



Malta
Further & Higher
Education Authority

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

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Introductory Note

Chairman's Introductory Note to the MFHEA Annual Report 2024

2024 was a year of instruction for an authority set up just three years before. It was a year when the Authority had to set milestones to keep abreast of the rapidly evolving landscape of educational excellence.

In 2024, we endeavoured to strengthen our engagement with stakeholders, reinforce connections with national and international partners—consolidating our position not only as a regulator, but also as a proactive force for innovation in further and higher education. Through open dialogue and shared purpose, we aim to ensure that the sector remains responsive, inclusive, and future-ready.

Our efforts to modernise the educational landscape are ongoing. We have developed initiatives in vocational education, broadened access to alternative learning pathways, invested in digital learning, and reinforced our commitment to lifelong learning. These efforts were intended to shape a more inclusive and accessible educational system that meets people where they are and supports them throughout their lives in their academic development.

Recognising the pace of change in today's learners' and labour markets, we remain committed to equipping learners with the skills, mindsets, and flexibility needed to succeed. By promoting a culture of innovation, we have welcomed AI and digital technologies to reshape our world, as we remain active in cultivating a learning environment where people and technology progress together—defining both human potential and economic productivity.

As we look to the future, new challenges lie ahead. Entering this new chapter, the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority remains steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities with diligence and purpose throughout 2025. With a focus on maintaining rigorous standards, fostering excellence, and shaping a forward-thinking vision for education in Malta, I am confident that the Authority will face these challenges with determination and clarity. To this end, the Authority will need to expand its team of specialists and equip its staff with the necessary tools to succeed.

I am grateful to the dedicated team members of our organisation for their commitment and hard work. With a strong work ethic, the Authority will face the challenges of 2025 with measured confidence.

Dr Edward Woods

Board and Committee Members

MFHEA 2024 Board Members:

Dr Edward Woods

Chairperson

Edward Woods (LL.D.) is the Chairperson of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. During his career, Dr Woods specialised in Civil and Commercial Law, with a focus on marine disputes, business partnerships, and property law. Through his legal experience, Dr Woods has gained a wealth of knowledge, which he has channelled during his various appointments, serving as Chairperson of the Malta Maritime Authority, member of the Board of Governors of the Malta Arbitration Centre and Chairperson of the Malta Communications Authority. He also served on a number of boards and worked on several projects, including the Valletta Cruise Liner Terminal Project.

Dr Francis Abela

Deputy Chairperson

Dr Francis Abela has been working in the educational field for about 40 years. He was a teacher for 20 years and spent the rest of his career in school administration. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Education with a specialisation in Biology and a Diploma in Education Administration and Management from the University of Malta. He also holds a Dottorato in Scienze Biologiche from the University of Pisa. In addition, he holds a licence from the President of Malta to act as an Assistant Apothecary, as certified by the Pharmacy Board. He was a part-time lecturer for three years at the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Malta. On a voluntary basis, he is currently actively involved with several NGOs, namely: the Emergency Response Rescue Corp (ERRC) – Vice President; the English-Speaking Union – Gozo Branch – Vice Chair; and President of Gozo Life, an NGO in the educational sector for schools in Gozo. In 2020, he was nominated for the Premju Nazzjonali tal-Volontarjat 2020.

Mr Anatole Baldacchino

Member

Anatole Baldacchino is a Certified Public Accountant, with professional experience spanning 30 years, covering management consultancy and audits. His main area of academic interest is inclusive education.

Anatole has several years of board experience. He served as Deputy Chairperson for the National Commission for Further and Higher Education in 2020. He founded his private consultancy firm in 1998 and is involved in a number of research and consultancy assignments. He is currently the Chairperson of the Independent Community Living Appeals Board.

Dr Desiree Cassar

Member

Desiree Cassar graduated with a Doctorate in Law from the University of Malta in 2003 and was admitted to the Maltese Bar, Superior Courts of Malta, in 2004. She advises clients across different sectors. Desiree has delivered lectures and seminars on specialist subjects for a number of years. She is a member of the Chamber of Advocates and the Institute of Financial Services Practitioners. She was a member of the Board of the National Commission for Further and Higher Education before it was statutorily established as the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

Dr Kenneth Vella

Member

Dr Kenneth Vella attended Marsa Primary State School, Junior Lyceum Liceo Vassalli tal-Handaq, Gian Frangisk Abela Upper Lyceum and the University of Malta. In 1996, Vella graduated with a Bachelor of Education Honours degree from the University of Malta. In 2005, he obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Administration and Management and in 2008, a Master's in Educational Leadership, both from the University of Malta. Vella continued with his studies at the University of Lincoln in England, from where he obtained a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Research and Development in 2015. In July 2019, Vella was appointed Chairperson of the Quality Assurance Committee within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. In January 2021, Dr Kenneth Vella was elected Vice President for the European Region of the International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA). Presently, he is also the Principal of Mater Boni Consilii St Joseph School, Paola, and the Non-Resident Ambassador of Malta to Estonia and Finland.

Dr Alicia Agius Gatt

Secretary

Dr Alicia Agius Gatt graduated with a Doctorate in Law from the University of Malta in 2008, and in the same year, she obtained her warrant to practise in the Notarial Profession in Malta. Dr Agius Gatt has her own notarial practice and advises clients on succession, property law and other related legal matters. She was a Director of Bank of Valletta from December 2014 to December 2015. She was then appointed Director of Tigné Mall plc from June 2016 to September 2020.

Dr Francis Abela (Deputy Chairperson from the 1st of January until the expiry of term on 31st January 2024).

Dr Kenneth Vella (Member from the 1st of January until the expiry of term on 31st January 2024. Re-appointed on 12th March 2024 and resigned on the 5th of September 2024).

QAC Committee Members

From 1st January until 2nd July 2024:

Dr Kenneth Vella (Chairperson)
Ms Angela Charles (Deputy Chairperson)
Dr Mateja Farrugia (Member)
Ms Pamela Zerafa (Member)
Dr Mario Vassallo (Member)

Dr Aleks Farrugia was a QAC member from **1st January until 4th April 2024.**

From 3rd July 2024 onwards:

Dr Mateja Farrugia (Chairperson)
Prof. Khatuna Saganelidze (Member)
Mr Claudio Cauchi (Member)

Advisory Committee

Members/Representation (as of December 2023)

- Malta Chamber
- Malta Union of Teachers
- Malta's National Youth Council
- Chamber of SMEs
- Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
- University of Malta – Academic Staff Association
- Institute of Tourism Studies
- University of Malta
- Further Education Institution's Rep – Elected member
- Higher Education Institution's Rep – Elected member

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority has established an Advisory Committee as per Article 18 of Cap. 607 of the Laws of Malta. The Advisory Committee provides a forum for consultation with stakeholders, who meet at least twice a year, and is chaired by the Chairperson and/or the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority. The Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from private and public further education institutions, of representatives from private and public higher education institutions, of representatives from students, of representatives from civil society, of representatives from the business community, and of representatives from trade unions which represent the majority of employees in the further and higher education sector.



CEO Introduction

Foreword to the 2024 Annual Report

This annual report reflects a year marked by steady progress, resilience, and shared ambition within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. The outcomes achieved in 2024 underscore our growing impact on Malta's further and higher education landscape.

Throughout the year, MFHEA remained steadfast in its mission to promote a high-quality, inclusive, and internationally aligned education system—one that responds to the evolving needs of learners, providers, and society at large. We strengthened our quality assurance mechanisms, enhanced the recognition and comparability of qualifications, and supported institutions in their development and innovation. These efforts were guided by our core values: transparency, trust, and collaboration.

By fostering strategic partnerships and engaging in key initiatives, we continued to raise awareness about the importance of education and qualification recognition. Our overarching aim has been to demonstrate the tangible value of accredited qualifications, not only in supporting individual academic journeys but also in promoting personal development and expanding access to global opportunities.

One of the Authority's primary responsibilities is to ensure that education providers in Malta operate with integrity and in full compliance with ethical standards. In 2024, our regulatory work remained robust, with ongoing oversight and regular inspections designed to uphold the highest standards of quality, ethics, and accountability. These actions reaffirm our commitment to safeguarding students' rights and nurturing a trusted, values-driven education ecosystem.

MFHEA's participation in international and national forums further reflected our dedication to excellence and strategic development. The year began with the 9th ASEM n Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9), a landmark event that strengthened ties and facilitated the exchange of best practices between European and Asian higher education systems. We also played a central role in the organisation of the ENQA General Assembly in October, reinforcing our contribution to the advancement of quality assurance and cross-border collaboration in higher education.



On the national level, 2024 saw the achievement of two key milestones. In March, we launched the fifth revised edition of the Referencing Report, a comprehensive resource that brings together the expertise of numerous contributors from Malta's dynamic further and higher education sector. This was followed by the publication of the National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education, which maps key trends and drivers up to 2030. The strategy emphasises the importance of greater alignment between education, research, and industry, advocating a cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach that extends into broader policy domains, including digital innovation, health, and environmental sustainability.

MFHEA remains actively engaged at the European level through its participation in the Council of Europe, the Bologna Follow-Up Group, and a number of European Commission-led initiatives. This continued involvement ensures that Malta's education policies remain closely aligned with European frameworks, facilitating comparability, mutual recognition, and integration within the European Education Area. By contributing to these high-level platforms, MFHEA helps shape policy on key issues such as quality assurance, qualifications recognition, academic mobility, and inclusion, while ensuring that Malta's unique perspective is both represented and respected.

Looking ahead, the Authority remains committed to implementing Malta's national FHE strategy with foresight and adaptability. This calls for the adoption of innovative, future-oriented strategies and deeper cross-sectoral collaboration. Our vision is for FHE institutions not only to serve as centres of academic learning but also to act as catalysts for social, economic, and technological advancement.

MFHEA also remains dedicated to transparency and effective communication across all operations. We continue to foster strong relationships with our licensed providers, grounded in mutual understanding, trust, and shared alignment with national goals. Our team is committed to guiding both current and prospective providers, offering consistent support throughout the regulatory process. We aim to maintain a facilitative and welcoming environment for all stakeholders, especially new entrants navigating the system for the first time.

We firmly believe that high-quality education is the foundation of a fair, resilient, and forward-looking society. By promoting excellence in education, we empower learners with the values, skills, and opportunities necessary to reach their full potential.

While the journey ahead presents its challenges, I remain confident that, through the dedication of my exceptional team and the continued collaboration across the sector, we will continue to advance our mission and uphold the highest standards of educational excellence.



Chief Executive Officer, MFHEA
Dr Rose Anne Cuschieri







Year in Review:

Who We Are and What We Do

Our Mission Statement

“to foster the development and achievement of excellence in further and higher education in Malta through research, effective licensing, accreditation, quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications established under the Malta Qualifications Framework.”

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) is the local competent authority for recognising qualifications and accrediting courses against the Malta Qualifications Framework. The Malta Qualifications Framework is a referencing tool that helps describe and compare both national and foreign qualifications to promote quality, transparency, and mobility of qualifications in all types of education. It is mainly referenced against the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), as well as other non-European qualifications frameworks.

Our Services

The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) is the competent body within the MFHEA that recognises programmes of study against the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Recognition statements for programmes of study may be required for various reasons, such as: to pursue further studies, to apply for a job or a promotion, qualification allowance, tax rebate, scholarship schemes, a single permit/visa/citizenship with Jobsplus, among others.

The Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications is a key element to ensuring the free movement of citizens, in this case pertaining to professionals throughout the EU to ensure the full functioning of the Internal Market. The principle of mutual recognition for professional qualifications is guaranteed through a harmonised legal framework, in place since 2005, applicable to all EU Member States.

Provider Accreditation is the formal acknowledgement, issued by the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), of the status, legitimacy, and appropriateness of an educational institution. Programmes of study are referred to as ‘accredited’ when they have been assessed by the MFHEA and pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework. All educational institutions interested in offering programmes of study which are accredited and pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) are required to submit their prospective programmes to the MFHEA for accreditation.

Quality Assurance refers to one or more processes that safeguard the quality of further and higher education within the economic, social, and cultural context at national, European, and international levels. External Quality Assurance audits conducted by the MFHEA provide public assurance about the standards of further, higher and VET qualifications, and the quality of the students' learning experience.

Validation is the process of assessing the skills, knowledge, and competencies an individual has acquired. This is benchmarked against National Occupational Standards, which are evaluated by Sectoral Skills Units. The Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning is a process that identifies, assesses, and formally certifies the knowledge, skills, and competences which individuals develop throughout their lives by means of participation in non-formal and informal learning.

The Compliance Unit within the MFHEA plays an important part in ensuring that licensed further and higher educational institutions adhere to the pertinent laws regulating further and higher education provision in/from Malta, among others. The Compliance Unit carries out its main responsibilities through licence checks, media checks, spot-checks, and investigations of non-compliance claims flagged by MFHEA officials or by the general public.

The Research and Policy Unit's role is spread over several central functions which are all interrelated, positioning the groundwork for the further and higher education sphere on a national and international level. Accurate data collection is essential to maintaining the integrity of research, which, in turn, is essential for the development of national policies and strategies.



Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC)

The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) was established under the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Act (Chapter 451 of the Laws of Malta). It is responsible for evaluating and recognising both academic and vocational programmes of study. Using the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), MQRIC ensures the recognition and comparability of academic programmes, offering guidance on both local and international credentials.

MQRIC operates in line with the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention—formally known as the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. This treaty, developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, is the main legal framework for credential evaluation in Europe.

As Malta's official ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre), MQRIC plays an active role in the ENIC-NARIC network. It contributes to the recognition process, the development of standard practices, policy making, and legislation in the field.

Recognition statements issued by MQRIC are often required for various purposes, including pursuing further education, applying for employment or promotion, qualifying for a qualification allowance, tax rebates, scholarships, or applications related to single permits, visas, or citizenship through Jobsplus.

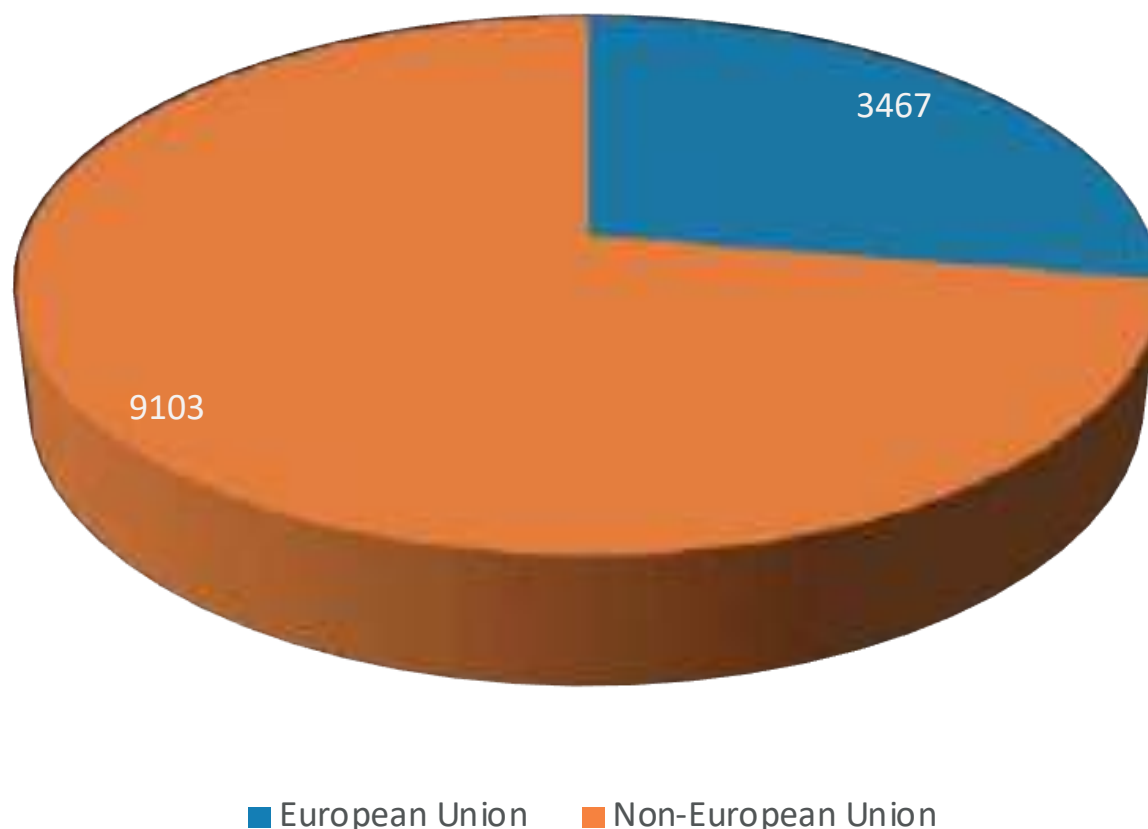
Recognition in 2024

Now in its ninth year of delivering recognition services online, MQRIC has been able to accurately monitor annual and seasonal trends and insights that are featured in this year's annual report. For the calendar year 2024, MQRIC received a total of 12,570 applications. Of these, 11,584 were processed and communicated to the applicants. 899 applications were processed through the fast-track procedure, whereby applicants received their statements in two working days. Other applications were not processed due to various circumstances, including fraudulent certificates submitted, missing documents from applicants, or due to inconclusive or pending verification from foreign ENIC-NARICs or awarding institutions.

The online system has since been upgraded to offer enhanced functionality for evaluators. These improvements allow for a more accurate assessment of programmes by taking into account the date of award—an essential feature that enables the system to assign different recognition statuses to the same programme when its accreditation or licensing status has changed over time.

Total Qualifications Received in 2024

Fig. 1 – Total Cumulative Applications – by Nationality of Applicant (2024)



Demographics of MQRIC Applications

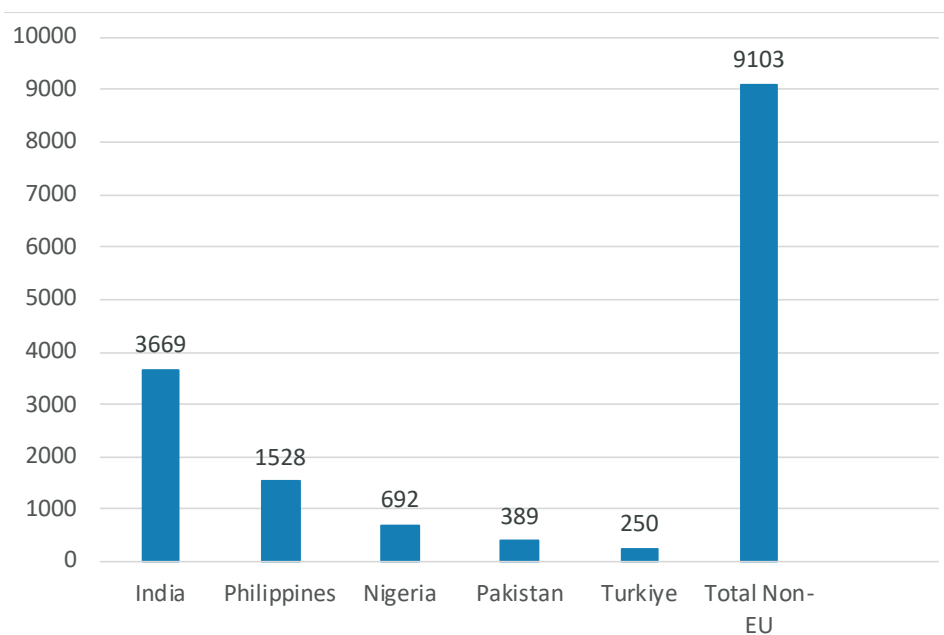
In 2024, MQRIC received 12,570 applications from around the world (Fig. 1). Of these, 11,671 were regular applications and 899 were Fast Track applications.

India and the Philippines represented the highest volumes of nationals applying for academic recognition, with 3,669 and 1,528 applications received respectively (Fig. 2).

Among EU nationals, Maltese and Italian citizens were the primary users of MQRIC services, with 2,381 applications submitted by Maltese nationals and 481 by Italian nationals (see Fig. 3). Figure 4 provides a detailed breakdown of applications by nationality for all EU applicants, along with their respective percentages relative to the total EU submissions. Similarly, Figure 5 presents a breakdown by nationality for all Non-EU applicants, indicating their percentage share of total Non-EU applications.

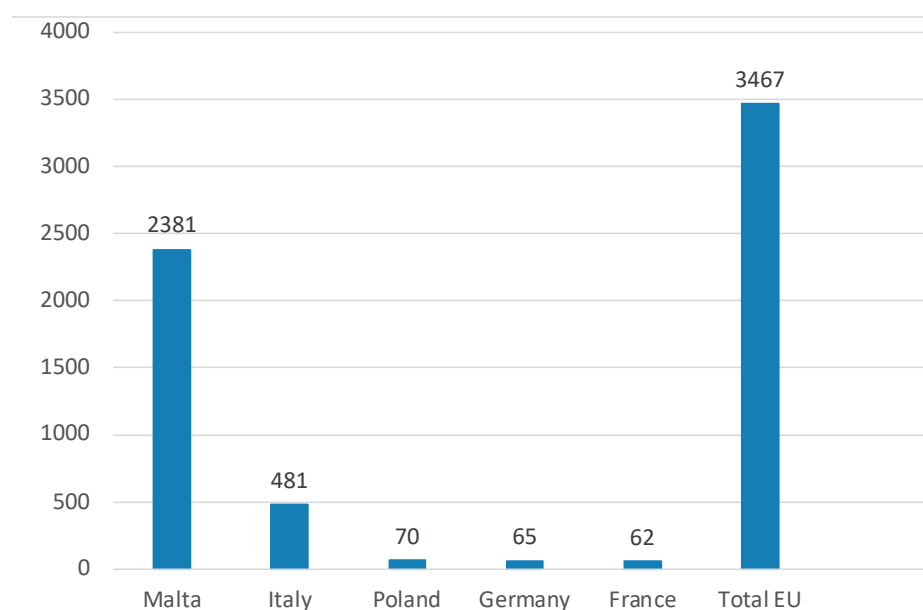
The data also includes cancelled applications—those submitted with incorrect information, duplicate entries, or other issues that necessitated their complete removal from the system.

Fig. 2 – Top 5 Non-EU Applications by Nationality of Applicant



Of a total of 9,103 non-EU applicants, the percentages include: India with the highest number of applications; followed by the Philippines, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey (all others include other non-EU countries from which we received applications).

Fig. 3 – Top 5 EU Applications by Nationality of Applicant



Of a total of 3,467 EU applications received, Maltese applications were the highest, followed by Italy, Poland, Germany, and France (all others include the other EU countries).

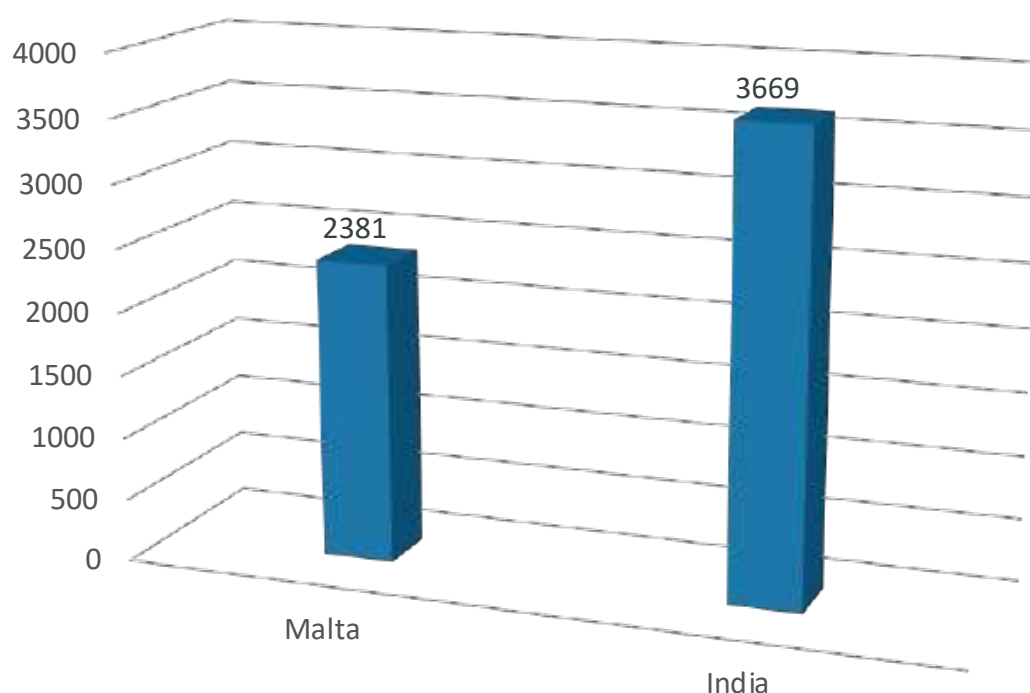
Fig. 4 – Breakdown by Country of Non-EU Applications Received

India	3,669	Malaysia	39	Indonesia	8	Trinidad & Tobago	3
Philippines	1,528	Canada	35	Myanmar	8	Afghanistan	2
Nigeria	692	Libya	31	Palestine	8	Benin	2
Pakistan	389	Lebanon	30	Singapore	8	Bolivia	2
Türkiye	250	Argentina	29	Thailand	8	Costa Rica	2
Colombia	217	Cameroon	29	Georgia	7	Iraq	2
United Kingdom	186	Venezuela	28	Israel	7	Jamaica	2
Ghana	127	Armenia	21	Japan	7	Montenegro	2
Ukraine	127	Bahrain	20	Lesotho	6	Namibia	2
Brazil	124	Mexico	18	New Zealand	6	Panama	2
Zimbabwe	121	Algeria	17	Bosnia & Herzegovina	5	Senegal	2
Nepal	117	Azerbaijan	16	Gambia	5	Sierra Leone	2
Russia	106	Morocco	16	Rwanda	5	Tanzania	2
Sri Lanka	102	Australia	15	Sudan	5	Vanuatu	2
South Africa	97	Jordan	15	United Arab Emirates	5	Zambia	2
Serbia	75	Vietnam	14	Uzbekistan	5	Bhutan	1
Tunisia	74	Belarus	13	Ecuador	4	Cuba	1
Mauritius	73	Iran	13	Eswatini	4	Guatemala	1
China	66	Uganda	13	Peru	4	Iceland	1
N. Macedonia	58	Syria	12	South Korea	4	Ivory Coast	1
United States of Amer.	55	Taiwan	12	Yemen	4	Kosovo	1
Albania	53	Chile	10	El Salvador	3	Liberia	1
Bangladesh	52	Kazakhstan	10	Ethiopia	3	Mongolia	
Egypt	46	Switzerland	10	Kyrgyzstan	3	Nicaragua	
Kenya	46	Botswana	8	Saudi Arabia	3	Oman	

Fig.5 – Breakdown by Country of EU Applications Received

Malta	2,381	Romania	39	Slovakia	15	Belgium	6
Italy	481	Bulgaria	33	Croatia	13	Estonia	6
Poland	70	Hungary	32	Sweden	13	Denmark	5
Germany	65	Ireland	30	Latvia	11	Slovenia	3
France	62	Portugal	30	Austria	8	Finland	2
Greece	59	Lithuania	16	Czechia	8		
Spain	56	Netherlands	16	Cyprus	7		

Fig. 6 – Highest Non-European Applications Compared to EU Applications



Participation in International Initiatives

ENIC-NARIC Annual joint meeting 2024

The 31st Annual Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks was held in Naples, Italy, from the 23rd to 25th of June 2024. This event brought together approximately 150 representatives from national centres responsible for the recognition of academic programmes, fostering a dynamic platform for sharing expertise and best practices in credential evaluation.



The meeting was organised by CIMEA (ENIC-NARIC Italy) in collaboration with the ENIC Bureau, NARIC Advisory Board, European Commission, Council of Europe, and UNESCO. The meeting included a plenary session and 12 parallel workshops, covering a wide range of topics relevant to the field of credential evaluation. Discussions centred on various current issues, including digital transformation in recognition policies, the role of artificial intelligence, transnational education, national challenges in recognising refugee qualifications, and automatic recognition. The meeting also marked the 40th anniversary of the NARIC network, highlighting its long-standing role in supporting the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and facilitating multilateral cooperation within the UNESCO Europe and North America region.

Mutual Recognition of Professions (MRC and EU Affairs)

The year 2024 was marked by numerous initiatives, packed with events and demanding commitments, that kept the Unit and all stakeholders engaged in achieving the set goals. Thanks to the accumulated experience, commitment, and flexibility of all stakeholders, our priorities and ongoing initiatives kept the agenda full and on track, while maintaining focus on the key objectives and responsibilities.

Functions of the MRC and EU Affairs Unit

All functions were directed towards a key aim: ensuring the freedom of movement for professionals and the relevant services, with minimal legislative and administrative barriers. This facilitated permanent establishment, as well as the temporary and occasional provision of services for professionals seeking to practise their profession in a country other than their home country or origin. The work of the Unit focused on ensuring the smoothest mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

The MRC and EU Affairs Unit coordinated efforts to implement the European Commission Directive 2005/36/EC and its subsequent amendments to the fullest through the “Competent Authorities” – the Designated Authorities responsible for various regulated professions in Malta.

All the Competent Authorities have played a pivotal role in ensuring that all Maltese and other EU nationals can fully benefit from the provisions outlined in the current regulatory framework. The Unit is responsible for maintaining an active network to facilitate the continuous flow of information from the European Commission to the Designated Authorities, providing instructions, and ensuring that corrective actions are implemented promptly and effectively.

The Unit has handled a substantial amount of data, which has been duly submitted on two main European Commission databases:

- **The Internal Market Information System (IMI system)**

A considerable number of alerts reached the Unit each month. These were immediately disseminated to the respective Competent Authorities for processing. The Alert (IMI) system allows all the Competent Authorities to have immediate access to the latest developments in the relevant Member State, pertinent to the specific profession targeted.

- **The Regulated Professions Database (REGPROF)**

REGPROF is a database that records details of all regulated professions, providing information on how prospective professional service providers can access or begin practising a regulated profession in different Member States, including Malta. The Mutual Recognition Coordinator has supported the Competent Authorities with the entry and updating of statutory data on the database. Significant efforts were made to amend and update all profiles, which enabled the complete and full migration of REGPROF to the IMI in July 2024.

The Unit has also maintained a crucial and direct link with the public through the European Assistance Centre. In 2024, a significant number of queries were received from EU and third-country nationals, requesting information about the necessary requirements to access specific regulated professions in Malta. Every effort was made to provide a timely response, made possible through the cooperation of the relevant Competent Authorities. Additionally, we acknowledge the strong performance of the Assistance Centre for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications in Malta within the Single Digital Gateway (SDG) tool, by ensuring that all statistical data requirements were accurately recorded in accordance with the SDG standards, in full conformity with the set legal obligations.

- **Proportionality Test Directive**

The year 2024 was marked by intensive efforts to ensure the full and accurate application of the Proportionality Test requirements. Malta carried out and formally submitted the five conclusions from proportionality tests according to the established criteria. Simultaneously, the Unit worked closely with several Competent Authorities on various new proportionality tests. Every effort was made to ensure that all partners and Competent Authorities acquired the necessary knowledge and capabilities to meet all legal requirements within the prescribed timeframes and standards. To support this, the Unit organised a one-day ad-hoc training session for all Competent Authorities in May 2024 during which the European Commission's representatives provided the latest developments and assistance. All hard work on this aspect was certified through Malta's good performance, as can be verified in the European Commission's first implementation report of the Proportionality Test Directive 2018/958/EC published in November 2024 .

International Participation

The Unit actively participated in various meetings throughout the year. Officers attended and followed up on the information provided at all Group of Coordinators (GOC) meetings organised by the European Commission. The meetings played a key role in enabling the Unit to directly participate in and contribute to ongoing initiatives in partnership with the European Commission.

It is worth highlighting the ongoing initiative aimed at upgrading the basic training of the seven sectoral professions listed in Annex V. The Unit worked with the European Commission in preparation for amending the basic training for the first three sectoral professions. Additionally, efforts were made towards the migration of REGPROF Database to IMI and the implementation of the various planned elements of the Single Digital Gateway. Other topics included the development of Common Training Frameworks concerning a number of identified regulated professions such as physiotherapy, as well as enforcement measures and reporting obligations.

The Unit held several individual meetings with the European Commission aimed at improving the implementation of the current regulatory framework. In addition to these meetings, the Unit provided technical expertise to various public entities, enabling them to effectively participate at various European and international meetings. The MRC and EU Affairs Unit remained actively involved in the work of the Task Force Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA community and organised a meeting of the Task Force group in Malta in January 2024. The Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA Community was established to address the widespread concern that the stakeholders—such as higher education students and staff, employers and society at large—are often unaware or misinformed about the

[https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-publishes-first-report-implementation-proportionality-test-directive-directive-eu-2018958-2024-11-18_en#:~:text=The%20Proportionality%20Test%20Directive%20\(PTD,disrupt%20the%20EU%20single%20market.](https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-publishes-first-report-implementation-proportionality-test-directive-directive-eu-2018958-2024-11-18_en#:~:text=The%20Proportionality%20Test%20Directive%20(PTD,disrupt%20the%20EU%20single%20market.)

achievements of the Bologna Process and the EHEA. The Task Force seeks to raise awareness of what the Bologna Process and the EHEA have accomplished, their current scope, the areas they address, and their impact on higher education systems in the member countries.

ETINED

The Council of Europe hosted the annual ETINED Plenary on 26 and 27 November in Rome, Italy. The event brought together delegates from States Parties to the European Cultural Convention, as well as observers, NGO representatives, and experts, all focused on addressing the pressing issue of education fraud.

The ETINED Plenary served as a platform for in-depth discussions and deliberations focused on combating fraud in education. Participants engaged in conversations ranging from policy formulation to practical implementation, exploring innovative solutions and strategies to safeguard the integrity of education systems. Some key agenda items included:

Discussion on a project focusing on student awareness of education fraud and on establishing the Centre on Preventing and Countering Education Fraud.

Key findings of the CoE-IIEP-UNESCO study on Open School Data.

Key findings of the study on “Student Awareness of Education Fraud.”

Institutional Integrity Labelling Scheme for educational institutions: focusing on measures to counter educational fraud.

Recent international and national developments in education integrity.

Throughout the event, participants emphasised the importance of maintaining transparency and integrity in education systems, ensuring they empower future generations.

As Malta will preside over the Council of Europe in the second half of 2025, it was announced that the 9th ETINED Plenary will be held in Malta, with the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority serving as the host.

Albanian BFUG Secretariat, “Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA community Draft Action plan”, March 2022

Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Designated Authorities Conference

The annual conference, as per Article 451 of the Laws of Malta, was held on 7 November 2024, at the Salini Resort, where the Competent Authorities gathered. The conference featured a comprehensive agenda designed to provide essential information, instructions and updates. It addressed the most pressing and relevant issues concerning the implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive. Topics covered included briefings on the latest developments, such as the Common Training Framework, amendments to Annex V, the mapping exercise for the basic training of the seven sectoral professions, various European Commission studies and reports, the latest SDG commitments, and Proportionality Test training. The conference facilitated a productive exchange of information and discussions, setting the needs and objectives for the year ahead.

The year 2024 was also crucial for the timely and accurate compilation of all the statutory statistical reporting obligations, which were ultimately submitted and approved by the European Commission. Other agenda items included discussions on the impact of Brexit, various technical and digital innovations affecting regulated professions, and the latest updates regarding amendments to several local legislations impacting numerous regulated professions.

Another key item focused on providing detailed information and instructions regarding the ongoing contentions and infringements with the European Commission. The Unit worked diligently to address all outstanding issues as quickly as possible. In 2024, we are pleased to report that a number of infringements were formally closed. This was positively reflected in the annual report of the Single Market Scoreboard for Malta.

The Way Forward

As long as the Professional Qualifications Directive remains in force, the Unit's work will continue, and no effort will be spared to optimise performance in the implementation of the current regulatory framework. The internal reorganisation of the European Commission, with the transfer of the entire policy from DG GROW to DG Employment, may present several challenges. However, the Unit is committed to maintaining a steady pace. Efforts will be intensified to ensure the correct implementation of all the legal provisions and the effective functioning of the latest tools.

The Unit is determined to maintain Malta's strong performance in implementing the various provisions of the Professional Qualifications Directive, as certified by the Court of Auditors (COA) in the Special Report 10/2024 entitled **The recognition of professional qualifications in the EU – An essential mechanism, but used sparsely and inconsistently published** in July 2024 .

All relevant Ministries and Competent Authorities will be central to our activities, helping us to address challenges head-on and find solutions where necessary. We will invest more time and resources in enhancing capacity building and knowledge among all concerned partners to ensure optimal performance.

<https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/publications/sr-2024-10>

Programme and Provider Accreditation

Accreditation Unit : Overview

In accordance with Subsidiary Legislation 607.03 on Licensing, Accreditation, and Quality Assurance, all educational institutions offering Further and/or Higher Education—whether based in Malta or providing education from abroad—are required to obtain a licence from the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) to operate within the educational sector.

The provider accreditation process serves as a formal recognition granted by the MFHEA, confirming that an institution meets the established standards necessary for operation. Licensed providers are authorised to offer both foreign-accredited programmes and home-grown programmes accredited through the MFHEA.

In addition to provider accreditation, the MFHEA oversees the accreditation of educational programmes. Programmes are considered ‘accredited’ upon successful assessment by the MFHEA and their alignment with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Institutions seeking accreditation for their programmes must submit them for formal evaluation and approval, ensuring adherence to the required quality standards and appropriate alignment with the MQF. This process guarantees that students receive qualifications that are both nationally and internationally recognised.

Through these accreditation processes, the MFHEA upholds the integrity and quality of educational offerings in Malta, ensuring that only institutions and programmes meeting standards are authorised to operate.

Key Projects and Activities

In October 2024, the MFHEA released an updated version of the Referencing Report, outlining the alignment of Malta’s qualifications with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The report specifies that a programme may be accredited as a ‘Qualification’ if it meets the following criteria:

- The learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant level descriptors of the targeted qualification level.
- The programme satisfies the required number of ECTS credits.
- In cases where the programme does not meet the full ECTS credit requirements for the specified MQF level, it may be classified as an ‘Award’, provided the learning outcomes align with the level descriptors for the relevant MQF level.

To ensure compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESGs), the MFHEA has also endorsed revised provider accreditation standards and procedures for higher education. These procedures are separated into two parts: a Financial Eligibility Check and the Institutional Accreditation Process, which includes an ex-ante audit. This revised accreditation framework commenced in January 2024, with applications for this process continuing to be processed.

Parallel to the ongoing improvements to institutional accreditation procedures, the MFHEA is developing new standards for programme accreditation. These standards are designed to guarantee that academic programmes meet the highest quality standards while aligning with both national and European frameworks. The final version of these guidelines is anticipated to be completed in 2025.

In December 2024, the MFHEA published the first draft of the updated accreditation guidelines for public consultation. This consultation process, which invites feedback from a broad spectrum of stakeholders—including higher education institutions, academic staff, students, and others—represents a significant milestone. Following the consultation, the final guidelines will be released in 2025.

Provider Accreditation Activities in 2024

In 2024, the MFHEA issued a total of 40 licences to educational institutions, granting them the authorisation to operate in the Further and Higher Education sector. In addition, a total of 40 applications were carried over to 2025 for further processing. During the year, 6 applications were withdrawn, and 2 applications failed to meet the necessary criteria for accreditation.

Below is a summary of the provider accreditation outcomes for 2024:

Provider Accreditation		Totals
Licences issued in 2024		40
Applications carried over to 2025		40
Applications withdraw		6
Applications failed		2

Accreditation Activities in 2024

Throughout 2024, the Accreditation Unit remained actively engaged in ensuring that educational programmes across various MQF levels adhered to the necessary quality standards. A total of 270 programmes were accredited during the year. While 8 programmes did not meet the required criteria, 7 programmes were withdrawn, and 91 programmes were carried over to 2025 for further review. The following table provides a detailed breakdown of programme accreditation outcomes by MQF level:

MQF level	Total programmes accredited	Total programmes failed	Total programmes withdrawn	Total programmes carried over to 2025
8	15	2	0	7
7	53	1	1	26
6	19	1	0	27
5	43	0	1	13
4	73	2	1	5
3	29	1	3	7
2	23	1	1	3
1	15	0	0	3
Total	270	8	7	91



Quality Assurance

Overview

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) is responsible for the implementation of Subsidiary Legislation 607.03, the Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation, and Quality Assurance) Regulations. The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit within the MFHEA plays a crucial role in promoting, supporting, and ensuring a robust national quality culture for the provision of further and higher education in Malta. Its primary responsibilities include:

- Evaluating and assisting with the development of Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policies that accredited educational institutions must implement.
- Conducting Quality Assurance audits of licensed providers and other forms of External Quality Assurance (EQA) to support continuous improvement in the sector, ensure regulatory compliance, and monitor the achievement of national education targets.

Key Projects and Activities

The QA Unit remained actively engaged throughout 2024, organising webinars, workshops, and events focused on quality assurance in further and higher education. It continued to participate in various projects aimed at enhancing the quality of education in Malta:

European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) National Reference Points (NRPs): The MFHEA contributed to the EQAVET initiative, which aims to enhance quality in teaching and learning and strengthen QA mechanisms across further and higher education providers, including Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions. The project included the development of the **National Handbook for VET Providers**, designed to guide VET institutions in improving their Quality Assurance Systems (QAS) and fostering a deeper quality culture within their organisations. The MFHEA also provided support for internal assessments, self-assessments, and stakeholder feedback collection. In addition, the MFHEA published the **Statistics and Analysis of Licensed Providers** and organised a webinar focused on experiential teaching and learning.

Annual National VET Team Project:

In December 2024, the MFHEA introduced updated accreditation standards for further education institutions and centres, placing greater emphasis on a student-centred approach, stronger collaboration with industry partners, and the implementation of robust quality assurance frameworks. These revised standards also promote lifelong learning opportunities, ensuring that institutions are better aligned with labour market demands and fostering continuous improvement. This initiative marks a significant step towards improving the quality and relevance of further education in Malta.

The MFHEA's Thematic Analysis Report highlights both the strengths and areas for improvement within Vocational Education and Training (VET) higher education institutions in Malta. Key strengths include a strong commitment to quality improvement, effective industry partnerships, experienced faculty, and the adoption of innovative teaching methods. However, areas needing attention include the insufficient integration of technology, limited use of employer feedback, inconsistent internal quality assurance systems, and resource limitations. These findings aim to guide institutions in enhancing their educational offerings and aligning more closely with both national and international standards.

Work and Accomplishments of the QA Unit in 2024

In 2024, the QA Unit initiated 13 External Quality Assurance (EQA) audits, while also continuing to work on audits from the previous year. By the end of the year, a total of 25 audit reports were completed and published on the MFHEA website. The introduction of the new Policy and Procedure for Appeals resulted in 5 appeals, with their outcomes also made available on the website alongside the EQA audit reports.

The QA Unit also evaluated and assessed Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) policies submitted by institutions as part of their accreditation process. A total of 39 IQA documents were assessed and concluded in 2024, with an additional 12 IQA documents still under evaluation.

Furthermore, the QA Unit conducted 7 financial sustainability checks, 2 follow-ups, and 1 extension of scope, in addition to planning further audits throughout the year. Below is a summary of the key outcomes:

Totals	
EQA reports published	25
EQA audits started	13
IQA documents assessed and concluded	39
IQA documents assessed and not concluded	12
Financial sustainability checks	7
Follow-ups	2
Appeals	5
Extension of scope	1

Validation of Informal and Non-formal Learning (VNFIL)

The importance of skilled and knowledgeable citizens to Europe extends beyond formal education to learning acquired in non-formal or informal ways. Citizens must be able to demonstrate what they have learned in order to use this learning in their careers and for further education and training. Countries need to establish systems that allow individuals to identify, document, assess and certify (validate) all forms of learning so they can use this learning to advance their careers and pursue further education and training.

The 2012 Council Recommendation on validation encourages Member States to put in place national arrangements for validation by 2018. These arrangements enable individuals to increase the visibility and value of the knowledge, skills and competences they have acquired outside formal education and training: at work, at home, or in voluntary activities.

VNFIL in Malta is regulated by Subsidiary Legislation 607.02, **Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Regulations** of September 2012. Under the remit of this legislation and as per Article 6(1) of SL607.02, the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority has been entrusted with VNFIL in Malta. During 2024, MFHEA conducted a handover exercise of the SSUs to NSC, since these will form part of NSC's remit in the near future, as per new legislation.

As of the end of 2024, the following Sectoral Skills Units were in place:

- Automotive
- Health and Social Care
- Building and Construction
- STEM Engagement

One of the pivotal objectives of the SSU meetings is to develop, with the help of external experts, the National Occupational Standards (NOSs) for occupations in their respective sector. These NOSs consist of a set of job-related standards that highlight the performance expected from an individual when carrying out a specific role or function. These standards are pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and are therefore compiled using the **Learning Outcomes Approach**. The NOSs serve both employers and employees by outlining the expected skills and knowledge for different occupations. These NOSs will eventually help education providers develop their programmes and will also form the basis for the validation assessment that enables individuals to obtain an award for the learning that they acquired through experience.

In total, throughout 2024, three NOSs in the Health and Social Care SSU were published:

NOS in the Health and Social Care SSU:

- Emergency Ambulance Responders – Level 3
- Emergency Ambulance Responders – Level 4
- Emergency Ambulance Responders – Level 5

The final NOSs that have been published may be found at: <https://mfhea.mt/national-occupational-standards/>

Main Developments in 2024

During 2024, the following main developments took place.

1. The Validation Unit was set up with two officers and a Senior Manager working in the field of VNFIL and RPL.
2. The QA guidelines for VNFIL centres were published in October. These came into force as of January 2025.
3. A spot-check list was introduced to assist the Validation Unit and VNFIL centres in the procedure to be applied during these visits.
4. Spot-check visits to start in March 2025 to determine the level of compliance with MoUs signed earlier during 2024 and 2023.
5. The Unit became a member of the European RPL network in October 2024. This is a prestigious and important network encompassing various institutions which promote RPL and set standards to ensure

The European Year of Skills – What Comes Next?

Concluding event on 30 April 2024.

The objective of the concluding event of the European Year of Skills was to scrutinise the achievements that were gained throughout the year and plan the way forward. It was organised by the European Commission in Brussels with the aim of bringing stakeholders together, including training providers, guidance and validation practitioners, companies, social partners, chambers of commerce, qualifications agencies/authorities, as well as public authorities who play a vital role in the concrete delivery of skills. The main objectives of the event were:

1. To stimulate discussion about the gaps in skills development and the needed changes in public policy and in the business world. The event aims to facilitate the exchange of good practices and ideas with a view to improving the implementation of reforms.
2. To promote the value and visibility of skills. It showcased and discussed experiences from public authorities, companies, and civil society organisations. The event resulted in lessons learned on how to address skill imbalances, also by taking advantage of EU initiatives and tools.

Moreover, the purpose was to seek new insights from high-level speakers and experts from the field while also providing space for questions and comments from those attending the conference.

Participant: Mr. Gaetano Calleja, Senior Manager MFHEA.

Purpose of the Mission

The accelerating digital and green transitions mean that the skills acquired during initial education and training are no longer sufficient to meet the evolving demands of the labour market, and adults need to develop their skills throughout their lives. Moreover, demographic trends leading to a shrinking workforce are expected to accelerate in the coming decade, increasing the pressure to use the full potential of the skills of everyone on the labour market. This is why the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan sets the target that at least 60% of adults should participate in training every year by 2030. EU leaders welcomed this ambitious target at the 2021 Porto Social Summit, and Member States have translated it into national targets.

Objective/s of the Mission or General Overview of the Mission

The European Skills Agenda aims to enhance skills for individuals and businesses, aligning with the European Pillar of Social Rights. It emphasises basic skills like literacy, numeracy, and digital proficiency for societal and labour market participation. Addressing the low skill levels in the EU, the agenda calls for policy actions.

The conference aligns with the EU Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways, targeting adults with low skills. Objectives include addressing labour market mismatches and declaring 2023 as the European Year of Skills. There's a need for improved skills assessment, communication, and professionalisation.

The conference also focuses on the parity of esteem issue, highlighting the increased target group due to digitalisation. It emphasises the responsibility of public support for adult basic skills development and the importance of recognising skills within the education system.

Furthermore, the conference addresses career guidance challenges, emphasising the need for effective coordination among stakeholders to support adult learners in upskilling pathways.

Report of the Study Visit in Ireland held between 7 and 11 October 2024

The study visit in Ireland – Cork – had the objective of learning about the way VNFIL operates in the country. The Extended Campus of Munster Technological University, Cork, was selected since it has a very hands-on system and a robust RPL policy, which helps students move forward in life. It was our objective to see how the RPL provision is being implemented and to learn from the good practices of other countries whose RPL is very well developed and extensively implemented. The visit also focused on the kind of research conducted by the Extended Campus, as well as the extent to which digital technology was being used to enhance this component of validation. The visit also focused on validation methods used in the evaluation of non-formal and informal teaching and learning.

Each day of the visit had several learning outcomes, with the following being the main ones:

1. To compare RPL systems in our country with those of other institutions in other countries.
2. To establish a form of network with local RPL providers.
3. To support providers in the provision of RPL.
4. To assist local providers in understanding what foreign providers are doing in this field.
5. To become familiar with the Munster Technological University structure.
6. To become familiar with quality assurance procedures in relation to RPL.
7. To attend presentations of RPL projects at NQF level 6.
8. To understand the procedure for targeting the right audience for upskilling and reskilling tasks.
9. To understand the role played by the student in the RPL process, and
10. To deliver a presentation to Munster Technological University about our local developments in the field of VNFIL.

Mr. Lawrence Azzopardi, Head of Accreditation, and Mr. Gaetano Calleja, Senior Manager, Validation, attended the visit in Ireland.

Conclusion

Promoting VNFIL in Malta is important, since we still have a situation where many skills gained outside formal education and training are undocumented and underutilised. Skills, competencies, and knowledge must be acknowledged, recognised, and validated, irrespective of whether these are gained in formal, non-formal, or informal teaching and learning settings. The QA guidelines for VNFIL centres, together with visits and rigorous processes applied, are intended to make skills qualifications—wherever and however they are acquired—into transparent and trusted qualifications.

Research and Policy

Educational policy and research continue to receive consistent and growing attention. The Research and Policy Unit (R&P) remains a central part of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority's efforts to support evidence-based planning and monitoring. The R&P Unit continuously carries out a broad range of interconnected functions that form the backbone of both the national and international further and higher education sectors.

The establishment and operations of the R&P Unit are regulated by the Education Act (Cap. 607, LEĠIŻLAZZJONI MALTA). The unit consistently undertakes research to inform policy development and to set standards that guide growth and transformation within the further and higher education sector. Alongside its research efforts, the R&P Unit also plays a continuing and essential role in supporting policy implementation.

International Representation

The R&P Unit at MFHEA was actively strengthening its international engagement by seeking representation in key international groups and forums, broadening its network to enhance collaboration, knowledge exchange, and alignment with best practices in education policies:

- European Higher Education Area, Thematic Peer Group D (Social Dimension), Co-chair
- Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and Education for Sustainable Development (RFCDC-ESD), National Representative, Council of Europe
- Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN), National Representative, Council of Europe
- Working Group on 'Tracking mobile graduates', European Network of Graduate Tracking
- Working Group on 'GDPR and data protection issues', European Network of Graduate Tracking

Annual Further and Higher Education Statistics

As per Cap. 586, 5 (1) the R&P Unit at MFHEA has access to all relevant information available within educational institutions. The R&P Unit at MFHEA collects essential information and statistics necessary to support the effective fulfilment of its responsibilities. Both public and private providers are expected to supply the requested information within a reasonable timeframe.

Ongoing collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO) supports the initiative, with both entities working together to consistently collect data from licensed education providers on further and higher education students and graduates for each academic year. An active Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the collaborative exchange of statistical information on education data is aimed at streamlining processes and reducing the administrative burden on institutions.

The Research and Policy Unit has two annual calls for data collection: annual student enrolment and graduate headcount from further and higher education providers, obliging MFHEA-licensed institutions to provide this information. In 2024, the call for graduate data spanned students completing their programmes of study in the preceding academic year and was initiated at the start of the year.

The second annual survey focuses on student data, conducted in Q2 and covering statistics for all students enrolled during the relevant academic year.

EUROSTUDENT

The EUROSTUDENT project focuses on gathering and comparing data on the social dimension of higher education (HE) across participating European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries. Every three years, a survey is conducted among higher education students in approximately 30 countries, collecting insights on their socio-economic backgrounds, living conditions, and mobility experiences during their studies.

Malta, participating for the fifth time through the MFHEA, contributed to the eighth round of EUROSTUDENT, which ran from 2021 to 2024. In August 2024, the National Findings Report was published:

https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/EUROSTUDENT-National-Findings-Report_Final.pdf

Moreover, preparations were made in September 2024 for Malta's participation in the upcoming ninth round, covering the period 2024–2027, with the field phase planned for Spring 2025.

Within the EUROSTUDENT project, the MFHEA's Research and Policy Unit has a dual role:

- It acts as Malta's national research team, responsible for executing the national student survey in adherence to EUROSTUDENT international standards and offering national insights into the gathered data. The country participation agreement for the ninth round was signed in 2024.
- It also holds a position as a member of the EUROSTUDENT consortium, a central coordination team comprising seven member organisations. In this capacity, the MFHEA has the role of coordinating policy and communication. In 2024, the R&P Unit began planning for the preparatory seminars to be held in Malta for EUROSTUDENT countries, planned for February 2025.

EUROGRADUATE

The EUROGRADUATE 2022 survey represents the second pilot phase of a European initiative designed to track higher education graduates. Its primary objective is to generate data and analysis on the outcomes of higher education, enabling:

- International comparisons and national-level research
- The linkage of graduates' background, educational experience, employment, mobility, and social outcomes
- The differentiation of various levels and fields of higher education (including Malta's collection of Level 5 as well), and
- The comparison of short- and mid-term outcomes (1- and 5-years post-graduation)

A report based on the findings of the survey was successfully published in March 2024 and is available here: https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/EUROGRADUATE-2022-Country-Report-Malta_ISCED-5_FINAL4.pdf

European Qualifications Framework National Coordination Point (EQF-NCP)

From 2019, the R&P Unit has taken on the strategic role of Malta's National Coordination Point for the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Its core mission is to drive the seamless integration of the EQF within the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF), strengthening alignment with European standards and promoting greater transparency and mobility in education and training.

The updated Referencing Report (RR, mini and full version) was launched in March 2024 (EQF-NCP 2021–2023). The RR can be found here: Referencing Report – Malta Further & Higher Education Authority. Subsequently, an updated version was released in October 2024.

Moreover, in 2024, the Research and Policy Unit, MFHEA successfully secured funding for the EQF National Coordination Point work programme, covering the period from 2024 to 2026. With a strong focus on collaboration and cooperation, the initiative will be carried out in close partnership with international peer organisations and local government entities.

The project's implementation commenced in 2024 and includes continuous updating of the Referencing Report, fostering the utilisation of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) among both public and private stakeholders, and enhancing MQF accessibility for learners, workers, and employers through a series of strategic activities.

Policy Implementation - 2022-2030 National Further and Higher Education Strategic Action Plan

In July 2024, Malta's National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education 2022 –2030 was launched. Extensive internal consultations began within the MFHEA to lay the groundwork for the effective implementation of the Strategy. These efforts aim to establish well-structured Working Groups (WGs) aligned with the Strategy's recommendations, ensuring coordinated and focused action across key priority areas. The meetings of the WGs are planned to start in Q1 2025.

Communications

To advance the Authority's mission, vision, and values, we prioritise clear and effective communication, fostering transparency, building trust, and encouraging engagement. The Communications Unit plays a key role in achieving these goals by delivering timely and accurate information across multiple channels. Within the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, effective communication with key stakeholders and the public is maintained through close collaboration between departments. This ensures a clear understanding of the Authority's operations and the accurate dissemination of information to its audiences. The Communications Unit at MFHEA engages with diverse audiences, each with distinct needs and priorities, yet all sharing the common aim of providing and receiving the best possible learning experience. The unit focuses on developing and implementing tailored strategies to effectively address the specific requirements of each audience.

Structure

In 2024, the Communications Unit was comprised of a manager, an officer, and an executive. In March 2024, the team expanded with the addition of a new executive, increasing its members to four. Recognising that effective teamwork is essential for success across various communication areas —such as internal communications and branding—the team has set clear goals and objectives to strengthen collaboration within the unit.

Media and Advertising

Throughout 2024, the Authority actively took part in diverse advertising methods, leveraging various media channels to effectively communicate our corporate message. In particular, we partnered with prominent advertising companies to publish online digital articles, strategically crafted to reach target audiences and raise awareness about MFHEA. These initiatives aimed to offer a comprehensive overview of the services provided by our Authority.

We had the opportunity to establish a year-long collaboration package with a reputable advertising agency that included a 12-month banner campaign with 20% occupancy on the homepage and all sections of the partner company's website, along with our company logo featured in the footer of each page. The package also comprised four sponsored articles, one of which was replicated in the June 2024 publication, as well as a premium double-page spread in the same publication. Additionally, the collaboration provided ongoing public relations support throughout the campaign. This initiative aimed to improve our visibility, strengthen our brand presence, and effectively communicate our core services to a wider audience.

In addition to the above, we collaborated twice, in May and October, with another reputable advertising agency. The primary objective remained to enhance visibility and inform our target audience about the core services that define MFHEA. The focus was on delivering a clear and concise message that effectively communicates the nature and scope of our organisation's offerings.



In 2024, we also took part in the television programme **Illum ma' Steph**, a popular show that focuses on current events, entertainment, and topics of interest to the local audience. This participation aimed to extend our reach to the wider public, ensuring our message resonates with the community and engages directly with the general public.

Complementing these efforts, we maintained an active presence on our social media platforms throughout the year. Regular posts were disseminated on a weekly basis to keep our followers informed about our ongoing activities. This consistent online engagement served as an additional method to reinforce our corporate message and maintain a transparent line of communication with our audience.

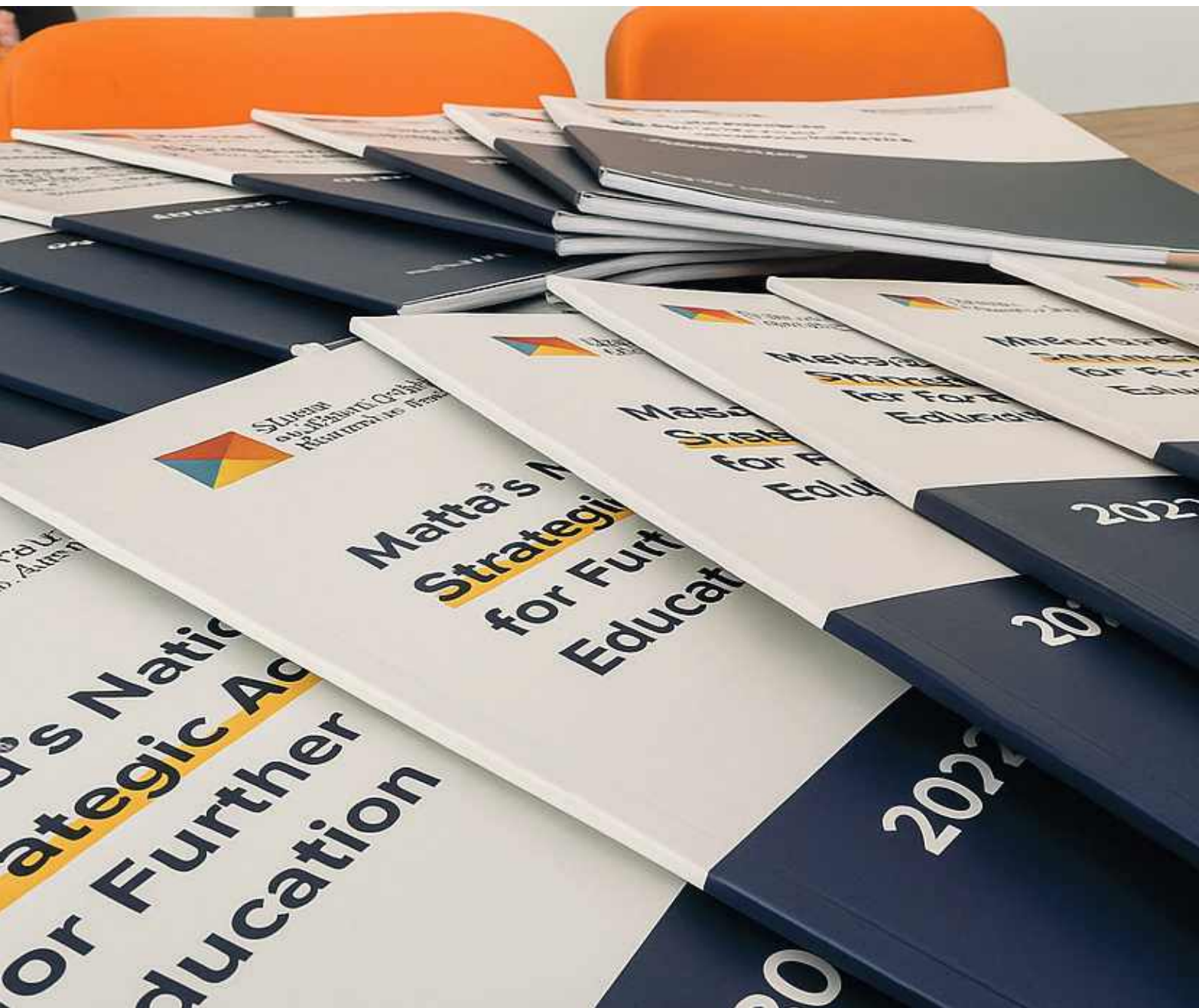
In summary, our 2024 advertising strategy combined online digital articles and social media updates. Through these efforts, we aimed to effectively reach our target audiences, increase awareness of MFHEA's services, and strengthen our relationship with our stakeholders.

Branding and Visibility

Branding and visibility are essential to the MFHEA's identity, with various elements, such as content creation, print materials, developing digital content, designing, coordinating with suppliers, copywriting, and advertising. All these elements contribute significantly to establishing a strong brand identity and increasing visibility.

Effective content creation focuses on developing engaging and informative materials that resonate with the FHE community. Print materials and digital content, such as flyers, social media posts, and website updates, serve as key platforms for showcasing MFHEA's services. Additionally, design and collaboration with suppliers ensure brand consistency across all marketing materials, maintaining uniformity in elements such as the logo, colour scheme, and typography.

The Communications Unit holds the responsibility for ensuring the seamless integration of these elements, working collaboratively to enhance MFHEA's visibility and foster growth. Additionally, the Unit oversees the maintenance of the MFHEA website, playing a vital role in creating and disseminating various types of content.



Employment opportunities

The Unit posts job vacancies and related information on the website to attract potential candidates.

Announcements

The Unit posts announcements regarding new developments, changes, or other news related to the MFHEA on the website.

Communications for providers

The Unit provides updates and information to providers, such as guidelines, policy changes, and other important official communications.

Latest news and categorised posts

The website features posts organised by categories to help visitors easily find information that interests them.

Publications

The Communications Unit also publishes articles, reports, or other publications on the website.

Events

The website features information on past and upcoming events, such as conferences, workshops, or training sessions.

Projects and activities

The Communications Unit also shares information about ongoing projects and activities related to the MFHEA.

In addition to maintaining the MFHEA website, the Communications Unit disseminates information through various other means and portals. These include:

- **Direct email:** The Communications Unit sends information directly to licensed providers via email.
- **Social media:** The Communications Unit uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X to reach a wider audience and promote the MFHEA.
- **Presentations:** The Communications Unit prepares and supports presentations at events or conferences to promote the MFHEA and provide information to stakeholders.

Creating content for various channels requires a blend of design and copywriting expertise. To ensure high-quality output, the Communications Unit collaborates with suppliers, including graphic designers, web developers, and copywriters, to produce exceptional content that effectively conveys key messages. In 2024, the Unit strengthened its capacity to carry out much of this work in-house, investing in new equipment and expanding its capabilities to improve efficiency and streamline content creation.

Additionally, the Unit works closely with other departments and stakeholders to facilitate clear communication and ensure the accuracy of disseminated information. Proactively, MFHEA's Communications Unit has also implemented measures to maintain and update branded collateral materials in both physical and digital formats. This commitment to standardisation reinforces consistency in messaging and design across all communications issued by the Authority.

Annual Report

The Communications Unit was responsible for creating and distributing the 2023 Annual Report. This process involved collecting and compiling data in collaboration with other MFHEA units to ensure the inclusion of relevant information. Following established procurement protocols, the Unit selected a designer and supplier for the report's design and printing.

After completion of the design and printing phases, the Communications Unit distributed the report to the Authority's stakeholders, including members of parliament. Simultaneously, a digital version was made available online.

The Communications Unit played a crucial role in creating and disseminating the annual report, which helps to keep stakeholders informed about the MFHEA's activities and progress. By engaging with designers, suppliers, and other departments, the Communications Unit ensured that the report was of high quality and reached a wide audience.



Support and Participation

The Communications Unit supported various projects and events in 2024 by providing communication support both internally within the MFHEA, and externally with stakeholders and the public.

In 2024, the Communications Unit played a significant role in organising and hosting major events, including the 9th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting (ASEMME9), which centred around the theme **Leaving No One Behind**. The Unit also contributed to the launch of the Referencing Report, and the National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education. Lastly, it supported the ENQA General Assembly, which took place on 24 and 25 October 2024. This prestigious gathering brought together quality assurance leaders and experts from across Europe to explore the theme **Quality Assurance Beyond the ESG**, focusing on advancing higher education standards and fostering cross-border collaboration.



Through its efforts, the Communications Unit ensured the successful coordination, promotion, and execution of these key events, reinforcing MFHEA's commitment to effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and the continuous development of education and quality assurance on both a national and international level.



Additionally, the Communications Unit actively supported MFHEA's participation in various initiatives, including workshops, webinars, career expos, annual conferences, and professional development training sessions throughout the year. By assisting in the planning, promotion, and execution of these events, the unit played a crucial role in enhancing engagement with stakeholders and increasing awareness of MFHEA's services and initiatives. Furthermore, the unit facilitated the visit of a delegation from HAKA, the Estonian Quality Agency for Education, to MFHEA's premises, strengthening international collaboration and knowledge exchange in quality assurance and higher education.



In 2024, the Communications Unit maintained its central role in supporting various events and activities. This involved drafting speeches, assisting in event coordination, creating content and materials, and providing feedback on various topics. Through these endeavours,



The Communications Unit played a crucial role in ensuring the seamless organisation and clear communication of these events and activities to stakeholders.

Providing a wide range of support services, the Communications Unit remains integral to promoting effective communication and organisation. By delivering these essential services, the Communications Unit helps ensure that information is easily accessible and well-structured, thereby facilitating efficient decision-making and communication processes.

These services include:

Media monitoring	This includes monitoring media coverage and industry trends, keeping management informed of public opinion and emerging issues, while identifying opportunities for engagement and outreach.
Maintaining personal and generic inboxes	This involves managing email inboxes within the organisation; this ensures that communications are received and responded to in a timely and organised manner.
Maintaining lists	This involves maintaining updated lists of projects, representatives, measures, and tasks within the organisation, ensuring that information remains accessible and current.
Data filing	This involves managing and organising data and information within the organisation to ensure that information is easily accessible and well-organised.

Conclusion

Looking ahead, the Unit is committed to expanding public and community engagement across different platforms, fostering greater trust and understanding among stakeholders. It will also play a key role in supporting international events in Malta, offering a valuable opportunity to highlight the Authority’s initiatives, strengthen global connections, and establish new partnerships. Additionally, the unit aims to launch and support impactful campaigns that promote key educational initiatives, raise awareness of the Authority’s services, and enhance stakeholder involvement. These efforts reflect the unit’s strategic vision for the future, further solidifying the Authority’s reputation as a respected and influential presence on the international stage.

Corporate Unit

Primary Functions

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)'s Corporate Unit is a composite section responsible for the Authority's Administration, Human Resources, Logistics and Procurement, Contract Management, and Financial Management and Administration. The Authority's Front Office is also assigned to this unit.

Composition

Throughout the year, the Unit was composed of a Head of Unit, a Finance Manager, and eight other employees in different grades.



Administration - Human Resources

All HRM functions are assigned to the Corporate Unit. These include responsibility for:

Recruitment

The Corporate Unit facilitated timely recruitment in line with organisational requirements. All vacancies due to either turnover or revised establishment (approved head count) were filled subject to initial internal calls. During the year, there were 17 recruitment calls. Additionally, temporary contracts also sustained HR shortages over this period.

MFHEA Policies and Procedures

The Unit also revised existing staff policies and introduced others where gaps were identified. Organisational procedures were also revised and updated.

Attendance and Timekeeping

During the year, MFHEA also introduced attendance and timekeeping hardware and software.

Collective Bargaining

In 2024, the Corporate Unit was also directly involved in the collective bargaining process.

Administration – EU Funds

The Corporate Unit was responsible for the administration of funds from various EU projects as follows:

- EQAVET 2021–2023
- EQAVET 2024–2027
- EQF-NCP 2021–2023
- ARAQUA Project 2023–2024
- ECVET 2024 National VET Team
- EQF-NCP 2024–2026
- Eurostudent VIII

Administration – National Funds

The total revenue from government funds for 2024 was €1,200,000. The Licensing and Accreditation Unit generated €853,250 in income, marking a notable increase from €660,105 in 2023. Income from the Quality Assurance Unit, which included External Quality Audits, reached €27,449, a decrease from €78,052 in 2023. The MQRIC generated €432,923 in 2024, up from €287,923 in 2023. Overall, total income for 2024 amounted to €2,832,811, compared to €2,454,893 in 2023.

Financial Management

Financial Reporting

Monthly and quarterly FDRS Financial Reports were submitted throughout the year. These reports assisted in tighter budgetary control. Regular reconciliations were also carried out for the daily transactions posted into SAGE. The quarterly management accounts were also presented to the MFHEA Board. FDRS reports were also submitted to the MFHEA Board monthly.

Payments

Throughout the year, the unit processed over 69,362 transactions, totalling more than €2,813,119.00 in payments. These payments covered various services provided to MFHEA, including the evaluation of national qualifications, other professional services, and the procurement of supplies and services needed for daily operations at MFHEA's offices. Some of the transactions were also related to international projects, such as the EQF-NCP and Eurostudent VIII projects, among others. Payments were made in accordance with procurement and financial procedures, and efforts were made to ensure that evaluators submitted invoices promptly to prevent payment delays. The Corporate Unit adhered strictly to the 30-day requirement outlined in the Late Payments Directive and worked towards achieving SEPA compliance.

VAT Compliance

The Corporate Unit ensured that all business processes were compliant with VAT regulations. For example, evaluation services and research-related services were scrutinised to ensure that VAT receipts for their payments were duly submitted.

Financial Audit

The work for the financial audit commenced in January 2025 and the Audit was completed in March 2025. The audit of the financial statements included the Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024, the Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Accumulated Fund and the Statement of Cash Flows for the end of 2024. The unit was assisted in this work by the external accountant.

Administration – Procurement

During the year, the Corporate Unit continued to adhere to MFHEA's procurement policy. This policy provides guidelines and procedures to be used by MFHEA staff for the procurement of all goods, services, and works. The underlying principle of this policy is that procurement is carried out in line with the provisions of the Public Procurement Regulations 2010 (LN 296 of 2010). Requests for the procurement of goods or services must be approved by the respective line managers before being passed on to the Corporate Unit. In 2024, over 104 purchase orders were issued to procure supplies, services, or works. The procurement policy facilitated the monitoring of the goods procured so that cost-cutting exercises could be introduced.

Throughout the year, the Corporate Unit also allocated each expense to a specific unit within MFHEA. This enabled the forecasting of expenses for 2024.

Administration – EU Projects

As in the previous years, the financial system ensured that direct costs related to EU projects were correctly accounted for and that EU reimbursements related to such projects were allocated to the correct project fund. This achievement greatly facilitated the project reports which are needed to close off the projects. Separate project files were set up for each project. Project files of projects which had been closed off were archived. The MFHEA Board was presented with a quarterly report on the current status of the projects.

Administration – Contract Management

In 2024, MFHEA centralised all contracts within the Corporate Unit, which has also been tasked with contract management and archiving.

Administration – Archiving Policy

The Corporate Unit periodically retrieves obsolescent files (which are stored in third-party premises) and destroys them as per the data retention and GDPR policies. These periodic exercises also decrease archiving costs.

Administration – Parliamentary Questions and EU Statistical Information

This Unit supported the collection and collation of data to entertain 34 Parliamentary Questions in 2024. The section also compiled and submitted the required EU statistical data.

The section was also responsible for information required for the Fiscal Consolidation exercise including HR data concerning sick leave data, disciplinary returns, consultants, and overtime.



Administration – Generic E-Mail Address

Throughout the year, the Unit also maintained the generic email addresses admin@mfhea.mt and corporate.mfhea@mfhea.mt. These email addresses are mainly utilised for calls for quotations and recruitment purposes. For financial management purposes, the Corporate Unit oversees the generic email address finance.mfhea@mfhea.mt.

Cost-Cutting Achievements in 2024

Electronic Payments

As in previous years, the Corporate Unit endeavoured to ensure that payments were made electronically. This measure continued to substantially reduce postage costs, while also facilitating timely payments of invoices. Collection of revenue for the services of Licensing and Accreditation is primarily carried out electronically via bank transfer. Most evaluators of home-grown qualifications are also paid electronically.

Bulk Payments

Whenever possible, multiple payments to the same supplier were processed together. This approach reduces bank charges and improves efficiency.

Postage

Whenever possible, bulk postage system was adopted. Postage stamps were purchased and retained within the Corporate Unit and available upon request. This measure was necessary due to the incremental increases in the postage rates.

Office Equipment

The leased photocopiers were monitored monthly to supervise usage costs. Staff were reminded to minimise colour prints, especially for internal use. Staff were also encouraged to use these printers rather than any desk printers for large print jobs.

E-Invoices

All invoices for the collection of revenue related to the processing of Licensing and Accreditation fees were communicated electronically and subsequently followed up to ensure timely collection of revenue. Receipts were also issued electronically. Hard copies of all documents were kept in the financial files.

IT

The IT strategy within MFHEA is largely focused on promulgating the enabling nature of IT amongst all our staff. At MFHEA, technology is a resource at our fingertips that is making us more proactive, more responsive, and more effective at doing the right things the right way, and as rapidly as possible. For this to happen, the IT function within MFHEA shields our employees from the complexities that technology carries with it while actively encouraging staff to make the most of the liberating functionality of modern-day equipment and systems.

Thanks to solid security and other state-of-the-art infrastructure provided by MITA, we are now able to host all our key data within a cloud environment, thereby giving us instant accessibility to our information irrespective of our physical location. Staff have embraced video-conferencing technologies to the extent that MFHEA now organises very high-quality virtual events on a regular basis. Understandably, this necessitated an extensive overhaul of the computing resources at our staff's disposal, moving towards equipment well-gearred to provide the quality, continuity, and speed of access that modern technology demands.

In keeping with our status as the leading authority in Further and Higher Education and in acknowledgement of the transformational impact technology is having on the educational environment across the board, we are continuing to explore new functional boundaries such as the use of e-signatures and automated business process flows, to celebrate the fact that physical location is becoming largely irrelevant in the pursuit of effective productivity.

In 2024, the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority also invested in new hardware and software for its workforce. It also carried out an extensive exercise to dispose of obsolete items as per MFHEA policy. In the absence of the Manager IT, the Senior Manager of the Corporate Unit held monthly meetings with the IT support providers to ensure that any issues were resolved in as short a time span as possible. Throughout the year, records of all IT assets were also kept updated as per the Fixed Asset Inventory held in the accounting software. Various procurements for IT hardware and software were also carried out as per the procurement regulations and policy of MFHEA. This included the purchase of new laptops, printers, and external hard drives.

Legal and Compliance

The Legal and Compliance Unit strives to assist Further and Higher Education institutions in complying with regulations and guidelines. It also attends to reports or complaints by students or the general public in relation to issues with educational institutions not related to Quality Assurance. The Unit's main aim is to act as the critical friend of providers. On the other hand, the legal arm deals with any legal issues and assists all units within the Authority.

The Unit continued its previous work to highlight any misinformation by providers to students or prospective students. The Unit followed several reports on such material and, in general, the Unit is very satisfied with the cooperation found and proud to say that in most cases providers collaborated and rectified any incorrect information.

As per law, the Legal and Compliance Unit also monitors providers who have not operated for several months or years. This exercise will continue on a regular basis to ensure a healthy register.

The Unit also continued with its regular monitoring through online reviews and physical checks. The main aim of the Unit is to protect students and, at the same time, help providers comply with laws and guidelines. This will ultimately help during the institutional audit and ensure the best provision possible.

From time to time, the Unit receives reports of alleged breaches or suspected unfair advertising on to the relevant authorities, issuing orders and providing feedback to the person reporting whenever that is possible. In 2024, the Unit dealt with 96 such cases.

In 2024, the Unit also worked in collaboration with other Units to update internal procedures for the various processes used. This is an ongoing process and, in fact, it is currently engaged in the drafting of other procedures and guidelines.

The Legal and Compliance Unit continues to assist the governance structures of the Authority through its advice to the Quality Assurance Committee and Board of the Authority. The Unit also assists all other units in their daily work, such as the MRC & EU section with Mutual Recognition of Qualifications or EU issues, and the Research and Policy section when it comes to data collection issues from providers who refuse to pass on data. The Unit also handles data protection issues and Freedom of Information requests.

Also, the Unit has seen an increase in legal litigation cases due to the hard but necessary decisions taken by the Authority.

The Unit strives to continue the work that has been done over the past years to the best of its abilities and with the resources available, and where possible, improve through better efficiency.

Annual Financial Statements

Members' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (the "Authority") presents this report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Principal Activities

The Authority was formerly established under the Education Act, Chapter 327, Laws of Malta. Subsidiary Legislation 327.433 has been transposed to Cap. 607.03. The Authority was officially launched on 8 January 2021 and is legislated by the Further and Higher Education Act, 2020, Laws of Malta which came into force on 1 January 2021. MFHEA is engaged in promoting furtherance and higher education to empower all students with knowledge and skills to meet education requirements as requested by Government.

Business Review

The Authority is reporting a surplus for the year of €181,957 (2024: surplus of €87,367) on income of €2,832,811 (2024: €2,454,893). During the year, revenue from the Authority's own operations has increased from previous year, amounting to €1,367,267 (2024: €1,058,356). The financial support received from the government, which is used to cover payroll costs, amounted to €1,200,000 (2024: €1,200,000). The Authority will continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and that adequate support will continue to be made available by the Government of Malta through the subventions to enable the Authority to meet its commitments as and when they fall due.

Reserves

The Authority proposes to transfer the surplus for the year to accumulated funds, which amount to €314,428 as at 31 December 2024 (2023: €132,469).

Future Developments

The Authority is not envisaging any changes in operating activities for the forthcoming year.

Results

The result for the year ended 31 December 2024 is shown on the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income on page 5. The surplus for the year is €181,957 (2023: surplus of €87,367).

Authority

The Members of the Authority who held office were:

Dr. Kenneth Vella (term expired on 31 January, re-appointed on 12 March 2024 and resigned 5 September 2024)

Dr. Desirée Cassar (term expired on 31 January 2024 and re-appointed on 12 March 2024)

Mr Anatole Baldacchino (term expired on 31 January 2024 and re-appointed on 12 March 2024)

Dr Alicia Agius

Dr Frank Abela (expired on 31 January 2024)

Dr Edward Woods

Mr Anthony Borg (appointed on 12 March 2024)

Mr Paul Gauci (appointed on 12 March 2024)

Mr Edgar Francis Borg (appointed on 12 March 2024)

Ms Allison Zammit (appointed on 12 March 2024)

Ms Nicole Cuschieri (appointed on 12 March 2024)

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Members' Report

For the Year Ended 31 December 2024 (continued)

The Authority's responsibilities

The Authority is required to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the Authority and of the profit or loss of the Authority for that year, in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the EU. In preparing these the Authority is required to:

- adopt the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Authority will continue in business;
- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- account for income and charges relating to the accounting period on the accruals basis;
- value separately the components of asset and liability items; and
- report comparative figures corresponding to those of the preceding accounting period.

The Authority is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy, at any time, the financial position of the Authority and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the International Financial Reporting Standards. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Authority and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities, and for designing, implementing and maintaining such internal control as the Authority determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error.

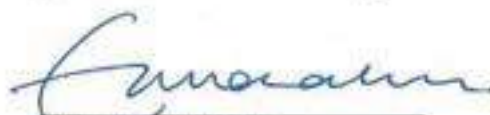
Auditors

Forvis Mazars, Registered Auditors, have expressed their willingness to continue in office and a resolution for their reappointment will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting.

This report was approved and authorized for issue by the Authority on 20 March 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Dr Rose Anne Cuschieri
Chief Executive Officer



Dr Edward Woods
Chairman

Registered Address:

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)
J. Abela Scolaro Street
Hamrun HMR 1304
Malta

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Revenue	3	2,832,811	2,454,893
Direct costs	5	(211,529)	(226,391)
Gross surplus		2,621,282	2,228,502
Administrative expenses	5	(2,505,605)	(2,180,814)
Other operating income	4	66,280	39,679
Surplus for the year	5	181,957	87,367

The notes on pages 7 to 21 form an integral part of these financial statements.

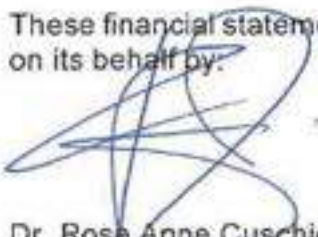
Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Statement of Financial Position As at 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Assets			
Non current assets			
Intangible assets	7	-	62
Property, plant and equipment	8	56,256	54,038
Total non-current assets		56,256	54,100
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables	9	126,746	152,738
Cash and cash equivalents	10	525,766	462,040
Total current assets		652,512	614,778
Total assets		708,768	668,878
Funds and liabilities			
Fund			
Accumulated fund		314,426	132,469
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	394,342	536,409
Total current liabilities		394,342	536,409
Total funds and liabilities		708,768	668,878

The notes on pages 7 to 21 form an integral part of these financial statements.

These financial statements were approved by the Authority on 20 March 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



Dr. Rose Anne Cuschieri
Chief Executive Director



Dr. Edward Woods
Chairman

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Statement of accumulated fund
For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Accumulated Fund EUR
Balance as at 1 January 2023	45,102
<i>Changes for 2023</i>	
Surplus for the year	87,367
Balance as at 31 December 2023	132,469
<i>Changes for 2024</i>	
Surplus for the year	181,957
Balance as at 31 December 2024	314,426

The notes on pages 7 to 21 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Cash from operating activities:			
Surplus for the year		181,957	87,367
Depreciation and amortisation		16,733	17,209
Deferred income released		(153,174)	(138,380)
Deficit from operations		45,516	(33,804)
(Increase)/decrease in trade and other receivables		25,992	(49,973)
(Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables		(40,354)	57,087
Net cash flows used in operating activities		(31,154)	(26,690)
Cash flows from investing activities:			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment		(18,889)	(24,177)
Net cash flows generated from/used in investing activities		(18,889)	(24,177)
Cash flows from financing activities:			
Net project funds received		51,461	232,523
Net cash flows generated from financing activities		51,461	232,523
Net cash movement		63,726	181,656
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		462,040	280,384
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	10	525,766	462,040

The notes on pages 7 to 21 form an integral part of these financial statements.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Basis of preparation

a. Relevant Act

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (the "Authority") was formerly established under the Education Act, Chapter 327, Laws of Malta. The Authority was officially launched on 8 January 2021 and is legislated by the Further and Higher Education Act, 2020, Laws of Malta which came into force on 1 January 2021.

b. Statement of compliance

The financial statements of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority, ("the Authority"), have been prepared and presented in accordance with the requirements of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as adopted by the European Union.

c. Basis of measurement

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis.

d. Functional and presentation currency

The financial statements are presented in Euro (€), which is the Authority's functional currency.

e. Use of estimates and assumptions

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFRS as adopted by the EU requires management to make judgments, estimates and assumptions that affect the application of accounting policies and the reported amounts of assets, liabilities, income and expenses. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimates are revised and in any future periods affected.

f. Changes in accounting policies and disclosures

Initial Application of an International Financial Reporting Standard

The Company has adopted the following new and amended IFRS and IFRIC interpretations as of 1 January 2024:

- Amendments to IAS 1, Presentation of Financial Statements: Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current (issued on 23 January 2020), Classification of Liabilities as Current or Non-current - Deferral of Effective Date (issued on 15 July 2020) and Non-Current Liabilities with Covenants (issued on 31 October 2020) (effective on 1 January 2024)

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Basis of preparation (continued)

f. Changes in accounting policies and disclosures (continued)

Initial Application of an International Financial Reporting Standard (continued)

The amendments requires that a right to defer settlement for at least 12 months must exist at the reporting date and have substance. This right may be subject to compliance with conditions specified in a loan arrangement and only those existing at the reporting date are to be considered. However, information about conditions or covenants that apply in future periods are to be disclosed. Also, liabilities relating to convertible debt may become current. The amendments apply retrospectively.

The application of these amendments did not have a material effect on the Authority's financial statements.

- Amendments to IFRS 16, Leases: Lease liability in a sale and leaseback (issued on 22 September 2022) (effective on 1 January 2024)

The narrow scope amendment impact how a seller-lessee accounts for variable payments that arise in a sale-and-leaseback transaction. The amendments introduce a new accounting model for variable payments and requires seller-lessees to reassess and potentially restate retrospectively as from date of application of IFRS 16.

The application of these amendments did not have a material effect on the Authority's financial statements.

- Amendments to IAS 7, Statement of Cash Flows and IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures: Supplier Finance Arrangements (issued on 25 May 2023) (effective on 1 January 2024)

The amendments relate to disclosure requirements in connection with supplier financing arrangements - also known as supply chain financing, financing of trade payables or reverse factoring arrangements.

The application of these amendments did not have a material effect on the Authority's financial statements.

Standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards as adopted by the EU in issue but not yet effective for financial periods beginning on 1 January 2024:

- *Amendments to IAS 21, The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates: Lack of Exchangeability (issued 15 August 2023) (effective on 1 January 2025)*

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

1. Basis of preparation (continued)

f. Changes in accounting policies and disclosures (continued)

Standards, interpretations and amendments to published standards as adopted by the EU in issue but not yet effective for financial periods beginning on 1 January 2024:

The amendments specifies when a currency is exchangeable into another currency and when not. It also specifies how an entity can determine the exchange rate to apply when a currency is not exchangeable and requires additional disclosures when a currency is not exchangeable.

The application of these amendments is not expected to have a material effect on the Authority's financial statements.

Standards, interpretations and amendments issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) but not yet adopted by the European Union:

- Amendments to the Classification and Measurement of Financial Instruments (Amendments to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7) (issued on 30 May 2024)
- IFRS 19 Subsidiaries without Public Accountability: Disclosures (issued on 9 May 2024)
- IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements (issued on 9 April 2024)
- Contracts Referencing Nature-dependent Electricity – Amendment to IFRS 9 and IFRS 7 (issued on 18 December 2024).
- Annual improvements Volume 11 (issued on 18 July 2024)

The Authority is assessing the impact that the adoption of these Financial Reporting Standards will have in the financial statements of the Authority in the period of initial application.

2. Material Accounting Policies

a. Overall considerations

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFRS requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the Authority's accounting policies.

The financial statements have been prepared using the significant accounting policies and measurement bases summarised below.

The accounting policies have been consistently applied by the Authority and are consistent with those used in previous years.

b. Going concern

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis which assumes that the Government of Malta will continue to provide the necessary funding to the authority to enable it to continue with its activities.

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis which assumes that the Authority will continue its operational activity for the foreseeable future.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

c. Property, plant and equipment

i. Value method

Items of property, plant and equipment, comprising of Furniture and Fittings, Office Equipment, Motor Vehicles and Computer Equipment, are initially measured at cost. They are subsequently stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses.

Cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset and any other costs directly attributable to bringing the assets to a working condition for their intended use, and the costs of dismantling and removing the items and restoring the site on which they are located.

ii. Depreciation

Depreciation is charged to the statement of comprehensive income on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of items of property, plant and equipment, and major components are accounted for separately. The estimated useful lives are as follows:

Furniture and fittings	10%
Office equipment	10%
Motor vehicles	20%
Computer equipment	25%

Gains and losses on the disposal or retirement of an item of property, plant and equipment are determined as the difference between the net disposal proceeds and the carrying amount at the date of disposal. The gains or losses are recognised in the statement of comprehensive income as other operating income or other operating costs, respectively.

An asset's carrying amount is written down immediately to its recoverable amount if it is greater than its estimated recovery amount (Accounting policy 2g).

d. Trade and other receivables

Trade receivables are amounts due from customers for services performed in the ordinary course of business. If collection is expected in one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer), they are classified as current assets. If not, they are presented as non-current assets.

Trade receivables are carried at original invoice amount less provisions made for impairment of these receivables. A provision for impairment of trade receivables is established when there is objective evidence that the Authority will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the set original terms. Bad debts are written off during the year in which they are identified.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

e. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash comprises cash on hand and demand deposits. Cash equivalents are short-term investments that are held to meet short-term cash commitments rather than for investment or other purposes. Bank overdrafts, which are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Authority's cash and management, are a component of cash and cash equivalents.

f. Trade and other payables

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer). If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities.

g. Impairment of non-financial assets

The carrying amount of the Authority's non-financial assets are reviewed at each reporting date to determine whether there is any indication of impairment. If such indication exists, then the asset's recoverable amount is estimated.

An impairment loss is recognised if the carrying amount of an asset or its cash-generating unit exceeds its recoverable amount. A cash-generating unit is the smallest identifiable group that generates cash flows that largely are independent from other assets and groups. Impairment losses are recognised in profit or loss.

The recoverable amount of an asset or cash-generating unit is the greater of its value in use and its fair value less cost to sell. In assessing value in use, the estimated future cash flows are discounted to their present value using a pre-tax discount rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the asset.

Impairment losses recognised in prior periods are assessed at each reporting date for any indications that the loss has decreased or no longer exists. An impairment loss is reversed if there has been a change in the estimates used to determine the recoverable amount. An impairment loss is reversed only to the extent that the asset's carrying amount does not exceed the carrying amount that would have been determined, net of depreciation or amortisation, if no impairment loss had been recognised.

h. Financial Instruments

i. Recognition and derecognition

Financial assets and financial liabilities are recognised when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument.

Financial assets are derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial asset expire, or when the financial asset and substantially all the risks and rewards are transferred. A financial liability is derecognised when it is extinguished, discharged, cancelled or expires.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

h. Financial Instruments (continued)

ii. Classification and initial measurement of financial assets

Except for those trade receivables that do not contain a significant financing component and are measured at the transaction price in accordance with IFRS 15, all financial assets are initially measured at fair value adjusted for transaction costs (where applicable).

Financial assets, other than those designated and effective as hedging instruments, are classified into the following categories:

- amortised cost;
- fair value through profit or loss (FVTPL); or
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)

In the period presented, the Authority does not have any financial assets categorised as FVTPL and FVOCI.

The classification is determined by both:

- the entity's business model for managing the financial asset; and
- the contractual cash flow characteristics of the financial asset.

iii. Subsequent measurement of financial assets

Financial assets are measured at amortised cost if the assets meet the following conditions (and are not designated as FVTPL):

they are held within a business model whose objective is to hold the financial assets and collect its contractual cash flows; and
the contractual terms of the financial assets give rise to cash flows that are solely payments of principal and interest on the principal amount outstanding.

After initial recognition, these are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Discounting is omitted where the effect of discounting is immaterial. The Authority's cash and cash equivalents and receivables fall into this category of financial instruments.

iv. Impairment of financial assets

IFRS 9's impairment requirements use more forward-looking information to recognise expected credit losses - the 'expected credit loss (ECL) model'. This replaces IAS 39's 'incurred loss model'. Instruments within the scope of the new requirements included loans and other debt-type financial assets measured at amortised cost and FVOCI, trade receivables, contract assets recognised and measured under IFRS 15 and loan commitments and some financial guarantee contracts (for the issuer) that are not measured at fair value through profit or loss.

Recognition of credit losses is no longer dependent on the Authority first identifying a credit loss event. Instead the Authority considers a broader range of information when assessing credit risk and measuring expected credit losses, including past events, current conditions, reasonable and supportable forecasts that affect the expected collectability of the future cash flows of the instrument.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

h. Financial Instruments (continued)

iv. Impairment of financial assets (continued)

In applying this forward-looking approach, a distinction is made between:

- i. financial instruments that have not deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition or that have low credit risk ('Stage 1') and
- ii. financial instruments that have deteriorated significantly in credit quality since initial recognition and whose credit risk is not low ('Stage 2').

'Stage 3' would cover financial assets that have objective evidence of impairment at the reporting date.

'12-month expected credit losses' are recognised for the first category while 'lifetime expected credit losses' are recognised for the second category.

Measurement of the expected credit losses is determined by a probability-weighted estimate of credit losses over the expected life of the financial instrument. An assessment of the expected credit loss on financial assets has not been carried out by the Authority during the year under review.

v. Classification and measurement of financial liabilities

As the accounting for financial liabilities remains largely the same under IFRS 9 compared to IAS 39, the Authority's financial liabilities were not impacted by the adoption of IFRS 9. However, for completeness, the accounting policy is disclosed below.

The Authority's financial liabilities include trade and other payables. Financial liabilities are initially measured at fair value, and, where applicable, adjusted for transaction costs unless the Authority designated a financial liability at FVTPL.

Subsequently, financial liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, except for derivatives and financial liabilities designated at FVTPL, which are carried subsequently at fair value with gains or losses recognised in profit or loss (other than derivative financial instruments that are designated and effective as hedging instruments).

Interest-related charges and changes in an instrument's fair value (if applicable) are recognised as finance costs in the statement of comprehensive income.

i. Revenue recognition

Revenue represents Government tranches received during the year, EU reimbursements, income from the Authority's own operations and interest income. Revenue is measured at the fair value of the consideration received or receivable for services provided in the normal course of the business. Revenue is recognised to the extent that it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the Authority and these can be measured reliably.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

i. Revenue recognition (continued)

i. Government funds

The Authority is funded by a Government contribution which is voted separately for recurring expenditure. These funds are provided annually in order to cover the payroll costs of the Authority. Funds from the government are recognised at their fair value where there is reasonable assurance that the funds will be received and that the Authority will comply with all attached conditions. Government funds of a revenue nature are recognised when approved in the annual government budget.

ii. EU grants

The Authority receives financial assistance from the European Commission as a reimbursement for costs incurred on EU projects. The amount of grants received for each project is dependent on the agreements entered into between the Authority and the European Commission. Grants are recognised at their fair value where there is reasonable assurance that the grant will be received and that the Authority will comply with all attached conditions. Government grants relating to costs are deferred and recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income over the period necessary to match them with the costs that they are intended to compensate.

iii. Income from own operations

The Authority's business operations include licensing and accreditation of educational institutions, the conduct of external quality assurance among the public further and higher education institutions in Malta, and the provision of recognition and comparability of both academic and vocational qualifications, using both the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to provide recognition advice on both local and international qualifications.

j. Taxation

In November 2024, the Minister for Finance has authorised that the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority be exempt from payment of Income Tax in terms of Article 12(2) of the Income Tax Act (Cap.123) of the laws of Malta. The exemption order was applied with a retrospective effect.

k. Financial risk management

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks: credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk. The Authority's overall risk management program focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and seeks to minimise potential adverse effects on the Authority's financial performance.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Material Accounting Policies (continued)

k. Financial risk management (continued)

i. Credit risk

The Authority's credit risk is limited to the carrying amount of financial assets recognised at the date of the Statement of Financial Position, which are disclosed in notes 9 and 10.

The Authority continuously monitors defaults of customers and other counterparts, and incorporates this information into its credit risk controls. The Authority's policy is to deal only with creditworthy counterparties.

None of the Authority's financial assets is secured by collateral or other credit enhancements. The credit risk for liquid funds is considered to be negligible, since the counterparties are reputable institutions with high quality external credit ratings.

ii. Liquidity risk

The Authority's exposure to liquidity risk arises from its obligations to meet financial liabilities, which comprise trade and other payables (see note 11). Prudent liquidity risk management includes maintaining sufficient cash and committed credit facilities to ensure the availability of an adequate amount of funding to meet the Authority's obligations when they become due.

At 31 December 2024 and 30 December 2023, there were no contractual maturities on the financial liabilities of the Authority. Contractual maturities reflect gross cash flows, which may differ from the carrying values of financial liabilities at the date of the Statement of Financial Position.

iii. Foreign currency risk

Most of the Authority's transactions are carried out in Euro. Exposure to currency exchange rates arises from the Authority's transactions in foreign currencies.

The Authority's financial assets face minimal foreign currency risk since all sales are made receivable in Euro.

iv. Interest rate risk

The Authority's exposure to interest rate risk is limited as it does not have any borrowings bearing variable interest rates.

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority**Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024****3. Revenue**

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Government funds	1,200,000	1,200,000
EU reimbursements	265,524	196,535
Income from own operations	1,318,622	1,026,080
Miscellaneous other revenue	48,665	32,278
Total	2,832,811	2,454,893

4. Other operating income

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Reimbursable staff costs relating to projects	43,890	32,287
Reimbursement of travel expenses	22,390	7,392
	66,280	39,679

5. Surplus for the year**a. Auditor's remuneration**

Total remuneration paid to the Authority's auditor during the year amounted to:

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Audit fees	5,000	5,000

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

5. Deficit for the year (continued)

b. Surplus for the year

Surplus is stated after charging the following:

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Direct costs related to projects	116,448	136,026
Honoraria for Board, Q.A Comm. & Sector Skills Unit	114,735	64,435
Staff salaries	1,655,794	1,408,644
Depreciation and amortisation	16,733	17,209
Auditor's remuneration	5,000	5,000
Accreditation services	165,008	102,585
Advertising	9,370	15,957
Clerical services	36,909	33,857
Hospitality	87,760	78,747
IT related expenses	6,051	17,291
Other support services	192,046	163,272
Printing, postage and stationary	37,476	42,097
Subscriptions	79,080	127,267
Travelling expenses	82,845	105,267
Other administrative expenses	111,879	89,551
	<u>2,717,134</u>	<u>2,407,205</u>

6. Wages and salaries

a. Wages and salaries

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Wages and salaries	1,537,940	1,305,929
Social security costs	117,854	102,715
	<u>1,655,794</u>	<u>1,408,644</u>

b. Average number of employees

The average number of persons employed by the Authority during the year was as follows:

	2024	2023
Operations	40	36
Administration	10	9
	<u>50</u>	<u>45</u>

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

7. Intangible Assets

	Computer software EUR
Cost	
At 1 January 2023, 31 December 2023 & 31 December 2024	23,782
Accumulated Amortisation	
At 1 January 2023	23,472
Amortisation charge for the year	248
At 31 December 2023	23,720
Amortisation charge for the year	62
Balance at 31 December 2024	23,782
Net Book Value	
At 31 December 2023	62
At 31 December 2024	-

8. Property, plant and equipment

	Furniture and fittings EUR	Motor Vehicles EUR	Office equipment EUR	Computer equipment EUR	Total EUR
Cost					
At 1 January 2023	32,005	19,005	12,119	95,272	158,401
Additions	1,579	-	866	21,732	24,177
At 31 December 2023	33,584	19,005	12,985	117,004	182,578
Additions	1,031	-	487	17,371	18,889
Disposals	-	-	-	(32,445)	(32,445)
Balance at 31 December 2024	34,615	19,005	13,472	101,930	168,022
Depreciation and impairment losses					
At 1 January 2023	8,529	19,005	3,744	80,301	111,579
Depreciation charge for the year	3,358	-	1,282	12,321	16,961
At 31 December 2023	11,887	19,005	5,026	92,622	128,540
Depreciation charge for the year	3,365	-	1,341	11,945	16,671
Released on disposal	-	-	-	(32,445)	(32,445)
Balance at 31 December 2024	15,272	19,005	6,367	72,122	112,766
At 31 December 2023	21,697	-	7,959	24,382	54,038
At 31 December 2024	19,343	-	7,105	29,808	56,256

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

**Notes to the financial statements
for the year ended 31 December 2024**

9. Trade and other receivables

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Trade receivables	58,091	117,536
Amounts owed by related parties	26,376	21,762
Advance payments	-	2,238
Prepayments	12,906	11,202
Accrued income	29,373	-
Total	126,746	152,738

Amounts owed by related parties are unsecured, interest-free and repayable on demand.

10. Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents for the purpose of the cash flow statement are as follows:

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Cash on hand	286	-
Bank balances	525,480	462,040
Total cash and cash equivalents	525,766	462,040

11. Trade and other payables

a. Trade and other payables

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Trade payables	25,922	22,537
Accruals	87,109	96,083
FSS, NI and payroll	4,613	39,378
Deferred income (Note 11 b.)	276,698	378,411
Total	394,342	536,409

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024

11. Trade and other payables (continued)

b. Deferred Income

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
At 1 January	378,411	284,268
Increase in year	51,461	232,523
	<u>429,872</u>	<u>516,791</u>
Released in year	(153,174)	(138,380)
At 31 December	<u>276,698</u>	<u>378,411</u>

Deferred income relates to projects whose timing of approval and finalization is uncertain. All deferred income is classified as a current liability since most deferred income normally crystallizes within the following year.

12. Related Party Transactions

During the year, the Authority entered into the following trading transactions with its major stakeholder, the Government of Malta through Government controlled entities, and conducted business with Government controlled utility entities. Refer to Government Funds listed in Note 3.

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Government subvention	1,200,000	1,200,000
Services provided to government-controlled entities	<u>129,993</u>	<u>105,095</u>

Year end balances receivable from related parties are disclosed in note 9.

13. Capital management policies and procedures

The Authority's capital management objectives are to ensure its ability to continue as a going concern. The Authority monitors the level of debt, which includes borrowings and trade and other payables less cash and cash equivalents, against total capital on an ongoing basis.

14. Contingent liabilities

At the financial position date, there were four proceedings that were initiated against the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority. Whereas these cases may result in financial damages against the Authority, the Authority is not yet in a position to determine the probability and extent of such damages, if any. A provision has not been recognised in these financial statements in relation to these cases.

15. Events after the reporting period

There were no material events affecting the Authority which occurred after the reporting date.

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (the Authority), set out on pages 3 to 21 which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of accumulated fund and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements:

- a. present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Authority as at 31 December 2024, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the EU (EU IFRSs)
- b. have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Further and Higher Education Act, Cap. 607 of the Laws of Malta.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (IESBA Code) together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in accordance with the Accountancy Profession (Code of Ethics for Warrant Holders) Directive issued in terms of the Accountancy Profession Act (Cap. 281) in Malta, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements and the IESBA Code. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The Authority is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Authority's report and Schedules. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Authority

The Authority is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adopted by the European Union, and for such internal control as the Authority determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (continued)

Responsibilities of the Authority (continued)

In preparing the financial statements, the Authority is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Members either intend to liquidate the Authority or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Authority's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Authority.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Authority's use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Authority regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (continued)

Use of audit report

This report is made solely to the Authority's members as a body in accordance with the requirements of the Further and Higher Education Act, Cap. 607 of the Laws of Malta. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters that we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the full extent permitted by law we do not assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority's members as a body for our audit work, for this report or for the opinions we have formed.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'ER' followed by a flourish.

*This copy of the audit report has been signed by
Ernestino Riolo (Partner) for and on behalf of*

Forvis Mazars

Certified Public Accountants
Birkirkara,
Malta

20 March 2025

**The schedules on the pages that follow do not form part of the
financial statements**

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Schedule I

Detailed Statement of profit or loss and other Comprehensive Income For the year ended 31 December 2024

	2024 EUR	2023 EUR
Revenue		
Government funds	1,200,000	1,200,000
EU reimbursements	265,524	196,535
Income from own operations	1,318,622	1,026,080
Miscellaneous other revenue	48,665	32,278
	<u>2,832,811</u>	<u>2,454,893</u>
Direct costs		
Direct costs related to EU reimbursements	(116,448)	(136,026)
Direct wages related to EU reimbursements	(95,081)	(90,365)
	<u>(211,529)</u>	<u>(226,391)</u>
Gross surplus	2,621,282	2,228,502
Administrative expenses		
Administrative expenses	(2,505,605)	(2,180,814)
	<u>115,677</u>	<u>47,688</u>
Other operating income		
Reimbursement of salaries and other expenses	66,280	39,679
Surplus for the year	<u>181,957</u>	<u>87,367</u>

Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

Schedule II

Administrative expenses

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Administrative expenses

	2024	2023
	EUR	EUR
Accountancy	5,500	4,820
Accreditation services	165,008	102,585
Advertising	9,370	15,957
Auditor's remuneration	5,000	5,000
Bank charges	9,547	2,547
Board Honoraria	85,972	40,425
Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Honoraria	28,763	24,010
Cleaning	33,020	28,026
Clerical services	36,909	33,857
Consultancy fees	600	52
Depreciation and amortisation	16,733	17,209
Donations	7	113
General expenses	1,760	1,968
Hire of equipment	7,421	5,171
Hospitality	87,760	78,747
Information Services	26,061	4,163
Insurance	1,169	1,567
IT related expenses	6,051	17,291
Materials and Supplies	435	2,902
Motor expenses	11,716	10,524
Other support services	192,046	163,272
Printing, postage and stationery	37,476	42,097
Repairs and maintenance	9,844	16,204
Salaries and wages	1,560,713	1,318,279
Sponsorship	-	6,900
Staff training	2,875	4,513
Staff welfare	1,924	118
Subscriptions	79,080	127,267
Telecommunication costs	-	963
Travelling expenses	82,845	105,267
Total	2,505,605	2,180,814

Groups and Representatives (as of December 2023)

ELT Council

The ELT Council board plays a vital role in advancing the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession, with a focus on a national level. It prioritises enhancing standards in teacher qualifications, implementing quality assurance systems, and positioning Malta as a premier ELT destination. Additionally, it fosters collaboration between ELT and tourism sectors, ensuring sustained growth and resource allocation for effective management.

Get Qualified Scheme Committee

The Get Qualified Scheme Committee plays a crucial role in facilitating access to education and supporting the growth of a skilled and qualified workforce in Malta. The Get Qualified scheme has been established as part of Malta's ongoing efforts to enhance educational opportunities and support individuals in their pursuit of qualifications and certifications required by industry.

National Lifelong Learning Strategy & Upskilling Pathways Working Group

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy & Upskilling Pathways Working Group is a collaborative initiative dedicated to advancing education, training, and skill development opportunities for individuals of all ages in Malta. Comprised of representatives from government agencies, educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and community organisations, the working group aims to formulate comprehensive strategies and actionable plans to address the evolving needs of Malta's workforce and society.

MFHEA Advisory Committee – Board Secretary

The Advisory Committee provides a forum for consultation with stakeholders, which meets at least twice a year and which is chaired by the Chairperson or the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority. The Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of private and public further education institutions, representatives of private and public higher education institutions, representatives of students, representatives of civil society, representatives of the business community, and representatives of trade unions which represent the majority of employees in the further and higher education sector.

National Curriculum Framework Review Board

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is the backbone of the national curriculum, the assessment of which serves as a measure of national indicators of where the students are in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences throughout their entire journey of compulsory learning. The role of the NCF Review Board is to provide strategic direction, create strategic priorities for the implementation of the NCF, offer solutions to problems that arise during implementation, and to ensure effective communication with all interested parties.

MFHEA Gender Equality Plan Working Group

The MFHEA Gender Equality Plan Working Group is a collaborative team formed to discuss and implement the Gender Equality Plan introduced by the MFHEA. Comprising representatives from all units within the Authority, its primary objective is to drive gender equality initiatives in the workplace.

The working group's actions focus on implementing the strategic measures outlined in the plan, such as addressing unconscious bias, fostering an inclusive work culture, and promoting diversity.

Additionally, the group facilitates collaboration with relevant stakeholders to exchange best practices and strategies. Through these efforts, the working group actively supports and promotes gender equality within the MFHEA, ensuring that all employees feel secure, respected, and valued, regardless of gender.

Freedom of Information Officers

The Freedom of Information Act (Chapter 496 of the Laws of Malta) gives the general public the right of access to documents held by public authorities in the interests of transparency and accountability.

Every public authority has appointed an FOI Officer who is responsible for handling requests for documents submitted by the public and representing the public authority on all matters related to the FOI Act.

Data Protection Officers

The primary law governing data protection is the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta). Malta has established the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner, which is responsible for overseeing and enforcing data protection laws in the country. The Commissioner ensures that organisations comply with the Data Protection Act and investigates complaints related to breaches of data protection principles.

The primary role of the Data Protection Officer (DPO) is to ensure that their organisation processes the personal data of staff, customers, providers, or any other individuals (referred to as data subjects) in compliance with applicable data protection rules.

EQAVET Representative

EQAVET, the European Quality Assurance Vocational Education and Training framework, supports quality assurance in vocational education and training (VET) across Europe. As the EQAVET National Reference Point, MFHEA collaborates with other NRPs and experts to enhance quality assurance in VET systems.

Through an online CPD course in VET Quality Assurance, we aim to boost the attractiveness of VET nationally and across Europe. This initiative fosters European collaboration and enhances institutional capacity through ongoing professional development. Participants gain new knowledge and refine management and leadership skills, improving their employability.

TPG-C on QA

The BFUG Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance (TPG-C on QA) plays a pivotal role in promoting and advancing quality assurance standards within the European Higher Education Area. Established in September 2018, TPG-C focuses specifically on Key Commitment 3, which pertains to ensuring quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

Through various initiatives and discussions, TPG-C addresses key thematic areas such as introducing legislative changes to align with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), enhancing the effectiveness of internal quality assurance mechanisms, fostering a culture of quality, and engaging stakeholders, including students, teachers, and employers, in both internal and external quality assurance processes. Additionally, the group explores cross-border quality assurance challenges and advocates for a European approach to ensuring quality in joint programmes.

Overall, TPG-C serves as a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and policy development aimed at continuously improving the quality of higher education across Europe.

ETINED

“ETINED” stands for “Ethics, Transparency, and Integrity in Education,” and is a platform established by the Council of Europe to combat corruption in European education systems. It aims to promote ethical conduct, transparency, and integrity in education to ensure quality education for all European children.

Through comprehensive standards, legal instruments, norms, and recommendations, the Council of Europe addresses various forms of corruption such as embezzlement of funds and plagiarism. The platform consists of national delegates designated by the governments of the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention.

Its efforts are monitored by bodies like the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the Parliamentary Assembly’s anti-corruption platform.



Europass – National Europass Centres

A National Europass Centre coordinates all activities related to Europass in every country that participates in Europass. It is the first point of contact for any person or organisation interested in using or learning more about Europass.

Europass is a set of documents and online tools aimed at helping individuals communicate their skills, qualifications, and experiences in a clear and standardised way across Europe.

Europass aims to facilitate mobility and transparency in education and employment across Europe by providing a common framework for documenting and communicating skills and qualifications.

European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group (under the Erasmus+ programme)

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group serves as a platform under the Erasmus+ programme to provide guidance and advice on matters related to the implementation and development of the European Qualifications Framework. The EQF is a common European reference framework designed to promote transparency, comparability, and portability of qualifications across Europe.

The EQF Advisory Group consists of experts and stakeholders from various fields, including education, training, employment, and policymaking. Its role involves discussing policies, sharing best practices, and providing recommendations to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the EQF in supporting lifelong learning, mobility, and the recognition of qualifications within the European Union and beyond.

European Qualifications Framework – National Coordination Points

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is a common reference framework designed to help compare and understand the qualifications of different European countries. It acts as a translation tool to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems.

National Coordination Points (NCPs) are entities established within each European country to facilitate the implementation of the EQF at the national level. These NCPs serve as contact points for information about the EQF within their respective countries. They also play a crucial role in ensuring consistency and transparency in the implementation of the EQF across different education and training systems.

EQA Validation

As the entity directly in charge of validation, we are currently in the process of updating the RPL document published in 2020 to better reflect the fast changes that are taking place in this sector. Currently, VNFIL centres whose MoU has expired are being requested to apply again to have their MoU extended for another period of 2 years.

VNFIL providers must follow the guidelines published by MFHEA in September 2022 and must fill in a detailed application form which is in line both with these guidelines as well as with the European Inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning, together with other documents published by CEDEFOP.

The aim of all this is to make the VNFIL process more accessible and better organised. It is also meant to provide an opportunity to all learners to have their skills, knowledge, and competences assessed in a serious, transparent, trustworthy, and reliable manner.

National Reference Point on Graduate Tracking

The European Network of Graduate Tracking, established by the European Commission following the recommendations of its expert group on graduate tracking, aims to facilitate collaboration among EU Member States in implementing the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates. Through promoting cooperation and mutual learning, the Network offers opportunities for peer exchange in designing and executing graduate tracking systems.

Comprising national reference points, Commission representatives, and stakeholders from various sectors, the Network fosters discussion, analysis, and the sharing of expertise. Supported by the European Commission, its activities include annual meetings, peer learning sessions, thematic working groups, webinars, and newsletters, all geared towards advancing common approaches and best practices in tracking graduate outcomes across Europe. Operated on a voluntary basis, the Network encourages active participation and ownership from its members in shaping its agenda and initiatives.

BFUG Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process Working Group

The BFUG Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process Working Group plays a pivotal role in overseeing the execution of the Bologna Process objectives. This group, operating within the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), is tasked with monitoring and assessing the progress made by participating countries in implementing the various initiatives and reforms outlined in the Bologna Process. Through regular evaluations, data analysis, and collaborative efforts, the working group ensures accountability and transparency in the adhering to Bologna Process principles and commitments. By identifying areas of success and areas needing improvement, the group provides valuable insights and recommendations to support the continuous advancement of higher education systems across Europe and beyond.

BFUG Global Policy Dialogue – Subgroup America

The MFHEA participates in the BFUG Global Policy Dialogue, particularly in its sub-group focusing on America, which serves as a platform for collaborative discussions and policy development within the Bologna Process framework. Established by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), this dialogue engages representatives from American countries to exchange insights, best practices, and challenges related to higher education policy and implementation. By fostering cooperation among participating nations, the sub-group aims to enhance mutual understanding and alignment with Bologna Process principles and goals.

Through regular meetings, thematic discussions, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, the sub-group facilitates the exchange of ideas and experiences to advance higher education reforms and improve academic mobility, quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications across the Americas.

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Global Policy Dialogue

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Global Policy Dialogue is an initiative that stems from the Bologna Process, which is a series of agreements aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process began in 1999 and involves 48 countries, including the 27 Member States of the European Union, as well as other European countries.

The Global Policy Dialogue is a forum within the BFUG that focuses on engaging with countries and regions outside of Europe that are interested in the principles and goals of the Bologna Process. This dialogue allows for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and experiences in higher education reform. It aims to promote mutual understanding and cooperation in advancing the goals of quality assurance, degree recognition, and mobility in higher education on a global scale.

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) TBG-A on Qualifications Framework

The MFHEA participates in the TPG-A on Qualifications Frameworks. In September 2018, the BFUG formally established the Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Frameworks (TPG-A on QF) —more specifically on Key Commitment 1: a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching frameworks of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS —based on the interests and needs indicated by the BFUG members and Consultative members in a survey conducted during the summer of 2018.

Specific thematic indications include topics such as:

- Self-certification of national qualification frameworks to the overarching Qualifications Framework of the EHEA
- complete implementation of the ECTS User's Guide
- short-cycle higher education
- multiple purposes and uses of the qualifications frameworks by the stakeholders
- study programmes outside of the Bologna three-cycle structure
- the relationship between the qualifications frameworks and quality assurance

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Fundamental Values Working Group (Co-Chair)

The Fundamental Values Working Group within the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) is tasked with promoting and safeguarding the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These fundamental values include academic freedom, institutional autonomy, student-centred learning, and the social dimension of higher education.

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Social Dimension Working Group

The MFHEA actively participates in the BFUG Social Dimension Working Group. The overarching aim of the Working Group on the Social Dimension is to develop proposed instruments and policies to fulfil the objective set out in the Paris Communiqué and to support national plans and strategies aimed at strengthening the social dimension of higher education, as well as to improve access and completion by under-represented and vulnerable groups.

Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Observer

The MFHEA serves as an observer within the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), contributing valuable insights and perspectives to the ongoing implementation of the Bologna Process. In this role, MFHEA actively participates in discussions, provides feedback, and offers recommendations aimed at promoting the harmonisation and enhancement of higher education systems across Europe. By closely monitoring developments and initiatives within the BFUG, MFHEA helps ensure that the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process are effectively realised, fostering greater collaboration and cooperation among European higher education institutions and stakeholders.

Quality Assurance of Micro-credentials – Implementation and Innovation in Quality Assurance through Peer Learning (IMINQA)

The “Implementation and Innovation in QA through peer learning” project functions as the overarching support mechanism for the BFUG Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance throughout the 2021–2024 period. With a dual focus, it addresses quality assurance in a broad context while also exploring specific themes with innovative perspectives, such as the QA of micro-credentials, European University Alliances, and the digitalisation of QA processes. Thematic orientations encompass legislative alignment with the ESG, internal QA mechanisms, cross-border QA endeavours, and the European Approach for the QA of Joint Programmes. The project facilitates policy dialogue among 42 participating countries, the European Commission, and six stakeholder organisations, fostering mutual exchanges of ideas, knowledge sharing, and understanding to advance the implementation of key quality assurance commitments within the European Higher Education Area.

Centres nationaux d'information pour la reconnaissance académique – National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC)

The ENIC-NARIC Networks are collaborative platforms involving 55 countries under the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997). These networks facilitate the recognition of academic qualifications across borders. Their joint website, an initiative by the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) in the EU, aims to streamline access to pertinent online resources.

This platform assists organisations and individuals in navigating international academic and professional mobility issues, including recognition procedures for foreign qualifications. It supports ENIC-NARIC member organisations by directing them to updated information provided by competent bodies in each member country. Supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO, the website offers insights into the role and responsibilities of national information centres, governance under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

Ecorys National Expert for the European Graduate Tracking Initiative

The European Graduate Tracking Initiative is a collaborative effort among European countries aimed at tracking the outcomes and experiences of graduates after they complete their education. Ecorys, in this context, likely refers to the organisation or consultancy firm responsible for managing or coordinating the national-level activities related to this initiative. As a national expert for Ecorys, your role would involve providing expertise and support in implementing and managing graduate tracking efforts within your country, ensuring the collection of relevant data and the dissemination of insights to stakeholders for informed decision-making and policy development.

European Wergeland Centre

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is an organisation based in Oslo, Norway, focused on promoting democracy, human rights, and intercultural understanding in education across Europe. It was established in 2008 and named after the Norwegian poet and politician Henrik Wergeland, who was known for his advocacy of democratic values and human rights.

The EWC collaborates with governments, educational institutions, and civil society organisations to develop educational resources, provide training for teachers and educators, and facilitate dialogue and exchange programmes aimed at fostering inclusive and democratic societies. Its work encompasses various areas such as citizenship education, human rights education, intercultural dialogue, and education for democratic citizenship.

The Centre is supported by several European governments, including Norway, Austria, Germany, and the Council of Europe. Its activities contribute to the broader efforts to promote democratic values and respect for human rights in Europe's diverse societies.

Steering Committee for Education Practice and Policy (Council of Europe) (CDEDU) (Formerly CDPPE)

The Steering Committee for Education Practice and Policy (CDEDU), formerly known as the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), is a body within the Council of Europe dedicated to promoting cooperation and exchange of information among member states in the field of education.

The committee focuses on policy development, sharing best practices, and addressing challenges in education across Europe. It serves as a platform for member states to discuss and collaborate on various educational issues, ranging from curriculum development to teacher training and lifelong learning initiatives. Through its work, CDEDU aims to support the development of inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education systems throughout Europe.

EPAN

Established in 2018, the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) serves as a pivotal platform within the Council of Europe member states, dedicated to fostering democracy and human rights in education. Anchored by the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), EPAN collaborates with education authorities across member states to tailor strategies promoting democratic values in educational policies and practices. Comprising representatives appointed by member state governments, EPAN operates under the auspices of the Council of Europe (CoE) Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU).

Key objectives include aligning with the Council of Europe Education Strategy, advocating for the integration of the RFCDC in education systems, facilitating knowledge exchange on effective practices, nurturing conducive learning environments, and contributing to the UN 2030 Agenda. EPAN's dynamic contributions encompass the ongoing refinement of the RFCDC, including tailored descriptors for young learners, teacher resources, and recommendations for enhancing teacher education programmes. By bridging expertise and resources, EPAN plays a vital role in advancing country-specific capacity building initiatives, emblematic of its commitment to promoting democratic values in education across diverse contexts.

Eurostudent 8 consortium member

MFHEA is a consortium member of the Eurostudent project. The EUROSTUDENT project collects and analyses comparable data on the social dimension of European higher education. A wide range of topics related to students' social and economic conditions are covered. The project strives to provide reliable and insightful cross-country comparisons. It does this through combining a central coordination approach with a strong network of national partners in each participating country. The central coordination team is made up of a consortium with seven member organisations; each of these partners is assigned specific tasks.

Group of Coordinators (GOC)

This group is a statutory formation stemming from the Professional Qualifications Directive bringing together all mutual recognition coordinators in a permanent forum/dialogue with the European Commission. The GOC convenes at a monthly/bi-monthly interval, where each coordinator shall attend to present all information as requested by the European Commission and receive instructions that are promptly disseminated to local Competent Authorities. The entire ethos of the meeting revolves around the correct implementation of the Directive and the subsequent tools in their entirety, and it serves also as a forum to share best practices.

Joint Meeting of the GOC and the Services Expert Group

This group brings together mutual recognition coordinators within the GOC formation and the Services Directive Experts Meeting attended by the national coordinators. Both Directives are intertwined with several shared tools, mechanisms, and legal obligations. Thus, the joint meeting serves as a coordination point where synergies between ongoing and new initiatives can be strengthened.

MLE on ISM

The Mutual Learning Exercise was an ad hoc initiative from 2023–2024 spearheaded by the European Commission aimed at mapping and producing a comprehensive report concerning the valorisation of research at further and Higher Education levels. Despite the vast amount of research that takes place at the university level, the EU suffers from a major impediment being the lack of or imperfect structures where research can be put into practice in industry and transformed into tangible goods and services. This initiative helped the Maltese stakeholders to be part of such a unique initiative and exchange experiences and best practices.

ASEM (Asian European Education Meeting)

The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), founded in Bangkok in 1996, serves as a pivotal platform fostering dialogue and collaboration across a spectrum of domains encompassing politics, economics, social issues, culture, and education between 53 partner entities as of 2022. Comprising 51 partner nations from Asia and Europe alongside two institutional partners, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEM orchestrates biennial summits where leaders convene to deliberate on shared concerns, with the most recent gathering, ASEM13, themed “Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth,” taking place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in November 2021. Complementing these summits are ministerial and senior officials’ meetings spanning various political arenas, including the ASEM Education Ministers’ Meetings (ASEM ME), which have been held in diverse locations such as Berlin, Hanoi, Copenhagen, Kuala Lumpur, Riga, Seoul, and Bucharest, with the most recent gathering in Bangkok in 2021, albeit virtually, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to nurturing the ASEM Education Process (AEP) and fostering an ASEM Education Area.

ASEM Expert Group on SDGs and Education (EG1)

The MFHEA ASEM Expert Group on SDGs and Education (EG1) is a specialised body within the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) framework. ASEM is an intergovernmental process that promotes dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe. EG1 specifically focuses on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education.

EG1 aims to facilitate exchanges of best practices, policies, and experiences among ASEM partners in the field of education, with a particular emphasis on advancing the SDGs related to education. It brings together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from both Asia and Europe to discuss challenges, share knowledge, and explore collaborative initiatives to achieve the SDGs in the education sector.

The group typically holds meetings, workshops, and other events to promote dialogue and collaboration, and it may also produce reports or recommendations to inform policymaking and action in ASEM member countries regarding education and sustainable development.

Group on History Teaching (CoE)

History and history teaching have been a focus of the Council of Europe's work on education since its inception. In a time of democratic backsliding, where history is susceptible to distortion, including the denial of certain historical facts and political manipulation, it is crucial to provide platforms for open discussions regarding the role of history in the 21st century. It is imperative to strive to establish guidelines that promote the cultivation of peaceful collective memories, rooted in a multi-perspectival approach to history. The annual Forums for History Education provide a platform for various stakeholders to exchange their perspectives and practices in history education and collaboratively develop guidelines for improving history education. This year, an MFHEA officer attended the 3rd History Forum at the University of Bologna, where during various presentations, debates, and discussions, the following were addressed:

- The importance of intergovernmental programmes on history education, drawing upon extensive knowledge,
- The promotion of dialogue and collaboration among the various stakeholders, including public authorities, academics, teachers, curriculum developers, and students,
- Sharing and disseminating best practices and insights from diverse aspects of European history.

This year's forum focused mostly on the threats and challenges facing the teaching of history in universities, which is often questioned or even cut in favour of other subjects that seem closer to the immediate needs of the economy.

This series will conclude in 2025, as part of the 70th anniversary celebration of the Cultural Convention. This final Forum will present the various recommendations from the previous Forums and reaffirm the role of history in the construction of a Europe founded on principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Democratic Mission of Higher Education (CoE) WG

The Council of Europe has been concerned about the decline of democracy, leading to an erosion of trust in institutions and major societal establishments, including higher education. This has led to economic, political, social, and educational inequalities, increased intolerance, discrimination, and hate speech, and threats to freedom of expression and association. To respond to these challenges, a WG has been set up to study and implement strategies that help revitalise the CoE's democratic and civic mission by preparing citizens to become active participants in democracy, while also contributing to the democratic transformation of schools, universities, and societies.

ENQA

ENQA was first established in 2000 as the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education. In 2004, it became the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education with the aim of contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of European higher education, and to acting as a major driving force for the development of quality assurance across all the Bologna Process signatory countries.

RFCDC

The RFCDC, as a set of materials, can be used by education systems to equip young people with all of the competences that are needed to take action to defend and promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, to act as active citizens, to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies.

It is intended for use by education policy-makers, especially those working within ministries of education, and by education practitioners in all sectors of education (pre-school, primary and secondary education, vocational education and training, higher education, and adult education). The RFCDC provides a systematic approach to designing the teaching, the learning, and the assessment of competences for democratic culture.

Glossary and Abbreviations

EQF

EQF stands for the European Qualifications Framework, which is a meta-framework to support translation and communication between national qualifications systems and Frameworks.

Further Education

All non-compulsory formal, non-formal, and informal learning that serves to obtain a national qualification or award classified up to and including level 4 of the Malta Qualifications Framework, or a foreign qualification at a comparable level. Only the Further Education Centres, Further Education Institutions and Further and Higher Education Institutions may offer further education programmes.

Higher Education

All non-compulsory formal, non-formal, and informal learning or research that serves to obtain a national qualification or award classified at level 5 of the Malta Qualifications Framework or higher or a foreign qualification at a comparable level. Only Further and Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education Institutions and Universities may offer higher education programmes.

MQF

MQF stands for the Malta Qualifications Framework. The MQF is very similar to the EQF from levels 1–8; however, it also includes introductory level A and introductory level B which are lower than MQF level 1.

NQF

A National Qualifications Framework is a common reference point for all nationally recognised qualifications and awards, indicating level of education and training and progression from one level to another. The Malta Qualifications Framework is Malta's NQF.

QA

The main aim of quality assurance (QA) is to safeguard the quality of Further and Higher Education. Quality assurance is a set of processes and checks carried out by the education institution to ensure the use of appropriate measures as a means of improving the quality of teaching, learning, training, and research. The outcomes of these processes are then communicated through the internal quality assurance policy and the external quality assurance audit carried out by MFHEA.

EQA

An external quality audit refers to an external evaluation process of internal quality assurance mechanisms adopted by a provider for its own use, and of the provider's adherence to any licensing, accreditation, and any other obligations under the Education Act. An EQA is carried out by MFHEA for all its licensed education institutions as part of their licensing conditions.

IQA

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) is the responsibility of licensed providers, and, in the form of a policy or document, it is developed by addressing all 11 Quality Assurance (QA) Standards outlined in the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education.

Formal Learning

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (in a school/training centre or on the job) and is intentional from a learner's point of view. It typically leads to certification.

Informal Learning

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work or family by which an individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, insight, and competences.

Lifelong Learning

Continuous personal and professional development, with no age limit.

National Occupational Standards

A set of job-related standards which highlight the performance expected when carrying out a specific occupation at a specific level.

Non-Formal Learning

Learning embedded in a planned activity organised outside the formal educational system, which activity is not explicitly designed as learning but which contains an important learning component.

SSU

A sector skills unit is a sector-specific board including several representatives from a number of industry-relevant stakeholders, such as the economic sector, education and training, government and social partners, and workers' representatives within the specific sector. The SSU is a key factor in the validation of non-formal and informal learning, as they set up national occupational standards, amongst other things.

VET

Vocational Education and Training (VET) prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities and are related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation.

VNFIL

Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning, which is the process of assessing and recognising a wide range of knowledge, skills, and competences which people develop throughout their lives within different environments.



Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)

Triq J Abela Scolaro, Hamrun. HMR 1304 – Malta

Telephone: 00356 2598 1450

Email: info@mfhea.mt. **Website:** mfhea.mt