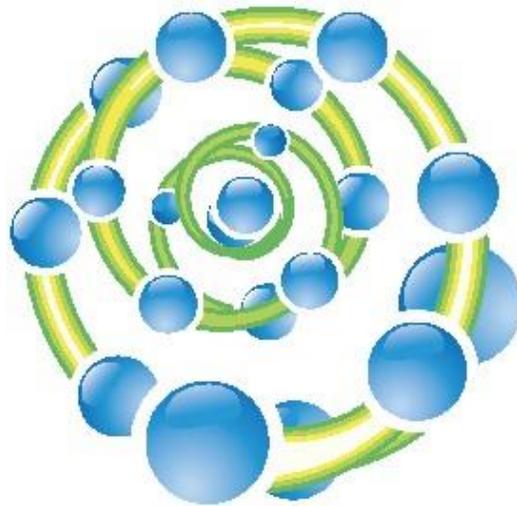


## Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

Malta



This article on apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes is part of a set of articles prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. It complements general information on VET systems available online at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

ReferNet is a European network of national partner institutions providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland.

The opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

The article is based on a common template prepared by Cedefop for all ReferNet partners.

The preparation of this article has been co-financed by the European Union and National Commission for Further and Higher Education.

Author: National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), Malta

© Copyright: National Commission for Further and Higher Education', 2014

## Contents

Introduction .....	2
A. Definitions and statistics .....	3
A.1. The Technical Apprentice Scheme (TAS).....	3
A.2. Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS).....	4
A.3. Sectors in which apprenticeships are offered.....	5
A.4. Statistics on participation in apprenticeships.....	8
B. Specific features of apprenticeships .....	11
B.1. Support for Companies.....	11
B.2. Enhancing attractiveness and career guidance .....	12
B.3. National governance.....	13
B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning .....	14
C. Main strengths and weaknesses.....	15
D. Conclusions.....	16

## Introduction

Apprenticeships in Malta have a long history and already existed as a form of financial incentive for youths back in the early 19th century <sup>(1)</sup>. The first official state technical school, in fact, dates back to 1893 when apprenticeships were offered in carpentry, joinery, carving and stucco work. Apprenticeships today are still considered to be an effective way to prepare youths for the world of work as they ensure a smooth school to work transition. Today, apprenticeships in Malta exist as part of vocational education and training offered in various vocational sectors by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) which are the main State vocational education providers. The apprenticeship schemes, however, are regulated by the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC).

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Sultana, R., (1992), Education and National Development: Historical and Critical Perspectives on Vocational Schooling in Malta, Malta: Mireva Publications.

## A. Definitions and statistics

A formal definition of apprenticeships in Malta is found in Part VII of the Employment and Training Services Act. Where Article 9 states that an apprentice is ‘a person over the age of fifteen years who is bound by a written agreement to serve an employer for a determined period with a view to acquiring knowledge, including theory and practice, of a calling in which the employer is reciprocally bound to instruct that person’ <sup>(2)</sup>.

Apprenticeship consists of on-the-job and off-the-job training for a specific period of time. The programmes begin at one of the MCAST Institutes or at ITS, where the apprentice acquires the underpinning knowledge needed in the chosen occupation. This learning is then followed by the actual work training at an employer’s establishment for the acquisition of hands-on practice.

There are two main types of Apprenticeships offered in Malta: the Technical Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) and the Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS). The regulations for the TAS are included in the Subsidiary legislation S.L.343.22<sup>3</sup> while the ESTS regulations are stipulated in the Subsidiary legislation S.L.343.25 <sup>(4)</sup>.

### A.1. The Technical Apprentice Scheme (TAS)

In the Technical Apprentice Scheme (TAS), the apprentice obtains an occupational competence at technician level (level 4 according to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Level Descriptors). The entry requirements for this level of apprenticeship is usually either a level 3

---

<sup>(2)</sup> Government of Malta, (2009), Chapter 343, Employment and Training Services Act, ACT XXVIII of 1990, as amended by Acts XV of 1995, XVI of 1997, II of 2005, VII of 2006 and XXXII of 2007; Legal Notice 424 of 2007; and Act XXIII of 2009, Valletta: Government of Malta, <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8814> accessed on 17/5/2014.

<sup>(3)</sup> Government of Malta, (2007), Subsidiary Legislation 343.22: Technical Apprenticeship Scheme, LEGAL NOTICE 82 of 1990, as amended by Legal Notices 101 of 1991, 198 of 1997, 165 of 1998, 181 of 1999, 6 of 2000, 109 and 275 of 2003, 389 and 451 of 2004, 41 of 2005 and 424 of 2007, Valletta: Government of Malta, <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=10137&l=1> accessed 17/5/2014.

<sup>(4)</sup> Government of Malta, (2007a), Subsidiary Legislation 343.25: Extended Skills Training Regulations, LEGAL NOTICE 73 of 1998, as amended by Legal Notices 180 of 1999, 5 of 2000, 238 of 2001, 108 and 274 of 2003, 367 of 2004, 214 of 2005 and 424 of 2007, Valletta: Government of Malta, <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=10140&l=1> accessed 17/5/2014.

Diploma or else a number of passes in certain Secondary Educational Certificate (school leaving level) subjects depending on the sector of the course. The apprentice will thus, as is specified in the Malta Qualifications Framework for level 4 qualifications, on completion of training, have the competence to supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work. The Journeyman’s Certificate at Technician level is awarded on successful completion of the TAS apprenticeship.

Apprentices receive remuneration during their apprenticeship which is paid by the employer and supported by the government, and varies with increased years of study. The table below provides the payment received by the apprentice.

Table 1. **Rates payable to apprentices under the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme**

Year	Wage (Payable by the Employer)	Maintenance Grant (Payable by the Government during the whole apprenticeship course – both during study and work periods)
1	€ 49.97 per week	€ 86.01 per four weeks
2	€ 52.20 per week	€ 86.01 per four weeks
3	€ 75.87 per week	Nil

A one-time grant of € 326.11 or part thereof is paid to cover expenses related to the purchase of educational equipment.

Source: 3a Malta

<http://www.3amalta.com/en/articles/item/122-etc-apprenticeships.html>

## A.2. Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS)

In the case of ESTS, the apprenticeship leads to a trade or skill at craftsman level (level 3 according to the MQF Level Descriptors). Entry qualifications usually include a foundation course certificate obtained from the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) or a few subjects at Secondary Education Certificate (school leaving level) depending on the sector. At level 3 on the Malta Qualifications Framework, on completion of the training the apprentice will be able to take on agreed responsibility for completing complex tasks, and interacts with the immediate environment and in defined actions at one’s own initiative. The Journeyman’s Certificate at Craftsman level is awarded on successful completion of the ESTS apprenticeship.

Table 2. **Rates payable to apprentices under the Extended Skill Training Scheme**

Year	Wage (payable by the sponsor)	Maintenance Grant (payable by the Government during the whole apprenticeship course – both during study and work periods)
1	€ 47.75 per week	€ 86.01 per four weeks
2	€ 49.99 per week	€ 86.01 per four weeks
3	€ 73.61 per week	Nil
A one-time grant of € 326.11 or part thereof is paid to cover expenses related to the purchase of educational equipment.		

Source: 3a Malta

<http://www.3amalta.com/en/articles/item/122-etc-apprenticeships.html>

### A.3. Sectors in which apprenticeships are offered

Apprenticeships in Malta are offered in different sectors. These are mainly offered in Applied Science, Art and Design, Construction and Building Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Community Services and electrical Engineering. The largest range of courses offered as apprenticeships are found in the engineering sectors, both in electrical engineering as well as in construction and building. These sectors probably follow the tradition of apprenticeships which were offered in the past as part of the City and Guilds qualification.

The range of apprenticeships offered at levels 3 and 4 vary. In the case of level 3 qualifications, there are 11 types of apprenticeships offered. The majority are offered by the Institute of Construction and Engineering at MCAST. When one looks at the areas offered, it is evident that these reflect crafts and trades such as stone masonry, joiner and furniture making, plumbing etc. which all reflect responsibilities and skills benchmarked at Level 3 as well as are in the traditional trades. One also finds that the Institute of Tourism Studies also offers an apprenticeship in the tourism sector. This is the only apprenticeship offered by ITS. The apprenticeships are nearly all 2 years part-time, with the exception of the Diploma in Accident Repair Body and Paint which first has one year of full-study and is only after that followed by 2 years of part-time apprenticeship.

Table 3. List of courses offered as an apprenticeship at Level 3 in VET in Malta

	Name of Qualification	Duration
Institute of Art and Design		
1	MCAST Diploma in Printing	2 years part-time
Institute of Construction and Building Engineering		
2	MCAST Diploma in Construction and Stone Masonry	2 years part-time
3	MCAST Diploma in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	2 years part-time
4	MCAST Diploma in Joinery and Furniture making	2 years part-time
5	MCAST Diploma in Masonry Heritage Skills ( <i>sewwej</i> )	2 years part-time
6	MCAST Diploma in Plumbing	2 years part-time
7	MCAST Diploma in Trowel Trades (plastering and tile laying or Painting and Decorating)	2 years part-time
8	MCAST Diploma in Welding and Fabrication	2 years part-time
Institute of Mechanical Engineering		
9	Diploma in Accident Repair Body and Paint (C&G 4291)	1 year full-time & 2 years part-time apprenticeship
10	Certificate in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (C&G4290)	2 years part-time
Institute of Tourism Studies		
11	ITS Foundation Certificate in Hospitality Trades	

Source: Information from MCAST

<http://www.mcast.edu.mt/MainMenu/Full-TimeCourses/Prospectus.aspx> and ITS Prospectus 2013-2014

<http://www.its.edu.mt/courses-admission/its-prospectus/its-prospectus.html>

There are more apprenticeships offered at level 4 under the TAS scheme, with 21 different courses. Some of these courses offer a higher level qualification in the same sectors as those apprenticeships offered at Level 3. There are also other apprenticeships available which range over a larger number of sectors and jobs in engineering and even extending to community services and applied science. The apprenticeship at these two levels can be in two main different formats: 2 years part-time; 3 years part-time; or 1 year full-time study followed by 2 years part-time apprenticeship.

In Malta there exist, both within VET as well as Tertiary Education, other forms of work-based learning than apprenticeship where students are required to spend a period of learning time at work. These take place in teacher-training, healthcare sector, medicine, pharmacy etc. at tertiary education. There are also non-apprenticeship VET courses e.g. in care where students also spend time at the work place. Students in both VET and Tertiary education are also encouraged to participate in work placements abroad through participation in mobility programmes such as the ERASMUS+ programme. The Employment and Training Corporation also has initiatives where it offers work placements or traineeships to job seekers (to all unemployed, among them young people) to facilitate their transition into work.

Table 4. **List of courses offered as an apprenticeship at Level 4 in VET in Malta**

	Name of Qualification	Duration
Institute of Applied Science		
1	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Applied Science	2 years part-time
Institute of Construction and Building Engineering		
2	MCAST Diploma in Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning	3 years part-time
3	MCAST Diploma in Joinery and Furniture Making	3 years part-time
4	MCAST Diploma in Masonry Heritage ( <i>Mastru</i> )	3 years part-time
5	MCAST Diploma in Plumbing	3 years part-time
6	MCAST Diploma in Welding and Fabrication	3 years part-time
7	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment (Building services Engineering)	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
8	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment (civil engineering)	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
9	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
Institute of Community Services		
10	Diploma in Hairdressing – Women (C & G 6902)	2 years part-time
11	ITEC Diploma in Holistic Massage, Diploma in Facial Electrical Treatments, Diploma in Diet and Nutrition for Complementary Therapists	2 years part-time
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering		
12	Diploma in Electrical Installations (Buildings and Structures) (C&G 2365)	2 years part-time
13	MCAST Diploma in Computer Engineering	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time

14	MCAST Diploma in Green Energy Technologies	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
15	MCAST Diploma in Industrial Electronics	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
16	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Electrical/ Electronic Engineering	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
Institute of Mechanical Engineering		
17	MCAST Diploma for Polymer Process Technicians	3 years part-time
18	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Operations and Maintenance Engineering	3 years part-time
19	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Manufacturing Engineering	3 years part-time
20	Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (C&G 4290)	1yr full-time, 2 yrs part-time
GOZO Centre		
21	DIPLOMA in Electrical Installations (Buildings and Structures) (C&G 2365)	2 years part-time

Source: Information from MCAST <http://www.mcast.edu.mt/MainMenu/Full-TimeCourses/Prospectus.aspx> and ITS Prospectus 2013-2014 <http://www.its.edu.mt/courses-admission/its-prospectus/its-prospectus.html>

In addition, Malta has a number of private VET providers where some of their courses also include work-based learning. These other forms of work-based learning are not legally regulated in the same way as in the case of apprenticeships, and possibly it is time to reconsider the concept of apprenticeships/work-based learning in a wider sense such that all forms of this type of learning provision is regulated to ensure quality learning and consequently improve Malta's competitiveness, reduce youth unemployment as well as decrease the percentage of early school leavers.

#### A.4. Statistics on participation in apprenticeships

**Table 5. Apprentices registered across different VET courses for intake October 2012 and 2013**

Name of Qualification		Intake Oct 2012			Intake Oct 2013		
		F	M	T	F	M	T
<b>Institute of Applied Science</b>							
1	MCAST-BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA IN APPLIED SCIENCE	8	6	14	12	12	24
<b>Institute of Art and Design</b>							
2	MCAST DIPLOMA IN PRINTING	-	-	-	1	2	3
<b>Institute of Building and Construction Engineering</b>							
3	MCAST DIPLOMA IN CONSTRUCTION AND STONE	0	1	1	0	4	4

	MASONRY						
4	MCAST DIPLOMA IN HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING	1	17	18	0	9	9
5	MCAST DIPLOMA IN JOINERY AND FURNITURE MAKING	0	5	5	1	4	5
6	MCAST DIPLOMA IN MASONRY HERITAGE SKILLS (SEWWEJ)	2	7	9	0	5	5
7	MCAST DIPLOMA IN PLUMBINGO	0	2	2	-	-	-
8	MCAST DIPLOMA IN TROWEL TRADES (PLASTERING AND TILE LAYING OR PAINTING AND DECORATING)	1	0	1	-	-	-
9	MCAST DIPLOMA IN WELDING AND FABRICATION	0	11	11	1	15	15
10	MCAST DIPLOMA IN HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING	0	8	8	0	2	2
11	MCAST DIPLOMA IN JOINERY AND FURNITURE MAKING	-	-	-	0	2	2
12	MCAST DIPLOMA IN MASONRY HERITAGE SKILLS (MASTRU)	2	15	17	2	6	8
13	MCAST DIPLOMA IN PLUMBING	0	1	1	-	-	-
14	MCAST DIPLOMA IN WELDING AND FABRICATION	-	-	17	0	9	9
15	MCAST-BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA IN CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (BUILDING SERVICES ENGINEERING)	1	8	9	0	3	3
16	MCAST-BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA IN CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (CIVIL ENGINEERING)	4	13	17	0	11	11
17	MCAST-BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA IN CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	1	18	19	3	24	27
<b>Institute of Community Services</b>							
18	Diploma in Hairdressing – Women (C & G 6902)	15	2	17	13	0	13
19	ITEC Diploma in Holistic Massage, Diploma in Facial Electrical Treatments, Diploma in Diet and Nutrition for Complementary Therapists	9	0	9	8	0	8
<b>Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering</b>							
20	Diploma in Electrical Installations (Buildings and Structures) (C&G 2365)	-	-	-	0	7	7
21	MCAST Diploma in Computer Engineering	1	2	3	1	13	14
22	MCAST Diploma in Green Energy Technologies	2	9	11	2	11	13
23	MCAST Diploma in Industrial Electronics	1	15	16	2	19	21

24	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Electrical/ Electronic Engineering	1	29	30	2	19	21
<b>Institute of Mechanical Engineering</b>							
25	Diploma in Accident Repair Body and Paint (C&G 4291)	1	15	16	1	23	24
26	Certificate in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (C&G 4290)	1	29	30	0	35	35
27	MCAST Diploma for Polymer Process Technicians	2	7	9	-	-	-
28	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Operations and Maintenance Engineering	2	6	8	0	9	9
29	MCAST-BTEC Extended Diploma in Manufacturing Engineering	2	17	19	1	13	14
30	Diploma in Light Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (C&G 4290)	-	-	-	0	16	16
<b>GOZO Centre</b>							
31	DIPLOMA IN ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS (BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES) (C&G 2365)	1	3	4	0	9	9

*Source:* Data collated from data provided by MCAST.

The table overleaf provides statistics for the number of apprenticeships at MCAST in the academic years 2012/13 and 2013/14. In the case of the Institute of Tourism Studies, the number of students on apprenticeship in the October 2013 intake amounted to 17 students. It is to be noted that the percentage apprenticeships from every year's overall intake at MCAST is small. In addition, the majority of the apprenticeships are taken up by males, with the exception of those offered by the Institute of Community Services which has a large majority of females. A gender balance is present only in the apprenticeships in Applied Science. There is thus strong gender segregation across apprenticeship schemes.

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) usually works to find employers to sponsor apprentices, but students are also encouraged to try and find an employer. It is to be noted that students do not always manage to get a sponsor (an employer who offers an apprenticeship) and so the number of students taking up an apprenticeship is limited. These students at most can only follow the course as a taught course without the work-based learning experience.

## **B. Specific features of apprenticeships**

Although Malta has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in Europe at 13.8%, the situation needs to be seen within the perspective of Malta having one of the highest rates of early school leavers in Europe as well as the percentage of youths classified as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Malta is also experiencing a skills mismatch of skilled workers which would be necessary for the country's competitiveness.

Apprenticeship schemes in Malta have a long history. Today, employers can offer apprentices sponsorship to train at their workplace. There is so far no accreditation of employers before they accept apprentices at their workplace. When apprentices are sent to work with employers, they are assigned a mentor who is responsible for the apprentice's learning experiences, and to oversee and confirm the entries in the apprentice's logbook. There is no formal training so far for mentors at the workplace. Apprentices following a course are provided with a list of competences that the employers need to provide them with. These guidelines help employers decide where to place the apprentice when at work. The Employment and Training Corporation carry out monitoring visits to see how the apprentice is getting on with the employer during his work experience. At the end of the apprenticeship course, apprentices obtain the qualification for their studies from MCAST and the Journeyman Certificate from the Employment and Training Corporation. In the case of the Journeyman Certificate, there are Trade Testing Boards which consist of experts in the trade. Their role is to assess apprentices through their logbook, interview and at times also through a practical activity.

### **B.1. Support for companies**

Apprenticeships are supported by the government financially as well as at policy level. One finds that apprenticeships have been included in Malta's National Reform Programme <sup>(5)</sup> as well as the budget document. Government supports companies and employers for apprenticeships by contributing directly to the apprentice's wage making expenses less than what a normal employee would cost. In addition to that, government has this year extended its commitment to apprenticeship from policy to additional direct financial incentives for enterprise. In this year's budget, government has introduced financial incentives in terms of tax rebates for each and every apprenticeship offered by employers.

---

<sup>(5)</sup> Ministry of Finance, (2013), *Malta's National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

This tax rebate amounts to €600 for each traineeship and €1200 for each apprenticeship <sup>(6)</sup>. There is no other form of support provided particularly to SMEs to promote take up of apprenticeship.

Government has also utilized European and Social Funds (ESF) to offer traineeships which provide work experience. Jobs+ is one ESF project initiative where social partners and representatives of the political parties have the task of advising and co-ordinating with Government issues relating to the labour market. These initiatives are discussed within the Active Labour Market Counselling and Action Committee. Results so far have been encouraging as a good number of employers have promised their support to offer traineeships under the government schemes utilizing funds from this project <sup>(7)</sup>.

## **B.2. Enhancing attractiveness and career guidance**

Government, through the Ministry for Education and Employment and MCAST and ITS, has worked to increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships with both young people and employers. An initiative taken by the Ministry for Education and Employment has this year attracted 83 companies spanning from various economic sectors (manufacturing, gaming and tourism amongst others) who are ready to offer traineeships as part of the Employment and Training Corporation's traineeships scheme <sup>(8)</sup>. Government in Malta has dedicated attention in trying to attract more youths to apprenticeships through media campaigns. These have also been mainly funded through various ESF projects.

A study conducted in 2004 <sup>(9)</sup> showed that young persons' decision to take up an apprenticeship scheme was influenced by their work aspirations; conditions of work; followed by role models, family and teachers. It also showed that there was a higher tendency for youths from lower socio-economic status to opt for apprenticeships than those coming higher socio-economic backgrounds. Although over 10 years old, this is the only study which provides some insights into young people's choices and apprenticeships.

---

<sup>(6)</sup> Deloitte, (2013), *Malta Budget 2014 Summary: What you need to know...* Malta: Deloitte Malta.

<sup>(7)</sup> Ministry of Education and Employment, (2014), *National Employment Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

<sup>(8)</sup> Ministry of Education and Employment, (2014), *National Employment Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

<sup>(9)</sup> Employment and Training Corporation, (2004), *Apprenticeship in Malta: Results of a Study among apprentices and employers*, Malta: Employment and Training Corporation.

MCAST has also invested in providing career guidance which can help students in selecting their study courses. The Information Centre at the MCAST Main Campus in Paola provides students with information about the training programmes offered by the College's Institutes, as well as the support services available before and during studies at MCAST. On the other hand, employers are incentivized to take on apprentices as they plan to expand their workforce. Apprenticeship offers employers the possibility of training new workers at a low cost.

### **B.3. National governance**

Apprenticeship schemes in Malta are regulated by Part VII of the Employment and Training Services Act which gives the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) the responsibility of managing and monitoring apprenticeships in collaboration with MCAST and ITS who provide the theoretical learning component.

There is official recognition by government at policy level of the value of apprenticeships is one of the best successful ways of ensuring employability and a smooth school to work transition for youths from initial VET to the labour market. The National Employment strategy supports and moves forward the commitment to apprenticeships that had already been made in the National Youth Employment Strategy 2015 published in 2013<sup>10</sup>. This continued support for apprenticeship is noted also in the National Reform Programme of 2013<sup>11</sup> which stated government's intention to peg the current apprenticeships to the Malta Qualifications Framework. In addition, there is also commitment in the National Employment policy for Malta<sup>12</sup> to also participate in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in order to develop high quality apprenticeship-type training and excellence in work-based learning in VET.

Governance also includes the participation of key stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of VET programmes, also apprenticeships. MCAST supports industry through two main types of collaboration: consultation where advice and support of the major employers and industry representatives related to the area of study are sought when planning the introduction of or renewing courses; and collaboration, where industry can approach MCAST to propose new courses that are required to meet the latest industry needs and in response

---

(<sup>10</sup>) Ministry of Education and Employment, (2013), *National Youth Employment Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

(<sup>11</sup>) Ministry of Finance, (2013), *Malta's National Reform Programme under the Europe 2020 Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

(<sup>12</sup>) Ministry of Education and Employment, (2014), *National Employment Strategy*, Malta: Government of Malta.

MCAST draws up new training programmes or amendments to existing courses to fill any skills lacunae identified. MCAST has recently gone a step further and is currently offering tailor-made courses for organisations' employees. The Institute of Tourism Studies works on similar lines where it organises meetings and feedback seminars where it dialogues with the industry in order to understand the skills gaps which exist as well as obtain feedback on skills learnt in order to improve the training provided.

These channels are informal and no specific mechanisms for this dialogue exist. However, these existing channels for discussions do enable an effective reaction to rapid changing market needs.

#### **B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning**

Quality assurance in VET learning is very important to MCAST and this is reflected in the personnel dedicated to Quality Assurance within the college. The main emphasis tends to be on the quality of the taught component. Monitoring of apprentices during work is the responsibility of the Employment and Training Corporation. Students need to keep a log book, and it is difficult to ensure that a proper quality work-based learning experience is provided. This is an aspect where there is need and space to dedicate more attention to the quality of the work based experience. A proper quality assurance mechanism dedicated to work-based learning is not yet in place and is an aspect which requires attention, even if it is difficult to achieve. There is, however, a commitment to address this aspect of work-based learning, as Malta is participating in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships.

### C. Main strengths and weaknesses

The main strength of apprenticeships in Malta is the high success rates in employment for young people. In 2010, the Technician Apprenticeship Scheme (TAS) and Extended Skills Training Scheme (ESTS) resulted in 91% of applicants being placed with an employer following completion. In September 2012, out of those who did not pursue further studies after completing their apprenticeship, 85% were in full-time and 7% in part-time employment. According to a 2011 Eurobarometer survey 84% of Maltese respondents who had completed a traineeship stated that the traineeship helped them to get a permanent job <sup>(13)</sup>. Apprenticeship, thus, can be considered to have been successful in providing employment opportunities for young people.

There is also a very small dropout rate which shows how apprenticeship are one main means of combating drop out from VET.

However, there are areas which still need attention in order to improve apprenticeships:

- Apprenticeships are limited to only two qualifications levels (3 and 4) and thus there can be the extension of apprenticeships to higher and lower levels of qualifications;
- Apprenticeships can be extended to a wider range of courses offered locally in VET. The courses with apprenticeships have reflected historical traditional apprenticeship sectors but there is potential to consider extending the courses and sectors where there can also be apprenticeships;
- Every year there are limited apprenticeships placements. This means that greater efforts need to be made to attract more employers to offer sponsorships to young people in training;
- Quality assurance in work-based learning, whether in parts which are academically accredited and those which are not needs attention such that a good quality work-based learning experience is assured to all.

---

<sup>(13)</sup> European Commission, (2013), *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Schemes in EU27: Key Success Factors: A Guidebook for Policy Planners and Practitioners*, Brussels: European Commission.

## **D. Conclusions**

This article has tackled apprenticeships in Malta from different perspectives and provided some insights into the types of apprenticeships that exist, some statistics as well as the policy and implementation perspective of apprenticeships. While continuing to be successful in ensuring young people a smooth school-to-work transition, the number of apprenticeships on offer in Malta remains small compared to the number of young people in training. There is thus need to widen apprenticeships in number, sectors and qualifications level. However, there is also the need to invest in developing quality assurance frameworks which ensure that young people have good quality work-based learning in preparation for the world of work. This would not only help the young people themselves, but also contribute to make Malta more competitive in today's economic world.