reporting system, flight data monitoring programme if required and the operator's accident prevention and flight safety programme;
- Facilities and organisation inspections carried out at the operators' main base and outstations;
- Ground and flight inspections at overseas bases including UK and UAE for Air Malta, Libya for Medavia and Isle of Man for European 2000 Airlines;
- Inspections of operators' organisational and postholder competence;
- Operations Manual inspections;
- Ramp inspections on a 'no notice' basis.

Other tasks carried out by FOI during 2008 included the approval of simulators and the examination of Training Captains for purposes of issuing them with authorisations as simulator pilot examiner. Proficiency checks were also carried out on the Inspectorate flying staff to ensure currency of flying skills. The Inspectorate participated in the Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft (SAFA) programme and acted as the SAFA National Co-ordinator. Type rating examiner assessments of Air Malta and Medavia pilots were also carried out on behalf of the Personnel Licensing Section.

In 2008, the Inspectorate published a number of Operating Standards Circulars containing information and guidance to Air Operators. The Inspectorate also participated in the European Commission Air Safety Committee dealing with EU-OPS and the Community list of carriers subject to an operating ban in Europe.

AIRWORTHINESS INSPECTORATE

The task of the DCA's Airworthiness Inspectorate is that of maintaining regular safety oversight of all aspects of the airworthiness of aviation in Malta, which includes Air Transport Operators, Approved Maintenance Organisations and oversight of any other person or organisation involved in the design/production/modification/repair/maintenance of aircraft and training aspects of personnel engaged in civil aviation. In this context, the Inspectorate not only helps to ensure the maintenance of high safety standards but also helps fulfil Malta's obligations under the Convention on International Civil Aviation and also as member of ICAO. The Inspectorate is also responsible to carry out audits to ensure that aircraft are properly operated and maintained, that airlines discharge their airworthiness management responsibilities in an effective manner, that staff certifying aircraft maintenance are qualified and competent to issue such certifications, and that general aviation activities meet the required level of safety standards.

To enable it to effectively discharge its monitoring role, the Airworthiness Inspectorate employs a small team of specialist aircraft maintenance surveyors that are all conversant with the latest certification, maintenance, licensing and operational regulations. As a result of Malta being an EU Member State, the DCA has managed to become a competent authority in airworthiness recognised by the EASA and is thereby empowered to carry out the Continuing Airworthiness safety oversight.

The Airworthiness Inspectorate has direct responsibility for:

- Operator Maintenance & Continuing Airworthiness Management Systems;
- Aircraft Maintenance Licensing;
- Aircraft Maintenance Standards;
- Aircraft Airworthiness Certification and Continued Airworthiness of aircrafts registered in Malta;
- Minor Certification Tasks on behalf of EASA;
- Incident Reporting related to airworthiness and maintenance (including investigation and follow-up);
- Human Factors & Maintenance Error Management;
- Harmonising European Airworthiness Standards;
- Safety Assessment of Foreign Aircraft Inspections (in conjunction with the Flight Operations Inspectorate);
- the approval of Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisations (CAMO);
- the approval of Part-145 Aircraft Maintenance and Aircraft Maintenance Training Organisations;
- the issue and variation of Part-66 Aircraft Maintenance Licences;
- International Civil Aircraft Register.

During 2008, the Airworthiness Inspectorate issued six new certificates of airworthiness for four large turbo propeller aircraft, one airliner and one medium jet. Two export certificate of airworthiness were also issued. In addition, 12 Part-66 Aircraft Maintenance Licences and seven variations were issued whilst approval for aircraft maintenance programmes for the above-mentioned aircraft and Part-M approval to four aircraft operators were issued.

In 2008, for the first time, the Airworthiness Inspectorate conducted Part-66 examinations (aircraft maintenance engineers licence) and also issued Part-147 approval (maintenance training organisation) to MCAST following a certification process which took over two years to complete. During the same period, Falcon Engineering Limited was also given approval as a maintenance organisation for light aircraft, whilst over 50 inspections and audits were carried out as part of the Inspectorate's continuing oversight. As part of the EASA SAFA programme, a number of inspections on foreign aircraft operating to Malta were also carried out.

AIR NAVIGATION SERVICES

The Air Navigation Services Section of the DCA is responsible for the provision of a safe, effective and efficient air navigation service within the Malta Flight Information Region, a huge area of airspace that stretches from Sicily to Libya from North to South and from Tunisia to Crete from West to East. The unit also regulates Air Traffic Management and airspace design. This includes communications, navigation, surveillance, airspace and air traffic management systems and procedures, as well as Aeronautical Information Services. The unit is also responsible for the preparation of approach and departure procedures, the production of the relevant charts and the Malta Aeronautical Information Publication.

The following are some of the demanding activities carried out by the Air Navigation Services Unit:

- the setting up of a database of all Air Traffic Management Occurrences reported since 2003 by either Malta Air Traffic Services Ltd or Malta International Airport plc. This enabled statistical interpolation of trends in aviation safety as well as identification of the most common causes of incidents which obviously helps the DCA in better managing safety issues;
- an audit of Malta Air Traffic Services Ltd (MATS) was carried out in conjunction with the Personnel Licensing Section. Following this audit, MATS was certified as a training provider in accordance with EC regulations;
- to keep abreast of latest developments in aviation safety and regulations, the Unit also participated in various meetings of EUROCONTROL and of the European Commission (Single European Sky Committee and the Blue Med Functional Airspace Block Project);
- following changes found necessary in the air route structure of the Malta Flight Information Region, an extensive review of the Malta Aeronautical Information Publication was made, as a result of which an updated version was published in 2008;
- other activities included the annual update of the Local Convergence and Implementation Plan and the approval of various documents and procedures used by air traffic control personnel (an ongoing process).

AERODROME LICENSING & AIRCRAFT REGISTRY (ALAR)

The Aerodrome Licensing and Aircraft Registry Unit is responsible for the issue of licences for the operation of aerodromes under the Civil Aviation (Aerodrome Licensing) Regulations. For this purpose the unit is responsible for overseeing aerodrome operations and undertakes safety audits and inspections to ensure that the aerodromes in Malta offer a safe operational environment in accordance with the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

During 2008, the Aerodrome Licensing Unit carried out a number of audits, inspections and meetings at MIA to ensure that the aerodrome was properly equipped, maintained and operated in accordance with international standards and this enabled confirmation of MIA's aerodrome licence.

During the year, the Aerodrome Licensing Unit also examined several development applications submitted to the Malta Environment & Planning Authority for purposes of confirming or otherwise any civil aviation objection to the development.

Aircraft Registration

ALAR is also responsible for the Malta Register of Aircraft and is actively seeking to increase the number of aircrafts being registered in Malta as part of Government's strategy to exploit this economically beneficial market.

During the year, 16 new aircraft were added to the Malta Register of Aircraft, consisting of two Airbus 319, two Hawker Beechcraft 1900D, one Learjet 60, one Bombardier Challenger 605, one DHC-8-315, two Vulcanair, one Cessna 421C, one Piper 28 and five microlight aircraft. On the other hand, three aircraft were deleted from the Register, namely two Boeing 737 and one Learjet 60. As at the end of 2008, there

were 68 aircraft (including 24 microlight aircraft) on the Malta Register of Aircraft. Armed Forces of Malta aircrafts are not included in the register.

AIR TRANSPORT & AIR SERVICES AGREEMENTS

The Air Transport Unit covers the non-financial economic aspects of aviation and international relations. In particular, it approves the commercial operation of aircraft into/out of Malta, the grant of traffic rights, the formulation of bilateral air services agreements and the commercial licensing of Maltese air transport undertakings, known as the Air Service Licence. It is relevant to point out that scheduled air services between two countries operate on the basis of bilateral agreements that set out the operating rights, terms and conditions that have to be followed by the carriers designated by each State. In this context the DCA is responsible for negotiating such bilateral agreements between Malta and other countries.

During 2008, international scheduled services were operated between Malta and the following countries: Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Belgrade, Benghazi, Berlin, Birmingham, Bologna, Bristol, Brussels, Budapest, Cairo, Casablanca, Catania, Cologne, Dubai, Dublin, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Geneva, Girona, Glasgow, Hamburg, Istanbul, Kiev, Larnaca, Leipzig, London Gatwick, London Heathrow, London Stansted, Luton, Luxembourg, Lyons, Manchester, Marseille, Milan Malpensa, Monastir, Moscow, Munich, Naples, Oslo, Palermo, Paris Orly, Pisa, Prague, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Sofia, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Toulouse, Tripoli, Tunis, Venice, Vienna, and Zurich.

The scheduled carriers operating from Malta were Aerosvit, Air Malta, Air One, Alitalia, British Airways, Clickair, Easy Jet, Egyptair, Emirates, GB Airways, German Wings, JAT, Libyan Arab Airlines, Lufthansa, Luxair, Ryanair, SAS, Sevenair and Transavia. Austrian Airlines and LOT operated codeshare flights with Lufthansa. SN Brussels Airlines operated codeshare flights with Air Malta while Iberia operated codeshare flights with Clickair.

Charter flights were operated mainly from the UK, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy and France.

Passenger Movements

In recent years the number of passengers who travelled to/from Malta has been on the increase. The number of passengers in 2006 was 2,692,019 whilst the corresponding number of passengers for 2007 was 2,970,830. The number of passengers in 2008 was 3,109,868.

The volume of passenger traffic at the Malta International Airport, coupled with the number of airlines operating flights to Malta, highlights the increasing importance of the DCA's role in ensuring the continued safety and security of all aviation-related activities of organisations/airlines operating in/to/from Malta.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

The DCA's Administration Section is responsible for providing financial and administrative support to the department including issues related to staffing and contracting.

Staff

To discharge its regulatory mandate the DCA has a staff complement of 10 full-time specialists, and 11 contract employees on part-time basis. A call for applications was issued in November 2008 to recruit Airworthiness Surveyors. The DCA also operates a 24-hour office in the Air Terminal at MIA in which six Duty Management Officers work on a shift basis. The DCA employs another 21 officers that carry out administrative functions in finance, personnel, supplies, and messengerial services.

Training

In direct recognition of the highly important roles carried out by its employees, the DCA during 2008 undertook necessary action to ensure that its professional officers were provided with appropriate training, both in Malta and abroad, so as to enable them to keep abreast of developments in their specialised areas and thereby ensuring they have the skills to carry out their duties more effectively.

Website

The DCA also maintains a departmental website at <http://www.dca.gov.mt> that contains extensive information about the operations of the various units of the Department and also provides access to a number of services. The maintenance of the website is entrusted to the Personnel Licensing Unit. During 2008, an extensive review and update of the website was undertaken, particularly in relation to the Airworthiness Inspections Unit, following the updating and review of internal technical procedures, forms and checklists so as to bring these in line with EC legislation.

The Department's website has now been in use since July 2003 and has proved extremely useful. In 2008, it averaged 6,522 hits per month.

Computerisation

During 2008, the Department continued with its strategy of replacing obsolete computer equipment and of standardising the computer software in use. Furthermore, access to the Internet was expanded to cover all officers dealing with technical matters and also to a number of administration staff, thus enabling further training and development of staff through Internet research. These developments were possible through the support of the Ministry's Corporate Services Directorate and also the technical assistance of MITTS Ltd.

Legislation

During 2008, a number of legal notices were issued to amend existing legislation or publish new ones. These included legal notices amending the Air Navigation Order 1990 and the repeal of the Passenger Service Charge at Airport Regulations.

International Relations

Ever since it was set up, the DCA has maintained continual relations with international organisations of which Malta is a member, by taking active part in international meetings, in particular those organised by ECAC and ICAO, and more recently EUROCONTROL and the JAA. Since Malta joined the EU, the DCA has also maintained a solid international relation with the EU institutions including the EASA. The department's membership in such organisations enables it to keep abreast of technological and regulatory developments in the field of air transport.

During 2008, department personnel participated in various EU related meetings, JAA Committees and in EUROCONTROL and ECAC meetings. The Department also held bilateral discussions on air services with delegations from Egypt and Singapore.

ANTHONY GATT

Director General (Civil Aviation)

Land & Public Registry Division

GENERAL

In view of the planned Central Registry Act, whose main aim is the establishment of one Central Registry through an amalgamation of the Land and Public Registries, it has become essential to ensure that the Division has the necessary administrative capacity to provide nationwide databases both in terms of trained human resources as well as technological capacity. In this regard, the Management Efficiency Unit had been assigned the exercise of reviewing the Central Registry Bill with the aim of identifying those operations which would form part of the business analysis and complete a business process design/redesign exercise. This exercise will be completed in the first quarter of 2009. The restructuring process will eventually be completed through the re-issuing and eventual filling of vacant posts, as approved by the Management and Personnel Office, in view of the expected increased workload resulting from the Central Registry Act.

In June 2008, MITTS Ltd also delivered to the Division a document aimed at analysing and assessing any possible impact that the proposed Central Registry Act may have on the currently live systems within the Land and Public Registry departments.

The necessity for these documents stemmed mainly from the fact that that the Central Registry Act envisages the extension of the present compulsory registration areas to include the whole territory of the Maltese Islands and includes quite an extensive number of new registerable acts.

Assistance on the draft Act was provided to the Standing Committee for Consideration of Bills during 2008. The Act is expected to be brought into force during 2009.

In preparation for the entry into force of the Central Registry Act and for EU legislation relating to land registration, during the summer of 2008, Land Registry managers attended training in Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Data Infrastructures. Besides, other courses attended by Land Registry staff during 2008 include sessions on data protection, improving customer service, interpersonal skills, e-mail and Internet: Information and Communication.

LAND REGISTRY

The number of applications lodged at the Land Registry during 2008 was 7,021.

LAND REGISTRY CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Preparations for the implementation of enhancements to the LRCS were finalised during 2008. The enhancements will allow the updating of the LRCS basemaps and will pave the way for subsequently making the LRCS accessible online, in line with Government's policy to develop and deploy online services to the general public. This access will obviously be subject to certain security and data protection safeguards and will ensure an enhanced service delivery to all Land Registry clients. Discussions with the relevant stakeholders, including MEPA, were held throughout 2008, with the main aim of providing this service during 2009.

LAND REGISTRY QUALITY SERVICE

The Land Registry issued a Quality Service Charter in 1999. Commitments featuring in the QSC offer a service that aims at responding to customers' requests within a few minutes: clients coming to the Registry for a Land Registry Plan, for example, are guaranteed service within ten minutes of their request. A generic e-mail account for the Land Registry - land.registry@gov.mt - which enables clients to make comments or complaints electronically was created and queries are dealt with on a daily basis. Random checking on all types of applications lodged at the Registry revealed that targets and deadlines set out in the Charter were rigorously observed during 2008.

DATA PROTECTION

A Data Protection Policy was drawn up, vetted and approved by the Data Protection Unit, Office of the Prime Minister and published way back in 2006. Besides, the Land Registry collaborated extensively with the OPM Data Protection Team for the finalisation of an analysis report of data collection forms and a full Data Protection Audit. Recommendations are regularly scrutinised and implemented whenever possible. One of the recommendations included the training of all staff on matters of data protection and in fact, most Land Registry staff has attended such courses during 2008.

PREŻENTATA AND SEARCHES SECTIONS

The *Preżentata* and Search Sections were transferred from the Public Registry to the Land Registry in 2002 in order to enhance the one-stop-shop concept insofar as property registration is concerned.

The e-government service, launched in 2007 to enable the Registry's clients to *Request Searches on Wills* through the website www.searchonwills.gov.mt, is presently being enhanced to provide a better service delivery.

The Land Registry also plans to publicise a Standard Form for the electronic submission of notes of enrolment, thus eliminating the need for the Notary to have to physically present such notes at the Department. This exercise will be finalised during 2009.

VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION SCHEME

In conjunction with the Rehabilitation Project Office and the local councils, a voluntary scheme of registration was launched in November 2001 for property situated within Valletta, Floriana, Senglea, Cospicua and Vittoriosa. By virtue of this scheme, owners of immovable property within these areas are entitled to benefit from certain subsidies. These include the preparation of the registration plan by government employees at the expense of €23.29 and subsequently the actual registration of property at the cost of €23.29 rather than €46.59.

The year 2008, in fact saw further co-ordinated phased implementation of the Scheme. Further funds were also made available in the 2008 Estimates and the Scheme for the Voluntary Registration of Property in the areas mentioned is currently ongoing. In fact, out of 2,164 applications received, 732 have been finalised and work on 1,432 applications is in progress. The applications were divided as follows:

Council	Applications
Valletta	458
Birgu	320
Bormla	673
l-Isla	379
Furjana	334
Total	2,164

GREEN INITIATIVES

The Land Registry actively supports and promotes green initiatives. The Land Registry's contact person regularly liaises with the Ministry's Green Leader. Paper, carton, and plastic are collected for recycling in collaboration with WasteServ Ltd. Appropriate bins for this purpose were also procured. Spent batteries are collected for proper disposal. Staff is committed to save as much as possible on paper, envelopes, electricity and water and spent light bulbs are replaced with energy-saving ones. Touch-free auto-spouts for the Department's water taps and infrared motion sensors for lighting have also been procured.

CONCLUSION

Despite the efforts and commitment of management and staff there is always room for improvement and it can safely be said that the main challenge faced by the department is the strengthening of administrative capacity in view of the Central Registry Act organisational requirements.

Finally, the Land Registry remains committed to keeping attuned to evolving EU related developments in the area of land registration, particularly the ongoing attempts of harmonisation of cadastral policies and practices within EU countries and the tapping of EU Funds if and whenever possible.

PUBLIC REGISTRY

The main functions and responsibilities of the Public Registry originate from the Public Registry Act, (Cap 56), the Marriage Act, (Cap 255), Chapter 16 of the Civil Code, Sections 1 to 306 and the Housing (Decontrol) Ordinance, 1959.

CIVIL STATUS

This Section deals with the registration and issuance of copies of Acts of Birth, Marriage and Death as well as all annotations to these Acts. Besides registering all births, marriages and deaths occurring in Malta, the Department registers, on request, certificates of births, marriages and deaths of Maltese citizens where the event occurred abroad. During 2008, a total of 551 such registrations were made which included 525 births and 26 deaths. There were also 178 annotations of nullity of marriage and divorces. Statistical data is also regularly forwarded to government departments, particularly the National Statistics Authority.

The total number of Acts of Civil Status registered during 2008, as compared with 2007, is shown in the following table:

	Registrations		Extracts Issued	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
<i>Births</i>	4,229	4,566	48,578	46,178
<i>Marriages</i>	2,393	2,458	12,862	12,262
<i>Deaths</i>	2,949	3,161	15,916	15,419
Total	9,571	10,185	77,356	73,859

During 2008, a total of 7,825 *Full Copies* of Acts of Civil Status were issued against 6,664 copies issued in 2007. During 2008, a total of 12,140 Civil Status certificates issued were ordered online.

The Department issues Free Status Certificates which attest that no registration of an act of marriage exists in the Civil Status Records against a particular individual. The number of these certificates issued in 2008 was 202 against 163 in 2007.

Annotations

Any person, who may have an interest, can bring an action before a competent court in Malta for (a) the correction of any registered Civil Status Act, (b) the legitimisation *per subsequens matrimonium* of a person born out of wedlock, and (c) the acknowledgement of the paternity of a person born out of wedlock. Legitimation *per subsequens matrimonium* may also be effected by applying to the Director, Public Registry.

Moreover divorces and nullities of marriage obtained abroad in a competent court may be registered at the Public Registry after ascertaining that they conform to the relative requisites of Maltese Law. Nullities of marriage obtained in Malta are also registered at the Department. All changes emanating from the above instances are recorded in the Annotations column of the relative Civil Status Act.

Comparative figures for annotations entered in the registers of Civil Status in 2008 and 2007 are:

Types of Annotations	2007	2008
Corrections	85	131
Legitimations or Acknowledgements	195	211
Nullity of marriage	164	180
Foreign Divorces	35	29
Total	479	551

Adoptions

The number of adoptions entered in the Adopted Persons Register in terms of the Civil Code (Amendment) Ordinance 1962 during 2008 was 71 against 76 in the previous year.

MARRIAGE REGISTRY

The number of marriages in respect of which formalities were completed by the Marriage Registry during the year under review, as compared to the preceding year, was as follows:

Marriages in Malta	2007	2008
Religious	1,492	1,474
Other Religious	10	4
Civil	782	743
Total	2,284	2,221

The number of marriages (Religious and Civil) between foreign couples who in 2008 opted to contract their marriage in Malta amounted to 646. These couples hailed from a wide diversity of countries. During the year, 99 Maltese men and 103 Maltese women were married to foreigners.

The number of religious marriages between Maltese couples was 1,289 while 84 opted for a civil marriage. Civil marriages may be celebrated at the Department and also outside the Public Registry premises upon request from the spouses.

LAND VALUATION SECTION

The Department processes applications for the decontrol of privately-owned dwelling houses in terms of the Housing (Decontrol) Ordinance, 1959 and issues certificates thereof, besides certificates of rental value. In 2008, one tenement was decontrolled and six certificates of decontrol were issued.

OTHER

Various officers were detailed to attend courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation. Staff at the Public Registry and the Finance and Administration Section attended advanced IT courses.

The main project for this year was the relocation of the premises from 197, Merchants Street to Evans Building, Valletta. It involved, amongst other things, the transfer of archives which date back from 1863 and which are now being kept in a more appropriate and secure environment.

The combined effort of all the staff enabled this Department to run as smoothly as possible even during the relocation of these premises.

PASSPORT AND CIVIL REGISTRATION DEPARTMENT

The main function of the Department of Passport and Civil Registration is the issuance of Maltese passports to Maltese citizens. The Passport Office also provides assistance to Maltese embassies, high commissions, consuls, and the Passport Office in Gozo. Other functions of the Civil Registration Department include: acting as the Registration Authority for the e-ID, maintaining, enhancing and developing Government's corporate database known as the Common Database (CdB) and notifying the Public Registry of births and deaths that occur in Malta.

BIOMETRIC PASSPORTS

Significant progress on biometric passports was registered towards mid-2008. In fact, on 30 September 2008, the first Maltese biometric passport was issued. This not only brought Malta in line with EU legislation, but enabled it to become part of the US Visa Waiver Programme which essentially eliminates the requirement for Maltese citizens to acquire a Visa prior to visiting the USA. A delegation from the US Home Security visited the premises to inspect, amongst other matters, the security of the premises and IT systems and to analyse the new Passport Office procedures that had to be drafted in view of the issuance of this new type of passport.

The high level physical security required for the issuance of a biometric passport was attained by the move of the Passport Office to Evans Building, Merchants Street Valletta. It can be safely said that the Passport Office managed to start issuing biometric passports and to move its premises during the third quarter of 2008 with the least possible inconvenience to the general public.

SERVICES

- The Passport Office accepts applications for the issuance of a second passport in special circumstances and when considered necessary. During the year, 163 such passports were authorised and issued.
- Convention Travel Documents are also issued by the Passport Office. A total of 1,675 Travel Documents were issued during 2008.
- To further enhance the one-stop-shop concept, Passport Office officials are also appointed as Commissioners for Oaths to administer oaths when necessary. A total of 583 oaths were taken in 2008.
- The Department also offers an all inclusive round-the-clock emergency service to clients needing an urgent passport during silent hours: 44 such cases were processed in 2008.
- During 2008, a total of 1,468 urgent passports (issuance within four hours of application) were issued.
- The Passport Office also offers the services of an Arabic translation of passports to those persons who request this service. A total of 869 translations were carried out during 2008.

Total Number of Passports issued in 2007-2008				
	Passports Issued		Revenue	
	2007	2008	2007 €	2008 €
Malta	30,262	28,859	729,606	853,992
Gozo	2,329	2,199	54,051	60,532
Missions	2,472	2,450	93,510	103,091
Diplomatic	63	85	920	1,503
Total	35,126	33,593	878,087	1,019,118

THE COMMON DATABASE

The Common Database (CdB) is a corporate initiative aimed at providing commonly used information that falls under the public domain and serves to achieve information consistency across government departments. The CdB processes person data which forms the main area of information, and all other areas of information, such as person relationships, addresses and organisations associated with it. The Data Protection Act has put greater responsibility on the Public Service and Public Sector to ensure that the CdB is used appropriately and only when really needed to assist in the business process of a department.

The primary objectives of the Common Database are basically to produce a repository for commonly used information which is in the public domain to be shared among government departments, and to facilitate the one-stop -shop concept in government departments.

Thus the Common Database System integrates public domain information that is commonly used amongst government departments and which is available in computerised systems. Established security and audit procedures are in place to ensure proper use of the available data, particularly in conformity with Data Protection legislation.

The information contained in the CdB concerns persons and their addresses and furthermore an Organisations Area of Information is gathered from the Public Registry, the Electoral Office and the VAT Department. This is validated against predefined rules so as to ensure data integrity and quality. Those transactions that pass the validation rules update the respective records inside the CdB. The source department verifies transactions that fail the validation process. Government departments run the query module to conduct searches as required. Therefore they can view information that is current, consistent, and correct on daily basis. A mechanism is also provided so that feedback on the integrity and quality of the data is obtained from different users. Action is taken accordingly to rectify the information after investigations are carried out.

E-ID OFFICE

The new system for e-ID registrations is an improvement on the former registrations which used to be handled by the local councils. The e-ID offers a simple method of identification and authentication allowing access to electronic services offered by the Government of Malta, from the comfort of one's home, office or local council. The e-ID is free of charge and is available to all national ID card holders, subject to the registration process. Through e-ID, citizens can have access to all e-government services through the Internet, with the added value of the electronic signature. This is a positive step forward in the realisation of a National Identity Management System. During 2008, a total of 4,090 applications for the e-ID were received.

DR STEPHANIE PAPPALARDO
Director General (Land & Public Registry)



**Ministry for Resources
and Rural Affairs**

Paying Agency

OBJECTIVE

The Maltese Paying Agency was established to administer the European Agricultural Funds. These subsidies fall both under direct payments as well as under the Rural Development Programme.

The Paying Agency's main aim is to administer, in an efficient manner, the funds under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and national funds so that these subsidies reach the farmers and the herdsmen within the shortest time possible. Moreover, the Agency serves as a catalyst so that the agriculture sector is informed with the opportunities and challenges that exist under the CAP reform and how it can achieve success through the correct use of these funds so that the sector can advance and grow while respecting good environmental and agricultural practices.

The Paying Agency was established so that it could process requests for aid from European Funds under Direct Aid schemes both on land and on animals. Other requests for financial aid are addressed through the Rural Development Programme.

2008

During 2008, the Paying Agency introduced the Single Payment Scheme for farmers and herdsmen. Through this scheme, farmers and herdsmen can apply for direct aid and for agri-environmental measures in one form. Three centres in Malta and one in Gozo were opened to receive applications. More than 6,000 farmers and animal breeders applied for EU funds under the CAP reform and other schemes from national funds.

The measures for which farmers and herdsmen applied are as follows: SMPPMA; *ad hoc* - for full-time farmers; nine measures on agri-environmental measures; single Payment; and LFA – Less Favoured Areas.

During the year, farmers had the opportunity to renew applications which they had presented on agri-environmental measures between 2004-2006 (rubble walls, organic farming, and autochthonous).

After receiving applications, samples are taken for control purposes. The majority of controls are being carried out by remote sensing. This means that the majority of controls on registered fields may be carried out from the office using digital photos. In this manner, inspections were limited to difficult or dubious cases. Because of this investment, the Paying Agency is carrying out controls of a better quality; it is increasing its efficiency and is reducing its spending on operations.

Implementation of the Single Payment Scheme

During 2008, the Paying Agency paid for the first time the Single Entitlement that amounts to a total of 14,361 entitlements with a global figure of €4,162,991.84. The type and value of entitlements are as follows: Normal Entitlements - €990,835.00; Authorised Entitlements - €546,550.34; Special Entitlements - €2,625,606.49.

During 2008, the fruit and vegetable reform continued. With this reform, the farmer and the tomato processors will be allocated aid that is not tied to production under the form of entitlements.

CONTROL UNIT

In order to ensure that the financial aid given is in conformity with EU regulations, the Paying Agency invested in tools so that it may improve the controls carried out on fields and even on farms. It is the Unit's aim to see that farmers and herdsman know what obligations they have to follow in order to receive financial aid. In this way, farmers and herdsman will not be penalised and will receive the full amount of subsidy for which they applied. It is the Paying Agency's aim, through the Control Unit, to see that farmers and herdsman are well informed on the need to follow good agricultural and environmental rules.

Introduction to Remote Sensing

Remote sensing was introduced in 2007. During 2008, selected fields for control under land-based schemes were controlled by remote sensing. Over 20,000 fields were controlled by this method after the development of the new specialised computer system. Remote sensing made controls more effective and efficient. During the period October-December 2008, the Unit checked 240 applications related to cross compliance.

Farm Advisory Service

During 2008, the Ministry introduced the Farm Advisory Service (FAS) for farmers. Two entities were registered with the Ministry. FAS will assist the farmers in obeying cross compliance regulations.

Publicity/Educational Campaign

The Paying Agency carried out an information campaign wherein the advantages and opportunities related to the CAP reform were advertised. These campaigns did not target solely farmers and herdsman but also consumers.

Payments

During 2008, the Paying Agency processed €3,468,720.74 in direct aid while €4,576,358.53 were processed under the Rural Development Programme. The following are the schemes for which farmers and herdsman could apply for financial aid:

EAGF	Payments
Restructuring of vineyards	38,157.04
uSingle Payment Scheme	1,541,876.67
Deprived Aid	399,035.96
Tomatoes for processing	1,111,720.03
Producers Organisations	100,000.00
Producers Organisations - Operational programme - 2007	221,513.16
School Milk	22,125.81
Apiculture – Marketing of Honey	7,904.00
Export Refunds - Cereals	26,388.06
EAGGF (Rural Development Plan 2004 -6)	Payments
Ad Hoc Full time farmers and herdsman	1,918,172.91
Meeting Standards	1,229,714.82
Aid for Rubble Walls	496,760.44
Technical Assistance	923,086.86
Autochthonous	8,623.50

JOSEPH CARUANA
Head (Paying Agency)

Rural Development Department

OBJECTIVE

In 2008, the Rural Development Department (RDD) was responsible for the management and implementation of the various measures funded under both the Guidance and Guarantee (EAGGF) 2004-2006 programmes. With regard to the Guidance funds, the Rural Development Department was the final beneficiary under the Single Programming Document for Malta, and as such it was responsible for the implementation of priority 3 measures, mainly Investments in Agricultural holdings and Improving in Marketing and Processing of Agricultural Products. In respect of measures funded under the RDP Guarantee section, the RDD acted as the Managing Authority responsible for the management, implementation and authorisation of payments linked with the various measures found in the 2004-2006 programme.

The Rural Development Plan for the programming period 2007-2013 was approved in December 2007. Under this new programme, the RDD assumed the role of Managing Authority and together with the Paying Agency within the MRRA took the necessary steps towards the successful implementation of the funding programme under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Implementation of Measures Funded through the EAGGF Guidance Fund (2004 – 2006)

During 2008, the Department monitored the implementation of the projects contracted in 2006 under both *Measure 3.1- Investments in Agricultural Holdings* and *Measure 3.2 – Improving the Marketing and Processing of Agricultural Products*. By the end of December 2008, the RDD had processed invoices amounting to €718,133.83 for Measure 3.1 to 12 beneficiaries. With regard to Measure 3.2, a total of €1,220,151.99 were processed by RDD to 16 beneficiaries. All files concerning measures 3.1 and 3.2 were closed by 2008 and all beneficiaries who abided by the contractual obligations were duly paid.

Implementation of Rural Development Plan (2004-2006) Funded through the EAGGF Guarantee Fund

Agri-environment Measures

Measure	Amount	Beneficiaries
Conservation of Autochthonous- Maltese Ox (2007 claim)	€7,428.00	1
Holm Oak (2006 and 2007 claims)	€1,195.50	6
Rubble Walls (2007 and 2008 claims)	€486,367.50	703

Meetings standards

Beneficiaries	Amount
3	€51,792.20 (Marketing Year 2007)
31	€224,902.50 (Marketing Year 2006)
17	€198,369.92 (Marketing Year 2008)
21	€156,130.40 (Marketing Year 2008)

Ad Hoc Measure

2007 Applications	
Beneficiaries	Amount
968	€1,293,963.86
2008 Applications	
246	€246,712.08
408	€118,206.99
199	€68,935.31
65	€10,614.77
105	€34,061.39
7	€14,251.49
63	€92,593.08
Total	€1,879,338.97

During 2008, the RDD ensured that all checks provided by EC legislation in relation to the measures administered by it were correctly and adequately performed. Administrative checks were performed on applications, followed by quality controls and on-the-spot controls. This allowed the RDD to identify anomalies and possible irregularities in order to be rectified.

Meeting standards

Beneficiaries	Amount
31	€224,902.50
3	€51,792.20
17	€198,369.92
21	€156,130.40
41	€578,154.10
1	€12,760.00
Total	€1,222,109.12

Measure 3.2 – Improving the Processing and Marketing of Agricultural Products

Beneficiaries	Amount
5	€447,498.19

Successful Implementation of the Programme

As the Managing Authority, the Department is responsible for the successful implementation of the programme. With this aim, Technical Assistance funds were directed at a number of activities involving consultative and information seminars, commissioning of studies, programme evaluations and purchase of services for provision of technical consultancy. During 2008, five payments were authorised in relation to the above-mentioned activities which amounted to €923,086.86.

Reporting

Various reporting exercises were carried out by the Rural Development Department:

- The Annual Report was submitted as part of the obligations that the Managing Authority (Planning and Priorities Co-ordinating Division, OPM) has with regard to the Structural Funds Programme (EAGGF).
- Progress in implementing the 2004-2006 RD Programme during 2007 was reported to the Commission through the Annual Progress Report (APR). This was first endorsed by the local Monitoring Committee prior to being submitted for Commission approval in June. The Annual Report 2007 included information about the financial execution, evaluation, monitoring of the measures during 2007, found in the two programming periods. The other Annual Progress Report related to the programming period 2007-2013

was submitted in accordance with Article 82 of Council Regulation No1698/2005. The Annual Progress Report for the year 2007 was considered by the Commission as acceptable. The Commission informed the RDD that the data forwarded following its request was sufficient and that the APR was closed.

On 21 November 2008 the Managing Authority had the first annual meeting concerning the progress report for 2007.

Another major reporting task entrusted to the Managing Authority is to provide for the setting up and submission of the ex-post report. The ex-post evaluation is an instrument which will inform authorities, the general public, the EU and other stakeholders involved about the outcomes of the 2004-2006 RDP. This evaluation will establish the impact of the EAGGF to identify the effectiveness, efficiency, added value and other lessons to be learnt in the future. The tender for the ex-post evaluation was published in the Government Gazette of 14 October 2008. Following article 65(2) of Commission Regulation 817/2004, the ex-post evaluation report shall be transmitted to the Commission not later than two years after the end of the programming period. The actual ex-post evaluation shall be the responsibility of the Commission, in collaboration with the Member State and the Managing Authority.

Implementation of the Rural Development Plan for Malta 2007-2013

For the 2007-2013 period, the Rural Development Department was responsible for the programming of the €76,633,355 million EAFRD allocated to Malta. In order to develop a plan which not only addresses national weaknesses and capitalises on strengths but also addresses stakeholders concerns, an extensive consultation process was embarked upon. Amalgamated with factual data and in line with other national strategies, the programme priorities and objectives were identified and firstly formulated into the National Strategy Plan for Rural Development. After being endorsed by the evaluators, it was translated into measures under each respective Axis in the new Rural Development Plan. The final version was approved by the Commission on 19 December 2007.

In 2007, a tender was issued for the ex-ante report in relation to the RDP 2007-2013 as per Article 85 of EC Regulation 1698/2005 and presented to RDD on 14 August 2007. Following the conclusion of the Ex-Ante exercise, a seminar was held in collaboration with the Paying Agency which covered the application process. The purpose of the seminar was to prepare for the logistics of the applications campaign, on-line applications and new software mainly for the application phase of the rural development measures.

In 2008, the RDD launched a number of measures contained in the Rural Development Plan 2007-2013. *AXIS 2 Improving the environment and the countryside* was fully launched. This launch consisted in Measures 212 and Measure 214 which together accounts for 25% of all the funds available under the RDP 2007-2013. The measures were publicised with the distribution of numerous leaflets and publications. In conjunction with these initiatives, numerous posters were produced accompanied by billboards and audio-visual clips.

The compilation of the Communication Plan began in 2008. The purpose of the Communication Plan is to ensure an equitable access for potential beneficiaries, transparency and clear selection criteria and to inform the general public on the RD policy. For what concerns the LEADER initiative, a booklet was published and a seminar and information meetings on a regional basis were organised. During the period November-December 2008, a publicity campaign was launched to publicise measure 121. This included the organisation of bilateral meetings and a seminar. RDD members of staff were also invited on local radio stations to publicise the measures contained in the RDP 2007-2013.

The LEADER Programme was characterised by the launch of several public private partnerships like Majjistral Action Group, Xlokk Action Group, Gozo Action Group, and National Rural Development Agency (NRDA) formed by local councils and other entities of the region that work together to plan, propose a strategy and eventually implement projects under the LEADER initiative. Ultimately, a number

of Local Action Groups shall be chosen from the established groups and accredited in order to implement their respective strategy.

On 12 November 2008, the first measure from Axis 1, Measure 121- *Modernisation of agricultural holdings* was launched. Applications of Measure 121's first call will be accepted up to 30 January 2009. The evaluation and final selection of the successful applicants will subsequently follow.

Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee was formally constituted on 2 July 2008. The terms of procedures, the selection criteria of measures in the RDP 2007-2013 and the Annual Progress Report 2007 were discussed and approved by the members. The Paying Agency and the Department of Agriculture are also members of the Monitoring Committee. During the second meeting of the Monitoring Committee that was held on 10 November 2008, the amended version of the selection criteria for Measure 121 was approved.

European Evaluation Network for Rural Development – Focus Group

On 22 October 2008, the Rural Development Department, together with geographical expert Mr John Grieve hosted the first meeting for the focus group of the evaluation network for rural development. Mr Grieve is responsible for the co-ordination of focus groups for the Evaluation Network for Rural Development in Malta, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The aim of the focus group was to link all those responsible for the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Rural Development Programme, specifically Managing Authorities, Implementing Bodies and Evaluators. The purpose of the first meeting was to carry out an assessment of Malta's requirements with regard to evaluation, capacity building, networking and knowledge transfer for rural development.

JOSEPH CARUANA
Head (Paying Agency)

Department of Agriculture

ST VINCENT DE PAULE NURSERY

Sale of Fruit Trees and Rootstock

In the first two weeks of February, the nursery organised an important event which included the sale of fruit trees and rootstock. About 6,500 soft and pome fruit trees including peaches, nectarines, plums, prunes, apricots, cherries, pears, apples, and a further 2,000 fruit trees of other types such as figs, pomegranates, sweet almonds and black mulberries were sold to farmers and the general public. An additional 4,000 American vine rootstock and 7,500 micro-propagated fruit tree rootstock were also sold. With the exception of fruit tree rootstock purchased from Italian suppliers, the majority of fruit trees were grafted and grown at the nursery's own fields, and eventually uprooted and sold as bare-rooted fruit trees.

During October, the annual sale of potted olives and table grapes was organised and concurrently orders for fruit trees were accepted. About 2,000 grafted olive trees, 700 table grapes, and an assortment of potted fruit trees were sold directly to farmers and to members of the general public. A total of 710 sales transactions and bookings were recorded over a two week period.

Propagation of Indigenous Olive Trees

The nursery also represented the Ministry as a partner in Project Primo, a project with the aims of propagating indigenous olive oil variety called *Tal-Bidni*, planting of *Tal-Bidni* olive orchards, and the establishment of an olive oil production industry. Production during the year reached around 1,000 *Tal-Bidni* olive trees, which were delivered to Mr Sam Cremona for later distribution. About 40 field visits were carried out around Malta with the aim of identifying the most suitable fields for planting olive trees and to provide advice to interested parties on preparatory works. *Tal-Bidni* olives were harvested from olive trees growing on Farm grounds for the first time and an oil sample was obtained. The oil shall be sent to specialised laboratories for organoleptic and chemical analysis.

Visits to locations and meetings with farmers were held with the aim of identifying local varieties of olives and pomegranates. In November, a survey was carried out on the millenarian olive trees growing in the environs of the village of Bidnija. The aim of the survey was to identify all *Tal-Bidni* olive trees growing in the locality of Wied Arkati, *Tal-Bidni* clones and any other olive varieties. A sample of olives was collected from each *Tal-Bidni* olive tree.

Other Duties

Apart from normal day-to-day work, the nursery's personnel performed general maintenance works, provided the Farm and the PARC Unit with emergency deliveries of water, laid a new concrete floor to the greenhouse and erected a 100 metre square canopy to provide for a sheltered working area.

An officer in charge took part in several radio and television programmes and provided information and advice on fruit trees. He also co-ordinated a programme for the destruction of field crops that were contaminated with sewage in the locality of Tal-Mejjieli, l/o Mellieha.

RECYCLED WATER DISTRIBUTION UNIT/ŽABBAR

Five reservoirs which are located at *Tumbrell Xghajra*, *San Anard*, *Bidni l/o Žabbar*, *Habel l-Abjad l/o Žejtun*, and *Tas-Silġ l/o Dellimara* are used by farmers to irrigate fields situated in these areas and were replenished with recycled water.

The Unit also planted some carob trees, repaired water channels, installed an iron ladder at San Anard Reservoir and cleaned the areas surrounding the reservoirs.

The Unit was represented on radio programmes *Familja Wahda* and *Frott Artna*. Inspections were carried out on farmer premises and private gardens. The Unit also issued permits for pruning carob trees and for uprooting protected trees according to MEPA legislation.

SAN ANTON PRESIDENT'S GARDENS AND VERDALA

San Anton President's Gardens and Verdala cover about 80 tumoli of arable land comprising 10 tumoli of citrus trees, stone fruit trees and vines; six tumoli for the cultivation of the kitchen garden, five tumoli for the cultivation of flowers, three tumoli for Lawn Garden. Another six tumoli of land comprise flower gardens whilst 50 tumoli consist of decorative trees at Verdala Buskett.

During the year, the gardens were maintained by the Department's gardeners who provide fresh flowers, vegetables etc for the President's Palaces which are situated at San Anton, Verdala and Valletta. Gardens were prepared for state visits by foreign presidents. As in previous years, the surrounding gardens at Verdala Buskett were prepared for various occasions such as the August Moon Ball.

New Equipment

This section was equipped with a new rotary cultivator and a new spraying machine to replace equipment which was used for over 20 years. A new irrigation system has been installed in the flower garden. A new water pump and rainguns replaced the former old irrigation system. A large rubble wall which collapsed as a result of storm has been rebuilt. The wall (which was on the verge of collapse) situated at the drive-in of San Anton Palace, was pulled down and reconstructed. A new opening and ramp were constructed so that a truck or tractor could move across different fields.

Gardeners within the Department were provided with a new restroom. Three MCAST students attended on-site practical lessons on a one-day-a-week basis.

PITKALI MARKETS

Upgrading of the Pitkaliija

- Discussions were held on how and when to upgrade the Pitkali Markets. The fruit and vegetable reform including marketing standards were looked into and officers also attended various meetings in Brussels on the subject. The rescheduling of opening hours of the Pitkali Market was also negotiated with Pitkali stakeholders and a new arrangement was introduced on a three-month trial basis.
- Several meetings were organised between Pitkali Officers and an appointed architect and an estimate of the cost to upgrade Pitkaliija to the required standard was submitted to the Director of Agriculture, which neared €7 million. Feedback was also sought from stakeholders concerned. Farmers, *pitkala* and hawkers would also benefit from a civil amenity site as projected in the upgrade.
- Other meetings were held with the Ministry's Chief Information Officer and the Ministry of Finance to install a new computerised system that incorporates a weighing facility for better control over the weight of produce at Pitkali Markets.

- The new fruit and vegetables reform necessitated various discussions related to marketing standards and issues related to producer organisations.
- The Pitkali Markets hosted the Single Payment Unit for the land registration application for 2008.
- The Pitkali traffic management plan was discussed in a meeting with ADT and the Police and is expected to be implemented during the first weeks of 2009 subject to the police approval.
- The calculation of SMPPMA subsidies on fresh fruit and vegetables and on specific produce such as potatoes, watermelons and tomatoes was made by the Pitkali Markets administration offices.
- Health and safety matters and HACCP were also addressed.

Statistics

During the year, 7,817,501 kg of fruit were sold with a value of €3,503,705, of which 3,280,365 kg were water melons with a value of €513,207. 27,801,583 kg of vegetables were also sold with a value of €11,548,236, of which 4,498,501 kg were potatoes with a value of €1,047,975.

MALTA EMBELLISHMENT AND LANDSCAPING PROJECT

A public-private partnership between the Government and the Environmental Landscapes Consortium Limited reached its sixth year since its formation. Through the implementation of a new contract, general maintenance of a higher standard could be achieved. There was an increase in the planting of decorative trees which included the replacement of trees that died during the past years. Moreover, a better presentation of flowering annuals was accomplished, with practically the same budget allocation as afforded in previous years for maintenance, nearing €7 million.

Important Projects carried out during 2008

The following projects were carried out during the year:

- Skate Park, Msida
- Salina Park, St Paul's Bay
- Magħtab
- Regional Road
- Ta' Qali Park
- Villa Francia
- Mater Dei completion
- Saluting Battery
- Mtarfa Roundabout
- St Paul's Bay By Pass
- Rabat Roundabout.

ORGANIC FARMING

Organic Farming has reached new heights. Seven out of 12 organic farming operators who were certified as 'under conversion' have acquired full certification in 2008.

Land accounted for organic farming (12 operators)	229.1 tumoli
Land registered as fully organically farmed	80 tumoli
Land in conversion	149.1 tumoli

More operators have already expressed interest to invest in organic farming and are in the process of initiating the conversion procedure.

The 2006 and 2007 Reports on Organic Farming were sent to the European Commission. Data on organic farming was also gathered from the Malta Standards Authority as Malta's Control Authority.

In December 2008, an Agricultural Officer was assigned the responsibility to address technical issues related to organic farming.

Standing Committee on Organic Farming

The Department was represented on several meetings of the Standing Committee on Organic Farming in 2008. Agendas, minutes and major points of concern such as the creation of the EU new organic logo, the drafting of the new Commission Regulation on organic production, and on new implementing rules on imports from third countries, were discussed with the Director of Agriculture and other stakeholders in government departments.

Liaison with Malta Standards Authority

As Malta's Control Authority on Organic Farming, the Malta Standards Authority and this Unit work closely together. Several meetings and discussions were held on various matters, such as the issuing of certificates for farmers, i.e. processors and producers, in conversion to organic farming, to be eligible to apply for the said subsidy. As a result of the recently approved Rural Development Plan 2007-2013, agri-environmental measures supporting organic farming were implemented as from 2008. Certification from MSA regarding payments/subsidies was issued on the following criteria; the size of the parcel; type of crop; the conversion status (stating whether area is certified as being under conversion or already certified organic).

In July 2008, a training course was organised by the Malta Standards Authority with the assistance from this Unit on the new Council Regulation 834/2007 which shall enter into force in January 2009.

This Unit also held a routine inspection at MSA as part of a regulatory process performed by the Competent Authority.

Malta Organic Farming Movement

Close contacts were established with the Malta Organic Farming Movement which was often consulted. The Unit believes that contacts with relevant non-government organisations would increase awareness of the farmers' needs and views on operative organic farming.

Ad Hoc Committee on Organic Farming

The Organic Farming Unit formed an *ad hoc* committee made up of Agricultural Officers for advisory services for the purpose of dealing with matters related to European Commission documents, consultations on instruction notes, and further enquiries from the public. The Committee met regularly, twice a month.

Interest by Schools and Students in Organic Farming

The Unit provided assistance to various students ranging from primary to university level in research on organic farming. Schools with an interest in organic farming made arrangements for their students to visit the farm. The Unit also delivered talks in schools to various students, who in turn exhibited their projects related to organic farming.

APICULTURE UNIT

- The Unit's colonies are kept in the main apiary at Ghammieri. In September 2008, some hives were transferred and are being kept at the new mating station at Romeo Romano Gardens, St Venera.

- The aim of the AU is to assist all the registered beekeepers in Malta and Gozo in all the aspects of beekeeping including any bee disease problems that might occur. Special attention is given to beginners.
- It is the responsibility of the AU to register new beekeepers and update data on presently registered beekeepers. Such data includes personal details, apiary details, number of colonies, type of hive, beekeeping experience, annual honey harvest, diseases and other relevant details.
- In July 2008, the AU organised, through an EU funded measure for Apiculture, an educational presentation on queen rearing at the Mgarr Local Council. The presentations were conducted by Dr Marco Lodesani, an Italian expert on the subject.
- In 2008, a field-test survey was conducted on American foul brood and European foul brood on a number of apiaries around Malta. The results were all negative.
- The upkeep of the government apiary involves several works that are carried out mainly by the AU officers, including general maintenance of hives, production of frames, cleaning of the observation area and the surrounding landscape, etc.
- The beekeeping work involves regular inspections (sometimes at dawn), feeding, monitoring and treatment of *Varroa*, production of queens and nuclei, production of bee products, etc.
- Maltese bee queens and nuclei are being sold at subsidised prices.
- Honey and beeswax are also produced and sold.
- The main work at the mating station at Romeo Romano Gardens involves the breeding of selected drones of the Maltese race in order to congest the surrounding congregation area and hence guarantee as much as possible the controlled mating of selected virgin Maltese queen bees with these drones. This work aims to conserve the local honey bee subspecies.
- The AU is collecting samples of Maltese bees from different apiaries for further analysis to determine the level of hybridisation of *A. m. ruttneri* in the Maltese Islands to date.
- A honey fair was organised on the 14 and 15 November 2008 at Romeo Romano Gardens. The event was a success and various beekeepers, members of the general public and the Minister himself expressed hope that the fair be held annually.
- All the necessary work associated with the National-EU Apiculture programme for the payment of related apiculture subsidies was performed.
- The Manual of Procedures was kept updated as necessary.
- The AU participated in numerous TV/radio programmes.
- The AU collaborated with Veterinary Division staff in the annual honey collection and residue analysis exercise.

VITICULTURE AND OENOLOGY UNIT

Administrative Work

During 2008 the Viticulture and Oenology Unit performed administrative work in the registration of wineries, vines and the modification of the production potential, filling of the harvest declarations as well as the registration of vines under the schemes of the DOK and IGT.

During the year, 49 different wines coming from different wineries were certified as DOK while another 14 were certified as IGT. For the period between 15 November 2007 and 15 October 2008, this certification system cost more than €40,000. Costs were met by the Ministry.

During the 2008 grape harvest, officials of the Unit collected samples of the grapes which were being delivered to the wineries. These were all analysed for their natural sugar content. The results obtained

were compiled into a database to be used for the administrative controls during the certification of the 2008 wines.

In October 2008, the first applications for the certification of DOK wines produced in 2008 were received. The relevant checks were carried out and the wine samples were collected and sent for the relevant analysis.

Wine registers were inspected to confirm reliability and integrity of the whole operation which is necessary for the certification of these wines. Other administrative checks were carried out at the office to confirm the correctness of the data received, including:

- cross checking the sugar content of samples gathered during grape harvest;
- checking whether the land parcels are registered;
- checking the quota of grapes for each farmer;
- checking the labelling to be used on the bottles.

Cultivation of Vines and Olive Trees

Fields that are cultivated with vines and olive trees were given the necessary seasonal attention. Officials of the Unit pruned vines during the months of January and February and once more during the early summer season. The setting up of the trellising system continued and most of the supporting wires are now in place. Some new rootstock vines were planted in a field below. The vines will be grafted with local Maltese varieties in the coming years. During October, olives were harvested and pressed.

Microvinification Pilot Plant

Wine samples from the 2008 vintage year were made in the microvinification pilot plant so that samples could be sent to the European Commission in fulfilment of EU regulations. The rest of the wine was bottled and sold internally to staff of the Government Farm during the months of November and December. The samples produced in the vintage year 2007 were sent to the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the Commission for analysis.

Orange Blossom Water

Another traditional product produced by this Unit was Orange Blossom water. A licence fee was paid and once again, the Unit resorted to distil blossoms of sour oranges using the *Lampik* method.

Meetings

Various meetings were held with the society for Maltese Viticulture and the Unit organised two visits to Italy for members of the society.

Restructuring and Conversion of Vines

From January to June, various applications for the restructuring and conversion of vines were received, processed and successful applicants paid. Ten farmers have benefited from this scheme, receiving a total of €38,157.04.

Identification of Local Vine Varieties

The Unit was granted a research programme under FP7 by the Malta Council for Science and Technology. The project, which deals with the identification of local vine varieties, will be carried out in conjunction with the University of Malta. It will mainly focus on the Maltese indigenous varieties of vines - the *Girgentina* and *Gellewza*.

CROP HUSBANDRY SECTION

The Crop Husbandry Section is responsible for the setting up and execution of trials and experiments performed both in the open field and also under protected cultivation. These trials consist in the growing and demonstration of vegetables, herbs, flowers, fruit trees and forage crops. In 2008, various crops were grown besides the maintaining of fields and surroundings.

Outdoor Crops

In 2008, trails with new globe artichokes variety from Sicily were continued and towards the end of the year, the variety proved more successful than in the previous year. Other vegetables were cultivated in the fields of Ghammieri during 2008, such as kohlrabi, zucchini, lettuce, cabbages, onions, broad beans, parsley and other herbs, aubergines, green peppers and potatoes.

The Crop Husbandry Section was responsible for maintaining the citrus orchards, the olive orchard, the grape vines and the prickly pear collection plot.

The produce of all fodder such as wheat and *sulla* for the Animal Husbandry Section was sown and harvested by the crop husbandry section. 163 large size bales were produced during 2008.

The Outdoor Crops workers performed maintenance works on rubble walls, watered crops and orchards and cleared weeds and litter from fields, apart from manuring and ploughing fields.

Tractor GVH 394

In 2008, a Sifra tractor GVH 394 was handed to the Crop Husbandry section by the Education Department. The tractor will be refurbished and used on the fields of the farm.

Protected Cropping

Various crops were grown in greenhouses during 2008. The main crops grown were tomatoes, melons, zucchini, cucumbers, runner beans and strawberries. 500 poinsettias were also grown in greenhouses during 2008. Also, trees grown by school children as gathered by the Arbor Committee were housed and repotted in one of the available greenhouses. Herbs and other pot plants were also grown in another greenhouse.

TV Programmes and Other Activities

The Crop Husbandry section made available vegetables, fruit and/or pot plants for use on some television programmes and for certain school activities.

Sale of vegetables at the Pitkali Markets

Vegetables	Amount	Total Value (€)
Globe Artichokes	2,951 heads	924.53
Tomatoes	67 boxes	552.32
Zucchini	358 boxes	2,160.87
Kohlrabi	276 bunches	303.73
Parsley	158 boxes	45.62
Basil	-	90.36
Aubergines	36 boxes	86.81
Green Pepper	23 boxes	49.46
Potatoes	47 boxes	88.21
Lettuce	168 boxes	349.36
Onions	-	158.37

Cabbages	351 boxes	509.38
Strawberry	-	468.65
Melons	46 boxes	512.58
Rucola	-	77.96
Corriander	26 punnets	3.60
Runner Beans	202.50 kgs	489.41
Broad Beans	17 boxes	20.40
Cucumbers	69 boxes	473.23
Total		7,364.85

Total sales by Crop Husbandry Section in 2008

Pitkali Sales	Various vegetables	7,364.85
Onion Seedlings	86,650 seedlings @ €1.75 per 100	1,516.38
Potatoes	324 sacks @ €4	1296.00
Potatoes Seed	2 sacks @ €1.75	3.50
Ortensia	129 plants @ €6.00	774.00
Chrysanthemums	1 dozen	2.40
Kalkara Fair	Vegetables & ortensia	106.25
Grand Total		€11,063.38

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Poultry Section

This Section continued with the implementation of breeding programmes of various poultry breeds, especially Black Maltese breed. This latter breed, which in the past was greatly used by the local breeders for egg production, is now being bred to increase its population as it was in danger of extinction. Apart from this breed, different types of poultry are being bred at Ghammieri, such as the marans chickens, *tal-Azil*, naked neck, silky, peacocks, guinea fowls, geese, various breeds of ducks and fancy and broiler pigeons. The poultry section also assumes charge for the keeping of ponies used by children for pony rides during different events organised by the Ministry and also has a horse, donkey, monkey, llamas, emus, ostriches, pigmy goats and a gazelle. Indeed, there is no other place in Malta that provides children with the opportunity to see all the said kinds of animals in one location.

The Poultry Section sells poultry offsprings and the like to the public.

Sheep Section

During 2008, the Sheep Section pursued its breeding programme with the aim of rearing good producing sheep that can be sold to local breeders in order to improve the sheep genetic pool. The majority of sheep are of the Maltese breed and the Unit aims to further enhance this breed which has good traits with regards to production and acclimatisation to Malta's climatic conditions. All milk produced in this Section is sold to the public primarily for cheeselet production. Demand for this type of milk has increased over the years and at present the demand has actually exceeded supply.

Rabbitry Section

The Rabbitry Section aims to produce rabbits of the right kind for breeding and production. The desired traits were achieved through several years in search of good selections. Most of the rabbits are sold to the local public but mainly to small rabbit breeders. Given the limited availability of rabbits during 2008, rabbit breeders' requests exceeded production.

MEPA

As in previous years, an official inspected farms of applicants seeking to upgrade their farms, in order to be in line with present and envisaged legislation. Such applicants seek approval from the Office before proceeding to submit their application to MEPA. The Section also offers an advisory service to farmers and gives them instructions on the required changes in order to upgrade their farms. The majority of cases request to upgrade poultry, pig, sheep, rabbits and equine farms.

Single CMO Meetings

CMO meetings are held in Brussels every month and tackle issues related to poultry meat and eggs, pig meat, beef and dairy. An officer attends the meetings periodically and particularly when issues of importance to Malta regarding poultry meat and eggs are discussed. The Section and the Division responsible for Veterinary Services prepare instruction notes and/or explanatory memoranda accordingly.

Nitrates Report

During October and November, an officer attended a number of meetings organised by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding the Nitrates Directive report. The officer collected data that was required to complete the report and sent it to the responsible officers on this dossier at MEPA.

Media Programmes

The aim of media programmes is to educate farmers and consumers about animal breeding and presentation of the product, and furthermore to inform consumers how to choose good-quality local products. For this reason, an officer participated in six editions of the TV programme *Bongu*, two of which focused on poultry meat, one on eggs, two on pig meat and one on rabbit meat. He also took part in three radio programmes on poultry meat, eggs and rabbits, and wrote two articles on poultry for the magazine *Biedja u Sajd* in 2008.

Goat Section

The Section aims to propagate the Maltese goat. Goats are selected for their dairy quality with special regard to their resistance to the Maltese semi arid climate and to mastitis.

Cattle Section

The cattle section at the Government Farm is divided in two sections: the Dairy Section and the Autoctonous Section. In the Dairy Section, there is a small dairy herd where production trials are conducted. The Autoctonous Section focuses on the propagation of the *Gendus Malti*. Both the Dairy Section and the Autoctonous Section are appreciated by locals and foreigners and students alike when paying a visit to the farm.

NOEL AZZOPARDI
A/Director (Department of Agriculture)

Veterinary Regulation, Fisheries Conservation and Control Division

INTRODUCTION

The Veterinary Regulation and Fisheries Conservation and Control Division continued with its activities to safeguard veterinary public health and to contribute to the economically viable development of the livestock industry via the improvement of the legislative environment and through the employment of veterinary knowledge, skills and resources in a cost effective and social manner. The management of fisheries involved surveillance and monitoring of the fishing activities, landings, sales and vessels themselves to ensure that all our obligations towards conservation of the stocks and the marine environment were maintained.

The main areas of activity included inspections and controls of:

- production of meat (beef, pork, sheep, poultry and rabbit meat), milk, eggs, fish and their respective products;
- importation and movement of foodstuffs;
- animal feeding stuffs;
- animal diseases;
- veterinary medicinals;
- animal welfare on farms, during transport and at slaughter;
- aquaculture including capture based aquaculture of blue fin tuna;
- fishing vessels including their registration and licencing;

The primary functions of the Division consist of:

- drafting and implementing legislation in the area of veterinary public health, animal health and welfare, veterinary medicinal and animal feeding staff, and fisheries and aquaculture;
- prevention and control of animal diseases through implementation of the livestock identification programme, prophylaxis, inspections and diagnostic tests on animals, their samples and animal products;
- issuance of approvals, certificates, licences and registrations prescribed at law relating to veterinary public health, fisheries, animal health and welfare; and
- research and development of new livestock in aquaculture.

OPERATIONS

SLAUGHTERING OPERATIONS

- *Pool of Butchers.* The current pool of butchers was further reduced due to retirement. Seven trainees followed an ETC traineeship that ended in December.
- *Training.* A refresher course in food handling and hygiene was set up for the slaughtering butchers. Moreover, a number of butchers who show potential have been identified for training in supervisory techniques.
- *Deboning Plant.* The load in this plant is continuously on the increase and eventually will increase further. More processing plants are requesting to have their carcasses deboned at the plant. Most of the processors

are also requesting to have the various cuts vacuum packed at the plant as well. This will add to the burden on operations as it will also affect the expenditure budgets.

- *General Operations.* During the period various discussions with stakeholders were held in order to improve operations and maximise our resources. This has resulted in better planning with regard to bovine and swine slaughtering.

The number of caprines slaughtered during the year has increased dramatically after the regulator issued further directives on this particular market restricting the slaughter on farms.

The meat traceability system is now in place and a number of runs have been carried out. It is expected that a dual system will be operated as from 2009.

SLAUGHTERING OF LIVESTOCK

The number of livestock slaughtered in 2008 at the Civil Abattoir in Malta is as indicated hereunder:

Animals Slaughtered (Heads)						
Cattle	Swine	Sheep	Lamb	Goats	Kids	Equines
5,453	102,104	127	20	65	15	139

There was an increase in the number of animals slaughtered for all species except equines. There was a decrease of 53.35% in the number of equines slaughtered with respect to 2007. However, there was an increase of 19.5% and 8.3% in the slaughter of cattle and pigs respectively in 2008 over 2007. The slaughter of sheep, lambs, goats and kids was inexistent in 2007 but a booking system was introduced in 2008. The slaughtering of these animals is set to increase in the coming year.

The number of kilogrammes of the respective livestock slaughtered at the Civil Abattoir in Malta is as indicated hereunder:

Animals Slaughtered (Weight)						
Cattle	Swine	Sheep	Lamb	Goats	Kids	Equines
1,480,293	8,497,095	3,998	239	1,531	133	28,509

The total number of animals slaughtered during this period was 107,923 heads weighing 10,011,798 kg, while the number for the same period of last year was 99,176 heads weighing 9,655,994 kg.

There was an increase of 8.8% with respect to the number of animals slaughtered and an increase of 3.7% in weight in relation to the previous year. The increase in weight of bovines was 6.8% and the increase in weight for swine was 5.9%. When these percentage increases in weights are compared to the percentage increase in the number of cattle and pigs slaughtered, it appears that the animals slaughtered in 2008 yielded lighter carcasses.

SWINE ANALYSIS

The market demand for the year shows an upward trend. Swine slaughtered (heads) during 2008 results to be 8.3% higher than that for 2007 (94,290 heads). The weight has also gone up from 8,018.0 M.tons (2007) to 8,497.0 M.tons, therefore 5.3%.

The percentage grade/quality of the meat is mostly A1. The average carcass weight for 2008 was 83.2 kg. Production is now in the region of 8,497.0 M.tons which is equivalent to about €13.37 million. There was importation of about 1,641.0 Metric tons of pork-meat from EU states. The pork consumed in Malta throughout 2008 was of Maltese origin in 80.7% of the cases.

	Qty	Wt./Kg	Percentage in Weight				
			A1	A2	A3	B	C
January	8,666	737,821	61.4	15.9	8.5	5.5	8.6
February	7,261	619,336	60.0	15.5	8.4	6.0	10.0
March	6,999	605,716	57.2	14.5	9.1	7.7	11.5
April	8,851	774,351	57.0	15.0	8.7	6.4	12.8
May	7,588	655,914	59.9	13.8	8.5	5.8	11.9
June	7,780	659,729	66.2	12.1	7.5	4.9	9.3
July	10,223	849,205	68.5	12.9	6.3	4.1	8.1
August	7,955	634,657	77.7	11.4	5.3	2.2	3.4
September	8,582	706,645	78.2	12.1	4.5	2.3	3.0
October	9,634	773,399	75.5	13.5	5.3	2.6	3.0
November	8,183	662,464	74.1	14.4	5.7	2.6	3.2
December	10,382	817,858	75.4	14.4	5.2	2.9	2.1

ANIMAL WELFARE AND PROMOTION

A new directorate, the Animal Welfare and Promotion Directorate, was established in 2008 with the purpose of ensuring that animals receive due care and just treatment and that the laws governing animal welfare are respected. Another issue that concerns this directorate is the management of stray animals.

Animal Welfare Initiatives

Funds allocated to this Directorate were spent on three main projects regarding animal welfare: the neutering campaign, the provision of financial help to the animal welfare NGOs to cover capital expenses in improving their establishments and the Animal Aftercare Centre. Apart from these projects, the Directorate has managed to establish a good relationship with the media, participating in TV programmes which deal with the care of animals and also contributing to articles on the written media. Also the Directorate has a dedicated telephone line which is being used by the public to report any cases of ill-treatment of animals or any other queries.

Neutering Campaign

The Neutering Campaign was the result of months of work. The scope of this campaign was to neuter stray cats and dogs. This campaign proved to be very successful. In fact, in just a few months over 1,500 cats and dogs were neutered. The success of this campaign was the result of a co-ordinated effort between the Directorate, the relevant NGOs and various veterinaries. The funds allocated to this campaign amounted to €174,000 and this money covered the expenses of the vets for the actual neutering procedure including any medicines required and also the expenses which were necessary to keep the cats and dogs housed until they recovered from the surgery. All the funds allocated for this project have been used and thus this project has been closed.

Funding for animal NGOs

Another €174,000 were handed out to various animal welfare NGOs. The registered NGOs were invited to submit projects that were part of their capital expenditure. An adjudication board analysed the various applications and found that all applications were eligible. Some of the NGOs have already completed the projects and have received the funds for which they applied. Others are still to commence their projects and will receive their funds upon completion of their works.

Animal Aftercare Centre

In 2008, the Animal Welfare Directorate completed the planning process for an Animal Aftercare Centre and the actual construction work has started. This centre, which is being built at Ta' Qali, will be open 24 hours a day and will host stray animals that need urgent medical attention along with convalescing

privately-owned animals. The centre will be fully functional by the end of 2009 and will cost approximately €420,000. The Aftercare Centre will also be offering the service of an Animal Ambulance.

PROGRAMMES SECTION

Livestock Aid Programmes

This section had a number of audits from the public internal auditors (IAID) and also by private auditors (Grant Thornton) regarding bovine and ovine subsidies. Audits carried out were: IAID – two full weeks (in January and in June); Grant Thornton – four consecutive days in June.

Applications concerning Ad Hoc Scheme Livestock

This section received about 150 *ad hoc* applications from farmers coming from different sectors. All applications were filled accordingly and sent to the Rural Development Department.

Diesel Duty Free Allocation for Fishing Vessels

In accordance with the current agreement between Government and the two fishermen's co-operatives, 3,861,834 litres of duty free fuel have been allocated for category A fishing vessels and 6,250 litres for category B fishing vessels.

Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance 2004–2006

From the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance 2004–2006, the Maltese fisheries sector benefited from about €3 million, which aid was co-financed by the European Union and the Maltese Government.

The FIG consisted of two measures: one measure was related to the fleet and the other measure related to structures. Under these two measures, every full-time or part-time fisher, existing aquaculture establishment, marketing and processing establishment could apply to benefit from these funds.

Up to the end of 2008, a major part of all the FIG projects were implemented and concluded. However an extension was granted to finalise pending projects such as the procurement of furnishing items at the Hardstanding Facilities, the marketing and processing scheme and the Fleet Modernisation Health & Safety Scheme.

During 2008, marketing and processing, and fleet modernisation aid schemes were relaunched in order to utilise savings accumulated from the first calls.

The Marketing and Processing scheme was aimed to modernise existing processing facilities within the fisheries sector. Investment had to be made in the processing of fish products which involve fish handling, fish treatment, storage and distribution between the time of landing or harvesting and the end product stage. The Fleet Modernisation scheme was aimed at improving the health and safety equipment on board Maltese fishing vessels.

Three marketing and processing enterprises and eight fishing vessels benefited from these calls. The final recipients procured filleting machines, packing machines, cold rooms, EPIRBs, radars, autopilots, life jackets, fire-fighting and other equipment.

During 2008, the hardstanding facilities at Ponta tal-Qrejten Marsaxlokk were furnished with additional industrial equipment such as a forklifter, a sweeper, a tent, service pillars, and an air compressor. About 270 fishing vessels were hoisted on the hardstanding facilities and about €128,000 were generated during

2008. Additionally, the slipway at Ta' Belen which is adjacent to the hardstanding facilities has been resurfaced.

European Fisheries Fund 2007–2013

The European Commission approved a financial package worth €11.1 million that will be co-financed by the European Union and the Maltese Government. The investment will be used for fleet modernisation, permanent and temporary cessation, modernisation of aquaculture, and marketing and processing establishments. The Maltese Operational Programme for the Maltese Fisheries sector for the period 2007–2013 aims to ensure sustainability and an improved fisheries sector. During the programming period, a new fishmarket and landings offices in designated ports will be built.

FISH MARKETING ACCOUNTING SCHEME

Fish Landings

The estimated total landings for 2008 were 917,106 kg valued at €5,626,057. The average wholesale price works out at €6.13 per kilo. Fish landed consisted mainly of dolphin fish, swordfish and bluefin tuna. Considerable quantities of trawled fish were also landed. The following table gives details of fish catches for the period 2007–2008.

Estimated Fish Landings 2007 - 2008					
Estimated Quantity (Kg)		Value (€)			
		Wholesale		Retail	
2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
850,071	917,106	4,966,120	5,626,057	5,540,376	6,187,282

The actual landings recorded at the Wholesale Fish Market were 765,505 kg valued at €4,749,725.

Receipts from fish hawkers amounted to €3,716,583, whilst payments made to fishermen and *pitkala* were €4,540,269.

Export and Import of Fish

The Division endeavours to see that the fishermen's livelihood is safeguarded and at the same time ensures that the consumer is well provided throughout the whole year with a supply and variety of species of fish. 5,161,228 kg of frozen fish worth €10,961,352, at an average price of €2.12 per kilo and 273,948 kg of fresh fish valued at €1,895,304, at an average price of €6.92 per kilo, were imported during 2008.

Fish Imports 2007 - 2008							
Frozen Fish				Fresh Fish			
Quantity (Kg)		Value (€)		Quantity (Kg)		Value (€)	
2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
3,784,449	5,161,228	6,497,742	10,961,352	153,584	273,948	709,333	1,895,304

295,912 kg in round weight of bluefin tuna were caught by Maltese fishers. 170,288 kg of captured bluefin tuna and swordfish valued at €1,535,237, at an average price of €9.02 were exported to Japan and Italy.

Limited quantities of other species of fish were also exported during 2008.

AQUACULTURE SECTION

Aquaculture Operational Farms

Three sea bream and sea bass farms were operational in 2008:

P2M Co Ltd operating at Mistra, St Paul's Islands and Mellicha Slugs Bay
 Malta Fishfarming Ltd at Munxar Reef
 Fish and Fish Co Ltd at Hofriet

Capture Based Aquaculture – Bluefin Tuna

Six tuna fattening farms were operational in 2008:

AJD Tuna Ltd
 Fish and Fish Ltd
 Malta Fishfarming Ltd
 Mare Blu Tuna Farm
 Ta' Matthew Fish Farms Ltd
 Deep Sea Aquaculture site (operated by Mare Blu Tuna Farm)

Aquaculture Production

The hatchery produced 436,500 sea bream fingerlings. This was the largest number of sea bream fingerlings in the last five years.

The total production of sea bass and sea bream was 1,680 tons in 2008. This production was for export and local sales and had an estimated value of €6.6 million. Over 88% of this production was exported.

Fingerling Importation

A total of 5 million fingerlings were imported throughout 2008 from approved French or Italian hatcheries.

Activities within the MCFS Aquaculture Research Branch

The Amberjack Project

The Amberjack Project joint venture between VRFCC and Malta Fishfarming Ltd has entered its third year. The largest number of fingerlings of sea bream ever produced in one cycle from the hatchery in Fort San Luċjan were produced within the terms of this project. This sea bream cycle was carried out to test and improve techniques for larval rearing, involving specific enrichments in diets, water quality parameters and grading for larvae and juveniles.

Malta Fishfarming Ltd, on behalf of the Amberjack Contract, invested in a new filter system for the sea water at Fort San Luċjan. This filter system consists of a sand filter, one micron filter and a UV steriliser unit and is constructed to cope with a flow of 70m³/hour.

During 2008, amberjack spawning was attempted twice, with the intention of producing more eggs with an extra cycle at an earlier stage. This experiment was successful and over 8 million fertilised eggs were produced in the beginning of June as opposed to the end of June. The second spawning induction was carried out at the end of June and more eggs were produced. From both cycles, the hatchery produced around 5,175 amberjack juveniles. 4,700 of these were transferred to the cages for on-growing experiments in cages while the other 475 were kept at the hatchery for experiments on their nutrition.

Collaboration took place with Nisshin Feeds Co of Japan for enrichment trials on live feed used for sea bream and amberjack larval rearing. Collaboration took place also with Digsfish Services PTY Ltd of Australia for feed additives required for amberjack juvenile rearing.

Due to the small size of our hatchery in Malta, talks were held with the hatchery in Lampedusa and that of Acqua Azzurra Spa in Sicily for future collaboration and commercial scale production of amberjack fingerlings. After initial talks in August and more detailed meetings, a contract was drafted between the Amberjack Project and Acqua Azzurra Spa for collaboration in commercial scale production of amberjack juveniles. Collaboration was held with Acqua Azzurra Spa of Sicily for sea bream and amberjack egg and larval rearing trials.

A number of maintenance jobs were carried out to improve the hatchery and nursery areas at Fort San Luċjan.

Selfdott EU Project

This project, with the acronym SELFDOTT (Self-sustained Domestication of Bluefin tuna) was accepted by the EU and started in 2008, principally dealing with the reproduction, larval rearing and nutrition of the bluefin tuna.

The first meeting was held at the Instituto Español de Oceanografía in Murcia on 5 February 2008. All the Work Packages (WP) were discussed and logistics were finalised.

Throughout the year, a number of discussions were held with scientists from Spain, Greece, Israel, Germany and Italy whereby the involvement and details of various experiments from different WP were discussed. Malta is involved in the project as a scientific research centre and through the industry with Malta Fishfarming Ltd which provides the cages and broodstock for the experiments. Dr Robert Vassallo Agius is the SELFDOTT co-ordinator for Malta.

Several experiments and dummy trials were carried out during the year and are expected to continue in 2009.

Malta – Tunisia collaboration

The first visit to Tunisia in connection with the collaboration between both countries started in the beginning of April when Dr Robert Vassallo-Agius visited the Fisheries Institute in Bizerte and had meetings with the Director of the Institute and with the Director of Fisheries. The main topic was the common areas for research between the two countries. Dr Vassallo-Agius gave a lecture at the Institute where he explained various principles of broodstock management for marine fish, with particular emphasis on species diversification.

From 17 to 24 September, the Tunisian counterpart from the Institute of Bizerte visited Malta for a technical practice visit. During this period, she gained valuable experience in the procedures used at our Centre. She was involved in aquaculture hatchery procedures, cage feeding, turtle rehabilitation, and water quality sampling and analysis.

Samples of amberjacks taken from a feed trial where two different diets were fed have been collected and are stored until they are delivered to the Tunisian Institute where they will be analysed for lipids and fatty acids.

Others

- Vaccination trials were also held at the Fort San Luċjan vaccine experimental facility as per the contractual agreement between Schering Plough Aquaculture and VRFCC.

- On 2 May, the EU Commissioner for Fisheries Dr Joseph Borg visited the tuna spawning cage to see with great interest the progress that was being achieved by Malta in this field.
- On 22 May, Dr Borg and the Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs Mr George Pullicino visited the tuna spawning cage along with a number of NAFO Ministers for Fisheries.
- Supervision and training of a student from MCAST, who was trained at the Centre in marine hatchery techniques for live food preparation and larval fish.
- Participation in a Research Exhibition Week organised by MCST in Bighi: Two posters showing the progress achieved in the Amberjack Project and in the SELFDOTT project were put up for display.
- Malta participated in the sixth session of the GFCM Committee of Aquaculture that was held in Tirana, Albania on 17- 19 December.

Scientific Publications

- Spatial-temporal pattern of bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus* L. 1758) gonad maturation across the Mediterranean Sea. (2008) G Heinisch, A Corriero, A Medina, F. J. Abascal, J-M de la Serna, R Vassallo-Agius, A Belmonte Rios, A Garcia, F de la Gandara, C Fauvel, C R Bridges, C C Mylonas, S F Karakulak, G De Metrio, H Rosenfeld, H Gordin. *Marine Biology*, Vol 154, No4. 2008.
- Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus* L.) culture: The Italian experience. (2008) De Metrio G, Caggiano M, Bridges C R, Mylonas C C, Deflorio M, Vassallo-Agius R, Gordin H, Corriero A. *European Aquaculture Conference, Krakow, Poland 2008*.

Press Releases

A number of press releases were published after the spawning success of the amberjacks and in connection with Malta's participation in SELFDOTT - the EU funded project on bluefin tuna research. These were also accompanied by TV news service coverage and appearances in the popular TV programme *X'Qala l-Baħar*. Apart from the press releases, there were also other newspaper articles on aquaculture research and the way forward for aquaculture in Malta. The international press also covered Malta's success in aquaculture research.

REGULATION

FOOD HEALTH AND VETERINARY ENFORCEMENT

Official Controls on Establishments

White Meat Slaughterhouses and Meat Establishments

Inspection activities covered poultry slaughterhouses, red & white meat cutting plants, meat preparations & meat products establishments and cold stores. In Malta there are four poultry slaughter houses and cutting plants which are inspected daily by the two official veterinarians.

The main aim behind inspections is to check and observe the level of hygiene at each plant and ascertain that all animals slaughtered and placed on sale are fit for human consumption. This is assessed through hygiene assessment score (HAS) forms. Inspection activities carried out this year on poultry slaughterhouses resulted in a total of 7,850 of condemned poultry carcasses. Poultry slaughtered during 2008 amounted to 2,983,960.

The official veterinarians responsible for food health and veterinary enforcement participated in two Food Veterinary Office (FVO) missions, one related to the ABP (animal by-products) during which the FVO visited slaughterhouses and meat processing plants, the second one comprised an annual review.

Tasks throughout this year consisted in reviewing all MEPA documents, the management of the ABP carried out by the operators, and the complying with the Council Regulation 1774/2002.

Enforcement resulted in convincing operators to observe EU legislation regarding animal by-products and for placing labels on the plastic containers inside the establishments in line with the CR 1774/2002.

In 2008, the official veterinarians attended the following training courses:

- course type 1: development, implementation and maintenance of HACCP system;
- workshop on food hygiene and controls for meat and meat products;
- training courses on monitoring and controls of zoonoses and applying microbiological criteria in foodstuffs. Practical application of microbiological criteria in foodstuffs and investigation on food borne outbreaks;
- hygiene and controls of milk and milk products.

Other activities

- 50 inspection/visits in various establishments;
- six HAS inspections;
- 42 visits to assess new or potential applicants, in particular evaluation of rabbit slaughterhouses;
- a full audit to an establishment in accordance to regulations EC854/2004 and EC882/2004;
- approval for slaughtering of turkeys in Gozo (Traditional Seasonal Slaughter);
- in conjunction with the Public Health Division, activities related to rapid alert were carried out on a daily basis - a consignment was resent to the original manufacturer in Argentina/one was destroyed locally;
- issue of two warning letters following investigations on the activities carried out by two establishment;
- seizing of some poultry meat.

Red Meat Slaughtering

- Ante-mortem inspections: A total of 3,343 bovines and 61,139 swines were inspected before regular slaughter.
- Internal reports were drawn up by the ante-mortem and post-mortem sections every three months.
- Post-mortem inspections were carried out as indicated in the following tables:

Regular Slaughter lines			
Carcases of Bovines and Swine inspected at post-mortem during regular slaughter			
	<i>Inspected</i>	<i>Fit for human consumption</i>	<i>Condemned</i>
Bovines	5,372	5,276	196
Swine	102,104	101,663	441
The percentage of condemned bovine carcasses was 3.65 %. The percentage of condemned carcasses was 0.43%.			

Emergency Slaughter line			
Number of animals inspected at post-mortem at the "emergency" slaughterhouse			
	<i>Inspected</i>	<i>Passed for HC</i>	<i>Condemned</i>
Bovine	194	78	116
Swine	1,234	1,057	177
Ovine/Caprine	229	224	5
Equine	186	153	33
Total number of animals inspected on the "emergency" slaughter line was 1,843, whilst those condemned were 331. This equalled 18% of the total number of animals inspected.			

No. of tests requested for carcasses after having performed the post-mortem inspection in regular and “emergency” slaughter lines			
<i>Species</i>	<i>Bovine</i>	<i>Equine</i>	<i>Swine</i>
Antimicrobial	62	57	204
Bacteriological	57	50	101
Results of tests carried out			
<i>Type of Test</i>	<i>Bovine</i>	<i>Equine</i>	<i>Swine</i>
Antimicrobial - Positive	1	4	4
Antimicrobial – Negative	61	53	200
Bacteriological – Positive	29	15	42
Bacteriological - Negative	28	35	59
1.96% of tests resulted positive for Antimicrobial while 4.2% resulted positive for Bacteriological.			

- Other Sampling Operations:
 - National Control Plan on Bovine, Equine and Swine carcasses;
 - Collection of 75 samples from Equine carcasses for detection of Cadmium;
 - Collection of 2,114 Central Nervous Tissue samples for TSE testing in bovines ≥ 30 months during regular slaughter;
 - Collection of 55 Central Nervous Tissue samples for TSE testing in bovines ≥ 24 months during “emergency” slaughter;
 - Collection of 76 Central Nervous Tissue samples for TSE testing in fallen bovines, caprines and ovines;
 - Collection of 266 swabs for Cleaning Control;
 - Collection of 400 samples for Carcass Surface Contamination Control.

Milk Hygiene Control

The main tasks were the following:

- inspections on the Dairy Cows Farms producing raw milk for collection and processing;
- inspections to the Dairy Establishment that need the approval under EU Reg. 853/04 to obtain the relative Oval Health Mark;
- inspections on Goats and Sheep Farm that produce cheeselet *gbejna* and sell their product to third parties or place their produce directly on the market.

Dairy Cow Farms

The actual number of dairy farms is approximately 150 including the dormant farms. A total of 165 inspections were carried out in 2008. During two rounds of inspections in the year, 86 farms were given a Conditional Approval; 54 given a Warning Letter; and 19 farms were served with a Close Down Letter.

Other activities throughout 2008 included six official inspections, training meetings with farmers and other meetings with quality, administrative and process managers.

Cheeselet producers

The work on the cheeselet section started at the end of November 2008. Internal meetings were held with all the stakeholders in the cheeselet industry and competent authorities (Food Safety Commission (FSC), Health Department, etc). According to the statistical information obtained from FSC, there are 1,300 official cheeselet producers. This section carried out six inspections in December 2008.

To date two training sessions were organised for Gozo cheeselet producers and process establishments. Activities included other meetings and courses locally and abroad.

Multi Annual Control Plan

Regulation 882/2004 required the preparation of an annual report for the year 2007. The report covered the activities carried out by all the official veterinarians performing official controls. This entailed updating and/or changing all the checklists used by the Food Health Veterinary Enforcement Section and assessing all the required changes, in line with all present/future legislation.

Feedstuff

In spite of the fact that the activities concerning this section do not foresee the control and inspection on feeding stuff establishments, three inspections and one full audit on a feed manufacturer were carried out.

Registration and Approval of Muslim Butchers

Applications from the local Muslim community for butchers were received to carry out slaughtering according to Muslim religious rites. This request had to be assessed and negotiated with other officials within the civil abattoir, which finally proved to be successful.

Instruction/Speaking Notes, Explanatory Memoranda, Questionnaires

A significant number of these documents were prepared throughout the year for supporting officials representing Malta at various EU meetings/committees. Most of them concerned the area of food safety, a number dealt with importation and trade of food.

A questionnaire concerning fees on official controls as charged at present and on what could be charged in future was prepared. This questionnaire was set in accordance with Regulation 882/2004. This included an evaluation of the consequences and effects that such new tariffs could generate both at administrative level and also at production level.

New Legislation

A number of pieces of new EU legislation had to be assessed and comments were given to the Ministry and our Permanent Representation in Brussels. The main legislation assessed concerned ABP, marketing of meat and animal welfare. All the national legislation applied in other Member States is already being evaluated in accordance with EU rules, and feedback is being given to the EU Commission on these issues. With regard to local legislation, a regulation regarding rabbit slaughter was drafted jointly with the Department of Environmental Health.

Training

Two training sessions were held for the butcher trainees of the civil abattoir.

BORDER INSPECTION POSTS

All live animals (excluding pet dogs, cats and ferrets, which follow the requisites of the Pet Travel Scheme), as well as products of animal origin (for human consumption, for animal consumption, for other purposes other than human or animal consumption) originating from Third Countries are subject to veterinary checks, which are carried out at a Border Inspection Post (BIP) approved by the European Union. Malta has three Border Inspection Posts where veterinary checks may be carried out: Malta International Freeport BIP, for products of animal origin; Malta International Airport BIP, for products of animal origin and for live animals; and Malta Grand Harbour BIP, for live animals (the premises permit direct access to the facility from the ship unloading areas of the port).

Introduction of TRACES

After the introduction of the TRACES online system for filling in of part one of the CVED by importers and couriers since July 2007, BIPs have registered a substantial amount of positive feedbacks both from local users and importers.

The system has eased the releasing of consignments at the BIPs and is now more efficient. In this respect, an online system has been introduced at each loading dock at both the Freeport and Airport BIP so that as soon as inspection is carried out, consignments are released electronically.

Data Warehouse

The following tables indicate the figures related to the importation of live animals and products of animal origin at the Malta International Airport BIP, as well as those related to the importation of products of animal origin at the Malta Freeport BIP during 2008. No consignments of live animals were received at the Grand Harbour BIP during this period.

Malta International Airport Border Inspection Post			
2008			
	<i>Total No. ⁽¹⁾</i>	<i>Rejected ⁽²⁾</i>	<i>Lab Tests ⁽³⁾</i>
HC-total	247	1	-
Ambient T°	1	-	-
Chilled	246	1	-
Frozen	-	-	-
NHC-total	-	-	-
Ambient T°	-	-	-
Chilled	-	-	-
Frozen	-	-	-
Total Products	247	1	-
U	-	-	-
E	-	-	-
O	181	-	-
Total Live Animals	181	-	-

⁽¹⁾ The number of consignments of products of animal origin fit for human consumption (HC), products of animal origin not fit for human consumption (NHC) with separation into the number of consignments without low temperature requirements and frozen/chilled consignments; the number of consignments of live animals for each category (ungulates, registered equidae and other animals).

⁽²⁾ For each category, the number of rejected consignments

⁽³⁾ For each category, the number of laboratory tests carried out.

Malta Freeport Border Inspection Post			
2008			
	<i>Total No. ⁽¹⁾</i>	<i>Rejected ⁽²⁾</i>	<i>Lab Tests ⁽³⁾</i>
HC-total	443	2	21
Ambient T°	179	1	9
Chilled	18	-	-
Frozen	246	1	12
NHC-total	47	-	-
Ambient T°	29	-	-
Chilled	-	-	-
Frozen	18	-	-
Total Products	490	2	21
U	-	-	-
E	-	-	-
O	-	-	-
Total Live Animals	-	-	-

⁽¹⁾ The number of consignments of products of animal origin fit for human consumption (HC), products of animal origin not fit for human consumption (NHC) with separation into the number of consignments without low temperature requirements and frozen/chilled consignments; the number of consignments of live animals for each category (ungulates, registered equidae and other animals).

⁽²⁾ For each category, the number of rejected consignments.

⁽³⁾ For each category, the number of laboratory tests carried out.

Amount of fees collected from these inspections amounted to €108,397.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Ruminants Section

- During 2008, the Ruminants Section carried out the ongoing ruminant disease surveillance schemes for tuberculosis, brucellosis and bovine leucosis.
- Census inspections were carried out on dairy and non-dairy ruminant farms in accordance with EU legislation regarding identification and registration and premium schemes.
- The tagging and retagging of bovines and small ruminants is carried out by Veterinary Support Officers in this department.
- The national database was further upgraded and data inputted on a daily basis. The database has been recognised as fully operational and is utilised in the calculation of premium subsidies. The database is also necessary for the issuing of computerised movement permits for bovines.
- Co-ordinates of all ruminant holdings have been taken throughout the year. These are being inputted into the National Livestock Database so as to be recognised as fully operational for sheep and goats. This exempts Malta from using herd registers for small ruminants.

Dairy Farms

A total of 105 dairy premises in Malta (127 including the dormant premises) and 45 dairy premises in Gozo (50 including the dormant premises) were registered with the Veterinary Regulation and Fisheries Conservation & Control during 2008. 108 farms in Malta and 60 farms in Gozo were tested for tuberculosis, and 116 farms in Malta and 63 farms in Gozo were tested for brucellosis.

Testing on dairy farms - 2008					
	Tuberculosis		Brucellosis		
	Bovines	Caprines	Bovines	Caprines	Ovines
Malta	7,816	587	7,246	1,417	478
Gozo	6,098	-	6,099	50	10
Total	13,914	587	13,245	1,467	488

Tuberculosis reactors

Five bovines gave a dubious result to the intradermal comparative skin test for tuberculosis. These bovines were re-tested after eight weeks and resulted negative. One bovine gave a dubious result; the bovine was slaughtered and samples sent to the laboratory of Weybridge where results proved negative.

Tuberculosis reactors on dairy farms -2008			
	Total Bovines Tested	Dubious Result	Positive Result
Malta	7,815	6	-
Gozo	6,098	-	-

Brucella reactors

Six bovines in Malta (one on slaughter line) and 6 bovines in Gozo (one on slaughter line) gave a positive result to the Rose Bengal test (RBT). The animals were retested after about three weeks with the RBT and the blood sampled was also tested with the Complement Fixation confirmatory test (CFT).

One bovine gave a positive result to the CFT and it was slaughtered. The bovines resulting positive on slaughter line gave also positive results to the CFT.

Brucella reactors on dairy farms		
<i>Species</i>	<i>RBT Reactors</i>	<i>CFT Reactors</i>
Bovine	12	3
Caprine	-	-
Ovine	-	-
Total	12	3

Calf Identification Scheme

Tagging of bovines according to the relevant EU legislation continued during 2008. All bovines are double ear-tagged using a unique identification number which has to accompany the animal throughout its entire lifetime thus ensuring the “farm to fork” traceability concept. All MDP Farms are visited on a fortnightly basis, or under request by the farmer, in order to double-tag all newborn calves. The number of animals tagged on bovine holdings (dairy + non-dairy) in Malta and Gozo during 2008 was 4,826.

When a bovine or a small ruminant loses one of its ear tags, it must be retagged using the same ear tag number, so as to ensure its traceability. Ear tag losses are reported by farmers to this department and tags bearing the same numbers are reordered from the supplier. The number of re-tags carried out on dairy and non-dairy holdings is shown in the table below:

Re-tagging of bovines in Malta and Gozo - 2008			
	<i>Dairy</i>	<i>Non-dairy</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	1,415	116	1,531
Gozo	730	4	734

Retags for the small ruminants carried out in 2008 are shown in the following table:

Re-tagging of small ruminants in Malta and Gozo - 2008			
	<i>Caprines</i>	<i>Ovines</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	33	94	127
Gozo	17	121	138

Population on Dairy Units

The animal population on dairy farms in Malta and Gozo during 2008 is as shown in the tables below:

Bovine dairy farm population							
	M1	M2	M3	F1	F2	F3	Total
Malta	918	686	252	1,489	1,615	4,979	9,939
Gozo	561	573	109	791	911	2,720	5,665
Total	1,479	1,259	361	2,280	2,526	7,699	15,604

- M1: Male bovines under one year
M2: Male bovines between one and two years
M3: Male bovines over two years
F1: Female bovines under one year
F2: Female bovines between one and two years
F3: Female bovines over two years

Caprine dairy farm population				
	<i>Kids</i>	<i>Billy Goats</i>	<i>Goats</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	315	47	894	1,256
Gozo	14	2	46	62
Total	329	49	940	1,318

Ovine dairy farm population				
	<i>Lambs</i>	<i>Rams</i>	<i>Ewes</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	105	14	291	410
Gozo	3	2	12	17
Total	108	16	303	427

Non-dairy farms

Non-dairy farms, which also include the registered cheeselet producers, hold the majority of sheep and goats present on the Maltese islands. These holdings are registered on the national database (InterTrace®) as ruminant farms. These holdings are subdivided into two categories, farms rearing only sheep and/or goats (RUM) and farms that rear also bovines (mostly bulls) for fattening and slaughter (RUM-B).

A total of 1,835 non-dairy farms were registered during 2008 (2,965 including dormant premises), and these are subdivided as per table below:

	<i>RUM</i>	<i>RUM-B</i>	<i>Total</i>
Malta	1,906	191	2,097
Gozo	857	11	868
Total	2,763	202	2,965

Brucellosis testing on non-dairy farms - 2008			
	<i>Bovines</i>	<i>Caprines</i>	<i>Ovines</i>
Malta	815	4,268	10,403
Gozo	7	808	3,123
Total	822	5,076	13,526

Eight sheep and eight goats in Malta and six sheep in Gozo gave a positive reaction to the RBT. From these positive animals, five goats and three sheep gave a positive reaction to the CFT and were slaughtered.

Brucella reactors on non-dairy farms		
<i>Species</i>	<i>RBT Reactors</i>	<i>CFT Reactors</i>
Bovine	-	-
Caprine	8	5
Ovine	14	3
Total	22	8

Population on non Dairy Units

An estimate of the animal population on non-dairy farms in Malta and Gozo 2008 is shown below:

Bovine non-dairy farm population							
	<i>M1</i>	<i>M2</i>	<i>M3</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	Total
Malta	545	564	248	87	113	236	1,793
Gozo	19	13	3	2	5	9	51
Total	564	577	251	89	118	245	1,844

Caprine non-dairy farm population				
	<i>Kids</i>	<i>Billy Goats</i>	<i>Goats</i>	Total
Malta	792	309	2,744	3,845
Gozo	183	65	991	1,239
Total	975	374	3,735	5,084

Ovine non-dairy farm population				
	<i>Lambs</i>	<i>Rams</i>	<i>Ewes</i>	Total
Malta	2,033	356	5,963	8,352
Gozo	799	152	3,212	4,163
Total	2,832	508	9,175	12,515

Ovine and Caprine Identification Scheme

In line with EU Regulation No. 21/2004, all sheep and goats must be identified by means of a pair of ear tags. The exercise of inputting identification numbers into the livestock national database system was continued in 2008.

Ear tagging of ovines and caprines in Malta and Gozo (dairy and non-dairy)		
Ovines	Caprines	Total
3,391	1,407	4,798

Poultry Section

The Poultry Section has an active role in enforcing regulations covering the poultry industry in Malta. The data below shows the amount of imported hatching eggs, live poultry and sales of chicks throughout 2008:

Imports (Hatching Eggs)			
	Top layer	Best quality	Others
Broilers	2,289,400	1,646,110	-
Layers	70,760	27,360	-
Imports (Live Poultry)			
	Top layer	Best quality	Others
Day-old (Br)	-	-	-
Day-old (La)	42,950	-	36,570
Layers / Pullets	39,573	-	-
Day old turkeys 3,800			
Imports (Hatching Eggs)			
	Top layer	Best quality	Others
Day-old (Br)	2,006,837	1,240,104	-
Day-old (La)	106,276	9,677	-
Layers / Pullets	39,573	-	-

Swine Section

Tattooing during 2008 amounted to 105,318. This resulted in a decrease of 10.77% over the previous year. Mortality stands at around 11.95% of all swine tattooed.

Pig Movements and Tattooing in Malta and Gozo				
	Issue Gilts	Issue Boars	Piglets Tattooed	Trans of Fatt. *
Tattooing Malta	1,766	205	99,597	476
Tattooing Gozo	147	8	5,721	n/a
Total	1,913	213	105,318	476

* sale of weaners from KIM to Breed/Fatteners

The balance of boars as at end 2008 was 402 whilst the balance of sows was 6,530.

Enforcement Animal Health

- *Court Cases Re. Illegal Farms:* The official responsible for this section attended eight court sittings in connection with four different cases. Seven farms resulted to be illegal and action is to be taken in due time.
- *Census on Bovine/Caprine/Ovine Farms:* This section analyses all censuses carried out on bovine, ovine and caprine farms. 165 censuses were carried out, of which 68 were found without discrepancies while the rest showed a number of discrepancies. 64 farms were issued with a warning letter whilst the rest were served an administrative penalty. Other types of discrepancies that were noted during slaughter time, re-ordering of tags and during the tagging system resulted in 25 letters of penalties and 20 warning letters.
- *Update of the national livestock database:* A circular was sent to 51 farms that were declared dormant by our field workers, but appeared otherwise in the database. An investigation was done on all farms and an official declaration was requested according to the findings.

- *Slaughter Records*: All slaughtering of bovine animals was registered in the database. All documentation is registered according to the kill number, document number, ear tag number and weight. This amounts to 5,511 records.
- *Ordering of Re-Tags*: This section received 3,142 applications for re-tags on bovine, ovine and caprine. All tags were ordered and distributed accordingly.
- *Herd books*: 42 farmers requested the help of this section to update their herd book. All requests were dealt with and all herd books were updated.

NATIONAL VETERINARY LABORATORY

Introduction

The Food Health and Diagnostics Laboratory is responsible for ongoing testing of samples derived from animals under screening programmes to monitor and control disease in the local livestock and poultry population.

The laboratory also receives samples, which are partly tested in-house and partly subcontracted to accredited EC labs for the necessary analysis. This monitors farm animals to safeguard animal health at farm level and their products on the market.

Testing also extends to the post slaughter stage. Carcasses are tested for substances like antimicrobials, as well as microbiologically for quality control levels. Such and other measures are practiced with the aim to ensure the release of safe food on the market.

The details of testing activities carried out during the twelve months covered by the report are given for each analytical section of the lab accordingly.

Serology Section

Brucella Testing 2008

Rose Bengal Test/Complement Fixation Test - Results for 2008					
RBT Results	Total RBT	Total CFT	RBT + / CFT -	RBT + / CFT +	RBT - / CFT +
Total	37,479	96	21	10	Nil

Brucella Milk Ring Test

The Food Health and Diagnostics Laboratory tested milk from dairy farms for brucellosis. Milk from individual farm bulk milk tanks was sampled and tested by the Milk Ring Test. A total of 270 tests in Malta and 40 tests in Gozo were conducted on such bulk tank samples. No reaction to brucellosis resulted from the samples tested.

Disease Surveillance Plan

The objectives of the disease surveillance programme are to achieve harmonisation with other EU countries in veterinary controls and surveillance programmes; to strengthen veterinary epidemiological surveillance measures, in accordance to EU legislation (64/432/EC, 93/24/EC); and to achieve a disease-free status.

Enzootic Bovine Leucosis

MDP registered farms were screened for Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL) according to EU legislation, to map their degree of incidence of the BLV virus.

Sampling was performed both simultaneously with the bleeding for brucellosis screening as well as specifically for EBL. This was done in order to reach more herds in a shorter time, thus minimising the spread of the disease within and between farms. This phase of the survey is aimed at identifying the individual infected animals in the infected herds defined in the initial phase of bulk testing.

During the year, 6,424 serum samples were tested in Malta and Gozo for EBL using the ELISA technique.

Blue Tongue

During the year, 374 serum samples were tested for blue tongue using the ELISA technique. No clinical cases of the virus were reported from animals on farm. All samples tested resulted negative to BTV during 2008. In September, the laboratory participated in a BTV Ring trial led by the Institute for Animal Health, Pirbright. Ten serum samples were analysed, and the results obtained and submitted to IAH earned our lab yet a further good mark for proficiency.

Avian Influenza

In January, 276 sera from local poultry farms were tested for avian influenza by IDEXX ELISA, according to legislative requirement 92/40EC. No Avian Influenza virus resulted from the analysed samples.

BSE Rapid Testing

Table BSE01 - Testing

BSE Rapid Testing									
<i>BS</i>	<i>BE</i>	<i>BF</i>	<i>CS</i>	<i>CE</i>	<i>CF</i>	<i>OS</i>	<i>OE</i>	<i>OF</i>	Total
2,308	67	52	15	-	34	38	1	41	2,556

B-bovine / O-ovine / C-caprine / S-slaughter / E-emergency / F-fallen

Table BSE2 – Comparison on Bovine species

	2007	2008
Health Slaughter	2,288	2,114
Emergency	174	55
Fallen	194	49

Table BSE03 – Comparison on Caprine species

	2007	2008
Health Slaughter	-	8
Emergency	-	-
Fallen	171	26

Table BSE04 – Comparison on Ovine species

	2007	2008
Health Slaughter	22	38
Emergency	5	1
Fallen	154	42

All samples tested for BSE resulted negative.

BSE Ring Trial

The TSE laboratory has for the fifth consecutive year successfully participated in Ring Tests organised by the European Community. This year two sets of samples were received; one set covered BSE in bovines, which was tested in November; and the other covering Scrapies in ovines and caprines, which was tested in December. Once more, the BSE and Scrapies Ring trials' results certified the proficiency of the FHDD Laboratory facilities and personnel.

Parasitology

Faecal Parasites Tests

Total	Species					Findings					
	Pigeons	Goats	Rabbits	Poultry	Song Birds	Cocci+	Cocci++	Cocci+++	Worms	Mites	Neg.
15	9	3	2	-	1	3	6	-	4	3	3

Note: Discrepancies in numbers arise in cases where different species of parasites are observed in the same sample.

Trichomonas (in racing pigeons)

Trichomonas (in racing pigeons)		
	Positive	Negative
Total	6	7

Chemistry/Residue Analysis

Analysis of sulfonamides (using Thin-Layer Chromatography)

During 2008, the following samples were screened for sulfonamide residues:

- *National plan*: 150 samples (including 16 poultry muscle, two bovine muscle, two bovine kidney, two swine muscle, two swine kidney, 39 poultry eggs, three rabbit muscle, 80 bovine milk and four ovine/caprine milk)
- *Imported products*: two samples (including one corned beef and one lamb muscle)
- *Survey*: 12 bovine kidney samples.
- *Suspect*: five egg samples (from SPT analysis).

All samples were found to be compliant.

Analysis of veterinary drug residues and contaminants at the VRFCC (Chemistry) Laboratory

Substances analysed	Number of samples analysed	
	National Plan 2008	Imported Products 2008
Sulphonamides (screening by TLC)	16 poultry muscle 2 bovine muscle 2 bovine kidney 2 swine muscle 2 swine kidney 3 rabbit muscle 39 poultry eggs 80 bovine milk 4 ovine/caprine milk	1 corned beef 1 lamb muscle

Substances analysed	Number of samples analysed	
	Survey 2007 ⁽¹⁾	Suspects 2007 ⁽¹⁾
Sulphonamides (screening by TLC)	12 bovine kidneys	5 poultry eggs (from SPT analysis)

⁽¹⁾ Suspect/Survey 2007: indicates samples collected during 2007 and analysed during the first months of 2008.

All samples analysed for the above-mentioned substances contained residues below the respective maximum residue limits (MRLs).

Bacteriology

Quality Control – Civil Abattoir Slaughter Houses

The equipment and other surfaces of the Civil Abattoir Slaughter houses were monitored for hygiene levels on a weekly basis, according to method 2001/147/CEE. Contact plates were used to sample surfaces which are important to ensure that marketable carcasses are free from contaminations. The sampling and analysis conducted covered total bacterial count (TBC) and coliforms.

Civil Abattoir Slaughter Houses – Hygiene Q.C.			
<i>Bovine Slaughterhouse samples/tests</i>		<i>Porcine Slaughterhouse samples/tests</i>	
<i>Total Count</i>	<i>Total Coliforms</i>	<i>Total Count</i>	<i>Total Coliforms</i>
100	95	105	100

Microbiology of Suspect (slaughter) samples

Samples			
<i>Muscle samples Bovine slaughter</i>	<i>Muscle samples Porcine slaughter</i>	<i>Equine</i>	<i>Others</i>
62	124	49	2

Meat Quality on random carcasses from the Civil Abattoir slaughter houses was also monitored by the FHDD laboratory on a weekly basis. As with Hygiene QC, random meat samples were sampled and tested for TBC as well as coliforms.

Civil Abattoir Meat QC Tests			
<i>Bovine Slaughterhouse samples/tests</i>		<i>Porcine Slaughterhouse samples/tests</i>	
<i>Total Count</i>	<i>Total Coliforms</i>	<i>Total Count</i>	<i>Total Coliforms</i>
93	93	40	40

Antibiotic Residues

Several animal product matrices were tested for antibiotic residues. The samples came from different sources, including the Civil Abattoir emergency slaughter house, BIPs, poultry and fish farms.

Samples for Antibiotic Residues - 2008	
	No.
Porcine - suspect	387
Porcine - National Plan	-
Bovine - suspect	78
Bovine - National Plan	-
Milk - Bovine - suspect	4
Milk – Bovine - National Plan	-
Milk- Caprine - National Plan	-
Ovine - suspect	1
Equine - suspect	55
Equine - National Plan	-
Poultry - National Plan	1
Poultry - suspect	-
Poultry Feeds	3
Poultry Eggs - National Plan	-
Fish - National Plan	-
Fish - Survey	-
Fish Feeds	-
BIPs	1 chicken; 1 lamb
Equine - survey	2

Training/Duty Visits Abroad

Food Health and Diagnostics Laboratory personnel attended a CRL-ISS meeting on proficiency tests in Rome on 17 October; and a CRL workshop of EU-CRL/NRLs on technical and statistical issues in Berlin on 3-6 June. Further to analytical and administrative work, laboratory personnel also covered duties abroad, particularly participating in EU related workshops, seminars, conferences, standing committee meetings.

VETERINARY MEDICINALS UNIT

- During 2008, the Unit monitored centralised procedures at EU level for 28 centrally authorised veterinary products.
- Inspections of two feed establishments were carried out in September and December 2008.
- Quality, safety, efficacy and administrative documents were reviewed and concluded for 83 veterinary medicinal products. Liaison, discussion and consultation with officers at EMEA (London) regarding ongoing procedures *vis-à-vis* product registration, labelling and product safety alerts is carried on a daily basis.

FISHERIES

Control Section

- Preparation and submission of the Control Programme
- Preparation and submission of the Serious Infringement Reports.
- Preparation and submission of the Intermediate Report of Control Programme.
- Preparation and submission of Annual Report for Control Programme.
- Malta's Report on the financial scheme for the period of 2004.
- Identification and registration of 7 Designated Ports for 2008. Issued tender and drafted contracts for the Landing Officers to be present during the landings of bluefin tuna swordfish and trawled fish.
- Preparation and transmission of the list of trawlers authorised to fish within Malta's 25 nautical mile management zone, and holding a special fishing permit in accordance with Article 7 of Council Regulation (EC) 1627/94.
- Preparation and submission of Malta's information on incidental catches of cetaceans in fisheries in line with Council Regulation 812/2004.
- Preparation of Call of Interests and drafted contracts for Harvesting Officers and Caging Officers.
- Issuing Government Notice on interest to fish for *lampuki* in April, receipt of applications in May and allocation of individual sites in May. *Lampuki* season started on the 16th August and continued till the end of the year.
- Daily measurements of fish for minimum sizes in Designated Ports and at the fishmarket. Any fish below the minimum size immediately confiscated.
- Implementation of the swordfish closed season between the 15th October and the 15th November.

Bluefin tuna section (in line with Council Regulation 1559/2007)

- A management plan was submitted to the European Commission in view of control of allocated quota.
- Participation and Co-ordination of the Joint Deployment Plan for Bluefin Tuna with other Member States and with AFM.
- Issue of tender for Landing officers, Caging Officers and Observers during harvests.
- Co-ordination with Civil Aviation to prohibit spotter planes (LN122/2002).
- Organised seminar for VRFCC and AFM officers to explain BFT Recovery Plan for 2008.
- Organised seminars with Fisher's Co-operatives to explain BFT Recovery Plan for 2008.
- Issuing of a specific BFT licence to each fisherman with the obligation to report before entry into port and record catches on logbook.
- Issuing of Bluefin Tuna Catch Documents (BCD) to each fisher to be filled upon each catch of bluefin tuna so that the bluefin tuna catch documents accompany the fish from the catch to the final destination.

- Continuous transmission of VMS of all vessels involved in BFT fishing and activities to EU.
- Registering of fishing vessels with EU and ICCAT and placed on ICCAT website.
- Data of catches recorded daily from Landing Officers, Sales Vouchers and Catch Logbooks and submitted to EU for real time monitoring of quota.
- Registration of tuna farms with EU and ICCAT and placed on ICCAT website together with list of fishing vessels, farm vessels and joint fishing operations.
- Advising each farm regarding each catch of fish so that prior to transfer of bluefin tuna into cages, authorisation is received from the flag state of the fishing vessel and registration of bluefin tuna takes place with EU Commission.
- Submission of Caging Declaration to Flag State and EU Commission for authorisation.
- Bluefin tuna Catch Documents compiled after all the necessary crosschecks carried out.
- Co-ordination of VRFCC inspectors, EU inspectors and CFCA inspectors to carry out the necessary inspections.

EU Commission Inspector Visits

- 31 March - 4 April
- 15 -24 April
- 14 - 22 May
- 13 - 18 June
- 16 - 21 June
- 18 - 27 June
- 21 - 25 July

Community Fisheries Control Agency (CFCA) Inspector Visits

- 14 - 15 June French inspectors
- 1 - 4 July Greek inspector
- 25 - 29 August Spanish inspector
- 13 - 17 October French inspector
- 17 - 20 November Italian inspector
- 9 - 12 December Spanish inspector
- Controls of bluefin tuna transshipments taking place in designated ports.
- Preparation and submission of half-yearly reports of exports and re-exports of Bluefin tuna.

EU and External Relationships Section

The tasks covered by the EU Affairs Section include:

- drafting of instruction notes, briefing notes and speaking notes for all EU meetings in conjunction with fisheries;
- validation of the Maltese versions of documents when necessary;
- receipt of EU documents regarding fisheries and their dissemination;
- organising a conference meeting in Malta, on behalf of the European Economic and Social Committee, to discuss the Proposal on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing on 17-18 April;
- drafting answers to articles written in newspapers concerning fisheries, mainly bluefin tuna;
- co-ordination with external bodies such as ICCAT and the EU;
- assisting the Libyan delegation during the meetings held in Malta on 27-28 October, with regard to co-operation with the Maltese fisheries sector;
- continuous collaboration with NSO with regard to the publishing of data related to fisheries.

Meetings attended

- Expert Group Fisheries Control- Bluefin Tuna Debriefing the inspection programme on control at sea at on IUU vessel, Ispra, 28 January
- Joint Deployment Plan BFT 2008, Ispra, 29-30 January
- Meeting of the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture/Committee on Structures/Expert Group Fisheries Control, Brussels, 1 February
- Expert Group Meeting – The Implementation of the BFT recovery plan, Athens, 20-22 February
- GFCM 32nd Session Meeting, Rome 25-29 February
- Meeting on the Joint Deployment Plan BFT 2008, Brussels, 26-27 February
- Bilateral Meeting on operational monitoring of Bluefin Tuna Fishery, Brussels, 27 February
- ICCAT Preparation of the Meeting of the Managers and Stakeholders of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, Brussels, 18 March.
- ICCAT Meeting of Managers and Stakeholders of Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, Tokyo, 26-27 March.
- AgriFish Council, Luxembourg, 13-14 April
- Meeting on the Joint Deployment Plan BFT 2008, Brussels, 18 April
- Meeting of the Expert Group Fisheries Control - Working Group on Inspection Procedures, Brussels, 3 June
- Technical Consultations to draft a legally binding instrument on port state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, Rome 23 June
- Director Generals' Informal Meeting, Slovenia, 26-28 June
- Meeting of the Committee for Fishery Products, Brussels, 22 October
- BFT Steering Group Meeting, Brussels, 27 October
- Meeting of the Committee for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Brussels, 28 October
- Working group meeting on the harmonisation of inspection procedures, Brussels, 19 November
- Annual ICCAT meeting, Marrakech, Morocco 16-23 November
- Management Committee Meeting on Fishery Products, Brussels, 1 December
- Fisheries Control Expert Group Meeting on IUU, Brussels, 9 December

Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences (MCFS) – Capture Fisheries Section

Malta is obliged to conduct an annual National Fisheries Data Collection Programme (NFDCP), in line with the EU Data Collection Regulations (DCR) EC1639/2001 and EC1581/2004, amended by Council Regulation EC199/2008 followed by the Commission Decision 2008/949/EC. The programme contributes to a better knowledge of the main fishery resources of Malta from the biological, managerial, economical and social points of view. In this regard, three species are studied in detail: Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) and Dolphin fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*). The MCFS is also responsible for the development and maintenance of the databases and information systems of the NFDCP.

The Capture Fisheries Section represents Malta in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) through active participation in the activities of the GFCM Scientific Advisory Committee and its sub-committees on stock assessment, statistics and information, marine environment and ecosystems and socio-economics, as well as through participation, with observer status, in scientific meetings of the ICCAT and those of the EU.

Fisheries Monitoring and Research

Data Collection Regulation (EC1639/01, EC1581/04, EC199/08, EC949/08)

- *Fishing Capacities (Module C)*

All Maltese fishing vessels are registered in the Fishing Vessel Register of the Veterinary Regulation Fisheries Conservation & Control Division. The register is kept in a database which forms part of the MALTASTAT Information System. This database is correlated to other databases such as the ones

concerning landings. Apart from other information, the Fishing Vessel Register database includes the following information related to each vessel: typology; registration number; age (age of the hull); dimensions [GT, length, width, draught]; engine power, type and age; ownership; health and safety equipment. The information in the Vessels Register is updated daily.

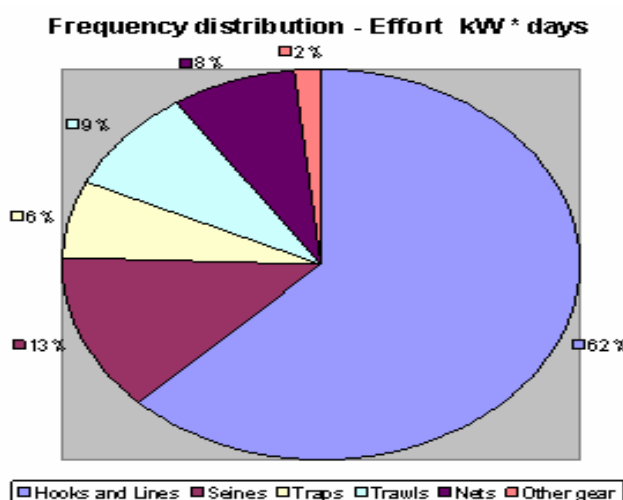
Based on information supplied in the MALTASTAT system, Malta segmented the fleet of vessels according to the sub division set out in Appendix III of Regulation EC1581/2004, at the requested precision level of the Regulation.

- *Fishing Effort (Module D)*

The required data have been collected and include all the information requested. Data on effort are available by: species; vessel (over 10 metres); day; geographic area - division (according to level 3 of geographical disaggregating defined in Appendix I of the regulations); duration of trips in fishing days; gear used. Data on fishing effort was aggregated as required in Appendix III, V, VI and VIII of the DCR (EC1581/2004).

Logbook and Sales voucher approach: By using information from logbooks, Malta collects data on commercial landings (both within and outside the country) and total catch, including landings (in value and weight) relating to the fleet of vessels over 12 metres. The Fish Market Sales Notes are also used to gather such data.

Small scale fishery (<10m) Port Sampling Approach: A specific sample survey is carried out to estimate effort and landings relating to artisanal fishery, < 10 metre fleet. Data is collected to estimate overall annual commercial landings by species. Landings by weight and value are estimated also by segment, by species, by quarter, and geographical origin of the catch. The population under study consists of all Maltese fishing vessels less than 10 metres during the survey reference period within each month. In 2008 the data for 2007 and previous years was analysed and the summary statistics are shown below.



- *Catches and Landing (Module E)*

The required data have been collected and include all the information requested. Data on commercial landings are available by: species; vessel (over 10 metres); day; geographic area - sub-area (according to level 2 of geographical disaggregation defined in Appendix I of the Regulation) or for stocks mentioned in Appendix XII in the DCR, commercial landings can be disaggregated as indicated in that Appendix; gear employed.

Data on commercial landings are aggregated by species, quarter and for every segment. With regard to the geographical origin of the catches, the data was aggregated at the level of geographical desegregation 2.

In 2008, the data for 2007 and previous years was analysed. During 2007, about 17,167 records on commercial landings were recorded. The distribution of catch by gears class shows that about 55 % of the catch in Malta is produced by the class “Hooks and Lines” as shown in the table below.

Market landings: % distribution of landed fish on weight basis	
<i>Gear</i>	<i>% of captured fish</i>
Hooks and lines	55%
Seines	34%
Trawls	7%
Traps	2%
Nets	1%
Other	1%

In 2007, about 704 tonnes of fish were landed. The most landed species in terms of weight were *Thunnus thynnus* (34%), *Coryphaena hippurus* (25%) and *Xiphias gladius* (19%). These species together constitute about 78 % of the total landed catch in 2007. The following table summarises the percentage distribution of landings by order through sales vouchers.

Landed catch by order through sales vouchers			
<i>Name</i>	<i>Species</i>	<i>Total Weight (Kg)</i>	<i>Distribution (%)</i>
Tonn	<i>Thunnus thynnus</i>	302,923	34.2
Lampuki	<i>Coryphaena hippuris</i>	222,978	25.2
Pixxispad	<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	170,980	19.3
Mazola	<i>Squalls Plainville</i>	15,893	1.8
Vopi	<i>Boops boops</i>	13,085	1.5
Skorfon	<i>Scorpaena scrofa</i>	12,209	1.4
Gambli homor	<i>Aristaeomorpha foliacea</i>	11,507	1.3
Ċeren	<i>Epinephelus spp.</i>	11,216	1.3
Ohrajn	Others	119,465	14.0
Total		880,256	100

Approximately, 163 tons of fish were landed by vessels less than 10 metres in length (small scale fishery) and were sold through the fish market in 2007. Most of the landings consisted of *Coryphaena hippurus* (32%), *Xiphias gladius* (20%), *Boops boops* (6%) and *Thunnus thynnus* (5%).

The following table shows the percentage distribution of gear classes as recorded during the 2007 interviews to estimate the catches. The class of “Nets” is the modal gear class, followed by “Hooks and Lines” and “Traps”.

% distribution of gear used to estimate total catches	
<i>Gear</i>	<i>% of captured fish</i>
Nets	44.8
Hooks and lines	36.1
Traps	16.4
Seines	2.5
Surrounding nets	0.2
Total	100

The following table shows the percentage distribution of species caught. The most common is *Octopus spp.*, followed by *Auxis thazard*, and *Sphyrna sphyraena*. It is evident most of the catch is distributed among a very high number of species.

Small scale fishery: % distribution of landed catch of the top ten species		
Name	Species	% of catch on weight basis
Qarnit	<i>Octopus</i> spp	8.9
Tumbrell	<i>Auxis thazard</i>	7.3
Lizz	<i>Sphyaena sphyaena</i>	6.1
Sicča	<i>Sepia officinalis</i>	5.1
Vopa	<i>Boops boops</i>	4.5
Skorfna	<i>Scorpaena porcus</i>	4.3
Plamtu	<i>Sarda sarda</i>	4.2
Lampuka	<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>	4.1
Morina	<i>Muraena helena</i>	3.8
Açcola	<i>Seriola dumerili</i>	2.9

- *Catch per unit Effort (Module F)*

Malta has collected data on catch and effort since 2005. A time series can now to be built for these parameters, both by species and by gear. The CPUE time series expressed in kg per day of fishing for the reference fleet is shown below:

CPUE series for the Maltese reference fleets					
Species	Area	Reference fleet	CPUE (kg/day)		
			2005	2006	2007
<i>Coryphaena hippurus</i>	GSA 15	FAD Fishery	487	515	288
<i>Thunnus thynnus</i>	GSA 15	Drifting longlines	450	377	277
<i>Xiphias gladius</i>	GSA 15	Drifting longlines	133	111	240

- *MEDITS trawl survey (Module G)*

As part of the Mediterranean International Bottom Trawl Survey, an annual summer sampling survey was carried out in the Geographical Sub-Area 15 (GSA15) which includes the Maltese 25 Nautical Mile Fisheries Management Zone. This survey is performed in order to collect data on abundance and biological aspects of 38 species of the priority MEDITS list, including fish, crustaceans and cephalopods.

Sampling was performed at 45 selected stations at a depth ranging from 45 - 800 m. The number of valid hauls was 45, with each trawl lasting for 30 or 60 minutes depending on the depth of the station being sampled. From each haul, the catch was sorted into the MEDITS reference species, the fish by-catch and the invertebrate by-catch. A minimum of 50 specimens from each of the 38 MEDITS reference species from each station were retained.

No. of individuals measured for length, weight, sex and maturity during the MEDITS survey	
Group	No. measured
Cephalopds (Octopus and Squids)	1,040
Crustaceans (Shrimps and Norway lobsters)	5,440
Fish including sharks and rays	7,281
Total	13,761

All MEDITS data collected were inputted, checked and validated using ATrIS software and the outputs transmitted and stored in the Regional MEDITS database. In order to maximise the survey, apart from MEDITS parameters defined by the protocol, stomach contents of all elasmobranchs caught were also collected and examined. Moreover, in all hauls, a miniature data logger recording both temperature and depth was installed on the head rope of the gear.

- *Length and Age sampling (Module H)*

Under the current DCR, Malta is obliged to report length and age data for three species: bluefin tuna, swordfish and dolphin fish. Bluefin tuna and swordfish were sampled at the landing ports, on board vessels and at the fish market by field recorders. Length measurements were carried out and spines were collected for age reading. Dolphin fish specimens were purchased and subsequently analysed at the laboratory where extraction of otoliths was carried out.

Malta has also been collecting length data from caged bluefin tuna (BFT) during harvest since 2006, including 2007 and 2008.

- *Other biological sampling (Module I)*

Malta collects data on growth, sex ratio and sexual maturity for the three species: bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*), swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) and dolphin fish (*Coryphaena hippurus*). All samples were collected from commercial catches as part of the market sampling programme. Bluefin tuna samples were also collected by observers on board during the tuna season. Dolphin fish samples were analysed in the laboratory for these parameters as well.

Data on bluefin tuna and swordfish length by sex were duly reported to ICCAT for their use in the respective stock assessment exercises. Data on pelagic sharks was also sent to ICCAT as requested.

- *Economic data by group of vessels*

The parameters which were evaluated in the economic situation of the fisheries sector were in line with Appendix XVII of the Regulation. The survey was designed in a similar way to other surveys prepared by other EU member states, but adapted to the local context.

The sampling frame for the national programme for the collection of economic data was based on the fishing vessel register information recorded in MALTASTAT and on catch logbooks. The Maltese fishing fleet totals 2,252 vessels, with 2,074 vessels having a length of less than 10m, and 178 vessels having a length of more than 10m. In 2008, 326 questionnaires were compiled through interviews.

- *Databases*

The integrated electronic database system for fisheries data MALTASTAT continued to be developed by the Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences through the support of local and external expertise. MALTASTAT is not limited to a series of databases referring to the Fishing Vessel Register and Catch and Effort Statistics, but also includes other software applications that are necessary for monitoring and management of fisheries and fisheries resources. It also addresses all commitments related to data submission which Malta must respect as an EU Member State and as a member of FAO, GFCM and ICCAT. Currently, the MALTASTAT set of databases cover a number of domains, some of which were specifically created in order to comply with the requirements of the Data Collection Regulation. All other existing databases have also been adapted to process and aggregate data according to DCR requirements.

Other databases developed outside the framework of MALTASTAT but which have been integrated into the system are: ATrIS (AdriMed Trawl Information System); database for trawl survey data (MEDITS); and the National Fisheries and Ecosystem Information System (FEIS)

- *Maps of Fishing Effort by Gear/Period utilizing VMS data*

Apart from being an instrument to monitor vessel activity, the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) was used to produce graphic representation of the spatial distribution of the different components of the fleet by period. The maps thus produced also give a good indication of fishing effort.

All fishing vessels with length (LOA) of 12 metres or over are fitted with VMS. To produce meaningful maps it was necessary to separate this data by type of gear/fishing being undertaken.

The data of trawlers was filtered and maps which clearly show the main trawled areas were obtained. With superimposition of the bathymetry, it was possible to identify the target species (i.e. shrimps/red mullet).

The rest of the VMS data had to be correlated to landing data so that trips utilizing different gears could be separated. Thus a map of the surface long-line fleet operating during the tuna season was produced.

The activity of the swordfish fleet (outside tuna season) was analysed by quarter. Activity during the last quarter (corresponding with the Lampuki season) was concentrated in the ‘swordfish corridor’.

There was only sufficient data to produce maps of bottom long-lining for the 1st and 3rd quarters.

The production of these maps has given scientists and managers a better idea of where fishing is in fact taking place.

MEDSUDMED (FAO Sub-Regional project)

“Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and the Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily”

This Italian-funded FAO project was launched at the end of 2001. Four countries participate in this project: Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia. The project aims to support scientific communities and countries to develop a monitoring system for the studies of fisheries resources and ecosystems. The main objectives of the Project are to increase the scientific knowledge of the ecosystems in the project area, strengthen national and regional expertise, and develop scientific co-operation in order to promote the standardisation of the methodologies used in fisheries research.

MEDSUDMED also finances two research survey programmes in Maltese waters: the Echosurveys (Ancheva and Juvenile) and the Ichthyoplankton survey. In November, officers from MCFS participated in a workshop on *Octopus vulgaris* stocks and related fisheries in the MedSudMed Project area held in Tunis.

Yelkouan Shearwater (EU-LIFE project)

The Yelkouan Shearwater Project is Malta’s largest conservation initiative. The main aim of the project is to protect the birds at the largest breeding site, Rdum tal-Madonna, in the North of Malta. The project will also improve this protected site for wildlife and visitors. The project aims to increase breeding pairs by the end of the project in 2010 and to set an example for the management of other protected sites in Malta. The project is 50% funded by the EU Life Nature Fund with contributions by MEPA and HSBC. In 2008, a number of reports and scientific publications were produced.

A project officer and a technical officer were again actively involved in work related to the EU-LIFE Yelkouan shearwater project. The preliminary data collected from a survey on seabird by catch, conducted by MCFS, was published in a paper. This paper was subsequently presented in Madrid during the ICCAT Intercessional meeting of the sub-committee on ecosystems, in March. The paper was also discussed in detail during ICES Workshop on Using Fishers to Sample Catches held in June in Copenhagen.

COPEMED II

The project CopeMed II is based on the results obtained in the first stage of CopeMed, and as such aims to reinforce scientific co-operation at sub-regional level. The long term objective of the project is environmental, economic and social sustainable management of the fishing activity, taking into account the biological aspects, of the marine fishing and its ecosystem.

An inception meeting of COPEMED II, held in Malaga, Spain in June 2008 was attended.

Participation in International Groups

During 2008, the MCFS participated in various international planning and working groups and scientific projects, in connection with the National Data Collection Programme, and meetings of the EU Scientific and Technical Economic Committee on Fisheries (STECF), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) as well as other meetings.

Data Submissions

In 2008, Malta submitted data collected within the framework of the EU DCR to the following international bodies: the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean

Education, Exhibitions and Marine Life Conservation

During 2008, the Education and Exhibitions section processed a steady demand for group visits from schools, cultural groups and other sectors such as Heritage Malta's Wignacourt trail, which visited the Centre on 15 June. A local company organised regular visits for groups of German students, whilst the Junior College included MCFS in the Systems of Knowledge Project list for their students. The section participated as partner in the EU-LIFE Yelkouan shearwater project and took part in the ICCAT sub-committee for ecosystems and ICES workshop on using fishers to sample catches.

The section co-ordinated studies carried out by two Masters students from UK universities who focused on fisheries bycatch related to bottom and surface longlines on board Maltese fishing vessels.

Educational Visits

Guided tours for school children from years 4 and 5 primary grades were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, whilst the permanent exhibition was open to the general public on Wednesday mornings till May 2008. In order to satisfy the general public, the exhibition was instead opened on Saturday mornings. The breakdown of the visits by category was as follows: primary school students (644); secondary school students (283); foreign visitors and students (109); general public (686) – a total of 1,722.

Exhibition stands

- The permanent exhibition comprised seven glass aquaria with various wild species of marine organisms and eight large hexagonal tanks holding cultured fish and wild fish such as moray eels, triggerfish, octopus and groupers.
- The section exhibited stands at the Research Expo at Bighi and the Aquaria fair at Razzett tal-Ħbiberija, Marsascula in October. On both occasions, staff from the Capture fisheries branch delivered presentations illustrating the scientific and educational work carried out at MCFS.
- The section participated with a stand at the Research EXPO 2008 held at the Malta Council for Science and Technology in November.

Educational Material, Media productions, etc.

- A number of posters were designed and printed to be used in fairs and exhibitions; two posters covered the Amberjack and SELFDOTT projects and others concerned the laboratory and MEDITS trawl survey.

- An educational poster on the bycatch of sea birds was designed and distributed to all fishing vessels of the ICCAT convention.
- Officers delivered presentations titled: (1) San Luċjan from a military fort to a scientific institute, (2) How do you age a fish for fisheries research? and (3) Reef aquaria – tracing the origins of popular fish and coral during the 2nd Aquarium fair at *Ir-Razzett tal-Ħbiberija* at Marsascalea in November.

Students

Several national and international tertiary education organisations seek to send students for traineeships at MCFS. In 2008 the following students participated in the activities of the Section as part of their studies:

- MSc student at the University of Malta – conducting her dissertation at MCFS titled *Aspects of the Ecology of three demersal elasmobranches, Scyliorhinus canicula, Galeus melastomus and Raja clavata in the Central Mediterranean*
- MPhil/PhD student at the University of Malta – conducted part of her dissertation *Biology, population dynamics and ecology of deep water cephalopods in the Maltese Islands* at MCFS
- MSc student from the University College London titled *An assessment of the bycatch impacts in the Maltese longline fishery*
- MSc student from the Centre for Wildlife and Conservation UK titled *An assessment of non-target bycatch in the Maltese blufin tuna (Thunnus thynnus) longline fishery: Environmental and spatiotemporal effects on bycatch CPUE*
- 5 visiting BSc students from the University of Malta for one month
- one visiting student from G F Abela Junior College for one month.

Aquaculture Water Quality Monitoring Program

For 2008 contracts were made to conduct the aquaculture water quality monitoring programme as approved by MEPA with the Malta Fish Farming (MFF), Azzopardi (AJD) and Pisciculture Marine Ltd (P2M) aquaculture operations.

During the year, water samples were collected and in-situ measurements were recorded including temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity and secchi disk depth. Lab analysis was performed for nitrates, phosphates and ammonia, chlorophyll a, total bacterial count and faecal bacterial count.

Apart from the usual analysis, a water quality manual including standard operating procedures, maps and fieldwork procedures was completely updated in 2008. This included new quality assurance procedures such as good laboratory practice (GLP), new water analysis data sheets and certificates of analysis.

Reports for the 2007 water quality programme were also compiled.

Fishing Vessel Register

Introduction

The Fishing Vessel Register office was relocated from Fort San Luċjan, Marsaxlokk to VRFCC, Abattoir Square, Marsa in March 2008.

The number of fishing vessels registered in the Maltese Fishing Vessel Register (FVR) as at the end of 2008 was 2,820 vessels, of which 14.5% were commercial full-time (MFA), 25.5% commercial part-time (MFB) vessels and 59.3% recreational vessels (MFC). The category of auxiliary vessels (work boats) used in fishing operations (MFD) was made up of 20 vessels.

The total gross tonnage (GT) and power [main engine only] for the full-time and part-time commercial vessels were 10,777.75 GT and 84,805.26kW respectively.

Adjustment of ceiling in the European Fleet Register

In the first Snapshot (1 September 2004) regulated by Commission Regulation (EC) No 26/2004 of 30 December 2003 on the Community Fishing Fleet Register, Malta had included all the vessels in the Fishing Vessel Register, including the recreational vessels.

The first meeting regarding the adjustment of ceiling was held on 20 December 2005 in Brussels between Head of Unit (Management of Fleets DG Fisheries & Maritime Affairs) and officials from the Fisheries Conservation and Control Division. At the meeting it was proposed that the way forward to correct the anomaly created by the removal of the recreational vessels would be to correct the original reference level to show the true state of affairs and back date this reference level to May 2004.

A final decision on the above issue was taken in November 2008. It was agreed that the snapshot of 1 June 2005 which reports the first stable position of the Maltese commercial fishing fleet (i.e. Capacity 15,241.61 GT and 98,224.48 kW) as the baseline be dated back to May 2004.

Opening of the Commercial Register Vessel Register

Maltese vessel owners who submitted a written request to register in the professional categories, between 1 October 2006 and 30 April 2008, were informed in writing that their request was accepted and were asked to confirm their registration by the 30 June 2008 by presenting Schedule 1 of SL 425.07. These requests were included in the FVR, replacing tonnage and engine power withdrawn from the Register.

Fleet Register Snapshot

The four annual fleet register snapshots uploaded on the first working day of March, June, September and December via FIDES – FRONT, in accordance to EC Reg No. 26/2004 on the Community Fishing Fleet Register, were all uploaded in time and a 0% error result was obtained in all cases.

Other issues

A number of meetings were held with Malta Maritime Authority officials in charge of the Small Ships Register (SSR) to harmonise the situation between both registers.

Two Standard Office Procedures (SOPs) on the registration of vessels in the FVR, namely one for the registration of professional vessels and the other for the registration of recreational or auxiliary vessels, were drafted. The principal objective of these SOPs is to provide Front Desk Officers, a step-by-step guide on the requirements, procedures and guidelines to register a new vessel in the Fishing Vessel Register. The scope is to have a standardised, accountable and efficient process in line with current legislation in the registering of vessels within the Fishing Vessel Register. These procedures are to come into force in 2009.

Fisheries Information System

A number of meetings were held with the Ministry's Chief Information Officer, MITTS officials and VR FCC officers from the various sections concerned to initiate the process to develop a uniform and holistic Fisheries Information System. MITTS officials carried out meetings with all sections concerned with the aim to study the requirements of each section and be able to present long-term ideas to reach a consolidated system throughout the Division. This study was presented to Division towards end 2008.

GOZO SECTION

Work done at Civil Abattoir in Gozo

- During this year the Gozo abattoir tender was re-evaluated. Recommendations were submitted to the Department of Contracts.
- Masonry work continued on the site assigned for the cutting and chilling rooms.
- Routine maintenance was performed on the incinerator by engine drivers.
- The weight in kilogramme of animals incinerated during 2008 was as follows:

Bovines	886
Ovines	566
Equines	14
Pigs	492
Others	44,574

Field Work

Testing for TB, Brucellosis & Leukosis

During the year, all dairy farms producing raw milk for human consumption were tested for TB, brucellosis and leukosis:

Herds	93
TB	6,310
Brucellosis	6,310
Leukosis	5,464

Sampling was also carried out for brucella testing of farms that produce milk for cheeselets or keep store cattle:

Units	523
Sheep	4,213
Goats	1,057

Tattooing of Pigs

No of tattoos (Born)	5,719
Death	905
Slaughtered	5,401

Inspections on Poultry farms

An officer is entrusted with the duty to visit all poultry farms prior to slaughtering. Faeces and eggs were sampled from layer farms and sent for respective laboratory analysis.

Imgarr Inspectorate

Prevention and precautionary measures were taken by the Mgarr Inspectorate especially with respect to vehicles coming over from Malta.

DR ANTHONY GRUPPETTA

Director General (Veterinary Regulations, Fisheries Conservation & Control)

Parks, Afforestation and Rural Conservation Unit

During the year, the Parks, Afforestation and Rural Conservation (PARC) Unit maintained its work momentum with particular attention to the establishment of the National Park at Salina. More than 15,000 trees, shrubs and plants, mainly indigenous and endemic species, were planted in 2008.

This work was complemented with an extensive infrastructure, including ground preparation, water management and irrigation systems. Effort was also addressed on the rural conservation aspect, with the construction of more than 1,000 m³ of rubble wall and the collection of tons of illegally dumped material from around the countryside.

Mellieha – Foresta 2000

The main concept of the Foresta 2000 is the recreation of tracts of Mediterranean woodland, in order to encourage biodiversity. Particular attention was given to the upgrading of access points leading to the site for use by the general public. The area is managed in collaboration with Birdlife, *Din l-Art Helwa* and the PARC Unit. The Unit, jointly and with the participation of Birdlife officials, was also responsible for the planting of trees, staking, watering and related tasks.

Throughout this year, the Unit continued with the task of terracing fields in Mellieha by repairing and constructing more than 700 m³ of rubble wall. Regular maintenance was carried out including grass cutting, tree trimming, disposal of illegally dumped material and litter picking. Tree guards were fixed around all newly planted trees, to protect them against vandalism and strong winds, and appropriate signs and notices were installed.

Salina National Park

Works at Salina National Park were completed as planned and the park was officially inaugurated on 2 March 2008. The upper part of the Salina National Park incorporates a naturally turfed area with an open fountain and a building on the back that is expected to serve as a cafeteria. An artificial water stream was constructed that leads from the turfed area to one of the entrances of the park. More fields were developed at the park, levelled and landscaped as more tree planting sessions took place under the 34U campaign. More than 200 m³ of rubble wall were erected, which even serve to define different terraces of planted areas. An informal walkway was developed linking the new project to the afforestation site and the old part of Kennedy Grove.

Ta' Qali

Adventure Park

The third phase of Ta' Qali National Park project, already underway in 2008, aims to convert a section of the old Ta' Qali runway into an all-year-round adventure and leisure facility for all age groups. The site is located on a north west section of the old Ta' Qali runway and overlooking a picnic area on the south west side of the site. The project will convert a tarmac open space, loosely used for parking, into a more useful and attractive landscaped zone.

The project is spread out on a section of the runway, 360 metres long by 44 metres wide, covering an area of 15,840 m². The site will house a central amenity building facility at its centre and will be further divided into two sections. Project works will focus on four areas: an Amenity building, a Children's area, an Adults' area, and road works. The amenity building will be located at the centre of the project site, consisting of a one-storey building, and will provide the general public with amenities such as public conveniences, catering facilities, a covered seated area and a security room. The children's area will be located at the east side of the amenity building and will include play equipment for children, a water stream, five water features, footpaths, an accessible landscaped area and an access road. The concept behind the children's area is to create a centre of adventure and leisure for children of all ages and to develop a number of play activity centres within. Various water features spread along the area will provide interactive water enjoyment.

The Adult area is to be located on the west side of the amenity building and will comprise an entrance gate, footpaths and adult play equipment. The area will incorporate a number of adult adventure nodes that will provide interaction and adventure for the young at heart, such as high/tight rope, climbing towers and hanging slings.

Picnic Area

During 2008, the picnic area situated along the ex-runway at Ta' Qali was further embellished with the setting up of various tree clusters and picnic tables that complement the already existing ones. In all, a total of 85 trees were planted while 15 picnic tables were fixed on site near the said trees. Most of the trees planted were Aleppo pine, Oak, Olive, Carob and Cypress trees and were so planted under the 34U campaign.

Other decorative trees, namely Ficus trees, which were previously planted in front of the older formal garden entrance, were transferred to this area and successfully re-planted in the picnic area. Regular grass-cutting, trimming, watering and other gardening activities were likewise performed during the dry summer season.

Regular general clean-ups were also carried out - particularly on Monday mornings, following visits by large crowds to the recreational area during weekends.

Recreational Mall

The area along the ex-runway, including areas such as the traffic islands, roundabouts and pavements, is maintained on a regular basis. Works include clearing of litter, grass cutting and mowing, replacing dead trees and so on. Regular maintenance includes ploughing, tree trimming, grass cutting and servicing of the garden infrastructure.

Xrobb l-Ghagin Nature Park

Work at Xrobb l-Ghagin continued with the planting and staking of over 4,000 trees and shrubs, and general maintenance of the area. Works included watering, grass cutting and rotary cultivating. During 2008, works commenced on the restructuring and repair on the ex-Deutsche Welle building. The building will house a research area, laboratories and will host students studying on marine environment. The whole project is being carried out in collaboration with Nature Trust.

Ghajn Tuffieha

The Scouts area at Ghajn Tuffieha was earmarked for the holding of a National Tree Planting weekend. Preparatory works, which included removal of non-indigenous trees and preparation of holes, commenced in October.

During the tree planting weekend, which was held on 14 and 15 November, more than 3,000 trees and shrubs were planted under the 34U campaign.

Other Sites

Various other sites were regularly maintained. Works included rubble wall-building/restoration, tree trimming, grass-cutting/de-weeding, litter-picking, manufacturing/installation of new garden furniture, cleaning of reservoirs, installation of drip irrigation systems and planting of trees, shrubs and plants.

Sites included: Fiddien Dingli, Chadwick Lakes, Buskett, Wied Mejxi – Swieqi, Wied Ghomor, Pinetum – Pieta`, Sta Margerita Lines – Birgu, Fawwara – including the renovation of an ex-school for CHEER Research Centre.

Drum Collection

Steel drums and items discarded in the countryside were collected and removed during 2008. Steel drums, white goods, derelict vehicles and other scrap metal that were either dumped illegally or used as dividing walls in the countryside were removed. Most of the items had to be handled manually because of poor access to sites and to avoid damage to crops in sown fields. The Department was assisted by MEPA Enforcement Officers who traced the fields to their owners. More than 45 tons of material collected from Binġemma, Żebbiegħ, Mgarr, Sigġiewi, Birzebbuga, Lija, Balzan, Attard were transported to be shredded and exported as recycled steel.

DR CHRISTOPHER CIANTAR
Permanent Secretary MRRA

Plant Health Department

PLANT HEALTH LABORATORIES

Diagnostic and Control Laboratories

The overall responsibilities of the Diagnostic Laboratories of the Plant Health Department consist of the detection and identification of plant diseases caused by plant pests and pathogens with special reference to Council Directive 2000/29/EC and the Plant Quarantine Act 2001 (Act No. XVIII of 2001). Diagnostic techniques implemented by the laboratories are in accordance with EPPO standards. The Diagnostic Laboratories supply the Diagnosis and Control Unit (DCU) with results on tests for the various annual surveys conducted. Tests/diagnosis are also carried out on samples collected during inspections carried out by the Surveillance and Inspectorate Unit (SIU).

Plant Pathology (Mycology) Laboratory

In 2008, the number of samples examined totalled 30, while the number of tests performed amounted to 13. Mycology testing included analysis of imported grain samples for the presence of *Tilletia indica* and testing of suspect samples in conjunction with *Phytophthora ramorum* survey, and the *Gibberella circinata* survey carried out by DCU.

Virology Laboratory

In 2008, the number of samples examined by the virology lab totalled 2,307, the number of tests amounted to 3,352. Tests were performed in conjunction to the annual surveys for CTV, PepMV, PSTVd, and PPV, TSWV, TYLCV and certification viruses carried out by the DCU.

Bacteriology Laboratory

The number of samples examined in 2008 was 227, the number of tests performed was 346. Tests were performed on samples in conjunction with the surveys for quarantine bacterial diseases and monitoring at SVDP for quality diseases carried out by the DCU.

Entomology Laboratory

A total of 51 laboratory tests/diagnosis were performed on entomological material in conjunction with the annual surveys for quarantine insect pests carried out by the DCU/SIU and samples brought to the lab by growers.

Nematology Laboratory

A total of 32 laboratory tests/diagnosis were carried out for nematodes in conjunction with quarantine nematology monitoring carried out by DCU with special reference to the Pine Wood Nematode Survey. In total, more than 15 inspections were carried out.

Tissue Culture Lab (*In-Vitro* Laboratory)

The laboratory focused mainly on the production by micro-propagation techniques of endangered local plant species and commercially marketed species and sanitation of local citrus accessions. Other duties included the drawing up of the standard operating procedures and revision of existing ones, stock-taking and purchasing/repairs of apparatus, chemicals and consumables, etc.

Micro-propagation

Production of ornamental plants: During the year, a batch of around 400 Boston ferns of the genus and species *Nephrolepis bostoniensis* were rooted using *in vitro* techniques and were then acclimatised in the glasshouse in pots. Another batch of around 300 plants has also been transferred to multiplication media *in vitro*. This work involved regular transfers of the plantlets being grown in jars and daily inspections.

Research Work

Research work was continued from previous years on indigenous, endangered wild plants and research work on sanitation of local citrus trees which are very important for Maltese agriculture commenced. A lot of administrative work was carried out in connection with this research mainly related to the applications for permits for the handling and possession of species that are protected by national legislation, publications available on local species, payments in connection with projects, etc. A number of problems were encountered throughout this research as it is innovative work for Malta.

- *Roses:* The propagation of roses proved to be rather successful this year when compared to previous years as new media formulations were utilised which gave satisfactory results both during the multiplication stages as well as the rooting stages. Approximately, 110 plants are presently being maintained in the acclimatisation greenhouse.
- *Tulips:* Experimentation on the local tulip, *Tulipa sylvestris*, has been an ongoing task. This is due to the fact that it is somewhat difficult to induce the *Liliaceae* family to produce bulblets *in vitro* when parts of the original bulb are not maintained with each explant. At the laboratory, various types of multiplication and bulblet formation media were utilised in order to attempt to induce bulblet formation as these are indispensable if plantlets are to be acclimatised and re-introduced in nature. However, none of these media formulations proved satisfactory. Further research revealed that in certain cases plants from the *Liliaceae* family might produce bulblets if given an 11-week cold treatment followed by a dark period. The plantlets available at the laboratory were given this particular treatment and it seems that structures like tiny bulblets have been produced. Currently, rooting of these bulblet-like structures is being attempted.
- *Orchids:* *In vitro* culture of various local orchids has been attempted on various types of media formulations which were never utilised before. Satisfactory results have been achieved, though these have not been similar for all orchid varieties as some of the orchid varieties, such as *Spiranthes spiralis*, have been multiplying. However, other varieties, such as the *Ophrys lutea*, have not really multiplied although the plants look healthier than they did on the other formulations. So far, acclimatisation has also proved to be problematic. A trial on the acclimatisation of *Spiranthes spiralis* has been carried out which did not succeed. Another trial using different substrate is being attempted.
- *Local varieties of fruit trees:* Literature collection and review was carried out as an attempt to try and come up with a reliable method of citrus sanitation for our local accessions as this is the first time that this work shall be carried out in Malta. Not much information was found as sanitation techniques are not made public to a large extent by researchers. Attempts were also made at contacting foreign laboratories and institutions about possible training on sanitation of plants. Other administrative work was carried out in connection with the sanitation process such as drawing up of lists of persons who registered their citrus trees with the Seeds and other Propagation Material Unit in connection with the agri-environmental measures, lists of items needed for experimentation, etc.

In the meantime, trials have started on the surface sterilisation and *in vitro* establishment of bitter oranges' explants. This will help to gain experience in this new experiment which will act as a means of drawing up a protocol for the establishment and maintenance of citrus plantlets utilising *in vitro* techniques.

Chemistry Laboratory

During the year, the main activity carried out within the laboratory related to the testing of soil and irrigation water supplied by various farmers and entities. However, additional duties comprised the interpretation of test reports, stock-taking and purchasing/repairs of apparatus, chemicals and consumables, drafting and forwarding of short documents to farmers with the soil and irrigation water test reports for information purposes, drawing up of a new set of standard operating procedures for apparatus and revision of existing standard operating procedures, processing of requests from third parties for special services, cost calculation exercises for soil and water analysis and the introduction of laboratory fees for tests carried out among others.

Lab Analysis

A summary of the number of samples received and the laboratory tests performed during 2008 at the Chemistry Laboratory is presented in the table below:

Type of agricultural material	No of samples received	No of tests performed
Soil (routine)	324	2,268
Irrigation water (routine)	196	981
Total	520	3,249

Students/Trainees at the Plant Health Laboratories

- *Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory*: The laboratory was visited by a number of students from different schools in Malta and one from Gozo. A presentation on the main activities of this lab was given by MRRA officials. A university student spent one day working at the Plant Tissue Culture Laboratory as she wished to gain experience in the field of micropropagation with the hope of being employed full-time.
- *Chemistry Laboratory*: During the year, two MSc students reading for Environmental Chemistry carried out work on the determination of several heavy metal concentrations in local air using the graphite furnace-atomic absorption spectrophotometer. Another two BSc students reading for Biology and Chemistry and one BSc student reading for Architecture and Civil Engineering carried out soil tests within the Laboratory as part of their dissertation under the supervision of lab officials. Other students reading for the Diploma in Agriculture continued with their research work as part of their dissertation which included extractions and distillations from wild plant species. Water analysis was carried out by a student from the International Environment Institute whose dissertation was to correlate the levels of contaminants in water in the different areas of Malta with the population of dragonfly larvae.
- *Bacteriology and Virology Laboratory*: An MCAST student (lab technologist) worked at the lab between January and May.
- *Entomology and Plant Pathology*: A Junior College student attended three lab sessions in January as part of her Systems of Knowledge project.

DIAGNOSIS AND CONTROL UNIT (DCU)

The main aims of the Diagnostic and Control Unit is the formulation and monitoring of the national plant health strategy. This also includes science consultancy support, pest and disease monitoring and detection, plant health risk analysis and management to deal with quarantine contingency issues and investigation of quarantine pest and disease biology to complete risk assessments.

Annual Surveys in Conjunction with EU Directives and Emergency Measures

Annual surveys are carried out to assess the local situation with respect to emerging pests. Monitoring and testing of certain quarantine and harmful diseases are also regulated by Council Decisions and Directives.

Surveys in conjunction with Council Directive 2000/29/EC - Monitoring of quarantine Fungal diseases

During the year, mycology surveys carried out included the *Phytophthora ramorum* survey, and the *Gibberella circinata* survey.

A total of 28 inspections were carried out as part of the annual surveys required for *Phytophthora ramorum* and *Gibberella circinata*. The annual *Survey for Phytophthora ramorum* for 2008, as specified by Council Directive 2000/29/EC and Commission Decisions 2002/757/EC and 2004/426/EC was carried out and results were reported to the Commission. The report included 16 locations including public gardens, public green areas, parks of national importance, woodland pockets and *garigue-type* areas and susceptible plant species (e.g. *Quercus ilex*, *Laurus nobilis*, *Arbutus unedo*, *Camelia spp.*, *Viburnum spp.*) were inspected.

The *Gibberella circinata* survey was carried out on pine trees in forestry areas covering approximately 35 ha., as well as in nurseries/garden centres growing coniferous trees.

Surveys in conjunction with Council Directive 2000/29/EC- Monitoring of quarantine Viral Diseases

During 2008, the DCU carried out a total of 115 inspections in conjunction with virology surveys.

- *Citrus Tristeza Virus Monitoring for Protected Zones*: The national protected zone CTV survey for 2008 was carried out in accordance with Council Directive 2000/29. Sampling of citrus was performed during the months of January, February, April, June and July as well as in November and December. In all 50 inspections of citrus trees were carried out at private gardens, commercial orchards in various localities around Malta and Gozo as well as in garden centres trading citrus trees from other EU countries.

A total of around 800 samples corresponding to c. 1,900 trees were collected for testing at the Virology Lab. During the inspections, the trees were inspected for CTV symptoms and data on the trees was collected.

Areas inspected included Xaghra, San Blas, Dahlet Qorrot and Xewkija in Gozo; and Attard, Naxxar, Lija, Żebbug, Żejtun, B'Bugia, San Pawl tat-Tarġa, Ghaxaq, Mosta, Żurriq, Żebbuġ, Hamrun, Iklin, Qrendi, and Birgu in Malta. The total area inspected is approximately 10 hectares. Intensive sampling was carried out at Dahlet Qorrot and San Blas, Gozo, as part of the contingency plans within the area. Inspections were also carried out on citrus trees traded from EU countries (Italy) at four garden centres.

CTV presence was confirmed in San Blas. A total of 94 trees were confirmed infected at San Blas/Dahlet Qorrot area. Single infected trees were also randomly found in private residences. Another three infected citrus trees were found at a local nursery. The whole lot of these trees (amounting to 12) were confiscated from the nursery.

Information on CTV was sent to all citrus farmers at San Blas/Dahlet Qorrot area. An informative campaign on CTV (including leaflets, meetings, and seminars) was carried out during 2008.

- *Pepino Mosaic Virus (PepMV), Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV) and Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus (TYLCV) Surveys*: These surveys were run in accordance with Commission Decision 2004/200/EC and Council Directive 2000/29/EC. Surveys were carried out during the periods March, April, August and October.

A total of 236 samples corresponding to circa 1,180 plants were collected and tested at the Diagnostic Labs for PepMV. From these, 51 samples were also tested for TSWV, TYLCV. During the inspections plants were inspected for PepMV, TSWV and TYLCV symptoms and data on the plants was collected.

All samples were tested by Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) using commercial polyclonal antibodies. Results of tests performed were sent to the growers visited.

34 inspections on open field and greenhouse tomatoes were carried out. Surveyed areas include Mgarr, San Ġwann, Rabat, Żebbug, Siggiewi, Dingli, Żejtun, Żabbar, Mellieħa, Attard, Safi, Żurrieq, Qrendi, Xagħra, San Lawrenz, Xewkija, Mosta. The total area inspected is circa 5 hectares. None of the samples gave a positive result.

Nine lettuce samples were also tested for TSWV and seven for TYLCV. One of the lettuce samples resulted positive for TSWV.

- *Potato Spindle Tuber Viroid*: This survey was performed in compliance with Commission Decision 2007/410/EC. All samples were extracted and printed at the Diagnostic Lab at the PHD on a nucleic acid hybridisation assay. The processing of the membrane and issuing of results was carried out at Agdia Incorporated Laboratories.

Between the months of February and April field potato crops were inspected and sampled. During the month of May ware potato samples were also collected. A total of 31 potato inspections amounting to 24 hectares were performed out of which seven samples were taken. Samples of glasshouse tomatoes and open field tomatoes were also taken during field inspections. A total of 24 inspections amounting to five hectares were performed out of which 24 samples were taken. Six samples of *Solanum jasminoides* and *Solanum rantonnetti* were collected during inspections at garden centres and tested for the presence of the viroid.

- *Grapevine Flavescence dorée survey*: The survey was performed in accordance with Council Directive 2000/29/EC and the EPPO protocol for the detection of Grapevine *Flavescence dorée* (GFD) was utilised.

During February and August the GFD survey, which was initiated during 2007, was continued. A total of 92 PCR tests using P1/P7 primers followed by nested PCR using R16 (V) F1/Ri primers were analysed by agarose gel electrophoresis. These were carried out using the new EPPO protocol for the detection of GFD.

During August, three inspections at Girgenti, Manikata and Ta' Qali were carried out. During the inspections all vines within the vineyard were inspected for *Flavescence dorée* symptoms out of which 17 samples were collected.

10 chromo-tropic traps were placed in different locations around Malta and Gozo. This is part of the GFD survey in order to establish the presence/absence of the leafhopper vector *Scaphoideus titanus*. The chromo tropic traps were analysed in the Plant Pathology Lab, Għammieri. 108 vine cuttings were collected from 2 vineyards from Marsaxlokk, Malta and were put in pots for rooting for observation of symptoms.

A total of eight grapevine samples including frozen leaves and phytoplasma enriched nucleic acids were also tested. These gave positive results for phytoplasmas and were sent to University of Bologna for confirmatory testing for Grapevine *Flavescence dorée*. None of the samples resulted positive for *Flavescence dorée* and its vector *Scaphoideus titanus*.

- *Viral Diseases Recorded*: CTV was confirmed present in San Blas. A total of 94 trees were confirmed infected at San Blas/Dahlet Qorrot area. Isolated infected trees were also found in private residences. Another three infected citrus trees were found at a local nursery. The whole lot of trees (amounting to 12) were confiscated from the nursery.
- *SVDP Government Nursery monitoring*: During the months of June, July and August, three inspections were carried out at the SVDP Stone Fruit Government Nursery mother plots. All stone fruit trees within Plots 29 and 30 (demonstration plot) were inspected for quarantine and quality diseases and samples were taken. A total of 450 trees were sampled and tested for the presence of Plum-Pox Virus (PPV) out of which 416 trees were also tested for Prune Necrotic Ringspot Virus and Prune Dwarf Virus. The trees

were inspected for viral, bacterial and fungal symptoms as well as for the presence of insect pests. Collected samples were tested with ELISA for each virus at the Diagnostic Laboratory, Plant Biotechnology Centre, Lija.

- *Others*: Two inspections were made at vineyards in Marsaxlokk and Siggiewi for symptoms similar to Eutypa dieback and 30 mechanical transmission tests were carried out for quality viruses.

Surveys in conjunction with Council Directive 2000/29/EC- Monitoring of quarantine bacterial diseases

In 2008, 68 inspections were carried out by the DCU in conjunction with bacteriology surveys.

- *Potato Ring Rot (Clavibacter michiganensis ssp sepedonicus) and Potato Brown Rot (Ralstonia solanacearum) Surveys*: Surveys for Potato Brown Rot and Ring Rot were carried throughout the year. The Potato Ring Rot survey is obliged annually by Council Directive 2006/56/EC on the Control of Potato Ring Rot of 12 June 2006 as amending Council Directive 93/85/EEC. The Potato Brown Rot survey is obliged annually by Council Directive 2006/63/CE on Control of *Ralstonia solanacearum* of 14 July 2006 amending Council Directive 98/57/EC.

Field inspections on potato crops were carried out in February till April. A total of 31 inspections were carried out covering a total area of 24 Ha. Inspections of potato crops included localities at Żebbuġ, Mgarr, Żurrieq, Siggiewi, and Burmarrad. During these inspections the whole areas of potato crops visited were inspected for symptoms of bacterial wilt. During the inspections, potato samples were uprooted and tubers were dissected for symptoms of bacterial rot. Field inspections were also carried out on glasshouse tomatoes (January till March) and open field tomatoes (June-July) for bacterial wilt symptoms. A total of 24 inspections were carried out covering 5 Ha of tomato cultivation including the localities of Żebbuġ, Siggiewi, Attard, Armier, Mgarr, Rabat, Dingli, Qrendi, Luqa, Xaghra, Sannat & San Lawrenz.

A total of 195 laboratory tests were carried out for Potato Ring Rot and Brown Rot using SMSA and NA plating and Immunoflorescence assays on any suspect samples of potato and tomato plants. SIU brought seed potato samples traded from Holland, France & N. Ireland, during October till December 2008. About 200 tubers were extracted as a compound sample from each respective sample, and tested for Potato Brown & Potato Ring Rot accordingly. None of the samples resulted infected.

In total 12 seed potato samples were tested, conducting four tests for each sample i.e. semi-selective isolation on SMSA and MTNA together with an Immunofluorescence assay for both Ring Rot & Brown Rot. All seed samples tested for both diseases were found to be free of such diseases.

- *Bacterial diseases recorded*: One stonefruit sample resulted positive for *Pseudomonas syringae pv.syringae*.

Surveys in conjunction with Council Directive 2000/29/EC-Entomology Monitoring Surveys

A total of around 87 samples were collected during 66 inspections carried out in conjunction with quarantine nematology and entomology surveys.

Insect pests monitored by the Diagnosis and Control Unit included the Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) on palm tree species. *Toxoptera citricida* (Brown Citrus Aphid) survey on citrus trees was carried out in conjunction with the CTV survey. This aphid is not present in the Maltese Islands and is a very efficient vector of CTV. Survey for *Leptinotarsa decemlineata* (Colorado Beetle) was carried out on field potatoes covering approximately 24 hectares. Monitoring for *Scaphoideus titanus*, a vector of Grapevine *Flavescence dorée phytoplasma* was carried out. All monitoring surveys were carried out together with the Surveillance and Inspectorate Unit.

- *Outbreaks of insect pests:* Reports of the Geranium Bronze Butterfly (*Cacyreus marshalli*) were received and its presence have been confirmed, the A Bostrichid borer species was found infesting carob trees and vines and *Phrynetta leprosa* continued to be reported on mulberry trees (*Morus nigra* and *Morus alba*).
- *Insect records:* The red palm weevil was the most commonly recorded insect pest, however peach buprestid beetle (*Capnodis tenebroides*) were recorded on stone fruit trees, Scale insects were recorded on citrus fruit and fig trees, *Aphis spiraecola* and *Toxoptera aurantii* were confirmed present on citrus trees. The Pear tree borer (*Cerambyx nodulosus*) was confirmed on pear trees, Bostrichid borer pest was recorded on carob and vines (studies still undergoing), *Phrynetta leprosa* was on mulberry trees and citrus leaf-miner (*Lyriomyza trifolii*) was confirmed on citrus trees.

Surveys in conjunction with Council Directive 2000/29/EC - Nematology Monitoring Surveys

A total of around 32 samples were collected during 15 inspections carried out in conjunction with the Pine Wood Nematode (*Bursaphelenchus xylophilus*) survey. Suspected samples were forwarded to the Nematology lab for analysis. Traded wood packaging material was also inspected and sampled. The Pine Wood Nematode, *Bursaphelenchus xylophilus* survey was carried out on pine trees in forestry areas covering 35 Ha (in conjunction with *Gibberella circinata* survey) and on traded wood packaging material. None of the suspect samples resulted positive to Pine Wood Nematode.

Three inspections were carried out in July 2008 on the Stone fruit and Pome fruit mother plots at the SVDP Government Nursery for visual symptoms related to bacterial diseases. Samples were collected for laboratory testing using ELISA. A total of 137 ELISA tests were carried out. 97 Pome Fruit samples were tested for *Erwinia amylovora*, while 20 stone fruit samples were tested for *Pseudomonas syringae pv syringae*. One stone fruit sample resulted positive for *Pseudomonas syringae pv syringae*. SVDP were informed of the infected trees for necessary action.

SEEDS AND OTHER PROPAGATION UNIT (SPMU)

General Issues

The SPMU was responsible for the preparation of reports, documents, checklists, memoranda, leaflets, posters and presentations on various issues that fall under the remit of this unit and on activities of the Plant Health Department such as EU obligations and derogations on propagation material, quality of propagation material, inspections to be carried out in nurseries and suppliers, budget and business plans, plan of work, establishment of the seed testing laboratory, Plant Health Department seminars, dissemination of information campaigns on plant health and research, etc.

Seeds of Agricultural Plants and Vegetables

The SPMU went through notifications received from other Member States on varieties of agricultural plants and vegetables which are regularly added, deleted or modified on the Common Catalogues of varieties. Also, notifications on authorisations for the marketing of seed of not yet listed varieties according to Commission Decision 2004/842/EC were reviewed. Communication was made by the SPMU with a few responsible official bodies for information to be provided on certain varieties.

Trials on various varieties of cereals and vegetables belonging to local plant genetic resources which are at risk of genetic erosion have continued throughout the year. These are taking place in the fields of the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Lija. The aim is to compile descriptions of all the varieties of local varieties marketed in Malta and also as part of conservation activities. Broad beans, carrots, cauliflower, garlic, kohlrabi, marrows, melon, onions, pumpkin, radish, vetch and watermelons were sown for such purposes. Morphological characterisation of the resulting plants and mature fruit was carried out and recorded according to internationally-recognised technical protocols. Mature seeds from the fruit and plants have

been collected, when possible, to be conserved and also to be used for further trials. Work related to the collection and storage of seeds was carried out. Other administrative work was carried out in connection with the marketing and quality of seeds.

Fruit Trees and Vines

The SPMU continued to work on the establishment of the national catalogue of varieties of fruit trees and vines which are marketed or produced in Malta. This catalogue is covered by Legal Notice 271 of 2004 and 470 of 2004. Only varieties and clones included in this catalogue will be allowed to be marketed and produced in the Maltese territory. A description of the main morphological and physiological characteristics of the plants is being endorsed for each variety.

Inspections of rootstocks of fruit trees that have been produced by micro-propagation techniques at the Tissue Culture Lab have been made by officials of the Diagnostic & Control Unit and the Inspectorate & Surveillance Unit. Following the submission of the report to the SPMU, 12 certificates for 12 batches consisting of 9,040 trees of the rootstocks Myrobolan 29C (7,450 trees) and GF677 (1,590 trees) were issued by the SPMU.

Draft technical protocols that establish the national certification schemes for fruit trees and vines are being drawn up. These include the steps from the identification of candidate stocks to the certification of the plant material. Production of disease free propagation and planting material falls under these schemes. In view of this work, the SPMU made a revision of the national legislation on the general plant certification schemes. The SPMU communicated with a number of units of MRRA and the Ministry for Gozo in order for the SPMU to collect feedback on the revised version of the legislation and on the current practices and intentions of the nurseries *vis-à-vis* fruit tree and vine propagation and marketing.

Forest Trees

The SPMU worked on the establishment of a list of Maltese common names of species of forest trees covered by Council Directive 1999/105/EC (marketing of forest reproductive material). Administrative work was carried out as regards the importation of forest reproductive material from third countries to Malta and on the implementation measures of the mentioned directive.

Ornamental Plants

Data on newly encountered pests that have been found attacking ornamental plants in Malta were gathered from the relevant units of the Plant Health Department. A document was drafted in view of the European Commission's proposed system of exchange of information that shall possibly be adopted at EU level in the future.

GMOs

Administrative work was carried out on GMOs when reference was made to seeds and grain to be used for sowing and seed production. SPMU is a member on MEPA's Biosafety Co-ordinating Committee (BCC) on behalf of the Rural Affairs Division. Review of relevant documentation and participation in BCC meetings were carried out.

Plant Genetic Resources

The Plant Health Department provided replies to a questionnaire forwarded by MEPA on developing the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of the Maltese Islands in compliance with the National Reform Programme for Malta. The aims of this strategy and action plan are to integrate the conservation

and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

Advisory Services

Information was provided to the Rural Development Department as the latter requested the review of the nomenclature of species being cultivated in Malta and a list of plants being used for bee roaming. Further advice was provided on the use of sunflower seeds as ornamental plants, propagation of ornamentals and marketing of vegetable seeds. Advice relating to the registration of seed varieties and trials for caper propagation was also given.

Projects and Studies

Agri-measures and rural development funds

Support measures for the conservation of endangered plant species that are at risk of genetic erosion were issued for the public in 2008 by the Rural Development Department under the Rural Development Programme for the period 2007-2013. Eligible trees had to belong to old trees of olives, carob, mulberries and citrus. The SPMU, the Applications Unit and the Rural Development Department collaborated on activities related to these measures. Application forms and a database were therefore designed by the SPMU to act as an ancient fruit tree register as applicants have to register their fruit varieties in the register before applying for aid. Short guidelines were also prepared by the SPMU for use by the Gozitan officials who were involved in the registration of ancient fruit trees being cultivated in Gozo. Information on species not covered by financial aid was also included in the database. In all, 353 persons registered with the SPMU and approximately 9,000 trees have been registered.

INTERREG IVC

The SPMU and DCU were involved in the possible participation of Malta as a partner in a proposed project on the harmonisation of methodologies for sanitary control and certification of healthy propagation material for trade in the European Union. The proposal was submitted by the lead partner under INTERREG IVC but was not accepted.

PESTICIDES UNIT

As per Malta Standards Authority and various Laws (Amendment) Act, 2007 published on 21 December 2007 and Legal Notice 33 of 2008, the competency for the authorisation and regulation of pesticides in Malta was transferred to the Malta Standards Authority (MSA) on 1 February 2008.

Inspections and Sampling

Placing of Pesticides on the Market

During January 2008, the Plant Health Department started the routine inspections at the retailers for plant production products on the market. These inspections were carried out according to the Manual of Procedure drawn up by department officials.

In all, 55 inspections were carried out as follows in Attard, Balzan, B'Kara, Dingli, Floriana, Gharghur, Hamrun, Mosta, Mtarfa, Naxxar, Nigret, Qormi, Rabat (Malta), San Ġiljan, San Ġwann, Siggiewi, Sliema and Sta Venera. Out of 55 outlets, five had changed their line of business and 31 were found to be in possession of plant protection products which are not registered. All information was transferred to MSA for necessary action.

SURVEILLANCE AND INSPECTORATE

Phytosanitary Inspections

Inspections of Commodities originating from Third Countries

- During the year, 339 full inspections were carried out on third country commodities subject to inspection as per LN 97/2004.

Inspections of Wood Packaging Material (WPM)

- WPM originating from third countries is subject to inspection as per ISPM 15 and EU Directive 2004/102/EC. All WPM imports were according to ISPM 15. Inspections on wood coming from Portugal have also been carried out due to the risk of introduction of Pine Wood nematode.

Inspectors were involved in the stamping of WPM for Comtec Ltd. This service is being given free of charge. There were 241 heat treatments consisting of 3,484 pallets, 203 Boxes and 415 dunnage.

Plant Passport System

- During 2008, various nurserymen contacted the S&IU for clarifications with regard to the implementation of the plant passport system. Producers were also encouraged to utilise a database for recording the purchases and sales similar to the system that had been explained during the seminar held in 2007.

In all, 16 nurseries, including the SVDP Fruit Nursery, were inspected with regard to the plant passport system and around 17,877 plant passports were distributed.

Sampling

- During the year various inspections were carried out in private residences, public gardens and nurseries from where various samples were collected. The S&IU were involved in the collection of samples for Brown Rot, Ring Rot and Potato Spindle Tuber viroid surveys, the Colorado beetle survey and the *Phytophthora ramorum* survey.
- Inspections regarding the Citrus tristeza virus, Pepino Mosaic virus, *Flavescence dorée* and its vector *Scaphoideus titanus*, Pine wood nematode and *Phytophthora ramorum* were carried out. 358 samples were collected for testing. Out of these samples, 143 were sent to Virology lab, 21 were sent to the Nematology lab, 70 were sent to the Entomology lab, 35 were sent to the Mycology lab and 89 were sent to the Bacteriology lab.
- Monitoring for the Red Palm Weevil was carried out throughout the year and the beetle was detected in various areas mainly on the *Phoenix canariensis*. During the 478 inspections carried out in 2008, the beetle was found in all the different stages of growth, i.e. from egg to adult. 193 palm trees had to be destroyed as a consequence and 129 registered enforcement letters were sent to various individuals for palm removal. During these visits, the stakeholders were informed about pesticide treatments which could be utilised for control purposes. A total of 78 pheromone traps were distributed to third parties free of charge.
- Other inspections were carried out on stone fruit cultivation at SVDP Nursery and pine wood nematode and *Giberella circinata* from nurseries and public places.

Phytosanitary Certificates

Phytosanitary Certificates for Export

- A total of 28 export phytosanitary certificates were issued, in compliance with ISPM 12 (IPPC). Certificates are issued after commodities are inspected and found to be free from regulated pests and diseases.

Phytosanitary Certificates for Re-export

- Eight re-export Phytosanitary certificates were issued during 2008, after phytosanitary inspections were carried out.

Collection of Revenue

During 2008, a total of €9,289.34 was collected by the S&I Unit through phytosanitary inspections carried out by SIU.

Registration

During the year, there were three new entries in the Traders Registration. In 2008, there were 243 importers who trade in agricultural products and timber from both third countries and European Member States. These were duly registered in the respective database.

Border Inspection Posts

Necessary arrangements were carried out in 2008 to establish the Border Inspection Posts (BIPs) at Airport and Freeport. These started functioning in September. Various presentations were prepared and delivered during the various seminars organised by the Plant Health Department to describe the function of these BIPs.

Others

- Updating of SIU database on imported commodities of plants and plant products. Collation of data and extracting of information is carried out to help in the drafting of EU specific reporting obligations, drafting of LNs and formulation of local plant health strategy. It is also a tool for planning surveys and inspection.
- The RPW database for infected palm trees was regularly being updated. A further database of non-infected susceptible plants was started in 2008.
- During 2008, the SIU drew up and published guidelines for importers of plants and plant products. Further inspections were carried out with respect to movement of wheat from Kordin Grain Terminal to Italy.

Advisory Work

- Inspectors visited a number of private farmers to carry out inspections and collect samples for further diagnosis. This was mainly based on visual inspections especially for *Leptinotarsa decemlineata*.
- Most advisory work by the SIU was on the Red Palm Weevil. The Unit received many queries from third parties who sought help through all possible means. Many inspections were also carried out following such requests.
- A number of importers and individuals called the Unit for queries regarding any import regulations and wood packaging material. Assistance was also given to nurseries to implement the plant passport system.

PLANT BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Glasshouse Facilities

Routine work such as cleaning of pots, application of pesticides and fertilisers was carried out in the glasshouses, screen houses, shade house, mother block and outdoor areas. Routine works for the up keeping of the PBC grounds were carried out. These included weeding and rotovation of fields and general cleaning and maintenance of the premises.

- *Acclimatisation glasshouse:* During the year, 22 jars of roses and around 400 ferns were sent from the *in vitro* laboratory for acclimatisation. Acclimatisation of various local orchid and tulip plants was also attempted. Rootstocks and ornamental plants were continually cared for and regular applications of insecticides were necessary to control sciarid flies and other insects. Preventative drenching with fungicides was carried out to avoid soil borne fungal diseases and fertilisers were applied during irrigation. Acclimatised rootstocks were transferred to the shade house for hardening and certification. Conventional propagation of various ornamental plants was also carried out within the glasshouse.
- *Diagnostic glasshouse:* A continuous production of herbaceous indicator and indexing plants for virus diagnosis was carried out throughout the whole year. Apart from the regular herbaceous plants, pumpkins, cucumbers, tomatoes, aubergines, fava beans and others were used as indicator plants. Works include regular sowing, transplanting, repotting, irrigation and spraying with pesticides for the control of insect pests such as sciarid flies, thrips, whiteflies and red spider mites. Old material was discarded. Hygiene, such as cleaning of benches and floors was carried out. A stock of mother plants for the collection of seeds was maintained. The ornamental and endemic plants are being maintained in the 3rd compartment and required regular irrigation and spraying. Commercial propagation of spider plants, *Myrtus*, *Cremnophyton*, *Helichrysum* and other ornamental plants was carried out. The compartments, benches and floors were cleaned on a regular basis and one of these benches is currently being utilised by the PARC Unit in connection with the 34U campaign.
- *Plastic house:* The plastic house was mainly used for the production and upkeep of herbaceous indicator mother plants which are used for seed collection. These plants were given regular care. Maintenance work was also carried out on some of the benches.
- *Shade house:* Rootstocks were transferred to the shade house for hardening off prior to being certified for eventual collection by SVDP staff. Regular irrigation, application of pesticides and drenching with fungicides for the control of insect pests was carried out. Other work included organisation of plants and weeding. The remaining *Sarcopoterium* plants were repotted as they had outgrown their pots.
- *Screen houses:* Plants were regularly cared for and required irrigation, weeding and spraying for insect pests. The stone fruits and vines were pruned and organised and slow release fertilisers were applied.

Sale/Donation of Plants

During the year, 500 Myrabolan and 500 GF 677 plants were forwarded to the Government Farm in Xewkija, Gozo while 7,150 Myrabolan 29C and 2,240 GF 677 plants were forwarded to SVDP. 113 bales of wheat were donated to the Government Experimental Farm, Għammieri.

The following plants were donated to various entities including PARC Unit, Nature Trust, MRAE and the Education Department: 2 *Myrtus communis*, 2 *Lavandula*, 77 *Cremnophyton lanfranconi*, 24 *widnet il-baħar*, 23 *Ficus*, 47 ferns, 21 spider plants, 5 *Philodendron*, 14 *Yucca*, 161 carob and 130 dwarf palm trees. A further 15 baskets with plants were donated to MRRA upon request. 190 *Sarcopoterium spinosum* plants were forwarded to Argotti gardens after the necessary arrangements were made with MEPA and Argotti gardens.

77 ferns, 2 spider plants, 4 *Philodendron* and 8 *Ficus benjamina* and 8 *Yucca* were sold to the general public, which amounted to €425.

Maintenance Work

During the year several maintenance works and services were carried out at the PBC premises related to the upkeep of the laboratories, offices, glasshouses and ancillary equipment and also at the Border Inspection Posts and Għammieri.

Efforts have also been made to repair the glasshouse computer system and the hot room by a team of engineers from the University Engineering Department who have been carrying out tests to try and isolate the problems.

Local Vegetable Varieties

During the year, trials on the local vegetable seeds were continued within the premises. Such trials included local varieties of vetch, onions, garlic, white and purple kohlrabi, broad beans, broad carrots, cauliflowers, pumpkin, vegetable marrows, melons and watermelons. The aim of these trials is to determine the characteristics of the local varieties. Trials will be continued during 2009.

TECHNICAL AND OPERATIONAL

EU Related Affairs

Various EU related meetings were attended as listed hereunder. Instruction notes and reports have been prepared by the respective officials for such meetings and the former have also been prepared together with proxy arrangements for meetings for which no Maltese representatives were present. All the documents to be used in the meetings have been reviewed thoroughly and comments were sent to the European Commission and the Presidencies (Slovenia and France) when needed.

Meetings Attended

- Various council and commission meetings (monthly SCPH meetings, COPHs meetings, WP) were attended by PHD officials. Respective instruction notes and follow-up reports were drawn up for each meeting.

MERTENS/COPERPER/AGRIFISH/SCA/Environmental Council and other EU matters

- Review of documentation was made and comments and clearance were given by Plant Health Department as regards issues that were going to be discussed during COREPER I, CODEV and SHERPA meetings and that relate to propagation and planting material of various species and phytosanitary issues.

Communications to the EU

The Plant Health Department sent its comments to the Commission Services, the Council Secretariat and the Presidencies when requested. These were mainly on the draft EU legislation, evaluation of the Community *acquis* on the marketing of seeds and plant propagation material, seed marketing, plant health issues of ornamental plants and certification of propagation material of fruit trees.

Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) matters

- Officials from the Seeds and other Propagation Material Unit attended meetings between the CPVO and its Administrative Council and the examination offices during which issues on the functioning and activities of the CPVO, the technical examination of plant varieties and granting of Community plant variety rights were discussed.

Communication was held between the SPMU and the CPVO mainly on issues that dealt with entrustment of examination offices to carry out distinctness, uniformity and stability (DUS) testing of different plant species, technical examinations of plant material, internal CPVO procedures, variety denominations and applications for Community plant variety rights originating from Malta.

Reporting Obligations:

Various reports (total 28) were forwarded to EU Commission through the EU Secretariat as obliged through EU legislation. Reporting on the Multi annual National Control Plant was also submitted in 2008.

National Legislation - New Legal Notices Adopted

- *Legal Notices under the Plant Quarantine Act 2001*: Two EU directives were transposed into Maltese law during 2008.
- *Trees and Woodland Regulations*: A draft legal notice on the Trees and Woodland Protection Regulations drafted by MEPA had been forwarded to the Plant Health Department for review. The Plant Health Department attended a public consultation seminar held by MEPA dealing with the draft legal notice.

Boards

The Plant Protection Board, as stipulated under the Plant Quarantine Act (Cap. 433), was set up during this year. Staff from the Plant Health Department represent the Ministry on a number of boards, namely Plant Protection Board, Red Palm Weevil Commission, Institute of Agriculture (University) Board and Food Safety Commission.

Seminars/Meetings Organised by the Plant Health Department

The Plant Health Department organised a series of seminars between May and September as part of an EU funded project under the Rural Development Plan 2004-2006. These include:

- Controlling Pests and Diseases to Reduce the Use of Plant Protection Products (71 attendees)
- Controlling Pests and Diseases; How, Why and When? (109 attendees)
- Export, Import and Marketing of Plants and Plant Products (60 attendees)
- Plant Protection Products; Registration, Marketing and Use (71 attendees)
- Plant Protection Products; the Way Forward (119 attendees)
- Import Regulations for Seed Potatoes (2 attendees)
- Quarantine Diseases Affecting Grape Vines (68 attendees).

Five courses were also organised for farmers and traders on the use and correct sale of plant protection products (PPPs); a total of 108 farmers and 33 retailers attended the courses. The attendees at the farmers' courses have undergone an examination and a certificate was given which is recognised by MSA to obtain the licence for use of PPPs as per LN 115 of 2004.

The Plant Health Department organised, in conjunction with WasteServ Ltd, the Civil Protection Department and SDO, talks on waste management and fire wardens as well as a two-day course on team building. These were organised for the staff of the Plant Health Department.

In December, staff from the Diagnosis and Control Unit gave a presentation on the role of the Plant Health Department on harmful organisms to mayors from the local councils through AKL. Discussions were also held on how local councils can collaborate on the prevention, eradication and containment of emerging pests.

Meetings/Seminars/Courses Attended

Departmental officials attended several meetings, seminars and training courses, both locally and abroad, in the course of the year.

List of Publications Published by the Department

During the year various flyers, leaflets and posters were published and distributed during the Plant Health seminars. These include leaflets on: Citrus Tristeza Virus; Integrated Weed Management; Colorado Beetle; Parasitic Plants; The Soil Laboratory; Old Fruit Tree Varieties; Plant Viral Diseases; Red Palm Weevil; Citrus Longhorned Beetle; Sudden Oak Death; Ergot; SPMU Section; *Reġistrazzjoni tal-Varjetajiet ta' Pjanti; Il-Kummerċ ta' Materjal għat-Tkattir tal-Pjanti*.

Publications were also published in the MRAE monthly magazine *Biedja u Sajd*, press releases appeared on the Government Gazette and on the Department of Information website.

GENERAL ISSUES

The organisation and management of official controls by the Plant Health Department was audited by Malta Standards Authority (MSA) within the context of Regulation (EC) No 882/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on official controls to verify compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules.

During the year, the existing department website was kept up to date with regard to the published legal notices and news items. Presentations and photos from the seminars organised by the Plant Health Department have also been uploaded onto the website and a photo library was created.

DR MARICA GATT
Director (Plant Health)

Promotion and Information Directorate

ROLE

This Directorate was set up in February 2008. Its remit is to inform stakeholders of the rights, benefits and obligations that emerge from EU regulations managing aid in agriculture, to conduct public awareness campaigns on the CAP Reform, Cross Compliance, Rural Development Schemes, and to promote the activities of the various units within the Rural Affairs Division. It also has the mandate to manage all queries by the producers; to promote the benefits of the CAP, focusing not only on the farming community but also on the public as consumer in general. The Directorate is also responsible to conduct farm visits at Għammieri, to assist local farmers and producers with the introduction of marketing concepts, and to produce and manage the Għammieri agricultural products and their by-products, serving as a model to farmers and breeders. The Directorate has also the role to implement and regulate the Farm Advisory Service, manage the registration of the FAS entities, and to implement the legislation on the Promotion of Agricultural Products on the Internal and External market.

In order to achieve the set goals, the Directorate took several initiatives. Funds were obtained through sponsors and from the Rural Development Plan for Malta 2004-2006.

Media Events

The Directorate took a number of media initiatives to educate the farmer and the consumer on the agricultural sector and its products.

Radio Programmes

The Directorate runs a weekly radio programme on PBS – *Frott Artna*, aired every Sunday at 7.30 am. The programme addresses subjects related to the agriculture and fisheries sector, taking into account the products in season. The production and marketing of fruit and vegetables, fish, pig meat, poultry, dairy, sheep and goats, and other products such as honey, and rabbit breeding, were all covered in various programmes. Other programmes covered environmental aspects related to agriculture including fertilisers and pesticides, afforestation and cross compliance. Prior to the opening of aid applications, special programmes were organised, on both state and private radio stations, with the aim of communicating and making clear the eligibility criteria and obligations tagged to each measure and for informing potential applicants on procedures and logistics. Furthermore, the Directorate participated in phone-in programmes on other private stations on various topics ranging from the benefits of fresh local produce to assistance through EU Funding.

TV Programmes

The Directorate was involved in a number of TV programmes:

- the morning breakfast show on PBS *Bongu* from January till June, contributing a 20-minute slot on Fridays to display local produce, explaining the benefits of fresh local products and on how to select good and fresh products. A recipe was provided and prepared by qualified chefs, while a nutritionist from the Health Information Unit gave nutritional information about the product under discussion. The season ended with a four hour special programme of *Bongu* dedicated to the Agriculture and Fisheries sector. This

programme was organised by the Directorate and was aired live from Buskett on the feast of *Mnarja*. A number of producers directly took part in the programme, along with students from the AgriBusiness at MCAST, and the Institute for Agriculture at the University of Malta. The feedback received was also very encouraging;

- participation in 30-minute slots on various TV programmes on private TV stations, to promote local products or provide information on aid schemes. The Directorate also encourages and invites producers' associations and co-operatives or people from the sector to be interviewed about their activity during these programmes;
- assisting in the co-ordination and production of the TV documentary series *Intietef*, focusing on traditional crafts associated with agriculture and the fisheries sector.

Newsletter

The newsletter *Biedja u Sajd* was published regularly and distributed to the farming community and other interested individuals. The newsletter includes educational and information material about the sector and targets farmers, breeders and fishermen.

Fairs

Honey Fair

On 15-16 November, the Directorate, together with the Apiculture Unit of the Department of Agriculture and the Local Council of Sta Venera, organised the first Honey Fair in Romeo Romano Gardens in Sta Venera. The fair coincided with the launching of the project to conserve the species of the local bee undertaken by the Apiculture Unit. Spread over two days, the fair sought to promote local honey and related products. Bee keepers were given the opportunity to put up stands to promote and sell their produce. The Institute of Tourism Studies also took part in this fair, promoting the use of honey in food and drink products. Recipes were distributed, and tasting samples were offered during the fair. The traditional mule-drawn water mill (*Sienja*) at the garden was also appreciated by the public. Part of the old farmhouse situated on site was also open to the public where an informative DVD on honey and bee keeping was shown. Casa Leoni, situated at the back of the Garden was open to the public for the first time through this event, and guided tours of the historical palace and adjoining gardens were carried out by courtesy of Heritage Malta. The fair was very successful and it is planned to hold this event annually.

Christmas Village

The Directorate contributed in the organisation of the Christmas Village and a radio programme was produced on the subject.

Meetings with Farmers

Meetings organised through a Twinning Project

Sixty meetings were organised by Gozitano, a farmers' co-operative which had won a tender paid from the twinning project MT05/IB/AG/01 on the promotion of the Common Agriculture Policy. The Directorate was actively involved in obtaining the EU funds, in the drafting of the tender, adjudication, and in the organisation of the meetings themselves. The Directorate assisted Gozitano to facilitate the dissemination of information. The Directorate also assisted in the preparation of a booklet and a set of leaflets that were distributed throughout these meetings.

Meetings organised with Farmers' Co-operatives

A further 27 meetings were organised with Farmers' Co-operatives and their members for disseminating information on aid applications, cross-compliance, and to discuss farmers' needs and analyse how the Directorate could be of further assistance and even more effective.

Customer Service

- *Freephone.* The Director assumed responsibility to manage a Freephone service as from 2008. The service in effect provides clients with a one-stop-shop facility; alternatively, individuals may place queries through the MRRA website.
- *Direct Customers.* The Directorate also provided a direct service to customers. Various queries from farmers were managed effectively, often with the co-operation of other departments. The Directorate also provided information services to students reading for courses, directly or indirectly related to the agriculture and fisheries sector. The Directorate vets all local newspapers daily and electronically provides senior officials with relevant newspaper cuttings.

Ghammieri Related Activities

Visits to Ghammieri

The Directorate organised and conducted regular visits at the National Agricultural Research and Development Centre – Ghammieri for the general public, tourists and for school children of all ages. Visitors were informed about the activities at Ghammieri, the Maltese breeds, the endemic species, and the history of the place. They were also given the opportunity to see livestock rearing and crop husbandry activities. The Directorate also made arrangements with Malta Dairy Products for free yoghurt to be supplied to all visiting school children.

Bungalow

Efforts were made to find ways to rehabilitate the dilapidated Schedule 1 bungalow situated at Ghammieri. The completion of an action plan is underway.

Sale of Produce

The Directorate was actively involved in the sale of *Ghammieri* products.

Farm Advisory Service

The Directorate also covers Farm Advisory Services legislation. The legislation regulating the Farm Advisory Service (LN 41/2008) was implemented; a Farm Advisory Service Board was appointed and its members reviewed two applications received by the end of the year. Two Farm Advisory Service entities were recognised – the Farm Advisory Service Co-operative and APS Consult Ltd. A register was also maintained by the Directorate in line with existing regulations.

ANTOINE ATTARD

Director (Promotion and Information)

Works Division Office of the Director General

LEGAL OFFICE

The Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs, the Works Division and the Services Division, comprising the various departments within, constantly consult the Legal Office, and request its assistance with respect to drafting of contracts, as well as in judicial proceedings before the Law Courts, in order to safeguard their interests. This led to the filing of approximately 60 judicial acts in Court during 2008, for the various departments within the Ministry, as a direct result which the Works Division recouped € 351,500.

The Legal Office assisted the Ministry and various line departments in approximately 40 cases before the Law Courts, as well as in arbitration proceedings before the Malta Arbitration Centre. It was also involved in the drafting and amendment of laws falling within the competence of the Ministry.

An advocate within the Legal Office attended a number of seminars and conferences held locally.

DOOR NUMBERING UNIT

Door numbering exercises were carried out in the following localities during 2008:

Locality	Number of Streets
Pembroke	34
M'Scala	2
Qrendi	10
Mqabba	11
Siggiewi	1
Naxxar	1
Tarxien	1
Balzan	6
B'Bugia	17
Santa Luċija	2
Luqa	2
Total	87

The Unit carries out its work in co-operation with the Electoral Office, the Commissioner of Police, the Water Services Corporation, Maltapost plc and the local councils.

WORKS PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT UNIT

During the year, this Unit was involved in the preparation of a programme of works and in the updating of the programme in respect of various projects undertaken by the Works Division.

Refurbishment Works at the Auberge De Castille

The refurbishment of the Auberge proceeded with general upgrading projects including the installation of a new set of lifts, restoration works on the façade of the *piano nobile*, and other general maintenance works.

Works at the PPCD Offices, St Paul's Street, Valletta

Asbestos cement roofs of a number of rooms were replaced. Furthermore, the project also necessitated other upgrading works of the same offices.

Works at Villa Francia, Lija

The project consists in the restoration of this Villa so that it can be utilised for official activities by the Office of the Prime Minister. During 2008, the refurbishment works were completed, except for one room at first floor level, and the refurbished premises were handed over by the Division to the Office of the Prime Minister. The refurbishment works included:

- restoration of the exterior and interior fabric;
- installation of the necessary services including electrical/ELV system, A/C, lifts, plumbing, etc;
- finishing works, including paving, plastering, bathrooms, etc;
- soft and hard landscaping, including irrigation systems.

The specialised restoration of the pending soffit should be completed in the first quarter of 2009.

Works at the MEUSAC Offices, Republic Street, Valletta

It is planned to upgrade the offices presently occupied by MEUSAC over a number of phases. This refurbishment is necessary so that the needs of this Action Committee could be adequately met. During the last year the necessary plans and tender documents were prepared so that the first phase of the project could be taken in hand in 2009.

Refurbishment Works at the ex-Lotto Department, Floriana

The offices previously occupied by the Lotto Department are to be transformed for use by the Centre for Research and Training of the Office of the Prime Minister. During 2008, plans were drawn up and the necessary MEPA application filed. This project will be divided into a number of phases, and it is planned that the first phase would be taken in hand in the beginning of 2009.

Wind Farms

The initial studies for the Wind Farm Projects proposed across the Maltese Islands were taken in hand. Furthermore, the necessary MEPA applications for this national initiative are also being concluded.

RAY FARRUGIA
Director General (Works)

Works Division

Building and Engineering Department

INTRODUCTION

During 2008, the Building and Engineering Department maintained its role as the principal design arm of the Works Division, for projects originating from the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs and for projects originating from other ministries and departments.

The main projects that originated from the MRRA were landscaping projects aimed to enhance the environment and the quality of life of the local population and visiting tourists.

The Departmental set-up for 2008 included in the Building and Engineering Directorate were:

- the **Design Unit** incorporating the Draughting Office, Records and Archives Office and the Architectural and Engineering Office responsible for design and project management of assigned projects;
- the **Services Unit** incorporating the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Office, Quantity Surveying Unit responsible for preparation of tender documentation (Pre Contract) and measurement of works carried out (Post Contract);
- the **Land Surveying Unit** responsible for carrying out land surveys and related work; and
- the **Rehabilitation Project Office** incorporating, Valletta Rehabilitation Project, Mdina Rehabilitation Committee and Cottonera Rehabilitation Committee responsible for monitoring of projects in these historically sensitive areas.

DESIGN UNIT

The following are projects executed during 2008 and projects which commenced and were still in progress at the end of 2008.

Projects Originating from Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs

- *Embellishment of Xatt is-Sajjieda, Spinola Bay, St Julians*: As a result of damage caused by a major storm to this popular promenade, plans were drawn up to upgrade this area. An area was identified for boat hard standing as well as a passageway for pedestrians. The project extended from the restaurants area to Kavallieri Hotel. The material that was used consisted of porfido material and hard stone.

The bulk of the work was carried out by employees from the Construction and Maintenance Department. A number of benches, bollards and planters were fixed along this promenade. These works were finalised in August.

- *Re-paving of Paceville Square, St Julians*: Urgent repair works were required in view of problems that developed in the square's original paving. It was decided to replace the existing paving material with thicker porfido slabs. A new design was carried out and works on site started on 19 May 2008. These works were finalised within three weeks. All preparatory works were carried out by Construction and Maintenance Department employees. Paving works were carried out by a private contractor.
- *Design of Tower Road and Bisazza Streets New Paving*: As part of the general upgrading plan for the area, the whole stretch of pavements along Tower Road and, at a later stage Bisazza Street, will be repaved. Talks with ADT resulted in a reduced carriage way for vehicular traffic, the elimination of side parking and the subsequent widening of the pedestrian walkways. Works on lower Tower Road were completed early

December 2008. The main paving material used was porfido paving slabs and porfido kerbs. After January 2009, the rest of Tower Road up to Pjazzetta and the first stretch of Cathedral Street will be taken in hand.

- *Embellishment works at Sliema/Gżira Promenade:* It was proposed to carry out repair and general maintenance works on the promenade beginning from Manoel Island Bridge till the part opposite Triq Sant'Antnin. The greatest function of this promenade is the merging of Gżira with Sliema, the busiest and most modern of all the Maltese towns. The works carried out to date are: replacement of dilapidated paving, with cement blocks; regrading of existing ramps; painting of railings; reconstruction of pavement adjacent Captain Morgan and Bus Terminus and in area adjacent to Manoel Island bridge; the manufacture and installation of galvanised iron grating; and cleaning/weeding works.
- *Buskett Rehabilitation Project:* The Buskett project involves the rural and landscape rejuvenation and rehabilitation of Buskett gardens, which are the only woodland area in Malta, and Verdala Palace, which is the official residence of the President of Malta, located on the edge of the gardens. The valley where these gardens are located is very fertile and is called Wied il-Luq. This project should be conceived in a larger framework involving all woodland and landscape areas of outstanding natural beauty. The task is ultimately to enhance the country's heritage and patrimony by giving better access to the public and provide useful information on this subject.

This project involves the repair and possibly re-use of the existing structures, whether buildings, boundary walls or man-made interventions. All works are being carried out using building materials and construction techniques which are akin to existing ones.

- *Restoration of Maria Addolorata Cemetery (Embellishment, Landscaping, Maintenance and Repair works - Phase1):* The work initially involved the preparation of reports on the required interventions to establish a programme based on priorities for the short and long term works. Detailed estimates for the short (phase 1) and long term works (phase 2) were compiled and referred to ministries concerned. The work also included the submission of a method statement report to MEPA in conjunction with the proposed works and interventions.

Tender documents were prepared for the cleaning of the underground reservoir at the rear end of the cemetery and for the laying of new tarmac surface in the two carriageways (identified for the short term interventions). Work on site to date involved the execution of works by direct labour on the repair and adjustment of the stone staircases on the sides of the identified carriage ways.

- *St George's Church Parvis, Qormi:* The paving to the church parvis was re-designed. Material used consisted of porfido paving slabs, hardstone paving slabs and granite paving slabs. Works were completed in March 2008.
- *Fixing of decorative lamp posts at Salini Road, Marsascala:* This project was funded by MEPA's Urban Improvement Funds. A total number of 99 lamp posts were fixed along Triq is-Salini. The wiring installation was carried out by the Manufacturing and Services Department. The fixing of these lamp posts was carried out by a private contractor. These works were finalised in July 2008.
- *Kennedy Grove Embellishment:* The area forms part of the Salini Park and plans have been carried out to upgrade the area. Infrastructural works are ongoing. The existing footpaths are to be retained and resurfaced using imprinted concrete similar to that already used elsewhere in the park. Additional furniture and other items including light fittings, bins and benches of the types already in place will be installed to allow for continuity throughout the area. Since the area is a salt marsh, utmost priority was given not to disturb the land as far as possible. It is also envisaged to include water features to complement the existing Salina Park.
- *Xgħajra Promenade:* The second and more extensive second phase of this project is currently underway. It involves the embellishment of the promenade of this picturesque village. Works consist in the widening of the walkways, the provision of ample parking and other general amenities. Works are scheduled to be completed by the second quarter of 2009.

- *Creation of a recreational area at Blue Grotto Avenue, Żurrieq:* This project consisted of the construction of a sports complex for use by sports clubs and non-government organisations and a large reservoir intended to alleviate flooding in the area. The sports facilities included a *boċċi* pitch, two multipurpose soccer pitches, toilets and landscaped areas. The area in question was previously a disused site having an area of circa 3,960 square metres. The area was designated as a site for community facilities.

The works consisted of the removal of soil, excavation works, erection of reservoir floor, walls and roof, unreinforced concrete sub-floors, tiling works, erection of toilet walls and roofs, decoration, plumbing and aluminium works in toilets, electrical installation, erection of masonry sleeper and boundary walls, erection of pump room, erection of *boċċi* pitch, erection of pump rooms and fountain, erection of fencing, provision and installation of turf in two multipurpose pitches including sports equipment, backfilling and tiling works, laying of surface pipes, irrigation and landscaping works, erection of rubble walls and other works.

- *Qrendi Parish Square embellishment:* The Qrendi Parish Square project involved embellishing the village core of Qrendi, including the church parvis. The street/piazza in front of the parish church was redesigned. The pavements closest to the church were widened. The pavements were paved using hardstone material while the road itself was paved with grey and black concrete paving blocks which were laid in a pattern.
- *New Fuel Station – Kordin:* Works on a new fuel station at Kordin were completed in early 2008. The station has now been commissioned and replaces the old station facility at Kirkop.
- *Demolition and Excavation works at the ex-Spinning & Weaving factory site, Ta' Qali Zone A:* The remaining demolition works of zone A were carried out and an agreement with site owners was reached regarding the use of an existing shed for construction material storage.
- *Balzan Parish Church Parvis:* The embellishment project of the church parvis in Balzan involved paving an area of approximately 650 square metres (which were formerly covered with cement tiles) using natural stone materials such as granite and hardstone with a bush-hammered surface to render it non-slip. Uplighters were included as part of the paving design to highlight the architectural features of the church. The concrete steps at the side of the church were replaced with moulded hardstone steps. In conjunction with this project, further paving works in the vicinity of the church were also carried out.

Projects Originating from other Ministries and Departments

- *New AFM Administrative Building for Maritime Base, Haywharf:* A part of the planned block had already been constructed by AFM personnel earlier and houses a large garage, a generator room and a new Enemalta substation. The construction of the remaining parts has now also been completed.
- *Works with Police and Armed Forces:* Demolition and replacing a 40-metre-long dangerous balcony at the Police Depot together with the structural appraisal of internal roofs.
- *National Statistics Office Building:* A structural appraisal report was carried out suggesting the need for remedial works and a risk and mitigation assessment.
- *Structural inspections at Barn 7, Sa Maison (MFEI):* Rehabilitation of Barn 7 Sa Maison was carried out after structural investigations concluded that the roof could be retained. Waterproofing works were also carried out. The premises will be used by the Department of Contracts for storage purposes.
- *Structural work at Verdelin Palace Valletta (MITC):* The roof at basement level was repaired as deterioration was evident. Works included the replacement of old steel beams with new ones.
- *Ta' Kandja Centre for Asylum Seekers:* This project was completed during 2008 except for minor security details which are being considered by the Police Force. The Centre, which houses around 400 immigrants, consists of four dormitories with ancillary facilities such as living/dining areas, lavatories and recreational spaces. It also includes an administration block.
- *Central Visa Unit:* The project comprised the refurbishment of disused office space in Floriana for use by the Central Visa Unit.

Projects Currently at Design Stage

Projects originating from the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs

- *St George's Square Paving Project, Valletta:* An application has been submitted to MEPA for the construction of an underground one-storey car park and the upgrading of St George's Square. The car park will have a minimum capacity of 95 cars and access to the car park will be possible from Archbishop Street. MEPA approval is still awaited on this project.

The design will incorporate a central fountain facing the Presidential Palace; lighting of existing buildings surrounding square; and paving in natural materials of existing square, Old Theatre Street and Republic Street.

- *Embellishment of Xatt is-Sajjieda, Marsaxlokk:* The aim is to revamp the whole area and to make it more manageable in view of the various activities that take place in the area, including the Sunday market, the Fish market, restaurants' and fishermen's activities. The main paving materials will be porfido slabs, granite slabs and hardstone slabs and porfido and granite *cubetti*. A tender has been awarded and works are projected to commence at a future date.
- *Re-paving of Gżira Parish Church Parvis:* The existing concrete slabs are expected to be replaced by local coralline *tal-qawwi* hardstone, both for the paving (approximately 2,200 metres squared) and for the reconstruction of the balustrade pilasters.
- *Design of St Anne's Square Paving, Sliema:* St Anne's Square is to be returned to its former use as a public open space in the centre of the very busy commercial hub of Sliema. Paving materials being proposed are porfido *cubetti* and hardstone slabs. A fountain, a small kiosk and seating around the existing mature *figus* trees will complete the ensemble. The project design has been finalised and works should start after January 2009.
- *Embellishment of Qui-Si-Sana Promenade:* The promenade will extend beyond the already embellished promenade which stretches all the way from St Julians to Għar id-Dud. The sidewalk will be extended over the beach so as to provide kerb side parking. The railing will reflect the design already existing in the Għar id-Dud stretch. The paving will also be replaced, as will the lighting. The proposed paving and lighting will be similar to the Għar id-Dud design. Sanitary facilities will be provided at beach level.
- *Widening of Pedestrian Sidewalk in St George's Bay, Paceville:* In order to enhance an area with a high density of tourist accommodation, it is envisaged to widen the pedestrian sidewalk at St George's Bay, Paceville. This will link the bay to the central nightspot in Paceville and even further to St Julians Bay.
- *New pavement design at Castille Square, Valletta:* A need was felt to redesign this piazza, which will be incorporated in the new paving and traffic master plan of Valletta. The square in question is of prime national importance and is one of the most important squares in Malta. An innovative design incorporating new concepts in a historical setting is being proposed.
- *Qui-Si-Sana Garden and Underground Car Park:* Architectural drawings were prepared for the construction of an underground car park of about 500 cars and an overlying garden. A sustainable approach was the main focus in the design aiming at natural ventilation, green roof, water collection and tree structures with incorporated photovoltaic panels. The underground structure followed the existing contour of the garden and consisted of a complex of two, three and four levels. Another feature in the garden was a direct link to Fort Cambridge garden. The garden was designed on a theme of fractals in nature. A preliminary structural analysis and cost analysis were also carried out.
- *Extension to Maria Addolorata Cemetery – Paola:* Initially the project included the extension of the cemetery to incorporate additional graves. However, it was later decided to prepare a master plan for the upgrading and extension of the Maria Addolorata Cemetery. This master plan has been prepared and its design provides for a better integration of the existing historically and architecturally important cemetery with the proposed extension.

- *Birgu Clock Tower*: Following the approval of an outline application for the reconstruction of the Birgu Clock Tower, a Full Development Application was submitted for this proposal.
- *Melita Street*: As a continuation of the pedestrianisation project in Valletta, architectural drawings have been prepared for the re-paving of Melita Street running from Merchants Street to Republic Street. The material to be used is similar to that used in Merchants Street and consists of porfido material. Works are expected to be taken in hand in 2009.
- *Caravan Sites*: Preliminary designs for the construction of a caravan site at a site adjacent to Maghtab at Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq and Żonqor Point, Marsascula have been prepared.
- *Heritage Trail – Żonqor Point, Marsascula*: Designs are in hand for the embellishment of this area which will include a heritage trail to highlight the existing coastal fortifications.
- *Design of Ganado Gardens, Floriana*: Plans have been prepared for the upgrading of this garden. It is proposed to retain as far as possible the existing footpaths and use natural materials.
- *Proposed ramp at Bastion Square, Mdina*: Pjazza tas-Sur or Bastion Square was the old parade ground of Mdina and its old firing bastion, the *Bastione de Vaccari*, has a superb panoramic view of Malta. The need was felt to make both sites accessible to all and design proposals for an appropriate ramp have been prepared.
- *Construction of Archery Bridge, Marsa*: Works are envisaged to commence during 2009 for the construction of a 13-metre road/pedestrian bridge. The site conditions necessitate a bridge with a very low structural depth and a flat soffit. A structural steel through girder bridge can provide this requirement and it is envisaged that works will be carried out by the steel section of Manufacturing and Services Department.
- *San Ġwann T'Għuxa, Cospicua*: This involves the embellishment of a run-down area, next to a housing estate on one side and the Cospicua bastions on the other. The area is at the moment inaccessible and unutilised. This project would create an area for recreation while enhancing the environs of the bastions. Designs were prepared and revised according to MEPA requests. The Cospicua Local Council is currently applying for funds to be in a position to carry out this project.

Projects originating from other Ministries and Departments

- *The proposed Beach Programme*: The project involves the rehabilitation of some selected beaches. Works include the preparation of detailed plans indicating the design and location of beach ladders, access railings, signs, pathways, outdoor furniture and even repair of beach structures. The implementation phase will follow. A pilot project has already been carried out: a beach stairway has been designed and constructed taking into consideration its use by elderly persons and infants.
- *Rehabilitation of Old University Building, Valletta*: A master plan is being prepared for the rehabilitation of the whole building. This would include the provision of better vertical access and improved access routes in case of fire.
- *Ta' Kandja New Police Academy, I/o Siggiewi*: A design brief was formulated for this project. To this effect, various meetings were held with the Police Corps. A detailed 'site and building layout survey' was also compiled including structures below ground existing at the proposed site. The work involves the design of a master plan and more detailed layouts of the individual buildings, which are in an advanced design stage.
- *Contracts Department*: Plans for the alteration of the basement level of the Contracts Department premises into offices have been submitted to MEPA. The project involves the demolition and re-erection of roofs in several isolated blocks; provision and installation of new apertures, decoration works, plumbing and electrical works, tiling, provision of basic services and cleaning works.
- *Extension of office space, Police General Headquarters, Floriana*: Designs have been prepared for additional offices at the Police General Headquarters in Floriana. These will be housed within the existing vaulted building in the Police Yard.

- *Rehabilitation works at MCESD, Floriana (OPM):* A structural investigation was carried out at the MCESD premises in Floriana. A structural solution was found and works were carried out successfully to consolidate this building.
- *Additional floor for the Plant Biotechnology Centre, Lija:* Architectural plans have been drawn up and an application was filed with MEPA. The proposed floor is an extension of the existing laboratory.
- *Lift and new escalators for Valletta Market (MFEI):* Proposals for two escalators and a lift at the Valletta Market were presented to the client.
- *Construction of a Heavy Vehicles Workshop for the AFM at Hal Safi:* Plans for a heavy vehicles workshop for AFM at Hal Safi have been drawn up.

SERVICES UNIT - MECHANICAL

Works carried out for Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs

- *Fuel Station – Corradino:* A new Fuel Station was built at Corradino to replace the existing station at Kirkop. Works are now complete and the new station is operational.
- *Ta' Qali Park:* The Services Unit embarked on the design of water features for the Ta' Qali Park project. There will be five water features, an underground stream and water flowing through a pond.
- *Fish Market, Valletta:* Mechanical services in the common area and services inside the stalls at the Fish Market were either obsolete or non-existent. These shortfalls were addressed and other facilities were also made available, including a changing room, an area for washing skips used by fishermen, and an ice-making machine.
- *St George's Square, Valletta:* Work is in hand on the design of mechanical services such as ventilation and fire prevention systems, to be installed in a single storey underground car park that is planned for construction beneath the square.
- *The Maria Addolorata Cemetery, Paola:* A new water supply system has been designed for the cemetery, to enable rainwater to be pumped from an underground to a surface reservoir.
- *The Mall Gardens, Floriana:* The irrigation system in the gardens was modified to a fully automatic drip irrigation system, which included underground reserve tanks, a pump room and timing equipment.

Works Division – Beltissebh

- *CCTV System:* In order to enhance the security of the entire area, a CCTV system was installed. Initially, envisaged coverage included all the entry/exit points to Project House and also the entry/exit points for traffic into and out of Beltissebh. It has since been extended to also include nearby open areas and car parks.
- *Maintenance of VRF type Air Conditioning Systems at Project House:* A tender has been prepared for the regular period maintenance of the three VRF systems installed at Project House.
- *Construction and Maintenance Department premises, Beltissebh:* A number of energy efficient, high-wall split-type units were commissioned for these offices.
- *Spinola Palace, St Julians:* A hydraulic operated lift was installed in the building to make the upper floors accessible to people with special needs.
- *Fond Għadir, Sliema:* design of a fountain for the waterfront.

Works carried out for other Ministries and Departments

- *San Anton Palace:* All the air conditioning units in the De Paule Suite were replaced with new units using R410a refrigerant gas and are also inverter driven for maximum energy efficiency.

- *Auberge de Castille*: replacement of two of the four existing lifts with a new pair of machine-room-less type traction lifts.
- *St Vincent de Paule*: Air conditioning and fresh air systems at the psycho geriatric female wards were completely refurbished. A state-of-the-art Variable Refrigerant Flow/Volume air conditioning system was installed together with a ventilation system which provides fresh air to all the areas and also utilises heat recovery to maximise energy efficiency.
- *Villa Francia, Lija*: Mechanical services consisting of a semi-panoramic hydraulic passenger lift; a dumb waiter, a VRF type air conditioning system for the entire building, plumbing systems, rehabilitation of a number of fountains in the surrounding grounds.
- *Institute of Tourism Studies, Pembroke*: A ventilation system was installed to provide the lecturers' offices situated at basement level with forced fresh air due to the fact that the offices are situated below street level.
- *Local Government Department, Valletta*: A new lift has been ordered and will be installed as soon as it is available. This shall conform to the latest EU and MSA standards.
- *Law Courts – Passenger Lifts*: A tender was prepared for replacing three very small passenger lifts used at the law courts in three separate locations.
- *Auberge de Bavière*: installation of VRV air-conditioning systems as part of Phase 2 of the rehabilitation process.
- *St Vincent De Paule*: A tender for replacement of all air conditioning equipment of the Serenity Ward is currently being evaluated.
- *Centre for Policy Research and Training, ex-Lotto Department, Floriana*: This place consists of three separate blocks and a number of stores in the form of tunnels dug out in the bastions. An air conditioning layout consisting of VRV system technology was designed for both Blocks A and B. Passenger lifts will also be installed: an internal one inside block B, a panoramic lift that will connect the lower level of Block A with the upper level of Blocks B and C. A decision still has to be taken on the future use of stores and Block C premises and therefore no plans or designs have been prepared so far.
- *Fire Detection, Fire Suppression and CCTV Systems, the National Library, Valletta*: A draft maintenance agreement was prepared to cover maintenance of the systems installed at the National Library.
- *MEUSAC Building, OPM, Valletta*: Mechanical services at the new MEUSAC offices in Republic Street.

SERVICES UNIT – ELECTRICAL

Works carried out for MRRA

- Recreational Area, Żurrieq
- Promenade Phase II, Xghajra
- St Paul's Bay, Promenade
- Madonna tal-Ħlas Chapel, Qormi
- San Niklaw Chapel, Siġġiewi
- St Paul Chapel, Attard
- St Luke Chapel, Żurrieq

Works carried out for other Ministries

- Independence Square, Victoria Gozo
- Various Ministers' offices at House of Representatives
- Accounts, PQ, editing, typing offices at House of Representatives
- Auberge de Bavière, Valletta

Works in Progress (Design/Execution) for MRRRA

- Presidential Palace, Valletta
- St George's Square, Valletta
- Underground Car Park, Valletta
- Adventure Park, Ta' Qali
- Kennedy Grove
- Qui-si-Sana Promenade, Sliema
- Marsaxlokk
- Tower Road, Sliema
- Ta' l-Angli Chapel, Żebbuġ
- Landscaping at Pembroke
- Public Garden, Guardamangia

Works in Progress (Design/Execution) for other Ministries

- Addolorata Cemetery (upgrading)
- Addolorata Cemetery (extension)
- CPRT (ex-Lotto) Complex, Floriana
- AFM Maritime Base, Haywharf, Floriana
- SAG Complex/Detention Centre, Ta' Kandja

VALLETTA REHABILITATION PROJECT

- *The Conservation of the Alessio Erardi vault painting in the Church of Our Lady of Victory:* Restoration works relate to the ceiling wall paintings. The conservation project has been going on since 2000 and the works were carried out by the Coulthard Institute. Works have now approached the final phases.

Projects carried out by VRP Direct Labour as from June 2008

- *Republic Street:* Filling missed joints of existing porfido paving slabs using specialised grouting material.
- *Lower Barrakka Gardens:* Filling missed joints of existing porfido paving slabs using specialised grouting material.
- *St John Street (Steps):* Breaking up existing concrete patches from hard stone steps and replace same by new hard stone slabs. Cleaning and washing hard stone steps using special detergent and pointing joints using white cement, sand and marble mortar mix.
- *St James Church:* Plinth restoration - rendering final finish plaster coat using Colorado plaster with added tint to internal skirting of the perimeter of church. St James Church - restoration works to external walls at roof level using hydraulic lime and sand including plastic repairs plaster.
- *St Paul Street:* Maintenance to existing pavements using cement and sand mortar.
- *St Christopher Street:* Maintenance to existing pavements using cement and sand mortar.
- *Jesuit Church:* Restoration works to external parapet walls at roof level including stone cladding fixed to deteriorated stone by resin cement glue.
- *Bell Monument:* Restoration and remedial works to existing parapet walls using hydraulic lime and sand including plastic repairs plaster. Other completed works include the replacement of broken hardstone paving and repair to reinforced concrete soffits.
- *Statue at Old Bakery Street:* Replacing dislodged pedestal and related restoration works.
- *Mall Gardens, Floriana:* Repairs, restoration and remedial works to existing water fountains using hydraulic lime and sand including plastic repairs plaster and special plaster.
- *St Paul's Church:* Restoration and remedial works on historical timber cupboards in sacristy have also been completed.

LAND SURVEYING UNIT

The Land Surveying Unit carried out 120 survey downloads for 56 projects, besides ‘setting out’ to all listed projects. The Land Surveying Unit catered for the following entities: MRRRA (Works Division and Services Division); Health Department; Armed Forces; Malta Police Force.

- *Works Division Projects:* Sliema Tower Road Refurbishment; Paceville – Main Square; Valletta; St John Street; Melita Street; South Street; St George Square; Victoria Gate; Żurrieq Sports Complex; Balzan Main Square; Marsaxlokk – Triq ix-Xatt; Paola – Sta Maria Addolorata Cemetery Extension; Kordin Fuel station; Qrendi – Village Core; Marsa – Jetties Wharf; Gżira – Manoel Island Bridge; Żabbar – Xgħajra Road; St Julians – Ix-Xatt; Kirkop – Football Ground; Xgħajra promenade; Town/Village Main Church Squares/Parvis; Qormi - San Ġorġ; Paola – Christ the King; Ta’ Xbiex – St John of the Cross; Ta’ l-Ibraġ; Balzan; Gżira; Mosta.
- *Storm Water Projects:* Marsa; Burmarrad/Kennedy Grove; Maghtab; Qormi – Valletta Road; Gudja – reservoir; Lija – Mosta Road proposed reservoir.
- *Other Projects:* Floriana – Milorda Gardens; Gattard House - car park; Floriana Lotto Department; Salina – Kennedy Grove; St Julians – Neptunes Waterpolo club; Buskett –Square; Sliema – Qui-Si-Sana; Żabbar – St Joseph Convent; Bugibba foreshore; St Paul’s Bay - St Francis Street; Mtarfa Playing Field; Marsa Spencer Gardens; Sa Maison - car park; Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq beach; St Georges’ Bay Refurbishment; Marsascale – Heritage Walk.
- *Malta Police Force:* Ta’ Kandja Compound.
- *Armed Forces:* Lija – Fireworks Factory; Luqa – Fireworks Factory.
- *Expropriation Files:* B’Kara – Msida Street; Dingli/Rabat Road; Mgarr Housing Estate; Haġar Qim; Għar Lapsi Car Park.

QUANTITY SURVEYING UNIT

The main duties carried out by the Quantity Surveying (QS) Unit are:

- preparation of budget estimates at pre-planning stage;
- drafting of particular specifications;
- preparation of bills of quantities;
- drawing up estimates for allocation of funds for tendering purposes;
- evaluation of tenders and drafting of technical reports;
- giving advice regarding contractual procedure and interpretation of conditions of contract;
- drawing up of monthly valuations for issue of interim payments to contractors;
- re-measurement of all contract works;
- drawing up of Final Accounts and agreeing rates for variations with contractors;
- checking, evaluating and reporting on extra-contractual claims submitted by contractors.

Works covered – 2008

During 2008 the following works load was handled by the QS Unit:

- Tender documents, bills of quantities and estimates were prepared for 61 tenders with an estimated value of €2,674,354;
- 22 Final Bills on a re-measurement basis were prepared for completed contracts with total value of €455,652;
- Valuation for 18 monthly interim payments to contractors during the course of contracts amounted to €1,042,466;
- 21 estimates were prepared to the value of €1,367,731.

Other Activities

Besides the works mentioned above, the following activities were also performed:

- Advice was given to architects/engineers on contractual procedure regarding disputes with contractors and consultants.
- A managerial grade quantity surveyor represented the Department at Law Courts in cases of litigation.
- Work on ERDF restoration projects.
- Estimating and measuring works carried out by Construction and Maintenance Department employees on behalf of local councils.

Final Accounts Settled during 2008

Building and Engineering Department	€178,128
Construction and Maintenance Department	€277,524
Total	€455,652

Payments on Account Certified during 2008

Building and Engineering Department	€421,631
Construction and Maintenance Department	€5,710
Armed Forces of Malta	€103,787
Police Department	€511,388
Total	€1,042,516

EMANUEL BUTTIGIEG
Director (Building and Engineering)

Works Division

Construction & Maintenance Department

INTRODUCTION

The Construction and Maintenance Department (CMD) is one of the largest departments within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA), with a workforce of around 800 employees that includes administrative, professional, technical, and direct labour personnel. The CMD is made up of the following units:

- Restoration Unit
- Central Districts Office
- Supporting Services
- Lija Workshop

RESTORATION UNIT

The Restoration Unit is engaged in works of a specific nature, specialising in restoring monuments and public buildings that are part of our vast and colourful national heritage. Works are of a varied nature, yet these have one focus; to render to its former glory the particular monument or building in question. Interventions are classified under four classes, each distinct yet interrelated: those of maintenance, of restoration, of conservation, and those of consolidation. Through the capabilities of the workmen of this Department, the MRRA is engaged in a systematic programme of restoration works across the Islands which have now been going on for several years.

Works carried out during 2008

Works carried out include the following:

Restoration of Ta' l-Anġli Chapel, Żebbuġ	Decoration Works at Auberge d'Italie
Restoration of Fountain at Palazzo Parisio	Restoration of Ta' Qrejċa Chapel, Qormi
Restoration of Facade of Hal-Millieri Chapel	Restoration of Semaphere Tower, Gharghur
Restoration of the Casemated Vaults at Ospizio, Floriana and conversion into offices	Restoration of the facades of the Wied Ghammieq Chapel, Kalkara
Restoration of St Paul's Statue in Melita Street, Valletta	Cleaning of Floriana Bastions (Viset's Area) – Phases 1 & 2
Restoration of the portico and facades of the National Library, Valletta	Restoration of Falsabraga Bastion, Sa Maison, Floriana (near ADT offices)
Restoration of paving at Santa Maria Addolorata Cemetery, Paola	Completion of the restoration works of façades, tal-Hlas Chapel, Qormi
Restoration of the interior of Tas-Salvatur Chapel, Kalkara	Restoration of St George's Parish Church Parvis, Qormi
Restoration of side-façade of St John Co-Cathedral facing Merchants Street, Valletta	Restoration of side façade of St John Co-Cathedral facing Great Siege Square, Valletta
Restoration of San Niklaw Chapel, Siġġiewi	Restoration works of Main Entrance to Mdina
Restoration of St Barbara Bastion, Valletta	Restoration of Sant' Antnin Chapel, Marsascula
Restoration of façade of Wignacourt Museum, Rabat	Cleaning of various historical sites which were subject to acts of vandalism
Various restoration works on the Presidential Palaces (Valletta, San Anton and Verdala)	Preparation works in connection with the Fortifications' Interpretation Centre

Project Funded by the EEA Financial Mechanism (MT0012)

Consolidation of unstable terrain and restoration works of historic ramparts underlying Council Square, Mdina

Works were initiated in March 2008. Following the discovery of important archaeological remains, works had to be halted to allow for the excavation of said remains, and the necessary amendments were made to the intervention as originally proposed. Deep consolidation was concluded in end October 2008, and boring for soil frac treatment and ties commenced. Works were executed at a slower rate due to unpredictable ground conditions.

Project Funded by the ERDF

Restoration and Rehabilitation of Historical Fortifications of Malta and Gozo

- **Mdina:** Service tender for geotechnical consultancy - works on this tender continued during 2008, and as per deliverables established in the awarded tender.

Tender for Mdina Bastions Ground Investigation Work and Monitoring System - tender is currently at adjudication stage.

Area A- Restoration and Consolidation of the Vilhena Palace Area - drawing up of this tender is at an advanced stage. Consultants are preparing the underground consolidation intervention, while the Restoration Unit is preparing the above-ground restoration works.

- **Gozo Citadel:** Service tender for the provision of geotechnical engineering consultancy, including monitoring works - tender has been drawn up and referred to Department of Contracts for vetting.

Tender for the documentation (3-dimensional and 2-dimensional recording and mapping) of the Citadel fortifications, Gozo.

- **Valletta:** Tender for restoration works to Valletta Landfront Fortifications - The photogrammetry section of the Restoration Unit prepared detailed plans documenting the present state of St John's Cavalier, Valletta, St Andrew's Bastion and adjoining Low Platform, Valletta; Spencer Bastion, St Andrew Tenaille, St Michael Demi-Bastion and Two Piazze Basse, Valletta; SS Peter and Paul Bastion Face, Counterscarpe and Bridge, Valletta.

Tender for restoration works to Valletta Landfront Fortifications - The photogrammetry section of the Restoration Unit prepared detailed plans documenting the present state of St Michael's Demi-Bastion and Curtain wall and St John's Bastion.

- **Birgu:** Tender for restoration works to Birgu Landfront Fortifications - The photogrammetry section of the Restoration Unit prepared detailed plans documenting the present state of St John Bastion, Piazza Bassa and Gateways, Birgu; St John's Cavalier and the Curtain of France, Birgu.

Tender for restoration works to Birgu Landfront Fortifications - The photogrammetry section of the Restoration Unit prepared detailed plans documenting the present state of St James Cavalier and Bastion.

CENTRAL DISTRICTS OFFICE

The Central Districts Office carries out various projects and works such as embellishment and maintenance works on behalf of various entities including ministries, government departments and the local councils.

The CMD provides other services through the Supporting Services Unit, such as waterproofing works and supplying of *franka* stone blocks from the Tar-Robba soft stone quarry situated at Mqabba, and which is government owned and run by CMD. The Lija Workshop, in turn, carries out various iron works including railings and benches in connection with the various ongoing projects being executed by this Department.

Works carried out by the Central Districts Office (CDO)

The Districts Section carried out works which were requested by local councils, various government departments and the MRRA. The works consisted mainly of laying of new pavements, reinstatement of several other pavements, embellishment works and upkeep of roads and gardens, patching up of primary and secondary road surfaces using the cold mix system, cleaning of water carrying canals, building of walls, and various maintenance works on government-owned non-residential tenements; these works were requested by the Estates Management Department.

The main projects undertaken by CDO during 2008 were the following:

Construction of footpath at Triq il-Marina, Kalkara	Maintenance works at Marsaxlokk Promenade
Paving at Hibernians FC Nursery, Corradino – Paola	Repair works of the interior of Wied Ghammieq Chapel
Reconstruction of boundary wall to access road to Marsa Sports Complex	Cleaning/repair works at St Joseph Junior Lyceum, Corradino Hill, Paola
Maintenance works on rubble wall at Triq Hompesch, Żabbar	Various works at Santa Maria Addolorata Cemetery, Paola
Maintenance works at St Thomas Bay Promenade, Żejtun	Paving of Parish Church Parvis, Fgura
Various paving works at Triq Salvatore Magri, Triq ta' Ciantar, St Mary Street, Żurrieq and Triq Prof Enrico Vassallo, Siggiewi	Construction of a Sport Complex/Recreational Area at Blue Grotto Avenue, Żurrieq
Maintenance/construction works at the Manufacturing and Services Department Marsa	Paving of Mqabba Church Parvis, including adjacent Main Square
Construction of a wall at De La Cruz Gardens, Qormi	Various works at Sally Port, Gardjola Gardens, Senglea
Various repair works at Ghadira Bay, Mellieha	Paving of Balzan Parish Church Parvis
Completion of paving works of San Gwann Parish Church Parvis	Various reconstruction/repair of rubble walls at tal-Plieri, Rabat and Maghtab
Construction works at Ta' Qali Adventure Park (Phase 3)	Embellishment works at Kennedy Grove, Qawra
Paving of St George's Parish Church Parvis, Qormi	Paving of St Sebastian Parish Church Parvis, Qormi
Paving of Sta. Venera Parish Church Parvis	Embellishment of Balzan Centre
Various internal works at Palazzo Spinola, St Julians including the construction of a lift shaft and the installation of an elevator	Works on various football/sports grounds including Hal Kirkop, Mqabba, Mdina, Qormi, Zebbug, Dingli, Attard and Pembroke
Construction works on the new Xghajra Promenade	Construction of a new Fuel Station at MSD, Kordin
General maintenance works on promenade between Manoel Island and Sliema Ferries	Commencement of works on store for St Julians Scouts Group, below parish church
Casting of precast concrete slabs in connection with the proposed embellishment project at Marsaxlokk	Construction/demolition works on the ex-Deutsche Welle Building at Xrobb l-Ghaġin, Delimara in connection with a Visitor's Park
Embellishment works at Xatt is-Sajjieda, St Julians	Various maintenance works on pavements in Valletta
Paving of Paceville Square	Various maintenance works at Buskett Gardens
Construction of a water retaining masonry wall at Gudja catchment area	Repairs and reconstruction of dangerous walls at the Bio-Technology Centre, Lija and San Anton Gardens
Commencement of embellishment works at Triq Napuljun Tagliaferro, Pembroke	Various repair works to masonry/rubble walls at Ġnien Romeo Romano, Sta Venera
Various works on vaults at St Angelo, Birgu	Maintenance works in Pioneers' Road, Buġibba
Embellishment works at Tower Road, Sliema	Restoration and refurbishment works at Villa Francia, Lija
Maintenance works at Ursuline Sisters Convent, Valletta	Maintenance works at House of Four Winds, Valletta
Embellishment works at Saqqajja Hill and Dingli	Ongoing maintenance at il-Mixtla, Bormla
Completion of access road to Haġar Qim Temples in connection with Wied Babu Project (Phase 3)	Preparatory works in connection with the construction of a Family Park at Marsascalea
Commencement of refurbishment works at Fawwara Research Centre in connection with CEER Project	Refurbishment works at MRRA offices and Project House, Floriana
Various maintenance works on the following Promenades: Buġibba, Qawra, St Paul's Bay, Xemxija, Ċirkewwa, Sliema (including Ġnien l-Indipendenza), St Julians, Marsascalea, Birzebbuġa, Xghajra and Sirens Water Polo Pitch	Maintenance works carried out in various localities including 1,000 metres of kerbs; 800 sq m of pavement repairs; 1,800 metres of masonry and rubble wall repairs; erection of 350 sq m of boundary fencing; repairs to bus shelters, traffic islands, roundabouts, etc; maintenance to garden furniture in public areas; road patching works
Various paving works in Sliema including Sir Luigi Camilleri and Stella Maris Street	

Works carried out in non-residential government-owned tenements were the following:

Construction of a sub-station at Valletta for the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs	Construction of steel and timber decking at Auberge de Baviere, Valletta
Repairs to roofs/ceiling at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Valletta	Refurbishment works at the Construction and Maintenance Department, Floriana
Replacement of roof at Scouts Headquarters, Hamrun	Plastering and Painting at Mriehel Stores
Refurbishment at District 3 Stores and District 4 (both premises pertaining to the Works Division)	Restoration of Old Fisherman's room 'Tunnara' at Ghadira, l/o Mellieha
Plastering and painting of barn no.7, Sa Maison Hill, Floriana	Removal of six dangerous lattice steel masts at Wied Rini, l/o Bahrija
Reconstruction of dangerous retaining wall in St Nicholas Street, Bormla	Commencement of structural repairs to Belvedere Structure, Vittoriosa
Repairs to external wall at Evans Building, Valletta	Drainage and plumbing works at Refugee Centre, Hal Far
Repairs to façade of Deaf Centre, Lascaris, Valletta	Maintenance works on façade of Mosta Civic Centre
Repair of garages at 18-20, Ditch Street, Paola	Repairs to two staircases of Rabat Civic Centre
Preparation of tender documents for the removal of danger at 156, St Nicholas Street, Valletta	Repair of beams at Crafts Centre, St John's Square, Valletta

SUPPORTING SERVICES SECTION

Apart from the usual cutting of *tal-franka* stone blocks, the quarry workers were also employed on extending the quarry floor by a considerable amount of square metres. This is part of an ongoing process to render the quarry area usable for the production of stone. The Waterproofing Section covered around 4,710 square metres of waterproofing membrane on various departments and other government-owned premises.

Materials issued from Tar-Robba Quarry during 2008 were the following:

Material	Qty
<i>Blokki kbar (2'x3'x4')</i>	1,757
<i>Kantun tas-6", 7" and 9"</i>	84,484
<i>Ċangatura 24"x10¼"x3"/16"x16'x3"</i>	13,876
<i>Blajjet/Samrotti (over 3ft in length)</i>	575
<i>Važi (different sizes)</i>	2,931
<i>Xorok</i>	52

HAL LIJA WORKSHOP

Works carried out by the Lija workshop were the following:

Manufacturing and installation of 700 metres of steel hand railing	Manufacturing and fixing in position of 110 timber/steel dustbins
Ancillary steel/timber works were also carried out which included iron grids, timber/steel gates, partitions, timber/steel benches and health and safety signboards	Wood restoration project of the Sacristy of St Paul's Church, Valletta

NICHOLAS GRECH

Director (Construction and Maintenance)

Services Division

Office of the Director General

INTRODUCTION

During the past year, the Units within the Director General's Office continued with the work initiated in the preceding two years and were involved in the preparation for the provision of extra services especially in the realm of new building regulations concerning energy efficiency of buildings and avoidance of damage to third parties which will be posing extra challenges on the Division's limited resources. Consolidation of the Valley Management Unit continued with the issue of calls and the transfer of a number of employees from other departments within the Ministry.

SECRETARIAT AND ADMINISTRATION

The secretariat and administration Unit continued to provide the everyday backbone services linked with running of the various units within the DG's Office. Such work comprises the distribution of memos and correspondence, keeping of attendance and leaves records of the employees, the monitoring of accounts, fuel issues, implementation of service standards, data protection issues, the checking of telephone and other services' bills and keeping track of all file movements that are referred to or opened by the DG's Office. This small unit also handles typing and printing requirements, the purchase of office materials, the compilation and updating of inventory, the travel arrangements of staff, and the distribution and provision of messenger and car transport services required by the other units. The Unit co-ordinates and handles booking arrangements for the use of the main hall and lecture rooms at Project House and the holding of talks and seminars by the other units of the DG's Office.

BUILDING REGULATION OFFICE (BRO)

Development of New Building Legislation

During 2008 work by this Office was focused on the following four main pieces of new legislation:

- Regulations to fully transpose and implement Directive 2002/91/EC concerning the Energy Performance Certification of Buildings, Boilers and Air Conditioning Systems.
- Amendments to the Building (Price Control) Act
- Amendments to the Bill prepared in 2003 in connection with the Registration of Building Tradesmen and new Building Regulations
- Drafting of new regulations to safeguard third party property during excavation, demolition and construction works.

The complete transposition of Directive 2002/91/EC was in fact done through the issue of Legal Notice 261 of 2008. It provides for implementation of certification of dwellings that are newly constructed, sold or rented out, and will come into effect as from 2 January 2009 for single family dwellings and 1 June 2009 for all other buildings. It also provides for the certification of boilers for the provision of hot water or heating of buildings and also the certification of air conditioning systems.

Work on the transposition and implementation of the Directive was mainly carried out by officers from the BRO and through the participation of members from a technical committee which met five times during 2008 and which carried out research and formulated the terms of reference for the issue of a tender for the

drafting of the methodology and provision of software for the certification of dwellings for Malta. This tender was first issued in August but had to be re-issued at the end of October because of an appeal that was lodged by one of the bidders. This setback meant that the methodology and related software can only be available by the end of February 2009.

Members of the BRO were also instrumental in providing terms of reference for the development of software to cater for the administration of the whole certification process. This system would be working through the e-Government portal and would facilitate registration of energy performance assessors and registration of energy performance certificates.

Work on amending the Building (Price Control) Act, the Bill on the Registration of Building Tradesmen and new Building Regulations and the drafting of the regulations to safeguard third party property during excavation, demolition and construction works was done in collaboration with the Legal Office of the Works Division and the Chairperson of BICC and consisted mainly in the preparation of a number of drafts which took into consideration the principle of better regulation by trying to minimise as much as possible the creation of new boards and committees, and the inclusion of self-regulatory principles. These drafts were discussed within the Ministry and referred to the Building Industry Consultative Council for its comments. At a later stage, the draft regulations will be brought up for public consultation prior to being presented for the approval of Cabinet.

Seminars, Meetings and Participation in EU Programs

The BRO organised a seminar in connection with the new legislation on energy efficiency of buildings, gave two expositions to members of a prominent estate agency and also took part in a seminar on the same subject that was organised by the Kamra tal-Periti.

The BRO also managed to obtain funding from an EU sponsored programme to participate in meetings of the *Concerted Action II*. This project was specifically set up by the European Commission through the *Intelligent Energy Europe programme* to provide a forum where officials dealing with the transposition and implementation of Directive 2002/91/EC could discuss and share experiences in the implementation of the Directive. Through a consultancy obtained through this project, the BRO conducted a study comparing energy ratings of buildings obtained in the southern European States bordering the Mediterranean Sea. One can gain access to this study from the Division's web page on the MRRA website.

The BRO continued with its work in connection with the European Municipal Buildings Climate Campaign by issuing a tender for an energy audit of Project House and offices at Block A at Beltissebħ. During the summer months, the Unit again recruited a number of university students and carried out research and information-gathering from thesis that have been carried out at the University of Malta on the subject of energy efficiency and thermal properties of building elements used in Malta.

Officers from the BRO took part in an EU Evaluation and Validation workshop and study with the title of *Future Qualification and Skills Needs in the Construction Sector*, the EC's Energy Demand Management Committee meetings, the Department of Health General Services Board meetings, and a number of meetings held by the Malta Standards Authority technical boards concerning Eurocodes on structures, health & safety and recycling of building materials.

Support to the Ministry's EU Affairs Directorate on matters dealing with energy efficiency of buildings, the free movement of services, mutual recognition of qualifications, and education and training in the field of architecture was also provided.

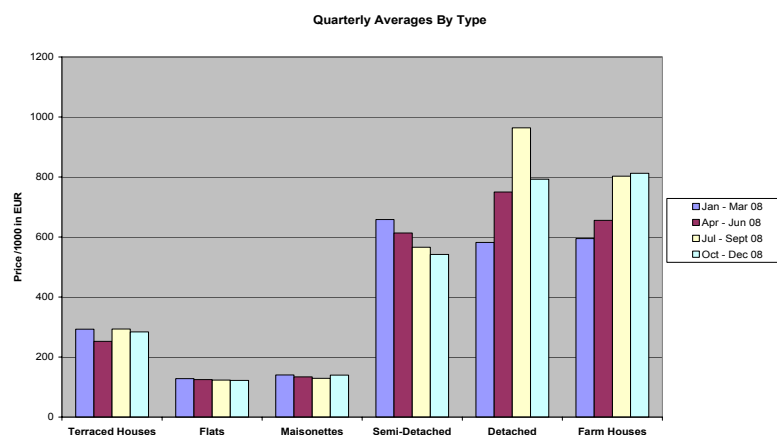
CE Marking of Lift Installations

The unit responsible for market surveillance of lift installations carried out the scrutiny of around 3,000 MEPA applications to determine possible new lift installations in Malta and Gozo in order to monitor CE

marking requirements. The Unit made also 600 site inspections to check on the progress of such installations and see that proper CE marking is carried out. A number of warnings were issued but no formal action was resorted to as installers carried out the necessary adjustments as requested.

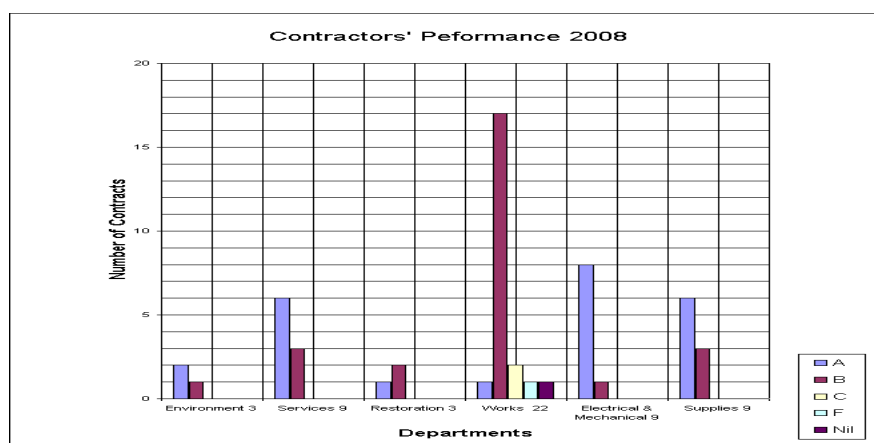
Market Surveillance on Prices of Buildings

Information on the fluctuation of prices in the domestic properties market was collected as in previous years. This information is taken from adverts in the local papers and logged into the Division's database that has been built up for the past six years. The following chart gives an indication of the fluctuations of prices on a quarterly basis that occurred during 2008.



QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT

The performance of contractors that worked or provided materials and services to the Works Division and Services Division throughout 2008 continued to be monitored by logging into the Division's database the completion reports of each contract that was awarded during this period. The table below gives an indication of such performance.



	Award of overall rating in running the contract					Total
	A	B	C	F	Nil	
Environment	2	1	0	0	0	3
Services	6	3	0	0	0	9
Restoration	1	2	0	0	0	3
Works	1	17	2	1	1	22
Electrical & Mechanical	8	1	0	0	0	9
Supplies	6	3	0	0	0	9

The Unit also carried out the sampling and co-ordinated the testing of materials and products that were used in various projects carried out by the different units of the Services Division and Works Division. These consisted in 112 sets of concrete tests, 15 sets of tests on concrete paving blocks, 3 sets of tests on asphaltting works, 2 sets of tests on concrete kerbs and 77 core cuts. The Unit, in collaboration with the structural engineering section of the Building & Engineering Department, also prepared and vetted a number of period contracts for the purchase of building material such as ready mixed concrete, aggregates, sand, concrete reinforcement steel, and concrete mesh reinforcement.

HEALTH & SAFETY UNIT

Daily Routine Work

Apart from the daily inspections on work sites, the H&S Unit is regularly contacted by officials and workers for support and guidance to the various line departments of the Works Division and Services Division. The following duties are regularly carried out:

- Verbal and written correspondence and reports after daily inspections are addressed to the respective head of departments, and their subordinate supervisors.
- Regularly collecting and evaluating various forms of occupational health and safety related data and other information, and communicating the results to line departments for which this information and material is of utmost importance.
- Participating in any feedback that is requested by the OHS Authority regarding new laws that are in the pipeline.
- An official from this unit is responsible to act as co-ordinator with the Building Industry Consultative Council in the programme on safety of construction workers and on site training known as *The Safety Bus*. Four sites were visited during 2008. During such visits, H&S issues are examined and through a session of dialogue with the site managers and workers, matters dealing with H&S are expounded further.

During 2008, the Unit made 233 inspections on various sites of work and issued 203 reports and risk assessments for works that were being handled by the Ministry's workforce.

Risk Assessments

The Unit made a number of specific and detailed risk assessments for different sections within the Manufacturing & Services Department and the Restoration Unit. These risk assessments tackled the following sections: Lifts Section - Marsa; Metal workshop MSD – Marsa; Carpentry workshop MSD – Marsa; Heavy Plant workshop MSD – Kordin; Heavy Vehicles workshop MSD – Kordin; Main Stores MSD – Kordin; Restoration of Fortifications (Bastions Restoration Workmen Hoist Platform) –Valletta.

The Unit carried out also a risk assessment for the Offices of the Attorney General at the Main Guard Building and the Palace in Valletta.

Health & Safety Representatives Meetings

H&S representatives meetings are an important means of spreading health and safety knowledge throughout the Department and a good opportunity to listen to the complaints coming from different sections. The Unit held five Health & Safety Representatives meetings during 2008. These meetings are usually chaired by the DG, and are an important asset to direct decisions on matters that H&S representatives report. Minutes of each meeting are taken, prepared and distributed by the Unit and any reports from H&S representatives resulting from these meetings are later followed up. Feedback is always given both in the following meeting and also to each person or H&S representative that brings up such reports. In each meeting, a member of the Unit also tackles a subject that would help all participants enhance their knowledge on H&S matters. During the year the subjects that were dealt with were safety

harnesses, proper lifting techniques, hierarchy of H&S principles, protective gloves, and mobile elevating platforms.

Investigation of Serious Injury Reports

The H&S Unit received 27 Injury Reports from the Human Resources Department which were inserted in the Unit's database. 15 reports were evaluated and investigated. Workers who were involved in these incidents were called to the office for a detailed explanation of how the incident occurred. Colleagues and supervisors were also questioned. All investigations were followed by a report and recommendations to the respective Heads of Department so that precautionary measures are taken to avoid similar accidents from happening in the future.

Health & Safety Courses

The Unit co-ordinated the holding of two courses on Basic First Aid which were attended by 26 employees from different departments of the Services Division and Works Division. Officials from the Unit also gave a 32-hour course on the responsibilities and duties of H&S representatives; 12 prospective H&S representatives attended this course. Officials from the Unit continued with their continuous professional development by attending a number of seminars dealing with stress, culture and hierarchy of H&S services.

Health & Safety Policy Document

A new draft of the Health & Safety Policy document for the Works Division and the Services Division was written. This draft amends the Policy Document that was issued in 2002 for the Works Division.

Drafting and Evaluation of Tenders

H&S inspectors were involved in drafting tenders, analysing samples, and data supplied by prospective contractors in order to submit evaluation reports to the Contracts & Procurement Section on matters dealing with the purchase of H&S protective clothing and equipment. In 2008, the H&S Unit was involved in a number of tenders regarding protective gloves, hard hats, sun protection lotion, safety boots, knee and half knee safety shoes, soap, respirators and *baseball type* protective caps.

ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES UNIT

National Flood Relief Project

The proposals for the Flood Relief Project for which EU funding is being sought under the 2007-2013 Structural Funds have been developed further and widened in scope. The project will still address the notorious flooding problems of the Lija/Iklin/Balzan/Birkirkara/Msida localities, but it will also include four additional project components that will afford the same level of flood relief to six other urbanised flood-prone areas. The work on the project's proposals has during the last year given the proposals a sharper focus on flood relief, retaining a scope for water conservation only as far as this is economically viable. The end result will be an overall greater and geographically wider distribution of flood relief benefits with a net saving in the overall budget. The former Birkirkara-Valley project has been expanded into a National Flood Relief Project (NFRP) that includes five project components in all, whereby flooding problems in Qormi, Marsa, Żebbuġ, Gżira, Żabbar and Marsascala, shall also be addressed.

The original project proposals and a range of technical alternatives developed by the Storm Water Master Plan Consultants and the Services Division were subjected with the help from Jaspers (experts from EIB) to an economic options analysis that also provided assistance in developing an even wider range of more viable options. Altogether, the whole range of alternatives was then subjected to an environmental appraisal to determine which were strongest on all counts. The inputs of various experts pointed towards

a downsizing of cost-inefficient water conservation infrastructure on the Birkirkara component. The scope of the project was widened to include interventions for flood relief and water conservation in several other localities. These were again analysed on account of their economic efficiency and examined together with the MEPA with regard to the specific nature of proposed intervention and site environmental sensitivity. Those which were likely to be environmentally acceptable and economically (even marginally) viable were retained within the framework of the NFRP. The NFRP, as a redefined flood relief project, was then presented and discussed with DG Regio, where the proposed changes were met positively. In the latter part of the year, a tender was prepared and published for the more detailed development of the project proposals, their economic and environmental appraisal, further refinement of proposals for the most favourable option, detailed cost-benefit and financial feasibility analyses, a full EIA, development of a procurement strategy for the project's execution, the formulation of capacity building proposals for operation of the project, once complete, and for improved storm water management and integrated valley management at large.

VALLEY MANAGEMENT UNIT

During 2008, the Unit was engaged on various works related to the cleaning and maintenance of valleys and reservoirs. Actual site work was carried out by a group of nineteen employees from the Cleansing Services Department and four employees who were transferred from the Construction and Maintenance Department following a call for the filling of vacant posts in this Unit. Another four employees were loaned from the Construction and Maintenance Department up to the end of September 2008. The group of nineteen employees from the CSD will eventually be transferred to the Valley Management Unit in January 2009.

Setting up of Site Operations Base

A small office and garage situated at Qormi, which belonged to the Cleansing Services Department, has been refurbished and is now being used as a base for the Unit. This involved the installation of a new electrical system and plastering and painting works. An IT connection to the main offices at Floriana was also installed.

Cleaning and Repair of Reservoirs

The following work connected with the cleaning and repair of reservoirs was carried out:

- cleaning and repair works to a large reservoir in Wied Garnaw, at Santa Luċija together with the installation of a chain link fence around the reservoir;
- cleaning and repair works to two reservoirs in Triq Garibaldi;
- cleaning of a reservoir at Valley Road, Msida.

A survey of storm water reservoirs that are owned by Government is being carried out in order to prepare a program for cleaning and rehabilitation works so that better use of this valuable water storage resource can be made.

Cleaning of Valleys

The following work in connection with the cleaning and maintenance of valleys was carried out during 2008:

- removal of illegal dumping from various valleys such as Wied Rmiedi, Wied is-Sewda, Wied il-Kbir and Wied Hesri;
- removal of accumulated material from the main water under-passages in Wied il-Qlejja (l/o Rabat);
- removal of tree trunks and branches from the watercourse following pruning works by the PARC Unit;

- clearing of accumulated material from the watercourse and underpass near Autobahn on the road leading to Wied Inċita;
- removal of accumulated material from the watercourse around the Marsa Sports Grounds complex;
- dredging of accumulated material from the dam in Wied Bidni, Marsascalea ;
- cleaning from vegetation and accumulated material of part of Wied Qannotta, Burmarrad;
- removal of illegal dumping from part of Wied Ghajn Rihana, Burmarrad;
- removal of vegetation from open culvert in Ghar Barka, Rabat;
- cleaning works at Mdina Valley;
- clearing up of deposited material from Wied Mofru, Rabat.

Construction of Road Retaining and Boundary Wall

The demolition and reconstruction of a road retaining boundary wall along part of the old racetrack at Marsa was completed. This boundary wall is 700m long and its construction had commenced in the later part of 2007. Work on the manufacture of the masonry coping for this wall which is made of specially sized stone was also taken in hand.

Replacement of Watercourse Bed at the Marsa Sports Grounds

Around 1,350 square metres of the existing concrete bed of the watercourse at the Marsa Sports Grounds which were damaged by the 2003 storms were replaced. This work involved the breaking up of damaged concrete slab, the removal of silt, consolidation of the canal bed and the recasting of the bed with reinforced concrete.

Construction of a Reservoir at Mosta Road, Lija

The designs for a 40,000 cu.m. soak-away reservoir at Mosta Road, Lija were completed, and an application was submitted to the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. A tender for ground investigation was also issued and awarded. Work on the preparation of tender documents for the execution of the works was also taken in hand so that as soon as this application is approved and the permit is issued site works on this project may commence. A survey of existing trees in the area was also undertaken.

Wied Qlejja Management Programme

This programme involves the general upgrading and rehabilitation of the Chadwick Lakes storm water basins. The work will include the clearing of accumulated silt and deposits from behind the water retentions and the reconstruction of all damaged structures, such as roads, bridges, rubble walls of the surroundings as well as the retention structures themselves.

Due to the sensitive nature of the work, consultations were started with MEPA on the manner in which such works could be tackled so as to avoid as much as possible the impact on the natural habitat of this system. Other consultations were undertaken with the technical section of the Agriculture Department to review and analyse the previous extensive work already carried out on the upper part of the valley at Il-Fiddien under the Italian Mission's programme. Joint inspections of the valley were carried out by the Valley Management Unit, MEPA officials and Agriculture Department personnel.

Work has begun on the survey of all structures from the *Fiddien* stretch all down to the *Chadwick Lakes* and *Wied Qlejja* so as to enable an overall view of the area and define areas of interventions. Works are proceeding on a photographic survey of the areas and structures requiring interventions.

Other Work

Technical staff stationed in Floriana continued with the photographing, cataloguing and recording of interventions carried out by the Unit. These records are being entered in a database held by the Unit so that a complete inventory of valleys and interventions that are from time to time carried out is built up. A tender for a land survey of *Wied is-Sewda* in preparation for the extension of existing water retaining basins in order to help alleviate the problem of flooding in Qormi was also prepared.

MARINE AND STORM WATER UNIT

Marine Projects

Surveys, designs and relative estimates were drawn up for the facilities listed hereunder:

- the damaged wave deflector and the Menqa St Paul's Bay – a new deflector was also designed;
- three damaged slipways at Xghajra;
- eight slipways at Mellieha;
- jetty at Qortin l/o Armier;
- slipway and hard standing in Qawra;
- underground car park at the Ferries, Sliema/Tigne Sea Front.

Surveys, designs, estimates and drawing up of tender documents were also done for:

- an eroded cavity in the sea wall retaining the promenade at Balluta - the tender was issued and the contract for the works is expected to be awarded in the beginning of 2009;
- widening of the promenade at Qui-si-Sana using a system of piles inserted in the seabed.

The Unit continued with the supervision of contract works for the Armed Forces Maritime base at Hay Wharf, where the extension of quays and underwater chambers to house fuel tanks is being carried out.

Other works carried out by the Marine Unit comprised:

- transporting about 19 concrete blocks, 20 concrete slabs and 22 concrete beams from Hal Far to Corradino;
- transporting all the material left from the Marsa storm water project to Corradino including franka stones, sheet piles, concrete blocks, concrete beams and steel shutters;
- precasting of 10 slabs for the Marsa slipway at the Unit's Corradino base;
- completion of works on the Marsa slipway beside the Regatta Club - this work entailed breaking up of floor, excavation, laying of new base and casting of new reinforced concrete floor and reconstructing the slip to accommodate deeper draft, as well as the construction of a new embankment;
- construction of a wheelchair ramp and repair of existing concrete floor. This work included the breaking of existing concrete, wooden shuttering and casting of new concrete.
- transportation of 10 concrete blocks weighing 17 tons each and measuring 10 metres in length from Malta Drydocks to the Corradino base, demolition of a wall measuring 3m x 15m, cleaning of a water culvert approximately 70 metres long, and cleaning and removing all debris from the area;
- Marsascalea, il-Maghluq - surveying and inspecting all the circulation pipes, sumps and manholes, taking soundings every 5 metres of Il-Maghluq, underwater levelling of the offshore circulation pipes using gravel and geogrid mattresses, dredging of silt to form an underwater sump, cleaning of a semi submerged culvert 30 metres long and cleaning of the circulation pipes linking il-Maghluq to the bay, by means of pressure pumps;
- survey of the old bridge at Jetties Wharf in connection with the repair of the masonry arches;
- St Julians, Balluta Bay Steps - involved the removing of 21 displaced stone slabs forming the retaining wall and steps, cleaning of the area from seaweed and other materials, placing and levelling of material behind the original steps, and casting 10 cubic metres of concrete;
- Valletta (Fossa) - Preparation for works to be carried out included fabrication of a wave deflector shutter and scaffolding, the breaking up of the damaged 28 m long wave deflector, and the repair and plastering of

the remaining 40 metre, grouting of reinforcement bars in the existing concrete, assembly of scaffolding, shutter and the recasting of deflector in six sections of 5 metres;

- breaking and reconstructing 14 bollards, repairing of another 16 and replacing the damaged or missing railing between the bollards at the Marsa Sports Grounds.

Storm Water Projects

Qormi -Marsa

Finishing and snagging works on the Qormi-Marsa storm water project, namely, the construction of a weather station, plastering, and construction of a concrete platform, two manholes and footings for the bridge rails were completed.

Wied il-Ghasel

A scheme design, together with estimates for the cleaning of a large area from debris and the construction of a 60,000 cu.m rain water reservoir, was completed.

Wied Ghollieqa

The tender for the modification of the retention dam at *Wied Ghollieqa* and dredging of basin for water harvesting was issued and awarded.

Pembroke

Designs and tender documents were prepared for new storm water culverts at Pembroke in order to relieve flooding problems that had been occurring in the past years because of the urbanisation of the area.

Mghatab

A scheme for the relief of a flooding problem in Triq il-Knejjes, Mghatab was drawn up.

Burmarrad

Work on the first phase of the water channel to relieve flooding in the Burmarrad Plain was completed and preparations for dredging and the rehabilitation of *is-Sokkors* around the Salini Salt Pans was taken in hand.

CARMEL MIFSUD BORG
Director General (Services)

Services Division

Manufacturing and Services Department

The Manufacturing and Services Department carries out engineering works within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs. It incorporates the following trades: carpentry, metal trades, plumbing and electrical installations and repairs, the traffic lights section, lifts and air-conditioning servicing, the co-operative for traffic signs and road marking, and vehicles and plant repairs. All trades are located at Marsa, except for the vehicles and plant garages which are situated at Kordin.

MSD is now also responsible for the vehicles and plant of the Agriculture Department, operating from the Ghammieri farm, and other vehicles deployed at other departments.

MARSA BRANCH

The Marsa Branch continued to serve the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs by providing the technical works for various embellishment projects carried out by the Ministry and at the same time provides maintenance services to other departments, both within and outside this Ministry. The staff complement at Marsa amounts to 380, including the workers of the co-operative organisation Koptasin.

During 2008, 799 new work jobs were initiated amongst various sections of the Department. In the meantime, 771 jobs were closed during the same year. In reality, a job is considered open until all paper work is compiled and concluded. The annual turnover, including labour cost, reached nearly €9 million. The table below summarises the works and values of the various sections, excluding Koptasin.

Section	New Jobs	Closed Jobs	Labour Hrs	Labour Cost €	Material €
Carpentry	195	204	583,598	4,376,984	131,785
Aluminium	59	32	22,338	167,535	21,324
Metal Trade	155	199	237,513	1,781,344	151,970
Air-conditioning	92	79	75,753	568,145	7,764
Lifts Section	67	66	24,952	187,138	13,756
Electrical	167	132	133,198	998,987	149,426
Plumbing	64	59	52,353	392,645	19,163
Total	799	771	1,129,705	8,472,778	495,188

Carpentry Section

The Carpentry Section manufactures and installs timber works and carries out restoration works on old apertures as instructed by architects in charge of project works. The Section manufactures also public garden furniture such as benches, litter bins, gazebos and shadings. These are used at sites that are embellished by the Ministry. The Section carried out 195 new jobs during 2008.

The main works carried out during this year were the continuation of restoration and new manufacture of timber apertures as needed at Villa Francia. Other works related to restoration were carried out at various chapels such as Ta' l-Angli, Żebbug; Ta' Qrejca, Qormi; and Sant'Antnin, Marsascala. Other maintenance works of historical buildings, such as Palazzo Spinola, Presidential Palace and Auberge de Castille were included in the programme of works. Maintenance of street furniture in public gardens and other open

spaces was carried out in various localities. Moreover, new apertures and furniture were manufactured for CMD offices at Floriana.

Aluminium Section

The Aluminium Section manufactures and installs aluminium apertures and fixtures as needed by clients. Furthermore, it carries out works with gypsum and false-ceilings (soffits) government departments and entities.

The Section carried out 59 new jobs and performed work on other jobs that were initiated in the previous year. Gypsum partitions and soffits were erected at Villa Francia project, and works were brought to an end in 2008. Other gypsum and aluminium works were carried out at Auberge de Castille and Presidential Palace Valletta. The CMD offices were completely refurbished, where all office partitions and soffits were made anew. Works at Projects House included the renewal of apertures on the main entrance and the erection of partitions to provide for smoking areas with the block. Erecting and shifting of partitions at various offices and other minor works were carried out as requested. Apertures and partitions for Żurrieq Sports Complex, Kordin fuel station, St Julians waterpolo pitch (to repair storm damage) and at the Restoration Unit offices at Ospizio were also made.

Metal Trades Section

The works carried out by this section during 2008 included the manufacture and installation of steel articles, the repair and restoration of steel articles, the installation of flagpoles in connection with state visits and national holidays, and various other works.

The major works completed during this year included the:

- manufacture and installation of steel railing at the Żurrieq Sports Complex;
- various steel works at Villa Francia;
- restoration of the steel railing around the parvis of the Żabbar Parish Church;
- manufacture and installation of steel railings at St Julians;
- restoration of the steel balcony at the Public Registry;
- manufacture of trolley frames for the Marsa waste separation plant operated by WasteServ;
- replacement of railing along Triq il-Kučcard, San Ġwann;
- restoration of the ornamental railing of the Kennedy Grove Monument;
- manufacture and installation of a fire escape exit at the Auberge de Castille;
- various steel works related to the implementation of health and safety measures within the Department's premises.

During 2008, 155 new jobs were opened while 199 others were completed.

Air-Conditioning Section

The Air-conditioning Section caters for the maintenance and repairs of some 3,000 split-unit air-conditioners and 15 centralised plants in government offices, health centres and hospitals. The Section is very busy during the warmer summer months, as it must address more frequent repairs and breakdown of the units. During autumn and spring, when many air-conditioning units are typically left switched off, the Section conducts routine maintenance as required to prepare the units for other months of high usage.

The Section attended to about 1,030 calls for repairs during 2008. On a number of cases, a/c units are dismantled and installed in a different place as needed by clients. The Section also inspects systems and draws up condition reports on a/c equipment and provide technical advice about maintenance/replacement of equipment.

Lifts Section

The Lift Section maintains and repairs about 88 lifts and hoists in various government buildings, offices, hospitals and health centres. This service includes emergency repairs as and when required, seven days a week.

During 2008, the Section carried out 375 interventions on lifts. The works included repairs, maintenance, upgrading of specific lifts, routine maintenance and assistance in carrying out engineer's certification. Repairs and modifications as specified in engineers' reports were carried out. The Section also assists government departments to keep abreast with new lifts regulation by offering advice on the maintenance of lifts.

New training was given to all section employees, in conjunction with the Employment and Training Corporation to improve the skills of the workforce. Following training, the employees successfully passed the lifts' operative skills tests.

Electrical Section

The Electrical Section carries out electrical installations in public gardens, promenades, government offices and at some other public spaces. It also incorporates a section that caters for traffic lights installation and repairs, as instructed by ADT.

The main activity consisted of the repair, alteration and upgrading of electrical installations within government building and offices, mainly in Floriana and Valletta areas. However, a considerable amount of work was performed in various offices within the remit of the Ministry at various localities.

Main works included:

- Żurrieq sports complex floodlights and electrical works in dressing rooms;
- electrical works in various chapels – Tal-Lunzjata Kirkop, San Bastjan Qormi;
- lighting in public spaces – parish squares at Birzebbuga, Qormi, San Ġwann, Żabbar, San Girgor Żejtun, St Margerita Bormla;
- light fittings at Villa Francia;
- installation of new traffic lights.

Apart from new installations, maintenance works were carried out as required including works on the lighting of gardens, promenades, traffic lights and lighting bollards in the traffic islands.

Plumbing Section

Works carried out by this Section during 2008 included the installation and modification to hot and cold water domestic installations, the installation of irrigation systems, the repair and maintenance of fountains in various public areas and the installation and repair of chain link fencing and iron railings in various localities.

The major works completed during this year included:

- the installation of new domestic water systems at Villa Francia as well as the repair of a number of decorative fountains and the laying of hydraulic accessories related to an automatic irrigation system;
- chain link fencing at the Żurrieq Sports Complex;
- repair works on the Triton Fountain, Valletta;
- plumbing system at Addolorata Cemetery.

During the year, 64 new jobs were opened while 59 other jobs were completed.

KORDIN BRANCH

Workshops

A total of 101 persons are currently employed at Kordin, including workshops' staff, administration, the personnel manning the MSD fuel station, three ESTS apprentices, four workers on loan to other departments, and six employees forming part of the newly revamped Fleet Management Section.

The workshops are organised into five sections, namely Light Vehicles, Auto Electricians, Heavy Vehicles, Heavy Plant and Miscellaneous (including spray painting, panel beating, upholstery and vulcanising works). The jobs performed range from routine maintenance to overhauling and body work on light cars, vans, trucks and heavy plant equipment such as shovels, bulldozers and road rollers. The workshops cater for vehicles and equipment owned by the MSD, as well as equipment owned by other departments. Various departments make use of services offered, with major customers being the Cleansing Services Department and the CMD.

The Fleet Management Section is responsible for identifying the transport needs of the various sections within the Ministry and for deploying vehicles accordingly. The section is also responsible for hiring vehicles whenever the need arises and also includes a surveyor who investigates all cases of traffic contraventions and collisions involving vehicles owned by the MRRA. The services of the surveyor are sometimes sought by other ministries and departments when their vehicles are involved in collisions or when they need to have his recommendations regarding particular vehicles within their respective fleets. The Fleet Management Section also incorporates the operations of the MSD fuel station and is responsible for the deployment of the computer-based Fleet Management System for the allocation of fuel to the various vehicles. This system also allows for closer monitoring of the fuel consumption of the vehicles in question.

The Workshops have carried out a total of 2,899 jobs during 2008, the total value of repairs being €467,542, distributed as follows:

Section	No of Jobs	Material Cost €	Labour Cost €	Total Cost €
Heavy Plant	417	36,075	67,728	103,803
Heavy Vehicles	478	42,456	136,852	179,308
Light Vehicles	359	23,064	35,917	58,981
Auto Electrical	633	20,266	22,212	42,478
Miscellaneous	1,012	46,146	36,826	82,972
Total	2,899	168,007	299,535	467,542

The MSD fuel station is responsible for providing fuel for all vehicles and plant pertaining to the Works Division and the Services Division. The new station is capable of supplying unleaded petrol, diesel and biodiesel. The following table summarises the consumption figures for the various types of fuel supplied in 2008.

Fuel Type	Amount (litres)	Cost €
Unleaded Petrol	178,344	204,143.09
Diesel	295,866	335,381.06
Diesel (by bowser)	147,697	166,818.40
Bio Diesel	14,187	15,699.76
Total	636,094	722,042.31

Although fuel consumption figures show a reduction of 4.7% with respect to the consumption figures for the previous year, the amount of money spent was 10% higher due to the increased cost of fuel.

During 2007 the Department had commenced work on the construction of a new fuel station across the road from the Kordin garage, with a view to relocating the station formerly situated at Kirkop. All works related to the relocation, including commissioning were completed and the new station began to operate on 9 December 2008.

From an administration point of view, the garage is also responsible for drawing up specifications for tenders that are issued by the Department. These include tenders for the purchase of equipment by the MSD and its customers and period contracts for replacement parts that are regularly used at the garage itself, and for the hiring of equipment such as excavators, loaders and cranes, and for towing of small vehicles and plant equipment.

The equipment purchased during 2008 together with the respective prices is tabulated below:

Description	€
Flat-Bed Double Cab Pick-up van for Aluminium Section	21,779
Sweeping attachment for Skid Steer Loader	5,984
2 Madvac Vacuum Litter Collecting Machines	67,670
LDV Light Tipper Truck	25,170
Komatsu Mini Excavator	37,317
2 Subaru Vivio light cars	500
Suzuki Alto light car	250
Daihatsu Hi-Jet van	325
Iveco truck	2300
Total	161,295

The three light cars, Hi-Jet van and Iveco truck were acquired from Customs after they had been seized from third parties and then offered to MSD at reduced prices as shown above.

Other tenders for equipment to be purchased which are in progress or pending delivery are for two skid steer loaders, another light tipper truck, two glazed passenger vans and two flat-bed pick-up vans.

Risk Assessment exercises have been performed by the various section officers in liaison with Health and Safety officers with the aim of improving the working environment of personnel and minimising risk of injury and infection. Such exercises are subsequently followed up by appropriate action. A number of separate areas for improvement have been identified. These include the need to relocate certain workshops with a view to minimising the risk of accidents and the inhalation of spray paint and exhaust fumes.

Vehicle and Plant Operations

The Vehicle and Plant Operations Section was recently set up within the Department to cater for the vehicle and plant fleet of the entire Ministry. The Section aims to achieve better co-ordination between the various departments and to obtain better fleet utilisation through the proper deployment of existing vehicles.

The Section is responsible for assigning vehicle resources on various projects and work sites as needed. Hiring of vehicles, fuel issue and monitoring, and other matters related to the vehicle fleet operations are also catered for by this section.

The Fleet Management System is being introduced in the Works and Services Divisions to better implement an efficiency strategy within the Ministry.

MARTIN GRECH
Director (Manufacturing and Services)

Services Division Cleansing Services Department

REVENUE

The Department continued to provide services to local councils and other entities. These services consisted in the cleaning of urban roads, the cleaning of public conveniences, and the collection of bulky waste from private residences. Arrears of revenue in respect of fees due to the department for services in connection with the disposal of waste at the former Magħtab landfill continued to be collected; legal proceedings were instituted against customers who despite various warnings failed to comply.

A breakdown of the revenue collected from services to entities in 2008 is as follows:

Total Revenue for 2008	
<i>Description</i>	<i>€</i>
Local Councils	527,449.85
Landfills	30,536.24
Extra Services	373,261.75
Others	22,045.34
VAT	168,491.20
Legal Fees	508.57
Total	1,122,292.95

CONTRACTS OF SERVICES HELD WITH LOCAL COUNCILS

Contracts with local councils for 2008 vis-à-vis street sweeping, collection of bulky waste, and cleaning of public conveniences were as follows:

Annual Values of Contracts with Local Councils			
<i>Local Council</i>	<i>Value (€)</i>	<i>Contract</i>	<i>Description</i>
B' Buġa	27,393	sweeping	
	17,237	public conv.	
Birgu	12,672	public conv.	
Bormla	5,572	public conv.	
Fgura		bulky	€4.76 per household
Gharghur	8,637	sweeping	
		bulky	€4.67 per household
Għaxaq	28,651	sweeping	
Gudja	20,638	sweeping	
	8,153	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.19 per household
Kirkop	6,972	sweeping	
		bulky	€5.82 per household
Lija	6,972	sweeping	
	2,714	public conv.	
		bulky	€5.82 per household
M'Scala	7,516	public conv.	
M'Xlokk	16,525	sweeping	
	7,745	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.43 per household

Mdina	6,536	public conv.	
Mellieha	26,143	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.19 per household
Mġarr	4,659	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.89 per household
Mosta	1,165	public conv.	
Naxxar	10,948	public conv.	
Qormi	16,771	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.19 per household
Qrendi	8,017	sweeping	
	6,238	public conv.	
		bulky	€5.82 per household
Safi	6,972	sweeping	
		bulky	€5.82 per household
San Ġiljan	75,832	sweeping	
	19,343	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.66 per household
San Pawl		bulky	€4.19 per household
Sta Luċija	10,366	Sweeping	
	5,823	public conv.	
Sliema	101,257	sweeping	
	33,543	public conv.	
		bulky	€5.12 per household
Valletta	69,881	sweeping	
Commercial area	58,234	sweeping	
Xgħajra	6,972	sweeping	
Żabbar	72,210	sweeping	
	23,294	public conv.	
Żejtun	28,681	sweeping	
	19,122	public conv.	
		bulky	€4.43 per household

COLLECTION OF BULKY WASTE

The provision of the service for collecting bulky waste from private residences was continued efficiently by this Department, the service being given throughout 15 localities. Although given free of charge to residents, the Department charges expenses on a contractual basis to local councils.

Total Revenue from Bulky Waste Collection Service		
	Number of calls	Amount Invoiced €
Total	20,147	96,159

Amount of Bulky Waste Collected from Households									
	No. of Calls	Metal	Wood	Mattresses	Sofas	White Goods	IT & TV	Glass & Others	Total Items
Total	20,147	8,663	9,575	4,235	1,609	8,468	3,431	13,708	49,689

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Throughout the year in question, the Department renewed 24 contracts of service with local councils for the upkeep of public conveniences in the respective localities. Apart from this, the Department manages several other public conveniences that fall under the responsibility of central government.

CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE

The Quality Service Charter adopted by the Department is being constantly revised to reflect an ongoing improvement in the quality of the service delivery. The following table shows the number of complaints filed with the Department up to December 2008. All complaints were settled within stipulated target dates.

Customer Care Complaints Handling								
	No of Calls - Freephone	Received by e-mail	Received by fax	Newspaper Cuttings	Complaints referred to Local Council	Carried out by CSD on same day	Carried out within one week	Referred to other entities
Total	780	395	-	22	404	494	248	51

CLEANING OF ARTERIAL ROADS

A workforce of 50 employees make up the unit responsible for the manual cleaning of arterial roads on an ongoing basis. The work is varied and includes sweeping, collection of litter and residue, grass cutting along the kerbs, and a rapid response action to remove obstacles such as dead animals and spilled material. The nature of the work is both labour and machine intensive, with the Unit having at its disposal five mechanical sweepers and two vehicles for transporting water.

Cleaning requests of an urgent nature involved mainly the removal of dead animals and the removal of spillage in arterial roads. There were cases where the material in question was illegally dumped by irresponsible persons, and timely response by the cleaning unit served a twofold purpose, that of cleaning and that of removing obstacles that could cause harm through accidents. Spillages originated also from overloaded vehicles carrying building material including concrete. The unit responded also to requests for cleaning of industrial zones and areas popular for recreational purposes such as parks and other popular spots.

Around 500 litter bins were emptied on a daily schedule. These bins are situated along the route from the Malta International Airport to Valletta, along the promenades from St Julians to Pieta' Creek, others fixed next to bus shelters in all the arterial roads around Malta.

Regular cleaning and washing of the carriage way along the tunnels, subways, the bus terminus in Floriana, was carried out on a regular basis. Ancillary cleaning works included the cleaning of hundreds of traffic signage and barriers fixed in arterial roads, and the removal of a large amount of illegally fixed advertising material. In order not to disrupt traffic flow, work was carried out at night time with police attendance in order to provide the safest possible working environment for departmental personnel.

Waste material deposited in landfills in 2008 totalled 22,617 tonnes. It is estimated that:

- 9,634.84 tonnes (42.60%) of waste was inert waste dumped illegally;
- 565.43 tonnes (2.50%) was illegally dumped and collected litter;
- 429.72 tonnes (1.90%) was made up of grass cutting; and
- 11,987.01 tonnes (53.00%) was waste coming from demolition and projects.

The estimated cost for collecting, transporting, and disposing of this waste amounted to €368,883 worked at the rate of €16.31 per tonne.

Works carried out during 2008 of type: general cleaning									
General cleaning	Mechanical sweeping	Removal of material	Litter picking	General cleaning	Removal of posters	Washing of signage	Labour Cost	Other Costs	Total Cost
Km	Km	Tones	Km	Sq Mts	No	No	€	€	€
2,815.11	8,753.15	22,617	28,371.43	1,410.00	17,645	1,038.00	1,031,848	324,327	1,356,175

TARGET CLEANSING INITIATIVE

Whereas the cleansing services provided by the Department used to be mainly concerned with only arterial roads, as from August 2008, the 'scope' of the Department's work was transcended from that of simply *implementing* cleaning of arterial roads to *taking ownership* of the cleaning treatment relating to all sites/roads around the whole of Malta. To this effect, a programme, based on an innovative concept of Target Cleansing, was introduced and implemented under the name of *Cleansing Response Programme* (CRP).

The CRP attends to *Cleansing Response Areas* (CRAs), sites/roads that are identified (a) by third parties through freephone, e-mails, newspapers, etc, and/or (b) proactively by CSD itself through a newly set-up *Cleansing Response Team* (CRT), which conducts daily two-hourly site visits for this purpose. Once identified, these CRAs are put on a 'fast track' cleaning programme: CRAs falling within the Department's responsibility are dealt with within 48 hours; whereas CRAs relating to other entities, such as local councils, ELC, ADT, etc, are cleaned within a week, following a 3-day notice to the respective entity or local council. *Before* and *After Works Inspections* (BWIs & AWIs) documented photos are taken in order to measure and ensure work implementation. A total of 230 cases have been treated under the CRP to date (from mid August till end December 2008).

The table below illustrates the cases dealt with under the CRP, from its inception till end of 2008. It shows that 145 cases (63%) involved work related to areas falling within the remit of local councils, but where cleaning was implemented by the Department.

Cleansing Response Programme (CRP)				
<i>Cases: from mid August till end of December 2008</i>				
<i>Cases</i>	<i>Closed</i>	<i>Pending</i>	<i>Local Councils</i>	<i>CSD</i>
230	192	38	145	85

CRP cases involving CRAs within Local Councils' boundaries					
Attard	2	B'Buġa	4	B'Kara	7
Birgu	1	Bormla	5	Fgura	5
Floriana	2	Gharghur	1	Gzira	3
Iklin	1	Kalkara	1	Kirkop	1
Lija	1	Luqa	3	Mellieha	6
Mġarr	4	Mqabba	1	Marsa	6
Msida	2	M'Scala	5	Mosta	6
M'Xlokk	3	Naxxar	3	Paola	5
Pieta	3	Qrendi	5	Qormi	2
Rabat	3	San Ġwann	5	Sliema	1
Siggiewi	1	St Paul's Bay	14	Senglea	3
St Julians	12	Swieqi	2	Tarxien	6
Żabbar	2	Żebbuġ	2	Żurrieq	1
Żejtun	5				

New work practices have been introduced to ensure the efficient running and effectiveness of the CRP, whilst sustaining fully the regular arterial roads cleaning programme. Indeed a Project Planning Unit (built on a three-tier structure of *plan*, *monitor* and *measure*) has been set up, a more adept works inspections structure has been put in place, grass cutting is now being treated through a weed-killer formula instead of deploying gangs of people just for cutting grass, etc. Besides, a new Transport Policy (timely deployment, repairs and replacement policies, etc.) has been introduced in order to ensure the 'all time' availability of transport needs for CSD workers; hence, eliminating so much idle and unproductive man hours of work due to lack of transport in the past.

CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN

The Cleansing Service Department was heavily involved in the three-day clean-up campaign organised by the MRRA during on 23-25 October. This campaign resulted in a huge success and served its purpose to raise awareness with regard to keeping our local environment clean.

Around 3,000 persons took part in the campaign, ranging from the general public to school children to private companies employees, and also included a large section of our Department's, Works and Services Divisions' workers. Entities taking part included 40 local councils in Malta and Gozo, 29 schools and 26 private companies, besides other numerous voluntary organisations that include Scouts, Girl Guides, Football Nurseries, etc.

Around 60 sites from all over Malta and Gozo were treated for cleaning during this campaign, comprising two sea-beds, six beaches and various historical sites ranging from public gardens to areas around bastions. The list of sites cleared up includes: a large stretch of coastline between Żonqor Point and Xgħajra; seabeds in Wied iż-Żurrieq in Malta and Hondoq ir-Rummien in Gozo; Birgu Bastions ditch and overlooking bastions; Floriana Bastions near AFM Maritime Squadron; Ġnien il-Kottoner, Cospicua; various sandy beaches in the north of the island like Golden Sands, Riviera, and the three bays in Armier, St Paul's Bay promenade; Hal Far and other frequented localities.

MARIO RODGERS

Director (Cleansing Services)

Oil Exploration Department

The Department of Oil Exploration is set up to implement and administer the provisions of the Petroleum Production Act (Cap.156), the Continental Shelf Act (Cap. 194), the Petroleum (Production) Regulations, 2001, and related petroleum exploration and production terms as set out in contract with oil companies. For this purpose it provides technical support to Government in the form of advice, analysis of data and contractual terms, monitoring of contractual obligations, keeping of data and surveillance of petroleum exploration activity on Malta's continental shelf.

MONITORING

The Department monitored the activities of four companies or group of companies holding exploration licences in offshore Malta to ensure that they fulfilled the contractual obligations. The companies were Malta Oil Pty Ltd, Heritage Oil International (Malta) Ltd, RWE Dea/Global Petroleum Ltd, and Anadarko Energy/Pancontinental Oil & Gas Ltd.

LICENSING

A Production Sharing Contract (PSC) was awarded to the Australian company Malta Oil Pty Ltd in July 2008. The area covered by the contract comprises Blocks 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Area 4 to the south of the Island. The obligations of the company under the contract include the drilling of a firm well by July 2011. This was the second contract of this type to be signed within a few months. In December 2007, a similar PSC was awarded to Heritage Oil International (Malta) Ltd.

The Exploration Study Agreements (ESAs) with RWE Dea/Global Petroleum and Anadarko/Pancontinental Oil & Gas Ltd were not extended further, in line with the policy to discontinue exploration activity under ESAs.

During 2008, several meetings were held with oil companies interested in exploration opportunities in offshore Malta. In the light of this interest, preparations were underway to launch a new licensing round in 2009.

The Model PSC 2001 was revised and updated to better reflect prevailing practices and trends in the international oil industry. This exercise was carried out in preparation of the new licensing round.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY

In connection with the two PSCs with Heritage and Malta Oil, preparations were underway in 2008 for two geophysical surveys to be carried out in preparation of the drilling of two wells. Survey designs were in progress in 2008 as the operating companies established optimal acquisition parameters in consultation with the Department.

The results of the microbiological survey of the sea-bed and the 2D seismic survey carried out during 2007 by RWE Dea/Global Petroleum Ltd and Malta Oil Pty Ltd respectively became available in 2008. The former provided new information supporting the presence of a hydrocarbon system in Blocks 4 & 5 of

Area 3 while the survey of Malta Oil provided new information in parts of the licence area that were not adequately covered by previous seismic surveys.

SURVEILLANCE

The surveillance of exploration activities in the Central Mediterranean continued to be a priority activity of the Department during 2008. No activities were reported in areas of overlapping claims.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

The Department provided technical support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the negotiations with neighbouring states over establishing areas for the joint exploration and development of petroleum between the interested states.

SUBMARINE CABLES

During 2008, there were five applications for the laying of submarine telecommunication cables on the continental shelf. Two of these were approved and three were still being processed at end of year after geotechnical surveys were carried out to establish seabed characteristics needed for the laying of cables.

DATA CUSTODY

The Department kept safe custody of newly-acquired geophysical and geological data and samples including digital field tapes/mass storage and seabed samples. The new data was interpreted and integrated in the data bank of the Department.

REVENUE

By end of 2008 the annual revenue derived from licences amounted to €894,756.98, made up of bonuses, rentals and administration fees. Other contributions amounting to €111,059.35 were derived for transfer of technology and education in oil.

GODWIN DEBONO

Chief Scientific Officer (Oil Exploration)

EU Affairs Directorate

Mission Statement

To act as the Ministry's focal point and guide on EU policies and other related matters and financial programmes.

POLICY UNIT

The Policy Unit proactively pursued its 2008 workplan, placing particular emphasis on improving synergies and communication with our line divisions, departments and entities including establishing and training two EU co-ordinators within Veterinary Affairs and Agriculture. This arrangement has proven to be effective and improvement has been registered in co-ordinating with these Departments and in the preparation of EU core documentation. The Policy Officers responsible for the Climate Change and Energy Legislative Package also had to handle a very intensive year building up to a climax in the last quarter when the French Presidency held 2 to 3 weekly meetings to ensure political agreement on the package. This was accomplished and finalised at the December Council of Ministers (Environment) meeting when agreement was reached and the package formally adopted. It should be noted that a substantial number of instruction notes covering MRRA remit were processed for use at various EU related meetings and at different levels (working parties, COREPER, Council of Ministers, etc).

FUNDING UNIT

The Unit continued to monitor and provide active assistance and guidance to all project leaders handling more than 50 projects falling under a comprehensive range of different sectors, including the Agriculture and Fisheries grant schemes and Community Initiatives (INTERREG, EQUAL, etc) as well as those projects being co-financed under the Structural and Cohesion funds. The Funds Manager continued to identify and resolve problems to ensure a smooth and timely implementation of these projects. The Directorate processed during 2008 the total sum of €12.51 million in respect of different projects falling under the various funding programmes (2004-2006 funding period). The Unit also played a successful key role in the closure of this programme.

The Directorate also provided assistance to its line divisions and departments to set up the institutions required to assume the role of Managing Authority in respect of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries Fund for the 2007-2013 funding period.

The integration presented new challenges in that the Unit had to assume responsibility for additional projects from the Works Division, Malta Resources Authority and the Malta College of Science and Technology.

JOE DE GIORGIO
Director (EU Affairs)

People Management Directorate

The People Management Directorate contributes to the collective management of the Ministry, by directing all support services provided to the line departments, particularly in the areas of recruitment, training, employee relations and time and attendance.

AMALGAMATION

Following the general election of March 2008, the Ministry for Resources and Infrastructure and the Ministry for Agriculture and the Environment were effectively amalgamated as the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs. Since then, the Human Resources Staff of ex MRAE and counterparts at ex MRES were housed at Block A, Floriana. The amalgamation enabled the People Management Directorate (PMD) to act as a one-stop-shop for all employees within the Ministry.

The PMD ballooned from a staff complement of 30 to a complement of 311, consisting of 45 administration staff, 102 watchmen duties staff and 164 security services staff. The increase is mainly attributed to the fact that security and watchmen began to form part of the People Management Directorate. This change brought about new challenges in seeking to harness the amalgamation of security staff and employees on watchmen duties from either side of the Ministry.

RECRUITMENT

The MRRA had a staff complement of 3,425 employees at the end of 2008. A manpower plan was drawn up to determine the complement and deployment of staff. A capacity building exercise was carried out to fill vacancies that arise in the divisions of the ministry. The Office of the Prime Minister approved a number of calls to fill close to 300 posts/positions. During the year, 38 employees were recruited from outside the Public Service. The Human Resources Branch processed 55 letters of progression, besides confirming a number of increments of employees.

DATA MANAGEMENT UNIT

The Data Management Unit caters for the inputting of employee data into the relevant departmental software (HRIMS), the organisation of the employment return at the end of each month, and the constant updating of the Ministry Staff List, which shows the grade extension of each employee and the Unit where s/he is deployed.

ATTENDANCE/ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

The amalgamation of the two Ministries immediately called for the extension of the Notification System across all MRRA. The notification system is a system whereby the daily attendances/absences are recorded on a notification sheet which is e-mailed to the Directorate's Notification Unit on a daily basis. This particular exercise required a lot of dedication on the part of the Notification Unit. It also meant upgrading the Unit and increasing its person power. The implementation of the Notification System which roped in the whole Ministry was spread over a period of two months (October-November 2008) in order for the Unit to be able to gestate by stages its new and increased surveillance of attendances throughout the Ministry.

At present, 255 notification forms are completed each day by various departments, sections and units within the Ministry: 219 notification forms emanate from ex-MRES units whilst another 36 forms arise from units which were previously within the MRAE. All notification forms have to be scrupulously checked for their correctness, and then passed on to other staff at the Notification Unit so that the various types of leave are inserted and accounted for in the HRIMS. This Unit also answers queries by all the employees of MRRA with regard to such types of leave.

Employees within the PMD manage the various requests for special types of leave, both paid and unpaid, as well as family-friendly measures. The year also witnessed the introduction of telework among MRRA personnel. In fact, 10 application forms were received during the year, three of which were approved during the year. During the third quarter of 2008, the Department also introduced a flexitime schedule for its staff.

During 2008, a number of finger readers were installed. These finger readers will be replacing the traditional attendance sheets. During 2009, more finger readers will be installed in order to fulfil the provision of the Collective Agreement 2005/2010.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

During 2008, the Unit received 30 reports of cases where workers were injured on duty. It also liaised with the Health Division for the processing of 11 cases of employees who were to be medically boarded out, in order to establish whether or not they were fit to continue to perform their duties at their place of work. The Unit also processed 97 pension papers of employees who reached retirement age.

TRAINING

Customer Care

Training for supporting staff was one initiative taken up by the PMD. This effectively meant the organisation of two separate courses: one with a view to increasing customer care, and the other for enhancing reception skills. 26 minor staff members performing messengerial duties attended the first training sessions on customer care. These sessions were spread over two separate periods of three days during 2008. The training sessions were organised with the collaboration of the Staff Development Organisation (SDO) and a joint certificate of attendance was handed to those who attended these training sessions. A manual in Maltese, adapted by the Directorate, was also handed to participants. This was the first time that staff doing messengerial duties at the Resources end mixed with their counterparts of the Rural end. It was a very expedient exercise and the feedback from the participants was very positive.

Receptionist Skills

The training sessions on receptionist skills were spread over a period of two days in November 2008 and were attended by 13 members of MRRA staff performing receptionist duties. These sessions were organised by SDO, and MRRA attendance was co-ordinated by the Training Unit based at the PMD.

Pre Retirement Course

The SDO training prospectus provides an opportunity for a pre-retirement course which is very useful to those who are nearing their retirement age. Seven employees from MRRA participated in the pre-retirement course organised by SDO.

Away Day for Top Management Staff

In October 2008, the People Management Directorate organised an *Away Day* for top management staff. This initiative was very well received by the 25 participants involved, which was held away from the office

environment. The objective of this one-day training session was to organise an informal meeting of Directors and Directors General as well as CEOs of entities within the remit of MRRA. A freelance trainer was engaged to organise this *Away Day*. There was a lot of positive feedback regarding this occasion and it is planned to organise similar one-day training sessions annually.

DISCIPLINE

A discipline strategy was drawn up in order to address the need for further enforcement of discipline especially with respect to late attendance for duty, absence without authority and dereliction of duties. This involved the setting up of an inspection team made up of members of the security staff who carry out random inspections on staff working at different work places, from offices to a number of work sites.

Even before the administration at the People Management Directorate settled down and commenced to operate from one building at the beginning of October 2008, the Inspections Unit of this Ministry was already organising inspections to various offices and work sites within the MRRA. In fact, the first inspections were held on 1 September 2008, and during the last 4 months of 2008, no fewer than 51 inspections were made. As a result of the inspections, 110 employees were not found at their place of work or were clocking in late. Consequently, disciplinary procedures were initiated against these employees.

Charges Issued during 2008 as per PSC Discipline Regulations 1999			
	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Total MRRA</i>
Regulation 18	4	21	25
Regulation 19	4	22	26
Regulation 20	91	5	96
Total	99	48	147

Concurrently, the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs opened a total of 14 new criminal files in respect of five Rural and nine Resources employees.

JOHN BORG

Director (People Management)

Financial Management Directorate

ACCOUNTING AND BUDGETARY UNIT

Accounts Section

This Section is responsible for the monitoring and administration of the financial aspect of the Ministry. During the year, 22,777 commitments were processed and a large number of payments were carried out. Processing of payments is completed within the same day they are received. Financial reports giving an up-to-date financial picture of the sections and departments falling under the Ministry are created at regular intervals. These reports are invaluable for aiding the sections in the proper projections and utilisation of the ministry funds.

The Financial Management Directorate provides the necessary assistance in matters relating to finance and procurement of supplies and services.

During 2008, the Accounts Section continued with the Management Efficiency Programme (MEP), a restructuring programme which has now been running for the past five years, transforming the Accounts Officers' role from a passive to an active and dynamic one.

Through the Project Management Programme (PMP), senior officers from the Accounts Section set up monthly meetings with every project manager responsible for each Capital project in hand, to establish expenditure targets for each project and to regularly monitor the progress in the implementation of these projects. Thus we attain better management of the capital vote through clear projected expenditure and step up project implementation.

Revenue Section

This section comprises the Cash Office and the Collection Unit. In collaboration with the Contracts and Procurement Section, the Cash Office within the Revenue Section attained a one-stop-shop regarding tendering and payment procedures, meaning that all quotation and tender documents and any plans that form part of these tendering documents are to be sold as one complete set at the Cash Office, without the need for the prospective bidders to call at other sections. It is the ongoing goal of the Revenue Section to improve on effective control and monitoring of outstanding dues from various departments within the MRRA and on the proper registration of claims.

FINANCIAL CONTROL UNIT

The main role of the Financial Control Unit (FCU) is:

- to exercise financial control over the expenditure being incurred by the various departments and units throughout the Ministry;
- to investigate, formulate and initiate cost-cutting measures and structures; and
- to assess the financial viability of the Ministry's initiatives.

The FCU strives to implement effective control and monitoring on the commitments raised and the relative outstanding payments. Through various structures that have been set up and co-ordinated by the FCU,

commitments and their respective settlement are being more effectively managed. Allotted funds are being utilised more efficiently and effectively, whilst expenditure wastage and excess is continually being identified and rectified. Moreover the formulation of business plans and projections is much more realistic.

The FCU is engaged in the introduction of various programmes and exercises that are directed towards effective control and monitoring of the expenditure being generated, both relating to the operations in general (e.g. overheads) of all the departments within the Ministry, as also to capital infrastructural projects that the Ministry is undertaking. The main focal thrust exercised by the FCU is to create or regenerate a 'value for money' concept within all operations/structures throughout the Ministry and also to establish itself as a catalyst in curbing government expenditure.

Utilities Programme

During the year under review and following the amalgamation of the two Ministries, a full and comprehensive inventory of all telephone lines and water and electricity accounts was undertaken to include the large number of newly acquired accounts formerly falling under the responsibility of the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment.

As a result of this inventory compilation, all telephone billings are now being handled by the FCU. The latter, besides maintaining and updating an inventory of telephone lines, also monitors the operational cost of each line and audits excessive bills through itemised billings.

The same exercise conducted for telephone bills is also carried out on water and electricity billings. Each individual account is closely monitored and audited. The outcome of this programme is aimed towards the identification of the true cost of each individual account, thus highlighting all those cases where unjustified excessive expenditure is being incurred.

Vehicle Control Programme

This Ministry has established a Datatrak system in order to better control its transport fleet. Data captured from the Datatrak system is matched against vehicle logbooks or other means registering the authorised work assignments/movements of the vehicle concerned. The main objective of this programme is to maximise the effective utilisation of the Ministry's transport fleet and control the movement of vehicles with a view to increasing productivity and minimise excessive fuel consumption.

Salaries Support Unit

The Salaries Support Unit is responsible for the flow of information that is transmitted from the Directorate in Malta to the Gozo-based Salaries Section that caters for the computation of all salaries of this Ministry.

This Unit serves as the liaison office through which all information relating to the correct computation of all salaries is channelled, besides acting as a customer care unit for our employees.

During this year and following the amalgamation of the two Ministries, the process of the computation of the salaries of the ex-MRAE employees was transferred to our Gozo-based Salaries Section. Now all salaries pertaining to all the departments within this Ministry are being processed by the Ministry for Gozo employees under this Directorate's direct management. This Unit closely monitors the operations of this back-office work being done in Gozo with a view to maintaining the high efficiency levels expected from this Section.

Travel Support Unit

The Travel Support Unit has been established to take full responsibility of the travel arrangements required by ministry officials requiring overseas travel abroad. During the year under review, this Directorate has established written guidelines and procedures, based on standing financial regulations, whereby a complete overhaul of the Ministry's travel system was introduced.

The aim of this exercise was to standardise procedures for the request and granting of approval to proceed abroad on official business, besides safeguarding that all official meetings abroad are properly represented by this Ministry's delegations and all expenditure incurred during such visits is accounted for.

CONTRACTS & PROCUREMENT SECTION

The Contracts and Procurement Section is responsible for all the procurement needs of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs as well as for the issue of all contracts that are required to implement the various projects undertaken by the departments falling within the Ministry portfolio.

The Section is continuously engaged in the processing of requisitions for the procurement of all types of materials, equipment, stationery, the purchase and repairs of machinery and equipment, and other stores through the nominated period contractors. For this purpose, a large central store is situated at Mriehel and a smaller store for stationery and other day-to-day requirements is found at Floriana.

The Contracts and Procurement Section also deals with the disposal of various unserviceable and obsolete items from various departments either by selling the items *tale quale* following calls for tenders or, if found unserviceable, by dumping such items at appropriate dumping sites following the standard procedure through appointed boards of survey.

The compilation and management of the Ministry's inventory is also entrusted to this Section. With the amalgamation of the two ministries into one mega Ministry, inventory management work has increased considerably and it is now being strongly felt that this particular branch requires reorganisation and the appropriation of resources.

Activities in the line of duty of the Contracts and Procurement Section

During 2008, the Contracts and Procurement Section issued a total of 204 calls for tenders resulting in the award of 127 contract for works, supplies and services for a total amount of €4,827,920.82 categorised as follows:

	Calls for tenders	Awarded Contracts	Value (€)
Contracts Department Tenders	18	12	3,396,980.09
Departmental Tenders	90	54	1,080,355.84
Departmental Quotations	55	28	70,965.13
Departmental Hand Quotations	34	29	172,565.86
Departmental Direct Orders	7	7	107,053.90

Purchase of material from contractors holding period contracts with the Works Division and Services Division amounted to €837,273.45. For the procurement of this material, a total of 753 GSPOs were processed. Further GSPOs raised by the Floriana and Mriehel stores for the purchase of stationery and other items, other than period contract material, amounted to 3,402 for a total sum of €1,101,737.88.

The total number of tender and quotation documents sold during the year amounted to 559 with a global income of €14,427.79.

General categorisation of 2008 contracts

Besides the ongoing contracts for supplies and services continuously required, the CPS issued a number of contracts connected with the Ministry's continued policy of maintaining and restoring places of historical value, upgrading of seaside and tourist areas, embellishing village core and parish church areas and harvesting of storm water. In this regard, the following contracts are worth mentioning:

- *Restoration works*: the Pinto clock tower at the Presidential Palace; St Christopher Bastion; Maison Demandols façades and the National Library façade;
- *Upgrading seaside and tourist areas*: Marsaxlokk; Xghajra; Sliema, St Julians; Kennedy Grove; Blue Grotto Recreational Area; Paceville and Vittoriosa;
- *Embellishing village core areas*: Sta Venera Parish Church parvis;
- *Harvesting of Storm Water*: Wied Għolliq, Kappara.

Other contracts awarded during 2008 included works and services connected with projects required by various ministries and departments. Details of such contracts follow:

- *Office of the President*: one contract connected with refurbishing of San Anton Palace amounting to €16,987;
- *Office of the Prime Minister*: 16 contracts connected with the Villa Francia Project amounting to €178,457;
- *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*: one contract for refurbishing works amounting to €13,546;
- *Department for Local Government*: two refurbishing works contracts amounting to €21,471;
- *Statistics Office*: one refurbishing contract amounting to €3,121;
- *Libraries Department*: one contract connected with restoration works on the National Library façade amounting to €2,850.

MAIN REGISTRY AT THE EX-MRES

The Main Registry which prior to March was responsible for most of the movement of files of a large department such as the Works Division has seen another hectic year. Reconstruction of the structure in which most of the put-away files are housed was set in motion. Ways of increasing space by storing away old files which are rarely, if ever, used were also undertaken. These files, some of which date back to the 1920's, will be stored in space which belonged to the former MRAE which has now become available. The following figures provide a summary overall view of the transactions carried out through the Registry:

Files In for Movement	25,005
Not WD files for distribution	180
Files Referred BU	851
Files Referred PA	2,076
Requested files from PA	785
Main files opened	616
Part files opened	915
For files opened	1
Volume of files opened	11
Memos issued	186
Internal memos issued and circulated	62
Circulars distributed only	28
Postage	5,024
GSPOs for Mail €	1,374
Mail to government departments	1,760
Main In from sections to other sections	7,638
Mail received from Maltapost	8,525
Mail distributed to sections concerned	8,335
Registered mail	205

REGISTRY AT THE FORMER CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE AT THE EX-MRAE

As part of the amalgamation exercise resulting from the fusion of the Ministries, initial steps were taken in the Registry Unit at the Directorate of Corporate Services, so that the day-to-day running of the services provided would continue to run smoothly even after the amalgamation. This concerned both the transfer of offices from the former premises at St Christopher Street, Valletta, as well as the facilitation of file access. In order to continue operating the archive as smoothly as possible, an arrangement was entered into with the new tenants of the premises at St Christopher Street, Valletta enabling the Registry officials to have access to the room housing the archive unit. The annual activities concerned the following:

Files In for Movement	18,188
Files Referred BU	1,942
Requested files from PA	960
Main files opened	1,803
Others	256
DCS circulars	168
Circulars distributed	170
Postage	26,671
LPOs for Mail €	4,281
Mail to government departments	1,852
Mail received from Maltapost registered only	1,061
Registered mail	396

PIERRE PACE

Director (Financial Management)

Information Management Unit

Mission Statement

To enable the Ministry to develop policies that will help integrate information technologies into the activities of its stakeholders and the society in general and also to harness the full potential for effective development driven by appropriate technological innovations and providing data management support.

BUSINESS AND BUDGETING PLAN

The Chief Information Officer was responsible for the planning and provision of ICT services to assist the Ministry to function effectively and efficiently in line with Government ICT policy. The CIO consolidated the ICT planning within the Ministry and managed the overall ICT capital and operational budgets. The Ministry's overall IT allocation for 2008 was of €521,000. While core services were funded centrally, the CIO administered and managed the contract with MITTS Ltd for the rest of the maintenance and support facilities and software applications. In the course of the year, two ICT officers (a Management Information Systems Officer and a Governance Officer) were appointed to the IMU. In the course of its activities, most of the time the IMU liaised with the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications (MITC), CITAC (Core IT Advisory Committee) and MITTS Ltd.

The Ministry embarked on implementing a software application holistic approach across all the ministry business areas as the natural outcome and follow-up of the Common Agriculture Policy scoping document 2006. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform had a considerable impact on the whole ICT business of the Ministry. The CAP Reform System costing €600,000 and awarded to ABACO Srl under an EU Twinning Agreement is now in a very advanced stage of development. Particular attention was given to the Fisheries Department in order to bring it in line with this holistic approach.

Another major project currently in hand is the national calculation methodology for the implementation of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2002/91EC. This service will provide certifiers (architects and engineers [*periti* and *inginiera*]) to register and issue Energy Performance Certificates for buildings in Malta.

Following feedback gathered from the Directors and Heads of Sections, the ICT Capital and Operational Budgeting Plan for 2009 was drawn up and presented to CITAC.

INTRODUCTION OF THE EURO

The necessary preparations and undertakings in respect of information systems ensuring compliance with the euro requirements were carried out by the Information Management Unit (IMU) in full collaboration with the IT Task Force set up for the purpose. The changeover proved successful and took place without any serious problems.

BOARDS AND MEETINGS

The CIO represented the Ministry on the National Information Society Advisory Committee (NISCO) and sat regularly on the monthly CIO Council meetings. During the course of the year, the CIO chaired or was a member in various adjudication boards relating to the acquisition/disposal of hardware and software by

the Ministry and its departments. He was also a member of the Information Security Forum of the Ministry and of the Paying Agency Technical Board. He was continuously involved in the ICT consolidation drive for government entities that fall under the Ministry, namely WasteServ (Malta) Ltd, the Malta Resources Authority, the Malta Council for Science and Technology and the Building Industry Consultative Council.

WEBSITES

In the late 90's, all departments were requested to develop their own website primarily as a showcase of the services they offered. Government websites should be directed towards the citizen to provide easy access to the public services used and the information needed. Experience has shown us that keeping the content of these websites valid and up-to-date was not an easy task. It is of maximum importance that these websites present correct and up-to-date information. During 2008, the CIO had to take inevitable action to close down a couple of websites that failed to abide by these rules.

The original drive for all departments to build their own websites naturally resulted in several websites with a variety of looks and presentations for the same Ministry. The IMU is actively working to amalgamate and organise under a corporate image all the websites that fall under the remit of this Ministry. All this entails very lengthy assessments and approvals from the Quality Assurance offices of MITTS.

NETWORKS

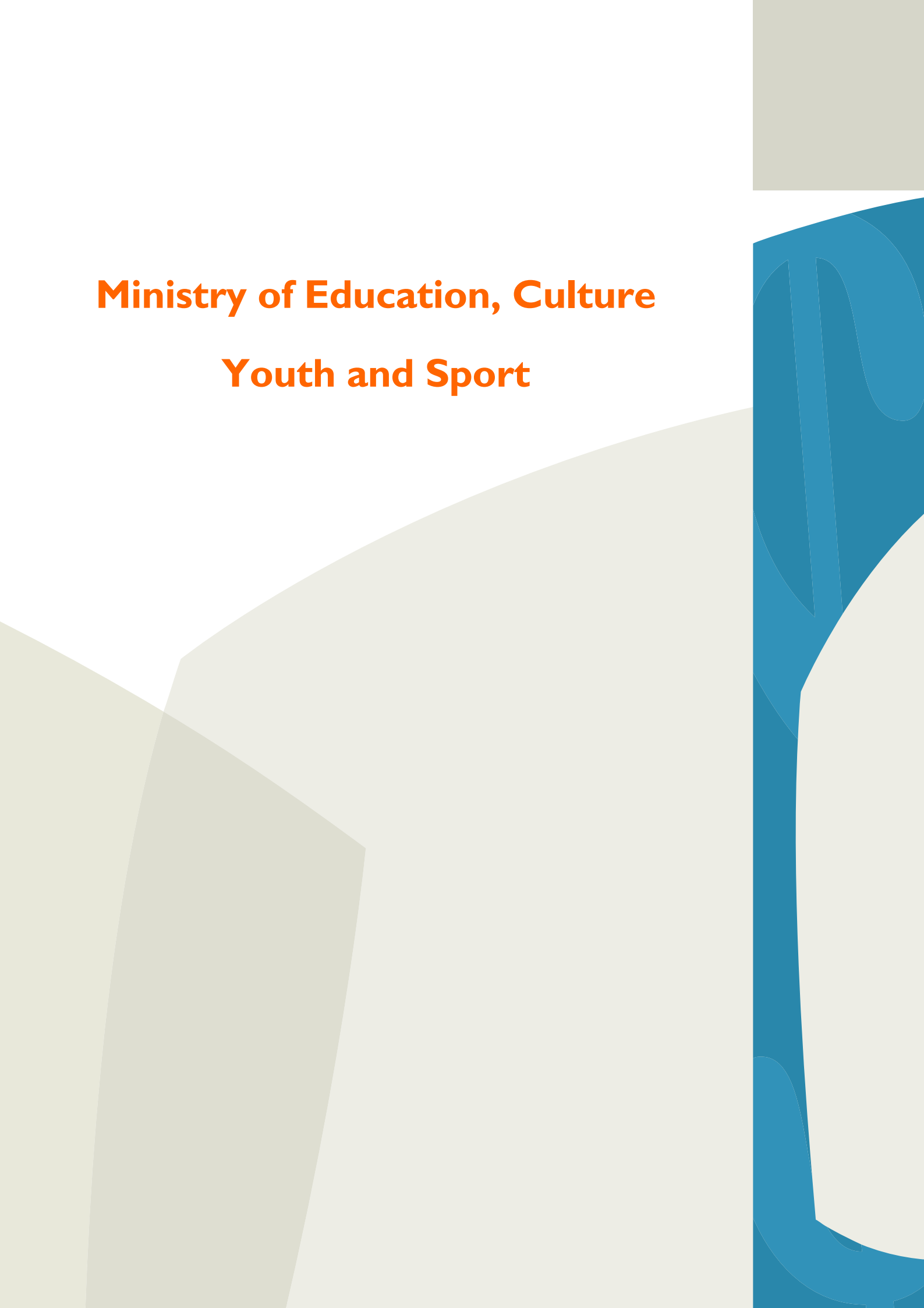
The demand on the network has grown rapidly as a result of the implementation of various applications and other facilities, including CCTV cameras, biometric readers and voice over IP. This demand is expected to grow further as new applications and services are rolled out. Old networking equipment, primarily hubs, at the ex-MRES are being replaced by modern intelligent switches. Local area networks at ministry buildings in Floriana are being refurbished to cater for modern needs, including telephony using structured cabling. It is intended that VoIP services currently existent for eight of the PABX systems at the ex-MRAE be extended to cover the whole Ministry. Connectivity has been upgraded to fibre optic at various sites, including the PARC Unit and Pitkali Markets (both at Ta' Qali), the Plant Health Department at Lija and Ospizio in Floriana. Works are in hand to similarly upgrade the connectivity at the Marsa Garage.

AUTOCAD

Relevant data, that is storage data and related ACAD drawings, was consolidated and centralised on the MITTS environment. The ACAD Licence File Manager is being transferred to a PC to enable and facilitate the control of all licences on hand. AutoCAD is a vitally important design tool for the Ministry, which is responsible for the design and planning of major infrastructural projects for the Maltese islands.

GEORGE FALZON
Chief Information Officer

**Ministry of Education, Culture
Youth and Sport**



Office of the Permanent Secretary

The Permanent Secretary is responsible for providing support and advice to the Minister for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport and ensuring the implementation of major projects, policy formulation and direction, sectoral strategic and business plan development and amending and drafting legislation. He is also responsible for providing leadership and contributing to the collective management of Government, particularly by contributing to discussions on major government policies and providing long-term, strategic direction.

The Permanent Secretary is responsible for all the departments, units and entities falling within the remit of the Ministry with the direct responsibility of the Sport Promotion Unit, the Youth Section and the Institute of Tourism Studies.

SPORT PROMOTION UNIT (SPU)

The Sport Promotion Unit is a unit within the Malta Sports Council working in collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sport. This unit started implementing its projects since September 2008 (beginning of scholastic year 2008/2009).

Objectives

SPU aims to increase the participation in sport and physical activity within the primary and secondary schools. The main objective is to provide a supportive school environment which encourages a healthy lifestyle, and promotes healthy choices early in life through sports and physical activity.

Colleges within Pilot Project

St Ignatius College, St Theresa College and St Thomas More College are the three colleges taking part in the pilot project. Seventeen primary schools and ten secondary schools form part of these three colleges. The Sports Promotion Unit is organising in-house coaching clinics (held by professional coaches in various disciplines) in the schools that pertain to these colleges, as well as in other subsidiary schools from other colleges. Qualified coaches, as experts in their field, show the students their respective games namely handball, rugby, baseball, netball and hockey.

In-house Coaching Clinics

During the first semester, the handball youth development officer visited six primary schools. A total of 350 Year 5 and Year 6 students took part in the handball sessions. The main objective is for students to start engaging themselves and appreciate the physical education activities. The total number of students participating in the primary schools were 221 boys and 280 girls whilst 283 children benefited from this activity from the secondary schools.

A qualified baseball coach from the United States of America visited three primary and two secondary schools on behalf of the Baseball Association. In all, 280 students had the opportunity to participate in baseball training sessions and experience the actual game.

European Youth Week

The students who participated in the European Youth Week had the opportunity to practise five different sports namely: basketball, baseball, football, martial-arts and touch rugby. During this week, 10 secondary schools participated in this activity amongst which was a church school – St Michael's Boys Secondary School. In all 600 students aged between 13 – 15 years took part in this activity.

Other Related Activities

The Hockey Association organised a hockey day for Żejtun Primary B students, at the Kordin Hockey Complex. During this activity, coaches from Sliema Hotsticks prepared different stations for the students to practise different skills/techniques related to the game. 190 students participated in this event.

Apart from these schools, the Sport Promotion Unit worked with different schools in organising the inter-school leagues for which all secondary and primary state schools were invited to participate. These inter-school leagues were held successfully, thanks to the full collaboration of the five associations concerned, namely: Basketball Association, Volleyball Association, Malta Amateur Athletic Association, Malta Rugby Football Union and Malta Handball Association. During these leagues, students from various schools participated and strengthened their networking relations with other schools. Out of 32 schools, 19 (10 boys secondary schools and 9 girls secondary schools) registered for these inter-school leagues.

Way Forward

During the second semester, the Unit continued to provide support and assistance to all schools forming part of this pilot project, by introducing a detailed programme for those students who are regularly absent from school and others who are experiencing behavioural problems. This is being done according to the exigencies of the school and the parents of the participating students.

YOUTH SECTION

The Youth Section holds various initiatives and events to support and encourage young people in becoming responsible individuals and active members of society, while helping them achieve their personal and social development. The Youth Section works to make provisions for young people's basic and social needs.

Youth Support Programme

This initiative is aimed at providing financial assistance to youth organisations in order to enable them in carrying out projects in the local communities.

During the year, the Youth Support Programme benefited from projects carried out from January till June 2008. Ten non-governmental youth organisations were granted a total sum of €3,150 to cover expenses in connection with their projects and activities.

The Youth Support Programme is currently being evaluated so as to ensure that the needs of young people and youth organisations are better addressed whilst helping them to access more EU Funding.

Youth Specialisation Studies Scheme

The Youth Specialisation Studies Scheme is a joint venture between the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth and Sport and the APS Bank Ltd aimed at financially assisting young people who wish to pursue their studies abroad if such studies, including post-graduate and distance learning courses, are not available in Malta.

The loan is repaid over 10 years including a moratorium on capital repayments of five years depending on the duration of the academic course to be followed. A total of 53 applications were received by the June deadline, out of which 20 were selected by a Credentials Committee. The Youth Section's total expenditure for the subsidised interest for 2008 was €18,634.

Youth Empowerment Programme

The Youth Empowerment Programme operated through seven Youth Empowerment Centres in Birkirkara, Mosta, Tarxien, Fgura, Żurrieq, Qormi and Victoria (Gozo). The empowerment centres operated till March, except for the Victoria (Gozo) Youth Empowerment Centre that was operating till June. The centres provided a service to young people in their locality, equipping them with the necessary information and skills to empower them in becoming more employable, whilst giving them the opportunity of getting in contact with voluntary organisations in their field of interest.

The Youth Section is currently evaluating the Youth Empowerment Programme and is seeking to make the necessary shift from the latter programme to a new programme in order to be able to offer professional youth work service in all interested local councils.

National Youth Information Centre

The National Youth Information Centre (NYIC), located at MCAST, Corradino operated fully till May. The Centre provided young people with relevant and effective information about developments at local, national and international levels. This year, the Youth Section furthermore worked to widen the arena of youth information. For this purpose a youth information handbook will be issued and a youth information centre will be in operation in the coming year.

European Youth Week

From 2 to 9 November, more than 350 young people coming from various spheres of society participated in the celebrations of the European Youth Week held in Valletta. During this event, young people participated in more than 26 discussions, 58 sports activities and also rock concerts.

This event was held with the help of various entities, especially the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA), the Maltese Association of Youth Workers, the Malta Sports Council and various youth and sports organisations and associations.

Youth Organisations Network

The Youth Section updates regularly by e-mail all youth organisations and other agents involved in youth work with any local, European and international opportunities and initiatives. Youth organisations also have the opportunity to inform other stakeholders in youth work by posting their activity on this network.

INSTITUTE OF TOURISM STUDIES (ITS)

The Institute of Tourism Studies provides vocational education of a high standard. It seeks to identify customer needs, monitors customer satisfaction and is responsible for providing the tourism industry with personnel trained to international standards. The Institute of Tourism Studies:

- provides opportunities for work experience in industry;
- recreates actual working environments on campus;
- provides training in a comprehensive range of practical skills;
- develops and enhances the intellectual ability of its students through a wide range of academic subjects;
- teaches generic skills essential for a smooth transition into the world of work;
- continuously monitors students' progress by tutors, review boards and internal and external examiners.

Programmes of Study for the Academic Year 2008/9

The Institute of Tourism Studies offers the following programmes of study:

Higher Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management;
 Diploma/Certificate in Hotel Operations;
 Diploma/Certificate in Accommodation Operations;
 Certificate/Diploma in Travel Agency Operations;
 Diploma in Tour Guiding;
 Diploma/Certificate in Food Preparation and Production and Supervisory Studies;
 Diploma/Certificate in Food and Beverage Service and Supervisory Studies;
 Extended Skill Training Scheme (Hospitality Trades).

There are 566 registered full-time students attending the Institute of Tourism Studies for the academic year 2008/9 together with another 450 part-time students. Students from 25 different nations attend the Institute.

International Internships

102 students commenced their international internship in July 2008. Students were placed in the following countries: England and Scotland 76, Ireland 5, Isle of Man 10, Germany 1, Italy 1, Luxemburg 1, Switzerland 1 and Brussels 5.

ITS Graduates - 2008

Course of Studies

Higher Diploma in Hospitality Management	12
Diploma in Hotel Operations	15
Diploma in Travel Agency	4
Diploma in Accommodation Operations	5
Diploma in Culinary Arts	15
Certificate in Hotel Operations	8
Certificate in Accommodation Operations	3
Certificate in Food Preparation and Production (Craft)	1
Certificate in Food Preparation and Supervisory Studies	23
Certificate in Food and Beverage Studies and Supervisory Studies	1
Certificate in Travel Agency	6

45 students completed their studies in Food Preparation and Service – Level 1. 2 students completed their studies in Restaurant Operations Level 1. 29 students completed their studies in the Extended Skills Training Scheme – Food Preparation and Service.

Participation in EU Programmes

During 2008 the Institute of Tourism Studies participated in the following programmes:

Interreg IIIA Italia – Malta Prisma Project (Integrated Relational Tourism);
 Leonardo Da Vinci NEW (No Borders European Workers) Hospitality;
 Comenius Project – Food – Healthy Youth in a future Europe;
 Comenius Project – European Business Handbook for young entrepreneurs;
 ESF80 Training of persons with learning difficulties and disadvantaged persons in basic hospitality trades.

FRANS BORG

Permanent Secretary, MEDC

Directorate for Educational Services

Mission Statement

To ensure the effective and efficient operation and delivery of services to the colleges and state schools within an established framework of decentralisation and autonomy.

GENERAL FUNCTIONS

The Directorate for Educational Services (DES), in constant collaboration with the colleges and schools, has the general function of planning, providing and allocating the resources, human and otherwise, services, and learning tools, both of a pedagogical, psychosocial, managerial and operative nature and other ancillary support tools, as required in the state colleges, schools and educational institutions, and to encourage and facilitate their networking and co-operation.

The DES was set up through the Education Act in July 2007 and started to operate functionally in November 2008. The Directorate has three departments: Human Resources Development, School Resources Management and Student Services. The DES also oversees the mode in which the ten state colleges operate and function. In its first year of operation, the DES gave great emphasis to recruitment within the Directorate, the development of student services and the overhaul and reform of school resources management.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

The Human Resources Development Department is responsible for:

- planning;
- recruitment;
- performance appraisal;
- customer and support staff.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

During the year under review, in line with the amended Education Act, the Department of Operations ceased to exist as from 31 January 2008. The Human Resources Development Department was set up as from 1 February 2008.

As this was a new department within a new directorate, it was important to have the Service Managers in place as soon as possible to address the responsibilities in the various sections within the Department. The Service Managers were given the responsibility of the Recruitment, Planning and Customer and Support Staff sections respectively.

During the year, Żurrieq Primary A & B and Żebbuġ Primary A & B were amalgamated into Żurrieq Primary C and Żebbuġ Primary C. Corradino Boys' Junior Lyceum was evacuated and moved temporarily to Adelaide Cini in Hamrun. The Corradino premises were handed over to MCAST.

Staff

Professional staff attached to the Human Resources Development Department is as follows: one Director; one Assistant Director; three Service Managers; and three Education Officers.

Teaching Staff

When schools reopened in September 2008, there was a shortage of Heads in the following schools: *Primary* - Bahrija, Gharghur, Mosta B, Safi, Senglea, Żabbar A, San Lawrenz, Xagħra and Żebbuġ (Gozo); *Secondary* - Dun Karm Psaila, Żebbuġ; Lorenzo Gafa` Boys' School. Total number of regular teachers recruited (Primary & Secondary) was 138 as follows:

Primary			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
	2	20	22
Special Education			
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
	1	5	6
Secondary			
<i>Subject</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Art	0	1	1
Biology	2	3	5
Computer Studies	4	1	5
Design & Technology (Food & Textiles)	2	2	4
Design & Technology (Resistant Material)	3	1	4
English	3	6	9
German	0	1	1
Home Economics	0	7	7
ICT	1	5	6
Int. Science	2	4	6
Italian	0	6	6
Maltese	3	6	9
Maths	3	8	11
Music	2	0	2
PE	5	5	10
Physics	0	5	5
PSD	0	4	4
Religion	1	2	3
Spanish	0	2	2
Theory of Music	1	1	2
French	0	1	1
Geography	0	3	3
Social Studies	0	2	2
History	1	1	2
Total	33	77	110

Number of Schools

Schools			
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Total</i>
Kindergarten Centres	-	-	62 ⁽¹⁾
Primary Schools	-	-	70
Junior Lyceums	4	5	9
Secondary Schools	10	6	16
Secondary School (College)	4	1	5
Schools	1	1	2
Post-Secondary Schools	-	-	2
Total			166

⁽¹⁾ these centres are situated on the same premises as the primary schools, with the exception of Mosta and an additional centre at Paola

Staff in State Schools

	Pre-Primary		Primary		Secondary		Inclusive Education		Post-Secondary		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	M	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Heads of School ⁽¹⁾			33	26	17	11			1	1	51	38	89
Assistant Heads of School ⁽²⁾			32	79	48	38			4	2	84	119	203
Subject Co-ordinators ⁽³⁾			1	1	38	30			12	-	51	31	82
Teachers ⁽⁴⁾			136	584	626	1,046			103	89	865	1,719	2,584
Resource Teachers			4	6	22	23			1	-	27	29	56
Instructors ⁽⁵⁾			12	77	44	36			1	-	57	113	170
Part-time Instructors ⁽⁶⁾			-	5	2	2			-	-	2	7	9
Temporary Teachers ⁽⁷⁾			-	1	2	1			-	-	2	2	4
Retired Teachers			-	4	2	3			2	-	4	7	11
Supply Teachers			5	28	13	28			1	-	19	56	75
Kindergarten Asst. (KGA) ⁽⁸⁾	-	356					-	32			-	388	388
KGAs (Spec. Educ.) ⁽⁹⁾							-	87			-	87	87
P/T KGAs (Spec. Educ.) ⁽¹⁰⁾							-	3			-	3	3
Supply KGAs ⁽¹¹⁾	-	57									-	57	57
Learning Support Assistants (LSA) ⁽¹²⁾							9	278			9	278	287
Supply Learning Support Assistants (SLSA) ⁽¹³⁾							55	676			55	676	731
Supply Learning Support Assistants (SLSA) (Spec. Educ.) ⁽¹⁴⁾							6	32			6	32	38
Total	-	413	223	811	814	1,218	70	1,108	125	92	1,232	3,642	4,874

¹ Not including 3 Primary Heads on unpaid/responsibility leave, 1 Secondary Head on long leave*

² Not including 7 Primary Assistant Heads on Parental/unpaid leave, 11 Primary Acting Heads, 4 Secondary Acting Heads, 15 Secondary awaiting appointment as Assistant Head and 1 on long leave

³ Not including 1(Secondary) on non-teaching duties and 1 (Post-Sec) on long leave

⁴ Not including 71 Primary Teachers on maternity/parental leave, responsibility, study and unpaid leave, 8 Secondary Teachers and 2 Post Secondary Teachers on non-teaching duties, 170 Secondary Teachers and 13 Post Secondary Teachers on long leave,

⁵ Not including 7 Primary Instructors on maternity/parental leave and emigration leave, 1 Secondary Instructor on non-teaching duties, 3 Secondary Instructors on long leave and 1 Post Secondary Instructor on non-teaching duties

⁶ Not including 2 Primary Part Time Instructors on parental leave/clerical duties

⁷ Not including 1 Primary Temporary Teacher on parental leave

⁸ Including 2 KGAs on clerical duties, 10 KGAs on pre-retirement leave, 4 KGAs on long sick leave, 2 KGAs on maternity leave, 2 KGAs on parental leave and 1 KGA on unpaid study leave

Not including 2 KGAs (Incl. Educ.) on unpaid study leave

⁹ Not including 1 KGA (Spec. Educ) on maternity leave and 1 KGA on parental leave

¹⁰ Not including 1 PT KGA (Spec. Educ) on maternity leave – primary

¹¹ Including 2 SKGAs on maternity leave and 1 on unpaid study leave

¹² Not including 13 LSAs on maternity leave, 14 on Parental leave, 3 on unpaid study leave (Primary) and 1 on maternity leave, 1 on parental leave and 1 on unpaid study leave (Secondary)

¹³ Not including 2 SLSAs on maternity leave, 11 on parental leave, 5 on unpaid study leave, 1 on cultural leave (Primary) and 9 on maternity leave, 5 on parental leave, 3 on unpaid study leave (Secondary)

¹⁴ Not including 1 SLSA (Spec. Educ) on parental leave and 1 SLSA (Spec. Educ) on unpaid leave

* long leave includes: maternity, parental, emigration, missionary, study, responsibility and other unpaid leave

Student Population and Number of Classes in State Schools

Sector	School Population (at the beginning of scholastic year 2008/2009)			No. of Classes
	Population			
	Male	Female	Total	
Kindergarten	2,548	2,307	4,855	346
Primary Schools	8,181	7,124	15,305	823
Junior Lyceums	1,869	4,350	6,219	273
Secondary Schools	2,683	2,649	5,332	272
Post-Secondary Schools	950	1,230	2,180	n/a
Colleges	3,220	789	4,009	89
Boys/Girls' School	82	46	128	10
Total	19,533	18,495	38,028	1,813

In-Service Management Course for Assistant Heads

The Human Resources Development Department organised an in-service course for newly appointed Assistant Heads of School (Primary and Secondary). The course entitled *Improving Quality Management in Schools* was spread over five days. It tackled the following topics: The Role of Assistant Head of

School; School Development Planning; the Performance Management Programme; School Accounts; Student Services; the school as a professional Learning Community; Leaders and Leadership. The course was attended by 52 Assistant Heads.

Schools, Teachers' Students Database

During the year, the HRD Department in collaboration with the Schools Information System (SIS) conducted training courses in the various SIS software programs, aimed at newly appointed School Administrators and School Secretaries/Clerk. Training and workshops for Heads of Schools in the Facility Timetable software were held before the start of the new scholastic year.

The SIS support team provided school clerks with the required support during the summer recess to perform the Year-End update for their students' database.

At the start of the new scholastic year the SIS team conducted the Good Shepherd Project for the tenth consecutive year. This project identifies children of five years of age whose parents have not registered them in any school according to the provisions of the Education Act.

The main project for 2008 was the completion of the roll over to the new STS Database System. By the end of March all schools had populated the database with all their school data and were all using the attendance module in the system. Now that the data of all students is entered in the system, statistical data can be extracted expeditiously by the Head Office with the help of the SIS Office.

Inclusive Education

During 2008, the global number of personnel detailed to support Special Needs students increased from 1,152 to 1,269.

Interviews for Supply Learning Support Assistants (SLSAs) to cater for mainstream students were held during August/September 2008. 48 candidates passed the two A Levels requisite section while 18 passed the corresponding one A Level requisite section.

In December 2008 interviews were held following a fresh call for applications to employ more SLSAs to fill vacancies created by shortages in the sector caused by an increase in the number of statemented students.

In 2008, the number of SLSAs who were eventually employed numbered 45. The majority are presently attending the course organised by the Students Services Department designed to cater for students with Individual Educational Needs. SLSAs employed after the commencement of the course will be attending the next course due to start in the first quarter of 2009.

A total of 223 transition exercise sessions were held to place Special Needs students proceeding from the primary to the secondary sector. Sessions were held between April and June 2008.

At the close of 2008, the number of students benefiting from LSA support in mainstream and special schools has reached the 1,680 mark.

Customer Care Services

The Customer Care Services incorporate:

- Reception of customers at the Head Office;
- Customer Care at the Head Office;

- Staff Support Service: Counselling to staff on performance related issues through the services of two part-time counsellors; and training on soft-skills and other issues for all staff within the Education Directorates.

The major change within the Customer Care Services was the change in location of offices in order to accommodate also the new service regarding Staff Support. The introduction of the number 1571 started to be operated in November 2008 with a view to ensuring that the services of the Education Directorates are more accessible to the public.

The Reception at the Head Office was incorporated with the Customer Care Services. The Reception served an average total of 13,296 persons during 2008.

All Customer Care Services personnel attended Recruitment Portal training delivered by the Management Personnel Office in view that all recruitment applications above Scale 10 shall be processed through the recruitment portal as from 2009.

The Customer Care Officer in charge of answering queries through the *servizz.gov.mt* portal attended training since the new system will be changed as from 2009.

All Customer Care and Staff Support attended two half-day training sessions regarding the Education Reform *Mill-Primarja għas-Sekondarja*.

Recruitment/Promotion Section

The Recruitment/Promotion section in the Department for Human Resources Development is responsible for the issuing of all calls for applications pertaining to the Education grades, from Kindergarten Assistants to Assistant Directors/Service Managers, in the Directorate for Educational Services and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

In the case of Regular Teachers, which attracted the largest number of applications, 36 selection boards were set up. A meeting with all the chairpersons nominated to conduct the selection exercise for Regular Teachers 2008-2009 was held on 17 June 2008. Results were published as follows:

- *Approved by PSC on 07/08/2008*: Biology; Chemistry; Computer Studies; Design & Technology – Resistant Materials and Electronics; Design & Technology – Food & Textiles Technology; Economics; French; Geography; German; Graphical Communication; Home Economics; Information Technology; Integrated Science; Italian; Maltese; Music; Physics; Piano; Social Studies; Spanish; Theory of Music; Violin.
- *Approved by PSC on 04/09/2008*: Physical Education; Mathematics; Art; History; PSD; Business Studies; Marketing; Systems of Knowledge; European Studies.
- *Approved by PSC on 19/09/2008*: English.
- *Approved by PSC on 23/09/2008*: Special Education; Primary.
- *Approved by PSC on 16/10/2008*: Religion.

In addition, draft calls for applications for a number of grades were prepared and published, and 252 recommendations for appointments were made to the Public Service Commission and the Management and Personnel Office for verification and approval.

Posting of Students for Teaching Practice/Observation/School Experience

The Directorate of Educational Services is represented by the Human Resources Development Department on the Teaching Practice Committee of the Faculty of Education. This committee seeks to enable close collaboration with the Teaching Practice Co-ordinator of the University and the Department of Operations.

Students following the Bachelor of Education degree course are posted in state, private and church schools for a six-week teaching experience, for weekly class observation or for school experience sessions. The following table provides a calendar when each activity took place.

Primary	Teaching Practice	Class Observation	School Experience
1st Yr Students			Nov - Dec
2nd Yr Students		Apr - May	
3rd Yr Students	Nov - Dec		
4th Yr Students	Nov - Dec		

Secondary	Teaching Practice	Class Observation	School Experience
1st Yr Students			Nov - Dec
2nd Yr Students		Nov - Dec	
3rd Yr Students	Apr - May		
4th Yr Students	Nov - Dec		
PGCE	Apr - May Nov - Dec		Jan - Feb Oct - Nov

The schools taking B.Educ (Hons) and PGCE students determine their own needs and student teachers are posted accordingly, as much as possible. Schools take full responsibility of the students placed in their schools. In this way, both parties involved benefit to the maximum from their placement in school. During the whole process Heads of School, Assistant Heads, Subject Co-ordinators and teachers are encouraged to participate in the tutoring, mentoring and supervision of student teachers.

At the request of, and in conjunction with, the Teaching Practice Co-ordinator of the Faculty of Education, a total of 917 placements in state, private and church schools were given to B.Educ/PGCE students for their teaching practice or school experience and observation during 2008.

<i>Primary</i>							
1 st Year		2 nd Year		3 rd Year		4 th Year	
Observation		Teaching Practice		Teaching Practice		Teaching Practice	
3 M	70 F	0 M	14 F	0 M	14 F	2 M	42 F
73		14		14		44	
<i>Secondary</i>							
1 st Year		2 nd Year		3 rd Year		4 th Year	
Observation		School Experience		Teaching Practice		Teaching Practice	
32 M	89 F	23 M	84 F	25 M	74 F	25 M	74 F
121		107		99		99	
<i>PGCE</i>							
Teaching Practice				Teaching Practice			
21 M		76 F		34 M		114 F	
97				148			

School Councils

During the year under review, there were 110 councils in mainstream schools (72 primary, 32 secondary, four in special schools and two post secondary schools). The School Councils' Section dealt with enquires and information regarding school councils including collection and checking of annual reports, monthly council meetings agenda and reports.

This year again the section dealt with the EU Milk Subsidy Scheme, while meetings were attended in preparation of the EU Fruit and Vegetables Scheme. The section also represented the councils in various activities and fora, took part in presentations on the media and organised talks to parents about school councils. The Section also attended various activities held by individual schools.

ALFRED MALLIA

Director (Human Resources Development)

DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The Department of School Resources Management consists of three main areas of operation, namely the Technical Services Area, the Educational Services Area and the ICT in Education Area. Each of these areas will eventually be led by a Service Manager.

The *Technical Services Manager* is responsible for liaising with the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools in its programme of new school building in line with the Ministry's policy. He is also responsible for major and minor refurbishment, embellishment and overall improvement of the state primary, secondary and post secondary schools. One major task force that is responsible for this school enhancement is the Technical Services Branch that has under its wings 120 members of technical operators whose work is facilitated by co-workers acting as leading hands.

The *Educational Services Manager* is responsible for ensuring that all operations of the state schools and the Directorate's sections will be serviced in their everyday administrative processes. A number of roles within this sector have this year operated under the auspices of the Director Corporate Services. But once the Service Manager is appointed, the departmental sections as defined by the call for applications will be put in place. One important section that falls under this Service Manager is the School Transport Section and this has been operating under this Department since February 2008.

The *ICT in Education Services Manager* is responsible for the software and hardware teaching and learning needs of all schools to operate within the eLearning strategy of the Government's policy. This Service Manager is responsible to research new methodologies and technologies that need to be adopted by schools and teaching staff to enable them to adopt modern state of the art pedagogies whereby students learn and teachers teach meeting modern holistic standards.

Another Unit that lies under the direct responsibility of the Director School Resources Management is the Health and Safety Unit. This unit is headed by an Education Officer and is serviced by a number of teachers. The School Resources Management Department boasts of a Health and Safety Unit which has achieved quite a lot in past years and plays a leading role whenever it participates in European fora.

Projects and Initiatives Undertaken by Various Sections

Project/Scheme/ Initiative Title	Description of Project/Scheme/Initiative
Verdala Project	General cleaning and restoration of bastions surrounding the school.
Acacia Project: San Miguel, Pembroke	The large number of Acacia trees that have re-emerged in the school grounds have once again been cut and/or sprayed in a effort to get rid of the unwanted acacia pollen from the school surroundings.
Palm Project	A programme of spraying with systemic treatment has been carried out on all Palm trees on school grounds to protect against the Red Palm Weevil.
Flower Arrangements	Provided approximately 365 flower arrangements for schools and directorates' ceremonies.
Casa Leone Garden	Major upgrading and regular cultivation of the garden of the Ministry's premises.
Food Labs Project	10 Food Labs were installed in seven schools.
Textile Labs	10 Textile Labs were installed in seven schools.
Electrical Installation	Electrical works/installations at: Nannakola Child Care Centre in Gharghur, Pepprina Child Care Centre in Paola, Malta Qualifications Council at Santa Lucija, Mqabba Primary School, St Theresa College, St Theresa Girls JL, San Gorg Preca Hamrun BJJ, Higher Secondary School, Naxxar, Marsascala Primary School, Guze' D'Amato Paola. General inspection of all electrical lights in all schools in preparation for the general elections.
Science Labs	4 Science Labs were installed in two schools.
Kitchen Installations	8 kitchens/kitchenettes were installed in eight schools.
Toilets refurbishment	16 toilets were completely refurbished in 10 schools.
Computer Infrastructure Power and Communication Network	Replaced all non-standard socket outlets with standard 13 Amp socket outlets together with adding sufficient standard power sockets outlets for the increased demand made by the desktop Replacement project in all the primary and secondary schools in Malta; Other works at Life Long Learning Centre Msida, Sir Luigi Preziosi, Siggiewi Primary School, and St Ignatius College, Qormi.

Plumbing works	Refurbishment and/or new plumbing installations in toilets, kitchens, technology labs, art rooms and science labs in 24 schools/sections.
First Aid in Schools	Leonardo Project for teacher training in First Aid.
Tandems GO	Grundtvig Project re Health and Safety development over the years.

School Requisites

The guidelines were revised and updated in the form of a manual to help Heads of School draw up the capital expenditure business plan. The revision of this booklet arose in response to a number of concerns raised by Heads of School in their interpretations of guidelines in the previous edition. The introduction of the euro also necessitated the definition of the boundaries regarding the financial thresholds to abide by in the procurement process. The financial allotments of the three funds passed to schools were also processed.

The Technical Services Branch

The Technical Services Branch is responsible for the ordinary works required in schools. The Department is guided by the principle that schools need to be a second home for the students and the staff. In the carrying out of its tasks, the Technical Services Branch works in close collaboration with the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools. The table below gives a summary of the tasks that have been carried out by the Technical Services Branch during 2008:

Trade	Members of staff in the trade	Requisitions for works submitted in 2008	Number of jobs carried out in 2008	Number of jobs in hand
Aluminium works	3	86	74	4
Carpentry works	15	150	123	20
Drainage works	7	295	292	3
Drivers	5	252	252	Nil
Electrical works	22	282	2,275	3
Masonry works	11	90	76	13
Membrane works	4	38	36	2
Plastering and Painting works	23	102	86	16
Plumbing works	14	56	55	1
Welding and Iron works	14	144	132	4

Transport Management

The transport services consist of two sections, namely the Transport Pool, currently operated under the auspices of the Director Corporate Services and the School Transport operated by the School Resources Management Department.

The School Transport Unit is responsible for providing transport to approximately 17,000 students every day, to and from state primary and secondary schools. This mammoth task has a route register of 680 routes for mainstream students together with 30 other routes for students with special needs. The mainstream transport service is currently rendered by three major providers, namely the Mini Bus Co-operative, the Unscheduled Bus Service and the Public Transport Association.

The transport of students with special needs is partially carried out by private contractors operating under contractual agreements and partly by the Directorate's Special Transport Service.

During the summer of 2008, new transport reporting software was developed by the Transport Unit itself whereby better control is being exercised on the way reports of transport trips to and from schools reach the Accounts section of the Directorate. Training has been given to school staff about the way data is collected and forwarded to the Directorate. A database giving information about the students taking particular routes has been compiled by all the schools.

A study has been commissioned to recommend ways of improving upon the current mode of operation of the transport system. A draft 'Safe Route to Schools' policy has also been compiled together with ADT.

ICT in Education

In January 2008 the eLearning team, currently liaising with the Department of School Resources Management, started working on the images given to the laptops and desktops in schools. The team has produced three images: one for the primary sector, another for the secondary sector and one for the members of the administration. By the end of February, the team started the deployment of 12 laptops and 68 desktops to San Ġorġ Preca's College Valletta Primary School. Go plc sponsored the new network installed at this school whilst Promethean UK, represented by Forestals Ltd, donated two Promethean boards.

In March, 16 laptops and 73 desktops were deployed to Gozo College Victoria Primary School. This school was also given two interactive whiteboards from Promethaen. Another four interactive whiteboards were installed at St Thomas More College Girls JL and at San Ġorġ Preca Girls JL.

The issuing of the leased equipment that was entrusted to two suppliers was one of the major tasks undertaken by the eLearning team during 2008. The table below gives a summary of the desktops and laptops distributed to schools and to all teaching staff in schools and sections.

	Laptops	Desktops	Total
Primary	1,313	3,684	4,997
Secondary	2,115	2,086	4,201
Administration	378	292	670
Total	3,806	6,062	9,868

Deployment of laptops to all teachers was completed in May 2008 and thus, in June, the desktops' deployment was started. This process lasted till October 2008. The desktops at St Benedict's college still need to be changed.

All teachers attended a Professional Development session prior to the laptops being given to them. Apart from the basic training, information was disseminated about the manner in which difficulties which may arise during the course of the use of these machines are to be tackled. Teacher movement between schools over the summer vacation brought about a demanding task of redistributing the laptops that had to be returned by moving teachers. The same applied to teachers availing themselves of parental leave, maternity leave, study leave; etc.

Work on the communications network and power infrastructure is an ongoing process and thus desktops will be deployed as soon as the infrastructural work is completed.

Health and Safety in Schools

Greater awareness regarding health and safety has been achieved in all state and non-state (church and independent) schools due to the sustained efforts of Health and Safety Unit made up of peripatetic H&S teachers in primary schools and resident H&S teachers in secondary schools. Schools are increasingly asking for the services offered by this Unit's personnel and are therefore identifying the H&S Unit as a point of reference.

Teaching

The Maltese peripatetic teachers in the H&S Unit are divided into four teaching (two-man) teams:

- one team caters for St Margaret College, St Benedict College and St Thomas More College;
- the second team caters for San Ġorġ Preca College, St Ignatius College and St Clare's College;

- the third team services Maria Regina College, St Nicholas College and Saint Theresa College;
- the fourth team caters for the five special schools and the Drama Unit; the HE Centre; the Science Centre; the School of Music; Unit Ghozza; the Special Inclusive Education Unit; St Patrick's Craft Centre and the Youth Hostel at M'Xlokk;
- Gozo has its own team which services all the eleven primary schools in Gozo. There are another six resident H&S teachers who see to the secondary schools, namely two each in Ninu Cremona BS, Agius de Soldanis GS and M A Refalo Higher Secondary, all in Victoria.

During scholastic year ending July 2008, H&S teachers in the primary level delivered lessons to all Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 classes in Malta and Gozo as follows:

- Year 4 students were taught Road and Sea safety;
- Year 5 students were taught about Bike safety and "Drugs and Needles";
- Year 6 and 7 students were taught Internet safety and Safety in the Home;
- Moreover, the Gozo College and Maria Regina College were involved in the *Catch 'em Young* pilot project wherein the very young students (Years 1, 2 and 3) are taught all about H&S without the use of formal lessons. This is done through games, role plays, puzzles and other such interactive pedagogies.

Other services

During scholastic year ending July 2008, the Health and Safety Unit serviced all state primary schools. Various topics related to Health and Safety were promoted and discussed with the school management teams and staff.

During 2008, the Health and Safety Unit contributed also towards the following:

- carried out annual risk assessments in all state primary and secondary schools;
- created and organised the Education H&S Certificate of Merit (HaSSCoM) which was awarded to 20 schools at elementary level;
- created and organised the Health and Safety Education Best-practice Award (HASEBA) which was won, for the first time, by San Ġwann Primary B School;
- distributed a monthly Health and Safety e-pamphlet to all schools on various topics related to H&S;
- organised courses for school leavers in basic health and safety issues, basic fire awareness and prevention and basic first aid;
- delivered talks to parents on local and EU legislation related to Health and Safety issues;
- organised annual Health and Safety Expositions in Malta and Gozo;
- participated and organised staff development sessions in various schools on Health and Safety issues;
- prepared detailed evacuation plans for schools, including the installation of marked plans and exit signage at strategic places on school premises;
- organised two INSET Courses;
- provided support to Skolasajf 2008 to ensure a healthy and safe environment;
- trained academic and minor school staff in fire awareness and suppression, as well as in basic first aid;
- headed the Health and Safety monitoring team for the premises of the Education Headquarters in Floriana;
- trained, observed and advised schools on evacuation protocols and drills;
- prepared school contingency plans;
- inspected first aid cabinets to ensure that they were well stocked and their contents compliant with the recommendations set in government-recognised first aid courses;
- ensured that fire extinguishers were appropriate in number, well-maintained and serviced;
- advised on the procurement, deployment and fixing of emergency lighting, as and where necessary;
- liaised with local and foreign agencies such as the OHSA, CPD, Malta Red Cross, FTS, ADT, AFM, AKS, HIS, PPCD at OPM, Sedqa, Appoġġ, Police Department, Health Division, RoSPA, Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT), European Child Safety Alliance (ECSA), EUPA;
- provided a consultancy service to all schools, including non-state schools and other sections of the Education Directorates;

- regularly conducted research in schools. During 2008, extensive research on schoolbags, sports days, and accidents in schools was carried out;
- organised and/or participated in EU-funded projects related to Health and Safety;
- participated actively in various inter-departmental and ministerial committees;
- promoted Child Safety Education on the Mass Media;
- became involved in two European projects namely *Tandems Go*, a Polish led Grundtvig2 project, and *First Aid In Schools – FAIS* a Leonardo da Vinci project co-ordinated with Red Cross (Gozo), Red Cross (Belgium), Red Cross (Italy), and Red Cross (Germany);
- acted as member on the steering committee of the ECSA and the local co-ordinator for the Child Safety Action Plan;
- started the compilation of a list of the private and government entities following a health and safety policy. Schools may consult this list when they organise educational visits.

PAUL S ATTARD

Director (School Resources Management)

STUDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

One Director and five Service Managers were employed during 2008. The five Service Managers are managing the following sections:

- Psycho-Social Services
- Special Education and Resource Centres
- Inclusive Education
- Life Long Learning
- Projects and Initiatives.

Student Services Department Centre, Hamrun

In 2008 the Director for Student Services continued to refurbish and embellish the Centre for Student Services in Hamrun. This included a total overhaul of the first floor of this centre which was prepared for the transfer of most of the services provided by this Department.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SERVICES

The Psycho-social Services within the Department for Student Services seeks to provide quality service by qualified personnel to clients within the educational system according to the specific needs of pupils and students. These Services are intended to assist students in their holistic development as individuals and help them become active and responsible members of society.

The Psycho-social Services Section is comprised of the following Units/Services:

- Education Medical Service
- School Psychological Service
- Guidance and Counselling Services
- Unit Għozza
- School Social Work Service
- Safe Schools Programme which incorporates the Child Safety Services, Anti-Bullying Unit and Substance-Abuse Policy Team.

Education Medical Services

In 2008, most of the efforts were directed towards the obesity issue and Secondary School BMI Surveillance Programme set-up as part of the HELP initiative, whilst all the other activities and programmes were kept and offered. A major achievement was the setting up of several committees which the Directorate of Educational Services and Health Division have developed in an effort to co-ordinate activities related to health in schools and educational institutions.

Head lice Screening Programme

The head lice screening programme was carried out to meet the demands of individual school administrators. In certain schools (including private and church schools) where there was reporting about head lice infestations, screening was seen to without delay. The service was also provided uninterruptedly during the summer months during which 45 Skola Sajf centres were visited and their pupils screened on at least three separate occasions. Since the beginning of the 2008-2009 scholastic year, there have been 74 requests by Heads of School for screening, covering schools ranging from primary schools to secondary schools in government, church and private schools. A total of 32,013 boys and 31,636 girls were screened during the year.

Advisory Service

Advisory service, by phone and if need be by attending specific educational institutions, constitute a major service continuously sought by school administrators and college level administration as well as directors in main directorates of the Education Ministry as well as by parents of children when medical issues arise. The problems are diverse and range from queries about contagion of certain conditions to management of particular circumstances with health connotations.

Advice is also provided to the relevant sections of the Directorate to implement and execute directives on sick leave issued in OPM Circular 12/99 according to information forwarded by respective specialists in medical reports.

Advisory services are also given to schools about arrangements to meet the particular needs of children with special needs. This, through participation in and organisation of multidisciplinary teams to devise an individual education needs programme embracing the diverse aspects of the conditions tackled.

The unit also prepares and updates an informative publication regarding medical conditions reported to the Statementing Board. The publication provides reference of websites from which further information can be sought. This is also important to allow a process of classification of these conditions according to European standards which serve the administration to utilise when liaising with EU institutions.

Special Exam Arrangements Applications

Special exam arrangements assessments are carried out in the school attended by the child involved and the necessary arrangements are carried out after careful assessment which involves analysing the submitted medical certification and reports so that recommendations are then passed to curriculum management for implementation.

Hepatitis Immunisation Programme

The Hepatitis B Vaccination programme of special schools staff, due to the particular exposure to body fluids which arises from the nature of their working conditions, is organised by the unit and an electronic database is well into completion. This service relies heavily on the liaison with the Health Division.

Fever Unit

The unit organised and provided a medical service of clinical assistance in cases of children who during their Junior Lyceum Entrance Exam were sick or needed special medical attention due to the conditions they were suffering from and which still allowed them to attend for the exam.

Health Promoting School Inspections Programme

Health Promoting School Inspections were also carried out and the necessary advice about school clinics and first-aid set-ups as well as health issues about particular students are tackled. Nutritional aspects as well as tuck-shop and food availability are also considered and the school administration is advised accordingly.

BMI survey in secondary schools

This was a major project during the year and involved the distribution of weighing scales of high standard to all secondary schools in Malta and Gozo. The weighing scales were calibrated and a cross-sectional study set up to research predictors of overweight problems and obesity in secondary school children. This was achieved with the help of PE teachers and co-ordinated by the Education Medical Services. All the procedures were carried out after extensive consultation with the Data Protection Commissioner. Strict anonymity was respected with no personal data being processed as well as all safeguards taken to ensure the safety of the children. The response was good and the number of eligible students attending Form I was 4,951. This figure does not include a small number of 12-year-old students who fail to pass the secondary school entrance exam and repeat the final year at primary school level. However this figure includes a few students who failed to be promoted to Form II and repeated Form I. The actual measurements, questionnaire-delivery and collection have been carried out. This phase is planned to pave the way forward to develop a continuous surveillance of BMI in all secondary schools for all the students and development of a longitudinal dimension to the project. A similar process already exists in several countries and EMS strives to achieve this.

Liaison with Health Division

This process has taken a formal nature with the setting up of an interdepartmental committee providing a forum in which issues regarding Health and Education are discussed and liaison sought. The Education Medical Services Unit is one of the main stakeholders in this process, involving frequent meetings which are usually lengthy and technical requiring relevant research and preparation according to the issues on the agenda. The Unit also represents the Directorate for Educational Services on the inter-departmental committee to tackle the obesity problem in Malta. Liaison has also been developed in a structured manner with the Disease Surveillance Unit and the Health Promotion Unit in areas which involve contagious diseases in school children and execution of related policies as well as health-promoting initiatives which the unit deems necessary.

Educational Talks and Presentations

Talks and presentations are regularly organised and are directed towards staff development, education of parents and students and as educational initiatives for nursing staff giving services in the school-setup.

Heavy School Bags Initiatives

The unit was instrumental in the development of a committee in the Education Student Services Directorate to address the heavy school bags issue. The unit was also responsible to weigh all the text books used and this paved the way to the implementation of a policy updated by the committee to help schools develop timetable-based control of school bag weight. The whole process involved several meetings held during the summer months and extensive consultation with several units in the Education Directorates.

School Psychological Service

The School Psychological Service strives to promote the optimal psycho-educational environment that facilitates the learning and development of children and young people. This is undertaken through partnership with parents and collaboration with school staff and other child professionals and services.

Section Profile

The main services offered by the School Psychological Service during 2008 included:

- psycho-educational assessment and intervention for children and young people with learning and behavioural difficulties. The majority of referrals requested support relating to severe emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (including aggression, depression, suicidal behaviour, disruption, and school refusal) and identification of learning difficulties predominantly relating to dyslexia, dyspraxia, mental disability, ADD/ADHD and autism. Around 45 % of new referrals requested an assessment *vis-à-vis* special examination arrangements for junior lyceum or MATSEC examinations;
- telephone consultation with parents, school staff and professionals in other agencies/services;
- attendance for case conferences in schools and in child support agencies/services;
- advising teachers and parents on the psycho-educational needs of children;
- liaising with other units within the Support Services of the Education Division and with external child-support agencies;
- participation in whole-school development, relating to children's psycho-educational development and/or special educational needs;
- contributions to professional development of school staff;
- contributions to policy review regarding special examination arrangements for candidates with particular requirements;
- participation in a project co-ordinated by the University of Malta and St Luke's Hospital. The aim of the project was to monitor changes in cognitive functioning in persons with dopa-responsive dystonia receiving 5-hydroxy-tryptophan;
- supervision of trainee psychologists and psychology students.

Referrals

In 2008, 348 new referrals were received consisting of: 298 individual case referrals; 24 junior lyceum special examination arrangements assessments for the May 2009 examinations; and 26 MATSEC special examination arrangements assessments for the May 2009 examinations.

As at 31 December 2008, the total number of closed referrals (received before or during 2008) was 281; 179 referrals were in the process of assessment and/or follow-up.

Guidance and Counselling Service

This Unit seeks to provide a continuous service to all students, leading to their holistic development. The service is given to schools and to the general public during office hours.

The Guidance and Counselling Unit covers:

- personal, curricular and career guidance with students and parents;
- developmental guidance based on identifying and meeting the personal and social needs of pupils/students; and helping them deal successfully with their concerns;
- meetings and training for Guidance Teachers and Counsellors;
- work and contacts with other agencies;
- meetings and staff development sessions for teachers on Personal Guidance;
- seminars and ongoing development programmes regarding work of other agencies and personal growth/enrichment;

- parenting skills programmes, consisting of six sessions with parents;
- individual and group counselling with students and parents, both as preventive action and crises intervention.

Counselling Service

This service is given in all schools. Students usually ask for counselling themselves, or parents may be sent for. Counselling could range from crisis interventions to personal, vocational or educational counselling. A great number of referrals are also done, to other helping and support agencies.

Curricular Guidance

- Transition from primary into secondary schools. Choice of subjects at secondary level also covered. This exercise is now college-based as counsellors co-ordinate talks with their respective guidance teachers for Year 6 students and the parents of their college. They also organise visits from the primary schools to the secondary/junior lyceum within the same college.
- Subject options 2 & 3, talks, discussions, meetings with students and parents. Individual counselling.
- Entry into post-secondary courses. Talks to 5th Formers on various courses available, visits to different post-secondary institutions, individual and group counselling. This exercise is year-long. Teachers in post-secondary institutions meet with students and help in their settling in. These teachers then visit the "feeder" secondary schools (Form V students) and brief them regarding course content, subject choices, etc. Some institutes also accept visits from secondary schools.

Career Guidance

- Careers' Orientation Visits. Places visited were Bank of Valletta, Institute of Tourism Studies, Central Bank, Malta Stock Exchange, Middle Sea Insurance, AFM, Swatar Training Centre, and Malta Centre for Restoration, University of Malta and Malta Institute for Computer Science. These visits were held mainly for Form V students. In some cases, some fourth formers were also included in the groups.
- Apart from these visits, every school organised talks and visits on the initiative of guidance teachers. Careers' Market or Careers' Week were also organised in a good number of schools. These visits are mainly organised for students of Form IV and V.

Careers' Seminars

The section is responsible for the development and delivery of a one-day Careers Seminar for school leavers (fourth or fifth Form students). Two to three seminars are delivered per day. During 2008 a total of 5,181 students attended the seminar. These can be classified as follows: boys' state schools (secondary and junior lyceums) 1,595; boys' church/private schools 578; girls' state schools (including Unit Għożża) 2,328; girls' church/private schools 680. All state colleges were covered.

The one-day seminar consists of three sessions. During the first session the students are encouraged to reflect upon themselves by focusing on their own concept/s of career, the influences behind choices they have made so far, their values and interests as well as their inter- and intra-personal skills. The second session helps students become aware of skills needed to explore the job market, the different types of challenges presented by different sectors within the job market, as well as links between post-secondary courses and career paths. The third session is divided into three parts: in the first part students are made aware of the Malta Qualifications Framework and its relevance to career development. In the second part students are presented with the key elements, and models, of letter (job application) writing as well as of the Europass Curriculum Vitae. Finally the session focuses on interview skills. These are highlighted through the screening of a DVD produced by the Employment and Training Corporation.

Meetings

- Counsellors: These were held every fortnight with the agenda made up of issues that need to be discussed by counsellors. Occasionally a guest speaker would address the counsellors on a specific issue. As from February 2008, as part of their ongoing development, counsellors undertook short courses in lieu of their usual meetings. These sessions were varied, dealing with counselling techniques in the Primary, Stress Management, Play Therapy Techniques and proved to be very beneficial and enriching. As from October 2008, sessions on Supervision Skills are being delivered.
- Guidance Teachers: Guidance meetings were held weekly, as part of an ongoing development programme for guidance teachers. Topics covered included: Helping Skills; Gender Awareness Education; Career Guidance for persons with Disability; Healthy Youth: Enhancing Relationships for the Common Good; and others.

Summer Service

A summer walk-in service was offered to school leavers and post secondary students who were in need of a guidance service upon receiving their SEC or Matric results. Post-secondary schools such as the Junior College, Higher Secondary, ITS, MCAST and University ask for help in guiding prospective students to enter one of the courses. This took place from July 18 to 21 August, for six weeks. During this period, eight guidance teachers offered their services, on four mornings a week during the open days for applications. Once all closing dates were exceeded, the service came to an end.

This service was very much in demand as many students who turned up had results that they were not expecting and others decided to enrol in a different course. The majority of students turned up with their parents. These parents voiced their concerns about their children's future choices and expressed their reassurance that their children were going to follow the right path.

Courses for Guidance Teachers

For the first time, two courses were offered, 32 guidance teachers and counsellors attending a course in Counselling Skills whilst 34 guidance teachers and counsellors are attending a course in Career Guidance Skills. The first course, comprising ten sessions of two hours each, started on 1 October and will end on 21 January 2009.

Other Duties

Counsellors have also formed working groups in order to maintain, develop and enhance the Unit's progress, in the following general aspects of work:

- planning and organising of guidance teachers meetings;
- meeting the need for counsellors' further training and supervision;
- statistics/tracer study;
- career orientation visits.

Parenting Skills Programme

Sessions are held throughout the year and delivered by trained facilitators for groups of not more than 20 parents. Requests are forwarded to the Unit regularly, especially by the primary schools. A six-session parenting programme called *Nifhmu 'l Uliedna* is carried out. Topics include self-esteem, decision-making, communication, relationships, drug abuse, assertiveness, health and sexuality. A new manual has been prepared for use.

Personal Growth

One day seminars were organised by the Guidance sections of several schools. Counsellors identified particular needs which were then dealt with during the seminars. Issues tackled centred round leadership, relationships, communication and other relevant topics.

Tracer Study

Since 1990 the Guidance and Counselling Services have been organising a series of tracer studies - both at school and at the national level. Such research provides helpful information to educational planners as well as the personnel at the Guidance & Counselling Services. The work carried out by Guidance Teachers encouraging students to have positive approaches toward furthering their education is evident in the steady increase there has been during the past few years in the number of students participating in post-secondary courses. The report indicates that 3,886 young people (76% of the total number of students who reached school leaving age and replied to the survey) opted to follow a course in post-secondary schools. This represents a 2.2% increase over the previous year. All students who completed Form V in 2007 were asked to participate in this Tracer Study, i.e. all students who are legally able to leave school on finishing the statutory school career and could opt to stay on at school or seek work. Those students who left school before doing their school-leaving examination - having been officially exempted from school on reaching their sixteenth birthday - are considered as dropouts and thus are not included in the study. In the form sent to all school leavers, each student is asked to indicate if she/he was studying at school, working or at home. A list of all post-secondary schools is sent to all school leavers. Schools are grouped into academic, technical or vocational courses. Each student is asked to indicate which school he/she was attending at the time of the survey, i.e. October/November 2008. If the student declares he/she is working, a list of the 10 jobs which are most popular in the 2006 Tracer Study is given. Students are asked to indicate if they are working in these or other different jobs. Students also state whether they were at home, emigrated, registering for work or any other option.

Request for Service

The Unit's services are also requested by primary and secondary schools, and parish groups for seminars/talks and staff development programmes. Counsellors also liaise with other branches and services like Sedqa, Anti-Bullying, Anti-Substance Abuse for Prefects' Programmes, for talks/discussions/seminars in schools and for preventive programmes.

LdV Project

Five counsellors were involved in a Leonardo Project entitled *Career Guidance Education and Employment in a Lifelong Learning Context*. Two counsellors went to St Tiernan's Community School in Dublin in October whilst three counsellors went to City Limits, Southampton for their placement in November. The visits proved to be very worthwhile and enriching.

Unit Ghozza

This Unit seeks to provide a support service and an educational programme to unmarried pregnant minors, leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career paths.

For this purpose the Unit works closely with Heads of School, School Counsellors and Guidance Teachers. The Unit make contacts with the School Administration as well as the Matsec Board, to facilitate attendance for examination sittings.

When the pregnant girl is still attending school, after informing the Head of School, she may choose to follow one of the three options: to continue attending school regularly and go to the Unit for counselling or

to seek information; stop attending school until the birth of the child and attend the full programme at Ghozza; or to attend 2/3 days at school and 2/3 days at Ghozza. After the birth of the child we do our utmost for the girl to return to school.

Referrals

During the year, 191 new cases of unmarried mothers contacted the Unit. 73 girls attended the programme and 76 girls requested counselling. About 40 teenage mothers and their babies/toddlers attend the Mother and Baby Support Group. Ongoing counselling is also offered to these girls, their parents and partners.

Programmes

The Unit offers a number of programmes including:

- *Pregnant Girls*: Sessions are held regularly for the pregnant girls consisting of PSD sessions, pregnancy issues and parenting skills. Parent craft sessions are also held by a midwife from Mater Dei to address further pregnancy issues. Craft sessions are also held to enhance the girls' creative skills. Speakers were also invited to give talks to the girls pertaining to social benefits and registration of name.
- *Parents*: The parents of the pregnant girl approach the Unit whenever they need information, support or counselling. This applies to the parents of the partner as well. Parents are invited to attend the first time the girl comes to the Unit, for the Labour session at St Luke's and for a special session delivered by personnel from the Public Registry and the Social Service.
- *Mother and Baby*: The Mother and Baby Group is held weekly. This group tackles issues which are relevant mainly to personal and social situations and also parenting skills. This is carried out through discussions and inviting speakers to the Unit. Craft sessions are also held to enhance creativity and outings to enhance social communication and cohesion in the group. This promotes communication between mother and child. A certificate is given to the girls who regularly attended the programme of the Unit.
- *Prevention*: Talks called *Nifhmu 'l Uliedna fil-Bidliet* were regularly carried out during this period. These are talks to parents of children in Years 5, 6 and 7 carried out as part of a prevention programme. Throughout 2008, these talks were held in 29 state schools and 12 church and independent schools.
- *Counselling Service*: Counselling is offered at all times and by appointment. It is requested by the pregnant girls and their partners as well as by their families. Counselling is also requested by the young mothers. They continue to be considered as clients of the Unit until they are married.

School Social Work Service

The School Social Work Service ensures that all school age children receive the best possible education, in the best possible conditions and to the best of their abilities. This is done through the use of effective social work intervention and, when necessary, by taking unco-operative parents to court.

Work Activities

During 2008, the tasks performed by the School Social Work Service were as follows:

Home visits	803	Referrals out	79
School visits	305	Talks	6
Education court sittings	136	Talks on radio	1
Case conference	50	Meetings with other Professionals	68
Case reviews	20	Police Court sittings	10
Juvenile court sittings	5	Datatrak Court sittings	126
Juvenile court cases	104	School Reports on absenteeism – cases processed	9,195
Social work intervention at Unit	446	School Reports on absenteeism – cases taken to court:	
Social work counselling	243	<i>Police cases</i>	322
Exemptions	1,212	<i>Datatrak cases</i>	3,604

Initiatives

The Social Workers and Support staff at the School Social Work Service worked throughout the summer months in order to produce an Evaluation of School Social Work intervention. The study covers the years 2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008. The work also includes an analysis of the school absentee reports received by this Section every month, from the schools, and the subsequent court procedure. Furthermore, an analysis of all the school exemptions issued by this Section is also included.

The Evaluation for School Social Work intervention is purposely divided according to each school and college. Every referral and every case, on which social work intervention was carried out, is shown according to the school from where it was sent. The information collected shows the age of each child in the referral, the gender, the locality where the child lives, the age, who referred the case, the term (time) of intervention, which professionals were involved in the case and the outcome of the intervention. The outcome of the intervention is decided according to which aims, planned with our clients at the start of the intervention, were reached. The results for the year 2007-2008 regarding School Social Work intervention are as follows:

Outcome/result	No of cases/outcomes	%
Substantial change	290	67.29
Significant change	55	12.76
Further action needed	0	0
Change impossible	0	0
No change registered	86	19.95
Total	431	100

N.B. The above figures represent intervention carried out from 1 September 2007 to 31 August 2008.

Safe Schools Programme

The Safe Schools Programme comprises three units: the Child Safety Services, the Anti-Bullying Unit and the Anti-Substance Abuse Unit. Each unit seeks to give service through consultation, intervention, prevention and training.

Child Safety Services (CSS)

Child Safety Services (CSS) is a specialised unit working in the area of child abuse. It is an educational, co-ordinating and therapeutic unit, offering interventive and preventive services to students, parents and school staff. CSS strives to offer effective and professional services catering for the needs of children who have experienced abuse.

Child Safety Services has the following functions: prevention; consultation; monitoring of cases and co-ordination of services; training; intervention; research; tracing; and multidisciplinary team work.

- *Prevention:* Prevention work is a continuous process in schools. This includes awareness raising sessions with parents and prevention sessions with students. Prevention programmes are offered to Year 4 students at the primary level and to first/second/third/fourth formers attending state, church or independent schools. The programmes aim at equipping students with the necessary knowledge about child abuse and vital skills necessary to protect oneself.
- *Consultation:* Consultation with various schools has been a main priority for CSS since its onset. Normally, school staff or other professionals within the Directorate for Educational Services call CSS for consultation. Consultations are made mainly over the phone or at the office, or within the school and with the members of staff concerned. The aim of these consultations is to decide whether the school needs to refer the case for investigation or if the case needs to be observed further by the school before being referred. In the case of the latter, CSS together with the school, design an observation programme and time frame. Consultations have also been requested by parents, other professionals working within the student

services and outside agencies such as Sedqa. In the majority of cases, following the consultation, the school makes a referral.

- *Monitoring of cases and co-ordination of services:* Once a referral is received, CSS then monitors the case and co-ordinates any work that needs to be done by other student services and/or other agencies. In most cases a team of professionals from different agencies are involved with the case. CSS offers to be a link between schools and service delivery units of the Student Services Department and/or other agencies/professionals outside the Directorate of Educational Services.
- *Training:* This function has been given high priority. CSS participates in staff development meetings in schools, upon request. Generally, the Unit present the four forms of child abuse; physical, neglect, emotional and sexual. The Unit then go into the referral policy and explain what a member of staff should do when a case of child abuse arises. Services offered by the CSS during the year included:
 - a talk to Assistant Heads of Schools in order to sensitise them further to the seriousness of abuse and to indicate what steps are to be taken in cases where there is a strong suspicion, disclosure or other evidence of abuse, according to the policy;
 - a three-day INSET course on Child Abuse, highlighting awareness, prevention and intervention for delivered to members of staff in the School Sector; six other similar courses delivered to all the teaching staff in the Gozo College;
 - training to all counsellors of church schools on how to recognise abuse and what to do in cases of suspected child abuse: through this training, better contact was made between the counsellors and CCS;
 - two talks to 2nd year BEd Students on child abuse and child protection policy;
 - 10 sessions of circle time were organised, in conjunction with the College counsellor, for Year 3 pupils in Senglea primary and three sessions for Year 1 pupils of the same school: these classes were targeted as the pupils were highly at risk of finding themselves in abusive situations;
 - towards the end of December, CSS were invited by Sedqa to deliver a staff development programme on child abuse to Sedqa's primary and secondary schools facilitators.
- *Counselling/Intervention:* Once a case has been investigated, counselling to survivors of child abuse is offered. The counselling sessions take place with the child within the school premises. Other services offered to students are also co-ordinated.
- *Research:* This year CSS has invested a lot of time and energy in research resulting in the:
 - upgrading of all CSS awareness and training programmes in content and in presentation;
 - translating some of our training programmes into Maltese;
 - acquiring short video clips which were incorporated in our presentations;
 - developing a new programme for secondary students re cyber abuse;
 - carrying out ground work for the drafting of a white paper for a National Child Protection Sports Policy;
 - researching child protection issues in pastoral ministry for the seminarian's programme;
 - looking into different therapeutic interventions for victims of abuse for counselling services.
- *Tracing:* CSS are often asked by Appoġġ to trace students in schools so that they can investigate or follow up cases of child abuse. This task involves phoning schools, until a school confirms that the student is registered there. During 2008 this task was facilitated with the help received from SIS who helps the Unit identify in which government school children that cannot be traced, could be found. If a child could not be found, the Unit then contacts all the church and independent schools, to confirm that the student is listed in one of their schools.

The year 2008 was marked with an increase in tracing demands by the Child Protection Services, the Initial Response Team and by the Generic Section at Appoġġ. In all, this year the Unit received 327 requests for tracing, 153 of which were received since September 2008.

- *Special Educational Needs Team (SENT):* CSS has continued to be part of the Special Educational Needs Team being present on five SENT teams. These are present at Żabbar Primary A and B, Senglea, Cospicua, St Julians and Sliema Primary Schools. SENT consists of a multidisciplinary team that caters for children with learning problems, trying to identify and help students at risk.

- *Media Awareness:* In 2008 CCS were invited to two television presentations. One was a morning programme where CSS was requested to talk about child abuse and child safety services and the other was on an evening programme which dealt with the issue of date rape. CSS was also invited to three different radio stations in Gozo to give information on what is child abuse and what one should do in such situations.
- *Others:* reports to Director General, Directorate for Educational Services; giving feedback on cases on request to heads, counsellors and guidance teachers; continuous updating of the database and filing system; updating of individual cases; filing; inputting of information in database; attending courses offered by the Directorate or on own initiative; maintenance of website: <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/safe/css/>; and attending courses offered by the Directorate for Educational Services or on own initiative.
- *Statistics:*

Service	Frequency
Consultation by phone	numerous
Consultation on school premises	110
Consultation and Co-ordination (with police/parents/counsellors)	102
Case Reviews	17
Court Summons	3
Staff Training	43
Other Talks on Child Safety (BEd 2 nd year Students, Luqa Local Council, Curia Counsellors, Sedqa prevention team)	7
Primary Safety Programme Year 4's	138
Primary Safety Programme	4
Circle time with Senglea Primary Pupils	13
Secondary Safety Programme	54
Parents' awareness programme for primary schools	46
Parents' preparatory meeting for year 4 programme	52
Parents' awareness programme for secondary schools	12
Parents' awareness programme on Internet Safety for secondary schools	1
Other talks (assistant heads, seminaries, heads, member of federations of sports clubs)	37
SMT meetings	16
Counselling sessions	177
Meetings with other agencies on shared projects	79
SENT meetings	33
Meetings with college principles	28
Tracing	327
Media	5
IEP	1
Supervision	4
In service Training	8
Total	1,317

- *Referrals:* In 2008, Child Safety Services received 294 new referrals re cases of child abuse and nine cases were re-activated. The following table shows the types of cases referred to CSS. Cases closed – 99; cases referred to the Director General – six.

Type of Abuse	New Referrals	Reactivated Referrals
Emotional	43	0
Neglect	61	0
Physical	40	1
Sexual	62	1
Emotional and Neglect	14	1
Emotional, Neglect and Physical	6	0
Emotional and Physical	24	0
Emotional, Physical and Sexual	0	3
Emotional and Sexual	13	0
Neglect and Physical	19	1
Neglect, Physical and Sexual	0	0
Neglect and Sexual	8	1
Physical and Sexual	1	1
Physical, Sexual, Emotional & Neglect	1	0
Unknown	2	0
Total	294	9

- *New initiatives by CSS:* collaboration with the Drama Unit for a programme to be offered in 2009 to secondary school students; meetings with STC computers to try and involve them in designing an interactive programme for other forms similar to that offered to Year 4 pupils; meetings with local councils to extend the prevention programme to the community; translation of programmes.

Anti-Bullying Unit

The Anti-Bullying Unit forms part of the Safe Schools Programme. The Unit strives to initiate, support and co-ordinate the efforts of schools in anti-bullying programmes to ensure a safe and caring environment conducive to learning and well-being.

The functions of the Unit are:

- *Consultation services:* provision of advice, understanding and support in developing whole-school responses to bullying and promotion of pro-social behaviour; provision of support to individuals, (staffs, students, parents) to increase their confidence and competence in dealing with incidences of bullying behaviour; and provision of useful resources.
- *Intervention:* whole-school policy development including raising awareness of the issue of bullying; and formulating and implementing strategies to respond to situations of bullying behaviour. Whole-school interventions to include: staff/school development; class interventions; individual cases; and parents' meetings.
- *Prevention:* provision of a range of activities to maintain a steady input into the prevention of bullying in schools, by raising awareness of administration, staff, minor staff, students and parents to the long term effects of bullying.
- *Co-ordination and monitoring:* liaison with schools and other student services or professional agencies within or outside the Directorate for Educational Services.
- *Prevention intervention:* With prevention interventions being a central aim of the programme new initiatives continued to be developed. Follow up from the previous year continued. Prevention strategies through tailor-made programmes were developed with the school on demand to meet their individual needs.
- *Activities:*
 - The Unit had a greater demand for interventions from all schools including church schools and independent schools.
 - Regular visits were made to Gozo.
 - Participation in anti-bullying weeks in different schools.
 - There was a significant increase in the number of secondary schools (state, church, and independent) asking for awareness and intervention sessions.
 - Primary schools targeted input to all classes and their parents.
 - The Unit was invited to participate in a number of school and staff development meetings.
- *Referrals and intervention:* Referrals were made by School Administration, Educational Welfare Services, School Psychologists, Guidance and Counselling Unit, social workers from Appogg, 179 and directly from parents and students. The number of individual referrals was 260 cases. Constant contact is kept by telephone with parents or school as the need occurs.

All ten state colleges as well as independent and church schools were visited during 2008 for the following purposes: staff development, parents' meetings, individual cases and class contact.
- *Research and Training:* More co-ordination with higher institutes of learning for research projects is felt to be imperative for optimal functioning of the programmes. Data collection is taking place, which will in the future offer scope for study. An evaluation tool to assess and measure effectiveness of interventions is another area for study.

- *Different levels of training are required:* in basic awareness for primary school sector for teachers/administrators interested in; in becoming the anti-bullying person in the school; in skills for dealing with incidences in the non-blame approach; and expertise for compiling data for research purposes.
- *Resources:* A number of new books were added to the library and has greatly added to gaining new knowledge on trends, strategies and initiatives. Availability of PowerPoint has been added to the existing OHP with the acquisition of lap-top computer.
- *New initiatives:* As a result of the introduction of state colleges, three colleges were assigned to each member of the unit respectively. As for the Gozo College, one member of staff was assigned to Ninu Cremona BSS, another member to Agius de Soldanis Girls Secondary School, and the other member was assigned all the primary schools. As from November, the 10 colleges were shared equally between the two members of the unit.

Work at church and independent schools in Malta and Gozo was equally divided between the guidance teachers within the unit.

New initiatives in the area of behaviour recovery were made. Often the Unit helps out and follows youngsters, both in the primary schools as well as in the secondary schools, by carrying out regular visits and by supporting them in their programme of behaviour change. In secondary schools, classroom groups are often divided into the smaller PSD groups in order to make experiential work more effective. Besides these tasks activities with youngsters with emotional and behavioural problems, often involved in bullying situations, as well as supportive work with school management teams, inclusion co-ordinators, teachers, LSA's and parents were undertaken.

Substance Abuse Policy Team (SAPT)

The Substance Abuse Policy Team (SAPT) strives to keep schools safe from substance abuse in all its forms and from all stakeholders. This stance warrants the planning and implementation of preventive strategies and interventions for students, school staff and parents.

- *Consultation services:* offering assistance to schools whenever cases of alleged substance abuse occurred. It provided technical advice on matters of policy and procedures regarding school referrals. This is an integral part of the service because it strives to strike a balance between the needs of the alleged user and the safeguarding of the school.
- *Intervention:* assisting individuals who are allegedly abusing or are at risk of substance abuse. The process of intervention involves an array of indirect and/or direct strategies. Indirect intervention may include classroom sessions, fora, seminars, staff development meetings/in-service training and other preventive work. Direct strategies involve sessions with abusers, parents and staff concerned in the case. During 2008, 79 cases were reported to SAPT. The total number of case consultations reported was 81.

Reports Submitted to SAPT in 2008								
	State Secondary Schools		State Primary Schools		Church Schools		Independent Schools	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Total	45	25	1	0	7	1	0	0

- *Consultations:* Over the year, a number of referrals through various professionals including parents, prevention officers occurred. These were 81 in number. Such referrals were investigated through secondary prevention activities that included targeted educational plans and adolescent and family, counselling/intervention and professional meetings.
- *Co-ordination and monitoring:* Serving as a link between schools and service delivery units of Student Services in the Directorate for Educational Services and/or other agencies/professionals outside the Directorate. Throughout 2008, as indicated in the Tackling Substance Abuse Policy (2001), the SAPT made adequate use of the Drug Squad of the Police Forces and secondary prevention within Sedqa. Whenever the case required, other links with non-governmental agencies include CARITAS and OASI in Gozo have been developed. Particularly useful is our work with the Guidance and Counselling Unit and

with services provided within the Safe Schools Programme. All cases are monitored regularly by keeping frequent contact with the students and workers concerned.

- *Prevention:* Participating, together with Sedqa and the PSD/Guidance team, in prevention programmes. Prevention is a crucial aspect in our service, its aim is twofold: (a) to focus on those students who are most at risk; (b) to be proactive in promoting a healthy society.

Activities are directed towards students, parents, staff and community at large. The Family Strategies Programme is set up to assist and support parents in their ever-changing and challenging role, as first educators of their youth. As part of our general awareness programme, we have participated in some mass media programmes.

- *Dissemination of Information;* During the year, the Unit personnel was invited to participate in the induction course of the new Assistant Heads in schools. Meetings which were intended to provide information regarding the work remit of the Unit were held periodically with College Administrators during Council of Heads' Meetings. Dissemination meetings were also carried out with guidance personnel in various colleges.
- *Research:* Throughout 2008 the Unit together with personnel from Sedqa, Caritas and Oasi, under the leadership of the National Commission on the Abuse of Drugs, Alcohol and Other Dependencies, met regularly to work on the evaluation of the drug prevention programmes offered by agencies.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RESOURCE CENTRES SECTION

The Special Education and Resource Centres Section is housed in Hamrun and is the base for the following services:

- peripatetic service for students with visual impairment in mainstream schools;
- early intervention for children with special needs who are still of pre-school age or have started their school experience at kindergarten level;
- home tuition for students who are absent from school on a long-term basis due to chronic illness or injury;
- service to students who attend the Young People's Unit of Mount Carmel Hospital;
- teaching of creative arts (one teacher for Music, two teachers for Drama, two teachers for Arts and Crafts) to students attending the special schools and St Patrick's Craft Centre;
- teaching of PE and sports to students attending the special schools and St Patrick's Craft Centre;
- assistance to children in the Children's wards at Mater Dei Hospital;
- transition programme for students moving from the mainstream schools to special school and from special schools to the adult training centres and to other educational establishments;
- Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU);
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Team;
- support to students with a hearing impairment attending mainstream schools.

Service of Peripatetic Teachers for Students with Visual Impairments

The peripatetic teachers for students with visual impairment endeavour to empower students with visual impairment to develop to their full potential by giving them support to access the curriculum, to integrate in the school and to become active members of society. During scholastic year 2007/2008 the teachers worked with students in different localities. A regular service was also introduced to cater for children up to age 5. The following tables show the number of students seen according to age, gender and locality.

Ages 0 - 5			
Residence	Boy	Girl	Age
M'Scala		1	2
San Ġwann		2	1, 2
Senglea	1		2
Siggiewi	1		3
St Paul's Bay	1		1
St Paul's Bay		1	3

Swatar	1		3
Żebbuġ		1	2
Żurrieq	1		2
Total	5	5	

Age 5+			
<i>Residence</i>	<i>Boy</i>	<i>Girl</i>	<i>Age</i>
Balzan	1		9
B' Buġa	2		6
B' Kara	2		9, 15
B' Kara		2	11, 14
Bahrija		2	9, 12
Dingli		1	15
Fgura		1	10
Fgura	1		10
Gudja	1		14
M'Scala		2	9, 13
Mosta		1	9
Mqabba		1	14
Msida	1		6
Qormi	1		10
Qormi		1	8
Qrendi		1	17
San Ġwann	2		8, 11
St Julians	1		11
St Paul's Bay	2		6, 16
Sta Venera		1	13
Tarxien		1	13
Valletta	1		14
Żebbuġ	1		8
Żebbuġ		2	11, 16
Żejtun	4		10, 11, 12, 12
Żejtun		3	8, 9, 9
Total	20	19	

Early Intervention Service

This service helps children to develop their full potential in spite of their needs and to pave the way for their future year in school. The service also aims to provide support to the parents/legal guardians tutors, teachers and LSAs in the holistic educational development of the children and their inclusion in the school.

During scholastic year 2007/2008 the ten early intervention teachers worked with a total of 424 in Malta and Gozo. The following tables show the number of children seen according to age and gender:

Children seen by early intervention teachers in Malta during scholastic year 2007/2008			
<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
0	3	1	4
1	3	3	6
2	15	15	30
3	39	19	58
4	93	36	129
5	103	32	135
6	29	11	40
Total	285	117	402
Children seen by early intervention teachers in Gozo during scholastic year 2007/2008			
<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	2	3	5

4	3	2	5
5	6	2	8
6	2	2	4
7	2	2	4
Total	15	11	26

Home Tuition Service

This service provides the student with a continuous education and minimises the effects of absence from school. The service also helps the student to reintegrate back in school at the appropriate time. During scholastic year 2007/2008, home tuition was given to a total of 36 students in different localities in Malta and Gozo. Students referred to the Home Tuition service this year were as follows:

Ages	Male	Female
16	0	1
15	1	5
14	1	1
13	4	3
12	0	6
11	2	0
10	2	1
9	1	1
8	1	1
7	1	0
6	1	0
5	2	0

Locality	Male	Female
B'Buġa	0	1
B'Kara	0	2
Fgura	1	0
Floriana	1	0
Gudja	1	0
Gzira	1	0
Kappara	1	0
Kirkop	1	0
Marsa	1	2
M'Scala	1	1
Mosta	0	3
M'Xlokk	1	0
Naxxar	0	3
Qormi	1	1
Rabat	1	0
Siggiewi	0	2
San Gwann	1	0
St Paul's Bay	0	2
Żabbar	0	2
Żebbuġ	1	1
Żurrieq	0	2

Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU)

This unit was established in September 2006 with the aim of providing the necessary support to enable students with learning disabilities to access the curriculum and learning through the use of assistive technology. During 2008, the unit assessed and supported 108 students with different levels of difficulties. The unit is also committed to provide the appropriate training on assistive technology to persons supporting these students. The following table gives an overview of the training given by the unit during 2008.

Training on Assistive Technology					
January	LSAs (Diploma students)	97	Lectures/hands-on sessions AAC	Inclusive and Special Education Network	10 hours
February	Parents of students attending Helen Keller School	8	Lecture	Helen Keller school	1 hour
February	SDP Helen Keller School	30	Lecture	Helen Keller school	2 hours
February	SDP San Miguel School	55	Lecture	San Miguel School	2 hours
February	Masters Education	8	Module ICT IENs	Inclusive and Special Education Network	21 hours
February	LSAs (Diploma course Gozo)	70	Lectures ICT IENs AAC	Gozo Centre	12 hours
April	SLPs and OTs	35	Hands on training in AAC	ACTU	2 hours
May	LSAs (Diploma course Gozo)	70	Hands on training in AAC	ACTU	4 hours
May	OTs and major stakeholders	36	Hands on training in AAC	ACTU	2 hours

Autism Spectrum Support Team

The autism spectrum support service recognises that each student is an individual and seeks to maximise the student's potential. It aims to empower educators and parents to meet the individual educational needs of the child with autism, facilitating learning, supporting behavioural and social development and maximising on students abilities in mainstream and resource environment. From the beginning of scholastic year 2008/ 2009, the Autism Spectrum Support Team covered 14 different primary schools.

Service for the Hearing Impaired

The mission of the service for hearing impaired students is to provide a quality educational and audio logical service for deaf, hard of hearing and hearing-impaired students in Malta and Gozo, from the point of diagnosis and throughout their educational experience in the home and in mainstream schools.

During scholastic year 2007/2008, the teachers supported 92 students in state, church and independent schools in Malta and Gozo. One of the teachers, who also specialises in audio logical assessments, provided audio logical services to these students.

Special Schools

The Special Education Section is responsible for the running of four special schools in Malta, namely Guardian Angel School, Hamrun; Dun Manwel Attard School, Wardija; Helen Keller School, Qrendi; and San Miguel School, Pembroke. The section is also responsible for the running of the St Patrick's Craft Centre at Pembroke and Mater Dei School, Msida. During 2008 the Director for Student Services held regular meetings with all Heads of Special Schools.

Staff in Special Schools

	Dun Manuel Attard School, Wardija	Guardian Angel School, Hamrun	Helen Keller School, Qrendi	San Miguel School, Pembroke	Mater Dei School, Msida	St Patrick's Boys Craft Centre, Pembroke	Total
Head of School	1	1	1	1	1		5
Act/Head Teacher	1	1		1		1	4
Teachers	5	8	4	8	3	2	30
Teacher (Peripatetic)							6 *
Instructor		2			2	5	9
SLSA and LSAs 2	12	14	3	16			45
Kindergarten	4	20	5	11			40
Nurse	1	2	1	1			5
Nurse Aide			1				1
Clerk	1	1	1	2		1	6
Executive Officer	1						1
Asst. Careworker				2			2
Supervisor		1					1

Labourer					1		1
Charwoman				1			1
Cleaners	2					1	3
Gardener	1						1
General Hand		2	2	1	1		6
Handy Man			1				1
Tradesman				2			2
Senior Tradesman	1			1			2
Watchman	3	3		3	3		12
Driver		6	1				7
Operator III		1					1
Total	33	62	20	50	11	10	192

* Peripatetic teachers are not based in any schools but give a service to all the six special schools on a peripatetic basis.

Student Population in Special Schools 2007/2008

School	Boys 3-10 Yrs	Boys 11-16 Yrs	Boys Over 16 Yrs	Girls 3-10 Yrs	Girls 11-16 Yrs	Girls Over 16 Yrs	Total
San Miguel School, Pembroke	6	13	9	6	6	6	46
Guardian Angel School, Hamrun	7	26	28	3	21	12	97
Helen Keller School, Qrendi	3	4	6	1	3	8	25
Dun M Attard School, Wardija	1	13	24	0	8	7	53
Mater Dei School, Msida	5	23	0	0	0	0	28
St Patrick's Boys Craft Centre, Pembroke	1	39	0	0	0	0	40
Total	23	118	67	10	38	33	289

All the special schools benefit from the services of a social worker. The following is an overview of services provided:

Social work activities in Special Schools	
<i>Type of Service</i>	
Home visits	49
School visits	40
Case Conferences	6
Case Reviews	5
Social work intervention at Unit	58
Social Work Counselling	32
Referrals Out	5
Talks	2

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SECTION

During the year, the total number of personnel employed to support students with special needs increased from 1,152 to 1,248. Various initiatives to support inclusion in schools were taken by the Department. This included the training of another 257 Supply Learning Support Assistants (SLSAs). In order to facilitate the transition from primary to secondary school, transition exercises for students with special needs were held. These were conducted by the Inclusion Co-ordinators (INCOs) supported by BPsych Students. Primary and secondary school personnel were also involved in the process. In all, 196 sessions were held between April and July.

As from October 2008, the Service Manager responsible for Inclusive Education conducted various mentoring and monitoring visits to different schools. During these visits, support and advice is given to SMT, teachers and LSAs supporting students with individual educational needs.

Inclusion Co-ordinators

Fifteen qualified teachers who successfully finished a two-year full-time course leading to a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (Inclusion and Individual Educational Needs in Primary Schools) started to perform duties as Inclusion Co-ordinators in colleges.

Professional Development

The Student Services Department is committed to providing training opportunity to all staff, including staff in mainstream and resource centres. The Department organised various training and informative sessions during 2008. These included:

- *Information Sessions at the Access to Communication and Technology Unit (ACTU)*: Between January and May 2008, ACTU conducted five information sessions regarding the use of technology and augmentative and alternative means of communication. These sessions were attended by teachers, learning support assistants, diploma and undergraduate students, allied professionals such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists as well as other stakeholders. Information has been disseminated to more than 250 participants.
- *Keyword signing for students with learning disabilities*: This training programme was conducted by an experienced sign language interpreter. Members of staff from four resource centres were trained in the use of manual sign systems for students with learning disabilities. A total of 21 teachers and 17 learning support assistants have been trained.
- *Assessment of Deaf Students up to 5 years*: This five-day course was organised for Teachers of the Hearing Impaired at the Student Services Department in Hamrun. Participants included 13 teachers of the hearing impaired, four Inclusion Co-ordinators and one Head of School.
- *The Inclusive and Special Education Network* organised a seven-week course on Inclusion and Support Services aimed for Heads/Assistant Heads of Primary State Schools as from October 2008.
- *Courses Supporting Students with Individual Educational Needs* continued to be offered. During 2008 another four courses were organised and 277 participants completed the 70-hour training programme for Supply Learning Support Assistants in state and church schools.

INSET Courses

The following INSET courses were also organised by the Student Services Department:

- *Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*: This training programme was organised for members of staff in special schools. It was held between 18 and 24 April with the involvement of three specialist teachers from Grangewood School, UK. These specialists worked directly with teaching staff in resource centres to help them develop strategies to support students with the Autism Spectrum. This included strategies such as behaviour modification, developing classroom structure, using social stories and the effective use of resources. In the afternoon these specialist teachers together with local trainers conducted the INSET course. There were 48 participants.
- An *INSET course on Multisensory Impairment* was held at Helen Keller School in July 2008. Teachers teaching at San Miguel School and Helen Keller School attended the course.
- *Introduction to manual signing, story telling and story sharing*: This training programme was conducted by Dr Nicola Grove, a learning disability specialist, who provided training for teachers and learning support assistants in resource centres. Participants were exposed to various language systems and modes of communication and how these can be used in the classroom. Strategies for using storytelling and story sharing were discussed. Dr Grove provided hands-on training and individual sessions. Evening sessions were conducted both by Dr Grove and local lecturers with expertise in Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Teachers at the four schools attended the course.

Support to other organisations

The Student Services Department offers support to MCAST. This is done through the provision of two teachers and one supply LSA for the Pathway programme. This programme is also supported by the Transition Co-ordinator provided by the same department.

An ongoing study is being carried out in mainstream secondary schools, state, church and independent sector to establish the number of students with intellectual impairment finishing Form V. Data are collected through a questionnaire and later on through interviews. These data help in the necessary provision of post secondary programmes for students with intellectual difficulties finishing formal education.

Inclusion Curriculum Project

After successfully completing phase one of the project with the publication of 15 syllabus supplements to be used by teachers and learning support assistants in mainstream and special schools, the Department has embarked on the second phase of this project.

Statementing Moderating Panel

During 2008, the Statementing Moderating Panel carried out 44 sessions during which 434 students were statemented.

Adult Education Unit

The Adult Learning Unit is responsible for Evening Classes, Adult Literacy Courses, the Lifelong Learning Centre, the Schools of Art, the Schools of Music and the Schools of Drama in Malta and Gozo. The aims are to:

- provide learning opportunities to all those who would like to acquire and/or improve their skills and knowledge in the subject/s of their choice;
- support concept of a dynamic knowledge-based society and economy;
- monitor learning opportunities offered to ensure relevance and quality;
- create a culture of lifelong learning.

Adult Learning

The Student Services Department is one of the leading providers of adult education in Malta and Gozo. The Department offered 391 courses in Malta and 59 courses in Gozo, starting during the last quarter of 2008. These courses vary in type and depth and the comprehensive number of learners attending evening and adult classes is 7,396 (2,189 – male; 5,207 – female).

This year, apart from the general prospectus, the Department published a prospectus for each of the three performing and visual arts schools and another for the Lifelong Learning Centre in order to enhance the identity of these schools for adults.

Adult courses (mainly evening classes) at various Centres in Malta and Gozo

These are the traditional evening class format of one-and a-half hour lessons twice weekly. For the 2008-2009 courses, 49.89% of the adult learners registered with the Adult Education Unit attended the evening classes courses. The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and sex.

No. of learners in Adult Classes by gender in Malta & Gozo - 2008						
Age Group	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	221	160	138	112	92	126
Females	360	481	352	453	584	427
Total	581	641	490	565	676	553

Basic literacy initiatives in Local Councils - Basic English and Basic Maltese

During 2008, 245 adults (70 males and 175 females) attended courses in Basic English literacy organised in 20 Local Councils in Malta. The following is the distribution according to age groups.

Basic English Literacy in Local Councils						
Age Group	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	8	17	15	13	11	6
Females	17	20	31	33	36	38
Total	25	37	46	46	47	44

Two Local Councils organised courses in Basic Maltese for 13 adults. One Local Council organised a course in Spanish for 19 adults.

The Adult Education Unit offered basic literacy for foreigners. 79 adult learners attended courses in Basic Maltese; 77 adult learners attended courses in Basic English. This following is the distribution by age groups.

Basic Maltese Courses						
Age Group	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	2	6	6	1	3	4
Females	5	16	18	9	7	2
Total	7	22	24	10	10	6

Basic English Courses						
Age Group	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	3	6	9	6	3	1
Females	3	17	13	14	2	0
Total	6	23	22	20	5	1

Adult Special Classes

The Adult Learning Unit is co-ordinating the teaching for adults in the following Centres:

Centre	Subjects	Learners
St Mary Community, Luqa (Sedqa)	Gardening, Basic Maltese, Basic English, Basic Maths	29 in all
Villa St Anna, Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq (Caritas)	Basic English, Basic Maltese	13 in all
FITA	Basic Skills in Computer	9
Downs Group	Basic Skills in Computer	8
Dar is-Sliem	Basic English	19
National Council of Women	Computer Awareness	8
	ECDL	37
	Computer Upgrade	12
	Basic English	20
	Basic Maltese	13

LIFELONG LEARNING CENTRE

As from this scholastic year the Lifelong Learning Centre at Msida has moved to new and bigger premises which will enable it to expand its provision. The number of adult learners attending day classes in the last quarter of 2008 was 364 (70 male and 294 female).

The courses offered include basic literacy courses in Maltese and English Language, as well as other academic subjects leading to SEC level examinations. The language courses offered are Maltese, English, Italian, French, German and Spanish. Conversation courses in English at different levels are also

offered. As there was a request from students who were successful in the SEC examination in German, as from this year German lessons leading to Intermediate and Advanced level are offered.

Courses in Computer Awareness and ECDL (both core and Advanced) are in great demand. Also a course in Entrepreneurship is also taken up at the Centre. The Empowerment course has been offered this year as well.

The following is a representation of adult learners by age groups.

Lifelong Learning Centre						
Age Group	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	8	9	5	8	6	34
Females	3	29	52	59	66	85
Total	11	38	57	67	72	119

Schools of Visual and Performing Arts

The Student Services Department is responsible for the School of Art, the Mikelang Borg Drama Centre and the Johann Strauss School of Music in Malta; and the School of Music, the School of Drama and the School of Art in Gozo.

During 2008, the aggregate number of students attending these schools in Malta and Gozo stood at 2,905 which represent 39.3% of learners registered with the Adult Education Unit. Apart from the vast range of courses in expressive and creative subjects, these schools organise various cultural initiatives and events.

The School of Art, Malta

During the summer 2008 holidays, the School Council took the initiative to organise a Summer Art Enrichment Activity at the School of Art. This activity was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, mornings and evenings. Learners from the age of eight upwards were allowed to participate in this activity. About 100 persons applied for this activity. Ten tutors were engaged to do these activities.

The School of Art participated in the *Notte Bianca* event held in Valletta. Students gave a hands-on demonstration and made sketches, drawings, and paintings from the live model. This activity was organised near the Old Opera House in Valletta. During *Notte Bianca*, the Malta School of Art in Old Bakery Street was opened for the general public. An exhibition of painting and sculpture by the tutors of the School of Art was set up in the foyer of the school. Visitors also had the opportunity to see students at work in the studio/workshops at the school.

The School of Art, in collaboration with the German Maltese Circle, worked on a project about Filfla to be interpreted as Arnold Bocklin's *Island of the Dead*. 27 students participated in the exhibition of artworks, entitled *Filfla & Toteninsel Art Exhibition*. The exhibition was put up at the German Maltese Circle and a catalogue/brochure was published for the event. In conjunction with the 'Filfla' Exhibition, sculptor Joseph Casha gave talks and power-point presentations as part of a 'Homage to Arnold Bocklin'. Students and the general public attended.

Heritage Malta invited the Malta School of Art to participate in the commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of Caravaggio's Stay in Malta. A group of students made studies and sketched directly from the masterpieces at Caravaggio's *L'Immagine del Divino* Exhibition at the National Museum of Archaeology. Another group of students had the opportunity to make studies and sketch directly from the works of the *Caravaggisti*, exhibited concurrently at the National Museum of Fine Arts. 40 interpretations were exhibited at the Loggia of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Valletta.

During 2008, students from other institutions such as the University of Malta and National Restoration School at Bighi were offered the facility to carry out research work at the School of Art archives. Students

from the B.Ed. (Hons) (Art) attended for their practical hands-on sessions and made use of the studio facilities.

The School of Art continued to support exhibitions on a national scale. A group of students attending the Artistic Printmaking Course put up an exhibition of abstract art at the Culture Ministry in Merchants Street, Valletta. The 50 works of art are a culmination of years of study, experimentation and hard work in artistic printmaking by these students. The exhibition entitled *Outofprint* was inaugurated by the Prime Minister.

The School of Art participated in the project FIVE where an Italian stone artisan held a workshop at the School where he exhibited his techniques in stone carving to the students. This event was part of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

With the introduction of the 'new Aesthetic Project work' in the Systems of Knowledge, students from the Junior College, Giovanni Curmi Higher Sec and St Aloysius' College came to the School of Art to work on their Aesthetic and Technology Projects.

The school library was further enriched with the purchase of more books about Art. The School's Library possesses over 1,000 lending art books.

The graduation and prize-giving ceremony at the Malta School of Art was held on 24 May. The Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport presided. An exhibition of course work projects was put up as part of the prize-day. All the students attending the school exhibited at least one of their works.

The School of Art offers courses in history of art, artistic development, sculpture (general, wood and stone), gold and silversmithing, gilding, artistic print-making, drawing and painting, life classes, 3D work in plasticine, plaster and clay (including mould-making) and artistic creativity courses.

The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and gender:

School of Art, Malta						
Age Group	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Males	96	84	5	1	5	0
Females	78	98	4	1	5	2
Total	174	182	9	2	10	2

Mikelang Borg Drama Centre

Mikelang Borg Drama Centre offered courses to 474 students in mainstream acting, musical theatre, ballet, flamenco, contemporary dance, modelling, personality enhancement, community theatre, outreach programmes, costume design, and script writing. During 2008, the school successfully prepared students for International Certificate in Drama of the London Academy of Music and Drama (LAMDA) and is preparing its ballet students for the Royal Academy of Dance graded examinations. The Centre actively involved students and tutors in Socrates/Grundtvig projects performing in Latvia and leading workshops in France and Finland. The Centre hosted Austrian drama students and two French actors.

The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and gender.

Mikelang Borg Drama Centre						
Age Group	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Males	35	37	6	5	0	1
Females	183	148	28	18	10	3
Total	218	185	34	23	10	4

Johann Strauss School of Music

The Johann Strauss School of Music offers tuition to 526 students in theory and harmony, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, althorn, tuba, violin, violoncello, classical guitar, bass guitar, jazz improvisation, piano, voice and piano accordion. It also has its own youth choir, a wind band, a clarinet choir, a flute choir and an orchestra. During 2008, the school organised concerts, recitals, master classes and specialised talks by local and international artists from Belgium, China, Austria and the United States. The School hosted the International String Orchestra Festival.

The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and gender:

Johann Strauss School of Music						
Age Group	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
Males	103	158	8	3	0	0
Females	76	161	12	5	0	0
Total	179	319	20	8	0	0

School of Music, Gozo

The Gozo School of Music offers individual tuition to 130 students in pianoforte, violin, cello, modern and bass guitar, drum kit, saxophone, clarinet, flute, trumpet and voice. Besides offering practical tuition in these instruments, all these students attend theory lessons which, besides the theoretical aspects of music also cover history and appreciation of music, aural and solfeggio sessions. Another 70 students aged between the age of 5 and 8 attend a two-year Basic Course in Music, a course which emphasises aural training and music making in an atmosphere of fun and play.

During 2008 the Gozo School of Music organised a parents' week, master classes and participation in the Debutants' Concert on the occasion of the Victoria International Arts Festival, lunchtime concerts and several instrumental recitals.

School of Drama, Gozo

The School of Drama in Gozo is situated in Nadur. During 2008, the School ran courses at various levels in drama, history of the theatre, theatre appreciation and criticism, classical ballet, ballroom and Latin American dance, movement and aerobics. The number of students attending the school in 2008 was 295. During this year, the school successfully prepared students for International Certificate in Solo Acting of the London Academy of Music and Drama (LAMDA) and presented its ballet students for the Royal Academy of Dance graded examinations

The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and gender:

School of Drama, Gozo							
Age Group	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	15	11	0	1	0	0	4
Females	175	67	4	7	10	0	1
Total	190	78	4	8	10	0	5

School of Art, Gozo

The Gozo Centre for Art and Crafts (GCAC), Gozo School of Art, catered for 1,024 students in 2008. The School offered 55 courses divided in seven main categories, namely: fine art, art juniors, crafts juniors, art and design, crafts, art for persons with special needs, design and crafts techniques to secondary schools teenagers (fifth formers).

GCAC is now separated from Ghajnsielem Primary School complex: each school has its own classes, facilities and conference hall. In addition, the Centre has embarked on a thorough embellishment for the

whole school. The already existent classrooms were upgraded with the purchase of new tools, equipment and software.

The Centre includes a Crafts Development Centre and five new workshops. The Centre is now fully functional. On 27 February the Prime Minister officially inaugurated the Wistin Camilleri Gozo Centre for Art and Crafts and an underlying incubation centre. It comprises 10 units and an exhibition space that will be provided for local craftsmen wishing to set up their wares.

Five new workshops have been set up on the first floor for the creation of art works by students attending classes in pottery, glass, metal, silver/goldsmith, wood/stone carving. Equipment has been upgraded; compressed air in all workshops and a new IT system installed all over in the new building. A kiln room and an air-compression chamber have also been included in the structure. A large conference hall has also been constructed, while the centre's administration offices have been transferred to the new block. A new exhibition hall, that is separate from the incubation centre's own exhibition space, offers a unique opportunity to all artisans who wish to expose their art and craft wares.

School participants are encouraged to use recycled material and biodegradable material for the production of artefacts. In fact, our school is selected from BEW Germany to convey the BLES programme for ECO Science in Gozo.

The School is also involved in two Leonardo DaVinci programme and participated in International exhibitions in Spain, Portugal and Italy. It also organised several local exhibitions including an International lace exhibition in our school.

The following is the distribution of learners according to age groups and sex:

School of Art, Gozo							
Age Group	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Males	62	78	31	26	39	19	40
Females	50	119	63	61	167	107	162
Total	112	197	94	87	206	126	202

Website and Prospectus

The Adult Learning Unit published its annual general prospectus and four other prospectuses, one for each of the schools in Malta. This literature was widely distributed with the co-operation of the local councils. Senior officials within the Department made use of several radio programme phone-ins to inform, encourage and invite the public to become active citizens through adult learning.

The official website (www.eveningcourses.gov.mt) registered over 350,000 hits throughout 2008. This shows an increase of 3% over 2007 and is by far higher than the number of hits registered in previous years. There was also an increase in the number of applications effected online over last year.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

International Relations

European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

Together in Diversity was the theme for the year. In line with the theme, a European conference was held in April for European teachers. The theme of the conference was *Creating Opportunities for Developing Intercultural Dialogue*. The main aim of this conference was to engage in intercultural dialogue and promote dialogue in order to encourage cultural understanding.

Spring Day in Europe 2008

This is an initiative by the European Commission to encourage students to learn more about the European Union and to voice their views and concerns regarding its future. It also aims to raise awareness on how young European citizens can join forces with European institutions for better dialogue and understanding of European democratic developments.

Europe Day 2008

Europe Day was celebrated on 9 May in conjunction with the closing of the Spring Day Activities. The event was held in the Palace Courtyard and presided by His Excellency the President of Malta. Thirteen state and non-state secondary schools from Malta and Gozo participated in the event.

Spring Day in Europe Competition 2008/Euroscola trip

The prize for this competition was a Euroscola trip to the European Parliament in Strasbourg where Maltese students joined students from the other 26 EU Member States. As the prize was won jointly by two schools, 22 students from one school went to Strasbourg in November whilst another group of 11 students from another school went to Strasbourg in December. Each group was accompanied by two members of staff. The aim of the Parliament's Euroscola programme is to bring together young people from EU countries and to provide them with the opportunity to express their views on current and future developments within the European Union.

European Development Youth Programme 2008

This competition, organised by the European Schoolnet in Brussels, was open to students in Europe between the ages of 16 and 18. The competition included posters focusing on the themes Climate Change; Water and Energy; Sustainable Development. The national winners (two in all) went to Strasbourg in November and were awarded their prizes by the Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid at the fair entitled 'Development Days'. One of the Maltese students will be among the 27 finalists who will go on a five-day trip to Zambia with the Commissioner in March 2009. The aim of the competition is to raise awareness about how development co-operation between Europe and Africa works.

International/European Relations

Contacts were made which led to various invitations to seminars and events organised by different entities e.g. The European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) and UNESCO. Teachers were kept informed through circulars regarding European and international initiatives that can be taken up. Information is also passed on to schools to participate in local, European and international competitions. Contact was also made in response to requests from schools abroad to form partnerships with local schools.

European Social Funds (ESF) Project

The project *Career Guidance Capacity Building* has been initiated through these funds. Within this project, scholarship grants will be given to students to take a Masters Degree in Career Guidance. This project was launched in January 2009.

Others

As from October 2008, the Service Manager for Projects and Initiatives has represented the Directorate for Educational Services for discussions focusing on the recommendations made in the Manifesto for Children published by the Office of the Commissioner for Children.

Skolasajf

Skolasajf 2008 was officially launched by the Hon Minister of Education, Culture Youth and Sport at St Ignatius College Primary Luqa on 27 May. The main theme chosen for 2008 was *Cultural Diversity in One Europe – Habits – Music - Games*. *Skolasajf* catered for primary school pupils – from Year 4 to Year 6. A promotional brochure was distributed to all primary schools catering for this age group. Some 3,650 pupils participated in the *Skolasajf* Programme at 54 centres in Malta and Gozo. The Cospicua, Bahrija, Gżira, Senglea, Sliema, Valletta, Vittoriosa and Xewkija centres did not open due to the low number of enrolments. The Qormi centre did not open due to major refurbishment works.

All children attending special schools were offered the opportunity to attend and participate in the programme; other centres were opened at Dun Manwel Attard School, Wardija, Guardian Angel School, Hamrun and San Miguel School, Pembroke and those in Gozo were hosted at the Arka in Ghajnsielem.

Klabbsajf

Klabbsajf, a programme that catered for Year 2/3 pupils who during scholastic year 2007/8 were receiving complementary education, remained popular. 11 centres in Malta and 4 in Gozo were opened to cater for this programme and some 200 pupils were enrolled. The programme was sponsored by the HSBC.

Special Programmes

Special Programmes were conducted by Sedqa, Caritas, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna, Heritage Malta (Gozo), Campus FM, Global Warming by HSBC and Nature Trust for the children attending *Skolasajf*. These included a number of talks on various subjects and visits to historical places in Malta and Gozo.

New Initiatives/Special Programmes

Skolasajf 2008 saw the introduction of:

- fruit days in all *Skolasajf* centres organised in conjunction with the Health Promotion Unit and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Health;
- visits to the Ghammieri Government Farm;
- visits to *Skolasajf* centres by Italian students;
- visits to historical sites in conjunction with Heritage Malta;
- HELP Campaign – an anti-smoking campaign.

Competitions

Weetabix Painting/Drawing Competition: Over 1,600 entries reached the *Skolasajf* office. The winning entry from each *Skolasajf* Centre was rewarded by a book token. The first three centres with the highest participation rate, pro-rata, were also rewarded with book tokens. The winners were rewarded at special ceremonies held in Malta and in Gozo. Pupils were accompanied by their respective parents. The book tokens were sponsored by Paolo Bonnici Ltd, agents in Malta for Weetabix.

The Beijing Olympic Games

A drawing competition featuring the Beijing Olympic Games was organised in collaboration with the Chinese Cultural Centre in Malta. Some 80 pupils submitted their work and the best seven entries were rewarded by books donated by the Chinese Cultural Centre in connection with the Beijing Olympics. The prizes were presented the Director of the Chinese Cultural Centre.

Intercultural Dialogue or Energy and Climate Change

A poster/art competition was organised by the European Commission Representation in Malta in collaboration with Europe Direct Relay and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. There were 78 entries and the first 12 placed were rewarded on 2 October at the Commission's office in Ta' Xbiex. Moreover these 12 drawings will feature in a 2009 calendar to be published at a later stage. This competition was sponsored by the European Commission Representation Office in Malta, the UHM - Europe Direct, Maxi Quartz Ltd and Clamus Centre.

Art/Prose Competition

There was also good participation in the Art/Prose Competition entitled *San Frangisk Habib ta' Kulhadd*, organised in conjunction with the Peace Laboratory. The competition was in line with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The prize-giving ceremony was held in November 2008

Other Activities

- *Cultural Diversity in One Europe*: The sum of €4,000 was raised in aid of the Community Chest Fund. Such funds were collected during the centre-based Talent Shows and from the door-to-door collections performed by pupils who attended the *Skolasajf* programme. The sum of money collected was presented to the President of Malta at a ceremony held at the Palace on 29 October 2008.
- *The Weetabix Intercultural Quiz*: All *Skolasajf* centres in Malta and Gozo participated in this Quiz. Over 200 pupils took part in teams of four. Thirteen preliminary sessions and two semi-finals were held. The final itself was held on 22 August at Mġarr *Skolasajf* Centre. All those pupils who participated were given a polo-shirt and a cap each. All finalists were given a medal each and a trophy was given to the five centres which reached the final. The Quiz was sponsored by Weetabix.
- *The Fun Games Festivals*: The festival proved to be very popular and was very well received by all *Skolasajf* stakeholders. The Final of the Fun Games sponsored by Weetabix was held at the Cottonera Sports Complex while the Final of the Quiz was held at the Mġarr *Skolasajf* centre. During the last week of *Skolasajf*, each and every centre held an Open Day/Talent Show for parents. The feedback received was very encouraging – these well-organised activities were attended by quite a good number of parents.

Some 220 university students, 50 Centre Co-ordinators and some 100 Learning Support Assistants were deployed within the whole programme of *Skolasajf* 2008.

School Library Service (SLS)

Computerisation Project

Regular meetings were held with MITTS and the Information Management Unit (IMU) of the Ministry of Education throughout the year and progress was made after the SQL Version of Oliver was installed and SLS staff trained in its use. The User Acceptance Testing (UAT) was postponed to January 2009 when it is hoped that the project will go live.

At the beginning of the year the IMU purchased two servers which were eventually handed over to MITTS and placed in the Mater Dei Data Centre. During the SQL conversion, all data from the 12 sites in the project were transferred to these servers by the software vendor's personnel.

Cataloguing

The online catalogue holds 77,516 entries, 20,000 of which were added in 2008. Two new school libraries were added to the system whilst two more are on the waiting list. Weeding of collections of books continued - 3,855 books were either recycled or added to the Special Collections Scheme. By the end of 2008, there were 4,182 fiction titles and 13,726 information books.

Professional Development Courses

The annual professional development course ran from January to May and November to December 2008. The SLS hosted seven Diploma in Librarianship students during their practicum in the summer months.

Activities

The Section organised the 8th International School Library Day Seminar in October. The seminar was attended by teacher-librarians from state, independent and church schools. More than 100 persons were present. It was held in the Hall of the St Julians Primary School with the participation of the Malta School Library Association.

The section ran the annual quiz competition in conjunction with World Book Day (23 April) for secondary schools. Two schools Sir Adrian Dingli Girls Junior Lyceum and St Monica School, Gzira tied for first place. A writing competition for primary schools was also well received. First prize went to a student from St Francis School, Cospicua; consolation prizes were also distributed. As in previous years, the library week activities were held around World Book Day with many schools participating in the events.

The School Library award for 2008 was given to St Benedict College Girls Junior Lyceum, Sta Lucia. The Librarian of the Year Award was awarded to Mr Noel Tanti, a librarian from San Anton School. Awards were handed out during the October seminar by the Permanent Secretary.

Lists of new books/Exhibition centre

Eight monthly booklist for primary and secondary schools as well as eight special subject lists were issued. Fifty-three books were added to the exhibition centre.

Processing of Library Books which do not form part of the Computerisation Project

Over 18,000 library books emanated from a number of primary and secondary school libraries were brought to the SLS for processing. Tarxien, Mosta B, Rabat B, Paola B schools sent parents to help with the processing. Work on Victoria Primary School started late in the year. Books from Guardian Angel School were also processed by SLS staff.

Upgrading Libraries

New shelving units for the Reference Collection at St Ignatius College Girls Junior Lyceum were delivered and installed so as to replace the old shelves. The collection was heavily weeded while the rest of the books were shelved by subject.

Agreement with Foundation for Tomorrow Schools (FTS)

A mutual agreement was reached with FTS so that the SLS would provide site plans and library furniture specifications for the issuing of tenders for all new libraries. At the request of FTS, site plans for the following three libraries were prepared, St Benedict College Boys Secondary School, Kirkop; St Margaret College Boys Secondary School, Verdala; San Ġorġ Preca Boys Junior Lyceum, Hamrun. Work was also undertaken at St Thomas More Boys Junior Lyceum, Paola; St Ignatius College Boys Secondary School, Qormi; and St Theresa College Boys Secondary School, Naxxar.

At Kirkop, a site plan and specifications for library furniture for the new purposely built library were provided and FTS were still processing the tender by the end of the year. In the meantime the school is using alternative, suitable premises.

At Verdala, a similar site plan and specifications for library furniture were provided and FTS issued the required tender. Unfortunately the new library is being used temporarily as an assembly hall and the school

was without the use of a library till the end of December. All library materials were moved by the SLS staff from the Hamrun site to Verdala and stored till the furniture arrives.

At San Ġorġ Preca Boys Junior Lyceum, Hamrun, a site plan with furniture specifications was provided to replace the previous library site. No results were visible by the end of December and the school therefore ended the year without a usable library.

The Boys Junior Lyceum at Paola was closed at the end of June. The SLS took responsibility to move all the library furniture and books to a safe storage over the summer holidays. At the beginning of the new scholastic year, library materials were transferred to their temporary site at Hamrun.

The tender for the manufacture and supply of library furniture for St Ignatius Boys Secondary School, Qormi, was reissued in January 2008. In June it was possible for SLS staff to install the library in the newly provided shelving units. The new Head of School immediately ordered hundreds of new books to fill the empty spaces in the room. The two Boys' Schools at Naxxar were finally amalgamated and SLS staff worked hard to organise the two collections into one. Library furniture was re-arranged.

Library Statistics

Statistics from 34 secondary sites were gathered. The total number of books in these schools amounts to 191,854 and with a total of 18,266 students gives a ratio of 10.5 books per head. This is of course an inflated number because less than 50% of the books in our school libraries are of any use. A total of around 7,800 books were added throughout the year. Number of periodicals purchased stood at around 50. Loans during the year were around 63,000, approximately 3.5 books per student.

Archives Section

The collection of School Admission Registers rose to a total of 103. Throughout the year, over 296 school attendance certificates were issued to ex-students. The records of Admission Registers held by all schools were transferred to a database created for the purpose by the undersigned. Fifty registers were repaired and re-bound with funds provided by the Student Services Director.

SLS New Site

This was the first year that the SLS functioned from the St Julians' site. The section has a very healthy relationship with the adjoining School and the sharing of resources is optimum.

Youth Service Organisation

The main objectives of this section are student exchanges, competitions in schools and exhibitions of works by students as well as other initiatives with voluntary organisations.

Student Exchanges

The following exchanges took place in 2008:

Outgoing Country	Students	Teachers	Participating School/s
Verona, Italy	15	2	Primary School, Qrendi
Weiden, Germany	13	2	Giov Curmi PSS, Naxxar
Bari, Italy	10	2	Furtu Selvatico BSS, Naxxar
Stromberg, Germany	14	3	C Diacono GJL, Żejtun/St Joseph BJL, Corradino
Morocco	12	3	L Manche BSS, Fortini/E Serracino Ingloft, Cospicua
Goppingen, Germany	22	2	Margaret Mortimer GJL, Sta Luċia
Landshut, Germany	18	3	M'Regina GJL, Blata l-Bajda/M'Assumpta GSS, Hamrun
Total	104	17	

Incoming Country	Students	Teachers	Participating School/s
Bourges, France	18	3	Carlo Diacono GJL, Żejtun
Weiden, Germany	14	1	Giov Curmi PSS, Naxxar
Stromberg, Germany	15	2	C Diacono GJL, Żejtun/St Joseph BJL, Corradino
Bari, Italy	11	3	Giov. Curmi PSS, Naxxar
Lithuania	10	4	Sir Temi Zammit BSS, Mtarfa
Morocco	18	2	L Manche BSS, Fortini/E Serracino Inglott, Cospicua
Goppingen, Germany	24	2	Margaret Mortimer GJL, Sta Lucia
Total	110	17	

Marsaxlokk Youth Hostel

In addition to the aforementioned exchange groups, other groups/organisations made use of the hostel on other occasions which included the Caritas group on 12 weekends catering for 480 students and other organisations on a number of weekends amounting to 259 persons. The total number of persons making use of the hostel for the weekends in 2008 was about 866.

With regard to repairs, the hostel underwent regular maintenance works like whitewashing, painting both on the inside and façade of the building, electricity and water repairs as well as replacement of water geysers. General furniture maintenance and replacement of chair seats was carried out. Light bulbs were replaced with energy saving bulbs. Floor tiles in the top floor rooms started to be replaced. A CCTV camera for the hostel was purchased and installed.

Competitions

- *Carnival Painting and Craft Competition 2008*: This competition is organised to promote Maltese cultural activities. Students were invited to take part in mask making, painting or collage as well as miniature floats. Entries were exhibited at the Education Foyer. Due to the numbers involved, only the best ten entries from each school were accepted. Forty schools from primary, secondary and special schools participated in this competition.
- *Christmas Crib Competition*: This annual activity is organised in collaboration with the National Commission for Folklore. The selected cribs were exhibited at the Education Foyer. This year the competition was open for both primary and secondary schools. 159 cribs from 16 schools participated in the two categories – *The Traditional Maltese Christmas Crib* and *The Modern Christmas Crib*. All proceeds were forwarded to the Community Chest Fund.
- *Mascot Design for the Office of the Commissioner for Children*: A competition for students was organised in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Children. Students were asked to design a suitable mascot which could be used to promote the activities of the Commissioner’s Office among children and youths. 64 entries from 14 schools were received and works were exhibited at the Education Foyer and at the Ministry for Social Policy.
- *Festival of the European Song by Children “Un Testo Per Noi”*: In 2007 the *Associazione Coro Piccole Colonne* through the Italian Cultural Institute, invited primary schools to participate in a festival of songs for school children from 6 – 10 years. A Maltese school was selected by the Italian organisers to participate in the Festival of the European Song by Children. In January 2008 they travelled to Levico Terme, Italy and participated in the festival.
- *Drawing Competition organised by the MAGG*: The YSO in collaboration with the Maltese Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (MAGG) organised a drawing competition for primary schools. The theme titles were: *In-Nanniet* and *L-anzjan fit-triq tieghi*. Over 200 drawings were submitted by 23 schools. The exhibition of the drawings was held at St Vincent de Paule Theatre Foyer.
- *Children’s Painting Competition organised by the China Cultural Centre*: The 2nd Children’s Painting Competition for primary students was entitled *Dreams of Beijing Olympics*. Its aims were to bring about the rich imagination and creativity in children and enable a better understanding of the Olympic Games.

Fifteen schools participated in this competition with 60 paintings. Works were exhibited at the Art Gallery of the China Cultural Centre.

- *15th Kanagawa Biennial – World Children’s Exhibition:* Four schools submitted 73 paintings for this art exhibition. This event exhibits children’s art from all over the world at the Kanagawa Exhibition Hall in Japan. The exhibition is intended to further understanding of the world’s diverse cultures and difference in global lifestyles.
- *Road Safety Competition:* The Touring Club Malta in collaboration with the Youth Service Organisation organised an Art Competition themed *Road Safety in Malta...Prevention. How can we minimise Traffic Accidents?* for students from 10-20 years. 75 artworks were received and will be exhibited in the Education Foyer in January.

Other Activities

- *Annual Christmas Mass:* YSO organised the children's Christmas Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral. This event was attended by H E the President of Malta as well as a number of high officials from the Education Directorates. The children's Christmas mass launches the *Milied Flimkien* Campaign for the Community Chest Fund.

GEORGE BORG

Director (Student Services)

Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AND eLEARNING DEPARTMENT

The Curriculum Management and eLearning Department (CMeLD) has the following areas of responsibility, each allocated to an Assistant Director:

- Assessment for Learning – mainly focusing on training teachers of Year 4 in formative assessment as part of the preparation of teachers in view of the current reform on the transition from Primary to Secondary being discussed at national level;
- Co-ordinating the work involved in the teaching of Languages with responsibility of the Education Officers of this area and also responsible for Literacy and Inclusion especially in the Early Years.
- Responsible for co-ordinating the work involved in the teaching and learning of the Humanities (Social Studies, History, Personal and Social Development, Citizenship, Democracy, Human Rights Education, Media and Communication, Religion, Art, Drama, Music and Physical Education);
- Responsible for textbooks and assists in the area of Training and Professional Development;
- Responsible for Summative Examinations and the Educational Assessment Unit, and for Mathematics and Science subjects (Mathematics, Science, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Computer Studies, ICT, Home Economics, Design and Technology and Graphical Communication).

During the year under review, the CMeLD saw an increase in the number of Assistant Directors as well as in Education Officers.

The CMeLD now has Education Officers in the Early Childhood Sector and in the Primary and Secondary Sectors. In the Primary Sector there are Education Officers for the following areas: English, Maltese, Science, Social Studies, Religion, Personal and Social Development. Mathematics is being serviced notwithstanding the absence of an Education Officer in this area. Education Officers for Music, Art, Drama, Media Education, Physical Education and Inclusion service both the Primary and the Secondary Sectors. In the Secondary Sector Education Officers for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, English, Maltese, Italian, French, Arabic, History, Personal and Social Development, Social Studies, Religion, Design and Technology, Computer Studies, eLearning, Documentation and Adult Education are currently providing their services within the Department.

While the work of the CMeLD was focused on the key areas represented within the Department namely assessment, classroom support related to teaching and learning, provision of textbooks and computers, teacher training together with input related to the eLearning, the Department collaborated with other government departments not only in connection with the eLearning strategy but also in other areas. The Director formed part of a working group set up by the Ministry for Social Policy that drew up a report that developed an integrated and visible flexicurity pathway for Malta. There was also participation in an inter-ministerial working group led by the Health, Elderly and Community Care Sector of the Ministry of Social Policy concerning the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. The Director CMeLD also served as a representative of the Education Directorate on the Faculty Board of Education and on the MATSEC Board, the latter together with the Director General DQSE and two Assistant Directors. The Director General DQSE also serves as Board member on the Malta Qualifications Council, National Commission for Higher Education and the English as a Foreign Language Monitoring Board.

The Director General DQSE and the Director, CMeLD were also actively involved in a number of key projects. These included the Curriculum review project, the Core Competences project, the setting up of the Science Strategy working group, the eLearning Strategy, the Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta and the preparation of a revised format of the Certificate awarded at the end of Secondary Education. During 2008, the Director CMeLD was involved in two European projects namely the ERDF Science Project and the ESF Computer Project. As Project Leader, the Director CMeLD submitted applications for the projects and held discussions with the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division that resulted in the eventual acceptance of the projects in question.

National Curriculum Review

In March 2008, a working group chaired by the Director General DQSE, Dr Grace Grima was set up to carry out this task. The group also includes both directors of the DQSE: Director CMeLD and the Director, Quality Assurance as well as the Dean and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Education, the Chairman of the Matsec Board, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Private Schools Association, and a representative of the Independent Schools Association.

The Curriculum Review has three major objectives, namely to:

- revisit the principles and objectives of the National Curriculum in the light of recent changes affecting Malta;
- present a Curriculum Framework that emphasises educational practices that are major sources of influence on teaching and learning;
- ensure that direction is given and action is encouraged, supported and maintained at the level of colleges and schools.

Meetings have already been held with College Principals, Assistant Directors, Education Officers and Heads of School, State and Non-State during 2008. It is planned that the Curriculum Framework will be drafted for discussion and consultation with stakeholders in 2009.

Core Competences Working Group

In March 2008, the Director General DQSE set up a Core Competences working group to formulate a National Policy and an implementation strategy of the policy regarding the acquisition of core competences, which cover three main areas, namely Literacy, Mathematics and eLiteracy (Digital Literacy). The aim of the policy and the strategy is to ensure that all Maltese children acquire the above mentioned competences not later than Year 3 of primary education. Among other things, checklists have been proposed for each of the three competences at Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 levels. These checklists will help educators identify children at risk at an early stage. Consequently educators will be in a position to provide appropriate support for as long as it is needed. This will enable children to access the full curriculum and become lifelong learners. The policy and the strategy emphasise the need for all stakeholders to co-operate and co-ordinate their work for the benefit of the child. The stakeholders include teachers, school and other educational leaders, parents and the community at large. This initiative is one among a number of measures taken to improve the quality of our educational services. It will enhance student achievement and raise the national standard.

A National Strategy for Science Education in Malta

The objective of the strategy group is to formulate a national strategy for science education in Malta for students in primary and secondary schools and beyond. The group is chaired by the Director General DQSE and includes representatives of the DQSE, the Faculty of Education, the MATSEC Board, and church and independent schools, working on three different areas - Science for Early Years and Primary Schools; Science for Secondary Schools; Current International Trends in Science Education.

The committee was set up in October 2008 to review the current situation of science education in Malta and propose a comprehensive national strategy for the enhancement of science literacy. This strategy is intended to cater for:

- the scientific needs of students at both primary and secondary levels;
- students with different learning abilities;
- students who wish to further their study of science subjects beyond compulsory education;
- the development of science literacy for all; and
- opportunities for lifelong learning.

In 2009, the committee will draw up and issue a draft document that will propose a national plan for science education. This document will be disseminated amongst all stakeholders for public consultation. Analysis of the feedback from the consultation process will be used by the committee to issue a final amended version of the strategy document.

The eLearning Strategy

During 2008, the CMELD was heavily involved in discussions related to *Malta's National eLearning Strategy: Embracing Technology, Realising Potential*, published in 2007. This strategy aims to give learners the most sophisticated tools available. It also aims to equip educators with the resources they need to be able to effectively engage learners.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications (MITC) sat on panels set up to discuss the eLearning Strategy. These meetings resulted in the finalisation of the eLearning Strategy 2008-2010 and the development of a roadmap with responsibilities concerning learners' skills, teachers' skills, leaders' skills, computers and connectivity, standards. Meetings were also held to discuss the eLearning Platform, management information and provision of learning resources.

Further meetings were held with personnel from MITC on the Smartlearning Action Plan aimed at providing computer hardware in schools. The DQSE succeeded in ensuring that personal computers with a global ratio of one computer for every four students be introduced in schools through a leased agreement. So far, the refreshment exercise is at a more advanced stage in primary schools than in secondary schools due to additional infrastructure work that needs to be completed urgently in schools. Laptops were given to all teachers through the leasing mechanism. In 2008, a total of 6,056 desktop computers were refreshed and 3,780 laptops were given out to schools.

The provision of laptops and computers were correspondingly matched with the enhancement of teachers' skills through a series of training sessions during professional development sessions for all teachers. In addition, INSET courses were held.

The DQSE and the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), in conjunction with MITC through MITTS, carried out infrastructural upgrades in schools.

Business and functional requirements for the eLearning Platform were finalised by the CMELD after internal discussions were carried out with College Principals, Education Officers, a number of Heads of School, Assistant Directors and Directors. Information meetings held by Exigy and Fronter eLearning Platform providers were attended.

Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta

Essentially, the aim of the review is to '... eliminate the rather staccato if not abrupt manner by which students move from primary to secondary schooling in the state system' (*For all Children to Succeed, 2005*). The report was drawn up by a working group chaired by Director General DQSE and including

officials from the Educational Assessment Unit and representatives MATSEC, the Church Schools Association and the Independent Schools Association. The report was originally presented in July 2007 to Dr Louis Galea, Minister of Education, Youth and Employment. An updated version was presented to Hon. Dolores Cristina, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in September 2008.

In November, the document *Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta: A review* was launched and a public consultation process commenced. This has been extended to mid-February 2009. The DQSE is currently working on a strategy of implementation together with major stakeholders within the Directorate and beyond.

A series of public consultation meetings, eleven in all, were carried out between November 2008 and January 2009 in the ten colleges in Malta and Gozo. They were chaired by the Director General DQSE and attended by Director CMeLD and members of the Educational Leaders Council in all of these meetings. Staff meetings in all colleges (primary and secondary schools) were chaired by the respective Principals. There were also meetings with all Heads of School (State and Non-State) and staff and students from the Faculty of Education. There was adequate media coverage in November-December 2008 with several radio and television programmes giving prominence to the educational reform. There was also regular input by means of newspaper articles during the same period.

School Leaving Certificate

The DQSE is working on a new format of the School Leaving Certificate awarded at the end of secondary schooling. The aim of the certificate is to recognise the value of all the aspects of the achievement of the students during the five years of secondary schooling. The certificate is cumulative. It recognises five particular aspects, namely formal education (academic achievement taking into consideration both teacher assessment and examination results); personal qualities; informal education; non formal education; and school attendance. This certificate recognises the importance of holistic education and gives due importance to the student's initiative and participation inside and outside school.

The process is chaired by the Director General DQSE and includes the Assistant Director Formative Assessment, the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Manager Standards and Qualifications of the Malta Qualifications Council, and Headmaster St Benedict College. The Certificate carries the endorsement of the Malta Qualifications Council. It is pitched at Level One, with students being awarded the grade within Level One according to their standard and achievement.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Sessions

318 professional development sessions were held after school hours, on themes chosen by Heads of School in conjunction with College Principals and with the CMeLD. 3,290 participants attended these sessions during 2008.

In-Service Courses

- In-Service courses for teachers and other teaching personnel were held during July and September 2008. A total of 95 different courses were offered in both sessions. 2,303 attended the July session and 1,446 attended the September session amounting to a total of 3,749 participants.
- Educators were also given the opportunity of attending conferences and seminars held locally which were sponsored by the CMeLD. These included among others seminars on behaviour issues and inclusion.
- Teachers and other educators also attended conferences abroad, including Council of Europe seminars and training programmes initiated by the European Centre of Modern Languages.
- Training on inclusion was also given to Education Officers.

- Other courses were organised by the CMeLD during the year, including a course for teachers of Basic Skills that was held for the second year, during school hours, for teachers in both church and state schools.
- ICT courses were organised during January-May 2008 and July-September 2008, during which a total of 328 educators were trained in an ICT related subject:

ICT Subjects	
<i>Course Title</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>
Computer Awareness for Complete Beginners	31
Creating Multimedia Resources for Special Needs	6
Creating Resource Packs	18
Photoshop basics	11
Using the Internet Effectively	46
Advanced Word	46
Advanced Excel	8
Advanced PowerPoint	13
Advanced Database	9
Core ECDL	70
eTwinning	7
Basic Word	10
Microsoft Excel	8
Microsoft PowerPoint	21
Multimedia Resource Packs using Illuminatus	4
Photoshop basics	20
Total	328

eLearning Centre

Skola Portal

During 2008, the Skola Portal (<http://skola.gov.mt>) was being maintained and updated. New articles were submitted by schools and teachers to showcase and advertise their activities. The portal also provides various facilities and functionalities for students and teachers including the Skola forum, access to the email accounts, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, online applications and sub-portals of the various eLearning Centre Sections. The portal is being redesigned and the new URL is <http://skola.edu.mt>.

Training

Personnel from the eLearning Centre were involved in delivering the above-mentioned ICT related courses. Training for all peripatetic teachers was carried out during the year while they were released from their teaching duties. These peripatetic teachers were in turn involved in supporting teachers while they were in schools.

eLearning Strategy

From October to December, the Education Officer for eLearning was involved in all aspects of the eLearning strategy. He designed and disseminated a teacher questionnaire to help identify the gaps in ICT confidence to ensure that the necessary corrective measures can eventually be taken to address these gaps. He also carried out professional development sessions in a number of schools and delivered training to the primary peripatetic ICT teachers.

eTwinning

A new eTwinning Co-ordinator was appointed at the beginning of October. The first tasks taken in hand included an incentive to award the first 25 schools to start an ICT project during scholastic year 2008/9 with a digital camera. This was launched in October as part of the eTwinning preparation weeks to

promote the programme in primary and secondary schools. The following schools have already benefited from this scheme:

- *Primary Schools:* St Theresa College St Venera Primary, Gozo College Xewkija Primary, San Ġorġ Preca College Ħamrun GP Primary, St Clare's College San Ġwann Primary B, San Ġorġ Preca College Paola Primary B, San Nikola College Bahrija Primary, Maria Regina College St Paul's Bay Primary, St Clare's College Gżira Primary, San Injazju College Żebbuġ Primary, San Benedittu College Qrendi Primary, San Ġorġ Preca College Paola Primary A, Sta Margerita College Senglea Primary, San Ġorġ Preca College Valletta Primary, San Benedittu College Safi Primary, San Benedittu College Birżebbuġa Primary A, Maria Regina College Mellieħa Primary and St Joseph School Blata l-Bajda.
- *Secondary Schools:* Gozo College Girls JL Victoria, San Benedittu College Girls JL Sta Lucia, San Ġorġ Preca College Boys Secondary Marsa, St Clare's Boys JL Sliema, San Ġorġ Preca Boys JL Ħamrun, Maria Regina College Boys Secondary Naxxar, and St Clare's College Girls JL Pembroke.

On 21 November, an eTwinning Seminar was held at St Clare's College Girls JL Pembroke. This was open for all senior management staff and teaching staff in primary and secondary schools. During this seminar the new features of the new eTwinning Portal, launched in October, were also highlighted by the eTwinning co-ordinator. At the end of the seminar, a short award-giving ceremony was held to hand out the digital cameras won by schools during the eTwinning promotion incentive mentioned before.

This seminar was also the start of a three-day contact seminar organised between Malta and Italy with the aim to create dynamic partnerships between teachers and register new projects between the two countries. 10 primary and secondary teachers from the neighbouring island of Sicily and a member of the Italian eTwinning National Support Service Team participated in the seminar.

Italian and Maltese teachers attended various workshops, namely Stop Motion Animation and Photostory for Primary Teachers and Movie Maker and Blogs for Secondary Teachers, and two voluntary teachers from San Ġorġ Preca College Ħamrun GP Primary and San Ġorġ Preca College Boys JL Ħamrun, who are active eTwinning participants in Malta, shared their experience with the seminar participants. They also gave more details about the eTwinning portal and tools and inspirations available within it.

On 23 November the Maltese and Italian eTwinning Co-ordinators helped all the participants register on the eTwinning platform. Each Maltese participant partnered with an Italian participant and planned a project between their classes/schools. The outcome of this contact seminar was the foundation of seven projects.

During the above mentioned seminar an eCard competition was launched where schools were invited to send in eCard with the theme *Christmas Fever in Europe*. Prizes will be awarded for the best and second best entry each from Primary and Secondary schools.

At the end of November and in December strategic plans were drawn up for the coming year. A meeting was also held with the Gozo College Principal to hold a seminar for senior management teams and a seminar for teaching staff in January to promote eTwinning on the island of Gozo.

ESF 21: Parents and Teachers Fusion ICT Training Programme

The eLearning Centre applied for ESF Funds during the first months of 2008. The project was selected for co-financing on 10 April 2008. Through this project, 1,700 individuals (1,400 parents and 300 teachers) will be trained in ECDL over a period of two years (850 participants each year). The first group of ECDL courses is envisaged to start on May 2009 and come to an end on December 2009. The second group of ECDL courses will start on January 2010 and come to an end on July 2010. This will induce a substantial increase of adult training participation rate in ICT. The successful applicants will be awarded a European recognised certificate during a presentation. The course will include tutoring, a pen drive with ECDL approved material for each participant, childminding and examinations. The course is free of charge.

During the last period of 2008, project management services were contracted through a departmental tender and other various tenders related to the project were designed. The total sum of funds allocated to this project is €670,000.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Summative Assessment

During 2008, the Educational Assessment Unit carried out the following activities:

- co-ordinated the construction of annual examination papers, their printing and distribution. 330 different examinations were held, involving 430,317 examination booklets;
- organised the junior lyceum entrance examinations into Form I in May 2008. 3,625 students, (437 were provided with access arrangements), sat for these examinations; 2,203 (60.8%) were successful. Results were sent via SMS to candidates who opted for this service. There were 245 requests for revision of papers;
- published the Junior Lyceum Entrance Examinations' Annual Report, which included detailed statistical information, a review of the examination procedure, copies of the examination papers, marking schemes, specification grids, an analysis of the examination items, the Chief Examiner's report on each paper and other general information;
- provided Education Officers, as well as schools, with statistical information such as schools'/national mean score, and schools'/national standard deviation for each subject;
- held various meetings with Heads of School and meetings/training sessions with peripatetic teachers, as preparation for the Year 6 Annual and the junior lyceum entrance examinations;
- conducted staff development sessions on Formative Assessment and the setting of examination papers;
- maintained the CMeLD's website which included past examination papers, articles related to assessment, syllabi and other useful information;
- selected and preserved sample scripts (together with the corresponding Markers' Sheets) of the Junior Lyceum Examination 2008. The collections were based on specified criteria with a view to monitor standards over the years;
- published on the CMeLD's website three booklets entitled *Guidelines on Assessing Student Achievement and Reporting*, *Guidelines for Paper Setters* and *Record of Development and Progress at Kindergarten Level*.

Assessment for Learning

The work carried out in this area includes the following:

- input in connection with the Reform in Education including role in the Core Competences Group and the transition from Primary to Secondary Schools;
- school visits to implement Assessment for Learning in the classroom;
- work in the preparation of an updated format for the reporting of learners' performance at the end of secondary education;
- collection of samples of scripts and markers' sheets from the junior lyceum entrance examinations which will serve as exemplars of children's work at different levels of achievement;
- collection of the best 20 compositions from the junior lyceum entrance examinations to be included in the *Children's Writings* section of the CMeLD website;
- with the co-operation of Education Officers for Primary Education, six compositions will be critically analysed according to specific criteria and included in the *Learning to Assess* section on the CMeLD website. Learners shall find these useful to continue developing their writing skills and to become confident in self-assessment;
- preparation of articles for the newsletter *Resources* of the CMeLD.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- Recurrent expenditure for materials and supplies was kept for the procurement of school textbooks for the scholastic year 2008/09.
- The issuing of tenders for the timely procurement of textbooks was supervised and followed closely.
- The Education Officer responsible for textbooks conducted periodic school inspections to identify surplus books.
- The CMeLD's website was kept updated with recent versions of all syllabi and relevant resources.
- The textbook database was updated.
- The Stores Section were provided with accurate delivery lists for book distribution.
- The evaluation and procurement of new books for both primary and secondary sector was carried out.
- Regular meetings were held with Education Officers on the process of supplementing current subject syllabi with detailed learning outcomes.
- The Foreign Languages in the Primary Schools Project has been continued in a number of primary schools in Italian and French.
- Supervision of teams of Heads of Department in the first part of the year in the absence of Education Officers for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Business Studies, Spanish and Computer Studies. Regular meetings with these Heads of Department were held to discuss and co-ordinate new requirements and initiatives.

Teachers' Documentation Centre

The Education Officer for this sector was responsible for the following:

- Information from Schools' Textbook Requisition Orders was collated and vetted in order to make a final order request to the Procurement Section.
- Articles were collected and edited for the Resources Newsletter issued in January, April and October.
- United World College Malta Committee meetings were chaired by Education Officer; reported annually to the UWC International; issued International Baccalaureate scholarship circulars, adverts and press releases; vetted applications; held interviews and reported to colleges offering scholarships.
- The Education Officer responsible for this Centre also chaired meetings with core group and other stakeholders in preparation for the celebration of the 2009 Year of Creativity and Innovation.

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

General Outcomes

- The team contributed towards the implementation of the National Minimum Curriculum by advising and supporting teachers, evaluating and reporting on their work and about the progress of teaching in schools.
- Liaising with Education Officers to ensure monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- Providing support to teaching and learning in all curricular areas at all levels.
- Liaising with Student Services Department to ensure that all students receive their entitlement in an inclusive educational setting.
- Co-ordinating and supporting peripatetic teachers to strengthen the personal and social education of each student.
- Supervising teams of Heads of Department in the absence of subject Education Officers for Social Studies, Geography, Music, PE and PSD.
- Administering and managing the Peripatetic Service.

The Peripatetic Service

The peripatetic service encompasses the following areas: Personal and Social Development (for pupils in Year 4 to Year 6 in primary schools); Sexuality and Relationship Education (in primary and secondary schools); Thinking Skills; Alcohol and Drugs Prevention; Hands on Farming; EkoSkola; Specific Learning

Difficulties Unit (SpLD); Let Me Learn Programme; Literacy Unit; and Complementary Education. In addition, the peripatetic service has a number of teachers for Art, Drama, Music, PE, Science, and Home Economics.

With such multiple-faceted teams, the CMeLD expanded its services to all colleges and state schools in a large number of curricular areas. Calls for applications for the post of peripatetic teachers of Music, PE, Art, Drama, PSD, Democracy Citizenship and Human Rights, Science, Complementary Education, and Specific Learning Difficulties were issued and interviews held.

The following table shows the number of applicants and the number of teachers chosen for each subject:

Applicants for Posts in the Peripatetic Service		
<i>Subject/Area</i>	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Employed</i>
Art	18	8
Complementary Education	30	6
Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights	13	0
Drama	13	3
eLearning (Peripatetic Teachers Primary)	37	21
eLearning (Support Teachers Primary)	10	5
eLearning (Support Teachers Secondary)	19	8
eLearning (Support Teacher Special Needs)	1	1
Home Economics	8	2
Music	4	0
Personal and Social Development (PSD)	33	2
PSD - Alcohol and Drugs Prevention	11	3
Physical Education	11	2
Science and Technology	11	2
Specific Learning Difficulties	11	5
Total	230	68

The following table shows the number of teachers in each area/programme/subject as on January 2008 and October 2008.

Teachers in the Peripatetic Service in Malta and Gozo				
<i>Area/ Programme/ Subject</i>	<i>January 2008</i>		<i>October 2008</i>	
	<i>Malta</i>	<i>Gozo</i>	<i>Malta</i>	<i>Gozo</i>
Art	16	1	18	1
Complementary Education	67	10	68	10
Drama	15	2	16	3
eLearning (Support and Peripatetic)	-	-	30	-
EkoSkola	4	1	3	1
Hands on Farming	1	-	1	-
Home Economics	8	1	10	-
Let Me Learn	3	-	3	-
Literacy Tutors	3	1	3	1
Music	16	4	16	4
PSD Thinking Skills	6	-	6	-
PSD Alcohol and Drugs	4	-	4	-
PSD Peripatetic Primary	29	7	31	7
PSD Sexuality and Relationship in Education	2	-	-	-
Physical Education	30	6	32	6
Science	17	2	18	3
Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)	8	-	11	1
Total	229	35	270	37

Complementary Education

Complementary Education is an intervention programme for primary school learners who have not mastered the basic skills or who have fallen behind in the class literacy and mathematics programme. The purpose is to help these pupils fill gaps in their knowledge of written and spoken forms of words, meanings

of words, and meaningful contexts in which words function; and develop interconnection between these kinds of knowledge.

The number of teachers involved in the programme at the end of the year was 78. The number of children who are receiving the service is as follows:

Children & schools receiving the service January 2008		
Schools	Year	Children
58	1	611
60	2	660
61	3	722
59	4	560
38	5	197
10	6	43
Total		2,793

Children & schools receiving the service October 2008		
Schools	Year	Children
43	1*	394
62	2	631
62	3	643
54	4	486
41	5	199
7	6	26
Total		2,379

* The number of children receiving Complementary Education in Year 1 increases in January.

Weekly meetings were held on a regular basis to discuss and work on assessment. Assessment packs were compiled and shared among the teachers to be used as tool for continuous assessment. Teachers of Complementary Education were given opportunities for discussions and sharing of ideas on literacy programmes and literacy skills.

Hands-on Farming Initiative

This initiative continued in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture. Primary pupils attend a session at the Government Farm at Ghammieri and are shown around the farm. They are made aware of the way their food is produced through agricultural practices and they also get the opportunity to see farm animals.

Biology students of the secondary sector also have the opportunity to visit the farm and examine the way biological processes interact with each other as part of their SEC practical sessions. Conservation efforts of rare local animal breeds such as the Maltese Ox are explained. The utilisation of plant parts for food and fodder, the management of soil, fruit tree and olive cultivation and the biological processes involved are also emphasised. During the summer of 2008 the newly planted (autumn 2007) Araar (*Tetraclinis articulata*: Sığra ta' l-Għargħar) windbreak shielding the stone fruit orchard was irrigated and cared for with the collaboration of the Department of Agriculture. Visits to the agricultural laboratories were also included in the sessions.

Arbor Day and Forest Week

The CMELD was again represented on the School Arbor Committee. National Forest Week was organised in January and Arbor Day was celebrated on 16 January. Forest walks were organised to the Foresta 2000 site, Wied il-Qlejgha (Chadwick Lakes), Pembroke and Dwejra Park Gozo.

The activity at Pembroke consisted of tree planting near Fort Pembroke sponsored by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs together with the Pembroke Local Council. The tree planting activity at Dwejra was held in conjunction with Nature Trust (Malta) and consisted of the planting of African Tamarisk (*Tamarix africana*; Bruka ta' Malta) and Shrubby Orache (*Atriplex halimus*: Bjanca) by the side of the road leading down to Dwejra.

It has been the policy of the School Arbor Committee to have schools plant an Araar tree (*Is-sığra ta' l-Għargħar*) on their grounds. The tree growing competition was taken up again with the prize-giving ceremonies held in May (Malta) and June (Gozo). Saplings grown by students were cared for by the Crop Husbandry Section of the Department of Agriculture for planting out in December at Ghammieri and at Foresta 2000 in January 2009.

School visits at Argotti Botanic Gardens

The CMELD once again worked in collaboration with the University of Malta, Argotti Herbarium and University Gardens Section, to sponsor educational visits to the Argotti Botanic Gardens. Visits of 1/1½ hour duration, accommodating a maximum of three sessions per day, were held. The number of students who visited the Argotti Herbarium during this scholastic year was 1,899 from 31 schools (1,474 students from primary schools and 425 students from secondary schools).

The Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Unit

During 2008 the SpLD Unit continued to create further awareness of the implications of dyslexia while offering teachers support to address the particular needs of the individual students and create dyslexia-friendly environments. This was done through one-to-one intervention, meetings with teachers and/or facilitators, meetings with parents and also through the organisation of the annual three-day voluntary summer course for teachers who have particular interest in the area of dyslexia.

The post-graduate certificate course in teaching dyslexic individuals sponsored by the CMELD and co-ordinated by the SpLD Unit proved to be of much benefit to all involved. The presence of a number of foreign researchers in the field of dyslexia such as Prof John Everatt, Dr Steve Chinn, and Dr Mike Thomson allowed participants to broaden their understanding of dyslexia. Moreover, the practical nature of the course also contributed to ensuring that appropriate teaching expertise is developed.

Parents of dyslexic individuals were again offered the opportunity to attend the annual four-day seminar held at the National Curriculum Centre. This seminar aimed at offering practical advice and hands-on activities to illustrate the kind of multisensory activities required to further the learning opportunities of dyslexic individuals. Parents attended enthusiastically and participated actively in the practical training offered by the SpLD team. This year a one-day seminar was also held in Gozo.

The SpLD Unit also offers a library furnished with appropriate reading materials for dyslexic individuals and multisensory resources and programmes for specialist teachers. The SpLD Unit supports a total of 1,073 students. Members of the SpLD staff have also offered support to students in church and independent schools as well as adults who might be encountering difficulties at work or in obtaining further qualifications.

Literacy Programme

The work being done in this area in primary and secondary schools is essentially the following:

- developing, implementing and sustaining literacy programmes in schools: the focus being the whole school approach, especially in primary schools;
- meeting with college principals, heads/assistant heads and teachers to promote literacy initiatives and advise on strategies to be implemented throughout the scholastic year; discussing, planning and executing this action plan;
- advising and supporting class teachers/Heads of School/college principals with school based literacy programmes;
- training given to individual teachers and as a group through observation, immediate constructive feedback, guidance and in-class support, participation in class (demos), co-teaching, discussions, school development plans, solving queries and providing the necessary tools to work with;
- developing and adapting new resources to enhance literacy skills in various schools, which is a great challenge especially in secondary schools;
- promoting a high quality 'Book Flood' policy in schools and providing support materials and resources, and discussing on how best they can be used;
- devising and developing literacy schemes together with the teachers;
- encouraging child centred and multifaceted programmes; helping to create a literacy-rich environment in classes;

- promoting and supporting literacy activities both at classroom level and at school level;
- organising and co-ordinating book week activities and book fairs, also during parents' day;
- organising story-telling, shared and paired reading sessions;
- promoting differentiated teaching, the all-English approach, reading techniques and other teaching and learning strategies;
- promoting reading and writing;
- setting up and/or upgrading of literacy rooms and libraries;
- sustaining and enhancing use of lending libraries;
- encouraging planning and preparation of students' own books and material;
- supporting schools and Heads of School in the selection of appropriate materials and books;
- reviewing and selecting books according to the different levels of the pupils and their different needs;
- ensuring that the selected books are appealing, motivating, stimulating and are used effectively during literacy sessions;
- raising awareness about the importance of literacy for life-long learning and promoting reading as a fun and an enjoyable experience;
- encouraging schools to apply for funding to enhance literacy projects;
- supporting and working with teachers from Kindergarten to Year 6 and literacy teachers from Form I to Form V;
- planning and discussing issues related to assessment; encouraging continuous assessment;
- providing in-class support, individual attention and co-teaching;
- liaising with other peripatetic teachers, especially Complementary and eLearning teachers;
- creating a closer link with parents so that they become more involved in their child's development and learning;
- implementing new projects to be carried out during school hours, like for example, ICT projects (with kindergarten and secondary classes), Best Language Practice Award, Pre-Reading and Writing Project, creating and publishing phonic pack for schools, continuation of a reading project for boys at Ninu Cremona Secondary School, Gozo College, organisation of Dyslexia Awareness day at the Gozo College;
- organising and co-ordinating in-service courses, professional development sessions and seminars;
- planning and developing action plans and literacy strategies with college principals and any other persons interested in the services of the Literacy Tutors of the Centre for Literacy;
- introducing a reading scheme with all classes, after much consultation with all teaching staff; providing support material after analysing feedback from teachers;
- promoting the importance of having a contact person in school responsible for the running and logistical set-up of the literacy programme within that school;
- sharing of best practices within schools and colleges;
- requesting and allocating funds to schools from local councils, local banks and other agencies;
- running the National Curriculum Centre literacy library and the Gozo College Literacy Centre; maintaining and keeping the Centres up-to-date with latest resources; being on-site to advise teachers when they are borrowing material from premises and co-ordinating all work related to the smooth running of the centres;
- exploring new possibilities and ventures regarding literacy awareness, strategies, action plans, research work and projects;
- participating in specific training activities organised by the Centre for Literacy in collaboration with schools and agencies abroad.

Let Me Learn (LML)

- Starting first scholastic term but evolving throughout the whole scholastic year, the LML team initiated its provision of mentoring. A minimum of three school visits were conducted in which the mentor observed the implementation of the process and gave feedback and support as needed. Mentors kept regular virtual contact.
- A number of meetings with the majority of the 56 educators who showed interest in taking part in mentoring were held. The potential options that such an exercise could offer were communicated.
- Articles such as *Supporting Teachers* were published in The Times of Malta.

- Beginning of November but evolving across a number of consecutive Wednesday afternoons, 3rd Year BEd Junior Years students participated in a compulsory study unit entitled *Empowering the Learner*. Another study unit *Young Learners' Learning Characteristics* targeted mainly the early years of primary schooling.
- In November the co-ordinator of the Programme conducted the third and final phase of the LML Accelerated Certification Programme held at the University of Roviri i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain.
- Certificates were awarded to educators who completed successfully the LML Professional Training Process. During one of the ceremony, the LML team launched the second LML DVD targeting the secondary sector and eighteen newly printed charts revolving around LML context. These charts are aimed to be used for training purposes.
- Two micro-teaching sessions took place at Birzebbuga Primary B and at Paola Primary B where the B.Ed. students were given the opportunity to observe a lesson incorporating LML.
- The LML team conducted in house seminars with the purpose of reviewing and evaluating work-in-progress, looking at the way forward and planning for LML initiatives that are still to take place.
- The LML team tried to outline a possible programme through which it can be possible to achieve additional knowledge in 'Mentoring' and 'Differentiation' with the assistance of specialised people working in these sectors and relevant literature.
- The LML team started revising the stories that it has developed and used over the years within the classrooms as part of the awareness sessions. Eventually, an illustrator will be engaged to design the book and an activity book is planned to supplement the story book.
- The LML team wrote a set of five narratives intended to form part of a book to be published in England by Professor Carmel Borg.
- The LML team held talks, awareness sessions, staff development, in service courses, parents' meetings and seminars in various schools both state and non-state schools. Meetings were also held with College Principals and Education Officers. Educators who came from both primary and secondary sectors in both state and church schools started attending the LML Professional Training Process.
- The co-ordinator of the Programme finalised the planning of the mentoring course programme meant to initiate during scholastic year 2008/2009. The programme is open for all those who have gone through the LML Accelerated Training. The practicum consists of the actual support already offered during the year.
- Participation in various conferences locally and abroad: a paper on *CPD practice in Malta: The role of school leaders* was also presented in a conference organised in Malta.
- The LML website was re-designed. The new website is finally functioning and members of the public interested in knowing what Let Me Learn is all about can now access it.
- The third issue of *Netwerk* has also been concluded and it will shortly be mailed to all educators who have participated in the various LML programmes held in schools.
- The team started planning the script and resources needed for the third LML DVD. This DVD is to include a selection of different scenarios wherein students are seen applying strategies in order to tackle the learning stumbling blocks they are meeting.
- Training in schools on effective classroom practices.

Early Years (September – December 2008)

The work being done in this area is essentially the following:

- carried out school visits in Malta and Gozo;
- attendance at European Symposium on Improving ECEC, Brussels;
- presentation of a paper entitled *Facing the Challenge: Introducing School-Based Self-Evaluation* during a conference organised in November on Educational Leadership.

Social Studies Primary (September – December 2008)

The Education Officer for Social Studies worked on the following tasks:

- website to support Primary School teachers: the website at <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/socialstudies> is being developed and co-ordinated for the benefit of all primary school teachers; the website will consist of resources supplied voluntarily by primary school teachers willing to share resources with their colleagues;
- introductory school visits to all the primary schools of three colleges, namely St Benedict, St Nicholas and Maria Regina (a total of 22 primary schools); during these visits, the ‘supporting’ role of the Education Officer was discussed with the senior management teams of primary schools;
- routine class visits - started during November.

Maltese (September – December 2008)

The Education Officer for Maltese is currently working on the following projects:

- a standardised test for students regarding reading and comprehension of the Maltese language;
- in collaboration with the National Council of Maltese Language, adjourning teachers in the primary schools regarding new orthographic regulations;
- on a committee to choose literature books for pupils in the primary sector;
- fulfilling the duties of Inspector for European secondary schools;
- writing a new Maltese language syllabus for the secondary sector for students attending European secondary schools.

In collaboration with a number of other educators, translated into Maltese the publication *Transition from Primary to Secondary Schools in Malta – A Review – Executive Summary*.

Mathematics Primary

During the period when there was no Education Officer responsible for the Mathematics Primary Curriculum, the Secondary Section for Mathematics took on board some of the functions normally undertaken by the Primary section, namely:

- responsibility for the setting of the Mathematics junior lyceum examination paper;
- formed part of the Board responsible for the Basic Screening Assessment for Year 6 pupils in a number of colleges;
- set and monitored Mathematics national annual examination papers for Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6;
- published a booklet *Working with Abacus F1- A Reference Guide for Kindergarten Assistants* in order to give kindergarten assistants a clear overall view of the various important components in the teaching and learning of Mathematics in kindergarten.

English and Mathematics Primary

The Education Officer for Primary Schools who has the responsibility for the English and Mathematics primary curriculum has been involved in the following projects:

- co-ordinating and setting of national examinations and marking schemes – English (Junior Lyceum); Social Studies, Mathematics, English (Years 4, 5 and 6 Annuals);
- professional support in primary classes (re confirmation visits and routine visits and follow-up visits) – observing lessons; identifying teacher’s strengths and areas for improvement in classroom practice; providing feedback, discussing teaching points and strategies; setting targets for improvement of specific areas related to teaching and learning;
- professional support in primary schools re planning for teaching and learning – review of long-term planning and provision of guidelines for updating/improving long-term planning;
- school-based professional development focusing on the teaching of English at Primary – including interpretation of specific learning outcomes, modelling of tasks set at different levels, and teamwork on exploring ways of ensuring progression in learning within and across Year Groups;
- *Learning to Assess* – a new initiative re Formative Assessment aimed at providing online help (www.curriculum.gov.mt) for primary pupils to learn how to assess writing.

Science Primary (September – December 2008)

The Education Officer Primary with special responsibility for Primary Science, apart from conducting school visits to the allocated primary schools and attending the various departmental meetings, lectures and seminars as required, has been directly involved in the following projects or initiatives.

- the logistical reorganisation of the Primary Science Peripatetic Team (PSPT) for the maximisation of human and other resources available; a new time-table has been put into effect to allow for more school visits by the PSPT members while still keeping the hands-on workshops at the Science Centre running;
- the day-to-day management of the PSPT, monitoring the school visits effected and holding regular curricular development meetings with the team members who are now sub-divided in Group A, Group B and the Gozo Group;
- directing and overseeing of preparation, launch and running of the hands-on science workshops *L-Avventuri ta' Nicolo` fid-dinja ta' Newton* at the Science Centre, Pembroke: this project deals with the topics of Forces and Light in a student friendly and innovative manner. 1,643 pupils from state and non-state primary schools (Year 5 to Year 7) visited the Science Centre and actively participated in this project. Various other schools have also conducted Fieldwork Activities at and around the Science Centre;
- participation in the newly set up Committee for the creation of a National Strategy for the Teaching of Science;
- the chairing of an interviewing board and subsequent leading of interviews for the temporary appointment of supply teachers for Integrated Science for Forms I and II in state secondary schools;
- the design and logistical planning of the upcoming hands-on science project *Il-Gżira tal-Furbani* to be held at the Science Centre between February and March 2009.

Art

During the year the Art Section:

- Organised an in-service course in July for Art Teachers for secondary state and non-state schools.
- Organised meetings for primary peripatetic Art Teachers where various art workshops were planned as extra curricular activities to complement the art syllabus.
- Carried out visits in both secondary and primary schools.
- Acquired a selection of books for the Art Department.
- Set the national annual examination papers in collaboration with the Education Officer and the Head of Department.
- Presented a report on Arts and Cultural Education in Malta.
- Introduced a new syllabus for Forms III, IV and V for Art Option.
- Represented Malta in the first meeting held in Brussels of the *Expert Group on developing synergies with Education especially Arts Education* (September 22).
- Organised *The Euro Changeover National Art Exhibition* featuring children's work in the foyer of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport to celebrate the introduction of the new currency.
- Supported initiatives taken by the teachers of Art in various colleges. These were:
 - *Art Links*, an art exhibition featuring work carried out in various artistic media and techniques by the secondary schools of St Margaret College, St Benedict College and St Thomas More College. The exhibition is held every year in the south of Malta. This year it was held at Kalkara Boys Secondary School in Cottonera.
 - *Creative thinking for Innovative Management of Cultural Diversity*, Gozo College represented both islands in Austria when they took part in this art event carried out by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and KulturKontakt Austria. The participants were schools from other European countries.
 - *The Armoury: Ceramics and Drawings*, an exhibition of artistic works created by art teachers during their In-Service Course, which was inspired by a visit to the armoury. The exhibition is being held at St Theresa College and will tour the schools of the same college in scholastic year 2008-2009.

Music (September – December 2008)

The Education Officer for Music:

- Held discussions with the Education Officer in charge of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation regarding a final artistic project for the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. A Ballet composed by Composer Mariella Cassar was discussed to be performed live by Primary Students in November 2009 as the final event.
- Started working on a music workbook for Year 1 together with a teacher's handbook.
- A questionnaire was sent to all primary schools to be filled in by peripatetic music teachers together with the senior management team to determine the resources currently accessible in primary schools.

Drama Unit

During 2008, the Drama Unit presented six *Theatre-In-Education* (TIE) projects, which were attended by a total of 14,305 students. The TIEs, which were presented at the Drama Unit, Blata l-Bajda and St James Cavalier Theatre, Valletta, were:

- *Hans u Greta* for Year 3. This was held in January 2008, at the Drama Unit. The aim of this TIE was “healthy habits”. A total number of 1,826 pupils attended this TIE.
- *Paċi Kulaci* for Year 4. This was held in February 2008, at the Drama Unit. This project which aimed at eliminating prejudice was based on a humoristic legend. A total number of 1,763 pupils attended this TIE.
- *Scenes for Shakespeare's Macbeth* for Form IV. This was held in April 2008, at the Drama Unit. This programme, which included acted excerpts from *Macbeth Acts 1, 2 and 5*, also aimed to serve as an introduction to the life and work of *William Shakespeare*. A total number of 1,374 pupils attended this TIE.
- *4 Drammi ta' Oreste Calleja* for Form IV. This was held in April 2008, at the Drama unit. This TIE presented excerpts from *4 Drammi ta' Oreste Calleja: Anestesija, Satira, Ċens Perpetwu, Igħma Ihirsa*. A total number of 884 pupils attended this TIE.
- *Stejjer minn Chekhov* for Year 6 and Form I. This was held in May/June 2008 at the St James Cavalier Theatre, Valletta. A total number of 1,879 pupils attended this TIE.
- *Krex* for Forms II and III. This was held in October 2008 at the Drama Unit Theatre. A number of 2,966 students attended this TIE at the Drama Unit and a further 1,050 pupils attended when this TIE was presented on the main stage at City Gate Valletta, on 5th, 6th and 7th November during the Youth Week organised by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. This brings the total of pupils who attended this TIE to 4,016.
- *In-Nassa Tal-Grieden* for Year 3 students. This was held in November/December 2008. True friendship was the aim of this TIE. A total number of 2,563 students attended this TIE.

In July and September, the Unit organised two in-service courses:

- *Using the Drama Syllabus* was held in July 2008 and was aimed at Year 6 teachers. A group of 20 teachers attended this course.
- *Voice – That Essential Tool* was held in September 2008 for Drama Unit teachers and other interested teachers. A foreign tutor worked with a group of 21 teachers through physical, vocal and text exercises.

The Drama Unit teachers visited schools throughout the year, where they gave drama lessons, helped teachers to use Drama in their teaching, and helped in the staging of the Prize Day play, as well as other activities related to Drama and Theatre.

Nine teachers were allocated one each to the colleges for a term to term basis, mainly concentrating on the primary schools with a fixed time table, while six others plus the Head of Department were doing TIE projects. At the same time, six teachers from the whole group were chosen to visit secondary schools for the whole scholastic year, whether they were assigned to colleges to tackle primary schools or whether they

were involved in TIE projects. These six teachers dedicated afternoons to visit the secondary schools to which they had been allocated.

Apart from this, one teacher from the Drama Unit ran an in-service course organised by St Benedict College in July. Another teacher prepared a number of students from the Ospizio, Floriana, for Trinity College exams with a 100% success. Two teachers did a one-day Team Teaching at Sacred Heart Convent School, while two other teachers helped in activities organised by the Youth Service Organisation.

Inclusive Education (September – December 2008)

Twenty schools were visited, the majority of which were primary schools but including also three area secondary schools and three special schools. The main objective of the school visits was to observe existing teaching practices in schools with an emphasis on inclusive practices in mainstream schools.

Other activities that the Education Officer for Inclusive Education contributed to or was responsible for:

- Delivery of two sessions, entitled *A School for All* and *Creating a Caring Community* at the National Curriculum Centre to Heads/Assistant Heads of Primary Schools on *Inclusive Education and Support Services*.
- Delivery of two sessions entitled *Developing inclusive practices: challenges and opportunities for responding to the diversity of students' needs* and *Strategies for creating inclusive classrooms* during *Basic Skills Training Course (Literacy and Mathematics)*; involvement also as Course Mentor.
- Membership on the *Bord tal-Għażla tal-Kotba Supplimentari tal-Malti fil-Primarja* and of the *Cospicua Action Committee*.
- Delivery of *SEBD* session at the National Curriculum Centre entitled *School level collaboration* in relation to the education of students with challenging behaviour organised by the European Centre for Educational Resilience and socio-emotional health, University of Malta.
- Delivery of two professional development days for teachers at Sliema Primary and Rabat Primary C on inclusion.
- Collaboration with Mr Keith Humphreys on an inclusive curriculum and contribution to session at the National Curriculum Centre.

Personal and Social Development (PSD) (September – December 2008)

- Organised and facilitated meetings with primary and secondary PSD teachers and Heads of Department.
- Facilitated the delivery of the programme entitled *Heroes* and attended some of the sessions delivered in two different colleges.
- Attended the launching of the CD entitled *Tfal* at St Margaret's College, a CD produced by Sedqa for the use of primary pupils within the PSD lesson.
- Had meetings with various agencies namely NCPE, Appoġġ, Sedqa, MCRU and individuals to find speakers who can deliver various INSET courses on various topics and themes.
- Started support meetings for new PSD teachers within the secondary sector.
- Conducted a feedback survey on *Crossroads* (a prevention pack used by PSD teachers in the secondary sector).

Social Studies (September – December 2008)

- School visits were carried out in secondary schools and junior lyceums, encompassing all 10 colleges, as well as in a number of non-state schools. Visits included both lesson observations as well as subject meetings;
- As from the scholastic year (2008/09), all Social Studies annual examinations are to be set in both Maltese and English;
- The Education Officer for Social Studies was appointed as Council of Europe EDC/HRE National Co-ordinator with effect from October 2008. On 13-15 November, he attended the 14th International Meeting of EDC/HRE Co-ordinators held in Vienna.

Religion (September – December 2008)

- New contacts have started between the Religion section and the *Kummissjoni Kateketika* so that the new syllabus coming from the Episcopal Conference may be enriched with the contribution of all our teachers of Religion.
- Work has been carried out in connection with the preparation of national examination papers at both primary and secondary levels.

Mathematics

- Introduced a new syllabus at Form III junior lyceums and general secondary schools. This syllabus is now subdivided into four schemes that cater for all levels of student ability, namely, from the high achievers (Scheme A) to those who need mathematics as a Basic Skill (Scheme D).
- Worked on a National Policy and Strategy for the Attainment of Core Competences. This policy targets students in Years 1, 2 and 3 who are at risk in the core competences of Literacy, eLiteracy and Mathematics.
- Co-ordinated the setting of four examination papers of different levels for each form from Form I to Form V.
- Introduced new textbooks at Form III at both junior lyceums and general secondary schools.
- Set the test paper and formed part of the team in charge of the Basic Skills Assessment at the various colleges.
- Carried out a Basic Skills Training course for those teaching mathematics to students following a Basic Mathematics (Numeracy) Programme.
- Organised six hands-on activities for gifted and talented Form IV students from state and non-state secondary schools as well as three similar activities for students in Form V.
- Set examination papers for junior lyceums and general secondary schools as well as ex-Opportunity Centres.
- Organised INSET courses in July and September for teachers of Form I to Form III and Form IV and V of state and non-state schools.
- Updated the level descriptors at both primary and secondary levels.
- Visited schools to support teachers in their good practices.
- Published two issues of the mathematics magazine *Mathsline*, a publication for the professional development of teachers at both primary and secondary schools.
- Carried out structured routine visits by Heads of Department in a number of secondary state schools in which there is no resident Mathematics Head of Department. During 2008 the discussions focused mainly on setting and moderation of examination papers, level descriptors, and basic skills.
- Participated in school-based staff professional development sessions in both state and non-state schools.
- Carried out interviews for the engagement of supply and regular mathematics teachers.
- Carried out teacher appraisal and confirmation of appointments.

Biology, Chemistry and Physics

In addition to conducting regular visits in state and church schools, organising a weekly meeting with the Head of Department, setting annual examination papers together with corresponding marking schemes etc., the Education Officers:

- are participants on the Committee for the development of a National Science Strategy;
- are involved with Project 58. This project, funded by the ERDF for the purchase of science and technology equipment for state schools is aimed primarily at providing state secondary schools with more equipment for science/technology labs, as well as supplying school labs with the latest in science apparatus, interactive whiteboards and software;
- were chairpersons on the boards for the selection of supply teachers in Biology/Chemistry/Physics;
- held regular meetings with the Faculty of Education lecturers at the University of Malta. In this regard, in October 2008, the third year B.Ed. science students were addressed about the roles of an Education Officer and about current trends and practices in science education;

- held regular meetings with the Heads of Department of church schools with the purpose of establishing links in the teaching of Biology/Chemistry/Physics.

Arabic

- Prepared handouts in Arabic for teachers of Arabic together with CDs as supplementary notes in the form of a booklet to assist them in their teaching of the new SEC Syllabus of 2010 for the culture section of the examination.
- The Centre made its contribution to the quarterly leaflet *Resources* with an article that dealt with the teaching of the writing skill in Arabic.
- Researched extensively on the selection of the new Arabic textbooks to be purchased and introduced in our schools. This need has been particularly necessary since the current Arabic textbooks do not conform to the new SEC syllabus of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching. Several Arabic books for non-native speakers of Arabic from Europe and the USA were sent to the Arabic Language Centre for inspection.
- Organised the adult Arabic evening classes in collaboration with the former Department of Further Studies and Adult Education. For the third consecutive year, these adult Arabic evening courses turned out to be very popular as the number of participants was overwhelming.
- In October 2008 the Education Officer for Arabic participated at the Maltese-Libyan Joint Commission as a representative of the Education Directorates held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Libyan assistance to the Maltese Government in the field for Arabic was discussed and agreed upon.
- The Arabic Language Centre, through its Head of Department, did its utmost to maintain good cultural relations with the Egyptian and Tunisian embassies by paying several visits to the embassies, which occasionally supply the Centre with Arabic reading material.

English

- *Launching of the new Alternative English Literature Syllabus:* This syllabus addresses the needs of students in Forms IV and V who do not plan to take the SEC English Literature exam. The syllabus offers a structured but highly flexible course of study aimed at making literature an enjoyable and educationally rewarding experience for the target students. It incorporates elements of continuous assessment, course work, creative activities that may include the use of digital media, and class-based text choices. This syllabus was launched at the beginning of the 2008-2009 scholastic year.
- *European Indicator of Language Competence (EILC) Advisory Board:* The EILC is a EU Commission project aimed at supporting the learning of foreign languages across Europe. One of its targets is to set a test in two foreign languages involving Form V level students in 2011. Malta is a member of this project and an Education Officer sits on its Advisory Board. During 2008, two meetings of the Advisory Board were held in Brussels, in June and December. During the June meeting some decisions were taken on the nature and development of the tests, and time-frames updated accordingly. Related questionnaires were later completed and sent to Brussels. Further decisions were to be taken during the second meeting but this meeting was not attended by the Maltese delegate.
- *LanQua Project:* LanQua is an acronym for Language Network for Quality Assurance, a project set up last year by a number of European countries with its base at the University of Southampton, UK. The Network has undertaken a three-year project which aims at developing a European quality benchmark related to language learning at higher education institutions. The project is to be completed in 2010. The Education Officer in this network is engaged in a subgroup on Literature and Culture. Research on the definitions and nature of these areas has been undertaken and a suitable case-study of quality assurance in Malta is in the course of being identified for further exploration. During the second meeting of this project held in Karlstad, Sweden in August 2008, the contributions of the various members were discussed and collated.
- Identifying, celebrating and disseminating good language practice through membership of a selection committee entrusted with the task of rewarding good practice in a number of primary and secondary schools in the state and non-state sectors participating in the Best Language Practice of the Year Award 2008.

- Gathering of feedback from all teachers of English in state schools regarding the Oracy Assessment Scheme with a view to fine-tuning the present scheme related to Assessment of Speaking that has been in place since 2003.
- Collating information about basic skills teaching in area secondary schools in order to have a snapshot of teaching methodologies in this sector.
- *SEC Syllabus Panel*: An Education Officer chaired the SEC English Language Syllabus Panel which prepared the SEC English Language Syllabus for 2011.

English Language Resource Centre

The English Language Resource Centre (ELRC) is run by an Education Officer within the English section of the CMELD. It is a resource centre for teachers of English. Resources, such as books, journals, magazines, CDs, DVDs that have a bearing on the teaching and learning of the English language are regularly updated. These resources are made available to the teachers of English in the state, church and public sectors. The ELRC is also the venue for regular meetings between Education Officers and Heads of Department of English.

Italian

- The syllabus for Italian was further developed with the introduction and amendment of learning outcomes.
- September 2008 saw the introduction in Form V in government secondary schools and junior lyceum classes of the new textbook for the teaching of Italian culture: *Civiltà punto it*.
- The Culture material continued to see its incorporation in the new syllabus for use in state schools.
- The publication of two new numbers of *Lo Stivale* which is distributed throughout all schools (state, Private and church) in Malta and Gozo.
- The Italian Language Awareness project in primary schools has seen a considerable expansion. Five new teachers were recruited in the project and now more than six colleges are covered and have their Year 5 classes in primary schools doing Italian Language Awareness lessons. Teachers were given whole sets of material for the teaching of Italian language and culture at primary level.
- For the first time, preparation of the Form V Italian paper saw the introduction of the Culture section, in line with the SEC syllabus for 2009.
- During 2008, contacts and collaboration with the Italian Embassy were consolidated and this gave birth to another competition in which 17 secondary schools participated. The theme for the project chosen was *L'Italiano e la Piazza*. All schools participated through exhibitions, research, plays, role-plays, ICT presentations, etc. An adjudicating panel, headed by the Italian Ambassador to Malta, visited each school and judged the practice. In October, €1,750 were distributed among the seven winning schools; the money shall now go towards improving facilities and resources for the teaching of Italian in the respective schools. A circular in November launched another competition for 2009, entitled *L'Italiano tra Scienza, Arte e Tecnologia*.
- In-service training was conducted by the author of *Rete!* series and teachers had the opportunity to discuss with him the methodology utilised in the new textbook.
- The Italian section has now directed its efforts on reviewing and rewriting a Form I reading textbook (*L'italiano per noi*). It is the aim of the section to produce a modern text to replace the one in current use.

French

- *Francofête*: As in past years, the French Section organised competitions and activities to celebrate the speaking of French all over the world. The activities took place in March and for the first time included pupils from primary schools. Four major events were organised, trophies, prizes and over 2000 certificates of participation were distributed. The events were supported financially by the Alliance Française and the French Embassy.
- *Blogging for Primary and Secondary Schools*: The French Section has opened a blogspot for primary schoolchildren and will imminently be launching a forum/blogspot for secondary students. Pupils have started writing to the blog.

- *Christmas Card Competition:* In an effort to promote the use of ICT in teaching, a competition was launched wherein students were asked to create a Christmas card and send it by e-mail. Up to the date of compilation of this report, the schools have completed the first short listing of participations and more than 300 entries have been received at the Centre.
- *In-Service Course:* The Education Officer for French conducted three days of training in September with a special focus on new MATSEC formats. Among other issues raised were the methodology of picture interpretation, the use of documentation from internet, and the methodology of teaching writing.
- *French for Primary School children:* The Centre has launched a pilot project concerning language awareness for children in primary schools. Every Friday, a class visits the Centre and does three activities.
- *Co-teaching:* The practice of co-ordinating special lessons in large schools, wherein teachers are invited to attend lessons which are delivered by the Education Officer in conjunction with the class teacher, has been continued this year. The focus of the lesson is usually some aspect of methodology which is not being dealt with to the full: use of visual stimuli to promote conversation; the methodology of role play; the use of U-tube, podcasting, reference and use of special websites.

Physical Education (September – December 2008)

The Education Officer has held regular meetings with Physical Education primary and secondary teachers who were free on Wednesday afternoons. The aim of these courses was to review Physical Education and to come up with a new syllabus for all the children in the education system.

The Education Officer held meetings with the newly appointed Sports Promotion Unit to co-ordinate and organise sports activities mainly for children in three different colleges. Moreover, national events were also planned.

Media Education (September – December 2008)

The Media Education Officer in collaboration with the Service Manager Lifelong Education (DES) was involved in the organisation and launching of workshop sessions in Media across the Curriculum for both secondary and primary school teachers. An English guest lecturer on Film Education, Mr Ian Wall, led the workshops. These were held between 18 and 20 November 2008.

History

- Introduction of a new history textbook for Form V history students.
- Revision of the Form V History (Option) syllabus.
- Upgrading and restructuring of the History webpage which can be viewed on <http://schoolnet.gov.mt/history>.
- Co-ordinated the subject of European Studies as an Option subject.
- Worked on a Pestalozzi eLearning History platform for trainers of history teachers.
- Participated in the revision of the SEC Environmental Studies Syllabus.
- Participated in Review Team re. the system of auditing in schools.
- Recurring items such as preparation of examination papers, moderation, interviewing boards, meetings with subject co-ordinators, routine school visits, confirmation of appointment of teachers, monitoring junior lyceum examinations, meetings re. the National Minimum Curriculum consultation process, etc.

Democracy and Values Education

- Delivering of school development meetings for senior management teams and teachers on creating a Democratic Citizenship School.
- Training of Link Teachers and members of Student Councils.
- In-Service course for Social Studies teachers delivered by Prof Sandra Chistolini from University of Roma 3 on Freedom and Citizenship.
- The organisation of projects and activities in collaboration with:
 - The Courts of Justice Division and the Office of the Chief Justice – school visits for Form IV students to the Courts of Justice every fortnight on Friday afternoon;

- KOPIN – the Global Action Schools project;
- SKOP (*Solidarjeta' u Koperazzjoni*), STOPoverty, KOPIN – the Stand-Up poverty campaign;
- KKG (*Koperattiva Kummerċ Ġust*) – the Make Fair Trade Greener project;
- JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) Malta the School Outreach Project entitled *Ilkoll Indaq*;
- Inizjamed – the Conectando Mundos (Connecting Worlds) project;
- SOS (Malta) with the financial assistance of the European Union and of Minority Rights Group International – the Water for Life – Malta project.
- Providing lesson plans, curriculum and interdisciplinary resources for the whole school to celebrate the commemoration of the following:
 - Holocaust Memorial Day focusing on the theme *Imagine, remember, reflect react...*;
 - International Women's Day focusing on the theme *Shaping Progress*;
 - World Health Day focusing on the theme *Protecting Health from Climate Change*;
 - World Animal Day;
 - Human Rights Day focusing on the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Computer Studies (September – December 2008)

- In the absence of an Education Officer ICT, the Education Officer Computer Studies is sharing the ICT responsibilities with the Education Officer eLearning. These include:
 - preparation of annual written exams in ICT for Forms I-IV;
 - implementation of the ICT automated annual exams for Form V;
 - discussions with the Director Exams re having two sessions for ECDL testing and a mock testing session after school hours prior to the actual tests.
- Organisation of September 2008 INSET at St Benedict's College.
- Organisation and administration of Java courses for Computer Studies teachers at the eLearning Centre.
- Chairing selection board for supply teachers in Computer Studies.
- Initiation of organisation of in-service courses (July and Sept 2009) in Computer Studies, PSD and Media Education.
- Chairing SEC Computer Studies syllabus panel.
- Project leader for ESF 21 (ECDL courses for 1,700 parents and teachers spread over 2 years).
- Professional development after school session at Rabat Girls' Secondary School (Quality assurance in testing).
- Teaching practice tutor for three BEd/PGCE students.

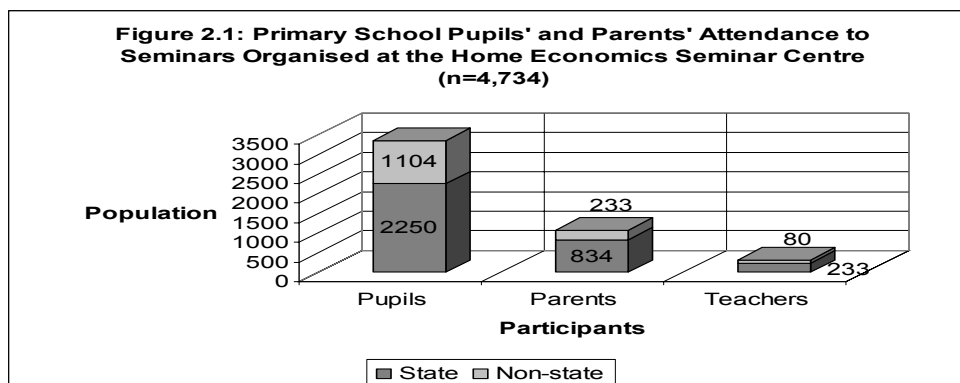
Design and Technology

- The total number of schools offering the subject has gone up to 25. The number of students opting for the subject has now reached 3,000.
- All these schools were equipped with the required furniture, tools and equipment. The schools were also supplied with the required books for students, teachers and class library.
- There was collaboration between the Education Officer and the FTS in the design, procurement and installation of Food Labs, together with the appliances and utensils for Design and Technology Labs as well as Home Economics. These were installed at Verdala Boys' Junior Lyceum, St Theresa Girls' Junior Lyceum, and Sir Luigi Preziosi Girls' Secondary School.
- State-of-the-art Technology Labs were installed at St Theresa Girls' Junior Lyceum and are now in use.
- Over 900 primary school pupils from Year 5 and 6 visited the Design and Technology Learning Centre where they spent a day on hands-on activities. They used computers to design, and the computer controlled laser machine, to produce their artefact. Others worked on Textiles, Electronics and Food.

Home Economics Seminar Centre (HESC)

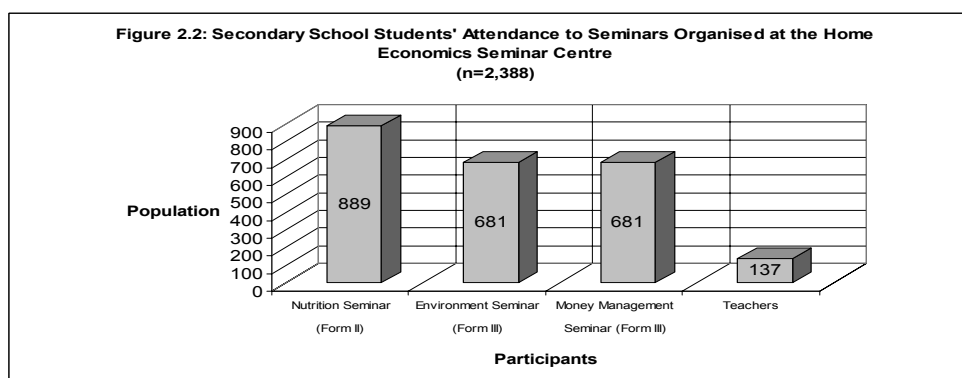
- *Primary School Programmes:*
 - *Festa ta' Frott u Ħaxix* (Kinder 2)
 - *L-Avventuri ta' Tigger u Shabu* (Year 1)
 - Milk Power (Year 2) currently being developed

- A Healthy Breakfast for a Good Start (Year 3)
- *Gawdi Sahhitek u Sahhet Uliedek* (parallel programme with the Year 3 parents)
- *Kul għal Sahhitek* (Year 4)
- *Duq il-Qawsalla* (Year 5) currently being piloted.

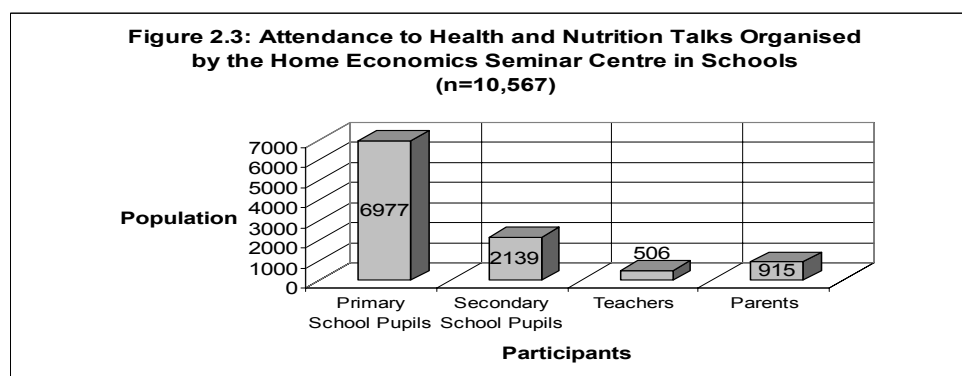


- *Secondary School Programmes:*

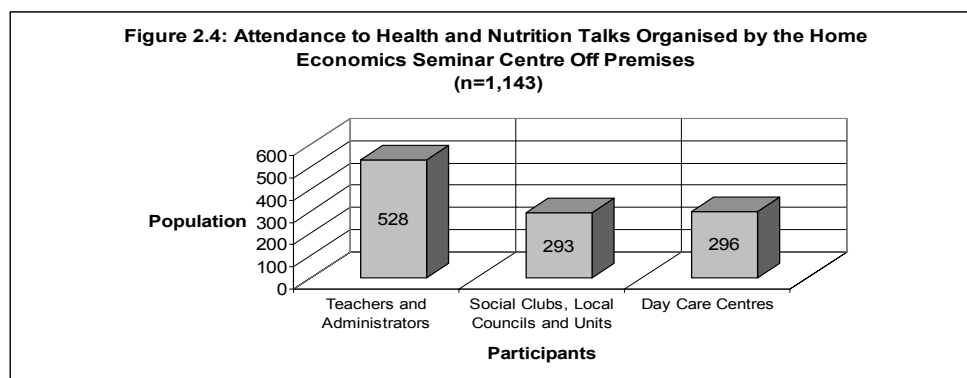
- A new programme on Personal Health and Hygiene is being developed (Form I)
- Nutrition Alert! (Form II)
- Aliens in our Food (Form II)
- The Savvy Shopper (Form III)
- Trendy Choices for Smart Teens (Form III)
- *Lejn Stil ta' Hajja Ahjar* (Forms IV & V).



Nutrition talks facilitated by PowerPoint presentations were delivered in state, church and independent schools in Malta and Gozo to secondary and primary school pupils who were not included in the programmes held at the Centre.



- *Staff Development Plans (SDP):*
 - HESC staff facilitated a number of interventions for the senior management personnel and the teaching staff during part of their SDP sessions. Schools were helped to plan and develop their School Food and Nutrition Policy which tallied with their particular needs and is in line with the recommendations of the *Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan* document.
- *Reaching out to the Community:*
 - Nutrition talks were held for:
 - Day Care Centres in both Malta and Gozo.
 - Parish groups, local councils and ladies' circle.
 - Other community groups.
 - Participation in media (TV and radio programmes) to promote the work done at the Centre and to explain and validate the recommendations as set out in the *Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan* document.



- *Other projects undertaken:*
 - Consultations with schools in relation to the implementation of the Nutrient Based Guidelines for Food and Drink Providers.
 - Food products analysis was conducted when requested by schools, educational entities and food importers for the distribution of food and drink items in schools.
 - Handouts were revised and tested with a sample population.
 - New PowerPoint presentations were designed and produced, in Maltese and English versions, to complement seminars.
 - The drafting of resources in relation to the launching of the *Milk Power* programme aimed at Year 2 pupils.
 - Carried out meetings with ICT professionals to set ground for the development of a software programme to be used when facilitating the *Milk Power* programme in schools with pupils. This is currently being piloted.
 - Consultations with schools regarding selection of food items for special events e.g. breakfast clubs in accordance to the *Food and Beverage Selection Guidelines*.
 - Contact and meetings made with tuck shop operators regarding the provision of Food and Beverages in Schools.
 - Contact with committees, organisations and foundations in relation to the provision of tokens for programme participants.
 - Market research and food analysis were conducted at various supermarkets to lay ground for the setting of the *Nutrient Based Guidelines for Food and Drink Providers* and *Food and Beverage Selection Guidelines*, and to keep abreast with new food products to formulate and update a comprehensive list of various food items which can be sold in school tuck shops.
 - Issued 30 certificates of approval for food manufacturers and distributors, in line with nutritional parameters established in the *HELP* document.
 - The HESC staff participated in SDPs held during each term: Euro Changeover, Renewal Sources of Energy and Laptop Orientation Course.
 - Members of staff attended various conferences and social events related to the main content areas:

- * *Għall-Gid tal-Familji Maltin*
- * eContentplus programme Global Action Schools...Forum Malta fl-Ewropa
- * Shape up College Networking Activity...St Benedict's College Kirkop
- * Nature Day...Paola Primary School
- * Educational Leadership Conference.

RAYMOND J CAMILLERI

Director (Curriculum Management and eLearning)

QUALITY ASSURANCE DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Quality Assurance Department (QAD) is mainly responsible for implementing a number of particular functions of the Directorate as stipulated by the Education Act (2006). Whilst respecting and seeing to the implementation of functions particularly related to the Directorate, the QAD will provide: “... *a professional service of support, guidance, monitoring, inspection, evaluation and Reporting on the process of teaching in schools, on the application of the curriculum, syllabi, pedagogy, assessment and examinations, and on the administration and on the assurance and auditing of quality in Colleges and schools.*” (Part II, para. 18:11).

To fulfil this role the QAD is developing a section that would be composed of a Director, two Assistant Directors (one to be responsible for self-evaluation; one to be responsible for external audits) and Principal Education Officers. The assistant directors were appointed on 13 October 2008.

Developing QAD's Mission Statement, Set Aims, Goals, Targets and Expectations

This dimension is still taking shape and whilst working within the parameters stated by the Education Act (2006), clear strategies are being developed that sees the Department achieving the goals set by the Education Act in general and the DQSE in particular. In the initial months, work has been carried out at discussing matters with different stakeholders in order to acknowledge and respect their views when undertaking or proposing any initiatives. The fact that people both from within the education sector and also from outside are being involved is proving a successful strategy.

Performance Management Programme

The existing Performance Management Programme was reviewed and a revised PMP aimed at linking performance management with professional development was presented. A strategy was developed, aimed at seeking the support of those that have been involved in organising the performance management of teachers. Various research methodologies were adapted to gather opinions and feedback. This research mainly involved:

- a review of the local research studies on the PMP carried out over the past six years, namely 2002-2008;
- a workshop with all Heads of School and College Principals in the island of Malta and Gozo;
- a task given to all schools for them to tackle during a school development session;
- deliberations undertaken by the PMP Review Team;
- a review of the PMP undertaken by the Malta Union of Teachers;
- a review of the international literature, policies and practices abroad on teacher evaluation and performance management;
- discussions with members of the Management and Personnel Office at the Office of the Prime Minister.

As a result of this work, four documents were developed and the QAD has engaged in a series of sessions within the Education Leadership Committee that brings together the Director Generals, the Directors and College Principals. The documents will be discussed within the respective Council of Heads and the new PMPs are expected to be introduced in the coming scholastic year.

Developing an Audit System

One of the main responsibilities of the QAD is to set up a system of external review (i.e. inspection). It is to be noted that external audits had already been operating since 2005, and a number of external audits had been carried out.

Given that the Education Act saw the setting up of a Department that would be responsible for auditing schools so as to see that schools do provide a quality education, it was the belief that a thorough review of the existing system had to be undertaken. In this way the Department would be in a position to acknowledge the work covered so far; respect the demands being put down by the Education Act and acknowledge the developments taking place locally and abroad in the field of quality assurance.

A draft proposal and strategy was prepared and discussed with the Permanent Secretary and the Directors General. It is to be noted that this review was undertaken in a fluid context in which discussions were being held in order to establish the organigram of the two Directorates.

A thorough review of the current external school audit scheme involved:

- a series of meetings with the Principal Education Officers (PEOs);
- a meeting with the External Audit Board;
- a workshop with all Education Officers;
- a workshop with school representatives that had experienced an external school audit;
- deliberations with different educators;
- a review of the international literature, policies and practices abroad on school self-evaluation and audits;
- personal reflections based on the experiences of Director QAD, both as a school development consultant in the state and non-state and a team leader in external school audits within the non-state sector.

The aims behind these sessions were mainly to:

- articulate the current rationale behind the external school audit scheme as perceived by the different stakeholders;
- explore how the external school audits were carried out;
- understand the different roles, duties and responsibilities of those involved in carrying out audits;
- appreciate the personal and team achievements;
- identify the concerns experienced by the different stakeholders;
- propose the way forward.

The audit report was presented to the Minister, the Permanent Secretary, the Secretariat within the Ministry and the two Director Generals. The proposals submitted were discussed and the Department has been given the go-ahead to proceed.

A strategy has been developed that is aimed at seeing the QAD as one that engages with colleges and schools in a different way with the two main aims being that of providing support and evaluating practices to see that standards and a quality education are provided. During the first months of 2009 the Department aims to meet the Council of Heads within the ten Colleges so as to explain the way the QAD will function vis-à-vis quality assurance. The main intent is to clearly explain to the schools how the QAD will function over the next few years. Support will be provided through continuous professional development/training sessions to school leaders in the state and non-state sectors; preparation of documents to support schools in school development planning and school self-evaluation; and preparation of the documents that will help schools adequately prepare themselves for external audits.

Other Initiatives

- *A two-day Induction Seminar for newly-appointed teachers within the State Sector (15-16 September):* This entailed preparing a programme that would help introduce new teachers into the profession by learning about the Education Act; the Directorates; the reforms under way; get acquainted about the positions they were going to take on, etc. The programme saw the involvement of the Minister of Education, the Permanent Secretary, the two Director Generals, and the participation of various Directors and College Principals. The sessions included short presentations, workshops; question time and a couple of presentations from two schools that introduced the session and also brought it to a closure.

As part of the work that the two Directorates are committing themselves to in the field of induction, the book entitled: *Mentoring and Induction for the Beginning Teacher* was launched. This is a publication of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education.

- *A three-day international conference on educational leadership (12-14 November):* The Director served as conference convenor. This conference which attracted over 300 participants from 24 countries took place thanks to the financial support of various bodies, namely the DQSE, the EUPA, the Centre for Research for Lifelong Learning (CRELL) within the European Commission and the support of two embassies and other local bodies. The conference was officially opened by the Minister of Education and the concluding speech presented by the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport.
- *Induction programme for newly-appointed heads and assistant heads:* The Director was also involved in organising, together with the Director and Assistant Director (HR, DES), induction programmes that are related to school leaders, namely Heads and Assistant Heads of School. The involvement of the office is mainly in the areas of school development, school development planning, evaluation and educational management and leadership.
- *Involvement in various national and European bodies:* The Director is currently involved on a number of bodies as an educator or else through appointment by the Minister of Education. He is an appointed member of:
 - The Council for the Teaching Profession
 - Member of the Curriculum Review Framework Team set up by the Director General (as from March)
 - The Faculty Board of Education (as from 1st December)
 - Member of the EUPA for Adjudicating EU Projects
 - European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education Systems
 - President of the Malta Society for Educational Administration and Management
 - Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management.

NON-STATE SCHOOLS SECTION

The Non-State Schools Section is responsible for church schools; independent schools; commercial schools and tuition centres; and independent summer clubs. The main function of this Section is to see that these schools follow the National Minimum Curriculum and adhere to the National Minimum Conditions as listed in the Education Act and related legal notice especially the National Minimum Conditions and National Minimum Curriculum.

The main tasks carried out by the Non-State Schools Sector during 2008 were:

- The approval of teachers recruited by non-state schools and, in the case of church schools, the relevant salary scale was also determined.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching.
- School visits were held on a regular basis in church and independent schools. Officials from the section attended prize days, open days, school concerts, school exhibitions e.g. Comenius projects and other activities organised by the schools.
- Regular meetings with the Church Secretariat for Catholic Education and Culture to discuss the approval of teachers, administrators and non-teaching grades, salary scales and other issues that cropped up in the year.

- Meetings with the Malta Environment and Planning Authority to discuss plans submitted to the Sector for the building of new schools or tuition centres or the extensions of already licensed schools or tuition centres. Sites were also visited.
- Collection of statistical data which includes school population, absenteeism, staff and school fees. As from 2001, a record of absenteeism in schools has been kept on a monthly basis. As from 2003, the collection of statistical data has been in line with that collected from state schools. A database is now set up to update statistical returns re absentees in church and independent schools on a monthly basis.
- Updating statistics re guidance and complementary teachers.
- Compiling records of statements for students with special needs. A new database was designed for statistical data re Statemented Special Needs students in church and independent schools.
- Ongoing support to non-state schools in the School Development Planning process.
- Constantly answering queries from public, teachers, parents and education officials regarding non-state schools and recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- The Non-State Schools Section is also represented on the Mutual Recognition of Qualification Council, the Advisory Board for the project *Hotline for Children over the Internet*, on the Ad Hoc Committee for Vetting and Barring Schemes for people working with or wishing to work with children and the Ad Hoc Committee for review of the document *Knowing Our Schools* re SDP.
- As from 2007, an exercise was started to search for, and retain a copy of, approvals of all members appearing on staff lists sent by schools. This is now an ongoing process and where no such approval can be located, the school is required to provide a copy and, if not available, to re-apply for such approval. A new database was designed to log and update data re teaching staff in church and independent schools.
- A database is now being compiled for school licences for church and independent schools.
- Registration and certification of *Non-State Summer Educational Programmes*.
- Schools are encouraged to join the *EkoSkola* project, encourage waste separation systems and other environmental friendly campaigns.

Request for Research

The Non-State Schools Section has processed 106 requests for research in church and independent schools. The research levels were as follows: Doctorate 2; Masters 15; Bachelor 33; Diploma 53; Certificate 3.

Church and Independent Schools

Non-State Schools provided Education to 23,691 students; 16,501 students attended church schools, while 7,190 students attended independent schools. The following church and independent schools were in operation in the marked sector at the end of 2008:

	Pre-Primary	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary
Church Schools	33	24	22	2
Independent Schools	21	14	10	2
Total	54	38	32	4

Teaching Staff in Church and Independent Schools

Church Schools			
<i>Religious Teaching Staff 2008/2009</i>			
	Male	Female	Total
Heads of School	8	22	30
Assistant Heads	4	12	16
Teachers	12	20	32
Instructors	-	1	1
Supply Graduate Teachers	11	1	12
Supply Teachers	1	1	2
Kindergarten Assistants	-	19	19
Supply Learning Support Assistants	1	-	1
<i>Sub-total</i>	37	76	113
<i>Lay Teaching Staff 2008/2009</i>			
Heads of School	5	7	12
Assistant Heads	15	37	52
Subject Co-ordinators	4	6	10
Teachers	223	702	925
Instructors	5	17	22
Supply Graduate Teachers	23	39	62
Supply Teachers	15	34	49
Kindergarten Assistants	-	44	44
Learning Support Assistants	8	105	113
Supply Learning Support Assistants	35	316	351
<i>Sub-total</i>	333	1,307	1,640
Total	370	1,383	1,753

Independent Schools			
<i>Teaching Staff 2008/2009</i>			
	Male	Female	Total
Heads of School	6	14	20
Assistant Heads	3	4	7
Subject Co-ordinators	-	1	1
Teachers	77	237	314
Supply Graduate Teachers	21	78	99
Supply Teachers	7	81	88
Kindergarten Assistants	2	88	90
Learning Support Assistants	-	1	1
Supply Learning Support Assistants	-	10	10
Total	116	514	630

Total Number of Teaching Staff in Church and Independent Schools			
<i>Total Staff in Non-State Schools 2008/2009</i>			
	Male	Female	Total
Church Schools	370	1,383	1,753
Independent Schools	116	514	630
Total	486	1,897	2,383

Approvals and renewals of staff

Distribution of approvals processed by the Non-State Schools Section for staff in Church Schools in 2008	
	Total
Heads of School	3
Assistant Heads	11
School Counsellors or social workers	2
Teachers	123
Supply Graduate Teachers	53
Supply Teachers	27
Kindergarten Assistants	8
Learning Support Assistants	17
Supply Learning Support Assistants	99
Computer or Science Lab Technician	5
School Secretary	3
Clerk	9
Cleaner or domestic	64
General hand or handyman	1
Total	425

Distribution of approvals processed by the Non-State Schools Section for staff in Independent Schools in 2008	
	Total
Heads of School	2
Assistant Heads	1
Teachers	49
Supply Graduate Teachers	50
Supply Teachers	22
Kindergarten Assistants	6
Learning Support Assistants (inc. supply)	1
Total	131

Total number of approvals for Church and Independent Schools	
Church Schools	425
Independent Schools	131
Total	556

Commercial Schools/Tuition Centres

In 2008, there were 64 licensed commercial schools and 58 tuition centres while there are 14 pending applications for new schools/tuition centres. These applications are held in abeyance because they do not have as yet the relevant permits from the Planning Authority or have not as yet provided the Directorate with the information requested. When dealing with an application for the setting up of a new school, the

sector requests detailed information about the school's proposed philosophy, policies, curriculum, teaching programme and teachers' qualifications.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH BRANCH

During 2008, the Planning and Research Branch was incorporated into the Quality Assurance Department and renamed International Research Branch. The remit of the branch is mainly the implementation, co-ordination and management of international research initiatives at the national level. International research is one of the resources available within the Department which will play an active role in helping policy makers and practitioners make informed decisions for school improvement.

Statistics Unit

The compilation and analysis of statistical data is a central activity of the Branch. Data are collated from both state and non-state schools as well as from post-compulsory institutions. Data mainly focusing on pupils/students and teaching staff are collated on a quarterly basis. The analysis of data provides objective indicators utilised for planning of educational initiatives and policy formulation by all departments within the Education Directorates. Data are made available, on request to researchers, the media as well as to local and international agencies.

The Branch drafted working documents regarding the upgrading and extension works in government schools, to meet the demand created by shifts in the population. Changes in the curriculum and the evolving educational experience being given to pupils in state schools also increases demands for new facilities in schools.

During 2008, the Branch continued its collaboration with the Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning (CRELL) and OECD in the international study on indicators on the educational provision for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and disadvantages (SENDDD). The second phase of the study included the checking of data, the international report and the development of indicators.

Research Unit

One of the functions of the Research Unit is to encourage and monitor research in local education. Such research, including that by university students, is conducted in state schools or through Education Directorates documents. During 2008, the Unit assessed and approved 194 requests for research in state schools. The requests originated from a number of faculties, 56% from the Faculty of Education.

The Unit also provided support to foreign research institutes and universities carrying out trans-European research studies on national education systems. The university courses that benefited from the Unit's support are indicated in the following table:

Course	No of Requests
Bachelor of Education	60
Bachelor of Architecture	1
PGCE (Post Graduate Course in Education)	10
BA/BSc	16
B Commerce/B Commerce(Hons)	1
Diploma in Facilitating (inc. Educ)	107
DEAM	3
MA/MEd/MSc/MBA/MPhil	45
PhD	1
Dip in Library & Information Studies	1
B Psych	5
Post in Qualification Dip in Nutrition & Dietics	1
Total	251

On completion of their research programme, researchers submit a copy of their dissertation to the Documentation Centre of the Education Division. Thus research carried out in state schools and/or Education Division documents can be put in context and the results made available to the areas concerned. In order to promote future studies, these documents are available for reference and perusal at the documentation centre for senior staff. The list of these dissertations, accompanied by a short abstract, is also available on the departmental website for easy reference. During the year, 123 theses were deposited in the Documentation Centre.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)

There is a growing consensus among educational stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on measuring educational outcomes. Further to this, both the National Minimum Curriculum and our new social and political realities as members of the European Union stimulate further the need to participate in international benchmarking exercises.

In the context of these developments, Malta has participated for the first time in TIMSS 2007. This four year project was initiated in 2005 and the results were published in December 2008. Malta was ranked 16th in Mathematics and 30th in Science from amongst 49 participating countries. The international reports provide also a wealth of contextual information such as school resources and home background which impinge on the students' achievement.

Participation in TIMSS has an added value component since, through close collaboration with IEA, staff at the Research Unit was trained in the use of two international databases developed by IEA and developed international research management competencies. Skills transfer also cascaded to school level with the training of TIMSS School Co-ordinators in administering research instruments. The whole process was monitored by an international quality assurance monitor, ensuring that the whole exercise met the international quality standard.

All data were sent to IEA following data checks made by the Unit. The Research Unit professionalism was given due credit by IEA for the quality of data sent in its report on quality assurance. The successful implementation of the study would have not been possible without the collaboration of the schools' management teams and the TIMSS Schools' Co-ordinators.

Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS)

The first strategic objective of the Lisbon process focuses on the need to raise the quality and standard of the learning process. One of the areas covered by this objective is the improvement of the education and training of teachers and trainers. In order to have objective data, the European Commission has commissioned the OECD to carry out an international study on the teaching and learning process taking place in European schools. The study entitled *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS) was launched in 2006. During 2008, the Research Unit implemented the main study in Malta.

International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)

The purpose of the *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study* (ICCS) is to investigate, in a range of countries, the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their roles as citizens. In pursuit of this purpose, the study will report on student achievement in a test of conceptual understandings and competencies in Civics and Citizenship. The international co-ordination is directed by a consortium consisting of three partner organisations: the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in England, and the Laboratorio di Pedagogia Sperimentale (LPS) at the Roma Tre University (Italy).

Eurydice National Unit

The Maltese Eurydice Unit has participated in all the work carried out by the Eurydice Network throughout 2008. The objective of the Unit is to monitor, draft and disseminate reliable and comparable information on the Maltese education system within the wider landscape of European education. The work of the Eurydice Network includes descriptive studies, comparative analysis as well as the collation of indicators and statistical data. During 2008, the Unit accomplished the following projects:

- Drafted the Maltese contribution to the electronic publication *Organisation of School Year 2008-2009* - a comparative analysis on how the school year is organised across the EU Member States, EFTA countries and acceding countries. The information collated covers both primary and secondary education and includes national data on the length of the school year, the timetable for the start of each school year and the distribution and length of school holidays. For the first time this included also the academic calendar of tertiary level institutions.
- Co-ordinated the first phase of the study *Higher Education 2009*. This involved updating indicators regarding higher education. This publication will incorporate indicators and information published in three previous documents on higher education; *Governance in Higher Education*, *Focus on Higher Education* and *Key Data on Higher Education*.
- Provided information for the comparative study on equity in early childhood education, focusing on special measures introduced in pre-primary education and checked the analysis prepared by the EEU. A short monograph on ECEC in Malta was also prepared.
- Completed the work on the comparative study on governance in higher education. The study was published in February 2008.
- Updated indicators and provided information for the preparation of new indicators for the 2008 edition of *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*. This will be published in January 2009
- Co-ordinated the first phase of data collection (national definitions, aims and methods of implementation) in preparation of a working document on Arts Education in Europe. This document was discussed during a conference on the subject organised in France in October 2008.
- Provided data for a working document on pupil guidance in compulsory education. The working document was used as a basis for discussion during a conference organised by the French EU presidency on this topic.
- Co-ordinated the drafting of a working document on the testing of pupils which will be discussed during a conference organised by the Czech EU presidency in 2009.
- Collated data and information for the 2008 Edition of *Key Data on Education in Europe*.
- Updated the summary fiche on Maltese education to reflect developments which have taken place during 2008.
- Provided an information service by regularly answering to the many requests for information regarding various aspects of our education system. These requests originate both from local as well as trans-border sources.
- Collation in collaboration with the National Statistics Office of data for EUROSTAT questionnaires regarding expenditure in education, student enrolment and educational staff.
- Promoted Eurydice work through the dissemination of its publications and other material among Maltese stakeholders.

Eduforum

Eduforum continued to be published regularly on a quarterly basis, reaching as wide a number as possible of stakeholders in Education. The objectives of this publication – to serve as a means of information and also as a printed record of initiatives, achievements, plans and policies generated within the Education Division during 2007 – remained on track.

The overriding objective of Eduforum also aims to bring together and disseminate good practice among stakeholders and partners in Education, while serving as a medium for quality public relations with local and foreign entities.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

Malta has been representing Maltese pupils in the European School system since 2005. The Malta Board for European Schools is composed of a Head of Delegation, a European Inspector Primary Cycle and a European Schools Inspector Secondary Cycle. The Head of Delegation (chairperson of the Board) represents Malta on the Board of Governors which is made up of representatives of Member States, the Office of the Secretary General of the European Schools, the schools, the parents and the European Commission.

Malta at present has over 40 pupils attending the European Schools in Brussels 1 (31 Maltese students), in Luxemburg 2 (15 students) and in Helsinki (one). There are two teachers of Maltese in the Brussels and Luxemburg schools.

The Head of Delegation attended the European Schools Board of Governors meetings and chaired local meetings with inspectors and with parents. The Primary Schools Inspector attended meetings of the European Schools Inspectors Primary Cycle and dealt with the Maltese Syllabus and exam papers in the Primary Cycle. The Secondary Schools Inspector attended meetings of the European Schools Secondary Cycle and dealt with the Maltese Syllabus and the Exam papers for the secondary cycle. Both Inspectors were invited to join the inspectorate team and supervise the European Baccalaureate Examination.

An in-service course was held in October and another is scheduled for September 2008.

The Maltese syllabus is being reviewed given that students in European Schools follow a Baccalaureate programme that develops a 7-year period (includes the two years at 6th Form). Work on the primary school syllabus will also be reviewed together with other syllabi that may need to be developed given the needs of Maltese students.

One of the main areas that needed to be addressed is the certification required by Maltese students attending European Schools who may wish to pursue university studies in Malta. A cordial meeting was held with the outgoing University Registrar to discuss matters. The meeting allowed both parties to appreciate the present context, and that students who pursue studies in European schools and want to come to Malta have to be addressed according to their own specific background. Whilst discussions are still going on, inroads have been made in securing that entry into most courses at the University would accept the level reached and certified by the European Baccalaureate.

Throughout the month of December, various sessions were organised so that all members within the Quality Assurance Department got to know each other; gain an understanding of each other's role and nurture a high level of respect and co-operation. It is envisaged that a collective effort is made to develop a document that would embrace the main areas currently under the responsibility of the QAD. It will also present the main objectives and targets it aims to address and achieve.

CHRISTOPHER BEZZINA
Director (Quality Assurance)

Examinations Department

Mission Statement

To administer local and overseas examinations that fairly and fully allow the demonstration of the candidates' learning abilities.

GENERAL

The main objectives of the Department are to:

- organise examinations for the Public Service;
- process registrations together with the organisation and conduct of examinations on behalf of the Matsec Examining Board;
- act as agent for overseas examining boards to process and administer examinations on their behalf;
- improve the environment of examination centres;
- offer a differentiated service delivery through the full use of e-Government initiatives.
- uphold and adhere to the provisions of the Quality Service Charter to ensure equity, impartiality and fairness in the delivery of its services.

The main thrust of the Department of Examinations is focused on the unceasing excellent service this office provides for the organisation of examinations. The Department is commissioned to conduct examinations by various examining bodies, most prominent of which are the University MATSEC Board, University of London, EDEXCEL and all the local public examinations. ECDL tests in government schools is also now an established event in the department's calendar.

The organisation of the SEC and MATSEC examinations constitutes a substantial part of the department's operations year after year. Around 15,000 students applied for the SEC and MATSEC during the May and September sessions; comprehensively this works out at approximately 100,000 individual sittings throughout the year. Preparatory work is taken in hand well before the actual exams and this consisted in providing accommodation for all the candidates in the 25 exam centres throughout Malta and Gozo, compilation and posting of timetables and providing the necessary arrangements for candidates with special needs and the appointment and distribution of 500 centre managers and invigilators to supervise the examinations. Five briefing sessions were organised for all the supervisors and invigilators outlining their duties and responsibilities to ensure a smooth and optimum procedure during examinations.

Apart from the MATSEC exams, the department conducts various other examinations on behalf of several examining bodies, both local and foreign, such as Edexcel London, foreign universities diplomas and degrees, local public exams, ECDL in schools, English as a Foreign Language and others. Over 10,000 candidates sat for these examinations.

ANALYSIS OF 2008 EXAMINATIONS

Secondary Education Certificate and Matriculation Examinations

Secondary Education Certificate –May/June 2008

During May/June 2008, a total number of 7,856 candidates sat for the Secondary Education Certificate examinations. In the re-sit session of September 2008 a total number of 2,179 sat for these examinations.

The total number of candidates who qualified for waiving of fees on social security grounds was 481. The total number of candidates who requested special arrangements and approved by the University Board was 247.

Matriculation Certificate Examinations May/June 2008

A total of 2,356 candidates sat for the Matriculation Certificate in May 2008. There were 4,712 subject entries at Advanced Level and 9,424 subject entries at Intermediate Level for this session.

Narrowly Failed Candidates

A total of 127 candidates sat for the Matriculation Certificate – Narrowly Failed Examination May 2008, with a total of 52 subject entries at Advanced Level and 75 subject entries at Intermediate Level.

Advanced Single Subject Examinations

A total of 1,222 candidates sat for May 2008 Session for Advanced Single Subject Examination with a total of 1,392 subject entries at Advanced Level and 139 subject entry at Intermediate Level.

September Re-Sits 2008

A total of 1,061 candidates sat for September 2008 session for Matriculation Certificate Examination, 184 for Single Subject Examination and 18 for Narrowly Failed Examination. There were a total number of 21 candidates who qualified for the waiving of fees on social assistance grounds.

2008	May	Subject Entries		September	Subject Entries	
		Advanced	Intermediate		Advanced	Intermediate
Matsec Certificate	2,356	4,712	9,424	1,263	838	811
Narrowly Failed	127	52	75			
Advanced Single Subjects	1,222	1,392	139			
SEC	7,856	48,310		2,179	3,260	

SPECIAL NEEDS ARRANGEMENTS

Requests for special arrangements during MATSEC examinations were all referred to the MATSEC Support Unit of the University of Malta. These were considered by the Special Needs Committee.

SEC Special Arrangements	May 2008	247
	September 2008	90
Advanced & Intermediate Special Arrangements	May 2008	34
	September 2008	12

EDEXCEL International London Examinations – January 2008 and May/June 2008

Edexcel London examinations are held twice a year, in January for the winter session and in May/June for the summer session at Ordinary and Advanced Level. The January session offers a limited number of subjects, while the May/June session subjects are offered on a wider scale. As in previous years there has been a constant decrease in the number of entries.

Session	Applications		Special Cases	Revision of Papers
	'O' Level	'A' Level		
January 2008	65	7	-	-
May/June 2008	2,007		18	2

Analysis of Results

<i>Edexcel London 'O' Level - January 2008</i>			
Subject Code	Subject Name	Sat	Pass
7011	Accounting	14	3
7040	Biology	3	1
7042	Human Biology	2	0
7081	Chemistry	1	0
7100	Commerce	1	0
7120	Economics	4	1
7161	English Language	43	16
7361	Maths SyII B	7	0
7540	Physics	3	0
7615	Modern Greek	1	1
Total		79	22
<i>Edexcel London 'O' Level - Summer 2008</i>			
Subject Code	Subject Name	Sat	Pass
7011	Accounting	402	290
7020	Art and Design	88	55
7040	Biology	59	34
7042	Human Biology	49	21
7081	Chemistry	13	3
7100	Commerce	1	0
7120	Economics	145	92
7161	English Language	1,576	839
7171	English Literature	6	0
7193	French	32	17
7233	German	13	5
7333	Italian	81	42
7361	Mathematics	62	31
7540	Physics	208	116
7593	Spanish	2	0
Total		2,737	1,545
<i>Edexcel London 'A' Level - January 2008</i>			
Subject Code	Subject Name	Sat	Pass
9011	Accounting	5	2
9040	Biology	1	1
9080	Chemistry	1	1
Total		7	4
<i>Edexcel London 'A' Level - Summer 2008</i>			
Subject Code	Subject Name	Sat	Pass
9011	Accounting	115	99
9040	Biology	8	3
9042	Biology (Human)	1	0
9080	Chemistry	1	1
Total		125	103

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2008 Examinations

The London Chamber of Commerce & Industry Examinations are held in Series 2 (Spring), Series 3 (Summer) and Series 4 (Autumn) of each year. Series 3 and Series 4 sessions have a wider range of subjects offered.

Entries of subjects that lead to a Diploma are mainly coming from MCAST and the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise. The total number of requests for Diploma Certificates for the year 2008 was 21. The total number of entries for 2008 was as follows:

Series 2 2008 Examinations	87 applications
Series 3 2008 Examinations	151 applications
Series 4 2008 Examinations	24 applications

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Series 4 - 2007								
Part	Subject	Entries	Sat	Pass	Credit	Distinction	Fail	
First Level	Business Administration	1	1	0	1	0	0	
	English for Business (Written)	1	1	0	0	1	0	
	Text Production	13	13	0	7	2	4	
Second Level	English for Business (Written)	1	1	0	1	0	0	
	Text Production	12	11	2	6	2	1	
	Business Administration	2	2	0	2	0	0	
	Customer Service	2	1	0	0	0	1	
	Marketing	1	1	0	0	0	1	
	Business Statistics	1	1	0	0	0	1	
Third Level	Business Practice	2	2	1	0	0	1	
	Principles and Practice of Management	5	4	3	0	0	1	
	Management Accounting	1	1	0	0	0	1	
	Business and Industrial Administration	1	1	0	1	0	0	
	Advertising	7	5	2	1	0	2	
	Selling and Sales Management	2	1	0	0	0	1	
	Marketing	15	5	2	1	1	1	
	Text Production	11	11	7	1	2	1	
	Business Administration	2	2	2	0	0	0	
	Total		80	64	19	21	8	16
London Chamber of Commerce Examinations Series 2 – 2008								
Part	Subject	Entries	Sat	Pass	Credit	Distinction	Fail	
First Level	English for Business (Written)	15	14	0	5	9	0	
	Text Production	24	23	2	11	9	1	
Second Level	Text Production	23	22	9	9	2	2	
	Business Statistics	8	8	2	1	0	5	
Third Level	Accounting	1	1	0	1	0	0	
	English for Business (Written)	13	13	2	9	1	1	
	Text Production	21	21	6	8	2	5	
	Selling and Sales Management	6	5	0	0	0	5	
	Marketing	5	3	1	0	0	2	
	Management Accounting	1	0	0	0	0	0	
	Advertising	9	8	3	2	0	3	
	Public Relations	21	21	4	15	2	0	
Total		147	139	29	61	25	24	
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Series 3 – 2008								
Part	Subject	Entries	Sat	Pass	Credit	Distinction	Fail	
First Level	English for Business (Written)	2	2	1	0	1	0	
	Text Production	19	19	3	6	8	2	
Second Level	Text Production	21	21	9	6	3	3	
	Book-Keeping and Accounts	18	17	2	4	0	11	
	Business Administration	10	10	1	2	7	0	
	Certificate in Customer Service	6	4	1	3	0	0	
	Marketing	20	18	7	1	3	7	
	English for Business (Written)	5	5	0	3	1	1	
	English for Business (Speaking)	4	4	2	0	0	2	
	Third Level	English for Business (Written)	68	67	10	32	25	0
		Text Production	26	26	12	8	1	5
		Business Administration	28	28	10	3	1	14
	Business Practice	29	27	9	12	4	2	
	Certificate in Customer Service	20	19	8	6	0	5	
	Selling & Sales Management	13	12	7	1	0	4	
	Marketing	20	20	3	9	0	8	
	Advertising	16	15	2	0	0	13	
	Public Relations	1	1	0	0	0	1	
Total		326	315	87	96	54	78	

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) Testing 2008

During the year 2008, the Examinations Department conducted 2 ECDL Automated Test sessions which were held in July/August 2008. There were 3,360 applicants from both junior lyceums and secondary schools (Academic Year 2007/2008) who sat for over 8,700 tests in the various modules.

Results Statistics		
Module No	Sat	Passed
Mod 1	648	388
Mod 2	983	605
Mod 3	1,585	390
Mod 4	1,514	314
Mod 5	634	260
Mod 6	823	387
Mod 7	1,348	593

AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance) 2008 Examinations

The AQA examinations Board offers subjects at Advanced Level. Examinations are held twice a year. The January session has the lowest number of entries due to the fact that the subjects offered for this session are limited in number. The June session has the higher number of entries and an increase over the last year.

The total number of entries for January was: Malta - 14; Gozo - nil. The total number of entries for June was: Malta - 131; Gozo - nil.

AQA January 2008			
Subject	Entries	Sat	Pass (A-E)
Pure Mathematics	14	14	14
Total	14	14	14
AQA June 2008			
Subject	Entries	Sat	Pass (A-E)
Chemistry	42	35	26
Further Mathematics	3	2	2
Physics	2	2	1
Pure Mathematics	84	84	72
Total	131	123	101

Other Foreign Examinations 2008

University/College	Applied	Sat
Birkbeck College – June	4	4
Birkbeck College – May	2	2
Cambridge International College – September	1	1
Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport – Jan/Feb	4	4
Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport – June/July	7	5
Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport - October	2	2
Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply - May	1	0
Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply - November	1	1
CIMA - May	3	3
CIMA – November	3	1
Engineering Council – May	1	1
European Institute of Education – July	25	25
European Institute of Education – June	10	9
European Institute of Education – May	24	24
European Institute of Education – October	24	24
Loughborough University – June	1	1
Loughborough University – Jan/Feb	1	1

Manchester Business School – June	1	0
Manchester Business School – November	1	1
Nabim University – May	1	1
Premier Training International – November	1	1
Professional Examination Services – December	9	9
Professional Examination Services CISA/CISM – June	18	18
Scottish Agricultural College -	1	1
Sheffield Hallam University – January	1	1
The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants - June	618	578
The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants - December	704	662
The British Computer Society – April	5	4
The British Computer Society – October	20	20
The Chartered Institute of Taxation – June	18	17
The College of Estate Management – August	1	1
The College of Estate Management – September	9	7
The Royal Statistical Society – May	2	2
University of Glasgow – January	1	1
University of Greenwich – December	31	28
University of Greenwich – January	8	8
University of Greenwich – June	7	7
University of Greenwich – May	8	8
University of Surrey – April/May	9	9
University of Surrey – December	8	8
University of Warwick – December	4	4
University of Warwick – September	1	1
Total	1,601	1,505
London Degrees 2008	Applied	Sat
BA English	6	5
BA Italian	2	2
BA Philosophy	2	2
Computing & Information Systems/Creative Computing Examinations	207	207
BSc Banking & Finance	2	1
BSc Economics	2	2
BSc Economics & Management	15	15
BSc Business	4	4
BSc Business Administration	1	1
BSc International Relations	2	2
BSc Accounting & Finance	1	1
BSc Sociology	1	1
BSc Information Systems & Management	27	27
BSc Management	5	5
BSc Mathematics and Economics	3	3
BSc Geography & Environment	1	1
Diploma in English	2	2
Diploma in Economics	19	18
Diploma for Graduates in Economics	1	1
Diploma in Social Sciences	2	2
LLM	14	13
MSc Information security	3	3
MSc Environmental Management	2	2
MSc Financial Economics	4	4
MSc Financial Management	4	4
MSc Biodiversity Conservation & Management	2	2
MSc Sustainable Development	1	1
MSc Infectious Diseases	2	2
MSc International Management	2	2
MSc Finance & Financial Law	2	2
MSc Development Finance	1	1
PG Cert Biodiversity Conservation & Management	1	1
Access Route	3	3
Total	346	342

LOCAL PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS & LOCAL LICENCES

Local Public Examinations			
	<i>Held</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Passed</i>
Armed Forces Regular Soldiers	Oct-07	324	143
Armed Forces Bandsmen	Oct-07	34	14
Principals in the Public Service	Nov-07	607	266
Senior Principals in the Public Service	Nov-07	158	108
Court Messengers (Malta)	Dec-07	8	5
Court Messengers (Gozo)	Feb-08	2	2
EFL - MARCH	Mar-08	229	79
Engine Drivers Land - May	May-08	31	25
Wireman Licence A	Jul-08	248	87
Wireman Licence B	Jul-08	56	25
Second Secretaries in the Diplomatic Service	Aug-08-to-date	30	still in progress
Officer Cadets in the Armed Forces of Malta	Aug-08-to-date	26	still in progress
Court Messengers (Malta)	Sep-08	2	2
Armed Forces Regular Soldiers 2008	Oct-08-to-date	320	still in progress
Armed Forces Bandsmen 2008	Oct-08-to-date	16	still in progress
EFL - NOV	Nov-08	164	72
Engine Drivers Land - NOV	Nov-08	10	9

ALFRED ZAFFARESE
Director (Examinations)

Department of Libraries

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Libraries comprises the National Library and the Central Public Library together with its Regional and Branch Libraries.

The National Library acquires, assembles and preserves for posterity the national collections of printed and audio-visual material, as well as material in electronic form.

The Public Library system provides the public with well-selected and contemporary reading material for both educational and leisure purposes.

NATIONAL LIBRARY

Customer Care

The Customer Care Unit welcomes visitors and researchers to the National Library and keeps record of their identification data, not only for statistical purposes but also and principally for security reasons. As of 1 July, a Security Guard is on duty 24 hours a day and is usually posted at the Customer Care area. During 2008 the Unit welcomed a total of 6,065 visitors, an 11% increase over the previous year, with an average of 20 visitors per day of opening. The majority of visitors hailed from Spain, but Germans, French and Belgians visited the Library in fairly large numbers too.

Reading Room

A total of 6,121 persons – an average of 20 per day - used the Library for research purposes, a 13% drop from 2007. Reading Room staff fetched, on average, one item per researcher. Apart from the delivery of requested material and its re-shelving on a daily basis, the staff in this Section also handle researchers' queries and direct readers to the various sources at the Library. In cases where the requested material is not available, the public is directed to other sources outside the Library. This occurs especially in the case of genealogy-oriented requests.

The majority of researchers who patronised the Reading Room in 2008 conducted research in the Library's newspaper collections. Others came to trace their relatives or made specific or general queries usually regarding family surnames, genealogy and sports events. Many consulted documents from the archives of the Order of St John. Among the researchers in 2008, the Library received four new foreign scholars (two Italian, one German and one Hungarian), who came over to conduct research, mainly into the archives of the Order of St John.

Most of the material at the Library is in closed access areas and the main task of the Readers' Services Section is to deliver books and manuscripts from these rooms to the researchers. This year the Reading Room staff fetched a total of 6,927 items comprising manuscripts, newspapers and printed material, a significant 16% decrease from 2007. The total consisted of 806 Archives manuscript volumes both from the Archives of St John and the Università, 329 Library manuscript volumes, 205 volumes from the Adami Collection, 3,842 volumes of newspapers and periodicals, as well as 1,745 printed books, both Melitensia and reference. These items averaged 23 per day of opening.

Items delivered by the Reading Room Staff during 2008						
	<i>AOM/Treas. Mss</i>	<i>Univ. Mss</i>	<i>Library Mss</i>	<i>Adami Collection Mss</i>	<i>Melitensia/Reference</i>	<i>Periodicals/Newspapers</i>
Total	756	50	329	205	1,745	3,842
Total			6,927			

Archives, Manuscripts and Rare Books

This section received 146 electronic and postal enquiries, a 6% decrease from 2007. The queries arrived mostly from Europe and also from the US, Canada and especially Australia. The bulk, i.e. 31% of all the requests, came from Italy alone and concerned the Archives of the Order of St John. In contrast to other years, a mere 18 requests were submitted by Maltese researchers this year. On the other hand, 20 requests each arrived from France and the UK. While French researchers sent queries about Knights of Malta, British researchers requested copies from war-time newspapers or made genealogical enquiries.

Electronic and Postal Enquiries			
Australia	10	Poland	1
Belgium	2	Spain	4
Canada	3	Switzerland	1
France	20	Sweden	1
Germany	10	Uganda	1
Italy	48	United Kingdom	20
Malta	18	United States	5
Nepal	1	Vatican City State	1
Total		146	

Bibliographic Services Unit

The preservation of the national imprint is one of the main functions of the National Library. This is achieved through the Legal Deposit Act which stipulates that authors or publishers are bound by law to deliver two copies free of charge to the National Library, of any work printed and published in the Maltese Islands. In 2008, 492 distinct books were deposited in total, together with approximately 479 local periodical titles that include journals, newspapers and magazines.

In addition to the works obtained through legal deposit, the Acquisitions Section also purchased an extra copy of most books received. Due to budget restrictions, with regard to books published abroad, works directly relevant to the Maltese Islands as well as those published overseas by Maltese nationals were given priority. In 2008, the sum spent on books published locally amounted to a total of €1,732.01, while a total of €619.15 was spent on books published abroad. In all, €2,218.96 was spent on subscriptions and memberships to foreign periodicals. In 2008, 15 new serial titles were entered into the computer database.

Purchases	Local Books	Foreign Books	Foreign periodicals
Amount spent: 2008	€1,732	€619	€2,219
Amount spent: 2007	€2,005	€89	€3,039

By the end of 2008, the Malta National Bibliography for the years 2005 and 2006 was in the final stages of completion for publication early in 2009. Predominantly based upon the items received at the National Library by way of legal deposit, the Malta National Bibliography lists new works published in the Maltese Islands during a specific period and describes each one in detail. Each item is catalogued according to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules and classified by subject according to the rules of the Dewey Decimal Classification. It is edited, indexed and formatted with the aid of Infor (formerly GEAC) software.

Photocopying/Scanning/Duplication of Microfilms

Photocopying of manuscripts is strictly forbidden and even the photocopying of books is generally discouraged since the process inevitably damages them. Reproduction of these items is done from the

microfilms since the Library has most manuscripts and newspapers on microfilm. As far as copying both from originals and from microfilms is concerned, a negligible 0.03% decrease was registered from 2007 with the intake amounting to the sum of €6,555.

With regard to scanning as an alternative to photocopying, 51 orders were registered, a 31% increase over the previous year. The actual intake amounted to €1229.

During 2008, the Library also received eight orders for the duplication of microfilms from negative to positive. Such requests are made by foreign clients who required entire volumes and who had access to a microfilm reader and/or printer. The sum netted from these orders was €378.

Photography

As of October, the National Library began to provide an in-house photography service. Researchers who require photos from Library material are requested to fill in a form and effect the necessary payment. The photos are then taken and sent to the client either by e-mail or by post on a CD. Eight requests have been received since the service began. Before October, 30 persons had applied to take photos themselves.

Four local and foreign companies or journalists approached the Library with a request for filming on the Library premises. They required images for documentaries or fiction. The latter were turned down since the Library does not accept requests of this kind. In all, there were 42 requests for photography or filming, a 30% drop from 2007.

Restoration/Bindery

The section collates and binds loose material of any nature, mainly newspapers and journals and also rebinds and sometimes restores damaged books or manuscripts which belong to the Library. The work of bindery staff this year concerned mainly the binding of newspapers and periodicals as well as the restoration of a number of manuscripts and books.

The bindery staff were also actively involved in the preparation and setting up of the exhibition mounted at the National Library this year and helped at the Malta Book Fair by mounting no less than three exhibitions at the Mediterranean Conference Centre.

Bindery/Restoration Section - 2008	
Binding of: newspapers	140
books	357
Repairs and restoration of manuscripts	37
Binding of and making of case for Brocktorff volume	1,000
Captions for and mounting of exhibition 'Anton Buttigieg' in May	
Exhibitions for Malta Book Fair in November	3
Books cleaned in Old Melitensia	1,000
Shelving books at Hal Far	3 days

Sale of Publications

The sale of National Library Exhibitions Catalogues this year yielded an intake of €279, a 28% decrease from 2007. Other income included €23 from the sale of Charles V's Deed of Donation, €84 from the National Library CD-Rom and €180 from the *Giuoco d'Arme dei Sovrani e degli Stati d'Europa*. €38 were generated by the sale of copies of the *Malta National Bibliography*, while the income from the sale of postcards amounted to €257. Thirteen sets of Brocktorff prints were sold netting the sum of €130 and the sale of seven Valletta/Valencia maps yielded an intake of €70.

Exhibitions Organised in 2008

During the year, the National Library contributed to an exhibition organised by Heritage Malta entitled *Bichi: Views from the Villa*. The Library lent a manuscript and two lithographs of Villa Bichi from its Melitensia collection. The exhibition, initially set up at the National Museum of Archaeology and then transferred to the Conservation Institute in Bighi, Kalkara, ran from August to September 2008.

Malta Book Fair 2008

In mid November, the Department of Libraries together with the National Book Council, organised the 24th edition of the Malta Book Fair at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. The number of exhibitors participating in this year's Fair decreased from that of the previous year, while the public's attendance remained on the same level of 2007.

Activities such as discussions, reading sessions, story telling for children and book launches, were organised during the Fair's opening hours. The Department of Libraries organised its own stand, focusing mainly on publications of the National Library. An exhibition focusing on Maltese autobiographies was organised. All logistical organisation was made by National Library personnel

Participation in Conferences Abroad

CENL Conference for European National Librarians

The 22nd Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation Conference of European National Librarians was this year held in Zagreb, Croatia, between 24 and 27 September 2008. The CENL annual meeting was preceded by The European Library (TEL) Management Board meeting held at the National and University Library in Zagreb. Prior to the Board meeting, a guided tour of the National and University Library of Zagreb was held.

This meeting was very beneficial to the National Library, as most topics centred on Digitisation, which is of particular interest to the National Library, in view of its application for EU funds.

Repairs and Maintenance Work

The work at the maintenance workshop included the day-to-day maintenance and carpentry works of the Department. New shelving units were manufactured and installed at the following local councils branch/regional libraries: Birgu (8); Fgura (3); Pembroke (5); Mosta (2); Tarxien (3); Qala, Gozo (12); Naxxar (4); Msida (20); Safi (5); Birkirkara (3).

Restoration Works at the Façade of the National Library

During the year the employees of the Restoration Division continued with the restoration work entrusted to them on the façade of the National Library together with its portico. Although being meticulous and very labour intensive, the work was accomplished with considerable speed. The portico and four-fifths of the eight-storey high façade are expected to be inaugurated in June 2009.

Brocktorff Watercolours of Malta Collection

On 19 February, the National Library launched Volume I of the publication *Charles Frederick de Brocktorff: Watercolours at the National Library, Valletta*, partly sponsored by the Maltese National Commission for UNESCO and authored by Bernadine Scicluna. The book, of which 600 copies were printed, was a great success and was sold out within a week of its launch, due also to the large number of pre-publication bookings. The income generated from the sale of this volume was utilised to finance the publication of Volume 2. The success of the publication was also thanks to the joint effort of three

government departments – the Libraries Department, the Department of Information which took many of the photos that appeared in the book, and the Government Printing Press which undertook the printing of the book and of the set of 12 A3 full-colour prints that accompanied the book.

During the year, preparations for the publication of *Charles Frederick de Brocktorff: Watercolours at the National Library, Valletta* – Volume II were undertaken. The text, this time examining 42 watercolours by Brocktorff depicting scenes of Valletta, was written by Theresa Vella. The photography and printing of the book were once more entrusted to the Department of Information and to the Government Printing Press respectively. The book is expected to be launched in February 2009.

Seminar for National Library Employees

On 8-9 May, the National Library organised a one-day seminar for its employees. Members of staff from different sections attended the seminar on different days to ensure the smooth running of the Department. The seminar centred on library work in general and other activities that might be taken to enhance the image of, and knowledge about, the Library with the general public. Guest speaker was Dr Stephen Spiteri.

Notte Bianca – Lejl Imdawwal Valletta 2008

The 3rd edition of *Notte Bianca* was celebrated on 4 October 2008. The National Library once again participated in the event and the Library opened to the public from 7.00pm to 11.00pm.

Two important activities were held. These included: lectures delivered every half an hour on the services offered to the users and visitors of the Library; and an audio visual *Bringing Books to Readers for Enjoyment and Enrichment* screened every 20 minutes to the audience present.

Digitisation Programme

In February 2008 the National Library of Malta filed an application requesting funds under Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 Priority Axis 6 of Operational Programme I – Investing in Competitiveness for a Better Quality of Life, in order to enable the setting up of a digitisation section at the National Library to embark on the creation of a digital archive compliant with international digitisation standards.

The ERDF 109 - *Digitisation Strategy and Framework for the National Library of Malta* project – will mainly involve the photography/scanning of each document held at the National Library with the aim of:

- generating a consistent, high level image quality digital archive, through the use of widely accepted standards and formats;
- decreasing the necessity of handling the original material, hence ensuring its preservation;
- enabling the generation of surrogate images (from the high-quality images) for various end users (e.g. web, publications, exhibitions, etc), depending on the users' requirements/specifications – e-accessibility.

Donations of Books by the Central Bank of Malta

To mark the 40th Anniversary since its founding, the Central Bank of Malta donated a set of six books published throughout the years. The books are: *Mdina, the cathedral city of Malta: a reassessment of its history and a critical appreciation of its architecture and works of art. Vol I and Vol II*; *Birgu: a Maltese maritime city. Vol I and Vol II*; *From scudo to sterling: money in Malta, 1798-1887*; and *Currency in Malta*.

A set of these books is to be distributed to all libraries in Malta and Gozo. On 22 December the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry and the Director Libraries attended a presentation ceremony at the Central Bank of Malta.

Security Services at the National Library, Valletta

The Department of Libraries in conjunction with the Contracts Department issued a tender document for Security Services at the National Library. After its adjudication, in July 2008, the work was entrusted to a security services company. The National Library is benefiting from a 24-hour security service and monitoring of the CCTV and Fire Detection and Suppression System installed at the National Library.

The system has ameliorated the National Library's effort in safeguarding the national heritage for posterity.

Commemorating Anton Buttigieg

In May 2008, the National Library joined forces with St Gaetan Band Club of Hamrun, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the death of Dr Anton Buttigieg, ex President of Malta, and one of the most important poets in Maltese literature. On 31 May, a Literary and Musical Evening was organised at the Library under the patronage of HE the President of Malta. The recital of some of Buttigieg's poems alternated with the performance by the Hamrun Band Club of musical excerpts selected specifically to suit the subjects or moods of the poems. The band composed of 45 musicians performed works by Mozart, Handel, Beethoven, Elgar, Mascagni, Sciberras, Grieg, Kattelbey, and others.

To mark this occasion an exhibition illustrating the life and works of Dr Anton Buttigieg was mounted at the Readers' Hall of the National Library. The works which were on display between 31 May and 30 June, consisted of material from the National Library collection and included also other exhibits kindly lent by the Hamrun Band Club as well as the Buttigieg family.

CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Public Libraries Network

During 2008, the Central Public Library (CPL) at Floriana with its seven regional (Birkirkara, Luqa, Mosta, Paola, Qormi, Rabat and Vittoriosa), and its branch libraries (36 in Malta and 11 in Gozo) were all operational. The hospital library at Zammit Clapp is still functioning as well as a hospital library that is housed in the Gozo General Hospital.

The services rendered at the Central Public Library are classified into two main categories namely: front desk services such as the Adult, Junior, Reference, Melitensia, Audio visual library and People with Special Needs; and the others that provide and prepare the necessary material to be offered to the public, namely the Acquisition, Cataloguing and Bindery Sections. In addition there is also the Area Libraries Support Unit which caters for all the regional and branch libraries.

The Pembroke Branch caters for the area that was in the responsibility of the ex St Andrews Branch which had to be closed. The two other branch libraries pertaining to the localities of Marsa and Sta Venera are still not functioning. Tarxien Branch was shifted to *Ċentru Komunitarju tal-Kunsill Lokali*.

Information Technology Support

The roll-out plan to connect the already computerised branches through ADSL was completed throughout the year in question and now all these libraries can make use of the telephone line as a dedicated line to receive calls for renewals from customers. This facility will obviously enhance the service in these libraries apart from answering any queries raised by members of the public.

Another attempt was made to computerise the remaining two regional libraries of Rabat and Vittoriosa together with the 15 branch libraries which are those located at Fgura; Kalkara; Kirkop; Lija; Marsa; Marsascale; Marsaxlokk; Pembroke; Qrendi; Safi; St Julians; Sta Venera; Senglea; Tarxien and Valletta but this has not yet materialised. The computerisation of these two regional and fifteen branch Libraries is

important in contributing to a holistic approach in the formation of a library network and to provide a comprehensive Online Public Access Catalogue.

Customer Care Unit

The Customer Care Unit of the CPL continued to offer assistance to clients and act as a supporting body to the services being rendered. It also acted as a focal point in tendering advice to parents and children on the correct usage of the sections and the right books to read. It was also instrumental in inducing first comers to the habit of reading and encouraging children to approach books for the leisure of reading and discovering a wonderful world and amicable trust in a book.

The Customer Care Unit was also responsible for the scheduling of various schools' orientation visits to the Central Public Library. These visits served the purpose of making visitors familiar with the services being rendered. 16 such visits by schools and other organisations were organised during 2008.

The Customer Care Unit is also responsible for ensuring that Quality Service Charter commitments undertaken by the Central Public Library are adhered to scrupulously without fail. Feedback by customers is recorded in a log book and trail of correspondence is kept up to date and filed accordingly.

The Unit is also responsible for the co-ordination of training new branch librarians. Five new branch librarians were trained during the year, namely those of Gudja, Gżira, Mqabba, Pembroke and Safi.

The number of new members enrolled during 2008 was 4,447: 2,502 juniors and 1,945 adults. The following list gives a breakdown of new members by locality:

Library Membership – 2008								
Locality	Juniors	Adults	Total	Locality	Juniors	Adults	Total	
Attard	107	48	155	Mqabba	36	24	60	
Balzan/Lija	57	43	100	Msida/Pieta'/Ta' Xbiex	46	58	104	
Birkirkara/Mrieħel	141	182	323	Naxxar	71	65	136	
Birzebbuga	57	33	90	Paola	46	31	77	
Cospicua	54	22	76	Qormi	89	47	136	
Dingli	24	24	48	Qrendi	23	11	34	
Fgura	75	62	137	Rabat/Mdina	79	62	141	
Floriana	8	10	18	Safi	30	17	47	
Għargħur	46	29	75	St Julians/Kappara/St Andrews/Swieqi	133	114	247	
Għaxaq	36	27	63	St Paul's Bay/Burmarrad/Buġibba	86	70	156	
Gudja	9	14	23	Sta Venera/Fleur De Lys	32	21	53	
Gżira	90	56	146	San Ġwann/Ta' Ġorni	58	56	114	
Hamrun	48	38	86	Senglea	9	8	17	
Kalkara	19	30	49	Siggiewi	56	33	89	
Kirkop	25	7	32	Sliema	20	53	73	
Luqa	59	26	85	Tarxien/Sta Lucia	75	50	125	
Marsa	8	13	21	Valetta	28	26	54	
Marsascala	101	76	177	Vittoriosa	14	28	42	
Marsaxlokk	52	30	82	Żabbar	124	85	209	
Mellieħa	54	58	112	Żebbuġ	68	38	106	
Mgarr/Mtahleħ	23	8	31	Żejtun	79	59	138	
Mosta	143	109	252	Żurrieq	64	44	108	

Juniors	2,502	Adults	1,945
Total		4,447	

Number of members enrolled per month					
January	402	May	338	September	281
February	167	June	345	October	554
March	260	July	628	November	361
April	304	August	484	December	323
Total		4,447			

Services to People with Special Needs

Five volunteers come regularly to the Central Public Library and read books to be recorded for people with special needs. About 154 hours of recording took place in the sound and vision studio facilitating the completion of 11 newly read books.

For persons with a hearing impairment, the section has 130 sub-titled videos available for lending and 65 DVDs for on-site watching. Complementary to this at the Multimedia Library, secondary school students who have a reading impairment can book for an appointment to make use of a 69 CD collection.

During the year in question, 19,171 tape-cassettes forming up 3,929 titles were loaned to people who are visually impaired, illiterate, persons with a disability, dyslexic and elderly.

432 new tape-cassettes were recorded at the sound and vision studio managed by the Section. This number brings the total of all the collection to over 31,270 tape-cassettes. At present there are 478 members making use of this sterling service. The following are the number of titles found under the under mentioned different subjects:

Subject	No. of Titles
Biographies	199
Maltese Drama	278
Maltese Novels and Short Stories	573
Short Stories in English	1,024
English Drama	352
Non-fiction (various)	673
Music	1,552
Religion	803
Stories in Maltese for children	75
Stories in English for children	260
Junior non-fiction	14
Children's music	23
Total	5,826

Audio-visual Library

The material found in this section is complementary to the books as information not found in a printed version can be retrieved by exploring sites on the Internet. Internet users have increased since last year while videos and DVD's are very popular with visitors. CDs are also listened to especially by persons interested in learning languages.

Reference and Melitensia Libraries

The two reference libraries were very busy during the year, especially the Melitensia Library which is mainly used by students conducting research for projects. Readily accessible information is prepared at the Melitensia Library. Personnel at the reference section assisted a good number of students who came to the section in search of clues to solve questions posed to them with the aim of introducing them to methods of research. This proved to be a very interesting exercise especially when information varied from one subject to another.

Area Libraries Support Unit

- New branch librarians were appointed at Gżira, Mqabba, Kalkara, and Pembroke. In all cases, training was delivered by Customer Care Unit staff. Training was also given to the librarians at Gudja and Safi. Training sessions are programmed to cover the theoretical aspect and include practice sessions. The newly trained branch librarians are then monitored for a couple of weeks to ensure that their delivery is up to standard and to customer satisfaction.

- Safi Branch was shifted to a more adequate and spacious place within the Safi Primary School premises, with the support of the Safi Local Council. Additional books were added to the collection and weeding of the old stock at the library was carried out. New shelving was also provided and the library can now boast of a good collection of books and an attractive place that undoubtedly will serve better the school and residents.
- Similarly, by agreement with the Mqabba Local Council and in co-operation with the school administration, the Mqabba Branch was moved to a spacious room in the Mqabba Primary School. CPL staff weeded old and tattered stock and replaced it with new acquisitions and a donation of books from the school itself and the Mqabba Local Council. A new Branch Librarian was appointed and a contract entered into by the Department, the Mqabba LC and the school regarding the use and running of the library for use by students and the public alike.
- A librarian has not yet been appointed to manage the Tarxien Branch.
- In November, the Msida Branch Library moved into the Msida Local Council premises. Connectivity has yet to be achieved to enable the library to function since this library is one of those that has been computerised.
- The book stock in the regional and branch libraries at the end of 2008 totalled 381,659 books, an increase of 21,064 books over the previous year, after taking into consideration books withdrawn or discarded from the collections.
- A co-operation agreement was signed with the Tarxien Local Council on 5 December.

Book Stock, Book Donations and Loans

A sum of €10,148 was spent on the purchase of new material in 2008. From this amount, 354 new publications were purchased for the sections of the Central Public Library; 730 for the regional and branch libraries. The number of books donated by the public and other bodies to be used in the central, regional and branch libraries was 22,113, which is divided into 1,534 for the sections of the Central Public Library and 20,579 for the regional and branch libraries.

The number of lost and paid books during the year was 59 while the number of books weeded from the collections at the Central Public Library was 743.

The Central Public Library has got standing orders for the following publications:

- *Local publications*: Sacra Militia, Treasures of Malta, Saghtar, Heritage Malta, Malta at War and Delitti u Misteri series.
- *Overseas publications*: Automobile Yearly, Guinness World Records, Stanley Gibbons Stamp Catalogues, Guardian International Film Guide, Writer's Handbook and Whitaker's Almanac.

The total number of book loans issued by the Central Public Library and all the regional and branch libraries totalled 758,509, as shown in the following table:

Book Loans issued by Central Public Library and Regional/Branch Libraries- 2008			
Central Public Library		No of loans	
Adult Library		115,773	
Junior Library		73,127	
Total Central Public Library		188,900	
Regional Libraries			
Regional Libraries		No of loans	
Birkirkara		63,937	
Luqa		36,036	
Mosta		32,756	
Paola		29,404	
Qormi (St Sebastian)		29,178	
Rabat		11,675	
Vittoriosa		2,824	
Total Regional Libraries		205,810	
Branch Libraries (Malta)			
Branch Libraries (Malta)		No of loans	
Fgura		18,209	
Żejtun		15,552	
Naxxar		13,396	
Żabbar		13,347	
Marsaxlokk		13,164	
Attard		11,868	
Siggiewi		10,575	
Sliema		10,463	
Marsascalea		10,151	
Mellieha		10,069	
Gudja		8,730	
Hamrun		8,594	
Ghaxaq		7,548	
Lija		7,311	
Qrendi		7,186	
Kirkop		6,768	
San Ġwann		6,619	
Birżebbuġa		6,218	
Żurrieq		6,129	
Branch Libraries (Gozo)			
Branch Libraries (Gozo)		No of loans	
Nadur		19,044	
Sannat		6,319	
Qala		5,955	
Żebbuġ		4,831	
Xagħra		4,746	
San Lawrenz		3,588	
Għajnsielem		3,348	
Għarb		2,820	
Xewkija		1,696	
Għasri		1,455	
Kerċem		667	
Gozo General Hospital		233	
Total Branch Libraries (Gozo)		54,702	
Branch Libraries (Malta)(cont)			
Branch Libraries (Malta)(cont)		No of loans	
Żebbuġ		6,098	
Qormi (St George)		5,819	
Mgarr		4,867	
Għargħur		4,810	
St Paul's Bay		4,657	
Dingli		4,442	
Gzira		4,017	
Senglea		3,807	
Safi		3,604	
Mqabba		2,722	
Cospicua		2,424	
Pembroke		2,200	
Kalkara		1,814	
Msida		1,599	
St Julians		1,127	
Valletta		259	
Zammit Clapp Hospital		165	
Total Branch Libraries (Malta)		246,328	
Total Gozo Lending Library		62,769	
Grand Total 758,509			

From 28 April to 2 May, the Department, in conjunction with the Ġużeppi Despott Junior Lyceum, ran a programme whereby a group of students visited the National Library and the Central Public Library on a project related to "work shadowing". The intention behind this orientation visit was for the students to take an active part in the routine work of both libraries with the objective of gaining experience that may help them in their future career. The project was successfully completed to the extent that some students expressed their wish to work in a library environment as soon as they finish their academic studies.

Besides these students, two university students following a diploma course in librarianship were attached to the Central Public Library for their practicum sessions.

Discussions on the re-engineering of the library website have started and new features that will enhance the performance and appearance of the library site were planned.

PHILIP BORG
Director (Libraries)

Corporate Services Directorate

The Directorate for Corporate Services (DCS) provides support services and advice to the Permanent Secretary and to departments and organisations within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport on issues related to financial planning and management, human resources management and office management. The DCS co-ordinates activities of a corporate nature in departments and seeks to achieve uniformity in implementing policy directives from the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment as well as the Ministry itself.

The DCS is organised into five branches: Finance (Ministry), Support Services, Human Resources, Financial Services (Education Directorates) and Procurement and Administration.

FINANCE (MINISTRY)

The primary role of the Finance Section is to assist the Permanent Secretary and the Director of Corporate Services in the financial management of the Ministry. The Section, however, also carried out other administrative duties related to human resources and Registry work.

Following the constitution of a new administration in March 2008, the workload at the Finance Section increased considerably with the setting up of a Parliamentary Secretariat responsible for Youth and Sport.

Monthly revised estimates were prepared in respect of recurrent and capital expenditure to assist management in keeping financial commitments on track and to take corrective action in cases where allocated funds were not sufficient. Continuous liaison was maintained with the Ministry of Finance, which was regularly updated with financial information required.

The Finance Section ensured that all invoices for goods and services which had been satisfactorily delivered were submitted by suppliers and settled during the year to avoid commitments being carried forward to next year.

The Section also monitored the revenue and expenditure of entities falling within the Ministry's portfolio and recommended to the Budget Office the release of funds required for their efficient operation.

The Finance Section played a major role in drafting the 2009 financial estimates of the Ministry. Business Plans for 2009 – 2011 submitted by departments and entities falling under the Ministry were analysed with a view to prepare a holistic document and recommendations were presented to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary to assist them in discussions held with the Ministry of Finance in connection with the 2009 Estimates.

During the year, the Section worked on devising new reporting systems to facilitate the gathering of information necessary for the preparation of reports to senior management. Action was also taken to address issues raised in the National Audit Office's Annual Audit Reports for 2006 and 2007. This action included the design of a new database to ensure accurate reporting and to assist in the collection of arrears of revenue.

Other work carried out included the preparation of Accrual Accounting returns on a quarterly basis, the preparation of draft replies to parliamentary questions, and the preparation and submission of other

information required by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Budget Office, the Treasury and the National Audit Office.

The Section was also responsible for drawing up of the contracts of the new Private Secretariat staff members at the Ministry and the Parliamentary Secretariat.

The Registry carried out the added task of receiving and registering files related to Culture, which previously formed part of a different ministry.

During the year, staff from the Section attended work-related or self development courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Support services within the Department of Corporate Services consist mainly of the administration of Students' Maintenance Grants and travel arrangements for officers proceeding abroad on official duty.

- *The Students' Maintenance Grants Section (SMGS)*: is responsible for the remuneration of students entitled to a Maintenance Grant, for the issue of swipe cards to post secondary school students and for payments to retailers for purchases made through swipe cards. This year the Section also administered stipends issued to students who were awarded a scholarship under the Malta Government Scholarships Scheme.

During the summer, the SMGS received and verified applications for a maintenance grant submitted by 5,018 new students. It also co-ordinated the placement of students with various organisations for work carried out during the summer holidays.

- *The Travel Abroad Unit*: prepares documents required by the Ministry's and the Education Directorates' delegates to travel abroad to participate in conferences and meetings. It is also responsible for follow-up procedures on the delegates' return. Such procedures include the presentation of relative documents to the Treasury and the submission of claims for reimbursements to the Ministry of Finance in respect of expenses incurred for travel related to the European Commission and Council.

HUMAN RESOURCES BRANCH

During 2008, the Human Resources (HR) Branch, which is made up of the Records, Employee Relations, Resourcing and Discipline Sections, continued to provide support and advice to the Permanent Secretary, the Directors General, the Director of Corporate Services and the other line departments to ensure that policies, procedures and relevant legislation were adhered to in matters relating to human resources. The Branch also supplied information required by central government and management.

Six calls for applications for the recruitment and engagement of new staff were published. These included three calls for part-time Cleaners and three calls for part-time Clerks. The HR Branch also circulated 155 circulars issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (including the Management and Personnel Office) to schools and Heads of Section.

The Branch was responsible for the organisation of a course leading to the European Computer Driving Licence. Several employees followed training courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation.

As a customer oriented measure, the Records and Employee Relations Sections remained open to the public until 3.30 p m during the shorter summer working days.

Various exercises were carried out in 2008 for the implementation of the provisions contained in the agreement between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers signed in July 2007. These included the adjustment of the all-inclusive allowance to employees in the various education grades covered by the Agreement, the re-designation of Instructors in possession of a Permanent Teachers' Warrant and the assimilation of 285 Facilitators as Learning Support Assistants.

Records Section

The Records Section carried out the following activities:

- preparation of appointments of new recruits and promoted officers;
- registration and engagement of new employees;
- processing of 226 confirmation of appointments and 2,290 increments of employees within the Directorate for Educational Services and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education;
- preparation of letters of progression in respect of 455 employees;
- updating of all changes in personal records and appointment details of the staff, including the personal record sheets, the various seniority lists and allowances database;
- any necessary action with MPO, the National Audit Office, the Public Service Commission and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) in respect of employees who terminated their employment in 2008;
- processing of requests for 189 qualification and other allowances, such as the all-inclusive and acting Head of School allowances,
- drawing up of the service and leave record sheets to applicants applying under various calls for applications.

Employee Relations Section

The Employee Relations Section:

- maintained an electronic and manual record of vacation, sick and special leave availed of by Ministry and the Directorates' staff, including part-time staff;
- processed requests for special leave, including parental, maternity, responsibility leave, pre-retirement, sports, alternative employment, unpaid study leave, vocational and cultural leave, as well as requests for reduced hours;
- liaised with the Salaries Section in respect of pay and allowances deductions;
- administered and processed reports regarding injuries at work; nine injury boards were set up to investigate cases of injury on duty;
- made administrative arrangements for the setting up of medical boards regarding employees on prolonged sick leave.

Resourcing Section

The Resourcing Section:

- processed a total of 480 cases of progression and promotions of staff as provided in the respective Classification and Regrading Agreements of the different classes and grades;
- submitted monthly employment returns to the ETC and MPO;
- administered the Performance Management Programme (PMP) for the general service grades;
- referred 378 new employees for the required medical examinations by the Occupational Health Unit;
- regularly updated the Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) database;
- submitted weekly returns of staff engagements, transfers to and from other departments, superannuations and resignations within the Directorates to MPO and ETC;

Discipline Section

The Discipline Section:

- processed 76 disciplinary cases in terms of the Public Service Commission (Disciplinary Procedure) Regulations, 1999;
- made salary deductions in terms of Section 3.1.3.3. of the Public Service Management Code in another 46 cases where employees were absent from their work area without permission.

FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH

The Financial Services Branch provides the Departments within the Directorate for Educational Services and the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, schools and outstations with support services on financial matters. It also implements monitoring and control mechanisms necessary to keep the Educational Directorates' finances in line with government financial regulations.

The Financial Services Branch is made up of the Accounts Section and the Efficiency and Strategic Operations Planning Unit (ESOPU). The Branch is mainly responsible for the evaluation of the Directorates' three-year business and financial plans and their compilation into a single document consistent with Government's policies and programmes. This document formed the basis of discussions with the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment for the 2009 Estimates.

Regular monitoring of Votes and Items of expenditure, both of a recurrent and capital nature, was carried out during the year and reports were submitted on a monthly basis to senior management for control purposes, indicating corrective action where expenditure was expected to exceed the budgetary allocation.

In particular, items such as allowances and school transport were closely monitored to analyse the effect of the increase in the respective rates payable. In the case of school transport, a new database has been introduced for the calculation of the monthly payments to service providers, with the aim of ensuring accuracy of payments. Various briefing sessions were held for Heads of School and their clerical staff to ensure a smooth transition to the new system.

As a result of the monitoring of expenditure, identified savings were transferred to those Items where additional funding was required for the efficient operation of the Directorates.

Since the mid-day break and transport supervision allowances account for a substantial part of expenditure under the Allowances item of expenditure, the Accounts Section continued to monitor returns from schools with the main aim of keeping the number of personnel authorised to carry out such duties within the relative agreements and to ascertain that payments were actually due.

Imprest funds for Materials and Supplies, and Maintenance, were allocated to primary and secondary schools in Malta. Schools filed interim and final reports on the expenditure incurred on these items for monitoring purposes. These reports were checked and any discrepancies were remedied with the respective Head of school.

A key role was played by ESOPU in auditing schools' accounts to ensure that capital expenditure transactions were made in accordance with government financial and procurement regulations.

The School Council Funds returns for 2008 were reconciled and any queries discussed and cleared with the respective Heads of School. ESOPU also compiled a list of bank accounts administered by the two Directorates and the respective returns were sent to the Treasury Department.

ESOPU was again responsible for the drafting, compilation and issuing of all departmental tenders and quotations related to capital expenditure. €463,768 were spent on IT equipment in schools, whilst €692,682 were spent on the purchasing of equipment and furniture for schools. The Unit was also responsible for the processing of quotations through the e-procurement system related to the purchase of IT equipment.

The Unit continued to administer the sick leave verification scheme, which monitors the man hours being lost through sick leave, and co-ordinated visits by medical professionals to verify sick leave.

The Accounts Section and ESOPU processed and issued relative payments for all items and services procured by the two Directorates. Where possible, payments for goods and services procured by the Directorates were processed by the end of the financial year.

A member of staff started to attend the Diploma in Public Administration course organised by the University of Malta.

The Assistant Director (Financial Services) was appointed as a representative on the Accrual Accounting Working Group, which is working to enhance the reporting of the yearly accrual-based financial statements.

The Financial Service Branch continued to compile statistical data on education for the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, the Treasury Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Audit Office. Data was also compiled for parliamentary questions and for senior management as required.

PROCUREMENT AND ADMINISTRATION BRANCH

Procurement Section

- Processed 24 departmental tenders, six Contracts Department tenders and 25 hand quotations for the procurement of goods and services. These included 16 tenders related to the procurement of textbooks for state schools, involving an expense of €724,583.
- Processed a total of 1,540 requisition forms from the various sections of the Directorates for the procurement of goods and services and for the repair of office machinery and equipment. The corresponding local purchase orders were drawn up and contractors paid after ascertaining that the goods or services were delivered.
- Three staff members attended training courses on procurement organised jointly by the Staff Development Organisation and the Department of Contracts.

Stores Section

- Distributed 133,800 textbooks to state schools in Malta and Gozo. These included new English textbooks introduced in primary schools and new Maltese and mathematics textbooks introduced in secondary schools and junior lyceums.
- Supervised the distribution of 35,000 Euro World booklets and pop-out Euro sheets, 21,000 copies of Lo Stivale and Italian classroom maps to state, non-state and private schools.
- Issued a total of 80 summer uniforms and 84 winter uniforms to entitled personnel within the two Directorates;
- Processed 900 requisitions for stores, including stationery and cleaning material.
- Processed 68 local purchase orders, amounting to €39,391.
- Compiled a computerised database indicating textbooks distributed to state schools and for the recording of stationery, cleaning materials and uniforms.

Registry

- Processed an average of 230 files daily.
- Opened 1,052 new files, of which 110 were personal files in respect of non-state schools staff, 200 in respect of staff in state schools, 250 for-files and 492 general files.
- 84,680 letters were sent by ordinary mail and 1,081 registered letters were processed through Maltapost.
- Continued the upgrading of the Ministry's and the Directorates' telephone directory and the Registry's website.
- Registered 660 internal circulars in the Docreg system and updated the mail, transfers and general files databases.
- Attention was given particularly to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 2001 in the workings of the Registry.

Inventories Section

- Gave continuous support to school administrators to update their inventory database, including leased laptops issued to teachers during 2008, in line with the Inventory Accrual Accounting System.
- Carried out 25 inspections in schools and outstations to check inventory updates.
- Submitted every six months to the National Audit Office and the Treasury Department the updated inventory general database.
- Section staff attended meetings with Treasury officials to be briefed on the new Accrual Accounting system requirements.
- Continued the process of labelling of permanent items.
- Re-compiled and updated the inventories following the transfer of the Minister's and the Permanent Secretary's offices from Floriana to Casa Leoni in St Venera.
- Emphasis was made on improving security in schools to reduce the number of thefts and in fact, only two thefts from schools were reported in 2008.

Transport Section

- Was responsible for providing transport services to the Ministry, and the two Directorates (a total of 2,900 requests for transport were received throughout the year).
- Assisted the Stores Section in the distribution of books to schools.
- Was engaged in providing transport services to school outings, Skolasajf, youth exchanges programmes and in-service courses organised by the two Directorates.
- Provided transport to officials travelling to Gozo on official duties and to students attending the School Mothers' Unit.
- Supervised and processed the issue of petrol entitlements to transport pool drivers and took adequate measures to control fuel consumption.
- Subjected all vehicles in the transport pool to the VRT test and, when required, maintenance was performed at the Directorate's garage at St Andrews.
- Assisted the Malta Transport Authority by providing vehicles for the transport of passengers during the industrial action taken by the Malta Transport Association in July 2008.

Minor Staff Section

- Regularly supervise cleaning staff at Head Office, in schools and sections to ensure an acceptable level of cleanliness (60 part-time cleaners were employed during the year to replace full-time members of staff who had retired).
- Regularly supervise the attendance of minor staff in schools (an average of four visits per week) and took disciplinary action against members of staff who were not found at their place of work at the time of the inspections.
- Supervised the watchmen's rosters in schools and took action to ensure security in schools, particularly during the night and weekends.

Electronic Servicing Unit

- Processed 120 requests from schools for the repair of electronic and hi-fi equipment.
- Provided advice to schools' and sections' administrations in the adjudication process related to the procurement of hi-fi equipment, public address systems and security cameras.
- Monitored the security cameras of the Directorate's main building and parking areas.

ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) MONITORING BOARD

Functions

The functions of the Monitoring Board are:

- to advise the Minister on the issuing of licences, the conditions of issue and the revocation thereof;

- to monitor the compliance by schools with the provisions of the Act, of the licence conditions and of regulations, and to report to the Minister thereon;
- to recommend to the Minister such measures as the Board may consider appropriate to be taken against any school breach of the provisions of the Act, of the licence conditions and of these regulations;
- in general to advise and make recommendations to the Minister on any matter concerning such schools;
- to perform such other functions as the Minister may from time to time prescribe.

New Work Programme

The new Monitoring Board embarked upon the design and approval of a Work Programme covering the cycle 2008-2010. This Work Programme is inspired by Government's 2015 vision to transform Malta into a regional centre of excellence and Government's electoral declaration to involve the private sector in educational services particularly where international students are involved.

LEONARD SACCO

Director (Corporate Services)

Directorate for European Union and International Affairs

INTRODUCTION

This Directorate covered a large number of issues and was involved in the preparation of a considerable number of meetings held during 2008. Documentation was prepared for two visits by European Commissioners and for 13 Ministerial meetings which tackled issues relating to education, culture, youth and sport. Issues relating to employment, health and safety, radiation and nuclear issues which were discussed at international fora were covered up to the change in ministerial portfolios on 13 March, whilst the Ministry took over responsibilities relating to culture and audiovisual. Notwithstanding this change, the Director continued to maintain responsibility as Senior Programming Officer for 14 projects launched by the Employment and Training Corporation under the ERDF and ESF 2004-2006 Programme and as the Intermediate Body for measures 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 4.2. The Directorate presented 24 background notes, 54 speaking notes, 34 briefing notes and 158 instruction notes to the EU Secretariat at the Office of the Prime Minister for use by ministerial delegations and Maltese representatives attending Council meetings. There were 30 explanatory memoranda submitted to the Inter-Ministerial Committee for European Union Affairs, one of which was presented on behalf of the Minister for Social Policy.

EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS AND EMPLOYMENT

Education and Training

The Directorate was involved in the preparation and documentation for the visits of the European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services Mr Charlie McCreevy on 14-15 May, and of the European Commissioner for Multilingualism Mr Leonard Orban on 12-15 November. A number of dossiers were approved at three Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) Council Meetings held at Ministerial level on 14 February, 21-22 May and 20-21 November. The Directorate prepared the documentation for two Ministerial meetings held at informal level on 15 February and 26 November; and for the *Third Ministerial Meeting of European Countries with One University* held in Larnaca on 4-5 April; and the Informal Conference of European Ministers of Education on *The Institutional Foundation for Dialogue and Respect* held in Oslo on 5-6 June. The dossiers approved by the Council meetings included the progress achieved under the *Education & Training 2010* work programme - delivering lifelong learning for knowledge, creativity and innovation; promoting creativity and innovation through education and training; key messages to the Spring European Council in the field of education and training; adult learning; Euroskills; European strategy for multilingualism; European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning; future priorities for enhanced European co-operation in vocational education and training (VET); better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies; the second phase of the Erasmus Mundus programme (2009-2013); the European Training Foundation (ETF recast regulation); the establishment of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET); the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQARF); on preparing young people for the 21st century: an agenda for European co-operation on schools wherein Malta made reference to the reforms it was conducting in the area of education particularly the development of the 'college' framework and the updating of the national curriculum to try to meet the needs of tomorrow; and on the mobility of young people, in which Malta insisted that funds for students' mobility need to be diversified and students having socially disadvantaged backgrounds should be assisted.

The Directorate continued to provide feedback on negotiations and consultations held during the year with the Commission on a possible derogation from the recognition of professional qualifications of the engineering degree; on the recognition of the Maltese pharmacy degree by Britain and Ireland and on the recognition by the Maltese side of professional qualifications pertaining to the Slovak dental technician's course. The Director organised a number of meetings with heads of departments and entities to elaborate on the internal memoranda issued by the Permanent Representative on importance of the timeliness in putting forward Malta's position, and on communication flow of EU related work processes.

Youth and Sport

A number of important youth topics were addressed by both Council Presidencies during 2008. The Slovenian Presidency stressed the importance of the international dialogue in the context of a youth policy, and presented a resolution on the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, which was adopted during the EYC Council meeting of May. The French Presidency had two main youth items on the agenda, namely a recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across Europe and a resolution on health and well-being of young people, which were adopted at the EYC Council meeting in November. The new Secretariat for the Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport set up the *Youth Issues Forum Meeting* to discuss on an informal basis with its stakeholders key issues pertaining to the field of Youth that are concurrently being addressed at European Union level. Between May and December the Forum met seven times, in which the Directorate was always present. A considerable portion of this time was taken in addressing the Commission's Questionnaire on the *Assessment of the European framework of co-operation in the youth field, including the knowledge of the youth field*. This questionnaire was submitted to the Commission duly filled in November.

With the Commission launch of the White Paper on Sport and the implementation of the *Pierre de Cobertin Action Plan on Sport* in July 2007, and the close possibility that sport will become an EU policy area with the expected coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty sometime in 2009, this Directorate gave sport its due importance and attention during 2008. Both EU Presidencies also gave sport greater focus. The Directorate prepared documentation for three informal Ministerial meetings on sport held in Brdo on 16-17 March, in Beijing on 11 August, and in Biarritz on 27-28 November. The major topics that were discussed during these meetings were the societal aspect of sport, the organisation of sport, and the economic aspect of sport. Malta was active on the discussion on the economic aspect of sport as this issue covers gaming.

Culture and Audiovisual

The cultural and audiovisuals unit was transferred to this Ministry following the March general elections. The unit provided technical inputs for the three EYC Council meetings at Ministerial level and on the informal Ministerial meeting on Culture held on 21-22 July. The items covered were the adoption of Council conclusions on a European approach to media literacy in the digital environment; intercultural competences; the *Work Plan for Culture 2008–2010*; the development of legal offers of online cultural and creative content and the prevention and combating of piracy in the digital environment; the establishment of a multi-annual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies; the promotion of Creative Content Online in the Single Market; the development and creation of a European Heritage Label; the prevention of illegal trafficking of cultural property; audiovisual issues as encompassed within the wider framework of the telecommunications package; culture's contribution to sustainable development through architecture; the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the European Union and its member states; as well as the value of multilingualism, translation and intercultural dialogue through the development of a European strategy for multilingualism. Malta also participated and supported the initiative which was launched in November 2008, namely the European digital library Europeana. Technical feedback was also provided for a number of intellectual property- related issues, most importantly in relation a proposal to

extend the term of protection of copyright and related rights. The unit contributed to the planning of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation (2009) which each member state will be celebrating.

Employment

During 2008, the EU and International Affairs Directorate dealt with employment issues up to the 8th March general election, when this area was transferred under the remit of the Ministry for Social Policy. The Slovene Presidency held an informal Ministerial Meeting on Employment and Social Affairs on 31 January to discuss issues relating to older workers in the labour market, and young people in the labour market. The Directorate was responsible for the EPSCO Ministerial Council meeting held on 29 February. The items discussed during this period included the strategic report on the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: launching of the new cycle 2008-2010; the joint employment report; a Council decision on guidelines for employment policies of the Member States; and preparations for the year for combating poverty and social exclusion (2010). The Directorate also prepared documentation on the topics that were discussed at the social protection and employment committees.

Health and Safety

The Directorate was responsible for issues relating to Health and Safety until the general elections. The main issue under Occupational Health and Safety was the amending of Directive 2004/40/EC on minimum health and safety requirements regarding exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (electromagnetic fields). This amendment was partly the result of endeavours by Malta and other Member States with the intention to push the implementation of this directive to 2012 since exposure values indicated in the original directive were erroneous. An explanatory memorandum dealing with Article 35 of the Euratom Treaty on the monitoring of the level of radioactivity in air, water and soil was submitted by this Directorate to the Inter Ministerial Committee on behalf of the Ministry for Social Policy, which became the originating Ministry with MEPA being the implementing agency in view of the recent ministerial portfolio changes.

Radiation and Nuclear

The Directorate was responsible for Radiation and Nuclear issues until March. In January the instruments of accession to the Convention on Nuclear Safety were officially sent to the International Atomic Energy Agency, thus terminating a lengthy process in transposing this Convention on which Malta was facing infringement procedures from the Commission. The Directorate presented national positions on two EU Commission initiatives, namely on financial resources earmarked for the decommissioning of nuclear installations, spent fuel and radioactive waste; and on the implementation of the Chernobyl Shelter Fund.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Multilateral Relations

The Directorate made attempts to involve this Ministry's participation in OECD committee work relating to education. The Policy Analyst Department at the OECD Secretariat was approached to explore the possibility of the Ministry of Education's participation in the OECD's network relating to Early Childhood Education and Care. As Malta is not an OECD member, the Directorate took its case of participation to the Education Policy Committee where the committee procedures on global relations strategy, which affected outside participation, were being finalised. However the Directorate was informed in November that Malta was not able to attend the new programme on Quality in Early Childhood Education as the project will only be opened to OECD member countries and regular observers of the Education Policy Committee.

The Directorate prepared the background memoranda on whether Malta should accede to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe. It also provided the necessary data

to the Ministry for Social Policy for the updating of the Council of Europe's Social Charter Report for Malta for 2008.

This Directorate was instrumental in the submission of grant application to participate in the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) survey, and for the extension of Commission's financial assistance for the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).

This Office was also involved in Euro Med's education and ICT issues particularly with the Ad Hoc Working Group on Higher Education & Research which was held on 5 June.

Bilateral Relations

The Directorate sustained its initiatives to enhance co-operation on matters relating to education, training, culture, youth and sport with third countries through the bilateral agreements that Malta currently has with 48 countries. During 2008, particular emphasis continued to be laid on the improvement of bilateral relations with neighbouring countries in the Mediterranean.

On 18 June, this Ministry gave its clearance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the entry into force of the new Cultural and Education Co-operation Agreement with Italy.

Under the terms of the XII Executive Programme with Italy 2007-2009, a number of issues were pursued. On 29 April the Director headed the selection process held at the *Farnesina* in Rome for the selection of 68 students for short-term English summer bursaries, and students for the 18 man-months scholarships for long specialised research studies, that Malta extends to Italian students. As these scholarships are very popular with Italian graduates, an emphasis was laid on the selection of high flyers. In July the Director paid a courtesy call on the 62 students that eventually turned up at the School of Language Studies within the University of Malta to receive their first-hand reaction on the organisation and level of these courses. During 2008 six Italian students benefited from the long-term scholarship programme. On 2 October the Ministry agreed to a new system of online registration of Italian students applying for scholarships granted by the Maltese government. The system was launched by the Italian Foreign Ministry as part of its computerisation process, which will do away with hard copies of applications and related documentation. In November the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research enquired on the Ministry's interest in entering into an exchange programme of language teachers. The Italians have expressed their desire to have Maltese graduate teachers to teach English in their state schools.

Three developments were registered under the Agreement on Cultural Co-operation between Malta and Greece. Malta accepted the visit of two Greek lecturers from Greek University departments of Biology and Education for the duration of one week each, in line with the education exchange arrangements under the Agreed Minutes of the Second Session of the Mixed Commission on Cultural Co-operation signed in April 1992. A Greek student was awarded a scholarship for undergraduate studies at the University of Malta. On 24 April the Greek Embassy in Malta informed that the Greek authorities were ready to send a delegation to Malta to elaborate a text for the conclusion of a bilateral cultural programme between the two countries.

A meeting was held with CNOUS Director for International Affairs who visited Malta to brief ministry officials on the potential which exists for Maltese students studying in French higher education establishments. CNOUS plays a vital role in looking after the needs of international students studying in France. There is scope for this Ministry to enter into an agreement with CNOUS on the possibility of sending Maltese scholarship holders to France, and the proposal is being evaluated.

This Ministry is in consultations with the Education Division, Malta Council for Sport and the Culture department on a list of amendments that the Cypriot authorities wish to effect to the Cultural Agreement between the two countries signed in 1997.

The conclusion of the Cultural, Educational and Scientific Co-operation Agreement with Croatia was deferred to a later date in view of financial considerations.

Discussions were held with the Tunisian Embassy in Malta on the conclusion of an Agreement of Higher Education. The Tunisian authorities offered Malta four scholarships, whilst for the first time this Ministry offered Tunisia two English language scholarships. However Tunisia was able to submit only one nomination, with the Tunisian student taking up the course in December.

This Ministry also gave its clearance to the signing of the Programme of Co-operation in the field of Education, Culture, Science, Youth and Sports with the Czech Republic for the years 2009-2011 which was eventually signed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Prague on 9 December 2008. As in previous years, the Ministry granted English language summer scholarships to three Czech students.

A decision is pending on a proposal coming from the Slovak authorities to incorporate a new provision in the agreement on cultural co-operation originally signed in 1979 with the then Czechoslovakia, on the teaching of secondary school Slovak students in Malta holding one year scholarships.

This Ministry gave its clearance to the signing of an Agreement on Co-operation in the field of Youth and Sport with Bulgaria. The Agreement was expected to be signed in December but the state visit of Mrs. Vessela Lecheva, President of the Bulgarian State Agency for Youth and Sport, was postponed.

Given that the Agreement on Co-operation in the field of Education, Science, Culture and Sports with Ukraine is wide-ranging and falls under the remit of three different Ukrainian ministries, Ukraine proposed that a separate agreement on cultural co-operation is concluded.

Various other general requests were tackled which emanated from our bilateral relations with Italy, Andorra, San Marino, Swaziland and Kazakhstan.

In September the Director participated in the launching of the Tempus IV programme for 2007-2013. The EU objective is to assist partner countries in promoting higher education reform and the launch of reform programmes in line with the Bologna Process. The objective of this Directorate is to assist as much as possible Mediterranean partner countries in their bid to benefit from projects falling under the new Tempus programme.

The Director participated in interviews for the award of Italian, German and IMLI scholarships to Maltese students, which were held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FUNDING

During 2008 most targets proposed at application stage for all of the 23 European Social Funds (ESF) and five European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) projects falling under the 2004-2006 Programme were successfully adhered to, all payments processed and the number of recoveries was extremely small.

Notwithstanding that the end of 2008 marked the closure of the Senior Programming Document 2004-2006, the EU Commission was requested to grant Malta an extension of six months of its eligibility period of expenditure on the respective structural funds projects. Notwithstanding this extension, all efforts were made to submit claims of refunds by the end of December on all disbursements. This extension is envisaged to utilise the savings through an extension of a couple of projects and to cover the reprocessing of a few payments which were rejected at Treasury level in December.

Savings per measure	
Measure 1.2	2,634.59
Measure 2.1	135,388.72
Measure 2.2	38,807.07
Measure 2.3	31,900.25
Total Savings	208,730.63

During the last quarter of 2008, a number of projects were awaiting approval of addendums for the utilisation of the unutilised savings which were reported from these ESF funds.

The following tables show the figures involved in the closing of the projects. These projects were delivered and all payments processed.

ERDF MEASURE 1.2 – Infrastructure – December 2008

Project Details	Total Revised Allocation (Net) €	Invoiced Amount & Paid (Net) €	Remarks
ERDF/8: Construction of Extension to ETC's Skills Development Centre – ETC	504,098.83	504,093.83	Inaugurated in November 2007
ERDF/13: Construction of additional floors - MCAST	1,836,906.91	1,836,906.81	
ERDF/25: MCAST Library and Resources – MCAST	187,882.42	187,882.41	
ERDF/26: Provision of equipment for vehicle training programmes - MCAST	173,028.97	173,029.00	
ERDF/9: MCAST Child Care Centre	130,356.03	127,726.44	

ESF MEASURE 2.1 – Employability and Adaptability – December 2008

Project Details	Total Revised Allocation (Net) €	Invoiced Amount & Paid (Net) €	Remarks
ESF/12 : Retraining and re-skilling of Workers for Engineering Industry – MCAST	107,169.17	104,793.18	
ESF/13 : Retraining and re-skilling of Workers for the electronics industry - MCAST	127,766.32	127,766.08	
ESF/17 : Training and Employment Exposure Scheme – ETC	3,447,242.00	3,447,240.15	
ESF/11: Preservation of Traditional Maltese Crafts - MCAST	230,417.73	230,167.88	
ESF/15 : Retraining and re-skilling of Workers for the building and construction industry - MCAST	119,799.18	79,489.33	
ESF/16 : Foundation Training for adults with no formal qualifications – MCAST	137,901.65	137,901.64 (Invoices Paid - 133,690.72)	
ESF/31 : Employment and Training Scheme - ETC	515,994.44	510,213.91	
ESF/37 : Study on Job Creation and Job Training in the Environmental Sector – ETC	49,697.00	49,695.75	
ESF/72 : Job Experience Scheme(JES)	241,700.00	211,048.29 (Invoices Paid - 210,361.84)	
ESF/73: Addressing the demand and Supply of E-Skills through Traineeships in ICT	82,151.00	60,694.40	
ESF/80: Provision of Training for Disadvantaged Persons and Persons with Learning Disabilities	83,458.04	83,128.10	
ESF/81: Enhancing Practical Skills in Engineering	54,569.00	20,337.83	Project started last quarter 2008

ESF MEASURE 2.2 – Gender Equality – December 2008

Project Details	Total Revised Allocation (Net) €	Invoiced Amount & Paid (Net) €	Remarks
ESF/24 : Increasing Female Participation through childcare services at the workplace - ETC	151,480.00	130,085.92	
ESF/14 : Technology skills for Women returning to the workforce - MCAST	222,616.36	221,463.11	
ESF/47 : Promoting the women entrepreneur culture - ETC	75,976.00	75,972.22	
ESF/50 : National Campaign promoting the Benefits of Quality Childcare	240,995.00	240,992.93	
ESF/85: Call Centre Training	111,147.20	94,893.31	Original tender cancelled; new call issued in August

ESF MEASURE 2.3 – Life Long Learning and Social Inclusion – December 2008

Project Details	Total Revised Allocation (Net) €	Invoiced Amount & Paid (Net) €
ESF/1: Training of Inclusion Co-ordinators – Division of Education	83,492.00	83068.86
ESF/3: Information & communications technology training programme – Division of Education	110,197.00	110,194.88
ESF/4: Pedagogical Training for non-formal educators – Division of Education	163,108.00	163,102.01
ESF/52: Training Programme for Youths in Institutional Care	49,332.00	49,246.42
ESF/5: Initiating and Managing Community based Lifelong Learning Centres – Foundation for Education Service	201,553	198860.46
ESF/19: Supported employment scheme for persons with disabilities – ETC	396,551.00	394,853.63 (Invoices Paid - 394,530)
ESF/18: Literacy Programme for those seeking employment - ETC	387789.74	360,796.23

Transitional Facility Funds 2005

Strengthening the Administrative Capacity of the National Labour Inspectorate

Payments to Service Providers during 2008 Transitional 2005	€	Total €	Date of Payment to Service Provider
Strengthening the Administrative Capacity of the National Labour Inspectorate			
OHSA component:			
Gesellschaft Fur Versicherungswissenschaft and gestaltung E.V. (GVG)	120,536.00	145,827.99 33,464.00	1 February 8 August
Gesellschaft Fur Versicherungswissenschaft and gestaltung E.V. (GVG)	25,291.99		
20% Final Payment			
DIER component:			
Education, Training & Employment of the Regional Govt. Authority of Tuscany	86,276.00	123,475.00	22 April 6 February
Malta Information Technology and Training Services Ltd.	37,199.30		
Twinning Light			
Final Payment (the Italian Company)		22,724.00	

ERDF 4*Haġar Qim and Mnajdra Temples Conservation and Interpretation Project - Heritage Malta*

Over 93% of the 4.2 million euros, which excludes VAT, of the projected budget were disbursed. The remaining 7% were accounted for by a combination of minor savings on some items, unallocated contingencies, some payments that could not yet be effected, and a few penalties that had been imposed. The recommended variations above the project budget were approved by the General Contracts Committee and the related payments were effected upon the conclusion and signature of the appropriate addendums to the respective contracts.

MARIO BUTTIGIEG

Director (EU and International Affairs)

Information Management Unit

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Divestment

A tender has been issued for all MEDC applications and systems, supported by MITTS, to be transferred to third party suppliers. The tendering period has closed and the adjudication committee is in the process of submitting the final report.

GMICT Policies

The IMU held various sessions with staff at the Malta Council for Culture and the Arts and Heritage Malta for their migration to the MITTS platform. IMU staff ensure that MEDC Users adhere to GMICT Policies.

Hardware

Surplus hardware is collected and recycled according to needs. Where necessary, hard disks are reformatted and RAM upgraded. A back-up server was installed for the Private Secretariat. Replacement PC servers were provided for the following schools: Ninu Cremona, Agius de Soldanis and Sir Mikiel Ang Refalo schools, as well as Verdala School.

Management Information System

Schools have a Management Information System known as the Students Teachers System (STS), which was created by MITTS Ltd. The appointment of 10 College Principals meant that Education required up-to-date information for management purposes. The IMU liaised between MITTS and Education so that various changes were made to provide better reporting tools and the mail merge process was simplified.

Networking

During 2008, most branch libraries have been connected to the MAGNET. Previously, libraries were connected via a modem which was costly to run and limited the network facilities available to librarians.

The Unit acted as the focal point for the whole Ministry for all requests for network consultancy services and terminations from MITTS. It monitored the conclusion of each and every project on behalf of our internal clients.

Repairs

The hardware repair process is managed both for timely repairs by the third party suppliers as well as for timely payment for services rendered. Repair quotations are assessed for value for money before the go-ahead is given for the repairs to take place.

Schools Library Software

The IMU created the scripts for Schools Library staff to test the software procured from Oliver to run libraries in schools. It will also assist them in the final adjudication.

Users' Accounts

Staff is provided with the required user accounts such as e-mail, Internet, DAS, HRIMS, STS, etc in accordance with their section's business requirements. All accounts are created by MITTS and passed on to their rightful owners in accordance with IMU security regulations. The process is an ongoing one throughout the year with numerous requests having to be processed each and every day.

Users Database

A Users' Database is maintained to record the various e-mail, internet, CORP, HRIMS, DAS, etc accounts given to staff. Accounts are duly closed once users terminate their service with Government or are transferred to administrative units where they no longer require them.

VISTA Compliance

Administrative units were guided to obtain feedback from the application/system suppliers on whether their products were VISTA compliant. The Library Information System had to be tested with VM ware as the supplier no longer supported the version used by the Libraries Department.

Waivers and Exemptions

The IMU applies with MITTS for various exemptions or waivers to GMICT regulations. Instances arise where enforcement of the regulation could have a negative effect on business. The IMU raises requests with MITTS and assists internal clients in the compilation of the application form.

Websites

MEDC has applied to the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications for the creation of a new Libraries Department eGovernment website, another for the department responsible for Curriculum, one for the National Commission for Higher Education and for new webhosting for the Schools website. Outsourcing the website will allow for new functionality not available at IMU. The IMU also facilitated the creation of an Archives website. Its staff prepared the scripts for the User Acceptance Testing and will assist Archives staff in testing the product.

EDWARD J CARUANA
Chief Information Officer

Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate

The Directorate for Policy Development and Programme Implementation (DPDPI) within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport was set up in February 2006 with the remit of initiating, developing and co-ordinating the formulation of policies with relevance to issues that fall under the responsibility of the Ministry. The Directorate also develops strategies and change management programme in relation to the Ministry's targets and objectives. It is responsible for the 2007-2013 Structural Funds programming period and acts on behalf of the Permanent Secretary as National Authority for the EU Educational Programmes.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Although the Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate was not a cost centre and did not have responsibility for a line vote, it committed itself that during the process of policy development, the financial aspect of the exercise was portrayed and maximal quality output was sought using the minimal financial costs possible. The DPDPI kept track of the Ministry's projects in line with the budget speech. This Directorate kept the Office of the Prime Minister informed on the Ministry's progress in this regard, by giving status of budget measures in process. The Directorate is also responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of Government's policy on education, culture, youth and sports and therefore is directly involved in the process for:

- a reform in education;
- the drafting of a new culture policy;
- updating of the National youth policy; and
- reforming the Sports Act.

NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR THE EU EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

The DPDPI is the regulatory body for the EU Educational Programmes administered by the European Union Programmes' Agency. The Agency is responsible for the following programmes:

- Lifelong Learning Programmes: Comenius; Erasmus; Leonardo da Vinci; Gruntvig
- Youth in Action Programme
- Euromed Platform
- Euroguidance
- Eurodesk.

DPDPI is responsible for ensuring the following:

- The National Agency carries out its tasks in accordance with the Operational Handbooks of the European Commission regarding the minimum requirements for internal control standards applicable to National Agencies and to their management of the projects financed under the various actions. The Operational Handbooks shall be an integral part of the obligations of the National Agency both towards the European Commission and the Minister as the National Authority.
- The National Co-ordinator provides the European Commission and the Minister with all the information and documentation that may be requested in connection with the affairs of the National Agency.

- Whenever requested, the National Agency submits to the European Commission the necessary work plans. The National Agency remains within the parameters of the recurrent expenditure allocated to it by the European Commission and the Minister as authorised by the Minister responsible for finance.
- The National Agency takes care of the proper keeping of management accounts and other records concerning its operations and transactions, and shall ensure that a relative statement of accounts is prepared when requested and submitted to the Minister, the Minister responsible for finance and the European Commission, without any delay.
- The accounts of the National Agency are audited by one or more auditors appointed by the Minister. The financial administration of the Agency shall be subject to the auditing of the Auditor General. The audited accounts shall be presented to the European Commission, the Minister, the Minister responsible for finance and the Auditor General.
- The National Agency, whenever so requested, sends a copy of its audited statement of accounts, a copy of the report made by the auditor or auditors about that statement, together with a report of its activities and outcome during that year, to the Minister and to the European Commission. The Minister shall, within 30 days of their receipt, lay a copy thereof on the Table of the House of Representatives. The audited accounts and the annual report shall also be presented to the Minister responsible for finance and to the Auditor General whenever these are requested.
- The National Agency, on the request of the Minister or the Minister responsible for finance, submits management reports and accounts as requested.
- The National Agency follows procurement procedures as regulated by the Public Service (Procurement) Regulations, 1996, and any amendments thereto.

In relation to the above, the DPDPI commissioned a financial and systems audit of the National Agency (EUPA). The report was used as the basis of the Annual Declaration of Assurance that the Ministry submits to the European Commission confirming the correct use of EU funds. Weekly meetings are held with the Agency's top management. This gives a direct insight of the work being carried out at EUPA, including project statistics, participating beneficiaries, funds allocated etc.

EUROPEAN UNION STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROJECTS

During 2008 the staff of the PDPI directorate attended and organised a number of meetings to offer assistance and support to ERDF and ESF projects' team members. All applications submitted by project leaders to MEDC were checked and reviewed by the PDPI team, before submission to the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division.

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME I COHESION POLICY 2007 – 2013

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

Under the OP I programme, 32 ERDF projects amounting to €123,025,210 have been submitted to the Managing Authority through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. 22 of these projects amounting to €50,636,271 have been selected for funding; nine have not been selected; and one is still awaiting feedback from the Managing Authority.

68.75% of submitted projects have been approved. The 22 projects selected for funding are:

- *ERDF 11: Furnishing and Equipping of the Chemistry and Biology Building Extensions:* The project will upgrade the teaching and research facilities at the Department of Biology and Chemistry. Total budget: €683,233.47
- *ERDF 12: Developing an Interdisciplinary Material Testing & Rapid Prototyping R&D Facility:* Setting up a materials characterisation and rapid prototyping facility that will improve Malta's research and development potential in new product development and the enhancement of existing products. Total budget: €4,326,353

- *ERDF 17: Construction, Finishing and Equipment of ICT Faculty Building:* The construction, equipping and furnishing of a state-of-the-art building to house the Faculty of ICT. Total budget: €13,345,857.62
- *ERDF 18: Strengthening of Analytical Chemistry, Biomedical Engineering and Electromagnetics RTDI Facilities:* The setting up of a laboratory cluster for research in electromagnetic fields and their applications, a Biomedical Engineering Laboratory and the setting up of a modern analytical laboratory within the Department of Chemistry. Total budget: €1,407,968.80

ERDF 32: Archaeological heritage conservation project: The Archaeological Heritage Conservation Project will see the embellishment and conservation of Ġgantija Temples in Xaghra, Gozo, St Paul's Catacombs in Rabat (Malta) and Tarxien Temples. Total budget: €8,160,352

- *ERDF 54: Multimedia Training Centre at the Institute of Art and design:* The project is concerned with the vast area of creative applications in Multimedia. Total budget: €1,302,233.52
- *ERDF 56: Upgrading and expansion of MCAST Institute of Mechanical Engineering at Corradino Malta and Xewkija Gozo.* Total budget: €1,612,264. Amount already disbursed: €1,221,651.95
- *ERDF 57: Junior College Building Extension.* Total budget: €1,343,837
- *ERDF 58: Purchase of Science and Technology laboratory equipment for State Schools.* Total budget: €2,619,064
- *ERDF 62: Setting up of a Language Lab at MCAST Institute of Business and Commerce.* Total budget: €172,215
- *ERDF 63: Contact Training Facility of MCAST Corradino and Xewkija Gozo:* Equipping MCAST's Institute of Business and Commerce at Corradino Malta and Xewkija Gozo with modern contact Centre Operation Training Facilities. Total budget: €233,484
- *ERDF 64: Construction and Equipping of University Computing Services Centre Building.* Total budget: €6,582,028
- *ERDF 65: Upgrading and expansion of the MCAST Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering Community Services at Corradino Malta and Xewkija Centre Gozo.* Total budget: €932,241. Amount already disbursed: €446,693.29
- *ERDF 66: New computer systems and computer laboratories at Institute of Information and communication Technology at Corradino Malta and Gozo Centre Xemxija.* Total budget: €257,122.85. Amount already disbursed: €301,044.96
- *ERDF 76: Refurbishing the signal processing laboratory within the Department of CCE:* Refurbishing the signal processing laboratory within the Department of Communications and Computer Engineering at the UOM with state-of-the-art equipment to capture, process and present multimedia signals for various applications within the realm of ICT. Total budget: €410,614
- *ERDF 77: Electrical Energy and Efficiency Laboratory for the University of Malta:* The project aims to set up the infrastructure required for an Electrical Energy and Efficiency Laboratory at the University of Malta. Total budget: €546,300
- *ERDF 78: Upgrading of Giordan Lighthouse Global Atmospheric Watch (GAW) research station:* consists of upgrading a present instrument measuring facility for atmospheric research at Giordan lighthouse, Gozo and the corresponding laboratory and office facilities at the University Centre, Xewkija, Gozo. Total budget: €417,750
- *ERDF 79: Setting up of Mechanical Engineering Computer Modelling and Simulation Laboratory:* (Department of Mechanical Engineering). Total budget: €409,815
- *ERDF 80: A Super-Computing Laboratory for the University of Malta:* This project aims to build a state-of-the-art computing facility for the University of Malta and for use by research-performing SMEs. Total budget: €583,000

- *ERDF 81: Enhancing the Health Biotechnology facilities at the University:* To improve Malta's research and development potential in the fields of genetics, cellular physiology and pharmacogenomics and provide the tools for National Health projects. Total budget: €3,778,440
- *ERDF 82: Modernising the University of Malta's Control Systems Engineering Laboratory.* Total budget: €518,041
- *ERDF 101: Installation of Renewable Energy Sources at MCAST.* Total budget: €994,057

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME II COHESION POLICY 2007 – 2013

European Social Fund (ESF)

Under the OP II programme, 22 ESF projects amounting to €46,057,755 have been submitted to the Managing Authority through MEDC. 15 of these projects, amounting to €30,350,923, have been selected for funding.

68.2% of submitted projects have been approved. The 15 projects selected for funding are:

- *ESF 1.21: Parents and Teachers fusion ICT Training Programme:* To enhance ICT confidence within parents and teachers so as to encourage the use of ICT within their children and students. Total Budget: €600,584
- *ESF 1.22: Research Analysis and Training for Enhancing the University Library.* Total Budget: €373,837
- *ESF 1.24: Career Guidance Capacity Building:* This project proposes the training of personnel, at Masters degree level, to render effective professional service within a dynamic framework in the educational and training institutions at all levels of the career paths. Total Budget: €600,000
- *ESF 1.25: Strategic Educational Pathways Scholarships (STEPS) Scheme:* The scheme will offer post-graduate bursaries at Masters and Doctoral level for fields of studies in areas of national priority and a grant to the University of Malta for access to e-journals subscription for scholars within the scheme. Total Budget: €10,041,673
- *ESF 1.28: Accrediting Quality Vocational Training:* The objective of the VQ project is to design competence matrices for current local vocational qualifications as a tool for programme accreditation. Total Budget: €382,385
- *ESF 1.29: Valuing all Skills for the Labour Market:* The objective of Skills Plus is to create the infrastructure for the design of occupational standards in 9 key sectors as indicators for the design of vocational and professional training programmes and the validation of informal and non-formal learning. Total Budget: € 353,465
- *ESF 1.31: Wood CPR: Education and training in Wood Conservation – Restoration:* The project improves education and skills in relation to cultural heritage in wood within the context of the European Qualifications Framework. Total Budget: €519,541
- *ESF 1.33: Increasing Student Capacity in ICT in Malta:* MCAST will embark on this project in order to ensure that the country's objective to increase capacity building in the field of ICT is attained. Total Budget: €4,205,629
- *ESF 1.34: Addressing Skills Mismatches in the Aviation Maintenance Industry:* The project is intended to offer basic training which will lay the foundations for expert knowledge, competences and licensing in the aviation maintenance sector, as well as to build up capacity at the College for the provision of better quality vocational education and training through the acquisition of training support material and resources. Total Budget: €2,058,779
- *ESF 1.36: Professional Development Programmes for MCAST Staff & Student's Top-Up Degrees:* The project has three main objectives: Professional development of Academic and Administrative staff at

MCAST; Improvement of quality of courses offered by MCAST; and Launch of Degree Programmes. Total Budget: €5,053,021

- *ESF 1.37: Amplifying the University of Malta's Teaching and Research Capacity*: The project aims to strengthen the University of Malta's teaching and research competence by building expertise in areas of strategic economic importance for Malta. Total Budget: €3,000,000
- *ESF 3.48: Lifelong Learning for Enhanced Employability for Parents (LLEEP)*: The LLEEP Project aims to upskill parents so as to (a) enhance their children's social skills and literacy attainment, and (b) to take on leadership and service roles in facilitating such upskilling and educational involvement in other parents. This leads to increased uptake in parental lifelong learning pathways which, together with employment opportunities in the project, enhance employability for women from disadvantaged groups. Total Budget: €145,120
- *ESF 3.49: Training of Inclusion Co-ordinators for Secondary Education*: Consists of the training of 15 teachers to become Inclusion Co-ordinators in secondary schools through a two-year post-graduate course. Total Budget: €136,889
- *ESF 3.51: Creative Lives Creative Schools*: To provide before-school and after-school activities for compulsory school age of children of parents, mostly parents and with a minimum percentage from vulnerable communities, who wish to return or to enter the labour market. Total Budget: €2,600,000

ROBERT TABONE

A/Head (Policy Development and Programme Implementation)



**Ministry for Social
Policy**

Health, the Elderly & Community Care Sector Office of the Permanent Secretary

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT DIVISION

Human Resources

Planning and Organisation

Whilst maintaining electronic records of the authorised complements of the various sections of the Health Division, this Office submitted monthly employment and other returns containing statistical data concerning the employment situation within the Health Division.

Resourcing

As in previous years, the Section processed the recruitment, appointment, progression and promotion of several personnel in various grades. The following tables indicate the posts filled, number of resignations, retirements and transfers processed during the year:

Grade	Progression		Internal Call		Public Call		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	
General Service	-	-	3	6	-	-	9
Professional	-	-	6	5	67	80	158
Technical	3	-	-	1	5	-	9
Departmental	14	27	71	89	17	72	290
Industrial	-	-	37	10	-	-	47
Total	17	27	117	111	89	152	513

Grade	Resigned/Dismissed		Retired		Medical Grounds		Transferred		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
General Service	1	6	4	1	2	-	-	-	14
Messengerial	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Professional	6	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
Technical	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	6
Departmental	4	8	15	3	1	1	-	-	32
Industrial	-	-	16	2	3	-	-	-	21
Total	12	20	40	6	7	1	0	0	86

During 2008, the Section workload increased considerably insofar as progression and promotion of employees is concerned mainly as a result of the various agreements signed with the unions.

Employee Relations

During 2008, the following requests were processed:

- *Injury on Duty* - 59 cases in respect of Health employees (25 males and 34 females);
- *Medical Boards* - 152 requests (110 males and 42 females) for medical boards on behalf of ministries, government departments, corporations and other organisations;
- *Discipline* - as per the following table:

Discipline	Total
Number of charges issued during 2008 in terms of Regs. 18,19,20 and 36 of the PSC Discipline Regulations	109
Criminal Offences	14
Cases finalised by the end of 2008	75

- *Applications* – as per the following table:

Type of application	Male	Female	Total
Maternity Leave	-	75	75
Parental/Responsibility Leave	1	88	89
Reduced Hours	14	409	423
Unpaid Leave	16	25	41
Sports Leave	27	8	35
Cultural Leave	1	1	2
Emigration Leave	20	19	39
Quarantine Leave	14	25	39
Union Leave	18	11	29
Leave to do Voluntary Work	-	5	5
Leave to try Alternative Employment	4	-	4
Special Paid Leave	6	14	20

Staff Development

The R&S Division focused again in investing more in the training of its employees to enhance their personal and professional competencies and skills required to run the Health Services efficiently and effectively.

During 2008, several employees were granted study leave in connection with qualifying examinations, training courses both locally and abroad as well as clinical attachments in hospitals/conferences abroad as indicated in the following table:

	Total
Medical	692
Paramedical	284
Nursing/Midwifery	490
Dentists	38
Pharmacists	27
Other	43
Total	1,574

Training and Development for Management Staff

The Division organised a number of management training and development activities during 2008 to support its overall objectives to empower public health sector management staff to perform more competently and confidently. Management staff were divided into three broad categories, each category receiving a specifically tailored continuing professional development programme. These categories are outlined below in Levels 1 (first line management), Level 2 for middle and Assistant Directors, and Level 3 management made up of administrative top management.

- *Level 1*

Level 1 management within the public health sector is predominantly made up of first line managers. These managers mainly hold positions within the Nursing and Midwifery Officer rank and their deputies and the rank of Principal and Assistant Principal. These first line managers are invited to attend the award winning internally organised course in leadership and management skills within the public health sector.

The aim of this course is to encourage first line managers to take on their role and responsibilities and move away from the more technical and functional roles within the professions they originally came from. The Leadership and Management Skills course is a 50-hour internally organised course and during 2008 a total of three courses were organised. Each course caters for 32 participants. Thus, during 2008 a total of 96 first line managers took part in this course.

This course is an ongoing initiative. Eventually, all first line managers within the public health sector will have gradually attended this 55-hour of awareness training on leadership and management skills. Participants at this course come from across the four divisions within the Health, Elderly and Community Care (HECC) sector of MSOC and two places are always reserved on each course for 'guests' coming from non-governmental organisations that are directly linked to the public health sector (for example, Hospice, Richmond Foundation and VolServ).

The majority of these first line managers continue to participate in ongoing booster CPD sessions focusing on specific leadership and management themes once the course ends. In fact, four CPD sessions were held in 2008 and all course participants were invited to attend these CPD sessions totalling to 20 hours of internally organised CPD in leadership and management.

- *Level 2*

Level 2 management is mostly made up of all service and departmental managers and senior principals within nursing, midwifery and the allied health care professions as well as the administrative assistant directors and senior principals. In total, there are an average of 120 managers regularly participating in the CPD programme from this management level. All of these managers were invited to attend a total of five CPD sessions each during 2008, covering topics such as Aspects of change management; Managing time for performance; Problem solving techniques; Effective decision making strategies; Adopting a patient-centred approach to management.

The general theme of these sessions circled round leadership and management issues, where participants were invited to appreciate and discuss their present leadership and management skills. In addition, as a result of these training sessions participants were led to identify their personal training requirements in order to meet the new challenges ahead of them.

Though no formal assessment was carried out to measure training effectiveness, it was observed that attendance rates remained steady throughout the year and individual groups started specific initiatives that were putting into practice ideas which had been actively discussed during the training sessions. These include a committee of allied health professionals that are now permanent advisors to the Mater Dei Hospital management board and conferences.

Level 3

Level 3 management is made up of the administrative top management within HECC (MSOC). These include the Permanent Secretary, the four Directors General, the four CEOs, and the Administrative Directors. In total, there are 25 people within this top management level.

The residential seminar and the reflection days sought to create more *esprit de corps* for the Ministry and to delve deeper into the requirements of an upgraded management and financial system. The coaching sessions followed the pattern of the needs of the individual DG and responded to the agenda that the particular DG and his team prioritised.

The challenge for 2009 is to streamline the structure of the enlarged Ministry and to address the issues highlighted above. The approach has to become increasingly operationally oriented with a definite strategic focus.

Transport Services

The project to upgrade the physical and work environment of the Transport Section operating from G'Mangia was continued in 2008 and is due to be completed within the first six months of 2009. The fleet underwent an overhaul and regular maintenance to ensure safety and efficiency levels. More investment was channelled towards providing additional protective clothing to personnel in line with health and safety

standards. The Division also invested in IT equipment to facilitate and ensure more effective communication.

New procedures have been adopted to exercise better asset and financial control in the areas of procurement of stores, of maintenance services, and overtime. New and revised procedures were also introduced regulating the handing-over and refuelling process concerning the ambulance service to ensure more control, accountability, and a more efficient client-oriented service delivery. Likewise, fuel replenishment of all cars has been integrated into the Fleet Management System.

An officer in the grade of Assistant Foreman was recruited in the latter part of 2008 to assist the Senior Foreman stationed at G'Mangia Garage in the running of the service through the management of transport emergency services operated from Mater Dei Hospital.

A *Prosit* Course (focused on communication skills) was successfully organised for all personnel with the aim of enhancing motivation and greater efficiency.

An exercise was initiated to maximise human and capital resources through the establishment of new timetable structures and work practices.

Registry Services

During the year under review, incoming mail amounted to about 90,000 items. These were received from the general public, government departments, parastatal bodies, hospitals, outstations, local councils and other organisations.

Outgoing mail during 2008 amounted to 140,891 items, classified as indicated in the following table:

Local Ordinary Mail	132,726
Local Departmental Mail	2,849
Local Registered Mail	3,621
Overseas Ordinary Mail	1,407
Overseas Registered Mail	288

The Registry also keeps a record of all registered letters sent both locally and abroad as well as recording the amounts of the two daily consignments of mail dispatched.

The following circulars were also processed and distributed by the Registry Section.

Office of the Prime Minister (MPO + OPM)	152 (90 + 62)
Ministry of Finance	5
Contracts Department	37
Treasury Department	3
Health Division (DH circulars)	213
Others – Memos	14

In addition to the responsibility for the safe custody of about 5,706 personal files together with 6,300 files of retired, deceased, and recruited employees, the Registry opened another 5,175 new files during 2008.

Supplies and Projects Section

During 2008, the Supplies and Projects Section published 179 departmental tenders. Another six tenders valued over the departmental limit of €47,000 were published through the Department of Contracts.

133 Letters of Acceptance in respect of tenders and 27 Letters of Acceptance in respect of quotations were issued whilst another nine Letters of Acceptance were awarded on behalf of Health Division by the

Director General Contracts. 26 direct orders were placed. The contracts awarded were for the procurement of medical and non-medical equipment, provisions, store material, capital projects, refurbishment of various wards and repair and service agreements for Mater Dei Hospital, Public Health Department and Primary Health Care Centres and all other 'Health' departments.

Apart from these tenders, various requisitions pertaining to the National Blood Transfusion Centre (NBTC) and the Pharmacy of Your Choice (POYC) were processed. The General Stores processed thousands of requisitions for the procurement of equipment, general store items, spares and repair and servicing of equipment. These were procured through the issue of quotations and/or direct from the open market when the amount involved was minimal.

Accounts Section

During 2008, the Accounts Section effected payments for goods and services without delay and provided monthly funds position reports and other financial statistical data to the various administrative directors within the Division to function smoothly. Data which is obtained by means of the Departmental Accounting System (DAS) is used to draw up necessary financial reports which are requested by the various directors. Such reports are used for the drawing up of cash flow, revised estimates and sometimes replies to various parliamentary questions.

Another important function performed by the Accounts Section is the drawing up, together with Salaries and Revenue Sections, of the quarterly accrual report which is requested by the Ministry of Finance. Such report is also compiled by means of data provided by the DAS system.

A total of 1,058 batches of payment vouchers, schedules and transfer and adjustment vouchers generated respectively by Accounts, Supplies, Salaries and Revenue sections within the Health Division were submitted by the section to Treasury Department for processing.

The table below shows recurrent expenditure for 2008 as compared with those of 2007:

Item	2007 (€)	2008 (€)
Personal Emoluments	104,398,050	119,463,974
Operational & Maintenance	15,814,759	27,783,212
Programmes/Initiatives	60,851,631	59,037,860
Contributions to Govt. Entities	21,520,676	28,295,434
Total	202,585,116	234,580,480

Revenue Section

In 2008, this Section faced new challenges with the adoption of the euro currency on 1 January 2008. All targets were achieved last year and there was a smooth process with the euro changeover across the Ministry. The staff particularly cash handlers, were provided with extensive training and necessary tools. In January 2008, this Section distributed the cash float as starting packs to eight sections within the Ministry and this was collected again in February.

In February 2008, this section recouped the sum of €143,324 in respect of Libyan nationals who were hospitalised at SLH from 1993 – 2004. These bills were guaranteed by the Libyan People's Bureau and, after several discussions and negotiations with the Libyan Embassy, these were settled this year. Other arrears which were recouped in 2008 included €14,854 from Water Services Corporation in respect of medical services rendered to their employees.

Several reminders were issued to outstanding debtors, including Health Division employees who had resigned from government service; overpayments in salaries and penalties against those employees who

were granted special leave but failed to fulfil their contractual obligations. Other debtors included foreign patients who were hospitalised at St Luke's Hospital from 1991 to 2005.

4,850 reminders were sent to these outstanding debtors as follow-up action. In some cases legal action was instituted for the settlement of various dues to the Health Division. Other bills were issued in respect of de-rating exemption certificates, fines, examination and course fees, licensing fees according to Legal Notice 143 of 1998.

Deposit refunds were issued to 4,341 persons in respect of returned medical aids.

The Revenue Section makes use of two imprest accounts which serve to pay petty cash expenses incurred by the Minister's Private Secretariat, Head Office and outstations.

EPOS transactions during 2008 amounted to €52,426, and the sum of €335,972.78 was deposited in the below-the-line accounts as follows:

Item Below-the-Line A/C	€
Loans to Medical Aids	163,654.98
Loans to Medical Aids	1815.24
Council for Nurses and Midwives	1294.46
Conversion course for nurses	9639.41
Nurses Patients Fund	926
Sale of Grave Sites	4077.04
Special Accreditation Committee	1912.38
Pharmacy Council	3901.25
Medical Council	76,632.36
Donations by local and foreign bodies	349.41
Receipts obo other departments	2825.39
Hoter Project	5252
Public Health	61596.37
Appeals Committee	2096.49
Total	335,972.78

Revenue collected for 2008 amounted to €1,406,560, as shown in the following table:

Revenue by Item	€
Miscellaneous licences	46,603.68
Attestations/certificates	14,426.94
Miscellaneous fees	12,405.07
Services to third parties	15,642.41
Ambulance and funeral expenses	8,092.54
Sale of medicines	338,983
Hospital fees	824,878
Sale of gravesites	3,692.18
Miscellaneous receipts	141,836
Total	1,406,559.82

In 2008, the Revenue Section collected a total amount of €1,742,532.78 - €1,406,560 as total revenue and another €335,972.78 which were deposited in the below-the-line accounts.

35 personal effects of deceased persons at SLH were released after the necessary documents were duly submitted by the respective next of kin and on the subsequent advice of the legal consultant.

Apart from addressing queries from the public, the Section engages in regular communication with various departments and entities in the course of its terms of reference. These include the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, embassies, Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs Department, Inland Revenue Department, Social Security Department, Refugees Commission, and insurance companies.

Salaries Section

The Section's primary function is the payment of personal emoluments on a four-weekly basis. This task entails a considerable amount of preparatory work, culminating in the inputting of adjustments according to established procedures and timeframes, thus ensuring that specific targets and deadlines are met. During 2008, the Health Division's Personal Emoluments expenditure amounted to:

Item	Totals (€)
1110 – Holders of Political Office	12,537
1210 – Salaries	77,303,075
1310 – Bonus	1,323,758
1410 – Income Supplement	1,144,437
1510 – Social Security Contribution	7,100,703
1610 – Allowances	28,234,460
1710 - Overtime	4,345,004
Total	119,463,974

The Salaries Section performs a number of associated functions, essential for the smooth running of the Division. It contributes towards the formulation of the Departmental Business Plan (Personal Emoluments Vote) and submits monthly financial reports on a regular basis. It is responsible for the continuous monitoring of the Division's financial position, the monthly expenditure trend, fund status and the projected cost of the various items constituting the Personal Emoluments Vote. Such reports have a direct bearing on the submission of requests for additional funds to the Ministry of Finance or the re-distribution of funds onto other votes if approved by the Ministry of Finance.

The Section is responsible for the daily performance of numerous transactions involving the payment and recouping of funds and the preparation of draft replies to parliamentary questions. It also deals with numerous general and inter-departmental queries, including matters raised by employees deployed within the various departments of the Ministry for Social Policy.

The Salaries Section co-ordinates particular functions involving other paying sections within the government hospitals and the Department of Primary Health Care. In 2008, part of the Salaries Section migrated to Gozo; however, contact is still maintained through a liaison officer.

Travel Section

In 2008 there were 233 travel cases. The majority of these cases were conferences connected with the workings of the European Commission, Council and Presidency. Other conferences were organised by WHO and HOPE.

Claims Section (EEC Regulation I 408/71)

During the year, 1,146 E125 claims were issued for the amount of € 638,015.

- Total E125 claims issued for the period May 2004 to December 2008 stands at € 1,355,569.
- E125 claims received in 2008 in respect of E125 amount to € 200,804.
- Total E125 claims received for the period May 2004 to December 2008 stands at € 432,832.

Other Activities

Green Initiatives

The Green Office, based at Head Office, embarked on a number of initiatives such as the extension of waste management schemes through the procurement of separation bins to other units within the Health Sector.

Meanwhile, an *ad hoc* Green Leader has been appointed at Mater Dei Hospital. Both Green Leaders within the Ministry (Health Sector) are being assisted by green focal points posted at outstations.

The Ministry Green Leader stationed at Head Office represented the Ministry through participation in COHAB 2 (Conference on Health and Biodiversity) held in Ireland, thanks to a sponsorship award by European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) Lifelong Learning Programme *Grundtvig*.

A wide variety of other plausible green initiatives were undertaken by directorates across the Health sector

Parliamentary Questions

A total of approximately 400 PQs were processed. As of April 2008, this Division was concerned with processing of all PQs directly falling within its area of responsibilities, besides assuming overall responsibility for drafting of consolidated replies covering all divisions within the Health, the Elderly & Community Care sector.

Security Services

Concerted efforts were exercised during 2008 towards addressing longstanding issues concerning these services and the personnel manning them, particularly through a comprehensive redeployment exercise. Through this exercise, surplus personnel stationed at St Luke's Hospital/Karin Grech Hospital (in the wake of migration of services to Mater Dei Hospital in November 2007 where security services are outsourced) were redeployed to Primary Health Care Department to service deficient complements at health centres.

It is envisaged that the whole re-organisation process, based on due consultations with unions representing this category, will be concluded during 2009.

Occupational Health and Safety

Administrative Directors/CEOs were regularly invited to nominate officers within their jurisdiction to participate in various training programmes and initiatives organised by the Occupational Health & Safety Authority (OHSA) and the Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD), a leader in the provision of HR personal and professional development services in Malta.

Lack of financial and other resources has impaired or delayed the implementation of sundry projects aimed at upgrading the level of health and security features at workplace.

Councils, Boards & Committees

This Directorate undertook the routine exercise to re-appoint a number of statutory and departmental councils, boards, committees within the Ministry (Health and Elderly) following expiry of term of office.

FINANCIAL MONITORING AND CONTROL UNIT

The objective of the Financial Monitoring Control Unit (FMCU) within the Office of the Permanent Secretary is to create an organisational culture change and instil a mentality of accountability, transparency

and value for money within all service and non-service provider entities falling under the responsibility of the Health, Elderly and Community Care sector (HECC),

The focus of FMCU is on management accounting, cost control and data interpretation, all of which are so crucial for decision making and policy decisions. To achieve this aim, FMCU compiled and presented a Business Plan inclusive of a Project Plan to:

- implement and roll out payroll and financial systems within all health care service provider entities;
- set and retain standardised working practices and reporting mechanisms amongst all decentralised entities within HECC in line with policy direction given by the Minister;
- carry out analytical reviews of clinical, financial and operational information systems within each entity/department falling under the responsibility of HECC;
- monitor expenditure vis-à-vis the agreed service provider budgets and investigates operational variances;
- introduce robust internal control systems particularly where high risk areas are detected.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned tasks FMCU has:

- devised an overall financial systems strategy which primarily distinguishes the service provider entities from the non-service providers. This triggered the need to have
 - robust organisational structures, both financial and operational within each entity.
 - devise and map out a business re-engineering process and a sustainable way forward within the whole health care system pertaining to the procurement, purchasing, distribution and consumption of drugs, medical devices and other items, operational or capital in nature, amongst all health care service providers.
- compiled detailed job descriptions and following internal approval, issued a call for the recruitment of several qualified financial controllers.
- together with the Information Management Unit (IMU), initiated the process to carry out a serious IT investment in network infrastructure, operational and financial systems in various areas/departments.
- created several project implementation teams with a mix of IT and financial expertise so that with the stakeholders and external systems implementation teams will re-engineer and restructure the business processes with an aim to improving service quality and reduce operational costs.

Projects

Systems of Health Accounts (SHA) Twinning Light Project

The Ministry's commitment to implement the proposed financial reform so as to:

- have a positive impact on financial responsibility and accountability amongst budget holder entities
- promote a culture of value for money across the health care sector
- aid to improve health care systems by reducing losses and curtailing costs, which will in turn provide savings and social benefits through more cost effective delivery of patient care

instigated FMCU to compile and launch a Twinning Light EU Project together with the Department of Health Information (DHI). The aim is to work together with a group of foreign experts who through their experience in the field will guide us to formulate the necessary building blocks to achieve the desired financial framework.

FMCU and DHI also managed to apply for an EU grant and a team of local experts from both departments visited Portugal on a training and exchange of information exercise in this SHA area which is also an EU requisite applicable to all Member States.

Consolidated Budget for the Department of Health, Elderly and Community Care

The Financial Monitoring Control Unit (FMCU) was fully responsible for the collation, compilation and presentation of the consolidated budget for the Health, Elderly and Community Care sector. Following the

budget allocations, FMCU steered a thorough budget analysis exercise which was presented to the Minister via official budget presentations, the aim of which was to examine the variances between that requested and funds allocated, and re-visit the operational priorities of each entity in line with funds allocated to each.

Centralised Entitlement Unit and Treatment Abroad

FMCU, together with IMU, worked solidly to support the two major areas falling under the responsibility of Director General Strategy and Sustainability (DGSS). To this effect a taskforce has been set up and a business process has been mapped out by FMCU.

The information management system based on FMCU's proposal has also been written and demos will be carried out soon. Although the system is not yet finalised, a lot of work has been successfully achieved within the project timeline and it is envisaged that the system will go live in the first quarter of 2009.

National Blood Transfusion Services (NBTS)

FMCU pioneered and project managed the financial specifications of NBTS financial and stock inventory system. FMCU also provided financial advice in the compilation of a cost model which formed the basis of NBTS pricing tariffs. The aim is for NBTS to initiate charging process for the provision of its services to both internal and external users. The software implementation contract was finalised in the last quarter of 2008 and is planned to go live in March 2009 in line with EU legislation.

Primary Health Care and Community Services

CommCare Unit

FMCU took the initiative and formulated a technical and operational taskforce whose responsibility was primarily to project manage the implementation of an information management system at CommCare Unit within the Department for Primary Health Care. FMCU also provided financial advice in the business process mapping in the initial phase of the programme.

Malta Memorial District Nursing Association (MMDNA)

FMCU represents the Health Division on the Board of MMDNA and its responsibilities primarily relate to the financial and operational aspects of the Association and its relationship with the Division. During 2008, FMCU contributed to various decision making aspects of the Board and provided financial advice in line with Government's policy in the area of primary health and community care.

Primary Health Care (PHC) Task Force

FMCU formed part of the PHC task force and its main responsibilities related to the compilation of a financial framework, estimation of savings and payroll costs under the various proposed scenarios.

Breast Screening Project

The compilation of the operational and capital expenditure requirements for the initiation of such a project fell under the responsibility of FMCU. This was officially presented to MFEI as part of the Division's Budget.

Malta's Average Cost Paper for the EU Audit Board

Having already submitted Malta's Average Cost Papers for the years 2003 – 2005, FMCU went ahead to compile Malta's Average Cost Paper for 2006. This was officially presented to and approved by the EU Audit Board.

FMCU is now in the process of compiling Malta's Average Cost Paper for 2007 and it is aimed that this will be presented to the EU Audit Board which is next due in June 2009.

Capital Projects

Various cost benefit analyses were carried out in line with the Division's policy direction. Amongst the various projects, FMCU focused on the following major and material capital project:

- Oncology Hospital
- Rehabilitation Facility
- Karen Grech Hospital Refurbishment Programme
- National Blood Transfusion Services Project.

Operational Feasibility Projects

Financial input with respect to contracts feasibility exercises was given by FMCU on a regular basis. FMCU's focus was on high risk and material areas, most of which related to contracts entered into by Mater Dei Hospital and/or the Foundation for Medical Services (FMS).

Costing of Services Provided at Mater Dei Hospital

Together with a group of technical and financial experts, FMCU is assisting in the compilation of an intensive operational costing exercise at Mater Dei Hospital. This primarily entails the costing of each and every service provided by MDH being the only general acute hospital on the island. Although a lot of progress has been achieved to date, the exercise is still ongoing although it is envisaged that the assignment will be finalised by March 2009.

The Elderly Department

FMCU provided ongoing support and financial advice to the Elderly Department in general, which comprises St Vincent De Paul Residence and Nursing Homes. FMCU managed to instigate a mentality of accountability and vouching prior approval and payment.

FMCU also sat on the adjudication committee when the Department entered into public-private partnership initiatives covering the purchase of additional beds in private nursing homes.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT UNIT

The Information Management Unit (IMU) leads the Ministry's ICT strategy, aimed to enhance service delivery standards. The primary focus of the IMU is the strategic direction and management of information management investment within this Ministry to ensure that data is translated into information as a resource.

Amalgamation

Following the amalgamation between the ex-Ministry of Health and the ex-Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity, an exercise was carried out to merge the two IMUs, with the aim to provide a better strategic direction and management of information management investment. Following the merge, the IMU has pooled its resources to make better use of its human and financial resources. Due to this amalgamation, an exercise to streamline the IMU operations is also being carried out to identify areas wherein service improvements that are within the IMU's remit, can be accomplished. During 2008, the IMU was also responsible for the management and co-ordination of both ICT Capital Votes and the compilation of the budgetary requests for 2009.

ICT Service Provision

The IMU has embarked on a business process re-engineering project to integrate the Administrative Support Unit (ASU) and the Support Services Pool (SSP) operations to facilitate and enhance the support services. Thus the ICT Support Services Unit would be in a better position to manage and service requests received from this Ministry's IT knowledge based workers.

Network Infrastructure

The demand on the data network has continued to grow rapidly with the implementation of various applications and is forecast to further expand as new applications and services are rolled out within the Ministry.

A number of changes had to be implemented including the provision of fibre optic cable, installation of ADSL backup equipment, routers, switches UPS units and equipment cabinets throughout the year. In addition, a number of network extensions have been implemented to enhance the service provision within the Ministry. Furthermore, ageing networking equipment is being gradually replaced with new networking equipment aimed to improve bandwidth speed to meet the ever growing demands and expectations.

Consolidation

In line with the Government's policy to consolidate all ICT services with the aim of reducing total cost of ownership, MSOC embarked on the consolidation process of its various services. The IMU extended the consolidation to servers located within MSOC entities. This consolidation process will continue in 2009 where it is deemed feasible.

Technology Upgrades

Even though no funds were available throughout the year, a number of technology upgrades were carried out within the Ministry through cost savings made by the IMU. Thus a number of PCs and peripherals were replaced through the Desktop Services Agreement as part of an ongoing technology refresh programme. During the year, the IMU was also responsible for the reviewing, monitoring and the approval of ICT requests submitted by the various departments and entities under the Ministry.

EURO Changeover

During the first quarter of 2008, the IMU continued to be of assistance, and thus facilitate the finalisation process of the euro changeover transition for all the applications that run throughout all the sections and the departments of the Ministry.

IT Training

Through the IT Steering Committee, the Information Management Unit put forward the proposal to utilise the training fund within the Ministry to offer IMU employees' sponsorship for IT related training, thus encouraging its employees to further their studies and enhancing the knowledge pool within the IMU. Apart from directly delivering training to the Ministry's employees the IMU has also co-ordinated and maximised the use of its training facilities by extending its services on a regular basis to various ministries and departments such as the Staff Development Organisation, the Management and Personnel Office, Local Government and Education.

Collection of Contractual information

Following the merge, an exercise to collate, assess and review where necessary all ICT related contracts spread throughout the various divisions and departments was commissioned. The project will be extended through 2009, wherein a framework for the monitoring of multi-year contracts will be defined.

IT Services Provided to Users

During the last quarter of 2008, the IMU embarked on an exercise for the filtering of services being contracted by the Ministry. Following investigations, a number of IT services which were no longer required, were discontinued in an effort to reduce the Ministry's expenditure on IT related services.

Business Continuity Centre

For a number of years the IMU has been highlighting the requirement for a Business Continuity Centre for the Data Audit, Management Processing Unit, responsible for the Benefit Processing and Cheque/ Correspondence Printing for a number of years. During 2008, the IMU earmarked the site for the business continuity centre and the initial discussions for the development and implementation of an appropriate disaster recovery and business continuity centre are in progress.

Ministry for Social Policy Portal

The Ministry's commitment to offer updated information with respect to the services offered by the Ministry is currently being addressed through the Ministry's various websites (www.sahha.gov.mt, www.mfss.gov.mt and the eHealth portal - www.ehealth.gov.mt). During 2008, these websites continued to augment their audiences and provide the necessary information to both local and foreign citizens.

In a strive to offer a better service to end users, the IMU initiated the process for the redesign and implementation of the new Ministry's portal. The portal aims at providing a one-stop-shop service, wherein all social policy related services are made available through the same interface, in order to enhance the user online experience. The new portal also aims at consolidating all government social policy sites, providing services split in four streams: Health, Employment & Co-operatives, Family and Social Services, and Housing.

The new portal will be launched in 2009 and discussions are in progress with the various stakeholders across the Ministry to consolidate the various online services. The new portal will eventually provide the e-services currently available through the individual sites and new e-Services which are currently under development. Initially the new service cluster will include Progeny, Breast Care, Elderly Care, Diabetes, Speech Language, Schedule V, NI Contributions, Medical Certificates, Children's Allowance, Supplementary Allowance and Marriage Grant applications, all accessible through the e-ID authentication.

The development of the initial phases of these services is in progress, and will primarily entail a customised content management system, through which the project owners will be able to maintain: information pertaining to services offered by the respective section; online application forms which will allow citizens electronic transaction of information; regulated fora for electronic exchange of ideas between citizens about the topic; an FAQs section; and query forms.

These obviously will set the pace for the further development of more services which relate to these sections.

Participation in eHealth Working Groups

Malta has been represented as a Member State on the i2010 subgroup on eHealth where exchanges of information about national eHealth initiatives are undertaken. The mandate of this subgroup is that member state experts and leaders in eHealth and their associated stakeholders provide specialist advice to the i2010 High Level Group with specific regard to eHealth.

The key objectives of this working group are to develop a European eHealth service and information space that leads to improved quality and access to care, whilst enabling cost effectiveness of eHealth systems and services, stimulating European industry, and supporting European patient mobility; and also to facilitate

and contribute to the implementation of the European eHealth Action Plan (2010) including eHealth actions plans in each of the Member States and European Economic Area countries.

Technical Commission for Data Processing

The IMU has also participated in the Technical Commission for Data Processing which has the strategic objective to facilitate the free movement of workers within Europe by improving the standard of service to migrant workers. The standard aims at simplifying and accelerating administrative procedures for the acquisition of rights and the award and payment of social security benefits. This would enable an improved implementation of social security legislations, and reducing administrative costs for the competent institutions through the application of five key principles:

- Setting a clear future direction
- Improving programme management and achieving better project results
- Utilising emerging technologies
- Promoting the spread of best practice and encouraging innovation
- Globalising telematics in social security

SABS (Sistema għal Benefiċċji Soċjali)

During the year, a number of enhancements to the Sistema għal Benefiċċji Soċjali (SABS), which is the principal software application used by the Social Security Division (DSS) have been implemented. These enhancements were introduced to increase overall efficiency in the processing of payments, amendments in relation to the Budget and other related correspondence. The web-based District Office query tool project was initiated in collaboration with MITTS Ltd, and an overview of the front-end of SABS which is still in its initial stages was presented for the initial review. Also, during 2008, a new Children Allowance payment for beneficiaries was introduced, together with payments abroad for Maltese pensioners living in Canada.

Social Policy Information Centre (SPIC)

Social Policy Information Centre (SPIC) customer relationship officers provide citizens with personalised, self-service telephony based access information on services about social services and other services offered by departments and entities within the portfolio of the Ministry for Social Policy. Although with less human resources SPIC personnel during 2008 not only offered the normal service but provided the general public with specific personal information, and collected feedback during the consultation process on the white paper regarding rent reform.

SPIC's services are aimed at addressing the difficulties faced by the general public in obtaining direct and related information to their raised queries from the DSS. A business process re-engineering exercise is currently being carried out at SPIC, as a first step in raising the levels of customer care services both at SPIC and the DSS. In return, this will enable SPIC to move from the current concept of a call centre to that of a more focused customer contact centre.

CommCare Assessment Unit System

During 2008, IMU was assigned with the project management of Phase 1 of the new CommCare Assessment Unit system. This new web-based system with a back-end database was required to serve as a better and fairer collaboration system between the regulatory body, set up to regulate and monitor domiciliary nursing services, known as CommCare Assessment Unit, and the MMDNA, which for the last fifteen years offered community and midwifery services to the Government. Now that Phase 1 of this system has been successfully finished, plans are already being considered for Phase 2 of this project.

IT Systems

The IMU has continued to offer operational support and enhancement implementation support for various IT systems already in use all through the Ministry. A number of initiatives were also considered for implementation resulting in the submission to the Core ICT Advisory Committee (CITAC) for approval. The IMU is also in the process of formulating an IT project submission proposal strategy for the maximisation of value, monitoring of IT System Implementation and ROI measurement.

IMU Toolbox

During 2008, IMU also embarked in a new project that will aid and facilitate IMU processes and operations through the whole Ministry. This project was originally intended for MSOC IMU internal operations, but the idea has been extended to other ministries. A multi-ministerial IMU Task Force to evaluate and identify potential improvements to enhance the system has been set up.

IT Focal Points

The IMU has also embarked on the identification of IT Focal Points within the various departments to assist the delivery of IT Services throughout the Ministry. Following the reshuffle in portfolios and vastness of the Ministry it has become evident that the limited resources within the IMU had to be complimented with personnel within the individual departments to assist the IMU with the service delivery and enhance the communication between the departments and the IMU.

FRANK MIFSUD

Permanent Secretary (HECC)

Health, the Elderly and Community Care Sector Public Health Regulation Division

The Division for Public Health Regulation, apart from the general safeguarding and promotion of public health, is also responsible for the formulation, monitoring and enforcement of national standards for health in both the public and private sector. It is its responsibility to ensure that public health legislation is being adhered to by all concerned and in this regard is responsible for the inspection and licensing of the various entities that provide health care as well as food establishments.

Within the Division there are four departments, namely:

- **Department for Environmental Health:** responsible for the enforcement of public health legislation as well as environmental issues.
- **Department for Health Care Services Standards:** responsible for the establishment and monitoring of standards to be adhered to by service providers in the primary, secondary and tertiary care sectors as well as the enforcement of legislation in relation to blood, organs, tissues, and cells.
- **Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention:** responsible for all activities aimed at improving health and the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable disease.
- **Department for Nursing Services Standards:** responsible for the establishment and monitoring of nursing care standards in all care sectors.

Medicines Authority, which also reports to the Director General (Public Health Regulation), is responsible for ensuring the quality, safety and efficacy of medicinal products on the Maltese markets as well as the inspection and licensing of manufacturing and wholesale dealing establishments.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Collaboration with the World Health Organisation

The Office of the Director General (Public Health Regulation) was once again involved in the negotiation, follow-up and implementation of various international projects involving the Health Division through the World Health Organisation Biennial Collaborative Agreement (BCA) 2008-2009.

The 2008-2009 BCA projects include World Health Day 2008 activities on the health effects of climate change, a project on healthy nutrition in schools, a database on accidents and injuries, country preparations towards the 5th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Parma, Italy in February 2010, an Environment and Health Performance Review, and the organisation of a National Conference on the Health Effects of Climate Change in 2009.

World Health Assembly and World Health Organisation Regional Committee Meeting

Representatives from the DGH (PHR) office formed part of the Maltese ministerial delegations to the 61st session of the World Health Assembly held in May 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland as well as the 58th session of the WHO EURO Regional Committee Meeting held in Tbilisi, Georgia in September 2008. One of the key resolutions adopted by the 61st World Health Assembly includes a global strategy on public health, innovation and intellectual property. The Health Assembly also endorsed a six-year action plan to tackle

non-communicable diseases, now the leading threats to human health. Other topics included a draft global strategy to reduce harmful use of alcohol, the need for decisive action to address health impacts from climate change, the importance of reaching higher coverage of immunisation, and the health of migrants.

Public Health Training Committee

A representative from the Office of the Director General (PHR) together with representatives from the Offices of the Directors General (Health Care Services and Strategy and Sustainability) now represent the Employer on this tri-partite Committee, alongside two other representatives from the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine (MAPHM) and two representatives from the University of Malta. The functions of the Public Health Training Committee include advising and recommending to the MAPHM on the competencies and content of the training programme, co-ordination of delivery of the training programme, selection, monitoring and evaluation of training attachments and locations, and regularly assess trainees' progress. At the end of the training period, the committee submits its recommendations to the MAPHM regarding the suitability of the trainee for specialist accreditation.

Clinical Guidelines

National guidelines for the treatment of hypertension and the use of antibiotic prophylaxis are being drafted and will be concluded during 2009.

Advisory Committee on Immunisation Policy

The advisory committee on immunisation policy has the following functions:

- to promote the understanding of, and support for, the immunisation programme among professionals and the public at large;
- to keep abreast of the latest research in vaccine development;
- to advise the Superintendent of Public Health with respect to vaccination programme priorities in the short, medium and long term;
- to develop written recommendations for the routine administration of vaccines;
- to issue guidelines regarding dosages, periodicity and contraindications applicable to individual vaccines;
- to tender advice as may be requested by the Superintendent of Public Health.

This committee met 11 times during 2008 and has managed to achieve a number of recommendations and events during 2008 including:

- recommendation for revised national schedule of immunisation;
- training course to immunisation nurses;
- recommendations on storage of vaccines at pharmacy level;
- recommendations on influenza vaccination;
- recommendations for updating of the International Travel Certificate;
- drafting recommendations for the Introduction of PCV in the Infant Immunisation Schedule;
- advice to the SPH as requested.

Inter Sectoral Committee to Counteract Obesity (ICCO)

At the start of the year, meetings were held with the respective sectors to discuss in great length the information submitted in the templates which had been filled in by each sector.

During such meetings the discussions proved interesting in exploring new avenues of co-operation between the health sector and the respective sector. Potential and existing policies and initiatives were discussed and new ones explored. From these discussions it became apparent that some sectors were in a better position to assist the health sector in its battle against obesity whereas others would be able to come on

board in the near future due to reforms they were undergoing or do to a lack of resources. This outcome had been somewhat expected and it was therefore concluded that the key sectors which were in a better position to be taken on board would therefore be involved in the first phase of the intersectoral strategy to counteract obesity.

The meetings were concluded by the second quarter of 2008 and at this stage it was felt that a similar process had to be done within the health sector itself. The departments involved were health promotion and disease prevention, primary health, school health service. This step was guided by the WHO's strategy to counteract obesity and revolved around the key four pillars namely nutrition and food policies, physical activity policy, primary health services, and research and surveillance. The discussions were lengthy and challenging due to the diverse skills needed to contribute to the constructive process of applying WHO thinking to the local scenario. For each pillar, a rough gap analysis was done and changes were proposed that would shift the infrastructure closer to the WHO recommendations. This would obviously require investment of human and financial resources, however, with adequate planning it would be achievable. The onus of these intrasectoral discussions revolved around measures for the prevention of obesity, management of obesity and surveillance of the body mass index of the Maltese population.

All the proposed initiatives and policies emerging from all said meetings were then drawn up as a concluding report and presented to all the members of ICCO for further reflection and discussion. During a meeting at the end of 2008, it was decided that the national strategy to counteract obesity would revolve around these conclusions and it was also hoped that this would be accompanied by a calculation of the national cost of obesity.

LEGAL OFFICE

The legal office within the health Division provides legal assistance to the Health administration, government hospitals, health centres, and other institutions within the Health sector. This assistance consists of various forms such as: legal advice, drafting both primarily and subsidiary legislation, legal assistance in Superior, Inferior courts, and in arbitration tribunals. This legal assistance consists also of the drafting and processing of contracts of patients and other third persons.

The pending civil legal cases are various and unique from each other. The facts under dispute range from alleged professional negligence, health and safety issues, promotions to money due by and or from the Division. Another particular service is that of affidavits. The main recipients from this service are the doctors because they give evidence in their absence without disrupting the health service.

When one compares the previous years with last year the legal office received a considerable increase in claims regarding allegations in the health sector, for the access to medical records, allegations of negligence, unauthorised treatment on minors and claims of breaches in health and safety at work.

Pending cases

Civil Court First Hall	36
Court of Magistrates (Malta)	1
Court of Appeal – Superior	1
Court of Magistrates (Gozo)	1
Civil Arbitration	3

Others

Judicial Letters (Magistrates Malta)	10
Affidavits (Doctors)	150
Affidavits (Plaintiffs or defendants)	13
Judicial letters (Civil Court 1 st Hall)	15
Concluded Cases	7
Garnishee Warrant	12
Garnishee Counter Warrant	3

Civil Court 1 st Hall Applications	13
Criminal Court Application	4
Court of Magistrates Applications	20
Applications for Jurors	14
Court of Appeal Applications	2
Health Inspectors Applications	30
Civil Court 1 st Hall Counter Protest	6
Civil Court 1 st Hall Defendant note	1
Civil Court 1 st Hall Reply	3
Civil Court 1 st Hall Submission Notes	2
Court of Magistrates Submission Notes	5
Civil Court 1 st Hall Schedule Deposits	20
Civil Court 1 st Hall Withdrawal Schedule Deposits	5
Health Inspectors replies	10
Court of Magistrates Counter Protest	5
Legal Letters	400

PHARMACEUTICAL UNIT

The Pharmaceutical Unit is responsible for the administration of the technical aspects of legislation and the development of national policies within the various pharmaceutical areas. These policies are developed and implemented with the aim of providing support for medicines legislation, safeguarding the patients' rights and wellbeing, and boosting the health care professionals' confidence in the medicinal products available, from their manufacture to administration and use by the patient.

Narcotic Drugs, Psychotic Substances and Precursor Chemicals

NMPAU implements local legislation and fulfils international obligations with respect to narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. A number of reports required by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) were compiled - namely Forms A/P (four reports), Forms A (four reports), Form B, Form C, Form D and Form P, as well as other INCB, and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) questionnaires. Other authorisations were issued as follows:

Import Permits for narcotic drugs	40
Import Permits for psychotropic substances	112
Withdrawal Permits	152
New Methylphenidate approvals	105
Renewal of Methylphenidate approvals	304

Together with the Customs Department, the Unit is taking part in an exercise to control precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, both physically and by means of adequate legislation

Access to Medicines

The Pharmaceutical Unit continued to manage the Malta Medicines List which includes all medicinal products which are marketed in Malta. The Unit also continued the monitoring of the list of medicines not covered by a marketing authorisation or authorisation in line with article 4(2) of the Medicines (Marketing Authorisation) Regulations and therefore not available on the Maltese market. This list indicates the medicines essential for public health needs which however are not covered by a market authorisation. The study on access to medicines in Malta and the legal routes for access was initiated so that the availability of essential medicines in Malta can be ensured.

Authorisation for the Use of Medicines

The Pharmaceutical Unit is responsible for the implementation of the *Guidelines for the supply of medicinal products for human use through processes which are not covered by the Medicines Act, 2003 and its subsidiary legislation*. The Unit processes the individual requests by prescribers and for departmental use in public hospitals and private hospitals. It validates, reviews the requests, and gives the necessary recommendations and advice to support the decision of the Licensing Authority.

The problem of the long list of medicinal products authorised via article 20 of the Medicines Act 2003, for use within the Government Health Services, was partially solved by the development and implementation of the policy *Authorisation of Medicinal Products used within the Government Health Services (GHS)*. This policy provides criteria which help identify which authorisation route should be used for medicinal products which are not registered in Malta.

In 2008, 219 unlicensed medicines requests were processed. Various queries from foreign medicines agencies/boards, local health professionals and patients, regarding guidelines, procedures, and availability of medicines were also dealt with. The Pharmaceutical Unit also provided support to the Licensing Authority by developing policies necessary for ensuring that medicines are of good quality and that these medicines are used in a controlled rational manner.

National Antibiotics Committee

The Pharmaceutical Unit worked closely with the National Antibiotics Committee which was established in September 2008, and took active part in the organisation of the campaign against the abuse of antibiotics and antibiotic resistance. This campaign included a conference which was held on 18 November, the European Antibiotic Awareness Day. It also involved the use of billboards, leaflets and posters. On 19 November, a seminar was also held to discuss the rational use of antibiotics. In this way, the Pharmaceutical Unit fulfilled its roles of improving the rational use of medicines and improving the impact of medicines on public health.

Research and Education on Medicines

The Pharmaceutical Unit has the mission of educating and informing health care professionals and patients about medicines and on how these should be used in a therapeutically sound and cost-effective manner. In April, the Unit held a telephone survey to study the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of the Maltese population with regard to medicinal products. The results clearly demonstrated the need of an educational campaign on the medicinal products, the different names, quality, laws and regulations, prices, role of pharmacist, timely treatment etc. Such campaign would ensure that medicinal products are used in a more rational and effective manner.

The Pharmaceutical Unit issued various circulars and policies with the aim of educating the professionals, for example, prescribing and dispensing of medicines, use of different brands of Warfarin, the rational use of the human papilloma virus vaccine, the access to medicines during pharmacy closing hours, etc. The preparation of other educational campaigns for professionals and patients was started.

Administration of Medicines

The Pharmaceutical Unit took an active and proactive part in the working group for the National Policy on the Administration of Medicines. The aim of this working group is to publish a policy which provides the standards and guidelines on the proper administration of medicines, for health care professionals and for those who provide health care services. Such policy would ensure an improvement in the administration of medicines and therefore better safeguarding of the patients' wellbeing.

Use of Medicines in Children

Article 42 of Regulation (EC) No 1901/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on medicinal products for paediatric use, as amended, requires that Member States collect all available data on all existing uses of medicinal products in the paediatric population, by the end of January 2009. Thus, the Pharmaceutical Unit co-ordinated the collection of this data from the various departments within the Government Health Services, from the authorities, and from paediatricians.

University Students

The Pharmaceutical Unit helps university students in their research and training with regards to regulations and policies on medicines. In the year 2008, the Unit supported a research project with the aim of developing and introducing health promotion in the private primary and community care. Various elements of the infrastructure were discussed including the education of pharmacists, specialised training, promotion, incentives, time and space management, monitoring and evaluation, and organisation structures. Other research projects dealt with medicine regulations and consumer protection, accessibility, promotion and information on medicines, etc.

Other National Pharmaceutical Policy Issues

The Pharmaceutical Unit received various queries regarding the access to medicines, medicinal products available in Malta, safety and quality of medicines, etc. In 2008, the Unit processed over 135 queries. Besides, the Unit also co-operated with other departments on various aspects of medicines, including patient safety, pharmacovigilance, regulations and consultations of the European Union regarding information to patients, the disposal of medicines and syringes, pharmacy services in detention centres, medicines management in homes for the elderly, drug control policies etc.

REGULATORY COUNCILS

The four regulatory councils namely the Medical Council, the Pharmacy Council, the Council for Nurses and Midwives and the Council for Professions Complementary to Medicine, were set up in terms of the Health Care Professions Act 2003. The principal scope of the Act is to regulate the practice of health care professions in Malta. New registrations effected by each council during 2008 are indicated hereunder:

Medical Council		Professions Complementary to Medicine	
Medical Practitioners (EU)	85	Dental Technologist	1
Medical Practitioners (Non-EU)	16	Nutritionists	6
Dental Surgeons	9	Medical Lab Scientists	10
		Physiotherapists	13
		Radiographers	18
Pharmacy Council		Occupational Therapists	5
Pharmacists	23	Acupuncturists	5
Pharmacy Technicians	11	Chiropractors	3
		Clinical Perfusionists	1
Nurses and Midwives		Optometrists	1
Nurses	209	Orthoptists	1
Midwives	nil	Speech Language Pathologists	14

Specialist Accreditation Committees

The Specialist Accreditation Committee (SAC) held 21 meetings during 2008. Several other meetings were held by sub-committees to determine applications for specialties which are not represented on the SAC.

Other meetings were held to review training programmes. During the year, a number of programmes were approved which, together with those approved last year, now include the following: Histopathology, General/Internal Medicine, General Surgery, Ophthalmology, Plastic Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Geriatrics, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Respiratory Medicine, Cardiology, Respiratory Medicine, Rheumatology, Diabetes and Endocrinology, Accident and Emergency Medicine, Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care, Family Medicine, Public Health Medicine, Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

The number of applications received during 2008 was 39, of which 20 were from foreign applicants and 19 from Maltese nationals.

A very important step was taken when all trainees in Basic Specialist Training and Higher Specialist Training were enlisted with this committee.

Those who have completed their training were awarded a certificate confirming their present status.

Quality Assurance Initiative Adjudicating Committee

The work of this Committee increased this year due to the new Government-MAM agreement making new grades eligible for the award. In February, the Committee received more than 200 new proposals to be considered for work to be carried out in 2008. The Committee assessed these proposals in order to ensure that they meet the requirements of the agreement. The Committee also received concluded reports for work carried out during 2007. The award was given to work carried out in hospitals or health centres which led to improved quality of care of service delivery.

EU Twinning Light Project – Free Movement of Health care Professionals

This office was project leader for a Twinning Light project responsible for the capacity building and training of the Health Care Regulatory Councils. The Twinning partner was the Netherlands which supplied a number of experts who came on a series of visits to Malta in order to review structures and processes and make recommendations for changes both to legislation and procedures. Changes to primary and secondary legislation are in the process of being finalised. A series of training seminars were held open to members of the Councils, their subcommittees and members of professional organisations involved in the regulation of health care professionals. Within the project remit, the Registrars of the Councils went on a one-week training visit to the Hague and Maastricht where they met counterparts and attended a training course organised by the European Institute for Public Policy. Standard Operating Procedures were finalised as part of the procedures used for the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications for professionals coming from EU Member States. A website has been set up with training materials and reports from the project in order to ensure sustainability of the work carried out during the eight months duration of the project.

DEPARTMENT FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION

The Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention has the main aim to protect and promote the health of people on the Maltese Islands by:

- empowering individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles;
- advocating the creation of supportive environments conducive to health;
- carrying out effective surveillance and control of communicable diseases;
- developing strategies for reducing the burden of communicable and non communicable disease.

The main tasks of this Department are to:

- enhance knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values that are conducive to good health;

- educate and empower the public to adopt healthy behaviour, enhance personal skills, promote environmental change, and advocate lifestyle policies favourable to health;
- monitor health and disease trends and provide the necessary input to the development of policies in respect of communicable and non communicable diseases;
- study ways of promoting better nutrition; preventing excessive weight, obesity and chronic disease in people;
- formulate effective health promotion measures, in co-operation with the key stakeholders, by applying a multisectoral approach;
- produce publications and use media on a range of health topics;
- formulate and regularly update national policy for communicable disease and ensure its implementation
- Carry out field investigation and epidemiological control of communicable diseases;
- minimise the transmission of and mortality from communicable diseases;
- prepare operational policies and strategies aimed at reducing non communicable diseases and their impact on morbidity and mortality;
- reduce the incidence, morbidity and mortality from non communicable diseases;
- formulate contingency plans for potential epidemics and prepare national plans for biological threats to public health.

Activities are categorised under three units:

- Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit
- Health Promotion Unit and
- Non-communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit.

HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT (HPU)

Policy Development

The Health Promotion Unit was an active contributor to the development of the following policies and strategies:

- Non-communicable Disease Strategy
- National Cancer Plan
- National Sexual Health Policy
- National Nutrition Action Plan.

Projects and Initiatives

Food Safety Week

A Food Safety Week was held between 15 and 22 May. Its aim was to increase awareness and inform the public to maintain food hygiene and food safety at home. These included two 20-second television adverts, one 10-second and another 20-second radio adverts, newspaper adverts on Sunday Times and another set of adverts featured on 18 May, newspaper articles published on local English and Maltese newspapers throughout this week, participation on radio, a 28-page booklet to address various food hygiene and food safety issues in the home and presentations given in 16 local councils (of which four were in Gozo).

Tobacco

- An anti-tobacco campaign *Ieqaf Pejjep u Irbah* was held throughout April and May with a draw of the winners at the end of May. The aim of *Ieqaf Pejjep u Irbah* was to encourage smokers to quit smoking and as a result be eligible to participate in a competition where significant prizes were won. Promotion of the campaign was done through different media and mediums, which included advertising on bus shelters, posters, radio, TV, Mater Dei Hospital, web, and different locations throughout Malta and Gozo. There were 901 participants in the campaign which included 51.6% females and 48.4% males.

- The Health Promotion Unit is an active participant in the European Network of Quitlines (ENQ) together with other European Member States. This is possible through the ongoing telephone support service that is being offered through our local 'Quitline'. The primary objective of the ENQ is to contribute to and promote health improvement and reduce morbidity and premature mortality by bringing together experienced and newer European Quitlines. The ENQ facilitates the sharing of knowledge, best practice, experience and a supporting network for all its members.
- The Health Promotion Unit actively supports the *HELP - For a life without tobacco* campaign with ongoing Comets testing that are included in our activities. The campaign's main objective addresses one of the main causes of avoidable death within the EU, that is, tobacco. The approach that is currently being used is to increase awareness and possibly reduce deaths through the combination of efforts on the preventive aspect, cessation services and the effects of passive smoking on the non-smoking. The HELP campaign is intended to reach out to young smokers, non-smokers, those exposed to second-hand smoke and smokers who want to stop. All promotional advertising and campaigns include the Malta Quitline number with Internet support that is also available in Maltese. There were 2,132 carbon monoxide measurements taken during the campaign. Malta was shown to have had high participation in the campaign and ranked third in terms of number of measurements per 100,000 inhabitants.
- *European Smokefree Award 2008* campaign. A press conference and award ceremony was held at the Department to announce the local participants and award the winners who participated in the European Smoke Free Award. Three ex-smokers were awarded a first, second and third placing trophies. Concurrently a local policy maker and a supporter were also awarded, for their contribution towards smoke free policies and for the support given to assist smokers quit. The winner was also awarded a trip to Amsterdam whereby he participated in the overall European Award Ceremony.

Physical Activity: Move for Health

The Unit organised a fun run for Move for Health Day. The 3km Fun Run was organised at Ta' Qali and was open for all age groups. A booklet in Maltese on Physical Activity (*Caqlaq għal Saħħtek*) was also published. In support, two 30-second adverts to promote physical activity to the general public targeted at adults and children, were produced and aired on various television stations as well as at the Eden Century cinemas.

Breastfeeding Week

The theme for 2008 for Breastfeeding Week was *Breastfeeding – nature's gift!* Its aim was to continue to raise awareness on the importance of breastfeeding, reminding mothers that the best way to give children a healthy start in life is to make use of this natural resource. For this campaign a poster was produced and distributed at various health and community settings. A radio and two TV adverts were also produced and aired throughout the campaign. The initiatives held throughout the week included training initiatives to health professionals, including family practitioners and talks for mothers and mothers-to-be.

Sexual Health

Teenage pregnancy

A series of sexual health workshops were initiated at Unit Għozza addressing sexual health issues with pregnant teenage women and teenage mothers. These workshops took place over a period of one month and focusing on contraception, sexual risk taking behaviour, screening, and assertiveness with partners.

Prison health

The Department collaborated with the YOURS (young people) section within Corradino Correctional Facility (CCF) to deliver a series of four workshops on sexual health touching upon STI prevention,

contraception and pregnancy and personal hygiene. This was the first initiative on the part of the Department to promote health within prisons.

A second initiative was launched later in the year to provide a series of workshops focusing on health-related life skills for adult men in prison.

Young people's sexual health

Following the European Commission Workshop *Towards a European Strategy on sexual health for young people*, the Unit brought together a group of experts from several areas including teachers, social workers, youth workers, medical professionals, spiritual directors and psychologists to discuss the way forward in promoting sexual health amongst young people in Malta.

Sexual Health Education

As of July 2008, a weekly article addressing various issues on sexual health appeared on one of the Sunday newspapers until the end of November. Topics that were discussed include: personal hygiene, communication on sexual health within the family, sexual development in adolescence, communication between partners, homosexuality, sexually transmitted infections, contraception, and the emotional turmoil during difficult pregnancies, testicular cancer, and prostate cancer.

STI prevention campaign

A campaign addressing STI prevention was launched for World AIDS Day on 1 December 2008 which carried the message 'Why don't we... Wait, Be faithful, Use condoms responsibly'. The booklet *Is-saħħa sesswali* is being revised in both content and design.

A self-test quiz was put together to be distributed by student organisations at University. This quiz is meant to be a self-test HIV/STI knowledge tool and will be distributed with our leaflet *STIs Puntj Qosra*.

Sexual Health Policy

The Health Division has finalised the sexual health policy and has prepared an action plan to execute this policy. The main areas of focus of this action plan include:

- Research and Evidence based guidelines development
- Enhanced surveillance
- Health promotion Initiatives
- Sexual health education
- Care of sexually transmitted infections and sexual health problems.

Immigrant Health

A request was received by Dar il-Liedna (IOWAS) to provide the carers and co-ordinators of the programme with guidelines for health promotion and disease prevention. The Unit liaised with the co-ordinators of IOWAS in order to organise a training seminar for the carers working in all the open centres/residences so that these guidelines can be disseminated in the various localities.

Drink Driving

A drink drive initiative was organised for the Christmas period reminding the public of their responsibility not to consume alcohol and drive. The initiative consisted of a public service announcement for radio and television, and a joint press conference involving also SEDQA, the Police and Civil Protection.

Health Promotion in the School Setting

A committee was set up between Health and Education to plan and discuss health-related activities in schools. The committee is meeting monthly.

Activities carried out in schools throughout 2008 included:

- Fruit at Skolasajf was an initiative where all children attending summer school were given a fruit salad. Children learned about the importance of fruit in their daily diet through fun and interactive activities. The initiative was taken to promote fruit in schools and in children's daily diets to counteract low consumption of fruit by children.
- A Health Day was held at Mellieħa Primary School focusing on nutrition and exercise. The pupils walked to and from the school to the main square and had an aerobics session to music. They were later able to enjoy healthy food.
- A farm visit at Għammieri was organised for Year 6 pupils. This experience was to raise awareness and increase children's knowledge on the process from farm to fork. Explanations on the processes of wheat, vegetables, milk, eggs and meat were carried out. The importance of this type of food in our daily intake was also given. This experience helped children get a better view of food and agriculture. Strawberries and yoghurt were also given to the children at the end of the visit. This served as a healthy snack.
- The Unit had a stand at Fresher's Week at Junior College during the first week of October. The aim of this initiative was to promote healthy lifestyles amongst adolescents, and covered the promotion of healthy, balanced diets, tobacco, and emotional wellbeing. Badges were made with the slogan *I'm cool, I'm healthy*.

Workplace Health Promotion

- A Healthy Living Day was held at Le Meridien Hotel in St Julians. This was aimed to promote healthy lifestyles for the staff of the hotel. The topics covered were nutrition, tobacco, and breast care. Another Health and Safety week was held in October 2008. Members of staff were weighed and their BMI was calculated. Advice on food and nutrition was also given after their BMI was calculated. Nutritional booklets were also given for more information.
- A Health Week was organised for Vodafone employees and various talks were given on different aspects of health mainly alcohol, tobacco, and nutrition. Discussions were held with catering staff with the aim of improving the availability of healthier options in the canteen.
- Another initiative to encourage quitting was reach-out at workplaces with the aim of reaching a wider spectrum of smokers and decrease the prevalence of smoking. Education, information, advice, and guidance on the effects of tobacco on health were given. Smokers were also encouraged to attend smoking cessation classes where applicable. Assistance on quitting was adapted according to age groups, settings and covered various sectors. During these events carbon monoxide testing was also carried out and tobacco exhibitions put up. Workplaces visited included the hospitality industry, factories, small and large enterprises and/or companies.

Health Promotion in Community

The events at which the Health Promotion Unit was present included:

- The Unit participated in the International Trade Fair of Malta where it promoted the Mediterranean diet and healthy eating. People were weighed and information on healthy eating was given in order to increase awareness on healthy dieting and healthy lifestyles.
- The Unit participated in Oral Health Day in collaboration with dentists working in primary health care, with a focus on Healthy Eating and Smoking. The initiative was followed by discussions regarding

nutrition and oral health. Meetings were held to discuss the relative nutritional issues and to project coherent nutritional messages within the Ministry for Social Policy. A presentation on nutrition and dental health was given during the Oral Health Conference that took place in October 2008.

- A Weight Management Programme took place at Kirkop in collaboration with the local council throughout summer. Follow-up sessions are still being planned.
- The Unit set up a stand on the occasion of the open day at the Madonna tal-Mellieħa home for the elderly. Officials from the Unit answered questions and helped members of the public.
- The Unit participated in the Festa Frawli held at Mġarr.

Committees

The Health Promotion Unit is represented and contributes actively in the Intersectoral Committee on Counteracting Obesity; the Food Safety Commission; and the Tender Adjudicating Board for meals served to elderly residents/meals board.

International Collaboration/Meetings Locally and Abroad

Officers from the Health Promotion Unit attended meetings related to their particular areas of work. There were 16 visits abroad, mostly to EU-hosted meetings where the officer is the national representative of the project. There were six meetings related to food and nutrition, four meetings related to tobacco, and three meetings on school health promotion. Locally, officers attended a number of meetings and conferences including a CAP Health Check seminar and meetings directly related to young people's health and women's health in particular.

Services

- *Nutrition consultations:* 18 one-to-one consultations took place in 2008;
- *Weight Management Programme:* 26 weight reduction programmes were carried out throughout 2008 in Malta and Gozo.

Tobacco

National Quitline

Counselling through the Quitline is an ongoing process within the Health Promotion Unit. On average the Quitline answers about three calls a day, averaging around 750 calls in a year. Callers are assessed on their readiness, motivation and given quitting guidance and given brief suggestions in a manner that is clear, strong, and personalised to the individual's situation. Depending on their requirements, smokers are either offered individual counselling or else referred to smoking cessation classes, depending on their individual smoking habits, needs and work schedule.

Smoking Cessation Programmes

This service is without any payment and is offered within the primary health care setting, in various health centres including: Paola, Mosta, B'Kara, Floriana, Gżira, Qormi, and Gozo. Applications are processed through the telephone and are also available online http://www.health.gov.mt/health_services/smokces.htm. The number of smoking cessation programmes carried out during 2008 were eight with 170 participants in different health centres.

One-to-One Counselling in Tobacco

One-to-one counselling is usually done through an appointment; however, due to the nature of the smoking cessation process, smokers are also supported upon request. This service facilitates the immediate intervention and support to the smokers on taking the decision to quit. The quitters are either followed up by other additional appointments or through telephone calls.

Sexual Health

74 counselling sessions were carried out, the majority of which focused on self-esteem, body image, and eating behaviour. 41 individuals received advice through the sexual health helpline, 12 of whom were referred to the GU clinic and one to Psychiatric outpatients.

Aerobics

18 Aerobics classes each consisting of 16 sessions were held in six different localities throughout Malta. In all, there were 389 participants (9 male; 380 female). WHO placed Malta first place for the initiatives taken during Move For Health Day.

Menus in Institutions

The Unit is consulted with regard to food offered in institutions for the elderly. In 2008, a Nutrition Assessment Tool and accompanying guidelines to be used within Elderly Homes was finalised. Menus were suggested for: the elderly resident's home in Mellièha; summer/winter variations in the menus of St Vincent de Paule; and 'Dar il-Kaptan' Respite Care Services.

Talks and Presentations

- A considerable number of presentations/talks were delivered during 2008. The audiences included pre-retirement public service workers (organised both by SDO and ETC); groups of adolescents (organised by parish centres), children (6-7 years old), elderly (organised by CARITAS, church parish centres), people suffering from Multiple Sclerosis (organised by the Multiple Sclerosis Society), and employees (organised by the Central Bank of Malta).
- 22 talks and presentations were given on nutrition and health.
- Training sessions for PSD teachers launched in January ended in April.
- A presentation on sexual risk-taking behaviour and screening was delivered to 400 officers within AFM – this was done over a period of four days.
- 'Communicating with adolescents on sexual health issues' was discussed with parents of adolescents at Siggiewi Parish and Qormi ladies' circle.
- Two talks on sexual health were held at ITS within its Health & Safety Programme for students who would be studying abroad for a year.
- A two-hour workshop was organised for a group of 15-year old boys from St Ignatius College on the topic of sexual health and STI prevention. Separate talks were held with students of Erin Serracino Inglott Girls' Secondary school, Maria Assumpta Girls' Secondary School and San Frangisk Assisi Boys' Secondary school, San Anton School, and youths attending Qawra Youth centre.
- A younger audience at Valletta Primary school discussed puberty and reproduction with emphasis given to communication, assertiveness and love.
- The Department participated in the outdoor music event 'Malta Pride' where material on STIs and testing was made available all through the evening.
- Two talks were delivered at Agius De Soldanis Girls' Secondary School, Gozo on the topic of body image and eating disorders.

- Two workshops on the psychology of coping with loss and emotional trauma (e.g. following an amputation) were conducted for the physiotherapists and occupational therapists at SLH.
- Two activities focused on personal hygiene, tobacco, self-esteem, healthy eating, and physical activity were organised for 8-year olds and 9-year olds attending kids on campus.

Media

During the year, officers from the Department gave interviews and actively took part in various television and radio programmes as well as contributed various articles in magazines and newspapers.

Research

- NSO Survey of Research and Development 2006 and 2007.
- Data about the DAFNE V project were sent to the National Statistics Office to complete an NSO Survey of Research and Development in the General Government Sector for 2006 and 2007.
- Risk Assessment in collaboration with the Malta Standards Authority.
- Questionnaire on the Flour Fortification Initiative.
- Data collection took place amongst 200 young foreigners (ages 18 – 28 years) as part of a research project entitled *Assessment of knowledge of HIV and sexual behaviour amongst young foreign people in Malta*. The survey which was translated in eight languages was distributed amongst various English schools in March and data analyses shall begin shortly.
- Malta has formally agreed to participate in the H-cubed project – A network to study and face the challenges of HBV, HCV and HIV amongst young people in the EU. This project has received favourable feedback from the EU commission but final confirmation is still to be received.

New Initiative

The Health Promotion Unit is taking the lead role in the Salt Initiative Framework presented by the European Commission. Discussions are under way and initial contact is being made with other stakeholders including the industry.

Resources

The Health Promotion Unit prepared the following resources in 2008:

- Quit & Win 2008 campaign: A2 poster and an application form
- Is-Sigurta' fl-Ikel - booklet
- Ċaqraq għal Saħħtek - booklet and a flyer
- Fun Run - flyer
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases - booklet
- Kul ikel tajjeb billi issegwi - leaflet
- Be Breast Aware – booklet
- Influenza - poster
- Is-Saħħa Sesswali – three-gate leaflet
- STI's make bad souvenirs
- A badge for Fresher's Week held at the Junior College, Msida, 1-8 October
- Breastfeeding poster and adverts
- Frota Bnina Saħħa Tina! Poster
- Euromelanoma 2008 billboard and poster
- World Glaucoma Day campaign
- Fibromyalgia International Awareness Day – poster.

The resources are designed in-house by the Graphic Design Unit.

The Unit in 2008 also created the following promotion material to be used in its outdoor activities: HPU canvas banner and a Ċaqraq għal Saħħtek banner.

Press Conferences

The Health Promotion Unit held the several press conferences to promote and launch its initiatives.

Training

Two groups of participating pharmacists and fourth year medical students have been trained in giving first-hand advice on quitting and information about the anti-tobacco services available at the Health Promotion Unit. Health care providers have a vital and prominent role in promoting tobacco free, healthy lifestyles and can contribute towards tobacco control through guiding and informing people on quitting.

Staff Development

A two-day training session was held for all members of staff of the Department. The training was based on team-building exercises and members of staff had the opportunity to discuss and strengthen collaboration at the Department. Opportunities for training are offered to staff both locally and abroad.

NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL UNIT (NCCU)

Non-communicable diseases put a significant health and economic burden on the population of Malta. Evidence shows that major chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, mental ill health and cancer result from a few lifestyle related factors, namely unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use and alcohol abuse which are in turn related to clear biological risk factors, namely obesity, hypertension, hyperlipidaemia, and carbohydrate abnormalities.

All these related factors depend on a solid socioeconomic environment which includes the control of poverty, education, employment, and social inequalities.

By means of appropriate strategic approaches, incorporating population risk and individual high risk reduction, a referral support system, a health information system, the empowerment of a primary healthcare system and health promotion initiatives, the implementation of a non-communicable disease strategy for Malta may be achieved through policy, capacity building, surveillance, and dissemination.

The strategy was revised during 2008 and will be issued for consultation in early 2009.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL UNIT

During 2008, the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit (IDCU) continued its primary role of surveillance, investigation and control of infectious diseases notified to the Department.

Notifiable Diseases

Notifiable infectious diseases are reported to the IDCU by medical practitioners, the microbiology and virology laboratories at Mater Dei Hospital and other medical diagnostic laboratories. The data presented in this report may be subject to changes according to further investigation results. Tabulated data is indicated in tables Section A to Section C:

Section A: Confirmed individual case reports, by sex and by quarter

(Q1: Jan-Mar; Q2: Apr-Jun; Q3: Jul-Sep; Q4: Oct-Dec)

Note: Except where otherwise indicated, figures refer to resident cases.

Notifiable Disease	T	M	F	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Comments
AIDS	6	6	-	1	-	5	-	All cases were imported. One case is deceased.
Chickenpox	280	145	135	74	126	44	36	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	4	2	2	-	1	3	-	
Chlamydia	104	62	36	23	32	25	24	One of the cases was imported. The gender of six cases is not known.
<i>non-resident cases</i>	2	-	2	-	-	-	2	
Clostridium Difficile	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	
Cryptosporidiosis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	
Campylobacter	70	41	29	14	26	14	16	
E. Coli	10	5	5	1	1	3	5	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	2	-	2	-	-	2	-	
Salmonella	131	63	68	13	20	63	35	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	9	7	2	-	-	1	8	
Scombrototoxic	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	
Shigella	3	1	2	-	-	-	3	
Unspecified	58	27	25	22	16	8	12	Gender distribution of six cases unknown
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Giardiasis	3	1	1	-	-	2	1	Gender distribution of one case is unknown
Gonorrhoea	49	36	8	8	15	7	19	Gender distribution of 5 of these cases is unknown.
Hepatitis A	4	1	3	-	-	-	4	
Hepatitis B	8	7	1	-	1	2	5	3 cases were imported and are pending confirmation. One case is deceased.
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	This is an imported case pending confirmation.
Hepatitis C	12	6	6	-	-	2	10	4 of these cases are pending
HIV	28	17	11	8	4	8	8	11 cases were imported
<i>non-resident cases</i>	2	2	-	-	2	-	-	One case was imported
Legionnaire's Disease	2	1	1	-	-	2	-	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	This case is deceased, occurred in a non-resident and forms an outbreak with a case notified in 2007.
Leishmaniasis, Cutaneous	14	9	5	2	9	2	1	
Leishmaniasis, Visceral	2	-	2	-	2	-	-	
Leprosy	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	This case was imported
Leptospirosis	2	2	-	-	-	1	1	
Malaria	2	2	-	1	-	1	-	These cases were imported.
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	This case was imported.
Measles	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	
Meningitis, Other bacterial	14	8	6	1	3	7	3	
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	This case is deceased.
Meningococcal, Meningitis	8	2	6	5	1	-	2	One case is deceased.
Meningococcal, Septicaemia	3	1	2	1	1	-	1	One case is deceased.
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	
Mumps	7	4	3	4	3	-	-	
Pertussis	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	
Rubella	3	-	3	3	-	-	-	
Scarlet fever	37	16	21	7	20	2	8	7 are pending confirmation
<i>non-resident cases</i>	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	
Shingles, Herpes Zoster	36	18	18	5	15	9	7	
Syphilis Latent	9	6	3	-	2	4	3	One case was imported
<i>non-resident cases</i>	2	1	1	1	-	1	-	
Syphilis Secondary	5	4	-	-	2	3	-	Gender distribution of one case not known. One case was imported.
Tuberculosis, Non-Pulmonary	17	13	4	3	2	6	6	
Tuberculosis, Pulmonary	48	42	6	10	14	14	10	
Typhus, Murine	8	5	3	-	3	3	2	One case is deceased.
Typhus, Tick-borne	3	3	-	-	-	3	-	

Section B: Cases involved in outbreaks, by sex and by quarter

(Q1: Jan-Mar; Q2: Apr-Jun; Q3: Jul-Sep; Q4: Oct-Dec)

The figures in brackets indicate the number of implicated outbreaks.

Outbreak Type	T	M	F	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Comments
Chickenpox [27]	79	54	25	16	23	29	11	These include 15 clusters of two cases, eight clusters of three cases, one cluster of four cases, and one cluster of 21 cases.
<i>non-resident cases</i> [2]	67	63	4	-	-	-	67	These include one cluster of 52 cases, and one cluster of 15 cases.
Campylobacter [7]	18	8	10	3	6	4	5	
E. Coli [2]	4	2	2	-	-	2	2	Gender distribution and total number of cases of one outbreak not known.
Salmonella [16]	40	20	17	7	5	18	10	Gender distribution of one outbreak not known.
<i>non-resident cases</i> [3]	8	5	3	-	2	-	6	
Scombrototoxic [2]	4	2	2	-	4	-	-	
Unspecified [28]	115	50	42	28	37	18	32	Gender distribution of three outbreaks not known.
<i>non-resident cases</i> [2]	4	4	-	2	-	2	-	
Leishmaniasis, <i>Cutaneous</i> [2]	4	2	2	-	4	-	-	
Norovirus, Gastroenteritis [4]	104	43	21	-	20	-	84	Gender distribution of one outbreak not known.
Norovirus, Suspected cases [2]	113	101	12	-	113	-	-	
<i>non-resident cases</i> [1]	11	4	7	-	-	11	-	
Rubella [1]	3	2	1	3	-	-	-	
Scarlet Fever [4]	9	3	6	9	-	-	-	
<i>non-resident cases</i> [1]	2	1	1	-	2	-	-	This cluster was imported

Section C: Reported deaths from Notifiable Infectious Diseases

During 2008 there were 8 deaths from notifiable diseases:

Notifiable Disease	Total number of Deaths	Comments
AIDS	1	This case was imported
Hepatitis B	1	
Legionnaire's Disease	1	This case occurred in a non-resident and forms an outbreak with a case notified in 2007.
Meningitis, <i>Meningococcal</i>	1	
Meningitis, <i>Other bacterial</i>	1	This case occurred in a non-resident.
Septicaemia, <i>Meningococcal</i>	1	
Tuberculosis, Pulmonary	1	
Typhus, <i>Murine</i>	1	

HIV

Thirty cases were reported during the year (apart from the six AIDS cases). Twenty eight of these cases occurred in Maltese residents (of which 18 were foreigners). The other two cases occurred in non-residents. Eleven of the total cases were female and six of these were pregnant. 25 of these cases were due to heterosexual contact, whilst eight of these cases were MSM.

Meningococcal Disease

During the year, 12 cases of meningococcal disease (MD) were reported in Maltese residents. All were sporadic cases. MD was reported in three males and nine females, and two of the cases involving female patients had a fatal outcome. The main clinical diagnosis was Meningitis in eight cases, while the other four cases were septicaemia, one of which is deceased. There were no cases involving both meningitis and septicaemia. During the previous year, 13 cases were notified.

Of the 13 cases, *N. meningitidis* was cultivated in three cases. Information on serogroup, type and subtype is available for these cases. Serogroup B accounted for two cases and Serogroup W 135 for one case.

Acute Flaccid Paralysis

Active surveillance continued throughout this year with reporting to the WHO. No cases of AFP in children under the age of 15 were reported in 2008.

Legionnaire's Disease

In 2008 there were three reported cases of Legionnaire's Disease that were diagnosed and confirmed using urinary antigen testing. One of the cases was reported through the European Working Group on Legionella Infections and involved a tourist who acquired the disease during a stay in Malta. This case was part of a cluster and was duly investigated and the report sent to EWGLI. Two other cases were associated with households and were diagnosed in Malta. Both were Maltese. One death was reported.

Diseases of Childhood

There was one reported case of measles (which was not confirmed serologically); seven cases of mumps; three sporadic cases of rubella and one outbreak involving three cases; one reported case of pertussis; 430 cases of chicken pox notified to the unit, 67 of which occurred in non residents; 36 cases of herpes zoster and 38 sporadic cases of scarlet fever and four outbreaks involving 11 people.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

There were 106 notified cases of Chlamydia, four of which involved persons of foreign nationality. There were 49 cases of Gonorrhoea, two of which in persons of foreign nationality. There were nine cases of latent syphilis, two in non-residents and seven in Maltese residents of foreign nationality, and five cases of secondary syphilis in Maltese residents.

Food-borne Diseases

Notified food-borne outbreaks and clusters have, in 2008, affected about 241 people. These outbreaks show a predominant association with households (37%), while 19% and 13% originated from restaurants and hotels respectively. Institutions were responsible for 9% of the outbreaks and these were mostly of unknown cause.

Noroviral disease in the community is represented by two notified outbreaks involving 13 persons but does not at all reflect the burden of disease in the community as the majority of cases and outbreaks are not notified. Characteristic with viral gastroenteritis is the large number of people affected in close communities typified in 2008 by a school outbreak involving an estimated 101 mainly children, an imported outbreak affecting 40 persons and an outbreak in an elderly people's home affecting another 44 residents.

The table below shows the sporadic cases per month for 2008. A short description for each type is given:

Numbers of sporadic cases of food borne illness in Malta according to causative pathogen where this was identified													
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Campylobacter	1	5	8	8	12	6	5	4	5	2	8	6	70
Salmonella	3	8	2	1	7	12	22	18	24	21	15	7	140
Unspecified	8	8	6	6	5	5	2	3	3	4	5	4	59
Giardiasis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
E. Coli	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	2	3	0	12
Toxic	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Shigella	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3

Salmonellosis affected an unprecedented 140 individual cases and 19 separate outbreaks or clusters involving an estimated total of 48 persons. This is the second highest peak since 1995.

Campylobacter affected 70 individual cases and seven separate outbreaks affected 18 cases.

E. COLI affected 12 individual cases (10 residents and two non-residents). There were two separate outbreaks affecting four cases.

Scombrototoxic poisoning has involved two individual cases as well as two outbreaks with 2 persons each.

Giardiasis: only three sporadic cases were reported but no outbreaks.

Cryptosporidiosis: one case was reported during 2008.

Unspecified food-borne illness affected a total of 59 individuals and 30 outbreaks involving 119 persons.

Shigellosis affected three individuals after no cases were reported since 2005.

Sentinel Surveillance

For the influenza season of 2008-2009, nine private GPs participated in sentinel surveillance of influenza, pneumonia, acute respiratory tract infection, acute otitis media and acute bronchitis.

Travel Medical Advice

The Unit provided information to the general public requesting medical advice prior to travelling abroad.

Website

The Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit maintained its website by posting monthly reports and also posting information of communicable diseases and any related press releases or updates, as required.

Academia

- Talks to the general public on Food Safety.
- Lectures to undergraduates and post graduate students.
- A series of CPD lectures on Infectious Diseases to Public Health doctors.
- Talks on radio and TV on communicable diseases.
- Two members of the permanent staff are currently reading for a Masters in Public Health and three members of the permanent staff are undergoing training in Public Health competencies to obtain accreditation as Public Health specialists.

Conferences, Seminars, Courses and Meetings

Departmental officials attended various conferences, seminars, courses, meetings and workshops both locally and abroad. In all, they attended eight courses abroad which included training on time series analysis, vaccinations, outbreak response, epidemiological aspects of an outbreak, infectious diseases and also 12 meetings abroad which included health security meetings and participation in two European exercises organised by the Health Threats Unit within DG Sanco in Luxembourg and Advisory Forum, Competent body meetings on preparedness, response, surveillance and threats and network meetings on influenza, sexually transmitted diseases and food borne diseases organised by the European Communicable Disease Centre (ECDC) in Sweden.

Other Work

Communicable disease strategy

The first communicable disease strategy was formalised in 2004. This strategy is being updated by a working group that constitutes representatives from the Public Health Department, infection control, clinical infectious diseases, and laboratory. During 2008, the epidemiological situation on communicable diseases in Malta was updated up to 2007 and updated the services available related to communicable diseases. The working group did a priority exercise whereby two main areas of priority were identified: tuberculosis and sexually-transmitted and blood-borne infections.

Two separate working groups are being set up to work on a strategy and action plan with the main aim of controlling these diseases.

Avian Flu Plan

The Public Health Action Plan for Avian Influenza was updated. The aim of this plan is to outline the Public Health actions in the event of Avian Influenza being notified in poultry or wild birds in Malta and notification of a case of avian influenza in humans.

Other Functions of IDCU

The Unit was also involved in other duties falling under the Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention namely:

- the renewal and issuing of licences, including the inspection of dental, X-ray, chiropody, acupuncture and tattoo clinics, blood banks, and medical diagnostic laboratories;
- involvement in the vetting of working permits of foreigners from the health point of view.

Chest Unit

The role of the Chest Unit is to co-ordinate activities on Tuberculosis (TB) prevention, surveillance and control. The main functions of the Chest Unit during 2008 were to run the Screening Programme for Irregular Migrants arriving in Malta, screening of third country nationals applying for work permits in Malta, screening of foreign students, prisoners and staff working in environments placing them at high risk of TB infection. The Chest Unit also screened contacts of patients infected with TB and provided BCG vaccine to those working in high risk areas or those travelling to high prevalence countries and organised Directly Observed Treatment for Tuberculosis patients. The Chest Unit also gave lectures to interested groups (particularly those working with irregular migrants) on TB and reported data on TB to the World Health Organisation and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Besides the above routine activities, in 2008, the Chest Unit reviewed the provision of Directly Observed Therapy for Tuberculosis, particularly in detention and open centres for irregular migrants, started work on guidelines for pre-employment screening for TB, screening of schoolchildren for TB and on a review of the screening programme for irregular migrants. Work on a new electronic database for the unit was also started.

Surveillance for Tuberculosis

There were 65 cases of TB notified during 2008. This is an increase of 97% over the previous year and reflects the increase in arrivals in irregular immigrants during 2008 and the enlarging local community of persons born in high prevalence countries.

The cases of Tuberculosis were as follows:

- 15 pulmonary TB cases in Maltese nationals;
- 33 pulmonary TB cases in foreign nationals (29 asylum seekers);
- 5 extra pulmonary TB cases in Maltese nationals;
- 12 extra pulmonary TB cases in foreign nationals (nine asylum seekers).

As in previous years, the majority of TB cases were among foreigners (45), and among these irregular migrants were the predominant group (38). This reflects the growing community of persons in Malta coming from high incidence countries. The number of cases among persons born in Malta has remained stable. These numbers are provisional and could change following the receipt of further laboratory data.

Contact Tracing

During 2008, the contact tracing system was reviewed. Cases of active pulmonary TBs were seen while inpatients wherever possible, or visits were made to their residences to identify contacts who needed to be screened. In an effort to better target screening activities, the NICE guidelines were applied. Using the recommendations in this guideline, the number of persons screened was reduced by 45%; however the number of persons requiring referral to Chest Clinic remained the same. In 2008, screening of close contacts of non-pulmonary cases was also started, as recommended by the NICE guideline. Further work on improving the contact tracing activities, particularly among immigrants in detention centres will be carried out in 2009. The following summarises the examination of contacts of notified TB cases.

Outcome	Contacts
Active TB and Treated	1
Referred to Chest Clinic	57
Followed up/Discharged	210
Total	268

Screening Programme for Irregular Migrants

The significant increase in irregular migrants reaching Malta during 2008 brought additional pressures on the screening programme, accentuated by the decrease in staff at the Chest Unit. During 2008, a total of 5,227 irregular migrants were screened (some more than once). Of these, 199 had an abnormal screening and were referred to the Chest Clinic for assessment. The screening programme identified 16 cases of Active Tuberculosis who were then notified in 2008. A total of 39 persons were reported to have started preventive treatment. The following table indicates the results of the Tuberculosis Screening programme in 2008.

Type of screening	Persons screened	Outcome
Screening Programme for Irregular Immigrants (landing) ⁽¹⁾	2,775	105 abnormal CXR; All referred to Chest Clinic 11 cases notified active TB; 29 started on preventive treatment
Screening Programme for Irregular Immigrants (release) ⁽²⁾	2,362	59 abnormal CXR; 5 notified active pulmonary TB; 10 started on preventive treatment
Screening Programme for Irregular Immigrants (Minors and Pregnant women) ⁽³⁾	51 Minors 39 Pregnant	20 had high Mantoux and were referred to Chest Clinic; 15 had high Mantoux All pregnant women are referred to Chest Clinic.

⁽¹⁾ Irregular immigrants screened for TB on arrival in Malta in 2008.

⁽²⁾ Screening of Irregular immigrants prior to release from detention centres. This data refers to immigrants released in 2008.

⁽³⁾ Minors and pregnant women are additionally screened through Mantoux tests for evidence of latent TB.

Screening of Employees Working in High Risk Environments

Although there is no routine recall system for screening of employees working in high risk areas, persons working with irregular migrants are encouraged to attend for annual screening for Tuberculosis. This included Detention Service, AFM, Police, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Refugee Commission and Appoġġ personnel. The objective is to test for tuberculin conversion or high tuberculin reactors and to offer them preventive treatment if required. In 2008, out of 255 persons screened, 24 were referred to Chest Clinic for assessment. There were no cases of active pulmonary disease among these personnel. The following table summarises the screening of employees working in high risk environments:

Department	Tested	High Mantoux	Given BCG	Abnormal CXR	Referred Chest Clinic
AFM/Detention Service	190	19	0	0	19
Police	16	2	0	0	2
Other agencies	49	3	0	0	3
Total	255	24	0	0	24

Work Permits

During the year, 1,776 foreigners were screened for TB during the work permit application process. Of these, 18 had abnormal chest X-rays and were referred to the Chest Clinic for follow-up. None were diagnosed as active TB.

Prison

Prison inmates are screened for TB once they are detained at CCF. There were 89 foreigners who were screened during 2008 – none of these had abnormal results. Of the 31 Maltese inmates screened, two had abnormal chest X-rays and were referred to the Chest Clinic for assessment.

Others

Foreign students are referred to the Chest Unit for screening for Tuberculosis prior to entering a government school in Malta. Of the 219 persons screened, none had abnormal chest X-rays or a positive tuberculin skin test.

Thirty persons employed with Dar Tal-Providenza were screened for TB in 2008. There were a further 33 persons screened for various other reasons (mainly travel to high prevalence countries for over four weeks). Of these, two had abnormal chest X-rays and seven had a positive tuberculin skin test. All nine were referred to the Chest Clinic for assessment.

Tuberculin Testing and BCG Vaccination

Chest Unit administered a total of 245 BCG vaccinations in 2008, an increase of over 40% over the previous year. This was mainly due to the start of vaccinations of children born to irregular immigrants.

The Unit also performed a total of 983 tuberculin skin tests, as follows:

- 255 as part of screening of employees at high risk;
- 149 as screening of irregular immigrants (including pregnant women, minors and prior to giving BCG to children of irregular immigrants);
- 257 as part of testing of persons who stayed in high risk countries for more than 4 weeks;
- 322 as part of screening of contacts of cases of active Tuberculosis.

Referrals from School Medical Services

33 school children were referred by the School Medical Services because of a high reaction to tuberculin testing. They were tested for TB disease by a chest x-ray. All CXRs were normal. 20 were referred to Chest Clinic for further follow up and possible preventive treatment.

Other Activities

Presentations regarding tuberculosis were given to people working with asylum seekers in Malta. This included Agenzija Appoġġ, and AFM personnel. The presentations consisted of an overview of TB including transmission, screening activities, treatment, DOT and drug resistance.

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Department for Environmental Health promotes and safeguards the wellbeing and health of the public from adverse environmental effects.

This Department, within the Public Health Regulatory Division, provides its services through the following three main sections, namely:

- *Health Inspectorate Services*: the executive arm of the Department, provides services through the Administration Unit; Citations Unit; Complaints Administration Unit; Regional Units; the Port Health Services; the Food Safety Unit; Environmental Health Unit (including the Pest Control Services); the Burials Administration Unit; the Drug Control Unit; Institutional Health Inspectorate Unit; and the Food Safety Commission Secretariat.
- *Port Health Medical Services*: primarily has the duty of border control from infectious diseases.
- *Public Health Laboratory Service*: provides technical and scientific support to the investigations performed by all the branches/units within the Department.

HEALTH INSPECTORATE SERVICES

Administration Unit

The Unit co-ordinates all work between regional offices, units and branches, replies to parliamentary questions, issues the relevant memos and correspondence, processes contraventions, performs prosecution on behalf of the Public Health Regulation Division and is also responsible for procurement/distribution of equipment to all staff. Regions/units/sections that fall under the responsibility of the Manager Health Inspector (MHI) are monitored, controlled and advised through this office, to provide consistency at work.

39 Replies to parliamentary questions were drafted during 2008. 120 memos were issued.

Citations Unit

The main duties of the Unit are to:

- register all citations;
- prepare contravention reports for endorsement by Manager Health Inspector;
- prepare Court summons;
- contact Point with Police Principal Citations Office;
- register and keep record of undertakings issued in terms of the Food Safety Act;
- register and keep record of undertakings issued in terms of the Public Health Act;
- register and keep record of emergency prohibition orders;
- register and keep record of public health emergencies.

During the year, the number of Health Sittings appointed totalled 44. The total number of cases heard by the presiding Magistrate was 1,520 (cases may be heard more than once during the year), of which 222 were decided. The total number of new cases during 2008 amounted to 185, while six magisterial on-site inquiries were performed; a total number of 442 charges were issued.

Undertakings issued in terms of Article 39 of the Food Safety Act amounted to 148. Emergency Control Orders (49) and Emergency Prohibition Orders (eight) in terms of Art. 36 of the Food Safety Act amounted to 57.

Complaints Administration Unit

The total number of complaints as lodged with this Unit amounted to 6,904, of which 5,988 were on environmental matters, 783 food related and 74 on other public health matters.

Regional Units

Environmental Health Officers have been deployed to work within six regional units around Malta and one in Gozo. The Health Inspectorate functions within a Quality Service Charter with respect to the service offered to the public. The services offered by the Health Inspectorate Services included:

Inspections in connection with Licensing	771
Undertakings (re Article 39 of the Food Safety Act of 2002)	99
Inspections for Risk Assessment Grading purposes	3,972
Inspections of food premises (other than Risk Assessment)	3,753
Samples taken during inspections of food premises	405
Samples taken in connection with environmental issues	2,004
Samples taken in connection with sampling programmes	1,466
Samples taken in connection with food poisonings	291
Nuisance reports/Abatement notices	832
Inspections re food poisoning	72
Inspections to verify immunisation of children	0
Complaints – food related	783
Complaints – environment related	5,988
Complaints – Other Public Health matters	74

Port Health Services

Activities of Port Health Office, Health Inspectorate Services, Floriana

Inspections of marine crafts requested by Malta Maritime Authority	24
Inspection of refrigerated vehicles requested by Commissioner of Police	138
Repatriation of human remains	118
Burial at sea	3
Processing of requests in respect of import declaration of foodstuffs	13,996
Processing of requests for importation of pharmaceuticals and allied products	4,882
Ship Sanitation Control Certificate	173
Ship Sanitation Exemption Control Certificate	117
Number of Inspections of Catering Establishments and Warehouses	182
Samples taken of imported items of food	178
Health/Radiation free Certificates issued	558
Undertakings	48
Inspections of incoming consignments	506
Destruction Certificates for unfit food	6
Registration of trader's application	62

The Port Health Medical Services were offered from the Floriana Port Health Office and Malta International Airport Health Clinic (Gudja) and the Yacht Marina Health Guard premises.

Activities of Port Medical Services

Number of crew disembarked for health/injury reasons	18
Radio Medical advice referred to ships	38
Examination of corpses on board	3
Examination in stowaways	20
Examination of corpses recovered from sea	13
Examination of irregular immigrants	2,758
Irregular immigrants referred to Hospital on arrival	30

The Airport clinic was responsible for the implementation of the international health regulations, foremost the prevention of priority communicable diseases of being imported into Malta.

Sick/injured travellers seen	1,985
Sick/injured employees seen	3,785

Food Safety Unit

This Unit was responsible for:

- giving consultations prior to licensing food businesses or refurbishing already licensed food businesses;
- inspection of food premises prior to licensing (35);
- issuing approvals connected with: Trade Licences (256); MEPA (182) and Malta Tourism Authority (103) applications; Police Department temporary licences (7); and Health Department licences (22);
- total number of applications for 2008 (570);
- total number of inspections performed during 2008 (937).

Environmental Health Unit

The main functions of this Unit included:

- investigation of complaints originating from noise pollution, air pollution and mobile phones' antennae;
- co-ordination of programmes for the monitoring, assessing and controlling environmental parameters which pose a threat to human health;
- producing reliable and standardised information for those concerned with further development of various country policies, which may affect public health;
- acting as a contact point with the EU Directorate and MEPA regarding environmental health issues;
- taking 41 service water samples with respect to the 20 various Water Quality Zones (WQZ) referred by the Water Services Corporation in view of current legislation;
- registering of 21 Private Water Suppliers for 23 sources as per LN 357 of 2004;
- taking of 2,043 bathing water samples in collaboration with the Regional Health Officers and the Public Health Laboratory (87 official bathing sites were monitored);
- issuing five health warnings in respect of bathing water sites (31 site days closed);
- registering of 300 swimming pools in accordance with LN 129 of 2005;
- performing 96 audit inspections of swimming pools (covering 257 swimming pools);
- registering of 11 premises with respect to Cooling Towers as per LN 6 of 2006;
- performing 17 audit inspections re legionella control as per LN 5 of 2006;
- issuing of 35 abatement notices under the Public Health Act.

The Pest Control Section deployed two teams of operatives in Malta; 159,900 point baits and 11,900 sewers were baited. One team is available in Gozo. 22,124 point baits and 2,020 sewer baits were baited.

Burials Administration Unit

The Burials Administration Unit was responsible for the running of Addolorata, Żebbuġ, Mosta, Burmarrad, Rabat, Mellieħa, and Ta' Braxia cemeteries. Burials carried out at government cemeteries were: 1,588 in Addolorata and 308 in other government cemeteries.

The number of new applications received for new gravesites during 2008 was 435. Also 51 new applications for the transfer of graves by donation or inheritance were received.

Total number of cleaning of graves and transportation of remains during 2008 were:

	<i>Cleanings</i>	<i>Transportation</i>
Addolorata	398	76
Other government cemeteries	32	43

Drug Control Unit

This section was responsible for the issuing of Control Cards for narcotic and psychotropic drugs as per Drugs (Control) Regulations 1985 and Dangerous Drugs (Internal Control) Rules 1939. The unit was also responsible for the licensing and maintenance of Clinics, Laboratories, Radiology Departments, Blood

Banks and Tattooists in terms of the Medical & Kindred Professions Ordinance and the Control of Tattooing Act.

The figures below show the number of clinics registered with the Department by the end of 2008.

Acupuncture Clinics	2
Chiropody Clinics	5
Dental Clinics	84
Medical Diagnostic Laboratories	5
Physiotherapy Clinics	15
Radiology Departments	15
Tattooists	18

A total of 23,794 Control Cards were issued during 2008, of which 663 were issued in view of affidavits as the original cards were lost.

Institutional Health Inspectorate Unit

The aim of the Unit is to work with that part of the community, which at some point in time is institutionalised or is frequenting some form of institution, possibly immuno-compromised, hence requires specific hygienic standards.

This Unit carried out the following:

- 159 inspections in government hospitals;
- 29 inspections in schools (non food handling);
- 399 food swab/samples;
- 183 service/other water samples taken for analysis;
- 12 MEPA files relating to the construction/alterations of both new and existing institutions dealt with;
- eight outbreaks investigated in institutions;
- 66 inspections performed in Old People's Homes with respect to renewal of licence;
- 398 risk assessment inspections performed in various institutions;
- one undertaking issued.

Food Safety Commission Secretariat (FSCS)

- During 2008, the Food Safety Commission (FSC) met 13 times.
- There were 8,531 food businesses on the official food premises register of these 874 registered during 2008.
- The number of food handlers registered and issued with the required document, during 2008 was 7,123.
- Present number of active registered food handlers amounts to 25,464.
- The total number of food handlers cards issued so far including renewals is 48,124.
- During 2008, eight new Food Hygiene Course Providers (FHCP) were authorised by the unit. Presently there are 46 FHCPs individuals or organisations approved to provide food hygiene courses.
- Registered cheeselets producers still stands at 1,300 as no new registrations were received in 2008.
- The FSCS is entrusted with the daily checking of all notifications received by e-mail from the EU Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed network. During 2008, 1,710 notifications, tables and other communication were vetted.
- There were 23 Alerts originating from Malta during 2008.

A list of food items which were destroyed during 2008 and the charges issued by the Health Inspectorate are summarised in the following tables:

Type of food	Quantity/Weight
Meat & Meat Products (inc. poultry and rabbits)	1,963 kgs
Fish & Fish Products	14.4 kgs
Dairy Products	36.25 kgs
Confectionery & Bakery Goods	41.12 kgs
Vegetable & Fruits	0.7 kgs
Savouries & Sweets	491.125 kgs
Juices & Beverages	6.48 kgs
Honey	7.2 kgs
Spices and herbs	80.5 kgs
Pasta, Noodles and Rice	50 kgs
Delicatessen	280 kgs
Nuts	71.2 kgs
Groceries	1,214.5 kgs
Table Water	2,000 lts
Beer	1.5 lts

Breakdown of the Number of Charges Issued during 2008	
Food Hygiene Regulations of 2002	169
Code of Police Laws	89
Food Safety Act of 2002	51
Labelling, Presentation and Advertising of Foodstuffs (Amendment) Regulations	33
Registration of Food Premises Regulations	11
Registration of Food Handlers Regulations	15
Sausages, Salted Meat and Other Prepared Meat Regulations	4
Smoking in premises open to the Public Regulations	26
Public Health Act	7
Registration of Private Water Supplies Intended for Human Consumption Regulations, 2004	2
Dairy Farms Regulations	1
Swimming Pools Regulations 2005	5
Use of fuel in Bakeries Regulations	1
Quality of Water Intended for Human Consumption Regulations, 2004	2
Edible Fat & Oils Regulations 2003	15
Food Safety (Temperature Control) Regulations 2008	7
Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and the Council of 29 April 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin.	1
Enforcement of various European Union Regulations on Food Safety, Regulations, 2008	1
G.N. 110 of 1934	1
Tobacco Control Act	1
Total	442

PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

The Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) continued to provide the vital technical back-up service for the whole department. MPHL was granted ISO accreditation for the first time for nine microbiological tests on 1 February 2008.

The Microbiology Section of the Public Health Laboratory was nominated National Reference Laboratory (food and products intended for animal feed) for:

- Salmonella (SLM-NRL)
- Campylobacter (CMP-NRL)
- Listeria (LM-NRL)
- Coagulase Positive Staphylococci (CPS-NRL)
- Verotoxigenic *E. coli* (VTEC-NRL)
- Parasites (PR-NRL)
- Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing (AMS-NRL).

While the Chemistry Section of the Public Health Laboratory served as the National Reference Laboratory (food and products intended for animal feed) for:

- Dioxins / PCBs
- PAHs
- Pesticides in Cereal
- Pesticides in Food of Animal Origin and Food of High Fat Content
- Pesticides – Single Residue Methods
- Pesticides in Fruit and Vegetables
- Mycotoxins
- Heavy Metals
- Food Contact Material
- GMOs

The nomination as a National Reference Laboratory for Genetic Modified Organisms is a recent event.

This laboratory examined a total number of 7,527 samples. The following list summarises the samples submitted from different sources as well as the samples analysed in the different sections of the Laboratory:

Food for Chemical Analysis	581
Water for Chemical Analysis	1,280
Food for Microbiological Analysis *	1,894
Samples (Environmental Swabs) for Hygienic Standard	269
Water for Microbiological Analysis	3,028
Clinical samples for Microbiological Analysis	475
Total	7,527

*A large number of food samples tested in 2008 consisted of five sub-samples (N=5)

Environmental Health Policy Co-Ordination

Environmental Health Management Meetings

During 2008, the Directorate for Environmental Health held regular monthly meetings with the Environment Protection Directorate of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. These meetings continue to serve to consolidate intersectoral action on environmental health issues such as noise, air and water quality, radiation and any matters arising from time to time and improved collaboration between the directorates.

Clean Air Consultative Group

During 2008, the Clean Air Consultative Group met several times to discuss replacement legislation under the Public Health Act for the Clean Air Act, which is to be repealed. The working group submitted proposals for a legal notice which will require the setting up of an Air Quality Advisory Board.

Preparations for the WHO Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2010

Representatives from the Directorate for Environmental Health attended two inter-governmental high-level preparatory meetings in Milan and Madrid in March and October 2008 respectively. During these meetings, Member States discussed country implementation of Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) Regional Priority Goals I to IV, dealing with health effects related to water and sanitation, air quality, accidents and injuries and supportive environments and physical agents, as well as the policy direction for the fifth ministerial conference and beyond, which will include issues around health effects of climate change and indoor air pollution.

World Health Day 2008: Health Effects of Climate Change

In line with the 2008 theme for World Health Day 2008, the Department for Environmental Health, together with the Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, worked on the production of a 30-second television and advert and publication of an information leaflet on the health effects of climate change.

Review of National Action Plan on Environment and Health

An intersectoral working group including representatives from various ministries and entities reviewed the 2006-2010 National Environment Action Plan. The document, due to be published by the end of February 2009 looks at environmental health issues in Malta and actions committed to by entities and departments. In line with Malta's commitments to the WHO Children's Action Plan for Europe, some child specific issues and actions are included.

European Environment & Health Action Plan 2004-2010

Malta, through co-ordination and representation by the Office of the Director, Environmental Health (Public Health Regulation) is committed to the European Environment and Health Action Plan for the period 2004-2010. The Action Plan is designed to give the EU the scientifically grounded information needed to help all 25 EU Member States reduce the adverse health impacts of certain environmental factors and to endorse better co-operation between actors in the environment, health and research fields. It takes the concerns of the other institutions into account in the identification of the actions proposed and is designed to fit with existing actions at regional, national, European and international level, notably to the WHO pan-European Environment and Health process, and its commitments to ensuring safer environments for children. The three main themes of the Action Plan include: improving the information chain to understand the links between sources of pollution and health effects (actions 1-4); filling the knowledge gap by strengthening research; and addressing the emerging issues on environment and health (actions 5-8); and reviewing policies and improving communication (actions 9-13).

Transport, Health and the Environment

The Department of Environmental Health has remained active within the recently re-appointed committee on Transport, Health and the Environment in line with the WHO/UNECE Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE-PEP). The main remit of the local committee is the integration of health and environment issues into transport policies and the broader implementation of commitments to THE-PEP.

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING SERVICES STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Nursing Services Standards (DNSS) is responsible for the establishment and monitoring of nursing standards in all care sectors. The main purpose of the DNSS is to ensure the provision of good quality care through regulation. Responsibilities falling under this office also include both the running and co-ordination of particular projects and initiatives, all requiring a hefty element of intradepartmental teamwork and interdepartmental collaboration.

During 2008, DNSS has progressed and nurtured ongoing developments, as well as embarked on new initiatives. This was done within the scope of the Department Nursing Services Standards, which is to provide vision and direction to nursing services as part of health service delivery in Malta. Such initiatives include the formulation of nursing standards, policies and guidelines, ensuring adequate nursing and midwifery manpower across all departments, the running of the Enrolled nurse-Staff nurse (EN-SN) conversion course, and intravenous therapy (IV) course, etc. Collaboration with other sectors such as the human resources contingency planning input to the Pandemic Contingency Plan, the Institute of Health Care, the Council of Nurses and Midwives, the setting up of a new rehabilitation facility at Karen Grech Hospital, recruitment of EU nurses, the running of the Continuous Professional Development scheme for nurses, a marketing campaign to recruit nurse returnees and student nurses, and a number of industrial relations issues with a number of unions were also among the challenges taken up by this office.

Formulation of Nursing Standards and Policies

Various work groups continued to function so as to improve on already established standards, to draft new ones and also to see that those already established are being implemented.

Controlled Drugs policy

This was drafted by the Unit responsible for standards and policies within the DNSS. This policy has been introduced in all local health care settings. A Controlled Drug Audit Tool is being introduced during the inspections that are being carried out in various health care settings by the Licensing Team.

Drug Administration and Infection Control Policies

These two policies are being drafted and they are at an advanced stage.

Standards for Homes for the Elderly

A working group set up through a DNSS initiative is finalising the standards for homes for the elderly. These include standards of care and also physical standards for buildings used for homes of the elderly. These will later on serve as benchmarks for the inspecting teams that will be conducting visits to these home so as to grant the necessary operating licences. These standards will facilitate a cultural change towards quality management in the running of homes for the elderly and the care processes involved.

Standards for maternity and neonatal care

After the recruitment of a midwife in October, this Department started working on standards for maternity and neonatal care. A report about team midwifery has been drafted and an analysis of the regulatory legislation concerned with midwifery is being carried out.

Report on the staff complement on the NPICU (MDH)

Following a formal request from the CEO of Mater Dei Hospital regarding the staffing levels at the NPICU, an in-depth study was carried out to investigate whether the staffing levels at the NPICU was adequate to meet the demands of the day and to investigate whether they were operating under safe conditions. The study was subdivided into three phases. In the first phase data on the staffing levels vis-à-vis number of patients was collected and analysed. The second phase involved a number of in depth interviews to top management, middle management, first line management and staff who previously worked at the NPICU and staff who are still working at the NPICU, while the third phase of the study involved data collection from field work and analyses of nurse to patient ratio taking into consideration patient acuity.

A full report with the findings and recommendations was presented to CEO Mater Dei and Director General (Health Care Services). Following this study, a meeting was conducted with the management of MDH to discuss the findings and recommendations to implement changes.

Working groups

One of these working groups is working on the introduction of draft standards for nursing agencies and an application form to apply for licensing. Another group was set up with the aim of drafting a national policy and standards for medicine administration, whilst another work group is working on the setting up of standards of care for the homes of the elderly. The process involved literature searches relating to the specific themes and meetings with key persons and stakeholders.

Inspection of Health Care Facilities

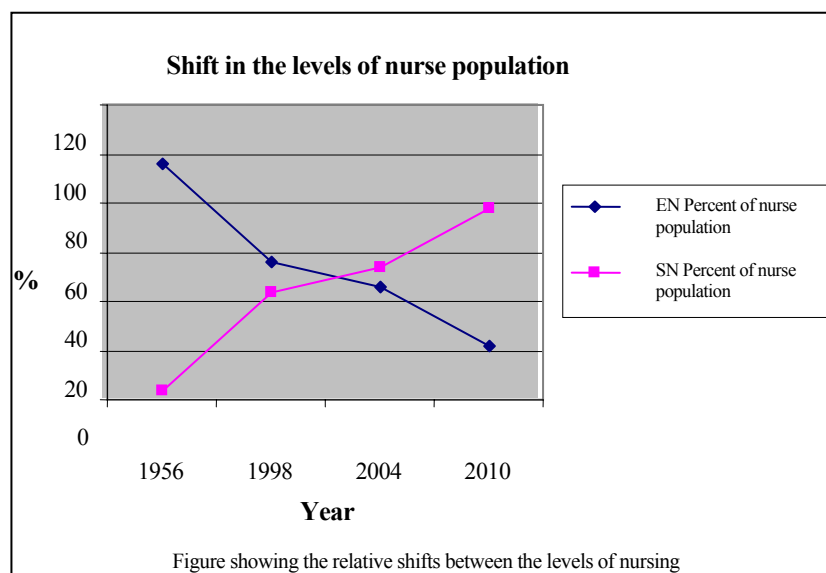
Inspection of Private and Public Homes for the Elderly, Private Hospitals and Clinics

DNSS supplied staff to the Department of Health Care Service Standards (DHCSS) to form part of the inspectorate team of hospitals and clinics. The DNSS' role as part of this Inspection Team is particularly to inspect and provide feedback from a nursing and midwifery services' standards perspective. These inspections are related to the renewal of licences.

Projects and Initiatives

EN to SN conversion

The DNSS is responsible for the running of the Enrolled Nurse to Staff Nurse (EN to SN) Conversion Course. This project entails courses where Enrolled Nurses (2nd level nurses) engage in studies to become 1st level nurses through a number of formal lectures, theoretical and practical assignments and examinations over a stretch of 18 months. Every year three courses run simultaneously where each one will be through a different phase of the course. The main aim of this project is for the Department of Health to convert the majority of 2nd level Enrolled Nurses to 1st level Nurses by the year 2012.



From the start of the project in March 2003 till this year, 424 candidates have started the course in which 277 have successfully become 1st level nurses while 110 students are still pursuing the course. 37 students discontinued studies, giving an approximate 8.5% course attrition rate. With two intakes per year (every March and September), the DNNS will be catering for another eight courses to reach its targets by 2012.

Intravenous Therapy Course

This is an ongoing national project organised by the Department of Nursing Services Standards to train and provide a certificate of competence to all qualified nurses who work in Malta. Since February, four courses in Intravenous Drug Administration were organised by the DNSS with a total of 95 nurses completing the programme. Throughout the year, the IV Course co-ordinator updated and maintained databases indicating which nurses have completed the various sections of the course.

The course webpage, which forms part of the HECC website www.sahha.gov.mt, was also revised and regularly updated with course programmes and venues, clinical assessors' allocation, lecture notes, and other useful material. In particular, documents and guidelines about intravenous therapy issued by the Royal College of Nursing and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention were uploaded. Links to

various local and international organisations were added. The certificate in IV drug administration is valid for five years after which it needs to be renewed. Therefore, another part of the project is the setting up of an online self-assessment method. This involves the development of the software to run the self-assessment.

Hazardous Materials Programme for Emergency First Responders

A Hazardous Materials Committee was set up with the main aim of planning a specialised training programme for Emergency First Responders to be able to identify a Hazardous Materials Incident and how to react appropriately to such an incident. This committee is made up of a number of experts in the field from different departments, namely Civil Protection Department, Armed Forces of Malta, Bomb Disposal, Police and Accident and Emergency Personnel.

The target audience for this programme is all the Emergency First Responders who are called in to assist during emergencies that involve hazardous materials, namely staff from the above departments.

A number of meetings have been held with all stakeholders involved and all parties agree on the need of such a training programme. This training programme will be made up of a two-day theoretical part and a half-day practical part.

Therapeutic Manual Handling of patients

Numerous studies have documented the enormous burden of work-related musculoskeletal injuries in the health care sector within European countries. Similarly in Malta, this is evident in the very high rates of sickness absences due to work-related injuries of the back which leads to substantial costs to employing hospitals. Given this background, a committee was set up to develop a National Programme on Therapeutic Manual Handling of patients. The purpose of this committee is to standardise practice of moving and handling of patients across all professionals and across all hospitals of Malta. The plan is to set up standard operating procedures based on evidence based practice to provide techniques which are safe to the patient and safe to the health care professional. Through this programme, the healthcare services of Malta will be meeting the standards set by the European Commission through Directive 90/269/CEE.

Mental Health Nursing Services

This Department contracts the services of MW Professional Ltd for consultancy and development of mental health nursing. This company is responsible for the co-ordination of all courses in mental health nursing being delivered at the IHC and those organised by the DNSS. MW Professional Ltd was also instrumental for the holding of an international mental health conference in Malta in October.

Leonardo IV project – EVA and PPM

The DNSS took over from the Department of Healthcare Services Standards the co-ordination of the Leonardo IV project on the Maltese side. EVA is an assessment tool for quality of care for homes of the elderly whilst PPM is a French abbreviation for moving and handling of patients.

A group of 10 French professionals involved in this project visited Malta between 10 and 20 October. A half-day formal meeting was organised at the Ministry of Health in Valletta where all the key people involved in the setting of standards within the health care services of Malta as well as the inspectorate team were invited to participate. During the meeting, the principles of EVA and its applicability to the Maltese health care system were discussed. A train-the-trainer programme was organised where a group of selected Maltese health care professionals were invited to participate. During this programme, the French experts gave demonstrations on techniques of patient handling where all health care professionals present had the opportunity to discuss, learn, and practice the techniques individually.

On 15 October, a half-day seminar was organised at Mater Dei Hospital. A number of presentations were conducted on the occurrence of work-related MSDs among health care professionals in Europe and in Malta. During the second part of the seminar the French instructors gave a number of live demonstrations on their techniques of patient handling.

Official visits to homes of the elderly were included in the programme where the French people had the opportunity to see the Maltese health care services for the elderly. Formal meetings and discussions were held during the visits and the heads of homes and hospitals had the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas of delivery of health care services with the French people. The homes visited were St Vincent de Paul Residence, Zammit Clapp Hospital, Mellieħa Home, and Villa Messina.

The second part of the Leonardo IV project is scheduled to be held in 2009 where a number of Maltese health care professionals are expected to go to France to learn on the process of EVA as an assessment tool for quality of care for homes of the elderly.

Basic life support course for hearing-impaired students

This was held between February and May, for students that attend Helen Keller School in Qrendi. The lectures were delivered with the help of an interpreter provided by the school administration and lectures were given both in Maltese and English. It is envisaged that in the future a similar course will be organised for parents of the students.

Palliative care

This Department was involved in the organisation of a course on Adult Cancer Nursing. This was part of the professional development programme in oncology and it was held at the IHC. In August, the DNSS co-ordinated a visit in the UK, consisting of a visit to two hospitals specialising in oncology and a visit to two hospices - St Anne's Hospice Cheshire, Wythenshawe Hospital, St Anne's Hospice in Little Hulton and Christies Hospital in Manchester.

Reports

Occupational health and safety

An occupational risk assessment was conducted by the DNSS at Sir Paul Boffa Hospital to assess work practices and evaluate risks associated with the use of formaldehyde. This was done after a request by the hospital management. Following the risk assessment, a number of recommendations was given to management on how to reduce exposure to formaldehyde. A formaldehyde management plan has been drafted for all users of formaldehyde in the form of gas, its solutions, and materials that release formaldehyde in the form of a national policy to establish the process of compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Authority of Malta. This national policy has been drafted and is due to be sent for consultation with all stakeholders involved.

Another risk assessment on the use of liquid nitrogen was carried out. This was done after another request by the management due to the fact that a large volume of liquid nitrogen is handled and used at Sir Paul Boffa hospital with no precautions to health and safety whatsoever. A full report is being drafted to management of Sir Paul Boffa to review the usage, storage, transport, and safety management systems required for the handling of liquid nitrogen.

This Department also prepared a report on cyanide use and also on emergency response measures that can be implemented in the event of an emergency related to cyanide toxicity. Given the high toxicity of cyanide, the speed of onset of symptoms with subsequent death, while keeping in mind the lack of serious side effects associated with hydroxocobalamin administration, it is reasonable to conclude that occupational health nurses working within an industry who make use of cyanide compounds would be trained and

licensed to administer the suggested intravenous antidote. This would, therefore, provide an additional measure to help maintain the health and safety of all workers.

Co-operation with other Departments

During 2008, DNSS participated in a collaborative project led by the *Centre Hospitalier Intercommunal du Pays des Hautes Falaises de Fécamp*, Normandy France, on the theme of *Prévention des Chutes: Falls Prevention*. This was done through the DHCSS.

It is planned that DNSS and the DHCSS will continue this collaboration with a view to sending local personnel to be trained as assessors in the use of the EVA method as part of the planned Leonardo V. The EVA method refers to a holistic method of inspecting homes for older persons developed by the *Compte Européen pour le Développement de l'Intégration Sociale*.

Continuous Professional Development Survey

In 2008 the DNSS embarked on a survey aimed at enquiring on the nurses' educational status after pursuing the EN to SN conversion course. This survey was aimed at investigating whether the conversion course was a major contributing factor for this group of nurses to further their nursing education and career. The survey was conducted between January and March 2008 and a full presentation of the results was given during the 7th European Regional Conference held in Malta in April.

The survey concluded that overall, participants have strong beliefs that the conversion course was instrumental for them to further their education. However, more than half of the participants have not furthered their education in the last three years. The main reasons for this were mainly due to lack of time to pursue courses and lack of awareness of course offerings. Of those who have furthered their education, some of them are engaged in diploma, degree and masters programmes. Participants considered the conversion course as an opportunity for them to further their career and in fact a number of them admit that it was the main reason why they changed their place of work.

Continuous Professional Development Scheme

Continuous Professional Development Audit Committee (CPDAC)

The DNSS is also responsible for the co-ordination of the Continuing Professional Development Scheme, which consists in the management of a CPD activities registration system. Claims are submitted by registrants for financial assistance based on the number of credits in their account. Other related work being carried out is the drafting of all previous memos into a set of guidelines to be eventually uploaded on the DNSS website. This function will be handed over to the Resources and Support Division in early 2009.

The DNSS Quarterly Newsletter 'The Link'

During 2008, four issues of *The Link* (nos.19-2) were published. 2,500 copies of each issue were circulated to all nurses and midwives in Malta and Gozo. The Link was also uploaded and made accessible in pdf format on the DNSS webpage.

Council for Nurses and Midwives (CNM)

The co-ordination and collaboration between the DNSS and the Council for Nurses and Midwives (CNM) is maintained by the Director Nursing Service Standards. Attendance at CNM meetings was maintained regularly as well as at sub-committee meetings and attendance in Appeals Committee sessions. The guidelines for registration in all registers for both EU and non-EU countries were reviewed as well as the relevant application forms.

Conference, Seminars, Courses and Meetings

Departmental officials attended various conferences, seminars, courses, meetings, and workshops both locally and abroad.

Manpower

During 2008, regular contact regarding data management was maintained with all hospitals and departments. Every month each area is requested to forward a monthly audit of nursing and midwifery activity to facilitate the maintenance of an accurate database and monitor attrition. This is also imperative when planning current and future projections for service delivery, new services and workload analysis. This database and all related data is kept regularly updated.

Particular attention was also given to the manpower database concerning nurses who have left the service. This was done as part of an exercise carried out by the DNSS to encourage nurses who have resigned to return and for retirees interested in continuing beyond the age of retirement to do so.

Recruitment of EU Nurses

The DNSS has embarked on a project to recruit a number of EU trained nurses to fill some of the vacancies across the Health Care Services Division. Approval was sought for such an initiative and the project continued until December 2008. The EU recruitment project will be reviewed and the necessary recommendations done for 2009. Eastern Europe was identified as a market for targeting since local salaries proved to be attractive mostly to individuals hailing from such countries. By December 2008, 56 EU nurses and one midwife were recruited - 48 nurses and one midwife at Mater Dei Hospital and eight nurses at Karen Grech Hospital.

Back to Nursing Programme

This programme aims at promoting the nursing practice among those nurses who had left the service for certain reasons such as the family or seeking work in the private sector. It started around September 2007 and, to date, 72 nurses (part-time/full-time) have been recruited.

Career Week at St Aloysius Collage

The Directorate participated in a Careers' Week held at St Aloysius College where a stand was set up and various discussions and presentations in relation to nursing were made. The main aim was to generate awareness of the nursing profession amongst students in Forms II, III, IV and V (all males) and the Sixth Form (mixed gender). As the nursing profession is viewed by the public as a predominantly female profession, the need for male nurses was emphasised. The programme was co-ordinated in conjunction with the Institute of Health Care nursing section.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES STANDARDS

OVERALL PURPOSE

The principal purpose for the Department for Health Care Services Standards is to achieve improvement in the quality of care and ensure patient safety through regulation. Patient safety is of paramount priority as there cannot be quality of care without patient safety and this principle will be foremost in view when planning all the Department's activities in the years to come.

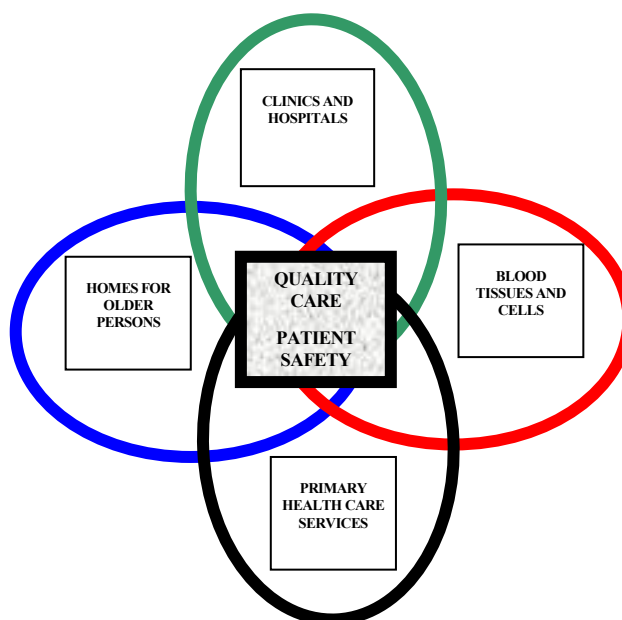
REMIT

The remit of the Department's regulatory jurisdiction can be classified into the following four main sectors where health care services are delivered:

- Clinics and hospitals including public hospitals;
- Homes for older persons including government homes;
- Primary health care including all service providers in this sector – public and private and also mental health services;
- Blood transfusion services – including the National Blood Establishment and blood banks (public and private), and services involving tissues and cells.

The above-mentioned four main health care services sectors are regulated by DHCSS with an overlapping central area representing quality of care improvement and guaranteeing patient safety as the main focus.

Consequent to the extensiveness of this territory to be regulated, DHCSS has submitted formal requests for a proportionate and proper investment in capacity building to enable the Department to discharge its functions in a proper and timely manner.



STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREAS

This Department's strategic objectives and the most important achievements during 2008 have been in:

Consolidation of the Core Regulatory Functions

There are 29 church and private homes for older persons in Malta and Gozo, and their scheduled inspections have continued during 2008 to ensure standards of care are being upheld. For each home, the yearly licence was issued by the Minister for Social Policy, after DHCSS had presented the inspection report for each of these homes, with specific recommendations for the amelioration of service provision. During 2008, two applications for the opening of new homes have been processed and key inspections carried out with a view to license.

Homes for Older Persons	Number of Homes	Number of Beds
Church Homes	18	738
Private Homes	11	917
Total	29	1,655

- *Participation in the Leonardo IV, European programme involving mobility of professionals – to increase staff competences in the regulation of health care services:* During 2008, DHCSS has continued participating in a collaborative project led by the *Centre Hospitalier Intercommunal du Pays des Hautes Falaises de Fécamp*, Normandy France, on the theme of prevention of back pain. A delegation from Normandy came over to Malta in October and demonstrated appropriate techniques in handling patients and elderly alike in a number of seminars including at Mater Dei Hospital. Their visit to Malta was jointly co-ordinated by DHCSS and the DNSS so as to maximise effective benefits to a wider audience of local participants in the workshops that took place during their one week's visit. This project has now been transferred for co-ordination by the DNSS.
- During 2008, work continued in close collaboration with the DNSS and the Director General for Public Health Regulation to refine the standards for long term care with the ultimate aim to enshrine them in a legal framework. The National Standards to Open a New Home for Older Persons which will mainly focus on the physical aspects of the health care service provision will be part of the above referred to standards.
- *Continued to engage in ongoing research such as action research studies on special themes for each year's inspections:* During 2008, the very pertinent theme of Fire Safety in Homes for Older Persons was revisited. A purposely-designed questionnaire was distributed to all the homes and the preliminary findings of the trends indicated the imminent importance of this safety issue in homes for older persons.

As a follow-up to the fire safety survey, a collaborative initiative between DHCSS and Civil Protection was launched to address the concerns and preoccupations regarding this important safety issue that concerns elderly residents in Homes. This collaboration culminated in a Fire Safety Awareness Seminar in April 2008, for managers of all the homes for older persons – government, church, and private. Certificates of participation were presented by the Hon Parliamentary Secretary for the Elderly. It is envisaged that for licensing purposes, all Homes would be equipped with an emergency evacuation plan to ensure safety of vulnerable residents in such cases of emergencies.

Furtherance of the licensing process of Private Clinics and Private Hospitals

There are 12 private clinics/hospitals with a total of 208 beds, and their scheduled inspections have continued during 2008 to ensure that standards of care are being upheld. For each clinic/hospital, the yearly licence was issued by the Minister for Social Policy, after DHCSS had presented the inspection report for each of these entities, with specific recommendations for the amelioration of service provision. During 2008, a new application for a private clinic was processed and a key inspection carried out and the licence issued.

During 2008, the external professional services of a retired anaesthetist were engaged to augment DHCSS's Inspectorate Team. It is planned that more external professionals will be contracted in future to develop an independent core Inspection Team that will eventually be utilised to inspect government entities such as public hospitals and government homes for older persons. The services of this same professional were engaged to draw up Guidelines for the Terms of Obsolescence of Anaesthetic machines in use in Clinics and Hospitals. The discussions also included a panel of experts chaired by the President of the Malta College of Anaesthetists and in consultation with the Chairperson of Anaesthesia. This model of participatory regulation has achieved the intended outcomes and it is hoped that this structured approach will be used in other sectors to be regulated.

During 2008, DHCSS collaborated with the DNSS to augment its Inspection Team to visit the Homes and clinics/hospitals for licensing purposes. This inter-directorate synergy is a step towards more transverse collaboration and adds inter-disciplinary value to the inspection process.

One of the first initiatives of DHCSS was to organise a meeting with MEPA representatives to streamline the MEPA consultation process in proposals concerning homes for older persons and clinics/hospitals, to safeguard the interest of service users, especially of older persons, by guaranteeing standards even at this

planning phase. A standard operation procedure was agreed to and DHCSS plans to monitor the MEPA website in order to follow up effectively the consultation process in applications that fall within DHCSS regulatory remit. During 2008, DHCSS continued to proffer its recommendations to MEPA in respect of proposals of building new homes for older persons and private clinics/hospitals.

In addition, DHCSS in collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Elderly continued to participate in the pre-consultation discussions with private entrepreneurs interested in submitting proposals to build new homes for older persons and private clinics/hospitals.

Collaboration with the Director for Elderly Care also continued as part of the screening process in the Private Public Partnership (PPP) scheme. DHCSS screens and actively engages in a propitious process to ameliorate the conditions of care in the homes from which Government considers buying beds for older persons under the PPP scheme.

As part of DHCSS's responsibility to facilitate communication and ensure ongoing consultation with all stakeholders, especially external ones, the Department remains in active discussions with the umbrella organisation of non-government organisations, namely Malta Health Network. DHCSS will be building on previous consultation initiatives such as the healthy links which already exist with Kunsill Nazzjonali Anzjani to be receptive to these well articulated expectations of all health care service users. Also, during 2008 very useful links were made with the newly established Maltese Association of Psychiatric Nurses.

DHCSS continues to be actively engaged in the focus groups set up for feedback and consultation for the improvements of the primary health care sector and community care. DHCSS has the remit to license these services and furthermore ensure a seamless transition of the service user's pathway from community/primary health care to institutional/hospital care.

DHCSS continues to investigate and act on service users' complaints. DHCSS intention is not to substitute or replicate the customer care services that each entity needs to have in place as part of good governance. These filtered reports necessitate to be subjected to a structured analysis which takes into account the wider factors within the organization which may have given rise to the complaint.

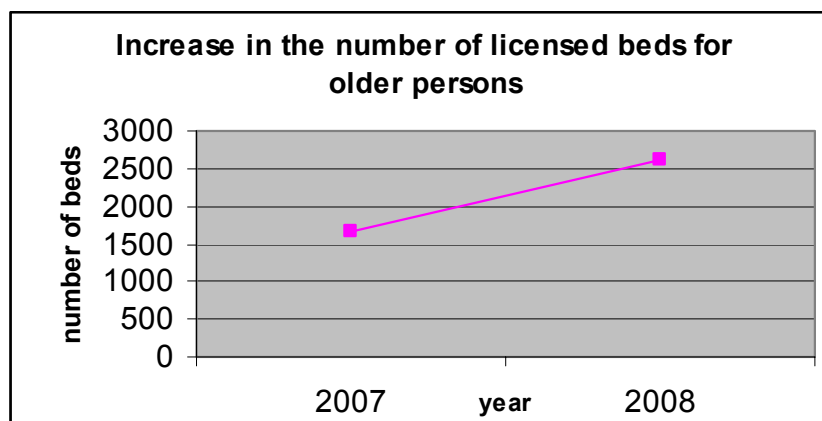
DHCSS continues to be actively engaged in the Medical Devices Alert cascade. It is subsequent to the close collaborative networking between DHCSS, the Director of Procurement and the Malta Standards Authority, that we could contribute jointly to this 'engineered safety devices' structured approach as per EU directives. During 2008, the two main private hospitals were also included in the alert cascade.

Expansion of the Existing Core Functions into areas of Health Care not yet regulated

There are to date eight government homes for older persons in Malta, and in close collaboration with the Director for Elderly Care, for the first time these homes were inspected during 2008 with the intention to license, to ensure standards of care are being upheld. For each home, the licence to be renewed on a yearly basis was issued for the first time by the Minister for Social Policy, after DHCSS presented the inspection report for each of these homes, with specific recommendations for the amelioration of service provision.

Homes for Older Persons	Number of Homes	Number of Beds
Government Homes	8	782
Long-term Care	4	175
Total	12	957

In accordance with the departmental remit to include within its regulated remit all the residential care services for older persons, for the first time the long-term facilities of St JeanneAntide Ward in Mount Carmel Hospital, St Anna's Residence in Gozo General Hospital and Capua Long-term Care Residence at Capua Hospital, Sliema were inspected during 2008 with the intention to license to ensure standards of care are being upheld. The licence for each was issued for the first time.



Depicting a registered 58% increase in the number of beds licensed by DHCSS

In close collaboration with the DNSS, DHCSS has initiated the process to have a set of standards to license nursing services agencies.

DHCSS has continued to invest in close collaborative links with the geriatricians and discussions took place during 2008 to address the sensitive issue of dementia care and how standards will need to be applied, keeping in mind the demographic shift in the population and the ever-increasing cohort of this group of older persons requiring extra attention by carers.

A series of discussions were held during 2008 with the management of St Vincent de Paule (SVPR) as regards the licensing of the Residence. During 2008, an innovative method of using a pre-inspection self-assessment questionnaire has been piloted in all the wards and sections of SVPR. On the basis of this information gathering exercise, it is planned that during 2009 the inspections with a view to license SVPR will be carried out.

A series of discussions with a number of stakeholders including top management of Mt Carmel Hospital were held during 2008 and are planned to continue during 2009, with a view to collate a set of standards to be used for licensing mental health services.

A standard format for reporting the key inspection findings has been drawn up to have a transparent and clear reporting vehicle. This format will include, in a standard manner, the demographic data pertinent for each Home, the inspectorate process and the strengths and areas identified for improvement within an agreed upon timeline. It is planned that a list of licensed homes and clinics/hospitals will be made available on the Department's website (<http://www.gov.mt/frame.asp?l=1&url=http://www.sahha.gov.mt>), together with a specially designed departmental logo developed in 2008.

Development on the Existing Regulatory Competencies and Embark into New Regulatory Services

With the steering initiative of DHCSS, a number of inter-departmental working committees have been set up - involving the Director of Health Information and Research, to enable effective monitoring and auditing by the development of clinical performance indicators for MDH, involving clinical consultants and CEO Mt Carmel Hospital with a view to license, and with Superintendent SVPR with a view also to license. A quality rating framework for Homes of Older Persons has been designed and is already being piloted.

Work continues within the inter-departmental working committee - involving the Director of Health Information and Research, the Director of Implementation and Monitoring and the Head Financial Monitoring and Control to ensure that the granularity and content of the data collection especially at MDH as in the hospital activity analysis, will enable effective monitoring and auditing by the development of clinical performance indicators.

One of the main remits of this Working Committee is to increase the scope of the data being collected to meet national and international health care reporting obligations. Furthermore, the active participation of DHCSS is to ensure that such data could be transformed into information for quality monitoring as well as comparative analysis of key performance indicators.

This inter-departmental collaboration upholds relevant European initiatives such as the Minimum Hospital Data Set and Systems Health Accounts. It is envisaged that for outcomes that could be quantifiable, Statistical Process Control (SPC) technique is used to monitor and control the process of care. SPC will be used to ensure that the process meets specific standards by measuring its performance.

By the active participation in this inter-departmental initiative, of having a standardised system for data collection to be able to uniformly code, validate and analyse clinical information, DHCSS has effectively taken the first step of many that will necessitate to be implemented in the plan for the accreditation/licensing of MDH.

Diversification into New Territory and Regulating Novel Sectors of Health Care Services

This strategic developmental area of diversification for DHCSS is essential to satisfy EU legal obligations emergent from the transposition into Maltese legal framework of the EU Blood and Blood Components Directive as well as the Tissues and Cells Directive.

During 2008, DHCSS participated in the EU Training Programme of EUSTITE (EU Standards and Training for the Inspection of Tissue Establishments) that offers invaluable learning opportunities through collaboration with other European partners in the training of competencies and skills for the inspections and licensing of tissue establishments.

Service users' satisfaction is the key measurement of any service provision and during 2008, the residents' perception of the quality of care in the homes for older persons was surveyed in a 500 residents' sample from all homes including private, church and government homes.

DHCSS also believes that a concern for the safety of patients must be both constant and proactive and has set this issue as a key target on its agenda. During 2008, for the first time the patient safety culture of Mater Dei has been surveyed for benchmarking purposes. Also, in collaboration with the Civil Protection Department, a fire safety awareness seminar was organised for managers of all homes of older persons. During the summer months, monitoring was undertaken to ensure that recommendations to mitigate the ill effects of the heat wave were being implemented.

During 2008, DHCSS followed up the previous year's planned roadmap in collaboration with the Medicines Authority for the setting up of the necessary mechanisms and structures to license the National Blood Transfusion Services as a Blood Establishment according to the recommendations of the EU Directives.

Subsequent to the achievement of the aforementioned milestone, DHCSS developed a plan to build the appropriate mechanisms and structures to have the various blood banks assessed with an intention to regulate. Both private and public blood banks will be included in this regulatory framework.

In the first half of 2008, DHCSS submitted to the EU Commission the first Maltese National Haemovigilance Reporting system as stipulated by the same EU Directives on Blood and Blood Components.

Also during 2008, in collaboration with Medicines Authority, DHCSS reengineered the haemovigilance system for the reporting and investigation of serious adverse events and reactions according to the specified EU Directives. The EU Twinning programme with the Dutch haemovigilance TRIP organisation was instrumental to the success of this business process reengineering (BPR) exercise.

DHCSS has also made key links with UK foreign expert to initiate the setting up of the mechanisms and structures to have the tissue banks assessed as regards the Tissues and Cells EU Directive. In September 2008, DHCSS organised a visit by a UK expert to the Eye Bank at MDH with the intention to advise and proffer recommendations for improvements.

During 2008, DHCSS has continued with the essential networking with the same foreign expert to initiate the setting up of the mechanisms and structures to have the stem cell collection service providers assessed with an intention to inspect, regulate and license according to national legislation.

DHCSS has become a member of the European Haemovigilance Network, and by directing a grant from the latter, was instrumental to encourage participation in a short training course on Haemovigilance in Dublin Ireland, by a member of staff from MDH Blood Bank.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge management is an essential constituent of health intelligence which is of paramount importance to support evidence-based decision making. During 2008, aware of the centrality of patient safety and quality of care in the very existential ethos of this regulatory Department, DHCSS engaged in three main research initiatives:

- Measuring and benchmarking the culture of patient safety in Mater Dei Hospital.
- Situational analysis of the measures being implemented in homes for older persons to mitigate the negative effects of the summer heat wave.
- Analysing the service users' perception of the quality of care in homes for older persons.

Culture of Safety

Cognisant that local research is needed in this sector, DHCSS during 2008 conducted for the first time a survey to measure and benchmark patient safety culture in Mater Dei. The term culture of safety refers specifically to the contextualisation of the concern for patients' safety which needs to be embedded at every level of the organisation. A culture of safety is one that seeks to analyse and thereby anticipate adverse events including errors and, in the light of that analysis, to organise systems and practices which, as far as possible, prevent them. Barriers or defences can be built into systems so as to help avert them, or to contain and mitigate their potential for harm.

Approximately 400 face-to-face interviews with staff at all levels from Mater Dei were conducted using an internationally standardised questionnaire specifically addressing 12 patient safety culture composites.

Whilst the gathered data via this survey is still being analysed, there are emergent trends of strengths and key performance indicators that differentiate Mater Dei as best in class amongst other hospitals, when the local data is benchmarked with the comparative databases of international hospitals.

These are all positive indicators of a good platform to transform Mater Dei into a learning organisation and a centre of excellence as regards patient safety. The main challenge, as the results indicate, is an element of under-reporting which needs to be addressed. An open and non-punitive environment in which it is safe for health care professionals to report adverse events, safe to admit error, is essential to explore the root cause analysis and transform such events into an organisational learning opportunity.

Measures to Mitigate the Heat Wave in Homes for the Elderly

DHCSS has felt the need of surveying Community Homes for the Elderly with the intention of finding what heat wave measures are currently being implemented to mitigate the ill effects of high ambient temperature on the elderly residents. To accomplish this, the Department prepared a detailed questionnaire and the homes chosen for the survey were randomly selected and included state, private and church

community homes for the elderly. The survey was conducted over a period of one month, between 27 July and 27 August. The 13 homes were visited at random and with no prior notice.

Strengths were identified that need to be encouraged such as the positive key finding that 92.3% of the homes participating in the survey monitor and observe the residents for signs of dehydration in a heat wave.

Another positive finding is that most of the homes (92.3%) alter their menu to include meals with a higher water content during high ambient temperatures.

These identified strengths should encourage the various service providers to do more such as documenting their monitoring and to draw up written protocols to ensure that all care givers know the standard operating procedures how to deal with heatstroke, amongst the most salient precautionary measures. DHCSS will be actively considering these findings for licensing purposes to ensure the implementation of appropriate measure to mitigate the ill effects of excessive heat on elderly residents in homes for older persons.

Service Users' Perception of Quality of Service

A representative sample of approximately 500 service users from all the homes for older persons was interviewed using a specially designed Quality of Care Evaluation questionnaire. As part of the summer work opportunities for university students, three students conducted this survey for DHCSS. Whilst the Department is still analysing the results, it is gratifying to note that for the question: *Do you consider yourself happy/content?* 92% of residents in Homes for Older Persons answered in the affirmative. Whilst there is no place for complacency, these findings are encouraging. The yearly inspections co-ordinated by DHCSS and which form the backbone of the regulatory framework for this particular health care sector, are surely contributing in the achieving of such positive results.

The representative sample size and the inclusion in this cross sectional survey of all homes, namely government, private and church homes, will surely provide a robust scientific platform for evidence based policy planning purposes to ensure quality of care in this sector of health care.

DR RAYMOND BUSUTTIL
Director General (Public Health Regulation)

Health, the Elderly and Community Care Sector

Health Care Services Division

OBJECTIVES

The Health Care Services Division (HCSD) co-ordinates all publicly-funded health care services delivered from hospitals and health centres, residential and long term facilities and community care. The objectives of the Health Care Services Division are:

- to give advice and make recommendations on matters of policy, strategy and overall direction in health care service delivery;
- to liaise with stakeholders to facilitate the effective, efficient and timely implementation of endorsed policies, strategies, standards, regulations and change programmes;
- to develop synergies and maintain an integrated continuum of services at both community and institutional level;
- to promote patients' and users' involvement, rights and obligations;
- to monitor patient and user satisfaction and ensure that an effective customer care service and complaints system is in operation;
- to carry out regular reviews to assess patients' and users' needs;
- to chair the Division's Management Committee made up of the directors and all heads of service delivery entities;
- to ensure an efficient system of procurement, storage and delivery of pharmaceuticals, medical devices, materials and supplies;
- to ensure governance of state health care services;
- to evaluate and review health care services and support their service development and consolidation;
- to manage and monitor performance and outcomes, and ensure that effective self-regulation and quality assurance systems are in operation by service delivery entities;
- to facilitate the development of operational policies and the introduction of inter-agency protocols that will provide for seamless and personalised services;
- to plan and allocate human, financial and other resources and ensure their proper use;
- to maintain good public relations, communicate pertinent information, and disseminate good practices;
- to develop and maintain networking and partnerships with NGOs, church, private and public sector organisations and other stakeholders;
- to negotiate the purchasing of services and manage service agreements;
- to plan for and facilitate programmes for postgraduate training and continuous professional development.

78% of health care services in Malta are publicly-funded. The Division is responsible for co-ordinating public services and assuring that the services offered are of the highest quality. Partnerships between the public and private sectors, NGOs and other non-governmental entities are being sought to develop services in areas where NGOs, church, and private sector organisations can contribute in a meaningful way to enrich the spectrum of services offered by the public sector.

Mater Dei Hospital proudly celebrated its first anniversary. The infrastructure for services offered is of a high quality. For the first time consultants started working on sessional basis following the Government-MAM agreement signed in November 2007. These job contracts are subject to review every year. Newly graduated doctors will be offered a two-year foundation course from July 2009 onwards. The Foundation Training Programme is being set up in collaboration with the UK NHS. The objective is to encourage young Maltese doctors to continue their postgraduate training locally and at the same time continue to offer

their services locally. After successfully completing this course, they can apply for specialty training. A structured postgraduate training programme is being implemented across all clinical specialties. This programme builds upon the curricula approved by the Specialist Accreditation Committee (SAC) for each specialty. Training co-ordinators have been appointed for each specialty and training committee. The doctors are awarded the Certificate of Completion of Specialist Training (CCST) following an intensive specialisation training programme.

To maximise the services offered at Mater Dei Hospital, services offered by Primary Health, Community Services and Rehabilitation Services have to be effective and complement each other. An exercise has been initiated to expand the services offered at Primary Health. These will include outpatient services, improvement in medical imaging facilities, and better utilisation of the *bereg*. Primary Health reform is an essential process in order to remove unnecessary pressure on the acute hospital sector especially during the colder months of the winter season where there is an exacerbation of chronic illnesses, a natural increase of acute respiratory illness, and a consequent increase in the acute referrals and admissions to hospital.

The Health Care Services Division is working on the redesign, configuration and eventual migration of oncology services from Sir Paul Boffa Hospital to Mater Dei Hospital. The plan has been finalised and the necessary preparations for the new building have been initiated. The first element of this project is the procurement of new linear accelerators to replace existing technology. In 2008, extensive work was done to process and conclude the adjudication of this essential treatment modality. Palliative care treatment is a new service which will be offered at the oncology hospital and specialists in this field are expected to be recruited in 2009.

The rehabilitation service was still operating from three different sites in 2008, its first full year of operation. The amalgamation of services onto the Karen Grech Hospital site is proceeding smoothly and will be completed in 2009. The redesign and configuration of the New Rehabilitation Hospital was placed on the agenda following a reassessment of the previous plans. The critical factors for the success of rehabilitation services are the availability of community support services and adequate long term care beds.

Together with the Department of the Elderly, plans for increasing long-term care facilities alongside existing facilities proceeded. This was done in parallel with developing new concepts for community support. Madonna tal-Mellieħa Home has become a hub of support for the community around it. The private public partnership in providing nursing home support was further strengthened. A pilot night shelter will be inaugurated in 2009.

Government is continuing with the decentralisation programme with the aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the managerial structures of hospitals and units. A clear example of such an exercise is the National Blood Transfusion Centre. This process requires transfer of responsibilities and decisions to the individual entity, in a framework which ensures accountability and transparency in the utilisation of public funds allocated to the individual entities.

One of the objectives of this Division is to guarantee a high quality of services. This is perhaps the most arduous task since it requires radical departures from current practices together with a change in culture which fosters such reforms. An exercise has been initiated to establish clinical guidelines to streamline care pathways and improve efficiency in the clinical management of patients at MDH. Another aspect which is being tackled is the allocation and utilisation of human resources. Information regarding the present staff distribution and future projections is being gathered for all the departments within all entities. The need for reengineering is greatly felt across the health care services; hence discussions have been initiated to address this issue.

Waiting lists and their management are a critical issue for the Health Care Services Division. A regular monitoring system has been introduced and action is already being taken to address waiting times that require redistribution of current workloads. This applies equally to health centres as to outpatient services. The analysis has highlighted that support services offered by the Pathology and Medical Imaging

Departments are on the critical pathway to address waiting lists mainly in the ambulatory services, but also in acute care. Discussions have been initiated with the Pathology and Medical Imaging Departments, to address the present situation and find concrete solutions for this problem. The main elements are availability of specialist staff, radiographers and technologists in order to hasten the diagnostic process. The introduction of online radiology and pathology results across the entire network is already producing faster turnaround times and this will improve much further as clinical staff become accustomed to these innovative ways of working. One has to keep in mind that the health care service is a network, hence good co-ordination and full co-operation from all entities is required.

A Strategic Plan for the Health Care Services Division till 2013 has been developed following a long process of consultation and discussion with all heads of services. Input from the Financial Monitoring and Control Unit has also been sought. The plan focuses on nine key fields central to health care service delivery: mental health; oncology; safe blood; elderly and long-term care; community care; rehabilitation; acute care; primary care; and procurement. The Business and Financial Plan for 2009-2011 together with the 2009 Estimates exercise were based on this Strategic Plan with positive benefits for all stakeholders who were treated as equal participants in the design of their operational targets for the coming months and years. This Division will continue to work closely with the heads of services and FMCU to identify and implement the deliverables identified and required to meet each objective outlined in Strategic Plan. Further consolidation will be achieved as the various deliverables will be further developed into more robust business plans reflecting the necessary reengineering processes together with additional financial and human resources.

As a full member of HOPE - the European Hospital and Health care Federation - the Division continued to be actively involved in the work of its Board of Governors and its plenary assembly and several subcommittees and working parties. HOPE is a major lobby group on hospital and health affairs that is extensively consulted by the institutions of the EU particularly the European Commission and the European Parliament. It is very well networked with other major stakeholders in the EU arena, and has developed over the years and still maintains a solid information base about planning and operation of hospital services and of the health systems within which hospital services function. One of the Federation's priorities is the exchange programme for health care professionals, which has fostered for the last 40 years the management training of health care professionals across the EU. Maltese health care managers have benefited regularly from this programme since Malta joined HOPE in 2000. HOPE is also a useful forum to push further national agendas on hospital and health care issues that arise within the EU. The Director General of Health Care Services took up the position of President in June 2008 for the next three years.

The Health Care Services has been a member of the Working Group on Patient Safety (PSWG) of the EU High Level Group on Health Services and Medical Care since its inception in 2006. Plans on how to develop and implement strategies to assure patient safety across Europe including Malta, are being developed. Further work in this area is linked to the availability of the necessary human resources within the Division to push this issue further and higher on the health care agenda. A feeble start in 2009 will be the implementation of new consent forms within the public health care services.

The preparatory work undertaken in 2008 on the breast screening services will be fundamental to the successful implementation of this project in 2009. The business plan prepared within the Division was the basis of the funding plan approved in the 2009 estimates, which will see the complete roll-out of this programme over the three years 2009-2011 targeting women aged 50-59 years.

During 2008, the Division continued with the co-ordination of the Health Ministry influenza pandemic planning and preparedness at various levels.

MATER DEI HOSPITAL (MDH)

The Year in Review

The year under review was the first full year of operation for MDH, and thus it represented a unique period for the hospital, its departments and services. The transfer of the hospital's clinical services and patients from St Luke's Hospital to MDH occurred in November 2007 and was judged to be a complete success. Most of the departments were transferred over a two-week period, during which essential patient services were maintained in operation.

After migration, the management's overriding projects during 2008 were:

- To increase quality of the various services offered, and
- Simultaneously attaining and then exceeding the pre-migration quantity of services as soon as possible
- After attainment of the pre-migration levels of activity, management's efforts were mainly focused on increasing both the quantity and the quality of the services

Hospital Management

The Human Resources and Administration Directorate worked very hard to consolidate its mission to be able to meet the challenges which were brought about by the migration of services from SLH to MDH. The Directorate's structure is based on four pillars – human resources, customer care, administration, and staff training.

The human resource plan needs to be a dynamic one to ensure a real time situation. It needs to be strengthened to avoid asking the respective departments to submit their requirements through the business plan submissions. In fact, the Directorate was directly involved in the collection of such information. A number of posts were issued to implement the various collective agreements. The need for an exit questionnaire and exit form was felt following 98 resignations. The aim is to identify the causes leading to resignations. The questionnaire was launched in November 2008.

Regarding the Staff Nursery at Birkirkara Institute, an extension to the present contract up to the end of 2009 was requested since the permit to build a nursery at MDH has not yet been issued.

This year a number of policies were revised amongst which are the Parking, Identification and Access Control Policies. The Sick Leave Policy was published.

The training contract under the European Social Fund (ESF 43) was awarded to Idea Management Ltd so that the employees in the support worker teams are trained, including cleaners, health assistants, receptionists, customer care personnel, porters, and ambulance drivers. This training was sponsored 75% through EU funds and 25% by the Government funds with a total value of €112,000. The training mainly included effective communication, customer care, and management of self and of others.

655 professionals are entitled for the continuous medical/pharmacist/dental education scheme. After the signing of the MAM agreement, there were only 20 consultants who chose Contract Type A. In MDH there are total of 103 members who are included in the Performance Management Programmes (PMP). Till the end of November 2008, a total of 1,854 applications were processed by the Personnel Section. An increase of submissions has been observed compared to end of 2007, when a total of 1,173 applications were submitted. Other activities undertaken by the personnel section include: 2,020 personal file movements, processing of 488 appointments, 45 placements, 109 progressions, 26 promotions, 35 qualification allowances and 53 transfers; 235 circulars were distributed electronically to all MDH staff; 50 retirement applications; six applications for medically boarded out individuals and four deaths.

The Voluntary Services within MDH continued to strengthen during 2008. The main services include guiding patients and visitors at the main hospital entrance and at the outpatients, confirmation of outpatients

and radiological appointments, delivery of refreshments at the outpatients, and services in the wards. The 200 volunteers involved were recruited and trained through Volserv. These volunteers are managed and co-ordinated by a Voluntary Service Office. A local bank sponsored uniforms for the volunteers.

The Payroll Section at MDH was deeply involved in work relating to the implementation of the various agreements that were reached with unions toward the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008. These agreements affected the majority of the employees. This exercise also necessitated detailed maintenance to the DAKAR software payroll system. New changes were effected in the layout of the electronic pay slip which is sent to employees by e-mail.

A new system was introduced whereby the attendance sheets, which were previously prepared manually, are now being prepared according to the individual cost centres (ward, unit or theatre).

Further discussions were held during 2008 relating to the introduction of the DAKINET system within MDH. This system is a powerful tool which gives the online facility to management and to individual employees to access information relating to their salary, leave and other entitlements directly from the ward or unit instead of having to visit physically the Salaries Section every time a query is encountered.

During the first full year at MDH, the Accounts Section processed a voluminous number of files with regard to the purchasing and payment of materials and services in relation to the operation of the hospital.

The Customer Care Department reached an agreement with 75% of the Consultants regarding the principle of vetting and classification of outpatient referrals; however, due to lack of doctors, 15% of the above could not introduce the vetting system in their day-to-day schedule. Decentralisation of the booking system took place in the ENT, Paediatric Medicine, Neuromedical, Orthopaedic, Cardiology, half of the Ophthalmology, and parts of Medical and Surgical Clinics. Further to these clinics an agreement was reached with the Chairperson of Medicine to adopt a decentralised system in all Medical Outpatients Clinics. Through vetting it is being ensured that patients requiring urgent medical advice are given priority. The Did Not Attend (DNA) rate for new cases was reduced from 41% to 15%.

Several projects were carried out during the year including: formulation of patient information booklet and leaflets, ensuring that patients have the necessary information on various services offered in the hospital; Notice of cancellation stickers which are being affixed on appointment letters encouraging customers to call if they intend not to keep their appointment; installation of suggestion boxes and designing of new comment/suggestion cards in both Maltese and English languages. Due to an increase in requests for access to patient medical information and in view of the Data Protection Act, it was felt necessary that Standard Operating Procedures are established and a standard request form was developed; upgrade of the complaints' database; an equitable system for booking of appointments was initiated in order to reduce the waiting time and waiting lists for consultations – a decrease in waiting times and waiting lists for new case appointments in the clinics has been registered were the system is fully operational; data was collected on a regular basis to monitor and measure the effect of all projects undertaken by this office; the Visitors Policy was formulated and implemented.

3,997 complaints were reported at Customer Care this year, of which 1,132 were complaints regarding long waiting time for the OPD appointment. Around 65% of all cases were resolved at the time of reporting. 25% were resolved within 48 hours, while 10% were resolved or given a suitable solution in a week or more.

Within the nursing department the need for official nursing guidelines was felt. A Nursing Guidelines Formulation Team was formulated. The discussions for the introduction of Operation Department Practitioners (ODPs) need to be finalised. MCAST administration is prepared to support and deliver this course provided that the course curriculum and career progression are finalised by not later than mid-February 2009.

MDH Engineering Directorate has to take over the Facilities Management (FM) of the hospital. An action plan has been submitted and approved by the Ministry. This action plan included the arrangements for the extension of present FM team members and MDH consultants until new recruits come on board. The recruitment process and the procurement and cost control processes need to be set up to effectively manage the FM. A Steering Committee chaired by the CEO was set up and is meeting regularly to follow up this plan. With the collaboration of FMS, an Invitation to Tender document for the General Building fabric, Mechanical and Electrical Maintenance at the hospital was finalised and is ready to be published.

511 new work requests were logged at the Engineering Department between the end of February and end of December 2008. 118 of these were completed. These vary from a simple additional socket outlet to the conversion of an unused area into a specific function room with all the services it entails.

The Inventory Management Section continued with its work of registering all fixed assets within MDH room by room. In the absence of dedicated software in order to keep a fixed asset register, all details are presently being captured on Excel sheets. Up till the end of 2008, the records of 27 departments have been finalised.

The year was a very busy one for the Information Management and Technology (IM&T) Directorate at MDH as it faced the challenge of managing and supporting an increased number of information systems and services. The following are some of the highlights of the year: extension of picture archiving and communication system viewing functionality from MDH to all public hospitals and health centres; launch of fully integrated electronic ordering and reporting for laboratory and radiology investigations, using the iSoft Clinical Manager program; implementation of the Laboratory Information System across practically all laboratory disciplines, with the integration of 22 analysers; enhancement and hospital-wide roll-out of the in-house Electronic Case Summary system, laying a solid function for improved inpatient activity reporting up to international EU/OECD standards; in-house developments and implementation of innovative Bed Status Indicator System; upgrading of Online Requisition System (ORS) functionality and security; Introduction and updating of British National Formulary information service on the MDH intranet; completion of transfer of over 400,000 patient files from SLH to MDH; launch of the new medical illustration function; successful medical videoconferencing pilots; formal creation of MDH IT Systems & Application Register.

The main duties carried out by the IT Trainers and Application Support Section during this year continued to be the provision of application support and training to all MDH staff, and on various occasions to staff outside MDH as well. The Patient Administration System (PAS), with its various modules, is an ongoing application requiring both training and application support. During 2008, the iSoft Clinical Manager started to be systematically rolled out across MDH. Hence, the Section had to organise various training sessions during different times to cater for staff needs. The PACS application is mostly used by the medical staff at MDH; new recruits still request training in this application. The Section strives to continuously enhance the services offered to its clients. Training material is prepared and given to all users that attend sessions in the Training Room. In the latter part of the year the section embarked on a project to digitise all the training material available; users are now being given CDs with hyperlinked guidance to problems which they might encounter while using any of the applications in which they were trained.

2008 saw KURA evolving to become the premier source for information on a hospital-wide scale. Requests for KURA personal accounts showed a substantial increase during the year. These accounts provide the account holder with the facility to view KURA from any location within the hospital as well as outside the perimeter of the hospital, such as from home via the internet, that is, as an extranet. The Info Centre (reference library) in KURA contains all MDH circulars, MDH policies, guidelines in respect of the various procedures for day to day business within MDH, publications, news items of specific relevance to MDH business and the Events area, which has become very popular as a source of notification for educational events such as seminars, workshops, lectures, and conferences which are organised throughout the year. The Forms Library on KURA, which includes some 385 forms, is also being utilised to the maximum, removing the need for sections and units to stock stationery, which now only print a required

form when the need arises. The Medical Record Request service via KURA was fully implemented in all areas at MDH, Sir Paul Boffa Hospital and Zammit Clapp Hospital followed.

The Online Telephone directory on KURA was updated and a booklet was prepared as easy reference directory. “Phone quick guide cards” were prepared and attached with every telephone set installed at MDH to offer guide and easy instructions on various telephone functions. New pager agreements and return forms were formulated.

During 2008, the Data Management Unit (DMU) processed 45,113 Hospital Activity Analysis (HAA) Forms. When compared with the total number of discharges recorded on the PAS for the said period, the return rate for all the HAA forms received was 71.4%. In comparison with the period November 2006 – October 2007 (61.7%), there was an increase of 9.7% in the response rate.

During 2008, Medical Records Department (MRD) loaned 517,939 and received back 505,311 files.

The Purchasing Department at MDH, gained significant momentum in improving the procurement processes of this hospital. During the year 1,269 calls for quotes were issued, 25 tenders adjudicated and the issuance of 9,810 local purchase orders and letters of acceptance requested. Along the year accountability and responsibility were promoted in all order of procurement submitted. Standard Operating Procedures were drafted and other circulars were issued by the department of contracts. Purchasing Department staff received training in tendering procedures. Issuance of circulars to inform and educate hospital staff about any new procurement procedures used.

The Supplies Department is responsible for the distribution of items worth circa €25 million a year. These items vary from medical material, apparatus, provisions, spare parts, IT related items and construction material. Processes were audited and confirmed to be in strict conformity with the government regulations. During 2008, the Supplies Department worked in a proactive manner with an HR set-up that was relatively new for this nature of work. The Supplies Department was restructured and a number of sub-sections were created.

Pressures to provide high level care within leaner methods of operation gave rise to highlighted emphasis on meeting the Logistics Department’s objectives and goals mainly being:

- building a resilient structure to cater for the continuous change in requirements and trends of the catalyst hospital environment;
- improving logistics management activities through enhancing materials management and inventory control;
- building a robust auditory control mechanism for monitoring in real time of materials being consumed within the hospital;
- increase efficiencies, reduce costs and wastes.

Performance Review and Analysis

The total bed complement in MDH (as at 31 December 2008) stood at 981 beds. This figure includes all beds and cots in use. The total number of beds available for inpatients stood at 849 (includes 30 Day Care beds used for inpatients). The total number of Day Care beds available amounted to 78 beds - Renal Unit (35 beds), Catheterisation Suite (16 beds), Day Surgery Unit (only 14 bedded area), Paediatric Day Care (12 beds), and Sleep Lab (one bed). In addition there were 54 Nursery Cots. The Paediatric Day Care (12 beds) and Urology Ward 2 (12 beds) opened during this year. On the other hand, Burns Unit (five beds) remained not functional and hence does not form part of the bed complement at MDH to date.

The available bed days in 2008 were 356,844 (if adjusted to exclude Day Care beds and Nursery Cots: 309,936), of which the total occupied bed days used amounted to 264,494 days (includes Nursery cots). The adjusted bed occupancy was 82.0%. The annual turnover rate was 76.4 patients per bed whilst the adjusted turnover interval (the mean length of time that a hospital bed is left empty between successive

patients), was 0.9 days. The average ward length of stay was 3.0 days. The total number of Direct Admissions stood at 51,185 (+3,482 Nursery admissions) whilst the Transfers-In to the wards stood at 15,958 (+86 to Nursery). The number of patients treated and discharged from the hospital was 49,557 (+3,488 from Nursery) discharges whilst the total number of deaths was 1530.

In the first 11 months of 2008 there were a total of 33,310 operation episodes registered. Of these, 17% were emergencies and 83% were elective episodes. There were 350,057 registered attendances at outpatient clinics according to the outpatient module of the PAS. Of these, 124,076 (35.4%) were registered as new cases, 225,981 (64.6%) as follow-ups and walk-ins.

The total number of attendances registered at the Accident and Emergency Department in 2008 amounted to 106,907. The referral source for the registered attendances showed that 73,246 or 68% of attendances were self referred whilst 22,675 were GP referrals and 10,061 were Health Centre referrals amounting together to 31% of all referrals.

The performance of the Department of Anaesthesia throughout the year was characterised by consolidation of existing services; quality control and maintenance of standards of care through audit and expansion of services as needs were identified. The department carried out continuous professional development and teaching of anaesthetic juniors.

The total number of patients seen at the Department of Dental Surgery was:

New cases	22,616
Follow-ups	2,605
Other	4,165
Walk-in patients	4,038
Total patients	33,424

There were 3,369 contacts in Consultant Clinics, 60 in the Cleft Lip and Palate Clinic and 3,626 contacts in the Consultant Child Dental Clinic. 1,430 treatments under local anaesthesia were performed. 294 procedures were performed under general anaesthesia. 5,330 cases were seen in Orthodontics.

A total of 2,729 patients received finished custom-made dental appliances from MDH, which is 377 more compared to the previous year.

Total of patients seen by Dental Hygienists was 3,094 at MDH, 5,800 at Primary Health Care, 60 at SVPR.

The performance of the Department of Pathology in 2008 (and % change from 2007) was as follows:

Pathology Section	Total - 2008	% Change over 2007
Biochemistry	2,834,259	31.7%
Bacteriology	748,224	38.4%
Cytology	10,330	5.2%
Haematology	730,280	70.0%
Haematology, ACC clinic	50,031	0.6%
Histology	71,487	6.9%
Histochemistry	8,331	Part of Histology
Mortuary	2,718	Part of Histology
Immunology	99,128	10.5%
Toxicology	58,965	14.2%
Mycology	5,254	9.5%
Virology	67,951	7.5%
Molecular Genetics	11,819	12.3%
Cytogenetics	279	New Service
HBB	84,889	5.3%
Reference Lab	12,181	24.6%
Total	4,796,126	11.0%

Notes: * Biochemistry and Haematology figures now include those for Emergency Services, formerly shown under "Emergency Lab".

** Histology, Immunohistochemistry and Mortuary were previously shown under "Histology".

Visits by foreign specialists to MDH generated a number of activities, 153 surgical procedures were carried out in Spinal Surgery, Paediatric Interventional Cardiology, Hand Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Uro-Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Pain Management, Ophthalmic Surgery, Interventional Radiologist and a Neurosurgeon. Consultants who were brought to MDH during 2008 included Consultants in Paediatric Respiratory Diseases, Paediatric Cardiology, Paediatric Nephrology, Paediatric Oncology, Paediatric Endocrinology, Paediatric Gastroenterology, Paediatric Neuro Muscular Diseases, Paediatric Neurology, Paediatric Neurosurgery, Haemato-Oncology, Respiratory Diseases, Retinoblastoma Ophthalmology and a Cochlear Implant specialist.

1,071 dentures, 1,624 glasses and 696 other medical aids were approved to be supplied free of charge.

The Pharmacy Department is responsible for the supply and distribution of medicines worth about €21 million a year. Approximately 55% is external costs, the majority being dispensed to outpatients, whilst circa 45% is internal cost supplied to wards and departments within MDH. 79,650 items were supplied to wards against scheduled orders.

A total of 99,930 patients attended MDH Outpatient Pharmacy in 2008 – an average of 333 patients per working day. This was a 15.5% decrease compared to the number of patients who attended OPD-SLH in 2007. This was attributed to the introduction of three-months' supply system and decentralisation of the community service to POYC. MDH Pharmacy also provides a service of medicines not found in retail. There was 19% decrease (n=7904 for 2008) in sales of medicines over 2007 (n=9802).

Throughout 2008, a total of 103 refugees and 188 illegal immigrants attended MDH Pharmacy to be dispensed free medication. The inpatients' service involves dispensing of medicines which are not distributed to wards from the Stores:

- A total of 6,262 orders for controlled drugs were dispensed to wards during 2008, of which 3,283 were for narcotics, and 2,979 orders were for psychotropic drugs. There were 158 patients requiring methadone administration throughout 2008, and a total of 25.834L of methadone mixture was dispensed.
- An average of 1,571 patients received a three-day supply on discharge per month.
- A total of 391 emergency trolleys were exchanged during 2008 and a total of 1,094 medicines were administered during emergency cases.
- A total of 7,225 urgent orders were processed by the inpatient section.
- A total of 21,856 non-formulary medicines were ordered and processed by this section.
- Throughout 2008 a total of 875 items were dispensed for free to government departments/institutions while 1,792 were sold to private clinics/hospitals at a total cost of circa €95,000.
- A total of 20 new patients were dispensed a nebuliser throughout 2008 while there were 12 returns of nebulisers.
- 186 new patients were given an oxygen cylinder and flow meter on loan while 237 patients returned their flow meter throughout 2008.

The Pharmacy also provides a 24X7 emergency service. The following services were provided after-hours:

- 2,658 sales to outpatients after normal hours at a value of €19,528.
- 5,745 issues to outpatients after normal hours.
- 22,118 urgent transactions to wards were effected after hours, of which 1,139 were for controlled drugs.

Throughout 2008, the clinical pharmacists made an average of 1,000 interventions monthly, a net increase of 46% over the total interventions carried out last year. These interventions include changeover from injections to oral medication, stopping of treatment, rational prescribing, counselling of patients on discharge, etc. A total of 594 patients were dispensed their anti-tuberculosis medication from MDH Pharmacy throughout 2008, a 3.5% increase over 2007. During 2008, there were 93 new stoma patients.

84 patients regularly collected their clozapine treatment from MDH Pharmacy. Another 240 were dispensed Methylphenidate 10mg tablets on a regular basis during 2008.

During the year, 97 patients were treated with HIV medications (anti-retrovirals). In total, throughout 2008, there were 311 visits to the pharmacist's anti-retroviral clinic. During this clinic, the pharmacist sees all the patients who come to the clinic. During this visit, there is enough time to discuss adherence issues with the patients; and discuss treatment decisions with the physicians. During 2008 approximately 200 patients were screened at Rheumatology Clinic and 14 patients were started on the tumour necrosis factor inhibitors.

Clinical pharmacists also contributed extensively in formulary management and processed requests for protocol-regulated medicines and non-formulary medicines. They are also involved in the drawing up and revision of protocols. Throughout 2008, clinical pharmacists were involved with: drafting of eight protocols for the introduction of new medicines; presenting 27 recommendations for amendments to current medicine protocols and three recommendations for deletion.

Almost 31,016 permits for non-formulary/protocol regulated medicines were issued up to December 2008. This is a 58% increase over the permits issued in 2007 (19,668). The number of permits refused and sent back to clinicians because request was not according to protocol was 2,256, an increase of 44% over the same period the previous year (1,569). Multiple applications refused (that is, patient would have already had a valid approval for the medicine requested) were 2,287, a slight decrease over the 2,550 of 2007. Telephone enquiries received in 2008 were 2,994, an increase of 100% over the same period last year.

The Medicines Information Section also reported a significant increase in the number of calls made in 2008 (an increase of more than 117%).

The statistics for chemotherapy show that the workload remained constant from 2007 (n=2806 for 2008). However, a 100% increase in number of sachets prepared was registered, and a further 32% increase in number of syrups which shows the increased demand from the Paediatric Department for extemporaneous preparations not found on the market.

The following reforms were introduced so as to improve efficiency and quality of service:

- The ordering system from the supplier was revised such that the Pharmacy is informed on receipt of medicines by the supplier and therefore medicines required urgently are ordered and made available by GHPS with minimum delay. Also, the delivery system of urgent requests has been revised, such that all urgent orders are now delivered by GHPS.
- The ordering schedule for wards has been revised to allow for better distribution of the workload over the week.
- The queuing system was revised - a fast lane system was introduced, such that patients calling at the Pharmacy to collect one item are given priority, thus minimising congestion at the waiting area.
- Clerical work was shifted to clerks so that pharmacy staff can concentrate on technical duties.
- The policy for collection of medicines by hospital staff was revised such that prescriptions are left at the Pharmacy and collected within two days. In addition, hospital staff presenting prescriptions from POYC areas was directed to make use of the POYC scheme.
- An appointment system was introduced for patients collecting CAPD accessories and stoma care appliances, thus increasing efficiency of this section. Over 260 patients benefit from this service.
- The policy for sale of medicines to private clinics and professionals was revised, thus making it simpler for private entities to access this service.
- Two medicinal products were decentralised to health centre pharmacies in the beginning of the year, such that patients do not have to call at Mater Dei for these medicines. Also, a number of patients were directed to the POYC scheme, thus reducing waiting times at outpatients.
- The custom lists of a number of medicines were revised, thus simplifying the ordering system for wards.
- The information system for medicines approval was upgraded such that it allows for more transactions to be processed.
- A new database is being developed so as to keep accurate data of patients loaned oxygen cylinder.

The number of new inpatients referred for physiotherapy was 9,521. They were given a total of 60,123 treatment sessions in the various wards. There were 3,126 treatment sessions carried out at MDH after normal working hours. A total of 8,662 adult patients were referred to the Physiotherapy Department at MDH. Of the total number of new patient referrals, 1,419 were redirected to health centres and 20 to

SVPR (outpatient treatment) leaving a total 7,011 patients who were treated at SLH and 212 adult patients treated at MDH. There were 964 new paediatric outpatient referrals in 2008. These patients received a total of 2,244 treatment sessions between them. The Paediatric Physiotherapy Service also provides a service to two schools for children special needs. At San Miguel School an average of 46 students were on treatment and received 817 treatment sessions.

The Occupational Therapy (OT) Department is finalising new protocols and patient leaflets. Ward OTs were involved in the development of the Adult Nursing Admission Assessment is being introduced in all wards to assess the need for different service. Some OTs were involved in the Marketing of the Occupational Therapy Profession, aimed at increasing the intake of students in the OT Degree Course.

The Orthoptic Department offers the following services: Ophthalmology Department; Botulinum toxin clinic; Neurology department; Neuro-surgery Department; Paediatric Department; Child Development and Assessment Unit; Gynaecology Department; Endocrine Department, and Heller Keller School for the Visually Impaired. There were 3,624 registered attendances for Orthoptic services.

Since migration, the decontamination services were centrally delivered from Central Sterilisation Supplies Department (CSSD). All operations were therefore processed under one central department whose processes were all accounted for with quality assurance tests and documentation for each individual medical device. A future plan is to increase the number of disinfection machines to cater for the increasing requests and opening of new theatres. It is also planned to register and accredit CSSD with ISO 9001 standard.

Customer	Operation packs	Kit/Bags	Total
Main Theatre	4,727	54,076	58,803
Orthop. Theatre	1,306	30,613	31,919
Day Surgery Th.	2,943	30,800	33,743
Cath. Lab.	180	8,641	8,821
All others	871	81,911	82,782
Total	10,027	206,041	216,068

MOUNT CARMEL HOSPITAL (MCH)

Overview

The main targets of Mount Carmel Hospital (MCH) for 2008 were:

- The struggle against stigma continued through the organisation of a number of activities both within and outside the hospital.
- A five-year strategic plan was presented and approved. Funds have been allocated for the execution of some of the projects and initiatives outlined in this plan.
- The Sectorisation Plan for Malta and Gozo was finalised.
- Refurbishment works were carried out in a number of wards such as Female Ward 8 and the Dual Diagnosis Unit.
- Construction of a gymnasium at Female Ward 1. This project was completed with thanks to the hard work, commitment and initiative of the nurses in FW1 – the motto being a healthy body healthy mind.
- Construction of two extensions of St Jeanne Antide Wards. The work is now at an advanced stage and is expected to come to fruition early in 2009 when these wards will be opened to receive their first admissions.
- A Chief Clinical Psychologist and a Postgraduate Training Co-ordinator were appointed to strengthen the delivery of more specialised services to patients. The latter appointment is of special significance since it increases the possibility of having more professional specializing in the mental health sector.
- Staff training both locally and abroad, exchange programs with other EU based Health Care professionals and longer term programs of studies aimed at career progression.

- Introduction of care plan groups and assessment devices were aimed at increasing the quality of care of patients.
- Online Requisitioning System and the extension of the IT network continued as planned. This resulted in better ward facilities and euros in savings.

Performance Review and Analysis

The total number of inpatients was 2,066. There were 1,256 total admissions of which: 429 were first admissions, 767 re-admissions and 60 were re-transferred from other hospitals. The following are some abridged activity figures:

Admissions	Totals	Male (%)	Female (%)
Informal	727	498 (68.5)	229 (31.5)
Compulsory	464	301 (64.9)	163 (35.1)
a) <i>Observation Order</i>		[25 (5.4)]	[16 (3.4)]
b) <i>Treatment Order</i>		[2 (0.4)]	[8 (1.7)]
c) <i>Emergency Observation Order</i>		[274 (59.1)]	[139 (30)]
Court	5	4	1
Re-transferred from other hospitals	60	27 (45)	33 (55)
Total	1,256	830 (66)	426 (34)
Total Inpatients on Hospital registers on 31.12.07	810	421 (52)	389 (48)

Discharges (inc. those temporarily transferred to other hospitals)

	Total (%)
Males	843 (69.5)
Females	370 (30.5)
Total	1,213 (100)

During 2008, there were 1,352 new psychiatric outpatient cases at Mater Dei Hospital (MDH) while the total follow-up attendances were 9,658. There were 301 admissions to the Psychiatric Unit, at MDH, of which 202 were new cases.

213 Electroconvulsive Treatments were delivered during the year. Therapy treatment was given to 46 male and 167 female patients.

The Outreach Team offered its services to 84 patients (of whom 60 are active while the remaining 24 are dormant/inactive due to a number of reasons). These patients benefited from a total of 5,133 interventions during the year, making the average number of weekly visits to each patient around the 1.65 mark.

The Primary Team followed a total of 84 patients (24 male and 60 female) while a further 433 patients were followed at secondary level.

A total of 343 patients were transferred to health centres from the Psychiatric Outpatients. There are currently 15,130 active cases being followed by the Outpatients Unit, of which 11,010 were seen at least once during the year.

49 patients attended the Day Centre in Cospicua, 15 of which were new cases referred. An average of 10 patients attended the centre daily.

Developments

A Consultant with Special Responsibility for Substance Misuse and one with Special Responsibility for Learning Disability were appointed. These enabled future consultant-led multidisciplinary development of these fields and better co-ordination with other related and community services.

A Chief Clinical Psychologist has been appointed, thus enabling development of psychology services beyond psychiatry in other fields of health care delivery.

The appointment of the Postgraduate Training Co-ordinator marked the introduction of postgraduate training of psychiatrists in Malta, making specialist training more relevant to national needs and helping to stem the exodus of doctors to train abroad in Psychiatry.

Female Ward 8 was newly refurbished to a high standard. Refurbishment is also underway in the Dual Diagnosis Unit (DDU).

The Nursing Management took an active part in continued professional development. The hospital's emergency medical response service was thoroughly assessed and plans are underway to set up a team of professionals that would be responsible to train medical and paramedical staff in the management of emergency situations. Through this training programme, which is aimed at medical doctors, nurses and nursing aides, the management plans are to set up a first aid/immediate medical response team. This programme will be mandatory to all medical and paramedical personnel and is being planned on an ongoing basis.

The Community Mental Health Services Department finalised the Sectorisation Plan for Malta and Gozo. Malta and Gozo are divided into three regions and each region is in turn divided into a number of sectors. Each sector will offer patients living within its parameters a number of services such as:

- Primary Mental Health Care – a multi-disciplinary team whose main aim is to educate, support and prevent relapse in cases which are deemed mild and/or relatively stable.
- Secondary Mental Health Care – a multi-disciplinary team which works closely with the above mentioned team, offering more specialised and intensive care to patients who needs considerable psychiatric care and involvement.
- Day Centre – A Centre which aims to train patients in necessary skills in order to function well within the community.

All employees working within this Department successfully finished a one-year course on the care of mental illness in the community.

An awareness campaign on mental health and mental illness was launched. This campaign is set to be extended over the coming years in order to promote more tolerance and understanding on the subject.

An initial informal agreement has been reached with the Curia regarding a potential partnership in order to open a new hostel for patients with learning disabilities.

Qormi Day Centre has been moved to a community multi-purpose hall where patients can enjoy all the benefits of a day centre without the seclusion and stigma usually associated with such a centre. The service users are now better integrated and liaise closely with a volunteer group working with them on certain projects, such as the enhancement of the hall's surroundings. On average, 10.8 patients attend the centre daily.

Finance Department

2008 has been a year of challenges because of a substantial increase in emoluments due to collective agreements. These costs included total unforeseen expenses amounting to €445,000 divided as follows:

	€
New agreements with social workers, nurses and paramedics whereby premiums were raised	157,000
Arrears of premiums & allowances allowed for in the new agreements	108,000
Arrears to consultants allowed in the new agreements	68,000
Overseas scholarship	52,000
Nurses' CPD allowances	40,000
Outsourcing of IT Manager	20,000
Total unforeseen expenses	445,000

The original 2008 projections allowed for a total expenditure of:	18,464,919
Add extra expenditure as outlined above:	445,000
Therefore total expenditure for 2008 should have been:	18,909,919

Since MDH managed to reduce MCH's operational expenditure by €127,000, the actual expenditure including unforeseen expenses (€445,000) for 2008 were €18,782,919.

SIR PAUL BOFFA HOSPITAL (SPBH)

Overview

The main items on the agenda were:

- A detailed plan for the new oncology facilities on the Mater Dei Hospital site which is being developed including identification of services that are going to be offered.
- Procurement process is presently underway for the supply, installation and commissioning of two new linear accelerators machines, together with associated bunker construction for three accelerators in line with projected workload increases.
- Staff familiarisation visits to Mater Dei Hospital are being organised.
- A mission statement has been developed which incorporates the principles of the care provided at Sir Paul Boffa Hospital and provide a foundation for policies, decisions, goals and new directions.
- A new isolator in the Chemotherapy Department has been successfully installed. This will also help as a backup plan during the migration process.
- The establishment of a Palliative Care Unit has been approved and specialists in this field are being recruited in 2009. This Unit will accommodate oncology patients and their family in a better environment as they will offer individual attention and better cure for pain, spiritual and psychological help.

Performance Review and Analysis

28,598 Dermatology outpatient/day-case visits were performed during 2008. This translates into an 8.4% increase in workload compared to the year 2007. The ratio of new cases to follow-ups was 1.33:1. The detailed activity swings were: 6,348 new cases (+9.1%), 4,785 follow-ups (+13.8%), 1,817 minor operations (+22.3%), patch tests 138 (+6.1%), leg ulcers out patients 3,318 (+30.8%), leg ulcers ward 1,211 (+182.8%), 4,446 PUVA/UVB (+11.9%), 320 plastic surgeries (+16.2%), 404 skin tags (+10.1%), 171 laser (-16.2%), and 2,569 attendances at the GU clinic (+15.7%).

During the year, 88 patients were admitted to the Dermatology Ward of which 42% were males and 58% were females.

Total no. of admissions in 2008	88 (+7 remaining from 2007)
Average length of stay of patients	32 days
Total bed stay of all patients	2,829
Average daily bed state	8 (on a number of occasions the ward [11 beds] was full with patients waiting to be admitted)
Occupancy rate	70.5%

The Oncology Department had 1,019 new cases referred for treatment. Of these, 684 received radiotherapy at the time of presentation, 322 received chemotherapy as outpatients. The number of treatments was as follows: Radiotherapy – 15,991; Chemotherapy 5,935; Simulator Planning – 1,047; Mould Room Shells 93; Cobalt Planning – 197; Linac Verification of Films – 324. 35 High Dose Radioactive Iodine; 16 Low Dose Radioactive Iodine and six Caesium insertion treatments were administered in the Isotope Administration Unit. The Department has catered for 1,319 admissions in the 28 beds at its disposal for inpatient treatment. An additional 185 day-cases were attended to (56% male; 44% female).

A total of 65 patients were treated at the Neuro-Rehabilitation Unit during 2008. Several meetings have been held regarding the New Rehabilitation Hospital at Karen Grech Hospital.

The Social Work Unit at Boffa Hospital has completed its 8th year. The unit continued to work with several patients and their families referred from the various wards, units and clinics. This work included: assessment, planning, interventions, follow-ups, recording, liaising with other institutions and entities. A total of 217 patients were referred to the Social Work Unit. Breakdown of patients referred is as follows:

Total no. of patients referred	217
NRU	58
Oncology, Outpatients, Palliative Clinic and Dermatology	159

The Radiology Unit performed 5,688 imaging procedures. The major users of this service are the Chest Unit and the Floriana Health Centre which between them exceed 80% of the total workload.

There were 5,731 physiotherapy treatment sessions for 1,265 patients.

76 new patients were referred for treatment at the Neuro-Rehabilitation Physiotherapy Service. Throughout the year, there was a notable increase in the number of patients with multiple sclerosis being admitted to the NRU from home for a short period of intensive rehabilitation. The overall average age was lower than that for 2007. There was also an increase in the number of patients admitted for rehabilitation following surgical interventions for meningiomas.

Family sessions, together with the carers and family members close to the patient, were held so as to complement and reinforce the treatment sessions carried out by the physiotherapists with the patient.

Outpatient activity consisted of treatment and follow-up spinal cord injury patients.

An information leaflet is being prepared to address self-care for stroke sufferers. The team is also working on setting up modalities for movement analysis and patient feedback via video recordings.

Throughout 2008, the Oncology and Palliative Physiotherapy Service continued to provide its services; clinically to the inpatients and outpatients referred from sources of Oncology; and also through various public education and awareness programmes. The team also covered the clinical responsibilities of referrals from Dermatology. In addition, staff development activities were undertaken. Services to inpatients continued for the male and female oncology wards and chemotherapy day clinic. The majority of the referrals covered mobility problems of the patients. There was improved interaction with the ward staff, and patients were being referred at an earlier stage. This implies an increasing harmonious collaboration and interaction between the physiotherapists and the MDT. Normal relationships continued with Malta Hospice Movement with close liaison with their MDT. Outpatient services were provided to oncology patients discharged from the wards, direct referrals from the outpatient radiotherapy department, and direct referrals from the consultants.

The lymphoedema clinic continued its services. 197 patients were treated of who 97 were new referrals. 761 treatment sessions were offered to this patient group.

A study entitled *Mobility of oncology patients hospitalised at Sir Paul Boffa Hospital before and after physiotherapy intervention* is being carried out. The objective is to assess the influence that physiotherapy intervention has on mobility and function in oncology and palliative care patients experiencing mobility problems.

3,778 patients attended the Occupational Department. 14,384 units (one unit is equivalent to 10 – 15 mins) were delivered, of which 3,492 inpatient sessions and 627 outpatient sessions. In the Oncology Section, assessment and follow-up treatment of both male and female ward was carried out. Inpatients and outpatients from radiotherapy or chemotherapy are seen following referrals from the palliative clinic that

takes place once a week with the multidisciplinary team so as to be able to offer home visits where necessary hence reaching more patients within the community that are not usually admitted as in patients. For dermatology patients, assessment and follow-up treatment is carried out in ward. In the Neuro-Rehabilitation Ward, assessment and follow-up treatment includes outpatient services and home visits. Group therapy sessions and home visits and outpatient service following referrals is offered to the Hospice Movement.

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ELDERLY AND COMMUNITY CARE

Overview

During the year, the Department for the Elderly and Community Care had the following responsibilities:

- providing domiciliary services to enable elderly persons to remain living in familiar surroundings within the community;
- setting up and running of day centres in various localities to support elderly persons to continue leading an active life in the community;
- providing rehabilitation services and the best possible conditions for health improvement in geriatric institutions;
- providing institutional residence to elderly persons who are unable to benefit from any of the foregoing services. In order to cater for increasing dependency needs in government homes, during 2008, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services were extended to cover all government homes;
- providing modern facilities and services to the elderly persons, which help them remain independent; and
- provision of ongoing training to both existing staff and training directed to fill in gaps in current human resources.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

St Vincent de Paule Residence (SVPR)

The main aim of the Residence remained that of giving elderly people, who are no longer able to live in the community, a better way of living in an attractive, comfortable and modern environment. During 2008 much has been done to attain this goal and have the residents' situation ameliorated.

The fact that, on the Maltese islands we are facing an ageing population is being reflected in the demand for admission to St Vincent de Paul Residence. An Admission Board vets applications and each application is treated on its own merits giving special attention to the social and medical conditions of the individual. The major problem during this past year has been the considerable number of long-term care cases at Karen Grech Hospital awaiting admission to St Vincent de Paul Residence.

At the end of the year 2007, the total population at St Vincent de Paul stood at 1,045 consisting of 332 males and 713 females while the population at the end of 2008 stood at 1,005 consisting of 304 males and 701 females.

1,037 influenza vaccines were given to residents at SVPR and 580 were given to residents at residential homes. 958 influenza vaccines and 165 Hepatitis B vaccines were also given to staff at SVPR, staff working at elderly homes and in the community with the elderly.

A total of 136 patients, of whom 66 new cases, were referred for Domiciliary Physiotherapy Services, resulting in 210 interventions. 78 governmental and 21 NGO day centre visits were visited giving group physiotherapy services to a total of 2,293 participants. A total of 283 were newly referred as outpatient services, 822 patients were seen resulting in 2,214 interventions.

2,691 Occupational Therapy treatment sessions were carried out with residents at SVPR, 518 sessions with residents in community homes, 128 sessions at St Jeanne Antide Ward and 217 treatment sessions at OT – SVPR. 171 clients are registered at the Speech Language Pathology service.

490 indoor and outdoor activities were organised by the Entertainment Section during 2008. These included a variety of cultural, religious outings, party invitations BBQs and others. A new inward activity is being organised on a daily basis which focuses on all the residents in the wards with particular emphasis to the semi dependent and the bedridden residents.

During 2008, a total of 246 admissions to Respite Care, 92 males and 154 females were requested. The main reasons for requests for such relief admissions include: relief of carers under stress; to temporarily alleviate care; in cases where carers develop states of conflict of roles and holiday admissions. Each of the seven respite beds at SVPR has been utilised by 18.9 respite users during 2008 (as compared to 15.9 respite users in 2007). These figures show that during 2008 there has been a through-put of one respite user per bed per 19.4 days (as compared to one respite user per bed per 23 days in 2007). This increased efficiency over the previous year is the result of shorter booked stays per person. As is apparent, this strategy has to date succeeded to curtail the need for more beds dedicated to respite. It is important to point out that planning for stays of less than 14 days will definitely not be effective to appropriately support carers through respite. If the trend for a burgeoning increase in respite applications continues, there will definitely be the need for an increase in the number of beds at respite, beyond the seven beds currently available.

In October, the Assessment and Rehabilitation Team's role was revised and the clinical duties were separated from the advisory/audit duties for the community homes. Such division resulted in the setting up of the Community Homes Assessment & Rehabilitation Team (CHART) and the Community Homes Advisory Committee (CHAC).

One of the main objectives of the CHAC is to evaluate the structure and processes that are related to holistic care in state community homes. The aim is to promote good care practices and improve outcomes. As a first pilot project to initiate such audit in the homes, the Team has received the approval to address the issue of falls management in its preventive, care and documentation spheres.

Additional CHAC duties include the evaluation of residents who are referred for care management assessment by the Managers of Żejtun and Bormla Homes, as well as of those residents who are residing in private homes under the public-private partnership schemes. Furthermore, the CHAC is requested to advise the Department during the planning stage as well as during the ongoing refurbishment period in connection with any projected refurbishment in the homes. Moreover, the CHAC is expected to carry out research projects that aim to study and analyse current and future projected care needs of the residents in the homes.

As stated earlier, clinical duties have been separated from audit duties. CHART's aim is to concentrate on assessment and rehabilitation of post-acute referrals from the homes; assessment of all residents on admission; performing an annual inter-disciplinary team screening of those residents who had not seen a doctor for more than a year and to perform a relocation assessment of residents who are referred for potential transfer to alternative settings. Due to shortage of medical staff, this service remains limited to the Homes at Floriana, Gżira, Mosta, and Mtarfa.

The major capital project at SVPR during 2008 has been the continuation of a major overhaul, refurbishment and construction extensions on one of the old buildings previously known as Females Wards 1-2, 3-4 and 15-16, housing female residents. On completion of works, this block will be named Pope John Paul II Block. Besides this, there has been an ongoing programme of refurbishment, modernisation and redecoration of wards to upkeep the standards of the residence and services provided. These included: the completion of the installation and commissioning of the two lifts at the Administration Block; installation of a new air-conditioning system at Ward 13, 14 and 15/16 St Joseph including the installation of a new soffit ceiling; installation of a new air-conditioning system at Male Wards 7/8; contracting out of cleaning

services for all males wards; installation of new water mains for Rużar Briffa Complex and St Vincent de Paule Complex; installation of a new air-conditioning system for the whole of Rużar Briffa Complex. This included as well the installation of a new electrical supply. Laying new and repair of old membrane on all roofs of the residence. These works have been carried out by the construction section at SVPR. Tenders for refurbishment of Male Wards 5, 6 7 and 8; and for the replacement of the roof top chillers at the Serenity Block have been awarded and works are envisaged to start early 2009.

New initiatives for Infection Control were carried out in 2008 including: sporadic and spontaneous ward assessments and documentation; vaccination programme for Hepatitis B for staff in Elderly Homes; collection of data of all Culture and Sensitivity results manifesting E. Coli to establish data of incidence of such micro-organism; distribution of pocket-size leaflet to all staff at SVPR regarding hand hygiene was handed to all newly recruited staff to promote hand hygiene; hand hygiene enforcement was carried out with a strict policy issued to all health care workers against wearing false nails; introduction of paper towels instead of cloth towers; distribution of hexachlorophene for usage in treatment of MRSA; a poster with a graphic explanation of improved hand hygiene was distributed and fixed in prominent areas in all wards and clinics; a survey was conducted in wards regarding hand hygiene compliance amongst staff; to reduce the incidence of antibiotic resistance and misuse of antibiotics a ward was identified where non common antibiotics are stored and made available to all wards when the pharmacy at SVPR is closed; the use of the antibiotic guidelines booklet was encouraged and all wards have been supplied with a copy.

Community Homes for the Elderly

Performance Review and Analysis

At the end of 2008 there were 778 residents in community homes for the elderly. During the year, a total of 259 residents were admitted at the residential homes of the elderly.

Residents' Complement in Homes					
Home	Males -60	Females -60	Males +60	Females +60	Total
Cospicua	1	2	32	94	129
Floriana	-	-	11	35	46
Gżira	-	-	4	27	31
Mellieħa	5	2	37	86	130
Mosta	4	1	20	43	68
Msida	-	-	14	50	64
Mtarfa	21	2	32	88	143
Żejtun	1	1	23	142	167
Total	32	8	173	565	778

During 2008, the major refurbishment project of Mosta was finalised during January and February 2008. This refurbishment programme consisted of:

- various internal and structural works;
- supply and installation of air-conditioning systems throughout the home;
- supply and installation of a new electricity system in connection with the installation of the a/c system;
- supply of manufacture of new furniture for all residential rooms;
- plastering and painting of all exterior parts of Mosta Home;
- supply and manufacture of new curtains and bedspreads for all residential rooms and common areas.

Other initiatives carried out in the other homes during 2008 included:

- *At Floriana Home:* maintenance and repair works were carried out on the air-conditioning system, passenger and service lifts, and the laundry. Equipment at the kitchen and laundry was replaced with new ones. During August, an *antiporta* was fixed at the main entrance.

- *At Mtarfa Home*: maintenance and repair works on the air-conditioning system, passengers and service lifts, laundry, and kitchen equipment. A refuse room was constructed to house four ships. During the summer months, a kitchen refurbishment programme commenced.
- *At Gżira Home*: maintenance and repair works on the air-conditioning system, passenger lift, laundry, and kitchen equipment.
- *At Msida Home*: maintenance and repair works on the air-conditioning system, passenger lifts, kitchen, and laundry equipment.
- *Within Żejtun and Cospicua Homes*: 15 students have chosen Żejtun Home as their Systems of Knowledge working project attachment. Some of the activities included: helping residents in their own orientation such as updating notice boards regularly with what is going on, organising craft lessons and another student helped in the creation of a library for the residents.

The Mellieħa Home was opened on 1 March 2008. The home comprises of four floors and eight wings and has a capacity of 130 beds in two bedded or single rooms. There are presently 130 residents at the home.

During 2008, the Department for the Elderly and Community Care maintained its agreements with private entrepreneurs for the provision of beds for government-referred residents in private home settings within Casa Arkati, Villa Messina and Casa Serena. In addition a number of beds were also purchased at Central Home, Mosta.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are 16 day centres in Malta, all opening on a five-day week basis, except for Safi Day Centre, which opens once a week. Attendances at day centres were as follows:

Centre	
Żejtun	1,181
Hamrun	1,792
Dingli	941
Qormi	1,269
Sliema	822
Żurrieq	1,114
Mtarfa	1,438
B'Kara	1,522
Cospicua	1,032
Luqa	870
St Paul's Bay	1,440
B'Bugħia	857
Mosta	1,020
St Venera	1,034
Naxxar	841
Safi	633
Total	17,806

The transport of elderly persons to attend the day centres continued to be an issue, as not all local councils agreed to finance transport.

Day centres organise a balanced activity programme consisting of creative, physical, social and educational activities. Different crafts such as parchment, *ganutell*, knitting, crochet, glass painting and paper creations were carried out in certain day centres. Guitar, painting and computer lessons were held in St Paul's Bay Day Centre. There was also the service of a hairdresser and beautician in certain day centres.

Physiotherapy, podology and occupational therapy services are all carried out at the day centres. The aim of these services is to help the elderly person to continue to live in the community by doing activities of

daily living prevent them being admitted to a residential home. Keep fit is being done regularly and the elderly members are getting more aware of the importance of doing simple exercises to stay healthier.

At the end of December 2008, telecare installations reached a total of 9,447 (167 Carelink installations). There were 918 new applications.

Month	No. of Calls 2007	No of Calls 2008	Change (%)
January	11,010	15,767	+ 43.21
February	10,216	12,600	+ 23.34
March	10,849	11,521	+ 6.19
April	9,658	11,110	+ 15.03
May	9,900	9,614	- 2.89
June	11,575	9,422	- 18.60
July	9,166	9,473	+ 3.35
August	8,929	8,919	- 0.11
September	9,120	9,594	+ 5.20
October	11,622	11,457	- 1.42
November	10,761	11,998	+ 11.50
December	16,036	12,240	- 23.67

As from January, all Telecare Operators were instructed to report faulty telecare lines and faulty telecare sets directly to 133 or to GO Customer care number 80072121 which are repaired within 48 hours. Since February, a new PABX system is being used at Telecare Centre.

During 2008, there were 783 persons making use of Incontinence Service (Scheme A). There were 106 new applications while 52 others stopped the service. There were 2,398 elderly persons aged 60+ years and certified as suffering from incontinence (Scheme B) who benefited from the service up to the end of 2007. In 2008, 762 new applications were registered while 769 stopped the service. This means that a total of 2,391 benefited from the service up to the end of 2008.

The handyman service section received a total of 1,487 new applications in 2008. 1,265 jobs were completed and 119 were cancelled (figure includes pending jobs from 2007). The most requested jobs were: plumbing (941), electrical works (452), and carpentry (434).

During the year, the Electoral Office processed 9,594 cards for new 60+ and 75+ holders. During the same year, 2,883 lost cards were passed on to the same office and all cards were renewed. The total number of beneficiaries of Kartanzjan stood at 95,044.

The main aim of the Social Work Unit is to provide help in the form of psychological support, counselling and guidance. The work of the Unit is to take care of all assessments following requests from elderly clients in need of 'Home-Help', 'Admission to Homes', 'Admission to SVPR', 'Carer's Pension', 'Alternative Housing', 'Telecare Cases', and 'Court Cases'. It also discusses all referred social cases. Up to the end of 2008, there were 2,192 requests for these services.

The principal aim of home help service is to enable elderly people and people with disability and special needs to live as independently as possible and to encourage them to better their quality of life. It is meant to complement not replace family support or community services that might presently be rendered. Allocation of service is granted on the basis of social needs and/or medical problems and limitations. Up to the end of 2008, there were 2,592 households which benefited from the service with a total of 3,524 of beneficiaries. During the year, 786 new cases were presented.

By the end of 2008, the number of elderly persons benefiting from telephone rebates stood at 5,482. There were 560 new applications and 734 cancellations.

During 2008, the meal-on-wheels service provided 65,869 meals. This figure is an increase of 1,860 over the previous year.

ZAMMIT CLAPP HOSPITAL (ZCH)

The Year in Review

The main items on the agenda were:

- Zammit Clapp Hospital (ZCH) Management took over the running of the inpatient facility of Karen Grech Hospital (KGH) in November 2007; this entailed a revision of the organisational structure of the hospital.
- The project for the migration of ZCH to KGH has been revitalised, thus vacating ZCH, and having all services under one roof.
- At present, a split service operation is being offered at ZCH and KGH.
- Refurbishment project plans are well advanced. The fifth floor at KGH has been refurbished and converted to administration offices and the Pharmacy is being refurbished to a high standard. Refurbishment will be completed during 2009.
- The New Rehabilitation Hospital project has been reconfirmed by the new administration. A number of potential sites for the new hospital building are being evaluated.
- Important appointments during 2008 were the Head of Clinical Services for the Rehabilitation Hospital, Clinical Chairman of Geriatric Medicine and Postgraduate Training Co-ordinator for Geriatric Medicine.
- An important achievement in 2008 was getting electronic access to imaging and pathology information from the centralised records at MDH.

The medical services provided by the two hospitals are:

- ZCH – three geriatric wards comprising 60 rehabilitation beds as well as a Day Hospital together with physiotherapy and occupational therapy services as well as clinical and dispensing pharmacy services.
- KGH – five wards each holding 31 beds: two geriatric rehabilitation wards and one non-geriatric, rehabilitation ward comprising 93 beds, and two wards holding 62 long-term care beds, together with physiotherapy and occupational therapy services and clinical and dispensing pharmacy services.

Performance Review and Analysis

A total number of 1,574 patients were admitted (732 at ZCH and 842 at KGH). The average age of inpatients was 79.3 years. A total number of 1,077 patients were transferred from MDH. 1,246 out of the 1,574 admissions were discharged and 175 patients passed away (153 patients remaining in the rehabilitation wards at the end of the year). Only 50% were discharged to their own home. A total of 22.4% of discharges were to long-term care (including all direct transfers to SVPR, government homes, PPP homes or through transitional wards/St Jeanne Antide).

Discharge Destination	Combined ZCH & KGH 2008	Change %
Own Home	715	50.3
Died	175	12.3
Transfer to Transitional Wards	166	11.7
SVPR & SJA	32	2.3
PPP Homes	63	4.4
Government Homes	57	4.0
Private Homes	73	5.1
Church Homes	75	5.3
Readmissions to Mater Dei Hospital	61	4.3
Other Hospitals	4	0.3
Total	1,421	100

With the new admissions policy of accepting patients who would ultimately require long-term care (LTC), a process of identifying these needs was commenced and a procedure for registering these patients was

developed. 348 new patients were identified as having LTC needs, less 341 patients who were discharged from this list in 2008, leaving a balance of 106 LTC patients by the end of 2008. 62 of these are being cared for in the two transitional wards (TW1 and TW2), however, the other 44 patients are occupying a rehabilitation bed.

1,978 consultation requests from MDH were dealt with in 2008. 53.7% of referred patients were transferred as at the end of the year. The majority of cases (1,228 - 62%) were referrals from the Department of Medicine. The average waiting time for all the transfers in 2008 was 14 days.

642 new community referrals were dealt with whilst there were 1,993 recorded medical follow-up visits which included patients discharged from the wards. Outpatient Therapy Services are also being provided at SLH: Physiotherapy Outpatients; Occupational Therapy Outpatients and the Orthotics and Prosthetics Unit. These services will be relocated in KGH building after refurbishing is carried out.

The Occupational Therapy (OT) Department saw an increase in referrals and a change in the client groups. A total of 13,339 treatment sessions for inpatients and 4,462 at the Day Hospital ZCH were carried out. The conditions were more typical of younger age groups. On the wards the majority of patients were elderly with a large number awaiting long-term care. This affected the type of OT intervention possible since a high percentage of the inpatients were highly dependent requiring medical care. OT staff was required to complete the Notification of Long-Term Care Form for those patients being discharged to long-term care. The instrumental HV service whereby therapists provide continued support in the community following discharge was provided and increased demonstrating its value to patients.

More emphasis was made on the provision of regular group therapy sessions on both sites. At ZCH there was the introduction of ward stroke therapy groups, dementia groups, leisure groups and the Parkinson's Disease Programme on the day hospital. At KGH, orientation, cognitive stimulation, leisure and domestic groups were held regularly for the LTC wards as well as on M3, M4 and M8.

The OT staff attended and organised various training seminars both locally and abroad to keep updated with developments. Meetings were held at MCAST to plan a one-year course for OT aides so that they will be certified as paramedic aides. Three induction courses were organised by OT for nurses and nursing aides.

Following the migration to MDH, the social work service started to provide 'In Residence' services to a total of 155 patients by 31 December 2007. The total social work caseload for 2008 was 1,777. A total of 1,574 SW service packages were given at ZCH and KGH.

2008	Patient Admissions By Status		Totals	SW Service Packages		Totals
	New Patients	Re-Ad Patients		Basic	Full	
Totals ZCH	57.5% (421)	42.5% (311)	46.5% (732)	37.8% (277)	62.2% (455)	46.5% (732)
Totals KGH	83.8% (706)	16.2% (136)	53.5% (842)	24.1% (203)	75.9% (639)	53.5% (842)
Total	71.6% (1,127)	28.4% (447)	100% (1,574)	30.5% (480)	69.5% (1,094)	100% (1,574)

A total of 92 reports have been prepared for the SVPR Admissions board.

The social work services organised training for its staff. The need for the engagement of sufficient social work staff is felt in order to deliver a quality service and for the continuous evaluation and renewal work practices and development of future practice to fulfil today's needs. The expansion of the current community services is also necessary to provide a more holistic service.

Physiotherapy services were provided to all referred patients at ZCH and KGH wards and for follow-up after discharge. 22,067 treatment sessions were carried out during inpatient services at ZCH, 41,163 at KGH and 5,115 at Day Hospital ZCH. Various courses, conferences seminars, workshop and lecturers

were organised for physiotherapy staff. 8,622 adult patients were referred to the Physiotherapy Department. Of the total number of new patient referrals, 1,419 were re-directed to health centres and 20 to SVPR (outpatient treatment), 212 adult patients were treated at MDH, leaving a total of 7,011 patients who were treated at SLH. There were 1,133 treatment sessions carried out at MDH and 43,432 sessions at SLH.

The total number of new referrals to the Speech and Language (SLP) Unit was that of 590 clients, an increase of approximately 26% over 2007. 194 of these patients suffered CVA and 150 suffered from dementia. The Unit created a database of information regarding intervention materials, handouts and advice sheets on each area used by all SLPs, thus creating more uniformity of service. A list of equipment/intervention resources was given to management as a result of an increase in demand for SLP services.

4,079 sessions were delivered with inpatients in the eight wards. The time between referral and first session was kept within the limits of the Quality Service Charter. However, the increase in number of new referrals made it difficult at times to follow patients more regularly and intensively. Apart from individual sessions, 141 patients were seen in 15 groups. These groups included group sessions for patients suffering from similar speech and language difficulties as well as group sessions targeted within the Parkinson's Class that were held weekly from October to December. These groups also involved sessions with the relatives in the form of advice on communication difficulties and feeding/swallowing problems.

Work is underway on certain projects including dysphagia, language and communication, and SLP documentation. This involves the training of health care professionals, development of advice sheets, creation of new forms, liaison with other health care professionals and workshops.

The objectives set for the current year by the Pharmacy Services have been mostly reached and the ones listed have been very successful.

- To consolidate the professional pharmacy practices and the management of the services at ZCH and establish the same standards at KGH.
- To plan and finalise the relocation of the Pharmacy Services at KGH within the former Gynaecology Outpatients Department.
- To implement a safe and yet more cost-effective system of drug dispensing at ZCH and KGH.
- To work for the employment of two pharmacy technicians and the replacement of one part-time pharmacist.
- To train all new staff members recruited by ZCH/KGH with the Pharmacy Services in 2008.
- To ensure continuing education for the Pharmacy staff.
- To continue to provide training opportunities for Pharmacy students.
- To continue to deliver quality pharmacy services to ZCH/KGH.

Some work still needs to be done in reviewing and finalising the standard operating procedures and in auditing and ensure quality care delivery. Also IT equipment is still lacking.

The total expenditure for 2008 was €566,894, a 60% increase when compared to €353,880 in 2007. Purchasing was almost entirely done from the Government Health Procurement Service (GHPS). The expense on drugs alone was €377,178 (67% of total expenditure). The trend in expenditure on drugs by class remains the same. The class of drugs with the highest cost remains anti-infective agents which amount to 42% of the total cost.

The inpatient pharmacy services at ZCH/KGH catered for all the 215 beds. This service was delivered through two-pronged practices namely:

- *Ward pharmacy practice*: which provided pharmaceuticals to all wards at ZCH/KGH. An individualised system of ward dispensing has been successfully implemented at ZCH/KGH with a considerable annual saving of around €12,000 on the previous unit dose system. The expiry date of all

drugs on the ward was checked monthly whilst scheduled inspections of the emergency trolleys were carried out.

- *Clinical pharmacy practice:* The pharmacy continued to deliver the clinical pharmacy service at ZCH/KGH. Pharmacists were allocated to wards. Patient medication records were kept and used to prepare a pharmaceutical care plan for every patient. Identified requirements for optimising drug therapy were discussed with the doctor and the patients' progress was subsequently monitored. Pharmacists joined the other members of the inter-disciplinary team on the weekly ward rounds/conferences and updated them on drug related issues.

All discharged patients were given a week's supply of drugs backed up by an individualised medication information sheet. The pharmacists ensured that application/authorisation forms for free medicine were filled in for eligible patients. Counselling was done on the wards to the patients and/or their carer/s.

Pharmacist intervention on Day Hospital was again restricted to patients who were referred with problems related to their medication and to participation in the inter-disciplinary Parkinson's Disease Programme for patients and their carers. A week's supply of drugs newly prescribed at Day Hospital was dispensed to patients. Patients on anticoagulant therapy, being followed up on Day Hospital, were also given their supply of Warfarin from the pharmacy.

The Pharmacy Department has continued to function within specialised teams with the aim of improving the quality of care practices. These teams include the Infection Control team, the Wound Management Team, the Nutrition Committee, and the Continence Care Team.

Clinical pharmacy services could not be delivered at KGH throughout the first quarter of the year due to lack of human resources. The main goal at the time was to set up our services. Another objective was to set up the wards at ZCH/KGH in view of the individualised system of ward dispensing that was later on implemented throughout both hospitals. Clinical pharmacy services eventually resumed at KGH during the second quarter of the year. This was a period when much of the administrative work revolved around the planning and long-term relocation of the KGH pharmacy unit.

With the complete recruitment of staff, the unit's operations were reorganised to allow for good co-ordination between the pharmacists' role and that of the pharmacy technicians. Reflective practice meetings were held to encourage staff to analyse their methods of intervention and find ways of improving their input. Weekly sessions whereby pharmacists took turns to present cases for discussion were organised. Teaching, seminars and training is an on-going process in the Pharmacy Department. Some of the staff are following postgraduate courses and Masters degrees.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY HEALTH

OVERVIEW

The Department of Primary Health provides a comprehensive and holistic health service within the community, which includes the following services:

- General medical practitioner (clinic and home visits)
- General Nursing care
- Specialised services: (Medical Consultant clinic, Schedule V clinic, ECG clinic, Gynaecology and Antenatal clinic, Well Baby clinic, Diabetes clinic, Dental surgery and dental hygiene, Radiography services, Mental Health clinics, Optometry and Glaucoma clinics, Pathology investigations, Podiatry clinic, Physiotherapy clinic, Speech Language Pathology clinic, Occupational Health Unit, Community Pharmacies, Migrant Health Unit, National Immunisation Service, School Health Services).

Performance Review and Analysis

During 2008, there were 466,080 General Practitioners (GP) encounters of which 262,373 were seen in Health Centres, 155,187 in District Clinics, 10,478 home visits by day and 1,794 visits by night. A total of 6,624 were seen by Consultants at the Health Centres. 5,799 attended for Schedule V issues or renewals. 1,494 new cases and 2,439 follow-up cases were screened for glaucoma at the Health Centres. 50,018 cases were seen by the Podiatry Services.

Other specialist services were offered as follows:

Service	Attendances 2007	Attendances 2008	Change (%)
Diabetes Clinic	12,597	12,782	+ 1.4
Obs/Gynae Clinic	6,667	7,118	+ 6.8
Ophthalmic Clinic	5,017	4,481	- 10.7
Mental Health Clinic	4,112	3,972	- 3.4
Dental Clinic *	20,259	27,376	+ 26
Well Baby Clinic	6,406	6,733	+ 5.1
Acupuncture	3,286	441**	- 86.6
Total	58,344	62,903	+ 7.8

* only services provided by Dental Surgeons are included

** service transferred to Mater Dei Hospital

Other professional services offered included the following:

Service	Clinic attendances 2007	Clinic attendances 2008	Change (%)
Nursing Care in the treatment rooms	175,356	174,899	- 0.3
Podology	50,412	48,779	- 3.2
Speech Therapy *	20,968	20,519	- 2.1
Radiology	7,682	6,958	- 9.4
Pathology	58,084	60,819	+ 4.7
Physiotherapy	27,456	27,950	+ 1.8
Dental Hygienist	4,867	5,637	+ 15.8
ECG	3,448	3,802	+ 10.3
Total	348,273	349,363	+ 0.3

* at health centres and district clinics

The main aims of the School Health Service are: to provide early detection of disease and abnormal processes; prevention of disease; health education; health awareness; and targeting vulnerable groups of children.

These aims form the cornerstone of Primary Health Care and in this regard the School Health Service provides this type of care for the child population in our community. The work carried out to date and the achievement of the strategic objectives certainly contribute greatly to the attainment of the goals aspired for by the Primary Health Care Department.

During 2008 a total of 9,296 medical examinations were carried out by the School Health Service. These were subdivided as follows:

Service	No of children
Medical examinations	9,296
Height and weight measurements	9,758
Development assessments	6,153
Visual acuity tests	6,935
Injury at school	150
Scoliosis screening	1,582
Ophthalmic referrals	714
Dental referrals	10
ENT referrals	12
Speech/Language Pathology referrals	312
CDAU/Child Guidance referrals	83
Education Psychologist referrals	3
Surgical referrals	25
Paediatric referrals	22
Orthopaedic referrals (inc. scoliosis)	158
Health Centre referrals	40
Chest Clinic referrals	10
Podology referrals	3
A & E Department referrals	4
Dermatology referrals	10
Immunisations	
Hep B 1 st dose	2,005
Hep B 2 nd dose	1,819
Hep B 3 rd dose	1,917
MMR	2,582
BCG (State Schools)	2,576
BCG (Church and Independent)	1,811

The National Immunisation Schedule for Children in 2008 was as follows:

National Immunisation Schedule		
Age	Vaccine	Remarks
At 6-8 weeks of age	Dip/Tet/Per + Polio + Hib	
At 3 months of age	Dip/Tet/Per + Polio + Hib	
At 4 months of age	Dip/Tet/Per + Hib	
At 15 months of age	Measles Mumps MMR Rubella Hepatitis B 1 st dose	to all children
At 16 months of age	Hepatitis B 2 nd dose	to all children
At 21 months of age	Hepatitis B 3 rd dose	to all children
During the 4 th year	Dip/Tet Polio	3 years after the 3 rd dose of basic course
At 7 years	MMR	to all children
At 8 years (year 4 junior sch)	Hepatitis B	to all children
At 12-14 years	BCG	to all children
Booster at 16 years	Dip/Tet Polio	5 doses of tetanus vaccine offer a lifelong protection. No further doses are necessary unless specifically indicated. To continue with diphtheria (adult dose) and polio every 10 years.

As to the Influenza Vaccine Campaign, this year as in previous years, there was a very smooth running of the campaign, co-ordinated from the NIS at Floriana Health Centre. This year we received a consignment of 85,000 vaccines. The campaign spanned from 3 to 22 November. After this date, the vaccine was offered to all. However, there was very little response to this offer.

The e-Health immunisation program enables online registration of every vaccination administered through National Immunisation Service or reported from private doctors. The development of this system has been ongoing for some time and it is now in the final stages of completion. At the moment, the system is running on an online testing area.

The following activities continued to be carried out during 2008:

- Hepatitis B, Diphtheria, Tetanus and typhoid vaccinations for WasteServ personnel, Green Skips workers, Beach Cleaners, and others;
- Diphtheria, Tetanus and Typhoid vaccinations for drainage workers, Works Division employees and Water Services Corporation employees;
- Tuberculin testing/scar examinations and Hepatitis B for Health Department employees;
- Vaccinations for foreign students;
- Vaccinations for Hepatitis B contacts, IV drug users, patients with blood hepatic and renal diseases;
- Vaccinations of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Polio to all irregular immigrants and to their children according to age.

During 2008, a total of 2,985 cases were examined and reported by the Occupational Health (Medical) Unit. The Unit continued to serve its four-fold function:

- periodical check-up for specific occupation health hazards (Periodical Medical Examinations Category I);
- certification of fitness prior to employment /appointment/transfers/apprenticeships etc, (Pre-placement Medical Examinations Category II);
- certification regarding specific cases (for example, ‘fitness to drive’) (Category III);
- sundry requests for reports (including ‘Ergonomic’ review cases and Colour Vision Testing as well as assessment and advice regarding Registered Disabled Person Candidates (Category IV).

A total of 5,688 patients attended the Radiology Clinic of the health centres.

Patients	Total
Chest Unit	1,651
Floriana Health Centre	3,218
Outpatient	9
MCC	4
Boffa Hospital	227
RTD	579
Total	5,688

The total budget allocated to Primary Health during 2008 was €15,950,156. These funds were utilised for payment of personal emoluments, services and all purchases needed throughout the outposts falling under the department’s responsibility. The Accounts Section was requested to introduce a system of Responsibility Centres for each Health Centre/Specialisation.

During 2008, the GP trainee programme was strengthened and twelve new trainees were recruited. A new GP training co-ordinator was also identified.

The schedule of activity in Rabat, Qormi, and Cospicua health centres remained curtailed, the centres closing at 20:00hrs from Monday to Friday and at 13:00hrs on Saturday, reopening on Monday at 08:00hrs. The general practitioner service at these health centres stopped at 17:00hrs. The other health centres, namely Mosta, Paola, Floriana, and Gżira, were kept open round the clock but the general practitioner service switched over to ‘emergencies only’ between 17:00hrs and 08:00hrs week days and from 13:00hrs on Saturday till 08:00 hrs the following Monday.

In the other medical and paramedical services, appointment waiting times were maintained at an acceptable level and services were streamlined. The optometry services were still sub-contracted and plans are in place to establish eligibility criteria.

In general the public appeared to be relatively satisfied with the standard of services given. A questionnaire was done in summer but results are still being analysed. Plans are also in place to review and make better use of the time allocated to prescription clinics. Consultations were done to establish guidelines for request for blood investigations

Nature of Complaint	2007	% of complaints	2008	% of complaints
Attitude of Employee	62	5.5	50	7.12
Appointment Failure	202	18.1	63	8.97
Prolonged waiting time	211	18.9	175	25
Undelivered service	561	50.4	375	53.4
Mistakes by employee	25	2.2	24	3.42
Others	52	4.6	15	2.14
Total	1,113		702	

During 2008, all cases were investigated, of which 493 cases (70.22%) were found to be justified and corrective action was taken, 141 cases (20%) were found to be completely unjustified while in 68 cases (9.68%) the benefit of the doubt was given to the complainant although it was not clear whether the complaint was justified. In order to limit the number of complaints, necessary action, including disciplinary action, was taken.

Community nursing and midwifery services were provided by the MMDNA. The CommCare section within Primary Health is responsible to vet, verify, and approve all calls before being forwarded to the MMDNA. During the home visits, patients, relatives, or carers are being involved more in the patient's care plan and informed on related issues such as education, handling of patients, and awareness on other services to encourage their participation. If patients are mobile and are able to attend the health centres, MMDNA service is not approved and they are encouraged to seek the service at the health centres.

A computer system was devised for CommCare Assessment Unit (CAU) solely for the registration of all patients. An agreement was entered into with CCG Investments Ltd. CAU will retain the overall project management responsibility and service ownership. A new classification system was devised for the different interventions delivered by MMDNA. The amendment of these classifications was to ensure better regulation, more transparency and cost effectiveness.

Partnerships with local councils were continued, so that diabetic injections are administered by nurses recruited by local councils. These services were still paid by the Health Division but the service has an advantage in that it offered more individualised and timely patient attention.

In 2008 there was a significant increase in number of community and midwifery services when compared to the previous year.

Service	Attendances 2007	Attendances 2008	Change (%)
General Care	82,416	88,711	+ 7.6
Surgical cases	82,188	90,387	+ 10
Injections	11,939	13,653	+ 14.4
Diabetic patients	203,919	212,199	+ 4.1
Tablets	23,186	27,310	+ 17.8
Total	403,648	432,260	+ 7.1

The Primary Health Department (Dental Section) co-ordinates the community dental service which consists of seven dental clinics in health centres, Floriana Dental Care Centre and the School Dental Service. The Department provides a comprehensive primary health care service to the community consisting of educational talks to school children, teachers and parents; dental check ups and treatment in the health centres. It is the policy of the Department to emphasise dental health promotion and the prevention of dental disease. It also organises an Annual Dental Conference, which is open to all members of the Dental

team. The Department also organised screening of patients in old people's homes, talks to the community at schools, local councils, and the Playmobil Funpark.

The total number of patients seen by Dental Surgeons in health centres was 27,380 subdivided as follows:

<i>Floriana</i>	<i>Qormi</i>	<i>Gżira</i>	<i>Paola</i>	<i>Cospicua</i>	<i>Mosta</i>	<i>B'Kara</i>	<i>Rabat</i>	<i>Total</i>
7,574	2,156	3,454	3,741	1,470	4,297	2,643	2,045	27,380

A total of 5,705 patients were screened for scaling and polishing procedures in the health centres during the year, 4.5% less than 2007.

The Infection Control Nurse in Primary Health was involved in various initiatives:

- Towards the beginning of the year, safety equipment was procured for the maintenance and ambulance section to ensure safety at place of work, in line with the OHSWA law.
- An audit was effected in the podiatry clinics and the need for new sterilisers and more instruments was identified to ensure maximum patient safety and increased efficiency for this service. Procurement for this equipment is in the final stage of processing.
- A store for infection control items such as protective wear for use by health care workers has been identified and set up. This will ensure stock availability of these items.
- A research study is currently underway to establish the hand hygiene compliance rates among doctors and nurses in primary health. This study runs parallel with the agreement reached by Government with WHO to run a campaign in an attempt to reduce hospital acquired infections. Consequently, reduction of infection rates will also decrease the use of excessive antibiotic use.
- Several audits on environmental hygiene in the health care setting were conducted to ensure that the cleaning contractor is delivering an effective service to the Department.
- New *Infection control guidelines for PHD* have been prepared for reference by health care workers. These guidelines, which are based on expert evidence by the Health Protection Agency in UK, have been devised to run in line with existent local policies but also address gaps for issues related specifically to community health. The guidelines have been submitted for endorsement.

Summary of works done by the maintenance section of the Department during 2008 include:

- painting and redecoration of the following health centres - Gżira, Mosta, Paola, Cospicua, Rabat, Floriana;
- major works including refurbishment of the treatment room in Floriana Health Centre, replacement of the main staircase in Rabat Health Centre and changing of dangerous roofs in San Ġwann peripheral clinic and in Head Office in 7, Harper Lane, Floriana;
- maintenance works in San Ġwann and Rabat Health Centre;
- redecoration and refurbishment in peripheral clinics: B'Bugia, Żejtun, Gudja, Żabbar, Qrendi, Mqabba, Żebbuġ, Ġhaxxaq, Senglea, St Lucia, and Marsascalea;
- transfer of Sliema *berga* into new premises at the local council because of structural problems;
- day-to-day repairs in all service outlets and carpentry works as requested by all service outlets.

The Human Resource Section within the PHD was set up and carried out the following activities: collation and organisation of essential information; organisation and management of staff training; and processing of applications submitted by employees.

PHARMACY OF YOUR CHOICE (POYC)

OVERVIEW

The highlights of initiatives were:

- The scheme was extended to other localities after a pilot project was launched towards the end of 2007.
- An intensive evaluation and consolidation exercise is being undertaken to assess the scheme's overall outcome since its introduction.
- Towards mid-2008, the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate finalised an independent audit evaluation exercise on the management and financial operational procedures together with the pharmaceutical stock in respect of the POYC scheme.
- A Management Committee was established to discuss key operational procedures and to increase the overall efficiency of the Unit.
- A mission statement and logo were developed and adopted.
- Standard Operation Procedures are being drafted in respect of all operational activities carried out.
- IT equipment (hardware) and a specific POYC software system were procured and installed in all the 68 pharmacies participating in the scheme, to enable the transparent management of Government's pharmaceutical stock. An evaluation is in progress to assess its operation efficiency and effectiveness.
- Substantial refurbishment investment was necessary to upgrade the POYC central offices and premises according to the needs of the new operational function. This involved the setting up of pharmaceutical storage area, preparation area, and pre-packaging area.
- A new PBX system and additional telephone lines were procured and installed to facilitate direct communication access to POYC offices.
- A vetting exercise has been initiated to verify the entitlement of each applicant and to certify the validity of each individual request including variations of prescribed treatment.
- Two separate Quality Satisfaction Questionnaires are being finalised. The aim is to evaluate the quality of service rendered by the private pharmacies to the POYC beneficiaries, the service rendered to the private pharmacies by POYC and the approach/attitude of the stakeholders towards each other.

Performance Review and Analysis

The POYC was launched as a pilot towards the end of December 2007. By end 2008, a total of 28,827 patients are registered over 68 private pharmacies. The scheme's roll-out roadmap together with the number of currently registered patients within each locality is outlined hereunder:

Roll-out month	Locality	Patients
December 2007	Gharghur	496
	Mgarr	608
January 2008	Mellieħa	1,694
February	Naxxar	2,178
April	St Paul's Bay	982
	Qawra	827
	Buġibba	574
	Mosta	4,338
May	Rabat	3,186
	Dingli	717
	Bahrija	173
May	Mtarfa	[140 –closed down]
	Swieqi	636
	St Andrew's	471
	Tà Ġiorni	457
	Pembroke	384
	Paceville	114
	Ta' Xbiex	359
June	Msida	1,749
	St Julian's	611
	San Ġwann	2,094
	Gżira	1,842
July	Attard	1,572
	Pieta'/G'Mangia	979
	Balzan	772
	Lija	765
	Fleur de Lys	249
	Total	28,827

NATIONAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION CENTRE

OVERVIEW

The year 2008 was characterised by a number of very important issues and events relating to the blood establishment.

- The direction given by the Ministry towards financial ‘autonomy’. The Finance and Procurement Section has been preparing for over one year for this event which will bring about a significant change in practices involving procurement, stock management, and the optimal utilisation of resources.
- After a number of foreign external audits at the blood establishment (inspection), the inspection for 2008 was carried out for the first time under the auspices of the local Medicines Authority.
- The blood establishment has to cater for transport of blood to Mater Dei Hospital.
- A major challenge was the increase of the donor pool and the number of donations.
- The tenders for the building of the new premises for the blood establishment have been finalised and either well advanced in adjudication (construction) or adjudicated and awarded (engineering works).
- The procurement, installation and validation of new equipment including analysers for blood donor screening for infectious diseases and new aphaeresis machines.
- The blood mobile unit has been completely rebuilt and will be inaugurated on 26 January 2009.
- The Department is participating in two EU co-funded pan European projects, one on donor management (Domain project) best practice and the other on the harmonisation of inspections and the production of a training manual for inspections (EUBIS).

Performance Review and Analysis

A total of 20,310 persons called at the various sites. From these a total of 14,810 Whole Blood Donations were accepted. There were also 320 Single Donor Platelets procedures. Single Platelet Donation production is of 35 units less than 2007 but this is due to a decrease in clinical demand from the hospital blood bank.

	2008	2007	Difference
Callers	20,310	18,647	1,663 (+9.0%)
Donations Whole	14,810	14,125	685 (+4.8%)
Single Donor Platelets	320	355	- 35 (-9.8%)

The Whole Blood Donations were as follows:

Whole Blood Donations	2008	2007	Difference
NBTC	10,158	9,005	1,153 (+12.8%)
GGH	1,528	1,619	-91 (-5.6%)
Mobile Teams	3,124	3,501	-377 (-10.8%)
Total	14,810	14,125	685 (+4.8%)

The decrease in the Mobile Unit collection is due to the fact the Mobile Blood Donation Unit was undergoing refurbishment throughout 2008. Mobile Teams were organised instead. A decrease was also registered in GGH Whole Blood Donations.

There were 2,946 first time donations in 2008. From 14,810 whole blood donations, 9,519 (64.3%) were males and 5,291 (35.7%) were females. 3,124 whole blood donations were collected during drives.

93,666 screening tests were carried out on blood donations received. 32,294 serology examinations were also performed.

The processed blood products for 2008 included 14,406 whole blood, 1,066 cryoprecipitate, 296 single donor platelets, 873 pooled platelets, 1 single donor red cells, 6,274 filtered FFP, 8,132 fresh frozen plasma.

Finance and Purchasing

NBTS is to be given the status of legal entity and contracting authority, thus leading to financial autonomy. This will enable the NBTS to:

- function more efficiently with optimal use of resources;
- have the ability to draft and implement yearly Business Plan;
- have full accountability and auditability;
- recover costs from all hospitals;
- improve user cost awareness (better use of blood and blood products).

A customised software package for the financial and inventory systems was designed during 2008. This will make the system fully compliant with the EU Blood Directive. Total purchases of medical consumables for 2008 amounted to € 998,391.85.

GOVERNMENT HEALTH PROCUREMENT SERVICES

During 2008, the Government Pharmaceutical Services were reformed as the Government Health Procurement Services (GHPS), this being the initial part of the ongoing health reform. It was also in line with the necessary upgrade of its Stores and the consolidation of Goods Distribution Practices in terms of EU legislation.

The GHPS are entrusted with the purchase, storage and distribution of pharmaceuticals and medical devices for the National Health Services. These functions are carried out in line with current financial regulations and legislation, with the aim of providing timely, quality-approved and cost-effective service. Continuous efforts are made to actively ameliorate the services provided, in collaboration with the various departments involved, in the provision of health care services under the National Health Services.

The National Formulary Management Unit (NFM) within the GHPS is essential in the procurement of safe and efficacious medicines and medical devices which are utilised at Mater Dei Hospital, the other hospitals, health centres and the Pharmacy of Your Choice Scheme. It checks and updates specifications of medications approved for inclusion in the National Formulary. The Unit leads the adjudication of offers and recommendations based on information submitted with offers and from the Medicines Authority, deals with problems arising during the procurement process, and responds to complaints, rapid alerts, and batch recalls. A special Interface Unit, which is assimilated within the NFM, monitors daily received goods and out-of-stock items throughout the whole NHS system, monitors quarantine items, the effective management of redistribution of items between clients so that urgent patients' needs may be fulfilled, and management of information pertaining to items deleted from the formulary.

About 40% of the pharmaceuticals bought by GHPS were directly imported from different suppliers, mainly from the UK. Some of these pharmaceuticals were imported directly and on more than one occasion.

The European Directive on the wholesale distribution of medicinal products for human use introduced the concept of the Responsible Person (RP) as the person entrusted with safeguarding product users against potential hazards arising from poor distribution practices. The RP office ensures that the conditions of the wholesale dealer's licence are met and that the guidelines on GDP (Goods Distribution Practice) are complied with, through standard operating procedures for the assurance of quality standards in purchase, storage, and distribution of pharmaceuticals. There are five key areas of operation: purchase, receipt, storage, issuing, and audit; and three areas of support activities: infrastructure, human resources, and technology; all of these require the application of standards for quality management of procedures within GHPS.

The function of the Contracts Section at GHPS is an ongoing process whereby contracts for the purchase of drugs and equipment, are constantly being issued, either through tender or calls for quotations. An exercise was conducted to identify the number of calls for quotations initiated by the GHPS in 2008; and the number of offers (quotations) received in pursuance thereto. These are divided under drugs and equipment.

Letters of Acceptance Issued during 2008		
<i>Issued by type</i>	Drugs	333
	Equipment	520
	General	3
	Total number issued	856
<i>Issued by category</i>	Contracts (Contracts' Dept)	120
	Departmental	628
	D/O via tender	108
<i>Cost by type</i>	Drugs	€24,919,009
	Equipment	€12,009,948
	General	€31,673
	Total Cost	€36,960,630

Total amounts in euro currency include various awards issued in foreign currencies.

The Purchasing Section within the GHPS procures supplies of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and general supplies.

Tenders, quotations and proforma invoices processed during 2008	
Tenders published via Contracts Department	138
GHPS Departmental tenders	756
Ex-Departmental tenders	95
Government Gazette wuotes (thro' Internet)	740
Proforma Invoices Quotes (thro' Internet)	1,738
Direct Proforma Invoices Quotes (not exceeding €1,000)	468

The GHPS currently stores and distributes approximately 10,000 medical items including pharmaceuticals, medical devices – disposable and non-disposable – and foods for special diets. Amongst the various GHPS clients are the six government hospitals, eight health centres, and nine other clinics, in addition to 94 CAPD patients eligible for monthly home deliveries of voluminous renal fluids, together with the POYC.

The reduction of the stockholding levels within the GHPS Stores resulted in better financial budgetary management through a reduction in the stockholding and expired drug costs, with the effects of this measure being at least instrumental in partially offsetting the hefty increase in costs brought about by the consistent rises in consumption levels and/or exorbitant price increases in the purchase of particular drugs. However for some products, the stockholding level has been kept at a higher level in line with the Pandemic Influenza national plans.

During 2007, a change in the method of requisitioning had been carried out to improve efficiency. GHPS had concentrated on an electronic system of ordering, and following successful testing during the latter part of 2007 and the initial part of 2008, the system was extended to all GHPS clients during 2008.

Following the migration to Mater Dei Hospital in 2007, GHPS has an office at MDH where certain duties pertaining to both GHPS and the Material Management unit could now be carried out on site, resulting in better service provision. A current project undertaken by MSOC is the centralisation of all stores in one location. The chosen location should reach the necessary standards from a logistical and pharmaceutical point of view, after being converted into a storage facility duly licensed by the Medicines Authority as appropriate for pharmaceuticals.

The Finance Section within the GHPS consists of two units: the Accounts Payable Section and the Management Accounts Section. The Accounts Payable Section is responsible for the issue of payments in terms of the General Financial Regulations to suppliers of pharmaceuticals and surgical materials, as well as prosthetic and orthotic equipment. It was involved in various payment transactions amounting to an

average of €4.8 million per month in 2008. During 2008, Accounts Payable Section had paid the total amount to €57.9 million, that is, the total monetary provision entrusted to GHPS in the estimates for 2008. Notwithstanding this, Accounts Payable Section has been left with over €39.7 million worth of arrears as at 1 January 2009. The Management Accounts is mainly involved in amending commitments in DAS before Accounts Payable proceeds with payment.

In conclusion, the statistics for GHPS show that during 2008 there was registered:

- 17% increase in the number of medicines released from GHPS Stores;
- 18% increase in the number of requests for medicines and medical devices from GHPS clients;
- 5% increase in the use of transport facilities to be able to meet increased demands for GHPS services.

DR JOHN M CACHIA

Director General (Health Care Services)

Health, the Elderly and Community Care Sector Strategy and Sustainability Division

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Strategy and Sustainability Division was originally set up during 2007 within the Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care. At the start of 2008, the Division continued with capacity building for the two newly established directorates so that it incorporated the Directorate for Policy Development and EU Affairs, Directorate for Health Information and Research, Directorate for Programme Implementation Monitoring and Directorate for Pharmaceutical Policy and Monitoring.

The main responsibilities for the Division were as follows:

- develop proposals/policies/strategies and advise on sustainability of health care;
- co-ordination for EU and International affairs;
- health information for research and planning;
- strategic planning for the health sector;
- project implementation and monitoring;
- pharmaceutical policy and monitoring;
- co-ordination of consultation with stakeholders;
- responsibility for health care entitlement policy and operations.

Until June 2008, the Director General worked with the above directorates to establish the objectives in keeping with the above responsibilities focusing particularly on initiatives to start to address health sector sustainability. Work was undertaken on two corporate issues: development of a workplace and work schedule; and development of a communications plan.

Initiation of a quality management system with standard operational policies drawn up for:

- Preparation of Strategies, Policy Documents and Memoranda
- Setting Up and Management of Shared Folders within the IT Infrastructure
- Audit Plans
- General Quality procedure for control of documents
- Management of the Consultation Process.

In June, the role of the Strategy and Sustainability Division was changed as a result of the change in ministerial portfolios. As a result, certain directorates were integrated and a re-designation of duties took place. The remit of the Division was considerably widened and the Director General became overall responsible across the entire Ministry for the following functions: Policy development; EU & International Affairs; and Programme Implementation.

In addition, the Director General retained responsibility for the Directorates for Health Information & Research and for Pharmaceutical Policy and Monitoring.

THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

Corporate Management

The office of the Director General co-ordinated the preparation of business plans and budgeting exercises for the Strategy and Sustainability Division. 20 management meetings for directors were convened on a regular basis. The office of the Director General was also responsible for liaison with other divisions on issues relating to human resources such as capacity building and on issues relating to IT. The office of the Director General also co-ordinated the submission on replies to parliamentary questions and liaison on travel abroad particularly for visits carried out at political level.

Strategy Development

The main areas of activity in relation to strategy development were the following:

National strategy report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion Policies 2008-2011

The Director General assumed overall responsibility for the finalisation of this report after June 2008. The co-ordination of preparatory work had initially been undertaken by the Directorate for Policy Development and Programme Implementation (ex MFSS). The report builds on the previous strategy 2006-2008 and provides a blueprint for policy reform and initiatives to be undertaken in the area of social policy and health. The report was submitted to the European Commission's Social Protection Committee Secretariat in October 2008.

Primary Care

A report consolidating the general feedback that had been obtained from the consultation process on the future of primary and community care that took place in 2007 was finalised in February 2008. Based on the proposed way forward in this report, two Task Forces were established to study options for a patient registration system and for systems to develop services in the community.

e-Health

The Director General convened several workshops to take forward and an advanced draft strategy on e-health has been compiled. Consultation on the way forward is currently being undertaken between MSOC and the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications.

Cancer strategy

Work has continued on the preparation of a strategy for cancer. This strategic work is complementary to other work carried out in the following areas:

- planning for the development of a new cancer facility;
- replacement of the linear accelerators;
- development of a proposal to fund and introduce a PET scanning service possibly by sponsorship through the "Swiss Fund" (Switzerland's contribution to Malta through EU accession);
- design of the breast cancer screening programme;
- gradual expansion of medicines formulary for cancer treatment (for example, through provision of the drug Herceptine).

Policy on Funding of Treatment Abroad

Early in 2008, the Director General was appointed as Chair for the Treatment Abroad Committee. During the year, steps were taken to set up written policies and procedures including terms of reference and criteria for the operations of the Committee. Proposals are also being made to establish a transparent and

sustainable system that deals with both referral for complex care in highly specialised institutions abroad as well as catering for the separate system of cross-border care that arises out of EU legislation. The Office of the Director General was also responsible for monitoring the developments in relation to the proposal for a Directive on patients' rights and cross-border care currently under negotiation with the Council of the European Union.

Health Care Portfolio

The health care portfolio incorporates the list of procedures and services that are provided from publicly-funded health care providers. It was important to have the portfolio compliant with an international coding system and the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases Version 9 with clinical modification, ICD-9-CM, was selected. A draft list for most procedures being performed at Mater Dei Hospital as well as that for dental health care has been finalised. Further work will continue and the full list will be published next year.

Health Technology Assessment and Introduction of New Service Developments

With the constant developments in technology and advancements in medicine, requests for new service and technology developments are received. Introduction of new health technologies and services within our health care system is crucial to ensure that the latter keeps pace with these developments. As part of the processes being undertaken to enhance access, improve quality whilst safeguarding sustainability of our healthcare system, in line with health service objectives, the need has been felt to streamline the introduction of new health technologies and services.

The consultant in Public Health developed an application form for such requests wherein vital information for the decision-making process has to be supplied. This form was released in the second part of 2008 during a seminar organised for chairpersons and heads of services. Alongside with the form, guidance notes were also released to aid applicants to complete the form appropriately. Following this activity the form has been used and nine such applications have been received and processed.

Public Health Programme

2008 was the year that the EU launched its second Community Action Programme in the field of Public Health. The Health Programme 2008-13 is still composed of three pillars: Health information; Health threats; and Health determinants.

The Consultant in Public Health was nominated as the National Focal Point for this programme. To aid project leaders to participate in EU projects with this programme, a document was developed to guide prospective applicants through the whole process, from invitation to participate, to letter of intent, selection process, negotiation, mandatory letter, funding and budgeting. It aimed to provide a standard process where all applicants obtained the relevant authorisation as well as appreciation of the financial implications both in terms of funds received as well as the necessary financial information that must be kept for sound auditing purposes. All project leaders were invited to attend a seminar on this guideline document and feedback was actively sought. All feasible comments were incorporated and the final version released was satisfactory to all. From the last call in 2008, 15 projects have been identified for participation.

Setting up of International Medical School in Malta

Following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland in December 2007, a steering committee was set up to take the Memorandum of Understanding forward to establish an international fee paying graduate entry Medical Programme in Malta. During 2008, the University of Malta expressed an interest to set up a graduate entry programme in collaboration with St George's London. Analysis of the capacity requirements and the infrastructure that was required to allow

for an international medical school to operate in Malta was conducted in collaboration with the National Commission for Higher Education.

EU Healthcare Entitlement Unit and National Referral Programme for Highly Specialised Treatment

During 2008, the Strategy and Sustainability Division worked on different initiatives aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in decision-making and the operations of different sections falling under its remit. Initiatives were also undertaken to increase information and accessibility to services offered to the public. These principles were also used to guide the administration of the EU Healthcare Entitlement Unit and National Programme of Referral for Highly Specialised Treatment, which fall directly under the responsibility of the Director General's office.

In this regard, this office has undertaken these initiatives:

- On the policy side, a wide process of consultation was initiated which will lead to clarification of entitlement criteria for health services in the year 2009.
- An effort has been made to consolidate and formalise the processes by which these two named sections work. This effort, guided by the above mentioned principles, will continue during 2009.
- Reviews of business processes and accounting procedures were initiated with the aim of setting up a specialised management information system.
- The Division actively sought media opportunities to inform the public on the work carried out by the EU Healthcare Entitlement Unit and the National Programme of Referral for Highly Specialised Treatment and giving information on how the public can make better use of the services they offer. Between April and November, officials from the Division took part in four radio programmes. A press conference about the use of EHIC was organised and an article about the same subject was published in a prominent local newspaper.

Besides all this, in both sections, necessary administrative work was being done to assist clients and patients in the best possible way.

EU Healthcare Entitlement Unit

The EU Healthcare Entitlement Unit was set up in 2005 to implement EU regulations on the co-ordination of health benefits between Member States. During 2008, the section processed more than 37,435 applications for the European Health Insurance card together with other related work for the implementation of EU regulations. This work includes the following:

E-Forms	Outbound (Issued)	Inbound (Registered)
E121	6	273
E109	2	4
E106	89	57

During 2008, the Unit also evaluated 323 requests received by other EU countries for reimbursement of expenses related to emergency medical treatment received in Malta. A total of 14 E126 forms were sent by the Entitlement Unit to other Member States. Out of these, eight E126 forms were approved for reimbursement by the Maltese health authorities.

The section was also in charge of answering a considerable amount of public queries by telephone, e-mail and post. Applications were being processed in a maximum time limit of five days despite the substantial amount of applications for EHIC.

National Referral Programme for Highly Specialised Treatment

Terms of reference for the Treatment Abroad Committee were reviewed. This committee met on a monthly basis (12 times).

The office was also responsible for logistics related to travel for the approved cases. Between January and December, 279 patients (424 episodes) were sent for treatment abroad.

Visiting Consultants in Spinal Surgery, Paediatric Interventional Cardiology, Hand Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, Uro-Surgery, Paediatric Surgery, Pain Management, Ophthalmic Surgery, Interventional Radiologist and Neurosurgery performed 153 operations/procedures at Mater Dei Hospital.

Visiting Consultants in Paediatric Respiratory Diseases, Paediatric Cardiology, Paediatric Nephrology, Paediatric Oncology, Paediatric Endocrinology, Paediatric Gastroenterology, Paediatric Neuro Muscular Diseases, Paediatric Neurology, Paediatric Neurosurgery, Haemato-Oncology, Respiratory Diseases, Retinoblastoma Ophthalmology, and a Cochlear Implant specialist were also brought in during 2008 and provided shared care clinics at MDH.

Entitlement to Medical Aids

The following numbers of applications were approved for the free supply of medical aids:

Dentures	1,071
Glasses	1,624

Other medical aids:

Breast Prostheses	396
Hearing aids and ear moulds	300

Duty Visits Abroad

- IDB NDA Training Session (March)
- Informal Meetings of Ministers of Health (April & September)
- Networking Meeting of the Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement of Pharmaceuticals (April)
- DG SANCO's Workshop on Health Examination Surveys (April)
- Administrative Commission Working Parties (April & November)
- Meeting of the Working Group on Data Protection of DG SANCO's Network of Competent Authorities (July)
- Meeting of the Committee of the Second Community Action Programme in the field of Public Health (July & November)
- Improving Health System Efficiency – Achieving Better Value for Money (September)
- Health Challenges for Europe (September)
- Euro-IDB Network Data Protection Task Force (September)
- EPSCO Council (October)
- Council Working Parties: Public Health, Social Questions
- Administrative Commission on Social Security for Migrant Workers (June & October)
- Social Questions Working Parties (October & November)

Conclusion and Challenges

2008 was a particularly challenging year as the Division had to cope with an increased workload and new tasks whilst still undergoing a process of capacity building. Internal reforms were carried out particularly in the area of entitlement. Preparatory work for strategy development was undertaken in several areas. It is envisaged that during 2009 the Strategy and Sustainability Division will publish results undertaken from research and analysis, as well as key strategic documents. It is also anticipated that a number of EU funded projects which have been approved will start to be implemented

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTORATE

The Role of the Directorate

During the first six months of 2008, the Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate (MFSS) continued to focus on its core areas of responsibility, namely the development of social policies, the drawing up of analyses and reactions to national and EU documents focusing on social issues, participation in seminars and conferences organised both on a national as well as on an EU level, the monitoring of measures and initiatives within the sphere of social policy, and co-ordination and guidance in respect of project proposals submitted for EU co-funding under the programming period 2007-2013. Following the restructuring of the Ministry's top management structure in June 2008, this Directorate was assigned responsibility for programme implementation across the entire Ministry so as to cover both health and social affairs while the social policy development remit was assigned to another directorate.

As from July 2008, the new Programme Implementation Directorate sought to understand its revised role and to equip itself with the necessary resources so as to effectively embark on its vast remit which now ranges from advising upon and guiding submission of project proposals for EU co-funding to monitoring progress of EU funded and nationally funded programmes and initiatives falling within the portfolio of MSOC, to monitoring & reporting on better regulation measures, regular evaluation of quality service charters and acting as *clearance house* for the Health Division's customer care system (local councils).

Key Tasks Undertaken during 2008

National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion

The Directorate's key commitment between January and June 2008 was the preparation of Malta's National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (2008-2010). For this purpose, a working group was set up so as to draft the four components that make up this national document, namely (a) an overview of the national socio-economic and demographic context, (b) the national action plan on social inclusion, (c) national strategy report on pensions, and (d) national strategies on health and long term care. The preparation of such a document asks for wide consultation and therefore the Directorate organised a series of eight focus groups for people coming from the various vulnerable groups identified in the previous National Strategies Report covering the period 2006-2008. Besides giving a voice to people at risk of social exclusion, these focus groups were also well attended by the respective service providers and thus this exercise succeeded to elicit a comprehensive understanding of the real needs and wishes of the target populations. The draft National Strategies Report (2008-2010) was completed in July 2008 and was then launched for the extensive consultation that such a strategic report warrants before finalisation and submission to the European Union.

Customer Care System (Local Councils)

The Directorate is entrusted with operating the Customer Care system as a *clearance house* for the Health Division. By virtue of this system which operates in conjunction with local councils, the Directorate addresses various queries and complaints that are raised by the general public regarding matters concerning various health issues. The Directorate refers such queries and complaints to the attention of the responsible department/entity and follows the matter through so as to ensure that the general public duly receives a reply or explanation. A total of 1,706 complaints/queries were processed during 2008.

In September 2008, the Directorate reactivated discussions with the relevant authorities with a view to gradually decentralise the Customer Care System (Local Councils) so that clients' queries and complaints would be, in the first instance, received by the department/entity concerned. A decentralised system should reduce waiting time and promote efficiency in the best interest of the general public. Discussions proceeded well, and the necessary training for the officers involved to facilitate the implementation of this new system was initiated. In the coming months, this measure will be implemented in four departments,

namely Environmental Health Department, Customer Care Department (Mater Dei Hospital), Primary Health Care Department and Department for the Elderly. It is planned that in the future, the Customer Care System (Local Councils) will be completely decentralised.

Quality Service Charters

During 2008, the Directorate evaluated various Quality Service Charters pertaining to departments falling within the remit of the Ministry for Social Policy. The Directorate also actively participated in the preparations for the external evaluation exercise undertaken by the Charter Support Unit within the Staff Development Organisation. Thus, during 2008, the Directorate persevered in its commitment to contribute towards enhancing service standards in the best interest of the general public.

Better Regulation (Reduction of burdensome procedures)

In its endeavour to contribute towards Government's commitment to reduce burdensome procedures, the Directorate is presently monitoring developments in a total of 13 measures that pertain to different departments/entities within the Ministry's remit. The Directorate is focusing on eight measures that fall within the area of social policy and five measures that pertain to the Health Division, as shown hereunder:

Social Policy

- Adopt a single “means test” yardstick across Government with a view to consolidate the ‘means test’ mechanism, thus ensuring a more just and fair system to determine eligibility.
- Revise existing processes within Department of Social Security for St Vincent de Paule residents in respect of pension deductions/adjustment with the aim of reducing unnecessary burdens to citizens.
- Grant access to Department of Social Security dataset to facilitate the assessment of Housing Authority schemes applications, as the majority of these applicants are also Department of Social Security clients. Such a measure would require the updating of legislation.
- Regionalise Social Security district offices and have local councils act as front desk, with a view to better address the needs of those citizens who currently do not have a district office.
- Enable Department of Social Security clients to have online access to all social security application forms and the possibility of filling them electronically through the use of the e-ID.
- Introduce a single application form for the assessment of all DSS benefits with a view to amalgamate the benefit application forms required for Social Assistance, Age Pension, Supplementary Allowance and Medical Assistance administered by the Department of Social Security.
- Introduce a system of automatic re-assessment of the Retirement Pension for recipients of an Invalidity Pension within the Department of Social Security, with a view to eliminate the need to submit a retirement application form by Invalidity Pension recipients upon reaching retirement age.
- Utilise data furnished online by Public Registry, Commercial Banks, and Inland Revenue to re-assess entitlements for the Children and Supplementary Allowances within the Department of Social Security, with a view to eliminate the need for a yearly application for such entitlements within data protection constraints.

Health

- Revise existing procedures regulating the certification of sickness within the MHEC with the aim of reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and paper flow and facilitating processes to medical officers issuing certificates and to lessen burdens to clients.
- Redesign present system within Health Information with the aim of providing comprehensive online data services to clients, thereby facilitating access to information.
- Develop an electronic medical records system within Primary Health Care with a view to ensure better patient care and safer medical practice (The implementation of this measure depends on the IHIS system).
- Consolidate forms for comprehensive investigations within Mater Dei Hospital, St Luke's Hospital and Mount Carmel Hospital (MCH) with a view to simplifying the handling and processing of forms.

- Review all forms prescribed by the Mental Health Act 1976 within MCH with the aim of reducing the number of forms handled by doctors and clerical staff and provide a better services to patients.

EU co-funded projects

During 2008, the Directorate continued to offer guidance and assistance to various departments and entities in terms of the drafting of project proposals for EU co-funding. As a result of this commitment, a total of 22 project proposals were submitted. Of these, the 16 projects listed hereunder were approved for EU co-funding.

Project Reference	Project Title	Applicant / Beneficiary
ERDF 45	Extension of ETC Skills Development Centre (Phase 2)	ETC
ERDF 72	Constructing and equipping an Independent Living Centre in Malta	KNPD
ERDF 102	Energy – Smart Authority	Housing Authority
ERDF 136	Grant Scheme for childcare facilities - The regeneration of childcare in Malta (<i>ERDF Aid Scheme</i>)	Department for Social Welfare Standards
ESF 2.4	Employability Programme	ETC
ESF 2.65	Training Aid Framework (<i>ESF Aid Scheme</i>)	ETC
ESF 3.64	Employment Aid Programme (<i>ESF Aid Scheme</i>)	ETC
ESF 3.42	An Independent Living Training Service for Disabled People	KNPD
ESF 3.43	Dignity for Domestic Violence Survivors	Commission on Domestic Violence
ESF 3.47	Unlocking the female potential	NCPE
ESF 3.56	Specialised research on OHS and development of OHS accreditation	Occupational Health & Safety Authority
ESF 3.59	<i>Nista</i> : The benefits of sharing life's responsibilities	ETC
ESF 3.60	Youth Employment Programme	ETC
ESF 3.61	E4L – Embark for Life: Labour market integration for socially excluded youth	FSWS
ESF 3.62	ME2 (Me Too)	FSWS
ESF 3.63	Childcare Subsidy Scheme	Social Security Division

Eliciting and monitoring of programmes, measures and initiatives falling within the remit of MSOC

In line with its core responsibility to monitor and report upon the progress registered in terms of the implementation of initiatives/projects undertaken by the various departments and entities falling within the remit of the Ministry for Social Policy, the Programme Implementation Directorate carried out an extensive exercise whereby it reviewed such key national documents as the Budget 2009, the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010, and the National Reform Programme 2008-2010 so as to identify the key projects and initiatives to be implemented by the Ministry for Social Policy.

The conclusion of this intensive exercise has shown that there is a total of 90 social policy initiatives and a total of 116 initiatives that fall under the health and elderly care remit that are to be fully or partially implemented by MSOC. After having identified these initiatives, the Directorate is communicating with the entities that are responsible for their implementation to:

- ascertain whether the identified initiatives actually fall within the remit of that particular department/entity;
- indicate which of these initiatives shall be implemented during 2009;
- state how such initiatives are being financed, that is, whether from national funds or from EU co-funding;
- indicate any constraints that may negatively impact upon the implementation of any of the projects.

Once this exercise is completed, the Directorate would be in a better position to embark effectively on its monitoring task and to duly report on progress achieved in the various initiatives. During 2008, the

Directorate also developed the necessary forms to facilitate monitoring of measures and held meetings with two key stakeholders so as to pilot this monitoring tool.

PHARMACEUTICAL POLICY AND MONITORING DIRECTORATE (PPMD)

INTRODUCTION

The Directorate for Pharmaceutical Policy & Monitoring (PPMD) was set up in March 2008. The unit previously formed part of the National Medicines Policy and Audit Unit (NMPAU).

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The PPMD is responsible for developing equitable and sustainable pharmaceutical policies for the National Health Service in Malta, and ensuring their effective implementation through continual and systematic monitoring.

Currently this Directorate has the following functions:

- formulate, monitor and evaluate pharmaceutical policies to be implemented in the Government Health Service within the framework of a National Health Policy and international pharmaceutical practices;
- be responsible for the implementation of EU legislation in the field of formulary management;
- establish, maintain and periodically review the Government National Formulary for pharmaceuticals and surgical materials for the Government Health Service;
- process of requests on a named patient basis for medicinal products that are not available on the Government National Formulary;
- optimise analysis of information and evaluation of clinical evidence in order to draw up prescribing guidelines and develop a systematic rational approach to prescribing and drug use through the use of international health technology assessment;
- set service-wide protocols governing prescribing and the rational use of medicines;
- audit prescribing policies set by the Government Formulary List Advisory Committee, assess the results of the audit and submit recommendations for necessary action;
- provide advice and provide technical assistance in the establishment of technical specifications;
- issue circulars related to formulary management and correspondence with the various stakeholders;
- participate at international meetings and projects, in line with the exigencies of the department;
- contribute to the availability and fair pricing for government pharmaceuticals. Moreover, drug prices across the EU counties can be monitored and followed accordingly;
- be responsible for administration of the Schedule V office. Periodically review the entitlement processes and recommend policy options to streamline procedures, improve efficiency, decrease bureaucracy, and offer optimal customer oriented services;
- develop and maintain an entitlement system for pharmaceuticals. A system where entitlement is universal in application can easily be audited and monitored, and cost contained. Integrate all sources of medicine entitlement including – Schedule V, Protocol regulated permits, POYC registration control and mean-tested entitlement. An entitlement database centre which can be linked to all government dispensing points – POYC, PHCD, MDH, and other government hospitals.

THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

Legislation

During 2008, work was undertaken to amend Legal Notice 165/07 transposing EU Transparency Directive 89/105/EEC concerning pharmaceuticals available on the Government Formulary List. This legal notice, which is aimed at providing the necessary legal framework for Government to reach an agreement

regarding fair pricing of medicinals for the Government Health Sector, was discussed with the stakeholders involved and is now in its final stages.

Government Formulary List Advisory Committee

The DPPM acts as the technical focal point for all activity falling under the remit of the Government Formulary List Advisory Committee (GFLAC). This committee, which was set up towards the end of 2007 to assist the Ministry of Health with the management of the formulary list for the national health service, has been meeting on a regular basis. Twelve meetings were held and 12 requests for introduction of new medicinals into the Government Formulary were assessed in 2008.

Routine Activities

The work performed by the Directorate on a routine basis included updating the government formulary list wherein new medicinals were introduced, protocols for controlled use were put in, changes in criteria for prescribing certain medicines were made and medicines were deleted. This Directorate regularly also gave advice to the GHPS regarding the purchasing of medicines especially with regard to specifications of such medicinals and other technical matters.

A summary of DPPM routine activities includes:

- 81 new requests for new introduction of medicinals were received (45 from consultants working within the Government Health Service and 39 from several Market Authorisation Holders);
- 358 requests were submitted for approval of medicines on a named patient basis, of which 278 were approved and 80 were refused;
- six new protocols were approved and placed online on the website;
- seven medicinal products were deleted from the Government Formulary List;
- eight circulars were issued - seven regarding medicinal products;
- 24 requests for changes in specifications of pharmaceuticals were received from GHPS;
- several other queries, parliamentary questions, ombudsman letters, newspaper letters etc related directly or indirectly to the Government Formulary List were processed and answered;
- databases set up in 2007 to deal with the above information were updated and maintained.

New Initiatives

During the year the Directorate took up several new initiatives aimed at enhancing transparency and equity in its decision-making processes and operations. These include:

- *Taking over the responsibility of the Schedule V Office:* The Schedule V Office formerly known as the Almoner's office became incorporated within the DPPM. This year, around 18,300 new applications and 22,700 renewals were processed with a total of over 41,000 applications. Plans are already in place to relocate the Schedule V Office to nearby premises, provide new modern hardware and amalgamate with the Medicines Approval Section. This will be done to offer a better customer-oriented service and allow easier data collection for decision-making purposes.
- *Exceptional Medicinal Treatment Funding Policy:* This Directorate processes requests for medicinals on a named patient basis. Such medicinals would either not make part of the Government Formulary or else they would be requested for indications that are not according to established protocols. Currently a new policy is being developed based on criteria for assessment of such numerous requests. This policy that is at the final stages is aimed at creating a more regularised and equitable means of granting approval or rejections for such an exceptional treatment.
- *Mapping of Medicinals of the Government Formulary:* The DPPM is currently carrying out an exercise in mapping of medicines in the formulary list with their respective and relevant indications and chronic conditions on Schedule V. This is aimed at establishing a formulary that reflects the entitlement to medicinal treatment by the government health service to patients concerned.

A classification of formulary items available to Schedule II (Pink Card) holders is being performed. This exercise that divides items into three – namely those intended for chronic use, acute use and both uses - is aimed at identifying medicinals that could be issued via the Pharmacist of Your Choice Scheme (POYC).

As part of this exercise, medicinals that may be dispensed to illegal immigrants in case of an emergency are being identified. It is planned that this list would be updated in the future and make part of a new policy for the rational medicinal treatment of illegal immigrants in Malta.

- *Analysis of Entitlement System for Medicines under Schedule V:* A Task Force was set up in order to study the system of entitlement to medication under Schedule V with a view to reviewing the entitlement system to undertake and improve accessibility to services, whilst ensuring long-term sustainability and equity. The reform was also intended to address the technological gap brought about by innovative pharmaceuticals and modern regimes.

The work performed up to date includes: (a) an audit of Schedule V applications – wherein a sample of 1,000 Schedule V applications were reviewed and the various misentitlements identified; and (b) meetings with Clinical Chairmen informing them of the exercise taking place and requesting their views and feedback on ways of improving current anomalies and shortcomings in the system. Following this, all necessary consultations (that were carried out by the Director and Assistant Director DPPM) consisted of interviews with the Clinical Chairmen based on a number of standard criteria. The feedback obtained from Clinical Chairmen was documented according to each speciality. The Task Force is currently concluding its findings and proposals.

Liaison with Stakeholders

- The Directorate took several initiatives in the form of meetings, circulars etc in order to keep health professionals especially pharmacists within the different areas of the Government Health Service abreast with any developments and plans of the Directorate. This goes a long way to promote a more co-ordinated environment where ideas, suggestions, and feedback is shared between the diverse sectors of the government pharmaceutical service.
- The Directorate took the opportunity in meetings organised with the Clinical Chairmen within the ambit of the Task Force mentioned above to discuss also ways and methods wherein the service can be improved for the ultimate benefit of the patient.
- The Directorate also continued its active support to the Consumer Competition Division on diverse technical matters and reimbursement of medicinals on the local market.

Projects

Several EU projects that had been started in 2007 were continued in 2008. These projects aid in the collaboration of technical information gathering and sharing between members of the EU and EFTA. These include:

- *INFOPRICE:* The INFOPRICE project, an initiative of the Transparency Committee Secretariat continued with its data gathering, analysis and disseminating of wholesale and retail prices of 15 specific pharmaceuticals in the EU member states and EFTA. This helps individual member states to monitor their drug prices, compare them to other member states and possibly identify ways and methods of obtaining less costly medicinal treatments.
- *PPRI:* The Pharmaceutical Pricing and Reimbursement Information network is an EU project supported by WHO and the Austrian Ministry of Health. The Directorate was again involved in answering questionnaires and queries submitted by the PPRI team and the exchange of pharmaceutical information.

Participation in International Meetings

During 2008, members of the Directorate were invited and attended several international meetings with the aim of taking a more active part in gathering and sharing of information and experiences. This was done in order to enhance the pharmaceutical service provided with regard to pricing and reimbursement up to European levels.

- Networking meeting of the Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement of Pharmaceuticals held in Slovenia on 28- 29 April;
- Peer Review: Cost containment in the pharmaceutical sector - innovative approaches to contracting while ensuring fair access to drugs held in Berlin, 30 June- 1 July;
- Pharmaceutical Health Information System (PHIS) Network Meeting at the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth in Vienna on 21 November;
- The Transparency Committee Meeting in Brussels in November;
- A Medicines Evaluation Committee (MEDEV) meeting held in Riga, Latvia in November.
- Networking Meeting of the Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement of Pharmaceuticals held on 10- 12 December in Paris.

Other Initiatives

- *Data Protection*: The DPPM ensured that all necessary safeguards were put in place and observed at all times, and has started work on the drafting of a Retention Policy.
- *Risk Assessment*: A Risk Assessment for 2008 has been performed where the risks and dangers within this Directorate were highlighted, and remedial action proposed in each case. These proposals are being followed up.

Project Plans for new Initiatives

Centralisation and Amalgamation of Medicinal Entitlement

A system is being planned that would streamline the pharmaceutical entitlement procedures and policies so as to improve efficiency, decrease bureaucracy and offer optimal patient-oriented services and at the same time provide entitlement that is universal in application, can be easily audited and monitored, and cost contained. This system will initially integrate sources of medicine entitlement including Schedule V, and the medicines approval section.

Setting up of a pricing unit

This Pricing Unit is aimed at:

- contributing to the availability and fair pricing for government pharmaceuticals. Drug prices across the EU countries will be monitored and followed accordingly;
- performing Relative Effectiveness Assessments of new medicines being requested by the Market Authorisation Holders (as per EU Transparency Directive 89/05 and LN 165/07) and consultants within the GHS; and
- participating in EU projects for a common drug database.

DIRECTORATE FOR HEALTH INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR) is to provide accurate information for the protection of public health, statistical purposes, research, and preventive medicine. It

promotes and supports the development of health information systems. The scope of the Directorate was amended to include research in its remit.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Directorate of Health Information and Research leads the collection, analysis, and delivery of health related information in Malta. It strives to provide high quality epidemiological information and indicators on the health of the population and health services. Health information is made available for policy and decision makers, for the public in general, interested institutions and other that may require it.

Research initiatives are taken and assistance is provided to the Director General (Strategy and Sustainability) by contributing the necessary evidence for the formulation of policy and strategy in the area of public health and health services for both existing and proposed programmes.

- To gather, analyse and disseminate health information;
- To conduct epidemiological surveys and maintain disease registers;
- To maintain and develop the range of services and products that the Directorate produces, ranging from reports to requests for customised information, accurately and in a timely manner;
- To co-ordinate and prepare reports identifying issues, problems, unmet needs and service gaps, and recommend initiatives, review of policies, and amendments to procedures and programmes as required;
- To develop the infrastructure needed for the provision of non-expenditure data for the System of Health Account;
- To promote and carry out research;
- To communicate relevant results and reports from the above initiatives to stakeholders and the public.

THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

Activities Common to all Sections of the Directorate

Policy Positions

The Directorate was required to give its expert advice for the formulation of policy positions on the following EU related proposals:

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community statistics on public health and health and safety at work.
- Comments on the Working Document on the processing of personal data relating to health in electronic health records (EHR).

Registry Database

- All registries have been implemented in the new database, even though some are still operating on a local server. Testing of various aspects of these modules is taking place with a view to migrating to the live server very soon. Additional features, such as facilities for automatic reporting and data mining solutions are currently being developed.
- Work has continued on the development of interactive online national databases. These are expected to be launched in 2009.

Human Resources

- A number of staff joined DHIR during 2008 through recruitment or re-deployment. Four public health trainees were hosted on rotation as part of the specialisation programme for public health towards which the Directorate is contributing.
- Several members of staff have attended SDO training during 2008, primarily on IT. A number of DHIR employees have started university undergraduate courses on a part-time basis.

- Two University Students performed summer work at DHIR, assisting with coding and scanning of the European Health Interview Survey.
- DHIR hosted three students from the Medical Documentation course run by the University of Ulm, Germany.

Information Technology

- A new heavy duty duplex photocopier/printer/scanner was leased. This has helped in reducing printing costs and contributing towards the Department's environmental goals.

Data Protection

- The Officer in charge of Data Protection attended various seminars and a study visit about data protection practices organised by the OPM Data Protection Unit.
- A first draft of a Manual of Data Protection for the DHIR was developed and is being discussed with the OPM Data Protection Unit before it is finalised and approved.
- New staff is being enrolled on data protection courses run by SDO to sensitise them to the confidentiality of the data that they are handling.

ROUTINE ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Malta National Mortality Registry (MNMR)

During the year, 3,390 death certificates were received and entered in the Mortality Register at the DHIR. Validation involved checking demographic details through the Patient Administration System (PAS) and Common Database (CdB). PAS was also updated with date and place of death of those who died during the year.

Processing involved coding of occupation, and causes of death. 20% of death certificates require further information to be obtained from other sources due to lack of good medical data. These other sources included deceased patient records, newspapers, police, pathologists, toxicologists as well as the certifier him/herself. A copy of death certificates involving cancers, infectious diseases, occupational diseases and congenital anomalies was made for the relevant registries. Collection of data regarding Maltese residents dying abroad required specific tracing from the Public Registry.

The National Mortality Registry was responsible for answering queries from a number of institutions and individual persons. These included:

Type of Query	Number
Parliamentary queries	6
Demographic data of deceased	once a month to a number of institutions
Requests for mortality data	10-15 per month
International requests	WHO/Eurostat/EMCDDA/IARC
National requests	NSO for demographic review

During 2008, the Annual Mortality Report for 2006 was issued. This was made available on the DHIR website.

The new death certificate started being used at the beginning of January. Despite our efforts to improve quality of certification, no major improvements have occurred. Formal training is needed; this will form part of the curriculum of house officers and is planned to begin in 2009. In addition, towards the end of 2008, DHIR was involved in a new initiative led by the Management Efficiency Unit to expedite the processing of the death certificate, probably through the introduction of an electronic death certificate.

Malta National Cancer Registry (MNCR)

The National Cancer Registry collaborated with the Department of Dermatology on a European Prevention Initiative for Dermatological Malignancies. The aim was to collect information on skin cancer with special emphasis on incidence, risk factors, treatment and costs involved. This study is to implement a prevention and recommendation programme.

During the year, 699 notifications of cancers were reported by medical doctors, 1,121 were recorded from death certificates and 9,788 were received from laboratory results. Laboratory investigations are received from both public and private sector. All cancer reports were crosschecked with the old cancer database to exclude duplicates. All the new cases were coded and entered in the National Cancer Register. The other already registered cases were edited in their respective database and filed. The following table indicates the source of the notifications:

Source	Number of cases
Pathology Lab (SLH/MDH)	4,941
Cytology Lab (SLH/MDH)	518
Oncology (Sir Paul Boffa Hospital)	1,359
Private hospitals and clinics	1,150
Notifications from doctors	699
Mortality Register	1,121
Total	9,788

The Cancer Register received requests from individuals, local institutions and from international organisations and was responsible for answering these requests. The Cancer Incidence for the year 2006 has been updated on the website.

National Obstetric Information System

The National Obstetrics Information System (NOIS) received, checked, coded, entered and validated 4,039 NOIS data sheets. This year the Register started using a new Antenatal Booking Sheet developed by the Registry in collaboration with the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. These sheets record a total of 106 variables for every birth on the Maltese Islands. A new computerised database is being developed in order to take the new variables being collected by the revised Antenatal Booking Sheets, in this way Malta will be in a position to report most data being requested by the EU.

The NOIS Annual Report for 2007 was compiled in 2008 together with two interim reports. These are available on the DHIR website. The NOIS webpage was kept regularly updated throughout the year.

Malta Congenital Anomalies Registry

The Malta Congenital Anomalies Registry (MCAR) actively identified a total of 150 infants/foetuses as potential cases of major congenital anomalies from obstetric wards. Other sources of information included paediatric echocardiography reports, the national obstetrics information system, the national mortality register, hospital activity analysis, and hypothyroid screening. As part of the processing, 350 hospital files of both mothers and babies were reviewed.

This year, data for 2006 were completed, published on the MCAR webpage and anonymous data sent to the international organisations of which the register forms part. For 2006, 105 infants/foetuses were confirmed and registered in the MCAR with major congenital anomaly these were as follows:

	Number of cases
Cases with isolated anomalies	69
Multiple anomalies of the same system	15
Multiple anomalies of different systems	7
Chromosomal anomalies	13
Recognised non-chromosomal syndromes	1

The Registry continued active participation in two international project networks: EUROCAT (European Surveillance of Congenital Anomalies) and ICBDSR (International Clearinghouse for Birth Defects Surveillance and Research). Through participation with these bodies in 2008, Malta data was approved for participation in several international collaborative studies.

Malta National Organ Transplant Registry

The National Transplant Registry webpage was updated with transplants having been done during 2007. The few requests that were received were answered (five in all). During 2008, the Registry received notifications for 11 kidney transplants done in Malta and for six liver and two kidney donations sent abroad. Eight corneal transplants were also done locally

National Hospitals Information System (NHIS)

This relatively new system will eventually collect data on hospital activity from acute state and private hospitals. To date no data from the private sector is being collected.

The NHIS has collected full paper record based data from Gozo General Hospital (GGH) since July 2004. Validation of hospital data for 2007 and data entry into the GGH Activity database was continued in 2008. It was analysed to produce a clear picture of activity at this hospital for the whole year. A report of detailed hospital activity for GGH for 2007 was prepared in March 2008.

Data on GGH activity for 2008 is still being validated and entered into the database. By the end of 2008, NHIS had received 5,611 clinical, episode based data sheets from GGH and 5,480 records had been validated and entered into the database. At the end of the year, NHIS was still receiving data sheets from GGH for episodes of care in 2008.

An ongoing exercise was launched in the summer months in an attempt to obtain and record permanent addresses overseas, or at least a country of residence, for non-resident foreigners treated at GGH. By the end of December, the GGH activity database had a recorded country of permanent residence for 75.9%, and an address of permanent residence for 51.8%.

Anonymised record-based data from Mater Dei Hospital was collected for 2007 from the hospital's Hospital Activity Analysis System and the Electronic Discharge Summary Data. This data was merged with data from GGH. The resulting aggregated data was analysed and sent to EUROSTAT as part of the its annual request on non-expenditure health care statistics data.

EUROSTAT's yearly health care statistics non expenditure data requests

Eurostat carries out an annual data collection on health care statistics (non-expenditure data), covering data at national level on health staff (manpower/health care professionals), equipment and use of health resources in the field of health care. The data request from EUROSTAT is structured into three parts:

- routine data collection on health staff (manpower), hospital beds and beds in residential institutions and procedures by category of episode of care performed in hospitals;
- routine data collection on hospital patients, core output and high-tech resources: this is based on the recommendations of the Task Force on Hospital Statistics Minimum Data Set and on the agreement reached at the OECD/Eurostat/WHO meeting on a morbidity shortlist for hospital discharges – the International Shortlist of Hospital Morbidity Tabulation (ISHMT). Included with this data collection is a section dealing with patient migration;
- data collection on hospital manpower and technical resources and a mapping exercise for the nursing professions.

EUROSTAT's 2008 request for data (basis year 2007) was answered with the data which was available, and was forwarded in July 2008.

Injury Database

This Register collates data regarding Accidents and Injuries. Data from the Emergency and Admitting Department (E&A) at GGH is still ongoing. 1,610 forms have been collected, checked, coded and data entered. This figure is still not complete as data still has to be retrieved from cross-checks with NHIS and NMNR. Data for 2007 was submitted to the Department of Home, Leisure and Sports in Austria for collation of Injury Database (IDB) Final Report of participating EU countries.

In mid-2008, data from E&A in MDH started being submitted. This data is being sent in Excel format. The exercise of retrieving data manually is proving to be too demanding. A total of about 9,300 cases are being forwarded per month from which an average of 3,000 were found to be eligible for inclusion and extracted. Customised software is currently being designed to assist us in mining the data sent from E&A to populate our injury database. In the meantime, ongoing collaboration between E&A in MDH and DHIR is being carried out to enhance data collection.

Public Health Reporting & Research

European Health Interview Survey (HIS)

The preparatory work for this survey took place over a period of two years before its official launch in 2008. The questionnaire was first piloted amongst a small sample of the population and any necessary changes were made to the questionnaire before the actual fieldwork began. Prizes from sponsors were obtained so that they could be offered as an incentive to all participants who were eventually included in a lottery which was held at the end of September. Billboards were set up with the help of the Department of Health Promotion to promote participation of those individuals selected for the survey. A tender was issued and a private company was contracted to provide the interviewers to conduct the fieldwork for this study. These interviewers were subsequently given training regarding the survey by staff members within the department. The fieldwork was launched on 16 June and was conducted amongst a representative sample of 5,510 individuals from all the localities in Malta and Gozo. While the fieldwork was being conducted, DHIR purchased the latest version of the OMR software which was used to create templates so that the questionnaires could be scanned. All through the fieldwork questionnaires were continuously being sent to the Directorate and were processed by members of staff. They were manually checked and coded before being cut to size at the Government Printing Press and ultimately scanned within DHIR itself. Any individuals who had refused to participate were contacted again and encouraged to participate, thus increasing the response rate as much as possible. In fact, the response rate at the end of fieldwork was more than 72% which is slightly higher than the figure predicted in the pilot study. Scanning of all the questionnaires was completed by the end of November and presently reports are being compiled from the information collected through this survey. This project was partly funded by the EU with the major source being EUROSTAT. Reports are being currently compiled and should be published in the first or second quarter of 2009.

System of Health Accounts

The System of Health Accounts (SHA) compiles detailed information on expenditure within the health care sector. This implementation is a challenge which has been taken up by DHIR and the Financial Management Control Unit (FMCU). To prepare for this implementation, DHIR is benefiting from a number of projects funded by the EU. The first project entitled *Grant for Supporting the Implementation of SHA* is in collaboration with Portuguese colleagues working in this field. In August, Dr Isabel Quintela from the Portuguese Economic Statistics office visited Malta for a week to assess the current situation in relation to the implementation of SHA. She met with a diverse group of individuals from within the Health departments, the National Statistics Office, and hospitals. During her visit, she also delivered two seminars

to a number of stakeholders, on the principles of the SHA and its implementation in Portugal. The second phase of this project was launched in the middle of December with a study visit to Portugal by five Maltese representatives. A research officer within DHIR, two officials from FMCU, and two key staff members from two major hospitals on the Island attended a week-long visit which involved meetings and discussions with experts and officials from Portugal dealing with the SHA compilation in their country. A report on the overall outcomes of this grant and the recommendations for SHA implementation in Malta will be presented at the end of this project in April 2009.

Twinning Light Project

A second project related to SHA and funded by the EU was launched in December 2008. This is a Twinning Light project in partnership with the British consulting company NICO and is planned to last six months. A delegation of foreign experts visited Malta in the first week of December to launch the project as well as to gather information regarding the implementation of SHA in Malta. They conducted presentations on SHA within their countries for a varied group of staff members from Health departments. They also had meetings with key staff within the National Statistics Office, FMCU, DHIR and the Directorate General Strategy and Sustainability. A press conference was held on 3 December to officially launch this project. The project will continue and close during 2009.

DHIR also submitted another application for a EUROSTAT grant entitled *Non-expenditure Health Care Data – Improvement of Quality*. The proposed project would involve the study of the legal feasibility of data collection within the health care entities in the private and public sector followed by the pilot data collection within some of these entities.

European Health Examination Survey

After a request made during a conference on cardiovascular disease in Malta at the end of 2007, the Government accepted to commit itself to support the piloting of the Health Examination Survey and to set up a Working Group for the planning of the next Health Examination Survey in Malta. This study would give a clear picture of the morbidity of diseases within the Maltese population because participants are not only asked about their health but are examined by a physician. EUROSTAT has shown its commitment to fund the co-ordination of this project within the EU countries and the Maltese Government has committed to financing the project which plans to study a random sample of 300 people within the Maltese population by 2010. This type of study has not been conducted in Malta since 1984.

European Morbidity Matrix

Another project undertaken by DHIR and financed by the 2005 Transitional Funds was the European Morbidity Matrix. This project involved the collection of detailed information from a variety of sources about the prevalence and incidence of a number of diseases in Malta. This information was included within a database containing sources of information from other EU member states so that a comprehensive list of data sources on morbidity and their reliability could be available within EUROSTAT.

The National Obstetric Information Registry continued as an active member of the EUROPERISTAT II project an EU project aimed at development of a strategy for monitoring and evaluating perinatal health in the EU. This project was closed in December with the publication and launch of a *European Perinatal Health Report – better statistics for better health for pregnant women and their babies*. This report collates all indicators related to pregnancy, delivery, and babies' health from all EU Member States. Through participation in this project, the Directorate benefited from funds to be used to further improve this system.

Analysis of Information Related to Activity within Primary Health Care

DHIR was asked to conduct an analysis of activity data collected within the health centres offering Primary Health Care. This data was mapped out to show the use of these services by locality. Apart from this, data from the Emergency Department at MDH pertaining to non-urgent cases presenting at Emergency without a referral by a doctor, was also mapped. The reasoning behind this was to quantify the potential demand that can be covered by health centres. This information was handed over to the Department of Primary Health Care for inclusion in its reports.

WHO-EURO Health for All (HFA)

Data on Health Indicators for the year 2007 was submitted to WHO-EURO towards the end of 2008. Experience obtained with WHO is being used to develop methodologies for the implementation of EUROSTAT's European Core Health Indicators. A delegate from DHIR has also been collaborating with the ECHIM group within DG SANCO to ensure harmonisation of data collection methods.

Statistics Clinic

The Statistics Clinic remained highly in demand during 2008. While attempts were made to maintain appointments on the prescribed slots on Tuesdays and Thursdays afternoons, these days are increased during peak demand periods such as May and September.

Health Ethics Committee

DHIR has continued its support to the Health Ethics Committee. Secretarial support is still being provided by DHIR, together with the co-ordination of all its activity.

Scientific Publications by DHIR Staff

DHIR staff has been involved in a number of collaborative research activities. A number of conference presentations and publications arose from these studies.

Mortality Monographs May 2008

- Suicide related deaths in the enlarged European Union;
- Homicide related deaths in the enlarged European Union;
- Transport accident related deaths in the enlarged European Union;
- Home and leisure injuries related deaths in an enlarged European Union;
- Fall related deaths in an enlarged European Union;
- Poisoning related deaths in an enlarged European Union;
- Accidental suffocation related deaths in an enlarged European Union;
- Drowning related deaths in an enlarged European Union;
- Event of undetermined intent related deaths in an enlarged European Union.

Projects

The DHIR continued to participate in a number of EU funded projects during 2008. These projects, whilst requiring a commitment in terms of time and human resource effort, have provided an opportunity for growth and development of new activities as well as networking opportunities at a European level particularly on a number of activities which are relevant to Maltese health policy, as already mentioned above.

- European Community Health Indicators Monitoring (ECHIM);
- Analysis of Injury Mortality in the European Union (Anamort);
- Health and Disability Statistics;

- Improving the Product and Safety dimension;
- WHO global status report on road safety;
- Policy impact assessment & public health reporting;
- EUGLOREH.

Other Collaboration

- DHIR was involved as collaborating partner on two projects I2sare (Health inequalities indicators in the regions of Europe) and AIR (ENRICH). These evaluated regional differences within different health indicators. They also study inequalities in these same indicators.
- Officials from DHIR collaborated with DPDEU to hold focus groups to collect information for the National Strategy Report 2009-2010.
- With regard to health indicators as requested by the EU Social Protection Committee, DHIR officials collaborated with the Department of Social Security, the Department of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and the Health Care Services for their collations,
- The Department also assisted the Health Consumer Powerhouse with its data collection for Malta for the three comparative reports during this year.
- The Consultant obtained data regarding diabetic retinopathy via a series of one-to-one meetings with stakeholders and data owners in the diabetology and ophthalmic departments. This is to better understand current practices in screening services and procedures at our Health services. Advice is also being sought from Dr John Olson, a preventive ophthalmologist consultant in Scotland.
- In addition, aspects of local and international equity issues are being followed and analysed.

Other Meetings Abroad

- Network Competent Authorities (Health Information and Knowledge) – Luxembourg 29-31 January
- Skin Cancer Project - Kick-off meeting - Berlin 14 and 15 February
- Working Group Public Health Statistics - Brussels 3-6 March
- Core Group Health Interview Survey
- Indicator Sub-Group meeting - Brussels 10 March
- Regional Training of EURO National Data Co-ordinators for the Global Status Report on Road Safety (World Health Organisation) – Switzerland March
- Training session for National Data Administrators of the European Injury Database – Austria March
- ECHIM 6th meeting of Working Party Indicators - Luxembourg, 15-16 April
- EURO PERISTST II meeting - Warsaw, 4-5 April
- Technical Group Health Interview Survey Meeting - Luxembourg 15-16 May
- European Symposium on Congenital Anomalies and 23rd Registry Leaders' meeting - Helsinki June
- European Prevention Initiative for Dermatological Malignancies - Rotterdam 5 June
- URHIS project on Urban Health Indicators - Brussels 10-11 June
- 7th annual TG Care meeting - Luxembourg 30 June-1 July
- Data Protection study visit - Hamburg, Germany July
- EUGLOREH 3rd Meeting - Rome 11-13 September
- IDB Network Meeting 15/16th - Luxembourg September
- Technical Group on COD Stats - 24-26 September
- Scientific Session and 35th Annual Meeting of the ICBDSR - Padova 14- 16
- Core Group Health Interview Survey – Austria 2-3 October
- Cancer Mortality Atlas of Europe 1998-2002 - Lyon 6-7 October IARC
- Working Group Public Health Statistics - Luxembourg 18-19 November
- EMCDDA meeting on DRDs - Lisbon 27-28 November
- Invitation to the High Level committee - Paris 10-11 December
- SHA study visit – Portugal December
- Workshop System of Health Accounts - Copenhagen 26- 28 March
- Health Inequalities – Edinburgh 13-15 April.

Conclusion

The main challenges identified for 2008 were indeed the organisation of the Health Interview Survey, contribution to the national health strategy and the implementation of the System of Health Accounts. The first challenge has been implemented successfully, despite two major hitches – basically a delay in the tendering process and the general elections. As to DHIR's contribution to the national health strategy, this Directorate has never before taken such a central role in providing the evidence base for a number of policy decisions at all levels and for so many international reports as in 2008, as described above, in most cases, within rather tight timeframes. The implementation of the System of Health Accounts is one step closer with strong ties having been built to the FMCU and a number of initiatives currently underway to assist us in learning the basic principles of how to construct such an infrastructure.

EU & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE – SOCIAL AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL POLICY ISSUES

During 2008, the EU and International Affairs Directorate was very active in co-ordinating EU and other international social policy matters falling under the responsibility of the Ministry for Social Policy and co-ordinating the formulation of the Ministry's position on policies proposed by the EU.

As shown in the table hereunder, in the period under review the Directorate prepared 16 explanatory memoranda outlining Malta's position on new EU proposals and communications in respect of issues where MSOC is the implementing Ministry. This represented an increase of 14.2% over the number prepared in the previous year. These memoranda were presented in and approved by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for EU Affairs. In this context, the Directorate actively participated in all the eight IMC meetings held during the period under review.

	2007	2008	% increase
Explanatory Memoranda	14	16	+ 14.2
Instruction Notes	57	123	+ 115.8
Briefing Notes	28	38	+ 35.7
Background Notes	16	22	+ 37.5
Speaking Notes	12	16	+ 33.3
Total	127	215	+ 69.3

Furthermore, as also shown in the above table, the Directorate drafted or co-ordinated the drafting of instruction notes for delegates attending the Social Questions Working Party meetings and COREPER I meetings, briefing notes, background notes and speaking notes for Ministers and other top government officials attending the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of Minister meetings and other informal meetings of Ministers. In total, the Directorate prepared 215 notes and memoranda, which means an increase of 69.3% over the total drawn up in 2007.

The Directorate was also very active in a number of EU related issues which the Ministry was involved in during the period under review. The most prominent ones to mention are:

- Council Directive 2002/73/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training, and promotion and working conditions and Council Directive 2004/113/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services which were fully transposed during 2008;
- the discussion and drawing up of the National Strategic Report on pensions, health and social inclusion for 2008-2010;
- the discussion and drawing up of the flexicurity pathway for Malta for 2008-2010;
- the discussion and drawing up of the Government position with regard to dominant EU dossiers such as the proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, the Communication from the

Commission concerning the common position of the Council on the adoption of a proposed Directive concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, the proposal for a Directive on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Directive 86/613/EEC, and the proposal for a Directive on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding;

- social inclusion issues and matters related to the European Social Model including the Social Reality Stocktaking, the Renewed Social Agenda and the family reconciliation package;
- the discussion and negotiations on the proposed Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the co-ordination of social security systems;
- issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights including women empowerment and other equality matters.

The Directorate also co-ordinated the Ministry action and ensured timely and effective response in connection with the receipt of several EU-related correspondence, reports, questionnaires, and other documentation. It also co-ordinated the participation of ministry officials in a total of 142 EU conferences, meetings, and other similar events abroad. A breakdown of these meetings is shown hereunder:

	Council	Commission	Presidency	Others	Total
Employment and Occupational Health & Safety	2	6	6	3	17
Equality & Disability	2	9	5	1	17
Industrial relations	0	3	1	2	6
Social security	16	26	4	7	53
Social Inclusion and Protection	0	23	3	9	35
Others	2	5	0	7	14
Total	22	72	19	29	142

Senior staff from this Directorate also attended 10 EU meetings primarily in connection with the work of the Social Protection Committee, MISSOC, ESF and also the EQUAL programme as well in relation to other EU initiatives such as the Renewed Social Agenda and the Roma population.

EU FUNDS (2004-2006)

During 2008, the Directorate, through its ESF Unit, continued to perform its duties as Intermediate Body (IB) for the Managing Authority (Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division – OPM) in connection with the European Social Fund and as National Support Structure (NSS) for the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme.

During the period under review, the Directorate was responsible as ESF IB for 50 projects, of which 25 fall under MSOC (including five run by NGOs) and 25 under other ministries. Furthermore, as EQUAL NSS, the Directorate was also responsible for another six EQUAL projects, of which four fall under MSOC and two under other ministries. By the end of 2008, all ESF and EQUAL projects had completed their training activities.

The Directorate, through its ESF Unit, continued to play a pivotal role in the processing of the invoices related to the running of all the above-mentioned projects. For 2008, a total of €2,336,853.64 was invoiced under the ESF while another €242,985.48 was invoiced for payment under the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme.

In 2008, the Unit also conducted a total of 18 Article 4 Documentary Spot Checks and seven follow-up spot checks. Furthermore, it also conducted 118 Article 4 Training Spot Checks and was involved in three Statements of Expenditure by Measure.

The ESF Unit/EQUAL National Support Structure within this Directorate was also very active in spearheading and implementing Action 3 of the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme – the Mainstreaming process. Several activities were carried out. The EQUAL Mainstreaming Strategy was published in February 2008 which set in motion the EQUAL Mainstreaming process in Malta at Programme Level. The main deliverable of this mainstreaming process was a Policy Brief which was presented to Government in October 2008.

A tracer study was also carried out between May and August 2008 to measure the impact of the EQUAL projects on the employment prospects and the employability potential of the EQUAL participants. An Information and Publicity Campaign on the EQUAL Success Stories was also carried out in September and October 2008. In April and October, two conferences were organised about the EQUAL Programme and its mainstreaming process. The latter conference practically brought to a close the EQUAL Programme in Malta.

The Director (EU & International Affairs), as Senior Programming Officer for projects financed under the EU Pre-Accession Funds and the EU Transition Facility Funds, actively contributed in the running of two Twinning Projects and a Service Contract funded under the Transition Facility for 2004 and 2005. These were all completed by the end of 2008 with a total investment of €396,500.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT, EU AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE - HEALTH

INTRODUCTION

The Directorate for Policy Development, EU Affairs and International Affairs for Health (DPDEU) has undergone a number of organisational transitions during 2008. From June to December 2008, it was re-designated as Directorate Policy Development for both Health and Social Policy within the Ministry for Social Policy. However, as from December 2008, it was re-designated again to its original title as Directorate of Policy Development, EU Affairs and International Affairs for Health. All along it has maintained all the responsibilities and functions for EU and International Affairs for Health and it will also be retaining the responsibility for Social Policy Development until the processes for the new Directorate for Policy Development, EU Affairs and International Affairs for Social Policy are completed.

This report encompasses all the activities performed by the team of DPDEU during 2008 which include Policy Development and EU and International Affairs for Health throughout the whole of 2008 and also for the activities concerned with Social Policy Development from June to the end of the year.

The responsibilities for the Directorate for Policy Development, EU Affairs and International Affairs for Health include the drawing up of policies in the areas of public health, health care services and long-term care and to promote the sustainable development of the Maltese health sector in line with service users' and national needs and priorities. The Directorate is also responsible for the co-ordination of the formulation of the Ministry's position on policies proposed by the EU, and is the local and international link that explores and utilises opportunities arising from EU membership and bilateral/international relations. The Directorate is responsible for co-ordinating Malta's participation in EU structures and processes through co-ordination with local stakeholders including EU Secretariat, other ministries, and the Permanent Representation in Brussels.

This Directorate was involved in the preparation of submissions for projects to be funded by the EU Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013. It also continued to monitor the implementation of projects under the Transition Facility Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF 2004-2006). The responsibility of Senior Programming Officer has been retained by the Director until these projects are completed.

The responsibilities assumed for Social Policy Development since June 2008 include the initiation, development and co-ordination of policy options, in the area of social policy.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The main functions pertaining to this Directorate are the following:

- To develop and consolidate the policy development structures of the Ministry, identify key areas in line with general government policy for advancement and conduct this development, employing international best practice and local evidence and reflecting appropriate consultations with stakeholders which includes user participation. To assist in the performance of assessments of economic and sustainability implications of proposed or existing policies and programmes and review of standards, regulation and service development initiatives.
- To proactively identify areas of key strategic importance for the Maltese health sector where the EU institutions are engaging in discussion and formulation of proposals and act as the focal point in preparing EU positions following consultation within the Ministry, with other ministries as relevant and with external stakeholders.
- To ensure that all obligations entered into by Government as a Member State of the EU are adhered to within the set time-frames. To promote the development of bilateral activities with other countries and seek opportunities for fostering greater collaboration and ensure compliance with bilateral and multilateral agreements and commitments.

THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW

Policy Development

Policy development takes places on an ongoing basis through the submission of reports, positions and questionnaires in response to requests from the European Commission.

Other specific areas of health policy development carried out by this Directorate include the following:

- elaboration of policy on the developments of cross-border health care in Europe and co-ordination of a consolidated government response for the proposed Directive of the EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border health care;
- monitoring and updating of health and long-term care aspects within the National Strategy Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2006-2008 and input as health representative on the Social Protection Committee;
- conducting and co-ordination of the consultation process that was performed to obtain feedback and views that were used in the compilation of the Health and Long-term Care strand of Malta's National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2008 to 2010 that was submitted to the European Commission in November 2008;
- the development of a draft national cancer control plan in collaboration with the Department for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention using an open consultation methodology. The plan is due to be finalised and published in 2009;
- conducting preliminary research work and establishing important contacts and working relationships with a view to the development of a Migrant Health Policy for Malta. DPDEU also participated in a number of events both locally and abroad dealing with this area of emerging importance at both the national and international levels.

Specific areas of social policy development carried out by this directorate from June 2008 include the following:

- co-ordination of the Community Action Programme in the sphere of Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013) on a national level and input as representative of the Committee for the implementation of PROGRESS;

- co-ordination of the social inclusion strand of the Community Action Programme in the sphere of Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013) through the national contact point on social inclusion;
- monitoring and updating of social inclusion aspects within the National Strategy Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2008-2010;
- representation on the working group of the National Environment and Health Action Plan - Focusing on protecting our children's health from environmental hazards;
- review of the feedback arising from the Focus Groups sessions carried out as part of the consultation process of the NAP/Inclusion 2008-2010;
- active participation in the working group that was tasked with the proposal of measures to promote the concept of Flexicurity in Malta. This working group was co-ordinated by ETC and was part of the National Reform Programme Report 2008-2010;
- elaboration of policy as regards to:
 - active inclusion - through positions on the Communication Commission Recommendation on the Active Inclusion of People excluded from the Labour Market
 - financial crisis - through co-ordinating Government's response to the questionnaire entitled *Impact of the financial and economic crisis in the field of social protection and social inclusion in your country*
 - work-life balance - through feedback on the Communication on a Better Work-Life Balance
 - governance - through feedback on Reinforcing the Open Method of Co-ordination
 - social agenda - through feedback on the (a) Renewed Social Agenda: Opportunities, Access and Solidarity in 21st century Europe and (b) Fifth Progress report on Economic and Social Cohesion
 - human rights - through feedback on the (a) Proposed Structural Framework of Malta's National Human Rights Report, and (b) Revised European Social Charter;
- preliminary policy positions have also been taken as regards the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).
- compilation of the three strands of the National Strategy Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2008-2010 (NSR SISP), co-ordination of the consultation through different entities for approval and clearance (these included Minister for Social Policy, MEDC, Cabinet of Ministers, MCESD, Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs, EU Secretariat at OPM and Permanent Representation of the EU); the report was finally sent to the Commission in November 2008;
- representing Malta at the in-depth review exercises conducted by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) on the NSR SISP 2008-2010 submitted by all MS to the Commission and at all the SPC meetings since June 2008; co-ordinating feedback to the reports of the Commission concerned with the analysis of the Maltese NSR SISP 2008-2010;
- co-ordination of the printing of the NSR SISP which will be published in February 2009.

EU Affairs Policy Co-ordination

The core tasks pertaining to the EU Affairs Directorate on a daily basis in the field of policy co-ordination are the following:

- Preparation of Explanatory Memoranda on EU pipeline legislation
- Drawing up of Instruction Notes
- Compilation of questionnaires
- Responding to queries
- Submission of reports to the Commission
- Co-ordination of transposition and notification of EU related legislation.

Memoranda and Instruction Notes

The process to deal with new Commission proposals at the various levels of discussion is co-ordinated by the EU Affairs Office. This process consists mainly of preparing updated instruction notes and briefing notes on the agenda items for discussions. The EU Affairs Office was responsible for preparation of

instruction and briefing notes (and speaking notes as necessary) for our Maltese representatives attending Council working parties, MERTENS and COREPER meetings, as well as meetings of the Council of Minister. The agendas of these meetings consisted of topics on which there was ongoing discussions at EU level; most of them being legislative proposals. The successful preparation of these dossiers was the result of teamwork and a good working relationship with line ministries, the EU Secretariat (OPM) and Permanent Representation in Brussels. This Office was also responsible for preparing briefing notes for meetings attended by ministers and the Permanent Representative.

Monitoring of the proposal list was conducted at regular intervals in collaboration with the EU Secretariat. Furthermore, these legislative items were classified according to the degree of relevance to Malta. The Directorate continued to employ a process of wide consultation in drawing up Malta's position on EU proposals by communicating with a wide range of stakeholders (internal and external) during the formulation process of the position of Malta on these proposals. Key issues that were of direct relevance to this Ministry during 2008, included health and migration, food improvement package, information to patients on medicinal products and counterfeit medicines, EU health strategy, tissues and organs, health care and long term care actions for social inclusion, patients' rights on cross-border health care, rare diseases, health security and bio-preparedness, the burden of cancer, anti-microbial resistance, and neurodegenerative diseases associated with ageing.

During 2008, this office produced 104 instruction notes, and 32 briefing notes and speaking notes. It also processed 15 explanatory memoranda which it presented at the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) meetings. Eight IMC meetings were held during 2008 and this Office was represented in all of them.

EU Presidency Topics

A good number health-related topics were tackled by the Slovenian Presidency (January–June 2008) and French Presidency (July–December 2008). Towards the end of the latter Presidency, a wide internal and external consultation was launched on new proposals on pharmaceutical legislation; and a Green Paper on the Health care workforce.

This Office continued to strengthen its working relationships with other EU Affairs Offices, the EU Secretariat, the Permanent Representation in Brussels, and also foreign entities. This networking continued to increase as a result of the ongoing sharing of information and queries between MS mainly on national legislation and operating procedures in their respective national health systems.

During the year, the EU Affairs Office channelled a variety of queries from simple questions to questionnaires to requests from large international organisations. Despite strict deadlines, this Office managed to work its way to the various stakeholders and achieved the desired results.

This office also managed several reports and questionnaires. Some of these were Community obligations. These included:

- Questionnaire on the transposition and implementation of the European Tissues and Cells Regulatory Framework
- Report on Food radiation
- EU survey on pneumococcal disease
- ECDC with regard to the designated competent bodies operating in the technical field of ECDC
- Questionnaire on living organ donations
- Questionnaire on the Existing Standards of Physicians Average Workload
- Questionnaire on Medical Devices
- Second questionnaire on the Council Recommendation on the prudent use of antibiotics
- Questionnaire re Implementation of International Health Regulations
- Questionnaire on Electronic Health Insurance Cards
- Questionnaire on chemical parameters of the Drinking Water Directive
- Report on claims related to regulation 1408/71

- Report on application of Blood Directive
- Bathing water report.

The Office collaborated closely with Forum Malta fl-Ewropa to disseminate information on health related issues and proposals. The Office was also involved in the consultation by MEUSAC regarding the development of consultation processes within it that will help augment the effectiveness of public consultation on EU instigated issues which are of special importance in their own right or are specifically of interest for Malta.

Participation in Overseas Meetings

This Office participated actively in EU related conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings both locally and abroad. Key overseas meetings attended include:

- EPSCO Ministerial Councils (June and December 2008)
- Informal Council of Health Ministers (September 2008)
- 1st Council Working Party on Public Health meeting at Senior level (December 2008)
- High level committee on Public Health (April 2008)
- Europe Centre for Disease Control – Management Board
- European Health for Patients (October 2008)
- The Burden of Cancer – How can it be reduced? (February 2008)
- Improving Health systems efficiency: Achieving better value for money - Joint European Commission/OECD conference (September 2008)
- two meetings in relation to the project *Assisting Migrants and Communities (AMAC): Analysis of Social Determinants of Health and Health Inequalities*.

In the social policy field, the following overseas meetings were attended:

- five sessions of the Social Protection Committee
- 5th Meeting of the Programme Committee for the Implementation of PROGRESS (July)
- 7th Meeting of people experiencing poverty (September)
- ‘E-Inclusion Ministerial Conference’ (October)
- Forum on Social Experimentation in Europe (November).

The DPDEU co-ordinated attendance to EU meetings in order to ensure that Malta was appropriately represented at all meetings where important decisions are taken. The Office was also responsible to identify and nominate national experts in the field of medicines, food, communicable diseases and other public health organisations and networks.

The meetings attended overseas by officers within this Ministry are shown in the table below. During 2008, the health attaché in Brussels covered most of the relevant working party meetings. This office also keeps records of MHEC officials attending EU-related meetings, stores reports drawn up from these meetings in its archives and monitors the actions that need to be taken as follow-up.

EU Meetings attended in 2008						
	<i>Council</i>	<i>Commission</i>	<i>Presidency</i>	<i>WHO</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Ministerial	2	0	2	2	4	10
Public Health	31	41	3	1	9	85
Food	17	22	1	0	4	44
Pharmaceuticals	7	15	5	0	113	140
Social security/social questions	1	5	0	0	0	6
Health promotion	0	17	0	0	2	19
Health Information	0	10	0	0	8	18
Regulatory committees; tobacco, blood, tissues & cells	0	9	1	1	4	15
Others	0	19	8	2	53	82
Total	58	138	20	6	197	419

EU Funds Management

The Director carried out the function of Senior Programming Officer for this Ministry during the first half of 2008 only for the projects that had not yet been closed from the Transition Facility Fund and the European Social Fund (2004-2006). During 2008, the role of SPO for the other projects was assumed by the Director Project Implementation and Monitoring. The roles and responsibilities of identification of new projects suitable for EU funding as well as the monitoring of the project implementation with successful remedial action being taken where necessary was also transferred to the Directorate Project Implementation and Monitoring.

Bilateral Affairs

The Ministry for Social Policy successfully continued to operate the administrative arrangement within the framework of the reciprocal health agreement with the United Kingdom. During 2008, DPDEU continued to be involved on work being done to develop and implement bilateral agreements with several countries. A Memorandum of Understanding to develop collaboration in the health sector was signed between Malta and Libya and Malta and Kuwait.

World Health Organisation and International Affairs

The European Union has stepped up its efforts to co-ordinate its policy and actions within the World Health Organisation. In this respect, the DPDEU has supported preparation of regional and world health assembly statements and positions vis-à-vis EU co-ordination activities. This Directorate continued to assist in the co-ordination of Malta's position on WHO policy in relation to the International Health Regulations and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

This Directorate was also the contact point for policy matters at the United Nations in the field of health particularly on health aspects related to sexual and reproductive health to ensure that Malta's policy on these matters was consistently promoted and safeguarded.

Staff Development

DPDEU organised a half-day seminar for employees working with MSOC (Health) that either travel on duty abroad or are frequently required to work on EU-related dossiers and obligations. This seminar aimed at providing training and information on the different structures within the EU bureaucracy and the EU process that are adopted both at national and EU level.

Staff within the DPDEU attended several continuing professional development events and SDO courses throughout the year. The Performance Management Programme was implemented for the relevant officers.

Conclusion

Further working on the ensuing policy development needs in response to EU identified strategies and national priorities will undoubtedly be the main challenge for the DPDEU in the coming twelve months. Health issues have continued to increase in importance on the agenda of the European Union and also at the national level and DPDEU must strive to be able to promote the furtherance of effective policies and good practices and also facilitate the mainstreaming of EU related policy initiatives into the fabric of national policy development in this sector.

DR NATASHA AZZOPARDI MUSCAT
Director General (Strategy and Sustainability)

Social Policy Sector

Social Security Division

The Social Security Division is responsible for the administration of social security legislation, which provides for the payment of benefits under the contributory and the non-contributory schemes.

These schemes cover the entire population which is in some way recipient of such benefits. The Division is mainly involved in ensuring that financial support is given to those sections of the community which are mostly in need, namely those with a low income, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

The total expenditure on social security benefits in 2008 reached €624,798,632. This expenditure reflects an increase of €52,500,204 over the previous year.

LEGISLATION

Legal Notice 149 of 2008 provided for the increases in the rates of social security benefits and contributions as had previously been announced in the Budget Speech for 2008. These increases were proportionately tied to the €3.49 cost of living increase rise in wages as awarded by Government.

Act XXXII of 2007 providing for the legislative changes as a result of the various changes to the Social Security Act arising out of the 2007 and 2008 budget measures was published.

There was no increase in the capital resources means test of persons applying for non-contributory benefits. Thus the capital limit for the entitlement of age pension, social assistance, and sickness assistance remained €14,000 in the case of a single or a widowed person and €23,300 in the case of married persons. The capital limit in the case of applications for medical aids grant also remained the same, at €9,320 in the case of a single or a widowed person and €16,310 in the case of married persons. There was an increase in the supplementary allowance and energy benefit incomes test in order to reflect the cost of living increase for 2008.

The social security contribution rate payable by employers and employees remained at 10% of the basic weekly wage, and the social security contribution rate payable by a self-occupied and a self-employed person remained at 15% of the income declared by the payer in the previous year.

NEW SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES

As a result of the various measures taken in the 2008 Budget, the expenditure in social benefits during 2008 rose by €52,500.204 million or approximately 9.17% more than that for 2007. Amongst the important measures introduced during 2008 one finds:

- Various measures affecting family benefits, including a reform in the child allowance; the introduction of a flat rate child allowance irrespective of the household income of the family; changes to the disability child allowance; the fostering allowance etc.
- During 2008, Government announced the payment of the full cost of living increase to social security pensioners with two-thirds of the increase being included in the weekly rate of pension and one-third being paid as a cost of living bonus at the start of the year. Approximately 80,000 pensioners received such cost of living bonus.

- Another measure for retirement pensioners under 65 years of age was the removal on the capping of the income such pensioners could earn from a gainful activity. From 5 January 2008, a pensioner can work and there is no limit on the amount of earnings from employment.
- Government introduced the first stage of a measure which is to see the gradual reduction in the amount of service pension which is to be considered in the establishment of a social security pension rate. In this first step, an amount of €466 of the service pension was no longer considered in the assessment process of the social security pension entitlement.
- Apart from the normal cost of living adjustment, the payment of maternity benefit was extended from 13 to 14 weeks.
- Other measures taken during 2008 were the increase in the weekly rate of the Orphan's allowance and the increase in the incomes test for the Supplementary Allowance and Energy Benefit.

The various measures will be mentioned in the respective sections of this report.

CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME

The Department continued with its duty to determine questions of cases of insurability. It also continued to issue exemptions from payments of the social security contributions to those expatriates insured in their home countries and were also paying their dues there.

The total revenue collected during 2008 in terms of the Social Security Act (Cap 318) amounted to €506,359,565. This reflects an increase of €26,116,641 or approximately 5.44% over the previous year. These figures are broken down in detail in the following table:

Contributions and Enforcement			
Type of Contributions	2007 Euros	2008 Euros	(+) or (-) Euros
Class I: Contributions in respect of private industry	212,563,864	227,123,303	(+) 14,559,439
Class I: Contributions in respect of government employees	73,446,911	75,948,397	(+) 2,501,486
Class II: Contributions by self-employed persons	34,041,774	34,354,677	(+) 312,903
Further contributions	164,101	220,000	(+) 55,899
State contribution	160,026,274	168,713,188	(+) 8,686,914
Total	480,242,924	506,359,565	(+) 26,116,641

Short-Term Benefits

During 2008, the Short Term Benefit Section in Gozo continued with the normal duties related to the issue of short-term benefits. Moreover staff at Stagers managed to input 15,159 contribution histories whilst they also verified another 20,142 ledger sheets, mostly belonging to self-occupied contributors. As in the previous year, the Gozo Branch once again managed to issue the annual reviews of Supplementary Allowance claims on time. The total number of Supplementary Allowance claims reviewed amounted to 27,693. Claims for short-term benefits dealt with during 2008, as compared with 2007, are shown hereunder:

Type of Benefit	Number of Claims		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Sickness Benefit	106,440	126,667	20,227
Unemployment Benefit	18,514	17,349	(-) 1,165
Special Unemployment Benefit	959	878	(-) 81
Injury Benefit	4,235	3,951	(-) 284
Marriage Grant	3,404	3,180	(-) 224
Total	133,552	152,025	18,473

Type of Medical Certificate	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
First/Final (less than 4 days)	76,788	78,802	2,014
First/Final (4 to 6 days)	29,016	29,111	95
First (open)	18,804	18,754	(-) 50
Intermediate	100,718	101,147	429
Final	15,810	16,141	331
Total	241,136	243,955	2,819

Children's Allowances and Other Family Benefits

The beginning of 2008 saw the Social Security Division reforming its family benefits schemes. In fact, the children allowance was extended to all households and payable for every child. This measure was twofold. First an annual flat rate of €250 per child was paid - as from 5 January 2008 - to those households whose income exceeded the amount of €23,923. The second group whose income is less than €23,923 had their allowance increased substantially as the percentage mechanism used to establish the rate of allowance due was reviewed upwards as follows:

Children Allowance Percentage Rates	
2007 rates	2008 rates
6% for the first child	6% for the first child
9% for the second child	12% for the second child
12% for the third child	18% for the third child
3% increase for each other child	6% increase for each other child

The major elements of the reform can be described as follows:

- The percentage rate utilised to establish the rate of means-tested benefit increased from 3% for the second and subsequent child to 6% for each child. As a result the means-tested benefit payable to each child in the household is now the same.
- At the same time the minimum means-tested child allowance applicable to all households increased from €121.12 per annum irrespective of the number of children in the household, to €250 per year for each child in the household. Approximately 33,000 children benefited from this measure.
- A new flat rate allowance was introduced and payable to households who do not qualify for a means-tested child allowance. The flat rate child allowance has been established as €250 per year per child. As a result of this new measure, approximately 16,969 households (with approximately 26,692 children) started to receive this allowance during 2008.

The reform of the child allowance benefit required an overhaul of the software governing this benefit and also the manual input from the personnel of the section concerned.

Disability Child Allowance

A measure introduced in the budget for 2008 was vis-à-vis the disability child allowance which ceased to be means tested. Moreover, as from 5 January 2008 the flat rate of €11.65 was increased to €16.31 per week and paid to each child irrespective of the income of the head of household, once the child is confirmed by a medical panel to qualify medically for such an allowance.

Foster Child Allowance

The foster child allowance or child in care allowance was also increased from €27.95 to €39.60 effective from 5 January 2008.

Maternity Benefit

The number of weeks that maternity benefit is paid has been increased from 13 to 14 weeks with effect from 5 January 2008.

The following tables give an overview of the family allowances in payment at the end of 2008 compared to 2007 and the number of households in receipt of a disabled child allowance and compare the number of accepted claims in respect of maternity benefit as at the end of 2007 and 2008.

Children Allowance for household with income less than €23,923	Number of Families		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Child Allowance only:			
- One eligible child	16,228	15,158	(-) 1,070
- Two eligible children	11,830	9,910	(-) 1,920
- Three eligible children	3,094	2,486	(-) 608
- Four or more eligible children	799	665	(-) 134
Total	31,951	28,219	(-) 3,732

Children Allowance for household with income more than €23,923	Number of Families		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Child Allowance only:			
- One eligible child	-	8,899	-
- Two eligible children	-	6,659	-
- Three eligible children	-	1,209	-
- Four or more eligible children	-	202	-
Total	-	16,969	-

Type of Benefit	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Disabled Child Allowance	682	709	27
Maternity Benefit	2,629	2,687	58
Total	3,311	3,396	85

During 2008, the Division reviewed all cases of child allowance that were in payment up to end of June 2007, with a view to establish the new child allowance benefit rates for the year starting July 2008. The number of households in receipt of children allowance benefit was 45,188 at 31 December 2008 as compared to 31,951 households on 31 December 2007.

Contributory Pensions

The table at the end of this section shows the number of persons in receipt of a contributory pension at the end of 2008. Here the upward trend in the number of pensioners, especially the new retirees, continued. An increase of almost 5.7% was recorded in the number of retirement pensioners.

As a result of the budget speech for 2008, all pensioners were awarded the full cost of living increase. Thus, two-thirds of the cost of living increase - €2.33 - was added to the weekly pension rate and the remaining one-third was given as a one-time payment in advance for the whole year.

As in previous years the maximum pensionable income for social security purposes was again increased by the cost of living allowance to reach the amount of €16,601.

During the period under review, the pensions section was also engaged in an exercise to carry out revisions of various pensioners in receipt of a service pension according to the budget measures for 2008 where for assessment purposes €466 were ignored.

Moreover, the staff at the pensions section continued with the exercise of data cleansing to improve the database of the Social Security Division.

Pension Reviews

As a result of this first step in the service pension exercise, 4,350 pensioners (Retirement, Widow or Invalidity) saw an increase in their social security pension entitlement.

Revisions to contributory pensions (Retirement, Widows, and Invalidity) were also undertaken in connection with new collective agreements that came into effect during the said year. The number of revisions undertaken as a result of the above mentioned exercises amounted to 32,963 with an expenditure of €5,750,654.

Invalidity Pensions

The number of invalidity pension cases assessed and reviewed under the new system during 2008 was 2,145 up to the end of the year. From this number there were 975 new cases, while 1,170 were cases that had to be reviewed by the medical board.

Type of Benefit	Number of Pensioners		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Retirement Pension	9,159	9,297	138
Increased Retirement Pension	2,321	2,146	(-) 175
National Minimum Retirement Pension	8,118	8,022	(-) 96
Decreased National Minimum Pension	130	121	(-) 9
Increased National Minimum Ret. Pension	2,489	2,658	169
Two-Thirds Pension	24,765	27,453	2,688
Invalidity Pension	1,619	1,351	(-) 268
Increased Invalidity Pension	312	296	(-) 16
National Minimum Invalidity Pension	7,059	6,640	(-) 419
Decreased National Minimum Pension	24	121	97
Widow's Pension with Service Pension	972	695	(-) 277
National Minimum Widow's Pension	8,488	8,486	(-) 2
Early Survivor's Pension	1,876	1,927	51
Survivor's Pension	4,498	4,806	308
Disablement Pension	361	347	(-) 14
Orphan's Allowance	11	11	0
Total	72,202	74,377	2,175

NON-CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME

The number of persons in receipt of non-contributory age, visually impaired, mentally/severely disabled and carer's pension/allowance paid under the Act increased by 0.03% over the previous year mainly in the old age pension beneficiaries, as shown in the table below:

Type of Pension/Allowance	Beneficiaries		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Old Age	4,885	4,883	(-) 2
Visually Impaired	165	170	5
Mentally/Severely Disabled	2,237	2,261	24
Carer's	229	205	(-) 24
Total	7,516	7,519	3

Assistances

Non-contributory benefits are granted to heads of household who are incapable of work, persons registered as unemployed, to carers of a relative on a full-time basis; to single unmarried parents, to aged persons who could not qualify to a contributory pension, to drug addicts undergoing a rehabilitation programme, to disabled persons, and to persons who suffer from a chronic illness. There are also benefits in kind such as the issue of free medical aid. All these assistances are subject to a means test.

The following table shows the number of households benefiting from non-contributory assistance paid under the Act. There was a marginal deduction in benefits of 1.39% as compared to the previous year.

During 2008, the Division carried out 7,570 financial investigations to determine the eligibility or otherwise to Free Medical Aid (another form of assistance in kind provided for under the Act), of which 7,502 were found to be eligible and were awarded free medical aid accordingly. There were also 490 applications for the waiving off of the Matsec 'O' level exam fees, of which 485 were accepted. During the same period, 27 applications for the waiving of Matsec 'A' level exam fees, of which 21 had been accepted. Furthermore, there were 70 applications for exemption from the payment of social security contributions.

Type of Assistance	Beneficiaries		
	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
Unemployment assistance	5,762	5,416	(-) 346
Social assistance *	10,770	11,246	476
Sickness assistance	14,712	14,332	(-) 380
Milk Grant	149	191	42
Leprosy assistance	57	50	(-) 7
Tuberculosis assistance	20	9	(-) 11
Supplementary allowance	29,789	29,163	(-) 626
Total	61,259	60,407	(-) 852

* Social Assistance means Social Assistance; Social Assistance (Carers); Social Assistance for Single Parents; Drug Addicts Allowance.

Investigations

During the year under review, the Division reviewed 271 cases following the submission of investigation reports carried out by the Benefit Fraud and Investigations Directorate (BFID), out of which 152 cases had their social security benefit entitlement suspended. Further cases of investigations are still under consideration by the Division.

Apart from the cases reviewed following investigations carried out by the BFID or by the Ministry, the Division embarked upon an extensive and intensive exercise on the review of means-tested benefit cases. The objective is to increase the review of such cases to ensure that each case is reviewed at least annually. Although beneficiaries are duty bound to inform the department of any change in their circumstances, and that every effort is made by the Division to obtain as much information as possible to ensure the timely adjustment of benefit entitlements as a result of changes in circumstances, there are still cases where clients fail to report changes of circumstances in time, either through carelessness or abusively.

Therefore during the year, it was decided to increase efforts in this aspect and seven officers were trained specifically to deal with such cases. It is pertinent to point out that the implementation of teleworking within the Division paved the way to attract back a number of experienced officers who were out on parental leave.

In fact, through the work of these officers, during 2008, a substantial amount of benefit payments have been reviewed. Apart from the fact that a number of benefit rates was reduced as a result of such an exercise thereby resulting in substantial cost savings on benefit expenditure, arrears of revenue due to the Division amounting to just over €595,000 has been raised and the Division is now following up these overpayments to collect the monies due. Given the positive results of this exercise, the Division is seeking to strengthen this area during 2009.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIT

The trESS National Conference and National Report

During this year, the International Relations Unit (IRU) organised once again the annual Malta national trESS (training and reporting on European Social Security) Seminar, which was attended by both local and foreign experts in the field of social security. This seminar is conducted in conjunction with the University of Ghent in Belgium and is co-financed by the European Commission. Following this seminar, the IRU compiled the 2008 trESS Annual Malta National Report which was submitted in September 2008.

The Revised European Social Charter Annual Report (Council of Europe)

As a signatory of the European Social Charter and of the recently Revised European Social Charter, Malta was requested to submit a report on the situation of Maltese legislation and practice in relation to selected articles of the Revised European Social Charter. The IRU was entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the submissions to the report among the various stakeholders (line ministries, NGOs) as well as with the

compilation of the submissions related to articles falling within the competence of the SSD. The report was submitted to the Committee in October 2008.

Launch of the Direct Credit System with Canada

In July 2007, the IRU embarked on the project of setting up a Direct Credit system for Maltese pensioners residing in Canada. In so doing, the role of paying agency of the Consulate General in Toronto was eliminated and the responsibility of the administration of the payments was reverted back to the SSD. This project involved liaison with various stakeholders. The project involved the compilation of all the required details from the 700 Maltese pensioners resident in Canada, as well as the consequent preparations required in order to launch the system. On 1 November 2008, the system was officially initiated with the direct credit of retirement pension payments into Canadian bank accounts.

Preparation of a Bilateral Agreement with New Zealand

In view of the considerable number of Maltese citizens who, along the years, moved to New Zealand, Malta is in the process of signing a social security bilateral agreement with this country. In so doing, Maltese persons who contribute both in New Zealand's and in the Maltese social security schemes may, by virtue of this agreement, benefit from both sets of contributions, thus ensuring social justice. The IRU was involved in the design of the agreement following consultation with the SSD senior management, and sought advice from the Attorney General's office. The IRU also identified a set of requirements in order to make the necessary amendments to the IT infrastructure to cater for this new agreement which is expected to enter into force in the beginning of 2009. Furthermore, the IRU engaged in a series of arrangements with New Zealand authorities to seek the best practices to implement such an agreement.

Launch of the Life Certification and Data Exchange System

With the ever increasing number of pensioners paid abroad, it was felt appropriate that a formal system of life certification should be set up in line with the DSS's strategic objectives to prevent fraud, error, and possibly abuse resulting in wasted effort and unnecessary expenses from overpayments. The IRU thus engaged in the task of designing a proper life certification and data exchange system so that every pensioner residing abroad and receiving a pension from Malta will receive a life certificate at least once a year. The IRU was also involved in the design of the forms which will be used in the process. The system will be launched in the beginning of 2009.

Participation in Meetings Abroad

The field of social security has a more concrete scope when seen in a wider perspective. IRU staff members have actively participated in several meetings held abroad, covering a wide spectrum of social security related issues. Thus, through its active participation, the issues and concerns of Malta as a Member State of the EU were voiced. During the year under review, the IRU has concluded successfully its participation in the Administrative Commission on Social Security for Migrant Workers and continued to attend regularly and participate in meetings of the Social Questions Working Party. The main theme of these meetings focused on the necessary measures to be taken by the Administrative Commission when the new EU social security co-ordination regulations enter into force. The IRU also represented Malta in a conference organised by the European Institute on Social Security in Berlin in September 2008 and in the annual Council of Europe meeting held in Madrid in November 2008.

Number of Queries Dealt with by the IRU

During the year under review, the IRU front desk office dealt with almost 5,000 queries received from the general public by letter, fax, in person or mostly by e-mail. Apart from pension claims, the IRU is also responsible for all the benefits which fall under EU social security co-ordination regulations. During 2008,

the IRU received 30 claims from jobseekers coming from other EU Member States who come to Malta to look for employment, whereas four Maltese jobseekers transferred their Maltese unemployment benefits entitlement to other EU Member States. The IRU also continuously provided information to the continuous flow of requests emanating from EU institutions and social security institutions in other Member States, ranging from clients' personal information to requests for contribution records. The IRU continued strengthening its internal IT infrastructure and services in order to process claims and requests more efficiently thus offering a better service to our customers.

Number of New Pension Claims received by the IRU

The incoming claims refer to the pension claims received by Malta from other countries whilst the outgoing claims refer to the number of Maltese residents claiming a foreign pension.

2008	Incoming	Outgoing
EU	152	112
Australia	557	234
Canada	78	131
Total	787	477

APPEALS TO THE UMPIRE

The following table shows how the appeals that were up for one or more hearings during 2008 were dealt with, as compared with figures for 2007.

Appeals	2007	2008
A. No of Appeals for hearing:		
(i) Brought forward from previous year	412	623
(ii) Lodged during the year	$\frac{909}{1,321}$	$\frac{1,065}{1,688}$
B. No. of Appeals settled:		
(i) Decided against appellant	288	410
(ii) Decided in favour of appellant	44	36
(iii) Withdrawn by appellant	353	145
(iv) Cancelled	13	59
(v) Revoked by Division	0	289
(vi) <i>Sine Die</i>	0	5
(vii) Awaiting reply from appellant/Division	$\frac{0}{698}$	$\frac{103}{1,047}$
No. of Appeals still outstanding at end year	623	641

PAYMENTS

During 2008, the DSS had to account for a total expenditure of €630,258,632. Apart from administration and capital expenses, this expenditure related mainly to social security benefits and state contributions.

The following table shows the expenditure on social security benefits payable under the Social Security Act (Cap 318) during 2008. This table comprises the contributory and the non-contributory benefits issued by the department.

Type of Benefit	2007	2008	(+) or (-)
	€	€	€
Pensions in respect of Retirement	262,147,463	293,954,306	31,806,843
Pensions in respect of Invalidity	37,022,895	35,055,203	(-) 1,967,692
Pensions in respect of Widowhood	90,039,709	93,841,427	3,801,718
Pensions in respect of Industrial Injuries	1,887,519	1,591,569	(-) 295,950
Pensions in respect of unemployment	2,323,371	2,318,749	(-) 4,622
Maternity Benefit	1,840,114	2,066,441	226,327
Sickness Benefit	6,227,591	6,446,491	218,900
Orphan's Allowance	40,913	59,638	18,725
Marriage Grant	707,147	700,163	(-) 6,984
Re-Marriage Gratuity	115,942	170,928	54,986
Bonus	28,711,638	32,643,278	3,931,640
Total (i)	431,064,302	468,848,193	37,783,891
Children's Allowance	29,145,080	40,241,871	11,096,791
Disabled Child Allowance	399,809	624,996	225,187
Pensions in respect of Age/Visually Impaired	17,572,786	18,012,915	440,129
Pensions in respect of Disability	8,939,856	9,601,456	661,600
Social Assistance	55,124,007	56,270,592	1,146,585
Medical Assistance	15,732,015	16,053,096	321,081
Bonus	7,793,135	8,806,205	1,013,070
Supplementary Assistance	6,527,438	6,339,308	(-) 188,130
Total (ii)	141,234,126	155,950,439	14,716,313
Grand Total (i) + (ii)	572,298,428	624,798,632	52,500,204

COMPUTERISATION PROGRAMS

Regular meetings were held with officers from the Social Security Division and MITTS Ltd to continue and enhance software of SABS (*Sistema għal Benefiċċji Soċjali*). This enabled the Division to continue and improve its services to the general public. Obviously this is an ongoing process with input from each side. Two major enhancements were carried out successfully. These were the software enhancement which enabled the Division to issue the children's allowance for all at the fixed rate and also the provision to deduct the sum of €466 from the amount of service pension which was being calculated for the social security pension entitlement paid to pensioners.

Initial work was also carried out to put on line applications for retirement pensions for those clients who are in possession of an e-ID.

CUSTOMER CARE AND DISTRICT OFFICES

There are 24 district offices in Malta situated in the localities of Balzan, B'Kara, Vittoriosa, Fgura, Hamrun, Luqa, Marsa, Mosta, Msida, Naxxar, Paola, Qormi, Rabat, Sliema, St Paul's Bay, San Ġwann, Siggiewi, Valletta, Żabbar, Żebbuġ, Żejtun, and Żurrieq. The two offices in Gozo are situated in Victoria and Nadur. The district office in Vittoriosa still forms part of ACCESS Complex, a family resource centre in the community comprising Appoġġ Agency, the Social Security Department, the Employment and Training Corporation, a resource centre for disabled persons and the Housing Authority.

On 8 October, the district office of St Paul's Bay moved to a modern building accessible to disabled persons. The office of St Paul's Bay should be forming part of an ACCESS Complex, like that of Vittoriosa, when the other entities start functioning from the premises annexed for a one-stop-shop. On 9 September, the district office of Qormi returned to its former premises in Victory Street, following refurbishment.

Work carried out at district offices mainly comprises financial investigations, the raising of applications for contributory and non-contributory benefits and pensions, and the registration under the Social Security Act of newly-employed workers. Registration of unemployed persons is also done at district offices by means

of the finger-reading machines introduced recently. In Mosta and Vittoriosa, this service is available at the ETC's premises within the same locality.

Training for personnel at district offices is an ongoing process. During the year, the training programme which had started in 2007 continued in Customer Care, SABS system and IT. The aim of this training is to improve our services at district level. In addition, personnel attended other training courses on various topics organised by SDO.

During 2008, District Managers participated on programmes aired on radio and television with the aim of promoting the services rendered by the Department in general and to make the general public more aware of the benefits/assistance emanating from the Social Security Act. Following the positive feedback received from the public in general, it is envisaged to increase the Division's presence in this area in future.

STAFF

During 2008, the staff complement of the Social Security Division decreased by 3.1% when compared to the complement on 31 December 2007, as shown in the following table.

	31.12.2007	31.12.2008
General Service Grades	240	234
Industrial/Messengerial	63	60
IPSL	19	18
Total	322	312

The above figures exclude staff at the Administration Section, Computer Section and the Reconciliation Section which are included in the ministry staff complement. Of the staff referred to in the above table, 66 in the general services grade and three in the industrial/messengerial grade were performing duties at the Social Security Department in Gozo.

JOSEPH CAMILLERI

Director General (Social Security)

Social Policy Sector

Department for Social Welfare Standards

INTRODUCTION

The main thrust for the Department for Social Welfare Standards during 2008 was the development of various standards and accreditation criteria and the consolidation of its Central Authority functions, especially that pertaining to inter-country adoptions. Among the most significant developments one should mention the formulation of the Standards for Residential Child Care and the Codes of Conduct and Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers, the acceptance of the ERDF Aid Scheme for child day care centres and the drafting of the new law setting up the Department as the regulator for social care/welfare services.

LEGAL OFFICE

Regulation of Social Welfare and Care Services Bill

The Legal Office prepared the draft Regulation of Social Welfare and Care Services Bill. The draft was discussed internally and submitted for ministry review and comments in August 2008.

Adoption

The Legal Office proposed amendments to the Adoption Administration Act of 2008 to enable the accreditation of agencies. These amendments are to be presented to the Ministry for its consideration.

In June 2008, a court case was filed by a married couple challenging the constitutionality of civil code provisions (as amended by the Act of 2008). The First Hall, Constitutional Court decided in favour of the applicants. An appeal was instituted which is due to be heard on 19 January 2009.

The Legal Office has also worked on various legal and diplomatic issues arising out of inter-country adoptions with Pakistan and Bulgaria and solutions are being sought especially for pending cases.

A draft Memorandum of Understanding between Malta and the Republic of Slovakia for possible adoptions from that country was reviewed and vetted.

Abduction Cases

Legal input was sought for a number of abduction related cases as outlined below.

- An application for the return of a minor was filed by a Turkish left-behind parent but the Maltese Court of Appeal decided that the minor should remain in Malta with the Maltese mother. The Legal Office worked in conjunction with the Attorney General's Office.
- A new case for abduction under the Hague Convention was commenced by a Maltese left-behind father but proceedings were halted and the application was revoked. The father is once again seeking to open an application with the Malta Central Authority.

- The Legal Office, in conjunction with senior social worker in charge of abduction cases, supervised for the last time access arrangements in the case of a minor whose Slovak father was seeking access to the child in Slovakia.
- Legal Office was also approached by a German father who is seeking to enforce access arrangements for his son. The father will be filing an application for access under the Hague Convention.

Services Directive

The deadline for the completion of all documents and questionnaires requested by the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment was respected and the documents were duly filled in and presented to that Ministry. The Draft Regulatory Bill was scrutinised to check whether it is in line with the Services Directive.

Conferences and Meetings

The legal officer attended the following activities in 2008:

- training seminar on children in cross-border conflicts in Geneva organised by the International Social Service (April);
- a European Judicial Network Conference in Brussels (June);
- a seminar organised by NCPE in Valletta on gender mainstreaming (May).

ASSESSMENT UNIT

Site Visits for Suitability of Premises

Throughout the year, assessors from the Welfare Services Assessment Unit carried out 37 site visits to prospective child day care facilities to assess the suitability of premises. The assessors ensure that the site or the facility has the potential to be developed into a child day care centre and also assist the service providers to comply with the standards.

Provisional Registration

The assessors carried out 53 assessment visits to child day care facilities. 12 of these visits were carried out to new applicants. The rest of the assessments regarded the renewal of provisional registration. Once granted registration, the particulars of these facilities are published on the Ministry for Social Policy's website. Furthermore, the parents sending their children to the registered facilities benefit from tax rebate (Article 14C of the Income Tax Act, Chapter 123 of the Laws of Malta).

Quality Indicators

The assessment team started developing the quality indicators on Standard 5 (Care, Learning and Play) of the National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities. Once finished, the registered child care facilities will be assessed rigorously on this standard.

Consultation Questionnaire

Nearing the end of 2007, the Department for Social Welfare Standards carried out a consultation with parents whose children attended childcare facilities regarding service provision and the National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities. In early 2008, the data collected from this consultation was processed and findings were published. Following this publication, the assessment team planned and organised two information sessions to share the findings with parents and service providers. These sessions were well attended and valid feedback from the participants was gathered.

Fostering Assessment and Accreditation

In 2008, the Department for Social Welfare Standards, as Central Authority, started processing the accreditation of the Fostering Unit within Aġenzija Appoġġ. The groundwork for the criteria for accreditation was carried out by three assessors within the Welfare Assessment Unit. The same team carried out the assessment visits at the Fostering Unit. The Fostering Unit will be given accreditation once the assessment report is completed. The report will be concluded by mid-January 2009.

Criteria for the Accreditation of Adoption Agencies

In 2008, the Department, as Central Authority, assumed responsibility for accrediting Adoption agencies. The assessment team developed the criteria and application for accreditation and is awaiting the formal implementation of the new Adoption Administration Act to commence accreditation.

Assessment of Host Families

Social workers from the DSWS have also continued to conduct home visits to assess families who host Russian children brought to Malta by the International Charity Society. These visits are required in order to assess whether a family is suitable and in a position to host children, and subsequently to provide the Department for Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs with advice for the issue of visa on behalf of the children to be hosted.

Policies and Procedures for Residential Care and Foster Care

The assessment team joined the research Unit of the DSWS to carry out consultations and hold focus group sessions regarding policies and procedures for residential care and foster care.

Unannounced Visits to Child Day Care Centres

The assessment team unit carried out various unannounced visits to child day care facilities to confirm if requirements specified in their last assessment had been carried out.

Follow-up of Complaints

The assessment team followed up 10 complaints made by service users against service provisions. The assessors met with the service providers to discuss the complaints and gave their recommendations for improvement.

Manual of Policies and Procedures for Assessment Unit staff

The Unit started to formulate a manual of policies and procedures to guide the functions of the assessment unit.

Team Building Activity

A team building activity was held in May 2008 for all the Department's employees. Three members from the assessment team planned and organised this activity. It was well attended and very successful.

Review of Care Orders

The Manager and Co-ordinator/Acting Manager of the Welfare Services Assessment Unit assisted the Director by reviewing the requests from Aġenzija Appoġġ for the issuing of care orders. Recommendations for 14 requests for the issue of care orders were presented to the Ministry after review by this Department.

Continued Professional Development and Training

The assessment team attended the following as part of the ongoing continued professional development programme: Effective Presentations; How will the new reform treaty affect the structure and functioning of European Institutions?; Data Protection Training in the Malta Public Service; Managing Meetings; Living Equality.

Research

Throughout the year, the Welfare Services Assessment Unit carried out ongoing research on service provisions which are to be regulated by the Department for Social Welfare Standards.

Staff Issues

The workload of the unit has increased substantially during 2008:

- carrying out assessments of child care facilities;
- formulating quality indicators for child care standards;
- formulating criteria for the accreditation of fostering agencies;
- formulating criteria for the accreditation of adoption agencies;
- assessing the application for the accreditation of fostering agency;
- follow up of complaints;
- site visits;
- playing an active role in consultation processes (Standards in Out-of-home Care and Residential and Fostering Policies and Procedures).

During the last quarter of 2008, a representative from the Department for Social Welfare Standards started working (for a limited number of hours) from Gozo. She has been liaising with a number of local councils to promote the National Standards of Child Day Care.

Travel Abroad

Department officials attended a number of activities abroad during 2008:

- meeting on Children in Cross Border Family Conflicts: The Child-Centred Mediation-Based approach of International Social Service, Geneva, 20-23 April;
- 22nd meeting of the Central Authorities Designated under the Brussels II a Regulation (EJN Meeting), Brussels, 18-19 June;
- 14th Informal Working Meeting of European Central Authorities for Inter-country Adoption, Brno, Czech Republic, 23-26 September;
- 3rd Annual Cambridge Conference on Regulation, Inspection and Improvement, Cambridge, 17-19 November.

Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

Since the role of the Malta Central Authority - as legally established in the Child Abduction and Custody Act (Chapter 410) - is vested in the person of the Director of Family Welfare, (now the Department for Social Welfare Standards), this Department was responsible for dealing with such incoming and outgoing cases requesting either return or access during 2008.

During 2008, a Senior Social Worker was responsible for handling all abduction incoming and outgoing cases for return or access as regards procedural matters. The Department's Legal Officer, together with assistance from the Office of the Attorney General, dealt with new incoming and outgoing cases from a legal point of view and represented the Malta Central Authority in court. The Department's Legal Officer has assumed full responsibility of cases as of the last quarter of 2008.

Clients who sought such service were assisted and supported sometimes in conjunction with their lawyers who, themselves, sought our advice on the best action to pursue vis-à-vis each particular case. However, the final decision for initiating procedures remained solely the responsibility of the clients.

Abduction Cases in 2007/2008

The number of pending child abduction cases as at December 2007 stood at 11. Ten of these cases requested access while the other one requested return. During the year, there were seven new cases and 15 cases were put away. Hence, at the end of December 2008 there were three pending cases in all. Two of these cases are requesting access while one is requesting return.

The foreign Central Authorities involved during 2008 were those of England and Wales, Turkey, Slovakia, Germany, Moldova, Australia, and Ukraine.

RESEARCH AND STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT UNIT (RSDU)

Standards Development

In January, the Draft National Standards of Residential Child Care were translated into English and published in a dual language book. A national conference was held in February in order to inform stakeholders about the role of the DSWS and about the formulation of the standards. During this conference the Draft Standards were launched for public consultation. The Model Policies and Procedures for Out-of-Home Care were also launched at this conference. The conference was a success and was well attended by stakeholders.

The intensive, public consultation process on the Draft National Standards of Residential Child Care was carried out with all relevant stakeholders. This consisted of various events including visits to service providers, meetings with service users, meetings with the families of service users, focus groups, and the distribution of self-administered questionnaires. A detailed overview of the response to the consultation process was presented to the DSWS working group chaired by the RSDU unit leader. The working group revised the standards in the light of the response received and also revised a memorandum about the gaps in the service provision of out-of-home care which is to be presented to the Minister for Social Policy.

Stakeholders in the field of foster care were contacted and consulted on the setting up of a working group to adapt the standards to also include foster care in order to ensure applicability of these standards for all out-of-home care. Ground work on the standards by a small core working group commenced in October and their work was finalised by December and presented to the full working group for final endorsement.

A first draft of a children's version of the standards was also produced by November. This draft was then revised in the light of the work carried out by the Fostering Working Group. Drawings by children living in care were used as part of the design of the book. A Maltese child-friendly translation of the children's version of the standards document was also produced.

Model Policies and Procedures for Out-Of-Home Care

With regard to the draft document for Model Policies and Procedures for Out-of-Home Care, which was jointly launched with the National Standards for Residential Child Care, a thorough consultation process kicked off in June and is planned to end in February 2009. Members of the Research and Standard Development Unit and members of the Assessment Unit took part in co-ordinating this process. The length of this part of the consultation process owes entirely to the voluminous document under review. The consultation has been divided into four stages, each dealing with a section of the document. By the end of each stage, focus groups were held with stakeholders. The turnout was positive and left valuable input. The first three stages were completed by November 2008. Another three focus groups were held outside the DSWS premises (one in Curia and two at Dar tal-Providenza) in order to obtain feedback from

stakeholders who could not attend the focus groups. The last three focus group sessions will be held in January 2009. A questionnaire has also been distributed, for which the deadline is set for January 2009.

Child Day Care Services Consultation Questionnaire

The draft report on the Child Day Care Services consultation questionnaire was finalised by February and the results were to be presented to the stakeholders in information seminars being organised by the Assessment Unit towards the end of 2008.

Estimate of Cost of Extending Services to All Looked-after Children

Research was carried out in order to establish an estimate of how much it would cost to extend the services received by looked-after children who are protected by a care order to all children in care. This was carried out and an estimate of how much this would cost the State on a yearly basis was drawn up.

University Course for Assessors/Inspectors in the Regulation of Care

Contact was established with the Social Work and Social Policy Department of the University of Malta to initiate a joint project for the establishment of a university post graduate diploma course for assessors in the regulation of social care. The University approved of the project and agreed to work with the DSWS to set up such training. Dr Wendy Rose, a UK consultant in the field, was identified as external advisor to the project. Plans were made for a visit by Dr Rose to Malta in October 2008, when meetings were held with the DSWS and the University as well as with other stakeholders and current assessors. Plans were finalised and a small working group, consisting of members of the University Staff and DSWS staff, was set up and held regular meetings in the last quarter of 2008. The head of the RSDU prepared all the documents necessary and started work on an outline of a two-year post graduate University certificate course and has started developing the curriculum for such a course.

Dissemination of the Codes of Conduct and Practice for Social Care

Since the publishing of the Codes of Conduct and Practice for Social Care in February 2008, a co-ordination team has been set up by the RSDU in an effort to disseminate the Codes of Conduct and Practice across the social care field. This process has been divided into three major stages. The first stage involves that of holding training seminars with the managers of these agencies in order to make them familiar with the document. In collaboration with these managers, the next step shall involve delivering lectures to all social service workers, mainly the care workers since they have no statutory body that regulates their profession. The final stage involves disseminating the codes, in various formats, to the service users. So far, both the Codes of Conduct and Practice and the child versions of the codes have been printed. In addition, liaison was made with the managers to start delivering lectures as from February 2009. The Health Division will be closely following the process so as to get an insight into how to conduct regulatory processes. In agreement with the health sector, the homes for the elderly which currently operate within the sector will be included in the dissemination process.

A user-friendly version of the Codes of Conduct and Practice for Social Care Workers was finalised and published.

ERDF and ESF Projects

During this year, an ERDF project has been entrusted to this Department. This scheme aims to improve and enhance existing child care facilities and to spur the establishment of new child care centres, especially at the place of work. It focuses on the provision of quality child care in Malta. This scheme is due to be launched in March 2009.

The Department has also applied for an ESF project dealing with the mapping and training of care workers working within the social and health sectors.

Training

During January and February, members from this Unit attended various courses related to the needs of the Department, mainly Effective Presentation, Registry Services and Managing Meetings, and Negotiating Skills Training.

Manual of Policies and Procedures for Research and Standard Development staff

The Unit formulated a manual of policies and procedures.

ADOPTION UNIT

During the year, the adoption fieldwork continued to be delegated/handed over to Agenzija Appoġġ. All active adoption procedures of those prospective adoptive parents, who had given their written consent to be referred, were referred to the agency. This handover was in line with the change of role of the DSWS from that of a 'Social Work Provider' to that of a 'Regulator'.

NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION PROJECT SELECTION COMMITTEE (NGOPSC)

The Non-Government Organisation Project Selection Committee (NGOPSC) is appointed by the Minister responsible for social policy to advise on the allocation of public funds to non-governmental organisations involved in the delivery of social welfare services in Malta and Gozo. In carrying out its mandate, the NGOPSC is expected to appraise the performance of recipient NGOs during the preceding year, evaluate project proposals and make recommendations to the Minister. The NGOPSC also draws up draft agreements with NGOs and designs the methodology as to how outputs can be ascertained and measured.

The NGOPSC's tasks for 2008 were:

- to make recommendations to the Minister for Social Policy with regard to the proposals for funding presented for 2008;
- to develop the methodology on the Verification of Outputs as determined in the service agreements that are signed with the NGOs receiving funds;
- to verify outputs delivered by NGOs according to the service agreements signed during 2008 between an NGO and the MSOC;
- to ensure that conditions agreed to in the agreements are adhered to;
- to provide advice to the Ministry on NGO funding or related issues.

Considerations

The following four main considerations were taken into account by the NGOPSC when discussing project proposals for 2008:

- NGOs providing a residential service and whose activities are output-based are given priority due to the higher costs involved in maintaining such a service and due to a shortage of local residential welfare facilities.
- Requests by NGOs for funding new projects are always taken into consideration by the NGOPSC as long as the NGO's activities fall within the Committee's inclusion criteria, which are based on the Ministry's National Action Plan on Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- Priority was given to NGOs that are run and operated in-house by the service users themselves.
- The NGOPSC also gave priority to new projects involved in community work.

Selection Process

Since NGOs with salaried staff have inherent recurrent cash flow problems, it was decided to evaluate the proposals earlier than in previous years, so that funds could be distributed early on in the year.

NGOs requesting funds for 2009 were given an information pack in September 2008. In broad terms, the pack included the scope of the fund, terms of reference of the NGOPSC, criteria for selection and the project selection process. It also included the application form for a financial grant, a specimen of the evaluation report form and a specimen of the service agreement format. All NGOs were informed that, wherever possible, evaluation would be output based.

The NGOPSC met three times on 18 January, 16 September, and 9 December 2008.

Visits were also carried out by the Chairperson and Secretary of the NGOPSC to Dar Nazzareth, OASI, ARKA, Dar il-Kaptan, Dar il-Wens, Eden Foundation, Merhba Bik, Don Bosco House, and St Jeanne Antide (Tarxien). These familiarisation visits were very useful in meeting with the persons responsible for the running of these NGOs and in understanding their main concerns and aspirations.

Funds Available for Distribution

Public funds available for distribution to NGOs are allocated under the Recurrent Vote of the Ministry for Social Policy. An allocation of €1,910,000 was available in 2008 under this Vote, representing a 10.9% increase (€209,557.42) in the allocation of funds for NGOs. A further €70,000 was committed to the NGOPSC by the Ministry of Finance to make good for a shortfall that arose due to unforeseen funding to EQUAL Partners.

The NGOPSC received 34 proposals for funding, of which 27 were for ongoing projects and seven were for new initiatives. The total request for funding by these NGOs totalled €2,955,288.77, €975,288.77 over the available budget. Thirty four recommendations were presented to the Minister.

On-site visits

During 2008, 24 on-site visits were made. During these visits, a service audit was carried out. Discussions as to the improvement and other matters were also conducted.

Meetings with NGOs facing Cash Flow Problems

Four meetings with NGOs that are facing financial difficulties were made at CHS. Costings for the purchase of outputs were compiled and compared. Detailed reports on particular NGOs were presented to the Minister, where the cost situation was analysed.

Data Protection

- *Data Protection Seminars:* The Data Protection Officer attended training seminars organised by the OPM Data Protection Unit.
- *Requests to see files:* Two requests to review departmental files were received in 2008. One was self requested while another was made on behalf of a former client.
- *Retention Policy:* The Department for Welfare Standards is presently conducting an analysis of files held by the Department (comprising files used by existing as well as defunct Units) and developing a file retention policy, with the assistance of the Administration Unit.
- *Files held:* The greatest number of files pertains to previous departments that had a social work function. These date from as early as the early 1960s up to 2008 when responsibility for adoption was passed on to

Appoġġ. As recommended by the Data Protection Unit, the National Archives are being consulted for advice.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE UNIT

- The Administrative Office continued to provide the required assistance and services pertaining to the Department's smooth running requirements. These included the Department's accounts, the registry duties, vacation and sick leave records, the Department's inventory, parliamentary questions, waste management, and childcare freephone.
- Childcare Freephone: During the year, this Office received 288 calls, mostly enquiries about childcare services available in Malta.
- The inventory of assets procured by three child day care facilities opened in March 2008 was compiled by the administrative office.
- During January and February, the administrative staff attended various courses related to the needs of the Department, mainly Effective Presentation, Registry Services and Managing Meetings and Negotiating Skills Training. One of the clerical staff also attended training in connection with Data Protection in the Social Welfare Sector.
- Upkeep of Premises: The Administrative Office continued to liaise with the Department for the Elderly for the completion of the upgrade to the electricity supply within the building. This system should provide an energy saving in the region of 7%.
- Retention Policy: The National Archives of Malta are being consulted for the formulation of a retention policy in respect of the Department's social work files dating from 1957. A sample of these files have been photocopied and forwarded to the National Archives Council to determine whether to retain or destroy these files.
- Hosting of Russian orphans: Administrative arrangements for the visits of groups of Russian orphans to Malta continued to be made by this Office.
- Waste Management: The manning of waste produced by the Department has been a continual exercise. Furthermore, the Department began making use of the water reservoir located within its grounds to fill up the ground level and roof top tanks, alternating with the water supplied by the Water Services Corporation (WSC). During December, the water supplied by the WSC was almost halved.

DR KENNETH GRECH
Director (Social Welfare Standards)

Social Policy Sector

Benefit Fraud and Investigation Directorate

The Benefit Fraud and Investigation Directorate which was established late in 2005 continued to strengthen its operations during 2008. During this year, the Directorate continued to focus its resources on investigating all reports of alleged abuse in social security benefits.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

As in the previous year, the Directorate continued to receive reports on alleged social benefit fraud from two main sources, the general public and the Social Security Division. The general public submits mostly anonymous reports that are received by phone, including the freephone (80072345), through e-mails, letters and other media. Staff at the Social Security Division submits a substantial number of Requests for Investigation on the template that has been provided to them by the Directorate. The Directorate also takes the initiative to identify other sources/trends where benefit fraud is suspected. The Directorate regularly monitors closely all financial data that is uploaded on the SABS computer system operated by the Social Security Division. This data which is obtained from the local financial institutions is used to investigate and make recommendations to the Social Security Division to suspend the claims of those beneficiaries of non-contributory means tested benefits soon after their financial means exceed the applicable financial scales. Further investigations are then conducted in those cases where the claimants to such benefits register a sudden substantial increase in their financial assets.

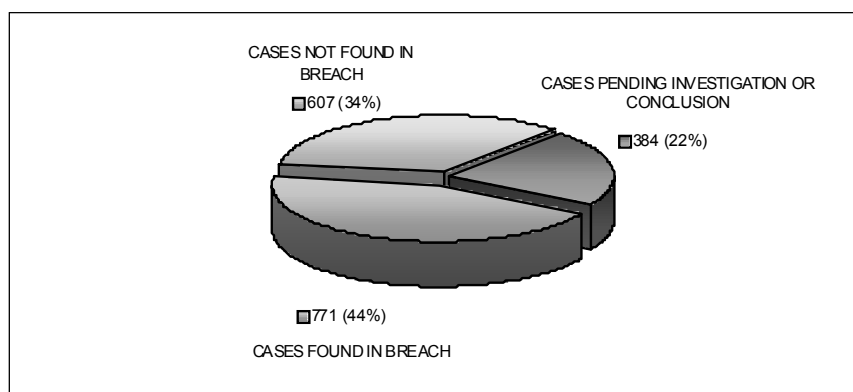
CO-ORDINATION

During the year, the Directorate continued to co-ordinate its operations with a number of government departments/entities and with the private sector in order to obtain information that is considered critical for the conclusion of its investigations.

OPERATIONS

During 2008, the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Directorate conducted, through its Inspectorate, 2,196 on-site inspections, an increase of 414 inspections or 23.23% over the previous year. The operations of the CVA system in Valletta continued to affect negatively the number of on-the-spot investigations that the Directorate can undertake at very short notice. The CVA has also substantially increased the vulnerability of staff members to physical risks.

From inspections and from other investigations conducted by the Directorate, 1,583 cases were successfully concluded. The Directorate recommended to the Social Security Division that 976 cases, which were found to be in breach of the provisions of the Social Security Act be suspended and that any resulting overpayments be collected. By the end of the year, the Directorate had received feedback from the Social Security Division on 771 cases. Action on these cases resulted in the suspension of a total of 960 social benefits as a number of these cases had more than one benefit in payment, as specified in the table below. Feedback from the Social Security Division on the remaining 205 cases, which involve 282 social benefits, was still pending by the end of the year. Furthermore, by the end of the year, the Directorate was still awaiting feedback on 418 cases of households that were identified as having failed to notify the Social Security Division of changes in circumstances related to the recognition of children who were originally registered as having an unknown father. The estimated annual savings for 2008, collated from the feedback received from the Social Security Division, totalled €3,491,501.



Suspended Benefits	
Invalidity Pension	3
Supplementary Allowance	39
Child Allowance	79
Sickness Assistance	286
Social Assistance	203
Unemployment Assistance	116
Age Pension	121
Social Assistance – Single Unmarried Parent	65
Social Assistance Carers	12
Carer's Pension	3
Sickness Benefit	3
Injury Benefit	1
Milk Grant	1
Disability Pension (non-contributory)	8
Special Unemployment Benefit	20
Total	960

CONCLUSION

During the period 2006-2008, the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Directorate concluded investigations on 3,785 cases of alleged social benefit fraud and it is estimated that the combined operations of the Directorate resulted in an estimated €10,481,022 in savings. During the same period, the Directorate, acting on the experience gained during its operations, recommended several amendments to the Social Security Act (Cap 318). The Directorate also identified and brought to the attention of the competent authorities data on non-performing overpayments that are recorded on the SABS system.

During the last quarter of 2008, the Directorate issued a fresh call for applications for the engagement of additional Benefit Fraud and Investigation Inspectors and concluded its selection process. This approved increase in human resources is expected to further strengthen the operations of the Directorate in its fight against abuse in social benefits when the new Inspectors join the Directorate early next year.

RAYMOND MUSCAT
Director (Benefit Fraud & Investigation)

Social Policy Sector

Department of Industrial & Employment Relations

Mission Statement

To protect the interests of workers holding employment contracts while, in a spirit of social partnership, actively promoting a healthy relationship, and to contribute towards stable industrial relations.

Functions

The principal functions of the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) are:

- providing effective machinery for the establishment of standard conditions of employment, in consultation with the social partners, and their eventual promulgation as legal instruments;
- providing the necessary monitoring and enforcement of employment conditions as established by law;
- regulating employment contracts in an equitable manner so as to ensure that rights and obligations pertaining to each party in the contract are observed;
- protecting workers whose employment relationship has been terminated by an employer;
- eliminating discriminatory practices;
- providing support services to the Industrial Tribunal, Wages Council, National Employment Authority, Guarantee Fund Administration Board, and Employment Relations Board;
- providing effective mediation and conciliation in order to reduce industrial actions and trade disputes;
- promoting good relationship between employers' and workers' representatives.

Department Structure

The Department operates within the framework of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act, Cap 452 of the Laws of Malta.

The DIER is composed of the following Units:

- *Director's Office*: responsible for the strategic overview of the Department's operations; proper functioning of the three divisions of the Department; registration of trade unions; provision of the machinery for the voluntary settlement of trade disputes in terms of the Act and promoting such settlement; preparation of draft employment legislation.
- *International Affairs and Research Branch*: allowing the Department to fulfil its role as the national focal point on issues relating to industrial and employment relations. This Branch is divided into two sections – International Relations and Research. The International Relations Section's main task is to co-ordinate closely with local associations or organisations which have a role to fulfil in protecting the interests of parties engaged under an employment contract; and maintaining contacts at the technical level with governments and other international bodies including the EU and ILO. The Research Section is responsible for library and archives, labour research and registration of trade unions.
- *Enforcement and Employment Agencies Branch*: carrying out the core inspection functions of the Department. This section is staffed by inspectors working in two sections - Terminations and Inspectorate. The Terminations Section processes queries and investigates complaints of clients, primarily related to employees whose employment has been terminated, whether of their own accord or by the employer and is also responsible for referral of cases to the Law Courts. The Inspectorate Section is responsible for monitoring conditions of employment and processing complaints of workers who are still in employment. This involves an ongoing programme of inspections to target particular sectors, or

to investigate specific complaints. Complaints can be received directly from the person concerned, through correspondence or e-mail or even anonymously.

- *Administrative Branch*: providing administrative support services to the Department and to the Industrial Tribunal. Such services entail the administration of the department's budget, revenue and expenditure, issuance and adjustment of salaries, issuance of honoraria payments to ERB members and Tribunal chairpersons, administration of PMPs, progressions, allowances, the departmental inventory, supplies' stores etc. During 2008, a Green Leader was also appointed to oversee environmental issues and promote eco-friendly procedures within the DIER. Besides other measures, eco-friendly initiatives undertaken included the further use of energy-saving lighting, separation within offices of waste material, recycling of paper etc.

Human Resource Issues

During 2008, the DIER experienced a substantial reduction in its workforce in view of resignations, retirements or transfers to other departments by ten officers. Three of these have been replaced and requests have been made for the provision of other personnel in replacement.

During the period under review, members of staff attended various courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation. These included Information Technology, Employment & Social Policy, and Training for Messengers courses.

Achievements - Employment Relations

Inspectorate Section

The Inspectorate Section carried out 1,304 inspections throughout the year, covering about 35,332 employees, out of whom 3,061 were interviewed.

737 irregularities were observed, issuing 126 claims amounting to €122,809.58. On the other hand, a total of 125 cases were settled whilst 20 unresolved cases were referred for legal action consideration.

Officials in this Section dealt with an average of 25,681 enquiries regarding conditions of employment – both on the phone and through personal visits at the Office. Another 464 e-mails requesting information were received and answered with immediate effect. In most cases, they concerned outstanding dues and other irregularities in connection with contract of employment, and rectification was effected through the Section officers' direct efforts. Other cases were followed up through court action.

The Inspectorate Section also processes Postal Workers Notifications; during 2008, a total of 452 notifications were received.

Terminations Section

Throughout the year, officials in the Enforcement Unit served a total of 357 claims against employers in Malta covering 365 claimants. The total amount for such claims amounted to €593,185.041. Of these, 149 cases amounting to €143,589.13 were amicably settled out of Court, as a result of the direct efforts of the officers of the Enforcement Section. €125,647.82 were collected through Court intervention.

266 requests were made to the police for prosecution. Court hearings in Malta totalled 414 cases. Five appeals against Court judgements were made throughout 2008.

Employment Agencies

The number of licensed employment agencies at the end of December 2008 was 52. During the period under review, 49 employment agencies renewed their licence. Three new employment agencies were granted a licence to operate as such while two employment agencies had their licence withdrawn.

The total amount received as licence fees amounted to €18,169.32. The Section also vetted 258 advertisements placed by the licensed employment agencies in the local press as job vacancies.

Employment Relations Board

The Employment and Industrial Relations Act provides for the setting up of the Employment Relations Board. During 2008, the Board held six meetings and discussed various issues relating to employment and labour conditions such as part-time work, fixed-term work, equal treatment in employment and telework.

During these board meetings, various draft legal notices, prepared by the Department's officers and forwarded to the Board by the Minister responsible for industrial and employment relations, were also discussed and forwarded to the Minister for his consideration.

Following this consultation process, the following seven legal notices were published:

- LN 137 of 2008 – Equal Treatment in Employment (Amendment) Regulations, 2008
- LN 165 of 2008 – Employee Involvement (Cross-Border Mergers of limited Liability Companies) Regulations, 2008
- LN 239 of 2008 – Contracts of Service for a Fixed Term (Amendment) Regulations, 2008
- LN 240 of 2008 – Part-time Employees (Amendment) Regulations, 2008
- LN 312 of 2008 – Telework National Standard Order, 2008
- LN 339 of 2008 – National Minimum Wage National Standard Order, 2008
- LN 340 of 2008 – Wage Increase (Employees) National Standard Order, 2008.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Conciliations and the Settlement of Trade Disputes

The Department always strives to take an increasingly more proactive approach towards the settlement of trade disputes to the mutual satisfaction of both the enterprise and the union involved. This mediation in the field of industrial unrest has largely contributed towards an increasingly stable industrial climate, avoiding strikes and other costly forms of litigation. The Department intervened on 62 occasions throughout the year. Agreement was successfully reached in 54 cases while such agreement failed to be reached in seven cases. Another case was referred to the Industrial Tribunal.

Industrial Tribunal

The Industrial Tribunal, which is an independent tribunal set up in terms of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act, hears and decides trade disputes referred to it by the Minister responsible for employment and industrial relations, at the request of either one, or both, of the parties involved in a dispute. It also hears cases of alleged unfair dismissal, discrimination, harassment and different remuneration for work of equal value. Sessions of the Industrial Tribunal are held at the Courts of Law.

The Department provides administrative support services for the Industrial Tribunal, to ensure its proper functioning.

Throughout 2008, 84 new cases of alleged unfair dismissals and five other cases of alleged discrimination/harassment/victimisation were received. Four cases of trade disputes were also introduced.

The Industrial Tribunal disposed of 57 cases of alleged unfair dismissals, one case of alleged discrimination/harassment/victimisation, and one case referring to a trade dispute. The Industrial Tribunal also disposed of two cases introduced in terms of other provisions of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act.

There were 529 pending cases on 31 December 2008, of which 478 refer to alleged unfair dismissal.

Industrial Actions

During the year, four strikes were ordered involving 1,522 workers. Strike action resulted in around 1,771 man-days being lost.

Collective Agreements

Article 5(2) of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act states that where conditions of employment are prescribed in a collective agreement, the employer is obliged to send to the Director of Industrial and Employment Relations an authenticated copy of said agreement, within fifteen days of signing. In accordance with this article, the following agreements between industrial establishments and trade unions were registered at the Department during 2008:

New Collective Agreements	14
Renewals/Extensions	24
Side Agreements/Addendums	3
Amendments	Nil

Eighteen verification exercises for union recognition were carried, out of which 11 were conducted through interviews by inspectors.

Registrar of Trade Unions

On 1 January, there were 30 registered trade unions and 17 employers' associations.

One trade union – The Middle Sea Insurance Staff Union – was cancelled in July. On the other hand, the *Ghaqda Xufigera tal-Coaches* and the Union Technical and Clerical (UTAC) MEPA applied for registration as trade unions, and were as such recognised by the Registrar. No new employers' associations were created.

At the end of the year, the Register of Trade Unions was composed of 31 trade unions and 17 employers' associations.

Other Activities

Twinning Light Project

During 2008, the DIER was involved in the implementation of a seven-month Twinning Light project in partnership with the Ministry for Education, Training and Employment of the Regional Government Authority of Tuscany (Tuscan Region), Italy. This project enabled DIER personnel to receive training on various areas of EU Labour Law and to learn from the Twinning partners' experience on practical problems in implementing EU Directives. As a result, the DIER is now in a better position to implement, monitor and enforce the transposed EU labour legislation while having its conciliation (industrial relations) function strengthened.

The project was mainly divided into three parts:

- *In-House Training*, comprising a series of training sessions held at the DIER premises exclusively for DIER staff and delivered by selected experts from the Region of Tuscany. The following topics were discussed: Posted Workers Directive; European Company, Information and Consultation and European Works Council Directives; Protection of Employees from Insolvency Directive; Disputes Resolution Mechanisms; Temporary Workers and Employment Agencies; Strategic Goals and administrative experience of competent authorities; Equal Treatment; Union Recognition/Registration .
- *Study Visits*. Such visits served to complement the in-house training; officers from the Department visited counterpart offices in the Tuscany Region with the aim of gaining first hand experience on practice and problems encountered in the implementation of various directives. The topics covered during these visits were identical to those covered in the in-house training.
- *Seminars*, comprising seven sessions open to DIER staff and all stakeholders involved in employment and industrial relations. Such seminars, each organised over a three-day period, enabled key players within the employment and industrial relations field to gain more insight on novel aspects of EU labour legislation. The following topics were discussed during these seminars: Work-life Balance (Equal Treatment and Maternity); Discrimination (Part-Time, Fixed Term, Posting of Workers); Employee Protection (Collective Redundancies, Transfer of Business, Protection from Insolvency); Information (European Works Council, SE Directive, Information and Consultation); Increasing awareness of EU Labour Legislation (Impact of EU Labour Law on national law); Increasing awareness of EU Labour Legislation (Impact of ECJ rulings on interpretation of EU Directives); Pitfalls and Problems in Collective Bargaining .

The programme also served to provide knowledge for two DIER officials in the dynamics of setting up and managing a Research Unit. This Unit is now functioning within the DIER and has responsibility for supplying the required data for decision making. Two officers from the DIER attended a study visit in Tuscany for this purpose.

Participation in Seminars, Conferences and Working Party Meetings Abroad

Department officials attended several conferences organised by various bodies, including the European Union and the International Labour Organisation, as follows:

- Between 28 May and 13 June, the Director led a tripartite delegation at the 97th Session of the ILO Conference in Geneva. The Minister for Social Policy attended and addressed this Conference. The Maltese delegation included a number of high-ranking officials from trade unions and employers' associations. The issues considered at this conference included discussions on skills for improved productivity, employment growth and development and the strengthening of the ILO capacity to assist its member states' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalisation.
- A department official attended an EU Member States expert meeting in Brussels dedicated to prepare for the International Labour Conference as regards EU co-ordination meetings, EU member states' common positions on issues being discussed at the conference etc.
- The DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission organised two meetings for Directors General responsible for Industrial Relations. These two meetings were held in Paris and Prague and were attended by the Director. During these meetings participants shared information on recent developments regarding industrial relations in Member States. Discussions were also held on the review of Council Directive 2001/86/EC supplementing the Statute for a European company with regard to the involvement of employees and on the role of transnational company agreements in the context of increasing international integration.
- The Director accompanied the Minister for Social Policy at an Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) meeting in Luxembourg where employment, social affairs, and health items were discussed.

- The Director accompanied the Parliamentary Secretary for Health for the EPSCO meeting in Brussels where amongst other issues, possible amendments to the Working Time Directive were discussed. Other issues discussed were the recasting of the European Works Council Directive and the Proposal for a directive on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breast-feeding.
- The Director, as the Maltese Government member on the Governing Board of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions attended the 79th Meeting of the Governing Board, which was held in Dublin.
- An official attended an Expert Meeting concerning Directive 2001/86/EC (Employees' Involvement in the European Company). During this meeting, the Commission gave presentations on the implementation of this Directive and on relevant facts and data concerning the European Companies established so far. On the other hand, participants commented on the implementation of the Directive in their respective Member States and discussed the Member States' replies to the questionnaire sent by the Commission.
- An official attended an Expert Meeting concerning the application of Directive 96/71/EC on the Posting of Workers in the Framework of the Provision of Services, organised by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. During this meeting, the Commission recommendation on enhanced administrative co-operation between the Member States' Competent Authorities was discussed.
- Two officials attended two meetings of the High-Level Group of National Representatives on Corporate Social Responsibility. During these meetings, participants were updated by the Commission on developments regarding CSR and exchanges between participants regarding CSR national policies were affected.
- An official attended a meeting of National Experts on the use of notification data in the Collective Redundancies Directive organised by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. During this meeting, the Foundation gave a presentation of its understanding of the potential of the notification data in various Member States. Participants gave feedback on this presentation and discussed the situation in Member States. Participants also discussed the setting up of reporting procedures.
- In addition, officials from the DIER attended various conferences/seminars both locally and abroad.

Guarantee Fund Administration Board

The Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452) and the Guarantee Fund Regulations (LN 432 of 2002, as amended by LN 444 of 2004 and 413 of 2005), provide for the setting up of the Guarantee Fund Administration Board. This Board is chaired by the Director (Industrial and Employment Relations) and includes representatives of employees and employers appointed on the Employment Relations Board, a member nominated by the Minister of Finance, the Chairperson of the Employment and Training Corporation and a person appointed by the Minister who shall be a member of the legal profession. The Guarantee Fund is endowed with the sum to be utilised, at the Administration Board's discretion, to guarantee payment of valid claims for employees' outstanding wages when the Administration Board is satisfied that the employer has become insolvent. To date, the balance of this fund stands at € 546,527.37

During 2008, no claims were received by the Board. In accordance to Regulation 6 (7) of the Guarantee Fund Regulations, an audit exercise by a qualified auditor was undertaken to review the Board's financial statements.

Newsletter

During 2008, a special edition of the newsletter *I Review* was published. This issue, apart from including routine articles written by DIER staff on matters related to industrial and employment relations, also

included details on the themes that were going to be discussed in seminars organised for DIER staff and stakeholders as part of the Twinning Light project with the Tuscany Region of Italy.

Self Employed (Loan) Scheme

The process of recouping funds from persons who had applied for, and benefited from, the Self Employed Loan Scheme was continued. During the year, €7,159.23 were recovered. Warning letters are regularly issued to defaulters who fall back on their payment of instalments of the said loan scheme.

DR NOEL VELLA

Director (Industrial & Employment Relations)

**Ministry of Finance,
the Economy and Investment**



Strategy and Operations Support Office

BACKGROUND

The overall purpose of the Strategy and Operations Support Office is to maintain a dedicated capability for the planning and execution of long-term and strategic programmes; and projects arising from the Business and Financial Plans of the Ministry. These programmes and projects generally have a service-wide application but may include initiatives limited to the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment. The major works undertaken by the Strategy and Operations Support Office in the year under review were related to five specific areas: (a) accounting practices; (b) organisational reforms; (c) procurement practices; (d) EU practices; and (e) international institution co-ordination.

ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

The changeover to the accrual accounting methodology is continuing. The Strategy and Operations Support Office works in close collaboration with the Treasury Department to implement best accounting practices. The focus has been to increase the quality of the accrual accounting data being compiled by the various ministries and their respective departments. This has been possible through the strengthening of the Accrual Accounting Methodology Compliance Unit within the Treasury Department; continuing the accounting training programme; and the regular and continuous revision of the accounting standards and guidelines.

The practice of issuing Accrual Accounting Financial Statements for internal appraisal has continued on a yearly basis since 2003. However, the quality of these statements has been continuously increasing as accrual accounting disciplines have been adopted by the respective departments. Furthermore, Treasury Department staff has made enormous effort to guide the various departments and monitor the accounting data quality. The long term accounting training course leading to “A” standard, which commenced in 2006, was completed. About 100 participants successfully completed the training programme, with about 5% successfully sitting for the “A” Level Accounting examination.

A Project Board, chaired by the Accountant General was established in 2008 with the objective of replacing the current Departmental Accounting System (DAS) which is viewed as being obsolete. The technical and business needs tender specifications which were completed some time ago are being revised by a Project Board sub-committee. Once the new accounting system is procured, the accrual accounting methodology may take a more prominent role in the financial management of Government.

Furthermore, a preliminary revision of the Financial Administration and Audit Act, 1962 (Cap. 174) and its respective regulations has been conducted. Currently, a working group has been established within the Treasury Department to examine the preliminary reviewed Financial Administration and Audit Act and draft the Public Finance Management Act to replace the current legislation. The Public Finance Management Act is to regulate financial management in Government; to ensure the effective and efficient management of all assets and liabilities, cash flow, and revenue and expenditure of the Government; to define responsibilities of officers entrusted with the financial management of Government; and to provide for other matters related with or incidental to the purposes aforesaid.

Accrual accounting will have a major impact on the way the internal financial business of Government will be conducted, particularly in areas of cash flow management, asset management and the management of

debtors and creditors. This financial reform process will cross Ministerial and Departmental organisational boundaries and have a major influence on the Departmental processes related to their day-to-day financial administration. Accrual accounting will provide more meaningful financial information that will enhance the quality of the Government's financial decision-making process. It will provide an in-depth understanding of the overall financial position of the Government, providing a sound basis for long term financial planning, in such areas as asset replacement planning, management of debtors and creditors and cash flow predictions.

ORGANISATIONAL REFORMS

An extensive implementation strategy has been defined with the aim of merging the revenue earning departments. This consists of merging the Inland Revenue, Customs, Tax Compliance Unit and the VAT Department as a single united entity. The formulated strategy is the result of close collaboration of the relevant departments involved and extensive research of a number of tax administrations in European and non-European countries. The defined strategy has been discussed internally and accepted in principle. However, the decision whether to proceed with the recommendations is still under consideration.

PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

An eProcurement Project Taskforce, chaired by the Director General (Contracts), has been established to provide the appropriate project strategic direction and implement the strategy that has been defined for the Contracts Department in line with EC Communication document, COM 2004/841/EC, entitled *Action plan for the implementation of the legal framework for electronic public procurement*.

The strategy for the implementation of eProcurement in the public sector takes a corporate view of Government. The objective is to introduce eProcurement services that include ePublication, eTendering, eAuction, eCatalogues, eOrdering, eInvoicing, and ePayments. Hence, there is the possibility that most of the paper work related to the procurement function may be eliminated reducing the cost and time required to process procurement transactions. This project has an impact on the public sector as the purchaser and the private sector as the prospective supplier. Special emphasis is being given to promoting the participation of SMEs in the procurement process. The cost-benefit analysis suggests that the Government may make substantial savings through the introduction of eProcurement. The saving will be the result of aggregating procurement across Government and through extensive business process reengineering.

EU PRACTICES

The Strategy and Operations Support Office co-ordinates all activities related to the EU Own Resources to ensure that all queries and communication with the EU Commission related to Malta's financial contribution to the EU are synchronised and any information given is consistent and timely. A task force has been established consisting of members from the VAT Department, Customs Division, Economic Planning Division, NSO, EU Paying Authority, and the Budget Office. Regular internal meetings are held to discuss issues and outstanding EU Commission matters. These internal meetings facilitate the preparatory work for three interrelated tasks:

- computation of financial forecasts regarding VAT and GNI to be provided to the EU Commission;
- consolidation of information in preparation for attending working group meetings, particularly those related to reforms in how EU Member States are to calculate their specific contribution; and
- preparing for EU Audit Missions related to VAT, GNI and Traditional Own Resources.

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION CO-ORDINATION

The Strategy and Operations Support Office co-ordinates all activities related to resolutions and meetings that need to be attended at the World Bank, IMF, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Finance Corporation, European Bank for

Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, and European Council Development Bank. Other international institutions that are actively monitored include the European Group for Public Policy (EGPA), and the UN Trade and Development workgroup on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR).

During 2008 the Director General (Strategy and Operations Support) participated in a joint research paper entitled: *Comparing public service motivation within various Europe countries: do institutional environments make a difference?* The countries participating in this joint research paper included: Austria, Belgium, Italy, Malta, Netherlands and Switzerland. The findings of the research paper are anticipated to be published in an accredited international journal in 2009.

In 2008 the Director General (Strategy and Operations Support) participated in a book publication entitled: *Handbook of Research on Data Mining in Public and Private Sectors: Organizational and Government Applications*. This handbook is edited by Dr Antti Syväjärvi, Professor, Department of Social Science Research, University of Lapland, Finland and Dr Jari Stenvall, Professor Department of Management Studies, University of Tampere, Finland and published by IGI Global. The contribution by the Director General (Strategy and Operations Support) is a chapter entitled: *Data Mining and the Project Management Environment*. This publication is scheduled for 2009.

CONCLUSION

The Strategy and Operations Support Office will proactively seek participation in projects that support the strategic direction of the Government in general and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment in particular. The Strategy and Operations Support Office is committed to utilising as much as possible the internal resources of Government such as, MITTS, MEU, SDO, Treasury Department and other relevant departments to minimise the implementation expenditure of the various initiatives undertaken. Furthermore, the level of project participation will be commensurate with the available resources and the priorities established by the Ministry.

EMANUEL CAMILLERI

Director General (Strategy and Operations Support)

Tax, Pay and Social Welfare Policy Directorate

BACKGROUND

The Tax, Pay and Social Welfare Policy Directorate was set up in November 2006 to contribute to enhanced economic and financial well-being by ensuring that professional standards of financial management apply across Government and by promoting tax, welfare and expenditure policies that improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of public service delivery and make for a tax and benefit system that is fair and equitable.

ASSIGNMENTS UNDERTAKEN

Taxation

A number of policy issues, both domestic as well as those which form part of our international obligations are referred to this Directorate by the VAT, Inland Revenue and Customs Departments for direction and formulation. Within this context, consultations with the impacted sectors of the business community have taken place to obtain feedback so as to be able to formulate policy proposals which incorporate such views.

Fiscal Instruments

The Directorate works closely with other departments/entities both within the Ministry and across Government to assist in the establishing of rates which are not solely aimed at generating revenue but also take into consideration the prevailing social and commercial realities. In this context, it has recommended the adjustment of a number of excise duty rates such as fuels, alcohol and water.

Infringement Proceedings

The Directorate contributed towards the closure of a number of infringement proceedings instituted by the Commission. Following close co-ordination between the Directorate and the line departments, TAXUD has decided to close four Maltese taxation cases which it had previously been investigating. One related to the confiscation of a van, another related to VAT levied on motor vehicle registration tax while the other two related to the treatment of interest on capital and capital gains. The Directorate is also co-ordinating the effort to address another infringement relating to motor vehicle registration.

Motor Vehicle Tax Reform

The motor vehicle registration and annual circulating tax reform is an issue which has taken up a substantial part of the Directorate's resources. A number of diverse and conflicting issues needed to be considered including the existing fleet of vehicles, the new registrations, the concerns of the dealers and importers, environmental issues and obviously the impact on government revenue brought about by any new proposal. The Directorate has contributed towards the conclusion of the drafting of a Bill entitled Motor Vehicles Registration and Licensing Act which will come into effect on the 1 January 2009. This has involved the holding of continuous meetings, both internally within the Ministry as well as with MITC, MEPA, the legal advisors and the impacted stakeholders.

Committees

The Directorate is represented in a number of committees and working groups within Government. The most important being:

- the Joint Negotiating Team which addresses issues relating to public service conditions, pay and allowances;
- the Collective Bargaining process with public sector entities;
- Projects Selection Committee within OPM that has the function to adjudicate proposed ERDF projects for eligibility for EU funds.

Budget

While the Budget Office's role is to balance Government revenue and expenditure on a macro level according to projected levels, this Directorate's role complements this process by assessing and costing individual micro measures, some of which are put forward by the public in the pre-budget process while others are directly referred by the Ministry.

Social Welfare

Evaluation of different policy proposals takes places on an ongoing basis.

Financial Policy

The worldwide financial turmoil has brought about a surge of regulatory activity in this area in the form of a substantial number of policy proposals and communications by the Commission through the Financial Services Committee.

IMAN SCHEMBRI

Director (Tax, Pay and Social Welfare Policy)

Financial Policy Development and Analysis Directorate

VEHICLE REGISTRATION TAX

It is estimated that during 2008, revenue from this tax amounted to €53 million. Most of the Financial Policy Development and Analysis (FPDA) Directorate's efforts were dedicated to the reform of the vehicle registration tax, including a technical proposal whereby M1 vehicles entering into Malta would be taxed on the basis of their carbon dioxide emissions, particulate matter, length and value. Several meetings were held with the Malta Transport Authority, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, the Malta Standards Authority, the Permanent Representation in Brussels, the Association of Car Importers (ACIM), the Chamber for Small and Medium sized Enterprises (GRTU), the Used Vehicles Importers Association (UVIA) and other associations. The proposal included also the reform of the annual licence, this being replaced by an annual circulation licence, which factors in the carbon dioxide emissions and age of a vehicle. Also, all M1 vehicles which had been registered until 31 December 2008 under the old licensing system were migrated to the new system, the annual circulation licence being based on engine capacity and age.

The first phase of the reform also included motorcycles, where the registration tax is calculated on the basis of a motorcycle's engine capacity and invoice value.

A proposal regarding the valuation of imported used M1 vehicles and motorcycles was made, aimed at addressing a number of infringements which had been raised by the European Commission. Agreement was also reached with CAP (UK), whereby a representative sample of models collected locally is inferred on the CAP's register, enabling Government to produce an estimated market invoice value for each used car entering into Malta. The valuations are accessible through the portal www.ereg.gov.mt.

A number of *ad hoc* transitional arrangements had to be catered for, including the lifting of the minimum tax for used cars imported from non-EU and EEA countries prior to budget day.

Work on enhancing the methodology on how valuations are calculated will continue during 2009. It is expected that, during 2009, most of this Directorate's effort will be dedicated to consolidating the work that was carried out during 2008 and to embark also on the reform of the registration tax for commercial vehicles.

FINANCIAL POLICY

Policy Areas

A review of all standing financial regulations and circulars was carried out and a number of priority areas including travel, transport, telephony, utilities and hospitality were earmarked. This activity will underpin the financial management framework, promoting efficient, effective and sustainable policies and procedures that best reflect practices and provide for appropriate reporting mechanisms on government financial data.

In this regard, this Directorate was also appointed to represent the Financial Policy and Management Division on a working group which was set up with terms of reference to draft the Public Finance Management Act that will replace the Financial Administration and Audit Act and General Financial

Regulations. Members of the working group include the Budget Office, Treasury, National Audit Office and the Internal Audit and Investigations Directorate. A draft is expected to be submitted to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment by the end of 2009.

Transport

Annual expenditure by government ministries and departments amounted to an estimated €11.1 million during 2008. In the course of 2008, this Directorate was assigned the responsibility for transport policy and management. The implementation programme of the Fleet Management System service-wide was continued and it is expected to be completed during 2009. This Office was also assigned the handling of all requests for the purchase, lease or hire of vehicles by government ministries, departments and public sector entities. Work on consolidating the transport policy was embarked upon. This aimed at having a younger, smaller and more efficient fleet of vehicles that will meet the demands of Government. An exercise whereby benchmarks which highlight vehicles that are potentially under-utilised was carried out. A programme which entails better management of the transport fleet, including replacement, transfer, etc was also embarked upon and will be consolidated in the coming future. A programme which aims at reducing the amount of carbon dioxide that is emitted by the government transport fleet was embarked upon and this programme will be consolidated during 2009.

Utilities and Telephony

Annual expenditure by ministries and departments amounts to an estimated €20.1 million hence the need to consolidate expenditure in this area. Benchmarks were established under an initiative whereby government ministries and departments contribute towards the planting of trees, with a view towards corporate social responsibility and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Also, discussions with mobile telephone service providers were begun with a view of having service-wide agreements which will provide Government with a better value for money service.

Obesity

The FPDA Directorate was appointed to represent the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment on the Intersectoral Committee to Counteract Obesity (ICCO). The ICCO is responsible for:

- translating measures outlined in the European Charter on counteracting Obesity(2006) into a series of specific sectoral and intersectoral objectives and implementation strategies, within an appropriate timescale and priority ranking as defined in a working plan (action plan);
- ensuring close collaboration and consistency of action regarding food and nutrition as described in The Malta Food and Nutrition Policy (1988);
- making proposals to government on any matters related to its functions;
- reporting regularly to the authorities on progress achieved.

Claims

This directorate was also assigned the responsibility of assessing claims made against Government by third parties. Such claims normally relate to out-of-court settlements which relate to injuries and accidental deaths. Claims against Government amounted to over €2 million during 2008.

Loans

During 2008, this Directorate was also assigned the duty of assessing requests by local councils to enter into agreements for loans to fund projects. Such requests amounted to over €0.5 million during 2008.

School Transport System

Further to a report by the NAO regarding the school transport system, a number of meetings with the Education Division were held, following which a number of recommendations were submitted to the Permanent Secretary, MFEI. The recommendations included both short-term and long-term solutions.

Budgetary Measures

A budgetary measure that was implemented by the FPDA Directorate was the setting up and administration of a grant scheme whereby officially recognised sport associations can benefit from a grant of 15.25% on the capital expenditure incurred on their sport facilities.

Another budgetary measure which this directorate helped in its implementation was the deduction, for income tax purposes, of the membership fee paid by those parents who send their children to recognised sport associations and this deduction being capped to €100.

Both budgetary measures were intended to address the obesity problem of our children.

EGPA 2009 Conference

The Government of Malta will be organising an international conference together with the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) between 2 and 5 September 2009. During 2008, this directorate embarked on the preparations for this conference, including venue, transport, keynote speakers, equipment, accommodation, etc.

It is expected that around 400 delegates, including academics and practitioners, will attend this conference, with the theme *The Public Service: Service Delivery in the Information Age*. Further information is available through the portal www.egpa2009.com.

Pandemic Preparedness

During the course of 2008, this directorate represented the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment on the National Pandemic Preparedness Committee (PPC). This committee was chaired by the Principal Permanent Secretary. The committee is made up of high ranking officials from various ministries as well as a representative from the Opposition. This directorate chaired a sub-committee on costs related to preparedness, these amounting to an estimated €5 million. The PPC will now be integrated with the Civil Protection Council (CPC).

Investment Facility Committee

During 2008, the FPDA directorate began representing Malta as a member on the Investment Facility Committee (European Investment Bank). The Investment Facility (IF) is a revolving fund, i.e. loan amortisation will be re-invested in new operations.

The IF provides various forms of risk sharing financing instruments for investment projects in most sectors of the economy. This includes projects in the commercially run public sector and in the infrastructure sector which are key to the development of the private sector, as well as the financial sector. IF support is provided through: debt finance; guarantees; equity-type financing; and acting as an investor in private equity funds. All projects funded by the IF must be economically, financially, technically and environmentally viable.

HERALD BONNICI

Director (Financial Policy Development and Analysis)

Treasury Division

DEBT MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE

MAIN FUNCTIONS

The Directorate was set up to carry out the key objectives in debt management activity, focused primarily to ensure that:

- the funding requirements for the Central Government borrowing programme (short and long term) can be financed prudently and cost effectively;
- the annual debt servicing costs are met at the lowest possible cost; and
- the development of the domestic financial markets is given the necessary support.

In order to meet the borrowing requirements, to date the Government's policy has been that of relying, almost exclusively, on issuing domestic currency dominated stocks in our domestic market and to avoid raising funds on the international markets. By the integration of Malta into the eurozone and the changeover of the Maltese lira into the euro on 1 January 2008, such events have brought new challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis achieving the above stated objectives.

Furthermore, as part of its cash management activity to cover any short-term revenue shortfalls, Government conducts weekly auctions for the issue of Treasury bills, being *temporary borrowing* usually of 91-day tenor but issues will also include a mix of the 28 day, 273 day and 364 day Treasury bills.

For its loans in foreign currency, the Central Government has to date only tapped international sources, mainly other foreign Governments and international institutions. To date, the Directorate does not borrow for lending activities.

In the course of the year under review, the Directorate initiated a recruitment exercise with a view to build a strong analytical capability with the appropriate technical staff over a medium to long term process to enable it to embark upon the initiatives that have been entrusted to its remit.

Treasury Bills

The issuance of Treasury bills has a dual role. The primary role is to cover the temporary revenue shortfalls of Government and the secondary role to maintain the Bill market.

Treasury bills are offered by public auction on a weekly basis and are issued in denomination of €1,000 with a range of tenors of 28 days, 91 days, 182 days, 273 days and 364 days.

As from 1 April 2007 Treasury bills were dematerialised and were admitted to listing and trading on the Malta Stock Exchange, while the Treasury bill yields started to be computed on Actual/360 days basis.

The maximum amount of outstanding Treasury bills is established by Parliamentary Resolution. In 2002 the maximum amount was set at Lm300 million, equivalent to €698.80 million.

The outstanding balance as at 31 December 2008 was €365,804,000 representing an increase of €10,868,000 over the amount outstanding at end of 2007.

Interest rates paid ranged between a low of 4.1313% for 91 day Bills issued on 22 February 2008 and redeemed on 23 May 2008, and a high of 5.044% for 182 day Bills issued on 20 June 2008 and redeemed on 19 December 2008. Yet the weighted average rate of interest paid on Treasury bills redeemed during 2008, which amounted to €1,018,943,853 in nominal terms, reached 4.482%.

During 2008 Treasury accepted Treasury bills offers amounting to €1,032,627,000 categorised by tenor and the respective amounts of the Bills as listed hereunder:

Tenor	Percentage of Volume	Amount (€) Nominal
28 days	5.79	59,744,000
91 days	58.43	603,390,000
182 days	29.11	300,600,000
273 days	6.67	68,893,000
364 days	0	0

Such interest rates for temporary borrowing are determined by the money market which in turn is influenced by the repo market rates.

Government Bonds

In terms of the 2008 Budget Measures Implementation Act (Act XXXII of 2007) the issuance target of Government Securities (namely, Malta Government Stock) for financial year 2008 was set not to exceed €300 million. The issues of such stocks are applied for the purpose of:

- financing the borrowing requirements,
- re-financing Malta Government Stocks (MGSs) maturing during the year, and
- effecting changes in Central Government debt portfolio as and when required in line with Government's debt management policies.

The Directorate has to service the half-yearly issue of Dividend warrants to existing stockholders.

As in previous years, the Directorate continued to offer advice and provide the necessary service to the heirs of deceased stockholders so that the heirs can have the stocks inherited transferred in their name by a procedure initiated through the heirs' own legal adviser.

During 2008 the Directorate arranged to redeem two MGS issues which matured during the year, representing the sum of €93,175,796 million, and issued fungibility stocks, staggered over three issues, which in total raised the sum of €287,368,600 million, and a placement of two MGS amounting to €6,869,300 million towards the partial settlement of ex-Church property.

The Directorate continued to pursue its current issuance policy with the issues of fungible MGS with a view to continuing to top up the existing larger MGS issues so as to contribute to a further deepening in the liquidity of current benchmark issues.

With a view to maximise the potential benefits of Malta's membership of the eurozone, the Treasury has set up a working group that is made up of officials from the Treasury, the Economic Planning Division, the Central Bank and the Stock Exchange. The role of this working group is to assess the various strategic options available to best achieve the key objectives of debt management particularly in this new scenario for the country. Moreover, as the existing laws and regulations on central government borrowing do not cater for the marketing of government securities issuance to investors on the international market, a legal team was appointed in October 2008 with the purpose of making recommendations as to how Maltese

legislation on debt laws can be improved upon to accommodate, amongst others, the marketing of government securities on the international markets if and when conditions are right.

Another initiative undertaken by the Directorate was the introduction of a combined prospectus which regulates the entire sum on issue when it is offered under two or more different stocks without the respective amount for each stock being specified. The offer price for each issue is announced normally three days in advance of the opening of the applications and the results of the bids by auction are announced within two hours from closing time of auction.

Foreign Loans

These loans are specifically issued to finance capital projects. A total of €7.57 million was repaid according to the repayment schedule resulting in an end-of-year balance of €113.95 million.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS DIRECTORATE

ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS

Accounts Section

The Consolidated Accounts Section of the Directorate is considered to be the executive arm of the Accountant General. The main functions of this Section are to ensure that ministries and departments adopt and maintain uniformity in the accounting system. The Section is guided in this exercise by the Financial Regulations 1966 and the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1962 as well as by circulars issued from time to time to help in the interpretation of financial policy and legislation.

With the publication of Legal Notice 185/2007 in the Government Gazette of 13 July 2007, the responsibility of the Accounting Officer, as defined in the amended financial legislation, was further strengthened. The processing and Vote accounting of transactions effected by ministries and departments continued to be the main function of the Section. These transactions involved accounts belonging to the Consolidated Fund, the Treasury Clearance Fund and other funds and accounts held by Government.

During the year, the Accounts Section processed local payments which were made up as follows:

Batches	Cheques	Value €
11,612	148,292	331,835,959

Reports

Apart from its day-to-day business, the Section also carried out additional assignments during the year including the issue of *ad hoc* reports requested by the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, the National Statistics Office and the Central Bank of Malta. Other reporting, as required by legislation, was also carried out by this Section within the established time-frames. Of particular relevance were the Section 65 Statements, the Annual Financial Report, the monthly Comparative Return of Expenditure and Revenue, and the publication on a quarterly basis of the Consolidated Fund Account.

The Section also carried out other duties relating to the Public Credit, Government Loans and Investments, Investments through MGI, Trust Funds and their related Investments, Warrants and Advances, collected returns from departments on their respective Arrears of Revenue, collected and verified returns on Stores Written off/Cash Losses, and monitored Other Deposit Accounts.

Cash Office

The year 2008 showed the tangible results achieved by the Directorate through a flawless change over to the euro. Cash Office staff were well prepared for the change and handled transactions with no difficulty.

As in previous years, bank reconciliation was undertaken by the Cash Office and the manual process for outstanding transactions from 2002 to 2007 is practically 100% complete. Manual reconciliation for 2008 is 65% complete. Liaison and co-ordination with MITTS and departments was maintained to ensure that the process progressed smoothly.

During 2008 an audit was carried out by staff from the Quality Service Charter Unit to ascertain that the Cash Office was fulfilling the obligations mentioned in the charter document. In most regards the Quality Service Charter Unit's representatives were satisfied with the Section's performance. Recommendations were also put forward to fine tune the document with a view to bringing it more in line with the day-to-day workings and services of the section.

A total of 704 stop payments and 517 Garnishee Orders were handled.

Bank Transactions Unit

The Bank Transactions Unit is responsible for effecting overseas and local payments. The following table illustrates the number of transactions by category effected by the Unit.

Transaction Type	Number	Value €
Debit Advice (Local)*	2,273	1,261,241,411
Debit advice (Foreign)	129	12,019,108
Funds transfers	2,099	56,294,464
Draft	1,016	4,889,418
Letter of Credit	2	43,091
Travel	4,053	3,054,522

* Debit advices issued by salaries and public debt are not included

Verifications Unit

The Verifications Unit was set up in 2008. The main objective of this Unit is to carry out the verification of payments being processed and other payments already processed and paid by government departments, as defined in Legal Notice 185 of 2007, amending the General Financial Regulations. Verification officers are responsible to:

- verify that the incidence of charge is correct;
- verify that the payment will not cause an excess on the provision authorised for the service;
- verify that adequate information has been given on the voucher on the nature of the services rendered or the supplies delivered;
- verify that the certificate has been signed by the proper officer.

The aim of this process is to ensure proper spending of public funds and that all payments are effected according to standing financial regulations.

Batches of Payment Vouchers for Verification

During the year under review, authorised officers within this section carried out verifications on batches containing payment vouchers which were processed for payment during 2007 and 2008 as follows:

Total verified Batches for 2007: 50
Total verified Batches for 2008: 128

A report in respect of the verifications carried out is prepared on a quarterly basis.

Identified Weaknesses

A number of weaknesses were identified during verification including: lack of VAT receipts from suppliers; copies of fuel requisition and issue notes provided instead of the originals; incorrect invoice number on payment voucher; payment vouchers/abstract without authorised signature; incorrect incidence of charge; itemised telephone bills not provided; payments under a factoring agreement not always indicated; and backdated invoices, amongst others.

Furthermore verification officers requested clarifications through the submission of copies of tender documents, contracts, and other approvals from Financial Management & Monitoring Unit and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, as the case may be, in order to confirm adherence to the Financial Regulations.

Whenever a high risk area was encountered, the National Audit Office and the Budget office were informed so that action could be taken.

Travel

As from 2008, the verifications of post-travel documentation on visit abroad have been undertaken by the Verifications Unit.

During 2008 checking of pre-travel documentation was carried out more rigidly and departments instructed, wherever omissions were noted, to abide by established procedures. A system of close co-ordination between Treasury and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment was strengthened ensuring that departments strictly followed regulations and ascertaining that any deviations from such were duly authorised by Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment.

During the year, Treasury continued with the maintenance of the 2005-2008 travel databases and the verification of documents following overseas travel effected in 2008. Provisional figures show that over 3,973 visits abroad have been recorded for 2008, as per following table:

Year	Total Visits Recorded
2005	3,248
2006	3,684
2007	3,863
2008	3,973

EU Funds Management

The role of the EU Funds Management Unit is to ensure the efficient management and control of the EU Funds allocations. The main functions of the unit are:

- to ensure that sound accounting procedures relating to requests for payment are being applied at all administrative levels;
- effect payment after careful verification of the compliance of the invoice with national and European rules;
- record of all payment transactions in *ad hoc* accounts;
- reconcile accounts; and,
- provide substantiating documents to all the relevant stakeholders involved in the EU Funds.

In 2008 the EU Funds falling under the direct responsibility of the Unit comprised of the:

- Transition Facility;
- Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund 2004-2006;
- Community Initiative EQUAL;

- ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund falling under Cohesion Policy 2007-2013;
- External Borders, European Refugee and Return Fund falling under EU Migration Policy 2007-2013;
- European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF);
- EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

During the period under review, the unit transferred 2,342 payments, an average of 195 payments per month. The below table summarises the payments made throughout the year by their respective fund.

	National €	Community €	Total Value €	No. of Payments
Transition Funds	514,512	4,414,974	4,929,486	118
Structural Funds 2004-2006	9,032,635	17,776,762	26,809,397	1,879
Cohesion Fund 2004-2006	4,353,453	7,325,623	11,681,076	61
Community Initiative EQUAL	91,649	226,562	318,211	167
Cohesion Policy 2007-2013	1,720,321	516,005	2,236,326	115
EGF	1,014	746	1,760	2
Total	15,715,584	30,260,672	45,976,256	2,342

Throughout the year preparatory works were carried out to facilitate the payment process of the 2007-2013 Programming Period and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. In view of this, progressive meetings were held with the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division within the Office of the Prime Minister and MITTS in order to enhance the new Structural Funds Database, the system which assists the management of Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 and EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism. In respect of Migration Policy 2007-2013, an *ad hoc* Financial Information System has been internally developed. It is anticipated that tests on the system will be completed by first quarter of 2009.

ACCOUNTING METHODOLOGY AND CONTROL

Accounting Methodology and Compliance Unit

The Accounting Methodology and Compliance Unit is primarily responsible for collecting and checking accrual accounting returns submitted by government departments on a quarterly basis. This Unit has been strengthened with the appointment of a Manager (Financial Accounting) in order to increase the level of accuracy of the information submitted and ensure adherence to the Malta Government Accounting Standards. The primary objective is to obtain an accurate picture of the financial situation of each department when compiling the yearly financial statements under the accrual accounting methodology, which are currently being produced for internal consumption only.

During the year the Unit expanded its functions in preparation for the introduction of a new corporate financial solution across Government as follows:

- *A new Corporate Financial Solution:* The Unit is represented on a Project Board appointed for this purpose which has formulated a vision for a new Corporate Financial System. The way forward has been officially approved and up to the time of writing this report the Project Board was at an advanced stage in the preparation of the business requirements.
- *Accrual Accounting Work Group:* Treasury has been meeting with all Directors Corporate Services in the ministries/departments to scrutinise the accrual based information submitted by the latter during the year. For this reason an Accrual Accounting Work Group (AAWG) has been established consisting of members from Treasury, MITTS, and the Internal Audit & Investigations Directorate. At this forum Directors Corporate Services/Directors Financial Management and other representatives from the respective ministries/departments are called to discuss and scrutinise their accrual based statements. The ultimate objective of the AAWG is to facilitate the way towards business process re-engineering and implementation process of the new financial corporate solution, by identifying key resources from each ministry and department to ensure that these officers are groomed to become leaders and promoters of change within their respective departments.

- *Public Finance Management Act*: The legislative aspect requires the enactment of a Public Finance Management Act to replace the current Financial Administration and Audit Act. This will ensure a sound legislative basis for the management and control of public finance in line with the proposed accounting framework. A Project Board has been appointed for this purpose and is currently reviewing the legislation.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Single European Payment Area (SEPA)

The SEPA is a long term project. A project brief has been prepared and a Project Board has been set up with representatives from Customs, Inland Revenue, VAT, Social Security, Central Bank of Malta, Treasury, MITTS and the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment.

The project work will encompass both the business and IT side. Members representing the VAT, Inland Revenue, Social Security and Customs were informed to initiate discussions with their MITTS representative on the IT aspects and its impact on the business side. Currently, the Central Bank of Malta in collaboration with the Treasury started piloting some payments in SEPA. This testing is on a continuous basis. Staff members of the Treasury have attended training organised by the Institute of Financial Services, MFSA and the Central Bank of Malta.

NOEL CAMILLERI

Director General (Treasury)

Economic Policy Division

BACKGROUND

The Economic Policy Division provides Government with expert advice and assistance in the formulation of economic policy and the management of economic activity, with the aim of attaining Government's overall objectives of economic growth and development, high employment and low inflation. Within this context, attention is devoted towards the achievement of a stable macroeconomic framework, also by attaining an appropriate fiscal policy. Furthermore, efforts are being made to improve the incentive to work and to continue to attract foreign direct investment, to develop the tourism industry, to improve the educational system and the environment, to improve the competitiveness of the domestic economy, to support small and medium sized enterprises, to reduce excess bureaucracy and to support creativity and innovation. Within this context, the Economic Policy Division provides Government with the relevant technical input, so that the implementation of policy measures is done within the framework of Malta's economic developmental goals.

The Division also provides technical advice and assistance to Government on international economic/trade issues. Through its participation in Commission Working Parties and Article 133 formations, the Division monitors and advises on the economic/financial impact of issues and strategies concerning the EU common commercial policy.

Furthermore, the Division assists Government by providing economic analysis of policy issues emanating from Malta's participation in a host of international, regional, bilateral and multilateral institutions. The Division also provides support to other government entities whose area of activity may be affected by EU initiatives with third countries in the area of international trade and investment.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY DIRECTORATE

Budgetary Process

The Economic Policy Division participates in the budgetary process, which is an essential tool in the implementation of Government's economic strategy. As in previous years, the Division provided information on the domestic and international economic situation as well as on the macroeconomic outlook. This information is important in order to ensure that the appropriate economic policy measures are formulated. The Division also contributes to the budgetary process by analyzing the economic and fiscal impact of proposed budgetary measures.

Throughout the year, the Division also provided an important input to the analysis of the fiscal situation and projections within the context of the EU fiscal surveillance mechanism and the obligations of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Furthermore, during 2008, the Division provided input for the macroeconomic section of the Pre-Budget Document 2009 (Together for a Sustainable Future).

EU Economic Policy Co-Ordination

The Division continued to participate actively in the EU economic policy co-ordination processes. In particular, the Division participated in the Economic and Financial Committee (alternates) and the Economic Policy Committee, including in Eurogroup composition. In addition, the Division also provided support for the preparations for the Economic and Financial Committee meetings. The Division also participated in a number of working groups attached to the EPC. In particular, the Division is actively involved in the Working Group on Ageing Populations (AWG) which examines the economic and budgetary consequences of ageing. Moreover, it also participates in other working groups of the EPC namely the Output Gaps Working Group, the Working Group on Energy and Climate Change and the Lisbon Methodology Working Group. It also closely monitors developments in the Labour Market Working Group and the Quality of Public Finances Working Group.

The Economic Policy Division is also engaged in the preparation of briefings for the ECOFIN and Eurogroup meetings as well as for meetings of other Council formations and for the European Council meetings, as requested.

During 2008, the Division provided direct input to the preparation of Malta's *Update of Stability Programme 2008-2011*. This Stability Programme constitutes an update of the *December 2007 Stability Programme 2007-2010*. The Stability and Convergence Programmes are important documents within the framework of the EU's multilateral surveillance of budgetary positions and the surveillance and co-ordination of economic policies.

The Update of Stability Programme 2008-2011 includes macroeconomic forecasts, budgetary projections, an in-depth analysis of the fiscal situation and Government's fiscal policy, sensitivity analysis as well as an overview of the long-term fiscal sustainability. The analysis is conducted within the framework of the requirements set out by the Stability and Growth Pact. The document was compiled in collaboration with the Budget Affairs Division of the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment and the Treasury, and with important inputs being received from the National Statistics Office as well as various ministries and entities.

Furthermore, towards the end of December, Malta submitted an Addendum to the Update of Stability Programme. This Addendum provides details on the budgetary stimulus measures adopted by the Maltese Government in the framework of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

The Economic Policy Division participated in the assessment of Malta's Stability Programme 2007-2010. In particular, it presented Malta's position in the Economic and Financial Committee (alternates) and contributed towards the preparation for the relevant Economic and Financial Committee and ECOFIN meetings.

During 2008, the Division continued to provide information on the domestic economic situation and on the economic policies and measures that are being pursued by Government to the European Commission and other relevant parties. In particular, the Division co-ordinates closely with Commission officials from DG ECOFIN and provides the requested information in connection with the EU's fiscal surveillance process. Bilateral meetings were held both in Malta as well as in Brussels with Commission officials from DG ECOFIN.

In January 2008, the Division participated in the country examinations meeting held by the EPC. The aim of this meeting was primarily to draft the updated country-specific conclusions, following the submission by Member States of their 2007 Annual Progress Reports on their National Reform Programmes (NRP). In July, the Division participated in a meeting with officials from the European Commission on the Implementation of the Growth and Jobs Agenda. The Division provided input to the drafting of the NRP 2008-2010 which was submitted to the European Commission in October 2008. In September 2008, the

Division participated in a thematic country review session held by the EPC, which dealt with flexicurity with a specific focus on tax and benefit reforms.

Malta Council for Economic and Social Development

The Division is represented in the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development and during 2008 it continued to participate actively in its proceedings. Furthermore, as in previous years, the Economic Policy Division computed and presented the relevant cost-of-living adjustment for 2009 as stipulated in the Incomes Policy Agreement of 1990.

National Econometric Modelling

The Division has two econometric models of the domestic economy. One model is used to produce short-term forecasts for the main macroeconomic indicators. The purpose of the second model is to undertake economic policy simulation exercises and to provide a framework for medium-term forecasts. During 2008, the Division pursued work related to strengthening its econometric modelling capability.

The short-term model was used to produce economic forecasts for spring and autumn, which were presented during the Economic Forecasts Meetings held between the Commission and the EU Member States. Discussions on these forecasts were held with Malta's desk officer in DG ECOFIN. Such forecasts were also used for the preparations for the Budget and the Update of Stability Programme 2008-2011.

The second disaggregated model was used on a number of occasions for the preparation of scenario analysis, including sensitivity analysis assignments as well as policy simulation exercises. This model is being further fine-tuned in order to reflect better the realities of the Maltese economy and to modify the way in which a number of important relationships within the model are calibrated.

International Institutions

The Economic Policy Division provides information on the performance of the Maltese economy as well as on Government's economic strategy to representatives of international organisations.

As in previous years, the Economic Policy Division contributed in meetings with representatives from credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. As the credit ratings assigned to Malta bear a direct influence on the interest rate charged on loans raised from international markets, the Division assigns significant importance to its interaction with these agencies. During these meetings, the performance of the domestic economy and the policies and measures pursued by Government to address the economic challenges faced by the Maltese economy were discussed.

In addition, during 2008, the Economic Policy Division was an important focal point in the extensive discussions held with representatives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) who visited Malta in May for the Article IV consultation. Such visits are followed by published reports on the local economic scenario. As part of the preparations for the mission, the Economic Policy Division prepared a series of analysis covering various aspects of the domestic economy.

Pension Modelling

During 2008, the Division carried out technical work, in collaboration with World Bank experts, in connection with the preparation of long-term pension projections, as part of the long-term age-related expenditure projections being prepared by the EPC's Ageing Working Group. These projections were carried out using the World Bank's Pensions Reform Simulation Toolkit (PROST) model. The projections are based on commonly agreed demographic and macroeconomic assumptions. These projections take into account the pension reform approved by Parliament in December 2006.

On the basis of these updated projections, Malta's country fiche on pension projections 2009 was submitted to the EPC's Ageing Working Group in November 2008 and the peer review of these projections was held by this Working Group in December.

During the year, officers from the Division continued to provide technical support to the Ministry for Social Policy for the purposes of a pension modelling effort co-ordinated by the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee aimed at calculating pension adequacy indicators on the basis of European Commission guidelines and also OECD methodology.

Furthermore, on the local front, the Director General is a member of the Pensions Working Group, which has been set up by the Ministry of Social Policy. The Division will contribute to the work of this working group through the modelling of alternative scenarios of systemic reform models.

Financial Perspectives 2007-2013

During 2008, the Division continued to provide support and input for the monitoring of developments regarding the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013. This included estimates for the Preliminary Draft Budget for 2009 with respect to Malta's net budgetary position. Furthermore, the Division provided technical input for the formulation of a Malta position on the EU Budget Review.

The Division is also involved in the Task Force on Own Resources which carries out work related to the Advisory Committee on Own Resources (ACOR). It provides technical input in line with its expertise related to the financial perspectives. In addition, the Division also participated in ACOR forecast meeting held in Brussels and was involved in the forecasts of GNI and VAT base estimates for 2008 and forecasts for 2009.

Economic Implications of EU's Climate Change Package

The Division provided technical economic input on aspects and proposals in the EU's Climate Change Package, especially on issues relating to the review of the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme. In particular, the Division carried out modelling work to analyse the direct cost of exceeding the proposed emission targets in energy and transport. This analysis also included a number of scenarios.

Research and Publications

The professional staff at the Division carries out research work on various economic, fiscal and financial topics.

The Division has participated in the public debt management strategy committee. It also participated in the Working Group set up by the Ministry for Social Policy at the request of Cabinet to develop an integrated, acceptable and visible flexicurity pathway for Malta. This group presented its report in August 2008, and the flexicurity pathway was included in the NRP which was submitted to the European Commission in October 2008.

The Economic Policy Division, together with the Ministry for Social Policy is involved in work undertaken in collaboration with the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna (ECV) as part of the Improving the Capacity and Usability of EUROMOD (I-CUE) project. This project is meant to assess the feasibility of extending Euromod (which is a micro-simulation model of the tax/benefit structure) to the new Member States. In April, the Division took part in the I-CUE Final Conference *Tax-benefit Microsimulation in the Enlarged Europe: Results from the I-CUE Project and Perspectives for the Future* and presented its findings on Malta's feasibility study for the implementation of I-CUE Euromod to Malta.

The Division published the Economic Bulletin April 2008. This document reviews recent economic developments, and also includes analysis of selected specific economic themes in line with internal economic research carried out by the Division.

Moreover, the Division published the Economic Survey November 2008. This document which is presented to the House of Representatives at the beginning of discussions on Government's budgetary estimates, provides a comprehensive analysis of Malta's recent economic performance and emerging economic trends, as well as an overview of international economic developments.

During 2008, the Economic Policy Division continued to hold active discussions with the Central Bank of Malta on the co-ordination of economic policies with a view to ascertain an optimal macro environment for further economic growth. It regularly collaborates with the Central Bank of Malta in areas of mutual interest, as well as to discuss local economic developments and prospects. The Division also continued to sustain contacts with similar organisations abroad.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS DIRECTORATE

The Common Commercial Policy

The Article 133 Committee is a trade co-ordination and advisory committee to the European Union covering all aspects of trade policy. The Division, in liaison with the Permanent Representation in Brussels, has constantly monitored and analysed developments that took place during the Article 133 Committees in order to ensure that Malta's views and interests are taken into account in the formulation of the EU's *common commercial policy*.

- *Article 133 Titulaire:* During 2008, the Article 133 (Titulaire) Committee was consulted on a number of trade policy issues. Some of the most important issues discussed include progress on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations, WTO accessions, negotiations on various bilateral trade agreements with third countries/regions, the market access strategy, the EU raw materials initiative, the Transatlantic Council and other issues.
- *Article 133 Deputies:* The Article 133 (Deputies) Committee discussed a number of issues which included the EU's position in the WTO DDA negotiations, Free Trade Agreements (FTA) negotiations with ASEAN, India and South Korea and Association Agreements, a mandate for a framework Agreement with Libya, an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) and relations with the US and Canada, amongst others.
- *Article 133 Services:* The Article 133 (Services) Committee focused on several issues that relate to trade in services. The Committee undertook significant work on preparing a services offer in the context of the WTO DDA negotiations, in particular with respect to a possible offer on mode 4 (temporary movement of specialised persons) to WTO partners. Discussions were also undertaken concerning internal procedure on US gambling commitments and various bilateral negotiating agreements such as Euromed, Korea and India.
- *Article 133 Textiles:* This committee was briefed regularly with updated information on textile imports from China. Specific issues discussed in 2008 included the bilateral agreements with Belarus and Kazakhstan, market access issues with Argentina, third country certification systems, rules of origin, REACH and the industrial and regulatory dialogues with Russia and China.
- *Article 133 Steel:* The Committee discussed various proposals regarding the extension/amendment of agreements on the trade of steel with third countries. Notably, the Committee discussed the agreement for autonomous measures on import quantities of steel from Kazakhstan and changes in quantities for the Russian Federation. Furthermore, the Division gave its views on repealing the trade agreement on certain steel products with Ukraine in view of its membership to the WTO. Discussions also included a proposed increase of export tariffs on steel scrap from Russia and EU measures to prevent this. The Steel Committee

is also currently viewing the EU raw materials initiative. After discussions in various working groups, it was agreed that the 133 Steel and 133 Textiles Committees should be merged. In fact, this is now the case with the establishment of the Steel, Textiles and other Industrial Sectors (STIS) working group.

- *General System of Preferences*: The Generalised System of Preferences Committee and the GSP Working Party discussed various issues in relation to the granting of preferential access to markets for developing countries during 2008. In particular, the GSP Working Party discussed the Council Regulation applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences for the period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011.
- *Antidumping/Anti-Subsidy*: The Division monitored and analysed the ongoing developments on anti-dumping, anti-subsidy and safeguard mechanisms. Advice was provided on a number of anti-dumping issues, this being based primarily on economic analysis whilst taking into consideration the objectives, interests and priorities of the various government entities and stakeholders. Some of the most contentious cases that were discussed this year include the expiry review of footwear imported from China and Vietnam, the imposition of definitive duties on imports of candles from China, the removal of duties on imports of farmed salmon from Norway and several cases concerning steel that were regarded as highly important due to their international trade significance. The necessary consultations with local and Community stakeholders have been maintained.

Multilateral Trade

WTO DOHA Development Agenda (DDA) Negotiations – July Ministerial Meeting in Geneva

The Division, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Representations in Brussels and Geneva, monitored developments and provided feedback on Malta's position with respect to various issues under the WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations. In particular, consultation was undertaken with various government ministries and entities to consolidate Malta's position and prepare a comprehensive briefing for the WTO DDA ministerial meeting.

The WTO Ministerial meeting was held in Geneva on 21-29 July 2008 with the Economic Policy Division being represented by the Director General and the Director. The Minister of Finance, the Economy and Investment, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, also participated in the ministerial meeting. While significant progress was made on a majority of issues, no overall agreement on the DDA was reached and the talks ended in failure. Efforts are still underway to try to bridge existing negotiation positions amongst WTO members so as to conclude DDA negotiations in the near future.

Bilateral and Regional Trade Relations

The Division consulted and co-ordinated with the competent authorities across Government in its policy formulation on a number of trade agreements that the EU is negotiating with third countries. Some of the most important include:

- *EU-Euromed Free Trade Area*: Negotiations with Euromed countries continued in an effort to conclude an FTA with Euromed countries by 2010. Discussions included progress on negotiations with respect to the liberalisation of agricultural, processed agricultural and fisheries products, the liberalisation of trade in services and establishment and the conclusion of the dispute settlement agreement. The 7th Euromed Trade Ministerial Conference was held in Marseille in July 2008 where progress in negotiations was discussed along with the importance of enhancing regional integration and a Euromed Trade Roadmap till 2010 and beyond.
- *FTA Agreements with ASEAN, India and South Korea*: The Commission is currently negotiating FTAs with India, South Korea and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in close collaboration with EU Member States. While significant progress has been made in discussions with Korea, progress with India has been slow. The Division continued to follow-up developments and provide economic analysis related to these negotiations.

- *Economic Partnership Agreements:* The Division continued to monitor developments in the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements with ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries. Malta supported the conclusion of a full EU-Cariforum EPA and gave feedback to Ministry of Foreign Affairs on draft Council Conclusions in relation to EPAs with other ACP countries and regions.
- *EU-China Framework Agreement of Partnership and Co-operation:* The Division, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, monitored further developments in EU-China relations, aimed to enhance trade and investment.
- *EU-US Partnership:* The Division reviewed developments in transatlantic relations, with a view to deepen transatlantic economic integration and further regulatory convergence.
- *EU-Canada Co-operation:* Discussions were held on the type of relationship that should be achieved with Canada in the 133 Committee and a representation from the Canadian Permanent Representation was also received at the EPD. An EU-Canada Summit was held in October 2008, whereby it was agreed that there should be deeper economic partnership between the two parties.
- *EU-Russia Agreement:* Negotiations on the successor agreement to the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA) with Russia continued in 2008 with a number of negotiation rounds being held throughout the year. The new agreement will not be a pure preferential trade agreement however it will preserve the trade provisions already contained in the PCA and sets out principles and objectives of the future FTA. The Economic Policy Division continued to monitor developments in these negotiations.

Thematic Issues

EC-Libya draft negotiation mandate for a framework agreement

During 2008, significant work was concentrated on the Commission's draft negotiating mandate for a framework agreement with Libya. While including a comprehensive trade agreement, the mandate for a framework agreement is wide in scope including political dialogue, economic co-operation, energy, justice, and a number of others areas of possible co-operation with Libya. There were intense discussions on the FTA section of the proposed mandate in the 133 Deputies Committee given that a number of EU Member States, namely Eastern European Member States were opposing the opening of negotiations with Libya. Malta's interest in this framework agreement and in an FTA with Libya was made clear in the 133 Committee. A meeting was also held at the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise between the Economic Policy Division and interested stakeholders to inform the latter of ongoing discussions and to encourage them to undertake a questionnaire which was distributed by the Commission to help it in its negotiating stance with Libya.

Market Access Strategy

During 2008, the Market Access Advisory Committee continued to extend the market access approach to other key third countries. More support has been given to new trade areas where the Community has important economic interests such as services, intellectual property rights, investment and public procurement. In addition, the Commission set up Market Access Teams in third countries and specific working groups which operate under the Market Access Advisory Committee. The aim of these groups is to prevent, detect and tackle trade barriers as well as to work on the concrete removal of specific obstacles to trade.

Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)

During 2008, the Commission continued to debrief the Art 133 Committee on the ongoing negotiations in connection with the plurilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, which is aimed to enhance the level of co-operation between authorities and to harmonise high levels of intellectual property rights enforcement. The Art 133 Committee worked in close collaboration with other relevant Council committees.

Commission Communication on the Raw Materials Initiative

The Division analysed the Commission's Communication on Raw Materials that outlines policy responses to ensure sustainable access to raw materials

Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements

The Division, in consultation and co-ordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other pertinent authorities, has continued negotiations on a number of draft bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements. Other negotiations have been commenced with Qatar, Cambodia, Indonesia and China. Negotiations with Albania, Ukraine, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Pakistan and Morocco have been consolidated.

Furthermore, the Division in liaison with other pertinent authorities has compiled a preliminary study on Intra-EU bilateral Investment Guarantee Agreements.

Advisory Services

The Directorate extended its advisory services to various government entities, mainly through the compilation of briefings, the preparation of instruction notes, technical advice, research and economic analysis on specific requests.

Eight Sino-Maltese Mixed Commission

The Economic Policy Division was involved in the necessary preparations for the convening of the Eight Sino-Maltese Mixed Commission that is scheduled to be held in Malta during 2009.

JOSEPH RAPA

Director General (Economic Policy Division)

Department of Contracts

HUMAN RESOURCES

During 2008 the procedure for the appointment of a number of Procurement Managers, who are intended to strengthen the administrative capabilities of the Department, was sustained. This measure is being implemented in view of the increased administrative challenges brought about by the new allocated EU budget obtained by Malta under the Structural Funds 2007-2013.

Recent government policy has encouraged the concept of introducing family friendly measures in the workplace. A proactive approach to this initiative by the department has resulted in two employees being afforded the opportunity of teleworking. Another initiative which was taken up by the majority of staff was the rearrangement of office hours coupled with flexitime so as to enable the Department to be open for business for an extended period of time during the summer months.

In order to efficiently manage the above initiatives, the concept of electronic attendance verification was adopted and has been a success.

Training of the human resources of the Department was sustained as in previous years. A number of officials were afforded the opportunity of training abroad in public procurement. Two officials attended an Introductory Course in Public Procurement organised by the European Institute on Public Procurement (EIPA) in Maastricht while another Procurement Manager obtained specialist training on the 'Effective use of the FIDIC Conditions of Contracts in International Construction Projects' in London during the month of June. Another two officials represented the department at the meeting of the EU Public Procurement Learning Laboratory on various facets of public procurement practices.

REFURBISHMENT WORKS

The Department has continued in its efforts to utilise all the possible office space available within the existing building premises. A refurbishment programme at the basement level was drawn up and all the necessary tender documentation of the works to be undertaken has been completed. However, despite extensive consultations with institutions such as Heritage Malta and the National Commission for Persons with Disability and obtaining their approval, MEPA has only sanctioned a minor part of these works which are envisaged to be carried out in 2009.

Another project under implementation is the transfer of the existing archives at Wied il-Kbir stores in Qormi to the recently acquired premises previously owned by the ex-Lotto Department which is situated in the vicinity of the Head Office. During 2008 the refurbishment work on the structure was carried out and a mobile shelving system installed. This transfer will result in the saving of time together with fuel consumption. This will also lead to increased efficiency in the archiving of documentation.

Another building, also close to Notre Dame Ravelin, has been acquired. This is envisaged to cater for badly-needed administrative office space for the Department as well as for new premises for the Public Contracts Appeals Board. Preparatory architectural plans have been designed for the conversion of the existing building to cater for the new use of the premises.

TRAINING FOR CONTRACTING AUTHORITIES

Training on local legislation i.e. Legal Notices 177 and 178 of 2005 relating to Public Contracts Regulations, and Public Procurement of Entities operating in the Water, Energy, Transport and Postal Services Sectors Regulations, was carried out, in collaboration of the Staff Development Organisation, by means of an intensive six module seminar during September 2008. The training consisted of theoretical tutorials on the use of the regulations, the evaluation process, the appeal procedures available to economic operators and the correct use of specifications and terms of reference. Practical interactive sessions were organised during the seminar on the use of the specifically designed Department of Contracts tender documentation templates for works, services and supplies.

Similar training seminars were also carried out with the collaboration of the Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division during May and November 2008. These seminars were specifically targeted for Project Managers entrusted with the management of the new allocated EU budget obtained by Malta under the Structural Funds 2007-2013.

PUBLIC CONTRACTS REGULATIONS

Public procurement policy and practice are continually developing in the national as well as international sphere. In order to keep public procurement progressing on the same lines the Department has drafted a number of amendments to the current legislation which are currently under review by senior ministry management.

In fact, in order to be in a position to advise the Government, senior officials actively participate in meetings organised by the Commission of the Advisory Committee on Public Contracts, the Working Group on e-Procurement and the Working Group on Public Procurement Statistics. In this way, as well as advising Government on proposed new legislation, the Department contributes to the development of public procurement methodologies adopted in the EU. In fact, the Commission has proposed a new Directive on Defence and Security related Procurement.

EUROPEAN UNION MATTERS

The EU Unit is responsible for the administration of all tenders which are fully or partially funded through EU funds, EEA Funds, EQUAL Community Programmes, EAGGF, FIGG, External Borders Funds, Norwegian Funds and other projects that are partly or fully funded through Community Funds. These operations, that include the vetting of tender documentation and publication thereof, are related to the procurement of supplies, services or works. Such tenders owe their origin to the Financing Memoranda signed for the year 2003, from the Financing Memorandum signed for the Transition Facility for the year 2004, the Financing Memorandum signed for the Transition year 2005, the Financing Memorandum for the Transition Facility for 2006, from the Single Programming Document for the years 2004-2006 and from the Single Programming Document for the years 2007-2013. The Head of the EU Unit is also the administrative officer who is in charge of all Twinning and Twinning Light projects that are carried out under Malta's Transition Facility Programmes.

The Department of Contracts is heavily involved in the Structural Sub-Committee on Transition Facility Assistance for Malta. In fact the Department is a member of this committee and attends both the Sectoral Monitoring Sub-Committees (SMSC) and the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meetings.

The Transition Programme 2004 for Malta was concluded on 15 December 2006, the Transition Facility Programme 2005 was concluded on 15 December 2007, whereas the Transition Facility Programme 2006 was completed on 15 December 2008. The Structural Funds Programmes for Malta for 2004-2006 have been almost concluded, with some projects afforded exceptional extensions to their disbursements due to their sensitive nature. The Structural Funds Programmes for Malta 2007-2013 are currently progressing at

a very fast rate with a large amount of tenders relating to projects funded under these funds being processed by the EU Unit.

The Assistant Director of the EU Unit and members of staff also delivered a series of training seminars during the year, relating to the use of the tendering templates, so as to get the end users to familiarise themselves with the said templates.

EXTENDED DECENTRALISED IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEM

Following the granting by the EU Commission of the Extended Decentralised Implementation System (EDIS) to Malta in 2004, the Department adopted several recommendations by the EU Auditors in order to enhance the monitoring, contracting and control systems in place. A revision of the Manual of Procedures and the introduction of check-lists and other tools which were recommended by the auditors were effectively carried out. The recommendation to increase the capacity of the staff of the EU Unit was implemented with a call for Procurement Managers being issued during 2008 and expected intake in early 2009.

AUDIT VISITS

A recent audit carried out by the firm Moore Stephens was carried out on behalf of the Commission, and the conclusions made by the auditors were overall quite favourable.

GENERAL CONTRACTS COMMITTEE

The General Contracts Committee held 101 sittings during which several contractual issues were considered. These issues ranged from the adoption of specific contractual procedures instead of the traditional calls for tenders to pre-contractual matters, such as approval of clarifications to prospective bidders and post-contractual ones involving approval of extra works/variations. Amongst these cases the Committee evaluated reports and recommendations submitted by contracting authorities which led to the issue of letters of acceptance/contracts signed by the Department. The Committee also deliberated on objections emanating from appeals lodged by economic operators against recommendations of award of contracts pertaining to departmental tenders.

PUBLIC CONTRACTS APPEALS BOARD

The Public Contracts Appeals Board is appointed by the Prime Minister to decide on objections lodged against the recommendations of the General Contracts Committee on the award of public contracts.

During 2008, the Public Contracts Appeals Board held various sittings that dealt with 27 objection cases, 13 of which were upheld.

THE NEW PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND WEBSITE

In November, the new website of the Department went online, and the Procurement Management System (PMS) began operating. The PMS, funded by the EU Transition Funds (2005) Programme, provides an efficient and effective platform for the Department to manage the calls for tenders, and offers enhanced functionalities for economic operators through the Department's website. These include the possibility to set up alerts in respect of new tenders which might be of interest to the economic operator (the alerts can be set against particular common procurement vocabulary (CPV), keyword or contracting authority); view preview documents; purchase/download tender documents; post tender-related questions directly from the site; be notified with new clarifications/notifications, and register for clarification meetings. Additionally, economic operators may now see the summary of tenders received, as well as the eventual award recommendations, directly online. Registered users can also be notified (via SMS and/or e-mail) when the status of particular tenders is marked as being under recommendation or under appeals period.

The PMS also allows the Department to dispatch the most important procurement-related notices pertaining to the Official Journal of the EU electronically. It also enhances the report-generating facilities for the Department, which is therefore aided in abiding with the statistical requirements of the EU.

Within the short period of time that the new website has been online, the Department has received positive feedback on the new services being rendered. Concurrently, a number of Maltese and foreign individuals and organisations have subscribed (via the Maltese e-ID platform, or directly from the website) in order to fully benefit from the site's functionalities (free subscription/registration allows the setting up of e-mail/SMS alerts, the online purchase/download of tender documents, and receipts of e-mail notifications).

The website has also been designed with a view of providing a single point of reference for public officers working in public procurement. An appropriate section has been set up, displaying the Department's letters circulars and annual reports, the tender templates, the procurement legislation, EU guidelines and explanatory notes, and the CPV amongst other matters. The Department aims to expand this resources page over time, by uploading any other information/documentation deemed to assist procurers in the carrying out of their tasks.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

The Department continued to support the introduction of transparent mechanisms to reward research and innovation through public procurement as part of the National Strategy for Research and Innovation 2007-2010. The Department made its contribution in the second *Workshop on Making Innovation Work for Public Procurement* which was organised in May of this year.

This workshop provided an update on developments in public procurement for research and innovation in goods and services at European and national level. The workshop also featured a presentation of the results of an ongoing FP6 Project (OMC-PTP Open Method of Co-ordination - Public technology procurement) which brings policy makers and practitioners together and provides a platform of mutual learning concerning various forms of pre-commercial procurement - not exclusively technology procurement.

FRANCIS ATTARD

Director General (Contracts)

Inland Revenue Department

Mission Statement

To provide the Ministry responsible for finance with guidance in enacting such legislation and to provide taxpayers and social security contributors with quality and timely service and to simplify procedures while minimising the cost of collection and the burden to taxpayers, in order to encourage compliance.

GENERAL

The projected targets for the Inland Revenue for 2008 were largely reached. 2008 was the first year in which the whole system, including the accounting system as well as the tax statements and all documents and payments, were accounted for in the new currency.

Also, 2008 was the first year of operation of the Department's Call Centre in Gozo. During 2009 a consolidation of this Unit will be undertaken with a view to increasing overall performance.

Another major change was the appointment of the new Commissioner. The Commissioner acts also as Head of the Tax Compliance Unit. This is expected to bring about a measure of integration and co-ordination between the two units. The TCU will be moved to Floriana by mid-2009 after the necessary structural changes are made to one of the Department's blocks.

This Report has four divisions: Income Tax, Social Security Contributions, International Tax Unit and Capital Transfer Duty.

INCOME TAX

Technical Section

Legislation

Amendments to the Income Tax Acts and new enactments of subsidiary legislation under the Acts were made during the year, the following being the more noteworthy:

- double tax treaties with Greece and Singapore;
- to enable the Commissioner to collect information required by foreign tax authorities in terms of the reciprocal international arrangements for the exchange of information;
- to further encourage electronic business by increasing the tax credit available to companies engaged in developing computer software and hardware as well as to open up applicability to sole traders in this field;
- deductions granted to companies to encourage them to make donations relating to sports events and sports organisations as well as to cultural organisations and artists;
- complementary to the 2007 amendments to the main acts regarding tax refunds in respect of underlying tax on distributed company profits, rules were issued in the early months of 2008 to provide for the creation of two new tax accounts: the Final Tax Account and the Immovable Property Account. The new rules also established the registration procedure for companies claiming refunds and extended their filing period.

The full list of Acts and Legal Notices concerning income tax is as follows:

18/01/2008	Act I / 2008	Income Tax Management (Amendment) Act - <i>re exchange of information</i>
05/02/2008	LN55/08	Tax Credit (Electronic Business) (Amendment) Rules - <i>tax credit (max €12000) available to SMEs including sole traders</i>
15/02/2008	LN67/08	Tax Credit (Women Returning to Employment) (Amendment) Rules - <i>removes prohibition of working with a related person</i>
19/02/2008	GN159/08	First and Second Board of Special Commissioners - <i>Appointment of members of Boards</i>
19/02/2008	LN78/08	Income Tax (Statutory Dates) (Amendment) - <i>extends filing period for companies claiming refunds</i>
19/02/2008	LN79/08	Tax Accounts (Income Tax) Rules - <i>establishes the allocations to the FTA and IPA</i>
19/02/2008	LN80/08	Tax Refunds and Registration Procedure Rules - <i>establishes the registration procedure for companies claiming refunds</i>
27/06/2008	GN560/08	First Board of Special Commissioners - <i>appointment of Board</i>
27/06/2008	LN159/08	Donations (Sports & Culture) Rules - <i>deductions for donations by companies towards sports and culture</i>
19/08/2008	LN194/08	Double Taxation Relief (Republic of Singapore) Order - <i>treaty with Singapore</i>
05/09/2008	LN205/08	Tax Accounts (Income Tax)(Amendment) Rules - <i>change in Y/A in respect of Collective Investment Schemes</i>
10/10/2008	LN257/08	Collective Investment Schemes (Amendment) Regulations - <i>amendment re custodian</i>
07/11/2008	LN268/2008	Double Taxation Relief (Hellenic Republic) Order - <i>treaty with Greece</i>
14/11/2008	LN288/2008	Income Tax Exemption (Philanthropic Work) Notice - <i>Exempts the St Jeanne Antide and St Peter's Foundations</i>

During 2008, another book was published in the series of tax cases, namely BSC Cases Vol.2, and the summaries of Court of Appeal cases on the Department website were also updated. A booklet on provisional tax and social security contributions was printed and made available. Memos were issued as necessary on the website as well as internally.

The Section also replied to a large number of technical queries received from other sections of the Department and the Ministry as well as from tax practitioners/auditors/lawyers and the general public. It also served as a liaison for the Department with international tax organisations such as the Intra-European Organisation of Tax Administrations (IOTA) and the Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA).

Twenty complaints were received from the Ombudsman during the year, of which 17 have been successfully concluded so far. Six requests were received in connection with tax at source on payments to non-resident companies and these have been cleared. Twenty-seven requests for exemption were received and examined; 16 exemptions were issued as being philanthropic (two) or approved (14).

Final Settlement System Tax

During 2008, employers submitted 9,023 Annual Reconciliation Statements (FS7) and 42,840 Payee Statements (FS3) referring to years 1999 to 2007. About 90% related to 2007. The FSS section vetted, captured and reconciled all this data. Registration of new taxpayers by the section during the finalisation process amounted to 810.

The Section also batched 51,863 documents and 1,381 web submissions (number of taxpayers 92,019). Total electronic errors solved were 17,455. Archiving for 2008 was completed. The Agriculture Produce Scheme documents were also processed and finalised by 31 January 2008. A total of 4,563 Adjustment forms were processed between June and December.

Enforcement

The section continued on an intensive enforcement programme. The number of defaulters has been reduced to 798 (from 4,421). A total of 10 different notices were issued between February and August. Compliance rate for 2008 was 93.62%. A number of previous years' documents were also recovered. All queries regarding these notices were dealt with.

Enforcement Exercises Performed at the Computer Section

	Count	Value (€)
15-day Notice (Individuals/Corporate)	6,313	81,337,790
FSS/SSC Notices (Current Year - FS5's defaulters)	2,087	N/A
Year-by-Year (All Balance claimed)	2,019	7,408,876
Year-by-Year (Default Tax Returns)	1,000	N/A
Social Security Class 2 Notices	738	2,666,228
Year-by-Year (Pre-Estimation including balance - Current Y/A)	19,301	N/A
FS7 Defaulters Notice (Current Year)	5,697	N/A
FS7 Defaulters Notice (Last Reminder)	4,488	N/A
FS7 Defaulters Notice (All Years Included)	1,948	N/A
FS7 Defaulters Notice (All Years Included - Last Reminder)	1,841	N/A
FS7 Defaulters Notice (Claiming of Penalties)	1,086	N/A
FSS/SSC Employers Notices (All Balance claimed)	573	5,545,305
Legal Employers Default Notices (FSS/SSC + Additional)	635	13,484,051
Enforcement Exercise on Deceased Taxpayers	1,248	5,254,750
FSS/SSC Notices (Balances due & missing FS7's)	1,542	N/A

These include the extraction of data models for the selection of cases and actual issue of the relative letters.

Assessments

A total of 5,193 assessments in respect of pre-1999 years were issued to taxpayers.

Tax Returns and Non-filers

Tax statements issued without the need for taxpayers to fill in and submit their annual tax return (non-filers) were 163,739. Tax Returns generated: 71,622.

Tax Audits

A total of 767 new cases were opened, while 442 cases were concluded, resulting in an increase in income brought to charge of €29,747,515. Cases in hand at the beginning of the year were 196, while at the end of the year the cases in hand were 521.

A total of 169 new objections were received against assessments raised under the self-assessment system. 190 objections were concluded, resulting in an increase in income brought to charge of €6,360,843. At the beginning of year, objections in hand were 371; balance at end of year was 350.

E-Business Usage Statistics

Corporate Tax Return

	Y/A 2007	Ratio	Y/A 2008	Ratio
Returns filed electronically	14,607	83%	12,530	81%
Returns filed manually	3,071	17%	3,017	19%

Values for year of assessment 2007 are for comparison and evaluation purposes only.

Individual Tax Return

	Y/A 2007	Ratio	Y/A 2008	Ratio
Returns filed electronically	926	1%	456	0.75%
Returns filed manually	80,966	99%	61,665	99.25%

Values for year of assessment 2007 are for comparison and evaluation purposes only.

FSS Services for Employers

	Basis 2006	Ratio	Basis 2007	Ratio
FS7's filed on web	1,217	65%	1,381	67%
FS7's filed through CD	671	35%	706	33%

Electronic Payments

Year	e-PG (payments through IRD website)		Internet Banking		Total value
	Count	€	Count	€	€
2008	6,604	2,724,986	14,595	63,169,229	65,894,215

Main IS/IT deliverables for 2008

- Euro migration early in 2008 was complemented by a number of simulations and further tests to ensure that statements are issued correctly and with the appropriate information.
- During February 2008 an exercise to release refunds from the Assessments System was conducted.
- A first evaluation and actual write-off of prescribed balances was also conducted.
- The free-filers initiative was significantly improved by a 24% increase in the number of taxpayers of 32,000 up to 162,000. This required a detailed review of the process and software with the Operations Directorate to refine procedures and improve software.
- Online Income Tax Return of Companies and supporting systems were enhanced for the Y/A 2008 filing cycle. For this purpose the Tax Return Spreadsheet, developed by Director Operations, was integrated with the online and back-end software. The Tax Return contained changes to support the new Corporate Tax Regime.
- Applications for refund registration in line with the new Corporate Tax Regime was also designed and developed by Director Operations and this was integrated with the IRD's Online and Back-end Systems.
- The Tax Return filing cycle was also reviewed for changes with the Operations Directorate required to implement budget changes. Changes were implemented in both back-end and online systems. The changes included new attachments.
- Technical upgrades were also carried out to improve the security and performance of the online systems.
- Software to implement the ETC-IRD initiative was also enhanced and an implementation plan was also prepared.
- A spreadsheet add-in was developed to facilitate the implementation of software for the submission of third party information.
- Software for the Collection of Class 2 contributions was delivered (still in UAT).

Workflow Management System

The Workflow Management System manages and controls the workflow devolving on the various units of the Department. 80,329 work items were received and forwarded for processing. 76,582 of these have been closed.

Companies

During 2008, the Companies Section cleared 592 years of assessment from the pre-Y/A 1999 objection backlog. New objections were filed against 277 years leaving a balance of 3,136 years of assessment. This Section also processes applications for changes in accounting dates and issues different certificates mainly tax clearances upon winding up of companies and residence certificates. All public relations relative to corporate taxpayers are carried out by this Section.

All manual, post Y/A 1999 tax returns are received and processed manually by the Data Processing Unit. Electronic filing remained constant at 83% of all filers.

Objections

The number of pending objections of individual taxpayers against one or more assessments at start of 2008 stood at 4,460. During the year, 1,672 new objections were registered. The number of objections settled was 2,296. Balance at end of year was 3,836. Due to the fact that records in respect of old objections are not reliable, the Section is still working on a filtering process, as it has been discovered that many objections settled long ago have never been deleted and are still being shown as pending. The real number of outstanding objections is therefore much lower than the book figure.

Board of Special Commissioners

Board No. 1 held only six sittings as one of the members could no longer continue in office. Board No. 2 held 39 sittings. The number of cases pending before both Boards at the end of 2008 was 107. Of these, 36 were filed during 2008. Board No. 1 decided two cases and had one ceded. Board No. 2 decided 10 cases and had 21 cases ceded.

Court of Appeal, Constitutional and Civil Court

Court of Appeal cases concluded during 2008 were 16 and the balance at end of year was four. Two cases were concluded before the Constitutional Court and there are no cases at present before this Court. Before the Civil Court, one case was concluded leaving a balance of two cases at end of 2008. Total number of sittings during the year was 50.

Revenue

Revenue from Income Tax during 2008 amounted to €735.4 million. Furthermore the Department also collected €510.5 million in social security contributions. As from January 2008, following an amendment to the Social Security Act, the Inland Revenue Department now has the responsibility for the enforcement and collection of social security contributions for years also prior to 1998. The following table gives a breakdown of the revenue collected in 2008 under the various sources:

	Settlement Tax €	PAYE/FSS €	Provisional Tax €	Self-Assessment €	Total €
Employees	5,628,076	196,503,693	12,606,913	8,818,374	223,557,056
Shareholders	72,823	0	374,992	427,457	875,272
Expatriates	262,330	0	5,147,705	2,698,286	8,108,321
Business, Profession, Ecclesiastic Entities	2,326,775	0	16,883,879	6,951,942	26,162,596
Rentiers	588,709	0	1,981,908	1,138,900	3,709,517
Companies (local)	2,899,633	0	226,771,353	72,626,864	302,297,850
Companies (foreign)	1,859,530	0	31,399,699	707,659	33,966,888
Capital Gains	0	0	80,300,955	0	80,300,955
Tax at Source	0	0	1,539,790	0	1,539,790
15% Withholding Tax	0	0	50,966,240	0	50,966,240
Others	3,140,285	0	370,725	419,786	3,930,796
Total	16,778,161	196,503,693	428,344,159	93,789,268	735,415,281

Cash Office Receipts

The number of receipts issued by Cash Office (Floriana only) in respect of income tax and social security contributions for 2008 was:

	No. of Receipts	Value in €
Income Tax	226,407	565,548,564
Social Security Contributions	143,922	254,333,477

Enforcement

The Collection Section carried out judicial action on a number of individuals and companies to secure revenue. Defaulting taxpayers were served with demand notices requesting settlement of tax. Various cases were concluded, whilst others were offered instalment repayment plans, as shown hereunder:

Individuals		
	Count	€
Demand Notices	1,160	2,550,646
Judicial Letters	583	24,515,625
Garnishee Orders	1	26,613
Agreements	273	711,344

Companies		
	Count	€
Demand Notices	13	102,402
Judicial Letters	450	61,502,355
Agreements	38	628,295

FSS/SSC Pre-2007		
	Count	€
Notices	10	1,551,575
Agreements	45	5,488,140
Garnishee Orders	25	3,706,603

FSS/SSC	
	No
Default Notices	17,810

During 2008 there were 72 court cases, 16 of which were concluded; 56 are still pending. 232 court sittings were attended.

Receipts Adjustments – Renewals of Permits

2,090 receipt adjustments were made. Renewals of work permits for expatriates were 2,995.

Mutual Recovery of Tax

The collection section continued to take enforcement action and precautionary measures for the recovery of claims from EU Member States as per directives 76/308 EEC and 2001/44/EC. The number of cases in 2008 increased to 35; seven cases was finalised.

Clearance Certificates

83 clearance certificates were issued to companies (34), employers (30) and individuals (19) who bid for a tender in an EU country.

Outdoor Inspections

The services of the Revenue Security Corps were regularly availed of to help the Department in its drive against tax evasion and for tax collection. Outdoor inspections were carried out mainly to (a) identify cases of persons who failed to register as taxpayers; (b) ensure remittance by employers of FSS tax/SSC deducted from salaries; and (c) trace taxpayers who fail to claim assessments sent by registered mail.

Inspections by RSC carried out in 2008 were:

Cash escorts	373
FSS/SSC	118
Investigations	33
Capital Transfer Duty Claims	481
Objections	38
Others	354

Taxpayer Service

During 2008 the Department's Taxpayer Service Office (Help Desk):

- dealt with 28,881 personal encounters;
- registered 1,175 new taxpayers;
- reached 648 direct agreements for programmed tax payments by individuals;
- reached 326 agreements with employers for programmed payments of tax;
- amended 2,038 addresses;
- issued 16,185 income tax returns.

IRD Call Centre

The Call Centre started receiving its first live telephone calls on 4 January 2008. During the year, the Call Centre replied to 90,561 telephone calls, 6,744 e-mails and processed 3,168 letters of correspondence.

Expenditure

The total recurrent expenditure, including emoluments and other operating expenses, was €4.45 million. The cost per €1 of income tax collected during 2008 works out at 0.006c. When considering also the actual revenue collected from social security contributions, the cost per €1 of revenue collected from both sources works out at 0.004c.

Refunds

By the end of 2008, the total number of refunds issued for y/a 2008 (including also some for y/a 2006 and 2007) was 63,553 amounting to €59,208,893. Included is the second instalment of refunds due for years prior to y/a 1999.

Capital Gains Tax

The Section deals with queries from professionals and taxpayers as regards income tax levied on transfers of property. 870 requests for a permit in terms of rules 10(2) and 10(4) of L.N. 5/2005 were received. Of these 790 permits were issued, 35 were refused or cancelled and 102 were re-issued. As regards permits in terms of article 43(3) a total of 249 requests were received and settled.

SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Social Security Division continued with the verification and enforcement of social security contributions. Class II payers continued to be informed of their social security obligations through the issue of the form PT1 every four months. Enforcement notices for defaulting payers for 2003-2007 were issued.

The major tasks carried out during 2008 were the following:

- Personal encounters – 2,650
- Agreements – 40
- Payslips issued for persons working abroad – 313
- Adjustments of Social Security receipts – 1,008
- Refunds issued – 26 (€59,136)
- Enforcement notices to defaulters – 738.

INTERNATIONAL TAX UNIT

Double Taxation Agreements

- The legal notices in connection with the double taxation agreements with Greece and Singapore were published;
- Double taxation agreements with Libya, USA, Montenegro, Ireland and Switzerland, and a Protocol amending the double taxation agreement with France were concluded and signed;
- The double taxation agreement with the Isle of Man and a Protocol amending the agreement with Italy were negotiated and initialled;
- Negotiations were held with India for the amendment of certain provisions of the existing double taxation agreement, but were not concluded;
- Negotiations were held with Ukraine and Oman, but were not concluded.

Work Processed

During 2008 the International Tax Unit processed:

- 1,201 self-assessments;
- 16 new applications for Advance Revenue Rulings;
- 14 applications for renewals of Advance Revenue Rulings;
- 621 claims for refunds;
- 1,254 requests for certification of exemption from duty under the Duty on Documents and Transfers Act;
- 83 exchanges of information with foreign tax authorities;
- 571 requests for registration of shareholders under the New Tax Regime.

Revenue

€87,000,000 were transferred to revenue from tax paid by companies dealt with at the International Tax Unit.

EU and OECD Affairs

Members of the Unit attended 36 meetings in connection with the EU, and 1 meeting with the OECD.

Tax Law Amendments

Members of the International Tax Unit took part in work related to new legislation on the Rules for the operation of the New Tax Regime and on proposed tax amendments concerning Collective Investment Schemes, Trusts and Foundations.

Computerisation of ITU Systems

Members of the International Tax Unit were involved in the computerisation of the process of the New Tax Regime, in particular on the registration of shareholders and of the refund claim form.

CAPITAL TRANSFER DUTY

Duty on Documents

The Department examined 12,190 notarial deeds. 5,975 of these were inspected by the Department's architects, resulting in 4,031 original assessments. 1,710 objections were filed and 670 revised claims were issued. Revenue under this source included also the duty collected in respect of share transfers, insurance policies, bank credit cards and other duties payable on various documents.

Total revenue collected from Duty on Documents amounted to €85,749,854.

2,844 *causa mortis* returns were processed and 100 declarations filed by notaries were referred to the Department's technical experts to verify the valuation of immovable properties declared therein.

1,969 claims were issued and 55 revised assessments were raised in the case of deficient returns. During the period, 83 objections were filed by transferees against the said *causa mortis* claims, while 95 objections were concluded.

Death and Donation Duty

The number of returns of chargeable transmissions filed and processed during the period was 84. Revenue collected, including prepayments on account and from arrears, totalled €59,915.

Acquisition of Immovable Property by Non-Residents

New provisions were enacted under Chapter 246 of the Laws of Malta to make the legislation compliant with the *acquis* of the European Union as regards Chapter 4. During 2008 the Department received 398 applications; 390 permits were issued.

Revenue

Total revenue collected by the Capital Transfer Duty branch was:

	€
Death and Donation Duty	46,482
Duty on Documents and Transfers	85,749,854
Fines and Late Fees	14,285
Fees on AIP Permits	223,273
Total	86,033,894

Computerisation

In collaboration with MITTS, the implementation of the computerisation programme of all sections within the Branch was completed. All sections, except the Monte di Pietà Office and the Consuls' Office, are fully automated.

Preliminary Agreements

A total of 8,208 Promise of Sale Agreements were registered (677 in Gozo).

Monte di Pietà

"*Il-Monti*" advances money on pledges of precious metal. Figures for 2008:

Pledges accepted	1,851
Pledges redeemed	2,271
Money loaned	€202,266
Money received back	€246,824
Interest received	€23,728

The number of pledges remaining in hand on 31 December was 7,382, against which €727,520 were advanced. Besides advancing money on pledges, *Il-Monti* also holds regular Court deposits lodged for safe keeping. On 31 December a total of 693 deposits were still being held. Expenditure to run *Il-Monti* during 2008 was €43,519, including salaries.

Assay and Valuations Office (Office of the Consul)

This Office regulates the marketing and distribution of precious metal articles and conducts also direct market surveillance by means of shop inspections. The price of gold and silver was regularly published in the Government Gazette. The number of articles assayed, weighed and valued as well as the number of inspections during the period is shown hereunder:

	Gold	Silver	Total
Articles received	1,206	15,846	17,052
Assays	389	309	698
Articles weighed and valued	155	0	155
Articles broken up on being found to be made of an inferior standard	0	951	951
Articles marked at a lower standard than the declared standard	0	0	0
<hr/>			
No of Inspections	81		

Revenue from fees on assays, hallmarking, valuing and manufacturers' registrations was €11,982. Expenditure to run the Consul's Office was €122,012, including salaries.

CARMEL CONTI

Director General (Inland Revenue)

Customs Division

MANAGEMENT

Customs administrations all over the world operate in a constantly changing environment. During 2008 the Division continued to face up to this challenge by adapting and further refining its procedures to meet the expectation of stakeholders in both private and public sectors and fulfil its obligations under EU regulations and national legislation while proactively preparing to face emerging threats and opportunities. During 2008, the Maltese Customs Administration continued to:

- improve delivery of services to clients, particularly the traders and manufacturers,
- enhance control on inward and outward movement of goods, people and means of transport,
- enforce legislation more effectively,
- improve the collection of revenue and the prevention of fraud,
- prevent the importation of illicit drugs and other prohibited goods.

Control and processing functions continued to be streamlined in line with Government's commitment to the revised Lisbon agenda, thus reducing administrative burdens on economic operators and citizens in general. However, Customs continued to be subject to ever-increasing pressures to provide greater security and safety in the face of a rising number of global threats. Balancing the conflicting demands of trade facilitation and security is not easy, particularly when viewed against a background of budgetary constraint and amidst increasing calls for the provision of more extensive and client-focused services. The Division has implemented a number of initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation with the Commission and the Customs administrations of other Member States. Our efforts to prevent the importation of prohibited and restricted goods, of fraud and international crime have continued to give good results. Customs in Malta also celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the Customs Union by organising several initiatives, including the issue of a commemorative stamp, the participation with the Customs of three other Member States in a DVD produced by DG TAXUD on Customs operations, and the holding of a public activity at Freedom Square in Valletta relating to drug-searching by trained dogs.

CUSTOMS EU SPECIALIST

The Customs EU Specialist supports the Division's senior management in all areas of operations where Community legislation or relations with EU institutions are significant. This function has three major aspects: co-ordination within the Division, liaison with outside entities (besides EU Directorate MFEI these include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General's Office) and the production of substantive EU-related input. Issues requiring the intervention of the Customs EU Specialist range from routine tasks such as the compilation of regular returns required by the Commission, to policy-related work (for example, following the amendment of regulations and directives relevant to the Division's operations, their transposition into Maltese law, etc.) and applications for funding. Other work co-ordinated by the EU Specialist includes the vetting of Maltese translations produced by EU institutions, the drafting of Instruction Notes (particularly for the Customs Union Working Party on Legislation and Policy), monitoring of issues brought before the General Rules Section of the Customs Code Committee, and the processing of *ad hoc* requests for information received from traders and traders' associations. The EU Specialist is also a member of the committee set up by the Division to administer the issue of AEO certificates, represents the Division on the Sanctions Monitoring Board and acts as the Division's Data Protection Officer.

ADMINISTRATION

Finance Branch

The Euro Changeover

The first months of 2008 were crucial for the Finance Section since it was then that one could assess whether preparations for the changeover to the euro were bearing fruit. Due to the training given to Customs personnel during the last quarter of 2007, the Customs Division's changeover to the euro was smooth and successful. No problems were encountered with respect to traders, mainly thanks to the information campaign run by Customs through various means of communication.

Accounts Section

The newly upgraded OMERA system for the collection of charges arising from the attendance of Customs officials at traders' premises was introduced. Further enhancements were proposed to MITTS, which enhancements were duly delivered according to specifications thus rendering the system even more effective. Discussions were started with Treasury regarding the forthcoming implementation of the SEPA project by 2010.

Customs Debt Unit

The total sum of import duties (Traditional Own Resources) for the latest recorded 12-month period was €15,508,372.48, of which €11,631,279.36 (75%) was transferred to the EU and the remaining €3,877,093.12 (25%) retained by the Maltese authorities as administration fee. The CDU continued to chase dues outstanding to Customs and to effect refunds due to traders, besides monitoring the deferred payment facilities granted to certain importing companies and managing bank guarantees.

The Cash Office

The main Cashier's office collected a total of €233,375,483 by way of taxes (import and excise duties and VAT) as well as fees, fines, store rent, proceeds from sales and other miscellaneous receipts.

Procurement/Stores Unit

A total of 1,329 Local Purchases Orders were committed during 2008. Seven departmental tenders and numerous calls for quotations were issued, adjudicated and awarded. Full assistance was also given regarding Contracts tenders issued on behalf of Customs. Several items, including office equipment and furniture were repaired or replaced as necessary. Uniform items were procured and distributed to entitled staff members. Personal protective equipment and other health and safety related items were also procured whilst risk assessments and other health and safety initiatives were undertaken. The inventory of items located in the 250 work areas within the 17 Customs premises was brought up to date.

Common Agricultural Policy Unit

The CAP Unit continued to approve import declarations subject to an agricultural licence (AGRIM) at the processing stage. Intra-community sugar was controlled on behalf of the MRRA's Agriculture EU Paying Agency which pays state aid to traders bringing EU sugar into Malta. At the request of other Member States controls were also affected on certain agricultural goods eligible for export refunds moving under the transit procedure. Records relating to the importations of wine as stipulated in EU regulations were also endorsed and maintained. CAP Unit staff participated in various meetings with other local agencies, including the Malta National Laboratory, and in various meetings on the CAP in Brussels.

Tariff Quota System Unit

In 2008 this Section experienced radical changes in its main electronic operating system as a result of the transition from the Surveillance 1/Quota 1 systems to the Surveillance 2/Quota 2 systems. A variety of quotas were requested, ranging from New Zealand lamb, to oranges from Egypt and wine from South Africa. Manifest and import system enquiries were solved to the satisfaction of traders. Anti-dumping reports were regularly sent to the EU Commission.

EU Programmes Unit

During 2008, a total of 362 participants attended 262 events abroad. A workshop on Drug Precursors was organised and held in Malta and a Customs & FISCALIS conference on information sharing is in the process of being organised. Information received via the CIRCA system was disseminated, whilst financial records were inputted into the ART system for real time monitoring by the Commission.

Secretariat Section

Rent and electricity bills were collected from Bond Operators using the Customs Groupage Terminal at Hal Far and the Temporary Storage Bonds at Luqa. 191 new cases of incorrect declarations were dealt with, 215 current cases were settled and 18 were referred to the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment. There were also 105 new and 107 settled cases regarding the monitoring of yachts and pleasure sea-craft status. 12 new application cases, all settled, related to onward supply relief. Eight applications were received and processed regarding the issue of Customs certificates and other misplaced documents, of which four were granted, three refused and one kept pending for further verification. There were also eight new post entries, of which seven were settled. 36 instances of garnishee orders or information requests by Law Courts were processed. Another 36 legal cases regarding arrears of revenue to Customs were in progress, of which nine were concluded during the year. The Section's activities contributed to the collection of €573,913 in taxes and fines.

Human Resources Branch

Personnel Section

An Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding were signed between the Government and the UHM on the revised flexibility allowance payable to the Customs Class personnel backdated from 2007 and the payment of three hours extra work per week to the Customs Auxiliaries, respectively. The process for promotions in the Customs Class grades continued during the year under review, as per Agreement signed in April 2006, resulting in the appointment of a further 68 Customs Officers and five Inspectors of Customs. Three employees died in the Service, another was medically boarded out while another 14 employees retired on attaining pensionable age, while the contract of an Advisor was terminated in September. New appointments of the Director General, Director (Compliance), Director (Excise and Systems) and Assistant Director (Landing & Releasing) were also effected. Another 27 appointments were effected in the general Service Grades. Two newly recruited Clerks were posted to the Division, one Extended Skill Training Scheme student commenced his apprenticeship and three Clerks were transferred from other departments while nine persons were transferred to other departments. The process to fill the vacancy in the grade of Principal Scientific Officer is currently in progress. Following the introduction by Government of family friendly measures, three employees availed themselves of unpaid Responsibility Leave, 22 employees went on reduced hours and three employees started to telework. Disciplinary action was taken against 3 members of staff in terms of Regulation 19 of the PSC Disciplinary Regulations. The expenditure in personal emoluments, particularly those being paid in allowances and overtime, was monitored continuously. The Administration was notified with the necessary virements, together with the causes leading to shortage of funds in the particular accounts.

Health and Safety Unit

The H&S Unit carried out risk assessments at various Sections and distributed H&S fact sheets and personal protective equipment as necessary. Training courses on first aid, fundamentals of ionising radiation, radiation detection, radiation protection supervision, erecting of scaffolding, and airfield driving permit and safety awareness were organised and delivered to Customs personnel. The various tasks which were outlined during meetings with the H&S workers representatives included the Influenza Immunisation of Customs staff and the servicing of all Fire Extinguishers and Smoke Detector systems, all of which were duly accomplished. Testing, certification and servicing of lifts and hoists at Customs premises were performed as required by law. At the Hal Far Groupage Terminal the fire-hydrant system equipment was overhauled and the feeding water reservoir cleared and cleaned. A protection safety framework was constructed around the container scanning mobile hut at Freeport. The no-smoking policy within all Customs internal premises was reinforced. Several architect's inspections were commissioned and building repairs and mitigation interventions were urgently requested and undertaken whenever these were deemed to possibly constitute a safety hazard.

Green Initiatives

Bi-annual monitoring reports were prepared regarding the performance of the PV system installed on the roof of the Administration Block of the Hal Far Groupage Terminal. Plumbing systems of all Customs premises were systematically checked for leaks and if necessary repaired or replaced. Sticker-labels were fixed next to every electrical switch and socket in all Customs premises with a reminder message to switch-off when not in use. Low power consumption lights were procured and installed in some of the premises. A hazardous waste collection policy in offices regarding batteries, toners and ink-cartridges, as well as the reuse of one-side printed paper and envelopes, have been promoted and implemented. Batteries and engine oil of Customs vehicles replaced at the Customs garage were sent for recycling.

Maintenance Unit

Normal physical embellishment and improvements were carried out at the various Customs premises. The gate-entry motor mechanisms as well as the floodlighting system at the Hal Far Groupage Terminal were repaired. All alarm systems at Customs were serviced, and preparations started to install a new CCTV system at Newport Bonds area. In-house maintenance programmes have been started regarding certain mechanical and electrical equipment at Hal Far Groupage Terminal and Freeport Warehouse. Two garages under Crucifix Hill Valletta as well as factory premises at Marsa Industrial Estate were vacated by Customs and keys handed over.

Training Unit

The Training Unit organised 45 training courses totalling 108 sessions (mostly half-days). A total of 348 lecturing hours were delivered, 280 hours of which on courses to Customs staff and 68 hours on courses to Customs clients, for example traders, shipping agents and *burdnara*. The total training time received by participants was 5,007 hours. Of the 846 persons invited, a total of 722 (85%) actually attended. A total of 14 in-house facilitators/trainers and 10 external trainers (of whom seven were local and three from foreign organisations) conducted or were involved in these in-house courses. Co-operation was received from several external training entities and Customs benefited from their tailor-made programmes adapted for Customs specific needs. These assisting external training entities were: the US Government, SDO, the Occupational Health & Safety Authority (OHSA), Malta Red Cross, Japan Tobacco International, and the Civil Protection Department. Otherwise, 88 Customs employees attended a total of 113 SDO-organised courses, and a further 76 employees attended other external courses, these totalling 665 hours. All e-learning modules available to Customs from the EC and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) have been placed on the Customs Intranet where they are accessible to all employees. An e-learning training policy is being drawn up whilst an e-Learning Portal is being developed to improve accessibility.

Legal Section

32 Letters to prosecute and 229 Seizure Notes were compiled and issued. The former were all sent to the Commissioner of Police for further necessary action, whilst the latter were all sent to the offenders. Customs had 867 court sittings, relating to 308 Civil and 551 Criminal cases. Customs personnel were regularly required to assist Prosecution through the Attorney General's Office as well as to testify in practically all the cases. 27 Criminal and 25 Civil cases were decided during the year, and fines in favour of Government amounted to €88,184.83. In 12 of the cases decided in the Magistrates' Court, offenders found guilty were also given suspended jail sentences. There were also 208 cases which were settled administratively out-of-court, in full or in part, as well as another four civil debt cases settled after court sentences. Total fines from all these cases amounted to €373,915, including taxes.

EXCISE AND SYSTEM CONTROLS

Local Producers, Traders and Service Providers

This section controls authorised tax warehouse keepers who produce alcohol or tobacco products, excise warehouse keepers who sell duty-free goods and traders that are not tax warehouse keepers. The section is also responsible for the issue of excise control stamps to importers and manufacturers as well as for payments of excise duty on mobile telephony services. All excise movements under duty suspension are monitored via the Administrative Accompanying Document (AAD) or the Internal Administrative Accompanying Document (IAAD). All traders are required to submit regular stock reports to Customs.

During 2008 the Section processed 41 applications for the status of Excise Registered Trader (ERT), of which one was transferred to the Tax Warehouses Unit and two had their application refused. There was also one new tax warehouse keeper. There were eight registered local producers of alcoholic beverages and wine, besides importers of wines and spirits. Three of these producers were situated in Gozo. An alcoholic beverages producer was refused authorisation to operate a new distillery. With regard to importation of pure alcohol, a number of tax warehouse keepers are manufacturers of medicines which use a large amount of ethanol for end-products that are not subject to excise duty. Other importers sell the alcohol either to be used in hospitals or for analysis and research. As for breweries, one company has completely closed down production and hence only one brewery was operating.

During the year, there were four producers of pipe tobacco/cigars. These producers were also importers of roll-your-own tobacco for cigarettes, pipe tobacco and cigars. Another five tax warehouse keepers were dealing with importation and distribution of cigarettes under duty suspension.

Tax Warehouses

This Unit controls tax warehouses at Barriera Tax Warehouse (BTW) and on private premises. There were 35 tax warehouses at BTW and 29 on private premises during 2008. Two new tax warehouse keepers started operations in 2008, both of them from BTW. Two other tax warehouse keepers transferred their operations from BTW to their private tax warehouses. New tax warehouse keepers are being encouraged to work from BTW.

Fuel Section

This Section monitors all fuel moved under duty suspension and ensures the proper payment of taxes and duty due on fuel released for consumption. Monitoring involves physical checks, satellite tracking as well as recording of the quantities of fuels imported, blended or moved. Data was submitted to the Malta Resources Authority on all imports and exports and on all the internal transfers and movements carried out between tax warehouses. All importations were physically controlled while internal movements between tax warehouses were controlled via the IAAD and entered into the electronic database. Frequent

inspections of tax warehouses and bunkering barges were made and fuel analysed to deter and detect illicit traffic. Liberalisation of the local fuel sector started to be implemented during this year and this section therefore adopted the first changes to be able to manage efficiently this new scenario.

Heating Fuel Rebates

On 15 December 2008, following an Exemption Order in terms of Art 14.2(c) of the Excise Duty Act (Cap. 382), gas oil (diesel) falling under CN Code 2710.19.45 with a sulphur content not exceeding 0.1% by weight became subject to a reduced rate of excise duty of 96.79 euros per 1,000 litres, only if exclusively intended for heating purposes. The Unit has been set up to monitor the sales of this particular product and to administer the rebate scheme. This type of fuel contains a blue dye for identification purposes and a specified marker added to it. For the time being the scheme is open to all those who use fuel for heating purposes, e.g. industries, caterers, bakers etc, and also private households, subject to the proviso that it is used for heating only. This blue-marked diesel, which is more ecologically friendly, has replaced light heating oil.

Excise Liaison Office

This office deals with the maintaining and updating of the Community's System for Exchange of Excise Data (SEED) database, covering all the excise registered traders, tax warehouse keepers and tax warehouses. This office is also responsible for four mail boxes: the Early Warning System for Excise (EWSE), Movement Verification System (MVS), the SEED and Excise Liaison Office (ELO) to ELO mailbox. The Excise Movement and Control System (EMCS) is envisaged to be fully monitored and maintained by this Office. The WLO liaises with its counterparts in all Member States and takes an active part during the Excise Committee Working Party (ECWP) meetings. It is also responsible for the National Project Plan as well as the monthly development plans.

Computer Section

Throughout this year, IT applications relating to the Import Control System (ICS) Phase 1, Entry/Exit Summary Declaration, Export Control System (ECS) Phase II, Authorised Economic Operator (AEO), Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI), Risk Management Module, TARIC/Quota upgrade, TARIC 3, New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), Centrally-Developed Transit Applications (CDTA) upgrade, System for Exchange of Excise Data (SEED) Version 1 and the new Single Administrative Document (SAD) were being discussed, developed or implemented as necessary within the established timeframes. Necessary upgrading was also effected to Malta Customs international gateway through the EU Common Customs Network (CCN) and Common Software Interface (CSI) which provide the necessary EU-wide interoperability between customs systems.

An open tender for the procurement of an EMCS and the provision of support services was issued during this year. An Evaluation Committee, reporting to an Adjudication Board, has been evaluating the tender.

Many important components of the EU's Multi-Annual Strategic Programme (MASP) developments must be implemented by July 2009. All these systems enable the application of Community customs regulations, hence project teams need to be fully familiar with the legislative, administrative and business requirements in order for the systems to be developed. This can only be gained from very frequent and intensive technical and functional meetings with colleagues from the Commission services and other Member States, as well as the continual reading and reviewing of all relevant documents. Nowadays all customs-related procedures are IT dependent, and will become even more so over the coming few years when all transactions and relative documentation will have to be electronic. The e-Customs Decision, which has been signed into law, provides a roadmap and rapidly-approaching deadlines for all future developments. The Division's IT capability is therefore critical to its success in all fields and deserves to be considered as a core function.

IT Centre

This Section deals with all hardware issues, including networks, PC-related software and customs user support and services. The IT Centre also updates and uploads the information on the Customs website. Besides routine operations, the major tasks undertaken during 2008 were the introduction of 29 computers in the Division under the leasing agreement, provision of support regarding the relocation of certain sections and the repair of several PCs.

Transit

The New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) has continued to perform satisfactorily in terms of stability and business operations. The number of open transit movements, the average time taken to close transit movements and the number of enquiry procedures resulting from open movements have settled down to acceptable levels due to greater efficiency in the monitoring of data exchanges between local and foreign customs offices. Trader experience and training for newly-appointed officers have further contributed towards an effective management of transit movements. A technical liaison mission was held in Malta during June by a representative of the European Commission. The mission reported positively on the national planning for NCTS Phase 4. The tender for a collaborative contract with three other national administrations on future development and implementation of NCTS was awarded. Malta participates in a Change Management Board that was set up for the purpose. The Board seeks agreement on commonly proposed changes to the NCTS application on a cost-sharing basis.

Customs Warehousing

This section is chiefly concerned with warehousing of goods subject to import duty and/or VAT, and their eventual release/export from approved customs warehouses, which are either public (Type A) or private (C). The number of containers warehoused during the year was 422. No new customs warehouse was approved during 2008 whilst two ceased to operate. A trader who usually imports new non-EU motor vehicles was authorised also to import and warehouse second-hand non-EU motor vehicles. A total of 2,664 new non-EU vehicles were warehoused, 2,094 units were released for home use, whilst 128 units were shipped to other EU Member States after payment of relative duty. This number does not include the 62 second-hand vehicles released for home use, on which €46,734 duty and €83,171 VAT were collected.

This Section includes the New Port Bonded Stores. Rent collected from goods released from these stores and from transfer in bonds amounted to €1,460 and €8,854 respectively, whilst import duty, VAT and excise duty collected were €6,514, € 6,382 and €5,963 respectively. There were 34 lots received for safe custody whilst there were 13 lots released ex safe custody. One auction sale was held in 2008, the total income derived from this sale amounted to €24,170.

COMPLIANCE

Representatives of all 27 Member States met in Paris on 4 July to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Customs Union, making this a year of special significance for customs administrations throughout the Community. The meeting took note of the changing role of customs, and recognised the importance of its role in the maintenance of a permanent balance between the protection of society from a variety of threats and the facilitation of trade.

Both these aspects were reflected in the Directorate's operations during 2008. Efforts to further improve trade facilitation went hand in hand with increased attention to the protection of national and EU financial interests. These twin objectives could only be simultaneously achieved on the basis of a risk management system that allows controls to be targeted in an intelligent manner. The risk management system continued to be refined on the basis of the experience gained in previous years.

An important milestone reached during 2008 was the implementation of the first phase of the Security Amendment (Regulation (EC) 648/2005) and the implementation of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) scheme. AEO status is granted by individual national customs administrations and is recognised throughout the European Union. It helps to modulate customs controls and facilitations according to the reliability of operators, as determined by thorough audits, thus providing customs administrations with another means of combining security with trade facilitation.

Processing Services

A marked improvement was registered in risk management, export facilitation and enhanced pre-physical control documentary checks. Risk Management was split into two separate units – a Risk Profiling Unit responsible for the update of risk profiles and a Risk Management Unit to oversee the electronic risk analysis. The aim was to focus the work of both units and enable specialisation. Export facilitation was brought about through the higher uptake of the remote input facility and the smaller number of controls effected on compliant exporters. The introduction of more thorough, pre-physical check documentary controls enabled traders to comply fully with import regulations prior to the actual physical control of goods, thus reducing the risk of delayed release from Customs.

Verification Unit

During 2008 there was a further streamlining and simplification of the intra community supply verification procedures followed by the Section. The submission of intra community invoices, which previously was mandatory, was only being requested when further clarification of the status documents was required. In order to further facilitate the movement of goods, only a percentage of imports were selected for physical control. This selection was based on risk analysis of trader, goods and origin of goods. In order to safeguard import revenue and security controls, those declarations which had not been subject to physical control were subjected to a further risk analysis and a percentage selected for post clearance documentary verification and control. These documentary controls, of which 4,766 were affected during 2008, led to the recovery of €55,061 in taxes and fines.

Valuation Section

The Valuation Section continued to be a reference point on values to management, head of sections in other Customs areas, members of the business community and to private individuals. The participation of the Unit's officers in the relative Committee meetings in Brussels made it possible for Customs to keep abreast of new initiatives launched by the Commission.

Binding Tariff Information Unit

The Binding Tariff Information Unit classifies goods at the request of traders, customs clearance agents and releasing officers at time of release or documentary checks. Queries are sometimes received from other Member States, a method used by all Member States in order to rapidly obtain a second opinion, thus eliminating the need to pursue the matter further with the Commission. Fourteen "Binding Tariff Information" were issued and published in the European Union EBTI-3 database. During 2008 a number of documents were submitted to the Unit by the European Commission for verification of translations into Maltese.

Sample Management Unit

The Sample Management Unit continued to liaise with the different laboratories/technical bodies as regards to technical problems as they arose. Due to Malta National Laboratory's limited resources, the Unit often had to seek assistance from Customs administrations in other Member States. Two working visits produced very positive results. A visit to the Dutch Customs Laboratory in Amsterdam solved a long-

standing problem regarding classification of chemicals used by the pharmaceutical industry in Malta, which were proving difficult to classify due to their complexity and the fact that these were not listed in the European Customs Inventory of Chemical Substances (ECICS) database. The Dutch Customs Laboratory provided the Unit with an extensive list of chemicals and their relative classification. The agreement reached with the Laboratorio Chimico di Catania cleared the problems the Unit used to face in regard to the analysis of mineral oils, chemicals and plastics. The agreement also provided for the referral of food samples by the Catania laboratory to the Customs laboratory of Palermo which specialises in edible products. During 2008, the Unit was also directly involved together with Malta Standards Authority in the implementation of the Registration, Evaluation and Assessment of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation.

Customs Economic Procedures Unit

The Unit assesses and authorises requests for special procedures from traders and manufacturing concerns. During the year under review, the Unit authorised 325 requests for various Preferential Customs Procedure Codes and activated same in the Business Registry. In order to follow up and monitor these authorised traders, officers regularly visited traders' premises and held meetings where modification or clarification of the procedures was felt to be warranted. During the year, 3,806 T2L Status Documents, 44 claims for refund of import duty paid under the Drawback and 90 transit documents were processed. Unfortunately the EU-wide Export Control System did not live up to expectations. While the local office complied with all requirements, other Member States were not so effective. In fact, out of a total of 598 ECN PLUS declarations created, only 197 were settled by Offices of exit in other MS. The consolidation of the Export System was effected during 2008. It is worth noting that the online transmission of export documents by traders totalled 14,247 i.e. 87.1% of the total declarations.

Binding Origin Information Unit

A total of 26 preference documents were submitted for verification to third countries eligible for tariff preferences under agreements with the European Union, in order to confirm their authenticity and technical conformity. Preference certificates were also submitted to the EU Commission in order to confirm/clarify issues such as technical conformity and possibility that a particular country had been granted a period of grace prior to complying fully with the technical requirements. The unit was instrumental in establishing that over €80,000 import taxes were due following negative replies in respect of preference certificates from solicited third countries.

Customer Services

This office processes import declarations benefiting from suspension of import taxes as provided for under Regulation 918/83 (e.g. 159 new applications for importation of personal effects). A total of 3,630 transshipment and shipping bills were processed (registration, checking, authorisation and settlement after export) and several EU TARIC Database queries dealt with. The Section also handles 139 claims for refund of overpaid duties and processes garnishee orders (390) and counter warrants.

The Customer Service section also compiles the daily booking list for containers selected for control. Data submitted by the traders is input manually into the Customs Electronic System (5,865 entries); the Section also inputs statistical data contained in 'intrastat' forms presented by traders (16,127 entries). The registration of new importers and administering user accounts of the CES forms part of the Section's duties. The Office is also responsible for the sale of Customs Forms to the public.

Archives/Records Office

The section stores and retrieves all archived files referred to and requested by the Registry Section. Insertions in respect of archived files were also referred to this office from Customs stations. The paperless environment created by the electronic Customs Electronic System, which retains all declarations in

electronic format, has allowed the staff complement at the Section to be further reduced to one Principal Officer and one Messenger.

Risk Management Unit

In June 2008, the Risk Management Unit was split into two sections: Risk Profiling and Operations. The Risk Profiling Section drafts and updates profiles in the Risk Analysis System. A total of 273 specific risk profiles were created during 2008, mainly on the basis of information submitted by the European Antifraud Office (OLAF), by DG TAXUD and by other local and foreign sources. The RPU issued 20 Risk Alerts to other stations, of which 40% gave positive results. Overall the RPU managed to target 65 fiscal infractions a posteriori which tallied to €160,494 in revenue. Communication between the Risk Profiling Section and other units within the Division - Enforcement, Intelligence, IPR and PCA - was enhanced. The RPU also played an active role in two operations coded 'WASABI' and 'MEDIFAKE'.

Risk Analysis in the Customs Electronic System (CES) is managed by the Operations Section. The status of declarations is monitored and the documentation pertaining to declarations selected for control by the system checked. The Export system (MEX) is being monitored by two officers and the work on the risk analysis is performed manually. The feedback reporting system performed by the releasing officers is functioning better and a database is being built for future reference and data analysis.

Landing and Releasing

The Landing & Releasing Branch in the Customs Division comprises the following outstations: Deep Water Quay, Examination Shed, Courier Office, Airfreight Section, Malta Freeport, Hal Far Groupage Complex, Laboratory Wharf, Parcel Post Office, Malta Shipyards and Weighers Office.

Deep Water Quay

During 2008 a total of 172 vessels discharged and/or loaded cargo at the DWQ. Discharges included 5,150 full load container/trailers and 2,029 new cars.

In January, a new weekly ferry service between Malta and Pozzallo was introduced; the service was increased to three times weekly in November. A total of 1,268 containers received from the Malta Freeport containing 4,394 cars and 60 motorcycles from Japan were unstuffed.

Examination Shed

During the year, 2,882 units from third countries were selected for control, examined and released, including 1,689 containers/trailers examined at importers' premises and 759 containers/trailers examined at General Examination Shed. The remaining 434 units were 'quick released'

Additional revenue collected on the basis of discrepancies noted amounted to €177,229. On various occasions, personnel from the Enforcement Section, Weighers Office, Intellectual Property Rights and Drug Squad were present during releases. The Port Health Office and Plant Health Department were also present in connection with foodstuffs and agricultural products. Goods were referred to the Malta Standards Authority in relation to certificates of conformity.

Courier Office

The total number of Transport Documentation Identifications (TDID) released in 2008 was 21,535. 309 cartons and 801 bags were scanned while 290 packets were opened and examined. Transshipment Bills (TSB) raised at the Courier Office totalled 443. The number of 'C' Status bags was of 43,139, non-EU bags 22,498. The revenue collected was €2,617,586 (90% of which was VAT).

Airfreight

A total of 6,471 manifests were handled by this section; 8,879 import declarations were received of which 2,675 were selected for control. Revenue collected was as follows:

VAT	€6,862,379	Duty	€1,019,683
Excise Duty	€11,867	Deposits	€6,047
Total €7,899,976			

Members of this Section co-operated with the Customs Intelligence Service, the Customs Debt Unit, the Computer Section and the Verification Unit. Attendance by members of the Enforcement Section was regular and useful. Goods suspected of infringing IPR regulations were checked by members of the IPR unit. These goods usually consisted of wrist watches, ink cartridges for printers, mobile phones and accessories, outerwear and medicines. Occasionally non-proliferation officers were called to check on dual use goods.

Malta Freeport

The main responsibility of this Section is to ensure that all units that exit the Free Zone area are accounted for and covered by necessary Customs documentation. A total of 2,565 *pratiques* were carried out, of which 1,634 were for vessels coming from non-EU countries. 34,611 containers despatched for local consumption amounted to 34,611, of which 12,314 were of non-EU status and released for free circulation.

Hal Far Groupage Complex

2008 witnessed a number of changes at this Section, mainly due to the transfer of the Examination Shed from Marsa to the Hal Far Groupage Complex. A total of 5,561 units entered the complex of which 1,447 were non-EU. Tallying was carried out on 342 non-EU units and 149 EU. The Special Intervention Action Team (SIAT) carried out 1,557 spot checks at the gate. Customs duties collected increased by 70.3%, to €1,625,961 and VAT by 36.8% to €5,532,856. This has to be attributed mainly to the payments of full load containers which are examined at Hal Far. There was an overall increase of 3% in post-entries raised and an increase of 23.2% in possible fines paid. The revenue collected for 2008 totalled €7,247,567.

Laboratory Wharf

This Section is responsible for the supervision of goods landed at Laboratory Wharf, Coal Wharf and the Silo. A total of 621 vessels landed goods at this station. The number of containers transferred from Malta Freeport to Lab Wharf amounted to 798 while Gate searches amounted to 992.

Parcel Post Office

The trend to increased revenue noted over the previous two years was confirmed. This resulted from the growing popularity of online shopping which in turn leads to greater demand for postal services. Another factor that might be contributing to the increase in revenue collected is the fact that Maltapost personnel are implementing fully the instructions given to them by Customs. Revenue collected at the Parcel Post Office totalled €688,094, of which 84% was VAT.

Other: Malta Shipyards, Customs Weighing Section

Revenue collected from the Malta Shipyards Section amounted to €34,432. The amount of €67,648 was raised as deposit on T1 documents. 77 containers/trailers were examined and released during 2008. Every effort was made to monitor and settle any outstanding amounts and to take note of any pending issues, especially in view of the imminent privatisation of the Malta Shipyards.

Weighing fees collected amounted to €2,100.

ENFORCEMENT

Investigations & Intelligence Branch

Non-Proliferation Unit

Documentary checks effected by the Unit included 115 on containers in transshipment, 48 on airfreight cargo, eight on local exports, three on courier cargo and two at Hal Far Groupage Complex. These were followed by a number of physical checks which led to seven shipments being withheld. All were later released after export authorisation was issued. In-depth *Commodity Identification* training was delivered to 10 individuals from various stations within the Division. This was co-ordinated with members of the local academia and the US Department of Energy, which also funded this programme. The industry outreach programme was continued through various meetings with operators engaged in the export trade.

Post Clearance Audit (PCA) and Economic Procedures Enforcement Unit (EPEU)

PCA/EPEU personnel carried out 251 on-site visits. These actions led to the raising of 22 post-entries which netted €100,947 in duties and VAT.

An official from the PCA Unit formed part of the team delegated by DG Customs to conduct an Alcohol and Tobacco Excise Audit. Another official was given the task to lead the Authorised Economic Operator Audit team. The same official also took part in the preparations for the introduction of the Economic Operation and Registration Identification (EORI) system.

Container Monitoring Unit

A total of 1,713 vessels' manifests were reviewed leading to the scanning of 7,558 transshipment containers. 798 containers were also physically examined resulting in the seizure of the contents of 35 containers. Another 5,730 containers intended for the domestic market were also scanned. The month of July saw the introduction into service of the new Nuctech scanner. Officials from this Unit were also involved in a pilot exercise and other preparations related to the coming into force of EU Regulation 1875/2006 in 2009.

Enforcement Unit

Drug seizures for 2008 were even better than for 2007, which had itself been a record year. Seizures totalled 21, 16 of which concerned passengers arriving from an EU country. Seizures included 19.4kg cocaine, 7.5kg heroin, 9,975 ecstasy tablets and a quantity of khat. Apart from swallowers (11 cases), methods of concealment included suitcases with the traditional false bottoms and shoes with hollow soles. A total of 2,860 flights were targeted and 31,600 pieces of luggage were scanned, of which nearly 11,000 were also physically examined. Personal searches carried out amounted to 151. These controls resulted in the seizure of over 930,000 cigarettes, 100 bottles alcohol and 14 bird skins (under CITES regulations). The 367 'currency control' spot checks gave five positive results. Anti-drugs sniffer dogs were involved in both covert and overt searches at MIA as well as sniffing of mail and courier bags while the mobile x-ray vans scanned over 8,400 pieces of luggage, goods or mail.

The Unit was also responsible for surveillance of open-air markets and searches of commercial outlets for illegal excise goods. Of the 924 such inspections, 23% resulted positive, leading to the seizure of 169,000 cigarettes and 4,560 bottles of alcohol. About 200 searches on vehicles were also carried out, leading to the seizure of more than 42,000 cigarettes, 6.8kg hand rolling tobacco, nearly 2,000 bottles alcohol, a quantity of wine and beer as well as a number of live birds and chipmunks. Many cases were settled administratively and thousands of euros were collected in taxes and fines. A total of 33 vehicles were withdrawn/seized and two vehicle and one gold & silver auction sales were held, which netted €35,554. Another €34,851 were collected following the settlement of various cases.

Enforcement officials assisted other Customs personnel in various outstations including Courier office, cargo shed, mail post office and Hal Far groupage bonds. Joint inspections with VAT inspectors of vehicles/trailers and commercial outlets totalled 32. Searches on airport staff, surveillance duties, and daily patrols of the Grand Harbour area, yacht marinas and Freeport perimeter were also carried out. Other tasks included vessel and yacht searches and verification of high-duty stores on board vessels.

The IPR unit examined 653 containers at the Freeport, leading to the seizure of 36 transhipments containers. 65 cases were registered, of which 32 led to legal action, 18 cases resulted in no action taken by right holder and 14 cases were settled out of court while two cases are still pending. Over 21.7 million counterfeit goods in transshipment and 3,280 counterfeit goods intended for the domestic market were also detained. Items detained included cosmetics, hair and skin care creams, mobile accessories, MP3/4, sanitary pads, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes as well as 'usual' items like cigarettes, outerwear, head gear, footwear and wrist watches.

The SIAT tallied 149 containers and carried out 1,557 searches on vehicles leaving the Complex regarding IPR, CE markings and Excise control. Of the 75,627 passes issued, 70,375 concerned 'C' status goods.

Customs Intelligence Services (CIS)

240 passenger and 670 cargo alerts were issued with eight from the former and 37 from the latter category resulting positive. These results involved drug seizures, excise evasion, IPR infringements, pornographic material and incorrect declarations. Containers scanned totalled 4,730, of which 30 were referred to Enforcement Unit for further investigations. A total of 637 RIF alerts were received while 21 were uploaded by this Unit. CIS issued 77 Intelligence alerts and 22 Yacht alerts.

Officials from this Unit participated in two Joint Customs Operations (JCOs) and supported the Enforcement Unit and CMU in their participation in other JCOs. CIS was also involved in the assessment and granting of AEO applications. Another task is the recording and exchange of statistical and nominal information of Cash Control Declarations at the borders with the local Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit and the EU Commission.

HEAD INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE

This office is responsible for local, EU and international administrative and operational co-operation in anti-fraud matters.

HOI regularly attended and contributed to the Council's (EU) Customs Co-operation Working Party (CCWP) meetings and Mutual Assistance Committee meetings abroad. The CCWP is the co-ordinating group within the Council's structure with responsibility for taking forward initiatives in the field of customs co-operation. The group also plans several joint operations a year focusing on specific issues such as methods of drug smuggling or illegal trade in other goods. In 2008 the Mutual Assistance Committee was engaged in significant amendments to Reg. EC 515/97 which relates to mutual assistance between the administrative authorities of the Member States and co-operation between the latter and the Commission to ensure the correct application of the law on customs and agricultural matters. Last year was also a milestone in the launching of the AFIS (anti fraud information system) web portal which will be the basic platform for all IT applications provided by OLAF.

Obligations under the above-mentioned regulation and other EU and international conventions regarding spontaneous dissemination of information were fulfilled through EU, OLAF and WCO databases and communication networks. These actions enhanced and consolidated our links with EU and international partners in the fight against criminal activities. A number of initiatives were co-ordinated with local agencies such as Police and VAT. Input by this office was key in the favourable response obtained to the *Application for co-funding of lease for a container scanner* by the EC and the financial gain obtained following the agreement between Japan Tobacco International and the EC and 26 Member States.

FRONTIER CONTROL

Customs Baggage Room

The main duties of this Branch include the clearance inwards and outwards of ships, yachts, aircraft and passengers; guarding and escorting of uncustomed goods; patrols on land and sea in Customs areas, and supervising the landing and loading of all cargo imported/exported by air. Release of accompanied commercial goods is also carried out by this Branch. Besides collecting the taxes applicable this branch must also prevent importation of restricted and prohibited goods. Since joining the European Union its roles and responsibilities have increased and became more complex particularly because Malta is situated at the southernmost border of Europe. In carrying out its duties this Branch maintains constant liaison with all stakeholders concerned and co-ordinates its resources accordingly, for example to address particular issues which arise from time to time such as avian flu.

Grand Harbour and Yacht Marinas

These sections operate on a 24-hour shift system. During 2008, a total of 5,994 vessels arrived in Malta, of which 3,234 from non-EU countries, while 6,034 vessels were cleared outwards. These figures include arrivals/departures at Marsamxett, Marsaxlokk and Mġarr. A total of 181 rummages were conducted on incoming vessels.

Passenger arrivals totalled 111,861, departures 109,809; transit passengers 530,095. A total of 11,552 accompanied vehicles arrived in Malta while 10,175 departed. This Section processed 1,635 transshipment shipping bills, 3,436 duty free deliveries and 5,265 fuel stores authorisations. Currency sport checks totalled 1,009 while 1,812 searches were carried out at the various customs areas seaport gates. Taxes collected amounted to €46,904.

Yachts arriving in Malta totalled 1,863, against 1,690 departures. In both cases only a small share of the total traffic (approximately 14%) was accounted for by non-EU countries. Marsamxett was responsible for slightly less than two-thirds of total arrivals and departures.

Airport

A total of 2,556 aircraft landed in Malta from non-EU countries, bringing 170,903 passengers, of whom 6,791 were in transit. On the other hand, 158,978 passengers of whom 6,117 were in transit departed Malta. Freight landed amounted to 5,792,361 kg whilst 5,598,854 kg were exported. A total of 637 currency control checks were carried out on passengers. Taxes and fines collected amounted to €72,421. Moreover, 15 seizures of meat and dairy products were effected (total weight 143 kg). The goods were confiscated and destroyed as per EU Regulations. This section operates on a 24-hour shift system.

Prohibitions and Restrictions

Taxes collected amounted to €165,165. Out of a total of 49,009 software packages submitted for vetting, 1,389 were viewed and 171 were withheld, leading to 26 appeals. Seven items were subsequently released by the Printed Matter Appeals Board.

IRO GALEA

Director General (Customs)

Value Added Tax Department

AIM

The principal aim of the Department is to ensure that the VAT revenue target set out in the annual Budget is attained, in line with the Government's policy of ensuring sound public finance and with the minimum cost and burden to registered persons.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Revenue

During 2008, gross revenue collected under the VAT Act 1998, the CET Act 1997 and the VAT Act 1994 was €554,023,468 compared to €524,559,040 in the previous year. Refund of excess credit paid out of revenue amounted to €98,730,873 resulting in a net revenue of €455,292,595 compared to €406,668,796 in the previous year. The relevant information is shown in the following table:

	VAT Act 1998 €	CET Act 1997 €	VAT Act 1994 €	Total €
Total Gross	553,743,549	59,515	220,404	554,023,468
Less Refunds	98,663,953	340	66,580	98,730,873
Total Net	455,079,596	59,175	153,824	455,292,595

Eco Contribution

The VAT Department is the competent authority for the administration and collection of Eco Contribution. During 2008 the amount collected from this contribution was €15,608,958.

E-Services

During 2008, the Department collected €38,646 from e-Services.

Outstanding Credits and Debits

As at the end of 2008, the Department had a net debit book balance on VAT (1998), after deducting outstanding taxpayers' credit, of €302,879,943. The amount of €279,497,555 was in the form of estimated assessments and interests which would automatically be cancelled once the relative missing returns are submitted. The realistic net balance is still being computed in the Return for Revenue Arrears 2008 (TR58/2009).

	VAT (1998) €	CET (1997) €	VAT (1994) €	Total €
Debit Balance	404,138,392	2,923,491	6,439,551	413,501,434
Outstanding credits	101,258,449	18,800	51,947	101,329,196
Net Balance	302,879,943	2,904,691	6,387,604	312,172,238
Estimated Assessments	204,755,866	259,548	605,857	205,621,271
Accounts with a balance as at end 2007	23,319	1,096	1,448	25,863
Accounts with a balance as at end 2006	19,095	2,583	3,298	24,976

Cost-Effectiveness

Total recurrent expenditure during 2008, excluding the contribution to the Tax Compliance Unit and the Fiscal Receipt Lottery, amounted to €4,519,618. Net revenue from VAT 1994, CET 1997 and VAT 1998 amounted to €455,292,595. Revenue from the Eco Contribution was €15,608,958. Net total Revenue collected amounted to €470,901,553. The cost effectiveness rate for 2008 was therefore 1c per euro of revenue compared to 3c3 in 2007.

COLLECTION OF TAX ARREARS

Civil Procedures

A total of 177 cases were settled through Civil Court action, resulting in the collection of €12,496,880 of tax in arrears, as shown below:

	Demand Notices	Judicial Letters	Garnishee Orders/ Warrants of Seizure	Civil Cases Settled	Tax Collected €
Total	2,065	266	83	177	12,496,880

Operations and Enforcement

Audit Investigations

The number of audit investigations carried out by the Department during 2008 was 42 resulting in 22 provisional assessments of €289,758 and a final assessment of €751. There were 33 cases referred to the Tax Compliance Unit resulting in provisional assessments amounting to €558,228 and final assessments of €1,159,985. The Department also carried out 1,650 Eco contribution cases and identified 205 defaulters resulting in assessments of €547,967.

Credit Controls

The Department concluded 800 credit controls resulting in 114 assessments amounting to €485,077.

Validation of VAT Returns, Correction and others

VAT returns are regularly validated for erroneous tax declarations. The following table gives a breakdown of the cases:

Type	Cases Concluded No	Final Assessments €
Validations	548	46,713
Corrections	629	0
Audit trail	334	42,587
Agreements	14	57,395
Total	1,525	146,695

Compliance Rate

VAT returns continued to be issued regularly each month. The following table shows the returns issued and received in 2008. The overall compliance rate as on due date, expressed as the percentage of returns received over the number of returns issued, was 71.75%, increasing to 87.96% by end year.

	Returns Issued	Returns Received as on Due Date	Compliance Rate as on Due Date	Returns Received up to End of Year	Compliance Rate as at End of Year
Total	145,955	104,720	71.75%	128,380	87.96

Inspections

During the year, the inspectors of the VAT Department carried out a number of field inspections consisting of spot-check inspections and surveillance visits. A number of cases were referred for Court action.

Throughout the same year, the majority of inspectors were assigned work connected with administrative tax enforcement and review of tax assessments. Ten inspectors were regularly assigned duties to carry out inspection visits, supported by seven Revenue Security Corps members carrying out limited inspection duties. A task force consisting of members from the VAT Department, the Customs Department and the Police has been set up to curb illicit trading in Malta. A number of persons were arraigned in court as a result of this measure.

Objections

During 2008, a total of 822 objection letters concerning VAT issues and 45 objection letters concerning Eco Contribution were dealt with completely. As a result, the number of outstanding objections as at end year was 868 and 131 respectively.

LEGAL ACTION

VAT Legislation

During 2008, the following legal notices were published under the VAT Act 1998:

- LN 59/2008 - Refund to Non-Residents (Amendment) Regulations, 2008;
- LN 335/2008 - Seventh Schedule Amendment, Regulations, 2008.

The Department also gave input in respect of LN 105/2008 - Euro Adoption Act, 2006 which dealt with the smoothing of monetary amounts and other amendments.

Court Cases

Legal action was taken against taxpayers wherever it resulted that the VAT legislation was being abused. As a result, 273 cases involving failure to issue fiscal receipts were brought before the Court, of which 155 were decided. These were together fined a total of €145,326, whilst 30 cases were acquitted.

Another 2,726 new cases involved failure to submit tax returns. As a result, 379 cases were together fined €768,690 whilst 1,899 cases were withdrawn once the returns were duly submitted prior to the Court hearing. The relevant information is shown below;

	Involving Fiscal Receipts				Involving Tax Returns			
	Appointed	Fined		Acquitted	Appointed	Fined		Withdrawn
		No	€			No	€	
Total	273	155	145,326	30	2,726	379	768,690	1,899

Appeals

During 2008, the number of new appeals lodged with the VAT and CET Appeals Boards was 58. The boards decided a total of 98 cases.

TAXPAYERS' REGISTRY

Registration and De-registration

During the year, 4,642 taxpayers were registered with the Department, bringing the total number of registered persons to 91,375. The current active registered taxpayers is 52,264 of which 33,103 are in Register A, 18,804 are in Register B and 357 are in Register C. The number of outstanding applications as at end year was nil. During the same year, 3,556 new applications were received for de-registration. A total of 4,964 applications were processed completely.

OTHER MATTERS

Manual Fiscal Receipt Booklets

The number of fiscal receipt booklets distributed in 2008 was 68,867, a decrease of 9.94% over 2007.

Printed Booklets	69,613
Distributed Booklets	68,867
Returned Booklets	41,768

Fiscal Receipts Lottery

The Fiscal Receipts Lottery has continued to be run by the Public Lotteries Department. During 2008 a total of €810,550 was paid as prize money.

Customer Service

Customer Service was also improved. The Department has improved communication with registered persons by upgrading the Department's website and publishing information leaflets for registered persons informing them of changes in legislation. The Department has enhanced training to staff and upgraded its Intranet. The Department is also analysing comments made by customers in order to improve the service.

E-Government

During the year, the Department continued to enhance its online services as part of the e-Government project. The Department has introduced a new service whereby taxpayers are now being reminded of the date by which they have to submit their VAT return by way of an SMS and/or e-mail.

Updating of Internet Website

Throughout 2008, the VAT Department has continually updated its website at www.vat.gov.mt. The website provides useful information on VAT for the general public, for traders and for tax professionals as well as online application for VAT registration and submission of VAT returns. The Intranet site was also updated for the benefit of the VAT Department officials.

Legal Committee

The Legal Committee set up during 2005 continued to discuss the various changes proposed by the European Commission and the EU Council to the VAT Directive and which should be included in the Maltese VAT legislation. The committee also makes recommendations to the Inter-Ministerial Committee regarding these changes and also deals with certain cases of VAT interpretation. The legal committee is presided by the Commissioner of VAT.

Participation in EU Commission and Council Working Party Meetings

The VAT Department also participated actively in meetings held in Brussels of the Working Party No 1, VAT Committee, SCAC Committee, Recovery Committee and other meetings.

The Commissioner of VAT also participated in the Council Working Party on Tax Questions which discusses the technicalities of the proposed VAT Directives for approval by COREPER and ECOFIN.

Own Resources

The VAT Department completed the compilation of the VAT Statement on Own Resources in due time.

EU Related Matters

During 2008, the Department continued to compile questionnaires related to EU matters. Notwithstanding that these commitments are increasing from year to year, the Department complies with such obligations in the prescribed time.

Fiscalis Programme

The VAT Department continued to participate in the Fiscalis Programme which is targeted to update officials from all Member States on VAT issues. 22 officials from the Department participated in seminars, workshops, work visits and multilateral controls. 10 officials from tax administrations of various Member States participated in a number of work visits in Malta. As part of the programme Malta hosted a seminar sponsored by the EU Commission on the Place of Supply of Services in November 2008. More than 50 participants took part from all Member States.

Training

Training to staff was held both in-house and outside the Department.

JOSEPH SAMMUT
Director General (VAT)

Tax Compliance Unit

GENERAL

During the year, the Tax Compliance Unit (TCU) continued to consolidate its core competencies of:

- expanding its Data Warehouse to include new sources of information;
- increasing its efforts in combating tax evasion and avoidance through better and more cost-effective tax audits;
- improving the expertise and technical knowledge of the TCU professional staff through continuous education programmes.

ADMINISTRATION

Finance & Budgetary Control

The total Tax Compliance Unit budget allocation for 2008 was of €1,223,000 under the item *Contributions to Government Entities* as part of the VAT vote. Pending recruitment drives and a conservative approach in terms of operational expenditure saw the Unit register significant savings of approximately €95,000.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Recruitment of Professional Staff

The Tax Compliance Unit's professional staff complement at the end of 2008 stood at 17. The Unit is presently seeking to recruit accountants and senior accountants to raise its staff complement. A call for applications for these positions was published in late 2008, and it is expected that the relevant recruitment of new staff will take place in early 2009.

Staff Training & Professional Development

Throughout 2008, the Unit embarked on an intensive in-house training programme for its accountants and senior accountants with a particular focus on income tax related matters. Amongst others, these short training programmes included a review of the fringe benefit regulations, a focus on technical matters with respect to capital gains, and a detailed analysis of tax evasion schemes. On average, each of the Unit's operational staff attended a total of 47 contact hours of training.

Furthermore, the Tax Compliance Unit participated in a total of 14 overseas meetings and training seminars under the *Fiscalis* and the *IOTA* (Intra-European Organisation for Tax Administrations) programmes.

IT SYSTEMS & DATA WAREHOUSE

Use of TCU Information by Other Departments

A total of 5,210 reports were generated from the TCU Data bank and furnished to other government departments, mainly the VAT, Inland Revenue and Social Security Departments as well as the ETC. The following table lists the reports furnished by the TCU to the mentioned entities during 2008:

TCU Reports for other Government Departments/Entities					
Department	IRD	VAT	DSS	ETC	Total
No. of Reports	224	154	119	4,713	5,210

Risk Analysis

The risk analysis function within the TCU continued to establish itself in 2008. The Unit embarked upon various other exercises on specific risk areas in order to identify cases for selection. A total of eight exercises were concluded by the end of the year. In the process, TCU, together with VAT, created a joint inter-departmental committee to liaise in the area of risk analysis and ensure that cases selected for audit satisfy preset criteria in terms of materiality and risk.

Data Warehouse

Early in 2008, substantial effort was allocated to the euro changeover. This process required particular attention to ensure that all value figures were converted in line with the methodologies applied by the respective data sources. Considerable effort was also applied to the improvement and simplification of data warehouse reports and also to the creation of new reports for risk analysis purposes. Towards the end of the year, IRD made available to TCU the financial statements data submitted by companies. This enabled TCU to start integrating IRD data within the data warehouse. This process should eventually lead to a higher level of consolidation of data across the revenue departments.

E-Audit

In May 2008, the TCU together with VAT organised the annual e-Audit contact persons meeting that was attended by representatives from all EU Member States. Following this seminar, a number of representatives delivered presentations on typical e-audit issues to TCU and VAT officers. These presentations served as a good complement to the e-audit training organised in the previous months.

Following this seminar, VAT selected a number of cases to be audited from an IT systems point of view. TCU provided extensive assistance and guidance throughout the conduct of these cases. The outcome of the cases concluded so far has been satisfactory so much so that in 2009, TCU will be selecting similar cases to be audited by TCU itself.

OPERATIONS

Tax Investigations

During 2008, the tax audit cases resulted in the following increases in income:

	€
Income tax	19,541,691
VAT	4,177,060
Total	23,718,751

CARMEL CONTI
Director General (Tax Compliance Unit)

EU Paying Authority Directorate

Mission Statement

To perform duties and responsibilities relating to the financial management of EU-Funded projects and EU Own Resources with the aim of maximising the benefits to Malta within the obligations and parameters as set out in national and EC Legislation.

MAIN AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- To act as National Authorising Officer (NAO) in charge of the National Fund which has been set up as a Unit for the management of EU Pre-Accession and Transition Facility Funds;
- To act as the EU Paying/Certifying Authority with regard to Structural and Cohesion Funds regarding the certification of expenditure and subsequent drawdown of funds from the EU Commission;
- To open and manage accounts in connection with receipts and payments of EU-related funds;
- To disburse funds relating to Own Resources as part of Malta's contribution to the EU Budget.

Core Functions

- to perform the duties of the Paying/Certifying Authority for Structural and Cohesion Funds;
- to perform the duties of the National Authorising Officer for Malta and be responsible for the management of the National Fund;
- to monitor progress of the projects which are being financed through foreign funds emanating from the EU and the European Economic Area and other non-EU Member States, and draw budgets and forecasts for the said funds;
- to control and report on a regular basis the financial position of the funds and relative disbursements;
- to liaise with DG Budget on the payment and financial management of EU Own Resources;
- to compile and maintain proper records of ex-ante, interim and ex-post inspections by third parties;
- to perform on-the-spot checks on the stakeholders involved in the implementation of EU-Funded projects;
- to monitor the work of the Treasury and Contracts Department, which together are equivalent to the Central Financing and Contracting Unit (CFCU);
- to maintain an ongoing liaison with government institutions on EU-related matters in order to ensure that all commitments emanating from the various funding operations are being met;
- to manage the EU Travel Envelope regarding Malta's participation in EU Council and Commission meetings;
- to manage and process funds related to other EU initiatives and programmes.

Work Report for 2008

Pre-Accession and Transition Facility Funding

The Director EU Paying Authority is also vested with the responsibility of NAO which is a function directly delegated to him by the Minister of Finance, the Economy & Investment. As stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the Financing Memoranda (FM) and EC Financing Decisions for the four Pre-Accession and the three Transition Facility Programmes, the NAO is recognised as the top leader in the implementation process. These Programmes are regulated by EC Regulation 555/2000.

The NAO continued adopting, in liaison with the European Commission, the Extended Decentralised Implementation System (EDIS) in the management of EU Pre-Accession funds, including the Transition Facility. The NAO ensured as an ongoing exercise that the EDIS requirements were maintained.

During 2008, the Office of the NAO liaised with the European Commission to finalise the Pre-accession Programme for 2003. With regard to Transition Facility 2004, the NAO initiated the process with the other key stakeholders to close the programme. Moreover, the NAO ensured that the deadline of 15 December 2008 in relation to commitment for the Transition Facility for 2006 was attained successfully. In fact the commitment amount as a percentage of allocation stood at 94%.

The National Authorising Officer (NAO) was also involved in the following:

- chairing of regular co-ordination meetings with the participation of all the horizontal stakeholders, including the National Aid Co-ordinator (PPCD), the Contracts and Treasury Departments to monitor the progress of all projects under the Pre-accession and Transition Facility Programmes and also to resolve any pending issues;
- participation in the biannually scheduled Sectoral Monitoring Sub Committees together with the National Aid Coordinator (NAC), Senior Programming Officers and the Project Leaders of projects under the Pre-accession and Transition Facility Programmes from various ministries, departments and other entities;
- participation in Steering Committees of Twinning Projects of various departments and ministries;
- issuing of various circulars related to the implementation of projects under the Pre-accession and Transition Facility Programmes. These circulars included reminders to stakeholders regarding contracting and disbursement deadlines of Programmes, another on Budget Estimates for each project, and another on the submission of Irregularity Reports;
- participation and contribution in a number of monitoring visits and audits promoted by the European Commission on projects under the Pre-accession and Transition Facility Programmes at various Implementing Authorities;
- monitoring the iPerseus System for the updating of financial data on the various projects;
- participating in meetings with the Commission on issues related to the programmes in question;
- communicating its position on various issues and problems encountered.

The total amount of Funds received from the Commission during 2008 to finance projects of the Programmes still open added up to €5,262,811. Following authorisation of payments according to expenditure affected at project level, €4,730,139 were actually transferred to Government Revenue. Detailed information is included in the following table:

Pre-Accession and Transition Facility Funds 2008		
<i>Programme</i>	<i>Funds transferred to Government Revenue</i>	<i>Funds received from Commission</i>
	€	€
TF 2004	1,157,063.56	2,067,937.72
TF 2005	3,141,785.64	2,200,373.53
TF 2006	431,289.44	994,500.00
Totals	4,730,138.64	5,262,811.25

Structural and Cohesion Funds

The Directorate also had the role of Paying Authority (PA) for Structural and Cohesion Funds and during 2008 honoured Malta's commitments and obligations and fulfilled its functions and tasks emanating from EC Regulations 1260/1999 and 438/2001 for the Programming Period 2004-2006 and as Certifying Authority under EC Regulation 1083/2006 for the new Programming Period 2007-2013.

During 2008, the Directorate experienced a heavy load of work since it had to cope with all the obligations and responsibilities emanating from the Structural and Cohesion Funds system whilst retaining all the responsibilities pertaining to Pre-Accession and Transition Facility Programmes. The Directorate performed a total of 17 certifications of expenditure to the Commission during the year and was directly

responsible for overseeing the whole certification process, and drawing up the necessary financial reports and disbursement claims. The said certifications carried out consisted of three certifications each for the ESF, ERDF, EAGGF, EQUAL and COHESION Funds and two certifications for the FIGG. All the said certifications were accepted by the Commission and the relative funds transferred to Government Revenue.

During 2008, the PA formulated a strategy of how it will proceed in the certification of structural and cohesion funds for the programming periods 2004-2006 and 2007-2013.

The EU Paying Authority continued to establish and maintain efficient communications and contacts with the Financial Services at the Commission in Brussels and with the different Funds to ensure a smooth and reliable process.

During the year, the PA participated as a permanent member in all the various Monitoring Committees for Structural and Cohesion Funds for the periods 2004-2006 and 2007-2013.

Furthermore, the EU Paying Authority ensured that the funds concerning projects under the Structural and Cohesion Funds were provided and committed in the National Budget and the relative accounts opened. In this process, sound communication links with the Central Bank of Malta (CBM) were maintained at all times and instructions to the CBM were issued to provide statements of account of all transactions including interest earned on balances and other certifications requested by the EU Commission. Details, about the relative accounts were communicated to the pertinent services in Brussels.

Throughout the year the Directorate was involved in various fora and communicated its position on various issues including proposals for the structure and implementation of the new Structural Funds Database for the programming period 2007-2013 and also on the Manual of Procedures for the same period.

The table below indicates the aggregated amounts of Structural and Cohesion Funds per fund received from the Commission totalling €21,953,817 together with the Certifications of Expenditure effected by the Directorate throughout 2008 which amounted to €18,687,947 Amounts reimbursed by the Commission following certifications and transferred to Government Revenue, during 2008 amounted to €21,381,859.

Structural and Cohesion Funds during 2008			
<i>Fund</i>	<i>Funds Received from EU Commission during 2008</i>	<i>Expenditure Certified by the Directorate</i>	<i>Amounts Transferred to Govt. Revenue</i>
	€	€	€
ERDF	11,299,622.72	8,422,868.35	11,299,622.72
ESF	1,710,297.56	1,231,453.14	1,710,297.56
EAGGF	1,806,778.75	1,172,823.77	1,806,778.75
FIGG	624,992.67	624,992.67	624,992.67
Equal	223,106.13	200,800.31	223,106.13
Cohesion	6,289,019.09	7,035,007.85	5,717,060.88
Totals	21,953,816.92	18,687,946.09	21,381,858.71

Own Resources

The EU Paying Authority Directorate also managed the Bank Account relating to EU Own Resources. During 2008, close relations were maintained with the relevant services in DG Budget of the EU Commission on the payment and financial management of Own Resources, reporting requirements, and the transactions to be made in the accounts and the exchange rate criteria. As a consequence, continuous contact, as an ongoing exercise, was maintained with the Customs Department regarding Traditional Own Resources (TOR), the VAT Department for the VAT-Based Own Resources calculation and the National Statistics Office (NSO) for the GNI-based workings. The PA participated and gave its contribution as a permanent member of the Task Force within the MFEI on Own Resources. The Directorate ensured that

payments to the EU Commission were effected on a regular basis and in the appropriate manner within the stipulated deadlines.

The table below indicates the payments of Own Resources effected by the Directorate in favour of the Commission during 2008, amounting to €59,841,193. During the year, the Commission refunded to Malta €2,505,153 as indicated by the negative amounts in the totals column.

Payments to EU during 2008						
	TOR ^(B) €	VAT-Based €	GNI-Based €	UK Correction €	Reserve €	Total €
January	1,110,360.50	1,470,191.50	5,653,804.34	686,463.50	0.00	8,920,819.84
			-2,505,153.00			-2,505,153.00
February	922,316.93	1,470,191.50	5,784,035.34	686,463.50	0.00	8,863,007.27
March	850,879.05	735,095.75	2,859,459.92	343,231.75	0.00	4,788,666.47
April	1,169,755.53	735,095.75	2,859,459.92	343,231.75	0.00	5,107,542.95
May	1,076,148.33	441,057.45	1,753,474.68	205,939.05	0.00	3,476,619.51
June	906,759.14	367,547.88	1,432,593.50	171,615.88	0.00	2,878,516.40
July	1,514,725.32	441,057.45	1,115,071.61	205,939.05	0.00	3,276,793.43
August	979,923.63	441,057.45	1,672,044.10	205,939.05	0.00	3,298,964.23
September	1,083,488.60	514,567.03	1,950,718.12	240,262.23	0.00	3,789,035.98
October	1,296,179.86	508,760.74	4,077,685.97	987,941.75	0.00	6,870,568.32
November	921,820.76	712,462.25	2,915,834.75	407,702.75	0.00	4,957,820.51
December		712,462.25	2,915,834.75	407,702.75	0.00	4,035,999.75
Opting out		2,077,850.89				2,077,850.89
Correction		4,140.95				4,140.95
Totals	11,832,357.65	10,631,538.84	32,484,864.00	4,892,433.01	0.00	59,841,193.50

Travel Vote

The EU Paying Authority Directorate managed the Travel Envelope of EU Funds allocated to Malta in respect of the reimbursement of travel expenses for participation in EU Council Meetings as per EU Decision 190/2003 and also implemented the procedures for reimbursement for participation in EU Commission Meetings.

The Directorate conducted the following related work in this regard:

- co-ordinated and completed an exercise with all government ministries, departments and entities to collect all outstanding travel claims from their end;
- formulated Malta's Travel Declaration in respect of the reimbursement of all travel expenses incurred following the participation in EU Council Meetings;
- gave its contribution towards the issuing of instructions by the MFEI laying out the procedures to be followed by all government ministries, departments and entities for the reimbursement of travel expenses for participation in EU Council and Commission Meetings and also made a presentation to the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, apart from also providing information to the various stakeholders involved;
- authorised the transfers of the EU Funds from the Central Bank of Malta to Government Revenue and the respective government ministries, departments and entities claiming reimbursement of travel expenses following their participation in the respective meetings.

The total of travel funds claimed and transferred to Maltese revenue for participation in EU Council and Commission Meetings during the year in question to date, amounted to €948,380. This included €646,127 for Council Meetings and €302,252 for Commission Meetings.

Other Community Programmes/Initiatives and Other Work

Interreg IIIA

During 2008, two certifications were carried out. The expenditure certified by the Directorate amounted to €372,166. Certified expenditure transferred to Government Revenue amounted to €197,015. Funds received from the European Commission during the year amounted to €153,622.

European Globalisation and Adjustment Fund (EGF)

This fund was established to assist the re-integration into employment through occupational guidance, training and retraining, aid for self-employment, job search allowance and a redeployment scheme. Funds received from the EC during 2008 allocated to this fund amounted to €681,207. A Commission on-the-spot check was carried out during the year and the findings were positive as regards the quality of the control environment. Furthermore, the Directorate carried out its own checks on this fund.

Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows

The EU Paying Authority Directorate will perform the role of Certifying Authority for this fund for the 2007-2013 Period. There are four funds related to Migration Flows, namely European Refugee Fund (ERF), External Borders Fund (EBF), Return Fund and Integration Fund. The aggregate amount for the four funds is circa €122m for a number of projects to aid Malta in dealing with illegal immigration. During the year, the Directorate was involved in various meetings with all the stakeholders and gave its contribution for the setting up of the payments and certification process system. In 2008 the Commission carried out an audit mission and concluded that there were no material concerns about the structure and functioning of the proposed system.

Fiscalis Programme

Work was carried out as National Co-ordinator and representative of the Fiscalis Programme 2013 within the MFEL. As Account Holder, the Directorate managed the Malta Fiscalis Account held at CBM, regarding the transfer of funds from the EU to Government Revenue which for the year amounted to €86,778. Funds received from the Commission during the year amounted to €177,855. This Office also co-ordinated and managed Malta's participation in various activities offered by the Fiscalis Programme such as seminars, exchanges, multilateral controls, committees and workshops and also contributed towards the hosting of a VAT Fiscalis Seminar in Malta.

Other Work

The EU Paying Authority was also involved in other specific areas of work as follows:

- hosting a delegation from the Croatian Ministry of Finance headed by the State Secretary, for the provision of advice and information on the work processes of the PA and also as the NAO in Malta, to help them set up their own system as a candidate country for EU membership;
- monitoring and processing funds under the PRINCE agreement with the European Commission to finance the euro changeover process;
- involvement in discussions on the JEREMIE initiative to assist SMEs;
- participation in the Monitoring Committee and Annual Meeting for the European Economic Area (EEA) and Norway Financial Mechanisms;
- keeping abreast with developments in the EU on various issues.

CLAUDE CUSCHIERI
Director (EU Paying Authority)

EU Affairs Directorate

BACKGROUND

The EU Affairs Directorate is responsible for the co-ordination of all EU-related issues falling within the remit of the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment (MFEI). As such, the EU Affairs Directorate is also responsible for co-ordinating the drawing up of a national position in preparation for meetings at the level of the EU Council and Commission. As such, the Directorate is involved in the dissemination of meeting agendas and documentation, co-ordination of attendance of officials at the meetings and the drawing up and clearance of instruction notes to be used by the technical officials and attachés participating in the meetings. The Directorate compiles Malta's position in consultation with the technical experts from both the public and the private sector. The Directorate is also responsible for preparing periodic status reports on the activities and operations of the EU Affairs Directorate. It also provides adequate support to the Ministry's departments in areas relating to the European Union.

Progress Achieved in 2008

During 2008, the EU Directorate faced a number of new challenges. Under the previous legislature, the Directorate was mainly responsible for EU-related issues falling within the Ministry of Finance portfolio. Following the General Elections of 2008 and subsequent change in ministerial portfolio, the Directorate's responsibilities increased substantially to include EU competitiveness, EU trade and the Internal Market. The EU Affairs Directorate also moved to more modern premises to accommodate a larger team.

The Directorate has, since its inception, made extensive use of family-friendly measures, especially since the team is mainly composed of young mothers. This trend has continued in 2008 with six officers out of eleven who telework and two working on reduced hours. Teleworking has enabled two officers to revert back to a full-time job, having previously worked on a reduced hours basis.

The EU Affairs Directorate continued to be responsible for the preparation of instruction notes and briefing notes for officers attending meetings at the EU institutions. This also entailed the preparation of briefing files for the ministerial delegations attending the ECOFIN, Competitiveness and Trade Council Ministers meetings. Apart from preparing the Council meeting files for the Maltese delegation, the EU Directorate organised pre-ECOFIN and pre-Competitiveness briefings for resident EU embassies. During these meetings, the Directorate informs resident ambassadors and senior diplomats of Malta's position on the particular agenda items for discussion during the Council meetings.

The Directorate continued to co-ordinate the consultation process on proposals submitted by the Commission. Malta's position is drawn up in consultation with both internal and external entities. The Directorate was also responsible for presenting the proposals at the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC). Once approved by the Committee, the memoranda were then presented to the Cabinet for endorsement. The Directorate co-ordinated the transmission of the approved memoranda and the holding of meetings on very technical subjects with the Standing Committee for Foreign and European Affairs for discussion. During 2008, a total of 151 memoranda were prepared for presentation at the IMC meetings.

Apart from preparing for Council meetings, the EU Affairs Directorate is also heavily involved with the preparation for visits by foreign dignitaries to Malta. During 2008 alone, the EU Affairs Directorate was involved in the co-ordination of the visits of two EU Commissioners and two Finance Ministers hosted by

MFEL. Besides these visits, the EU Affairs Directorate was also involved in the preparation of briefing notes for the Prime Minister during his visits abroad.

During 2008, the Directorate continued to follow projects under the Transition Facility 2004, 2005 and 2006, with the assistance and support of the Programme Implementation Directorate of the Ministry. Several projects falling under Transition Facility 2004 and 2005 were concluded successfully.

DIANE SAMMUT
Director (EU Affairs)

Programme Implementation Directorate

BACKGROUND

The Programme Implementation Directorate is responsible for the management of the Ministry's Change Management Programme, including facilitating the implementation of the Ministry's endorsed policies, strategies and change management programmes and monitoring the implementation of the required programmes and activities, including customer care initiatives and green initiatives, to ensure the efficient delivery of the Ministry Business Plan. The Directorate also co-ordinates projects falling under the remit of the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment (MFEI) that are co-financed by the EU Structural Funds under the 2007-2013 programming period. The Programme Implementation Directorate also co-ordinates the setting up and re-appointments of boards and committees that fall under the Ministry's remit.

Customer Care Queries

This Directorate handles the Customer Care issues that fall under the remit of the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment. Complaints are received both from the local general public and even from non-locals and these may also submit complaints, suggestions and queries through the Ministry's website, the Customer Care Local Councils Network, *servizz.gov*, in writing, by telephone or by calling personally at the Ministry. The following table reports on the number of cases which were received by this Department through the various channels available to the public.

Customer Care Issues - 2008								
	Customer Care Network		Website		Tel	Personal Calls	Letters	Total
	Clearance House	Local Councils	Local	Foreign				
Totals	89	34	344	155	173	11	2	808

Green Initiatives

During 2008, the Ministry continued to increase awareness amongst its staff members on green initiatives with various initiatives that included the installation of a reverse osmosis system that reduced the consumption of mineral water plastic bottles.

The custom of electric kettles in each section was prohibited and staff members were instructed to make use of the electric kettle in the kitchenettes on each floor. Where possible, energy saving bulbs and tubes replaced normal ones and staff members were encouraged to make more use of natural lighting. Staff members were also advised to switch off all electrical appliances during break times and before leaving their offices, thus resulting in a reduction of electricity consumption. Centralised duplex printers were introduced where possible and the Ministry continued with its policy of recycling the debris and surplus material from the refurbishing that is currently taking place within the Ministry's buildings.

EU Structural Funds 2007-2013

During the year under review, the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment took under its responsibility several EU funded projects that were previously under the remit of other ministries and that

were funded under the 2004-2006 programming period. This Directorate co-ordinated these projects and also the application for new projects under the 2007-2013 programming period. Several project applications were filed and subsequently approved and these include the expansion of the Kordin Business Incubation Centre, the Setting up of a Life Sciences Centre, the Upgrading and Embellishment of Industrial Parks and the project for Developing National Metrology Capacity in Support of Industry. This Directorate also co-ordinates the Aid Schemes for Industries that are managed by Malta Enterprise.

Representation on Boards

The Programme Implementation Directorate through the Director participated in a number of boards during the year under review. These included the DAS Replacement Project Board, the Sanctions Monitoring Board and the Board of Standards.

AUDREY-ANNE CALLUS RANDICH
Director (Programme Implementation)

Policy Development Directorate

INTRODUCTION

During 2008, the Policy Development Directorate within the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment (MFEI) continued to focus upon its core areas of responsibility namely the development of policies, to represent the Ministry on inter-ministerial committees and other bodies, as well as the provision of timely support and advice to the Permanent Secretary on any issue which is referred to it. This role generally entails background research, synthesis of information, and consultation with stakeholders to produce policy options.

As from June 2008, following the dissolution of the Ministry for Competitiveness and Communications and subsequent transfer of the Competitiveness portfolio to MFEI, the Directorate was laterally moved to MFEI. In this connection, MFEI is now the lead ministry for the Competitiveness Council. As a result the Directorate has a wide breadth of responsibilities in connection with this Council formation. These include, *inter alia*, the co-ordination of the Ministry's contribution to the National Reform Programme and monitoring of the progress achieved in its implementation. The Directorate also provides advice on policy issues and co-ordinates the preparation and formulation of Malta's positions on issues pertaining to Better Regulation, Single Market Review and the Lisbon Strategy. This is done by keeping abreast of the policies being proposed and discussed by the European Union that might have a direct or indirect impact on the policies, strategies or operations of the Ministry or other government entities. To this end, the Directorate represents the Ministry on EU Council and Commission Working Parties and High Level Groups.

Administrative Burden Reduction

Back in September 2007, the Directorate was entrusted with the responsibility for the measurement of Administrative Burdens affecting local businesses emanating from national legislation. This exercise focuses in particular on SMEs and micro enterprises and will alleviate the burden on the economy by identifying and reducing costly and time-consuming information obligations.

In January 2008, the Directorate kick-started a public consultation process in order to obtain a clear picture of the perception of administrative burdens by businesses. The Directorate, in collaboration with the European Commission, organised a conference in February 2008 with a view to raise awareness on the Administrative Burden Reduction Programme. Following this, the Directorate conducted a reviewing exercise on the legislation in four priority areas: company law, financial services, food safety and VAT, and then broadened its scope to include pharmaceutical legislation, working environment/employment relations, fisheries, public procurement, and environment. Information obligations originating from national legislation were identified, with a view to setting a realistic reduction target and to achieve tangible benefits for businesses.

Malta is fully committed to ambitious and systematic simplification to reduce administrative burdens on businesses and it has set a target to reduce administrative burdens on businesses by 15% by 2012. However, Malta is leaving open the possibility of adjusting this target after completing the measurements. Meetings have been held with constituted bodies in order to ensure that the simplification measures identified would translate into tangible reduction of administrative burdens to the maximum benefit of local enterprises.

Single Market Review

In September 2007, the Directorate assumed the responsibility to lead and co-ordinate issues pertaining to the Single Market. In November 2007, the Commission launched the Single Market Review package, which is an ongoing review that sets out its vision for a modern Single Market among all EU Member States. To this end, during the first half of 2008, the Directorate co-ordinated, with the respective line ministries, the consolidation of Malta's dossier on this review.

Lisbon Strategy

The Directorate co-ordinates the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs at EU level. Following the worldwide financial turmoil that ensued in the last quarter of 2008, the European Commission came up with an 'Economic Recovery Plan'. To this end, this directorate jointly shared, with the Economic and Policy Division within MFEI, the consolidation of Malta's position on this plan which required a co-ordinated effort by all stakeholders involved, since the recovery plan dealt with an extensive range of policy issues.

Malta National Reform Programme (NRP)

The Directorate is responsible for ensuring that the NRP measures relating to the entities falling under the MFEI, are meeting the established time frames for their implementation. During the third quarter of 2008, the Directorate consolidated the submissions received from entities falling under MFEI's remit on the progress achieved in implementing the NRP measures for the period under review. Furthermore, the Directorate also co-ordinated the Ministry's submissions from the respective entities to the new NRP cycle which covers the period 2008-2010.

Policy Papers

During 2008, the Directorate conducted research work on a wide range of policy issues. In particular, the Directorate prepared a dossier on the Creative Economy, which is an evolving concept that is gaining ground in current thinking about economic development.

The Directorate also followed closely the Ernst & Young's Malta Attractiveness Survey for 2008, by providing an overview of the survey to the relevant MFEI stakeholders and requesting their reaction on the issues falling within their remit. In addition, the Directorate also worked on the concept of Sustainable Localities by looking at a number of eco-initiatives undertaken abroad, as well as on other *ad hoc* issues such as sports financing and Gozo's ecological dimension.

In October 2008, the Directorate drafted a Memorandum to Cabinet putting forward its proposal for the setting up of a National Design Agency. The memorandum was the upshot of extensive research that the Directorate had carried out over a number of weeks, in which it explored the many possibilities and opportunities presented by innovation and design, reviewing the experience in other countries and suggesting similar structures locally. This was done in response to fresh figures that highlighted once again Malta's need to address this sector. As a result of the positive argument in favour of this initiative, in the Budget for 2009 Government committed itself to set up *Design Malta*, having the professed objective of aiding and sustaining all those initiatives that are being undertaken in order to encourage the development and creativity of design in Malta.

Inter-Ministerial Committees

During 2008 the Directorate represented the Ministry on the following Committees:

- Inter-ministerial Committee on the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. This committee was set up in order to identify and examine the relevant local legislation which is not compatible with the Convention and to advise on the required legislative and policy changes;
- Inter-ministerial Committee on the International Council of Nurses (ICN) Congresses in Durban South Africa (2009) and in Malta (2011). The committee's aim was essentially to co-ordinate the forthcoming activities required to organise the activities related to both the 2009 and 2011 ICN Congresses being held in Durban, South Africa and in Malta respectively;
- Inter-ministerial working group on the Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Anti Discrimination Directive). This committee was set up to carry out an analysis of the proposed directive, establish potential impact of its provisions taking into account related legislation already in place, and formulate Malta's position and strategy for negotiations.

Seminars and Workshops

During 2008, the Directorate continued to ensure that it was always duly represented by a member of staff in national conferences and workshops focusing on various policy issues. These included:

- Skills for the Future Conference organised by NCHE (September);
- Conference on Government's Vision 2015 (October);
- Pre-Budget Consultation Meetings (May – June);
- Better Regulation workshops organised by the Management Efficiency Unit in collaboration with Northern Ireland Public Administration (NI-CO) (June – July);
- GRTU SME Day Conference (June);
- Konferenza Nazzjonali dwar l-Intraprizi Żghar u Medji Insahhu l-Intrapriza ghall-Holqien tal-Gid (September);
- Seminar on the Functioning of the Notification Procedure Laid down by Directive 98/34/EC (September);
- Success Stories Project – Better Regulation: Reducing Administrative Burdens on Businesses (October);
- Access għal Kulhadd, Suċċess għal Kulhadd permezz tal-Konvenzjoni tan-NU (December);
- Konferenza Nazzjonali fuq it-Trasport Pubbliku (December).

Overseas Participation

Officials from the Directorate participated in the following conferences and technical meetings:

- Joint HLG Competitiveness & Growth and Economic Policy Committee Meeting, Brussels (January);
- High-level Colloquium Delivering Better Regulation for Europe's Citizens and Businesses -Taking Stock of the EU's Better Regulation Strategy, Brussels (September and November);
- Group of High Level National Regulatory Experts Meetings, Brussels (January, April and November);
- Better Regulation Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Meetings, Brussels (March, June, September and November);
- Internal Market Advisory Committee (IMAC) Directorate General level, Brussels (April, November);
- Internal Market Advisory Committee (IMAC) Working Group level, Brussels (February, May, October);
- Better Regulation Conference – Cutting Red Tape for Europe, Brussels (June).

MARTIN SPITERI

Director (Policy Development)

Enterprise Policy Directorate

The Enterprise Policy Directorate was set up in the Ministry following the reallocation of portfolios after the March 2008 General Election. It started operating at the end of the second quarter of the 2008 and is currently made up of three officials. The process to recruit additional staff is in hand.

The Directorate's goal is to provide:

- informed advocacy;
- effective input into development of policies that affect small business;
- developing better understanding of small business;
- improved government service delivery to small business.

This should contribute to the development of an enterprise policy for Malta, focusing on SMEs. The Directorate also represents the Ministry in a number of EU fora and provides, where appropriate, feedback to the EU Affairs Directorate on issues which are of direct relevance to the sector.

It is the Ministry's intention to set up an Enterprise Consultative Council (ECC) composed of key stakeholders of enterprise in Malta. The ECC would act as the platform for exchanging ideas and eventually launching policy initiatives and the Enterprise Policy Directorate would also function as the Council's Secretariat.

The Directorate has been given responsibility for co-ordinating initiatives related to the Small Business Act (SBA) proposal made by the EU Commission earlier this year. The thinking behind the SBA is to fully unlock the growth and jobs potential of SMEs and make full use of their innovative capacities by refocusing attention on SMEs' needs in EU and national policy making through a package of political principles accompanied by a set of ambitious actions by the EU and Member States. Work has started to consult government entities and public stakeholders on the measures proposed in the SBA to identify how, and to what extent, these and others can be implemented in Malta.

The Directorate is also responsible for the transposition of the Services Directive, which has to be transposed by December 2009. The Directorate co-ordinates with other ministries the implementation of the directive's various initiatives which include an exercise to simplify the process and limit the instances where an authorisation is required for the provision of a service. The directive also requires the setting up of a Point of Single Contact through which applications can be made and authorisations given using electronic means, as well as the provision of information for service providers and service recipients.

During 2008, work focused on the finalisation of the screening and identifying amendments required to existing legislation regulating the authorisation processes and on the drafting of a parent Act to transpose the relevant horizontal provisions of the Directive. Agreement has also been reached with the Malta Information Technology Agency to start working on the electronic system required for the operation of the PSC.

ANTON SPITERI
Director (Enterprise Policy)

Information Management Unit

BACKGROUND

In June 2008, an Information Management Unit (IMU) was officially established for the first time within the Ministry. Four newly recruited ICT officers were allocated to the IMU and occupied the following four management posts: ICT Governance Officer, ICT Contracts and Services Officer, ICT Applications Officer, and Management Information Systems Officer. The IMU was responsible for the provision of information management services and related technological infrastructure to provide the necessary ICT support for the Ministry and its departments. Apart from the routine operational and support services that the IMU offers, what follows is an outline of the projects and initiatives in which the IMU was directly or indirectly involved during the year under review.

Local Area Networks

The IMU co-ordinated the following works related to networking which have been carried out at the Ministry and its departments:

- Patching of a number of network and telephony points due to the re-allocation of staff following office moves within the Ministry at Maison Demandols;
- A LAN extension at the Inland Revenue Department;
- Wireless LAN at the Contracts Department Boardroom;
- New 48 port network switch at Maison Demandols;
- New LAN at Hal Far Groupage Container Complex (Customs);
- New network points at the EU Programmes Section of the Customs Department;
- Network Extension at the Treasury and re-wiring of the main network cabinet;
- LAN extension at Customs Freeport Office by laying a new fibre optic cable from the gate to the warehouse;
- Replacement of some other switches.

Requests for Services

In order to streamline more the requests for ICT services from MITTS, new procedures for creating and approving Electronic Requests for Services (ERFS) by users have been put into effect throughout the Ministry and its departments. The loggers and approvers of each unit/department have been identified and their roles have been segregated such that loggers and approvers are distinct persons. All final approvals were granted only through the IMU. This two level approval process ensured more accountability and control on the Ministry's ICT budget. On the same lines, the password notification process was also streamlined to ensure more security.

ICT Budgeting 2009

In July, the budgeting process to submit the Operational (OPEX) and Capital (CAPEX) ICT budgetary requirements for the Ministry and its departments for 2009 was commenced. A number of meetings with all relevant stakeholders were organised in order to assess the ICT requirements for the coming year. The finalised ICT Budgets were forwarded to MITTS in October.

Leasing

The IMU co-ordinated with MITTS the Desktop Leasing Services programme intended to replace desktop PCs and laptops with leased ones. During 2008, leased PCs including a number of laptops have been rolled out in the following entities: Ministry Private Secretariat, Parliamentary Secretariat, Support Services and Corporate Services Directorates, Government Property Division, Treasury Department, Economic Policy Division, Customs Department, Consumer and Competition Division, National Statistics Office, Commerce Division, VAT Department and the Inland Revenue Department.

Procurement and Supplier Management

All ICT procurement except for new personal computers and laptops which were leased was centralised within the IMU. This mechanism ensured more control on ICT spending and allowed the IMU to monitor and ensure that suppliers are delivering services/products in accordance to specifications, service agreements and/or contractual obligations. The IMU also checked the legitimacy and accuracy of various invoices related to the procurement of ICT equipment prior to authorising the payments.

To promote more the optimisation of resources and thus reduce costs, the IMU also ensured that unused equipment available within certain departments was transferred and made available to others that required such equipment.

The IMU was also involved in managing suppliers and co-ordinating repairs on electronic equipment that need to be carried out by third party suppliers. The IMU prepared the equipment for pick-up by the supplier, kept track of such equipment and ensured that the equipment was properly repaired and returned to its user/s.

ICT Asset Register

An ICT Asset Register for the Ministry and its departments has been compiled. The register gives a snapshot of all the physical and intangible ICT assets within the Ministry and its departments. The assets include network equipment, information systems, ICT personnel, work centres and other specialised hardware and software. The asset register will be used by the IMU as a basis for a proper ICT asset management framework.

Consolidation

As part of the ongoing ICT consolidation exercise within Government, the IMU assisted MITTS in migrating several ICT services within the Tax Compliance Unit (TCU) at Marsa to the Government's IT infrastructure at MITTS. This migration mainly included the data residing on servers. Besides, all users' PCs have been reconfigured to use new shared drives, receive Windows updates from MITTS servers, have their antivirus software updated and SMS (Windows Messaging Service) installed. The wide area network connectivity was changed from Ethernet over Fibre to Extra Connectivity with dual redundant fibre paths and IP renumbering was effected. The two servers that were previously used by the TCU were decommissioned.

The preliminary work to consolidate the Government Property Division and the Consumer and Competition Division in the forthcoming year was also commenced.

Departmental Support

The IMU offered support to a number of departments within the Ministry related to diverse aspects of ICT ranging from project management, to consultancy, advice and technical support. The following entities made use of our services: Parliamentary Secretariat, Customs Department, Treasury Department, Notary to

Government, Commerce Division, Consumer and Competition Division, Accountancy Board and the Contracts Department.

Exemptions and Waivers

The IMU received a number of ICT requests which, due to GM ICT policies, required a formal exemption from the MITTS ICT Compliance Department in order to be implemented. The process for co-ordinating the submission and eventual processing of exemptions by MITTS was fully conducted by the IMU.

Training

During the year, IMU officers underwent training on the following subject areas: Induction course for new ICT officers, Web Content Management, Project Management, Public Procurement, and Information Security. An official also attended a training workshop abroad on Information Systems currently in use by the Commerce Division. Local conferences dealing with IT security, virtualisation and enterprise solutions were also attended by IMU staff.

ICT Awareness Programme for Employees

As part of its effort to provide end user ICT support, the Information Management Unit launched an ICT Awareness Programme aimed at providing Ministry employees with comprehensive and useful information. A series of short, focused and easy to follow publications are being circulated to all users within the Ministry. The intention is that, through these publications, users are educated and/or trained on specific ICT topics. It is envisaged that these publications will assist in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness through a more informed use of ICT related technologies. Three publications have been published so far, dealing with the following topics: Telephone Conferencing; Social Engineering; and Data Backups.

Websites Support

A number of departments falling within the Ministry's remit expressed an interest in having a web presence. In this respect the IMU explored the possibility of developing child websites which form part of the Ministry's website framework – whereby the same technology, content management and infrastructure are used. The main advantage in adopting this system was to avoid the cost of developing a completely new website. Using this model, the IMU launched a new website for the Notary to Government (<http://notarytoGovernment.gov.mt>) and will be launching shortly a new website for the Consumer and Competition Division.

The IMU was also involved in updating on a continuous basis the Ministry website especially during the Budget process and also the registration of new domain names. The Parliamentary Secretariat for Revenues and Land were also assisted in launching their information pages on the web related to their campaign against squatters and illegal buildings under the domain <http://www.1577.gov.mt>.

Following a security scan of all websites hosted at MITTS, a number of vulnerabilities were discovered on some websites belonging to entities that fall within the remit of the Ministry. The IMU assisted these entities in making the necessary amendments to their websites to mitigate against such vulnerabilities by liaising with the developers of the sites, MITTS and the entities themselves.

The IMU, in co-ordination with MITTS, ensured that Ministry websites that make use of online payment functionality are in line with a new security requirement. This was related to the introduction of Card Verification Value 2 and Card Verification Code 2 (CVV2/CVC2) for all online electronic payments processed through the Government of Malta Electronic Payment Gateway. These systems were updated to use the new functionality in order to allow access by the banks. The websites that were upgraded were:

- www.ird.gov.mt of the Inland Revenue Department

- www.vat.gov.mt of the VAT Department
- www.gpd.gov.mt of the Government Property Division (e-rent section)

Windows Vista Readiness

In February 2008 MITTS kicked off a project to assess the impact of deploying the Windows VISTA operating system across Government. The IMU assisted MITTS in this exercise by gathering the necessary information about its Information Systems and check which systems were compatible or not and what will be the expense involved if it is possible to upgrade and/or amend such systems. The scope of the exercise was also to determine the status at which current information systems stand, should a technology refresh be required whether it is Vista or some other new operating system version such as Windows 7.

Representation on Boards

The IMU through the CIO participated in a number of boards or councils during the year. These included among others the DAS Replacement Project Board, the SEPA Project Board and the CIO Council.

Warrants Portal

MITC commenced work in developing a web portal for warrant holders. The IMU assisted MITTS in bringing on board the Accountancy Board and the Notary to Government by guiding and assisting these two entities to define their business requirements and ensured that the Warrants Portal Business Analysis catered for the needs of these two departments.

Trademarks and Patents Portal

In partnership with MITC under the Alliance Agreement Programme, the IMU assisted the Commerce Division in the process of implementing the Patents and Trademarks Portal. The IMU liaised with MITTS and assisted the Division in compiling the business and technical requirements. The portal will be launched next year.

Services Directive

The IMU started liaising with MITTS to assist the Enterprise Policy Directorate within the Ministry in implementing the electronic means part of the services directive. The directive mandates the setting-up of fully functioning and interoperable electronic procedures by the end of 2009 in order to attain the goal of administrative simplification which is at the root of the Services Directive.

Complaints Handling System

The Complaints Handling System used by the Consumer and Competition Division was upgraded with a number of changes. These included migration to a new SQL database and a number of additional pre-programmed letters and reports. Data migration from the old to the new system is now scheduled for early next year.

Used Vehicle Valuation System

The IMU assisted the Financial Policy Development and Analysis Directorate within the Ministry and the Malta Transport Authority in implementing and launching a new web portal to allow second-hand car dealers and private importers to obtain indicative vehicle registration tax due on imports both from EU and non-EU countries.

Fleet Management System

During the year under review, a lot of progress was registered on the implementation of the fleet management system. By year end 2008, with the exception of Civil Protection, Police, and AFM where work is still in progress, all the Public Service had the system installed and implemented.

A number of enhancements to the fleet management system have been proposed, tested and implemented. These include:

- A reconciliation function for invoicing purposes;
- Fuel limits added for those ministries/departments that have or required quotas for general use vehicles. This was offered as an optional function;
- Better control of user functions have been made available which allows for more flexibility and better control to access functions within the application;
- The newly released version (08/01/2009) of the client FMS allows for variable fuel costs (due to this commodity being liberalised) to be adjusted accordingly for each and every requisition.

More enhancements have been planned for the coming year. These include:

- Integration of government vehicle licensing with E-VERA (ADT). This will provide officers in charge of transport with information related to pending CVA's or citations which will need to be paid prior to the road licences being issued. This will also include information related to CO emissions;
- Alarm system for VRT, maintenance and services, citations and licensing. Some of the alarms will trigger stoppage on fuel issuance if necessary;
- Scanned document capture for collisions, quotations etc;
- Immediate fuel requisition reconciliation by Government fuel attendant i.e. for Kordin, Police and AFM fuel stations;
- Short term vehicle replacement function to be added;
- Other improvements and enhancements related to reporting.

ALBERT VELLA
Chief Information Officer

Commerce Division

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Commerce Division is to assist business and facilitate trade by providing effective support and services within the relevant regulatory and administrative framework in its remit.

Initiatives aimed at fulfilling this role are undertaken through the concerted efforts of its three directorates, namely the Industrial Property Registrations Directorate, the Trade Services Directorate and the Small Businesses and Crafts Directorate assisted ably by its Support Services arm.

OPERATIONS

The Commerce Division performs the following duties:

- registration of trademarks, certification marks, collective marks and designs;
- patenting of inventions;
- issuing of supplementary protection certificates in respect of medicinals and plant protection products;
- issuing of trade licences;
- recording of transfers, cancellations, amendments and renewals regarding trading licences as well as trade marks, patents and designs;
- authorisation of the export and transaction of dual use goods;
- issuing of import licences and export licences;
- administration of EU import quotas;
- administration of temporary state aid for sugar;
- licensing of auctioneers;
- dissemination of information relevant to the business sectors;
- acting as an intermediary vis-à-vis complaints and enquiries from businesses about services provided by Government and other entities;
- assistance in the setting up of business associations and facilitation of relationship of the latter with service providers;
- co-ordination the implementation of the IMAC (IMI) System in Malta;
- running of Crafts Centre in St John Square, Valletta;
- providing support to the Malta Crafts Council, The Copyright Board, the Auctioneers Board and the Trading Licence Advisory Committee;
- hosting the EU SOLVIT Centre for Malta;
- co-ordinating the drafting of legislation relating to trade and intellectual property;
- providing input on drafting related EU directives and regulations as well as international treaties;
- participating in international and EU meetings as required.

SALIENT STATISTICS FOR 2008

Trade-Related

Applications were received, processed and published in the Government Gazette as follows: 255 new applications for premises based activities, 25 for reactivation of licence, 310 for transfer of licence, nine for transfer by inheritance, 34 for market hawkers, 52 for street hawkers, one for substitute hawker, 17 for

buskers, six for marketing agents, 55 for registration of freelance activity non-premises based, two for changes from old to new regime of licences, three for late night shopping, 13 for extension of time, 27 for commercial fairs, 21 for car boot sales, and 40 for change or additional activity.

Furthermore, 1,980 applications were received for import licences and 18 for export licences. There were also 30 applications for exports of dual-use goods and military equipment.

The Division, through the Trade Services Directorate, testified 576 times in court cases instituted by different authorities including Civil and Criminal Courts, Family Courts, MEPA Appeals Tribunal, and Local Councils Tribunals.

Industrial Property-Related

During the year, 1,264 applications were received for registration of trademarks, and 37 for patenting of inventions. Furthermore, there were 3,090 Industrial Property searches.

The Commerce Division through its Industrial Property Registrations Directorate was called to testify in court 68 times on intellectual property related issues.

Crafts

Members registered with the Malta Crafts Council as at end December 2008 stood at 810 craftsmen and 431 entrepreneurs. Visitors (including locals and tourists) to a local exhibition of crafts at Crafts Centre Valletta were 33,400.

ASSISTING BUSINESS

Business Care Unit

The Commerce Division, through the Business Care Unit of the Small Business and Crafts Directorate, continued to give first-hand assistance and advice to clients who required any service offered by the Division. During 2008, circa 2,404 telephone enquiries and 3,277 personal visits were received at the Business Care Unit mainly in relation to services offered by the Commerce Division.

Malta SOLVIT Centre

As from 1 May 2004 the Commerce Division began hosting the EU SOLVIT Centre for Malta. SOLVIT is a network of centres throughout the EU and EEA, committed to solve cross-border problems which hinder the rights of citizens and Businesses in the Internal Market. The network works through an online database maintained by the EU Commission.

SOLVIT Malta received 42 enquiries during 2008. Out of these, 38 did not qualify as SOLVIT cases whilst the other four cases were inputted in the SOLVIT database, with Malta acting as Home Centre. One enquiry received during 2007 was inputted as a case in 2008.

Awareness Activities and Meetings with the Business Community

During 2008, the Division organised a number of meetings which included discussions with representatives of various sectors of entrepreneurs, meetings with service providers as well as a number of consultation meetings on specific issues of interest to the small business community.

During 2008, five meetings were organised at various local council offices for entrepreneurs operating in the respective localities. These meetings provided an opportunity for those who attended to meet the

Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Small Businesses and the Self Employed to discuss difficulties concerning their businesses.

The Commerce Division also organised or participated in several seminars or meetings aimed at raising awareness amongst local stakeholders on trade issues, intellectual property, crafts, SOLVIT and the Internal Market Information System.

An awareness campaign on trademarks and designs, emphasising also the importance of Community Trademarks and Community Designs was carried out in the latter part of 2008 through funds made available to this office under the Technical Co-operation Agreement entered into with the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM) – Community Trademarks and Designs.

Participation by the Commerce Division in this year's edition of the International Fair of Malta was more challenging than in previous years. The main theme of the Commerce Division's stand at the International Fair of Malta 2008 focussed on the promotion of intellectual property, primarily patents, and the correlation and synergy between innovations and local crafts thereby also giving the latter the opportunity to exhibit their products. For this activity, the Commerce Division utilised funds available under the National Action Plan entered into between this office and the European Patent Office.

Thirty crafts persons, registered with the Malta Crafts Council, participated in the Fair and were given the opportunity to exhibit and sell their local products.

LEGISLATION AND BETTER REGULATION

The Division is regulated in its activities by the following main legislations: the Auctioneers Act; the Commercial Code; the Trading Licences Act 2001 as amended; the Supplies and Services Act; the Trade Marks Act; the Copyright Act and the Patents and Designs Act. These are complemented with a significant amount of subsidiary legislations.

The Trading Licence Regulations LN 1 of 2006 were amended in 2008 in respect of commercial activities licensed by the Commerce Division through the Trading Licences Unit of its Trade Services Directorate via LN 104 of 2008 giving power to the Minister so that in special circumstances, by notice in the Government Gazette he may grant an exemption to the minimum limit of business hours during which commercial outlets may remain open and also approve opening of shops on Sundays and public holidays.

INTERNATIONAL AND EU INITIATIVES

International Instruments

On 21 July, Cabinet approved Malta's accession to the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the Performances and Phonograms Treaty as well as the draft bill which would bring into effect minor amendments to the national Copyright Legislation in order that Malta may accede to these treaties. These treaties were concluded under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 1996. The main thrust of the WCT and WPPT (as they are more commonly referred to) was to introduce further harmonisation on a global level in the area of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights particularly within the framework of the digital age. It is expected that Parliament will be discussing the afore-mentioned Bill early in 2009 following which Malta can proceed with the simultaneous deposition of the instruments of accession together with other EU Member States who are not yet party to these treaties.

Participation in EU and International Meetings

Officials from the Division participated in EU and international meetings pertaining to its remit or in order to assist other entities. Meetings concerned the following issues: Sanctions Monitoring, Dual Use Goods, the European Charter for SME's, Trademark Practice and Procedures, Protection of Designs, Trade Related

Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, Patents, Copyright, Patent Libraries, Better Regulation, The Internal Market Information System, European Enterprise Awards, Regulation 2679/98 EC on Disruption to the Internal Market and Crafts.

In addition to the above, the Division participated in the General Assembly of the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the meetings of the Administrative Council of the European Patent Office and of the Administrative Board and Budget Committee of the Office of the Harmonisation of the Internal Market (OHIM), as well as the EPO's Budget and Finance Committee, the Committee on Patent Law and the Working Party on Technical Information. In addition national judges were given the opportunity to participate in a series of seminars for judges dealing with trademark and design cases organised by the OHIM – Community Trademarks and Designs.

BILATERAL CO-OPERATION INITIATIVES

Co-operation with the Office for the Harmonisation of the Internal Market (Trademarks and Designs)

During 2008 the Commerce Division benefited from a co-operation agreement aimed at increasing awareness on intellectual property rights and in particular the Community Trademarks and Community Designs. Discussions with a view to conclude a similar agreement for 2009 were also initiated.

Co-operation with the European Patent Office

In February 2007, Malta was the first European country member of the European Patent Office to introduce the SOPRANO system for Patents which is gradually replacing the manual system for the application, processing and granting of patents. In 2008, on the initiative of the Ministry's IMU team, discussions were initiated with EPO for the implementation of other software tools in the area of patents as well as for the digitisation of all national patent records. These tools, which include access to patent databases, documentation management systems, and online filing amongst others, as well as the digitisation process would serve to offer a more overall efficient service in the area of patents.

Following representations made by the Commerce Division to the Administrative Council of the European Patent Organisation during 2007, the following agreements were concluded with the EPO in 2008:

- a National Action Plan for Malta for the years 2008-2011 whereby Malta will benefit from assistance aimed at improving the national infrastructure in the area of patent, promoting the protection of inventions and patent information dissemination;
- a working Agreement between the EPO and Malta, whereby Malta is now in a position to request searches from the European Patent Office to determine the level of novelty in patent applications.

Co-operation with EU DG Enterprise

IP Base – This office is actively participating in an EU trans-national project, known as IP Base, involving 26 IP Offices around the EU whose main objective is *to raise awareness of and knowledge of IP rights in particular for SMEs*. The project, which commenced in November 2007 and ends in 2010, consists of some 15 Work Packages (WPs) grouped under three Modules. This office is pro-actively participating in this project by providing input to 7 of the WPs found under Module 1: Local Level SMEs Services for IPR Awareness and Enforcement.

Co-operation with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)

The Division commenced negotiations with WIPO for assistance in drawing up an IP Strategy for Malta. In this regard this Office has participated in two national seminars held in Romania and Serbia in order to

acquire information from other offices that have already implemented such a strategy or are in the process of doing so.

Furthermore, a WIPO fact-finding mission came to our offices in June 2008 with a view to assess national requirements for the implementation of the IPAS system for trademarks that will contribute to the simplification of the trademark procedure and will also facilitate the trademark search tool, which is a highly requested service by the public from this office.

TRAINING

Ongoing exposure was given to the members of the SOLVIT team through participation in workshops partly funded by the EU Commission and two members of the IMI team through training events also organised and partly funded by the EU Commission. Other officials participated in workshops and training sessions organised by the Office for the Harmonisation of the Internal Market and by the European Patent Office.

During the past year, officials from the Division attended several courses organised by SDO which were complemented by ad hoc seminars organised by the Commerce Division on social and health issues such as drug abuse, alcohol awareness, gambling and waste management.

A new training room was refurbished through joint efforts of staff and equipped through funds presented by the European Patent Office. The training room was inaugurated during a pastoral visit to the Division by His Grace the Archbishop.

GODWIN WARR

Director General (Commerce)

Consumer and Competition Division

Mission Statement

Making Markets Work Well: The objective of the Consumer and Competition Division (CCD) is to ensure the enhancement of consumer welfare. This is achieved through either competition policy which approaches markets from the supply side or through consumer policy which approaches the market from a demand side.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Four directorates operate within the Division, namely:

- the Competition Directorate responsible for the application and enforcement of competition law;
- the Consumer Affairs Directorate which in turn is responsible for mediating between consumers and traders, disseminating information regarding consumers' rights and education;
- the Operations Directorate responsible for monitoring and intervening in the market when necessary; and
- the Enforcement Directorate for the enforcement of the price indications and price monitoring.

The Consumer and Competition Division incorporates within it the Office for Fair Competition and the Department of Consumer Affairs in terms of the Competition Act (Cap. 379) and the Consumers' Affairs Act (Cap. 378).

The Division is currently undergoing a thorough strengthening process to enhance its enforcement capabilities. This exercise is being conducted following an assessment of what essentially are its proper functions, and the *raison d'être*, role and purpose of the Office for Fair Competition and the Department of Consumer Affairs. This exercise also permitted to identify those areas, both legal and administrative, which need particular attention in terms of modernisation of law and upgrade in human resources levels.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

Unfair Commercial Practices – A Year On

The legal provisions prohibiting unfair commercial practices fall under the Consumer Affairs Act (Chapter 378), precisely Articles 51A to 51J which have been enacted and published on 29 January 2008 by means of the amending Act II of 2008. These legal provisions transpose into Maltese legislation Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market.

In an effort to inform interested parties on the implications of this new legislation, the Division drew up apposite information packages on the subject to serve as guidelines and provide information in a comprehensible way. These preliminary notes have been also made available to traders' organisations during meetings held with them as part of an information campaign.

Pre-investigations and investigations of alleged unfair commercial practices have also been carried out. Legal proceedings have been initiated in 68 cases, whereby 17 of them have been settled amicably, one case was referred for proceedings before the Consumer Claims Tribunal and in three other instances administrative proceedings were instituted.

EU Directives' Transposition, Drafting of Legislation and Related Legal Work

Five new legal notices were drafted. Three notices were necessary to effect the relevant transposition of legal provisions contained in a number of EU Directives. The provisions contained in these legal notices were also explained to the Consumer Affairs Council.

Drafting of Administrative and Legal Forms, Reports and Other Documents

The Division continued to strengthen both its administrative and legal procedures directed to enforce infringements of the Consumer Affairs Act. This included drafting of new compliance order forms, letters requesting compliance, reports to Police including the relative charges and requests for the institution of criminal proceedings against defaulting traders, and administrative proceedings and fines forms.

Attendance in Court to Provide Legal Assistance

The Office also provided assistance to other directorates in their court representations in three court cases instituted before the Courts of Magistrates (Malta), where criminal proceedings had been instituted at the request of the Director General against traders who had acted in breach of consumer protection legislation.

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Unit's remit is to support the Division in its financial and administrative procedures and also to ensure that government regulations are adhered to. Furthermore it provides all the administrative backing required to issue calls for applications as and when required.

Training Courses

The Unit organised staff training for Division employees in different areas in order to keep them abreast with administrative, public policy regulations along with other courses which were directed to enhance the officers' knowledge. The areas covered concerned fire awareness, alcohol and its effects, drugs and their effects, binge drinking, gambling, and stress management, sexual harassment, gender mainstreaming and data protection. The Division was also awarded a certificate for implementing the SAFE Programme at the place of work.

Cost Saving Initiatives

The Unit took action in support of Government's policy on green initiatives. In this respect a photovoltaic system was installed. In an effort to reduce overheads, other initiatives were taken such as the installation of reverse osmosis systems, networked photocopier systems, streamlining of telephone lines and a reorganisation of the Division's car fleet.

EUROPEAN CONSUMER CENTRE

The European Consumer Centre of Malta (ECC) is part of the European Consumer Centres network with offices throughout all EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The underlying objective of the network is to enhance consumer confidence in the Internal Market. The ECC network seeks to achieve this through the provision of information, practical advice and also by providing assistance with any cross-border complaints consumers might have.

The Division continued to operate the Centre in Malta under the same two-year grant agreement entered into with the European Commission in 2007. The grant agreement provides for the reimbursement of 50% of the total eligible costs incurred by the ECC.

In 2008, the ECC continued the role it took up in 2007, that of being the main back-up office to the Commission's information campaign for consumers. To fulfil this role, as well as perform its work plan, the ECC had to strengthen its staff complement. In March 2008, a full-time legal officer joined the ECC and in April 2008 an Executive Officer was deployed at the ECC in order to administer the front office of the Centre as well as to provide administrative support.

The ECC has also submitted its application for a grant to the European Commission for a 50% contribution to maintain its 2009 operations.

Promotional Activities

Collection of information on EU and national laws

In order to fulfil the tasks under this objective proficiently, the ECC continuously monitors and gathers information on EU and national legislation. ECC Malta mainly effects this task through the sharing of information within the network. The information gathered and shared concerned various areas. These include, amongst others, the liquidation of an airline, price indications, mobile phones and pre-paid cards, access to beaches, a ban on driving in certain German cities and Eurovision televoting.

The Centre also gathered information and participated in consultations on EU and national laws and initiatives, mainly on unfair commercial practices, consumer rights directive, timeshare directive, the European small claims procedure and collective redress.

Creation, publication and distribution of information material

The ECC has devised and issued:

- an introductory leaflet promoting the services offered by the Centre together with a number of posters and a sign;
- a leaflet on online shopping which was accompanied with matching posters, a sign and mouse mats;
- a leaflet on Unfair Commercial Practices which was also accompanied with matching posters and a sign;
- a booklet on various aspects of tourism in Malta. The content was devised during the performance of a joint research project on tourism entered into with other ECCs.

Furthermore, the ECC also submitted material and featured in a Joint Network Annual Report for 2007. It also took part in the translation of a fact sheet on supporters' rights issued by the Commission in conjunction with UEFA before EURO 2008. The fact sheet was uploaded on the ECC website.

Advertising, promotional material, press releases and contacts with the press

The ECC actively participated in the organisation of the World Consumer's Day (celebrated on 15 March) in conjunction with the Division and the EU Commission. A public event was held in Valletta. Information desks manned by ECC staff were set up where the public could make enquiries. Further to this, interviews with ECC staff were also featured on a two-page supplement distributed with the Times of Malta on 15 March 2008. This supplement also included case studies which were provided by the ECC.

In order to promote the centre, its work and provide information to the public, the ECC issued the following press releases:

- Identifying false websites and e-mails (phishing);
- Warning to e-mail users on a fake e-mail from *Poste Italiane*;
- Supporter's rights during Euro 2008;
- Launch of a Joint ECC-Net report on the European Online marketplace.

These press releases led to two interviews by the Public Broadcasting Services which were featured on the TVM news bulletins.

The ECC has since August 2008 published 10 articles in the Sunday Times of Malta, following the acquisition of a free column in this newspaper. The ECC was also approached by a journalist from the Times of Malta and an article on the ECC was published in this newspaper.

The ECC also participated in two interviews on radio and television explaining the services the Centre offers to the public.

Development, enhancement and maintenance of website

An integral part of the ECCs promotional work is its website. The website is continually updated with news and developments from the ECC Network and also from other organisations. Leaflets and other information material are continuously uploaded on the site. This year the updates dealt with the following:

- Is it fair?;
- New Regulation for services provided in the air sector;
- Scientists warn of health risks from exposure to noise from personal music players;
- Further reduction of rates for roaming calls in the European Union;
- The European Online Marketplace: Consumer Complaints 2007;
- Toy magnetic parts pose a danger if swallowed;
- Don't stay offside;
- Internet Sweep Press Release;
- EURO 2008 Supporters Rights;
- Consumer Day, Saturday 15th March 2008;
- 'Poste Italiane' – Warning to consumers and e-mail users;
- Ban on driving in several German cities for pollutive cars;
- Consumers' Corner; The Euro Changeover process;
- Consumer rights when purchasing from teleshopping programmes and other means of Distance Selling;
- Identifying false e-mails when shopping online.

Organisation of conferences, seminars, workshops

With regard to the organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops, the ECC has

- participated in the *Europe Close To You* fair and will also be participating in the organisation of the 2009 fair where it has again obtained a stand at no cost;
- prepared and given a presentation on the role and work of the ECC as well as provided information material during an open day organised by the Consumer and Competition Division on 10 October 2008;
- participated as the sole speaker in a seminar held in conjunction with the HEiA (Home Economists in Action). A two-hour presentation to an audience of approximately 50 teachers and student teachers on online shopping was delivered. About 1,500 leaflets were distributed and a further 1,500 were requested by the Association within a week. The location, promotion and other logistics were taken care of by the HEiA.

Co-operation with other EU networks

Being part of such an important EU network within the EU, the ECC seeks to co-operate with other EU networks present in Malta such as SOLVIT, FINNET, EUROJUS, Europe Direct, the Commission's Representation in Malta and Forum Malta fl-Ewropa (now MEUSAC) amongst others.

This co-operation led to the ECC participating in the *Europe Close to You* fair which is held annually by the Commission's Representation in Malta. The main theme for this year was the introduction of the euro

as Malta's official currency. The ECC has also attended meetings with the Commission's Representation in Malta and a number of other EU network offices in preparation for next year's fair.

Informal meetings with Forum Malta fl-Ewropa were also held and it was agreed that MUESAC would display ECC leaflets at their offices in Republic Street, Valletta. An agreement to participate in a radio programme by MEUSAC was also reached.

The ECC was also invited by the European Parliament Offices in Malta to be part of an exhibition to be set up in the European Parliament building in Brussels. The main purpose of the exhibition is to illustrate, through a number of concrete cases, how the European Parliament has made a difference to the benefit of the citizen through individual story telling in documentary style. The interview, which should be given at a later stage, will briefly outline how the ECC utilises on a daily basis the legislative tools enacted by the European Parliament for consumers.

Co-operation with other stakeholders in the field of consumer protection

Meetings were held with the Division on various topics and joint initiatives such as the screening of commercial guarantees and analysis of the consumer scoreboard were undertaken. Preparation of reports, consultations and position papers were also undertaken.

The Malta Tourism Authority and the Department of Civil Aviation were also regularly approached regarding case handling. The Malta Tourism Authority was invited to a conference on Tourism in Torremolinos, Spain, as part of an ECC-Net joint project. During the conference, the Malta Tourism Authority explained the Eco-certification scheme for hotels that they administer.

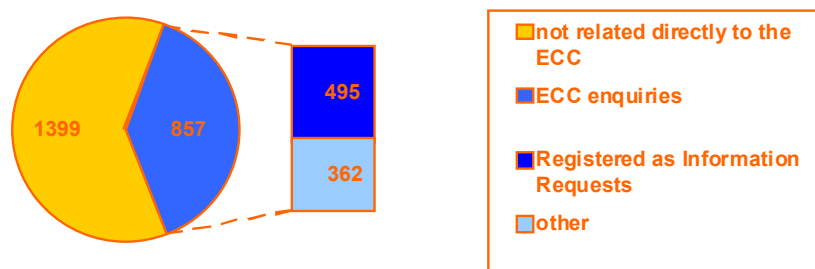
The Malta Financial Services Authority and the Malta Communications Authority were also contacted in relation with certain requests for information.

Direct provision of Information

A fundamental role of the ECC is that of providing quick, clear and practical information. During 2008, ECC Malta dealt with 2,256 enquiries, out of which 857 were directly related to the ECC. The other 1,399 enquiries were consumer-related but did not fall within the competence of the ECC and were forwarded to other organisations, mainly the Consumer and Competition Division. Out of the 857 enquiries handled, 495 were logged in the Commission's IT tool as information requests with the remaining being otherwise classified as complaints or handled otherwise due to their nature.

In its grant agreement with the EU Commission, ECC Malta had foreseen that it would receive 150 information requests. The 495 information requests received surpass this figure considerably.

Enquiries and Information Requests

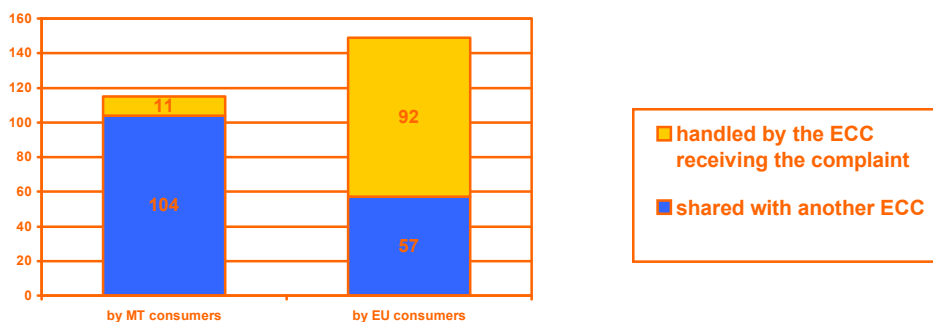


Assisting a consumer with a complaint or dispute

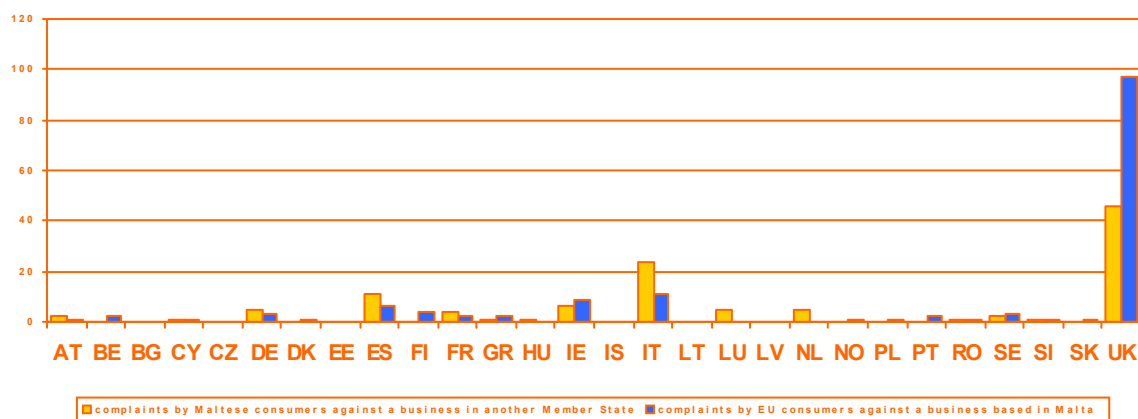
In its grant application, ECC Malta had also projected that it would handle 105 complaints throughout 2008. In actual fact, the ECC handled 149 complaints from EU consumers against businesses based in Malta and 115 complaints by Maltese consumers against businesses based in other EU Member States, thereby processing a total of 264 cross border complaints.

ECC Malta was directly involved in the handling of 173 of these cases either exclusively or in conjunction with another ECC. In the other 91 cases, ECC Malta was informed of the problem by the ECC receiving the complaint against a Maltese business.

Complaints involving Maltese consumers and businesses



Complaints by country



Alternative Dispute Resolution

At present there are no notified ADR bodies in Malta. The ECC met the Malta Arbitration Centre, the Malta Mediation Centre and the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) to encourage them to get notified as ADR bodies for the purposes of the ECC-Net. Copies of the Commission's recommendation on out-of-court settlement bodies were provided to the centres.

Both centres showed interest in getting notified and agreed to discuss the matter with their respective boards and ECC Malta is feedback. The MCA also provided feedback on the issue.

Networking and Feedback

Joint research projects

Another task the ECC performs as a network is that of identifying areas of interest to consumers where joint research projects can be conducted. These projects offer a very useful European dimension, particularly when ECCs from all Member States participate. In 2008, ECC Malta participated in three joint projects.

The first project was on tourism which started in 2007 and continued during 2008 with the development of a set of information leaflets on various aspects of tourism. These sets were then tailor-made by each participating ECC to reflect the laws, procedures and customs of the respective Member States. In this regard, ECC Malta drafted seven leaflets which will be made available both online and in the form of a booklet.

The second project the ECC participated in was on e-commerce where a joint report entitled *The European online marketplace* was released in June. This report is also available on the ECC Malta website.

The third project was related to a joint research project on Alternative Dispute Resolution. ECC Malta has already submitted the necessary information to the project working group and the report should be released in 2009.

Meetings of the Network, Cooperation days, etc.

A fundamental prerequisite in working effectively as a network is to regularly meet and discuss, with colleagues from other centres, the nature of the different difficulties that arise, good practices and other areas of interest. This is essential for the development of the individual centres and the network in its entirety. For this reason, quarterly network meetings are held in Brussels at which ECC Malta attended in 2008.

Another important annual event is Co-operation Day where all ECCs meet in a previously agreed member state and hold two workshops, one for directors and the other for case handlers. This meeting is relatively informal and very useful for ECC staff from all the centres in order to build good working relationships considering that the main area of work is that of sharing cases. In 2008, ECC Malta participated in this event which was held in France.

In order to enhance further co-operation with other centres and gain knowledge and experience, an ECC staff member participated in a study visit in Italy. The Italian ECC was chosen due to the fact that it is one of the centres with which ECC Malta shares most cases. An agreement has also been reached with the UK ECC for a staff exchange which is envisaged to take place in 2009.

Consultations at EU and national level

ECC Malta also has the task to participate in consultations and surveys and to deal with queries from the European Commission. The performance of the centre is assessed in relation to the timeliness and quality of the replies sent. During the year, the ECC received 83 requests from the Commission. These have also included EU-wide consultations on issues such as collective redress and harmonised case classification systems.

ECC Malta was also consulted by the Division on various topics such as the advertised prices of flights, audiovisual media services and collective redress amongst others.

COMPETITION DIRECTORATE

The Directorate, which is mainly composed of lawyers and economists, is, amongst others, responsible for handling complaints and carrying out *ex officio* investigations where it deems appropriate, regarding potential infringements of competition legislation. The Directorate advises the Director General regarding the exercise of his powers under the various laws and draws up reports and issues formal decisions on the basis of investigations conducted.

Since 1 May 2004, the Office for Fair Competition (OFC) was designated as the Maltese National Competition Authority in terms of EC Regulation 1/2003 and thus assumed the responsibility of investigating infringements of Articles 81 and 82 of the EC Treaty within the Maltese territory.

Complaints

A total of 21 cases are being investigated by the OFC, 12 of which are newly submitted complaints referring to alleged infringements of the Competition Act concerning, *inter alia* communications, the provision of services, insurance and others.

Investigations

Investigations carried out as a consequence of specific complaints concerned primarily the following markets: concerted practices (Art. 5 infringements): port services, retail and abuse of dominance (Art. 9 infringements): port services; access to essential facility, communications, energy, refusal to supply - spare parts and foodstuffs, transport, insurance, examined under both Art. 5 and Art. 9: broadcasting, insurance.

In terms of Article 15 (3) of the Competition Act (Cap. 379), the OFC also submitted a request to issue an interim measure on behalf of two undertakings involved in the provision of Internet services to the Commission for Fair Trading. The request follows an allegation of margin squeeze by another undertaking, which allegation the office is currently investigating.

Decisions

During 2008, the Office for Fair Competition delivered three decisions. These decisions concerned provision of ticketing services; provision of spare parts and the grant of TV licence. Three complaints, mainly in the communications and pet sectors were dismissed as complainants did not substantiate their allegations. Furthermore, after the necessary investigations were conducted and the results thereof examined, a complaint in the retailing sector, whereby it was alleged that an undertaking was conducting predatory pricing, was also dismissed.

Alternative Means of Resolving Competition Matters

As a result of its commitment to identify new tools to solve disputes and solutions, the Office introduced an alternative approach to resolve complaints. Locally, in the sphere of competition law, this is an innovative method and it is firmly believed that it is an effective alternative tool in the resolution of disputes within the business community and also in the promotion of the smooth functioning of the market. This system is advantageous to all parties because disputes are settled using a fast track approach.

In at least two circumstances the office managed to bring about a reduction in prices in a number of feeding stuffs, after it was demonstrated that at an international level the prices of cereals were on a downward trend. Furthermore, this approach was also adopted to bring about a reduction in the price of flour. Related to this market, an issue on refusal to supply was also positively resolved.

Therefore adopting alternative means of Commercial Dispute Resolution would result in further efficiency.

Concentrations

LN 294 of 2002 (Control of Concentrations Regulations) requires that in specific circumstances undertakings are to notify the office and, if the proposed Concentration does not present any competition law concerns, the Office grants its permission for the business transaction to go ahead. The Office gives its consent after conducting an analysis on the effects of such a transaction on the relevant market. Therefore, very often, businesses contemplating such a venture request pre-notification meetings with officials of the

Directorate for their advice. In this respect the office conducted meetings and drew up reports, where appropriate, covering the following areas: gaming; foodstuffs; leisure industry; communications; banking.

Furthermore the OFC issued two decisions. As to the acquisition in the leisure industry, the OFC after carrying out the necessary publications and holding the necessary meetings with several concerned parties, found that, even on the narrowest relevant market, the aggregated share in terms of volume did not give rise to any concern. For these reasons, the Director of the OFC, decided that although the Concentration fell within the scope of the Regulations, the Concentration did not raise serious doubts about its lawfulness and declared it to be a lawful Concentration. With regard to the acquisition in the gaming sector, the OFC held meetings with several stakeholders and applied the simplified procedure in terms of regulation 12(1)(ii) of the Regulations since the Concentration did not raise serious doubts about its lawfulness and declared it to be a lawful Concentration.

This area is now being monitored through the introduction of new procedures. All EU documentation sent to the OFC over the past years was classified, particularly that material stored on CD, and this has now become an established internal procedure. This documentation, which is the official notification done at EU level, is continuously monitored. This monitoring will eventually permit the Directorate to examine which sectors are most affected by these notifications. Track is being kept of merger notifications sent by other European Competition Authorities. The Office has also been following the proceedings within the ICN Merger Working Group, especially since this group is devising guidelines on various areas such as competitive effects, unilateral effects and co-ordinated effects.

Market Studies

The Office for Fair Competition also actively investigates markets that do not appear to be in conformity with the Competition Act. Market studies were conducted not only as a result of complaints but also on an *ex officio* basis where the OFC suspected that in a specific market, after a *prima facie* assessment, there may be the possibility of a market failure. In this respect, the Directorate conducted a series of sectoral inquiries in a number of markets such as: cereals; school uniforms, books and stationery.

The above studies have been concluded. However other ongoing studies are related to the following sectors: transport (mini vans; coaches; funeral motor hearses), and communications.

With particular reference to the communications market, a way forward has been decided following consultation with all operators in the market with a view to identify competition concerns. It was agreed that the major part of the concerns are basically being analysed through cases. It was also felt that where appropriate the scope of a specific market study may be widened to incorporate such concerns. In this respect, and in the context of the Office's commitment to this area, it held meetings with the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) to discuss certain queries emanating from the report which were also the concerns raised by the market players. Discussions were also held with the MCA following the conclusion of their reports, including a report on Wholesale Market Access in the broadband market, a report on Wholesale Broadcasting Transmission Services Market and a report on Wholesale Voice Call Termination on Individual Mobile Networks Market.

Analysis on Specific Issues

- *Professional Services* - The European Commission has taken the initiative to examine whether the current regulation of the sector, often set by national governments, is the most efficient and least restrictive of competition, or whether better regulation, more adapted to the modern world, could help spur economic growth, and deliver better services and value for consumers, in line with the objectives set by the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission's work focuses on six professions: lawyers, notaries, accountants, architects, engineers and pharmacists. In this context the Directorate conducted its own assessment and formulated said assessment in a report which in turn has been circulated to the pertinent government entities for their

own independent evaluation. The Directorate held one-to-one meetings with the said entities, explaining the whole exercise with a view to obtaining a clearer picture for each sector.

- *Actions for Damages* - On 3 April, the Commission published for public consultation a White Paper and a Commission Staff Working Paper on Damages Actions for Breach of the EC antitrust rules. The White Paper suggests specific policy choices and measures that would help give all victims of infringements of EC competition law, access to effective redress mechanisms so that they can be fully compensated for the harm they suffered. The Directorate has drawn up a report on how this may be implemented in Malta and has already initiated discussions with the relevant entity to identify an appropriate way forward.
- *Review of Shipping Consortia Block Exemption* - The office met with the Malta International Shipping Council in the context of the review of the Shipping Consortia Block exemption. The purpose is to explore the Council's concern, if any, on the said review. Note was taken of the Council's position in view of the second Advisory Committee meeting on the subject scheduled to take place during the first half of 2009.
- *Leniency* - Cartels are normally horizontal agreements between two or more undertakings aimed at co-ordinating their behaviour on the market and/or influencing competition through practices such as the fixing of purchase or selling prices or other trading conditions, the allocation of production sales quotas, the sharing of markets including bid-rigging and restrictions of imports or exports. Such cartel agreements lead not only to increase in price and reduce consumer choice but also have negative impacts on relevant economic sectors through the restriction of competition, avoiding pressures that lead them to innovate, both in terms of product development and the introduction of more efficient production methods.

By their very nature, cartels are often difficult to detect, investigate and prohibit without the co-operation of undertakings or individuals implicated in them. Therefore, the Office considers that the introduction of a leniency programme for those undertakings which are willing to put an end to their participation in illegal practices and co-operate in the Office's investigation, independently of other parties to an agreement would be advantageous.

In this context the Office conducted its own independent research and this was reproduced in a report which aim is to eventually incorporate this within the framework of the Competition Act.

Advice Tendered

Tendering advice continues to be another important aspect of the work carried out by the Directorate. In 2008 the Directorate was approached on several occasions by government departments, local authorities, law and accountancy firms, businesses and individual consumers to tender advice on competition issues. Such advice is also tendered to foreign companies and law firms.

A number of undertakings contemplated the creation of a new company. They enquired whether this constituted a full function joint venture and whether this was notifiable. The elements of full functionality, sufficient resources to operate independently on the market and the general requirements of notification were analysed.

Advice tendered mainly dealt with the following issues:

- Motor Vehicle Registration Tax;
- Privatisation of yacht marinas which are currently administered by the Malta Maritime Authority;
- Provision of photocopying services;
- Intellectual Property;
- Review of agreement in the context of a rent agreement.

Cases before the Commission for Fair Trading (CFT)

Another function of the Directorate is to represent the OFC in cases before the CFT when it is called upon to review a complaint by an undertaking generally following a decision taken by the Director of the OFC. The cases followed and in the main concluded concerned the following sectors: transport; communications; television; marine services.

National Reform Programme

The Directorate participated in meetings held with the European Commission to discuss the status of the Progress Report on the National Reform Programme, in particular, the outstanding issues regarding measures and specific issues with regard to assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of Lisbon objectives.

The European Commission had identified a number of areas as requiring further action, these being:

- strengthening of the Competition Authority;
- strengthening of competition in the professional services;
- issue of leniency.

Review of Reports

The Directorate was approached to express its position on various papers or working documents issued either within an EU framework or in the context of other organisations. During the year, the Directorate examined and expressed its opinion on the following:

- Internal Market Advisory Committee (IMAC) Working Group Report on Good Governance;
- A proposal for a Council Regulation on the Application of Article 81 (3) of the Treaty to Certain Categories of Agreements and Concerted Practices in the Air Transport Sector;
- Memorandum on COM (2008) 368 – Report on Competition policy 2008;
- EC-Korea Competition Agreement;
- The validity of an application by the Italian Government under Directive 2004/17/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 21st March 2004 co-ordinating the procurement procedures of entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal sectors.

Relations with Other Local Authorities/Organisations

Throughout the year the Directorate also conducted several meetings with various regulatory authorities and organisations both in the context of informative meetings which scope is to keep abreast with developments in specific markets and also in the context of specific complaints.

As regards to complaints, the Directorate conducted several meetings to examine specific complaints and determine the best placed authority to investigate such complaint. In this context meetings were held with the Malta Resources Authority (MRA).

Relations with other sectoral regulators were maintained. OFC officials had various discussions with the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA), Central Bank, MRA and MCA and discussed various matters of mutual interest. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed with MFSA.

Relations with the European Commission and Other International Organisations

The Directorate has also become heavily involved in international fora. The OFC's full participation within the European Competition Network (ECN) established under Regulation 1/2003, the Global Forum on Competition within OECD and the International Competition Network (ICN) has been reactivated.

Towards the second half of 2008, the Directorate regularly attended meetings organised within the ECN framework. This participation was possible since in competition matters the OFC is the national competent authority within the framework of Regulation 1/2003. Such participation also offers the Directorate's officials the opportunity to enhance their knowledge on competition matters. Furthermore, this participation also permits the OFC to obtain any information on specific issues from other national competition authorities in other EU Member States and engage in discussions therein.

The Directorate's strengthening process has permitted to participate within ICN's structures and that of OECD.

Participation in Conferences

The Directorate kept up with its international commitments by participating at a number of meetings, conferences and activities organised by the EU Presidency, the European Competition Network, the International Competition Network and the OECD.

Questionnaires

The Directorate's participation in the international field is not limited to participation in meetings abroad but also by means of the various questionnaires covering a wide array of subjects. During the year, there was a marked increase in the number of questionnaires received over previous years. These covered topics such as state aid to broadcasting; the transposition of Single Market rules; enforcement of competition law in Member States; Report on Regulation 139/2004 (Merger Regulation); food and retail; implementing the internal market in electricity; and horizontal co-operation agreements.

Development of Internal Procedures

The importance of maintaining uniformity both in the conduct of an investigation and in its assessment is of paramount importance. A procedural manual in investigating complaints has been developed. Its compilation is based on existing legislation and it is envisaged that other internal procedures will be formulated and added to the procedural manual.

Papers/Briefing Memos/Research

- Prepared a number of memoranda and briefing notes on the following: training for the Directorate's staff, strengthening of the competition authority, food, transport, and trade.
- A review entitled Competition Policy in Malta: 2003 – 2008 has been drawn up to be published in the British Public Service Review.
- The Office prepared a report regarding Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1400/2002 on the application of Article 81 (3) of the Treaty to categories of vertical agreements and concerted practices in the motor vehicle sector i.e. the Motor Vehicle Block exemption. The report took into consideration the concerns by the International Federation of Automotive Aftermarket Distributors (FIGIEFA) and also the position taken by the various organisations and competition authorities of other Member States on the report published by the Commission in May 2008.
- A written contribution was also submitted during the Global Forum on Competition (February 2008) which dealt with the interaction and co-ordination of Consumer and Competition Policy.
- The Directorate also conducted research and provided the relative legal input to a report on Pharmaceutical Pricing Mechanisms in Malta *and in other EU Member States* (July 2008).
- In the context of modernising the Competition Act and in an effort to enhance the OFC's investigative arm, research was conducted and a policy was formulated on introducing measures to facilitate price transparency. This was also done in the context of the wider initiative which purpose is to strengthen the Division.

Seminar

As part of ongoing continuous professional development, an internal seminar was organised for officials within the Directorate. During the seminar, held with Professor Valentine Korah, several issues were discussed amongst which the following: effect on trade vis-à-vis small member states; telecommunications; excessive pricing; and parallel trade. The seminar proved to be quite productive and it is planned to hold such seminars on a regular basis. This will permit officials within the Directorate to obtain varied opinions from high profile persons in both competition law and economics.

Replies to Pre-infringement Proceedings Initiated by the EU Commission

The EC Commission examined the transposition into Maltese legislation of a number of EU Directives, namely: Directive 97/7/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 1997 on the protection of consumers in respect of distance contracts; Directive 93/13/EEC of 5 April 1993 on unfair terms in consumer contracts; and Directive 1999/44/EC on certain aspects of the sale of consumer goods and associated guarantees.

The Commission was of the opinion that although in general it was satisfied with the transposition exercise that was done, there were instances whereby transposition was somewhat dubious. In this context the Division was presented with a number of questions which purpose was to give Malta the opportunity to clarify its position. In this context the Directorate prepared three draft replies for three different sets of questions in the context of the above Directives representing Malta's reaction to the Commission's queries.

Other Matters

The Directorate was also involved in various other non-competition related matters. It was responsible for the drawing up of an agreement between the Ministry and the *Għaqda tal-Furnara* regarding increase in prices and subsidies. It co-operated with the Enforcement Directorate within CCD to ensure that after sales services are provided as per commercial guarantee provided by the trader. It provided legal assistance to the same Directorate to present its case before the court and provided legal advice on timeshare.

The Directorate also compiled all the necessary information which it deemed necessary to be included in CCD's revamped website. In the context of the provision of information by electronic means, the European Commission requested all Member States to submit information on chosen topics to be published on the *Your Europe* Portal. For some particular fact sheets the Commission had prepared the fact sheets itself but requested the office to verify whether the information included in these fact sheets was correct prior to translating and published on website.

Along with officials within the Office of the Director General, the Directorate is monitoring the discussion on a Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and the Council on Consumer Rights. If this proposal is carried forward, it will bring about a maximum harmonisation directive thereby revising the following Directives: 85/577/EEC on contracts negotiated away from business premises, 93/13/EEC on unfair terms in consumer contracts, 97/7/EC on distance contracts, 1999/44/EC on consumer sales and guarantees.

OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

The main functions of the Directorate are to monitor the prices of medicines and verify whether the prices are fair and reasonable; and the prices of consumer products, mainly food items, in order to detect any possible collusive practice amongst traders to the detriment of the consumer. The Directorate is also entrusted with the disbursement of the subsidy to bakers.

Price of Medicines

The Medicines Prices Committee established in November 2006 with the objective of establishing a new system of new pricing for medicines, had reached an agreement on a mechanism on the pricing of medicines directed to ensure fair and reasonable consumer prices. In this regard, the Directorate performed a total of 424 inspections related to medicinal pricing and investigated 33 complaints lodged by consumers. Whilst during these inspections it was ensured that these prices were observed, in those cases where the consumers were overcharging the Directorate intervened to ensure that the difference in price was refunded.

Since the medicinals market is dynamic, records must be adjourned on a regular basis. In this regard, extensive research, investigations and inspections regarding the pricing of medicines is necessary and is conducted as described further on. This is also required to monitor prices as agreed in the above mentioned Committee.

Methodology of the Pricing Mechanism

The price of medicines sold on the market is compared with the average price which is calculated from the prices of those medicines forming the ‘basket’ of European countries. The ‘*reference countries*’ are categorised into low, medium and high priced bands with three countries, plus a reserve, in each band. To enable a calculation of the average price, the price of a medicinal from at least one country in each category is necessary. This was the agreed minimum requirement. The concept used is known as external (international) medicinal price averaging exercise and was adopted since it is also used in other European States, such as Cyprus, Norway, Italy and Spain. In these states, this reference method is utilised for price determination and reimbursement systems. This system is perceived as an innovative method which provides accuracy and fairness to the consumer benefit. The mechanism also provides impetus for a more pro-active approach in medicinal price monitoring.

The country selection and classification was based on: past experience (pre-EU accession) i.e. those countries from where Maltese traders used to import their supplies; the reference countries and categories of other MS; and availability of reliable data-bases of consumer prices in those countries.

The conduct of the pricing mechanism exercise is essentially divided into different phases as follows:

- Phase 1: Inspections of local pharmacies by Directorate officials and gathering and collation of data pertaining to medicines
- Phase 2: Analysis of the data and comparison of prices with those applied in the reference countries
- Phase 3: Communication with relevant importers in instances that require further investigation with a view to reaching agreement on price adjustments, where disparity in prices is not justified
- Phase 4: Subsequent inspections to verify that pricing adjustment has been carried out properly.

Over 350 medicines were checked and the prices of 93 medicines were found to be higher than the average. In 2008, 22 prices of Prescription Only Medicines (POM) were reduced. The decrease in the consumer price varied between 3% to 35%.

The Directorate drew up a report highlighting the pharmaceutical pricing mechanisms in Malta and the other EU Member States.

Market Analysis

The Operations Directorate carried out monthly inspections in 12 supermarkets to monitor price trends of 330 consumer products which are considered to be market leaders in their sector. 122 inspections were carried out and any increase in prices was investigated, with the aim of verifying whether the increase in price was the result of imported inflation or a decrease in the discount offered by the supermarket.

The Directorate established communication links with other European organisations in order to obtain information on prices, together with official data that are available on the Internet. The commodity prices on the international market were also monitored with particular attention to wheat, crude oil and coffee. This enabled the Division to be proactive and to anticipate fluctuations in prices. Prices tend to increase at a fast rate in response to international price increase however the reverse does not always apply when the prices revert back to normal levels. Thus the Directorate had to be on alert so that it can detect any uncompetitive behaviour.

Apart from the actual consumer price, the Directorate also monitors the recommended retail prices. This is carried out in order to ensure that supermarkets do not mislead consumers by increasing the latter and hence give the impression that consumers are being offered a higher discount than in actual case.

From an analysis of recorded prices, it was concluded that some products were cheaper in one supermarket whilst other products were cheaper in other supermarkets. It has been noted that this behaviour was also noticed in the UK market. This makes it harder for customers to identify which supermarket is actually giving the best price deals. In this regard, the Directorate is attempting to ensure that any claimed recommended retail price by the importer/manufacturer is consistent across Malta. This will eventually help consumers to evaluate the discounted prices prior to their purchases from the respective retail outlets.

Product Safety

On 1 February 2008, the enforcement of the Product Safety Act was transferred to the Malta Standards Authority (MSA) by virtue of Legal Notice 33 of 2008.

In the Directorate's endeavour to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities, the Directorate continued to investigate 22 cases related to product safety in the first quarter of the year. The Directorate was notified by the European Commission, through the RAPEX system, about dangerous products found in Member States and inspections were carried out to verify whether these products were placed on the local market. Steps were taken to ensure that corrective action on 21 products was taken by the importer to bring the products in line with the applicable safety requirements. In one instance, the importer withdrew the product from the local market since it was not possible to bring it in line with safety requirements.

The Directorate also ordered the destruction of 1,440 safety helmets which were found to be non-compliant with the relative safety requirements.

The Directorate had embarked on a project concerning the dissemination of information on the Indication by Labelling and Standard Product Information of the Consumption of Energy and other Resources by Household Appliances Regulations. In this respect, meetings were carried out with the respective importers during which the provisions of these regulations were explained.

Dolceta Website

The Directorate participated in one of the modules forming part of the Dolceta project, funded by DG Sanco and co-ordinated by the European Universities Continued Education Network (EUCEN). The aim of the project is for the creation a website enhancing online consumer education thereby containing interactive tools for teachers, trainers and adult educators in various educational institutions, government bodies with consumer responsibilities, consumer associations and similar organisations.

In this regard, the Directorate's experience acquired over the span of over seven years through the enforcement of Product Safety legislation, proved to be beneficial and this also permitted a proactive participation in a number of meetings held in Brussels, Lille and Talinn.

The Directorate developed over 150 pages for module 3 dedicated to Product Safety. The aim of the Directorate was to utilise this module to serve as an educational tool for both the consumer and trader.

Through this module, the consumer would know what to look for before purchasing a product while the trader would know beforehand what steps should be taken in order to ensure that safe products are always placed on the market. Additionally, this should also help consumers and traders to understand the various areas of product safety and related market surveillance and enforcement.

An evaluation meeting of Module 3 and 4 was held in Tallinn, Estonia on 5 November 2008.

Bakers' Subsidy

As a result of the increase in prices of wheat and fuel on the international market, Government continued to compensate the bakers for such increases in the production costs. During this year, the Directorate issued 1,645 cheques amounting to €1,839,765 to 144 bakers. Sixty-eight meetings were held with bakers as part of its ongoing monitoring to ensure that the system is not abused. This year's subsidies started to be issued at three different rates depending on the type of fuel used by bakers for oven heating. Bakers using Light Heating Oil (LHO) were given the highest rate of subsidy due to the high increase in cost of this type of fuel. In order to calculate the amount due to each baker, an exercise was undertaken, which involved visits to all bakeries that claimed to be using LHO. During the visits, the burners and LHO tanks were inspected and their details recorded, including the consumption rate of fuel. Documentary evidence was verified to ensure that the type of fuel claimed was actually being used.

Following agreement reached between the Bakers Union and the Ministry, a grant scheme was launched during the second half of this year to encourage bakers to use more environment-friendly fuels. Bakers were offered a one-time grant of up to €5,000 if they were to opt to convert their heating systems from Light Heating Oil to Gas. On-site inspections were carried out at 49 bakeries using this type of oil by an official from this Directorate, Enemalta experts and a MEPA environmental representative. A report was drawn up identifying the bakeries recommended for conversion to gas, detailing the required changes and general specifications for the installation. The bakers were notified of the outcome of the inspections and those whose bakeries were identified for conversion were formally invited to take the necessary steps in order to lodge an application with the relative authorities.

In December, inspections were carried out in a selected number of bakeries, in Malta and Gozo, to gather the prices of all the range of bread products sold. This should enable the Directorate to compare the prices once the market is liberalised as from January 2009.

ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE

Price Indication Regulations

Under the Price Indication Regulations (LN 283/2002) which emanate from the Consumer Affairs Act (Cap. 378), the Directorate is responsible for the enforcement of these regulations. Therefore in this context frequent inspections are carried out to ensure that the indication of the prices at which goods are offered for sale to the consumers are clearly legible, unambiguous, easily identifiable and inclusive of VAT and any additional taxes.

Inspections

During the year, the Directorate carried out around 25,609 inspections in various retail outlets, out of which 25,009 were compliant. 600 outlets were initially identified as not being compliant and were given the opportunity to regularise their position.

Surveillance for appropriate price indication on goods offered for sale to consumers was also carried out in open air markets in various localities. Inspections carried out by category are shown in the following table:

Category	Number of Inspections	Compliant	Non-Compliant
Retail Outlets	22,297	21,908	389
Vegetable Hawkers	840	709	131
Open Air Markets	2,472	2,392	80

Eventually 18 Compliance Orders were issued to those outlets which did not conform to the regulations.

Price Survey

The Directorate continued to monitor approximately 4,000 items from supermarkets, butchers, restaurants and kiosks. The purpose of this exercise is to identify and analyse price variations in a number of localities. The brand names selected for pricing were determined according to a volume seller basis. The information gathered is based on a list of fast moving items which included the following categories: soft drinks, beers, wine, tinned food, tea, coffee, sauces, pasta, rice, baby food, cereals, oils and butter, fresh dairy products, frozen and chilled meat, frozen foods, sugar, sweets and snacks, detergents and toiletries.

Prices of the following number of commodities were monitored on a monthly basis from the following establishments.

12 Supermarkets	227 fixed commodities
27 Butchers	28 fixed items
67 Restaurants	monitoring 646 items
18 Kiosks	monitoring 347 products

Monitoring of Corner Shops

During the period covered by the report, the Directorate continued with the monitoring of prices in corner shops. A total of 47 shops were selected with an average of 100 products per shop. Corner shops were monitored during the second and third week of each month.

Price Stability Agreements

The Directorate inspected eight discount stores and 126 fixed commodities. Inspections revealed that some outlets were quoting recommended retail prices that were different from those agreed upon by importers in the Stability Price Agreement. During the first three months, around 100 warning letters were sent to a number of supermarkets and discount stores. In three supermarkets, it was concluded that the way prices were displayed was misleading to the consumer, giving the impression of substantial discounts.

To address this, the Directorate instructed these establishments to refrain from using such practices. Eventually the establishments concerned remedied the situation.

Dual Display and Euro Pricing Regulations – Enforcement

The Smoothing of Monetary Amounts Regulations, 2007 (LN 369/2007) came into force at the end of 2007. The Directorate did not receive any *Directions* in terms of LN 04/2007 (Dual Display and Euro Pricing) and LN 369/2007 from NECC, during the period covered by the report. This ceased to be in force in June 2008.

Co-ordination with other Authorities

An investigation was initiated in July, following an allegation by a leading importer that traders may not be following labelling regulations. Although not within the Division's remit, the Directorate assisted in investigating a total of 232 shops. Subsequently reports were compiled and sent to Malta Standards Authority (MSA), indicating the outlets along with the products which officials of the Directorate suspected were being sold with incorrect labelling.

Monitoring Brown/White goods/Commercial Guarantees

In June the Directorate carried out a series of inspections to monitor prices of white/brown goods in order to check whether trade fair discounts were in fact being offered to the consumer. Apart from broadening the Directorate's in this area, the identified goods continued to be monitored to note any price fluctuations.

Complaints

During 2008, the Directorate investigated 166 consumer complaints lodged with the Division. These mainly concerned, amongst others, an alleged breach of the Consumer Affairs Act (Price Indication) Regulations, 2002. Ninety-seven of the complaints referred to price indication (of which in one case legal proceedings were initiated), thirty-three cases indicated an abuse on misleading prices (of which in one case legal proceedings were initiated) one case was referred to NECC, six cases were referred to MSA, three were referred to VAT and twenty-six required no further action.

Court Case

During 2008 legal proceedings were initiated against 18 commercial establishments for having violated the Price Indication Regulations.

Investigating for possible Unfair Commercial Practices in Supermarkets

The Directorate took the initiative to address particular forms of what are by law considered to be as unfair commercial practices, that is, those whereby prices on the shelf possibly did not correspond with the price at the point of sale in supermarkets. A total of eight supermarkets were selected covering various localities. A basket of 25 items per supermarket was selected and their shelf price was compared with that at the point of sale. From the investigation it resulted that out of 200 items only 9 were identified as possibly infringing the law. In these instances the incorrect pricing was the result of genuine mistakes. Indeed it was determined that in some cases the pricing error was in favour of the consumer.

Prices of Solar Water Heaters

Following the various measures mentioned during the budget speech, the Directorate took the initiative to monitor the market of Solar Water Heaters. The objective was to ensure that there is no abuse of this measure. A total of 61 importers/traders were inspected. The Malta Resources Authority (MRA) was also requested to forward a list of all solar water heaters sold during the year and which were submitted to the MRA for a rebate. The prices on this list were then compared to the prices retrieved from visits made to importers. The increases resulting from this comparison were found to be justified. This exercise was carried out jointly with the Operations Directorate.

Pricing of advertised flights and package tours

An extensive audit was carried out during the year on promotional material related to travel in local newspapers. The audit was carried out on a monthly basis in order to identify for any misleading adverts. A total of 260 letters were sent to travel agents for non-observance of the legislation. A total of 12 Compliance Orders were delivered to defaulting travel agents. Following this audit, the number of misleading adverts was reduced dramatically as can be seen from the following table which shows that non-observance of the Regulations fell sharply from 81% in February to 2% in December.

Degree of Compliance by Traders to Price Indication Regulations for Feb – Dec 2008

Month	Tax Values incl. Separately	Pre Tax price only	Final Price incl. Tax	Price with no indication of Tax	Price (not incl. Cost of flight)	%
February	126	444	-	105	-	81
March	73	381	13	31	65	73
April	13	591	34	140	127	81
May	70	453	204	33	61	35
June	114	412	209	35	63	54
July	45	347	283	8	65	47
August	86	26	277	4	78	6
September	35	13	225	4	60	5
October	4	7	510	14	139	3
November	0	5	471	16	118	3
December	0	1	407	11	78	2

Exercise on the Monitoring of January Sales – 2009

The Directorate drew up a surveillance plan, in the clothing sector, to enable it to monitor the January 2009 sales. A total of 70 shops were selected, to allow for the monitoring of: discounted prices; clear price indications; and the conditions of sale under which the item is sold.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE**Consumer Complaints**

Mediation, as stipulated by Section 23 (4) (a) of the Consumer Affairs Act, was initiated on 1,587 formal complaints which had been registered with this Division, out of which 58 had been brought forward as complaints which had still not been dealt with in 2007. By the end of the year, 1,645 complaints were dealt with and were concluded as follows: (i) mediation was successful in 460 cases; (ii) 304 cases were either withdrawn or else not followed up by complainants; (iii) no amicable settlement was reached in 699 cases and complainants opted to proceed with their complaint in front of the Consumer Claims Tribunal as provided for by Section 23 (4) (b) of the legislation. 84 decisions taken by the arbiter were honoured; 60 were not and following appropriate action from the Directorate, an additional 24 decided to honour the decision of the tribunal and for the rest the Directorate is taking the necessary legal action. At the end of the year, there were 118 cases that were still pending and therefore were carried forward to 2008.

An EU Proposal for a New Directive on Consumer Rights

In October a study on an EU proposal for a new Directive on Consumer Rights was undertaken to assess its implications on local legislation. This is a maximum harmonisation directive which brings together four directives, these being Sale of consumer goods and guarantees (99/44/EC); Unfair Contract Terms (93/13/EC); Distance Selling (97/7/EC) and Doorstep Selling (85/577/EC). The study included the formulation of a comparative table drawn up to enable a legal and policy assessment. Eventually, upon conclusion of this exercise a series of external consultations were held. Two presentations were also given to explain this new directive to all stakeholders. Stakeholders were also given the opportunity to make submissions on this proposal. These in turn were analysed and evaluated. The Division also participated in EU meetings with regard to this new directive.

Information Campaign

During 2008, the Directorate continued with its information campaign educating the general public and businesses on consumer rights to enable them to take informed decisions.

In this context, during 2008, the Directorate was involved on two fronts; on one hand it was responsible for the European Commission's campaign on consumer rights; on the other it continued with its own educational campaign which was mainly carried out through radio and television programmes. Indeed during 2008, the Directorate participated in a variety of programmes on a number of television and radio stations, approximately 89 TV slots and 208 radio programmes.

The Directorate's information campaign was also supported with regular contributions in the printed media. In total the Directorate drew up some 90 articles.

Training/Meetings Attended Abroad

The Directorate continued with its ongoing policy to train its information officers. In this context one officer attended a seminar on Measuring Customer Satisfaction in Maastricht, Netherlands and another Best Practices Workshops organised by ICPEN in Paris and prepared a report about it.

In the meantime the Directorate continued with its participation in meetings of various working groups and other initiatives. The following is a list of meetings attended by the Directorate:

- CPC Communicators' Network;
- Unfair Commercial Practices Directive Working Group;
- Sweeps – Preparatory Meeting, Consumer Protection Co-operation Committee;
- Consumers' Financial Programme Programme;
- Consumer Protection Co-operation (CPC) Training;
- Europa Diary Partners;
- (EIPA) Measuring Customer Satisfaction;
- Delivering for Tomorrow's European Consumers Conference;
- ICPEN Best Practices Workshops;
- European Consumer Day

School Talks

Talks on consumer rights based on the Consumer Affairs Act, with emphasis on legislation concerning the sale of goods and the eight basic consumer rights, were carried out in primary and secondary schools scattered throughout Malta and Gozo. A total of 63 schools talks were delivered to primary and secondary school classes throughout 2008.

Power point presentations and information material were used to achieve the best possible dissemination of information regarding the subject. Some 300 copies of the Europa Diary and Teachers Guide were distributed to head teachers to further students' awareness regarding consumer protection.

MIREILLE VELLA

Director General (Consumer & Competition)

Government Property Division

Directorate General

INTRODUCTION

The Government Property Division (GPD) forms part of the portfolio of the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment and is responsible for the management of Government's immovable estate.

The mission of the GPD is to promote and maintain the highest and best use of Government's immovable estate and to ensure an equitable process for the acquisition of property that may be required for public purpose.

The GPD incorporates the Land Department, the Estate Management Department and the Joint Office. Whereas each of the three departments has precise objectives to achieve within a specific remit, the GPD acts as the co-ordinator of all operations whilst ensuring smooth management through the provision of the necessary financial and administrative support.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION – 2008 DEVELOPMENTS

Quality Service Charter

The GPD is continuously striving to further strengthen its commitment to provide the best possible service to its clients within the ambit of the relevant laws and policies. In this respect, the quality service charter that was initially launched within the Division is being reviewed now that the Joint Office has moved to new premises in the vicinity of the Auberge de Bavière. The objective is to incorporate standards following the amalgamation of the Customer Care and the Registry for the whole of the Division. The main objective of the charter is to provide a brief overview of all legislation and policies that regulate GPD operations and to highlight the quality of the services and standards offered within set timeframes in order to raise the standards of the services given to the general public. The QSC is acting as a driving force for all staff members to further strengthen their commitment to carry out their responsibilities in a thorough and friendly manner.

Euro Changeover in the Public Sector

Following the implementation of the GPD Action Plan that included IT compliance of existing databases and training of staff, a smooth step-by-step transition to the euro was registered. Cash float requirements were adequately catered for in both offices in Malta and Gozo. Feedback was continuously provided during the initial weeks and months. As a revenue-earning Division, it was ensured that the changeover process translated into a smooth transition in compliance with official guidelines. The work of the GPD was recognised as an example of best practice. This was as a result of the co-operation and collaboration of all officers concerned who made possible the smooth transition process.

Rehabilitation Works

- *Office of the Parliamentary Secretary.* The ex-Customer Care Office was refurbished to house the office of the newly-appointed Parliamentary Secretary. Available furniture was renovated whilst IT and telephone facilities, including repeaters for improvement of mobile telephony signal, were upgraded.

- *Auberge de Bavière*. Works on the intermediate floor, in the west wing of the Auberge, have been finalised with the exception of the staircase leading to the upper level, as the said staircase will be fitted after the paving works are finalised. Electrical installation is operational. Paving works are due to start in January 2009. Air conditioning works are to be completed in January 2009. All internal rooms have been cleaned and pointed and work continues on the pointing of the rooms where electrical and air conditioning works have been finalised. Timber doors and windows have been restored and are ready to be refitted. The tender for the network infrastructure for the west wing of the Auberge has been adjudicated and contract for works to be carried out is to be signed in January 2009.
- *Electrical Substation Equipment Platform*. The electricity substation civil engineering works are in advanced stage and will be finished in January 2009.
- *Joint Office*. Work on a passenger lift at the GPD Annexe that houses the Joint Office is under way in order to make the three-storey building more accessible to both staff and clients. Following collaborative work with the Works Division, a request for a permit to install the lift has been submitted to MEPA. In the meantime, arrangements have been made to offer services to clients with mobility impairment on the ground floor. A sign has been fixed to the façade of the Joint Office building whilst a press release was issued to inform the general public. Moreover, a ramp is being constructed to facilitate access through the front door of the building.

Notte Bianca

Auberge de Bavière

Following a decision taken to include the Auberge de Bavière as one of the venues worth visiting during *Notte Bianca*, a plan of action was devised in preparation for this event. Works included the upgrading of the courtyard, which consisted of pointing of all mortar joints, removal of redundant rain water and drain pipes, fabrication and installation of a water fountain for drinking water and a decorative water feature, the scraping and pointing of part of the basement and front door accessibility to the Auberge for visitors with mobility impairment as well as the organisation of activities for the occasion. The many visitors, who called at the Auberge on the night of 4 October, could appreciate the beauty of this magnificent building, its history, some of the historical property records held in its archives and the extensive work carried out by the Government Property Division in the management of government property.

The GPD staff also facilitated the putting up of two exhibitions in the hallways surrounding the courtyard: a photo exhibition of Valletta past and present and an exhibition on the production of the Maltese loaf. The *Notte Bianca* was further enhanced by an evening of Maltese musico/literary activities in the Auberge's beautiful courtyard. These cultural activities were partially sponsored by the GPD.

Furthermore, following the success of this event, the Malta Council for Culture and Arts has, after consultation with the GPD, included the Auberge de Bavière in the programme of cultural visits that are regularly organised for the general public. The first event is planned for Sunday 8 February 2009.

Valletta Market

As administrators of the Valletta Market in Merchant Street, the GPD collaborated with *Notte Bianca* organisers in preparation for the use of the market in the festivities of 4 October 2008. Minor works were urgently carried out to meet the deadline whilst every effort was made to facilitate the process for the organisers. In fact, on the night in question, the market came alive with the activities under way and was a pleasure to visit for many Maltese and foreign visitors.

Logo Competition

A logo competition for the GPD was organised among all members of staff on the occasion of the *Notte Bianca*. The six submissions were exhibited on the notice board and staff voted for the logo of their choice.

Certificates of participation were distributed to participants. It is envisaged that the official launching of the logo will take place in 2009.

Information Technology

- In January 2008, work to migrate GPD applications to achieve euro compliance continued. By the end of September 2008 all dual displays were removed from GPD applications.
- The smooth migration of the Land Cheque Printing System took place in January 2008. Enhancements to this system continued during this year and will be finalised by end of February 2009.
- Issues arising following the successful amalgamation of the Joint Office Docreg System with that at the GPD's head office at the Auberge de Bavière were settled by end of February 2008.
- Discussions and User Acceptance Testing with MITTS to enhance the Map Scanning Tenements and Acquisitions are still taking place.
- With the change of GPD's portfolio from MJHA to MFEI, letterheads, together with other relevant documentation, were updated and where necessary e-mailed to all GPD staff together with installation instructions. The GPD users in the Ms Outlook Global address were transferred under the MFEI (GPD Group) and all incorrect GPD users' information in email accounts was amended.
- The GPD website including the e-rent section was updated, followed by testing prior to their transfer on the live environment. The development in the e-rent section relating to the GPD CVV2 Card payment validation technique was implemented in October after testing.
- A webpage on the new Freephone service 1577 has been developed by MITTS on the GPD website. This page, giving information on the service, was launched on 9 December 2008 with the aim of controlling the abuse of government property.
- The Port Locking exercise to ensure security and avoid any viruses in the network took place in April.
- Enhancements on the Land Management System (LMS) are being carried out to implement the system at the GPD Gozo office for acceptance of payments of rent on Government-owned property in Gozo. Access to the Local Councils Rent Payment System (LCRPS) will also be granted to issue receipts of payments for rent on Government-owned property settled at Gozo Local Councils.
- The project to extend the rent billing service, the payment of rent at local councils' service, as well as the e-rent service to ex-church properties registered in the JOPD by migrating JOPD data to GPD's LMS will continue in 2009.
- The EMA project which consists of the consolidation of GPD with MITTS and decommissioning of servers from GPD data centre is underway. Meetings and testing on GPD applications will continue in 2009.
- Hardware procurement in co-ordination with MFEI as well as software installations and systems maintenance and support to GPD users has been continual.

Human Resources

In spite of the capacity building exercises that were undertaken in 2007 and 2008, GPD staff complement continues to decrease from year to year. In fact, the total of 156 officers (December 2004) went down to 131 (December 2008).

Training Programme

The GPD embarked on an in-house training programme to upgrade the knowledge of staff members and to facilitate the integration of new members. To date, 11 training courses were organised each attended by approximately 50 participants hailing from the four departments of the GPD. Data protection courses were also held in collaboration with SDO for all GPD staff.

Customer Care

On a daily basis, the Customer Care Section deals with an average of 35 clients who call personally for assistance at the GPD. Incoming telephone calls are incessant particularly in the morning and calculated at approx 60 calls per day, whilst on average, 5 e-mail queries are answered daily. Many of these requests for assistance entail follow-up action and research in the relevant files.

Registry

The amalgamation of the Joint Office Registry with that of the GPD has made possible better co-ordination of work and communication within the Division. However, these processes are somewhat negatively affected due to a dearth of minor staff. In 2008, 10,170 incoming letters were registered for which an acknowledgement was issued on same day. 22,825 letters were inserted in respective files whilst 2,443 new files were created when necessary. The number of file movements rose to 240,406 indicative of the considerable work that goes on within the GPD on a daily basis.

Gozo Branch

For the convenience of Gozo residents, the GPD continues to provide personalised service to clients through its branch in Gozo where rents, ground rents, and *qbiela* may be paid. The Gozo office also provides customer care services.

Financial Matters

Funds allocated to the GPD under the Budget Estimates are managed with care and due diligence. All reporting is done on a regular basis including accrual accounting reports. Besides the day-to-day running expenses, the Accounts Section settled all bills related to court registry fees, research, land registration, contracts, electricity and water supply (value of €122,656), burthens (221 in number), refunds of overpaid ground rent and enforcement works (value of €92,480).

In order to be in a position to manage more efficiently water and electricity bills of common parts of government-owned blocks of flats and other vacant government-owned premises, a database has been created with regard to blocks of flats and kept regularly updated. Moreover, the GPD administers 221 burthens that are due to various entities. In order to get an overview and plan better their management, a database has been created that should help to facilitate the streamlining of this process.

Health and Safety

Health and safety issues are an ongoing process and annual updating of the risk assessment is being carried out in order to continue building on past initiatives. GPD staff members are regularly notified of any course that is available. All staff members are encouraged to attend.

Green Initiatives

The GPD continues to support and promote green initiatives. Waste is being separated and disposed of according to guidelines in collaboration with Wasteserv. Environment stickers to save water and electricity can be seen in prominent places and auto-spouts purchased. Energy saving appliances are used whenever possible.

PAUL MIRUZZI

Director General (Government Property)

Government Property Division

Estate Management Department

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW

The role of the Estate Management Department (EMD) is to help the Government Property Division shape and deliver Government's immovable property agenda by providing quality property-related advice and services. EMD helps the Government achieve its policy objectives by contributing to three key outcomes:

- Improved and more efficient property operations
- Sustaining Government finances
- Sustaining Government projects and initiatives.

PROPERTY OPERATIONS

Property Records

The update and maintenance of Government's property records is a fundamental task carried out by the EMD. The Department maintains a number of map-based property datasets each depicting particular aspects of the property inventory ranging from datasets showing ex-British Services property, to property that has been declared required for a public purpose under the Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Ordinance and property that has been leased or otherwise transferred to third parties. The EMD also maintains several thousands deed packets containing contractual documents related to property source and status. A computerised database of property is also kept that keeps track of general lease conditions. The data kept by EMD does not include property that was transferred to the State by the Church/State Agreement of 1991 since such records are held by the Joint Office. In this context, EMD has however identified and drawn up an internal procedure to allow the gradual transfer of ex-church property records under its fold so as to better enable the provision of client services that are not available at Joint Office such as computerised rent-billing and payment.

During 2008 the EMD carried no less than 5,000 property inventory updates ranging from updating of data fields, creation of new GIS parcels, sub-divisions of land and changes in property status. A process of staff recruitment was also initiated to ensure that much needed consolidation of information may be initiated during 2009.

Property Information Requests

As with any business, information in property management is king since it underpins the very basis of action taken. In this context the databases maintained by EMD provide useful decision-making information in relation to Government's property management activities both regarding major property-based development projects (such as Grand Harbour Regeneration, privatisation of Enemalta's gas operations) as well as such other activities as housing projects, road infrastructure, public gardens and sale and leasing of property.

As in past years, during 2008, the EMD was the source of important property related information to a varied list of clients that ranged from private individuals and companies, to government ministries, departments, agencies and authorities. By way of example, the Housing Authority's ability to sell residential property under its various Home Ownership schemes is dependent upon information provided to

it by the EMD. Likewise Government's actions towards enforcing the proper use of government-owned property can only be initiated after the EMD's Property Terrier Unit has provided all relevant details on the property.

In 2008, the EMD handled over 4,800 requests for property information, apart from carrying 580 property inspections to confirm on-site status and drawing up 190 property status reports.

Property Plans

The preparation of property plans and drawings is an essential element in the management of government immovable property and the maintenance of a property terrier. The EMD utilises a custom-developed GIS-based Property Drawing System for the preparation of property drawings and plans. This system also interfaces with specific off-the-shelf computer aided design software to facilitate layout drawings. During 2008, the EMD put up a total of 710 property drawings in connection with leases, sales and permits over government-owned property. In addition, nearly 11,000 copies of plans were provided by the GPD in relation to such matters as parliamentary resolutions, land registrations, tenders etc. In addition to the above some 550 property information plans, depicting general and detailed information on government property registrations and ownership/disposal status were also drawn up to facilitate data interpretation as well as enable a historical snapshot of property.

Protecting Government's Title to Property

Malta's land registration law enables property owners to lay claims for their ownership by registering the land under the Land Registration Act. By doing so, owners would be provided with a certificate of title that may then serve as a single proof of ownership of the property without the necessity to have laborious property research undertaken. Under the said law, the first person to register a title may obtain a pre-emptive advantage over subsequent pretenders who will need to provide proof of a stronger title to the property. Technically this may give rise to situations where, should sufficient time elapse, Government may lose its claim over a property that has been registered by third parties.

To avoid such situations, one of the EMD's important functions is to check every single application for property registration made with the Land Registry so as to ensure that there is no attempt to usurp government property. In 2008, 1,080 such applications were checked, and where applicable, the necessary cautions raised. The Department also investigated and resolved 84 cases of cautions raised against it by private parties.

To further secure Government's title to its real estate, the EMD has for a number of years been registering title to thousands of properties by carrying out laborious ownership research and then submitting *ad hoc* applications to the Land Registry. During 2008, an added impetus was given to this process via the creation of an overtime-based land registration task force that managed to put up no less than 2,930 land registration applications/plans (c. 33% of all applications received by Land Registry) for a total land area of nearly 6 million square metres.

Operational Streamlining

At the EMD, operational streamlining is an ongoing process that is the subject of regular reviews in *ad hoc* meetings between senior management and heads of units for purposes of identifying means of speeding public service delivery. During the past year, greater use of e-mail to hasten delivery of correspondence as well as the use of the telephone to directly explain the status of requests were two measures that were undertaken with success.

SUSTAINING GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Sale of Property

The identification of government land to be issued for sale by tenders at market prices is a major activity of the EMD's business development function, thereby enabling a direct contribution to government finances. In carrying out this function, the EMD also ensures that the parcelling of land for sale is undertaken in a manner that is conducive to higher values being obtained. During 2008 the amount recovered from sales of land (excluding ex-church property) amounted to €13,164,131.

Property Leasing

EMD also sustains government finances by processing and approving the disposal of government-owned land and buildings via emphyteutical grants, leases and temporary permits – with the final legal document being issued by the Land Department. This involves such properties as land, shops, garages, stores, mobile kiosks, filming, tables and chairs permits etc. During 2008 the EMD processed 60 cases for temporary activities on government land, 402 permits for repairs/works and 58 tables and chairs permits. In addition the EMD also approved another 140 properties for leasing and emphyteutical grants. During 2008 new leases were affected for a total yearly rent in excess of €300,000.

SUSTAINING GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Devolution of Property to Local Councils

As part of its efforts to promote subsidiarity, Government regularly devolves the management of properties to the respective local council. The EMD's task in this regard is that of evaluating requests by local councils for the devolution of properties, preparing necessary plans and *ad hoc* contract conditions and, following government approval, refer the matter to the Land Department for finalisation of the contract of devolution. During 2008 the Government Property Division concluded the devolution/leasing agreements for nine properties as approved by EMD, including properties at Vittoriosa, Floriana, Hamrun, Msida, Santa Luċija, Ghaxaq, Santa Venera, Żejtun and Fontana.

Property Expropriation Assistance for Infrastructural Projects

As part of the country's drive towards enhancing its road network infrastructure, as well as ensuring the provision of such public goods as drainage and water services, it is not uncommon for private property to be expropriated for a public purpose under the Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Ordinance. In this context the EMD plays a crucial role in that, when a project is planned that may be required to make use of non-government land, it is the EMD that identifies what land needs to be expropriated. The Department gathers all relevant technical and legal data, takes measures to ensure reduced use of privately-owned land (by for example proposing re-alignment of project configuration with government-owned land), liaises with the sponsoring department and prepares the necessary plans for the expropriation. The EMD also provides technical assistance to the Land Department in acquisition cases taken in front of the Land Arbitration Board. During 2008 EMD's efforts enabled the Land Department to issue 70 new cases of expropriation.

Where previously expropriated land is found to have remained unutilised, action may be taken to have land released back to the original owners or their successors in title. In 2008 the EMD approved the release to the original owners of more than 100,000 square metres of such land.

Special Projects

It is part of Government's development strategy to make use of government-owned property for purposes of enhancing economic activity via private investment in property redevelopment and urban regeneration

projects. The EMD makes a valid contribution in this regard through the identification of land boundaries, property status and burdens, participation in the preparation of project documentation, drawing up of property disposal plans and also participation in the preparation of tender documents. During 2008 the EMD played an active part in such projects as the privatisation of the Malta Shipyards, Selmun Palace Hotel, Hal-Ferh Holidays and Enemalta's Gas Operations. Other projects included the Valletta Lift Project and the Barrakka Heritage Park.

Land Transfer to Government Entities

During 2008 the EMD also played a major role in other government projects via the provision of government-owned land for such purposes as the North Malta Sewerage Treatment Plant, South Malta Sewerage Treatment Plant, land for Enemalta substations and also land for afforestation purposes.

Facilitation of Home Ownership Schemes

As in previous years, the EMD continued to sustain Government's efforts to promote home ownership by authorising the transfer to the Housing Authority of 342 properties for eventual sale to tenants. The EMD also issued 37 objections to sale requests by the Housing Authority - normally in view of the heritage value of subject property or other estate management considerations militating against sale.

Agricultural Land Scheme

This scheme was a corporate initiative that enabled cultivators of government-owned agricultural land to register for the possibility of acquiring a new title to the land even where occupation was irregular. During 2008 the EMD processed and approved for leasing 450 applications.

Support Services

The EMD also provides support services by providing property related information to such government bodies as the Planning Authority, Works Division, Department of Social Housing, Land Registry, MIMCOL, Malta Industrial Park, Malta Transport Authority, Malta Maritime Authority and Housing Authority.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Policy Collection Exercise

During 2008 the EMD undertook a laborious policy collection exercise whereby scores of policy documents, *ad hoc* policy decisions and legal advices that guide property decision-making across the whole Government Property Division were researched, sourced and organised into one collective database.

Training Programme

During 2008 the EMD undertook the initiative of organising a complete work-based training programme aimed at all Division employees that involved some 2,000 man-hours of training in such issues as data protection, concepts of property law, Disposal of Government Land Act, Land Acquisition (Public Purposes) Ordinance, property disposal policies and procedures, land expropriation procedures, evaluation of property requests, sale of land, property enforcement, processing of applications for agricultural land, and IT systems training.

GPD Website

During 2008 the EMD undertook several amendments to the website of the Government Property Division including the preparation of updated versions of policy and procedural documents. A new webpage was also prepared in conjunction with the Freephone 1577 initiative launched by the Parliamentary Secretary for Revenues of Land for purposes of promoting the reporting of abuse of government property. The EMD also prepared two sets of Frequently Asked Questions for the website, one set related to Data Protection issues and another set related to the Freephone 1577 service.

Green Initiatives

The EMD has also contributed to Government's green initiatives by reducing the use of paper and fuel particularly by resorting to the use of technological innovations such as the use of orthophotos to reduce the need for site inspections and hence fuel consumption, and also promoting the use of electronic means of storing documentation as opposed to hard-copy printing, when and as appropriate.

JOSEPH CARUANA

Director (Estate Management)

Government Property Division Land Department

INTRODUCTION

The Land Department's role within the Government Property Division is the legal aspect of government property management. This means that after the Estate Management Department or Joint Office has decided on the best possible use for a particular property, the issue is taken over by the Land Department for the actual disposal of the property under the procedures permitted in the Disposal of Government Land Act.

In general terms, the formal disposal of government property requires either the issue of a call for tenders or else an *ad hoc* parliamentary resolution. It is the Land Department's task to prepare tender documents, publish them and award the disposal. Likewise, *ad hoc* parliamentary resolutions are prepared by the Department. Subsequent to the disposal of a property through lease agreements/contracts, the Land Department is then responsible for the follow-up and enforcement of any conditions imposed on the transferee. These include the payment of rent and the proper maintenance of the property but may also contain other special conditions such as the development of structural improvements within specified time limits. The finalisation of contracts also includes those related to the acquisition of private property for a public purpose under the auspices of the Land Acquisition (Public Purpose) Ordinance. Indeed the expropriation of private property is a primary task of the Land Department, one which enables Government to carry out major infrastructure works and other projects of benefit to Maltese society.

The Land Department is organisationally split up into two branches, namely the Enforcement Branch, responsible for all enforcement measures required to better manage government property, and the Contracts Branch which handles the formal requirements of leasing or selling/purchasing property and finalising related contracts.

ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of contractual conditions is essential if property management is to be given any significance. Within this context, a very small number of Enforcement Officers carries out site checks to ensure that conditions of leases and permits are being honoured. Non-compliance is met by counter measures to ensure that defaulters are brought back on track. These measures include formal warnings, the issue of prohibitory injunctions and also eviction proceedings. In this regard Chapter 228 of the Laws of Malta, the Land (Compulsory Eviction) Act, gives the Commissioner of Land extensive powers to evict persons who occupy government property without title. This power is used with caution but the Land Department is committed to ensure that government property is not abused of.

The enforcement section incorporates within it the collection of rent due on leased property. The non-payment of rent is monitored through periodical invoices and also through individual demand letters. Persistent non-payment leads to judicial action that may include executive warrants, the termination of leases and, in the more serious cases, eventual eviction.

During 2008, over 23,000 payments which represent 51% of the total payments of rent were effected at local councils, while 1,000 payments, which represent 2.22% of the total payments, were made through the Government Property Division's website (www.gpd.gov.mt). Clients have three options for the payment

of rent: at the department by cheque or bank draft, at the Local Councils by cash, cheque or bank draft and on-line by credit card through the GPD's web site.

CONTRACTS BRANCH

The role of this branch is the formalisation of any disposal or acquisition of property. As already indicated, the Disposal of Government Land Act stipulates that government property can generally be disposed of either through tenders or through a special Resolution of the House of Representatives.

The publication of tenders necessitates continual liaison with the Estate Management Department and the Joint Office to ensure that the appropriate conditions are set out in the tender. To ensure maximum publicity, tenders, are advertised on a number of local newspapers apart from the Government Gazette. Transparency is ensured by opening all tender documents in public.

Government has for decades made use of the provisions of the Land Acquisition (Public Purpose) Ordinance (LAO) to enable it to take over private property without having finalised acquisition proceedings. Since 1994, the department has limited the growth of the acquisition debt by requiring government departments that originate the need for the acquisition, to provide up front the full estimated value of the effected property. This ensures the payment on demand for any acquired property. Between 2002 and 2008 over €64 million have been paid for expropriated property.

In accordance with the provisions of amendments brought into force in 2003, the Department can take action to process past outstanding acquisitions and purchase property under certain conditions set out by law. These amendments are intended to minimise the expropriation debt as well as to enable Government to draw up the long outstanding HOS plots contracts and dispose of residences within housing estates constructed on land still under acquisition. Under these amendments a total of 140 bank accounts were opened in 2008 for a total deposit amounting to €3.1 million.

2008 HIGHLIGHTS

Revenue Collection

During 2008, no less than 59,000 rent invoices, 210 judicial letters, and over 70 lease termination warnings were issued to ensure timely recovery of rent dues. To these, one has to add other efforts such as telephone contacts. About 72 repayment agreements were also negotiated with defaulters. This has resulted in a total revenue in 2008 of €20,347,881 excluding sales.

Abuse of Government Property/Evictions

Enforcement measures were taken early in 2008 to address this matter. The Enforcement Section has been strengthened by three additional officers and the total number of enforcement officers at the Land Department is now five. In addition the Department is about to issue a call for tenders for contracting the provision of machinery which at times may be required in order to demolish illegal structures after eviction.

Enforcement actions have been carried out without break and as a start public pavements and government land have been successfully freed from illegal encroachments. As a result the Land Department has won the support of the public in its commitment to stop abuse of government land.

The major eviction carried out was the removal of a large number of caravans from Baħar ic-Cagħaq. In addition to this, the Department has with the initiative of the Director General GPD improved work practices on permits for the use of land as follows:

- established a policy on the termination and renewal of encroachment permits as a follow-up to enforcement which includes the payment of fines for the return of furniture/items lifted and the issue of fresh permits;

- issued a strong notice to all encroachment holders of sites for the placing of tables and chairs warning them to ensure strict compliance with conditions and to remove/correct any infringement that they may have;
- carried out surprise visits on sites where action had already been taken to establish whether any abuse is repeated; and
- organised weekly enforcement strategy to obtain maximum results.

Tenders, Leases and Sales

During 2008, the Land Department advertised a total of 202 tenders for the lease of government property. These resulted in 77 lease agreements and 57 contracts. A total of 443 lease agreements were concluded in terms of the Agricultural Scheme. 218 encroachment permits were issued. These included permits for mobile kiosks and permits for the placing of tables in public areas. The Land Department also completed the sale of government land/property resulting in revenue for 2008 of €13,164,131.

Acquisition

In 2008, the Department finalised a number of acquisition deeds paying a total of €7.6 million to owners of expropriated property. A total of 103 new President's Declarations for the expropriation of land mainly for road formation have been issued. Moreover, 37 President's Declarations of past outstanding acquisitions in order to compensate the owners in accordance with the amendments made to the Land Acquisition (Public Purpose) Ordinance (Chapter 88) have also been issued.

Releases

In 2008, a total of 20,236 square metres of land in various localities formerly acquired in virtue of the Land Acquisition (Public Purpose) Ordinance (Chapter 88) were released to the private owners.

Free of Charge Services

During the year, the Land Department has continued to provide, free of charge, agency services to the Housing Authority. Within these services, the total sum collected on behalf of the Housing Authority was €272,653. The sum of €16,887 was collected as rent for sports facilities on behalf of the Sports Council.

Projects

The Land Department has worked closely with MIMCOL and the Privatisation Unit in the preparation of tender documents for the privatisation of the shipyards and the preparation of work processes and parliamentary resolution of the gas privatisation project. The Department has further processed the devolution of various sites and premises to local councils.

CONCLUSION

The Land Department's role in ensuring that the use of government property is appropriately controlled is considered to be of utmost importance. This will help in inducing a rationalisation culture that appreciates the true potential value of government property and its possible uses. The other major task, which the Department is tackling seriously, is the acquisition debt problem and in 2009 the Department will continue to explore further avenues in order to extinguish payments for land expropriated in the past.

ALBERT V MAMO
Director (Land)

Government Property Division Joint Office

INTRODUCTION

The roles of the Joint Office are:

- managing and administering the immovable estate transferred to Government by the ecclesiastical authorities in terms of the Ecclesiastical Entities (Properties) Act, Chap. 358;
- validating and verifying the data being transferred to it by the ecclesiastical entities. The scope is to determine the exact value of all the properties transferred so that the necessary adjustments are made to the original amount of Lm28,067,000 which the Government issued in Bonds in terms of the 1991 Agreement with the ecclesiastical authorities;
- to register at the Land Registry all the properties which it administers, as well as those retained by the ecclesiastical entities.

Property Administration and Alienations

In 2008, the following properties were alienated:

As per 1996 Scheme	4
As per 2002 Initiative or original deed	226
As per Tenders/Exchange/Direct Disposal/Conversion	21
Total	251

Four premises were transferred to the Housing Authority for social housing purposes.

The Department also received and processed requests for the recognition of emphyteutae and tenants in their respective properties.

2002 Initiative

By the end of the year, the Joint Office had received 5,445 applications for the redemption of ground rent and for the purchase of leased premises. This was a result of the Government's announcement in the 2002 Budget Speech, that the Government was putting on the market all the properties being administered by the Joint Office which are either resident-occupied or used as a summer residence.

Of the 4,671 applications processed so far, 821 applications were invalid and a further 3,516 applicants were informed of the amount of redemption or of the selling price, as determined by established criteria, and 334 applicants were given an interim reply. With a view of hastening the process, the Joint Office farms out to architects in private practice the valuation of certain properties.

Agriculture Leases Scheme

The Joint Office is also processing applications received by February 2001 in terms of a scheme, whereby persons, occupying government-owned land for agricultural purposes without title, were given the opportunity to regularise their position.

Reconciliation, Verification and Registration

Transfer of Information on Properties

During 2008, the transfer of information from the Church Administrative Offices to the Joint Office regarding properties transferred to the Government by the Church continued at a steady pace. Up to the end of this year, 24,523 forms concerning properties listed in Annex 8 of the Church/State Agreement were forwarded to the Joint Office by the ecclesiastical entities.

In 2008, the Control Committee approved 552 corrections, as provided for in the Agreement. These corrections entail additions of properties inadvertently left out of the Annexes to the Agreement, deletion of others that were erroneously included, and correction to the capitalised amounts of properties. The Committee also signed 300 property forms, thus confirming the final amount due to the ecclesiastical entities in respect of the properties concerned.

During the year, the Joint Office continued to reconcile the values of properties previously owned by the 99 different ecclesiastical entities. In fact, during 2008 the Joint Office verified and determined the exact value of 1,248 properties transferred to the Government by the Order of Saint Augustine, bringing the total of reconciled entities to 52.

Registration of Properties

The Department continued with the registration of property with the Land Registry in terms of Chap 358. During 2008, the Joint Office registered 607 properties which include 1,910,781 square metres of land which is not built up. The related work entailed the drawing up of relative plans. This brought the total number of properties registered as on 31 December 2008 to 11,726.

The following figures show the number of properties which were registered during the past three years:

	2006	2007	2008
Registered Properties	877	567	607

Revenue Collection

Besides the collection of rent of leased properties, the Department identified properties available for disposal in terms of the Disposal of Government Land Act. The following figures show the comparative figure of revenue collected during the past three years:

	2006	2007	2008
	€	€	€
Rent	1,195,460	1,416,501	888,428
Sales	10,840,892	4,959,101	13,266,255
Total	12,036,352	6,375,602	14,154,683

27% of the amount of rent collected during 2008 consisted of arrears. This was the result of an ongoing enforcement exercise undertaken by the Department in conjunction with the Land Department.

The Control Committee

The Control Committee is a body set up in terms of Article 17 of the 1991 Agreement between the Holy See and the Government of Malta. Two members of the Committee are nominated by the Holy See and two members are nominated by the Government of Malta. Chairmanship of meetings is by rotation. The present members representing the Government of Malta were nominated in January 2002.

The functions of the Control Committee are promoting and monitoring the correct and timely application of the provisions of the above-mentioned Agreement with particular reference to the approval of corrections to the Annexes; and the alienation of property and in particular to bonds that have to be issued to the Foundation for Church Schools.

By Legal Notice No 150/2008, the sum of €6,542,600 in Government Stock was issued to the Foundation for Church Schools in respect of property alienated in the previous year.

Co-ordination with the Estate Management Department and the Land Department

The co-ordination and related co-operation of the Joint Office with the Estate Management Department and the Land Department, both departments falling under the Government Property Division, continued to be essential for uniformity in adopting common policies of the Division.

JOSEPH SCIRIHA
Director (Joint Office)

Office of the Notary to Government

ARCHIVES SECTION

In the Notarial Archives are deposited deeds *inter vivos* and *causa mortis* published by Notaries Public who have practised or are practising in Malta. The latter are wills drawn up in the public form; the former are all other deeds relating to property transfers (sales, emphyteusis, partitions and others), loans, powers of attorney and so on. Moreover in the Archives one finds also all deeds received by the Notaries to Government. All these deeds are deposited for custody and safe-keeping.

All deeds are also accessible to the public for inspection, provided that the person enquiring about a particular deed can indicate the notary who published same and the date thereof. Legal or informal photocopies thereof are issued on request. Requests are also made by means of e-mail and this system has helped to improve the services. Fees are charged for such inspections and for any copies requested.

Assistance was given to a great number of clients who had problems arising from deeds published by a notary whose warrant was suspended by the Courts. In this respect and where possible, relative notes of enrolment and hypothecation were entered into the Public Registry by the Chief Notary to Government and, where necessary, forms for payment of taxes to the Inland Revenue were signed by same.

NOTARIAL SECTION

The Notarial Section publishes deeds to which the Government, any corporate body established by law or any partnership or other body in which the Government of Malta or any such body has a controlling interest or over which they have effective control, is a party.

The Notarial Section liaises directly with various government departments to give effect to certain government policies and activities. The Department also receives requests for the publication of deeds relating to courses of study which the Health Division advertises from time to time for the training of medical and paramedical staff. These requests are also received when scholarships are granted by the Education Division, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Works Division and others.

A number of contracts were published by the Notaries at the Department.

Upgrading of Archives at St Christopher Street

During the period under review, the office with the assistance of the Notarial Archives Resources Council, continued working on the project of organising and upgrading the Archives at St Christopher Street Valletta. A number of security measures were installed including an intruder alarm system, a fire alarm system as well as a suppression room sponsored by HSBC. A computer was also donated by HSBC and a special box-system covering 70 volumes were donated by the Farsons Foundation. A system for monitoring humidity levels was also put into effect.

Notarial Warrant Examination

In March 2008, a Notarial warrant exam was held for 24 students. Twenty students were successful and obtained their warrant in April 2008.

List of Notaries

The Department also prepared the list of deceased notaries and their keepers, both in Malta and Gozo, as well as the list of practising notaries, in Malta and Gozo, for publication in the Government Gazette in January 2009.

Lotteries

The notaries from this Department were appointed by the Lotteries and Gaming Authority to be present to supervise the weekly Super Five and Lotto draws held throughout the year. These are being held in a private studio in Birkirkara and transmitted live on television. A notary from the Department also supervised the Government VAT receipts lottery held monthly at St James Ditch, Floriana.

<i>Notarial Archives</i>	
Volumes of deeds received in the Archives in terms of the Notarial Profession and Notarial Archives Act (Chap. 55)	294
Volumes of deeds received from the Special Commissioner for Notarial Acts in terms of Act X of 1999	22
Copies of deeds issued	9,283
Volumes repaired	72
Volumes bound	48
<i>Notary to Government Office</i>	
Deeds were published in connection with:	
Works (tenders) contracts	5
Courses of study and scholarships	18
Sale of gravesites	4
Other transactions to which Government was a party	51
Notes of enrolment, hypothecs and references entered in the Public Registry	86

Revenue and Expenditure

The revenue collected by the office, during the year under review, amounted to €171,880.4 and the expenditure during the same period totalled €254,517.74.

CORA VELLA

Chief Notary to Government

**Ministry for Justice
and Home Affairs**

Attorney General's Agency

GENERAL

In conformity with the provisions of the Government/Agency Agreement of 31 May 2005, Government provided to the Agency in the financial Estimates 2008 the necessary finances to enable the Agency to carry out its functions and obligations as outlined in the Agreement.

The Agency continued to provide Government with all the legal services and representation as necessary both domestically and overseas.

In the course of 2008, the Agency succeeded to conclude successfully a second recruitment exercise as a result of which six new lawyers were engaged on a three-year renewable contract with the Agency. Following this second recruitment exercise, the Agency is in a better position than the previous year to cater for the ever-increasing demands for legal services by Government.

As a result of this second recruitment exercise, the legal staff complement at the Office of the Attorney General's Agency as at the end of 2008 read as follows: the Attorney General, the Deputy Attorney General, one Head of Unit (Prosecutions), six Senior Lawyers, five Lawyers, nine Junior Lawyers and five Legal Procurators.

At the end of 2008, the administrative and clerical staff complement of the Agency was made up of an Assistant Director and a number of officers in the various clerical grades who perform duties either as clerical support staff to the two legal departments or in the administrative sectors of the Agency.

The total revenue accruing to the Office of the Attorney General during 2008 has been registered as follows:

Affidavits	€ 128.09
Legal Fees	€ 20,670.67
Miscellaneous	€ 1,810.60
Procès Verbaux	€ 9,037.65
Total	€ 31,647.01

The amount as given is the actual revenue accruing in the books of the Office of the Attorney General for the said year but, of course, account should be taken of the substantial amount of monies which the Office enables the Government to collect through legal action taken by the Office as a result of judicial actions and other judicial intimations.

The premises housing the Office of the Attorney General has, over time, become too small to accommodate the legal personnel and administrative staff which have increased substantially over the years. A stop-gap arrangement was made years back when the former Main Guard building at St George's Square was patched up to accommodate the staff engaged on civil matters. Over time and, in particular, with Malta joining the European Union, the Office of the Attorney had to assume new additional and specialist responsibilities and as a result of the enactment of Act IV of 2004 the Office has been turned into a Government Agency.

These events have resulted in cramped quarters with lack of office space and storage space for files, specialised literature and equipment making it indispensable to renew the efforts which had been initiated in the late nineties to find alternative accommodation. After years of negotiations, Casa Viani and Casa Corogna in Strait Street Valletta were vacated from squatters and it is now finally possible to proceed with the project to turn these premises into suitable offices to house the Agency.

Arrangements have been made to revise the original plans and to secure Planning Authority permission to implement them. The project is expected to take two/three years to complete because of the complexities involved in the demolition of the internal structure of the two buildings while recovering and restoring the façade of both Casas. These difficulties are further compounded by the narrowness of Strait Street which makes it extremely difficult to manoeuvre the heavy plant required to re-build the new premises.

An application is currently being processed by MEPA and the Cultural Heritage Unit of the Authority has been on site inspection with Agency's architects. As a result it has been agreed to file a parallel application which, when approved, would allow specialised personnel to enter and make the whole premises safe and secure for the subsequent phase of controlled demolition and initial construction works while retaining the facade of both Casas.

It is envisaged that tangible progress is registered in the course of 2009 when preliminary works are expected to be embarked upon. In order that this be realised, however, greater co-operation from the appropriate Government authorities is required especially since the Prime Minister has personally committed himself that the Office of the Attorney General is to move from the Palace within 3 years.

As in previous years, the Civil Cases and Administrative Law Department and the Criminal Cases Department continued with their respective activities and as a result of the increase in legal staff the departments could cope better with the ever increasing demands for legal services from the Office.

CIVIL CASES AND ADMINISTRATIVE LAW DEPARTMENT

The Civil Cases and Administrative Law Department tenders legal advice on a very wide spectrum of subjects to Government Departments on an ongoing basis.

Lawyers within this Department plead on behalf of Government in Small Claims, Inferior, Superior and Appeal Courts and before the Constitutional Court, in court cases of a civil, administrative or constitutional nature.

Lawyers, Legal Procurators and Clerks in this Department also pursue the drafting, filing and follow-up of numerous judicial acts and legal letters required to collect monies due to Government and to enforce legal claims.

Relevant data regarding the activities of the Civil Cases and Administrative Law Department for the Year 2008 is given in Appendix A.

The Attorney General is also the Public Prosecutor before the Criminal Court and the Court of Criminal Appeal. Certain prosecutions initiated by the Police require the previous consent or direction of the Attorney General.

CRIMINAL CASES DEPARTMENT

The Criminal Cases Department is responsible for the processing of criminal inquiries (*kumpilazzjonijiet*) and the filing of bills of indictment where this is warranted. Trials by jury are prosecuted by legal officers within the department. The office is also the depository of all *procès verbaux* drawn up by magistrates in Malta and Gozo following a judicial inquiry.

The *procès verbaux* are vetted by the legal staff for any further investigation that may be necessary. The Department also deals with consents to the Police for summary proceedings, orders by the Attorney General with respect to drug cases, appeals from judgments of the Criminal Court and of the Courts of Magistrates as a Court of Criminal judicature, applications for bail and on various issues connected with criminal proceedings and requests for visiting permits to prisoners awaiting trial.

Another area where the Criminal Cases Department is very active is that of international judicial co-operation in criminal matters including extradition, mutual assistance and transfer of sentenced persons and therefore a small unit to deal with such issues has been created. Requests for assistance are usually made by way of letters rogatory which are examined and dealt with in the manner demanded by the nature of the request.

Relevant data regarding the activities of the Criminal Cases Department for the Year 2008 is given in Appendix B.

EU UNIT

Following Malta's accession to the EU in May 2004, the Agency setup an EU Unit and lawyers with specific expertise in EU matters have been assigned duties within this Unit.

The functions of the EU Unit within the Office of the Attorney General's Agency are principally as follows:

- conducting litigation on behalf of Malta before the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance and advising Ministries and Departments on matters related to such litigation;
- providing advice and guidance to Ministries, Departments and the Permanent Representation of Malta to the EU on EU legal questions;
- representing Malta in a number of Council working groups;
- acting as national contact point for the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

In the course of 2008, the EU Unit drafted and submitted a number of statements of defence and rejoinders in connection with a number of infringement actions against Malta which the European Commission decided to refer to the European Court of Justice.

Amongst other things, the EU Unit is also providing advice and assistance on a variety of EU legal issues including issues raised in the course of pre-infringement proceedings in the context of Maltese cases which have been or are currently being litigated before the Maltese Courts.

The EU Unit also represented Malta in a number of EU Council Working Groups and other meetings organised by the EU institutions. It also provided advice and drafted replies to letters of formal notice or reasoned opinions. These included replies on alleged infringement on the law of capital gain tax; registration fees on second hand cars imported to Malta; alleged infringement of the SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC), when modifications to the North West Local Plan in relation to a zone adjacent to Santa Maria Estate, Mellieħa, were carried out; the requirement of EU citizens to be in possession of a work permit before taking up employment in Malta; restrictions on the renting out of secondary residences acquired by EU citizens in Malta; access to the profession of Notary in Malta by EU citizens etc. Furthermore this Unit provided advice to the relevant Ministries whilst negotiating at Council meetings on certain proposals, including the regulation on IUU Fishing; the draft proposal for the amendment on ship source pollution and the Proposal for a new anti-discrimination Directive (still ongoing), and provided advice as regards Malta's submission to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) on the conversions of single hull tankers.

During the year under review the Attorney General personally, as Agent of the Government, pleaded before the European Court of Justice and made the first ever oral submissions in the Maltese language before that Court.

Lawyers from the Agency also represent Government in meetings of the Council of Europe Committees and of various other bodies of international organisations. They are also involved in the pleading of cases in the European Court of Human Rights and, since EU membership, in the European Court of Justice. They also periodically present and defend Government's position before other international bodies that monitor human rights situations or issues of corruption and money laundering.

A number of lawyers perform also lecturing duties at the University of Malta and at other institutions. It is considered that this activity plays an important role in enabling lawyers to keep up to date with developments in the academic field and in applying the legal resources of the Office for the benefit of legal education in general.

Lawyers from the Office of the Attorney General also advise Government on proposed legislation, draft Bills in question, and attend sittings of the House of Representatives during the passage of such Bills in order to advise the Ministers concerned and to draft any amendments which might be deemed necessary. In view of the bilingual edition of all legal enactments, the Office of the Attorney General is also engaged in the translation of laws.

The Office also vets such subsidiary legislation as is referred to it to be cleared from the legal aspect, translated and published under the supervision of this Office.

During the year under review, 16 Acts were passed through Parliament and 361 Legal Notices were published in the Government Gazette.

Moreover, 21 Bills were also drafted or vetted and similarly published in the Gazette. Local Councils Bye-Laws, besides several other Bills and Legal Notices, were drafted or vetted without yet being published due to consultations being still in progress.

The Office of the Attorney General is gaining more ground in establishing itself as a government agency and, within the framework of the Agreement signed between the Government and the Attorney General in May 2005, the Agency is meeting the demands made on it not without difficulties and daily routine problems which the staff of the Agency, both legal and clerical, have to cope with.

However, it has to be reiterated that further recruitment of legal and clerical personnel depends mainly on the successful realisation of the 'new premises project' as referred to earlier on in this report. It has now therefore become even more imperative for the Agency to be housed within the said premises the earliest possible.

Otherwise, it would be rather difficult and even problematic for the Agency to succeed in coping with all the commitments and obligations as agreed upon with Government and as provided for in the Agreement of May 2005.

Dr SILVIO CAMILLERI
Attorney General

APPENDIX A**CIVIL & CONSTITUTIONAL ACTS DEALT BY THE OFFICE OF
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL****SUPERIOR COURTS**

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Judicial Letters	65	58	83
Writs of Summons/Rikorsi Guramentati	98	75	63
Appeals	76	71	79
Warrants of Seizure	3	0	0
Garnishee Orders	5	9	22
Miscellaneous Judicial Acts (including Applications, Statement of Defence, Notes of Submissions)			
First Hall	1,090	1,112	1,328
Second Hall/Family	125	101	118
Statements of Defence	119	62	200

INFERIOR COURTS

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Judicial Letters	183	188	158
Writs of Summons/Application	17	8	7
Warrants of Seizure	21	4	2
Garnishee Orders	23	22	21
Miscellaneous Judicial Acts (including Applications, Statement of Defence, Notes of Submissions)	615	393	451

GOZO COURTS

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Judicial Letters	6	52	25
Writ of Summons/Statement of Defence	12	3	9
Warrants	1	0	0
Miscellaneous Judicial Acts	32	72	38

CIVIL CASES

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Decided	231	217	328
Current Cases	718	914	942
New Cases	282	205	316
Sine Die	19	35	32
Waiting for hearing	21	38	32

NEW CASES

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>
Constitutional	65	66	55
Appeals	58	50	46
Civil	149	81	209
Inferior	10	8	6

APPENDIX B

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS for the Years 2006,2007,2008

	2006	2007	2008	
Bills of Indictment	23	46	24	
Trials by Jury	Total	19	21	23
	Deçizi	11	10	15
	Ammissjoni	6	7	4
	C. Order	1	1	1
	Differ	1	3	3
	<i>Sine die</i>		1	
	Gurin			1
Cases remitted to Magistrates Courts for Judgement including Counter Orders	213	286	209	
Consent for Summary Proceedings in terms of Section 370(4) of Criminal Code	789	1,139	828	
New Preliminary Investigations referred to the Attorney General by the enquiring Magistrate	375	313	346	
New cases remitted to the Attorney General as per Article 392a1 after a "Guilty Plea" is registered	113	144	194	
Drug Cases examined under Caps. 31 and 101 for Attorney General's Order to proceed	505	498	753	
Miscellaneous Applications	1,157	1,494	1,426	
Appeal Applications from Court of Magistrates including appeals under Articles 392 A(1)	92	131	78	
<i>Procès Verbaux</i> (Malta)	1,071	1,189	1,219	
<i>Procès Verbaux</i> (Gozo)	133	21	37	

Police Department

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

In-service Training Programme

The training programme, introduced in March 2007 to all divisional police officers, was this year extended to office personnel and those deployed at the specialised branches. This means that this year's curriculum was followed by 1,480 officers. This year's training, based on eight hours attendance on a monthly basis, continued to focus on firearms handling, unarmed combat and physical education (otherwise known as 'core' subjects) as well as other policing subjects ('non-core' subjects) which are pivotal for police officers in their performance of their daily duties.

Training sessions on the use of the taser gun – a non-lethal weapon – were also carried out since mid-July, 2008. As a matter of fact, a US expert on taser guns was brought over to Malta in July 2008 to conduct a 'train the trainers' course to a number of selected police officers. A number of awareness lectures on the use of this weapon were also held during the in-service training programme prior to the distribution, in October 2008, of taser guns to districts, divisions and branches around Malta and Gozo.

Awareness lectures on the use and effects of pepper spray were also held throughout the year.

New Police Academy

The blue print and an estimated draft budget for the new Academy at Ta' Kandja have been finalised and following a number of consultations between the architect in charge of the project and officials from this department, an application with MEPA is to be submitted early next year. Work on the new academy is also expected to commence in early 2009.

CEPOL Meetings in Malta

This year, Superintendent in charge of the local CEPOL office was tasked, to make preparations for the organisation of two meetings which were to be held in Malta under the auspices of CEPOL – the European Police College.

In fact, between 21 and 22 April 2008, CEPOL's 'Training and Research Committee' met at the Corinthia San Ġorġ Hotel, St Julians. Twenty-six participants attended the meeting, including three from Malta. The Malta Police Force hosted this meeting as Malta is currently one of the eight member countries of this Committee.

A CEPOL seminar on Domestic Violence (Common Curriculum) was also held between 3 and 6 June 2008 at the Corinthia San Ġorġ Hotel, St Julians. Twenty-eight participants from various EU Member States participated. Supporting Member States for this international seminar were Slovenia and Portugal, however two other experts from Germany, also participated.

District of the Year Award

The internal competition held in connection with crime reduction between all police districts was won for the second time by Police District no. 7 (Hamrun, Marsa, Pieta', part of Sta Venera, Rabat, Dingli, Mdina, Mtarfa). This district managed to reduce the crime rate by 21.96%, when compared with the previous year. This is clearly illustrated in the following table:

Reported Crime by District				
District	2007	2008	Comparison	% Change
1	1,213	1,151	-62	-5.11
2	861	812	-49	-5.69
3	1,145	1,188	43	3.76
4	1,186	1,131	-55	-4.64
5	1,124	1,133	9	0.80
6	1,777	1,843	66	3.71
6A	2,546	2,101	-445	-17.48
7	1,339	1,045	-294	-21.96
8	1,145	937	-208	-18.17
9	2,022	1,747	-275	-13.60
10	601	587	-14	-2.33
GHQ	189	145	-44	-23.28
Total	15,148	13,820	-1,328	-8.77

Officer of the Year Award

The Award introduced in 2006 to identify that member of the Force who throughout the preceding year had manifested exceptional commitment to service, thereby upholding the highest traditions of the Force, was awarded to PC 527 Stephen Camilleri and PC 858 Carmel Camilleri, both stationed at District No 5 (Zurrieq).

Both constables went beyond their normal call of duty when they physically intervened to quell a very dangerous situation during which a person started shooting indiscriminately at the direction of the Nationalist Party Club at Mqabba. PC 527 and PC 858 wrestled with the aggressor until they managed to disarm him and secure his arrest. Their bravery was pivotal in saving the life of those inside the club as well as that of other onlookers. The award will be presented to both PC 527 and PC 858 during the Annual Reunion ceremony scheduled for 4 January 2009.

Certificates of Merit/Commendation

During 2008, the following certificates of merit/commendation were awarded by the Commissioner:

Certificate	No
Certificate of Merit for participating in displays for the last 10 years in the Mounted Section/ Dogs Section/Precision Drill Team/Jazz Band /Police Band	60
Certificate of Merit for participating in displays for the last five years in the Guard of Honour	57
Certificate of Merit for participating in the Hobbies Exhibition in connection with Police Day 2008	14
Certificate of Merit for not availing of any sick leave for the past five years	8
Certificate of Commendation/Merit for outstanding performance	19
Total	158

THE POLICE EU OFFICE

The Police EU Office is an integral part of the Malta Police Force. This office was set up in mid-May 2004 as a consequence of Malta joining the European Union on 1 May 2004.

The purpose of this office is to assist the Malta Police Force in carrying out its EU-related tasks. Amongst others, the EU Office carries out the following roles:

- Information gathering
- Raising the Malta's Police Force profile in the EU
- Developing regional links
- Exchange of information.

This office, which is presently manned by three officers, one police Inspector and two constables, under the remit of the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Administration, is also responsible for the handling of classified information which is regulated by a number of laws, which *inter alia* include: the Official Secrets Act (Cap 50); the Professional Secrets Act (Cap 377); the Security Service Act (Cap 391); the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure (Cap 12); and the Data Protection Act (Cap 440).

One main function of the EU office is the processing of documents received from various Ministries as well as from other foreign organisations such as Frontex, CEPOL, the European Commission, Europol, Interpol, etc. Information received differs from Council decisions and regulations, to training programmes for police officers. These training programmes and courses offer police personnel a chance to acquaint themselves with new methods of policing as well as information gathering and thus enhance efficiency and competency in the Malta Police Force.

On several occasions, the Force has been requested by different organisations to host meetings in Malta. As a means of demonstrating our commitment, and with prior approval from the Commissioner, the EU office is often involved in the coordination and logistical requirements of such meetings and training courses.

The average number of invitations received for our officers to travel abroad during the year 2008 amounts to a total of 1,301 invitations. Average acceptance of participation to these invitations amounts to 30.4%.

The following courses, meetings, conferences, seminars were attended during the period under review:

EU Meetings (Council Working Groups)

EU Council Working Group	No. of Meetings	Locality	No. of Attendees
Horizontal Drug Group (HDG)	12	Brussels	12
Frontiers Mixed Committee	7	Brussels	7
Frontiers Working Party (false documents)	6	Brussels	6
EUROPOL Meeting	5	Brussels	5
SCIFA Meeting	7	Brussels	7
SIRIS Meeting	3	Brussels	3
SIS VIS Meeting	4	Brussels	4
SIS SIRENE Meeting	10	Brussels	10
CIREFI Meeting	5	Brussels	5
SIS TECH Meeting	11	Brussels	11
	1	Ljubljana	1
Multidisciplinary Group on Organised Crime (MDG)	19	Brussels	20
Schengen Evaluation /Acquis Working Party	13	Brussels	13
Migration Expulsion/Admission Meeting	9	Brussels	9
Working Party on Criminal Matters	7	Brussels	7
Dublin Group Meeting	1	Brussels	1
Police Cooperation Working Party Meeting (PCWP)	11	Brussels	11
PCTF Meetings	1	Brussels	2
	1	The Netherlands	2
Ad hoc Information Exchange Meeting	3	Brussels	3
Total	136		139

EU Meetings (Non Council Groups)

Organisation	No of Courses	Topics	Locality	No of Attendees
AGIS	1	Seminar on the establishment of management of an operational crime analysis capability	Italy	1
AGIS	1	Conference on the protection of the EU Territory	Italy	2
ATLAS	1	Information Day on contra terrorism negotiators	The Netherlands	1
ATLAS	1	Atlas Forum	Vienna	1
ATLAS	1	Forum for Atlas Commanders	France	1
CEPOL	1	Training & Research Committee Meeting (TRC)	Rome	1
	1		Ireland	1
	1		Copenhagen	1
CEPOL	1	The European Dimension – Enhancing Europe in Police Training	France	1
CEPOL	1	Crime Prevention Seminar	UK	1
	1		Latvia	1
CEPOL	1	Strategic planning for European Police Mission	Paris	1
CEPOL	1	Train the trainers – Money Laundering	France	1
CEPOL	2	Governing Board Meeting	Slovenia	2
	2		France	2
CEPOL	2	AGIS Exchange Programme Conference	Hungary	6
	1		Cyprus	1
	1		Germany	1
	1		Lithuania	4
CEPOL	1	Leadership & Development & management of Change	Germany	1
CEPOL	1	Community Policing	Athens	1
CEPOL	1	Common Curricula on Drug Trafficking	Greece	1
	2		UK	2
CEPOL	1	The Hague Programme – obstacles & progress in the Implementation	Portugal	1
CEPOL	1	Atlas-Hermes Seminar	Italy	1
CEPOL	1	Administrative Seminar	UK	1
CEPOL	2	Meeting on Nature and Environment	Spain	2
CEPOL	1	New Technologies used in fight against Terrorism combined with forensic Science	Hungary	1
CEPOL	1	Course on covert/undercover operations	UK	1
CEPOL	1	National e-Net Manager training course	UK	1
CEPOL	1	Seminar on Prum Treaty	Germany	1
CEPOL	1	CIRCAMP – Implementing the Danish child sexual abuse Anti distribution	Denmark	1
COSPOL	1	CIRACMP workshop meeting	France	1
COSPOL	1	THB Meeting	The Hague	1
Council of Europe	1	Round Mutual Evaluation re European Arrest Warrant	Czech Republic	1
	1		Italy	1
	2		Brussels	2
Council of Europe	2	Money Val Meeting	Strasbourg	2
Council of Europe	1	Training course on the Best practice to combat counterfeiting of medicines & to protect public health	Cyprus	1
EUCPN	1	Board Meeting	Paris	1
EUROCOM	1	Guidelines for Radio communications in the Border states	Paris	1
EUROJUST	1	Strategic meeting on Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) and witness protection	Slovenia	2
EUROJUST	1	Meeting on Drug Trafficking organisation	The Hague	2
EUROJUST	1	EPOC III final conference	Italy	1

EUROJUST	1	Strategic meeting on Cyber Crime	Greece	2
EUROJUST	1	Seminar on the preparation of the entry into force of the agreement on extradition and mutual legal assistance between EU and USA	The Netherlands	1
EUROMED	1	Meeting on counterfeiting the internet of terrorist purposes	Brussels	1
EUROMED	3 1 1	Combating financial crime meeting	UK Slovakia Poland	6 1 1
EUROMED	1	Workshop on international co-operation in criminal matters counter terrorism	Morocco	1
EUROMED	1	Preparatory meeting for heads of the fight against Drug Trafficking	France	1
European Commission (EC)	1	Meeting of the Friends of the Presidency	Brussels	1
European Commission	3	Workshop on IPR enforcement of EU industry & SMEs	Brussels	3
European Commission	1 1	Police Working Group on Terrorism	Paris Brussels	1 1
EC	1	Meeting on Passenger Name Record (PNR)	Brussels	1
EC	1	REPOLMED Meeting	Italy	1
EC	2	Seminar on the Prum Treaty	Brussels	2
EC	1	Workshop on Combating Money laundering	Israel	1
EC	1	Seminar on the implementation of an operational coordination centre	Paris	1
EC	1	Workshop on Best Practices of support measures by member states	Brussels	1
EC	2	ECEG – Euro counterfeiting expert group meeting	Brussels	2
EC	3 1 2	Sirene Training	Slovenia Lisbon France	4 2 2
EC	1	Meeting on national contact points on ICONET	Brussels	1
EC	1	Bilateral talks on Police Liaison with the Belgian police	Belgium	1
EC	1 4	SIS II Committee Meeting	Italy Brussels	1 4
EC	1	Expert Group on Emergency Access (EGEA)	Brussels	1
EC	1	Exchange of Best practice in Arson prevention and investigation	UK	1
EC	2	Customs Cooperation Meeting	Brussels	2
EC	1	European Expert meeting on the fight against Cyber Crime	Brussels	1
EC	1	The role of women's shelters in prevention & elimination of domestic violence against women	Slovakia	1
EUROPOL	1	Operational Meeting on facilitated illegal immigration	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Annual Child abuse expert meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	EU-US International Seminar on the Liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Meeting on Mass Marketing Fraud	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Seminar on Trafficking of nuclear and radiological materials	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	IS User Forum	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Bitmap Code meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	2	Response Network Training	The Hague	2
EUROPOL	1	International conference on Animal Rights Extremism	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Meeting on European counterfeiting experts	Munich	1

EUROPOL	2	OCTA Meeting	The Hague	2
EUROPOL	2	Europol Liaison Officer meeting ELO	The Hague	2
EUROPOL	1	High Level expert on Terrorism meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Personnel Expert Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	2	Financial Committee Meeting	The Hague	2
EUROPOL	1	Police Chiefs Task Force	Brussels	1
	1		The Hague	2
EUROPOL	1	Presentation on West African fraud	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Interaction of criminal & epidemiological investigations joint training workshop	Portugal	1
EUROPOL	1	Common Requirements vision for Police IT needs	Brussels	1
EUROPOL	3	ICT Programme Board Meeting (IPB)	The Hague	4
EUROPOL	5	HENU Meeting	The Hague	5
	1		Hungary	1
EUROPOL	1	Homicide Working Group Meeting	Lithuania	1
EUROPOL	1	Ordinary security committee meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	8	Management Board Meeting	The Hague	8
	1		Ljubljana	1
	1		France	1
EUROPOL	1	Expert meeting on coordination of Cyber Crime Training	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	AWF Terminal Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Siena Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	AWF Analysis group meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	AWF Soya Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Advisory board meeting for TE-SAT 2009	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	European explosive ordinance disposal Units Network Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	AWF Sustrans Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Payment Card Fraud Expert Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	High level expert meeting on property crime	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Conference on cross border surveillance	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Training course on combating the sexual exploitation of children on the internet	Germany	1
EUROPOL	1	Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) Expert meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	High Impact Operation (HIO)	Paris	1
EUROPOL	1	HYDRA Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	European EOD Network Meeting	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Expert meeting on Forgery of Money	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	Working group meeting on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	The Hague	1
EUROPOL	1	CBRN Meeting on Terrorism	France	1
French Presidency	1	Plenary Conference of the European Capitals Network	Paris	2
FRONTEX	2	Mid Level Training Course on border security	Germany Finland	2
FRONTEX	1	Evaluation meeting for JO Nautilus	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	ICONET Meeting	Brussels	1
FRONTEX	4	Management Board Meeting	Poland	4
	1		France	1
FRONTEX	2	Meeting on Return Matters	Poland	2
	1		France	1
FRONTEX	1	EU Training day development meeting (EUTD)	Italy	1
	1		Prague	2
FRONTEX	1	Annual Bilateral Talks 2008	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	Capacity Building Kick-Off event	Poland	1
FRONTEX	3	AENEAS Project	Lampedusa	4

FRONTEX	1	Deployment of the VISA information	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	Information Seminar	UK	1
FRONTEX	3	Risk analysis network meeting (FRAN)	Poland	3
	1		Slovenia	1
FRONTEX	1	Specialist Board Meeting	Amsterdam	1
	1		Italy	1
FRONTEX	3	Meeting on Pooled Resources Network	Poland	3
FRONTEX	1	CIRAM Meeting	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	Meeting of outsourced project sub-leaders and trainers	Austria	1
FRONTEX	4	RABIT Meeting	Lithuania	4
	6		Italy	6
	2		The Netherlands	2
	3		Romania	3
	1		Germany	1
FRONTEX	1	Dog Handlers training core conference	Italy	1
	1		Traiskirchen	1
	1		Romania	1
	1		Latvia	1
FRONTEX	1	Workshop on analysis units on the border guard community	Poland	1
FRONTEX	2	Seminar on the detection of falsified documents	Austria	2
	2		The Netherlands	3
	1		Portugal	2
FRONTEX	1	Argonauts Meetings	Warsaw	1
FRONTEX	1	Joint operation in the Central Mediterranean	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	Meeting on updating of advanced level training tool	Romania	1
	1		Austria	1
	1		Italy	1
FRONTEX	1	FISO Training	Poland	1
FRONTEX	1	Joint flight return standardised Training courses	Italy	1
INTERPOL	1	International symposium on the theft of illicit traffic in works of Art, cultural property and antiques	France	1
INTERPOL	1	General Assembly Session	Russia	2
INTERPOL	1	European Regional Conference	Lithuania	1
OLAF	1	Anti fraud meeting	Brussels	1
OLAF	1	Computer Forensic Training	Germany	2
OLAF	1	OAFCN Seminar on a new Technologies and communications	Cyprus	1
	1		Brussels	1
OLAF	1	Training on the recognition of counterfeit Euro Banknotes	Italy	2
OSCE	1	Regional meeting on combating human trafficking & money laundering in the Mediterranean Rim	Cyprus	2
TAIEX	1	Study visit on SIS	Lisbon	5
UNICRI	1	EU-SEC II final conference	Italy	1
Total	236			267

Non EU Meetings

Organisation	No of Courses	Topics	Locality	No of Attendees
CARIN	1	Seminar on Assets Seizure	Budapest	4
CARIN	1	Annual Meeting	France	1
CECLAD French project	1	Towards establishment of a coordination centre for the struggle against drugs in the Mediterranean Sea	France	1
CEPS	1	Seminar on European Arrest Warrant	Brussels	1
ERA	1	Combating Trafficking in Human Beings through	Trier	1

		international cooperation in Criminal Matters		
ETSC	1	Basic technical training on counterfeit euro coins for investigations	France	1
EUPT	1	Training Exercise for the European Union Police Forces	France	1
GDISC	1	Asylum Conference	The Hague	1
IACP	1	International Association of Chiefs of Police	USA	1
IOM – International organisation on migration	2	Programme for prevention & fight against crime – preventing and combating THB	Brussels	2
IPES	1	Annual Meeting of the International Police Executive Symposium – Police without Borders; fading distinction between local and Global	Ohio	1
IWR Associates Ltd	1	International Drug Swallowers Conference	Barcelona	1
JRC – Joint Research Centre	1	Workshop on OSINT computer forensics and internet crime	Italy	1
NON EU	1	Early warning system meeting	Lisbon	1
None	1	Capital Policing Europe	Amsterdam	1
RUCGC	1	Annual Royal Uster Constabulary GS Day service	Belfast	1
SCRIPT	1	Seminar on Planets EUR: Towards a European report centre, a New way of fighting against cyber crime	France	2
TASER International	1	Europe Courses	Barcelona	1
Embassy of the Rep of Turkey	1	European Executive Policing conference (IACP) on Transnational Crime	Turkey	2
United Nations	1	Intercessional Meeting on fight against Human Trafficking	Austria	1
USA Embassy	1	International visitor leadership programme o Combating trafficking in persons	USA	1
Telefono Arcobaleno ONLUS	1	Meeting of European Experts on fight against online paedophilia	Sicily	1
Total	23			28

INTERNAL AFFAIRS UNIT

During 2008, the Internal Affairs Unit received and investigated 195 complaints against members of the Force. Besides, other investigations were initiated on the initiative of this unit such as those following inspections or on receipt of confidential information.

Other investigations made by this Unit, which are not included in the under mentioned list of complaints investigated, include breaches of discipline during supervisory patrols, failure to attend court sittings, etc. The nature of complaints is shown hereunder. 112 of these complaints have been concluded whilst the remainder are still being investigated or pending. The outcome of those concluded ranged from action before a disciplinary board or internal disciplinary action to no further action as allegations proved unjustified.

Nature of complaint	Reported	Concluded
Breaches of the provisions of the Malta Police Act	38	18
Breaches of the provisions of the Laws of Malta	19	11
Service not rendered	28	18
Failure to enforce the law	5	2
Others	105	63
Total	195	112

QUARTER MASTER STORES

During the current year, various items were purchased and issued besides the usual uniform items and accoutrements.

All Districts, Police Academy, Mobile Squad, SAG and all other sections, except ECU and ALE, were all issued with one TASER gun.

A further 100 GLOCK G-17 pistols plus their relative holders were also purchased. This purchase forms part of other and future purchases aimed at modernising and standardising the weapons in use by the Force.

Also a further 100 Kenwood radios were purchased and distributed to personnel stationed at the Drug Squad and ALE.

COMMUNITY & MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT

The following are the activities catered for by the above mentioned personnel at the C.M.R.U. during the year under review:

Community Relations

- Processing of requests for information by students, NGOs and the general public;
- Handling of the Customer Care System and the OPRES (Online Police Reporting System) as regards requests for information;
- Liaison with other Police units for the Police Day programme;
- Liaison with various NGOs, local councils and schools which requested services of various Police Officers in educational talks, the Traffic Safety Campaign, the services of the Police Band and Jazz Group and visits to the Police Academy and Museum as well as the Police Dog and Mounted Sections;
- Quarterly publication of the Police Magazine;
- Co-ordination for the visiting of the Last Supper Display for schools and local councils;
- Lectures in various schools re a career in the Police Force;
- Co-ordination of visits to Police sections (Police Museum, Crime Museum, Police Academy, Dog Section and Mounted Section) by students and other NGOs as required;
- Introduction of Crime Prevention material such as posters and book marks in relation to Crime – General Theft, Hold-Ups, Pick pocketing, Snatch and Grab, Theft of Vehicles and Theft from Vehicle. Said material was distributed to all local councils and police stations and during talks in schools.

Education on Crime Prevention/Visits

Displays/Participations by Police at Schools, Local Councils, NGOs, etc							
<i>Dogs</i>	<i>Mounted</i>	<i>Band</i>	<i>Jazz Band</i>	<i>Silent Drill</i>	<i>Traffic</i>	<i>Others*</i>	Total
41	26	26	10	5	15	13	136

* comprises Mascot, Mobile Squad, SAG

Other Requests	
<i>Nature of Request</i>	<i>No. of Requests</i>
Talks at Schools, Local Councils, NGOs, etc.	108
Interviews given to students, newspapers, students, researchers, etc.	39
Participation/Interviews on TV and Radio Stations	224
Requests for information received by e-mail, fax and post from journalists, students and other persons	225
Requests to borrow Police equipment, uniforms etc and for Police assistance during filming	27
Total	623

	Received	Settled
Customer Care Complaints	517	321
Online Reporting System (OPRES)	525	473

Media Relations

- Daily monitoring of news both visual and radio, newspapers and internet;
- Publications of press releases and co-ordination of press conferences;
- Recording and monitoring of news bulletins and programmes where these concern the Police;
- Arrangements as requested by the Media for interviews of Police personnel;
- Processing of requests for information for the Radio, TV and print media;
- Liaison with producers from Net TV (*La qomna, qomna*), One TV (*One Breakfast and Kalamita*), and PBS (*Bongu*) Family TV (*Kikkra Kafe' and Ma' Ġorġ*) in connection with various Police participations on day-to-day running of Police sections. Such programmes are on a weekly basis and run throughout the winter and part of the summer schedule;
- Liaison with local producers as regards requests for filming for local programmes (requesting police assistance, uniforms and liaison with other police departments).

Type of Activity	No
Issuing of Press Releases	790
Editorial Meeting /Crime Conference/Press Briefing	2
Replies to articles published through the Media	23
Total	815

HUMAN RESOURCES BRANCH

This office was heavily committed during the year 2008 due to the General Elections across the Maltese islands. This event entailed major preparation and organisation by the said office in selecting police personnel to distribute voting documents either door-to-door or from police stations. Police officers were briefed, detailed and deployed accordingly to supervise polling places, to escort ballot boxes and finally but not least, to sustain continuous supervision and order at the Naxxar Counting Hall.

The Branch also performed the following activities:

- *Retirements*: During 2008, there were 108 cases of retirements/resignations from the Police Force (3 Assistant Commissioner, 1 Superintendent; 8 Inspector; 5 Sergeant Major; 16 Police Sergeant; 3 Woman Police Sergeant; 62 Police Constable; 10 Woman Police Constable).
- *Other HR functions*: The HR Office also examined confidential reports regarding Police personnel for eventual promotion from one scale to another, advancements and confirmation in their respective appointment. Medical and injury boards were also appointed by this office, together with the maintaining of records concerning sick and vacation leave, unpaid, emigration and responsibility leave, allowances and financial information in order to keep documentation for pension purposes.

This office kept updated with all amendments regarding MPO and OPM Circulars, the Public Service Management Code, the Police Act (Chapter 164 of the Laws of Malta), and other directives issued by the Commissioner of Police. Consequently, various GHQ Circulars were released from this office so as to inform all the members of the Police Force with these new amendments.

- *Recruitment*: During the year, the HR Branch processed a call for applications for Police Constables issued on 7 September 2007. A total of 118 applications were submitted, which were assessed and interviewed accordingly. Fifty-four recruits were selected and successfully completed the training course at the Police Academy between 3 January and 12 February 2008. Furthermore, as per call for applications for Police Inspectors issued on 20 March 2007, 21 external and 30 internal applications were received at this office. These were assessed and interviewed, and 28 inspector cadets (24 internal; 4 external candidates) were selected to attend an ad hoc course at the Police Academy. On 1 February 2008, 27 inspector cadets (23 internal and 4 external) were appointed as Probationary Police Inspectors.

- *Promotions*: During the year, the following promotions were effected: 24 Police Constables appointed 3rd Class Police Sergeants; 10 1st Class Police Sergeants appointed Police Inspectors; nine 2nd Class Police Sergeants appointed Police Inspectors; two 3rd Class Police Sergeants appointed Police Inspectors; two Police Constables appointed Police Inspectors.
- *Disciplinary Sitings*: This Office also issued disciplinary charges for offences against the Police Act. Sixteen summary procedure sittings were held, during which 447 cases were heard.
- *Meetings Office*: During the year, this Office received and processed a total of 86 applications for the holding of public activities - 13 meetings, 53 public discussions, 7 demonstrations and 13 mass meetings.

Training Programmes

As the new shift structure was introduced within the Malta Police Force, this office was for the second year running, responsible for the drawing up of the detail of duties for Police officers following training courses at the Police Academy.

Each and every member of the Force who performs his/her duties as per the new shift structure attends for various training programmes at the Police Academy that include *core* and *non-core* sessions, small arms shooting courses, physical training and other essential guiding skills that can surely assist in managing to efficiently perform one's tour of duty.

Upgrading and Renovation of Police Stations/Branches

The following is a list of police stations/branches that were refurbished during 2008:

Police GHQ Museum	Setting up of the new crime museum consisting of a new balcony with handrail complete with stairs and showcase cubicles
Criminal Records Office	Refurbishing of office, new floor tiles, furniture, shelving and main doors
Principal Citations Office	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on all roofs
Former Traffic Section at GHQ (Presently the Accounts)	Changing of all office doors, floor tiles and wooden sky-light frames
GHQ Internal Yard (Opposite Other Ranks Canteen)	Embellishment of the area including new lighting, floor tiles, stone slabs (<i>tal-fil</i>), plastering of new arches, new wooden balcony, installation of male and female restrooms, and also the new statue of our patron Saint St Michael
GHQ	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on all roofs, including the installation of a new P.A. system all around Headquarters
AC Protective Services Office	Refurbishing of office including new soffit and furniture
Inspector Human Resources	Refurbishing of office including new furniture
IT Block	White-washing and plastering of all internal offices and corridors, including the installation of new electricity cables with three-phase
CID Block	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on roofs, repairing of air-condition chillers, white-washing and plastering of all internal offices including internal yards, and also repairing of lifts
CID Orderly Room	Erection of new office that is being used by the C.I.A.U. personnel, including office doors and relative furniture
CID Yard	Repairing and changing of internal CID yard including drainage system
CID Lock-Up	Refurbishing of office including new furniture, and repairing of lifts
MT Garage GHQ	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on all roofs including the Mobile Squad, Traffic and ALE sections
Paola Police Station	Refurbishing of orderly room, plastering, lighting and new furniture
Mellieha Police Station	Repairing of dangerous structure which included new wooden beams, stone slabs and also the changing of façade windows
Sliema Police Station	Repairing of dangerous structure by supporting the old beams and stone slabs by means of new ones
Msida Police Station	Total refurbishment of the Station including the installation of new office furniture and a new orderly counter

St Paul's Bay Police Station	Repairing of dangerous structure and refurbishing of all the Police Station <i>(Still undergoing)</i>
Pitkali Police Station	Total refurbishing of the Station including the installation of new office furniture and windows <i>(Still undergoing)</i>
Żurrieq Police Station	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on all roofs
Hamrun Police Station	Plumbing works were carried out all throughout
Dogs Section, Mosta	Water proofing and repairing of membrane on all roofs
Community Work	<i>At ir-Razzett tal-Hbiberija</i> for seven days
Court Orders	Works were also carried out in compliance with orders issued by the Court in various residences at Xemxija, Qormi, Birkirkara, Naxxar, Gżira and at a particular hotel in Paceville

Other everyday requirements in the respective police stations and branches, such as whitewashing, plumbing, electricity, installation & maintenance of air conditioners, carpentry works such as furniture, etc, and other needs were taken in hand on a regular basis, in order to keep the best working environment in all police premises, for the best interest of the public in general and staff working thereat.

IT SERVICES

The year 2008 was an important year for the IT Services. Attention was particularly focused on the Schengen Information System. This was achieved through the consolidation of the existing SIS1+ environment while being heavily involved in the project management and implementation of the SISII Project. This was no easy task, considering the number of other systems that fall under the responsibility of this small section and the ever-increasing number of projects that require its contribution.

Schengen Information System (SIS)

Although Malta successfully joined the Schengen area during 2007 (with the last borders lifted in March 2008), the main focus of the section's initiatives focused on the SIS. To join the Schengen area, Malta needed to adopt the SIS1+ system while continue to working to oversee the implementation of the larger and more modern SISII system. The SIS1+ system is looked upon as a temporary system that will make way for the SISII system once this is completed at a central level.

To successfully migrate to SISII a new ICT infrastructure is required. For this purpose several semi projects were initiated. These included the following projects:

- *Integration of national systems with the SISII:* This project was co-funded by the European Union (Transition facility 2005). The project involved procurement of IT equipment and security devices. This project also involved contracting with an international ICT company to ensure that the SISII application to be used by Malta is compatible and compliant with the SISII requirements. The contract also involved managing the testing structure adopted by the central project. This project was successful by December 2008;
- *Implementation of security and safety measures in SIS designated sites:* This project was co-funded by the Norwegian Funds mechanism. The project has enabled the IT Section to reach the required security and safety standards demanded by the Schengen framework. Works are expected to be completed during the first quarter of 2009;
- *Procurement, installation and commissioning of required ICT equipment necessary to implement the SISII:* A call for tender was issued and awarded during 2008. Works have started and the primary site was ready by the end of 2008. Works are expected to continue during 2009;
- *Modification of all national systems that will interface with the SISII:* This would ensure that once the SISII is available, all members of the Police Force and border control officers will access SIS data. Works in this regard are ongoing and will be completed during 2009;

- *Preparation of two sites to house the primary and secondary SIS data centres:* These projects involved modification of the IT Services building and the reallocation of the Cyber Crime Unit. The project also included the creation of a secondary SISII lecture room that may be used as a backup for the SIRENE bureau. Works were completed during 2008.

National Schengen Information System (N.SIS) Malta

The N.SIS Malta, which is a sub-group of the IT Services Unit, is entrusted with the management and operational support necessary to ensure the availability of the SIS. During 2008, the SIS in Malta was available for 99.86% of the time. The unavailability was for 3hrs 47 min (representing 4 incidents) due to an incident or unplanned maintenance with 8hrs 15mins (representing 8 sessions) for planned maintenance. During 2007, Malta was available for 99.04% of the available time. This is considered to be a very good performance by N.SIS MT.

Network connectivity between N.SIS MT and Central SIS was down for only 39 minutes (1 incident) during 2008.

N.SIS MT attended all SIS-TECH meetings during 2008. These meetings are held on a monthly basis, mostly in Brussels, and represent the management board of the SIS.

Members of N.SIS MT have, during 2008, also attended training organised by C.SIS during 2008.

False and Authentic Documents Online (FADO)

The FADO system continued to operate during 2008. The security devices attributed to this system were upgraded during the third quarter of 2008. The system is scheduled to be upgraded during 2009.

Ecrodat System

A new system was implemented during the second quarter of 2008. This system, referred to as Ecrodat, serves as a communication platform between the Malta Police and other EU Member States. The system serves to exchange confidential information through a secure channel.

PISCES - Border Control System

The existing border control system was also involved in the Schengen integration project completed during 2007. Despite this fact, the PISCES system was upgraded during the third quarter of 2008. A joint team, comprising of a specialist PISCES Project Team and members of the Police IT Services, successfully upgraded the system to ensure that adequate controls are effected at Malta's borders. This involved upgrading and replacing the existing servers and work stations deployed at the Malta International Airport, Seaport and Marinas.

The PISCES system is also expected to be upgraded during 2009 as part of the SISII project.

The PISCES system performed well during 2008 with minimal downtime providing our border control officers with important information necessary for them to complete their duties.

EuroDAC and DubliNET

Both the EuroDAC and DubliNeT system remained operational during 2008. The systems were migrated to new servers during 2008 to ensure better performance and stability. Security arrangements were also upgraded.

Interpol

The Interpol 24x7 system remained operational during 2008. New workstations were made available during the last quarter of 2008. A project has been initiated to integrate the Interpol system with other national applications. Once completed this will allow users to directly access Interpol resources. The project, if implemented, will be completed by 2010.

Europol

The Europol information exchange system remained operational throughout the year. A new network gateway was installed to allow for a more efficient and reliable communication channel. Video conferencing facilities were also implemented.

Police Incident Reporting System II (PIRS II)

The PIRS II remained operational throughout the year. This system is now considered to be the main police system and is accessed by various police units throughout the force. Various workshops have been held with several police officers and changes have been implemented according to their needs. Additional modifications are expected including the addition of road accident reports. A project has been initiated that will ensure that the PIRSII will be compatible with SISII requirements. This project will be completed in 2009.

PIRS II Training

A total of 336 officers have been trained in the use of the PIRS II during the last year. This has been achieved following the arrival of a full time trainer as part of the IT Services personnel. The officers trained are 10 inspectors, 130 sergeants, 140 constables and 56 recruits.

To improve training a specific programme has been created and implemented. This involves creating a replica of the PIRSII, SIS and NSL environment. This is the first time that the Malta Police Force has a dedicated training environment of this level. A training room has also been created at both the Police Academy and the IT Services building. Additional training is already planned for 2009.

National Stop List (NSL)

The NSL continued to play an integral part of national security. The system remained operational throughout the year. Modifications are scheduled to be implemented during 2009 in respect of the SISII and national requirements.

New Police Web Portal – www.pulizija.gov.mt

A new web portal was created to allow for improved communication with the general public. The portal is set to include information on various aspects of the Malta Police. The portal, apart from incorporating the existing on-line reporting mechanism, will provide readers with direct access to the latest information related to crime trends and statistics, press releases and other police publications. Although works have been concluded, the portal has yet to be launched. The page will be officially launched during the first quarter of 2009.

During the forthcoming year additional works are expected to create and implement a police Intranet, limited to serving police officers. This is set to be completed by the end of the year.

Human Resource Database

This system was created by IT Services personnel. Modifications were made during the year to incorporate user requirements. Additional reporting and data acquisition functionalities were developed. The system was migrated to a new server to improve resilience and performance.

Quarter Master Stores

A new project was initiated during 2008. The project included setting up a new database that would allow Quarter Master personnel to manage stock levels. After a period of consultation and testing, the system was implemented during the last quarter of 2008. Additional improvements are scheduled for 2009. The system replaces a manual process that was previously adopted by the stores.

ICT Equipment – Deployment and Enhancements

New Security Policy

The year 2008 saw the implementation of a new security policy for the Malta Police Force. The policy included the lock down of several workstations based on the sensitivity of the data retained. This in effect disallows users to install any unauthorised software or device. All computers deployed were joined with the police domain and security policies were applied. Through this system, all security and software upgrades are being conducted automatically.

Repairs, maintenance and support

During 2008, the IT Services staff maintained all police computers. This involved a number of call-outs, on-site repairs and repairs carried out in the IT Branch's technical workshops. As of February 2008, all call-outs were registered. Hardware repairs amounted to 1,556, software repairs amounted to 5,439, while other call-outs amounted to 1,417. This represents a total of 8,412 service requests.

Police Digital PABX / 112 Systems

The IT Services is responsible for two telephone systems; the police 21224001 PABX and the 112 Emergency Service. During 2008, general maintenance was performed on these two PABXs.

A new AIT Digital recorder was installed during the first quarter of 2008. This recorder is used for the purpose of recording all incoming and outgoing calls

Cepol E-Net Management (Police College)

During December 2008, members of the ICT unit were nominated as E-Net Managers representing the EU Police College of Bramshill. Their duty is to promote knowledge sharing throughout the Police Officers of the Malta Police and enrol such officers in the CEPOL website - www.cepola.europa.eu.

Other Involvement

IT Services personnel have also been involved in a number of formal initiatives and participated in various national working groups. The following are some of the activities undertaken during 2008:

- Involvement in the management and evaluation of the Forensic Digital Lab tender;
- Involvement in the NIDMS Tender evaluation;
- Involvement in the management and evaluation of the SISII project tender;
- Involvement in the Norwegian Funds Mechanism evaluation related to the Security and Safety Project;
- Setting up of a command centre as part of the Anti-Terrorism Evaluation exercise;

- Setting up of a command centre to monitor the activities of the Counting Hall in Naxxar during the General Elections. This involved setting up a CCTV system throughout the complex;
- Involvement in the US Visa Waiver Programme evaluation exercise;
- Direct involvement in the various Schengen-related working groups, including the National Task Force and Project Teams;
- Participation in the 112 Single Emergency Number Task Force. The role of the ITS was to advise the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs on possible solutions related to the 112 network and radio communication infrastructure;
- Participation in the Forensic Digital Laboratory implementation project. The role of the IT Services was to provide assistance during the adjudication of a tender related to the project, the provision of the IT infrastructure necessary to support the digital laboratory and to provide technical advice to the Forensic Science Laboratory. The project is expected to be concluded during the first quarter of 2009;
- Participation in the implementation and connectivity of new Breathalyser Equipment that was procured by the Police Force during 2008;
- Preparation and submission of a bid under the External Border Funds in relation to the implementation of the SISII project. Funding requested from the European Union would allow for the successful completion of the SISII project;
- Co-operation with the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs in respect of financial planning for the year 2009. This involved assistance in contract management and implementation, audits, project management and project reviews.

CYBER CRIME UNIT

The Cyber Crime Unit was very active on all fronts during 2008. The number of reports received and investigated has increased. This increase was expected due to more awareness and hence more reporting, increased use of technologies and bigger opportunities. The Unit was also involved in a number of preventative measures appearing on the media, organising talks with parents and children and holding seminars for specific sectors of the community. Given the dynamic nature of cyber crime, the unit was also involved in a number of international investigations.

The unit has also moved to a new premises re-allocating with the investigations building. Given the role of the unit as a support service, this has facilitated communication between the investigators and the unit. The re-allocation has also helped to raise the profile of the unit.

Crime Reported

A total of 279 reports were investigated by the unit during 2008. This represents a 60.34% increase over the previous year. The most predominant category investigated were fraud, unauthorised access and investigations related to possession of child abuse material. The table below indicates the crime categories and number of investigations in which the unit participated:

Category	2007	2008	difference	% change
Computer Misuse	47	72	25	53.19
Child Abuse Material	7	23	16	228.57
Copyright Infringement	3	7	4	133.33
Defamation	19	13	-6	-31.58
Child Abuse	6	17	11	183.33
Forgery	0	2	2	100
Fraud	46	51	5	10.87
Human Trafficking	0	1	1	100
Illegal Gambling	2	2	0	0
Incitement to Racial Hatred	0	0	0	0
Missing Persons	0	5	5	100

Homicide	0	1	1	100
Phishing	0	3	3	100
Prostitution	1	0	-1	-100
Pornography (Adult)	1	10	9	900
Terrorism	0	3	3	100
Theft	0	2	2	100
Threats	19	48	29	152.63
Usury	0	1	1	100
Wilful Damage	0	1	1	100
Other	23	17	-6	-26.09
Total	174	279	105	60.34

Note:

a) *Computer Misuse as defined by Chapter 9 of the Laws of Malta*

b) *Child abuse material refers to what was formerly known as child pornography.*

During the same investigations, the unit collected 5,393 items to be analysed and documented. The table below reflects the items collected and analysed by the unit:

Category	2007	2008	difference	% change
Computers Systems	68	113	45	66.18
Hard disk drives	77	125	48	62.34
Optical Disks	980	5,005	4,025	410.71
Floppy Disks	287	37	-250	-87.11
Other Storage Media	25	82	57	228
Printed Matter	3	31	28	933.33
Total	1,440	5,393	3,953	274.51

Crime Prevention Initiatives

In an effort to raise awareness and prevent the commission of computer related crimes, members of the unit participated in a number of media initiatives (12 television programmes, two radio programmes and one printed article). This included all media categories.

Similarly, the unit participated in a number of talks addressing parents and children. A total of 43 talks and seminars were organised for parents, teens and children whilst 45 talks were held with educational organisations and youth institutions. The unit also participated in the European Parents Association meeting related to Internet Safety organised in Malta during November, 2008.

Partnerships

The unit continued to work to strengthen partnerships with practically all sectors of the society. Regular meetings were held with Aġenzija Appoġġ and an agreement was reached in relation to exchange of information related to on-line child abuse.

Several meetings were also held with Italian NGO *Telefono Arcobaleno*. The meetings were held to explore how the latter and the Cyber Crime Unit could work together to combat on-line child abuse, both locally and globally. Members of the unit were invited to a conference during December 2008 organised by the Italian NGO whereby the unit gave an active contribution. Collaboration is expected to continue during 2009.

The strong relationship that existed between service providers and the unit continued to strengthen during 2008. This was achieved through a number of talks and meetings that focused on good practice and crime methodologies and trends.

The unit's participation in the COSPOL-CIRCAMP group continued to flourish during 2008. Malta, as a forerunner member, gave a positive contribution to the group. A filter intended to block out child abuse related web pages is scheduled to be implemented during the first quarter of 2009.

International Participation

The unit also participated in a number of international conferences, seminars and training programmes. These included:

- participation in the prestigious 9th training course on combating the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet organised by Europol in Selm Germany;
- participation in the 1st Strategic Meeting organised by Eurojust in Athens, Greece;
- participation in the International Association of Computer Investigative Specialist (IACIS) training organised by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) in Mainz, Germany;
- participation in Workshop on Open Source Investigation Tools - Computer Forensics & Internet Crime; organised by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Ispra – Italy;
- participation in a forum entitled *Combating Financial Crime over the Internet* organised in the United Kingdom;
- participation in the COSPOL-CIRCAMP meeting held in Denmark;
- participation in the Commonwealth Network (COM-NET) conference on computer crime;
- provision of advice and assistance to the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs in legal, technical and operational aspects of computer misuse and on line child abuse;
- participation in a workshop organised by Italian NGO *Telefono Arcobaleno* related to cooperation against child exploitation.

STATISTICS OFFICE

The Statistics Office continued to provide Police senior management with vital crime statistics that enables the Force to address specific or changing crime trends. The Statistics Office issued predefined monthly statistical reports on schedule, thereby allowing Police management direct access to critical information. This has without doubt helped police planning and strategic objectives.

The Statistics Office also published a number of crime specific reports that were requested from time-to-time. These included requests from different units within the Force itself apart from requests from senior management.

The Statistics Office also contributed towards addressing Parliamentary Questions, information requests made by the media, public entities, students and the general public.

Members of the Statistics Office are currently reviewing their work flow and are planning additional crime reports expected to be published during 2009.

PROSECUTION UNIT

The Prosecution Unit was set up in October 2000 and the parameters of its duties were set out in GHQ circular 83/2000. The main function of this Unit was intended to review cases, prepare their prosecution and finally to take over the prosecution of cases in Court. However due to ever present changing needs of the Force and the necessary academic training; there has been some comprehensive changes in its active role and personnel complement.

Role of the Prosecution Unit

For the past year, in continuance with its previous role, the Prosecution Unit has operated more as a legal section, providing legal and administrative support to all the other Police Branches. Such support includes

recommendations on preferred charges, information about changes to statute and case-law and prosecuting procedures. The role of this unit, since had taken over the prosecution of Criminal cases, in particular the sittings dealing with the Juvenile Courts and the Criminal Family Courts, and added further to this Civil and Constitutional Court cases attendance and review. In a number of prominent instances, the Unit has also taken on the prosecution of criminal cases.

This Unit is still concerned with a number of other initiatives and inter-authority issues, such as the malicious call tracing system and the standardisation of procedures between different Law enforcement agencies, such as the LES management committee, Customs, the Armed Forces and the Health Department amongst others.

In view of legislative changes occurring within the Criminal Law sphere, both substantive and procedural, this Unit has been ever increasingly burdened with legal review and discussions both in the local field and at EU level. This has during the past year been the greatest drain on our limited resources. Members of this unit have had need to travel abroad on a constant basis, and at least for two days nearly every week, one or more officers have been attending EU meetings. A total of 59 meetings and seminars abroad have been attended by personnel from this Unit. The meetings at Council were in fields of Multi Disciplinary Groups (MDG – PNR and Organised Crime), Criminal Records (Policy, Expert and Implementation – ECRIS), Police Co-Operation, Protection of EU Territory, Schengen and Data Protection. Personnel from this unit have also been involved in Scheval visits to other countries, notably in EAW and Data Protection issues and are also involved in the preparation of EU reports and follow-ups to such visits. EU meetings do not only require attendance abroad but also local meetings with other competent authorities and also in-depth discussions with the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the position that Malta should take within these meetings. Also, the Prosecution Unit is highly involved in implementing EU obligations, for instance the Prüm Council Decision, where this project requires enactment of new laws and also co-ordination efforts between other authorities such as the ADT and the IT authorities.

Our commitment to the further education of members of the Force has given rise to the continued provision of lectures aimed at Problems in Prosecution of Criminal Cases. Lectures have also been delivered on a weekly basis to prosecutors at Inspector upwards level. Our commitment to the Police Academy is still very strong and lectures were given in a number of fields, namely, Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Juvenile Law, and Data Protection as part of the ad hoc courses being held. Further lecturing by this Unit was given in particular as part of the Inspectors course currently being held in conjunction with the University of Malta.

This Unit further enhances the Police Public Relations through attendance on a monthly basis on the many media services of radio and television, besides delivering speeches in schools and other institutions, as requested.

Data Protection Unit

The Data Protection Unit (DPU) was set up on 16 January 2006. It forms part of the Prosecutions Unit comprised of officers having a law degree.

The first year of the DPU's function was largely spent forming the necessary DP infrastructure for the Police Force. Activities included the following:

- setting up of general procedure to be following by means of drafting a DP Manual;
- drawing up draft Memoranda of Understanding and meeting with several partners, notably with the Telecommunications sector;
- meeting with several departments and agencies and setting up the relevant DP procedure (e.g. facilitating the Adoption and Fostering processes where sensitive personal information is requested by applicants);

- seeing to the needs of different Police sections in terms of DP obligations, e.g. the setting up of generic email addresses in sections such as QMS, Weapons, Licensing Office, Accounts, Criminal Records Office, Secretariat and DPU (process is ongoing);
- processing of requests for information by the public according to articles 9 and 13 of Chapter 440 of the Laws of Malta, and LN 142 of 2004;
- lecturing police personnel (new recruits);
- participating in the Data Protection Officers Forum of the Public Service;
- meeting with the DP task force, headed by OPM;
- participating in television programmes on DP issues;
- meeting with the Data Protection Commissioner in order to prepare for the introduction of new EU obligations, emanating from Directive 2002/58/EC and Directive 2005/24/EC;
- co-ordinating investigations forwarded by the Data Protection Commissioner;
- assisting the Police Force in DP tribunal proceedings and Appeals Court proceedings involving DP issues;
- assisting Prosecutions Unit in legal issues and in EU evaluations in which it might be involved.

The DPU is constantly monitoring developments in DP and in Freedom of Information in the EU especially where new legislation needs to be introduced.

SENIOR STAFF OFFICE

Parliamentary questions are of an urgent nature having priority on other work and are to be replied by a specified date, usually at very late notice.

During 2008, this office has dealt with 240 parliamentary questions. Work involved which includes the registration of files, maintaining manual and computerised indexes, conducting a research on past Parliamentary questions on the subject in order to prepare background information, distribution of parliamentary questions to the respective districts and specialised branches as well as preparing summarised draft replies. During this year, the House of Representatives adjourned for General Elections with the consequence that no parliamentary questions were made until a new legislative was sworn in. Apart from this adjournment, the House of Representatives broke up for a recess period during summer and the Christmas period. However parliamentary questions were still proffered and which required to be answered. Parliamentary questions also contribute for statistical purposes and are very much sought for research requirements both by the Police Department as well as the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

General Collection

Each quarter of the year, upon receiving their salary, all members of the Force are required to pay the statutory contribution in respect of the General Fund, Mutual Help Association and the Police Association. After payment is effected at the respective districts and sections, the funds are brought over to the office where reconciliation is carefully made. The funds are then deposited at the Accounts section. An estimated amount of about €93,000 has been handled during last year.

Further work relating to these collections is involved in-order to collect payments from late paying members as well as being summoned to testify in disciplinary proceedings against non-paying members.

Mutual Help Association

During 2008, the sum of €40,577.68 was given through this office on behalf of the Commissioner of Police to 26 families of deceased ex-members of the Force whilst a remuneration payment amounting to €13,980 was collected from about 1,000 members (ex-servicemen) who either called personally at this Office or sent their payment by post as well as from serving members.

International Police Association

During 2008, this Office has also served as the official IPA Office within Police Headquarters, for customer care and renewal of IPA membership purposes. No less than 55 foreign IPA members and their families of foreign sections who have come to Malta for their vacation and have included a visit to Police General Headquarters.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The main role of the Finance and Administration Section is to provide financial and administrative support services to the line operations of the Police Force. As an ongoing process, administrative and financial guidance was provided to the Commissioner of Police, as Head of Department, and other senior police officers, the Permanent Secretary and the Director Corporate Services at the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

Constant monitoring and control was implemented on the expenditure of funds allocated in the budgetary estimates for the year under review, while the Ministry of Finance was provided with the requested financial returns on a regular basis. Funds, as approved in the Budget for 2008, were allocated under the five cost centres of the Police Department while the Department's estimates for 2009 were compiled and forwarded to the Director Corporate Services in the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

Apart from managing the departmental budget of approx €44,000,000, during 2008, the office of the Assistant Director responsible for Finance and Administration Section, managed and monitored the finances of the EU co-funded projects, which the Department had embarked on earlier. This has been done in collaboration with the respective Project Leaders in liaison with the Funds Manager at the EU Affairs Unit at the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

As for the Better Regulation, which is an ongoing exercise, the Assistant Director (Finance & Administration) apart from liaising with the BR Unit and the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs regarding reports on the state of the measures proposed, participated in training on better regulation organised by the Management Efficiency Unit as part of a Twinning Light Project with NI-CO (Northern Ireland), with the aim of increasing the knowledge on better regulation and the tools available to measure administrative burdens on businesses and citizens.

Accounts/Procurement Section

During the year, the Accounts and Procurement Section has been engaged in a considerable amount of purchases and relative payments in connection with the normal day-to-day running of the department, the improvement of the facilities and equipment available for use by Police Personnel.

In fact, during this year, this section was involved in the purchasing of Police horses, a trailer for same, pistols, base radios, portable radios and taser guns. The delivery of the new Photographic Laboratory has also started and it is expected to be fully installed and operational by the end of 2009. The new breath analysers and the new motor vehicles for the Mobile Squad, which have been purchased following a call for tenders, have also been fully delivered and paid.

During the same year, the Accounts and Procurement Section was involved in the issue of a number of calls for tenders including those for the usual items of police uniforms, ammunition, Traffic motorcycles and bullet proof vests, many of which are expected to be finalised early in 2009.

The following is a table showing expenditure during 2008:

Recurrent Expenditure	2008 €
Personal Emoluments	39,303,900
Operational & Maintenance	4,010,536
Special Expenditure	10,000
Total	43,324,436
Capital Expenditure	632,000

Revenue Section

This Section reconciles commercial bank statements of revenue generated from licences, taxes, fines and other fees with cash returns forwarded by collecting offices namely the Police District Offices, the Criminal Records Office, the Identity Cards Section, the Police Licences Office, the Seaport, the Weapons Section, the Central Immigration Office and the Principal Citations Office. Detailed records of revenue are kept in a computerised system. The following table compares revenue collected with that of 2007:

Item	2007 €	2008 €
Sporting Licences	980,121	824,751
Traffic Offence Tickets paid at the Traffic Fines Office	1,456	1,153
Miscellaneous Licences	55,814	54,989
Miscellaneous Fines *	35,810	138,383
Permits/Certificates	265,522	228,071
Fees on Visas (<i>figure shown under 2008 is an estimate</i>)	977,418	420,000
Services to Third Parties	363,560	397,550
Road Accident Reports	33,529	33,349
Miscellaneous Reimbursements	29	-
Miscellaneous Receipts **	77,721	27,500
Total	2,790,980	2,125,746

* The increase in 2008 is due to the collection of fines currently being imposed in terms of provision in Article 15 (5) of Chapter 217 of the Immigration Act on passenger carriers who carry improperly documented persons.

** Revenue collected from Miscellaneous Receipts during 2007 was abnormally high due to a number of one time payments effected by Police personnel as penalties due to resignation from the Police Force.

Salaries Section

During 2008, this Section effected adjustments for the processing of salaries, allowances, overtime, bonus and income supplement of about 2,126 uniformed and civilian staff. During the same year, returns pertaining to extra duty performed by Police personnel for third parties (e.g. banks, sports activities and private functions etc) have also been processed. Due to the sensitivity of responsibilities of this particular section, personnel working thereat have to ensure the constant meeting of deadlines.

Human Resources (Civilian Staff) Section

In 2008, the Department's civilian staff complement stood at 137, of whom 63 were assigned duties of Immigration Officers at the Malta International Airport on a 7-day weekly shift roster. Up till 30 September 2008, the Department sponsored two apprentices under the Extended Skills Training scheme.

This Section discharges the normal duties pertaining to HR Sections, comprising conditions of service of employees, processing of applications for all types of paid and/or unpaid leave and for allowances, drawing up of various reports and returns, Performance Management Programmes, miscellaneous correspondence and other duties such as processing of requests for reduced hours, etc. This section also processes promotions and salary scale progressions including the submission of appraisal reports and drawing up of letters of appointment/progression, manages the PSC Disciplinary Regulations and implements measures

and benefits related to collective agreements. The Section also processes Parliamentary Questions and participates in tendering procedures.

Secretariat/Registry Services

This section is responsible for the distribution of all official circulars, the keeping of records and the distribution of all incoming and outgoing correspondence and files, received from and sent to all Police stations and offices at the Police General Headquarters.

During 2008, this section dealt with about 17,000 letters received from government departments and authorities and from the public. About 7,000 new files were opened and approximately about 10,000 other correspondence were received and logged in the corresponding files. It is estimated that about 15,000 letters and reports were typed. 3,200 letters addressed to government departments and 41,080 private letters were mailed from this section.

As part of the daily routine of this Section, tracking of Death Certificates, Judicial Acts, Process Verbal, tickets of Admission in respect of unpaid court fines and requests from individuals living abroad for their personal conduct certificate (sometimes through e-mail) was carried out. Moreover, another task assigned to this Section is to inform the Director of Information by means of E-Mails regarding the deviation of traffic on various occasions of village feasts and any other outdoor public/political activities.

This section keeps also the database of: proceedings against public officers; proceedings against commercial establishments; appeals; and tickets of admission (DKR).

POLICE ACADEMY

The main aims and objectives of the Police Academy remain that of teaching and training its members and recruits to be as professional as possible to fulfil their role in the Malta Police Force with ability, knowledge and expertise, integrity and impartiality, effectively and efficiently. To meet these goals, courses and seminars to officers and the other ranks are held.

During the year, 22 seminars were held for officers on various topics, which included Maltese legislation and case-law. Courses addressed to the other ranks were held regularly every month all the year round. Collectively, during 2008, the attendance of these members (other ranks) reached the 25,882 mark. These courses consists of academic subjects related to their duties, firearm handling and shooting, pepper spray and TASER handling and also physical education and unarmed combat.

In conjunction with foreign and local agencies, other specialised courses were also held during 2008.

During the year under reference, 55 new recruits graduated as probationary police constables after successfully attended to an *ad hoc* course of training at the Police Academy.

Educational/career visits from the various schools on the islands were regularly entertained. A total of 1,842 students visited the Academy in 2008.

During the year, the Police Academy Board met on a number of occasions to discuss the general direction and the policies of the Academy as stipulated in the Police Act, Chapter 164.

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

The primary role of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) remains that of investigating serious crimes. A secondary but equally important role is that of addressing the problem of crime in a proactive way - with a view to preventing and reducing crime. For this purpose, ad hoc teams from CID met regularly with local councils, and issues related to crime occurring in particular localities, were addressed. These meetings served for more than one purpose. On the one hand, this tandem between the police and local councils gave a clearer picture and a better understanding of how crime was being committed, thus it gave an opportunity to identify new crime trends. On the other hand, it also served for the implementation of new strategies to prevent or detect crime as well as to promote crime prevention awareness with the community.

During 2008, a total of 755 CID case files were originated for investigation. These investigations led to the arrest and the interviewing of 1,763 persons, out of which 445 were detained for more than six hours. As a result, 412 cases were solved, of which 379 cases were presented in court with a total of 204 arraignments that involved the prosecution of 252 persons. Of these, 17 persons were under the age of 18. Out of the 412 cases solved during the year, 31 cases resulting in 24 arraignments totalling to 42 offences and involving 27 persons are yet to be prosecuted in Court. The following is a list of offences instituted in court during 2008 in connection with the above mentioned cases. The list also shows the number of arraignments related to cases solved prior to 2008.

Arraignments of Solved Offences - 2008	Arraignments	Offences presented in Court	Persons Arraigned	Over 18 yrs		Minors under 18yrs	
				Males	Females	Males	Females
Arraignments of offences solved in 2008	204	856	252	217	18	14	3
Arraignments of offences solved prior to 2008	13	42	16	13	3	0	0
Total	217	898	268	230	21	14	3

Offences presented in Court 2008	
GN292-1939 Possession and trafficking of heroin, cocaine and methadone	4
66 Chap 9 Assembly under arms	1
70 Chap 9 Incitement to disobey the law	1
79 Chap 9 Tumultuous assembly	8
80 Chap 9 Disobedience of order for dispersal	5
91 Chap 9 Violence and threats against public officers	4
98 Chap 9 Assault or resistance accompanied with violence	1
108 Chap 9 False swearing	3
101 Chap 9 Calumnious accusations	2
110(1) Chap 9 Fabrication of false evidence	2
110(2) Chap 9 Simulation of offence	5
111(2) Chap 9 Suppression, destruction or alteration of traces of crime	1
112 Chap 9 Unlawful exaction	1
115 Chap 9 Bribery	1
138 Chap 9 Malicious violation of official duties	1
14(11) LN47.2004 Driving vehicle without driving licence	6
15.1a(3) Chap65 Driving vehicle without driving licence	5
152 Chap 9 Prison breaking	1
161 Chap 9 Damage to monuments, etc	1
167 Chap 9 Forgery of documents	5
183 Chap 9 Forgery of public, commercial or private bank documents by person etc.	3
184 Chap 9 Malicious use of false documents	2
186 Chap 9 Malicious use of false declaration or certificates	1
188 Chap 9 False declarations or information to a public authority	3
189 Chap 9 Other kinds of forgery and use of false documents	3

209 Chap 9 Offences against decency or morals committed in public	1
211 Chap 9 Wilful homicide	3
214 Chap 9 Bodily harm	1
216 Chap 9 Grievous bodily harm	3
217 Chap 9 Grievous bodily harm with arms proper etc	2
218 Chap 9 Other cases of grievous bodily harm	1
22 Chap 446 Absolute or conditional discharge	14
221 Chap 9 Slight bodily harm	15
225 Chap 9 Involuntary homicide	1
249 Chap 9 Threats by means of writings	3
250 Chap 9 Blackmail	1
251 Chap 9 Private violence	3
251A Chap 9 Harassment	5
251B Chap 9 Fear of violence	8
252 Chap 9 Defamation	2
261 Chap 9 Aggravated theft	209
284 Chap 9 Simple theft	8
286 Chap 9 Possession of stolen articles by person previously convicted of theft etc.	3
287 Chap 9 Unjustified possession of monies, articles, etc by person previously convicted	1
289 Punishment in case of 2nd or subsequent conviction for theft	9
28B Chap 9 Commission of an offence during the operational period of suspended sentence	14
290 Chap 9 Unlawful possession of property of the Rep of Malta	1
293 Chap 9 Misappropriation	2
298 Chap 9 Commercial or industrial fraud	1
298D Chap 9 Tampering, removal, etc of chassis or engine number	1
3 Chap 104 Driving or permitting someone to drive vehicle without insurance policy	6
3 Chap 480 General Prohibition	2
307 Chap 9 Use of false weights and measurements	2
308 Chap 9 Obtaining money or property by false pretences	11
309 Chap 9 Other cases of fraudulent gain	8
318 Chap 9 Arson without danger of life	1
325 Chap 9 Spoil, damage or injury in general (wilful damage)	86
334 Chap 9 Receiving stolen property	83
334A Chap 9 Failure to inform, etc property	6
338 Chap 9 Contraventions affecting public order	13
339 Chap 9 Contraventions against the person	8
340 Chap 9 Contraventions against property	1
41(1) Chap 9 Attempted offence	28
42 Chap 9 Accomplice in crime	3
47 Chap 480 Custody of arms proper	4
48A Chap 9 Conspiracy	10
49 Chap 9 Recidivist	80
5 Chap 480 Licence to keep, possess, export or import firearms, weapons and ammo	7
50 Chap 9 Effect of previous conviction for crime	10
55 Chap 480 Possession of firearms during commission of a crime	19
579(2) Chap 9 Breach of bail conditions	11
6 Chap 480 Licence to carry knives	8
68 Chap 9 Unlawful assembly	8
7 Chap 446 Probation order	23
8(a) Chap 101 Possession of resin of cannabis	4
8(d) Chap 101 Possession of the plant of cannabis	2
86 Chap 9 Illegal arrest, detention or confinement	21
95 Chap 9 Vilification, threats or bodily harm against other public officers	1
96 Chap 9 Assault or resistance	4
35a Chap 399 Misuse of telecommunication apparatus	1
46 Chap 480 Accounting for ammunition	1
52 Chap 480 Carrying arms of a different kind from that specified in licence	2
Total	856

Offences committed prior to 2008 but presented in court in 2008	
261 Chap 9 Aggravated theft	11
221 Chap 9 Slight bodily harm	1
325 Chap 9 Spoil, damage or injury in general (wilful damage)	6
334 Chap 9 Receiving stolen property	9
250 Chap 9 Blackmail	1
28B Chap 9 Commission of an offence during the operational period of suspended sentence	1
49 Chap 9 Recidivist	5
5 Chap 480 Licence to keep, possess, export or import firearms, weapons and ammo	1
55 Chap 480 Possession of firearms during commission of a crime	1
86 Chap 9 Illegal arrest, detention or confinement	1
GN292-1939 Possession and trafficking of heroin, cocaine and methadone	1
284 Chap 9 Simple theft	1
53 Chap 445 Damage to Cultural Heritage	1
3 Chap 480 General Prohibition	1
339 Chap 9 Contraventions against the person	1
Total	42

HOMICIDE SQUAD

During 2008, the Homicide Squad investigated six murder cases of which three were solved and the persons allegedly involved brought before the courts. Obviously, most of the time was afforded to the three murder cases that took place during 2008 and which are still unsolved. However, in addition to these ongoing investigations, the Squad had initiated the review of three cold murder cases which date back to the years 1977, 1997 and 2005 respectively. The review of these cases is continuously ongoing with a view to identifying and bringing those responsible to justice.

The Squad was also tasked to investigate a number of not less than 23 cases of undetermined death, most of which originated from corpses found out at sea. Additionally, the Squad was deployed to investigate and examine a number of scenes where corpses were found and assisted the District Police until foul play was ruled out. The cause of the latter cases resulted to be of either suicidal or accidental nature or due to natural causes.

CULTURAL PROPERTY CRIME UNIT

During 2008, various types of crimes involving cultural heritage were investigated by the CID Cultural Property Crime Unit (CPCU). Crimes investigated range from crimes of theft and receiving stolen goods, illicit trafficking of cultural goods and damage (vandal acts/involuntary damage) on archaeological, historic and cultural sites.

Crimes Investigated

Theft and receiving stolen goods consisted of crimes related mostly to antique furniture, paintings, antique jewellery and other domestic objects, liturgical objects, coins and other types of antiques.

As for illicit trafficking, most crimes investigated during 2008 were trafficking of cultural goods mostly through internet auctions. Vandal acts and/or involuntary damage investigated during 2008 concerned vandal acts on archaeological and historic sites and monuments. Other related offences included damage by paint and graffiti resulting in damages on cultural sites.

During the year under review, the unit solved several thefts of antiques and managed to recover several stolen pieces of works of art and antiquities. Crimes solved during the period under review were as follows:

- Theft of antique Cross from St Augustine Church, Valletta, reported in August 2007;

- Theft of silver icon from the Greek Catholic Church, Valletta, reported in November 2007;
- Theft of two antique oil on canvas paintings from Christ the King Parish Church, Paola, reported in December 2007;
- Theft of antique painting from Żurrieq Parish Church reported in February 2008;
- Theft of painting from Archbishop's Curia, Floriana in January 2008;
- Theft of antique items from Knisja tal-Vittorja, Mellieħa in December 2007;
- Theft of ornamental vases from Knisja San Ġorġ, Qormi during the period December 2007 and January 2008;
- Theft of antique vases from Knisja San Ġorġ, Victoria Gozo in June 2006;
- Theft of antique uniforms and badges from Fort Rinella Battery at Kalkara and Barrakka Gardens Saluting Battery in Valletta, reported in March 2008;
- Damage on archaeological landscape in Mġarr, Malta reported in 2007;
- Damage on the statute of Christopher Columbus at Rinella Movie Park, Kalkara in 2008;
- Illicit sales of stolen original and replica historical items on the e-Bay website reported in June 2008.

Other Services offered by the Unit

In order to provide a better understanding of the subject to other police officers and with the aim of improving their investigative skills, the unit delivered several lectures to members of the Force during in-service and recruitment courses at the Police Academy. During this current year, the contribution of the Police in protecting the country's heritage was also promoted through several talks on the media.

STOLEN VEHICLES SQUAD (SVS)

During 2008, the Stolen Vehicles Squad carried out the following vehicle inspections:

- 4,519 second-hand imported vehicles;
- 733 second-hand imported engines;
- 913 other vehicles were inspected by SVS Technical Unit at MT Garage;
- 340 vehicles or engines were punched with new Police VIN or Engine number stamp by the SVS Technical Unit at SVS/MT;
- SVS Technical Unit personnel inspected seven vehicles on assistance to Customs and other Government Departments, and inspected 165 vehicles during assistance to other Police sections in other investigations, whilst the SVS Investigative Team (CID) were requested to assist divisional police and other police sections on 7 occasions;
- 6 vehicles were seized pending investigations whilst a vehicle was recovered by the SVS after resulting to have been either reported stolen or having tampered/false identifications or other discrepancies;
- 495 SVS query files involving vehicle/engine discrepancies were originated by the SVS Technical Unit during the year 2008;
- 439 vehicles and loose engines were photographed by SVS Technical Unit for investigation/record purposes whilst another 26 vehicles were photographed by the SVS Investigative Team (CID) pending other investigations;
- SVS investigations led to the prosecution of 11 persons who were charged with vehicle crime-related offences and other offences, consisting of eight arraignments, which cases are included in the statistics presented by the Department.

CRIMINAL RECORDS OFFICE (CRO)

During 2008, the CRO issued 34,889 Conduct Certificates against payment of €2.33 each, for a total revenue of €81,291. 5,336 persons were convicted, of whom 3,201 were convicted for crimes while 2,135 were convicted for contraventions.

The following table shows the gender of persons convicted:

Crimes	No.
Males	2,707
Females	184
Male Foreigners	185
Female Foreigners	20
Males Underage	81
Females Underage	8
Males Foreigners Underage	13
Females Foreigners Underage	3
Total	3,201

Contraventions	No.
Males	1,860
Females	171
Male Foreigners	27
Female Foreigners	2
Males Underage	32
Females Underage	37
Males Foreigners Underage	5
Females Foreigners Underage	1
Total	2,135

From the total number of persons convicted of crimes and contraventions, 256 were foreigners and 180 persons were under the age of 18 years.

The punishments inflicted by the Courts were as follows:

Imprisonment	294
Suspended Sentence in terms of Sec. 28A of the Criminal Code	457
Conditional Discharge in terms of Sec. 22 of Chapter 446 of the Laws of Malta	1,426
Conditional Discharged in terms of Sec. 7 of Chapter 446 of the Laws of Malta	94
Fine (<i>Multa</i>)	2,543
Fine (<i>Amenda</i>)	1,019
Prohibited from entering sport activities	5
Reprimand and Admonition (R&A)	656
Interdiction	3
Destruction	18
Forfeiture	112
Forfeiture and <i>multa</i>	1
Section 383 Chapter 9	596
Payment of Court expenses	6
Suspension of nautical licence	154
Suspension of Driving Licence	470
Suspension of Firearms Licence	2
Suspension of other licence	3
Community work	1

During the same year, 4,883 Criminal cases were decided, of which 3,333 were dealt with summarily whilst the remaining 1,550 cases were dealt with through compilation of evidence.

MOBILE SQUAD

The Mobile Squad's primary function is that of providing rapid response to calls received by the GHQ control room. The Squad has always maintained a reputation of responding to calls in a very short time, varying from one minute to not more than five minutes. On average, there are 10 Mobile Squad vehicles patrolling the Island on 24/7 basis. The Squad is equipped with a fleet of 20 Ford Focus vehicles with their distinctive Police livery.

During 2008, members of the Mobile Squad arrested 450 persons due to suspicious criminal activity or involvement in fights. 48 of these cases were persons caught *in flagrante*. The Mobile Squad also attended to a total of 516 scuffles or fights in progress. Presently, the Squad is increasing the number of roadside static observations where the area patrol cars mount a "Stop and Observe" procedure for a short period of time, normally of about 20 minutes, in order for the Police officers to control and observe passing drivers/vehicles. These "Stop and Observe" procedures help to increase recognition in respect of Police presence in the street. During 2008, static observations totalled more than 3,000.

During the same year, the Mobile Squad deployed more than 10,500 vehicular patrols, aimed primarily at curbing armed thefts from the person, commercial outlets and burglaries from residential areas, amongst

others. As usual patrols were intensified during Easter and Christmas periods. These patrols may have contributed to the reduction in crime rate over 2007 however one cannot estimate the number of crimes prevented by these patrols. The Mobile Squad also effected 6,685 frequent patrols at several sites requiring special attention.

The Mobile Squad managed to locate 13 absentees and assisted in 10 cases of crimes against morals.

Mobile personnel managed to locate 45 stolen vehicles and 48 wanted vehicles for further investigations. Forty-nine escaped illegal immigrants were arrested and returned to the Immigration Branch. The Mobile Squad responded to 231 bank alarms, 36 alarms at ATMs and nine alarms at exchange bureaux. The Squad also responded to 223 alarms originating from factories and other commercial outlets and attended to 176 house burglar alarms. Members of the Mobile Squad were also deployed to respond to 10 shooting incidents.

District Police were assisted on 1,938 occasions, whilst the special branches including CID, Drug Squad, ECU, Vice and Traffic Branch were supported on 498 events. Other public officers such as Local Wardens were assisted for 74 times.

Thefts which were in progress requiring the response by the Mobile Squad amounted to 196 cases, whilst there were 67 drug finds mostly on suspected drivers. Stolen items were recovered on 46 instances. In addition 481 searches were carried out on the person while 388 searches were effected in motor vehicles. Searches inside residences, garages and other buildings amounted to 369 cases.

The Mobile Squad mounted 156 road checks and there were 334 instances where the Mobile Squad was sent to intervene during fights in progress. The Squad also assisted in 280 traffic accidents, where 129 persons were tested positive with the portable breathalyser apparatus. Members of this Section also intervened in 52 suicides attempts. The Squad assisted in rescue operations or rendered other assistance for 130 times and administered first aid on 23 occasions. Assistance in controlling fires was given in 45 instances.

Type of Response	No.
Alarms at residences	176
Alarms at factories & retail outlets	223
Alarms at commercial banks/ATMs and other financial institutions	276
Roadside breathalyser tests	127
Interventions in drug related offences	67
Road checks	156
Interventions in cases of public order	516
Searches	1,238
Arrests	450
Illegal immigrants	49
Assisted in traffic accidents	280
Static observations	3,000

CID Lock-Up

The CID Lock-Up which also falls within the responsibilities of the Criminal Investigation Department is located at the CID yard. Its primary function is that of serving as temporary housing for persons who have breached or are suspected of having infringed the laws of the state. The majority of persons detained at the Lock-Up are arrested by the investigative teams at specialised branches. However, it is also regularly used by the district police. In 2008 a total of 2,664 persons were registered at the CID Lock-Up. 1,863 of these detainees were Maltese and the remaining 801 were of foreign nationality. Out of these detainees, 2,415 were males and 249 were females. 656 detainees were released on police bail conditions. The following list shows the number of detainees by nationality detained at this detention facility during 2008:

Nationality	No
Albanian	1
Algerian	14
Australian	4
Bangladeshi	1
Bosnia Herzegovina	1
Brazilian	2
Bulgarian	11
Burkina Faso	2
Canadian	2
Chadian	1
Chinese	9
Chilean	1
Côte d'Ivoire	7
Costa Rican	1
Croatian	6
Czech	2
Dominican Republic	1
Dutch	3
Egyptian	35
Eritrean	7
Ethiopian	10
Estonian	3
French	8
Gambian	1
Georgian	7
German	7
Ghanian	3
Guinean	1
Hungarian	9
Indian	1
Indonesian	6
Iraqi	2
Italian	20
Jordanian	6
Kazakhstani	1
Kenyan	1
Korea, Dem Rep	3
Kosovar	1
Kyrgyzstani	1
Liberian	4
Libyan	242

Nationality	No
Macau	1
Mali	4
Malawi	1
Maltese	1,863
Moroccan	9
Mozambique	1
Nepalese	9
Niger	6
Nigerian	25
Oman	1
Philippine	6
Pakistani	6
Palestinian	16
Polish	5
Romanian	29
Russian	14
Rwandan	1
Scottish	2
Senegalese	4
Serbian	21
Sierra Leon	3
Slovakian	1
Slovenian	5
Somali	27
South African	1
Spanish	5
Sri Lankan	1
Sudanese	22
Swedish	1
Swiss	3
Syrian	27
Thai	1
Togo	5
Tunisian	10
Turkish	6
Ukrainian	7
UK Nationals	45
US Nationals	6
Uzbekistani	10
Yugoslav	4
Zimbabwean	2
Total	2,664

Of the 2,664 persons detained, 382 were held in connection with immigration issues.

CRIME INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS UNIT

The Criminal Intelligence Unit continued to gain workable status throughout 2008. The strategic and tactical reports issued to inform investigators and senior management alike gained further stability.

The process of crime monitoring schemes based on intelligible practices continues to inform the crime linkage and detection practices at various levels both nationally and internationally. This practice took a major working and operational platform in the preparation phases of SIRENE and its ongoing day-to-day running.

The liaison between the CIU and the various sections with the Malta Police Force, especially Special Branch, District Police, Criminal Investigations Department and the International Relations Unit has been widely extended on numerous levels. This year exchange of information and intelligence checks between the ENU and this office has increased thus becoming stronger and more resourceful. In this respect, the CIU generally proposes information in terms of intelligence, vetting and other various security checks.

The monthly vehicle crime reports issued by the CIU have highly contributed to the CID particularly to the Stolen Vehicle Squad and the Mobile Squad. This report acts as a point of reference and intelligence guide.

As in previous years, the CIU has become the centre point for the Police to disseminate and alert national and international bodies on new synthetic or psychoactive drugs detected in Malta. This function is part and parcel of the Early Warning System Network established in 2004. As part of this information network, the CIU enjoys an active role in the anthology involved in the National Drug Report.

In preparing for the crime classification to be used in PIRS II, the CIU was consulted and asked to contribute in the process by the Police Legal Office.

As from 2008, the Unit started working six days a week with an officer on duty even on Saturdays. Preparations are in hand to introduce work on shift basis, so that the Unit will be manned every day.

As from 2 September 2008, the Unit became also operational with the stationing of a Superintendent and a Sergeant. Covert operations and surveillance have since been introduced producing positive response. The unit managed to identify and apprehend foreigners who were absconding from these Islands. The unit also participated in gathering information relating to homicides, thefts, hold-ups, drug trafficking and other serious crimes. A new office was also introduced and therefore the CIU presently occupies two offices in the new CID Block.

FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORY (FSL)

During 2008, the services of the Forensic Laboratory were requested in 2,759 cases – an increase of 236 cases from the previous year. These varied from magisterial inquiries, specific court orders arising during the compilation of evidence, or other scientific work requested throughout police investigations. Of these 2,016 were magisterial inquiries and 743 were police investigations. The Image Enhancement Section within the Photography Unit registered 310 enhancements from CCTV recordings and 148 video surveillance activities – a substantial increase over the previous year. A member of the FSL has also actively participated in working groups and specifically in the Working Party on Frontiers (False Documents) Mixed Committee (EU/Iceland & Norway) and in the FADO user group, and has also participated in other seminars related to biometrics. He has also been appointed as a project sub-leader for FRONTEX and he was assigned the task to update the advanced training tool and to provide training in the specialist courses all related to security document investigations. He is also engaged in the implementation of the PRUM requirements and is FSL's National Contact Point for two areas of this framework decision, which are DNA and Fingerprints.

Ballistics/Firearms Investigations

This section services all the service firearms of the Police Corps, processes firearms licences, inspects premises of firearms dealers, stores firearms referred to the section by the Police or Customs for safekeeping, receives Court appointments as ballistics experts, and escorts firearms that may be used in the film making industry from time to time. This Unit is manned by three officers. The work performed by this Unit throughout this year was:

Servicing of firearms	986	Processing of firearms licence applications	750
Inspections of imported firearms	3,060	Participation in the Weapons Advisory Board	19
Inspections re exporting of firearms/weapons	20	Inspection at firearms dealers premises	6

Inspections of firearms with incorrect serial no.	350	Court Nominations	32
Inspections of other firearms re transfers	200	Imported/exported firearms safe keeping	21
Firearms referred by the Customs Department	7	Police Work	6
Firearms referred by Police for safe keeping	35	Shooting Range Inspections	7
Firearms referred for destruction	36	Interviews re Collector Licence A	15

The ballistics unit has provided supporting evidence in a number of criminal investigations and has re-organised its scheduled servicing of police firearms to make it as effective as practicable so much so that it has trebled the number of regular inspections of Police Firearms in a single year.

Photography Section

This section processes films, prints photographs, carries out photographic and video surveillance during sporting activities, feasts and other public activities and photographs latent fingerprints previously recovered from Scenes of Crime during magisterial inquiries and other police investigations. They are also requested to photograph all illegal immigrants and therefore are called to provide standby duty on a 24 hour basis. The evaluation of new digital systems was completed and a call for tenders resulted in the purchase of a digitised mini-lab system which was delivered in the last few days of 2008. This new equipment will provide a totally new dimension to photography and the management and storing of photographic images for the Police Department. Digital camera systems have also been examined with a view of converting the analogue camera systems into digitised systems in line with modern trends.

During this period this section was called upon to perform the following work:

Printing of photographs	132,390
Photographic reproductions (black and white)	2,874
Video surveillance during sporting activities	90
Video/photographic surveillance during other activities	58
Police commitments and illegal immigrants	223
Enhancement of CCTV recordings	310
Other misc. work carried out at video section for other units e.g. SVS, MT Garage, Vice Squad, SB, CIAU, TU and others	105

Image & Video Enhancement

This is a sub-unit of the photographic unit. The FSL made full use of the investment in equipment and training in this section with over 310 investigations in this field carried out by just one officer and one senior technical officer. This is tantamount to practically one investigation per day during a working week. The increase in the workload carried out by the Photographic section and the Image & Video Enhancement Section requires further investment in human resources.

Fingerprint Unit

This Unit is responsible to take fingerprints of suspects, tenants (for elimination purposes) and all illegal immigrants and for their input into the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). Fingerprint comparisons between latent marks found at the scene of the crime and those of suspects are effected and the unit develops/enhances fingerprints from various documents, examines anonymous letters and carries out other specific assignments requested by the Attorney General, Court of Magistrates, Interpol, Europol, Immigration, CID, Economic Crime, Drug Squad and District Police.

Despite lack of resources, this section has once again been very successful with 138 hits, resulting from searches performed on the AFIS successfully resolving 73 separate crime incidents. (Hits are positively compared latent fingerprints which are recovered from the scene of a crime with suspects housed in the database). Numerous other hits resulted from elimination comparisons with tenants.

The Fingerprint Section has in all processed 36,311 transactions ranging from introducing new records, scanning, searching, updating and verifying results on the AFIS.

The Fingerprints Unit has successfully resolved 73 crimes, fingerprinted 2,300 illegal immigrants, scanned 468 ten-prints of suspects, 390 ten-prints of fireworks – licence applicants, and a number of tenants for elimination purposes. A further 1,244 latents were handed over by Scene of Crime Officers from 953 crime scenes and these were all scanned, inputted into the AFIS database and searched against the database. A total of 1,696 latents were searched against the suspects collection. 212 vehicles were examined and fingerprinted after being reported by their owners as having been broken into and objects inside stolen. This figure does not include other vehicles that were examined by Scene of Crime Officers after normal office hours or during the weekends.

This Unit also serviced requests submitted by IP, EUP and SIS Offices.

Fingerprint Chemical Enhancement Unit

Due to the increasing demand for the chemical enhancement of fingerprints from surfaces and other materials which could not be examined through conventional methods, the Forensic Science Laboratory set up the Fingerprint Chemical Enhancement Unit.

Items submitted to this Unit were all examined using various chemical techniques that involved ninhydrin, DFO, zinc toning, physical developer, cyanoacrylate fuming, basic yellow, basic red, cyano blue, sudan black, fluorescent and fingerprint powders, gentian violet, rhodamine, sticky Side Powder, black/silver/white and magnetic powders, small particle reagent, hydrochloric and nitric acids, sodium hydroxide, Copper II Chloride and Quasar2000/30. Fingerprints developed through these techniques were photographed by the Unit using cold light sources and the Quasar2000. Blood and body fluids enhancing techniques involved examinations with LMG, blue star and Obti Tests.

A total of 156 cases were examined at this Unit. These included documents handed over by Scene of Crime Officers, AFIS Officers, Police Inspectors and through court decrees. There were 32 cases of anonymous letters submitted to this Unit by the National Documents Unit for fingerprint analysis.

The documents that were examined at the Laboratory included:

Paper documents	692
Plastic including tape, bags, wrapper folders, etc.	898
Metal items including firearms, foils, etc.	90
Wood	4
Vehicles involved in serious crimes for full examinations	14

Scene of Crime Unit

The scene of crime unit is called upon to investigate practically all reported crimes. Their duties include lifting and preserving all types of forensic evidence which may be relevant to the case under investigation. The amount of work performed by this section is quite considerable and consequently very difficult to quantify. However, members of this section have attended on 2,052 court-appointed cases and 58 Jury cases as court experts during the period in question, apart from several hundred other police appointed cases, which, shared by other Units amount to a further 743 cases. These officers are responsible to assess the particular scenes of crime, evaluate the evidence being recovered, preserve the evidence according to established norms and standards, prepare the evidence for presentation in courts, prepare and submit detailed reports to the Courts of Law or to the Forensic Lab for each individual assignment. The members of the SOCO Unit area also called upon to assist the Photographic Unit in particular with surveillance operations. The range of cases included 6 Murder cases, 8 Explosion cases, 803 cases of theft, 26 hold-ups, 96 arsons/fires, 43 traffic accidents, 20 cases of vandalism, 12 cases of smearing of paint, 71 cases of

sudden death, 98 drug related cases, 35 recoveries of vehicles, 15 suicide cases, 8 overdose cases, 16 shooting incidents, 8 stabbings, 16 rape cases, and 439 fingerprint examinations.

Court Attendance

All the members of the Forensic Science Laboratory are obliged to submit their findings and to give evidence in Court on all their scene of crime work. Throughout this period, members of the FSL were summoned to give evidence in 2,052 Court of Magistrate sittings and 58 attendances in criminal trials. The time spent in Court is equivalent in having three officers all year round employed at the Court for the sole purpose of giving evidence. This evaluation does not cater for the time spent in Court in relation to the current procedure for the submission of Court reports which are prepared by our experts, which increases substantially the overall time spent in Court by FSL officers.

Restoration of Obliterated Serial Numbers

Two scene of crime officers who have received specialised training in the restoration of obliterated serial numbers are currently also performing restoration examinations on firearms, vehicle engines and chassis numbers as well as one tool mark case. During this period these officers were involved in six investigations and so far outstanding results have been obtained.

National Document Examination Unit

Apart from carrying out daily duties relating to police work, the NDEU is also recognised as the 3rd security level in security document examinations and is involved in liaisons with foreign private and government agencies engaged in border control measures, printing and distribution of classified alerts and bulletins, provides training for immigration personnel and provides training for other local entities (MIA, the Central Bank and government agencies and ministries). In 2008 this Unit seized the following documents:

Counterfeit Visa Applications and approvals	1
Counterfeit Foreign Identity Cards	2
Counterfeit Driving licence	3
Counterfeit Passports	1
Counterfeit Residence Permit	10
Forged Immigration Stamps	1
Forged Passports	8
Impostor Detection	1
Miscellaneous	6

Apart from counterfeit and forged documents, the NDEU has documented and added 147 genuine documents and specimens to its document library for comparisons.

The Unit has also processed, examined and reported on 26 cases of anonymous letters during the year in question. Furthermore the Unit has carried out 107 examinations on documents presented by “Improper Immigrants”. The Unit has printed and distributed 281 alerts and bulletins to all immigration personnel.

The Director of the FSL has actively assisted Fraud Squad in a number of investigations concerning handwriting examinations as well as document examinations and has also given evidence in Court as part of the Police Investigations.

Forensic Registry

The Forensic Registry is responsible for back office operations of the FSL. Duties include the monitoring of file movements, opening and closing files, Court diaries and appointments and other related office duties. The officers posted at the Registry perform standby duties on EFIT and photographic investigations relating to sexual offences.

EFIT

The Forensic Registry personnel perform standby duties to provide services related to the production of composite facial images through the use of computer aided software combined with specialised cognitive interviewing techniques (EFIT) of female and child victims. Two Ballistics Officers have also provided such a service for male victims or witnesses. Throughout 2008 they were requested to perform 19 male and 22 female EFIT examinations. Officers also provided photographic services to the Courts of Law for female victims, normally involved in sexual offences – a total of 16 Court appointed cases.

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES – DRUG SQUAD

During 2008, the Drug Squad persisted in the fight against drug trafficking and abuse. Priority was given to drug trafficking and smuggling cases and these aimed in determining, investigating, interrogating and prosecuting in Court the prime contributors to the smuggling and trafficking of dangerous drugs into the Maltese Islands.

During the year, the Drug Squad has once again managed to successfully finalise important investigations, in particular an investigation into the drug smuggling maritime activities (cannabis resin) of an organised criminal group, which investigation had been initiated way back in 2006. Other important investigations begun some months previously were also concluded in 2008; these operations targeted mainly cocaine and cannabis drug trafficking. Priority was also given to street level drug-pushing, which targeted the major pushers who were present on the drug market from time to time.

Special investigative techniques as permitted by the Drug Laws in the form of controlled-deliveries and the use of participating informants were adopted in a number of successful operations.

During 2008, the Squad has on a daily basis successfully carried out joint operations and searches with the Customs Department, particularly at the Malta International Airport. At the latter part of the year, for the first time, joint successful operations were also carried with the AFM, particularly with the Maritime Squadron and the Air Wing.

The table below refers to the total seizures recorded during 2008, with record seizures of cocaine (an increase of 122% on the previous year), cannabis (an increase of 887%) and khat (an increase of 9,900%).

Seizures

Drug Type	Quantity
Cocaine	21 kgs 144 gms
Heroin	8 kgs 427 gms
Cannabis Resin	23 kgs 420 gms
Cannabis Grass	16.1 gms
Cannabis Plants	11 plants
Ecstasy	13,677 tbs
LSD	5 Micro-dots
Amphetamine	0.5 gms
Methadone	230 mls
Khat	20 kgs

It is important to mention also the fact that the Squad has also focused its investigations on the seizure of assets from drug traffickers and as a matter of fact, more cash was seized which was eventually exhibited in Court, in addition to expensive vehicles and other immovable assets. Parallel money-laundering investigations were also initiated in line with the drug investigations.

The table below highlights the most significant seizures recorded 2008, most of which are the result of a number of operations targeting specific individual traffickers or criminal groups:

Month	Seizure
16 Jan	6 Kgs 647 grams of cannabis resin at M'Scala
01 Feb	6 Kgs cocaine at MIA
12 Feb	3 Kgs 123 grams of heroin at MIA
17 Mar	1 Kg of cocaine at MIA
11 Apr	300 grams of cocaine at Żejtun
19 Apr	335 grams of cocaine at MIA
21 Apr	958 grams of heroin at MIA
10 May	10 Kgs of khat at MIA
21 May	252 ecstasy tabs at Hamrun
25 May	1,050 ecstasy tabs at Naxxar
29 May	1 Kg of cannabis resin at Qormi
03 Jun	220 grams of cannabis resin at Ta' Qali
18 Jun	1 Kg 500 grams of cannabis resin at Mellieħa
18 Jun	310 grams of heroin at Sliema
19 Jun	5 Kgs of cannabis resin at Mosta
10 Aug	10 Kgs of khat at MIA
19 Aug	100 grams of heroin at MIA
22 Aug	450 grams of cocaine at MIA
27 Aug	650 grams of cocaine at MIA
29 Aug	8 Kgs 20 grams of cocaine at MIA
31 Aug	200 grams of cocaine at SPB
11 Sep	480 grams of cocaine at MIA
15 Sep	1,939 ecstasy tabs at B'Kara
17 Sep	3 Kgs 500 grams heroin at MIA
02 Oct	250 grams of cocaine at MIA
09 Oct	140 grams cocaine at MIA
12 Oct	7 Kgs 875 grams cannabis resin at Sliema
17 Oct	235 grams of heroin at Cospicua
31 Oct	700 grams of cocaine at MIA
01 Nov	630 grams of cocaine at MIA
16 Nov	780 grams of cocaine at MIA
29 Nov	640 grams of cocaine at MIA
10 Dec	9,975 ecstasy tabs at MIA
10 Dec	930 grams of cannabis resin at B'Kara

The total number of arrests has increased by 2% over the previous 12 months, whereas the number of searches and raids during 2008 has increased by 9%. The number of sentences pronounced by the Law Courts has increased by 14% over the previous year.

The total number of individuals charged in court with possession of drugs has remained practically stable, however the number of individuals charged with trafficking has increased by 27% to 137.

Arrests, Raids/Searches and Court sentences			
	Males	Females	Total
Arrested Persons	528	100	628
Raids/Searches	-	-	531
Sentences Delivered	348	37	385
Arraignments of Offences liable to over 6 months imprisonment (in 2008)			
Offence	Males	Females	Total
Possession	291	33	324
Trafficking	117	20	137
Other Crimes	13	2	15
Total	421	55	476

INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES (Economic Crimes and Vice Squads)

ECONOMIC CRIMES SQUAD

The Economic Crimes Squad is one of the specialised squads of the Police Force and is responsible to investigate all serious financial and fraudulent crimes, intellectual property rights' infringements and other serious crimes affecting the financial sector in any manner.

During 2008, the Economic Crimes Squad continued with its successful investigations where a number of crimes were solved and the culprit/s brought before the law courts. The most successful investigations this year were cases of corruption which are so very difficult to solve. The fight against the circulation of counterfeit currency, particularly now that Malta has joined the euro zone was ongoing as was also the curbing of intellectual property rights' infringements and contraband of cigarettes and alcohol on the local market. There were also important cases which had an impact on a national level. A lot of dedication and investigative work was invested on cases of theft and skimming of debit cards, in which the Squad was very successful, charging the persons responsible before the Courts, who all resulted to be foreigners.

The Economic Crimes Squad is responsible to investigate the following:

- Money Laundering
- Judicial requests for assistance from abroad regarding economic crimes
- Police requests from abroad through Interpol regarding economic crimes
- Contraband
- Breaches of the Financial Institutions Act
- Investigation of all Customs related offences
- Intellectual Property Rights violations
- General Fraud
- Misappropriation
- Extortion
- Corruption
- Usury
- Forgery of Documents
- Embezzlement
- Plastic card fraud
- Currency counterfeiting
- Computer Crime.

The effort being put by the Economic Crimes Squad into the fight against Intellectual Property Rights infringements was intensified during 2008. This was acknowledged by the representatives of the Association Against Copyright Theft (AACT) themselves and on various occasions. Over 23,000 counterfeit pieces were seized by the Squad. Raids and inspections were intensified and effected with more organisation and analysis with a view to have better time management and better results. In fact this proved fruitful and inspections of stalls at the various open markets and at retail outlets were effected and complemented by other raids at private residences, where such residences were used for business purposes, since IPR infringements were being carried out over the internet. The counterfeited material seized varied from audio and visual, to clothing, and to cigarettes. The seizures made were as shown hereunder:

IPR Enforcement seizures

Number of raids	85
Number of cases in court	27
Persons arraigned in court	30

Items Seized

Items Seized	Quantity
Music CDs	364
DVDs	14,251
Play station CDs	1,755
Audio Cassettes	615
Clothing	85

Clothing Accessories	505
Tools & Accessories	143
Handbags	122
Others	2,444
Total	20,284

During 2008, the Economic Crimes Squad investigated the under-mentioned crimes:

Offences Investigated	Number of Cases
Fraud	151
Misappropriation	50
Forgery	16
Embezzlement	1
Cheques Bounced	6
Cheques Stolen / Forged	7
Plastic Card Fraud	11
Local Counterfeited Currency	6
Foreign Counterfeited Currency	1
Intellectual Property Rights Infringements	32
Usury	6
VAT Investigations	3
Customs Investigations	21
Contraband Related	15
Computer Crime	3
Extortion	1
Corruption (Bribery)	17
Money Laundering (FIAU)	41
Money Laundering (Police)	5
Foreign Requests for Assistance in Investigations	14
Commission Rogatories	14
Others - Theft of Electricity	24
Total	445

The following table shows statistics relating to court arraignments:

Court Arraignments			
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>
Persons Arraigned	219	26	245
Cases (Arraignments)	-	-	217
Arrested	229	53	282
Persons Interrogated	402	102	504
Persons Interviewed	365	100	465

Money Laundering Unit

The Money Laundering Unit, a small Unit within the Economic Crimes Squad, is responsible to investigate all cases of money laundering, but has to deal also with judicial requests for assistance and with other requests for assistance from foreign counterparts concerning matters related to money laundering investigations that they were carrying out in their country. The Unit investigates all suspicious transaction reports that are referred to it by the Financial Intelligence and Analysis Unit, together with information received from other independent sources. Other investigations are initiated by the Unit itself or are referred to it from local police sources.

Money Laundering Activities

Persons charged in court	7
STRs FIAU	41
STRs Police	5
Requests for Assistance	14
Rogatory Letters	14

In 2008, the Unit seized almost €985,816 both in cash, movable and immovable property. Members of the Unit also seized one luxury yacht worth over €5,000,000 for our Italian counterparts.

VICE SQUAD

The Vice Squad is responsible to investigate all sexual offences, domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, curbing of prostitution, missing persons, illegal gambling, clandestine lotto, paedophilia on the internet and trafficking in human beings amongst other criminal offences.

Priority was again given to the fight against trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation and curbing the loitering and soliciting for prostitution. Several persons were charged in court following successful raids, inspections and investigations concerning these serious offences. Two very important trafficking rings were arrested and dismantled. These concerned the organisation of the importation of Russian and other East European women into Malta where they were put to practise prostitution. Various persons have been charged in Court.

Special attention was given to those areas which are notoriously known for loitering by prostitutes and possible new ones. These areas included the Gżira, Msida, Marsa and Ta' Xbiex and this year also Ħal-Far since there were allegations of prostitution by foreign women although none were observed thereat. A number of foreign women who were suspected to be indulging in prostitution locally were referred to the Immigration Branch for removal from Malta.

The Vice Squad personnel are also directly concerned in domestic violence issues including child abuse, child neglect or family issues, as well as the tracing of missing persons.

The Vice Squad also assisted social workers in the execution of Court Orders, by accompanying the latter when these authorities sought our assistance, apart from escorting women who were housed in shelter homes and required police protection due to their violent spouses or partners.

The statistical data concerning the Vice Squad activities for 2008 is as follows:

Subject	Total
Absentees	474
Domestic Violence	1
Rape	19
Violent Indecent Assault	3
Defilement of Minors	22
Suspected Foreign Prostitutes	46
Assistance to Social Workers	2
Child Pornography	3
Child Abuse	3
Bigamy	2
Raids for Prostitution	389
Raids for Illegal Lotto & Gambling	71
Others	2
Total	1,037

Subject	Charges	Persons	Cases
Rape	13	14	13
Attempted Rape	3	3	3
Defilement of minor	32	23	18
Sexual activities with minors	16	7	4
Violent Indecent Assault	23	4	4
Sexual harassment	1	0	1
Immoral acts in public	38	14	7

Child pornography	4	3	3
Pornography (Possession for circulation)	1	1	1
Loitering and soliciting for prostitution	128	128	128
Living off the earnings of prostitution	8	5	4
Compelled/induced persons of age to prostitution	4	0	3
Keeping a brothel	7	0	0
Trafficking in human beings for the purpose of prostitution	2	2	1
Illegal Arrest	24	1	0
Bigamy	0	0	2
Breach of the Gaming Act	47	47	8
Illegal gambling	16	16	15
Slight injuries	3	0	0
Grievous injuries	2	0	0
Offences against Police Officers	4	1	1
False report/Simulation of Offence	3	2	1
Others	70	20	19
Total	449	291	236

PROTECTIVE SERVICES

TRAFFIC BRANCH

The Traffic Branch concerned mostly on reducing traffic accidents, improving the flow of traffic and assisting drivers, pedestrians and other road users alike. Traffic personnel devoted most of the time to proactive policing with a mixture of reactive policing.

Traffic motorcyclists made their presence seen and felt particularly during the rush hours. Additionally, they regularly deployed at strategic spots frequently used by motorists. They were also utilised along main and arterial roads where works were carried out. The objectives were twofold - maintaining the free flow of traffic particularly where deviations were necessary and to curb and control abuses by drivers. They also focused on reducing traffic accidents especially around known black spots.

Four main issues dealt with and heavily focused on were (a) drink driving, (b) driving without seat belt, (c) driving and using mobile sets, and (d) crossing on red lights.

During spot checks carried out by the Traffic Branch, 22,477 drivers were stopped and charges were issued where necessary. As distinct from normal road checks, specific spot checks were also carried out with the aim of enforcing seatbelts regulations, driving with mobile phones, excessive speed and drink and drive regulations.

Other involvement was in the look-out for criminals who were either wanted by the section or other sections within the Force. There were a few occasions where vehicles that had been reported stolen were recovered by personnel from the Traffic Branch. In some instances, officers from this section were also successful when assisting other units during hold-ups, or recovering stolen items following snatch and grabs.

The total number of charges and Traffic Offences Tickets (TOTs) issued by the Traffic Branch is indicated below. Those charges which could not be otherwise included in the TOTs have had to be issued separately.

No of drivers Stopped	Charges	Traffic Offence Tickets
22,477	366	24,518

Personnel from this Branch were also responsible for providing police escorts with internationally renowned political dignitaries visiting Malta on official functions. There were 29 occasions, involving about 387 traffic motorcyclists, in which traffic personnel contributed during the year. Similar escort duties

were provided with the President of Malta as well as with the Maltese Prime Minister and in some instances with some ministers on 84 occasions with more than 307 members in participation.

Traffic motorcyclists had also contributed during sports events, in particular bicycle and athletic events, by assisting participants during the course of these competitions. Likewise, their contribution was also evident during the summer patrols carried out in various localities.

Traffic motor cyclists were continuously involved in delivering public talks to local councils, government and private schools. The Traffic Safety Campaign was given regular public awareness through continuous participation on the local media, both on TV and radio stations. The Traffic School Campaign was also continued during the year with 14 campaigns and a total of 5,270 students in participation.

During the year, 15 sets of PDAs were donated by Datatrack for use by motorcyclists. In November, the Superintendent in charge of Traffic Branch attended a seminar on *Environmental Crime* organised by Cepol at Madrid, Spain.

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT UNIT (ALE)

During 2008, the Administrative Law Enforcement Unit continued with its efforts to control and curb illegal activities in relation to environmental crime both on land and at sea. During the year, the number of individuals booked increased from 1,305 in 2007 to 1,993, an increase of 63.5%. Apart from the issue of spring hunting, which was banned once again in 2008 and where trapping was also reduced by a month in autumn, major emphasis was placed on violations related to smoking in public places. Additional effort was also put on another main area of operations, in particular littering and dumping in public places.

The number of police personnel at ALE was maintained to the previous level, however, during the peak of the hunting season, both in spring and autumn, an additional nine officers were brought in to beef up the existing complement.

The Section continued to assist various governmental entities in their operations. These included the Lands Department, MMA, MEPA, and the Veterinary Services. During June-September, officers from the Branch continued to be deployed on beach duties both during the morning and at night. As in the previous years, two officers were also deployed with the Mobile Squad for patrolling duties during the Christmas period. This is in addition to the occasional duties when the officers are deployed at district level.

During 2008, a donation of 13 binoculars was made to the ALE section by Bird Life (Malta).

In addition to such duties, a preparatory meeting organised by Cepol was also attended in Madrid in 2008. The ALE Inspector attended the preparatory meeting for the seminar where the topics of discussion and structure of the course were set up. A Superintendent gave a presentation entitled *Policing methods and the fight against environmental crime*.

Nature of Charge	No.
Illegal Bird Trapping	127
Illegal Hunting on Land	121
Illegal Hunting at Sea	5
Possession of Protected Species	18
Illegal selling of birds	7
Litter Act	87
Dumping	8
Infringements of Malta Maritime Authority Regulations	181
Traffic Offences Tickets/Traffic Charges	61
Cruelty to animals	1
Arms Act	58
Illegal cutting of protected trees	2
Smoking in public places	1,211

Others	106
Total	1,993

Court Cases	No.
VAT Sittings	51
VAT New Cases	2,914
VAT Cases Decided	2,682

ECO Tax Sittings	5
ECO Tax New Cases	115
ECO Tax Cases Decided	75

ALE Sittings	7
ALE New Cases	379
ALE Cases Decided	367

Seizures	No.
Protected species	255
Weapons	92
Cartridges	1,693

COMMAND AND CONTROL ROOM

Emergency Line 112	2007	2008
Total number of calls answered	294,414	475,556
Total number of calls unanswered	not given	159,347
Total number of calls transferred to various government emergency entities	46,152	65,577
Total number of calls transferred to various police stations	23,803	38,170
Total number of calls transferred to CPD	6,082	6,085
Total number of calls transferred to AFM	400	477
Total number of calls transferred to Mater Dei Hospital	4,205	18,370
Total number of calls transferred to Gozo Police	1,232	2,134
Total number of calls transferred to Gozo Health Section	319	341

The above table depicts the number of telephone calls answered and/or transferred to various government entities as well as various stations and branches within the Police Department.

PRINCIPAL CITATIONS OFFICE

This Office was responsible to issue a large number of subpoenas, not only in connection and directly connected to police work, but also for many other government departments. During 2008, this Office prepared paper work for the following court sittings:

Nature of Sitting	No of sittings appointed	Cases appointed	Cases put off	Cases decided
Traffic	72	4,071	2,795	1,276
Collisions	11	298	260	38
Health	43	1,656	1,446	210
DLE	20	392	297	95
Health & Safety	8	298	256	42
Appeals	106	931	592	339
Juvenile	8	110	45	65
ETC	25	913	540	373
Evasion of duty	12	284	266	18
Family Court	47	2,704	1,237	1,467
National Employment Authority	1	1	0	0
Total	353	11,658	7,734	3,923

CENTRAL DELIVERY SERVICE

This Office handled quite a massive number of citations, subpoenas and other court- related papers as clearly illustrated in the following table:

Incoming papers	Outgoing papers	Undelivered	Working days	Percentage of deliverable/undeliverable
98,936	95,043	3,893	243	3.93%

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS GROUP (SAG)

During the year the Special Assignment Group effected a total of 3,894 performances on a number of different activities:

- fixed point duties with high risk embassies and other entities as well as armed escort duties with high profile dignitaries when visiting Malta and additional patrols carried out at the Malta International Airport;
- close security protection duties with VIPS, including the President of Malta and other dignitaries including delegations, venues where international conferences were held, high risk personalities visiting Malta, politicians, royalty, religious personalities, ambassadors, athletes, and other celebrities, both official and private visits;
- normal patrols held in Paceville during weekends, public and national holidays and daily patrols round the clock to assist the Mobile Squad and patrols at Girgenti on particular occasions;
- escorting illegal immigrants to their country of origin and escort duties with criminals;
- escort duties with valuable objects, which consisted of diamonds, gold bullion, passports, paintings, etc;
- assistance to other sections or squads such as CID, Drug Squad, Economic Crime, ALE, and the Special Branch Immigration Section;
- providing personnel in anti-riot or Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) matters.

Type of Activity	No. of Performances
Fixed Point Duties	878
Close Security Protection (VIPS)	198
General Patrols	410
Daily Patrols with Mobile Squad	138
Patrols in Paceville/others	226
Daily Patrols at the MIA	5
Assistance to other departments	12
Escorts abroad	10
Naval Battleships	50
Escorts with valuable objects	171
SWAT related matters	12
Anti-Riot related matters	16
Training Courses	8
Extra Duties	1,757
Displays	8
Total	3,899

DOGS SECTION

The Dogs Section comprises of various dogs and breeds, such as German Shepherds, Labradors, Rotwieler, Springer Spaniels and short-haired German Pointers. All dogs are trained to perform display tricks which are often requested by philanthropic societies, schools, local councils and other institutions.

The dogs are divided into three categories - narcotics sniffer dogs, explosives sniffer dogs and assault dogs. The Dogs Section is an integral part combining and executing various works such as fixed points with the Special Assignments Group (SAG), close security protection with VIPS in delegations and conferences and (SWAT) related matters. Likewise, personnel and sniffer dogs from this Section assisted EOD officers from the Armed Forces of Malta in effecting searches for explosives.

Also on various occasions, sniffer dogs and their handlers are called for assistance by the Drug Squad in parties, houses and vessel searches, etc. Members of this Section are also deployed, together with their dogs, on security duty with illegal immigrants at Police detention centres.

Type of Activity	No. of Performances
General Fixed Point Duties	738
Fixed Point Duties in Paceville	312
General Patrols	791
Searches – Explosive related	310
Searches – Narcotics related	280
Reinforcement Duties	216
Police Band related duties	13
Displays – Malta & Gozo	105
Total	2,765

MOUNTED SECTION

This Section participated in ceremonial duties in connection with the presentation of credentials by newly appointed Ambassadors to Malta to the President of Malta at the Palace. A minimum of five riders on horseback are detailed to perform such an escort.

Personnel from the Mounted Section were also deployed on patrols in certain strategic places. Further to this, personnel were also detailed on foot patrol along most of the main beaches during the summer period. In addition, riders and horses were deployed at the Ta' Qali National Football Stadium during international, Premiership football matches and horse races at the Marsa Race Track.

Throughout 2008, further refurbishment of the Mounted Section was carried out by Mounted Section personnel in order to render the stables cleaner and more efficient.

Type of Activity	No. of Performances
Ceremonial duties	64
Presidential escorts	43
Football stadium	13
Marsa Race Track	226
Patrol on horseback	200
Foot patrol	348
Summer patrol	46
Gala duties	36
Displays	27
Reinforcement duties	113
Total	1,116

MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSPORT SECTION (MT)

The Motor Vehicle Transport Section, commonly referred to as the MT Floriana, is designated to provide vehicular transport to the Police Department and to maintain same in the best condition as possible. This section also provides technical back-up to branches and districts during investigations involving motor vehicles. The MT is comprised of two sections, the Drivers' Section and the MT Garage Workshop (Mechanics) Section.

The **Drivers Section** is responsible for the transport of all officers stationed at the GHQ. This section also caters for the transport of vehicles under investigations, derelict vehicles and stranded police vehicles, and provides bus transport for police needs, ranging from police reinforcements to the transportation of clandestine immigrants. The section also caters for the distribution of police-barriers and the conveyance of corpses undergoing magisterial enquiries.

The Police Fuel Pump caters only for service vehicles and cars hired by special branches. The St Andrew's Police Compound houses vehicles under investigations both by the Police and by the duty magistrates.

The *MT Garage Section* is composed of the Workshop section and the MT Stores section, which is responsible for the procurement and issue of vehicle spare parts. This section is responsible for maintaining and servicing the police vehicle fleet as well as second-hand vehicles acquired from other departments. Services carried out at the MT Workshop section are automotive/motorcycle repairs, auto-electrical, vulcanizing, panel beating and spray painting.

Two new motor scooters were donated by the St Paul's Bay Local Council for patrols carried out in the locality, while nine used vehicles were acquired from various government departments.

During the year, the MT Section handled 3,485 job cards for repair works on police vehicles. These varied from routine maintenance, to major engine or body repairs. The amount of €314,668 was spent on the purchase of both proprietary and non-proprietary parts, and for other services. During the same period, the fuel consumption for the Police Department amounted to €629,454.

Throughout the year, the administration of the MT section was actively involved in the upgrading of the service fleet, as a result of which 69 motor vehicles and 21 motor cycles were indicated as unserviceable and referred for removal by sale by tender, whilst another 11 vehicles were retained for preparation to be used during display purposes in the proposed Police Transport Museum. Steps were also taken to further reduce the downtime of service vehicles under repair as well as providing immediate alternative transport to police districts when necessary.

SPECIAL BRANCH

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIT

Interpol

The Special Branch has long been appointed as the National Central Bureau of Interpol and is the contact point for international co-operation matters. This Office ensures the continued liaison with the General Secretariat of Interpol, with the National Central Bureaux (NCBs) in other countries and with the various branches and sections of the Force.

The main activities performed by this office have continued to give assistance in relation to extradition issues; international search for fugitives; assistance in police inquiries, as well as the continued exchange of information with the Police services in Member States, where Europol is not concerned.

In the light of such activities, various messages by the dedicated electronic communication system of Interpol have been exchanged and personal liaison between the Head of the National Central Bureaux in Malta and those in other countries, in particular where assistance and information exchange is regular, has been ensured. Various enquiries originating from the above law enforcement bodies were catered for in 2008, with positive and desired results.

New working procedures have been implemented in view of the strengthening of IT functions at the office in order to decrease paper work. Further activities to improve electronic filing systems and enhancement of databases will be an ongoing process. Coverage for Interpol activities are 24/7 through the IRU front office.

Europol

Malta has taken over the Chair of the Heads of Europol National Units (HENU) Meetings and also represents the HENUs on the Management Board from June 2008 till June 2009. During 2008 Malta hosted the Europol Homicide Working Group Meeting and the Europol Informant Handlers Meeting.

The Europol National Unit started using the Europol Information system on a regular basis. Exchange of information through and with Europol has increased significantly. Malta's liaison officer at Europol is also covering various other meetings at Europol, as well as additional meetings organised by EUROJUST and other entities.

The staff at our National Europol Office has participated in study visits to Portugal, The Netherlands and Austria organised under the Leonardo da Vinci EU programme.

SIRENE Office

During 2008, SIRENE continued to operate on a 24/7 basis processing a significant amount of incoming requests from Schengen states. Various hits concerning persons wanted for extradition and other persons to be refused landing were recorded. Over all, this office received 59 (G Form) hits and 45 (H Form) hits and sent 12 (G Form) and 6 (H Form) besides other requests.

Personnel from this office took part in the common training organised in Ljubljana and Paris. Moreover, all SIRENE Officers have participated in study visits in Luxembourg, Portugal, and Italy (TAIEX), Austria, The Netherlands and again Portugal under the Leonardo da Vinci EU programme.

Mutual Judicial Assistance in Criminal Matters

The International Relations Unit has also assisted the Office of the Attorney General and the specialised police branches in the execution of various requests for mutual judicial assistance in criminal matters received from various EU and non EU States. In all, 30 cases were dealt with, most of them being rogatory letters.

Pursuant to the accession to the European Union, the International Relations Unit has also been entrusted with the duties relating to co-operation with EUROPOL. Malta has in fact been cooperating with Europol before accession to the EU when all its requirements and obligations were fulfilled in particular issues relating to Data Protection. Malta is represented at Europol by a European Liaison Officer (ELO) and he is posted at The Hague where the Headquarters of Europol are housed. Cooperation with other Europol Member States have increased considerably along the years and during the same period various seminars and meetings were attended by the ELO and where practicable by other senior officers. Communication equipment dedicated to the exchange of information with Europol has been enhanced and action is being taken to enhance the administrative capacity of this unit.

The Unit has been involved in the execution of nine European Arrest Warrants. The persons were extradited as follows: Poland (3), Italy (2), Germany (2), Romania (1) and Denmark (1).

Schengen

A considerable number of Schengen related issues were catered for by the Special Branch. As such, action was taken to build the administrative capacities in order to cater for such needs, including the proper administration of the Schengen Information System (SISone4all). Officers involved in Schengen activities were once again actively involved in the enhancement of administrative procedures required under EU obligations. The Special Branch is constantly in contact with the Ministry and other authorities in relation to activities related to Schengen. It is worth mentioning that this year we have successfully managed to

witness the lifting of the air borders in March 2008. This is yet the result of successful evaluation and a guarantee that the working methods employed are in line with the uniform activities in the Schengen area.

Anti-Terrorism Unit

The Anti-Terrorism Unit is part of the Police Special Branch. It is intelligence-oriented and carries out investigations on related matters. Ever since the setting up of this unit, several contacts have been established with other foreign services involved in related activities.

Various seminars, fora and other meetings were also attended by officers posted at this Unit during the same period. Their participation in national exercises and exchange of intelligence was always ensured. The Anti-Terrorism Unit also represents the Malta Police Force in the EU Police Working Party on Terrorism and works closely with other local Police units on issues of mutual interest.

IMMIGRATION

The main task of the Immigration Branch is to control the Island's points of entry, which include checks to prevent illegal entry of foreigners and detection of forged documents. It has entry points at the airport, seaport and yacht marina as well as a seasonal port at Mgarr, Gozo. Police and civilian personnel man the entry point at the airport. Police officers carry out border control at the other points of entry.

During 2008, the number of persons who arrived in or left Malta by air, was as follows:

Arrivals:	1,551,566
Departures:	1,558,077
Transit:	3,109,643

Source: Malta International Airport

The number of ferry passengers, excluding cruise liner passengers, who were processed at the seaport was as follows.

Arrivals:	541,219
Departures:	541,011

Source: Sea Passenger Terminal

The year 2008 saw the full introduction of the visa-on-line system. This requires the daily input of the Immigration Police in order to assure the proper processing of applicants for uniform visas in line with EU regulations. This Branch also houses an *ad hoc* office that deals with visa issues.

Another office is responsible for matters relating to foreigners' administrative issues and includes the processing of requests for Acquisition of Immovable Property, extensions of stay, residence permits, nationality requests, and work permits. 119 foreigners, who did not satisfy the conditions for entry, were refused entry into the Island, an activity aimed at suppressing illegal immigration.

A lot of changes are taking place in the Immigration Branch. Activities to be in line with EU requirements are constant, with the major changes having been implemented in 2004 upon Malta's accession to the EU. To secure the best possible processing for issues relating to residence permits, work permits, and other permits for permission for aliens to remain in Malta, constant liaison with the Department of Citizenship and Expatriate Affairs and with the Employment and Training Corporation is secured. Through this cooperation, the Immigration Branch is doing its best to ensure a rapid process of all residence permit applications filed. The online IT network set up during 2007 is in daily use and several hundred applications have already been processed.

Immigration Investigations

Insofar as field duties are concerned, 3,017 removal orders were issued by Immigration Officers. These include removal orders issued in respect of foreigners arriving in Malta or intercepted on boats. Immigration officers, deployed on field duties, also had to cater for the 84 boats that were rescued or entered Maltese water illegally. The boats carried a record total of 2,775 migrants who all had to be medically checked, photographed, fingerprinted and accommodated. They were also interviewed in order to establish their identity and wherever possible, effect repatriations.

Co-ordination with the Office for the Welfare and Integration of Asylum Seekers (OIWAS) is required and kept constant due to the arrivals of family units and minors who are only kept in detention for the minimum period necessary to have them cleared medically. Dubious cases of minors are also referred for further age examination and results of these are communicated to the MFSS.

The nationality of the boat people was: Somalia 1,443; Nigeria 338; Mali 187; Ivory Coast 159; Ghana 157; Others 491.

A number of them opted to apply for refugee status locally and all relative documentation that was referred to the migrants from the Refugee Commission, relating to the approval or rejection of their claim was delivered by Immigration personnel. The same applies to correspondence exchanged with the Refugee Appeals Board. All communications from REFCOM and the Appeals Board that are addressed to the immigrants are also distributed by this section.

In the field of repatriation, a total of 260 foreigners were repatriated in line with immigration procedures. Also in this aspect, the Police were responsible to acquire the relative documentation and return tickets in order to secure smooth repatriations. Requests for documents continued to be forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in an effort to be in a position to repatriate failed asylum seekers. In a number of cases, action was also taken to organise repatriation procedures with accompanying escorts. During this year, the Immigration Branch organised a charter flight to Mali and constantly monitored all joint repatriation flights organised by EU and Frontex with a view to participate in those which were valid for Malta.

During the same year, the section has been heavily deployed with activities relating to the Frontex Project Nautilus III. In addition to their duties, between May and October, officers posted at Immigration had to be actively involved in coordinating with Frontex offices that were part of the project in Malta. This drastically increased the burden of the work of the section, which is increasing every day with the constant arrivals of immigrants by boat. For the first time, two officers were also sent to assist the Italian authorities in interviews of illegal immigrants arriving in Lampedusa, under the Aeneas Project.

The Police Immigration Section has very close and strong liaison with the Maritime Unit and other sections of the Armed Forces of Malta, who have air and sea assets to patrol the blue border. Immigration Officers actively participate in a number of meetings, seminar, working groups and other activities, held both at EU level and by Frontex.

Eurodac Office

The Immigration Police are also responsible for the running of the Eurodac Office, which is responsible to store and disseminate fingerprints of all asylum seekers and illegal immigrants to the central data bank which is shared by all EU Member States. The same office is also responsible for the responses to requests to check or take back such immigrants as may be discovered in other Member States or vice versa. This office has received a number of requests to take back immigrants and these continue to be processed regularly.

Very close relation is kept with the Refugee Commissioner, who is technically responsible for Dublin activities. All action is being taken to ensure that from our end, all data is entered in good time in the Eurodac system.

DUTIES AT OPEN AND CLOSED ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

Figures of foreigners in custody differ from one day to the other; at the end of 2008, there were 70 housed at Ta' Kandja reception centre, 1,108 are housed at Safi Barracks and 951 are housed at Lyster Barracks - a total of 2,130 immigrants. Those at Safi and Lyster Barracks are under the supervision of the Armed Forces of Malta which greatly assists the Immigration Police in the housing of foreigners who enter Malta by boat or who are rescued by the AFM Maritime Unit.

Arrangements for the security at the closed centre at Ta Kandja where illegal immigrants are housed is also the responsibility of the Police Special Branch. Immigration Police presence is also secured at the Open Centre run by the Immigrants' Commission at Balzan. This activity generated massive duties during the same year, especially insofar as escort duties and other related activities are concerned.

This section is also responsible to ensure that all immigrants are released from custody according to government policy. During 2008, over 2,260 immigrants were brought over to GHQ for release, which obviously entails a lot of administrative duties apart from issuing them with an Immigration document.

PROTECTIVE SERVICE PLANNING AND CO-ORDINATION

The Special Branch is also the designated body to co-ordinate protective measures of visiting VIPs or to organise security during certain conferences and other meetings. For this purpose, close liaison is ensured with the District Police, the Traffic Branch and the Special Assignment Group.

As in former years, during 2008 various VIPs travelled to Malta. Every time action was taken by this Branch to ensure that, through a combination of measures and capabilities, appropriate steps were taken to protect such visitors and organise security at specific meetings. Action had in all cases been taken to have a proper security, and risk assessments and visits on sites to be visited for such purpose were ensured every time. Close liaison was also kept with other appropriate departments to secure the success of these visits, and these included the MFA, OPM, AFM, Health, MIA and OMAS. Protective duties are also carried out by officers within the Branch with certain local VIPs, as required.

LIAISON DUTIES

The Special Branch is also entrusted with liaison duties with Foreign Diplomatic Representations in Malta and as such has very close relations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of other government departments. Continued assistance is extended to embassies in several matters, including consular issues, both directly and very often through the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Several contacts have been ensured throughout the year with a number of foreign embassies and the Branch has established closer contacts with foreign Police and Immigration liaison officers represented in various countries abroad.

PRIVATE GUARDS AND LOCAL WARDENS

Another duty entrusted to the Special Branch is the processing of applications and licensing of applicants for the position of a Private Guard or a Local Warden and for the registration and licensing of the agencies which employ such guards and wardens. The following applications were processed during 2008:

Type	Applications				Licences
	Received	Refused	Withdrawn	Pending	Issued
Private Guards	565	19	1	38	507
Local Wardens	34	1	-	2	31
Private Guard Agencies	6	1	-	-	5
Local Warden Agencies	-	-	-	-	-

WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES

The Special Branch is also entrusted with issues relating to Weapons and Explosives. Insofar as weapons are concerned, it is responsible for approving import of weapons and the temporary approvals for import/export of weapons for sporting purposes. In view of this activity, action was also taken to comply with EU requirements for the movement of firearms within the Union, which requirements are also embodied in Maltese law. The Special Branch is the designated contact point with other European police services dealing with the movement of weapons.

During the period under review, the following weapons licences were processed from the different district offices throughout Malta which have access to a main weapons database. The system is enhanced continuously to meet the requirements of the Police Department.

Type of licence	New Applications	Renewed Permits
To carry harpoons	366	1,285
To carry firearms for hunting purposes on land	171	11,061
To carry firearms for hunting from aboard a sea craft	18	266
To carry firearms for the hunting of wild rabbits	242	1,425
To take wild rabbits	-	29
To take birds	-	4,281
Bird ringers	-	18
Renewals to keep a firearm/s	n/a	7,948
Requests for purchase of firearms	2,505	n/a
Target shooter Licence A	255	424
Target shooter Licence B	608	1,742
Collector Licence A	46	132

Transfers of firearms

Person to Person	837
Dealer to Person	1,880
Schedule I	176
Schedule II	75,544
Schedule II WB	1,007
Schedule III	4,798
Section 22	8,229

This office is also responsible to ensure that correct amounts of explosive materials are used at hard stone quarries. To ensure that this activity is well carried out, regular consultation is kept with the Planning Authority. Officers from this department are present during all blasting operations carried out in local hard stone quarries or on construction projects requirement the blasting of rocks. They are responsible to escort and control the issue and use of explosives when such operations take place.

The Explosives Committee, which includes a member from the Police, also met on several occasions to deal with issues of fireworks and blasting operations during the same period. Courses for the issue of Licences “A” to manufacture fireworks and Licences “B” to assist in the manufacture of fireworks were held during the same year.

AIRPORT POLICE STATION

The Special Branch is also responsible for the public areas at the Malta International Airport. It is also responsible for all investigations of incidents reported within the airport area. Such duties are directed by the Officer in charge of the Airport Police Station.

Duties at the station concern normal public order duties, prevention of crime and investigation of offences. For this purpose, several inspections and various road blocks were organised. The airport police are also responsible for the running of the custody centre at the MIA. Various offences relating to traffic contraventions were dealt with and regular patrol is secured at the airport. A number of traffic offence tickets were issued by the airport police.

The officers at the airport are also deployed on duties where special skills are needed to cover protective security measures during the use of the airport by distinctive visitors leaving or arriving in Malta. The following figures relate to activities carried out by the MIA Police Station during 2008:

MIA Police Station Activities - 2008		Total
Traffic offence tickets		134
False documents detected at MIA and Seaport		
<i>Visas/stamps</i>	2	
<i>Passports</i>	6	
<i>Others</i>	19	27
Inspections/roadblocks at MIA		
<i>Inspections</i>	287	
<i>Roadblocks</i>	113	400
Inspections carried out at Gates		773
Damaged/stolen mail		17
Escorts of valuable cargo		439

DISTRICT POLICING

REGION 'A'

The following is the statistical return for the year 2008 regarding the divisional Police in Region 'A' which effected:

- 324 searches and arrested 563 suspects in connection with crimes committed in my region or elsewhere;
- 52 roadblocks along major roads and traffic arteries;
- 11,374 traffic offence tickets;
- 26 breathalyser charges;
- 154 for breaches of smoking regulations;
- 26 charges in connection with prostitution;
- 15 charges against auto dealers;
- 5 charges for licences of shops for permitting minors inside their premises;
- 12 charges for breaches of illegal hunting;
- 30 vehicles towed.

Inspections in places of entertainment reached the figure of 2,319 for the past year and 46 charges have been issued for breaches of the regulations. However, a further 31 other charges have been issued for breaches of the Wines, Beer & Spirit Regulations.

Night patrols by gazetted officers reached 267 in Region 'A' which means an average of more than one gazetted officer per night on patrol. Usually, these patrols are carried out on a period of 4 hours and these differ in times between 9pm and 4am.

There were 333 major commitments in Region 'A' for the year 2008 such as village feasts, football grounds, water polo games, horse races, political commitments etc. 669 police personnel from Region 'A' were detailed for soccer games during the past year, and a further 5,545 for other major commitments.

The Police at Region 'A' attended 105 Court sittings. A great number of police personnel were always detailed to cover these sittings in Court apart from 11 police personnel who attended tribunal sittings. The number of police personnel attending Court has decreased dramatically from 3,448 to 756 since the introduction of the affidavit system on 1 May 2006. In fact, the number of affidavits presented by Region 'A' personnel during 2008 has risen to 8,576 - Court affidavits 2,885; 5,691 tribunal affidavits.

The district police detailed 10,635 police personnel for shepherding of school children.

During 2008, Region 'A' has detailed 6,026 fixed point duties, as shown in the following breakdown:

Embassies	1,098	
Castille Place	1,098	
Attorney General	366	
Prime Minister	1,098	
Mater Dei Hospital	1,646	Illegal Immigrants
Mt Carmel Hospital	720	Illegal Immigrants

Region 'A' has provided a total number of 48,208 hours of fixed point duties throughout the past year. The following table shows the number of articles found/delivered to the Police/reported lost/restored to owners; TOTs issued, and number of persons prosecuted during the divisional sittings. Cases are classified as either contraventions or crimes (under 6 months punishment), for the period 1 January to 31 December 2008.

Districts	Articles found and delivered to the Police	Articles reported Lost	Articles Restored to Owners	TOTs	Persons Prosecuted	
					Contraventions	Crimes
1	88	2,045	23	2,965	884	154
2	24	548	15	1,375	389	149
3	17	657	35	1,564	781	218
4	36	609	9	2,818	409	130
5	15	943	38	2,651	526	142
Total	180	4,802	120	11,373	2,989	793

Arrestment of Offences Liable to Imprisonment over 6 Months – Region 'A'

Offence	Cases	Males	Females	Minors under 18 yrs	
				Males	Females
Arms Ordinance	24	22	1	1	-
Arrest	3	3	-	-	-
Association with others to commit a crime	13	10	3	-	-
Attempted Homicide	8	8	-	-	-
Attempted Theft	12	13	-	-	-
Bail Conditions	14	12	2	-	-
Bodily Harm	38	37	4	1	-
Bodily Harm against Public Officer	17	16	1	2	-
Breaches of Bail	8	7	1	-	-
Counterfeit Bank notes	1	1	-	-	-
Damages Involuntary	4	4	-	-	-
Damages Wilful/Voluntary	62	57	5	1	-
Data Protection Act	2	2	-	-	-
Defilement of Minor	5	5	-	-	-
Domestic Violence	10	9	-	1	-
Drugs Possession	41	39	1	1	-
Drugs Traffic	7	7	-	-	-
Escape from custody	1	1	-	-	-
Explosive Ordinance	3	3	-	-	-
False Report	3	1	2	-	-

Falsification of Documents	12	10	2	-	-
Forgery	7	5	1	-	-
Fraud	17	13	4	-	-
Grievous Bodily Harm	67	68	3	3	-
Homicide	2	2	-	-	-
Illegal Arrest	4	3	-	1	-
Illegal Fishing	3	3	-	-	-
Insults & Threats	23	20	3	2	-
Involuntary Grievous Injuries	5	5	1	-	-
Involuntary Homicide	3	2	1	-	-
Malta Maritime Authority Act	7	7	-	-	-
Manslaughter - Traffic	1	1	-	-	-
Offence against Public Officer	29	29	1	1	-
Possession of stolen Art	4	4	-	-	-
Post Act	1	1	-	-	-
Received Stolen Goods	18	16	2	-	-
Sexual Offence	6	6	-	-	-
Sexual Offence (Rape)	2	2	-	-	-
Theft	120	117	11	6	-
Traffic – driving	18	16	2	-	-
Unlawful Assembly	2	2	-	-	-
Violence against Persons	3	3	-	-	-
Total	630	592	51	20	Nil

Solved Offences (Liable to over 6 Months Imprisonment) – Region ‘A’

Type of Offence	No. of Cases
Arms Ordinance	14
Arrest	3
Attempted Homicide	4
Attempted theft	8
Bail Conditions	12
Bodily Harm	20
Bodily Harm Against Public Officer	10
Breach of Bail	2
Data Protection Act	2
Defilement of Minor	5
Domestic Violence	6
Drug Offence	40
Explosive Ordinance	3
False report	2
Falsification of document	5
Forgery	5
Fraud	14
Grievous Bodily Harm	61
Homicide	2
Illegal Arrest	2
Insults and Threats	10
Insults and Threats and Possession of a knife	1
Involuntary Damage	1
Involuntary Grievous Injuries	5
Involuntary Homicide	2
Offence against Public Officers	19
Possession of Stolen Art	1
Post Act	1
Receiving Stolen Property	6
Sexual offence	5
Theft	90
Traffic - Driving	14
Traffic - Manslaughter	1
Wilful/Voluntary Damage	42
Total	418

Other Arraignments

Districts	Sittings	Cases	No. of Persons	Crimes under 6 months	Contraventions
1	17	462	439	135	1,420
2	24	842	902	376	582
3	12	781	559	218	781
4	20	370	686	66	631
5	32	444	530	142	526
Total	105	2,899	3,116	937	3,940

During 2008, Region 'A' brought to Court 3,529 cases and arraigned 3,780 persons. This notwithstanding the number of commitments in the whole Region, such as village feasts. During such village feasts, no incidents whatsoever were reported. Apart from this year's General Election and the usual village feasts, Region 'A' hosts a good number of events, especially in the Capital City of Valletta. These events are well attended to by the general public. Naturally, not forgetting the Notte Bianca and the Notte Magica, VIPs from different countries visited our Island and the safety of one and all was guaranteed.

REGION 'B'

The Divisional Police posted in Region 'B' performed the following duties:

- 343 searches and 752 arrests of suspects in connection with various crimes committed throughout the Region;
- 389 roadblocks were affected in major Roads and traffic thoroughfares;
- A grand total of 18,262 TOTs were issued;
- 50 charges were issued following positive breathalyser tests made;
- 1,541 offenders were brought to book for infringements of the smoking regulations;
- 63 charges were issued in connection with prostitution;
- 37 auto dealers were booked for breaches of their licences;
- 84 shop licensees were charged for permitting minors inside their business outlets;
- 19 charges were issued for illegal hunting;
- 149 vehicles were towed by the Police in contravention to tow zones, clearly indicated by appropriate signs for the year 2008.

A total of 9,911 inspections were made in places of entertainment during 2008, whereas 109 charges were pressed against offenders for breaches of regulations. 198 other charges were further issued for other breaches of the Wines, Beer & Spirits Regulations.

The number of night patrols performed by gazetted officers in Region 'B' reached 354. These patrols are usually performed between 9pm and 4am on a 4-hour shift. 158 night shifts were also performed by officers from Police Districts 6 and 6A every weekend in Paceville, bringing the total to 512 night patrol performed by gazetted officers in Region 'B'. It is to be noted that the four hours shift is normally worked by officers posted in 7, 8 and 9 PD, since 6 and 6A PD are exempted as stated above. In addition to the above, night patrols by the three gazetted officers posted in Gozo are also performed three times monthly which amounts to 108 night patrols yearly.

There were 223 major commitments in Region 'B' during 2008, which varied from village feasts, football stadia, water polo games, horse races, political commitments and others, which demanded the Police presence. To cater for these commitments, a total of 4,061 police officers were detailed for soccer competitions, whilst another 3,500 officers were detailed for other various commitments.

A total of 286 court divisional sittings, dealing with summary cases throughout the Region 'B', were held last year, for which a sizeable number of police officers had to attend. This does not include another 750 police officers who were detailed to attend tribunal sittings. Since the introduction of the sworn affidavit, the number of police officers attending for court and tribunal sittings decreased substantially. During the

year, 10,518 affidavits were presented during tribunal sittings, whilst another 3,100 affidavits were presented during divisional court sittings, bringing the total of affidavits to 13,618.

The number of police officers from within Region 'B' who were detailed to shepherd school children going in and out of their schools amounted to 12,702 officers.

The number of police officers detailed to perform fixed point duties with embassies and VIPs amounted to 9,884 officers. Other officers were deployed as guard duties with prison inmates and illegal immigrants receiving hospitalisation at Mater Dei Hospital, Mount Carmel Hospital, etc.

The following table shows statistics to lost and found articles, TOTs issued, vehicles towed and persons prosecuted during the divisional sittings. Cases are classified as either contraventions or crimes (under 6 months punishment), for the period 1 January to 31 December 2008.

Districts	Articles found and delivered to the Police	Articles reported Lost	Articles Restored to Owners	Traffic Offence Tickets	Vehicles Towed	Persons Prosecuted	
						Contraventions	Crimes
6	152	2,444	212	1,725	41	344	362
6A	25	1,338	7	4,425	56	451	385
7	52	1,048	46	5,542	2	684	257
8	33	873	47	1,459	5	477	111
9	104	1,237	87	2,839	25	1,250	90
10	71	662	87	2,379	20	814	237
Total	437	7,602	486	18,369	149	4,020	1,442

Arraignment of Offences Liable to Imprisonment over 6 Months – Region 'B'

Offence	Cases	Persons arraigned	Males	Females	Minors under 18 yrs	
					Males	Females
Attempted Homicide	9	9	10	0	0	0
Attempted Theft	7	15	13	2	4	0
Bodily Harm	59	62	58	3	0	1
Bodily Harm/ f/arm w/o licence	7	13	11	1	0	1
Bodily Harm against Public Officers	17	39	23	6	0	0
Borehole w/o licence	1	2	2	0	0	0
Breach of bail	7	9	8	0	1	0
Cruelty to animals	2	2	2	0	0	0
Defilement Of Minor	5	6	6	0	0	0
Disturbing Public Peace	7	7	6	0	0	0
Domestic Violence	1	1	1	0	0	0
Drug Possession	11	13	13	0	0	0
Drugs/Trafficking	7	7	5	1	2	0
Failed to obey Police orders	3	3	3	0	0	0
False Report	11	11	9	2	0	0
Falsification	7	9	3	6	0	0
Firearms w/o licence	8	9	8	1	0	0
Fraud/Forgery	24	33	20	9	0	1
Grievous Bodily Harm	67	75	73	2	1	0
Grievous Bodily Harm/Negligent Driving	3	3	2	1	0	0
Grievous Bodily Harm/Wilful Damages	2	2	2	0	0	0
Illegal arrest	2	3	3	0	0	0
Illegal Gaming	1	1	1	0	0	0
Indecent & immoral acts in public	1	2	2	0	0	0
Instigation	7	26	26	0	0	0
Insults & Threats	109	109	91	34	0	0
Involuntary Damages	6	6	6	1	0	0
Involuntary Grievous Bodily Harm	4	4	3	1	0	0
Involuntary Grievous Bodily Harm/Neg. Driving	7	7	7	0	0	0
Misappropriation	3	3	2	1	0	0

Murder	1	2	1	0	0	1
Negligent Driving w/o insurance	11	11	11	0	0	0
Offence against Public Officer	22	23	12	1	0	0
Pornography	2	2	2	0	0	0
Possession of Explosive Material	6	17	17	0	0	0
Possession of Petroleum	1	1	1	0	0	0
Pretended Rights	2	2	2	0	0	0
Prostitution	80	80	9	71	0	0
Protected species	5	5	5	0	0	0
Rape	3	3	3	0	0	0
Receiving Stolen Property	6	6	5	1	0	0
Recidivist	6	7	5	0	1	1
Sexual Offence	9	13	10	0	1	0
Sexual Offence – Gang Rape	1	0		0	0	0
Slight Injuries	6	8	7	1	0	0
Subornation of witness	1	1	1	0	0	0
Theft	146	183	141	33	14	4
Theft/Fraud	3	3	2	1	0	0
Theft/Involuntary Damage	1	1	1	0	0	0
Theft/Voluntary Damages	4	7	7	0	0	0
Violence against Public Officer	41	53	46	2	0	0
Voluntary Damages	40	42	37	5	1	0
Voluntary Damages/Insults & Threats	4	4	4	0	0	0
Weapons w/o licence	1	3	3	0	0	0
Wilful Damage	11	13	8	2	3	0
Total	818	981	759	188	28	9

Solved Offences (Liable to over 6 Months Imprisonment) – Region ‘B’

Type of Offence	No. of Cases
Arms Ordinance	2
Attempted Grievous Bodily Harm	3
Attempted Homicide	13
Attempted theft	3
Bodily Harm	49
Borehole w/o licence	1
Breach of Bail	3
Defilement of Minor	4
Disobeying Police Orders	2
Disturbing Public Peace	1
Drug Offence	28
False report	6
Falsification	6
Fraud	17
Grievous Bodily Harm	69
Indecent assault	3
Insults and Threats	2
Involuntary Damage	4
Involuntary Grievous Bodily Harm	6
Involuntary Homicide	3
Misappropriation	3
Motor Vehicle Accident	8
Offence against Public Officers	48
Pornography	2
Possession of Explosive Material	6
Pretended Rights	13
Prostitution	55
Protected species	5
Rape	4
Receiving Stolen Property	10
Seizure	1
Selling counterfeit items	1

Sexual offence	6
Theft	143
Theft of Electricity	7
Theft of vehicle	1
Voluntary Damage	27
Wilful Damage	51
Total	616

Other Arraignments

Districts	Sittings	Cases	No. of Persons	Crimes under 6 months	Contraventions
6	30	518	562	489	550
6A	31	807	836	823	470
7	53	633	684	257	999
8	39	637	477	126	887
9	33	729	773	697	665
10	64	2,326	2,523	237	814
Total	250	5,650	5,855	2,629	4,385

RESPITE WARRANTS EXECUTED BY THE DISTRICT POLICE

The Districts executed the following respite warrants throughout the period under review and collected the sum of €265,649.07:

District	No. of Respite Warrants	Amount
1	42	€10,934.33
2	64	€21,420.35
3	41	€21,022.27
4	83	€38,562.54
5	42	€21,386.41
6	55	€31,838.14
6A	70	€37,080.25
7	52	€23,545.27
8	84	€36,295.27
9	51	€19,930.43
10	25	€3,633.81
Total	609	€265,649.07

Meetings Held with Local Councils

Officers from Districts and Specialised Units held a total of 781 meetings with local councils during 2008.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Category	Sub Category	Return Quota Totals
Illegal Adoption		5
Association	In Crime	1
Arms Ordinance	Possession w/o licence	7
	Possession of Firearm	10
	Possession of Ammunitions	3
	Breach of Explosive Ordinance	6
	Possession of Pointed Instrument	2
	Illegal Fireworks	9
	Illegal Hunting	3
Breach of licence	Unspecified	5
Escape from custody		3
Unlawful exercise of profession		1
Abuse of telecommunication		3
Abuse of Public Authority		8

Bodily Harm	Domestic violence	11
	Attempted	6
	Attempted Grievous	4
	Grievous Voluntary	131
	Grievous Involuntary	20
	Grievous Involuntary- MVA	17
	Slight Involuntary	8
	Slight Voluntary	29
Bribery		2
Unlawful acts	Distribution of Medicines	1
	Restricted/Protected Area	3
Crime Against Public Peace	Disobeying lawful orders	31
	Disturbance	21
Cultural Property Act	Damages	2
	Illegal Excavation	2
Damage	Voluntary	82
	On Vehicle	23
	Involuntary	2
Driving Vehicle	w/o licence	2
	Negligence	8
Drugs	Possession	391
	Cultivation	5
	Possession with intent to supply	25
	Related	4
	Possession and Trafficking	22
	Trafficking	34
Motor Vehicle Regulations	Driving w/o licence & insurance	8
Evidence	Fabrication	6
Breach of Employment regulations	To employ foreigners	13
Malta Maritime Regulations	Breach of Regulations	3
Instigation	To commit a crime	3
Gambling	Football pools	2
	Clandestine Lotto	25
False particulars		1
False report		32
Extradition		1
False accusations	Calumnious Accusations	2
Falsification/Forgery	General	29
	Forgery	25
	Passport	6
	Passport, use of	13
	Of Vehicle Plates numbers	9
	Engine number	2
	Rubber Stamps	1
	Of Documents	90
Fraud	Unspecified	35
	Counterfeit goods	5
	Insurance	1
	Attempted	6
	Misuse of Telephone Equipment	4
	Computer Misuse	15
	Credit Card	8
	False Declaration	12
	Forgery of Public documents	5
	Forgery of currency	3
	Circulation of counterfeit currency	5
	Copyright Act	30
	Customs Ordinance VAT	15

	Cheques	5
	Fraudulent gains	48
	Gaming Act	1
	Excessive Currency	4
	Evasion of Duty	8
Blackmail		2
Breach of Animal rights Act	Illegal importation of protected species	5
	Cruelty	6
Breach of Bail conditions		30
Obstruction of public officers		35
Corruption		6
Breaches of	External Act	1
	Guard and Local Wardens Act	1
	Extradition Act	1
	Money Laundering Regulations	7
Trading in influence		2
Misappropriation		68
Hold up - Conspiracy		1
Hold up		16
Homicide	Attempted	20
	Wilful	7
	Involuntary	2
	Involuntary through road accident	2
Arrest	Illegal	10
	Resist	6
Trafficking	Illegal Immigrants	2
	Of Persons	1
	Conspiracy	2
Recidivist		6
Simulation of Offence		1
Theft	Attempted	55
	Conspiracy	8
	General	98
	Aggravated	39
	Receiving stolen property	41
	Currency	2
	From Beaches	18
	Government Buildings	1
	Commercial Premises	1
	From Construction Site	6
	Showroom	1
	From Garage	2
	From Residence	63
	From Retail outlet	61
	From religious sites	20
	From vehicle	61
	Of vehicle	22
	Cheques	3
	Of Registration number plates	1
	Currency / cash	17
	Private property	1
	Of electricity	22
	From factories	4
	Of mobile phone	4
	Of bank cards	2
	From sea crafts	1
	Of sea craft	1
	Of fuel	1

	Pick pocketing	6
	Documents	1
	Snatch and grab	21
	From bar/hotel	34
	with proper arms	3
Threats	unspecified	26
	private	3
Defamation		6
Usury		18
Pretended Rights		19
Violence	Private	8
	Against public officer- bodily harm	13
	General	18
	Slight injuries on public officer	15
	Against public officer - vilification and threats	28
Violation	Public order	4
Sexual offence	Child pornography	3
	Indecent exposure	1
	Sexual harassment	2
	Defilement of minor	41
	Rape	17
	Attempted Indecent assault	4
	Immoral acts	13
	Pornography (Circulation)	4
	Pornography	3
	Violent Indecent assault	9
Prostitution	Soliciting and loitering of age	105
	Compelled to prostitution of age	6
Brothel	Prostitution, living off	3
	Keeping of	4
Perjury	False swearing	20
Marriage of convenience		1

JOHN RIZZO
Commissioner of Police

Courts of Justice Division

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

GENERAL

The Department's objectives are:

- to provide support and advice to the Director General on general management issues;
- to provide timely and adequate support and facilities to the Civil Courts and Civil Tribunals, including the Family Court section, so that the members of the Judiciary within the Civil Jurisdiction may operate efficiently;
- to submit policy proposals to the Director General on matters relating to the operation of this Directorate.

Apart from the Constitutional Court and the Court of Appeal in its Civil Jurisdiction, there are three sections in the Civil Courts which are assigned the category of cases. These are the First Hall of the Civil Court, the Family Section and the Voluntary Jurisdiction Section.

There is also the Magistrates' Courts whereby the Magistrate takes cognisance of cases having claims exceeding €3,494.06 and not exceeding €11,646.88, in which case these cases are presided over by a Judge in the Superior Courts.

The Small Claims Tribunal is presided by an Adjudicator who decides on principles of equity according to law. Claims in this Tribunal do not exceed the sum of € 3,494.06.

This Directorate also heads the Court of Revision of notarial acts.

IT INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICES

A number of enhancements and the upgrading of IT systems and programs were undertaken during the year under review.

This Directorate continued monitoring the timely inputting of judgements and records of proceedings on the website. These are made available for viewing by the general public within three days from the divulgation of judgements and the records of proceedings. Notarial Acts are now being inputted on the computerised system. This enables easier search and follow-up of each Act filed in that Court.

The Notice of hearing of the first sitting in the Court of Appeal has been linked within the Civil Case Management program, enabling users to download it electronically. Monthly statistical reports of introduced and decided cases in the Civil Courts and the bi-annual publication of an age-analysis report continued to be published on the internet by this Department. This important source of information found on the site www.mjha.gov.mt has proven to be an important analytical tool particularly for researchers, members of the Judiciary and the Courts' administration. Regular cleaning up exercises were carried out to ensure that these statistics remain realistic.

Judicial sales can now be viewed on the website of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs (www.mjha.gov.mt). This service gives the facility to search for judicial sales that are due to take place in the future. This initiative is in line with Government's declared policy of further promoting e-Government.

Discussions were held with the Justice Unit for the implementation of online Applications and Renewals for Warrants as part of e-Government services. The purpose of this portal is to build a web-based solution for the application of warrants as currently undertaken by the various ministries and government-appointed boards. This will result in considerable benefits for warrant holders, the different boards and the public in general. Primarily, through the use of e-ID, warrant holders will be able to submit applications and renewals online, and to update their profile by accessing the “My Profile” section. The online service would cut down on the number of persons calling at the offices of the respective boards. Prospective warrant holders would have the facility to submit warrant applications online while the general public will have access to a searchable online warrant holders’ registry.

ARCHIVES

This Department continued with its exercise of upgrading the Archives of the Courts of Magistrates. New shelving was procured and installed and identification of all volumes carried out. Due to the ever increasing work load at the Family Court Section, an archive was set up. Two rooms within the Family Court have been identified, some shelving has been procured and terminated acts of that court are being archived.

TRAINING

Training sessions on a regular monthly basis were delivered by the Department’s legal advisor and the Director Civil Courts and Tribunals, in respect of the newly enacted amendments for the execution of warrants, on taxation of cases and other legal procedures. Sessions were held to convey information on newly introduced and forthcoming practices and procedures. Some of these sessions were transmitted via video-conferencing for the benefit of the staff at the Gozo Courts.

Orientation and introductory courses were organised for prospective and newly enrolled Deputy Registrars and casual substitute Clerks.

STAFF

A newly appointed Family Mediators’ Co-ordinator started functioning in the Civil Court Family Section. Moreover, a number of Judicial Assistants were engaged to perform research work and hear evidence.

CASES, WARRANTS AND OTHER ACTS FILED

The table below represents the number of court cases and acts filed in Malta during 2008, compared to the total number of cases filed in 2007. There was an overall reduction in the total number of Civil Cases and a marked increase in the number of Warrants and Judicial Letters filed.

		Total 2007	Total 2008	Difference 2007-2008
Court cases (Kawzi)	Superior	1,350	1,286	-64
	Family Court	508	485	-23
	Inferior	415	423	8
	Small Claims	933	952	19
	Total	3,206	3,146	-60
Warrants	Superior	1,902	2,039	137
	Family Court	361	338	-23
	Inferior	3,316	3,665	349
	Total	5,579	6,042	463
Judicial Letters	Superior	2,888	4,212	1,324
	Family Court	92	96	4
	Inferior	3,929	3,388	-541
	Total	6,909	7,696	787

Judicial Letters (Bill of Exchange)	Superior	19	7	-12
	Inferior	247	225	-22
	Total	266	232	-34
Judicial Letters (Sect. 166A of Chap. 12)	Superior	115	214	99
	Inferior	2,988	2,422	-566
	Total	3,103	2,636	-467
Mediation letters	Family Court	962	1,089	127
Mediation Notes	Family Court	360	341	-19
General Applications	Family Court	167	226	59
	Total Acts	1,489	1,656	167
Applications	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	857	878	21
Researches	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	6,869	6,576	-293
Obligations	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	89	71	-18
Hypothecs	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	89	71	-18
Circular Letters	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	45	48	3
Secret Wills	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	30	29	-1
Notes and reply Secret Wills	First Hall Voluntary Jurisdiction Section	280	290	10
	Total Acts	8,259	7,963	-296

COURT CASES

The table below represents the number of active court cases compared to cases pending the previous year. A reduction in cases in front of the Civil Court of Appeal, Court of Appeal (Inferior), Small Claims Tribunal, Land Arbitration Board and Rural Leases Control Board was registered during 2008.

Court	Pending cases as on 31 December		Difference
	2007	2008	
Constitutional	34	43	9
Court of Appeal	715	663	-52
Court of Appeal (Inferior)	253	196	-57
1st Hall Civil Court	4,849	4,854	5
1st Hall Family Section	1,043	1,099	56
Magistrates Courts	1,050	1,079	29
Small Claims Tribunal	901	872	-29
Rent Regulating Board	129	408	279
Land Arbitration Board	263	219	-44
Rural Leases Control Board	398	124	-274

WRIT OF SUMMONS BASED ON CRITERIA

Newly filed sworn applications (previously termed as Writ of Summons) and other Acts are being individually vetted and distributed amongst Judges according to their subject matter. The categories in specialised fields have been set as follows: Spoliation, Correction of Judicial Acts, Contempt of Court, Ejection & Eviction Orders, Applications for Enforcement of Foreign Judgements, proceedings for the recovery of a debt, other Special Summary proceedings (Giljottina), Requesting damages (Culpa Aquiliana), Prohibitory Injunction Orders (*Mandati Inibizzjoni*) involving the Government, Judicial Review Art 469A, *Subasti*, Unfair Competition, Intellectual Property, Trade Marks and Copyrights.

EUROPEAN DAY OF CIVIL JUSTICE

In 2003 the European Commission and the Council of Europe established a European Civil Justice day. This day is an opportunity for the public to familiarise themselves with the civil justice system, which would make it easier for them to access it. It also aimed to create a symbolic event, a date for recalling that justice is first and foremost a service to citizens which enables them to settle their private disputes and assert their rights. On 26 October, these Courts celebrated this occasion by successfully organising an open day.

SCHOOL CHILDREN VISITS

School visits in conjunction with the Ministry for Education and the Office of the Chief Justice started to be held on a fortnightly basis. During these visits the students were addressed by a member of the Judiciary on the practices and procedures of these courts. Afterwards, they were shown around the different courts.

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL COURTS AND CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS

During the year, the Courts of Criminal Jurisdiction Department continued with its main role, that of assisting, giving advice and support to the Permanent Secretary and the Director General (Courts). It continued with the ongoing mission of providing logistical support and motivated trained staff for the better administration of justice and extending its support to members of the Judiciary.

GENERAL

Notwithstanding a change in the Directorship of this Department, the transition period was smooth and this ensured continuity in the decision-making process.

Regular staff meetings with all employees of the Department were kept, providing the staff with the necessary information to ensure that they would be updated with legal developments and amendments particularly to the Criminal Code, the Code of Organisation and Civil Procedure and a number of Legal Notices. Training was also given on amendments to the Public Service Management Code.

The Directorate continued to take action regarding the freezing of assets when so directed by the Courts or when informed by the Court appointed expert. This entails research in the registries and communication of same to any court appointed expert. Every Court order was duly published in the Government Gazette. Besides this, the Directorate continued with the arduous task of conveying Letters of Request coming from or addressed to the Office of the Attorney General or through the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs which in turn transmits same to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Regular meetings were held with MITTS Limited, aimed at further developing all electronic programmes. A number of meetings were held with the National Focal Point of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) with a view to start collecting drug-related statistics for this EU institution.

During the year the inputting in the Legal Case Management system (LECAM) of all the Criminal Schedule of Deposits was launched. All the schedule of deposits for 2006 – 2008 presented before the Courts of Magistrates were registered and those schedules of deposits made before the Superior Courts (Criminal) were all registered. This process is expected to end in the coming year. This will give a clear picture of all the monies deposited by third parties before the Courts of Criminal Jurisdiction.

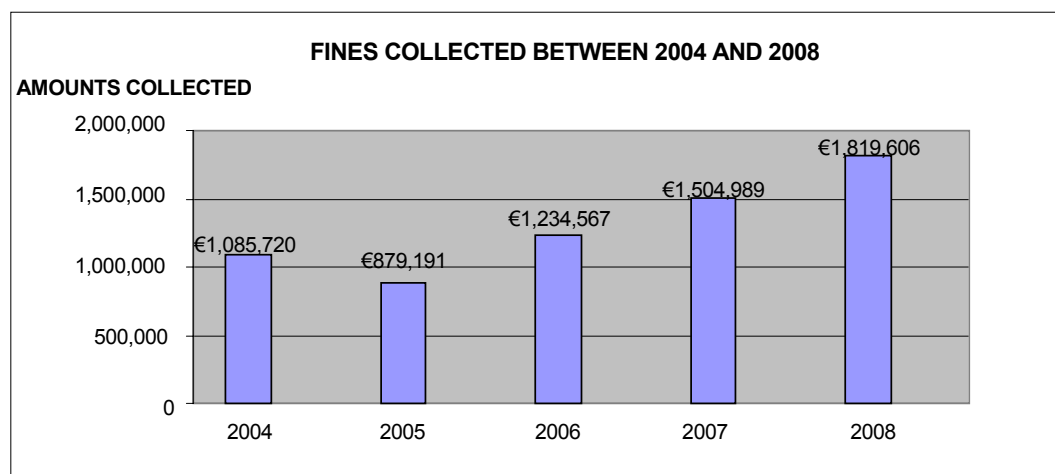
During the year, one of the halls at the Family Court building was equipped with an audio and visual recording system for video conferencing. This was vital to continue with essential video conferencing procedures required by the Judiciary. Equipment in Hall 22, which is used for trials by jury, was upgraded in order to provide a more professional service to the courts and the general public.

EURO INTRODUCTION

The preparations for the introduction of the Euro in the department proved successful as very few problems were encountered during the transition period. This was the result of close collaboration between this department and the Support Services Directorate. Discussions and planning for this national event took place during the previous months and this Directorate maintained continuous supervision on the process even during the period when both currencies were being used. Constant supervision was also kept at the Registry Annex and at each respective hall.

COLLECTION OF FINES IMPOSED BY THE COURTS

The long and sometimes complex legal procedures to collect fines, court expert fees and personal guarantees imposed by the Courts of Criminal Jurisdiction or the conversion of these into terms of imprisonment or detention continued throughout the year. As can be observed from the comparative table below there was an increase in Government revenue when compared to the previous four years.



Sending regular monthly intimations to all fined persons, taking court action and liaison with the Commissioner of Police to execute conviction tickets yielded positive results. The Registrar regularly files applications in court so that the Court converts the unpaid fines/referee fees/personal guarantee into terms of imprisonment or detention. 1,423 Conviction Tickets were issued and passed on to the Commissioner of Police for execution.

ARCHIVES AND COURTS EXHIBITS

The process of disposing old court exhibits continued during the year under review. This exercise takes place after the required verifications and legal provisions have been looked into according to law. During December, this section was strengthened with another member of the staff with the intention that old exhibits be disposed of. During construction works carried out in the basement of the Law Courts, more space was made available so that a reclassification exercise of court documents could continue. Modern shelving was introduced and space made available and this contributed to a more professional storage system.

Court staff continued to categorise and properly document all drugs, drug related material and valuable court exhibits. This process is an ongoing one. After carefully examining each court exhibit to be disposed of and ascertaining that the court case to which the exhibit appertains has been definitely decided, the item is photographed. Where applicable, the destruction of drugs and drug related material is undertaken. Subsequently a report has to be prepared according to law and inserted in the records of the case.

REGISTRY AND THE ANNEX OF THE REGISTRY FOR THE COURTS OF CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

During the year under review the Registry and Annex to the Registry handled the following transactions:

Services – Transactions – Records – Documentation	
Prison Permits	913
Withdrawal of Schedule of Deposits	257
Police Reports	1,030
Additional Police Reports	227
Procès Verbaux, Court Files, and Applications to the Attorney General	6,622
Procès Verbaux, Court Files and Replies to Applications from the Attorney General	5,563
Suspended Sentences – Courts of Magistrates	488
Suspended Sentences – Superior Courts	18
Sentences over 1 year imprisonment – Courts of Magistrates	110
Sentences over 1 year imprisonment – Superior Courts	62

Acts – Revenue and other details			
<i>Filed by</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Revenue if Applicable</i>
Malta Police			
Application	1,049		
Reply	218		
Note/Appeal*	704		
Note of Submission	42		
Report	6	2,019	
Court Registrar			
Application	209		
Application Conversion of Fines	632		
Note	74	915	
Probation Department			
Note	119		
Report	67		
Application	47	233	
Welfare Department			
Note	3		
Report	0	3	
Attorney General			
Application	175		
Application re Appeals	38		
Reply	251		
Extension of time limit	249		
Note	64		
Note of Submission	1		
Note of Reply	0		
Application by Jurors	2	780	
General Public			
Affidavit	2,047		€14,218.15
Schedule of Deposit	328		€709,090.41
Application	4,249		€1,108.71
Application – Appeal	379		€929.10
Application re Jurors	566		No Charge

Note	574		€116.56
Note of Submission	40		€11.28
Note of Plea	7		€2.98
Reply	88		€20.83
Photocopies	268		€629.06
Witnesses – Juries	3		€18.64
Seizure of monies	8	8,557	€2,053.34

* including Note of Appeal

Two Deputy Registrars at the Annex to the Registry under the supervision of the Director/Registrar, continued with the complex task of assessing the fees and expenses incurred by and awarded to court experts. During the year the total of €1,108,181 was assessed to various court experts.

DEPARTMENT OF SUPPORT SERVICES

HUMAN RESOURCES BRANCH

General

During 2008, this Directorate handled the engagement of various categories of staff, namely part-time Judicial Assistants, a Mediators' Co-ordinator, Assistant Registrars, Deputy Registrars, Court Messengers, a Training Administrator and Casual Substitutes. Furthermore, the Human Resources (HR) Section also handled the engagement of Clerks and the appointment of Executive Officers. Contracts were drawn up by the HR branch and appointments issued. A number of pension papers were also processed. Staff progressions and promotions were also the responsibility of this section.

The activities undertaken by the HR section in 2008 included:

- drawing up of 46 contracts (19 new and 27 renewals), issue of 8 appointments and processing of 8 retirements;
- processing of 32 staff progressions/staff promotions;
- processing recruitment of 38 persons;
- processing disciplinary measures of 8 persons;
- carrying out periodic staff complementing exercises to identify existing and future vacancies, on the basis of which requests for engagement/replacement were submitted to the Management and Personnel Office;
- monthly updating of HR organisation charts;
- handling of over 250 Performance Management Programmes (PMP) and Performance Rating Reports (PRR);
- processing various returns and surveys on family friendly measures, study allowances, casual substitutes, employment and disabled persons, employees on Contract for Service and registered self-employed, summer work schedules, staff in post;
- maintaining databases of staff availing themselves of family friendly measures;
- updating of a staff list of court employees;
- handling of salary adjustments and payment of allowances to court staff; and
- processing of substantial number of requests for maternity leave/parental leave/career break/unpaid study leave.

FINANCE BRANCH

The Finance section is responsible for the collection of fines, court fees and other revenue as directed by the Director, Civil Courts and Civil Tribunals and the Director, Criminal Courts and Criminal Tribunals. This section is also responsible for the payment of fees to persons who provide goods and services in connection with the day to day running and maintenance of the Courts of Justice. Payment is also made for other

services directly related to the Administration of Justice such as Court Experts, Commissioners for Justice and other Tribunals. The finance section is also responsible for payment of salaries to all court personnel.

Every effort was made during 2008 to curb recurrent expenditure. Total actual expenditure for 2008 was €304,486 more than that for 2007 as follows:

Category	Expenditure 2007 €	Expenditure 2008 €	Difference €
Personal Emoluments	6,549,713	6,877,481	327,768
Operational and Maintenance Expenses	1,361,028	1,227,747	-133,281
Programmes and Initiatives	1,259,632	1,369,631	109,999
Total	9,170,373	9,474,859	304,486

The difference of €133,281 in Operational and Maintenance expenditure was mainly through savings effected under the items of Office Services and Transport. The total expenditure, however, excludes the utilities bill for the latter part of the year.

In respect of Programmes and Initiatives, a net increase in expenditure of €110,000 was registered when compared to 2007, partly due to an increase of €40,000 under the Court Experts Item.

Capital Expenditure

One of the main functions of the Support Services Directorate is that of capital projects. A total expenditure of €316,950 was made during 2008 under this category. The main project was the structural reinforcement and consolidation of various columns situated in different floors of the Courts of Justice building. This project, which included urgent repairs and the replacement of the main garage door leading to the basement, was made for a total cost of €268,215 including professional fees. Apart from this project the Courts also commissioned the construction of a utility lift to be used for the transport of bulky files and court processes where no access is possible with the passenger lifts. The cost of this project was €12,000. Other projects included the refurbishing of various Court Halls. The old air-conditioning system (chillers) has now been phased out and replaced with modern air-conditioning units.

Revenue

Once again the Division registered an increase in the collection of revenue over the preceding year. During 2008, revenue collected was €457,676 more than that collected in 2007, as shown in the following table:

Category	Revenue 2007 €	Revenue 2008 €	Difference €
Fines	1,635,489	2,005,770	370,281
Fees	3,133,395	3,227,604	94,209
Miscellaneous	9,946	3,132	-6,814
Total	4,778,830	5,236,506	457,676

OPERATIONAL AND MAINTENANCE BRANCH

During the first quarter of the year, all directional signs within the main Court building were replaced with modern and updated signs. Remote visual/audio recording equipment was installed in Hall 24, enabling witnesses to testify without the need to be directly present in the Hall. All recording equipment in the Criminal Hall was replaced and a new PA system was installed in the Training Academy.

During the last six months of the year, the main capital project was the structural reinforcement of the columns of the main Courts of Justice building. Such project included the thickening of the columns

supporting the whole building at various levels. During the same works a number of areas were refurbished such as parts of the lock-up, exhibits stores and the garage. The total cost for this project was of €268,215.

Tender documents for the replacement of the lift used by the members of the judiciary and a new stairs lift on the second floor were prepared. The relative tenders will be issued during 2009.

Health and Safety

In order to address the health and safety risks at the Courts of Justice Division, members of staff continued to receive training in fire-fighting by the Civil Protection Department. A fire alarm was installed in the main building and fire detectors were installed in the main server room.

Following the certification report on the electrical installation at the Law Courts drafted by an Engineering firm, current breakers (RCBOs) were installed in the main distribution panel to protect court employees from electrical hazards.

A lift for bulky material has been ordered to help employees carry heavy files from ground to level 1.

Security

The contract for the engagement of security guards at the Courts of Justice Division was renewed following a call for tenders. A new security firm started offering the services. The annual expenditure in security services was that of €57,744. Additional security cameras were installed in the corridors on ground floor, 2nd floor, in Strait Street and in the basement.

Entry access by members of the Judiciary to the Courts building through the restricted area was upgraded with the installation of a coloured CCTV camera at the inside entrance.

A new, more secure automatically operated garage door was installed and windows at street level were barred with expanded metal sheets to ensure higher security levels at the Courts of Justice.

Refurbishment Works

In 2008 refurbishment works were carried out in Halls 3, 7, 11, the Small Claims Tribunal office, the Judicial Sales by Auction office in Strait Street, Criminal Hall offices, the main wooden doors at the Courts' entrance and the iron gates of the Portico.

All halls have been equipped with an air-conditioning system, with air-conditioning units installed in another 6 halls. Consequently, the old centralised cooling system operated on diesel was switched off saving thousands of euros.

Extensive works have been carried out on the drainage system and painting of various parts of the Law Courts including main corridors and common areas.

Old oil paint on Hall door ways located in the main Court corridors was carefully removed from masonry works thus regaining the décor of the original building.

Green Initiatives

A number of initiatives were taken to reduce energy costs. Where possible, PL lamps were fitted in common areas whilst low wattage lamps were fitted in other areas. The number of light fittings in the basement and at ground floor was halved.

The centralised cooling system running on diesel and electrical power was permanently switched off.

Efforts were made to localise a well that was not in use for many years. Tests by the Health Department were carried out and it resulted that the water can be used. Preparations are being made to make full use of this water.

Preliminary meetings were held with Enemalta personnel to study the possibility of installing photovoltaic panels on the roof and thus reduce energy consumption from the grid.

Other Maintenance Works

During 2008 the existing PABX was upgraded to reduce recurrent expenditure. Much of the old cards were replaced by sophisticated ones which are cheaper to replace and have twice the capacity of extension lines as the previous type. A roof shelter was installed over the main generator thus offering protection from weather corrosion.

The application filed with MEPA to carry out the necessary structural works on the roof of a store situated at Crown Ditch, Floriana was rejected. Funds allocated for this purpose were used for other services. Thus an alternative site at Lascaris was identified, cleaned and exhibit items in Floriana were transferred to these new stores.

Water leaking into third party buildings from the Court of Justice building in Old Bakery Street was addressed and resolved.

TRAINING ACADEMY

During the year under review, the Training Academy organised 17 sessions of local lecturing to court staff and one session to the Judiciary. These sessions were of a minimum duration of two hours to a maximum of a half day. The courses in the training programme covered during the period were varied and were attended by all categories of law court employees.

The material covered during the courses dealt with the role, conduct, managerial, legal and practical aspects of the duties of the employees concerned. Feedback by participants was very positive, attendance was regular, consistent and was highlighted by the frequent interaction with the lecturers.

The bulk of the training sessions were facilitated by competent law court employees whilst others were run in collaboration with the Staff Development Organisation, MITTS, the OPM Data Protection Unit and the Probation Office.

Some of the topics addressed during the courses were: Generic Procedures for court support staff, refresher courses on Taxation Procedures and relative recording, Data Protection in the Judicial Sector, Orientation Courses for prospective employees, Hands on Training on the LECAM and Community Service Orders.

In addition to the above, the Training Academy, in collaboration with the Curriculum Management and eLearning Department of the Education Division and the Office of the Chief Justice, invited groups of Form IV students from 10 different schools to visit the Courts of Justice. The aim of these visits was to enhance the knowledge of the students on the role and functioning of the courts and to foster an understanding on the judicial system.

The Training Academy's website was, during the month of December, hosted on the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs website. It provides details about its inception, set-up as well as up-to-date information on past and forthcoming courses.

JUDICIAL STUDIES COMMITTEE

The objective of the Judicial Studies Committee (JSC) is to guarantee that specialised legal training is provided to enable those who carry out judicial functions to carry out their functions effectively.

One of the major functions of the JSC is to foster international participation for members of the Judiciary in some of the programmes that are offered by the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) in conjunction with the European Commission. Two programme submissions were made in two different subject areas. The first submission was the Language training on the vocabulary of judicial co-operation in criminal matters whilst the second programme proposal was The International Judicial Co-operation in criminal matters in practice. This training is part of simultaneous seminars that will be carried out in Europe which will deal with European Arrest Warrant (EAW) and the Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) training simulations. A questionnaire was filled in by the JSC as part of the participation in the International Judicial Co-operation in criminal matters in practice.

The JSC co-ordinated a visit to the European Law Academy seminar in Trier, Germany in November 2008, treating the subject of Evaluating Counter terrorism legislation and jurisprudence in the area of European Criminal Justice.

GOZO COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

ORGANISATION OF THE GOZO COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

The two resident magistrates work on a new roster of a week each and take cognisance of all acts filed during the proceedings of the cases assigned to them, prohibitory injunctions with the exception of applications before the Court of Voluntary Jurisdiction. These two magistrates also serve as duty magistrates for the islands of Gozo and Comino, and as such hold magisterial inquiries and carry out preliminary investigations. Civil Court sittings are almost invariably held from Tuesday to Friday, with an average of 40 cases per sitting, while sittings of the Court of Magistrates (Gozo) in its Criminal Jurisdiction are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

REGISTRY

The single Registry at the Gozo Courts caters for both civil and criminal cases, as well as for appeals from the inferior courts. The following were the number of acts filed in the Registry during 2008:

Type of Act	Number of Acts Filed
Judicial Letters (excl. sect. 166A & 253 COCP)	659
Judicial Letters in terms of Sect. 166A (COCP)	175
Judicial Letters in terms of Sect. 253 (COCP)	6
Schedules of Deposit	424
Legal Protest/Counter Protests	58
Applications/Replies in lawsuits (application program)	2,535
Acts filed by the Attorney General	45

COURT OF MAGISTRATES

During the year, 133 cases were introduced in the Superior Jurisdiction, while 178 cases were decided and 53 were ceded, leaving 721 pending cases.

The Court of Magistrates in its Inferior (Civil) Jurisdiction, as a court of first instance, hears and determines claims not exceeding €11,646.87 and had 24 newly introduced cases. It decided 27 cases, three were ceded and 10 deserted/deducted, leaving 132 pending cases.

There were 83 new applications with 92 new additions before the Court of Magistrates in its Voluntary Jurisdiction, while 200 decrees were issued. The same Court still has 54 pending cases.

The Court of Magistrates as a Court of Criminal Judicature (*Kawzi Sommarji*) takes cognisance of all criminal offences and contraventions punishable with a maximum of six months imprisonment. During the year, 879 cases were introduced while 647 cases were decided, 20 were put off *sine die*, no cases were re-appointed from *sine die* and 83 cases were withdrawn. The total number of cases pending here stands at 954.

As a Court of Criminal Inquiry, 81 new preliminary inquiries (*kumpilazzjonijiet*) were introduced, 48 were decided while 158 remain pending. None were transmitted to the Attorney General for the issue of a bill of indictment.

The magistrate presiding as Revising Officer in terms of Section 13 (3) of Chapter 354 (General Elections Act, 1991), decided 20 applications pending before him. During the same period, three new applications were introduced while two were withdrawn. There are no pending applications here.

As regards magisterial inquiries, there are, at present, 333 pending, with 78 introduced during 2008, while 29 were concluded.

FAMILY COURT

In the Family Court, there were 167 pending letters at mediation stage by the end of the year under review and this included all such letters since their inception in 2003. There were 26 applications (*rikorsi f'medjazzjoni*) and six notes and four conjunct notes related to the same letters.

As regards cases of the Civil Superior Jurisdiction (Family Section), 30 writs of summons were introduced in the Family Court during the year, with 16 cases being decided. Three cases were ceded, while two were deserted, leaving a balance of 42 pending cases.

SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL

The Small Claims Tribunal has jurisdiction to hear and determine cases involving money claims of an amount not exceeding €3,494.06. There were 43 new cases introduced and nine were referred from the Tribunal in Malta. 41 cases were decided and two cases referred to the Tribunal in Malta, while two cases were ceded and seven deserted. This Tribunal has 68 pending cases.

The adjudicator sitting on the Small Claims Tribunal is substituted by another one from the Courts of Justice in Malta in cases of abstention or challenge. The same adjudicator of the Tribunal also chairs the Local Councils Tribunal as Commissioner for Justice in Gozo, dealing with minor offences such as traffic contraventions.

JUVENILE COURT

The sittings of this Court continued to be heard at the NGO Centre in Xewkija and in one particular case, the Courts' Administration had to install the necessary equipment so that one of the minors involved could give her testimony by means of video-conferencing.

COURT OF APPEAL

The Court of Appeal (Civil Inferior) holds sittings in Gozo to hear appeals from decisions of the Rent Regulation Board, the Rural Leases Control Board and the Small Claims Tribunal in addition to those of the Court of first instance, inferior jurisdiction, as well as appeals from other administrative boards which hold sittings in Gozo. This Court had 15 newly-introduced cases, decided 17 and has 15 pending cases.

Appealed judgements of the Court of Magistrates (Gozo) in its Civil Superior Jurisdiction are heard by the Court of Appeal in Malta.

The Court of Criminal Appeal (Inferior Jurisdiction) also holds sittings in Gozo and decided 82 cases, had 18 newly introduced ending with 13 pending cases. Two cases were deserted, while one case was referred back to the Inferior Court.

The Registry of this Court is also designated as the Registry of the Court of Criminal Appeal regarding appeals filed from judgements of the Court of Magistrates as a Court of Criminal Judicature in Gozo.

BOARDS

The Rent Regulation Board and the Rural Leases Control Board deal with applications regarding matters between lessors and lessees of premises or land respectively. The former had six new applications introduced while the latter had three such applications. Each Board decided two cases and had one ceded case each, the former ending with 20 pending cases, whilst the latter ending with 19.

The Judicial Assistant continued to hold sittings in Gozo as delegated by the Magistrates sitting in the Court of Magistrates in its Civil Jurisdiction. This officer was also encouraged and in fact started to send copies of his *verbali* and postponement of his sittings to lawyers via e-mail, thereby promoting further the concept of e-Government.

JUDICIAL SALES/LICITATIONS

For a number of years this Department lacked a deputy registrar who could be specifically delegated with the task of processing judicial sales/licitations. In June 2008 a new deputy registrar was engaged with the Gozo Courts and entrusted with judicial sales. She was trained at the Judicial Sales Section at the Courts in Malta prior to commencing her work here.

Out of a starting balance of 154 pending judicial sales, 107 have been rendered as deserted and 17 were withdrawn. Twenty new applications were filed during 2008 and eight were concluded between September and December 2008, ending with 42 pending cases.

SCANNING

This department saw it fit to embark on a scanning project. This pilot project may be considered as being antecedent to the scanning project which the Courts of Justice intends to undertake on a larger scale when the requisite funds are available.

By the end of 2008, all acts relating to the cases introduced during 2008 of one of the magistrates were scanned and linked to the LECAM system, including those acts presented by lawyers during sittings.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND E-GOVERNMENT

Throughout 2008, the Gozo Courts continued with its effort to improve the level of service to the legal profession and the public in general.

This department was the first in Gozo to have all the hardware utilised by its staff substituted by new PCs, monitors and keyboards under the Government ICT Leasing Agreement. New hardware was installed in all halls and in the Registry. Lawyers, legal procurators and the public in general now have the facility to make their own query, via the PC at their disposal, thus easing demands for assistance from our staff in that section.

VIDEO-CONFERENCING

During the period under review, the Courts experienced an increase in requests for the use of video-conferencing.

Internal video-conferencing has been invariably utilised during criminal cases involving witnesses who were minors and/or victims of rape or abuse. On the other hand, there were three requests for the use of the video-conferencing facilities made available to the Gozo Court by the Ministry for Gozo, allowing one of the magistrates to take the testimony of a party to a case in Gozo but residing abroad:

06/03/2008	Melbourne Australia
23/06/2008	Royal Courts of Justice UK
03/10/2008	London/Manchester Courts

Another testimony was taken using audio means with Australia. Finally two video-links were made with the Courts in Malta, the first one on the occasion of the inauguration of the Training Academy premises and the other for a training session on taxation held by the same Academy.

STAFF TRAINING

Staff training continued to be an integral part of human resource development. Employees from all sectors of this department were encouraged to undergo training in various fields especially those related to their responsibilities. It is mandatory that staff is well trained to meet the requirements of the complex environment of the Courts. For some years now, training in the field of IT has been and is continuing to be provided by MITTS Ltd. Various employees also attended IT courses organised by the Staff Development Organisation in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo in various IT programs.

COLLECTION OF REVENUE

Revenue at the Courts of Justice is generated through fees paid when filing acts at the registry and the relevant registry fees collected once a case is decided and through the collection of fines inflicted by the Courts.

During 2008, a total of 1,177 taxed bills were drawn up, in their majority regarding decided cases. A copy of the taxed bill is, in various instances, sent through e-mail to lawyers requesting such facility. Furthermore, the following fines were inflicted by our courts:

Court inflicting fine	Number of fines	Amount rounded up/down to nearest €
Court of Criminal Appeal	27	165,186
Court of Magistrates (Criminal Jurisdiction)	375	99,886
Other court divisions/tribunals & contempt of court	15	2,420
Total	417	267,492

As regards the collection of revenue, €192,403 were collected from fines (including arrears), an increase of €103,465.19, and €288,949 by way of filing and registry fees, an increase of €21,576.53 from 2007, bringing the total revenue to €481,352 which amounts to a global increase in revenue of €125,041.72 from the previous year.

REFURBISHMENT OF PREMISES

In view of the fact that both resident magistrates sometimes hold sittings contemporaneously, and due to an increase in sittings of the Criminal Jurisdiction cases, the need was felt to have a third hall. For this reason, the hall which previously housed the Advocates' Chambers was converted into a third hall with annexed Magistrate's Chambers.

The expenses for the refurbishment works in this hall were kept to a minimum as regards premises. However, a more sophisticated recording system utilising compact disks instead of the usual cassettes was procured.

Sittings of the Small Claims Tribunal and of the Judicial Assistant are usually held in this hall, and the said Judicial Assistant uses the Magistrate's Chambers therewith annexed as his office.

The Advocates' Chambers are also being refurbished.

PREMISES ADMINISTERED BY THE GOZO COURTS

The lawsuit filed by the Director/Registrar at the Civil Court Registry (Malta) against Maltapost plc to safeguard this department's rights over the flat at 128, Republic Street, Victoria, Gozo, is still pending. This flat was previously used as the residing Magistrate's residence and was still undergoing refurbishment when the case was instituted.

Furthermore, a garage was leased from the Government Property Division at an annual rent of €120 per annum with the intention of using said premises for the storage of court exhibits. This garage needs some refurbishment and the installation of shelves for storage, which task will be embarked on during 2009.

KEVIN MAHONEY

Director General (Courts of Justice)

Department of Correctional Services

The Correctional Facility is considered part of the island's justice system. One of its objectives is to provide a means through which inmates can be kept securely in a humane manner. The staff at the Facility ensures that persons remanded to the Facility are looked after with fairness but at the same time within a disciplined environment, while maintaining the necessary standards in security and control for the good of the general public. Inmates are provided with assistance to rehabilitate. Every effort is made to make the inmates' term of imprisonment a helpful and constructive experience and assist them to reintegrate into society.

At the main facility, programmes are being implemented with the main purpose of reducing the levels of drug misuse and helping prisoners to stay 'clean' of drugs; this coupled with a growing work programme and educational courses aimed at reducing illiteracy and innumeracy and providing skills for the outside world where they can work, thus helping offenders to a better future.

The aim of the Correctional Services Department is to maintain inmates in a secure environment while at the same time foster the inmates' re-education and rehabilitation in the most humane and safe environment possible.

PROJECTS

During the year under review, the following works and initiatives were initiated, continued or completed:

- Improvements to Security
- The complete refurbishment and upgrading of Division 4.
- Refurbishment of an area at YOURS and the set up of the Female B Division
- Installation and Commissioning of a number of environmentally friendly systems.

Improvements to Security

Security is one of this Department's main priorities. A number of improvements were conducted at Division 8 and Debtors' area, perimeter sensor lines were connected, razor ribbon was added in the area surrounding the cemetery, Divisions 4 and 5 and Debtors' section. CCTV cameras were installed in Divisions 1, Female B, New Medical location, MI room waiting areas and in Yard F.

Works

- New medical unit has been completed.
- Demolished ex-Female Division. Refurbishing and renovation of Division 4 commenced but is still in progress.
- Division 6, construction of MI room and lawyers' room were refurbished.
- New offices near MI room.

New Medical Location

This unit, which is situated across the landing from the MI room, serves as the sick/nursing bay where inmates, who do not need continuous medical attention, are kept apart or quartered. During times when the Facility was overcrowded this area had to be utilised also for detention purposes.

Refurbishment and Upgrading of Division 4

Following a decision taken towards the end of 2007 to close down Division 4, this was completely refurbished and upgraded in 2008. All electricity, water and drainage services were removed. All cells, the central atrium and common room were stripped down of all paintwork and new windows and new spiral staircase were installed. Underground ventilation system was reactivated. In view of such refurbishments, it is envisaged that this Division will be capable of quartering inmates with special needs and/or elderly inmates.

In line with Government's green initiatives, energy saving lighting fittings and low water consumption toilet flushings were installed. It is also envisaged that solar water heaters would be installed and the present nurse call system would be replaced by an intercom system similar to the one presently installed at the Remand Block. Most of the refurbishment work carried out in this Division was carried out by inmates under the supervision of the personnel from the Trades Section.

Repair and Maintenance of Roofs

During the year, the roofs at the old Facility, namely Divisions 1, 2, 3 & 4 were covered with waterproofing membrane and paint. Extensive repairs to the sewage mains system and the main water supply system at the Facility were carried out by personnel from the Trades Section, the inmates themselves as well as the services of a private contractor.

EDUCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC INITIATIVES

During 2008, the Education Unit at Corradino Correctional Facility continued to provide educational courses for inmates. An average of 50 inmates attended courses on a regular basis. Educational provision was extended to cover Divisions 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11 and 13 as well as the Young Offenders Rehabilitation Services (YOURS) and the Female Sections. Educational facilities were provided on a daily basis, six days weekly. The courses were in the following subjects: computer, electrical, English, Italian, life-skills, Maltese, masonry, mathematics, philosophy, pottery, Spanish, sports, thinking skills, art, beauty care and chess.

The facility library was refurbished and books kept thereat were classified

Facilities and assistance were also provided to four residents to attend ETC/ITS courses.

YOUNG OFFENDERS' UNIT FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Young Offenders' Unit for Rehabilitation Services houses residents aged up to 24 years. During 2008, the educational provision within the Unit continued to build on the belief that the main educational delivery should focus on the provision of practical courses which train and equip the residents with skills for employment. Apart from the basic courses provided according to schedule within the Unit, this year the residents continued to benefit from the delivery by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) of the Food Handling Licence B certification. The collaboration between ETC and the Unit continued to be strengthened as evidenced by the efforts to participate in an EU funded project for the installation of an industrial kitchen.

FACILITY POPULATION

The inmate population at the Facility is continuously on the increase; in fact the actual number of inmates as on 27 November 2008 was 446. The inmate turnover at the Facility was higher than the above quoted figure with the adverse effect that both the financial allocations as well as the human resources engaged thereat are stretched to the limit. As on January 2008 prison population was 391 whilst towards the end of 2008 the number of inmates had increased to 435.

DRUGS

In its continuous efforts to fight drug abuse by prison inmates, visitors as well as prison officers are frequently searched at random. Frequent and thorough searches are also held in cells, common areas, workshops and even the chapel area, using various methods and tools available. Unfortunately, a large number of the inmates at the Facility are on drug or drug related charges. Sedqa, Caritas and the Facility's own unit SATU are doing sterling work in fighting drug abuse and offering rehabilitation services.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Those newly admitted during 2008 were divided into 169 Sentenced and 493 under preventive arrest.

Newly Admitted during 2008			
	<i>Sentenced</i>	<i>Awaiting Trial</i>	<i>Total</i>
Maltese Males	138	355	493
Maltese Females	9	13	22
Foreign Males	35	103	138
Foreign Females	3	4	7
Total	185	475	660

- Note - An individual may appear in the statistical tables in any one of the categories, i.e. awaiting trial or convicted.
- When a prisoner is required to serve a sentence for two or more sentences, it is the heaviest sentence that is shown.
 - Two or more sentences passed at the same time and ordered to run consecutively are treated as one in equal to the length of the two.

Sentenced Prisoners (By Offence) *	
<i>Type of Crime</i>	<i>No.</i>
Homicide and attempted homicide	28
Breach of Probation Order	10
Breach of Bail	39
Theft	183
Arson	0
Sexual offences	62
Drug Related	180
Immigration and human trafficking	16
Threats	62
Prostitution	7
Wilful damages	12
Escape	6
Grievous bodily harm	37
Slight bodily harm	5
Forgery	18
Fraud	15
Debtor	0
Conversion of <i>Multa</i>	72
Falsification	11
Illegal arrest	19
Other offences	109
Total	891

* includes inmates admitted in previous years and sentenced in 2008

Release of Prisoners	
On Bail	194
By Court Order	10
On Payment of Fine	27
On Termination of Sentence	219
On Probation	4
Presidential Warrant / Amnesty	1
Immigration Act	7
Acquitted	6
Suspended Sentence	9
Extradited	3

Admission of Inmates		
<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Sentenced</i>	<i>Awaiting Trial</i>
Algerian	1	4
American	-	2
Bangladesh	-	1
Brazil	-	1
British	2	4
Bulgarian	1	2
Burkin	-	1
Danish	-	1
Dutch	-	5
Egyptian	6	1
Eritrea	3	-
Estonia	-	2
Ethiopian	2	1
French	-	1
Gambia	-	2
Georgia	-	2
German	-	2
Guinea	-	1
Hungarian	-	1
Iraqi	2	-
Italian	-	5
Ivory Coast	-	4
Liberia	1	1
Libyan	4	18
Malaysia	-	2
Maltese	368	147
Moroccan	1	1
Niger	-	2
Nigerian	1	11
Palestinian	-	1
Philippine	1	3
Polish	-	3
Romanian	3	1
Serbia	3	1
Slovenian	-	1
Somali	1	8
South Korea	-	1
Sri Lanka	-	1
Sudanese	3	7
Sweden	-	1
Syrian	2	-
Togo	1	-
Tunisian	-	1
Totals	406	254

Inmate Population Statistics

The average daily population during 2008 was 411 persons. The highest number of prisoners on one day was 446 (on 27 November 2008).

INTAKE ASSESSMENT UNIT

The Intake Assessment Unit (IAU) has continued to serve its designated functions regularly, namely those of carrying out assessments of incoming inmates, developing Correctional Care Plans for incoming inmates, reviewing inmates on an individual basis for support in social, psychological and behavioural

matters, and assisting inmates by directing them towards other services within CCF when and where necessary. The Unit has also carried out work in connection with social work through the services of a part-time social worker who is supervised and assisted by the IAU. The unit also serves as a liaison between inmates and various external agencies, generally those offering services of a social/welfare nature. The main agencies the Unit was in contact with included Probation Services, Agenzija Appoġġ, Sedqa and Caritas, ETC and the Housing Department, amongst others.

The Unit handled 587 admissions and 441 assessments (EuropASI: 4 - GHQ 28: 437). 177 were sentenced. A total of 437 correctional care plans were classified as follows: 118 low, 245 medium, and 74 high. Individual interventions carried out during the year reached a total of 2,348 involving 1,093 inmates. An average of 91 inmates was reviewed each month.

SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS

The part-time social worker continued to review the cases from the previous year. No new cases were followed. The social worker resigned from her post during 2008 and has not been replaced. All cases were closed when the social worker resigned.

PROBATION SERVICES

The main objective of the Probation Services is to help ensure social stability by contributing to minimise the frequency of crime and by ensuring the reintegration of offenders to functional societal frameworks. It is aimed that the myriad of services offered will address the needs of the criminal justice system with regard to both the pre-sentencing and the post-sentencing phase.

Probation Services Statistical Report

During 2008, the Probation Services received a total of 351 new cases from the Courts of Malta and Gozo, a figure which remains stable when compared to 2007.

The cases issued mark a shift towards the utilisation of the Probation Services at the pre-sentencing stage. One can also note an increase of 166% over the previous year, in the issuing of combination orders and community service orders. In December 2008, the Unit was handling a total of 585 active cases distributed among two senior probation officers, carrying a reduced caseload due to other duties, and 11 probation officers. Although the number of community service orders and combination orders issued increased during 2008, these services are still under-utilised.

The Probation Services database reveals that offenders come in contact with this Unit for various offences, with the predominant offence being theft, as was the case in previous years even if in 2008 the number decreased by 18%. The table also shows that there was a considerable increase in the number of cases with violence, such as grievous bodily harm or assault and especially domestic violence. Drug possession cases decreased by 223% when compared to 2007. With regard to drug trafficking cases, the same number of cases was registered in 2007 and 2008.

During the year under review, 50 cases of those referred to the Probation Services concerned female offenders, whereas 301 cases concerned male offenders. This shows a 1% decrease in the number of cases regarding female offenders referred to the Probation Services.

The highest proportion of offenders who benefited from probation services fell in the 15 to 19 years age bracket. Other increases were in the 35 to 39 bracket with a marked increase of 163%. Contrary to previous years, in 2008 the youngest age bracket, the 10 to 14 age group, changed its upward trend, going down by 212%. In general, the shift noted in recent years to more difficult and more demanding offenders has become even more pronounced. With regard to locality, this year, Valletta yielded the highest percentage of cases, followed next by Cospicua and Paola.

Breakdown of Cases	No
Provisional Orders of Supervision	33
Pre-sentence/social inquiry reports	90
Probation Orders	170
Suspended Sentences	51
Community Service Orders	4
Combination Orders	4
Age Distribution (years)	
10 to 14	8
15 to 19	82
20 to 24	72
25 to 29	68
30 to 34	47
35 to 39	31
40 to 44	11
45 to 49	16
50+	16
Gender Distribution	No
Females	50
Males	301

Type of Offence	No
Illegal substances	13
Drug trafficking	24
Sexual offence	3
Breach of public order	7
Theft	152
Attempted theft	16
Fraud	23
Assault/grievous body harm	23
Corruption of minor	16
Drug cultivation	3
Domestic violence	23
Child negligence	4
Traffic offence	7
Attempted hold-up/Hold-up	3
Loitering/prostitution	5
Voluntary damage	8
Other	21

Region 1		Region 2		Region 3		Region 4	
Valletta	36	Vittoriosa	1	Żabbar	15	Tarxien	3
Floriana	6	Senglea	11	Żejtun	6	Marsa	9
Hamrun	10	Cospicua	26	Marsascala	9	Paola	16
Pieta	3	Fgura	7	Bir id-Deheb	0	Santa Lucia	4
G'Mangia	0	Kalkara	6	St Thomas Bay	0		
		Xghajra	0				
Total	55	Total	51	Total	30	Total	32
Region 5		Region 6		Region 7		Region 8	
Birżebbuġa	9	Qormi	10	Mdina	0	Balzan	1
Ghaxaq	2	Kirkop	3	Żebbuġ	13	Birkirkara	15
Marsaxlokk	1	Luqa	2	Siggiewi	4	Iklin	0
Mqabba	1	Santa Venera	3	Attard	3	Lija	1
Qrendi	2			Dingli	0	Swatar	0
Safi	1					Mriehel	0
Zurrieq	3						
Gudja	1						
Total	20	Total	18	Total	20	Total	17
Region 9		Region 10		Region 11		Region 12	
Gżira	11	Baġar iċ-Ċagħaq	0	Mosta	5	Buġibba	5
Msida	3	Ibraqg	1	Mtarfa	1	Gharghur	2
San Ġwann	6	Paceville	0	Rabat	2	Mellieha	1
Kappara	1	Pembroke	3	Burmarrad	0	Mgarr	0
Ta' Xbiex	3	San Ġiljan	7			Naxxar	5
		Sliema	9			Qawra	3
		Swieqi	7			San Pawl il-Bahar	14
		Ta' Ġorni	0			Xemxija	0
		St Andrews	0				
		Madliena	0				
Total	24	Total	27	Total	8	Total	30
Region 13		Others					
Gozo	15	Unknown	5				
Total	15	Total	5				

ABRAHAM ZAMMIT
Acting Director (Correctional Services)

Civil Protection Department

INTERVENTIONS

The Civil Protection Department dealt with a total number of 4,863 emergency calls during the year under review. These calls dealt mainly with fire incidents, traffic accidents, spillages and rescue of persons in distress. These figures also include a total number of 136 interventions in respect of animal rescue.

Unfortunately the number of false alarm/hoax calls to this Department has continued to figure prominently in the number of distress calls, amounting to 169, i.e. 3.5 % of the total number of calls.

Incident (Fire)			Total
Vehicles/Trucks	168	17	185
Rubbish/Skips	381	53	434
Grass/Trees	1,065	31	1,096
Gas Lkg/Gas Fire	43	7	50
Houses/Apartments	130	32	162
Shops/Restaurant	26	6	52
Hotels/Guesthouses	11	-	11
Factories			20
Electrical Fires			14
Industrial Stores			8
Oil Spills			1,339
RTA's			137
Farms			45
Ind Garages/House Garages	12	12	24
Sea craft Pmp/SC Fires	9	2	11
Floods/Flood Pumping	30	7	37
Collapsed Building			15
Rescue of Persons			62
Fireworks Factories			5
Animal Rescue			136
Assistance /PLO	464	134	598
Others			157
False Alarms/Hoax			169
Total			4,747

Incident (Marine)			Total
Ship Fire/Boat Fire	1	2	3
Assistance	15		15
Pumping	1		1
Boat Adrift	2		2
Rescue of Person	2		2
Search missing person at sea	11		11
Rescue Diving	1		1
Rescue of animals	2		2
Oil spills	4		4
Stand by	53		53
Hazmat	9		9

Chemicals	4		4
Bio-logical	3		3
Others	6		6
Total			116

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

During the year under review, the Humanitarian Aid Unit responded to requests made by the EU, in conformity with the Agreement for the Civil Protection Department Mechanism in providing assistance following the natural disaster in China. Around 100 tents were sent to the stricken areas with the assistance of the Chinese Embassy in Malta.

Assistance from Foreign Countries

The Civil Protection Department has continued discussions with the French counterparts in order to finalise a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries to ensure reciprocal assistance in case of natural and man-made disasters.

As a primary step in this direction, the French Government sent two French experts to Malta to assist this Department in the drawing up of contingency plans regarding the EU Directive on SEVESO. These plans were finalised and submitted to the EU on time.

EU Fire 5

The Civil Protection Department was enlisted as an associate member of the EU Fire 5 entity comprising of five European countries as equal partners namely Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece. This measure has enabled Malta to attend several training exercises abroad. During 2008 the number of such activities amounted to five.

Germany

Discussions were held with the German Volunteer Corps (THW) as well as the German Embassy in Malta in order to organise training and exchange of experts. This project will commence in the beginning of 2009. This was a major achievement for the Malta CP volunteer corps. The present complement of volunteers is 75. Further enlistments are scheduled to be held during 2009.

Homes for the Elderly

In collaboration with the Ministry for Health and Elderly Care, several training courses were held for personnel employed at the homes for the elderly and other similar government institutions to ensure that personnel employed thereat could act as primary responders in case of major incidents which may occur in these establishments. This project will continue during 2009.

Education

The CPD has continued with its aims of providing educational activities mainly aimed at students and school children. During 2008, there was a total of 26 visits to schools in Malta and Gozo (including government, church and private schools) as well as other educational establishments. Various aspects of Civil Protection were treated during these visits.

In addition, the Department has continued featuring a series of television programmes on TVM aimed at depicting various incidents which happened in Malta and Gozo during the last years, together with expert advice aimed at educating the public in ways to prevent such occurrences.

The Department has also maintained its primary duties of delivering public information during morning breakfast shows on various TV stations as well as radio networks.

MARINE UNIT

The CPD continued to provide lifeguard services in the most popular beaches throughout the summer period. The Department employed a number of volunteers to carry out most of these functions.

The Marine Unit provided its sea craft to patrol the channel between Malta and Gozo, especially in the summer months, due to the increase of sea-craft traffic between the two islands.

Pollution at Sea

One of the major aspects concerning the duties of the CPD is oil pollution at sea, which is an issue which constantly requires the full attention of the Department. Following discussions held with the Malta Maritime Authority, the Department will be provided with anti pollution equipment and material amounting to circa €1 million. For this purpose Government provided the Department with premises to store this equipment as well as other material relating to humanitarian assistance.

EU MECHANISM FOR CIVIL PROTECTION

During the year under review, the Department participated in different meetings organised by the European Commission to establish greater co-operation between EU Member States and members of the European Economic Areas, in the field of Civil Protection.

The Director has also participated in various meetings by EU countries holding the Presidency as well as Euromed and other meetings organised in terms of the Eur-opa Major Hazards Agreement. These organisations provide guidelines on the prevention and action to be taken in case of major disasters.

IN-HOUSE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The aim of the Civil Protection Department is to deliver best quality service to the community in cases of incidents. The best possible way to reach this objective is to maintain a continuous employee development programme as well as Volunteers within the same Department.

Notwithstanding the problems that the Department must face to overcome problems related to human and financial resources, there is still the need to perform the tasks efficiently and effectively to save human lives.

The Department has also adopted other operational strategies to integrate the work of other agencies in other incident scenarios, such as flash floods and earthquakes.

PETER CORDINA
Director (Civil Protection)

Airport Security

RESPONSIBILITY

The Office of the Manager Airport Security (OMAS) is the appropriate authority responsible for the overall management and control of aviation security in Malta. The Office is responsible to develop, regulate and manage a secure aviation system, with the objective of ensuring a safe and secure environment for all passengers, airport employees, the general public and property.

NATIONAL AVIATION SECURITY PROGRAMME (NASP)

The National Aviation Security Programme provides the framework of regulations, standards and guidelines to be adopted and implemented by all entities, directly or indirectly, involved in aviation security at Luqa Airport. The purpose of this programme is to protect the security, regularity and efficiency of aviation security in Malta. It has been designed to meet the requirements of ICAO Annex 17, European Commission Regulation EC 2320/2002 and ECAC Doc 30.

Relevant parts of this programme are disseminated to aviation security stakeholders to enable these entities to develop security programmes and plans that are in line with national requirements. This programme is continually reviewed throughout the year to reflect new directives and regulations issued by the international security organisations.

AUDITS/INSPECTIONS AT FOREIGN AIRPORTS

The Manager Airport Security and two Assistant Managers were nominated by the European Commission to carry out four separate security inspections on behalf of the Commission. These inspections were held at Fontana Rossa Airport, Catania, Italy; Leonardo da Vinci Airport, Rome, Italy; Porto Airport, Porto, Portugal and Diagoras Airport, Rhodes, Greece.

The Manager Airport Security was also nominated to carry out a security audit on behalf of ECAC at Lyon Airport, France.

PARTICIPATION AT WORKSHOPS/WORKING GROUPS/MEETINGS

- *Annual Inspectors' Meeting:* An Assistant Manager attended this meeting in Brussels on 21-22 April. This meeting, chaired by the Head of the Directorate General for Energy and Transport, is held annually with the aim of explaining the new methodologies to be adopted when carrying out inspections and current developments in the legislative framework. Present for this meeting were security inspectors from all the Member States.
- *European Commission AVSEC Meetings:* During the year, this Office participated regularly in the monthly EC AVSEC meetings in Brussels. Throughout these meetings, decisions towards the implementation of AVSEC legislation are made. Malta, together with other Member States, has voiced its concerns about a number of issues.
- *Workshop - Screeners' Certification:* One Assistant Manager participated in a workshop organised by ECAC, in conjunction with the EU DG Tren. At the workshop, held in Brussels on 5-7 May, participants

were given information about the methodologies adopted by other Member States with regard to the certification of security screeners.

- *Workshop - Passenger and Cabin Baggage Screening:* Between 25 and 27 November, an Assistant Manager participated in a workshop organised by ECAC, in conjunction with the EU DG Tren. The workshop, held in Kiev, Ukraine, covered all ICAO and EU regulations with regard to Passenger and Cabin Baggage Screening. Methodologies and best practices adopted by Member States were discussed.
- *Working Group – Implementing Regulation on Standards for Explosive Detection Dogs:* Following the request from the Commission for the nomination of experts on explosive detection dogs, one Assistant Manager has been nominated to actively participate in meetings with the aim of developing draft standards on explosive detection dogs. Two meetings were held in November and December in Brussels.

SECURITY AUDITS, TESTS AND INSPECTIONS

During the year under review, the Office of the Manager Airport Security has carried out a number of tests and inspections.

The National Aviation Security Quality Control Programme states that regular monitoring activities shall be carried out by qualified national auditors within OMAS. The aim of these monitoring activities is to ensure that the security measures in place are in compliance with the requirements of the National Aviation Security Programme.

Monitoring activities were carried out on various aviation activities including:

- Access control, including airport staff and visitors' screening
- Aircraft security
- Passenger and cabin baggage screening
- Hold Baggage Security
- Cargo, including Regulated Agents and Known Consignors
- Air Carrier catering stores and supplies
- Air Carrier cleaning materials, stores and supplies
- Security equipment
- Public Areas.

This Office monitored the various development and infrastructural works which were being carried out within the airport grounds. The aim of these monitoring activities was to ensure that works on buildings situated on the boundary between landside and airside were carried out according to the site plans previously approved by the Manager Airport Security.

Between 26 and 31 July, OMAS carried out a security audit at Luqa Airport. The aim of this audit was to ensure that security measures observed were in compliance with the National Aviation Security Programme.

AVIATION SECURITY COURSES

Aviation Security Courses are held with the aim of increasing the security awareness of airport employees and to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in the security chain. A total of 963 participants attended these training courses. The following courses were held during the year under review.

- *Aviation Security Awareness:* This course is obligatory for new personnel who are employed by the various airport entities. The aim of this course is to introduce new recruits to the aviation industry.
- *Certification of MIA Security Screeners:* This Office held refresher courses for MIA Security Screeners. Following a theoretical presentation by OMAS qualified instructors, screeners were required to sit for a written examination. Practical tests were also carried out for individual screeners at the screening points.

- *Certification of Air Malta Instructors:* A security course for Air Malta instructors was held. The aim of this course was to certify those personnel whose duties involve the delivery of security training to other personnel. Following the theoretical presentation and written examination, on which they were assessed, the participants were certified as security instructors.
- *Certification of MIA Security Supervisors:* In December 2008, this Office held a Train the Trainer course for MIA Security Supervisors. The aim of this course was to certify those personnel at middle management level who are responsible to monitor the work of security screeners. Participants were also certified as security instructors.
- *Other specific courses* were held for the following airport and off-airport entities: Known Consignors, Air Cargo Handlers, In-flight Caterers, Airport Concessionaires, Airport Police.

MARIO BUGEJA

Manager (Airport Security)

Detention Services

Mission Statement

To keep in custody in as humane way as possible those persons declared as irregular immigrants on arrival until such time that they are granted freedom of movement, i.e. Refugee or Humanitarian Status, or freed without their case being resolved, or repatriated.

GENERAL

The year 2008 was unprecedented for the Detention Service. The number of immigrants arriving in Malta grew exponentially, registering a 75% increase over the previous year. This put a lot of pressure on the Detention Service which had to improvise its *modus operandi* accordingly, adapt to the changing situation and overcome new challenges created by mass arrivals.

Extraordinary measures were taken in order to increase accommodation space in detention centres for the overwhelming arrivals with an average rate of three boats arriving within 24 hours during the summer months. As can be expected, this stretched all available resources to the limit.

DETENTION SERVICE

The Detention Service is made up of personnel seconded from the Police Force and from the Armed Forces of Malta under one Command.

The Detention Service is tasked with the security of the closed centres while providing:

- adequate accommodation, including the necessary toilet and shower facilities;
- basic needs, such as food, clothing, hygiene and safe environment;
- access to medical care;
- access to the asylum system i.e. Commissioner for Refugees;
- access to non governmental organisations;
- means of contacting home or their country representative in Malta.

CLOSED ACCOMMODATION CENTRES

Since the closed accommodation centres were first set up in 2002, 11,655 irregular immigrants have passed through them. At the end of 2008, there were 1,864 irregular immigrants in detention centres accommodated as follows:

- Safi Barracks Closed Centre – 1,080 irregular immigrants in three compounds.
- Lyster Barracks Closed Centre - 714 irregular immigrants in two compounds.
- Ta' Kandja Closed Centre - 70 irregular immigrants.

IMMIGRANT POPULATION – 2008

At the end of December, there were 1,864 irregular immigrants in detention centres. The year 2008 was unprecedented in the number of immigrants accommodated in detention centres. In fact, in August there were over 2,100 immigrants in detention. This occurred as a result of the steep increase in arrival of

immigrants this year, as can be seen from the table below showing the number of arrivals up to and including 31 December 2008:

Arrivals	
January	nil
February	nil
March	24
April	109
May	188
June	575
July	794
August	533
September	299
October	46
November	68
December	139
Total	2,775

MEDIA PERSONNEL ALLOWED ACCESS TO DETENTION CENTRES

The policy regarding media access to detention centres was totally reviewed and consequently media personnel were allowed access to detention centres. Journalists and camera crews from all types of media were given the opportunity to each choose a date during which they were allowed to visit Safi Detention Centre with unrestricted access to the Centre and immigrants accommodated within. They were able to witness at first hand the conditions of the centres and speak freely to the immigrants individually or in groups. As a result of this openness the media subsequently was able to come up with much awaited balanced reports on the conditions in the centres. Media visits were not restricted to just local journalists but were made available to international media as well.

PROVISION OF MEDICAL SUPPORT BY *MEDICINS SANS FRONTIER*

Although medical services in detention centres had been outsourced to a local company following a tender process, the NGO *Médecins Sans Frontiers* (MSF) approached Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs and the Medical Support Structure of the Detention Service and offered to carry out medical support services which would increase the medical services available in detention.

A MoU was signed between the Medical Support Structure and MSF in September and members of MSF started deploying medical officers in detention centres providing medical support in the evenings and during weekends. So far, this combination of having a medical contractor operating in detention centres in the morning followed by an NGO in the evening has given positive results.

EU FUNDING – EUROPEAN REFUGEE FUND ANNUAL PROGRAMME 2008

The Detention Service embarked on a project to obtain funds made available by the EU. The aim of the project was to ensure that the minimum standard of reception as outlined in the EU directive *Minimum Standards of Reception 2003/9/EC* was maintained throughout the year, notwithstanding the large influx of asylum seekers that landed in Malta during the spring/summer months.

The Detention Service submitted the expenses faced in terms of provision of food supplies and medical support for Third Country Nationals residing in closed centres, where the situation was at times considered precarious. The project was accepted by the European Commission which co-financed 14% of the total costs, which in real terms amounted to approximately €334,021.

REFURBISHMENT PROJECTS

Various refurbishment works Safi Detention Centre and parts of Lyster Detention Centre were undertaken during the year. These consisted of:

- total refurbishment, including replacement of beds, of Warehouse 1 and Warehouse 2 Compounds Safi, which accommodate 600 immigrants;
- refurbishment of the sanitary facilities, including aluminium partitions, at the Tent Compound Lyster which accommodates 500 immigrants;
- refurbishment of C Block Safi which accommodates 288 immigrants.

These projects amounted to €85,000 and increased the accommodation capacity by 20%.

A major refurbishment project which will soon be undertaken is the refurbishment of Hermes Block Lyster which should cost around €400,000.

In all refurbishment projects, energy saving lighting replaced traditional light bulbs and water taps with timers were installed as a water saving measure.

DONATION OF MOBILE HOMES BY ITALIAN CIVIL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Following talks between MJHA and the Italian CPD, a number of mobile homes that were previously used by earthquake victims in Italy were donated to MJHA. A number of these mobile homes will be handed over to the Detention Service and placed at Lyster Detention Centre, the aim being to replace tents used as accommodation for irregular immigrants in detention.

CONSTRUCTION OF DETENTION COMPOUND AT TA' KANDJA

A new compound has been constructed at Ta' Kandja with the aid of EU funds. Works on the compound are almost complete. The compound should be able to accommodate 384 immigrants, distributed between four living areas.

EU-FUNDED TRAINING

During the year under review, the Detention Service embarked on a tailor-made training programme following discussions with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), UNHCR and Red Cross. The training, for which EU funds were obtained, was organised by JRS over a 12-month period. The programme sees the participation of UNHCR and Red Cross as partners with JRS as well as persons or NGOs directly involved in providing services to irregular immigrants. The programme is aimed at providing job specific training for all DS personnel.

COPE PROJECT

The year under review also saw the implementation of the COPE Project within Lyster and Safi Closed Centres. The project is the responsibility of OIWAS and its aim is to provide immigrants in closed centres with the necessary skills to prepare for life outside detention. It includes instruction on basic life skills, language training such as English language, cultural orientation and job oriented training. There are several partners involved in this project including the Employment & Training Corporation, the Education Division and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

CONCLUSION

2008 proved to be a most challenging year, even up to the end of December when the last boat carrying 139 immigrants arrived. This put a lot of strain on the resources available to the Detention Service which

invariably operated in crisis-management mode throughout the period under review. However, despite the difficulties encountered, Detention Services managed to meet its commitments and overcome the challenges

LIEUTENANT COL. BRIAN GATT
Head (Detention Services)

Office of the Refugee Commissioner

The Office of the Refugee Commissioner's (ORC) main responsibility is to receive, process, and determine applications for asylum, as stipulated by the Refugees Act, amended in July 2008. It incorporates the obligations assumed by Malta under the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of Refugees and also its obligations under Council Directive 2004/83/EC (on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection) and the content of the protection granted and Council Directive 2005/85/EC (on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status).

The Office's fundamental objective is to ensure a totally independent, fair, transparent and efficient eligibility determination process while, at the same time, guaranteeing the best quality possible regarding the hearing, analysis and determination of applications.

In 2008, the number of irregular immigrants who entered Malta has increased significantly. Indeed throughout this year, 2,775 persons arrived in Malta as compared to the 1,702 persons who entered Malta in 2007. Of these, 96% (2,683) have already applied for asylum. Despite this significant increase in the number of asylum applications, the Office of the Refugee Commissioner has succeeded in reviewing these cases as efficiently as possible. In fact the number of cases concluded in 2008 reached the figure of 2,715 i.e. an increase of 277% when compared to the cases concluded in 2007 (979 cases).

Staff has been kept especially busy with the notable increase in the number of applicants and subsequent closure of cases and also in helping out with information being requested regarding the various resettlement processes. During 2008 the ORC logged a total of 8,094 visits by clients, involving collection of documents, issue or renewal of certificates, request for information, applications for asylum, and other matters.

As highlighted by the Prime Minister in the 2006 Budget Speech, one of the Government's highest priorities was to address the complex illegal immigration problem, a task which has proved to be even more difficult with the increase of asylum applications throughout 2008. Aiming to fulfil this priority, the Office of the Refugee Commissioner has planned the management of the asylum applications as indicated by the figures of 2007 arrivals and according to these plans all asylum applications had to be concluded by March 2008. However, since there has been a drastic increase in the number of asylum applicants, this Office modified its plans and adopted a contingent strategy which focused on procedural improvements in relation to the processing of asylum applications.

This Office has introduced a scheduled time table for each case worker. Adopting a goal setting approach this system has helped case workers to direct their efforts to the assigned cases hence increasing performance. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner has also continued to practise the country desk system, thus having case workers working on a specific group of third country nationals over a period of time. This has helped this Office to develop country of origin expertise while ensuring that case workers would become familiar with the particular characteristics of the country in question and thus ensuring a more solid decision making.

The ORC has continued to develop a core group of interpreters, who are employed freelance, mainly to assist case workers during the interviews. This Office has also been supporting a policy of inclusion and gender sensitivity and has been encouraging women to work as interpreters.

These procedures have also been complemented by the set-up of an Annexe at Safi accommodation centre, after this Office reached an agreement with the AFM and the detention services. This Annexe is being used as an interviewing centre and has been equipped with the necessary facilities so as to make the refugee determination process more efficient. During this year this interviewing centre was totally refurbished through the co-operation of the AFM, making six interviewing rooms and two waiting rooms available. There was also a substantial upgrade in the IT and office equipment in the main office as well as in the offices at Safi Annexe.

As from January 2008 the revised version of the Preliminary Questionnaire, a form filled by third country nationals and through which they show their desire or intention to apply for asylum, has been used in all cases. The Preliminary Questionnaire has been edited as to become a more user friendly form. This Office has also translated this Preliminary Questionnaire to eight languages (amongst others Arabic, Amharic, French, Hawsa, Somali and Tigrinya) aiming to help third country nationals (TNC) fill, in an accurate manner, their Preliminary Questionnaires.

In July 2008, the Council Directive 2004/83/EC on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted and Council Directive 2005/85/EC on minimum standards on procedures in Member States for granting and withdrawing refugee status were transposed into Maltese legislation. Although the asylum system in itself has initially been set up with the eventual legislative transposition, major changes such as the introduction of subsidiary protection, the introduction of subsequent applications, and the possibility for asylum seekers to access their files, came into effect. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner had to make major procedural arrangements as to meet the requirements set by these legal amendments. Furthermore, throughout 2008 this Office received a good number of subsequent applications, all of which required a re-examination of the new asylum claim as presented by the applicant.

The ORC has throughout this year recommended to the Ministry another regime of protection i.e. *Temporary Humanitarian Protection* and which is to be granted in special and extraordinary cases where applicants are found not to be eligible for recognition as refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, but who are nonetheless considered to be in need of protection due to special humanitarian reasons.

This Office also introduced throughout 2008 an ongoing training system where personnel, at all levels, are given the opportunity of continuous learning. This concept of the ORC as a learning organisation helps staff to keep abreast of the new legislations, case law etc. Intensive in-house training for case workers was also organised during 2008 as to equip personnel for the legislative changes which were introduced in July 2008 following the amendment of the Refugees Act.

The ORC has also participated in a number of training courses outsourced by other organisations or government departments. In May 2008, this Office, in co-ordination with UNHCR, organised training about technical issues relating to the asylum determination process. This seminar was offered to all members of staff. A number of training seminars were also attended by different members of staff throughout 2008, including amongst others a seminar on the EU Directives relating to the treatment of asylum seekers, training on stress management, a training seminar on body language, and a training seminar on data protection. In November 2008, interpreters who work on a freelance basis with the ORC also had the opportunity to attend a training seminar which was organised by UNHCR.

Throughout 2008, the Office of the Refugee Commissioner increased its effort to participate in meetings and other conferences at EU level. This involvement aims to broaden the perspective of this Office and to incorporate in our system best practices of other Member States. Throughout the year, members of staff attended 19 meetings/workshops at EU level. This Office is also offering case workers the opportunity to identify an area of expertise and assisting them in developing it. This will create a pool of experts within this Office while offering opportunities of career development.

In October 2008, the OCR presented for the first time its application for the European Refugee Fund 2008-2013. The project has been selected for funding under the Annual Programme 2009. In view of the current legislative changes, this project mainly aims to provide information to TCNs who have already registered their desire to apply for recognition of refugee status and to inform TCNs about the asylum procedure. This Office aims to create audio visual material as well as printed material in various languages so as to prepare TCNs for their asylum determination interview. Through this project the OCR will further improve the existing refugee determination process by providing formal expert training to interpreters, case officers and case workers.

In December, a call for applications for the post of case officers was issued. This appointment aims to relieve some pressure from top management, since a filtering process for the cases concluded by the case workers will be introduced. This further aims to improve the quality of work and to further support the existing mentoring system. Thus case workers will be able from the very beginning of their career to receive support through coaching and mentoring by senior staff members within this Office.

In conclusion, the Office of the Refugee Commissioner has throughout the year concluded 2,715 cases. Of these cases, 19 were granted refugee status, 1,387 were granted subsidiary protection, seven were granted Temporary Humanitarian Protection, 1,279 were granted Rejection, and 23 were withdrawn. At the end of the year there were 503 applications which are being processed while 1,100 applicants are awaiting the start of the procedures, as shown in the following table. It must be noted, however, that, if it were not for the increase of 1,073 arrivals more in 2008 compared to 2007, there would have been only 27 asylum applications to be scheduled.

Caseload - 2008

Applications pending from 2007 - 606 cases involving 611 persons

New Applications in 2008 – 2,515 cases involving 2,607 persons

	No. of Persons involved
Granted Refugee Status	19
Granted Subsidiary Protection	1,387
Granted Temp Humanitarian Protection	7
Rejections*	1,279
Applications withdrawn	23
Applications still in process**	503
Awaiting start of procedure	1,100

* Humanitarian Protection cases not included in Rejections

** 140 cases involve unaccompanied minors. Procedure awaiting appointment of guardians.

Statistics for 2002-2008

Total New Applications – 7,852 cases involving 8,463 persons

	No. of Persons involved
Granted Refugee Status	212
Granted Subsidiary Protection	4,012
Granted Temp Humanitarian Protection	7
Rejections*	3,557
Applications withdrawn	172
Applications still in process**	503
Total Applications	8,463
Awaiting start of procedure	1,100
Total workload + awaiting cases	9,563

* Humanitarian Protection cases not included in Rejections

** 140 cases involve unaccompanied minors. Procedure awaiting appointment of guardians.

MARIO GUIDO FRIGGIERI
Refugee Commissioner

Corporate Services Directorate

MINISTRY'S OVERALL MISSION

The main objective of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs with regard to law enforcement is to preserve peace, law, order and security in our society while at the same time strive to maintain an acceptable balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of the community.

The Ministry is also responsible for justice affairs, data protection and illegal immigration.

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

The main objective of the Directorate for Corporate Services (DCS) is to offer support and advice to the Permanent Secretary and the departments falling under the Ministry's area of responsibility on issues related to human resource management, finance and administration and information technology.

The Directorate's main responsibility is to ensure the most effective and efficient utilisation of the resources, both human as well financial, at the Ministry's disposal. It includes the collation and preparation of the Ministry's business plans, financial estimates, annual reports and monthly financial forecasts. The Directorate also plays an effective co-ordinating role on these matters between the Ministry departments and the central authorities, mainly the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance. Currently the Department handles all finance and human resource requirements and the processing of payroll of the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, the Justice Unit (previously the Law-drafting and Translation Unit) and the Office of the Manager Airport Security and the newly set-up Detentions Services. As from March 2008, the DCS became also responsible for the Financial and HR operations of the Organisation for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers (OIWAS). Most of the work of the Department is deadline driven and depends on the target dates set by the central authorities.

Human Resources

During the year under review the Human resources section within this Directorate continued to provide support and assistance to the Ministry's departments/entities in the recruitment and deployment of human resources. The DCS continued to liaise with the various departments to ensure the effective implementation of corporate human resource policies, systems and procedures prescribed by the central agencies.

In its concerted efforts to keep the staff complement of the various departments falling under the Ministry duly filled, calls for applications were prepared and/or issued to fill vacant positions in the respective departments. The relative contracts of officers filling such positions were drawn up and submitted to the Management and Personnel Office and the Treasury Department.

Personnel in the HR sections within the departments falling under the Ministry continued to receive the necessary training on the compilation of Performance Management Reports. Such reports in respect of the General Service Grades were also drawn up on quarterly, six monthly and annual basis.

The HR Section was responsible for processing the progression of staff to the next higher scale provided for by the respective Classification and Re-grading Agreements of the different classes and grades.

Monthly employment returns were regularly drawn up and submitted to MPO and ETC as required by standing circulars. Requests for the payment of qualification allowances were processed in time, and service and leave record sheets were drawn up when officers applied to fill vacant positions across Government.

Other duties performed efficiently by the HR Section within the Directorate involved the recording of all changes in the personal record sheets, confirmation of appointments, increments and superannuations, and processing on a daily basis requests for vacation leave.

Legal Notice 51/2007

With the coming into force of Legal Notice 51 of 2007 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452) regarding the Fixed Term Regulations, officers engaged on contract basis within the departments falling under MJHA were, in 2007, informed of their positions in terms of the Directive.

Following clearance from the Public Service Commission, OPM had directed that all contract employees served with such individual letters were to be issued with letters of appointment informing them of their new Officer in Scale status. Such letters of appointment were issued towards the end of the year under review.

Training and Staff Development

As in previous years, the Ministry funded another Certificate Course in Criminology at the University of Malta, thus giving a chance to police officers to obtain a University qualification in subjects related to their work.

During the year, staff development continued to be given a high priority by the Directorate. Personnel from the Accounts Section of the Ministry and other departments were nominated to attend specialised training courses organised by the Ministry of Finance and the Staff Development Organisation on the Accruals Accounting concept.

Staff posted at the departments falling under the Ministry were also nominated to attend training courses in Information Technology, Data Protection, Health and Safety and other seminars on the European Union.

FINANCE AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT

The financial management aspect was given utmost importance by the Branch in its daily routine work. Monthly revised estimates were drawn up for the Ministry's Vote and its five Cost Centres, whilst the monthly financial returns of the other departments which form part of this Ministry were also evaluated and monitored prior to onward transmission to the Ministry of Finance. Another important aspect was the drafting and the consolidation of the 2008 Financial Estimates in respect of the departments which fall under the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs.

The Finance and Administration Section performed the following tasks during the year under review:

- compilation and monitoring of financial returns as requested by the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury and the National Statistics Office;
- raising, on a quarterly basis, financial information regarding accrual accounting;
- drawing up of the relative payrolls of personnel deployed at the various cost centres and units falling under the Ministry, after taking into account adjustments, increases, allowances and overtime. Apart from processing the payroll for the Ministry, Permanent Secretariat, the Directorate processes the salary computations of the Detention Services Unit, the Office of the Manager Airport Security, and the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees;
- processing requests for payment for the procurement of works and services;

- processed a considerable number of payments in respect of EU related projects;
- recording of inventory items procured by this Office and making the necessary information available to the departments in order to update their respective asset records;
- drawing up of quarterly returns of suppliers who do not provide the DCS with a fiscal receipt;
- compiling information related to replies to parliamentary questions. In various instances, this involved the collection of information from other line departments and the related consolidation of replies;
- approving advance payments made by the various departments falling under the Ministry;
- preparing the necessary documentation and closing of 180 advances related to delegations proceeding abroad on official duties;
- examining and certifying correct statements of expenditure related to travel abroad before submission to the Auditor General and Accountant General. The advances certified were: 180 Ministry; 90 Attorney General's Office; 349 Police; 28 Civil Protection Department: 35 Malta Security Services, 33 Courts of Justice Division;
- submitting claims to the Ministry of Finance for reimbursement of expenditure incurred in connection with travel related to attendance at EU Commission and Council meetings.

Green Initiatives

During the year under review this Directorate continued to co-ordinate and extend support to the Ministry's Green Leader towards the introduction/extension of 'green' initiatives identified within this Ministry. Plastic bins were procured for waste separation. Action continued to be taken to collect paper in garbage bags to be later collected by WasteServ for recycling purposes, collection and safe disposal of used batteries and ink cartridges/toners, participation in the Energy Saving (Neon Tube) Project. Action was also taken so that whenever possible envelopes would be reused for circulation of correspondence within departments under the Ministry.

Boards and Committees

This Directorate is also responsible for all the boards and committees which fall under the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs. Frequent correspondence is exchanged with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office of the President, for the appointment/re-appointment of members serving on these boards in terms of the relevant legislation. A database in respect of such boards and committees was kept constantly updated and action taken to publish the necessary notices in the Government Gazette regarding the compositions of these boards and committees. Data is also submitted to the Department of Information for inclusion on the Government's official portal.

GEORGE ZERAFA
Director (Corporate Services)

EU Affairs Directorate

The work of the EU Affairs Directorate continued to intensify during 2008. The Directorate ensured Malta's regular participation in discussions of a number of proposals put forward by the EU, which required Malta's constant input thereon. A number of these proposals related to immigration and this was always treated as a sensitive matter during preparations for discussions at EU level.

During 2008, the Directorate co-ordinated attendance of various officials from various entities falling within the MJHA remit to Council and Commission working group meetings and kept records of those meetings in which Malta participated both through its technical attachés as well as through the technical experts from the line departments. Line departments were immediately informed of the monthly calendars and agendas of meetings received. The Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs was represented at working groups very regularly and a few of the meetings were attended by the staff of the Directorate itself. The EU Affairs Director accompanied the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs to the Ministers' Council meetings on a regular basis. Reports of meetings were drawn up by the attendees and followed up by the Directorate. The Directorate worked in constant liaison with the technical attachés in Brussels and ensured a constant flow of information and co-ordination between both sides.

As expected, the Directorate continued to receive a constant daily flow of EU documentation which was distributed to the line departments according to the subject matter as soon as these were received. The Directorate was instrumental in the drawing up of explanatory memoranda (which are submitted to the Inter-Ministerial Committee, Cabinet and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives) and a good number of instruction notes for use at the working groups in Brussels, especially those relating to the most sensitive issues for Malta. The EU Directorate also prepared instruction notes for each item that fell within its responsibility and that was discussed at the Committee of Permanent Representatives on a weekly basis. The Minister was provided with briefing notes for his meetings with other ministers within the Justice and Home Affairs Council as well as for any bilateral meetings that had EU content. Furthermore, when required, the Directorate prepared other briefing notes and talking points for the Prime Minister when attending the European Council or when holding bilateral meetings, as well as for the Permanent Representative when this was necessary.

During the year under review, the Directorate continued with the initiative whereby Member States, through their representations in Malta, were briefed about the positions that Malta would be taking in Council during a meeting held for them one or two days prior to the Justice and Home Affairs Council meetings.

The Directorate co-ordinated the replies provided by Malta on various issues by means of questionnaires and written procedures and co-ordinated with the EU Secretariat at the Office of the Prime Minister for the transmission of such replies to the EU institutions.

Throughout the year, the Directorate was instrumental in ensuring that the necessary legislation for the transposition of EU legislation into Maltese legislation was drafted and this resulted in the timely implementation of the legislation that had yet to be transposed.

DR. JOSETTE ZERAFA
Director (EU Affairs)

Policy Development Directorate

BETTER REGULATION

The Policy Development Directorate co-ordinated work undertaken with respect to Better Regulation initiatives falling under the responsibility of the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs. One Better Regulation measure, namely MJHA PFO8: *The issuance of cards to family members of Maltese Nationals as opposed to stamps will enable them to fully avail themselves of rights conferred by the Schengen Acquis*, was completed during the year under review.

The following measures are presently ongoing:

- Upgrading of the database used at the Police Department to offer a more efficient service to the public when paying licence fees.
- Issue of conduct certificates for office use to public officers through the computerised system.

SCHENGEN

As from 2007, the Directorate was involved in the Ministry's Schengen information campaign, which came to a close with the lifting of air border control in March 2008. In this regard, the Director took part in TV and radio programmes and the Directorate prepared material for publication, further to assisting in logistical matters.

MEMORANDA (EU DOSSIERS)

During the year, the Policy Development Directorate, in co-operation with the EU Affairs Directorate, drafted Memoranda relating to several EU dossiers.

EUROPEAN PACT ON IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The Directorate co-ordinated efforts and assisted in the preparation of Malta positions in negotiations leading to an agreement on the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which features provisions relating to the re-admission of illegally staying third country nationals and intra-EU reallocation of beneficiaries of international protection, among others.

Officials from the Directorate attended technical meetings in Paris and Brussels relating to the Pact.

CYPRUS-GREECE-ITALY-MALTA MEETINGS

Officials from the Policy Development Directorate co-ordinated Malta's efforts and prepared Malta positions in relation to meetings held by Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta with a view to place at the forefront the agenda of these countries, particularly vis-à-vis immigration, in the EU context.

Officials from the Directorate also attended technical meetings in this regard.

LOCAL POLICY INITIATIVES

Local policy measures were also initiated and followed up, particularly with respect to Fireworks, Immigration, Asylum and the review of educational programmes at Corradino Correctional Facility. Moreover, the Directorate is also involved in a number of ongoing initiatives, not only in respect of the mentioned areas, but also in fields such as Restorative Justice.

JOSEPH St JOHN

Director (Policy Development)

Programme Implementation Directorate

INTRODUCTION

During 2008, the Programme Implementation Directorate continued to renew its activities that were in place in order to provide an enhanced service to respective stakeholders – additional staff was deployed and additional duties were taken on board. Particular focus was put on the EU Funding Unit and the International Affairs Unit with both taking up additional duties in order to provide an enhanced service to respective stakeholders.

PROJECT MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

During the year the Directorate continued to closely monitor developments as regards major projects pertaining to the Ministry. Particular emphasis was put on the development of National Identity Management Systems (NIDMS) which, up till the March General Elections formed part of the Ministry. Following the subsequent reshuffle of ministerial portfolios and the reallocation of the NIDMS initiative to another ministry, the Directorate retained a significant role in the process which eventually led to the adjudication of the related tender – indeed the Directorate was represented in the Selection Board which was set up and in view of the experience accumulated throughout the previous years on such subject it was in a position to clarify many of the issues raised by the other members of the Selection Board.

Other major projects which were actively monitored by the Directorate included Malta's bid for accession in the US Visa Waiver Programme and the implementation of EU co-funded projects.

GREEN INITIATIVES

The Programme Implementation Directorate is directly responsible for ensuring that green initiatives are undertaken by all the line departments within the Ministry. In view of this, the Ministry's Green Leader is appropriately deployed within the same Directorate. Throughout the year this official continued to maintain contact with the Green Focal persons deployed within the line departments, keeping them abreast with any developments, liaising with them on areas of related interest and issuing instructions accordingly. In view of the shift of ministerial portfolios, during the year the Directorate consolidated the system which was in place, particularly by updating and reviewing the focal point network and by constantly monitoring and reviewing the waste separation system. Furthermore, a water and energy audit system was introduced at House of Catalunya in order to track usage so as to be in a position to identify and introduce a number of cost-saving activities.

The Green Leader participated also in various meetings organised by the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

CUSTOMER CARE

During 2008, the Customer Care Unit within the Directorate handled a total of 773 requests through the Customer Care System, the Customer Care generic email, the Ministry Website Contact form and by telephone. This constituted an increase of cases since 2005 (172 requests), 2006 (418 requests) and 2007 (659 requests).

As per instructions issued by the Charter Support Unit, each Department has to ensure that it conforms to a number of minimum customer-oriented service standards. In this regard, the Customer Care Unit of the Directorate regularly monitored line departments, particularly by following up complaints and issuing regular requests for feedback, in order to ascertain whether divisions and departments were compliant or otherwise.

During the year, the Customer Care Co-ordinator participated also in related Customer Care fora.

MEDIA ITEMS

Newspapers (including online versions) were monitored on a daily basis in order to identify articles which refer to areas falling within the remit of the Ministry. The collated data was forwarded on a daily basis to senior officials for their attention, recorded for future reference in a virtual resource library and, where necessary, forwarded to line departments requesting them to report back on the follow-up action being taken from their end.

The Directorate monitored and recorded also press releases, acts and legal notices that were issued regularly.

MINISTRY'S WEBSITE

2008 has been a hectic year with regard to the contents of the MJHA website in view of two major changes that took place throughout the year. Initially the various webpages had to be amended to take on board changes brought about the euro changeover and also to include information on Schengen (Malta officially entered the Schengen zone in December 2007). Subsequently, following the March 2008 General Elections the contents of the website were amended to take on board changes which took place in ministerial portfolios. Such changes were carried out by the Programme Implementation Directorate.

Currently the Directorate is assisting the Ministry's Information Management Office in revamping and upgrading the website.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

International (non-EU related) affairs are managed by the International Affairs Unit within the Directorate. Its main functions are:

- liaising with line departments on invitations for participation in international events;
- taking care of logistical arrangements during visits by international delegations;
- liaising with other countries (through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) on proposed bilateral agreements;
- ensuring that documentation submitted by local/international organisations, such as reports and questionnaires, are duly filled in and returned; and
- keeping the Minister, Permanent Secretary and other senior officials abreast with related developments.

Invitations for participation in international events were received regularly from a number of international organisations, in particular the United Nations, the Council of Europe, OSCE, the Hague Programme and EuroMed. In cases where the topic of the meetings was of relevance to the Ministry, the invitation was forwarded to the appropriate entity in order to verify whether it would be interested in attending.

With regard to bilateral agreements, the Unit actively liaised with various counterparts in other countries (either through exchanges of correspondence or even through the setting up of bilateral meetings) in order to discuss points to be included/excluded from draft agreements. During 2008 four agreements were signed:

- Ukraine – Co-operation against Organised Crime (July 2008)
- Latvia – Co-operation on illicit trafficking in Narcotic Drugs (July 2008);

- Bulgaria – Police Co-operation Agreement (September 2008);
- United Arab Emirates – Co-operation against Organised Crime (December 2008).

Another agreement which was already signed (Co-operation against organised crime – Romania) was ratified in January 2008.

Furthermore, bilateral discussions held during 2008 ensured that the following drafts were finalised and ready for signature:

- Mutual Legal Assistance (China);
- Co-operation against organised crime (Ireland);
- Memorandum of Understanding on co-operation against organised crime (Oman); and
- Fight against crime (Uzbekistan).

Another agreement which was signed during 2008 was the Visa Waiver Programme Memorandum of Understanding between Malta and the United States of America in April. Apart from liaising with the US authorities on the contents of the document, the Directorate was also entrusted with the logistical arrangements of the ceremony. This agreement eventually opened the way for Malta's entry into the Visa Waiver Programme in December of 2008. Indeed, subsequent to such signature a number of related agreements were also signed at a technical level and, in September, a delegation from the US Department for Homeland Security carried out a visit as part of the process. Related meetings and site visits were organised by the Directorate.

One other area in which the Directorate was actively involved was that of Trafficking in Persons. Activities undertaken during 2008 include formalising an (already-existing) agreement between the Malta Police Force and *Aġenzija Appoġġ* for the provision of social assistance by the latter in suspected cases of victims of trafficking in persons. Furthermore, an informative leaflet was prepared and published jointly by the Directorate (on behalf of the Ministry) and *Aġenzija Appoġġ*. This leaflet was subsequently distributed in key areas in Malta.

Various visits by international dignitaries and organisations took place during 2008. Notable visits which were managed by the Directorate were those made by the French Minister for Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Development Partnership (the Hon Brice Hortefeux), the Italian Minister of the Interior (the Hon Roberto Maroni), a delegation from the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and (as already indicated) a US Delegation from the Department of Homeland Security.

Furthermore the Directorate was tasked with the organisation of two seminars relating to UNIDEM and to the Retired Judges Association. Apart from this, the Directorate assisted in the process leading to the transfer of six sentenced Libyan prisoners to Libya on 28 August 2008, as per provisions of an agreement which was signed previously between Malta and Libya.

EU CO-FUNDING

The principal areas of EU funding which are applicable to the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs are contained within three programmes: Security and Safeguarding Liberties, Fundamental Rights and Justice and Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows. Three of the four funds forming part of the Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows Programme – the European Refugee Fund, the External Borders Fund and the Return Fund – are managed directly (on behalf of the Commission) by the EU Co-Funding Unit within the Ministry's Programme Implementation Directorate. The Unit acts also as point of reference with regard to the other Funds which ultimately are managed by other stakeholders or directly by the European Commission.

The EU Funding Unit was formally set up within this Directorate in 2007. Originally it consisted of an EU Funds Manager and a Projects Officer. During 2008 the staff complement was increased with the addition of an EU Funds Officer and an EU Funds Support Officer.

The current programming period for the European Refugee Fund, the External Borders Fund and the Return Fund is valid up till the end of 2013. Initially Malta (along with the other Member States) was required to compile Multi-annual Programmes for each Fund – these are strategic documents that give a general picture of the current situation, highlight related issues and indicate how the Member State intends to address them during the programming period. Subsequent to the approval of such documents, Member States would issue calls for projects on an annual basis. Such Multi-annual Programmes were compiled by the Unit and eventually approved in the last quarter of 2008.

During 2008 the EU Co-funding Unit adopted a two-pronged approach. On the one hand it compiled the three Multi-annual Programmes with the assistance of entities who are experts in the areas covered by the Funds and concurrently liaising with the Commission in order to provide clarifications and carry out amendments to the documents as required. On the other hand it issued annual calls for the three Funds, set up independent project selection committees to adjudicate the proposals and eventually submitted four annual programmes for the Commission's approval. Such approval was obtained also in the last quarter of 2008. Currently Annual Programmes for 2009 have been prepared and are awaiting the Commission's approval.

Projections provided by the Commission indicate that up till 2013 Malta will receive €112 million for projects chosen under the External Borders Fund, €4.8 million for projects chosen under the European Refugee Fund and €5 million for projects chosen under the Return Fund. For each of these Funds, Malta will contribute a further 25% from local funds.

JESMOND CAMILLERI

Director (Programme Implementation)

Information Management Unit

During 2008, the Information Management Unit (IMU) within the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs was responsible for the provision of Information Management and ICT services to provide the necessary support to the Ministry's Permanent and Private Secretariats, the Malta Police Force, the Courts of Justice, the Attorney General's Agency, the Justice Unit, the Civil Protection Department, the Office of the Manager Airport Security, Correctional Services Department, and the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and OIWAS.

SCHENGEN SISONE4ALL AND SISII

The IMU is responsible for the overall administration of Schengen, including the administration of the current SISone4all system, the implementation of the SISII project, as well as the implementation of all other Schengen related projects such as the implementation of the Prüm Decision and the Entry/Exit system which are directly connected to the efficient and effective administration of the Schengen *acquis* in Malta.

During the second half of 2008, the IMU co-ordinated the procurement process for the purchase of the SISII ICT infrastructure. The contract for various types of servers, software licences and networking equipment worth €4.7 million was signed between the Ministry and the successful bidder in the fourth quarter of the year. By the end of the year all ICT equipment had been delivered and was ready for installation.

This new infrastructure will service the second generation Schengen Information System and is much more elaborate and powerful than the first generation system.

This office is providing all project and contract management functions for the SISII project as well as the current SISone4ALL system.

PRÜM DECISION

On 8 August 2008 the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs set up the Prüm Task Force composed of members from the Malta Police Force, the Ministry and from the Malta Transport Authority.

The main objectives for the Prüm Task Force were to identify all preparations that need to be undertaken by all relative stakeholders, to draft a gap analysis and issue a strategic plan for the implementation of the Prüm decision and to draw up a detailed project plan indicating critical milestones and relative timeframes as well as approximate financial requirements necessary to ensure that all Prüm-related commitments are implemented. This office is extending all the necessary support to all stakeholders on a regular basis to implement the Prüm project successfully.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLANNING

This office submitted a total of six ICT capital investment plans for 2009 from various departments within the Ministry. This office provided the necessary assistance and co-ordination to the different project champions compiling the various investment plans.

OIWAS

As soon as this office assumed the responsibility of the OIWAS, a detailed study was performed to assess the status of ICT within the Organisation and its related centres. As a result of the study, the support functions are being reorganised to reflect the specific ICT needs required by OIWAS.

This office extends its support to all ICT related issues required by OIWAS. Currently an automated cheque issuing system is being introduced to replace the existing laborious manual process and to enhance the control aspect of the whole process.

UPGRADING OF PCs

A programme to upgrade several PCs at the Ministry and its departments which commenced in 2007 continued throughout this year. Several PCs were upgraded with new RAM and larger hard drives. Many other PCs were reinstalled with a fresh copy of the OS and office applications.

NETWORK EXTENSIONS AND UPGRADES

All cabinets with the Ministry were completely reorganised. The remaining hubs have been replaced with faster network switches. Cables and cable management were totally reorganised and the cabinets cleaned throughout. Several other network extensions were commissioned in various departments within the Ministry including the Courts, Civil Protection Department, Refugee Commission and OIWAS.

PC LEASING

Through an initiative by this office, two back-to-back agreements had been signed between MITTS, the Attorney General's Agency and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. All PCs at the Office of the Attorney General had been replaced with modern leased PCs. Replacement of all PCs at the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner will commence in early 2009.

APPLICATION AND OFFICE AUTOMATION SERVER REPLACEMENT AT COURTS OF JUSTICE

A tender process was completed at the end of 2008 to replace the existing Application and OA servers at Courts. These servers will be commissioned in 2009 and should offer radically improved performance.

IMPROVING EXISTING APPLICATIONS

Several improvements to software applications, particularly on the mission critical LECAM system at the Courts of Justice, had been supported and financed by this office. Work is also underway to study the possible integration, into one workflow, of several processes that are executed by the Attorney General's Agency, the Malta Police Force and the Courts of Justice.

The concept of having the Malta Police Force, the Courts of Justice and the Attorney General's Agency streamline and integrate their business processes is being actively considered. The need for the electronic sharing of information between these entities has been identified, the ultimate goal being an increase in efficiency of all parties involved, resulting in the effective delivery of justice in its widest sense and for the benefit of all citizens.

Interconnectivity is a concept that is embraced in numerous fields of business. The efficiency of the Police Force (enforcement arm), the Attorney General (legal arm) and the Courts of Justice (judicial arm) is to a large extent governed by their ability to work and communicate together.

MINISTRY WEB SITE

Following the last General Elections, the Ministry's website has been heavily modified to reflect its new portfolio.

Work is now underway to design and implement a completely new portal for the Ministry based on a modern content management system. All e-Services in the Ministry's new portal will be redeveloped and enhanced using modern software technology.

KEVIN BUHAGIAR

Chief Information Officer

Third Country Nationals Unit

EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK

The Third Country Nationals Unit took steps to implement the measures arising out of the decision setting up the network. This work involved the identification and nomination of four experts involved in the relevant areas labour, immigration statistics and migration from various ministries. With the publication of Council Regulation 2008/381/EC, Malta joined the European Migration Network, a network of National Contact Points from 27 EU Member States. The co-ordination of the Network was assigned to the Third Country Nationals Unit as from May 2008, which became responsible for the administration of the National Contact Point in Malta. The National Contact Point is intended to meet the informational needs of the Community and EU Member States' authorities and institutions on migration and asylum, by providing up-to-date, objective and reliable and comparable information on migration and asylum, with a view to supporting policy-making in the European Union in these areas. The work of the local network involves the preparation of studies and queries regarding various aspects on the area of migration. Representatives from this office attended five meetings of the EMN in Brussels since April 2008. The National Contact Point co-ordinated and submitted over 45 replies to *ad hoc* queries placed by other National Contact Points during the period May to December 2008, completed a study on the organisation of Asylum and Migration in Malta and submitted a compilation of migration statistics in relation to reference year 2006.

The Unit participated actively in Twinning with the United Kingdom and Finland which were attended by the Project Officer in this Unit. The National Contact Point organised a national seminar to launch the network locally in order to promote its visibility and involve local stakeholders and participation in the network activities. The National Contact Point participated in the annual Metropolis Conference in Bonn in October 2008.

LEGAL AID

The Unit is responsible for the administration of legal aid provision to asylum appellants. In the execution of this task, the Office liaises continuously with the Refugee Appeals Board, and the Office of the Refugee Commissioner, the Reception Centres, the appellant and NGOs.

During the early months of 2008, the Office, profiting from a slow down in legal aid requests, made attempts to deal with the backlog of pending cases. The efforts made to trace the older pending appeal applicants in Open and Closed Centres as well as the Community led to the conclusion of 33 cases, but a large number of cases remained untraced.

In mid-year, largely as a result of the efficiencies obtained in the asylum determination process, the requests for legal aid steadily increased in relation to the increase in number of negatively decided asylum cases that were invariably appealed.

The Unit received 805 requests for legal aid in 2008, processing 475 cases by the end of the year. 365 cases were assigned to Legal Aid lawyers, 240 of which have been completed while the remaining 124 cases have been interviewed but await the conclusion of submissions by the appointed lawyers. A total of 111 cases could not be traced in their last known address.

As a result of close collaboration with the Refugee Appeals Board and the Office of the Refugee Commissioner in relation to a growing concern with an increasing number of untraced cases, a number of

recommendations were drawn up that became reflected in amendments to the Refugees Act which came into force during the year. The new Act introduces provisions that are aimed to introduce more discipline in the notification of addresses by appellants who abandon their cases without justification. Such provisions should impact positively on the effective employment of the limited human resources.

RETURN AND ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN

An official from the Unit took an active part in various initiatives aimed at improving the possibilities for the return of failed asylum seekers, in particular for the return of migrants to Togo and Central African states. The Unit was engaged in technical meetings locally and in Brussels in this regard.

The Unit liaised with the International Organisation for Migration in the Restart project, funded under the European Refugee Fund, and the Dar Project steered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

OTHER INITIATIVES

This Unit, jointly with the Policy Development Directorate within this Ministry, has taken up various issues concerning asylum related matters including among others the application and review of the Dublin Regulation, the Common European and Asylum System in relation to discussions at EU level. Active collaboration with the Office of the Refugee Commissioner and the Citizenship and Expatriates Affairs Department, among other principal actors in the field, were increasingly maintained in relation to the practical application of the provisions of the Directive on the Family Re-unification of Refugees, Council Directive 2003/68. Draft procedural guidelines concerning the establishment of effective processes in this regard were drawn up.

STATISTICS

The administration of asylum, immigration is dependent on information. To this end this Office has provided support and information on a regular and continuous basis to Government and non-governmental stakeholders both local and foreign. The Ministry co-ordinates on a regular basis with the relevant stakeholders to produce a monthly summary of asylum and immigration statistics as would throw light on progress in the management of the asylum process and related aspects in general.

The Third Country Nationals Unit engaged the National Statistics Office and the Office of the Refugee Commissioner in an active and sustained collaboration in particular with regard to the addressing of obligations arising from Council Regulation 862/07 relating to the effective submission of Asylum Statistics to the Eurostat, effective as from 2008.

During the year under review, the National Statistics office and this office worked closely together to introduce new statistical methodologies for keeping and processing required data in harmony with the wider obligations envisaged under the new statistical framework. The collaboration is resulting in increased effort in the proper compilation of all monthly statistical tables transmitted to Eurostat. The full compilations are expected to become available during 2009.

RESETTLEMENT

The Unit liaises and collaborates with the UNHCR on an ongoing basis in relation to the United States Resettlement Programme. A total of 175 persons enjoying protection in Malta were transferred to the USA during 2008.

MARIO AZZOPARDI

Assistant Director (Third Country Nationals Unit)