



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

**FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE
2022-2030**

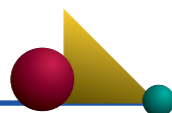
Child Guarantee National Progress Report 2023



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

NOVEMBER 2023

Child
Guarantee
National
Progress
Report
2023



Contents

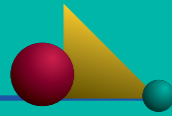
Minister's Foreword – Michael Falzon	7
<hr/>	
Permanent Secretary's Foreword – Mark Musù	9
<hr/>	
Executive Summary	11
<hr/>	
1. Background	13
1.1 What is the European Child Guarantee?	13
1.2 National Context	14
1.2.1 Children At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE)	15
1.3 Integrated and Enabling Policy Framework	16
<hr/>	
2. Specific Target Group and Key Services	17
2.1 Children in precarious family situations	17
2.2 Social Protection for Children in precarious family situations	17
2.3 Early Childhood Education and Care, Inclusive Education and School-Based Activities, including a Healthy Meal Each School Day	33
2.4 Healthcare	59
2.5 Healthy Nutrition	79
2.6 Adequate Housing	81
2.7 Overall Implementation Process	86
<hr/>	
3. Planned Measures 2022-2027	87
<hr/>	
4. EU Funds (ESF+)	89
<hr/>	
5. Governance, Monitoring and Reporting	90
5.1 Monitoring	90
<hr/>	
6. Concluding Remarks	92

List of Tables

Table 1.	Children at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (0-17 years)	15
Table 2:	Social Benefits and Social Welfare Services.....	18
Table 3.	Initiatives addressing barriers to education throughout childhood	33
Table 4.	Measures to prevent early school leaving	39
Table 5.	Measures seeking to ensure inclusive education throughout childhood.....	44
Table 6.	Measures addressing students' basic necessities for the provision of quality education in schools.....	48
Table 7.	Measures addressing equal access to digital connectivity, educational content online, and increased digital skills.....	50
Table 8.	Free transport for all	53
Table 9.	Measures for equal and inclusive access to school-based activities.....	54
Table 10.	Key characteristics of healthcare measures for early screening, detection and immunization	54
Table 11.	Measures for access to medicinal products.....	66
Table 12.	Measures for mental healthcare	68
Table 13.	Measures for children with disability	72
Table 14.	Measures related to the promotion of healthy lifestyles.....	75
Table 15.	Healthy nutrition provisions	79
Table 16.	Measures addressing housing for children	82
Table 17.	Planned Measures for a Child Guarantee.....	87
Table 18.	Pertinent indicators.....	90

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Pillars of the NAP	13
Figure 2:	Total Implementation Process	86



Minister's Foreword

Government's commitment to prioritizing the well-being and future of children through the National Action Plan for Child Guarantee emphasizes on equal opportunities and support for children in vulnerable situations as key for breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring a more inclusive society. Investing in key services for social protection including education, healthcare, housing, and healthy nutrition is fundamental to providing a solid foundation for children's development.

Breaking the cycle of poverty and ensuring that every child has an equal start in life is not only of social importance but also an investment for the future generations. The financial commitment of investing €145 million over five years to implement and sustain the measures outlined in the plan is particularly important, as societies are recovering from the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic and other global instabilities which have directly affected vulnerable populations, including children.

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

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

Hon. Michael Falzon

Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights



Permanent Secretary's Foreword

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

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

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

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

Mark Musù
Permanent Secretary
Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights





Executive Summary

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

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

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

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

Following the consultation process undertaken with the stakeholder Ministries, a total of 108 measures were ongoing/being implemented over four key areas, of which 29 measures relate to social protection, 34 measures relate to education, 38 measures relate to healthcare and 7 measures related to adequate housing. In addition, 50% of the NAP planned measures for 2022-2027 have been also implemented and are ongoing.

Looking ahead, new budgetary measures aimed towards children have also been announced in Malta's Budget 2024 with a number of wide-spread measures under the umbrella of social protection systems, education and health amongst others.

An effective and well-monitored implementation of the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee would not be possible without commitment of all the stakeholders involved in the development and provision of all relevant services.

1. Background

1.1 What is the European Child Guarantee?

The objective of the European Child Guarantee (ECG), adopted through a Council Recommendation in June 2021, is to prevent and combat social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need to a set of key services. These children include individuals under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The key services include (a) early childhood education and care, (b) education, (c) healthcare, (d) nutrition and (e) housing.

The Child Guarantee is complementary to and consistent with other EU initiatives. It complements the second theme of the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child** as it places Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on “Childcare and support to children” in action, rendering this initiative a key deliverable of the **European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan** which sets out concrete initiatives to turn the European Pillar of Social Rights into reality.

As a Member State, in 2021, Malta developed a National Action Plan to help ‘children in need’. This plan delineates the main outreach initiatives being conducted as follows through a number of ongoing/planned measures:

- a Early childhood education and care, inclusive education and school-based activities and a healthy meal each school day
- b Healthcare
- c Adequate housing
- d Social protection

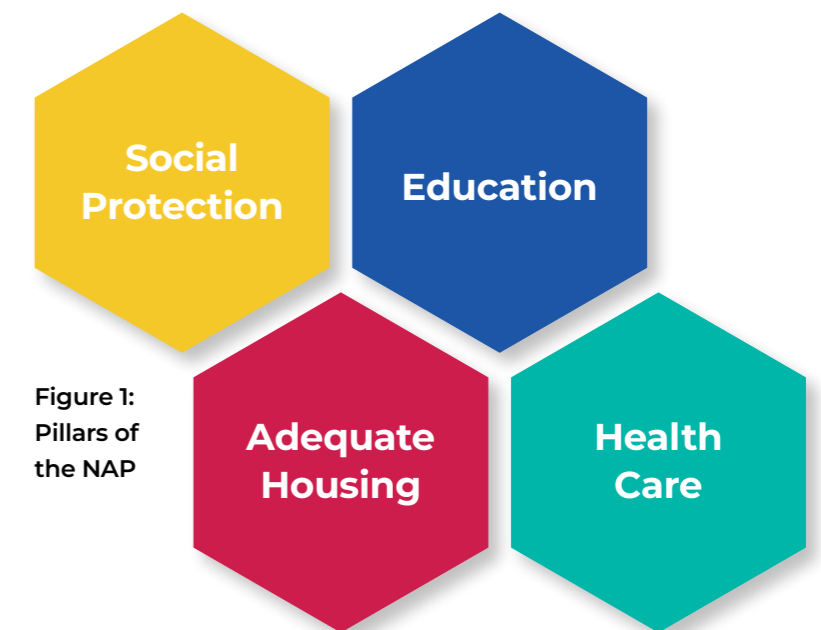
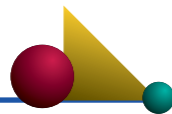


Figure 1:
Pillars of
the NAP

For the period 2022-2027, Government has allocated a total of €145 million for the Child Guarantee to strengthen its commitment of equal opportunities among children. Building on existing measures, this investment is intended to support all children, including children in need, with a view to enable children to succeed.

1 The term ‘children in need’ refers to persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion



Monitoring of the Implementation of the Child Guarantee Action Plan

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

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

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

Reporting Obligations

Following this preparatory phase of gathering information, MSPC is now compiling the information in preparation for the first round of reporting to the European Commission on the progress in the implementation of the Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1002 establishing a European Child Guarantee by Q1 2024.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a preliminary report towards this reporting obligation. This document provides a snapshot of the progress registered since the publication of the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030 in 2022, to date.

1.2 National Context

The child (0-17 years) population in Malta stood at 15.9% of the total population for both 2021 (82,130) and 2022 (82,677)², with no significant changes from the 15.9% also reported for 2020 (81,948). This is amongst the lowest share of children registered when compared to other EU countries³.

Childhood poverty and social exclusion have long-lasting impacts on a child’s life, causing poor physical and mental health, limited access to education and healthcare, and social and emotional developmental issues. These challenges can persist into adulthood, leading to unemployment, poor health, and limited life opportunities. Within this context, Table 1 below illustrates the AROPE

2 Eurostat. Population on 1 January by age Population on 1 January by age and sex. Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/DEMO_PJAN__custom_8360005/default/table?lang=en
 3 Eurostat. Fertility indicators. Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/demo_find__custom_8422159/default/table?lang=en
 4 Eurostat. MT Rate for children (aged less than 18) at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_lm412__custom_8425884/default/table?lang=en

rate for children (by sex) between 2018-2022, with 23.1 % of persons under the age of 18 years in Malta were at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion as at 2022.⁴

World crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the average AROPE rate of the EU, rising from 22.8% in 2019 to 24.7% in 2022⁵, indicating a significant increase in poverty thus highlighting the pandemic’s profound impact on global poverty reduction efforts. However this the situation in Malta stands in stark contrast to the EU average, as the child poverty rate in the country has remained relatively low⁶, indicating that the government was able to maintain its efforts in reducing poverty, even in the face of the pandemic. In fact, from 2019 to 2022, the child poverty rate in Malta decreased by 0.6%.

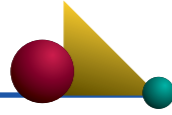
Table 1. Children at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion (0-17 years)⁷

Year	% or Number of Persons	Male	Female	Total
2019	%	24.7	22.6	23.7
	Persons in thousands	10,000	9,000	19,000
2020	%	21.3	24.1	22.3
	Persons in thousands	9,000	10,000	19,000
2021	%	23.8	22.6	23.2
	Persons in thousands	10,000	9,000	19,000
2022	%	24.0	22.2	23.1
	Persons in thousands	11,000	9,000	19,000

1.2.1 Children At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE)

The number of children considered at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) remained stable at 19,000 till 2022. In 2022, child poverty or social exclusion rates in Malta were below the EU average and relatively evenly distributed between males (24%) and females (22.2%). Children from single-parent households (51.5% in 2020⁸ and 43.3% in 2022)⁹ and low-skilled households¹⁰ (50.2% in 2022)¹¹ were more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion.

5 Eurostat. Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_PEPS01N__custom_8426334/default/table?lang=en
 6 Eurostat. Children (aged less than 18) at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_lm412__custom_8425884/default/table?lang=en
 7 Eurostat. MT rate for children (aged less than 18) at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_lm412__custom_8426776/default/table?lang=en
 8 NSO. 2021. EU-SILC 2020: Salient Indicators. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/News2021_175.pdf
 9 NSO. 2023. EU-SILC 2022: Salient Indicators. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/eu-silc-2022-salient-indicators/>
 10 This refers to parents having low educational attainment levels, i.e. less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (levels 0-2 of the International Standard Classification of Education 2011).
 11 Eurostat. Children-at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion by educational attainment level of their parents (population aged 0 to 17 years). Accessed on 10/11/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps60n__custom_8427363/default/table?lang=en
 12 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_peps60n__custom_8427363/default/table?lang=en



1.3 Integrated and Enabling Policy Framework

Since the launch of Malta's National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee, MSPC as Ministry responsible for Children's Rights, has continued its preparatory work towards two national policies which form the integrated and enabling framework to combat child poverty and social exclusion.

Children's Policy Framework 2023-2030

With a Public Consultation launched in November 2023, this policy document framework building upon established strategies, charting a course to address the persisting and emerging challenges in today's ever-changing world. The policy identifies four main guiding principles as National Priorities:

- Improving child wellbeing – ensure the provision of adequate support and empower children to improve their quality of life;
- Supporting families with children – children should grow up in a positive family environment, with access to sufficient resources and access to quality services (and support). Families required to have the best conditions to adequately nurture and care for their children and foster child's development;
- Providing a better environment for children – children are to grow up in a safe physical and digital environment that fosters a healthy development, opportunities for growth and wellbeing;
- Strengthening child participation – children are to be supported to freely express their views on all matters and decisions that affect them, and to have those views taken into account at all levels of society

The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024

On a quarterly basis, MSPC engages with the relevant stakeholders to monitor the implementation of this strategic policy. The Implementation and Evaluation report for the period 2020-2022, which is envisaged to be published in Q1 2024, assesses the progress achieved in the context of the strategic policy actions outlined in the Strategy, by reviewing the advancements in the six dimensions of wellbeing and analysing the execution of the measures aimed at realising the policy's goals.

The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035

Preparations are currently underway for a renewed **National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035**. The Ministry is preparing for a number of extensive consultations with several organisations in the area to discuss the experiences and challenges being faced, with a view to identify the strategic policy actions within the various dimensions that are to be addressed through the renewed strategy. The National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035 will be adopted by 2024.

2. Specific Target Group and Key Services

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

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

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

2.1 Children in precarious family situations

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

The effects of Covid-19 and War in Ukraine

Whilst still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, further economic challenges experienced such as inflation due to the invasion of Ukraine amongst other factors, are likely to have also left a mark on the economic and social well-being of families and children, including children from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income families.

2.2 Social Protection for Children in precarious family situations

Malta's Social Protection System is purposely designed to safeguard society against the social risks in relation to individual, familial and societal wellbeing. Table 2 below provides an update on the implementation status of a number of social benefits and social welfare services provided to families with children in need to alleviate the low socio-economic status as at end December 2022 unless otherwise specified.

Table 2: Social Benefits and Social Welfare Services

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/
planned measures

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

Children's Allowance

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Children's Allowance is awarded weekly to families with children from birth until 16 years of age amounting to a total weekly minimum of €21.16 per child. Households who do not exceed the means test, are awarded higher rates of these allowances per child, up to a total weekly maximum of €41.58 per child.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.
As from 1st January 2023, Children's Allowance beneficiaries who exceed the means testing threshold of twenty-five thousand and nine-hundred and twenty-four euro (€25,924), will be awarded one-hundred and forty euro (€140) per child per year. Those not exceeding the means testing threshold will be awarded one-hundred and sixty euro (€160) per child per year.¹²

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

44,500 families.¹³

One-time €300 Bonus

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.
As from January 2022 this 'one-time bonus' was increased to €400 per child in 2022.¹⁴

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

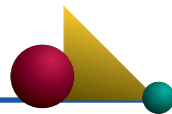
**Approximately
4,000 families/year.¹⁵**

¹² [https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/information-and-applications-for-benefits-and-services/family-benefits/childrens-allowance-supplement/#:~:text=As%20from%201st%20January%202023,140\)%20per%20child%20per%20year.](https://socialsecurity.gov.mt/en/information-and-applications-for-benefits-and-services/family-benefits/childrens-allowance-supplement/#:~:text=As%20from%201st%20January%202023,140)%20per%20child%20per%20year.)

¹³ Table 3: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2022/>

¹⁴ https://publicservicecms.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2022.pdf

¹⁵ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2020.pdf#



Widows' Pension

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

Support 179

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Supportline 179: This National helpline is a crises hotline accessible on a 24/7 basis for children.

Updates/Remarks

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

169 children.

Foster Care Allowance

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

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

Updates/Remarks

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

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

Foster Care Allowance:

203 beneficiaries.¹⁶

¹⁶ Table 3: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2022/>

Fostering Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Fostering Services mainly work on:

- i) eligibility of prospective foster carers;
- ii) carrying out foster care placement agreements and their regular revision;
- iii) drawing up review reports on foster carers; and
- iv) permanent fostering and adoption through fostering whereby minors placed in foster care have less chance of being lost in care.

In addition, a designated helpline

i.e., **1778 Helpline** is specifically aimed to provide support to persons who are interested in fostering.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

238 beneficiaries.

Disabled Child Allowance

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

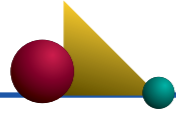
Updates/Remarks

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

2,028 children with a disability.¹⁷

¹⁷ Table 3: <https://nso.gov.mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2022-2/>



Orphan's Allowance

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

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

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Orphan's Allowance:
9 beneficiaries.¹⁸

¹⁸ Table 2: <https://hso.gov.mt/mt/government-expenditure-on-social-security-benefits-january-december-2022-2/>

Sustainable Baby Box initiative

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Sustainable Baby Box initiative:

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately
4,000 families.¹⁹

¹⁹ https://publicservice.gov.mt/mt/Pages/News/2020/20201016_TwettiqTql-Budget2020.aspx

Domestic Violence Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Domestic Violence Services include:

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

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Domestic Violence Services:
25 cases of children.

Għabex:
36 cases of children.

STOP!:
nil.

Child to Parent Violence:
27 cases of children.

Intake and Family Support Service (IFSS)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Other social work services are also offered to targeted groups of individuals, such as the **High Support Service** which offers one to one support for minors at the community level concerning their needs, particularly their reintegration within the wider community. Implemented and ongoing.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

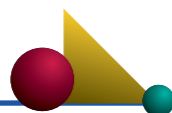
No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

IFSS:
115 cases of children.

Human Trafficking Service:
1 case.

High Support Service:
13 cases.²⁰

²⁰ <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/AlternativeCare/ALTCARE%20HYearly%20report%202023%20%28f%29.pdf>



Community Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

37 cases of children.

BeSmart Online!

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

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

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Hotline:

840 reports.

Helpline:

704 reports.

Out of Hours Emergency Service

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

179 cases were children.

Adoption Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

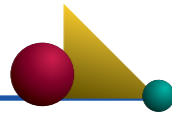
Adoption Services support families who are in the process of adopting a child/ren as well as families who adopted. The unit works to facilitate local and international adoptions and to prevent placement breakdowns.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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



After Care Service for children in care aged 15-17 years

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

After Care Service for children in care aged 15-17 years. Support to persons leaving institutional care to facilitate their independent living and ensure a good quality of life. An after-care plan is drawn, and a key worker follows this individualised plan together with the young person.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

54 active cases.²¹

²¹ It is important to point out that there is an overlap in the statistics of LAC and After Care service when it comes to minors between 15- 18 yrs.

Looked After Children (LAC)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

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

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

LAC: 461 cases.

*LAC Health Service: 799 cases.

Supervised Access Visits (SAVs) and Court Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

SAV: 46 cases.

SAV (Gozo Directorate): 1 case.

Children's House

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

50 forensic interviews were carried out.

Home Start (HS)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

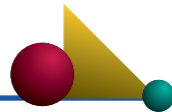
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Home-start Malta: 10 cases.

Home-start Gozo: 41 cases.



Holistic Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

- Social work and youth work **one to one interventions** for young people.
- Engaging Through Active Learning Programme (**E.T.A.L.**): Through this programme a youth worker and social worker intervene with young people who engage in challenging attitudes within the school and home environment.
- **Embark for Life (EFL)**: This project supports and addresses several needs of young people, mainly related to finding and retaining employment and to engage in training opportunities.
- **Opportunity Knocks (OK)** project works with youth to learn and enhance skills, boost their employment possibilities and other opportunities to help them reach their goals and advance in their career.
- Interventions with **youth inmates** within correctional facilities.

Updates/Remarks

- (**E.T.A.L.**): This programme focused on the themes of anger management, communication, gender and sexuality, substance misuse and fear.
- (**OK**) project: This EU Project came to an end however its services were incorporated in the YIF.
- Various **ad hoc projects** and initiatives amongst youths including a drama group and other activities for young people; a Service Facebook Page wherein the uploaded positive educational material is developed by young people; communication with young people through the Messenger app; an adolescent day programme consisting of informal learning; virtual youth groups and workshops.
- other ad hoc initiatives with vulnerable youths in communities, situations of bullying in schools and offering specialised help in particular groups of vulnerable youths.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

- **One to one interventions: 93²²**
- **Youth in Focus (YIF): 184**
- **Embark for Life (EFL): 113.**
- **(OK) project:²³**
 - * 512 grants given.
 - * 2,181 OK packs distributed.
 - * 173 assisted to enter further study or in employment.
 - * Capacity of the residential safe house of youths- 25
- **Adolescent Day Programme (ADP): 11 cases.**

²² <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/AnnualReports/Indesign%20Annual%202022%20Download.pdf>

²³ <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/AnnualReports/Indesign%20Annual%202022%20Download.pdf>

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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

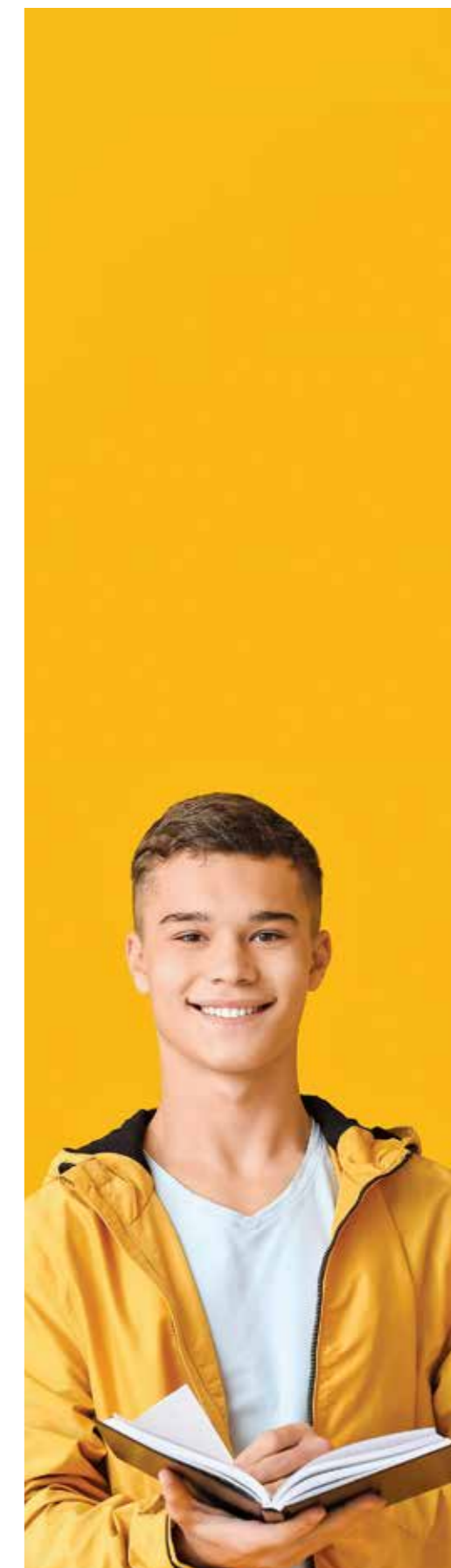
Updates/Remarks

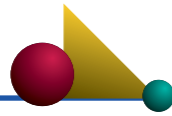
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

10,107 children benefitted.²⁴

²⁴ Children between 0-16years - Not unique cases but as a total from three distributions





The State Funded Food Distribution (SFFD)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

The State Funded Food Distribution (SFFD): Food boxes are distributed twice a year to families who are most in need or vulnerable and is totally funded by the State.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

4,177, children benefitted.²⁵

Programmes and Resources for Positive Parenting

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

A social welfare services branch in Gozo

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

A social welfare services branch in Gozo:

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

183 cases.

Prevention Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

A Substance Misuse In-patient Unit (SMIPU)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

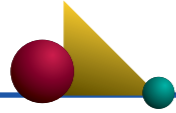
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

0 cases.²⁶

²⁵ Children between 0-16years – not unique cases but as a total from two distributions.

²⁶ <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/Sedqa/SEDQA%20Yearly%20online%20report%202022%20%28f%29.pdf>



A Substance Misuse Outpatients Unit (SMOPU)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

3 cases.

Psychological and Court Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

The Psychological Services offers a generic service and hosts an interdisciplinary team made up of Psychologists, Family Therapists, Gestalt Psychotherapists, an Art Psychotherapist and Counsellors. Court Services include psychotherapy service and coordination with persons who are being regularly seen and followed up on their progress by the Drug Offenders Rehabilitation Board (DORB).

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

129 cases -
17 cases from
these received
psychological
support.²⁷

²⁷ FSWS Statistical Report, pp 22-23 from: <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/Sedqa/SEDQA%20Yearly%20online%20report%202022%20%28f%29.pdf>



2.3 Early Childhood Education and Care, Inclusive Education and School-Based Activities, including a Healthy Meal Each School Day

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

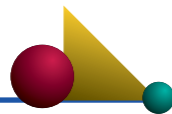
- a) Identify and address financial and non-financial barriers to participation in early childhood education and care, education, and school-based activities.

In Malta, financial barriers to participation in education are addressed through a number of services guaranteed by Government as from the early years which include (a) childcare, (b) free education (for all children aged 3 to 17), and (c) before, after and beyond school programmes. Table 3 below provides the ongoing and planned initiatives for 2022-2030 that address financial and non-financial barriers to education during all the entire childhood. Data is at end 2022 unless otherwise specified.

Table 3. Initiatives addressing barriers to education throughout childhood

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All Children aged 0-17 years



Free pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary education to all children

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year 2021/2022: Compulsory Education (State: pre-primary, primary and secondary): 34,369.²⁸

²⁸ Table 1: <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>

Free Childcare Services

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

In 2022, there was a significant increase, with 43.1% of children under 3 years attending formal childcare. Children (0–3) living in households with low-income earning less than €10,000 yearly are also eligible for the free childcare service, even if both parents are unemployed.²⁹

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

8,437 children of which 4,029 were newly enrolled.³⁰

²⁹ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 (National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024)

³⁰ <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=62789>

Breakfast Clubs

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

Klabb 3-16

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Klabb 3-16. An after-school care service within school structures is provided during the Scholastic year, particularly to bridge the gap between day school and regular working hours of parents in employment.

It is currently being operated in 30 localities and one may choose the centre that is most convenient. The service is also offered to working parents during holidays.

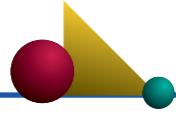
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

4,742 children were registered for this service.³¹

³¹ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 (National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024)



Skola Sajf

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

7,739 children.³²

Waiver of the Matsec and Sec Examination Fees

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Waiver of the Matsec and Sec Examination Fees.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

More than 6,000 students yearly.³³

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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

³⁴Students' Maintenance Grants include the initial grant, the one-time grant, the stipend, the supplementary allowances, the single parents' grant, Summer Special Stipends and Top up Stipends.

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

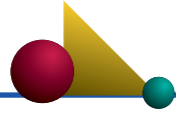
16,500 students.³⁵

³² This reflects 2021 data: <https://fes.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FES-ANNUAL-REPORT-2021-FINAL-with-cover.pdf>

³³ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2019.pdf

³⁴ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024.

³⁵ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf



10,000 funds for vulnerable students

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

10,000 funds for vulnerable students: The government will provide €10,000 per year to heads of State primary and secondary schools to spend on food and other basic resources for vulnerable students coming from disadvantaged family backgrounds.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.³⁶

The allocation of funds was calculated in a way that considers not only the student population but also how much of the population comes from an economic band that qualifies for Scheme 9. A manual was published with guidance for the use of these funds and meetings were held with all the Heads of Schools with the aim of informing them on making the maximum use of these funds for the wellbeing of children.³⁷

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately
1,800 eligible
low-income
families.³⁸

³⁶ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2022.pdf

³⁷ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024.

³⁸ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- b) take measures to prevent and reduce early school leaving, taking into account a gender perspective, to re-engage children who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out of education and training, including by providing personalised guidance and strengthening cooperation with families.

In order to decrease the rate of early school leavers and dropouts, Malta is implementing the second Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Policy: The Way Forward 2020-2030³⁹, which includes a holistic and inclusive approach, that not only targets students at risk but also those students who have already dropped out, their families and communities. Table 4 below illustrates ongoing and planned measures to prevent early school leaving. Data is at as end 2022 unless otherwise specified.

Table 4. Measures to prevent early school leaving

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All children aged 5-17 years attending State Primary,

Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools

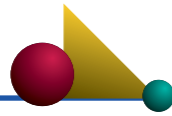
* Unmarried pregnant minors aged 13-17 years, their families and their partners

* Parents of children in Year 7 (attending State and Church Schools) aged 11 years

* Migrant Children



³⁹ Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Policy: The Way Forward 2020-2030. Accessed on 15/11/2023 from: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/ELET%20POLICY%20Document.pdf



One to one career guidance sessions

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

One to one career guidance sessions. This service aims to inform and prepare students about the world, even before students finish compulsory schooling. The service mostly focuses on secondary school students, with the aim of helping students to choose their post-secondary institution or career path. Year 10 students receive career exposure experience of their choice which helps them see the benefits of academic subjects in preparation for employment. The service is also provided within primary schools.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately 4,500 students.⁴⁰

Alternative Learning Programme (ALP)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year 2022/23: an intake of 91 students was registered.⁴¹

Gem16+

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Gem16+. A new school offering the opportunity to continue academic and work-related learning to those students aged 16 years and over who only attained 1 SEC exam, or the Secondary School Certificate and Profile. This is a 1-year educational programme.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year 2022/23: 87 students.

Work-based learning

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

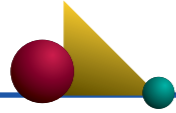
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year 2022: 826 students.

⁴⁰ Estimate based on National Statistics Office data: <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>

⁴¹ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024



Servizz Għożża

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

The services offered include:

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

During academic year 2022/23:

- * 54 Pregnancy Programmes were delivered.
- * 15 Mother and Baby Support Groups.
- * 19 Outreach Programmes.

Prevention Programme in State Schools:

- * 341 delivered to Year 7 students, and
- * 378 delivered to parents of Year 9 students.

Support to increase school attendance

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Support to increase school attendance.

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

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year 2022/23: 1,072 students who are habitually absent from school were followed by the College social work teams.

Community Liaison Workers (CLWs)

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

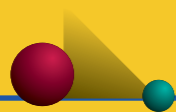
Community Liaison Workers (CLWs) work with the psychosocial support teams in colleges to follow cases of children out of school or at risk of social exclusion and poverty. The CLWs also work in particular with families of migrant learners who are at risk of underachievement or school drop-out or who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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

CLWs supported 3,247 parents.



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- c) provide learning support to children with learning difficulties to compensate for their linguistic, cognitive and educational gaps;
- d) adapt facilities and educational materials of early childhood education and care and of educational establishments and provide the most appropriate response to the specific needs of children with special educational needs and of children with disabilities, using inclusive teaching and learning methods; for this purpose, ensure that qualified teachers and other professionals are available, such as psychologists, speech therapists, rehabilitators, social workers or teaching assistants;
- e) put in place measures to support inclusive education and avoid segregated classes in early childhood education and care establishments and in educational establishments; this may also include giving priority to, or, when needed, early access for children in need;

Malta is addressing these targets by the implementation of various measures and policies, namely, the National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons⁴² aims to provide the Maltese disability sector with a roadmap up to year 2030. The primary objective of this strategy is to enhance individuals' accessibility to a wide range of books and various other learning resources in accessible formats in educational establishments and training for persons with disability on the use of digital technology. Moreover, the *Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion and A National Inclusive Education Framework* ensures the right to access to an inclusive education through equitable and accessible learning environment.

During academic year 2021/2022, in Malta there were 7,013 students⁴³ with disability. Out of these children: 5,490 had a Learning Support Educator (LSE) and 284 attended special schools. Table 5 below provides the planned initiatives for 2022-2030 (most of which have been ongoing and enhanced along the years) that ensure inclusive education during the entire childhood, taking into consideration those with learning difficulties and that require special educational needs.

Table 5. Measures seeking to ensure inclusive education throughout childhood

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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

⁴² Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing. Malta's 2021 – 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons. Accessed from: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf>.

⁴³ Figures include students listed as SEN students by the respective schools, enrolled in pre-primary (excluding childcare), primary and secondary education in state, Church and private institutions - NSO

Read with Me Programme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

For 2022, approximately 1,500 babies and toddlers (719 boys and 781 girls) attended Aqra Miegħi sessions.

Reading Ambassadors Programme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Reading Ambassadors Programme.

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

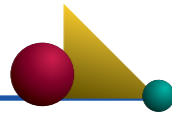
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

2,281 students benefitted from these sessions.





Nwar Programme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

The Magic of Stories

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Aproximately 10,500 children aged 4 to 7 years.

Training for Teachers

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

Instalment of Autism Units and Braille Machines

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing⁴⁴

This pilot project was launched during the 2021-2022 scholastic year.

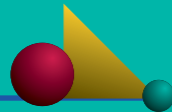
Braille machines equipped with modern technology were added in more schools in 2022 for an expenditure of €30,000.⁴⁵

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

4 Reach Units and 22 students benefitting.

⁴⁴ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2022.pdf

⁴⁵ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- f) provide at least one healthy meal each school day.
- g) ensure provision of educational materials, including digital educational tools, books, uniforms, or any required clothing, where applicable.

Families with limited financial resources or minimal educational experiences may encounter growing challenges in ensuring their children receive proper nourishment and essential educational resources. The cost of nutritious food and necessary learning materials can be overwhelming, compounded by a potential lack of understanding about what makes up a healthy diet. In order to address these issues, through the Scheme 9 and a number of other measures (listed in Table 6 below), Malta is committed in providing digital educational tools as well as a proactive approach to digitalisation for these cohorts in our society.

Table 6. Measures addressing students' basic necessities for the provision of quality education in schools

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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



Scheme 9

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

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

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

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

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

During scholastic year 2022/23, 2,659 eligible students.

Books are lent for free to the student per scholastic year

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing⁴⁴

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

1,017 children benefitted.

Strengthening the teaching of different languages

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

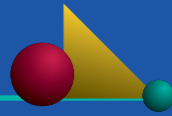
- a number of in-schools activities to promote the learning of foreign languages.
- increase access to books and digital resources.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- h) provide high speed connectivity, digital services and adequate equipment necessary for distance learning to ensure access to educational content online, as well as to improve digital skills of children in need and teachers and make the necessary investments to tackle all forms of digital divide and enhance digital competences.

In this regard, it is essential to support the development of learners to possess digital literacy skills and empower them to become self-reliant, self-assured, and intelligent users of technology. In order to address this, Malta has in the past years implemented various measures including free Internet access in schools and dedicated Wifi access⁴⁶; provision of MS Office 365 and MS Teams to all primary school students; various initiatives in Artificial Intelligence (AI), such as a Data Warehouse⁴⁷; and continuous awareness and courses to teachers and children to harness specific digital skills (e.g., coding)⁴⁸.

Table 7 below provides the ongoing and planned initiatives for 2022-2030 that address equality of access to:

- digital connectivity, services, and adequate equipment necessary for distance learning.
- educational content online.
- digital skills of children in need and educators.

Table 7. Measures addressing equal access to digital connectivity, educational content online, and increased digital skills

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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

⁴⁶ The Internet is based on a fibre-based, high speed connectivity. Possible introduction of even better connectivity, such as 5G, are being studied to be introduced till 2030.

⁴⁷ Moreover, it is planned that some AI websites will be introduced to help children during their curriculum studies, especially to early years school children.

⁴⁸ Additional specific digital skills courses are offered to girls.

One Tablet per Child project

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately 22,500 students.⁴⁹

Free Internet Vouchers

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

3,100 students are eligible each year.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

⁵⁰ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2021.pdf

Online training by Head of Departments and Support Teachers

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Related initiatives included:

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Five sessions and a total of 23 educators finished the training.



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- i) provide transport to early childhood education and care and education establishments, where applicable.

Transportation services are provided at no cost for students attending Kindergarten or compulsory schooling (Primary to Secondary School) if they live more than 1km away from their school. Additionally, young children in pre-primary education receive supervised care during their commute. This initiative is currently ongoing, as per below Table 8.

Table 8. Free transport for all

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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

Free Transport for all

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

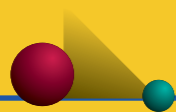
Free Transport for all (home - school - home). Supervision is offered on transport used by pre-primary children

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

During scholastic year 2022/23, 33,690 students.



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- j) ensure equal and inclusive access to school-based activities, including participation in school trips and sport, leisure and cultural activities.

Providing equal and inclusive opportunities for children to participate in school-based activities within the daily curriculum is essential for their comprehensive educational experience and active engagement. Alongside the academic subjects, these activities also encompass spiritual, religious, and ethical experiences, which further seek to enrich the educational prospects and foster the utmost potential of each individual child by exploring their innovative capabilities, collaborating with others, unleashing their creativity, and developing an appreciation for diverse cultures.

Table 9 provides the ongoing and planned initiatives for 2022-2030 through which equal and inclusive access to school-based activities for children in need is going to be implemented.

Table 9. Measures for equal and inclusive access to school-based activities

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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



Physical Education within the National School Curriculum

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Physical Education within the National School Curriculum. Children have regular lessons of physical activity at their schools; thus, promoting a healthy and active lifestyle among students. Through a variety of games, subject content focuses on the development of psychomotor skills and promotes physical, social and psychological development. Through this subject, children learn more about teamwork, fair play, leadership and social inclusion.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

58,377 (pre-primary, primary, secondary).⁵¹

⁵¹ <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>

The Heritage Malta Passport card

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

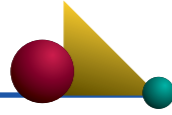
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Academic year
2021/2022: 4,611 (all year 1 students).⁵²

⁵² <https://nso.gov.mt/pre-primary-primary-and-secondary-formal-education-2021-2022/>



Outreach programs

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately
5,500 children
per year.

Thematic programmes

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Currently work is in progress to transform museums into spaces that are accessible to children on the autism spectrum.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

During 2022, an activity was organised for students on the autism spectrum and material that facilitates museums visits for people on the autism spectrum was launched.

5 special tours were organised for people suffering from ALS, and 4 Activities were done for visually impaired audience. Moreover audio-visuals in sign language were recorded.⁵³

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

⁵³ MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024

Culture Pass

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

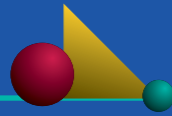
During scholastic year 2020/2021, the measure was extended to post-secondary students (MQF Level 4) and due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, the productions were offered to schools via an online programme.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

During scholastic
Year 2022/2023
38,859 students.



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- k) develop a framework for cooperation of educational establishments, local communities, social, health and child protection services, families, and social economy actors to support inclusive education, to provide after school care and opportunities to participate in sport, leisure and cultural activities and to build and invest in educational establishments as centres of inclusion and participation.

The National Inclusive Education Framework emphasizes the importance of school leaders and educators in cultivating a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere that caters to the unique needs of every student. This collaboration involves not only parents/primary caregivers but also other community members. The framework covers several key aspects, including promoting positive behaviour management, challenging and tailored teaching methods, offering mentorship and support for staff well-being, providing ongoing professional development and training opportunities, as well as ensuring inclusive access through preventive measures, screening processes, early interventions, and support services in child-care centres, early childhood settings, and compulsory school years.

2.4 Healthcare

In Malta all children have access to free healthcare services through the State. These start from pre-birth during pregnancy to further on through their growing years since early child healthcare is important to mitigate physical and psychological issues further on in adulthood. AROPE families and their children tend to have more complex needs due to their situation. They may also more susceptible to physical and mental health issues. In this regard there is the provision of adequate free healthcare and services by Government, as well as awareness raising on healthy eating benefits.

Various policy documents such as the Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2022-2030⁵⁴ - The National Cancer Plan 2017-2021⁵⁵ - The National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus 2018-2025⁵⁶ - and The Transgender Healthcare⁵⁷, have been drafted. Although these are aimed towards the general population, these also acknowledge child-specific needs.

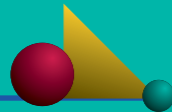
The following section outlines the Health related measures and although most target the general population, there is also inclusion of measures and services that target children, including AROPE children.

54 Ministry for Health. 2019. 'Building Resilience, Transforming Services: A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030'. Available at: https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental_Health_Strategy_EN.pdf

55 Ministry for Health. 2017. The National Cancer Plan for the Maltese Islands, 2017-2021. Available at: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEH-HEALTH/Documents/MinistryForHealth-Cancer%20Plan.pdf

56 Ministry for Health (MfH). 2018. A National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis C Virus as a Public Health Threat in the Maltese Islands 2018-2025. Available at: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEH-HEALTH/Documents/Hepatitis%20C%20Book_web%2020180130.pdf

57 Ministry for Health. Transgender Healthcare. Available at: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Transgender%20Healthcare.pdf> https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Transgender_Healthcare_EN-MT.pdf



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- a) measures taken to facilitate early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems, including those related to mental health, ensure access to periodic medical, including dental and ophthalmology, examinations and screening programmes; ensure timely curative and rehabilitative follow-up, including access to medicines, treatments and supports and access to vaccination programme.

The Maltese healthcare encourages early detection and early treatment of developmental, growth, sensory and learning problems, and physical disorders. These remain key as they allow for the development of specific, tailor-made care plans for children which can help reduce other challenges further on in life.

Most of the planned programmes and measures include screening programmes, physical assessments, free provision of medication, vaccinations, and check-ups, as well as the provision of social welfare support both in schools and within the community to ensure the wellbeing of children, particularly of children in vulnerable situations. These include services for children with mental health difficulties.

Table 10. Key characteristics of healthcare measures for early screening, detection and immunization

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

- * All AROPE children aged 0-17 years
- * All children in alternative care
- * All children referred to Social Services⁵⁸



⁵⁸ Referrals to Social Welfare Services can be made by social workers or other health professionals working within health centres, child protection and domestic violence entities, therapeutic services, and community family- or addictions- related centres or services.

Free periodic screening for children

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

4,462 children attended appointments.

Lenti fuq I-Izvilupp ta' Wliedna

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Lenti fuq I-Izvilupp ta' Wliedna - An Autism screening programme for children aged between 18 and 30 months.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately 4,000 eligible infants.⁵⁹

Pre-school entry assessments

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

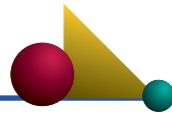
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

⁵⁹ Estimate based on National Statistics Office: [https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20\(Table%202\)](https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20(Table%202))



Comprehensive vision screening

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

7,417 students benefitted from vision screening.

Scoliosis screening for all children attending state and church schools.

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Scoliosis screening for all children attending state and church schools.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

4,948 students were screened for scoliosis in schools.

Periodic TB screening and vaccination record checking

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

388 students.

Monitoring of children diagnosed with Scoliosis

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

976 children are currently on Scoliosis Review Clinic database.

Multi-modal assessments for various developmental difficulties

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

This initiative is coordinated by a number professionals under different healthcare specialties. The data required is not currently gathered.

Remote Patient Monitoring of Blood Sugar Levels

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

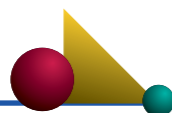
Remote Patient Monitoring of Blood Sugar Levels -The blood sugar levels of children below 16 years with Type I diabetes are monitored remotely through the use of mobile technologies.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately 134 children under the age of 16.



Free vaccinations

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately
4,000 infants.⁶⁰

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

For the birth year of 2022, uptake of these vaccines is above 95% for most of the vaccines. Specifically: 99.7% for DTP containing vaccine dose 1, 98.7% for DTP-containing vaccine dose 3, 97.8% for PCV10, 97.8 for Men B1, 96.8 for Men ACWY and 96.32% for MMR (birth year 2021, as this is taken at age 1 year 1 month. HPV vaccination is now being offered to both males and females aged 12years, with an ongoing catchup campaign for those aged 13-15. Invites would have been sent to all children aged 12-14 by the end of November, and by January 2024, the catchup campaign will be extended to all boys born as of the year 2000.

⁶⁰ Estimate based on National Statistics Office: [https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20\(Table%202\)](https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20(Table%202))

COVID-booster vaccine

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

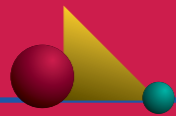
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

Other data not available.





Provision of Medications and Specialised Paediatric Feeds

Patients suffering from chronic medical conditions (Yellow Card Holders) are entitled to free of charge medicines which are specified under the Social Security Act (Schedule V). Moreover, another provision (Schedule II – Pink Card Holders) also includes access to free medicines from a restricted list of essential medicines to children in alternative care, fostered children living with a family, or students attending full-time education. The Government Formulary List⁶¹ includes a list of medicinal products, vitamins, food supplements and borderline substances available in Malta. This List also provides feeds for medical use: sip feeds, tube feeds, specialised formulas and feeds for metabolic diseases in childhood. **Exceptional Medicinal Treatment (EMT)** requests can be made for the procurement and provision of treatments that are not otherwise on the Government Formulary List such as specialised paediatric feeds or treatments, feeds for rare diseases and paediatric formulations.

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

The key characteristics of the abovementioned initiatives are outlined in Table 11 below, updated with data as at end 2022 unless otherwise indicated.

Table 11. Measures for access to medicinal products

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All AROPE Maltese and EU children aged 0-17

* All children in Alternative Care

* All children requiring medicines and treatments for chronic

61 Ministry for Health. 2021. The Government Formulary List. Accessed at: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/pharmaceutical/Pages/formulary/formulary.aspx>

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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Medications and treatments issued under Schedule V of the Social Security Act (Yellow Card) – covering a total of 83 chronic conditions – is offered to all children suffering from any of these conditions. Meanwhile, Schedule II (Pink Card) offers access to free medicines from a restricted list of essential medicines to particularly children in vulnerable situations.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

Exceptional Medicinal Treatment (EMT) requests

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

New and Innovative treatments

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

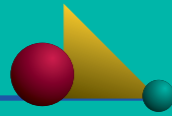
New and Innovative treatments, including Cystic Fibrosis Treatments and medicines for Anaphylaxis to over 325 schools in case of emergency.

Updates/Remarks

Cystic Fibrosis:
Implemented and ongoing.
Anaphylaxis:
Still to be implemented.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.



Provision of Mental Healthcare

Mental healthcare is key, especially at an early age, as this can detect and support the treatment of mental health disorders through early detection. Prevention and promotion are also part of the objectives of the National Strategy for Mental Health in Malta 2020-2030⁶².

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

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

These services are supported by the following comprehensive list of provisions related to mental health, as well as their key characteristics, as found in Table 12 below which is updated with data as at end 2022 unless otherwise specified.

Table 12. Measures for mental healthcare

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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

62 Ministry for Health. 'Building Resilience, Transforming Services. A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030'

Psychiatric services for youths aged 12-18

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

Psychiatric services for youths aged 12-18 with any of a number of mental health problems in Malta's psychiatric hospital.

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

Four-week intensive follow-up

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

In-depth multi-disciplinary, intensive and individualised therapy

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

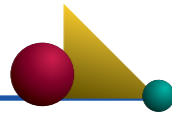
In-depth multi-disciplinary, intensive and individualised therapy is provided by a specialized team to young people aged 13 – 25 years with multiple complex mental disorders within the community

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.



Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT)

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
The data required is not currently gathered.

DBT and MBT

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Staff-oriented training is provided for the conduct of **Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills groups** as well as for **Mentalisation Behaviour Therapy** for children aged 13-15 years.

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
DBT- 34 children and youths are receiving this service in 2023 (the service is provided in weekly sessions throughout the year).

Family-focused therapeutic modalities, or services

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Other stand-alone clinics or centres providing **family-focused therapeutic modalities, or services** affecting by the hobby (e.g. music, art, sports, etc)

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Evaluation, advice and intervention

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Data not available.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Incredible Years Programme

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Incredible Years Programme: Children with ADHD and/or other challenging behaviour issues – and their families - are provided parental skills education within the school setting.

Updates/Remarks
Data not available.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Family Therapy, Parenting Programmes, Psychoeducation and Psychotherapy

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Children referred to the relevant social protection authorities and their families benefit from **family therapy, parenting programmes, psychoeducation and psychotherapy** within the community. Implemented and ongoing.

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Youth In Focus Service

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Youth In Focus Service: Young persons aged 13-17 years receive assistance that addresses their specific needs⁶³ in collaboration with their family.

Updates/Remarks
Data not available.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
184 young persons.

⁶³ To name a few, these include: anger management, involvement in vandalism, turbulent relationships with others, alcohol/drug abuse, promiscuity, coming out, poverty & homelessness and money management.

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- b) measures taken to provide targeted rehabilitation and habilitation services for children with disabilities.

In Malta, various strategies have been published, such as the National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons⁶⁴ and the National Autism Strategy 2021-2030⁶⁵, Together these ensure the underlying principle of equal treatment for persons with disability and awareness raising in the field as well as the accessibility and inclusion for the wellbeing of children with an emphasises on the early detection and intervention.

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

Table 13. Measures for children with disability

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All AROPE children with disability and their families

* All children with disability in alternative care



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

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

A one-stop-shop within the community

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Data not available.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

Voucher Scheme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

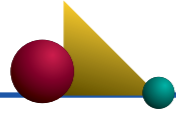
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

15 beneficiaries.

64 Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations and Consumer Rights. 2021. 'Freedom to Live – Malta's 2021 – 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons'. Accessed at: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf>

65 Ministry for inclusion and social Wellbeing. 2021. 'Respecting Diversity, Safeguarding Equity: Malta's 2021-2030 National Autism Strategy'. Accessed at: <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/National-Autism-Strategy-EN.pdf>



Support specialized for children on the Autism spectrum

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Data not available.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

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

Small community residential homes for children with disabilities

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Data not available.

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- c) measures taken to implement accessible health promotion and disease prevention programmes targeting children in need and their families as well as professionals working with children.

Health promotion in Malta is provided through various services and information dissemination, aimed at expecting couples and new parents/guardians, and beyond. Specialised multi-disciplinary units provide information both in clinical and educational settings as well as the community, as applicable. The aim is to reinforce lifelong healthy habits and informative sessions which is particularly beneficial for families and children at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion.

Table 14 below illustrates how the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and their families are locally pertinent and provided in different settings and include data as at end 2022 unless otherwise specified.

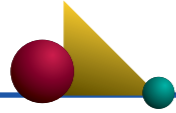
Table 14. Measures related to the promotion of healthy lifestyles

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All AROPE children aged 0-17 and their families

* All children of mothers with psychosocial issues





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

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Approximately the parents of 4,000 eligible new borns.⁶⁶

Specialized walk-in clinics

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Physical and Nutrition Education are embedded in the National School Curriculum

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Physical and Nutrition Education are embedded in the National School Curriculum. Regular lessons aim to teach children about physical activity and nutrition through hands-on activities with an aim to instil healthy lifestyle perspectives and skills.

Updates/Remarks
Pilot Project has been concluded.

Targeted towards 15-30 children aged between 5-7 years and their families.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Measure still being implemented.

Specific programmes

Status
Measure still to be implemented

Description
Specific programmes targeting behaviours related to nutrition, physical activity, and obesity in pre-school children and their families.

Updates/Remarks
Measure still to be implemented

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Measure still to be implemented.

Specific parental psycho-education

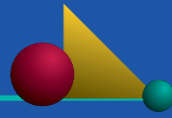
Status
Measure still to be implemented

Description
Specific parental psychoeducation is offered to parents of children on the Autism spectrum.

Updates/Remarks
Measure still to be implemented

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Measure still to be implemented.

⁶⁶ Estimate based on National Statistics Office: [https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20\(Table%202\).](https://nso.gov.mt/world-population-day-11-july-2023/#:~:text=Nearly%2053%20per%20cent%20of,and%20over%20(Table%202).)



Ancillary Measures to Health

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

The meetings with the professionals including the concerned Ministries continued. During these meetings the required resources and services to carry out this project are discussed. A site for Malta has still not been identified yet.

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

After the concept design was chosen, meetings with the relevant stakeholders are being conducted so that the actual design is designed.

Approx 100-150 children with mental illness who require hospital inpatient will benefit from this.

2.5 Healthy Nutrition

In Malta, school schemes aim to improve and promote healthy nutrition for all children. The continuous EU-School Scheme available in both state and non-state Primary schools, promotes healthy habits to children from an early start (3 years of age) and contributes to awareness raising and education on the benefits of healthy diets, including increasing the intake of fruit, vegetables, and milk for children. The renewed School Scheme for years 2023-2027 aims to continue building on this to ensure effective access to sufficient and healthy nutrition for primary school children. This focus of this Scheme is more on awareness raising and information dissemination on the benefits of healthy eating habits, local food chains and combating food wastage.

The following measure aims to mitigate the barriers encountered in accessing healthy nutrition particularly for children in vulnerable situations, children living in poverty, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Children in vulnerable situations, children living in poverty or children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to face barriers in accessing healthy nutrition. Within this context, this measure will provide for one portion of fruit and vegetables per child, per week, thus capturing children in vulnerable situations as per Table 15 below, which includes data as at end 2022 unless otherwise specified.

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- support access to healthy meals also outside of school days, including through in-kind or financial support, in particular in exceptional circumstances such as school closures; and
- provide adequate information to children and families on healthy nutrition for children.

Table 15. Healthy nutrition provisions

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

* All AROPE children aged 0-17 and their families

* All children of mothers with psychosocial issues

School Scheme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

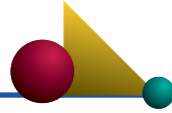
Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Approximately 20,000 students.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf



The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- a) ensure that nutrition standards in early childhood education and care and education establishments address specific dietary needs;

In Malta child-care centres need to have a healthy eating policy in place, and to ensure staff give particular attention to special dietary requirements. Free accessible drinking water is also provided to the children attending the centre. The breakfast club available for children in primary schools, outsources food in compliance with the Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan issued by the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation. This ensures that any food procured by schools is in compliance to the set regulations and policies.

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- b) limit advertisement and restrict the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in early childhood education and care and educational establishments;

Schools cannot promote food unless such advertisement is in line with Legal Notice 266/2018 in relation to procurement of food for schools. To further limit advertisements and to restrict the availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugars other tailor-made programmes remain in place. These include information dissemination, community outreach and support to schools which includes training of staff.

Schools are required to prohibit any promotions of fats, sugars and salts in line with Legal Notice 266/2018 in relation to procurement of food for schools. In fact, schools are subject to fines if found in breach of these regulations. Similarly, in line with the Healthy Eating Policy, educational programmes such as the Breakfast Club also have to ensure that to not promote or advertise any fats, sugars and salts.



2.6 Adequate Housing

The improvement of living conditions, the issue of homelessness, and the exclusion from suitable housing have been recognized as crucial concerns in the 'National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024'. This policy places great importance on Malta's approach towards enhancing the quality of life and overall well-being by implementing initiatives that promote the growth and accessibility of social housing.

The following sections outline the main planned and ongoing measures to implement the recommendations of the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. It is to be noted that unless outlined otherwise, the mentioned measures and services target all children, including AROPE children.

The European Child Guarantee calls on Member States to:

- a) ensure that homeless children and their families receive adequate accommodation, prompt transfer from temporary accommodation to permanent housing and provision of relevant social and advisory services;
- b) assess and revise, if necessary, national, regional and local housing policies and take action to ensure that the interests of families with children in need are duly taken into account, including addressing energy poverty and preventing the risk of homelessness; such assessment and revision should also include social housing or housing assistance policies and housing benefits and further improve accessibility for children with disabilities;
- c) provide for priority and timely access to social housing or housing assistance for children in need and their families;
- d) take into account the best interests of the child as well as the child's overall situation and individual needs when placing children into institutional or foster care; ensure the transition of children from institutional or foster care to quality community-based or family-based care and support their independent living and social integration.

Homelessness: In order to ensure that individuals have access to suitable and reasonably priced housing, thus promoting stability and facilitating upward social mobility, Malta adopts a proactive stance towards the problem of homelessness and housing exclusion. The government provides assistance to non-profit and non-governmental organizations that offer services to homeless individuals. In 2022, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, has entered into social agreements with eight non-governmental organizations, allocating around €2 million in funding. *Social Housing:* The Government places great emphasis on ensuring that people have suitable housing, with a particular focus on social accommodation. This responsibility falls under the Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation, which oversees various aspects such as social housing management, affordable housing, rental arrangements, and the supervision of housing projects and improvements.

Community-Based Care and Foster Care: The government is responsible for providing residential care for children requiring support and aid. During 2022 nine community homes, where a small group of children live together in a community setting were accommodating children in need of assistance, while some children are placed with foster care families. Other schemes supporting young adults leaving the care system are in place as young adults move towards independent living.

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

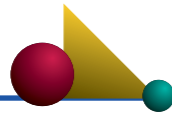


Table 16. Measures addressing housing for children

Target Groups being addressed by ongoing/planned measures

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

Prioritisation of families with children

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

Scheme to provide financial assistance

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing

Government continued to help with investments in photovoltaic panels together with batteries for energy storage.

Grants on the restoration of domestic wells, and grants on the purchase of solar water heaters and heat pump water heaters were also continued. In addition free house visits to guide the most vulnerable families on how to reduce the excess consumption of light and water, and be more energy efficient are also offered. This is combined with an informative campaign on efficient technologies for home use, with more information on what the Government offers.⁶⁸

***Pilot Project: Nearly-Zero Energy Building** - Energy efficient renovation of a block of social housing. The Housing Authority joined forces with the University of Malta, through the Institute for Sustainable Energy, to cooperate together in the field of sustainable energy and energy performance of buildings.

The overall objective of this project is to carry out a deep energy renovation of one block of the Housing Authority for almost zero energy performance (NZEB). This will serve as a pilot project of good practice.⁶⁹

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Data not available.

⁶⁸ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2022.pdf
⁶⁹ <https://housingauthority.gov.mt/annual-reports/>

Assistance to assist in rent payments

Status
Ongoing Measure

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

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
4,154 beneficiaries were receiving the improved and strengthened rental benefit.⁷⁰

* care plan for social accommodation beneficiaries 115 families.⁷¹

⁷⁰ <https://housingauthority.gov.mt/annual-reports/>
⁷¹ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

Families with children with disabilities

Status
Ongoing Measure

Description
Prioritisation of **families with children with disabilities** on the waiting list for social accommodation.

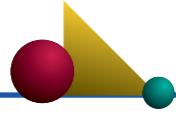
Several housing units which are designed specifically for individuals who suffer from a disability are being built and shall be allocated accordingly. Implemented and ongoing

Updates/Remarks
Implemented and ongoing

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

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022
Until September 2022, more than 145 individuals and 2 families with two children or more were benefiting from this initiative and were allocated flatlets with shared amenities as per the intergenerational principle.⁷²

⁷² MSPC Internal Report. Implementation and Evaluation Report 2020-2022 National Strategy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024



A Sens-Ability scheme

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Aproximately 49 families have benefitted or were in the process of benefitting from this financial aid.⁷³

⁷³ <https://housingauthority.gov.mt/annual-reports/2022>

Energy Benefit

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

16,004 unique beneficiaries including children.

Community Homes for Children

Status

Ongoing Measure

Description

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

Updates/Remarks

Implemented and ongoing

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

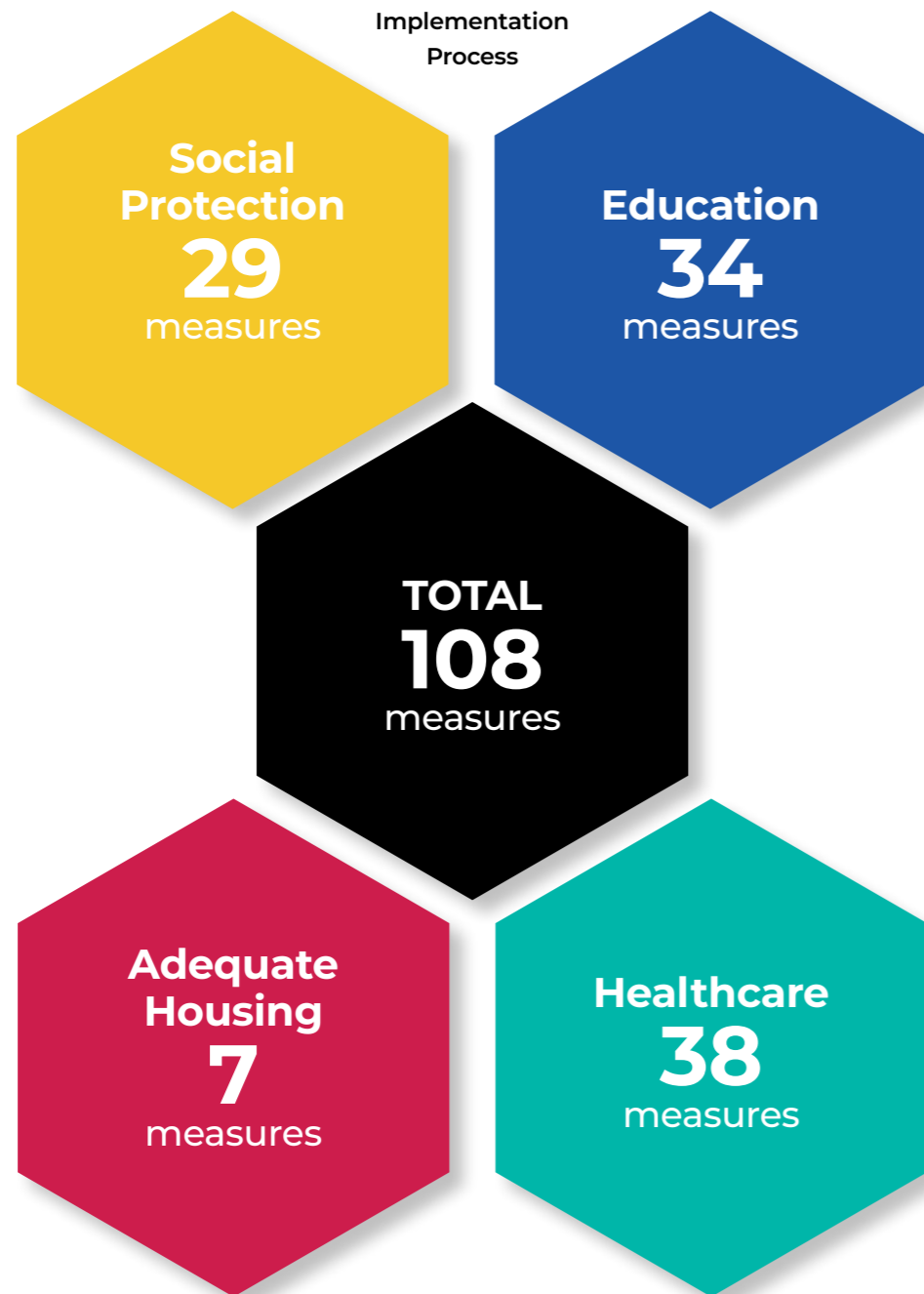
42 placements in 9 community homes.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ <https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Documents/StatisticalReports%20by%20Agency/AlternativeCare/ALTCARE%20Yearly%20online%20report%202022%20%28f%29.pdf>

2.7 Overall Implementation Process

As depicted in Figure 2 below, following the consultation process undertaken with the stakeholder Ministries, a total of 108 measures were ongoing/being implemented over four key areas, of which 29 measures relate to social protection, 34 measure relate to education, 38 measures related to healthcare and 7 measures relate to adequate housing. Through the provided updates, it is very evident that in the past two years, these services and benefits being provided by the different Ministries have been further strengthened and increased, with a view, to better cater for the needs of children in vulnerable situations and ensuring that no child is left behind.

Figure 2: Total Implementation Process



3. Planned Measures 2022-2027

With a total investment of €145 million allocated towards the Child Guarantee for the period of 2022-2027 with the objective to build on existing measures, this investment is intended to support all children including children in need, with a view to enable them to succeed. Table 17 below shows the implementation progress of these planned measures as identified in the National Action Plan. 50% of these listed planned measures had been implemented by 2023.

Table 17. Planned Measures for a Child Guarantee

Target Groups being addressed by planned measures

* All children aged 0-17 years and their parents

Measure 1

Description

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

Status of Implementation at December 2022

Implemented in 2023 and ongoing.⁷⁵

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

10,000 students.⁷⁶

Measure 2

Description

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

Status of Implementation at December 2022

Still to be implemented.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Still to be implemented.

⁷⁵ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagjit_2023.pdf

⁷⁶ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagjit_2023.pdf

Measure 3

Description

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

Status of Implementation at December 2022

Still to be implemented.

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

Still to be implemented.

Measure 5

Description

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

Status of Implementation at December 2022

Implemented in 2023 and ongoing.⁷⁸

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

2,500 students were eligible.

Measure 4

Description

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

Status of Implementation at December 2022

In the process of implementation.⁷⁷

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

It is estimated that 22,500 students will benefit.

Measure 6

Description

Extending the Scheme 9 initiative so that eligible children do not have to choose from the services offered but are eligible for all of them. Free eyeglasses to children who need them will be added among the already existing list of services offered.

Status of Implementation at December 2022

Implemented in 2022 and ongoing.⁷⁹

No of Beneficiaries as at end 2022

2,500 students were eligible.

4. EU Funds (ESF+)

A budget of 124.4€ Million ESF+ funds have been allocated to Malta to support projects promoting education and training, access to employment and healthcare. Strategic priorities identified include reducing early-school leaving and addressing skills shortages through innovative teaching methods and learning tools, inclusive education for vulnerable groups (such as children with disabilities) and education and lifelong learning in key areas.

The ESF+ investments will support Malta achieve multiple targets including that of **reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by 3.3 percentage points.**



⁷⁷ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

⁷⁸ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

⁷⁹ https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Documents/Twettiq_tal-Bagit_2023.pdf

5. Governance, Monitoring and Reporting

5.1. Monitoring

As mentioned earlier, for the purpose of the Child Guarantee, children in ‘precarious family situations (economic fragility)’ will refer to all those **families who have children under the age of 18 years and whose income does not exceed the National Minimum Wage**. Within this context, policy-targeting, monitoring and reporting are based on following existing set of indicators as shown in table 18.

Table 18. Pertinent indicators

Indicator		Available Data 2020	Available Data 2022
AROPE Children living in a single parent household	Single Parent Households with one or more dependent children AROPE:	51.5% (8,154) ⁸⁰	43.3% (6,796) ⁸¹
	Children AROP ⁸² :	20.4% (17,000 persons under 18 years)	19.3% (16,000 persons under 18 years)
Are Children living in low-income households	Children in Households with Very Low Work Intensity ⁸³ :	6.1% ⁸⁴	4.4%
	Children experiencing Severe Material and Social Deprivation (SMSD) ⁸⁵ :	6.7% ⁸⁶	6.5%
	Children experiencing Material and Social Deprivation ⁸⁷ :	10.3%	9.2%

Within a National Context, as outlined in table 18, AROPE rates recorded among children in single-parent households registered a decrease from 51.5% to 43.3% between 2020 – 2022. A similar decline in figures has been registered during the same reporting period for children living in low-income households. This decrease in trend⁸⁸, which is a stark contrast to the figures reported by other EU member states, reflects the compounded impact of initiatives/measures implemented.

Child Guarantee Coordinator

The Child Guarantee Coordinator for Malta is:

Mr Jonathan Silvio

Director Coordination and Implementation

Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights.

During 2023, preparatory work was ongoing for the setting up of a Children’s Unit focusing on various areas directly relating to children. This unit will be responsible for the overall implementation of the European Child Guarantee across Government.



80 NSO. 2021. EU-SILC 2020: Salient Indicators. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://nso.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/News2021_175.pdf

81 NSO. 2023. EU-SILC 2022: Salient Indicators. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: <https://nso.gov.mt/eu-silc-2022-salient-indicators/>

82 Eurostat. 2023. At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and sex - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys [ilc_li02__custom_8249309]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_li02__custom_8249309/default/table?lang=en.

83 Eurostat. 2023. People living in households with very low work intensity by age and sex (population aged 0 to 59 years) [ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371/default/table?lang=en

84 There was a slight revision from NAP quoted data. Eurostat. 2023. People living in households with very low work intensity by age and sex (population aged 0 to 59 years) [ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371/default/table?lang=en

85 Eurostat. 2023. Severe material and social deprivation rate by age and sex [ilc_md11__custom_8249456]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_md11__custom_8249456/default/table?lang=en

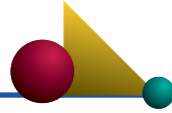
86 There was a slight revision from NAP quoted data. As from 2020, this indicator of SMSD is being used instead of the previous indicator for which data was reported within the National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030.

87 Eurostat. 2023. Material and social deprivation rate by age and sex [ilc_md07__custom_8249642]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_md07__custom_8249642/default/table?lang=en

88 Eurostat. 2023. At-risk-of-poverty rate by poverty threshold, age and sex - EU-SILC and ECHP surveys [ilc_li02__custom_8249309]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_li02__custom_8249309/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. 2023. People living in households with very low work intensity by age and sex (population aged 0 to 59 years) [ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_lvhl1n__custom_8249371/default/table?lang=en

Eurostat. 2023. Severe material and social deprivation rate by age and sex [ilc_md11__custom_8249456]. Accessed on 31/10/2023 from: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_md11__custom_8249456/default/table?lang=en



6. Concluding Remarks

Ensuring that all children are enabled to maximise their potential remains a priority for Government. Overall policy in recent years endeavoured to offer children a wide spectrum of opportunities with a view to meet their needs and fulfil their aspirations. At the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, all relevant strategies and policies are being developed with a view to support and compliment the implementation of the Child Guarantee at a national level. By way of example, the recent consultation process for the Children's Policy Framework 2023-2030, specifically referred to the Fight against Poverty and Social Exclusion within the Strategy. Similarly, this approach is key across all major actors involved in the formulation of strategies and policies, to ensure a stronger alignment to targets and policies set in relation to all children, including children at risk of poverty.

From an implementation perspective, in Malta, children are benefitting from a myriad of services and investments. As outlined in this report, the use of the AROPE indicator focuses on children-at-risk of vulnerability. Within the local context, the registered decrease in AROPE from 51.5% to 43.3% between 2020-2022 (refer to table 18 above) amongst children in single-parent households, is a reflection of the overall positive impact experienced by this category of children.

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

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

Apart from the children's allowance, another increase will be provided to families in their bonus for birth and adoption. This bonus of €300 was introduced in 2020 and was increased to €400 per child in 2022. In 2024, this bonus will be increased for the second time, from €400 to €500 for the first child and from €400 to €1,000 for the second new child or more in the family.

Moreover, in a period of global inflation and pressures strong on the international property markets, the Government managed to keep stable the figure of people applying for alternative accommodation because it maintained a good rhythm of allocations of social housing units and

more social housing units are expected to be completed during 2024. Further renting incentives were also announced, particularly in relation to the Private Renting Scheme, whereby an increase for families with children was also announced. The maximum rent assistance would increase from €4,800 to €5,400 for a family with one child and from €5,000 to €6,000 for a family with two or more children.

Further investment was also announced to continue reinforcing investment in educational infrastructure and quality of education. The extension of the One Tablet per child initiative would continue during 202, and work has also begun to distribute a new laptop to every student in the seventh year. Next year, stipends will be further increased again in proportion to the cost of living with a yearly increase of €64.

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

As a next step to this report, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, within its role of Child Guarantee Coordinator, will now be reporting the progress sustained by Malta with regards to the services for children in vulnerable situations in Quarter 1 2024.







NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

**FOR A CHILD GUARANTEE
2022-2030**



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

