

# European Inventory

on validation of informal and  
non-formal learning



Education and Culture DG



# **European inventory on validation of informal and non-formal learning MALTA**

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# Contents

PAGE

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>PUBLIC SECTOR .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1.1	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment.....	2
2.1.2	Malta Qualifications Council (MQC) .....	2
2.1.3	Developments since 2005 .....	3
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Current Validation Practices .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.2.1	The University of Malta.....	4
2.2.2	The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST).....	4
2.2.3	The Institute of Tourism Studies.....	4
2.2.4	The Employment and Training Corporation.....	5
2.2.5	The Armed Forces Malta (AFM).....	5
<b>3.0</b>	<b>PRIVATE SECTOR .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>THE THIRD SECTOR .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>8</b>

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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In October 2005, under legal notice 347, a new organisation was launched - The Malta Qualifications Council (MQC). This organisation is tasked with implementing a new national qualification framework for Malta, which will be compatible with the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The European agenda has been a key driver for Malta in establishing this new system.

The new qualification framework will form one single structure encompassing formal, non-formal and informal learning. This framework has not yet been launched but the necessary structures and legislation are in place to allow the new system to be implemented. Importantly, an Implementation Plan for the new framework has been put into place and work on incorporating non-formal and informal learning is expected to start towards the end of 2007.

## 2.0 PUBLIC SECTOR

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The emerging National Qualifications Framework for Malta forms a single over-riding public initiative for validating non-formal and informal learning, which has an application for all post 16 learning achieved in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

### 2.1 The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

The key features of the NQF parallel the European Qualifications Framework. For example in using 'credit' as a currency to understand/value all 'types' of learning whether that be vocational, academic, community based, workplace based, identifying credit at certain 'levels' of difficulty (Malta use an 8 point scale) etc. This will enable qualifications achieved in Malta to be understood and transferred overseas.

There are two key organisations involved with the new qualification framework (and therefore eventually with informal and non-formal learning).

#### 2.1.1 The Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment

Although the National Qualification Framework falls under the remit of the Malta Qualifications Council (MQC), the MQC is answerable to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment. The Ministry has ultimate responsibility for the entire education system in Malta. This includes primary and secondary education as well as the University of Malta, the Institute for Tourism Studies, Malta Council for Science and Technology, Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology, youth, employment and training etc<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2.1.2 Malta Qualifications Council (MQC)

MQC was established under legal note 347, in October 2005 for "the development, assessment, certification and accreditation of qualifications other than those in compulsory education and degrees"<sup>2</sup>.

MQC's functions are:

- To establish and maintain a qualifications framework for the development, accreditation and award of professional and vocational qualifications, other than degrees, based on standards of knowledge, skills, competence and attitudes to be acquired by learners;
- To promote and facilitate lifelong learning access transfer and progression;

<sup>1</sup> [www.education.gov.mt](http://www.education.gov.mt)

<sup>2</sup> [www.mqc.gov.mt](http://www.mqc.gov.mt)

- To foster the recognition abroad of professional and vocational certificates awarded in Malta;
- To promote and maintain the National Qualifications Framework and establish the policies and criteria on which the framework will be based;
- To approve and ensure the publication of national standards of knowledge, skills, competence and attitudes for each development sector;
- To endorse and ensure the publication of the procedures to be implemented by the training agencies offering programmes of education and training for access, transfer and progression;
- To ensure that such standards and procedures are implemented;
- To endorse vocational education and training programmes delivered by training agencies;
- To endorse certificates awarded by training agencies;
- To keep and issue official records of certificates awarded.

The MQC is therefore ultimately responsible for incorporating non-formal and informal learning into the new qualification framework.

### 2.1.3 Developments since 2005

To date, there has not been any work carried out on validating non-formal or informal learning but it is thought that this will start towards the end of 2007.

With respect to the new National Qualifications Framework however:

- Three policy documents have been published by the MQC – “Qualifications as tools for Employment”, “A glossary of Select Terminology Associated with Qualifications Frameworks” and a “National Qualifications Framework – A First Guide”.
- An Implementation plan (2006) has been written.

The piloting stage, which took place between November 06 and April 07, has been completed and documents, in connection with the NQF, have been published<sup>1</sup>

## 2.2 Current Validation Practices

Since there is currently no national approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning in place, it is still the case that differing examples of practice can be found in key organisations. The following offers examples of this.

<sup>1</sup> A National Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. A Second Guide, June 2007; Valuing All Learning (working documents) Volumes 1, 2, 3; Descriptors of Key Competences in the National Qualifications Framework Levels 1 to 3 ([www.mqc.gov.mt](http://www.mqc.gov.mt))

### 2.2.1 The University of Malta

The University of Malta has taken the new credit framework on board and has applied credit values to degree and masters programmes (although not PhDs)<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the Extracurricular Credits System gives students the opportunity to engage in an activity / project which helps them to manoeuvre outside of purely academic limits. On completion of the activity / project, the individual student is assessed both by his/her particular activity supervisor and by the Extracurricular Credits Board. The mark obtained is weighted as 0.5% of the final global mark that is considered for degree classification purposes.

### 2.2.2 The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, was set up in 2001 with the aim of providing 'universally accessible vocational and professional education and training with an international dimension, responsive to the needs of the individual and the economy' (Prospectus, 2002-3). The College provides a variety of courses of vocational educational training in the Institutes of Agribusiness, Art and Design, Building and Construction Engineering, Business and Commerce, Community Services, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Information and Communication Technology, Mechanical Engineering, and the Maritime Institute. The College is a major provider of off-the-job educational training element of apprenticeship schemes. It works closely with the Employment and Training Corporation in ensuring that these schemes meet the needs of local employees<sup>2</sup>.

With respect to non-formal and informal learning, although there is no official policy in place, it is known that students are sent to the college by industry on the basis of their formal qualifications as well as their non-formal and informal experience.

### 2.2.3 The Institute of Tourism Studies

The Institute of Tourism Studies, set up in 1987, provides vocational education in the field of tourism. The accelerated growth in tourism increased the pressure on the local labour market for highly qualified technical and management personnel. Apart from certificate and diploma level courses, the Institute has apprenticeship programmes that fall under the 'Extended Skill Training Scheme' (ESTS). These programmes offer students the possibility to equip themselves with skills for entry into the hospitality and catering industry.

<sup>1</sup> Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2006/2007 National Trends in the Bologna Process.

<sup>2</sup> [www.mcast.edu.mt](http://www.mcast.edu.mt)

*A more direct link with the concept of non-formal learning is found in the ‘Accreditation for Prior Experiential Learning’ – (APEL) whereby prospective candidates with documented and related work experience in the tourism industry will be awarded credits<sup>1</sup>.*

#### 2.2.4 The Employment and Training Corporation

The Employment and Training Corporation was established in 1990 under the Employment and Training Services Act. It was set up as a corporate body with a distinct legal personality, to provide and maintain a national public employment service. In essence, this means assisting people in finding suitable employment and assisting employers to find suitable employees. It was also given the mandate to provide training courses to promote employability and to gather the information required for establishing labour market requirements in Malta.

The Organisation is based on the twin European values of solidarity and subsidiarity. Its mission is “to provide and ensure equitable access to training programmes and employment opportunities and to contribute towards the social and economic development of the community”<sup>2</sup>.

Training services, Placement schemes, Apprenticeship schemes and specialist and individualised attention to disadvantaged groups are the main services that the Corporation offers (Azzopardi, A.E. (2003), ‘Strategic Review of ETC Services for Young People’, Report, Employment and Training Corporation)<sup>3</sup>.

With respect to non-formal and informal learning, the ETC assesses and profiles non-formal and informal learning outcomes by means of trade tests and other newly developed tools. The registered unemployed and others in employment are tested for possible further training and employment possibilities.

#### 2.2.5 The Armed Forces Malta (AFM)

The AFM<sup>4</sup> has a system for recognising formal, non-formal and informal learning, which they adopted from the British Army. The army performs trade and other tests for training, re-training and lifelong learning. They collaborate with Educational Institutions in Malta to issue certificates and are looking at ways to further develop this system.

<sup>1</sup> [www.its.gov.mt](http://www.its.gov.mt)

<sup>2</sup> [www.etc.gov.mt](http://www.etc.gov.mt)

<sup>3</sup> [www.etc.gov.mt](http://www.etc.gov.mt)

<sup>4</sup> [www.afm.gov.mt](http://www.afm.gov.mt)

### 3.0 PRIVATE SECTOR

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Consultation work has ascertained that the private sector is involved with validation of non-formal and informal learning with companies taking an interest in developments. The examples provided in the previous ECOTEC report also hold true and hence:

There is evidence of individual organisations moving away from the conventional mode of production bonus systems to reward employees for learning more skills and as a consequence, improving their performance in their department. A particular case in point is the 'learning strand' taken by Playmobil Malta Ltd. where a multi-skilling programme was introduced in September 1995. A three-tier approach to the skills process is taken in terms of must-know, good-to-know and nice-to-know skills. The company also launched a training programme in first aid and a computer-assisted learning technique among a representative group of workers from its various departments (Borg, undated in Haugøy, G., ed., *Open Learning Environments in Adult Education: A Guide to European Models* – [www.statvoks.no/focal/](http://www.statvoks.no/focal/)).

## 4.0 THE THIRD SECTOR

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The Youth Policy of Malta has been described by an international group of experts, acting as a Review Team, as 'a sound piece of work'<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, the Team particularly welcomed the 'reference to the accreditation of the acquired experience and skills through non-formal and informal learning'<sup>2</sup>. The expert team also stated that 'it is our view that investment in youth work would be money particularly well spent in Malta'<sup>3</sup> since 'youth work is, of course, the location within which non-formal education can take place very successfully'<sup>4</sup>

Articles 6.4 and 6.5 of the National Youth Policy<sup>5</sup> confirm that the State will follow a policy that complements formal education with non-formal and informal education. The policy also states that the various education and employment bodies should ensure the implementation of measures for the accreditation of prior learning and skills acquired through non-formal learning/education.

The Youth Information Handbook provides a list of 112 Youth Organisations with a social, political and religious orientation (2004:118) and 45 Sport Organisations (2004:171). Among these organisations there are a large variety of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning experiences both in Malta and abroad. In particular cases, recognition is limited to terms of sponsorship for activities, such as exchange programmes offered by established institutions. There is no record of accreditation procedures being followed although participants in the various activities have claimed that Certificates of Attendance and Reference Notes have been given some consideration by employees' interviewing Boards<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Evans, 2003:62

<sup>2</sup> Ibid:63

<sup>3</sup> Ibid:30

<sup>4</sup> Ibid:40

<sup>5</sup> Youth Information Handbook, 2004:18

<sup>6</sup> Interview, 06.09.04, Teuma, M., president, Malta Association of Youth Workers (may@nextgen.net.mt) and president ZAK3 – www.zakmalta.org

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

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Due to the creation of a new qualification framework in Malta, there is a national focus on non-formal and informal learning, with the aim of incorporating all forms of learning into the framework and adopting a common approach to validation.

Different institutes and organisations do hold experience in validating informal and non-formal learning of individuals and students but there is no common methodology in place, no common working tools such as portfolios, application forms etc. However, Malta will start working in this area towards the end of 2007 and will be looking at other countries to help practically implement a new national approach to validation of non-formal and informal learning.