European Commission

Education and Training Monitor 2013

Malta

Education and Training

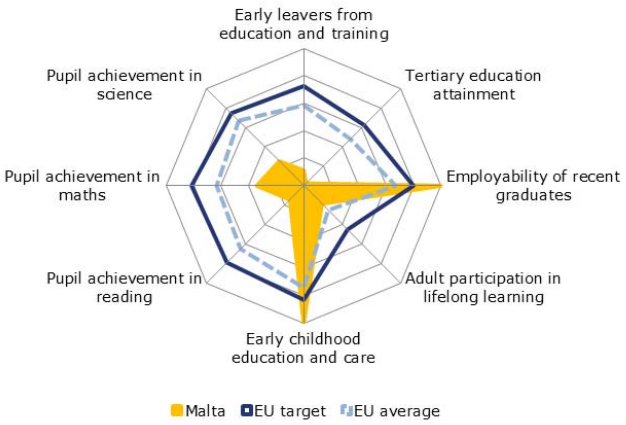
1. Key indicators and benchmarks

Europe 2020 headline targets			Malta 2009	Malta 2012	EU average 2009	EU average 2012	Europe 2020 target / Benchmark
1. Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)			36.8% [b]	22.6%	14.2% [EU28]	12.7% [EU28]	EU target: 10%
2. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)			21.0%	22.4%	32.1% [EU28]	35.7% [EU28]	EU target: 40% National target: 33%
ET 2020 Benchmarks							
3. Early childhood education and care (4 years old - year before start of compulsory primary)			93.9%	100.0% [11,b]	91.7%	93.2% [11]	95%
4. Basic skills Low achievers (15 year-olds; Level 1 or lower in PISA study)	Reading		36.3%	:	19.6%	:	15%
	Mathematics		33.7%	:	22.2%	:	15%
	Science		32.5%	:	17.7%	:	15%
5. Learning mobility	Initial vocational training (IVET)	**a.** Students participating in Leonardo da Vinci programs as a share of vocational students at ISCED 3	0.2%	5.7% [11]	0.6%	0.7% [11]	
	Higher Education	**b.** Erasmus inbound students as % of student population in host country		8.4% [11]		1.1% [11]	
		c. Inbound degree mobile students as % of student population in the host country		4.1% [11]		7.0% [11]	
6. Employment rate of graduates (age 20-34) having left education 1-3 years before reference year			94.1%	91.9%	78.3%	75.7%	82%
7. Adult participation in lifelong learning (age 25-64)			6.1%	7.0%	9.3%	9.0%	15%
Proposed ET 2020 benchmark							
8. Foreign languages skills	**a.** ISCED 2 students at proficiency level B1 or higher in first foreign language[1]		:	82.7% [11]	:	43.5% [11]	
	b. ISCED 2 students learning two or more foreign languages		95.8% [10]	89.8% [11]	58.6%	60.8% [10]	
Other ET 2020 Indicators							
9. Investment in education and training	**a.** General government expenditure on education (% of GDP)		5.4%	5.8% [11]	5.5%	5.3% [11]	
	b. Annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€ 6,255 [08]	€ 7,713 [10]	€ 5,732 [08]	€ 6,021 [10]	
		ISCED 3-4	€ 5,372 [08]	€ 5,444 [10]	€ 6,964 [08]	€ 7,123 [10]	
		ISCED 5-6	€ 9,688 [08]	€ 11,719 [10]	€ 9,309 [08]	€ 9,168 [10]	
10. Digital competences	**a.** Pupils in grade 4 (ISCED 1) using computers at school		:	80.3% [11]	60.7% [07]	64.7% [11]	
	b. Individuals aged 16-74 with high computer skills[2]		20.0%	23.0%	25.0%	26.0%	
11. Entrepreneurial competences	Individuals aged 18-64 who believe to have the required skills and knowledge to start a business		:	:	42.3% [a]	42.0% [a]	
12. Vocational education and training	Share of vocational students at ISCED 3		58.1%	38.9% [11]	49.6%	50.3% [11]	
13. Skills for future labour markets Projected change in employment 2010-2020 in %	High qualification		:	20.5%	:	19.1% [EU28]	
	Medium qualification		:	33.5%	:	4.6% [EU28]	
	Low qualification		:	-20.9%	:	-20.2% [EU28]	
14. Low-skilled adults	Literacy		:	:	:	19.9% [EU17]	
	Numeracy		:	:	:	23.6% [EU17]	
	Problem solving in technology rich environments[3]		:	:	:	26.9% [EU13]	

Source: Cedefop: 13 / EAC: 10a,b / European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC): 8a / Eurostat (Government finance statistics): 9a / Eurostat (LFS): 1, 2, 6, 7 / Eurostat (ISS): 10b / Eurostat (UOE): 3, 8b, 9b, 10c, 12 / IEA TIMSS: 10a / Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: 11 / OECD (PIAAC): 14 / OECD (PISA): 4

Notes: [07] =2007, [08] =2008, [09] =2009, [10] =2010, [11] =2011, e= estimate, a= unweighted average b= break, p= provisional
Number of countries included in EU average: PISA=25, Entrepreneurship=18, Language skills=13, ICT/Computers at school=13, others: EU27
[1]= average of skills tested in reading, listening, writing, [2]= having carried out 5-6 specific computer related activities, [3]= Results cover people with scores below level 1 as well as people who have no computer experience or failed the ICT test

Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)



Source: DG EAC calculations on the basis of data from Eurostat (LFS 2012 and UOE 2011) and OECD (PISA 2009). *Note:* all scores are set between a maximum (the highest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the lowest performers visualised by the centre of the chart).

2. Main challenges

Since Malta has few natural resources, economic growth is overwhelmingly dependent on the skills of its population. The country is faced with a number of challenges: a high - even if declining - rate of early school leaving, a low basic skills achievement, a still modest rate of tertiary education attainment and a vocational training system in need of modernisation. Despite relatively low overall and youth unemployment rates so far, the skills issue is set to become more relevant in the next few years. To properly address it, the 2013 European Semester country-specific recommendation (CSR) on education asks Malta to continue to pursue policy efforts to reduce early school leaving and increase the labour-market relevance of education and training.

3. Investing in skills and qualifications

Investing in education and training in a context of economic crisis

According to the most recent internationally comparable data, in 2011 general government expenditure on education as a share of GDP was somewhat higher than the EU average (5.8% vs. 5.3%). In 2012, Malta increased budget allocations for education by around 7% in real terms[1] compared to 2011; this appears consistent with the 2013 Annual Growth Survey priorities on strengthening investment in education.

Between 2010 and 2012, the budget allocated to ICT in public schools was increased by slightly more than a third. In recent years, the government has embarked on two European regional development fund projects in order to improve ICT equipment in schools. The first project, which took place between 2008 and 2011, focused on the purchase of science and technology laboratory equipment for public secondary schools, with a total budget of EUR 1.25 million. The second project has been operating in 2011-12 with an investment of EUR 8.6 million, including EUR 2.6 million for the purchase of interactive whiteboards for public primary, secondary and post-secondary schools

Skills

The process to review and update the National Minimum Curriculum was launched in March 2008 and finalised in December 2012 with the formulation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The NCF envisages a paradigm shift away from a prescriptive curriculum towards a framework based on learning outcomes, which allows for more flexibility. It also moves away from stand-alone subjects to learning areas. In the context of NCF implementation, work on the National Literacy Strategy for All (that reviews and widens the scope of the Literacy Policy and Strategy launched in 2009 and focuses on competences in both the Maltese and English languages) was launched for consultation in May 2013. The consolidated draft document is expected to be out for national consultation during the fourth quarter of 2013. The National Youth Employment Strategy also stresses the need to address literacy since this is seen by young people as a major stumbling block when looking for a job.

In terms of basic skills, 15-year olds' performance on PISA 2009+ tests is markedly worse than the EU average in all subjects; girls tend to largely outperform boys also in mathematics. Malta's 10-year old students performed very poorly in science in the 2011 TIMSS study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). According to that study, Malta was also the country which dedicated the least amount of time to teaching science (39 hours per year, compared with an international average of 85). The

[1] Data expressed in 2010 constant prices. See European Commission (2013), *Recent trends in the funding of education in Europe*.

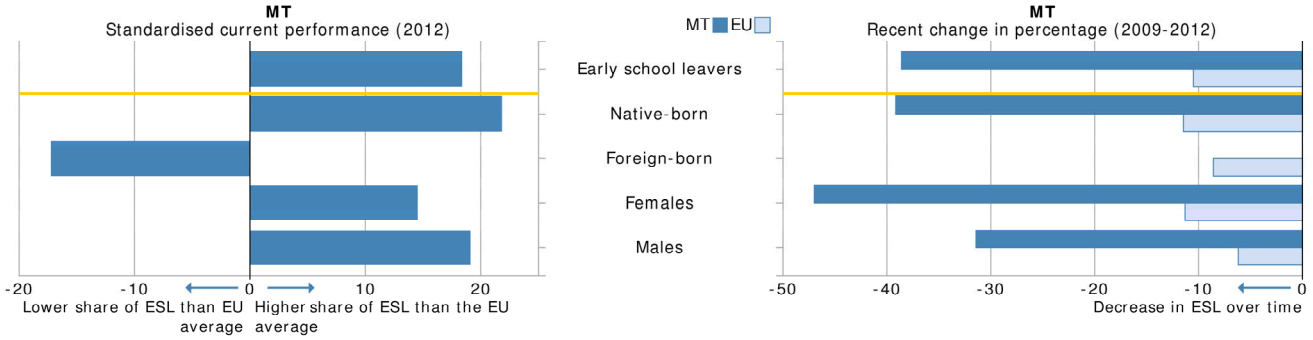
government committed to strongly increasing the allocated time for science in primary schools as from the 2013-14 school year. While ICT skills of the population are close to the EU average, the positive figures for foreign language skills are influenced by the fact that English is Malta's second official language.

Malta has been putting its comprehensive national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (Malta qualifications framework, MQF) in place since June 2007. The MQF was then referenced to European Qualification Framework in 2009. Important developments took place in 2012 with amendments to the Education Act, which established the legal basis for the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), replacing the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education. Three legal notices were published: on quality assurance and licensing of further and higher education institutions and programmes; on validation of informal and non-formal learning; and on strengthening the legal basis of the MQF for lifelong learning as a regulatory framework for classification of qualifications and awards.

4. Tackling early school leaving and raising the bar in school education

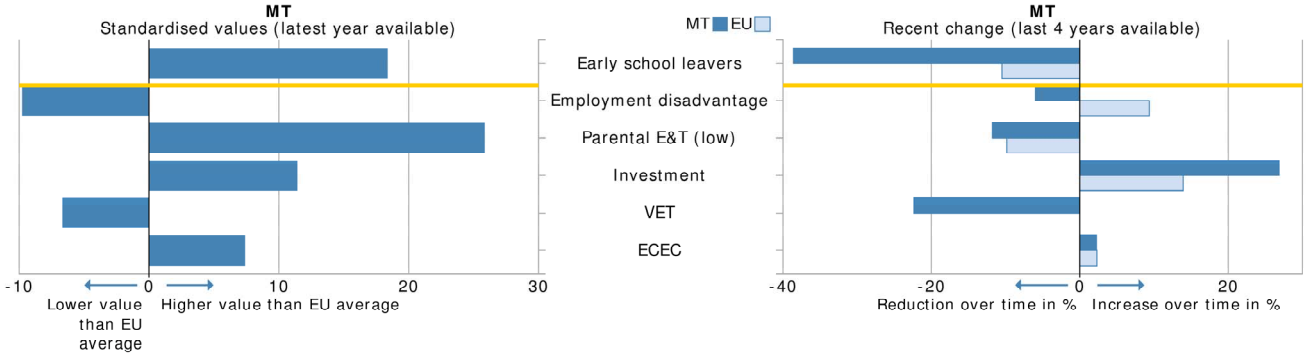
The rate of early school leaving (ESL) has been significantly reduced in recent years, but remains among the highest in the EU (22.6% in 2012)[2], with a significant gender gap: 27.5% for males compared with 17.6% for females in 2012. The analysis of sub-indicators shows that the family educational background is particularly unfavourable.

Figure 2. Early leavers from education and training: sub-groups



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* ESL = early school leaving. See Annex 2 for further information.

Figure 3. Early leavers from education and training: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

The measures taken in 2011-12 demonstrate that the government and the educational institutions are aware of the ESL challenge. A national strategy focused on prevention, intervention and compensation measures, in line with the 2011 Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving[3], has been launched in April 2013. The strategy aims to shed light on the reasons why students leave school at an early age and develop policies that motivate them to continue their studies. Prevention measures include implementing the National Curriculum Framework, validating non-formal and informal learning and developing new forms of teaching and learning, such as e-Learning. Intervention measures comprise a multi-stakeholder approach to address the needs of particular groups of students at risk of early school leaving and improving career guidance in compulsory education. A review of second chance and re-integration programmes features among compensation measures. Policy action has thus been relevant. However, a comprehensive monitoring system to collect and

[2] Time series on early school leaving have been reviewed by the Maltese Statistical Office and Eurostat due to a new classification of certain qualifications at secondary level. According to the new data, the 2012 early school leaving rate is about 10 percentage points lower than with the old methodology. At present, figures according to the new classification are available only after 2010 and are therefore not comparable with those up to 2009. In view of this, the authorities plan to announce a new 2020 target, based on the new data.

[3] 10544/11, 7 June 2011.

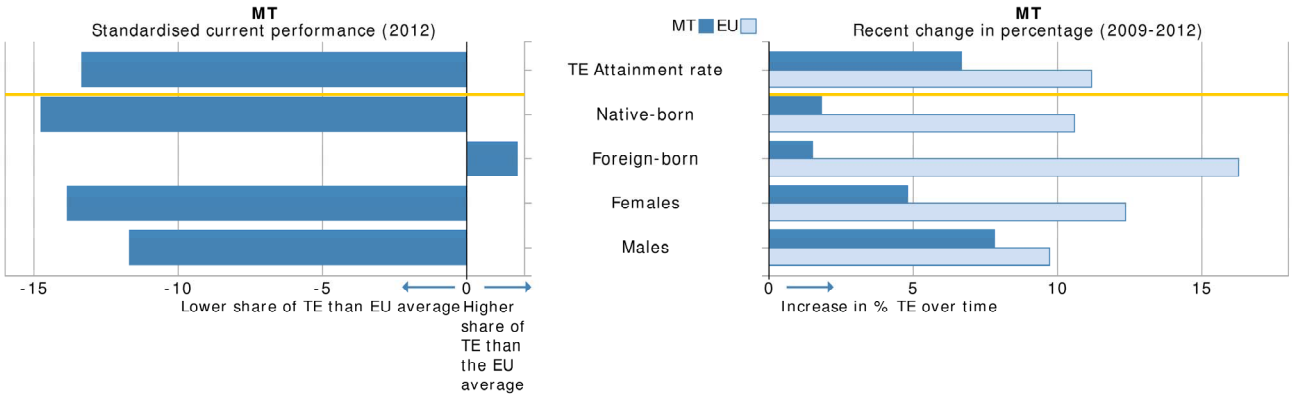
analyse information on early school leaving to underpin the national strategy, as recommended to Malta by the 2013 CSR on education, is yet to be put in place.

Participation in early childhood education reached 100% in 2011. New childcare centres administered either directly by public authorities or in partnership with the private sector have been set up and other are in the pipeline. Private childcare facilities are also available. High costs and often inconvenient opening hours, however, seem to hinder the efficiency of these facilities. Afternoon school programmes have been established in a number of localities and it is planned to expand this service to more localities. These programmes provide after-school care services which include extra-curricular activities within school structures, thereby bridging the gap between the school day and parents' regular working hours. Several tax incentives have been put in place for families sending their children to private childcare facilities. There is still room for enhancing the provision and affordability of child-care and out-of-school centres, as recommended to Malta in the 2013 European Semester. A programme to expand the provision of early childhood education and care is foreseen in 2014.

5. Encouraging participation in tertiary education and modernising higher education

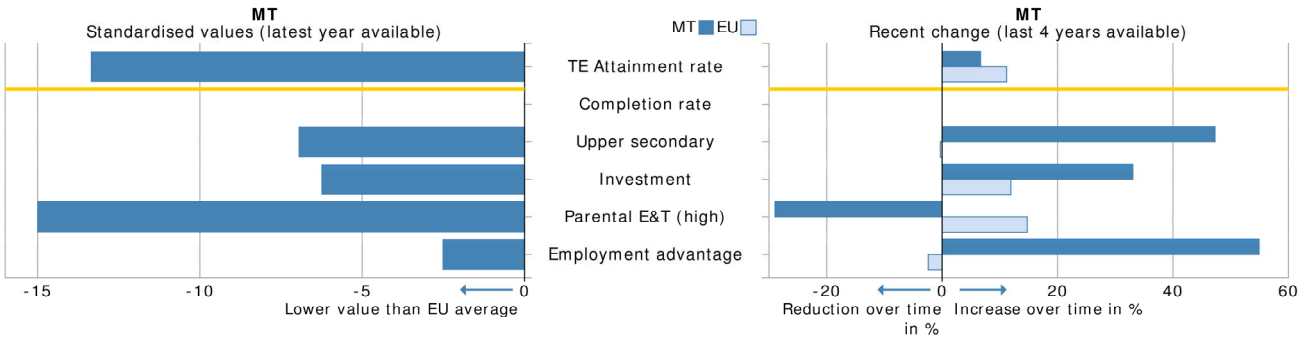
The tertiary attainment rate of people aged 30-34 is among the lowest in the EU (22.4% in 2012), has broadly stagnated in recent years and is still far from the 2020 national target of 33%, although it can be expected to increase due to the recent positive trends in participation in and graduation from higher education. As in the case of ESL, the analysis of sub-indicators shows that the family educational background is particularly unfavourable in EU comparison.

Figure 4. Tertiary education attainment: sub-groups



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* TE = tertiary education. See Annex 2 for further information.

Figure 5. Tertiary education attainment: sub-indicators



Source: JRC-CRELL. *Note:* see Annex 2 for an explanation of the sub-indicators.

To increase the supply of high-skilled workforce, a new scholarship scheme aims to provide more opportunities to promote further specialisation at a Master level. Targeted areas will be: manufacturing, life sciences, educational services, financial services, transportation and logistics, tourism, creative industries, environment and ICT. EUR 4 million are envisaged to be invested in this scheme over 2013-2014. The scheme is complemented by other scholarship schemes, such as Malta Government Scholarship Scheme (MGSS), Malta Arts Scholarships and Malta Sports Scholarships, which are locally funded.

6. Facilitating the transition from education to work

The relatively mild economic crisis experienced by Malta only had a modest impact on the employment rate of recent graduates, which remains among the highest in the EU (91.9% in 2012). This suggests that there is a substantial pay-off from education in terms of employment opportunities. The need to raise skill levels is set to become more relevant in the future as, according to the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the employment pattern in Malta up to 2020 is forecast to be characterised by a strong increase in medium and high qualification jobs and a marked decline in low qualification ones.

In 2012, a new Euro Plus Pact commitment established a sector skills committee, which will be responsible for examining occupational standards and validation of competences and learning outcomes in order to reduce skills gaps. The committee became operational after the appointment of its members in the second quarter of 2013. This can contribute towards addressing the current lack of a skills matching and forecasting system.

Participation of upper secondary students in vocational education and training is below the EU average (38.9% as against 50.3% in 2011). As regards the two existing apprenticeship schemes, according to the latest tracer study conducted in 2012, 35% of people completing an apprenticeship decided to continue education, while 85% of the rest found a full-time job and 7% a part-time one in the first 3 months after the end of the apprenticeship.

To further improve the efficiency of the system and modernise the vocational training system, the authorities have put forward a reform proposal, with implementation expected to start by end-2013, consisting of creating a single national apprenticeship scheme that would cover more qualification levels and occupations. The reform will also include an increase in apprentices' maintenance grants and a financial incentive for employers. The 2013 CSR on education invites Malta to implement this apprenticeships reform.

The post-secondary vocational education institution, the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), is currently undertaking an extensive review and update of many of its courses to make them more relevant and attractive to students. The college has also started working to introduce an e-learning component to a number of its course to introduce a blended learning approach. This, together with the development of an accreditation system for prior learning, offers new tools to attract a potential stream of students who have not followed traditional educational routes. These developments are funded through the European Social Fund (ESF).

As part of the national curriculum, Malta has worked on introducing vocational subjects in the secondary school cycle. Four vocational subject areas (Engineering, Health and Social Care, Hospitality, and Information Technology) were identified and scheduled to be piloted in six state colleges and 4 non-state schools from September 2011. From September 2013, the aim is to extend this pilot project to other schools.

7. Upgrading skills through lifelong learning

Participation of adults in lifelong learning remains low in EU comparison (7% vs. 9% in 2012). In 2010, only 54% of Maltese enterprises provided vocational training to their staff, as against an EU average of 66%. Malta is drafting a Lifelong Learning Strategy, which is expected to be launched for public consultation in the fourth quarter of 2013. Several initiatives are planned throughout 2013. The focus is on actions related to identifying low skilled and/or low qualified adults and designing the training needs for them, so as to be able in the coming years to increase the effectiveness of basic skills learning for those groups. Among second-chance opportunities for adult learners, the Adult Learning Classes courses recorded a 38%[4] increase in participation in 2012/13 compared with the previous year, involving more than 9,000 people aged 24-65.

[4] This figure applies only to courses organised by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning within the Ministry for Education and Employment as there are several adult learning courses organised by other entities and institutions.