NQF state of play

Malta 2018

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Introduction and context

Malta has been investing significantly in its education and training system in recent years. The percentage of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) is smaller than the EU average (8.6% in 2016, compared to 11.5%) (European Commission, 2017) and employment rates of recent graduates are high (94.5 % in 2017, compared to the EU average of 80.2%) at all qualification levels (European Commission, 2018). However, the early school leaving rate – even if declining – is the highest in the EU at 18.6% in 2017. This may be improved in the future due to the current almost 100 % rate of participation in early childhood education and care, and to specific measures taken by the government to address early school leaving. Student performance in reading, science and mathematics is below the EU averages, strongly linked to socioeconomic background and type of school. Despite government support for free access to tertiary education, the tertiary educational attainment rate of 30.0% is below the EU average of 39.9%). The country has the highest share of low-qualified adults in the EU and the foreign-born population living in Malta tends to be better qualified than the native population. Engaging low-skilled adults in lifelong learning is a challenge, with the rate of participation in adult learning at 10.1 % (compared to the EU average of 10.9%). Various strategic measures have been taken to address skill shortages, encourage quality and inclusion, and improve learning outcomes. A framework for the validation of non-formal and informal learning is already in place and a skills forecasting system is being developed. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, efforts are focused on increasing the quality and societal relevance of the offer, and development of apprenticeship schemes and work-based learning. School education reforms aim to modernise curricula using a learning outcomes approach, to improve the training of teachers, and to promote proficiency in basic and digital skills (European Commission, 2018).

Malta has been putting in place its comprehensive national qualifications framework for lifelong learning (MQF) since June 2007. It includes qualifications and awards at all levels acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Important amendments in 2012 to the Education Act established the legal basis for the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), replacing the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) and the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE). The NCFHE is responsible for all aspects of the MQF. In 2012, three legal

notices were published: on quality assurance and licensing of further and higher education institutions and programmes ([1]); on validation of informal and non-formal learning ([2]); and on strengthening the legal basis of the MQF for lifelong learning as a regulatory framework for classification of qualifications and awards ([3]). Malta was the first country to reference the MQF to two European overarching frameworks: the European qualifications framework (EQF) and the qualifications framework of the European higher education area (QF-EHEA), as well as the transnational qualifications framework of the small States of the Commonwealth (TQF).

The referencing report was revised several times, with the latest version published in February 2016 ([4]). This report has updated the MQF by introducing two additional levels covering learning below level 1: introductory level A and introductory level B. These new levels have been introduced to recognise any prior learning, as well as to provide a stepping stone towards MQF/EQF level 1 and further learning and employment.

Policy objectives

The Malta qualifications framework (MQF) makes the qualifications system easier to understand and review, and more transparent at national and international levels. This framework also functions as a referencing tool for describing and comparing national and foreign qualifications to promote and address the following issues:

a. transparency and understanding of qualifications;
b. valuing all formal, informal and non-formal learning;
c. consistency and coherence with European and international qualifications frameworks;
d. parity of esteem of qualifications from different learning pathways, including vocational and professional degrees and academic study programmes;
e. lifelong learning, access and progression and mobility;
f. the shift towards learning outcomes-based qualifications;
g. a credit structure and units as qualification building blocks;
h. the concept of mutual trust through quality assurance mechanisms running across all levels of the framework.

The MQF is seen as an important tool in promoting lifelong learning and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Its quality assurance function is getting stronger in line with the national quality assurance framework for further and higher education institutions ([5]). NCFHE has implemented its legal obligation to set up a national external quality audit system that complements the internal quality assurance mechanisms of individual further and higher education bodies. The framework provides the conceptual context for this work, and situates it in the paramount need to develop a national quality culture ([6]).

Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

Strengthening the learning outcomes approach has become fundamental to education and training reform and has been applied across all qualifications and levels in recent years. The education strategy framework 2014-24 – *Sustaining foundations, creating alternatives, increasing employability* ([7]) – has reinforced the intention to adopt a learning outcomes approach in all sectors of education and training linked to the MQF, and to update existing learning programmes and assessment modes. The MQF has eight learning-outcomes-based qualification levels, plus the two additional entry levels below level 1; introductory levels A and B. These two new levels have no equivalence on the EQF. The descriptors highlight specific attributes: communication, judgemental and learning skills, and the complexity, volume and level of learning expected for the particular qualification or award. Progression within the MQF is recorded in terms of:

a. knowledge and understanding;
b. applying knowledge and understanding;
c. communication skills;
d. judgemental skills;
e. learning skills;
f. autonomy and responsibility.

There is increased focus on the review and revision of the level descriptors of the MQF and further promotion of digital skills following input from a consultation committee on such skills ([8]). The results arising from the review of the digital life-skills, digital workplace skills and digital expert skills required, and the extent to which these are mirrored in the level descriptors of the MQF or require revision, will be presented in a national colloquium to be held in October 2019.

The MQF includes all types of qualification, including general, vocational, higher education and adult education, acquired in formal, non-formal and informal learning; it provides a clear commitment to focus on the learning outcomes approach at policy level. The reference levels are useful for education and training providers as they describe the knowledge, skills and competences and a set of learning outcomes which indicate what the learner would have achieved at the end of the learning process (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

One of the tasks of the NCFHE has been to introduce national standards of knowledge, skills and competences, and to ensure that these are systematically implemented, used and revised. Courses accredited by the NCFHE and those by the self-accrediting education and training providers (public, further and higher education institutions) use the learning outcomes approach.

The report *A national curriculum framework for all* outlines the role of learning outcomes in general education ([9]). The reform of the national curriculum framework (NCF) has led to the development of learning outcomes for all subjects in compulsory education; this aims to move away from a prescriptive curriculum based on standalone subjects and promote inclusion, diversity and citizenship. During 2016, a plan to introduce the learning outcomes framework (LOF) was prepared by the government ([10]) to support the national curriculum framework implementation. The NCF and the LOF together form the backbone of education programmes in Malta. The learning outcomes framework will be implemented by September 2019, under the new 2017 collective agreement ([11]).This agreement applies to all teaching grades in state schools and also in church schools, following agreement between the Maltese Government and the Holy See ([12]). The aim of the framework is to achieve a more learner-centred education, where learning progress is documented for each student and learning is targeted to their stage of development; new learning outcome programmes and syllabi will be introduced for kindergarten years 1, 3 and 7 ([13]). It is eventually intended to lead to more curricular autonomy for colleges and schools, to address better the learning needs of students ([14]). The *One tablet per child* (OTPC) project ([15]) at primary level is in its second year of implementation, while in 2018, all student-teachers received pre-service teacher training in using tablets (European Commission, 2018).

The government is also working on a reform called *My journey: achieving through different paths*, that is expected to be implemented in lower secondary school in the school year 2019/20 ([16]). The aim of this reform is to move from a 'one size fits all' system to more inclusive one catering to pupils' individual aptitudes, and to make it more equitable to reduce the number of early school leavers ([17]). Under the current system, students are focused mainly on areas of general education, such as science and business. But, in recent years, several vocational subjects were introduced and learning outcomes developed to be offered at levels 1-3 on the MQF (European Commission, 2017).

The MQF is intended to ensure that VET curricula are focused on key

competences and learning outcomes based on feedback from industry. Malta is developing occupational standards to inform the VET programmes. With the introduction of the work-based learning and apprenticeship Act that came into force in 2018 ([18]), a framework was provided for the development of effective work placements, apprenticeships and internships.

Malta also has a range of adult education courses accredited and level-rated on the MQF. These qualifications and awards enable adults to engage in lifelong learning and perhaps to progress to higher MQF levels. The programmes of self-accrediting institutions ([19]) are subject to external quality assurance audits where they are checked for a learning outcomes base distinguishing between knowledge, skills and competences (NCFHE, 2016c).

Learning programmes being developed in higher education are remodelled based on learning outcomes. The course descriptions are the ones offered by the state VET providers, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), and the higher education provider University of Malta. The licensed private further and higher education institutions whose courses are accredited by NCFHE are also described in terms of learning outcomes (NCFHE, 2016a).

Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

A wide range of stakeholders has been involved in developing and setting up the MQF. The MQC initiated the work, following Legal Notice 347 of 2005 ([20]) in cooperation with stakeholders, including ministries and the NCHE.

The NCFHE (under the Ministry of Education and Employment) is the authority responsible for all aspects of the MQF implementation, particularly for maintaining the Malta qualifications framework. It is also the EQF national coordination point (NCP) for Malta and runs the Qualifications and Recognition Information Centre (QRIC) which is responsible for providing the referencing and equivalence of foreign qualifications. The NCHFE acts as the competent authority for licensing, accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of providers and programmes as provided by the Act No XIII of 2012 (NCFHE, 2016a).

From a labour market sectoral perspective, the NCFHE is charged with leading the development and implementation of occupational standards in cooperation with social partners, the sector skills committee and sector skills units.

The NCFHE is also responsible for convening meetings with key stakeholders on sector skills units. It approves and ensures the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes for selected occupations within the economic sectors for which a sector skills unit is in place.

The MQF is seen to have improved cooperation between stakeholders (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018) through meetings such as the annual national colloquium and the Network on Quality Assurance Professionals in Further and Higher Education, known as Net-QAPE ([21]).

Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

[22]

Validation of non-formal and informal learning in Malta is regulated by Subsidiary Legislation 327.432 of 2012 ([23]), which sets the principles for the process. In addition, the value and importance of validation are emphasised in several national policy documents, published during 2014-16 but remaining valid in 2018, reinforcing the potential of validation of non-formal and informal learning in Malta. These documents include: Malta's *National lifelong learning strategy 2020* ([24]) that sets a target for setting up a transparent and sustainable system within NCFHE to validate and recognise non-formal and informal learning by the end of 2016; and the *National youth policy: towards 2020* ([25]) published in 2015 and stating that the validation of non-formal and informal learning would be pursued.

The 2012 legislation designates the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) as the authority responsible for introducing a national validation system and for establishing the necessary structures. The NCFHE has been responsible for providing the resources needed for validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL) to function effectively and for leading the development and implementation of national occupational standards in specified areas. The national occupational standards published by NCFHE consist of a set of job-related standards that highlight the performance expected from an individual when carrying out a specific function.

The NCFHE extended the process to more sectors through the continuing development of sector skills units ([26]). Validation is now available in the following sectors: hairdressing, childcare, and building and construction sectors, for which validation has started to take place. NCFHE has also extended the number of sector skills units to eight with the introduction of the IT Sector Skills Unit in August 2018. Validation in the automotive sector started in November 2017 while discussions have taken place to start validation and introducing ECVET points with the validation awards in the tourism sector. The entities entrusted with the validation process have also been extended from Jobsplus ([27]) in childcare to the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS). The NCFHE signed a memorandum of understanding with ITS to carry out assessment for the hospitality and

tourism sector ([28]).

In response to labour market needs and to overcome skills gaps, the government set up the National Skills Council in 2016 ([29]). The functions of the council are stated as similar to that of a consultative committee, working on different sectors and undertaking the role of highlighting needs. One of the areas that the National Skills Council has identified is digital competences. This links to occupational standards currently being developed, including those in IT, and which can serve as a basis for the development of validation of informal and non-formal learning in the sector. In total, 27 occupational standards are published on the NCFHE website ([30]) and another 28 are being drawn up.

The fourth edition of the referencing report of the Malta qualifications framework to the European qualifications framework ([31]), published in 2016, reflects a move towards a more modular based concept as building blocks for qualifications. Such an approach allows for better integration of non-formal learning within mainstream education routes, as well as setting out the principles on which validation of informal and non-formal learning is to be based.

Malta has been working towards the implementation of 2012 Council recommendations ([32]). The process has not been as fast as desired, but the extension to a number of sectors registered, as well as the full implementation of validation of non-formal and informal, learning is promising. NCFHE has also worked on providing information and training to further and higher education and training providers on the validation of non-formal and informal learning so that they can familiarise themselves with the concept. Greater effort to extend validation to a wider number of sectors is still needed. Ensuring parity of esteem of qualifications obtained through validation in the labour market, and for further education as part of lifelong learning, remains a challenge.

NQF implementation and impact

The MQF is operational; key documents and responsibilities for its implementation have been agreed among stakeholders and published ([33]). The MQF forms an integrated part of the overall national qualification system, including links to relevant legislation and policy strategies, the *National lifelong learning strategy 2020* ([34]), the *National literacy strategy for all in Malta and Gozo 2014-19* ([35]) and the *Strategic plan for the prevention of early school leaving in Malta 2014* ([36]).

The main body responsible for the MQF is the NCFHE (the former MQC and the NCHE merged in 2012); it decides which qualifications and awards to include in the framework. This agency stipulates strategic policies for further and higher education, promotes and maintains the MQF, accredits and licenses all further (post-secondary) and higher education institutions and programmes, and assists training providers in designing qualifications, assessment and certification. The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (based at the Ministry of Education and Employment) is responsible for quality assurance and standards in compulsory education.

Qualifications and awards included in the MQF should satisfy the following conditions (Government of Malta 2012c):

   a. be issued by nationally accredited institutions;
   b. be based on learning outcomes;
   c. be internally and externally quality assured;
   d. be based on workload composed of identified credit value;
   e. be awarded on successful completion of formal assessment procedures.

The term 'qualification' refers to substantial courses based on learning outcomes at the respective MQF level and a required minimum number of credits, whereas 'award' refers to courses which fulfil the level of learning, but not the requirement in terms of minimum credits. The terms are used to distinguish between 'full qualifications' and shorter courses at the respective level.

Following the setting up of the ESF project 1227 *Making quality visible* ([37]), the NCFHE has established the national quality assurance framework (NCFHE, 2015a), which sets the standards for internal and

external quality assurance for all further and higher education providers. Another key deliverable was the manual of procedures for external quality assurance ([38]), which set out procedures for the implementation of external quality audits. In 2015, the first three pilot external audits were conducted with the University of Malta, MCAST and ITS ([39]). The outcomes of the external audit pilots contributed to the development of a quality assurance system to be adapted for validation. The quality assurance arrangements have not changed since 2016, with the NCFHE remaining the designated competent authority for licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of providers and programmes, including cross-border provision from Malta or in Malta. The Quality Assurance Department, within the Directorate for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability will also provide quality assurance support ([40]).

A register of accredited further and higher education institutions and a national register of qualifications have been set up ([41]). Qualifications from VET and higher education have been included in the national register, as well as non-formal and private ones. International qualifications have not yet been included. MQF and EQF levels are included in new certificates and diplomas and Europass supplements. The Malta College for Arts, Sciences and Technology and the University of Malta use NQF (and EQF) levels on certificate and diploma supplements.

The national colloquium is expected to launch the revised national qualifications database in the next year ([42]). In November 2018, stakeholders discussed the development of a new qualification database, the introduction of the sectoral framework and the setting up of a new working group, which will also be composed of licenced educational providers as partners.

The NCFHE also maintains the register of accredited further and higher education institutions ([43]), in accordance with Subsidiary Legislation 327.433 on licensing, accreditation and quality assurance ([44]). The growth in licence holders from 30 in 2007 to 140 in 2016 has necessitated the publication of this register. It also includes a list of accredited courses offered by licensed institutions with reference to both the MQF and the EQF. This register highlights the level of each course accredited and is updated weekly.

An effective network to promote use of the NQF has been established with employers by the NCFHE through its qualifications recognition information centre. Both employers and individuals are invited to attend information sessions and seminars where they are given information about the Malta qualifications framework and other developments in

further and higher education.

Other methods of informing potential users about the framework include social media and the NCFHE website, which is continuously updated, as well as dissemination of information posters, leaflets and an explanatory video to public and private education institutions, local councils, and other government entities. Jobsplus ([45]) also uses the MQF as its main criterion for issuing work permits, and MQF levels are used in incentive schemes such as scholarships and tax rebates (Cedefop, 2017). The NCFHE intends to cooperate with the Europass and Euroguidance contact points in Malta. Employers use the MQF in their recruitment and career development practices and the public sector specifies the required MQF level in its vacancy notices (Cedefop, 2017). There is a planned communication strategy that will include the dissemination of a joint leaflet for the three networks in exhibitions and fairs and an update of the MQF's website.

The Malta qualifications framework is used by education and training institutions and providers, guidance and counselling practitioners, though the level of awareness differs. A study on the widespread understanding and appreciation of the Malta qualifications framework (MQF) and the European qualifications framework (EQF) ([46]) was conducted by NCFHE in 2016. Its aim was to identify the level of usefulness and methods of use of the MQF as well as its link to the EQF. One of the key messages of the study was that while the level of awareness of the MQF was high (6.9 out of 10), the awareness of the link between the MQF and the EQF was lower (6.61 out of 10). Awareness was greater for those making regular use of the MQF. The role of academics and parents as multipliers of information on the MQF and its link to the EQF remained limited. This stresses the importance of direct and regular engagement with both frameworks to ensure good public awareness. Respondents to the survey stressed the need for the MQF to contribute to simplifying and accelerating accreditation, recognition and validation processes for the benefit of all involved (NCFHE, 2016b).

Another message was that MQF needs to strike an adequate balance between its institutional and intrinsic logic to ensure that it is flexible enough to encompass all learning. The rationale which underpins the design and implementation of the NQF should correspond to the ways in which education institutions, employers and others actually use and value qualifications (Raffe, 2009). In connection to the study, further research is to be conducted under the EQF-NCP 2018-20 project. This includes focusing on review of MQF operating procedures, the body in charge of it,

and consultation with stakeholders.

A consultation committee is expected to be set up to review the framework and its impact. The committee will be supported in its work by the MQF Coordinator as this will assist the scheduling, organising and reporting of the meetings held. The results of the committee meetings will advise the NCFHE on the development of a systematic review mechanism for the MQF, the implementation of impact assessment, and recommendations for revisions of the MQF arising from such an impact assessment.

Referencing to the EQF

In 2009, Malta was the first Member State to prepare a single, joint report which referenced the MQF to both the EQF and the qualifications framework in the European higher education area (QF-EHEA) (Malta Qualifications Council and Maltese Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, 2009). This approach has been followed by many other countries in their own referencing process. The establishment and referencing of the MQF have led to substantial modernisation. Further editions were published in 2010, 2012 and 2016 ([47]). The last – the fourth edition – is in use and reflects the range of reforms that have taken place within the education system over the past few years (NCFHE, 2016a). The MQF is also referenced to the transnational qualifications framework of the small States of the Commonwealth (TQF). The 2016 referencing report is currently being revised to include validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Important lessons and future plans

Development of the MQF has served as a catalyst for education reform, addressing key challenges in education, training and the labour market. Consultation on the development of the MQF and preparation for referencing to the EQF and the QF-EHEA were interrelated processes that helped bridge the gap between stakeholders from different subsystems of education and employment. The updated referencing report ([48]) and the development of the national quality assurance framework for further and higher education ([49]), as well as the higher education strategy ([50]) which proposes further changes in the validation of informal and non-formal learning, are important reforms aimed at increasing lifelong learning, mobility and employability.

Quality assurance in further and higher education has been important in guaranteeing transparency and efficiency in both state and non-state sectors. Its function is getting stronger as it safeguards the quality of further and higher education within the economic, social and cultural context, at national, European and international levels. All courses accredited by NCFHE are included in the national register for accredited courses with identifiable credit points, improving quality in the educational system.

Despite the improvements brought about by the development and introduction of the MQF, there are still issues to be addressed. Although there has been a move towards a more modular concept as building blocks for qualifications to support lifelong learning and non-traditional learners, the development of accreditation and quality assurance parameters for digital/online learning is needed, as well as for work-based learning (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018). The easier movement of students between general education and vocational streams is also important, along with better integration of non-formal learning within mainstream education.

The main future challenges lie with the writing of learning outcomes in specific study programmes and further promotion of the MQF, and transitions towards online learning. Since awareness and use of the MQF appear to be interlinked, the benefit and relevance of the framework to the needs of different actors needs to be ensured and made clearer. Solid guidance tools, regular dialogue and continuous improvement based on the feedback from users, have been highlighted as important, by the study on the widespread understanding and appreciation of the MQF.

Main sources of information

The NCFHE is the designated national coordination point:
http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/default.aspx [accessed 13.11.2018].

National qualification framework (NQF)

NQF LEVEL	QUALIFICATION TYPES	EQF LEVEL
8	**Doctoral degree**	8
7	**Master degree** **Postgraduate diploma** **Postgraduate certificate**	7
6	**Bachelor degree**	6
5	**Undergraduate diploma** **Undergraduate certificate** **VET higher diploma foundation degree** **Category** VET	5
4	**Matriculation certificate** **Advanced level** **Intermediate level** **VET diploma** **Category** VET A VET diploma should enjoy the same parity of esteem as the matriculation certificate	4
3	**General education (level 3)** **SEC grade 1 to 5** **VET level 3** **Category** VET A VET level 3 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as six secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grades 1 to 5.	3

2	**General education (level 2)** **SEC grade 6-7** **VET level 2** **Category** VET A full VET level 2 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as four secondary education certificate (SEC) subjects at grade 6 and 7.	2
1	**General education (level 1)** **School leaving certificate** **VET level 1** **Category** VET A full VET level 1 qualification should enjoy the same parity of esteem as a full secondary school certificate and profile (SSC&P) Level 1.	1
B	**Introductory level B** These are not yet included in legislation.	No EQF level
A	**Introductory level A** These are not yet included in legislation.	No EQF level

Acronyms

EQF	European qualifications framework
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
LOF	learning outcomes framework
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MQC	Malta Qualifications Council
MQF	Malta qualifications framework
NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education
NCFHE	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
NCF	national curriculum framework
NCP	national coordination point
Net-QAPE	Network on quality assurance professionals in further and higher education
NQF	national qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	qualifications framework in the European higher education area
QRIC	Qualifications and Recognition Information Centre
SEC	secondary school certificate
TQF	transnational qualifications framework of the small States of the Commonwealth
UOM	University of Malta
VET	vocational education and training

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Notes

[1] See Government of Malta (2012a).

[2] See Government of Malta (2012b).

[3] See Government of Malta (2012c).

[4] See NCFHE (2016a).

[5] This framework was presented in a consultative conference with stakeholders on 25 July 2014 and was officially launched on 1 July 2015. The national quality assurance framework for further and higher education was a key deliverable of ESF Project 1.227 Making quality visible.

https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Publications/Quality%20Assurance/National%20Quality%20Assurance%20Framework%20for%20Further%20and%20Higher%20Education.pdf

[6] According to the national quality assurance framework, self-accrediting entities shall have processes for the design and approval of their programmes that are in line with the MQF and the Malta referencing report 2012 and subsequent updates. The provider and programme/course accreditation procedures are presently being revised. At a second stage, the framework shall be expanded to incorporate adapted provider and programme/course accreditation procedures and adapted procedures for all categories of entities. In the third stage of the development of the framework, it will be reviewed to consider how best to incorporate quality assurance requirements for informal and non-formal learning (NCFHE, 2015b).

[7] Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2014a).

[8] The consultation committee will be supported in its work by staff from the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), which will support the scheduling, organising and reporting of the meetings held. The results of the meetings of the consultation committee will advise the NCFHE on the review and revision of the level descriptors of the MQF, if applicable, and the further promotion of digital skills in Malta (European Commission and Cedefop, 2018).

[9] See Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2012).

[10] http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/

[11] In December 2017, the Malta Union of Teachers and the Education Ministry signed a sectoral agreement for 2018-22. The agreement includes a significant salary increase for educators across the different levels; allowances for professional development and career progression based on voluntary professional development (European Commission, 2018).

[12] The Holy See (not the State of Vatican City) maintains formal diplomatic relations with, and for the most recent establishment of diplomatic relations with, 183 sovereign states, and also with the European Union, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See

[13] The development of the learning outcomes framework includes ten levels of achievement. In a differentiated learning context, different learners in the same classroom will naturally be progressing at different rates through these levels of attainment, and the teaching and learning will need to cater for this diversity.

[14] The ESF 1.228 project Design of learning outcomes framework, associated learning and assessment programmes and related training is intended to deliver this learning outcomes framework approach to the educators within compulsory schooling and relevant stakeholders. http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/pages/about-the-framework

[15] This project is jointly financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). More information http://www.digital.edu.mt/

[16] See MEDE (2016).

[17] The Ministry for Education and Employment has already set up a committee of different education bodies such as the University of Malta and Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) to provide training for new and existing teachers. The Haaga Helia University of Sciences will provide training to teachers in vocational education. https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/ongoing-reforms-and-policy-developments-43_en

[18] More information at: http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/malta-work-based-learning-and-apprenticeship-act-comes-force

[19] In Malta there are self-accrediting education and training institutions as identified by Subsidiary Legislation 327.433. These include the main state further and higher education institutions: the University of Malta; the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology; and the Institute of Tourism Studies.

[20] See Government of Malta (2012d).

[21] In December 2013 the NCFHE set up a Network on Quality Assurance Professionals in Further and Higher Education, known as Net-QAPE. The aim of Net-QAPE is to bring together all personnel involved in quality assurance in the education sector, to provide concrete and continuing support, upskilling and continuous professional development. Net-QAPE is a key concept in the commitment of the NCFHE to developing a National further and higher education quality assurance framework, which will be the basis for internal and external quality processes and audits.

https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/services/Documents/QA%20Communications/201
4/Comm%20No%2006%202014%20-%20First%20Meeting%20of%20Net-
QAPE.pdf

[22] This section draws mainly on input from the 2018 update of the
European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning
(European Commission et al. (forthcoming).

[23] See Government of Malta (2012e).

[24] See Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2014b).

[25] See Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and
Sport (2015).

[26] A key function of the units is to develop and propose to this
committee guidelines and mechanisms for the validation of non-formal
and informal learning for all skills within their respective sector. They also
ensure that validation institutions are meeting the required standards set
out for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. These sector
skills units will identify the different jobs in their particular sector, outline
the knowledge, skills and competences required to perform these jobs
and map them against the NQF.

[27] Jobsplus is the successor to the Employment and Training
Corporation (ETC); its objective is to meet the needs of employers,
jobseekers and employees: https://jobsplus.gov.mt/

[28] More information available at:
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/el/news-and-press/news/malta-vinfl-takes

[29] See Government of Malta (2016).

[30]
https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/services/Pages/All%20Services/vinfl_nos.aspx

[31] See NCFHE (2016a).

[32] See Council of the European Union (2012).

[33] See the relevant legislation at the end of this report: Government of
Malta (2012a), (2012b) and (2012f).

[34] See Maltese Ministry of Education and Employment (2014b).

[35] https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Literacy/ENGLISH.pdf

[36] https://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/dbfile.aspx?id=47

[37] ESF project 1227 Making quality visible.
https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/Projects/ESF%201.227%20Making%20Qual
ity%20Visible/esf1227_making_quality_visible.aspx

[38] See NCFHE (2016c).

[39] https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/services/Pages/All%20Services/eqaa.aspx

[40] https://education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-
assurance/Pages/default.aspx

[41] https://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx

[42] This will allow for both the presentation of the findings from the

review and linking it with available, accredited programmes so that individuals interested in developing their education in digital skills will find it easy to find relevant accredited programmes.

[43] Both registers are available at:

http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/register/Pages/register.aspx

[44] See Government of Malta (2012a).

[45] Previously known as the Employment and Training Corporation:

https://jobsplus.gov.mt/

[46] See NCFHE (2016b).

[47] See all four editions online:

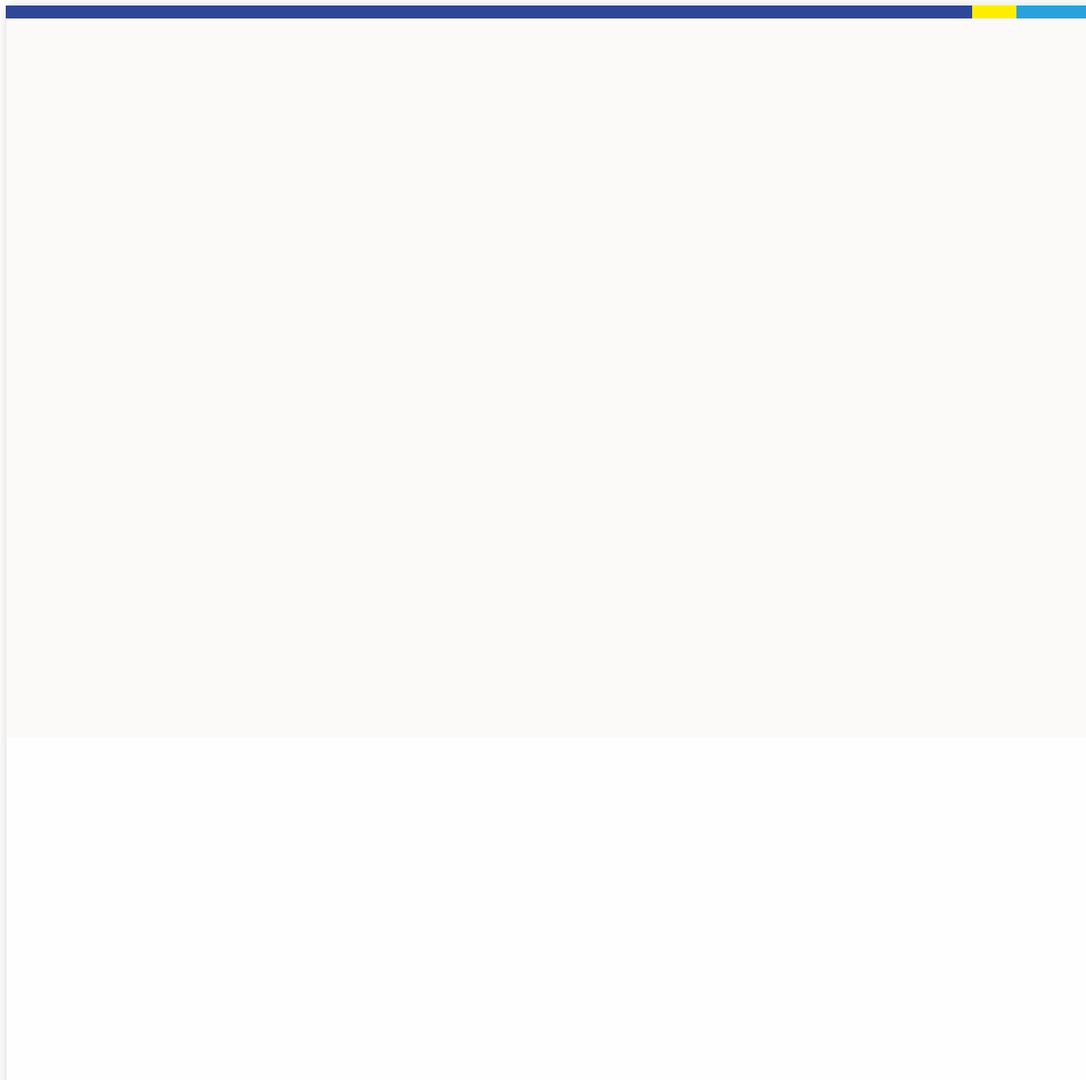http://ncfhe.gov.mt/en/Pages/referencing_report.aspx

[48] See NCFHE, 2016a.

[49] See NCFHE, 2015b.

[50] See NCFHE, 2015a.

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