

CITIZEN SUMMARY

Fund: European Social Fund (ESF)

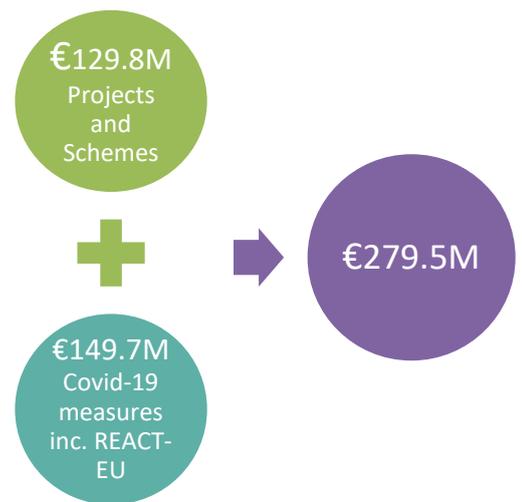
Programming period: 2014-2020

Budget available (Malta): €279.5Million (10% for Gozo)

Reporting Year: 2021

The European Social Fund, ESF, finances public projects and private projects that aim at improving peoples' lives through training and development of new skills or strengthen existing ones, to supporting them in finding better jobs and invest in building the institutional administrative capacity. The programme financial allocation was increased as part of Covid-19 response and flexibilities offered by the European Commission. The flexibilities offered allowed Malta to commit programme resources to finance the Wage Subsidies Scheme.

In summary, ESF Malta provides funding in five main areas that aim to support people in increasing their employability including with a focus on young people; improving the health sector and supporting inclusion particularly for those at a higher risk of exclusion; improving educational attainment; improving the delivery of the public service while supporting social partners to engage in dialogue with government; and sustaining employment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.



2021 Achievements

16 New Small Projects

- 12 projects by NGOs (10 new beneficiaries)
- 4 projects by social partners

New funding area

- WSS aid scheme agreement between Managing Authority and Malta Enterprise

In the beginning of 2021, the Managing Authority (MA) informed the newly selected beneficiaries that their projects were approved for funding. A total **sixteen new small-scale projects** run by NGOs and Social partners **were awarded**. The MA utilised a simplified approach to finalise the Grant Agreements within the first quarter of the year, enabling the beneficiaries to initiate their implementation immediately.

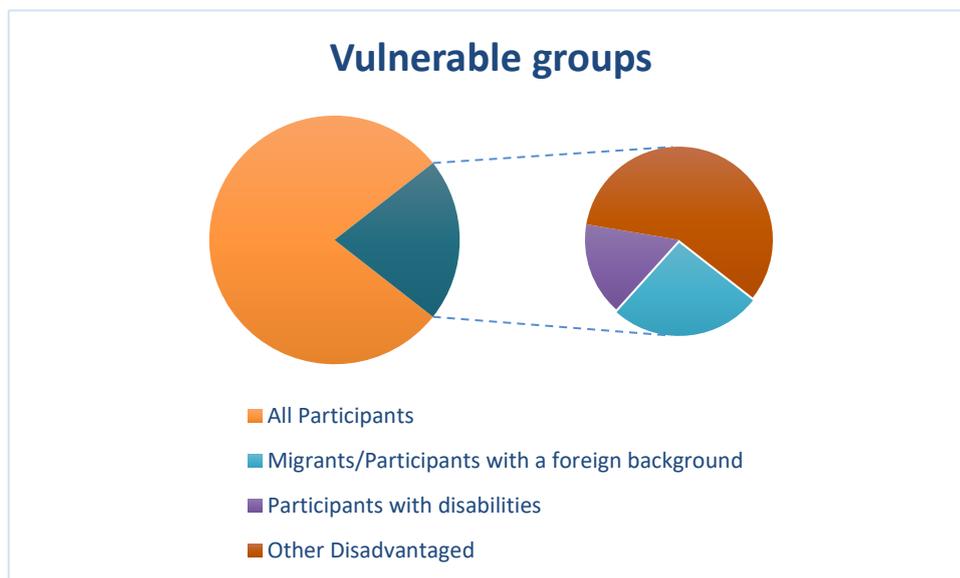
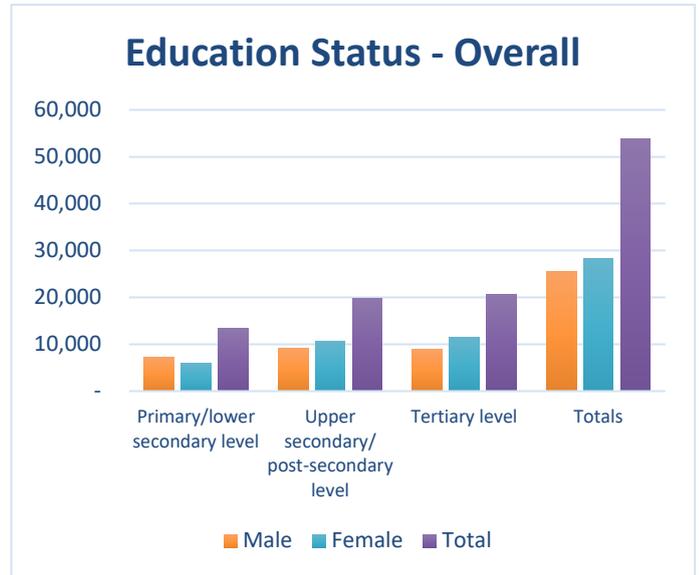
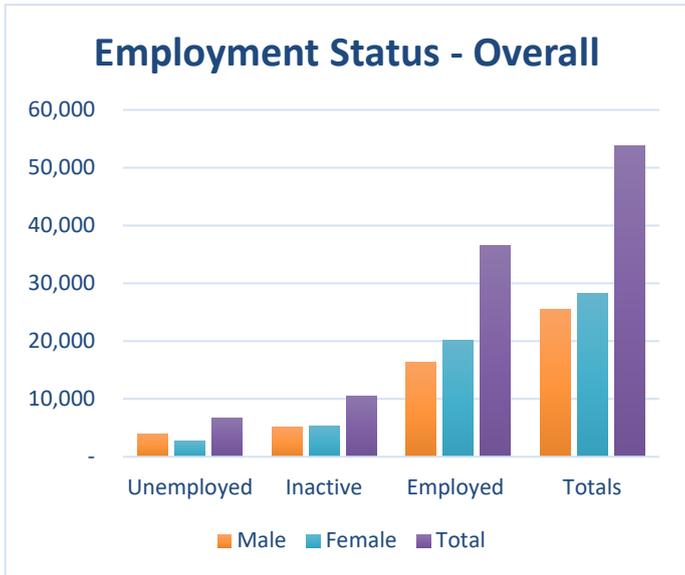
Twelve of these new projects are run by NGOs supporting those vulnerable in society. The project activities target the following areas: supporting de-institutionalisation; addressing bullying at the place of work; and capacity building activities tied to addressing suicide, mental health, disadvantaged children; as well as provision of programmes for youth victims of substance abuse, persons with disability and asylum seekers. In view that most of these beneficiaries are new to ESF, tailor-made training was carried out by the MA in March 2021.

Four projects started to be implemented by the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, Malta Council for Economic and Social Development, Malta Chamber of SMEs, and General Workers Union. The actions implemented by these projects intend to enhance engagement in the social dialogue process; as well as supporting training of staff and members of social partners.

In October 2021, an agreement was signed with Malta Enterprise, confirming the support of the Wage Supplement Scheme (WSS). This new aid scheme represents 53% of the total programme financial allocation.

What Results were achieved as at the end of 2021?

As at the end of 2021, **fifty-four projects** were being implemented including three aid schemes and **one** financial instrument. The list of projects can be found on www.eufunds.gov.mt. By end 2021, **circa 54,000 persons** were benefitting/benefitted through different opportunities provided by ESF projects implemented across Malta and Gozo whilst **circa 62,000 persons** have benefitted from the **Wage Supplement Scheme**. The following charts give a quick overview on the demographics and status of the persons supported from PA1 to PA4. Data tied to PA6 and PA7 will be reported in next AIR.



As part of the **Europe in My Region** campaign the MA organised a **nation-wide roaming photographic exhibition**. This roaming exhibition featured a number of projects implemented with the support of the EU - provided information and updates to the general public on the projects themselves, whilst increasing awareness of how European Funds have helped Maltese Citizens. It kicked off in Birżebbuġia in August and visited a total of **12 localities in Malta and Gozo over a span of 4 months**. Moreover, the MA continued to use electronic, digital and social media to disseminate information on EU funding in Malta, the roaming exhibition and to disseminate other material on approved projects, using the dedicated **Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn** pages reaching a total of **1,404,235**, with **221,510 ThruPlays** of the video posts.

What projects were in implementation throughout 2021?

The ESF supports activities in **5 main areas** as follows, providing key highlights on progress achieved in the respective areas.



EMPLOYABILITY

**€27.4M
committed**

2 projects

1 aid scheme

The **Access to Employment (A2E)** aid scheme, played a key role in addressing the pandemic complementing other employment measures such as the Wage subsidy scheme. 1,013 persons were supported in 2021 (of which 53% women, 6% with PwD, 6% with foreign background); a significant increase in demand (overall 275%) was noted in this case too with the most effected target groups being those under the age of 24 and/or unemployed for more than 1 year.

The **Training for Employment** project experienced a significant increase in demand. In 2021, Developing Skills Scheme saw a **192% increase in the number of persons applying for support**. By end 2021, 1,635 persons received support (including Development Skills Scheme) (of which 50% women, 23% with foreign background), of which 1,296 completed their studies within the same year.

In 2021 the **Youth Guarantee 2.0** aimed at reducing the number of youths who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) reached 805 participants (of which 49% women, and circa 6% foreign background), who were supported. The result indicator tied to persons less than 25 achievement is of 83% as at end of 2021 (including ongoing). In 2021, due to the COVID-19 situation, all learning material was made available on a bespoke digital platform which has been built specifically for the Youth Guarantee Project. During summer 2021, SEC and MCAST Preventive classes were offered to students. Students were given the option to attend either in class or online in keeping with the same study hours. Furthermore, students were provided with additional learning material – an online platform equipped with self-study short videos and tests covering all topics of the subjects offered.

The projects that are currently being implemented in this area, are providing opportunities to persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed individuals, other vulnerable persons, as well as those at risk of poverty to improve their employability prospects.

In 2021 through the **Developing Allied Health Capacity to Sustain Health Care Needs**, healthcare professionally successfully completed their studies and graduated in the following sectors in Orthoptics, Optometry and Genetic Counselling. They have now commenced work as qualified professionals.



HEALTH AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



Under the **Knowledge, Training, Communications and Support Measures in Support of Vulnerable Groups** a research study on the early intervention services for disabled children in Malta was funded. Under the same project, through an agreement with the World Bank, two studies have been concluded with the aim to refine Malta's social protection programs and tax benefits.

€42.3M committed

23 projects

EDUCATION

€39M
committed

5 projects

1 aid scheme

1 financial
instrument

Investment in education and lifelong learning has been addressing various dimensions from early school leaving through digital technologies, to scholarships, new VET Masters programmes and training opportunities.

In 2021 **The Endeavour Scholarships Scheme** launched its 7th and last call for scholarships providing grants to an additional 96 scholars (54 women) studying an MQF level 7 course. To date, over €10.6M have been invested supporting more than 1,100 scholars (50% women), 39% of which were in STEM subjects. The support is yielding very positive results with 34 awardees obtaining a distinction in 2021.

As at end 2021, the **'Further Studies Made Affordable'** Financial Instrument under PA3, committed €9.24M in loans supporting 278 students (37% women). The FI supports individuals in their studies at MQF levels 5-8 as well as other internationally recognised courses, with level 7 being the most popular and covering 83% of the loans provided.

The **Investing in Skills (IIS) Scheme** continued to invest in lifelong learning through training subsidies to businesses. In December 2021 the budget was increased to €6.65M. By the end of 2021, a total of 4,711 applications were received raising the number of grants signed to 3,175 and a financial commitment of €5.5M. In 2021 alone, through the scheme, over 700 unique undertakings (88% SMEs) and more than 20,700 individuals were trained (nearly 50% women, 21% vulnerable i.e. including persons with disabilities, minorities, foreign backgrounds, and other disadvantaged).

By investing in the public administration, the delivery, quality and cost effectiveness of public services delivered both internally within departments and entities as well as externally to the general public and enterprises, is improved. Consequently, this will also lead government to address the changes and developments needs of a modern economy.

The project **'Towards a More Professional Workforce in the Public Administration'**, offered further academic sponsorships to Public Service employees. Areas of studies included Leadership, Management and Business Administration at MQF level 7 as well as emerging areas in Building Services Engineering with Sustainable Energy, and health-related areas.

STRENGTHENING
THE INSTITUTIONAL
ADMINISTRATIVE
CAPACITY

€15.2M
Committed

19 projects

SUSTAINING EMPLOYMENT
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
COVID PANDEMIC CRISIS

€149.7M committed

1 aid scheme

As part of Malta's COVID response, the ESF and REACT-EU programme was modified to enable job maintenance through the **Wage Supplement Scheme**. At end 2021, the wage supplement given between October 2020 to March 2021, was committed to be supported from the programme. The MA is conducting its verification checks in close collaboration with key stakeholders such as Jobsplus, VAT department and Commissioner for Revenue.

2022 will see further physical progress of ongoing projects across all the ESF and REACT-EU programme areas. The challenge now is in relation to the evaluation of the implementation and effective impact on the ground. The MA will continue in its work tied also to verification checks on procedures carried out and related payments, in collaboration with the Certifying Authority ahead of processing the related payment claims.

LOOKING FORWARD

For more information:

info.eufunds@gov.mt – subject: ESF Citizen Summary 2021

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