

NATIONAL SKILLS STRATEGY

2026 - 2035

Public Consultation

Full report

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NATIONAL
Skills
COUNCIL



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION,
SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH
AND INNOVATION





This National Skills Strategy report (Output 5) forms part of the project “Shaping Malta’s future through a national skills strategy and targeted maritime sector measures” (24MT06), funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the OECD, in cooperation with the European Commission’s Reform and Investment Task Force (SG REFORM). The report includes policy recommendations for Malta, based on input from an assessment of the performance of the country’s skills system based on EU good practice (Output 2), and action areas for improvement informed by insights from government representatives and stakeholders (Output 3). The report covers eight priority topics defined by the project’s Advisory Group on the basis of insights collected at the kick-off event with stakeholders.

The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.



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3. Empowering educators and school leaders for future-ready education
4. Equipping learners of all ages with skills for the future
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Key insights and recommendations for Malta

SKILLS MATTER FOR MALTA

Turning global megatrends into opportunities for Malta's skills system

Skills are central to Malta's vision of enhancing citizens' quality of life, strengthening the country's economic and social foundations, and building a resilient, ambitious and dynamic future for all (Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects (MEEP), 2025^[1]). Across the globe, megatrends such as the net-zero transition, digital transformation, and demographic change are reshaping education and work. With a strategic approach to skills, Malta cannot only adapt to these shifts, but also leverage them as opportunities for sustainable growth, thereby contributing to the EU's Competitiveness Compass and advancing the Union of Skills.

Malta has successfully established core governance structures and policy frameworks to support effective skills development and use throughout the life course. As a result,

the country has made significant progress in strengthening learning and enhancing the skills of the population. Over the past decade, the country has significantly reduced the share of early leavers from education and training (ELET), achieving one of the steepest declines in the EU. Enrolment in higher education continues to increase, surpassing the EU average and EU-level targets, and Malta is increasingly being seen as an attractive learning mobility destination in Europe (European Commission, 2024^[2]). Participation in adult learning has also risen, aided by incentives and improved recognition of prior learning, and is now at par with EU-level targets (Eurostat, 2025^[3]; OECD, 2025^[4]).

Malta's labour market also makes intensive use of available skills, underpinned by strong employment outcomes and sustained labour demand. The country records one of the lowest unemployment rates in the European Union (2.7%, compared with an EU average of 6% in Q3 2025), indicating a very tight labour market (Eurostat, 2025^[5]). Labour demand is

correspondingly high, with a job vacancy rate of 3.3% in Q4 2025 – surpassed only by Belgium and the Netherlands across the EU (Eurostat, 2025_[6]). Looking ahead, Malta is also projected to experience the highest employment growth in the EU by 2035 (Cedefop, 2024_[7]).

However, despite this strong performance, persistent challenges remain. These challenges begin as early as compulsory education, with Maltese students scoring below the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science in the latest round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2023_[8]). This comparatively weak performance in skills continues well into adulthood, with 36% of adults in Malta having low levels of skills in comparison to the EU average of 25% in 2021 (OECD, 2025_[4]). Moreover, Malta has a smaller share of research and development (R&D) personnel than the EU average, suggesting that there is room to drive demand for higher-level skills and expand opportunities in higher-value sectors (Eurostat, 2024_[9]). Without action, these skills gaps risk undermining Malta’s productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

Towards a coherent National Skills Strategy for Malta

In response to skills challenges, Malta has increasingly embedded skills-related objectives into national strategies, including Malta Vision 2050 and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). These strategies highlight reskilling and upskilling as effective policy levers to help Malta successfully adapt to global megatrends such as the digital and net-zero transitions (Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and

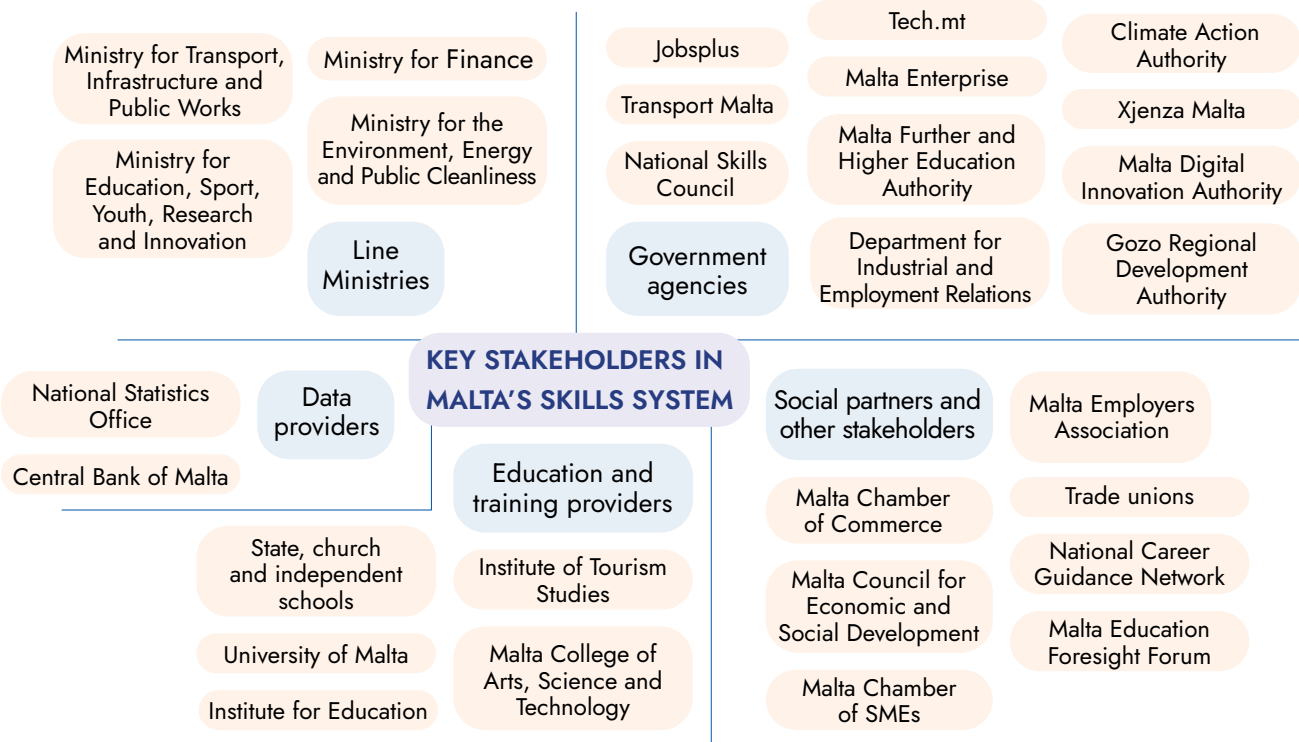
Strategic Projects (MEEP), 2025_[1]; European Parliament, 2025_[10]). In addition, the creation of the National Skills Council in 2023 further reinforced the centrality of skills policy in Malta (National Skills Council, 2025_[11]; OECD, 2025_[4]).

Building on these efforts, Malta formally launched in 2024 the development of a national skills strategy and a corresponding action plan for its implementation, requesting technical support from the EU. Until then, skills policy had not been addressed within a unified, strategic, and inclusive framework (OECD, 2025_[4]). Such a strategy is essential, given that skills policies are located at the intersection of education, labour market, industrial and other policy domains (OECD, 2019_[12]). A coherent skills strategy can provide a clear roadmap for achieving Malta Vision 2050, foster a shared agenda among stakeholders, and mobilise resources for timely reforms (OECD, 2019_[12]; OECD, 2024_[13]).

THE PROPOSED SKILLS STRATEGY IN MALTA

The project “Developing a skills strategy for Malta and its maritime sector” is funded by the European Union through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) and implemented by the OECD in cooperation with the European Commission. It is led nationally by the National Skills Council and Transport Malta. The project has engaged with multiple government entities and stakeholders (see Figure 1.1) to identify skills gaps, formulate policy solutions based on international best practices adapted to local realities, and build consensus for reform.

Figure 1.1. Overview of key skills stakeholders in Malta’s skills landscape



Source: Questionnaire filled out by Malta; research and stakeholder consultations by the OECD Centre for Skills.

The project is well-aligned with EU policy priorities, including: the European Skills Agenda (Actions 1, 2, 3 6 and 12); the European Pillar of Social Rights (Principles 1, 3, 4 and 8); the 2030 Digital Compass 2030; the Council Recommendation on the 2023 Malta National Reform Programme on the provision of skills for the green transition; and EU investments through the European Social Fund+ to support initiatives for green skills (EUR 3 million) and scholarship schemes (EUR 6.75 million). In addition, the project also supports Malta in achieving EU headline targets, including achieving at least 60% of adults participating in yearly training, as well as the European Education Area targets on basic, tertiary and digital skills. Furthermore, the project advances EU recommendations from the European Semester and the European Year of Skills 2023, promoting the acquisition of green

skills and improving the labour market relevance of education and training to reduce skills shortages and mismatches (OECD, 2025^[4]).

The National Skills Strategy in Malta is also guided by the OECD Skills Strategy framework (see Box 1.1), which has been applied in over 25 economies, including 14 EU Member States. The framework examines skills systems across three pillars: (1) developing relevant skills over the life course; (2) using skills effectively in work and society; and (3) strengthening the governance of skills systems. Over the years, the OECD Skills Strategy framework has demonstrated its value as a tool for assessing the performance of skills systems, as well as generating tailored policy recommendations for strengthening skills systems (OECD, 2019^[12]).

BOX 1.1. THE OECD SKILLS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

OECD Skills Strategy projects provide a strategic and comprehensive approach to assessing countries' skills challenges and opportunities and building more effective skills systems. The OECD collaborates with countries to develop policy responses tailored to each country's specific skills challenges and needs. The foundation of this approach is the OECD Skills Strategy Framework, the components of which are:

- **Developing relevant skills over the life course:** To ensure that countries are able to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world, all people need access to opportunities to develop and maintain strong proficiency in a broad set of skills. This process is lifelong, starting in childhood and youth and continuing throughout adulthood. It is also "life-wide", occurring both formally in schools and higher education, and non-formally and informally in the home, community and workplaces.
- **Using skills effectively in work and society:** Developing a strong and broad set of skills is just the first step. To ensure that countries and people gain the full economic and social value from investments in developing skills, people also need opportunities, encouragement and incentives to use their skills fully and effectively at work and in society.
- **Strengthening the governance of skills systems:** Success in developing and using relevant skills requires strong governance arrangements to promote co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government; engage stakeholders throughout the policy cycle; build integrated information systems; and align and co-ordinate financing arrangements.

Source: OECD (2019_[12]), *OECD Skills Strategy 2019: Skills to Shape a Better Future*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264313835-en>.

In Malta, the framework was applied to review performance and identify opportunities for improvement. Drawing on OECD and EU data, expert analysis, and stakeholder insights, the National Skills Strategy sets out 30 policy recommendations for strengthening skills development, use, and governance.

Each recommendation is shaped by three overarching objectives (OECD, 2025_[4]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]):

- **Developing future skills for the digital and net-zero transitions:** As Malta advances towards digitalisation and a net-zero economy, new skills are essential to maximise emerging opportunities and meet future workforce demands. To this

OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Developing future skills for the digital and net-zero transitions
- 2 Aligning the skills strategy with national priority and goals
- 3 Strengthening the skills of specific learner groups

end, the policy recommendations prioritise skills in areas such as environmental sustainability, digital and AI literacy, transversal skills, entrepreneurship, practical expertise, and research and innovation.

- Aligning the skills strategy with national priority and goals:** The recommendations have been verified for coherence with key Maltese policy documents, notably Malta Vision 2050, the Smart Specialisation Strategy, the National Education Strategy 2024-2030, the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2023-2030, the National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education, and the National Employment Policy, among many others (see Figure 1.2). This alignment ensures coherence, avoids duplication, and promotes efficient use of resources.
- Strengthening the skills of specific learner groups:** Providing tailored skills development opportunities for specific groups can help close skills gaps, promote equity, and make Malta’s skills system more inclusive. The groups most at risk in Malta include adults with low education levels, learners from migrant backgrounds with low literacy in English and Maltese, persons with physical or mental disabilities, self-employed workers and small business owners, employees in declining industries (e.g. those affected by the shift away from fossil fuels), and older workers aged 50 and above.

Figure 1.2. Links between the National Skills Strategy and other strategic documents in Malta



The development process

The National Skills Strategy for Malta was developed through a structured and evidence-informed process combining research, analysis, and extensive stakeholder engagement. This approach ensured that the strategy is grounded in the realities of Malta's labour market, aligned

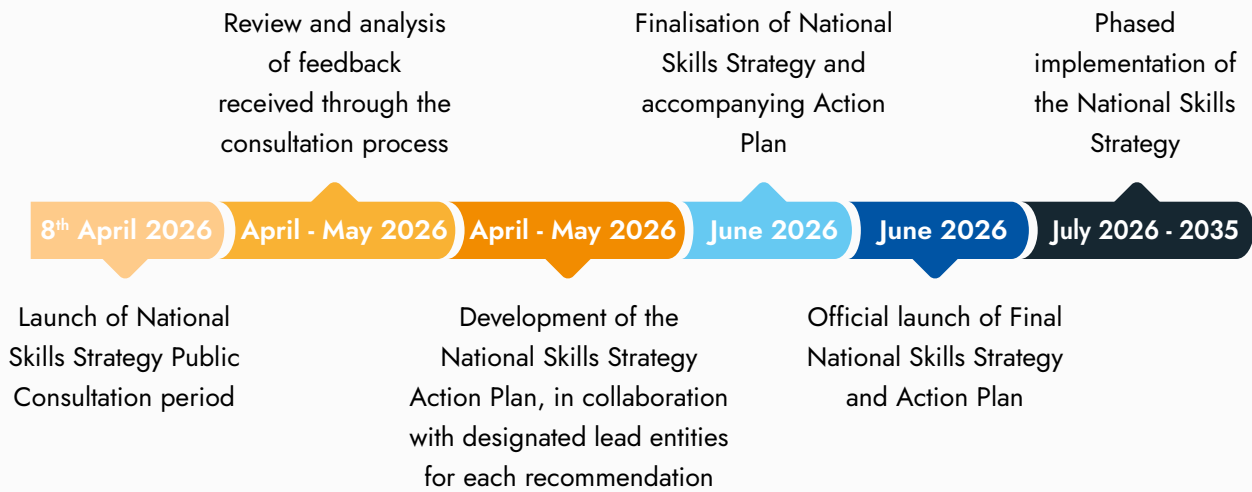
with national policy objectives, and informed by international best practices.

TIMELINE OF KEY ACTIVITIES

The strategy's development followed a clear sequence of activities over 2024 - 2026:

Date / Period	Key Activity
Early 2024	Awarded EU-funding through the European Commission's Technical Support Instrument. Project is led by the National Skills Council, with support from the OECD and European Commission.
Q3 2024	Kick-off stakeholder event , outlined the eight priority areas that the strategy will focus on
Q1 2025	Completion of the Analysis Report , synthesising Malta's skills system, labour market trends, and key challenges.
Q2–Q3 2025	Three multi-stakeholder workshops , engaging government, social partners, industry representatives, and civil society to validate findings and identify priority topics. Separate workshop targeting educators. One workshop including international best practices from Ireland, Latvia and the Belgium.
Q1–Q4 2025	A series of bilateral meetings held throughout with individual Ministries, training providers, and sector stakeholders to discuss specific needs and policy solutions.
Q3 2025	Drafting of policy recommendations , incorporating insights from the Analysis Report, stakeholder consultations and international best practices.
Q4 2025	Finalisation of the 30 evidence-informed policy recommendations forming the core of the National Skills Strategy.
April 2026	Launch of the National Skills Strategy for public consultation

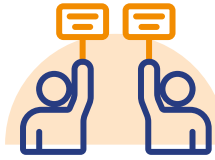
NEXT STEPS



This combination of research, analysis, and consultations provided a robust evidence base that underpins the 30 policy recommendations, ensuring they are targeted, actionable, and aligned with Malta’s strategic objectives, including Malta Vision 2050 and the EU skills agenda.

PRIORITY TOPICS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on OECD analysis and consultations with stakeholders, the project team identified eight priority topics at the start of the project to reflect Malta’s national priorities for skills policy. Across these priority topics, the project team developed 30 evidence-informed policy recommendations. Recommendations were revised to consider feedback from Maltese authorities and stakeholders. A summary of the recommendations is presented below, while Chapter 3 presents detailed descriptions of each recommendation, including context and relevant international practices.



01. UNDERSTANDING MALTA'S CURRENT AND FUTURE SKILLS NEEDS

Identifying skills needs through better assessment, forecast & foresight exercises



02. MAKING SKILLS INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL THROUGH CAREER GUIDANCE

Improving the dissemination of skills information and strengthening career guidance services



03. EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Empowering educators and school leaders for future-ready education



04. EQUIPPING LEARNERS OF ALL AGES WITH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Developing green, digital, and transversal skills across the life course



05. ENCOURAGING AND INCENTIVISING LIFELONG LEARNING

Encouraging and incentivising adults to participate in learning activities



06. SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS TO DRIVE LEARNING AND GROWTH

Incentivising employers to stimulate learning in their organisations



07. MAXIMISING MALTA'S TALENT

Making better use of available domestic and foreign talent



08. WORKING TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER SKILLS SYSTEM

Strengthening the governance, coordination, and implementation of the skills system

Figure 1.3. Overview priority topics and recommendations

PRIORITY TOPIC 1 – IDENTIFYING SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH BETTER ASSESSMENT, FORECAST & FORESIGHT EXERCISES

1. Establish the Malta Skills Observatory as a dedicated working group to oversee a coherent national approach to skills assessment and anticipation (SAA).
2. Design a national SAA methodology and strengthen strategic foresight capacity aligned with national policy frameworks.
3. Introduce sectoral and firm-level SAA methodologies to capture localised and industry-specific skills needs.

PRIORITY TOPIC 2 – IMPROVING THE DISSEMINATION OF SKILLS INFORMATION & STRENGTHENING CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

4. Launch a dynamic skills intelligence platform with regularly updated insights on evolving skills needs.
5. Publish the Employment & Skills Barometer every two years in partnership with Jobsplus to provide a more detailed analysis of skills trends in an accessible format.
6. Explore the introduction of a universal career guidance service for all individuals to support mobility and progression.
7. Strengthen parents’ involvement in career guidance through enhanced school engagement mechanisms.

PRIORITY TOPIC 3 – EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS FOR FUTURE-READY EDUCATION

8. Assess the feasibility of introducing individual learning accounts (ILAs) for education practitioners to strengthen continuous, self-directed professional development.
9. Develop a competency framework for education practitioners to strengthen professional standards and skills development.

10. Strengthen training for school leaders to improve leadership skills and promote a learning culture among school personnel.
11. Establish digital platforms and networks for informal learning among educators to regularly exchange best practices in pedagogy and assessment.
12. Implement targeted information campaigns to promote the teaching profession and address teacher shortages.

PRIORITY TOPIC 4 – EQUIPPING LEARNERS OF ALL AGES WITH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

13. Establish a future-focused skills museum to foster transversal skills through non-formal and informal learning.
14. Integrate green skills across all education and training levels to prepare the workforce for the net-zero transition.
15. Promote vocational education and training (VET) as a rewarding pathway for acquiring high-value digital and green skills.
16. Identify priority areas for specialised post-graduate qualifications to support the digital and green transitions.
17. Conduct an in-depth evaluation of Malta’s quality assurance system to streamline processes and ensure future readiness.

PRIORITY TOPIC 5 – ENCOURAGING AND INCENTIVISING ADULTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

18. Complement existing awareness-raising initiatives with a comprehensive national campaign to promote lifelong learning.
19. Strengthen existing incentives for adult learners, increasing benefits or easing eligibility criteria for target groups to encourage training in areas of skills shortage.
20. Increase uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) services, particularly for disadvantaged groups.



Strong skills governance

08



Anticipating skills needs

01



Skills information and career guidance

02

Empowering educators and school leaders



03

Future skills for all



04

Adult learning and upskilling



05

Learning driven workplaces



06

Better use of talent



07

PRIORITY TOPIC 6 – INCENTIVISING EMPLOYERS TO STIMULATE LEARNING IN THEIR ORGANISATIONS

21. Assess the feasibility of introducing legislation for training during working hours, training leave and payback clauses.
22. Strengthen in-house training within enterprises through the provision of practical tools for workplace learning.
23. Match readily-available trainers with enterprises – particularly SMEs to ensure reliable access to expertise.

PRIORITY TOPIC 7 – MAKING BETTER USE OF AVAILABLE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TALENT

24. Provide user-friendly information and targeted support to help firms particularly SMEs to adopt workplace productivity practices.

25. Support enterprise leaders and managers to promote strategic foresight and workplace innovation, and stimulate demand for higher-level skills.
26. Enhance validation systems to enable the effective use of skills card systems and examine the feasibility of extending their application and integrating them into existing digital platforms.
27. Develop a certificate recognising transversal skills to strengthen workers' employability.
28. Conduct a study on the causes, scale and socio-economic impact of brain drain to inform policies for talent retention and attraction.

PRIORITY TOPIC 8 – STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SKILLS SYSTEM

29. Strengthen skills coordination to better align skills supply and demand in the thematic areas of Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy
30. Regularly review action plans and strengthen reporting mechanisms to ensure the strategy remains a living, responsive document.



01. IDENTIFYING SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH BETTER ASSESSMENT, FORECAST & FORESIGHT EXERCISES

Skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises provide essential intelligence on current and future skills needs, enabling policymakers to address mismatches and design targeted interventions contributing to Malta's competitiveness. In Malta, strengthening national SAA capacity is a top priority, as existing initiatives are fragmented and inconsistent, contributing to, underutilised human capital and reduced productivity.

1. Establish the Malta Skills Observatory as a dedicated working group to oversee a coherent approach to skills assessment and anticipation (SAA). It is recommended that Malta establish the Malta Skills Observatory, a dedicated SAA working group that is led by the National Skills Council and includes key government and non-government stakeholders. Tasked to strengthen coordination and governance of skills intelligence, the group is expected to meet regularly and deliver tangible outputs to guide evidence-informed policy and education planning.

- 2. Design a national SAA methodology and strengthen strategic foresight capacity to identify skills needs in line with national policy frameworks.** It is recommended that Malta implement a unified national SAA methodology and strengthen strategic foresight in government to anticipate skills needs, improve labour market responsiveness, and guide long-term education and workforce planning in line with Malta Vision 2050 and Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy.
- 3. Introduce sectoral and firm-level SAA methodologies to provide more nuanced, localised assessments of skills demand.** It is recommended that Malta complement national-level SAA with sectoral and local analyses to capture sectoral and firm-level skills needs, particularly within the Smart Specialisation priority areas and emerging fields linked to the net zero and digital transitions. Strengthening stakeholder engagement and investing in national registers can improve data quality and efficiency.



02. IMPROVING THE DISSEMINATION OF SKILLS INFORMATION & STRENGTHENING CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

Malta provides strong career guidance through schools and adult learning centres, but many adults remain unaware of available services, and skills information is fragmented and underused by guidance professionals. Improving the accessibility, timeliness, and relevance of skills intelligence is essential to help learners and key stakeholders make informed decisions and support workforce development for the digital and net-zero transitions.

4. Launch a dynamic skills intelligence platform to disseminate timely, regularly updated insights on evolving skills needs. It is recommended that Malta consolidate its career guidance and skills information into a single, interactive digital platform, offering labour market data and SAA results alongside user-friendly tools for skills assessment. The platform could offer dynamic, tailored interfaces for both the general public and career guidance professionals. To maximise accessibility, it could be made available in mobile-friendly formats and include multilingual features.

- 5. Publish the Employment and Skills Barometer in partnership with Jobsplus to provide a more detailed analysis of skills trends in an accessible format.** It is recommended that Malta publish the barometer every two years to summarise skills and employment trends, using data collected by the NSO and Jobsplus in addition to employer surveys. The barometer could also include labour market trends derived from national, sectoral and local SAA exercises.
- 6. Explore the introduction of a universal career guidance service for all individuals to support job mobility and progression.** It is recommended that Malta introduce a centralised service that offers free, personalised career guidance support to all individuals regardless of their profile or employment status. Existing providers may play a role in delivering these services according to their target groups (e.g. Jobsplus for jobseekers). It is important for Malta to promote the service as an accessible, lifelong resource available throughout individuals' learning and working lives.
- 7. Strengthen parents' involvement in career guidance through enhanced school engagement mechanisms.** It is recommended that Malta strengthen parental engagement in career guidance by enhancing the ExploreMore platform – including by linking it to the dynamic skills intelligence platform (see Recommendation 5) and real-time labour market insights from SAA exercises (priority topic 1). Malta could also expand outreach through multiple familiar channels, as well as integrating career guidance into parent-focused school events throughout the schooling journey.



03. EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS FOR FUTURE-READY EDUCATION

Developing future-ready and transversal skills is a central priority in Malta's education system. However, challenges remain, particularly in relation to teacher shortages in certain areas. Addressing these requires building an innovative and resilient educator workforce and strengthening school leadership, supported by structural reforms to teacher salaries, curriculum overload and rigid assessment practices.

- 8. Assess the feasibility of introducing individual learning accounts (ILAs) for education practitioners to strengthen continuous, self-directed professional development.** It is recommended that Malta pilot ILAs or alternative tools such as training vouchers to promote teachers' autonomy in their training choices and participation. Eligible training offers could prioritise training in skills for innovative pedagogy, digitalisation, and the net-zero transition.
- 9. Develop competency frameworks for education practitioners to strengthen professional standards and skills development.** It is recommended that Malta develop a competency framework that integrates subject expertise and pedagogical skills, structured across progressive levels of complexity. It is important to describe competences in clear, observable, and action-oriented terms, directly linked to everyday school activities such as teaching, learning, and assessment.
- 10. Strengthen training for school leaders to improve leadership skills and promote a learning culture among school personnel.** It is recommended that Malta introduce structured, accessible leadership training



programmes for school leaders, solidifying their understanding of their roles in promoting teacher training and introducing them to evidence-based practices that foster a culture of learning in schools.

- 11. Establish digital platforms and networks for informal learning among educators to regularly exchange best practices in pedagogy and assessment.** It is recommended that Malta enhance existing platforms used by teachers, such as Eskola, to provide virtual spaces for peer mentoring, community discussions, and the exchange of pedagogical practices supporting the acquisition of skills for the digital and net-zero transitions.
- 12. Implement targeted information campaigns to promote the teaching profession and prevent teacher shortages.** It is recommended that Malta complement past and existing awareness raising initiatives by launching an information campaign targeted to non-traditional audiences such as career changers, as well as young parents and their children. The design of the campaign could be enhanced by a study examining barriers to entry into the teaching profession and factors attracting potential applicants.

04. EQUIPPING LEARNERS OF ALL AGES WITH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Malta is increasingly prioritising the development of future-ready skills in compulsory education and is seeking to further reinforce these skills across the life course. Developing a strong foundation for green, digital and transversal skills in childhood, and providing opportunities to develop these skills in adulthood, can help Malta build a future-ready workforce capable of thriving in rapidly changing labour markets.

13. Establish a future-focused skills museum to foster transversal skills through non-formal and informal learning. It is recommended that Malta establish a future-focused immersive space for learning, with an emphasis on developing transversal skills such as creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. This space could be promoted as a resource that is open to learners of all ages.

14. Integrate green skills across all education and training levels to prepare the workforce for the net-zero transition. It is recommended that Malta conduct a comprehensive mapping of how green skills are currently embedded in educational curricula to identify further opportunities for integration. Malta could also incorporate green skills into educator competency frameworks and training, as well as national education standards.

15. Promote vocational education and training (VET) as a rewarding pathway for acquiring high-value digital and green skills. It is recommended that Malta implement targeted information and awareness-raising initiatives to improve perceptions of VET, working closely with

career guidance services. This could include bringing VET role models into schools, providing accessible information on jobs for the digital and net-zero transitions, and promoting participation in skills competitions.

16. Identify priority areas for specialised post-graduate qualifications or awards¹ to ensure a steady supply of skills for the digital and net-zero transitions. It is recommended that the NSC, in partnership with relevant ministries and the thematic committees acting in an enhanced capacity as per Recommendation 29, use the results of SAA exercises from the Malta Skills Observatory to identify priority skilling areas. In developing new qualifications, it is important to promote a co-creation approach between higher education institutions and employers, as well as collaborate with career guidance services to encourage uptake among learners.

17. Conduct an in-depth evaluation of Malta's quality assurance system to streamline processes and strengthen future-readiness. It is recommended that Malta consult regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers and learners to examine key process issues, as well as identify opportunities to integrate future skills into quality assurance frameworks. The study may produce evidence-informed recommendations on the way forward, complemented by guidance on how to implement the recommendations in practice.

¹ In Malta, awards are certifications for programmes with less than the required number of ECTS credits to be considered a qualification at a specific MQF level. Awards are equivalent to micro-credentials and are also known as short courses (MFHEA, 2024).

05. ENCOURAGING AND INCENTIVISING ADULTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Encouraging adult learning in Malta is crucial to equip workers with skills for the digital and net-zero transitions, but motivation remains largely driven by external rewards. Many adults may therefore perceive little immediate need to upskill, especially in the context of a tight labour market. Participation is also constrained by logistical barriers, such as time pressures, highlighting the need for flexible, accessible learning pathways, particularly for disadvantaged groups with lower educational attainment.

18. Complement existing awareness-raising initiatives with a comprehensive, integrated national campaign to promote lifelong learning. It is recommended that Malta prepare a comprehensive nationwide campaign to promote lifelong learning, targeting diverse audiences with tailored messaging and multiple communication channels. To ensure inclusivity, the campaign could collaborate with trusted intermediaries and highlight flexible, accessible skilling opportunities that address barriers and emphasise the benefits of continuous upskilling.

19. Strengthen existing incentives for adult learners by increasing benefits and/or easing eligibility criteria for target groups to encourage training in areas of skills shortage. It is recommended that Malta review its range of existing incentives and explore how to increase the value of subsidies, offer more time allowance, and ease eligibility criteria for select sectors and disadvantaged groups. It is important to inform decisions on eligible sectors and target groups by the results of SAA exercises, with particular attention to skills needed for the digital and net-zero transitions.

20. Increase uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VINFL), with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups. To maximise the impact of Malta's RPL initiatives, it is recommended to increase visibility and uptake – especially among disadvantaged adults – and scale up outreach in key sectors. Data collection and assessing outcomes is essential to ensuring these services effectively support access to education, training, and labour market opportunities.



06. INCENTIVISING EMPLOYERS TO STIMULATE LEARNING IN THEIR ORGANISATIONS

Employers are crucial in addressing Malta's skills challenges by providing relevant, high-quality training that supports both individual career development and firm adaptability to digital and net-zero transitions. However, many Maltese employers, particularly SMEs, face constraints such as limited time, resources, and concerns over employee turnover, resulting in below-average training provision compared with the EU27. Strengthening employer engagement in adult learning is therefore essential to close skills gaps, enhance workforce capabilities, and boost Malta's competitiveness.

21. Assess the feasibility of introducing legislation on training during working hours, training leave, and payback clauses. It is recommended that Malta undertake feasibility studies on introducing legislation mandating training during working hours, prioritising transversal, digital, and green skills. In parallel, it could help to explore a training leave policy with a wage replacement scheme to support employers in shouldering costs. To safeguard employer investments, Malta may also assess the feasibility of introducing payback clauses, defining eligible training

and including provisions for insolvency and extra-judicial settlement.

22. Strengthen in-house training within enterprises through the provision of practical tools for workplace learning. It is recommended that Malta equip enterprises with practical tools to assess training needs, such as accessible self-assessment instruments tailored to SMEs. Malta can also encourage low-cost forms of non-formal and informal workplace learning, such as job rotation and mentoring, by raising awareness of their benefits and available incentives.

23. Match readily available trainers with enterprises – particularly SMEs – to ensure reliable access to expertise. It is recommended that the NSC collaborate with the Chamber of SMEs to identify enterprises with training needs but that lack the necessary expertise to deliver training. These enterprises could then be matched with available trainers who can provide training during working hours. Malta could also explore establishing partnerships with foreign training providers to increase the supply of additional trainers and introduce international expertise.



07. MAKING BETTER USE OF AVAILABLE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TALENT

Developing relevant and advanced skills is essential, but their effective use in work and society is equally important to maximise economic and social returns. For Malta, ensuring full utilisation of both domestic and foreign workforce skills is vital for competitiveness, particularly given the country's high projected employment growth and focus on smart specialisation areas. Opportunities remain to strengthen skills use, including expanding management capabilities, enhancing enterprise capacity for innovation, and increasing retention levels of highly qualified professionals.

24. Provide user-friendly information and targeted support to help firms – particularly SMEs – adopt workplace productivity practices.¹ It is recommended that Malta provide a comprehensive suite of resources (e.g. diagnostic tools, information sheets) through a centralised online platform. This could be complemented by mentoring and coaching for managers and HR personnel, as well as financial subsidies to engage external experts in organisational management and innovation. Peer learning networks could further reinforce these efforts.

¹ Workplace productivity practices are defined as practices that aim to improve work organisation and job design (e.g. teamwork, autonomy, task discretion, mentoring, job rotation, applying new learning), as well as management practices (e.g. employee participation, incentive pay, training practices, flexibility in working hours) (OECD, 2019; OECD, 2021; Johnston et al., 2002). For a more detailed discussion, please consult Recommendation 24 in Chapter 2.



25. Support enterprise leaders and managers to promote strategic foresight and workplace innovation, and stimulate demand for higher-level skills.

It is recommended that Malta provide targeted training in innovation management and strategic foresight to encourage enterprise leaders and managers to integrate creativity and entrepreneurship into daily operations. This may be complemented with mentorship and networking opportunities to build capacity in developing growth strategies, emphasising the creation of demand for high-skilled roles aligned with the digital and net-zero transitions.

26. Enhance validation systems to enable the effective use of skills card¹ systems and examine the feasibility of extending their application and integrating them into existing digital platforms.

It is recommended that Malta examine how to improve its validation system to support the effective expansion of the skills cards into other sectors. It is important to coordinate with the thematic committees mentioned in Recommendation 29 to define sector-specific skills and standards and determine the validity periods for the skills cards. Malta could also consider integrating the skills cards into existing digital infrastructure, such as BlockCerts via e-ID, to improve cost-efficiency and user familiarity.

27. Develop a certificate recognising transversal skills to strengthen workers' employability and support skills-based hiring practices.

It is recommended that Malta explore the development of a process to assess and validate transversal skills that aligns with existing national frameworks. The process should draw on a variety of assessment methods to recognise transversal skills acquired in schools, workplaces, volunteering, and community activities

28. Conduct a study on the causes, scale and socio-economic impact of brain drain to inform policies for talent retention and attraction.

It is recommended that Malta undertake a comprehensive study to assess brain drain, examining both push (factors driving emigration) and pull (factors attracting workers abroad) factors using multiple data sources (e.g. graduate tracer surveys, migration registers, stakeholder consultations). Based on these findings, Malta could consider developing a talent repatriation strategy with incentives such as tax breaks, as well as a diaspora engagement strategy.

¹ Skills cards are tools that capture formal, non-formal, and informal learning outcomes through standardised assessments, promoting a skill-based approach to hiring. They help strengthen skills utilisation by verifying individuals' skills for work in specific industries and linking them to sectors with labour shortages (OECD, 2023; ILO, 2023). For a more detailed discussion, please consult Recommendation 26 in Chapter 2.

08. STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SKILLS SYSTEM

Effective implementation of Malta's National Skills Strategy requires coordinated engagement across government, industry, and civil society, yet Malta has scope to strengthen strategic capacity, inter-ministerial coordination, evidence-informed policymaking, and implementation compared with EU peers.

29. Strengthen skills coordination to better align skills supply and demand in the thematic areas of Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy. It is recommended to consider assigning additional functions to existing thematic committees (sector-specific), set up in relation to the Smart Specialisation Strategy through a clearer and more formalised mandate for skills-related coordination. Under this approach, the thematic committees could be formally tasked with addressing both demand- and supply-side dimensions of skills policy within their respective sectors, drawing on evidence from skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises (see Recommendations 2 and 3). This would represent an expansion of their current advisory role, moving beyond

strategic discussion to include structured input on skills needs, training provision and workforce development, while remaining aligned with the objectives of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (Cedefop, 2017[246]; Legiżlazzjoni Malta, 2012[247]). Where relevant, Industry Skills Alliances could be established in other strategic sectors of the Maltese economy where thematic committees do not yet exist, particularly in line with the Malta Vision 2050.

30. Regularly review action plans and strengthen reporting mechanisms to ensure that the strategy remains a living document and supports effective and responsive implementation. It is recommended that Malta adopt shorter, regularly renewed action plans with clear timelines for each policy recommendation, monitored through a designated contact point in the National Skills Council. Minor ad-hoc adjustments could be agreed upon with stakeholders to ensure responsiveness to evolving labour market needs, while ensuring timely delivery.



Priority topics and policy recommendations

OVERVIEW

This chapter sets out the 30 policy recommendations of the National Skills Strategy, structured around eight priority areas. The recommendations address key challenges in Malta's skills system and are informed by desktop research, consultations with government and non-government stakeholders, and international good practices. These include lessons from EU Member States as well as selected comparison countries that share similarities with Malta, such as Singapore as a small island state.

1. IDENTIFYING SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH BETTER ASSESSMENT, FORECAST AND FORESIGHT EXERCISES

Skills mismatches and shortages are widespread across EU and OECD countries, as labour markets adapt to global megatrends. Addressing these challenges requires reliable and timely intelligence on current and future skills needs.

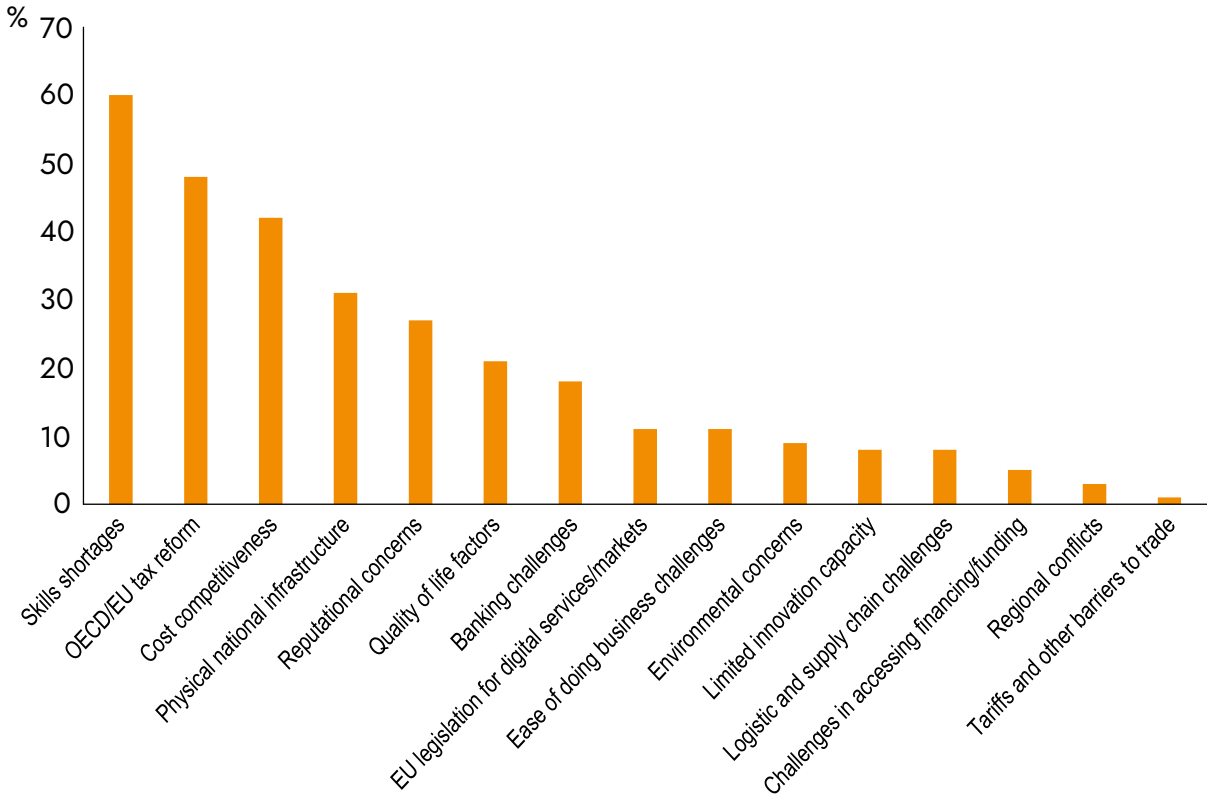
Skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises provide such intelligence through consistent and systematic methodologies (OECD, 2016_[15]; Cedefop, 2024_[16]). This evidence enables policymakers to identify gaps and design targeted, cost-efficient interventions that reduce skills shortages and boost national competitiveness. SAA is an important foundation for a comprehensive skills strategy and its results are applied in multiple ways: informing learners' learning choices through career guidance (see Priority Topic 2) and awareness raising initiatives (see Priority Topic 5); developing training in priority skilling areas (see Priority Topic 4); accelerating the recruitment of workers with in-demand skills (see Priority Topic 7); and updating occupational standards (see Priority Topic 8) (OECD, 2016_[15]).

In Malta, strengthening national capacity for SAA has been consistently identified by stakeholders as a top priority and is a stated objective in several strategic policy documents. Multiple actors already conduct SAA activities, including skills assessment (e.g. the Malta

Skills Survey by the National Statistics Office (2023_[17]); the ICT Skills Demand and Supply Monitor by the eSkills Malta Foundation (2021_[18]) and anticipation (e.g. the skills forecast in the National Employment Policy 2021–2030 by the Ministry for Finance (2021_[19])). However, these initiatives lack consistency and continuity over time, and Malta has yet to establish a national SAA methodology to ensure regular, comparable and actionable skills intelligence. Governance arrangements also remain fragmented, with unclear responsibilities and priorities (OECD, 2025_[4]).

Collecting and analysing skills intelligence is a complex task for many governments but remains essential given persistent mismatches between supply and demand. Such mismatches can lead to underutilisation of human capital with negative implications for productivity, job satisfaction, and the returns on public and private investment in education and training (Malta National Statistics Office, 2023_[17]; OECD, 2025_[4]; Cedefop, 2016_[20]). In Malta, 60% of foreign direct investors cite skills shortages as the greatest risk to the country's economic attractiveness over the next three years (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Greatest perceived risks to Malta’s economic attractiveness (2025)



Note: Based on survey data from 120 respondents (existing foreign direct investors) between May and July 2025. Source: EY (2025_[21]), *Future realized: EU Attractiveness Survey Malta*, <https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-mt/events/2025/malta-attractiveness-report-2025.pdf>.

To better identify skills needs through enhanced assessment, forecast and foresight exercises, the TSI project team recommends: (1) establishing the Malta Skills Observatory as a dedicated working group to oversee a coherent approach to skills assessment and anticipation (SAA); (2) designing a national SAA methodology and strengthen strategic foresight capacity to identify skill needs in line with national policy frameworks; and (3) introducing sectoral and firm-level SAA methodologies to provide more nuanced, localised assessments of skills demand.

Recommendation 1:
Establish the Malta Skills Observatory as a dedicated working group to oversee a coherent approach to skills assessment and anticipation (SAA)

Countries across the EU and OECD with well-developed skills intelligence systems tend to share several common features. These include clear governance frameworks with well-defined institutional roles and responsibilities; mechanisms for collaboration at both strategic and operational levels; shared visions and workplans supported by long-term funding; robust legal frameworks that safeguard data and build trust; and a strong focus on the needs of stakeholders and end-users (Barnes et al., 2023_[22]; OECD, 2024_[23]; OECD, 2020_[24]). Skills information is most effectively used in policymaking when supported by strong coordination among the actors responsible for designing and implementing interventions (OECD, 2016_[15]).

For Malta, the first step towards strengthening SAA capacity is to establish a dedicated working group responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining a national SAA framework, underpinned by stable funding. Similar bodies exist in other OECD and EU countries – for example, Finland’s Expertise Foresight Forum (*Osaamisen Ennakointifoorumi*), which brings together education and labour market stakeholders to analyse future skills needs and identify corresponding education and training opportunities (see Box 2.1).

The SAA working group in Malta could be referred to as the Malta Skills Observatory to distinguish it from the Malta Education Foresight Forum, a project under the Directorate for Planning and Strategic Foresight (MEYR, 2025_[25]). Furthermore, the establishment of the Malta Skills Observatory can promote alignment with the governance structure of the EU Union of Skills, which includes a European Skills Intelligence Observatory as a main element (MEYR, 2025_[25]; European Commission, 2025_[26]).

The Malta Skills Observatory could be led by the National Skills Council, the primary government body responsible for steering skills policy. Membership could include representatives from the Economic Policy Department (Ministry of Finance), Ministry of Economy, Directorate for Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills (Ministry of Education, Research, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation [MEYR]), Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education [MEYR], Malta Further and Higher Education Authority

(MFHEA), Jobsplus, National Statistics Office, Malta Enterprise, and the Central Bank of Malta. Key non-governmental stakeholders could also participate, such as the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Chamber of SMEs, and the National Career Guidance Network, with additional stakeholders engaged as needed. To safeguard objectivity, members could be required to disclose overlapping roles in other bodies where conflicts of interest may arise.

It is recommended that the members meet regularly – at least quarterly – and report systematically on progress. The Observatory could also function in a dynamic and agile manner by convening urgently to discuss rapidly evolving skills issues as needed. In addition,

members could be tasked with delivering tangible outputs that support the management of the SAA system. These could include: a common glossary of skills-related terms to ensure consistency across SAA exercises; periodic progress reports on implementation; systematic processing of data and input into the dynamic skills intelligence platform (see Recommendation 4); and evidence to inform the development of specialised training programmes for in-demand skills (see Recommendation 16). The Malta Skills Observatory could also take an advisory role by using SAA results to provide insights and guidance to policymakers. This could include producing regularly updated lists of training opportunities linked to shortage occupations that could be eligible for additional incentives (see Recommendation 19).

BOX 2.1. FINLAND: COORDINATING NATIONAL SKILLS INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE EXPERTISE FORESIGHT FORUM

Finland's Expertise Foresight Forum (Osaamisen ennakointifoorumi, OEF) is a national coordination body that brings together expertise from across government, education and the labour market to anticipate future skills needs. Chaired by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Board of Education, the OEF ensures a structured and collaborative approach by uniting experts in education and regional foresight with representatives of employers, employees, entrepreneurs, vocational education providers, higher education institutions and teachers.

The OEF's work focuses on medium and long-term skills trends, with results disaggregated by educational and occupational field. Findings are published through the education administration's statistical service *Vipunen*, providing accessible and reliable intelligence for policymakers, educators and employers. Beyond producing data, the OEF develops initiatives and policy proposals that help the education and training system adapt to emerging skills needs.

Source: Finnish National Board of Education (2025^[27]), *Osaamisen ennakointifoorumi #OEFoorumi*, <https://www.oph.fi/fi/palvelut/osaamisen-ennakointifoorumi-oef>; Finnish National Board of Education (2024^[28]), *Members of the Expertise Foresight Forum 2021-2024*, <https://www.oph.fi/fi/palvelut/osaamisen-ennakointifoorumin-jasenet-2021-2024>; Finnish National Board of Education (2025^[29]), *Forecast results*, <https://www.oph.fi/fi/tietoaineistot-ja-analyysit/ennakointi/ennakointituloksia>.

Recommendation 2: Design a national SAA methodology and strengthen strategic foresight capacity to identify skills needs in line with national policy frameworks

National-level SAA exercises analyse economy-wide trends in skills supply and demand – often using projections and forecasts – to provide strategic intelligence that informs national labour market and education policies. These exercises are a core feature of modern skills systems, providing essential evidence for national policy decisions and long-term planning. Common methodologies include quantitative forecasting models, national surveys and scenario development, which help assess gaps between skills supply and demand across sectors and occupations (Wilson, 2016^[30]; Eurostat, 2016^[31]).

Malta has applied a variety of national-level SAA approaches, including statistical models, cross-sectoral surveys and cross-occupational studies (see Table 2.1 in the Analysis Report) (OECD, 2025^[4]). While this diversity of methods has generated valuable insights, the absence of a unified national methodology makes it difficult to compare results across exercises and track trends over time (OECD, 2025^[4]).

To address this gap, it is recommended that Malta adopt a systematic, unified national SAA methodology. This could be part of a broader three-tier framework that also combines sectoral and local-level exercises (see Recommendation 3), which could be based on the framework applied in Flanders (see Box 2.1 in the Analysis Report).

The unified national methodology for SAA could align with national policy frameworks, such as Malta Vision 2050, by providing insights into the skills that need to be developed to support these strategic priorities. It is also important for the national methodology to assess both skills demand and supply, capture short and long-term needs, and be conducted regularly (e.g. every two to three years) to reflect structural changes in the labour market (European Training Foundation, Cedefop and ILO, 2016^[32]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; OECD, 2016^[15]). It could also leverage existing models and tools (e.g. the Structural Annualised Econometric Model for Malta [SAMM] model) and align with EU-level frameworks such as DigComp and the European e-Competence Framework (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; Joint Research Centre: EU Science Hub, 2025^[33]; European Commission, 2024^[34]).

Strengthening Malta's national SAA capacity also requires enhancing the strategic foresight capacity of central government agencies through targeted training and stronger collaboration with institutions possessing relevant expertise (e.g. EU's Competence Centre on Foresight (2025^[35]); OECD's Strategic Foresight Unit (2025^[36])). Embedding foresight into Malta's SAA system would enable the country to better anticipate the skills implications of global megatrends such as the digital and net-zero transitions, manage labour market risks, improve education system responsiveness, and seize opportunities aligned with Malta Vision 2050 and Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy (OECD, 2024^[37]; OECD, 2025^[38]).

BOX 2.2. MALTA: ENHANCING STRATEGIC FORESIGHT AT MEYR TO ANTICIPATE FUTURE EDUCATION NEEDS

In Malta, strengthening institutional capacity for strategic foresight and anticipatory governance was identified as a priority in the *National Post-Pandemic Strategy 2021*. To move from ad-hoc exercises in isolated policy areas to a more systemic approach, the OECD implemented its LIMinal project in Malta, Lithuania, and Italy to identify areas for improvement.

In Malta, the OECD worked with the MEYR and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to develop Futures Personas – character archetypes representing stakeholders and illustrating how their needs, behaviours, and challenges could evolve in response to future trends. For example, increased migration could reshape the learning environment; envisioning a student Futures Persona allows policymakers to anticipate emerging needs for both students and teachers and integrate them into policy, strategy, and service design.

This scenario-building exercise enabled Maltese policymakers to explore the future of the education system, generating actionable insights at a personal and systemic level. These insights informed the assessment of the National Education Strategy and suggested areas for improvement. While the pilot focused on education, the methodology has clear potential for application across other policy areas, supporting more proactive, anticipatory governance in Malta.

Source: OECD (2025_[38]), *Building Anticipatory Capacity with Strategic Foresight in Government: Lessons from Lithuania, Italy and Malta*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d7eb0bb6-en>.

Although strategic foresight was not formally applied in this stage of the TSI project, its national relevance for skills and workforce planning in Malta is widely recognised. Malta already has a strong foundation. With OECD support, institutional capacity for strategic foresight has been piloted in the MEYR, focusing on person-centred, futures-oriented initiatives for the education system (see Box 2.2) (OECD, 2025_[38]). This pilot could be scaled and replicated across other skills-related policy areas.

Recommendation 3: Introduce sectoral and firm-level SAA methodologies to provide more nuanced, localised assessments of skills demand

Complementing national exercises, Malta's SAA system could benefit from incorporating sectoral and local methodologies. While national-level analyses offer an overarching view of labour market trends, sectoral and local approaches provide a more detailed understanding of current and emerging skills needs in specific industries and communities.

Sectoral exercises assess skills supply and demand by sector and are often conducted by or for sectoral bodies (see Recommendation 29). These assessments examine emerging occupations, skills required, and the training system's capacity to meet industry needs. In addition to sectors, assessments can also focus on specific regions, clusters, value chains, or innovation areas (OECD, 2024^[39]; European Training Foundation, Cedefop and ILO, 2016^[32]).

At the firm level, skills gaps within individual companies can be evaluated through audits, employer and employee consultations, and digital data collection. Such firm-level assessments have multiple benefits for various stakeholders. For policymakers, these firm-level SAA exercises collect information from firms on vacancies and recruitments, helping identify skills that are hard to source in the labour market (OECD, 2016^[15]; OECD, 2024^[39]). For firms themselves, these assessments can highlight internal skills gaps and inform human resources strategies, such as targeted training, recruitment, or improved workplace practices (see Recommendations 22 and 24) (OECD, 2024^[40]).

Integrating sectoral and local analyses in its SAA methodology can enable Malta to generate granular skills intelligence tailored to different target groups (e.g. individuals, firms, sectors) and purposes, including HR policy development, training alignment, and evidence-informed policymaking (OECD, 2016^[15]; OECD, 2024^[39]). France provides a successful example, combining macroeconomic forecasts with sectoral surveys and qualitative information to reach sector-wide agreement on

future training and qualifications (see Box 2.3) (European Training Foundation, Cedefop and ILO, 2016^[32]).

In Malta, sectoral and local SAA is particularly important for emerging areas such as green skills and sustainability and should align with policy priorities identified in Malta Vision 2050 and the Smart Specialisation Strategy. Building on this broader approach, it is recommended that Malta pilot a sectoral methodology for skills forecasting in the maritime industry. The pilot would examine both short- and long-term projections of the skills required across the sector, highlighting critical bottlenecks and workforce mismatches.

Effective implementation of SAA exercises – both at the national level and in the maritime pilot – depends on robust engagement with a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. employees, students, employer representatives, and academic experts) through surveys, focus groups, and workshops. To ensure consistency and data quality, non-governmental stakeholders could be provided with guidance on how to complete SAA questionnaires, for example via clear instructions, easy-to-read communication materials, and short webinars. Disaggregating data by key characteristics (e.g. age, gender, education level) is essential to generate detailed intelligence and design targeted interventions (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).

Finally, reliable data infrastructure underpins all levels of SAA. While Malta has significant experience with surveys, investing in improved national registers is increasingly important. Comprehensive and continuously updated registers help overcome challenges such

BOX 2.3. FRANCE: ANTICIPATING SKILLS NEEDS AT THE SECTORAL LEVEL

In France, the government has made regional authorities responsible for implementing vocational education policy, including skills anticipation and matching. Government-funded contracts are awarded to various stakeholders – such as trade unions, research observatories, as well as AFPA, the national agency for adult learning – to conduct research on medium-term skills needs and propose measures to address them.

Studies are carried out at the sectoral level or by occupational group in industrial sectors (e.g. automotive, plastics, chemicals, food, insurance, and computing). Key activities include surveys and qualitative analyses to identify emerging skills needs, producing statistical databases, and mapping occupations. For instance, AFPA analyses changes to jobs and skills, including by conducting systematic on-the-spot observation missions in workplaces, where they analyse tasks of workers. Sector-level insights are combined with macroeconomic forecasts to project skills demand and supply within each sector.

These analyses inform sectoral interventions and enable the Ministry of Labour to identify broader trends shaping skills and qualifications, supporting the development of sectoral training plans in collaboration with social partners. Source: European Training Foundation, Cedefop and ILO (2016_[32])., *Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs: Working at sectoral level*, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2217_en.pdf.

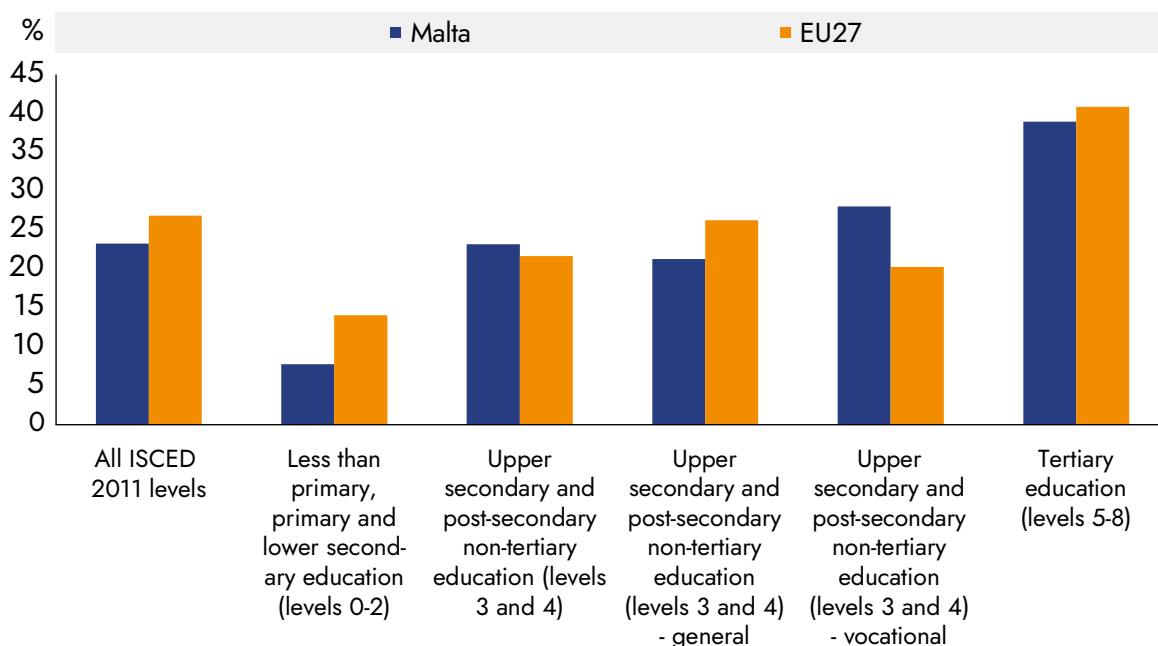
as small sample sizes, outdated contact information, and response fatigue among individuals and enterprises (OECD, 2025_[4]). Enhancing national registers could enable Malta to conduct SAA exercises more efficiently and cost-effectively, as the registers are comprehensive – containing up-to-date contact information for firms and individuals – and continuously maintained (ILO, 2025_[41]).

2. IMPROVING THE DISSEMINATION OF SKILLS INFORMATION AND STRENGTHENING CAREER GUIDANCE SERVICES

Malta performs well in disseminating skills information and providing career guidance, with youth accessing services through schools via Personal, Social, and Career Development

(PSCD) courses, and adults through Jobsplus centres and MEYR Lifelong Learning Centres (OECD, 2025_[4]). However, many adults – particularly from disadvantaged groups – remain disengaged and unaware of available career guidance and skills intelligence. While 39% of adults with a tertiary education in Malta have searched for information on learning possibilities, only 8% of those who have completed less than primary school have done so (see Figure 2.2) (Eurostat, 2022_[42]). Moreover, there is room to better integrate SAA results (see Priority Topic 1) with the career guidance system, as the use of SAA information is limited among career guidance professionals. Skills information is fragmented across multiple websites, reducing accessibility for career advisors and the public (OECD, 2025_[4]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

Figure 2.2. Share of adults aged 25 to 64 years who searched for information on learning possibilities, 2022



Source: Eurostat (2022_[42]), *Search for information on learning possibilities by type of learning and educational attainment level*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_184/default/table?lang=en&category=educ.educ_part.trng.trng_aes_12m.trng_aes_12m1.

Improving the dissemination of skills intelligence through inclusive career guidance is critical for achieving Malta’s objective of strengthening the skills of its workforce. Career guidance enables students and adult learners to make informed decisions about training and employment, helping them navigate an increasingly complex world of education and work in the midst of the digital and net-zero transitions (OECD, 2021_[43]). Equally important is ensuring that skills information is accurate, timely, and relevant for key actors involved in delivering guidance services. These actors include career guidance professionals, parents, HR personnel, and policymakers, all of whom play a critical role in shaping learners’ understanding of training and employment opportunities (Cedefop, 2024_[16]; Barnes et al., 2020_[44]).

To better improve the dissemination of skills information and strengthen career guidance services, the TSI project team recommends: (1) launching a dynamic skills intelligence platform to disseminate timely, regularly updated insights on evolving skills needs; (2) publishing the Employment and Skills Barometer in partnership with Jobsplus to provide a more detailed analysis of skills trends in an accessible format; (3) exploring the introduction of a universal career guidance service for all individuals to support job mobility and progression; and (4) strengthening parents’ involvement in career guidance through enhanced school engagement mechanisms.

Recommendation 4: Launch a dynamic skills intelligence platform to disseminate timely, regularly updated insights on evolving skills needs

Many OECD and EU countries have consolidated skills information into single online platforms to improve accessibility and usability for diverse end-users. These portals typically provide tools to help users understand their skills profiles, indicators of skills supply and demand, and information on available education and training options. High-quality platforms integrate these features, allowing users to explore occupations or sectors of interest and identify the training needed to acquire the relevant skills (OECD, 2021_[43]). To be effective, skills information and assessment tools must be tailored to the needs and expertise levels of different users (Cedefop, 2024_[16]).

In Malta, career guidance information is widely available online or on request but is not yet consolidated into a single, user-friendly portal, making access difficult for many users (OECD, 2025_[4]). To address this, the National Skills Council and the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry plan to develop a dynamic skills information platform with interactive features, using web scraping¹ to monitor online job vacancies. Data from websites would be automatically extracted and converted into structured information.

Stakeholders have expressed wide support for this initiative, as it can help learners navigate a complex, jargon-heavy information landscape and encourage learning and career transitions throughout life (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

It is important for the dynamic skills intelligence platform to present SAA results (see Priority Topic 1) in clear, accessible language, with two interfaces: a simplified version for the general public and a technical version for career guidance professionals. A useful reference is Australia's BEYOND Digital Careers Platform, which offers tailored interfaces for schools, students, and parents (see Box 2.4) (Beyond, 2025_[45]). Making both interfaces dynamic and interactive could allow users to filter by sector, occupation, qualification level, age, labour market profile (e.g. employed, inactive, mid-career), and desired skills. In addition to labour market insights from SAA exercises, the platform could also provide tools to assess learners' current skills levels, identify required qualifications for their desired occupations, and offer personalised links to training pathways and incentives. Maximum accessibility of the platform could be achieved through mobile-friendly formats and availability in Malta's most commonly used languages.

¹ Web scraping refers to technologies that extract data from websites in an automated, quick and efficient manner for processing and analytical purposes (Catrillo-Fernández, 2015[266]).

BOX 2.4. AUSTRALIA: CUSTOMISING CAREER GUIDANCE FOR DIVERSE USERS THROUGH THE BEYOND DIGITAL CAREERS PLATFORM

The BEYOND Digital Careers Platform is a free digital tool designed by education professionals and career development specialists to support informed career and education planning. The platform has three separate interactive and integrated versions:

- **For schools:** Designed for career guidance professionals, the school interface includes a student management system with detailed profiles, individual and cohort reports, tools to map current and future learning pathways, lists of preferred courses, and lesson plans to support career education.
- **For students:** The student interface allows users to build a profile with documents such as certificates and resumes, explore industries of interest, set career goals, and take interactive tests to identify careers suited to their interests and personality. It also provides personalised information on education and training options, apprenticeships, and entry-level job opportunities, with access to expert support through live webinars.
- **For parents:** This interface helps parents guide their children through career exploration, offering step-by-step roadmaps, personalised resources, expert-led webinars, and opportunities to connect with other parents and mentors.

Source: OECD (2024^[46]), *BEYOND – Online Career Guidance Platform: Case study*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/observatory-on-digital-technologies-in-career-guidance-for-youth-odicy_e098122e-en/beyond-online-careers-guidance-platform_8af47744-en.html; Beyond (2025^[45]), *Homepage*, <https://welcome.beyond.edu.au/>.

Recommendation 5: Publish the Employment and Skills Barometer in partnership with Jobsplus to provide a more detailed analysis of skills trends in an accessible format

In the early 2000s, one of the principal outputs of Malta's skills intelligence system was the Employment Barometer. Published by the public employment service (then named the Employment & Training Corporation), the barometer aimed to provide short-term (i.e. six months) indicators for potential skills gaps and employers' needs. The findings of the barometer were based on employer survey responses, providing detailed insight into the main occupations sought by employers over the next six months, recruitment challenges faced by

employers, and their strategies for addressing them. In addition, the barometer also examined social partners' perceptions of how the labour market is evolving and how employment trends are shaping their operational needs, as well as provided suggestions on how employers could bridge skills gaps through training (TSI stakeholder consultations, 2025).

To further reinforce Malta's skills intelligence system, NSC and Jobsplus are planning to relaunch the barometer, renaming it as the Employment and Skills Barometer. The new barometer will summarise skills and employment trends every two years, most likely using data already being collected by the NSO from the general public and occupational data

BOX 2.5. SINGAPORE: PROVIDING AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION ON LOCAL JOBS AND SKILLS TRENDS TO INFORM CAREER CHOICES

Published annually by SkillsFuture Singapore, the national agency for the promotion of lifelong learning, the Skills Demand for the Future Economy is a report summarising key job and skills trends in the local labour market. The report presents evolving workforce demands, using job posting data to analyse how skills requirements have shifted across occupations over the past five years. It is linked to the Jobs-Skills Portal, which provides datasets, dashboards and algorithms that allow users to further explore jobs and skills insights.

In addition to skills intelligence, the report also examines five key factors individuals should consider when seeking new career opportunities: wages, demand for jobs, the growth of job roles, skills similarity (e.g. to allow user to assess the transferability of their current skills), and historical transitions (i.e. actual movement of workers from one job to another). It provides practical guidance on how adults can access training pathways leading to in-demand jobs, including resources to support skills development such as the Skills Future Series, a curated selection of short, industry-relevant training programmes focused on in-demand skills in strategic sectors: Digital, Green, Care and Industry 4.0.

Source: SkillsFuture (2025_[47]), *Skills Demand for the Future Economy Report*, <https://jobsandskills.skillsfuture.gov.sg/insights/sdfe>.

from Jobsplus, rather than drawing solely on employer surveys (TSI stakeholder consultations, 2025).

In addition, the Barometer could also consider labour market trends derived from national, sectoral and local SAA exercises (see Recommendations 2 and 3). The Employment and Skills Barometer can offer a more detailed assessment of skills trends, complementing quantitative indicators from the dynamic skills intelligence platform (see Recommendation 4) with qualitative insights into stakeholders' challenges and the strategies they use to address them. In addition, by taking the format of a user-friendly publication, the Employment

and Skills Barometer can help make labour market-related trends more accessible and understandable for all.

The reintroduction of the Employment and Skills Barometer also aligns Malta with other high-performing countries that demonstrate good practices in the realm of SAA, such as Singapore and its annual Skills Demand for the Future Economy Report. The report offers a detailed analysis on how various job roles are evolving over time and provides individuals with practical guidance on training pathways (see Box 2.5) (SkillsFuture, 2025_[47]).

Recommendation 6: Explore the introduction of a universal career guidance service for all individuals to support job mobility and progression

Career guidance services are crucial for promoting labour market integration and ensuring inclusive access to training and employment (European Commission, 2025_[48]). In the context of the net-zero and digital transitions, career guidance can help individuals successfully navigate rapidly changing labour markets by providing information on emerging employment opportunities, flexible skilling pathways, and relevant training options and incentives (European Commission, 2025_[48]; Euroguidance, 2022_[49]). However, compared to career guidance services for youth, services for adults receive limited policy attention (OECD, 2021_[43]).

In Malta, career guidance is available for youth through the compulsory education system. For adults, Jobsplus and the Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Employability (DLE) within the MEYR offer programmes and conduct targeted outreach, especially for disadvantaged groups, in partnership with community social workers and various social partners (OECD, 2025_[4]; NSC, 2025_[50]). Post-secondary education institutions also organise open days and career fairs that attract adult learners, career changers, and jobseekers (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Despite these services, only 23% of working-age adults in Malta seek information on learning opportunities, below the EU average of 27% (Eurostat, 2022_[51]). At

present, career guidance is perceived by many as a service for the youth or for disadvantaged groups, and uptake remains limited among employed adults and professionals (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

In response to these challenges, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2023-2030 outlines several measures to expand adults' access to career guidance. These include strengthening the DLE's capacity within the MEYR to deliver more services, developing a marketing and outreach plan, establishing an independent adult guidance system, and increasing cooperation with industry representatives (MEYR, 2023_[52]).

Malta could build on these efforts by exploring the introduction of a universal career guidance scheme that is free and accessible to all individuals throughout their working lives. It could serve as a central access point for all individuals, regardless of their profile or employment status. A useful example is France's *Conseil en évolution professionnelle* (CEP) or Career Development Counselling, which offers free, personalised career guidance to all adults, whether they are employed, self-employed, seeking work, or retired. The CEP also supports students seeking employment, as well as early school leavers (see Box 2.6) (Service Public, 2025_[53]).

The scheme could be delivered in partnership with existing providers specialising in different target groups (e.g. Jobsplus for jobseekers, the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers

BOX 2.6. FRANCE: PROVIDING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CAREER GUIDANCE THROUGH THE *CONSEIL EN ÉVOLUTION PROFESSIONNELLE (CEP)* OR CAREER DEVELOPMENT COUNSELLING

The Conseil en évolution professionnelle (CEP) or Career Development Counselling scheme was established by social partners in 2013 and formalised under Law No. 2014-288 of 2014 on Vocational Training, Employment and Social Democracy. The CEP provides free, personalised career guidance to help individuals define their professional goals, build a professional project, identify the required skills and qualifications needed, and access funding support.

The CEP is available to employees (both in the public and private sectors), self-employed workers, artisans, persons with disabilities, retirees, students seeking employment and early school leavers. CEP support is delivered by designated institutions according to the individual's profile: regional career guidance operators (under the *Avenir Actifs* network) for private sector employees and self-employed workers; *l'Association pour l'emploi des cadres (APEC)* or the Association for the Employment of Managers for managers currently employed or seeking employment; *France Travail* (the public employment service) for jobseekers; and *les Missions locales* or local missions for youth.

CEP support can be accessed during individuals' free time, i.e. outside of working hours for those who are employed, although sectoral or company agreements may permit use during working hours. There are no limits on the duration of participation. The CEP is linked to France's *Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)* or Personal Training Account (see Box 2.8), in that individuals are encouraged to coordinate with CEP services when making informed choices about which training offers to prioritise.

Source: Service Public (2025_[53]), *Conseil en évolution professionnelle (CEP)*, <https://www.service-public.gouv.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F32457>; France Compétences (2025_[54]), *Mon conseil en évolution professionnelle*, <https://www.francecompetences.fr/reguler-le-marche/mon-cep/>; Mon Compte Formation (2025_[55]), *Envie de me former, qui peut m'aider?*, <https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr/espace-public/envie-de-me-former-qui-peut-maider>.

[AWAS] for asylum seekers and refugees in Malta) (NSC, 2025_[50]). To maximise uptake, it is important to promote the service as an accessible, lifelong resource for learners and workers alike, emphasising that career guidance is valuable for job mobility and career progression throughout professional life, not

only during school-to-work transitions or periods of unemployment. The scheme could also be linked to the pilot individual learning accounts (ILAs), encouraging individuals to seek career guidance before selecting training options (see Recommendation 8).

Recommendation 7: Strengthen parents' involvement in career guidance through enhanced school engagement mechanisms

Parents play a pivotal role in shaping young learners' career choices and aspirations, often serving as their first and most trusted source of guidance – sometimes even outranking teachers, school career counsellors, and public employment services (European Training Foundation and UNICEF, 2024_[56]). This underscores the importance of engaging parents as active partners in career guidance and ensuring they have access to up-to-date, evidence-informed insights on labour market trends and training pathways (see Box 2.4). However, many parents still lack a clear understanding of available opportunities, limiting their capacity to support their children in making informed choices (Barnes et al., 2020_[44]).

Misconceptions and outdated beliefs persist among parents, which can discourage learners from considering certain career paths. In Malta, for example, entrepreneurship is often viewed as relevant only for business students rather than as a transversal skill applicable across disciplines and ages. Similar challenges arise in the maritime industry, where few students express interest in pursuing maritime careers, even when their parents are employed in the sector (OECD, 2022_[57]). These patterns highlighted the need for more parent-oriented approaches to raising awareness, including public awareness campaigns that targets parents as a primary audiences.

In Malta, the MEYR's ExploreMore portal provides interactive career guidance for parents – in addition to students and teachers. The webpage includes tips for supporting children in middle school and information on various occupations across sectors (OECD, 2025_[4]; ExploreMore, 2023_[58]; Euroguidance, 2025_[59]).

However, opportunities exist to expand existing career guidance initiatives for parents. First, Malta could enhance the ExploreMore platform by linking it to the dynamic skills intelligence platform (see Recommendation 4) and real-time labour market insights from SAA exercises (see Priority Topic 1). This would help to expand up-to-date information on the platform and make it more interactive.

Second, Malta could systematically integrate career guidance support into parent-focused events throughout the schooling journey. Effective outreach is needed since MEYR initiatives targeting parents are often poorly attended (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Engagement with parents through multiple familiar channels – including online platforms (e.g. TV, podcasts, videos) such as ExploreMore, and in-person avenues (e.g. schools, workplaces, social services) – has reportedly proven effective in Malta (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]) and there is scope to expand these efforts. For example, in Scotland, career advisers attend parent events during transitions from primary to secondary school and throughout secondary education, providing guidance aligned with learners' evolving educational and career choices (see Box 2.7) (Skills Development Scotland, 2025_[60]).

BOX 2.7. SCOTLAND: PROVIDING MULTI-CHANNEL CAREER GUIDANCE SUPPORT FOR PARENTS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOLING JOURNEY

Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the national skills body, provides career guidance across schools, job centres, and online platforms, ensuring parents can support their children in making informed career decisions. Career advisers are consistently present at multiple points in the schooling journey: during the transition from primary to secondary school, when selecting lower secondary school subjects, and at parent evenings throughout senior secondary school. These interactions introduce career management skills, outline available support, and raise awareness of *My World of Work*, Scotland’s comprehensive career guidance platform with a dedicated section for parents. In addition, SDS offers tailored one-to-one sessions for parents and a free telephone helpline (0800 917 8000) to provide personalised advice and guidance.

Source: Skills Development Scotland (2025_[61]), *Our careers service in schools*, <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/scotlands-careers-services/our-careers-service-in-schools>; Skills Development Scotland (2025_[60]), *Support for parents and carers*, <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/scotlands-careers-services/our-careers-service-in-schools/support-for-parents-and-carers>;

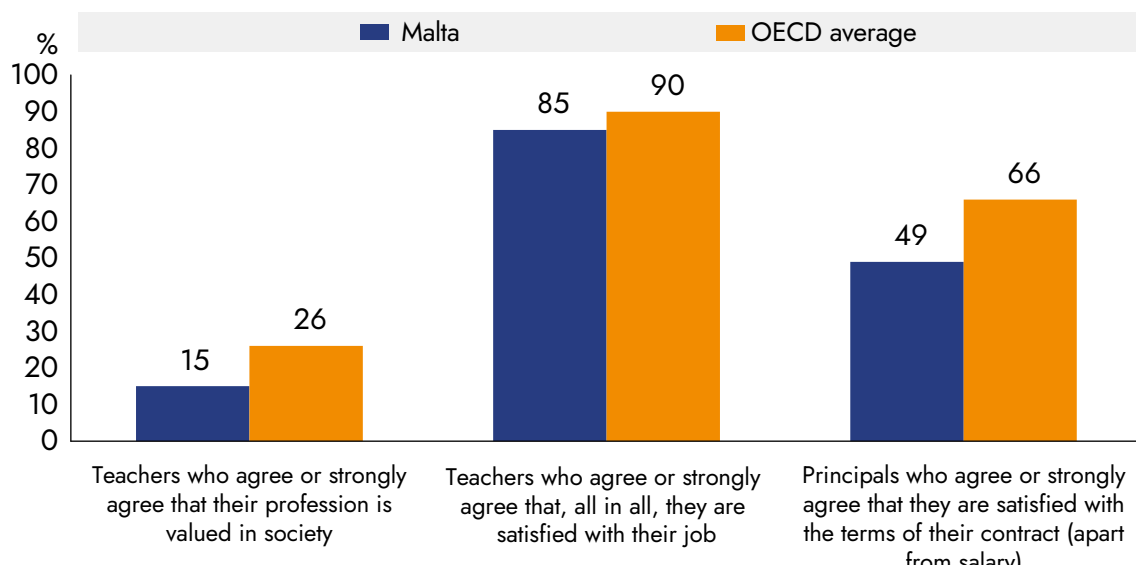
3. EMPOWERING EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS FOR FUTURE-READY EDUCATION

To build a competitive and resilient workforce, Malta is prioritising the development of future-ready and transversal skills among students in compulsory education, including digital literacy, entrepreneurship, socio-emotional skills, and competencies relevant to the digital and net-zero transitions (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Achieving this goal depends on a stable and skilled educator workforce capable of adopting innovative pedagogical practices and adapting to rapidly changing learning environments (OECD, 2019_[62]; OECD, 2025_[63]). Effective school leadership is equally critical – highly qualified and visionary leaders foster collaborative learning cultures among students and educators alike, support professional development among education practitioners, and embed continuous learning into the daily functioning of schools (OECD, 2019_[64]).

Malta has made sustained efforts to strengthen its educator workforce in recent years, notably through improved salary structures and enhanced support for educators’ wellbeing (MEYR, 2024_[65]; European Commission, 2024_[2]). System-level reforms under the National Education Strategy 2024–2030 also aim to address persistent challenges, including high workloads, an overloaded curriculum, and rigid student assessment practices (MEYR, 2024_[65]).

However, several challenges remain, with job satisfaction among educators and school leaders remaining below the OECD average (see Figure 2.3) (OECD, 2018_[66]). As in many OECD and EU countries, Malta continues to face teacher shortages, particularly in secondary education and STEM subjects – areas vital for developing higher-level skills and enhancing competitiveness in the midst of the digital and net-zero transitions. Negative perceptions linked to the profession, further undermine

Figure 2.3. Share of Maltese teachers and principals who are satisfied with their jobs, 2018



Source: OECD (2018_[66])(2018), *Malta: Results from TALIS 2018: Volume II*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/edu/talis/talis2018participantnotes/volii/TALIS2018_CN_MLT_Vol_II.pdf.

efforts to attract new entrants (Pulis, 2024_[67]; OECD, 2025_[4]; Fabian Galea, 2020_[68]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

To empower educators and school leaders for future-ready education, the TSI project team recommends: (1) assessing the feasibility of introducing individual learning accounts (ILAs) for education practitioners to strengthen continuous, self-directed professional development; (2) developing competency frameworks for education practitioners to strengthen professional standards and skills development; (3) strengthening training for school leaders to improve leadership skills and promote a learning culture among school personnel; (4) establishing digital platforms and networks for informal learning among educators to regularly exchange best practices in pedagogy and assessment; and (5) implementing targeted information campaigns

to promote the teaching profession and address teacher shortages.

Recommendation 8: Assess the feasibility of introducing individual learning accounts (ILAs) for education practitioners to strengthen continuous, self-directed professional development

Continuous professional development (CPD) is essential for education practitioners to enhance their pedagogical skills and subject knowledge, benefitting student learning while also fostering their own lifelong learning (OECD, 2019_[69]). In Malta, a new collective agreement requires educators to complete between 28 and 40 hours of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) annually, typically delivered during school hours. The MEYR also provides educational resources to support self-directed learning, though such self-study is not formally

recognised or linked to career progression (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

Complementing these initiatives, the introduction of individual learning accounts (ILAs) can build on strong internal motivation to engage in CPD by education practitioners in Malta and respond to their desire for more educator-led and co-created training opportunities (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]; Calleja, 2018_[70]). ILAs are personal accounts providing a dedicated budget to cover the direct costs of training and are increasingly being adopted across EU countries (European Union, 2022_[71]; European Union, 2024_[72]). A prime example is France, where the *Compte Personnel de Formation* or Personal Training Account allows all economically active persons to accumulate training rights to and use them to finance their professional projects (France Travail, 2025_[73]; Perez and Vourc'h, 2020_[74]) (see Box 2.8).

The introduction of ILAs would depend on the results of an ongoing feasibility study led by the National Skills Council, following the 2022 EU Council Recommendation on individual learning accounts (Council of the European Union, 2022_[75]). Depending on the study's findings, Malta could pilot ILAs for education practitioners – in particular educators, school leaders, career guidance professionals and other staff involved in students' learning and well-being – before scaling them up nationally. ILAs would complement mandatory CPD requirements and the priorities of the National Education Strategy 2024–2030, providing education practitioners with more autonomous yet structured access to training opportunities.

In addition, they could also serve to formally acknowledge practitioners' proactivity and commitment to lifelong learning. In later phases, and in close collaboration with unions and representatives, participation in ILA-supported training could be considered as a criterion for career progression (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

If ILAs are deemed unsuitable in the current context, Malta could explore alternative instruments such as training vouchers. These instruments differ conceptually: ILAs are owned by individuals and allow training rights to be accumulated over time, whereas vouchers are allocated at the discretion of government agencies and typically provide one-off financial support (OECD, 2025_[76]). Notwithstanding these differences, training vouchers would enable Malta to retain an educator-led approach to training and ensure freedom of choice (OECD, 2021_[77]; OECD, 2020_[78]). A relevant reference is Italy's Teacher Card (*Carta del docente*), a training voucher scheme which provides educators with EUR 500 annually for participation in formal, non-formal, and informal learning (see Box 2.8).

Eligible training, whether through ILAs or alternative mechanisms, could place emphasis on innovative pedagogical practices, transversal and future-ready skills, entrepreneurship, and skills relevant to the digital and net-zero transitions. Such mechanisms could complement existing incentives in Malta, including the Get Qualified programme, which provides tax credits for eligible professional development.

BOX 2.8. FRANCE AND ITALY: PROMOTING PERSONALISED TRAINING APPROACHES THROUGH INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACCOUNTS

France: Accumulating training rights through the *Compte Personnel de Formation*

Available for all economically active persons, the *Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF)* or Personal Training Account is an individualised scheme for financing training and promoting participation in skills development throughout an individual's working life. The account is funded through a compulsory contribution from employers with more than 10 employees, while self-employed workers pay a flat-rate contribution. Since 2018, the CPF is credited with EUR 500 per year for full-time employees (ceiling: EUR 5000) and EUR 800 per year for low-skilled employees (ceiling: EUR 8000). The training amounts acquired in CPFs are transferrable across employers and jobs. Multiple training activities are eligible, such as the acquisition of a qualification (diploma, professional certification), support for validation of prior experience, and skills assessments, among others. To support training take-up through the CPF, a free and optional career guidance service was introduced in 2018.

Italy: Promoting teacher training through a virtual wallet

The **Teacher Card** (*Carta del docente*), established under Article 1, paragraph 121 of Law 107 of 13 July 2016, is an initiative of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research that supports the professional development of tenured full-time and part-time teachers in state schools. Each year, the card provides **EUR 500** that teachers may use to enrol in accredited CPD courses (including undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate, specialist or single-cycle programmes), purchase educational materials (such as hardware, software and books), or participate in informal learning activities such as museum visits, exhibitions, cultural events and live performances. The scheme is administered through a dedicated web application (cartadeldocente.istruzione.it), which allows teachers to monitor their expenditure and remaining balance, and is supported by a Ministry-published list of eligible training institutions, retailers and service providers, both physical and online.

Source: Perez and Yourc'h (2020_[74]), *Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation (Personal Training Account – CPF)*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/301041f1-en>; France Travail (2025_[73]), *Le Compte personnel de formation (CPF) est au service de votre projet de formation*, <https://www.francetravail.fr/candidat/en-formation/mes-aides-financieres/le-compte-personnel-de-formation.html>; Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (2024_[79]), *Carta del Docente*, <https://www.cartadeldocente.istruzione.it/>.

Recommendation 9: Develop competency frameworks for education practitioners to strengthen professional standards and skills development

Efforts to strengthen the skills of education practitioners in Malta would benefit from the development of a competency framework. When well designed, a competency framework delivers advantages at both organisational and individual levels. At the school level, such frameworks help ensure teaching quality by defining the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required, as well as by establishing standards for their application in classrooms (UNESCO, 2024_[80]; OECD, 2023_[81]; OECD, 2025_[82]). At the individual level, competency frameworks foster lifelong learning by identifying pathways for professional growth, clarifying expected outcomes at each stage, and guiding present and future training choices (UNESCO, 2024_[80]; Caena, 2014_[83]).

Currently, Malta does not have a competency framework for educators and school leaders, raising concerns among stakeholders about declining levels of professionalism in the sector (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Introducing such a framework could help strengthen professional standards while supporting more informed training choices among educators (Recommendation 8) and school leaders (Recommendation 10). The Netherlands provides a useful example, where teacher competence frameworks function as professional standards and define core requirements for teachers' work (see Box 2.9) (Caena, 2014_[83]).

Malta could benefit from developing competency frameworks for all education practitioners, including educators, school leaders, career guidance professionals, and administrative staff. It could encompass both subject expertise and pedagogical competences, with an emphasis on emerging practices in transversal skills, digital and AI literacy, and green skills. The framework could be progression-oriented, with multiple levels of competence defined by increasing complexity. For example, Singapore's SkillsFuture for Educators (SFEEd) initiative describes six competency domains, each structured across four progression levels (see Box 2.9) (Academy of Singapore Teachers, 2025_[84]). In Malta, it is important for competences to be articulated in clear, observable, and action-oriented terms, illustrating how education practitioners can apply their skills and knowledge across daily school activities, including teaching, learning and assessment.

BOX 2.9. THE NETHERLANDS AND SINGAPORE: SUPPORTING PEDAGOGICAL QUALITY AND SUPPORTING TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

Netherlands: Using teacher competence frameworks as professional standards

In the Netherlands, teacher competence frameworks function as professional standards that guide schools in developing human resource policies and training programmes, including initial teacher education. These frameworks define core requirements for interpersonal, organisational, pedagogical, and subject-specific competences across three dimensions: working with others, within workplaces, and on their own. Each competence is specified through observable aspects (what must be achieved and how), requirements (professional attitudes, knowledge, and skills), and indicators demonstrating its application in practice.

The frameworks are evaluated every six years, with revisions developed collaboratively with key education stakeholders. In the Netherlands, teacher quality is regarded as a shared responsibility among the government, schools, and teachers. While the government sets the legal framework for competencies and professional development, schools are tasked with supporting, funding, and monitoring training, and teachers are expected to engage in agreed levels of continuous learning.

Singapore: Incorporating progression levels in competence frameworks to chart training pathways

In 2020, Singapore's Ministry of Education introduced **SkillsFuture for Educators (SFE_d)**, a professional development roadmap that supports teachers in strengthening competencies across six domains: (1) assessment literacy, (2) inquiry-based learning, (3) differentiated instruction, (4) support for students with special educational needs, (5) e-pedagogy, and (6) character and citizenship education. Together, these domains emphasise inclusive, adaptive and innovative teaching and assessment practices, the use of digital technologies, and the promotion of student well-being and resilience.

Each domain is structured across four progression levels: emergent (beginning to apply skills), proficient (broadening and deepening knowledge), accomplished (independently adapting practice), and leading (guiding and supporting others). This progression framework enables teachers to benchmark their current practice, identify professional development needs, and chart structured pathways for growth.

Source: Caena (2014_[83]), *Teacher Competence Frameworks in Europe: Policy-as-discourse and policy-as-practice*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.12088>; Academy of Singapore Teachers (2025_[84]), *SkillsFuture for Educators: Overview*, <https://academyofsingaporeteachers.moe.edu.sg/professional-excellence/skillsfuture-for-educators/overview/>; Academy of Singapore Teachers (2023_[85]), *Infosheet on SkillsFuture for Educators (SFE_d)*, https://academyofsingaporeteachers.moe.edu.sg/files/infosheet-on-SFE_d.pdf.

Recommendation 10: Strengthen training for school leaders to improve leadership skills and promote a learning culture among school personnel

School leaders play a pivotal role in shaping school culture and fostering environments that supports teachers' professional development and collaboration (OECD, 2020_[86]; OECD, 2025_[87]). By employing effective leadership practices – for example, creating professional development plans, involving teachers in decision making, and establishing structures for peer learning – they can cultivate learning cultures and drive lasting change within their communities (OECD, 2020_[86]; Meyer et al., 2023_[88]; Boeskens, Nusche and Yurita, 2020_[89]; UNESCO, 2024_[90]).

In Malta, the 2023 National Quality Standards in Education states that school leaders are expected to support staff professional development by creating learning communities, providing training opportunities, and motivating staff to engage in lifelong learning (MEYR, 2023_[91]; UNESCO, 2024_[92]). However, in practice, the importance of training school leaders to promote a culture of professional development and learning within schools remains underestimated (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]; Frendo, 2023_[93]; Bezzina, 2024_[94]).

Although the number of training opportunities for Maltese school leaders – including those offered by the MEYR – is increasing, participation remains low due to scheduling conflicts and perceptions of limited relevance (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]; Frendo, 2023_[95]). Existing training largely emphasises administrative and management skills, with insufficient focus on leadership development. Furthermore, while school leaders are required to hold an advanced degree in educational leadership, this requirement does not extend to assistant leaders (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]; Attard, 2020_[96]).

To address these gaps, Malta could strengthen school leadership training by developing targeted programmes focused on leadership skills. Sweden offers a useful model through its National School Leadership Training Programme, which equips principals, deputy principals, and preschool managers with the skills required to drive organisational change, aligning these transformations with national and local objectives (see Box 2.10) (National Agency for Education, 2015_[97]). In Malta, it is important for leadership programmes to discuss school leaders' roles in facilitating educators' participation in professional development and introduce them to evidence-informed practices that foster a culture of learning. Such programmes could also be accessible to middle-management leaders and tailored to their responsibilities, ensuring that the responsibility of promoting a growth-oriented culture is distributed across all levels of the school system.

BOX 2.10. SWEDEN: SUPPORTING SCHOOL LEADERS TO DEVELOP STRONGER LEADERSHIP SKILLS THROUGH A PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME

The National School Leadership Training Programme in Sweden is a mandatory, state-regulated professional development initiative implemented by the National Agency for Education. It targets school leaders, deputy principals, preschool managers, and other personnel in equivalent leadership positions.

Participants dedicate approximately 20% of their working hours to the programme, with university fees fully covered by the State and salaries maintained by their schools during study periods. Conducted over the course of three years, the programme combines residential courses, seminar days, literature studies, and a school-based investigative project. It covers several areas of knowledge, including a dedicated module on school leadership. This module develops participants' understanding of the critical role of leadership in school development, enhances their capacity for self-reflection, and equips them to lead staff and students more effectively, fostering motivation and professional growth.

Upon completion, participants are expected to demonstrate the ability to cultivate a collaborative school environment, where personnel are encouraged to share experiences, improve teaching practices, and support students' learning and development.

Source: National Agency for Education (2015_[97]), *The National School Leadership Training Programme: Goal Document 2015-2021*, <https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.6bfaca41169863e6a65b81a/1553966151968/pdf3469.pdf>.

Recommendation 11: Establish digital platforms and networks for informal learning among educators to regularly exchange best practices in pedagogy and assessment

Teacher collaboration is a key element of effective school systems, facilitating the exchange of teaching practices and experimentation with innovative pedagogies. Collaboration is particularly valuable in challenging work environments, providing educators with a space to seek advice and co-develop solutions to classroom challenges (OECD, 2020_[86]). Across EU and OECD countries, collaboration ranges from informal, voluntary interactions to structured, regular

mechanisms, such as collaborative networks within and across schools (OECD, 2020_[98]).

Despite its benefits, professional collaboration remains infrequent in many OECD and EU countries, and uptake in Malta is particularly low. Only 13% of educators in Malta report participating in collaborative professional learning at least once a month, compared with the OECD average of 21%, while just 9% engage in team teaching versus 28% across OECD countries (OECD, 2018_[66]). In Malta, educators who do collaborate report tangible benefits, including refining lesson plans, sharing good practices, and reducing workload. This demonstrates the value of avenues that

BOX 2.11. ESTONIA: CREATING A VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF TEACHERS THROUGH THE KOOLIELU PLATFORM

The Koolielu platform is a virtual space where teachers, students, and parents can connect and collaborate to diversify teaching and make learning more engaging. It is regularly updated with articles on events in the Estonian education system, and registered users can contribute their own news, including school job postings and upcoming training opportunities. Koolielu also features a Communities section, where users can create subject or interest-based groups to share information and study materials. Additionally, the platform hosts announcements on eTwinning initiatives, which allow schools across Europe to safely collaborate on projects, exchange ideas online, and enhance teaching skills.

Source: Koolielu (2013_[100]), *Overview*, <https://koolielu.ee/help/help>; European School Education Platform (European School Education Platform, 2024_[101])(2024), *About eTwinning*, <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning/about>.

facilitate connections and joint work between teachers (Vella and Azzopardi, 2022_[99]).

In Malta, digital platforms and in-person networks could expand opportunities for peer learning, complementing formal CPD. The MEYR's Eskola platform, currently a repository of teaching materials, could be a starting point by enhancing its interface to provide virtual spaces for peer mentoring between educators, community discussions, and the exchange of pedagogical practices supporting the acquisition of skills for the digital and net-zero transitions. This could foster educator-driven learning, focused on practical, day-to-day classroom needs (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Estonia's Koolielu portal offers a comparable model, providing a virtual community for educators to exchange resources, ideas, and professional opportunities (see Box 2.11) (Koolielu, 2013_[100]).

Recommendation 12: Implement targeted information campaigns to promote the teaching profession and prevent teacher shortages

Teacher shortages are a common challenge across OECD and EU countries, and Malta is no exception. Shortages are particularly acute in STEM subjects – including mathematics, engineering, physics, chemistry, biology, computing, and information technology – as well as in English, due in part to the high workload associated with teaching the subject (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Persistent public perceptions of the teaching profession remain a key barrier to entry, despite government efforts to improve working conditions, increase salaries and bonuses, expand CPD opportunities, and implement measures supporting educators' well-being (OECD, 2025_[4]) (Eurydice, 2024_[102]; MEYR, 2024_[65]).

To address these challenges, the MEYR and teacher training institutions (e.g. University of Malta, Institute for Education) have implemented awareness-raising initiatives, including campaigns, testimonials, career fairs, and outreach to secondary school students (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Current momentum provides a window of opportunity to further promote the teaching profession and its benefits. Evidence suggests that national campaigns, when designed well and combined with structural improvements (e.g. improvement of teachers' salaries), have great potential to significantly enhance the profession's attractiveness (OECD, 2019_[64]; EENE, 2023_[103]).

To complement past and existing awareness-raising initiatives, Malta could implement targeted, evidence-informed information campaigns that promote the benefits of the teaching profession (see example from Australia in Box 2.12). The campaign could focus on non-traditional audiences, such as career changers. Part-time pathways for industry professionals already exist, but awareness of these opportunities and associated incentives remains limited (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). In addition, young children and their parents are another key audience, as career perceptions and educational aspirations are shaped early in life (Davenport and Padwick, 2025_[104]; Damgaard and Nielsen, 2018_[105]; EENE, 2023_[103]; Christensen et al., 2022_[106]). To ensure a comprehensive approach and maximise reach among target audiences, it would be important to supplement Malta's awareness campaigns for educators with

targeted outreach to potential applicants for initial teacher education, including through career guidance services in secondary schools (see Priority Topic 2).

As an initial step, the design of the campaign could benefit from a study examining barriers to entry into the teaching profession and factors attracting potential applicants. While promotional campaigns can be an attractive solution to teacher shortages due to their relatively low cost, evidence suggests that their success largely depends on strategic messaging that highlights the concrete benefits of teaching (e.g. high salaries, high employability) (Ajzenman et al., 2024_[107]; EENE, 2023_[103]). In Malta, the campaign could highlight accurate and evidence-informed messages on the benefits of teaching, such as a good work–life balance, numerous opportunities for professional growth, and available incentives (e.g. Student Maintenance Grants), while correcting common misconceptions, including perceptions related to remuneration and status. The awareness campaign would be most impactful if accompanied by tangible, foundational improvements in teachers' working conditions and professional development opportunities, as outlined in this skills strategy and related policy documents (e.g. National Education Strategy 2024-2030).

BOX 2.12. GERMANY: PROMOTING ENTRY INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION THROUGH A MULTI-CHANNEL CAMPAIGN

In Germany, the state of Saxony launched a campaign to attract high school graduates – specifically Gen Z youth – into teaching while simultaneously improving the overall reputation of the profession. The campaign is centred on the web portal www.lehrer-werden-in-sachsen.de, which provides comprehensive information on studying to become a teacher and working as a teacher in schools. It is complemented by outreach through Gen Z-oriented platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and LinkedIn, as well as networking events, digital marketing initiatives, and large-scale advertising across Saxony, including cinemas. The campaign also collaborates with influencers from the region to help increase awareness and reach.

Since its launch in 2021, the campaign has reached over 60 million people across more than 30 media outlets, tripled website traffic, and steadily increased its social media following.

Source: Lehrer in Sachsen (2025_[108]), *Homepage*, <https://lehrer-werden-in-sachsen.de/>; Pioneer Communications GmbH (2024_[109]), *Saxon State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs – Future makers wanted*, <https://www.pio-com.de/en/projects/lehrer-in-sachsen>.

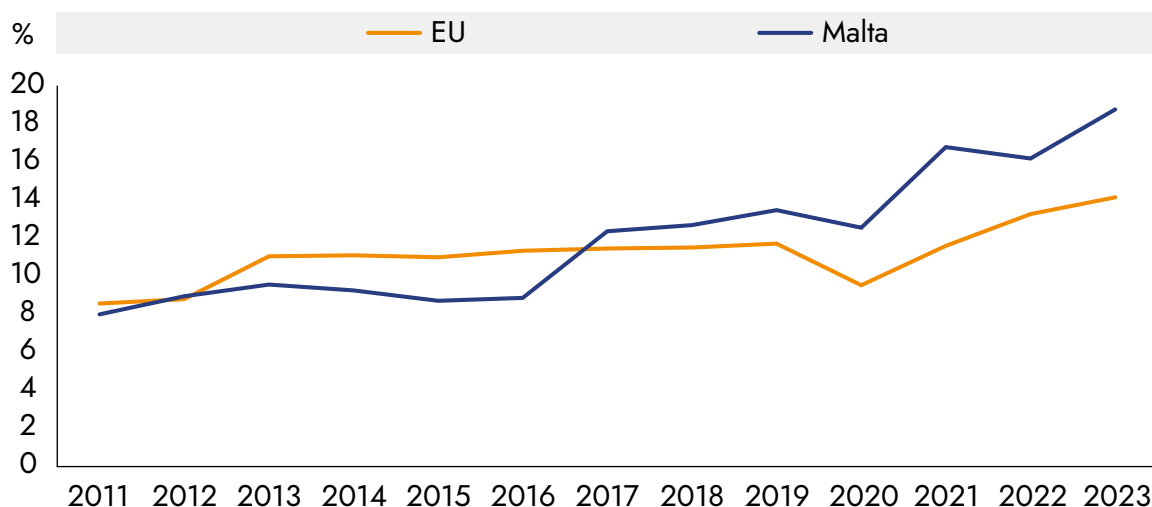
4. EQUIPPING LEARNERS OF ALL AGES WITH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Global megatrends such as the digital and net-zero transitions continue to reshape education systems and labour markets at an accelerating pace. In this context of economic, political and social uncertainty, education and training systems are placing increasing emphasis on equipping learners with the skills needed to navigate complexity and adapt to change (OECD, 2019_[110]). In Malta, forward-looking strategies such as Malta Vision 2050 signal a strong national commitment to developing proactive measures to anticipating the impacts of these transitions, including through targeted investments in education and skills (Government of Malta, 2025_[111]).

While compulsory education in Malta is increasingly prioritising the development of future-ready and transversal skills (see Priority Topic 3), it is equally important that this approach extends across the life course. As the share of Maltese adults participating in training continues to rise steadily (see Figure 2.4) (Cedefop, 2023_[112]), there is significant opportunity to further strengthen the country's preparedness by embedding green, digital, AI and transversal skills across post-compulsory education and adult learning provision. Ensuring that opportunities to acquire these skills are available in all learning environments – including schools, workplaces, communities and public spaces – is key to promoting future skills for learners of all ages.

To equip all learners with skills for the future, the TSI project team recommends: (1) establishing a future-focused museum to foster transversal

Figure 2.4. Share of employed population participating in training, 2011 to 2023



Source: Cedefop (2023_[112]), *Employed population participating in learning*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-intelligence/employed-population-participating-learning?year=2023&country=MT#5>.

skills through non-formal and informal learning; (2) integrating green skills across all education and training levels to prepare the workforce for the net-zero transition; (3) promoting vocational education and training (VET) as a rewarding pathway for acquiring high-value digital and green skills; (4) identifying priority areas for specialised post-graduate qualifications or awards to ensure a steady supply of skills for the digital and net-zero transitions; and (5) conducting an in-depth evaluation of Malta’s quality assurance system to streamline processes and strengthen future-readiness.

Recommendation 13: Establish a future-focused skills museum to foster transversal skills through non-formal and informal learning

Alongside increasingly essential digital, AI, and green skills, transversal skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and communication are an indispensable cornerstone of a future-ready workforce. While formal

education systems are central to developing these transversal skills (see Priority Topic 3), there is growing recognition of the need for complementary learning environments that foster experiential, hands-on and interdisciplinary learning across the life course. Non-formal and informal learning therefore provide valuable complementary learning experiences, particularly for enriching skills development beyond school. Furthermore, non-formal and informal learning are more flexible, allowing adults with busy work schedules to participate, and can spur motivation due to the absence of a traditional structure and routine (Johnson and Majewska, 2022_[113]; McKay et al., 2013_[114]).

Across the EU, non-formal and informal learning are increasingly taking place in interactive learning centres. These centres take a wide variety of forms such as museums, libraries, summer camps and community centres, which allow individuals of all ages to access the latest scientific thinking and link local actions to global

challenges (UNESCO, 2017^[115]). Such centres typically combine interactive exhibitions, hands-on activities and short learning experiences that encourage problem solving, creativity and critical thinking outside formal education settings.

Malta could consider establishing an immersive, future-focused museum designed to equip learners of all ages with transversal skills. The National Skills Council is already planning to establish such a museum. Inspired by international models such as Germany's Futurium (see Box 2.13), Australia's Museum of Discoveries, Brazil's Museum of Tomorrow, and the UAE's Museum of the Future, this

museum is envisioned as a flagship capital project. The museum could target a wide range of users, including children and young people, adults in employment, career-changers, educators and families, and offer interactive exhibitions, temporary thematic installations and short workshops focused on future-oriented topics such as sustainability, digitalisation and innovation. To maximise reach and impact, it is important to ensure that this immersive future-focused museum is promoted not only as an educational resource for children and young people, but also as a space for adult learning highlighting its role in supporting non-formal and informal learning and equipping adults with transversal skills for the future.

BOX 2.13. GERMANY: REFLECTING CRITICALLY ON QUESTIONS OF TOMORROW THROUGH THE FUTURIUM

Futurium, or the "House of the Future," is a museum and exhibition space in central Berlin that invites visitors of all ages to explore future scenarios and actively engage in shaping them. It features: an exhibition on alternative living scenarios addressing humanity, nature, and technology; an interactive lab for 3D prototyping, hackathons, and workshops; and a forum hosting public dialogues with scientists. Through these diverse events and activities, Futurium functions not only as a museum but also as an interactive learning space that emphasises dialogue, participation and the co-creation of future scenarios. It is designed to foster key future skills, including creative thinking, problem solving and collaboration, while also promoting futures thinking, a method that combines elements of futures studies, storytelling and design thinking.

A federal government initiative supported by private sector and academic partners, the construction of Futurium cost EUR 58 million and was completed in two years. Designed as a nearly zero-energy building, it is among Germany's most sustainable federal facilities. Futurium covers over 5,000 m² of fully accessible space, with facilities designed to support visitors with reduced mobility, visual or hearing impairments, and learning difficulties. In 2023, a record number of 760,000 people visited the Futurium.

Source: Futurium (2025^[116]), About Us, <https://futurium.de/en/about-us>; PD – Berater der öffentlichen Hand GmbH (2023^[117]), Futurium – The House of Futures in Berlin, <https://www.pd-g.de/en/our-customers-and-projects/project/futurium-in-berlin>; Visit Berlin (2025^[118]), Futurium – a house of futures, <https://www.visitberlin.de/en/futurium-house-futures>.

Recommendation 14: Integrate green skills across all education and training levels to prepare the workforce for the net-zero transition

The net-zero transition is becoming increasingly urgent, with growing adoption across EU countries – including Malta – bringing significant implications for education systems, workplaces and communities. As the climate crisis intensifies, embedding green skills into day-to-day learning in schools is essential to fostering a generation of climate-informed, environmentally responsible learners (UNICEF, 2024_[119]; Salvi del Pero, Wyckoff and Vourc’h, 2022_[120]). The development of green skills is also central to preparing the workforce for future careers in industries that are increasingly shifting towards more environmentally sustainable activities. This underlines the importance of ensuring that green skills are included not only in compulsory education, but also in post-compulsory education and in adult learning programmes (OECD, 2023_[121]).

In Malta, the integration of green skills into education and training is currently more limited than the integration of other types of future skills, such as digital and AI skills, which are advancing more rapidly due to several initiatives (e.g. Digital Education Strategy 2024-2030, Digital Decade Roadmap 2023-2030) (Cedefop, 2024_[122]; Government of Malta, 2024_[123]; Government of Malta, 2023_[124]). Through the National Education Strategy 2024-2030, Malta already aims to introduce educational technologies for the net-zero transition into the revised National Curriculum Framework,

provide accredited primary and secondary school programmes focusing on sustainability and green skills, and increase investments in scholarships for fields relevant to the net-zero transition (MEYR, 2024_[65]). However, while these measures in compulsory education represent important progress, they can be further strengthened by further mainstreaming green skills in vocational education and training (see Recommendation 15), in higher and post-graduate education (see Recommendation 16), and in workplace learning (see Priority Topic 6). As a useful reference, France illustrates a whole-of-system approach that integrates green skills not only into primary and secondary school curricula, but also in employment and training policies (see Box 2.14) (Global Environmental Education Partnership, 2025_[125]; European Commission, 2024_[126]).

As a starting point, Malta could undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise to examine the extent to which green skills are currently embedded across post-secondary levels, higher education, and advanced vocational education (MQF levels 4 to 7). Such an exercise would help identify gaps and opportunities to further integrate green skills into course content and outcomes, as well as strengthen linkages across all subject areas. Malta could further support these efforts by integrating green skills into competency frameworks and training opportunities for educators and trainers (see Priority Topic 3), as well as embedding them into national educational standards (e.g. National Quality Standards in Education [3-16 years]) (MEYR, 2023_[91]).

BOX 2.14. FRANCE: ADOPTING A SYSTEM-WIDE APPROACH TO GREEN SKILLS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In 2005, the French government introduced environmental education for sustainable development (EESD) into the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools. A one-year experiment was first conducted in over 80 French schools, where teachers received training on curriculum implementation and guidance on suitable tools, content and pedagogical approaches. Regional committees were created to monitor implementation, review programme content and assess results. In addition, France also offers various technical programmes at the secondary level for students to specialise in environment-related fields.

France continues to expand its efforts to integrate green skills across all areas of education and training. In 2024, the General Delegation for Employment and Professional Training (DGEFP) of the Ministry of Labour requested Technical Support Instrument assistance to develop a roadmap for the green transition and adapt the continuous training system to emerging green skills needs. The first phase of the project assessed the preparedness of employment and training schemes under the DGEFP's remit, drawing on international good practices. The second phase involves developing an action plan, a toolkit to support local implementation, a training plan for DGEFP staff and a methodology for greening employment and training policies and following their implementation.

Source: European Commission (2024_[126]), *Implementing in France the green transition roadmap of the general delegation for employment and professional training*, https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/skills-education-and-training/implementing-france-green-transition-roadmap-general-delegation-employment-and-professional-training_en?prefLang=bg; Global Environmental Education Partnership (2025_[125]), *France*, <https://thegeep.org/resources/countries/france#:~:text=France%20has%20demonstrated%20its%20commitment,to%20specialize%20in%20environmental%20fields>.

Recommendation 15: Promote vocational education and training (VET) as a rewarding pathway for acquiring high-value digital and green skills

Vocational education and training (VET) plays a central role in advancing the digital and net-zero transitions. Owing to its close links with the world of work, VET is at the forefront of equipping the workforce with the technical and transversal skills required in environmentally sustainable industries and increasingly digital work processes, including those shaped by the expansion of AI (European Commission, 2024_[127]; OECD, 2025_[128]).

Recognising the strategic importance of VET, Malta has undertaken reforms to enhance programme quality and deepen industry partnerships. These efforts have contributed to positive labour market outcomes, with employment rates among Maltese VET graduates (89%) now comparable to those of tertiary graduates (91%) (European Commission, 2024_[2]; Cedefop, 2017_[129]).

Despite these gains, participation in vocational pathways remains limited in Malta. In 2022, only 28% of Maltese upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary students (ISCED 3–4) were enrolled in VET programmes – a figure almost half of the EU average of 54% (European Commission, 2024_[2]). As in many OECD and EU countries, reputational challenges persist in Malta, with VET often perceived as a second-choice option relative to academic tracks (Malta Chamber of SMEs, 2015_[130]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

Increasing participation in VET is essential for Malta to supply the specialised skills required in key sectors linked to the digital and net-zero transitions, as outlined in Malta Vision 2050 and the Smart Specialisation Strategy. Ongoing structural improvements to the VET system will provide a foundation for raising the profile of vocational pathways, supported by additional measures in the skills strategy such as strengthening industry partnerships, including collaboration with the thematic committees where appropriate (see Recommendation 29) and strengthening skills recognition mechanisms (see Recommendation 20).

Complementing these structural reforms, targeted information and awareness-raising initiatives can help improve perceptions of VET pathways. In partnership with career guidance services (see Priority Topic 2), Malta could provide learners with information about the relevance of vocational skills to innovation-driven workplaces and the availability of rewarding, high-quality careers in green and digital sectors. For example, in Denmark, VET role models visit lower secondary schools to raise awareness about green occupations and support informed choices at the upper secondary level (OECD, 2025_[128]). Austria Fighters4Climate initiative similarly provides accessible online information on green careers and related VET programmes (see Box 2.15). To complement such initiatives, promoting Maltese participation in skills competitions, such as WorldSkills Europe, could further elevate the visibility of VET by showcasing the achievements of learners and apprentices to the wider public (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]; Cedefop, 2025_[131]).

BOX 2.15. AUSTRIA: INSPIRING LEARNERS TO PURSUE VOCATIONAL GREEN JOBS THROUGH THE FIGHTERS4CLIMATE INITIATIVE

In Austria, 81% of Austrian youth report wanting more information about green jobs. To respond to this demand and promote the relevance of green jobs to the energy transition, the Fighters4Climate Initiative - #careersforclimate was launched in 2023 by Oecolution, an independent think tank. The initiative's website (www.fighters4climate.at) presents the 13 key green occupations, many of which are technical and vocational in nature (e.g. installation and building technician, climate/heating technician, solar technician). Each occupation is presented on the website through short illustrative videos and real-life models, supplemented by links to relevant education and training programmes.

To maximise its reach, the initiative also carried out a series of nationwide media activities, including participation in major public events such as the 4Gamechangers Festival, as well as poster campaigns across more than 150 locations. In addition, a dedicated learning document on green jobs was developed and distributed for use in schools via the Ministry of Education, Science and Research's central education portal.

Source: Oecolution (2025_[132]), *Fighters4Climate Homepage*, <https://jetzt.oecolution.at/fighters4climate>; European Commission (2024_[133]), *Vocational education and training and the green transition: A compendium of inspiring practices*, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b4b7c905-1947-4e58-a2b1-cbb7fd1253_en?filename=2024%20Compendium_V3.pdf.

Recommendation 16: Identify priority areas for specialised post-graduate qualifications or awards to ensure a steady supply of skills for the digital and net-zero transitions

Malta's competitiveness in the knowledge economy, and its progress in the digital and net-zero transitions depend on an innovative, high-value workforce. Mainstreaming green, digital and AI skills early in education (see Recommendation 14) is essential for building a strong foundation. However, realising new opportunities for innovation and growth will also require specialised expertise. Higher education and post-graduate programmes are central to this effort. They provide advanced technical skills and knowledge, and they offer learning environments that foster innovation, creativity, critical thinking, and

problem-solving (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014_[134]; OECD, 2023_[135]).

Malta has expanded its range of post-graduate qualifications related to the digital and net-zero transitions. The University of Malta offers several MQF Level 7 programmes supporting the net-zero transition, including an MSc in Sustainable Energy, an MSc in Environmental Management and Sustainability, and a Master in Education for Sustainable Development, alongside multiple digital-focused programmes such as an MSc in Digital Health, an MSc in Digital Games, and an MSc in Artificial Intelligence (University of Malta, 2025_[136]). The Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) also offers relevant post-graduate vocational qualifications, including an MSc

BOX 2.16. IRELAND: EXPANDING SPECIALISED PROGRAMMES AND ALIGNING INVESTMENTS WITH PRIORITY SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH THE HUMAN CAPITAL INITIATIVE (HCI)

Ireland's Higher Education Authority leads the Human Capital Initiative (HCI), a five-year project that aims to strengthen higher education's capacity to deliver skills-oriented programmes in areas of priority demand, particularly in high-productivity and high-growth sectors. These priority skills needs are identified by the National Skills Council, using evidence from the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit and consultations with the Regional Skills Fora, the National Training Fund Advisory Group, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, and employer representatives. Based on these assessments, the HCI channels over 300 million EUR of targeted investments from the National Training Fund into specialised education programmes.

The HCI operates across three pillars. Pillar I funds full-time graduate conversion courses, offering subsidised places in programmes leading to a higher education diploma (Level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework) or a postgraduate diploma (Level 9). These courses were developed specifically for the HCI and prioritise digital, green and transversal skills, as well as management and leadership skills. Pillar II provides incentives for additional places in full-time undergraduate programmes in priority skills areas, while Pillar III supports innovative projects that foster collaboration between higher education institutions and enterprise partners.

Source: Higher Education Authority (2025_[140]), *What is the Human Capital Initiative (HCI)?*, <https://hea.ie/skills-engagement/what-is-human-capital-initiative-hci/>; Higher Education Authority (2025_[141]), *Human Capital Initiative*, <https://hea.ie/skills-engagement/human-capital-initiative-pillars-1-2-and-3/>.

Recommendation 17: Conduct an in-depth evaluation of Malta's quality assurance system to streamline processes and strengthen future-readiness

Across all levels of education and training, ensuring quality is critical to ensuring that learning offers meet labour market standards and future skills needs. A robust quality assurance system helps guarantee that learners acquire the intended skills outcomes upon training completion, maximising their returns on investment, both in terms of time and money (OECD, 2021_[142]). High-quality

training provision brings benefits for numerous stakeholders in the skills system: it builds trust in education providers and learning institutions, increases learners' willingness to further invest in training, and enhances employer confidence in the skills of newly trained workers (OECD, 2024_[143]).

Malta has strengthened its quality assurance system in recent years through the National Quality Assurance Framework for Further and Higher Education, which complements internal quality mechanisms. In addition, Malta also aligns with European frameworks, such as the

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) (Eurydice, 2025_[144]; Spiteri, 2016_[145]).

Nonetheless, challenges remain, with burdensome administrative processes remaining a key concern among stakeholders. Heavy bureaucratic requirements often deter employers and training providers from designing and accrediting new training offers, which, if unaddressed, can potentially undermine the ability of Malta to rapidly adapt to emerging skills needed for the digital and net-zero transitions. Moreover, inconsistencies exist among evaluators, and overlaps in state-funded training offers reduce efficiency and optimal use of public resources (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

To address these issues, Malta could benefit from conducting a comprehensive study of its quality assurance system, drawing on international examples such as Lithuania, where a TSI project assessed the coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of external evaluation processes (see Box 2.17) (OECD, 2025_[146]). In Malta, it is important that the study assess all levels of education and involve key stakeholders – including regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers, and learners – in identifying gaps and improvement opportunities, and in developing recommendations to address resource constraints. The recommendations could explore how to embed green, digital and transversal skills outcomes into evaluation frameworks. Both formal and non-formal learning provision could be assessed, with guidance included to ensure that recommendations are implementable.

BOX 2.17. LITHUANIA: IDENTIFYING CONCRETE OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM THROUGH AN EXPERT STUDY

Following reforms in higher education and VET, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in Lithuania requested the EU's technical support to strengthen the coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of its external evaluation and quality assurance systems. Funded by the EU through the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by OECD together with the European Commission, Lithuania conducted a project to identify bottlenecks and propose measures to enhance the quality and relevance of teaching and learning.

Drawing on OECD data and stakeholder input, the study highlighted regulatory barriers, financial and human resource shortages, limited use of skills data, and weak coordination among training providers. In response, it developed policy recommendations based on international evidence and EU good practices. Targeted recommendations also suggest innovative reforms to support the digital and net-zero transitions, such as embedding digitalisation and climate change in evaluation frameworks for higher education institutions. The OECD team produced a roadmap with clear action points to guide the implementation of these recommendations.

Source: OECD (2025_[146]), Ensuring Quality Vocational and Higher Education in Lithuania, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7a0131cf-en>.

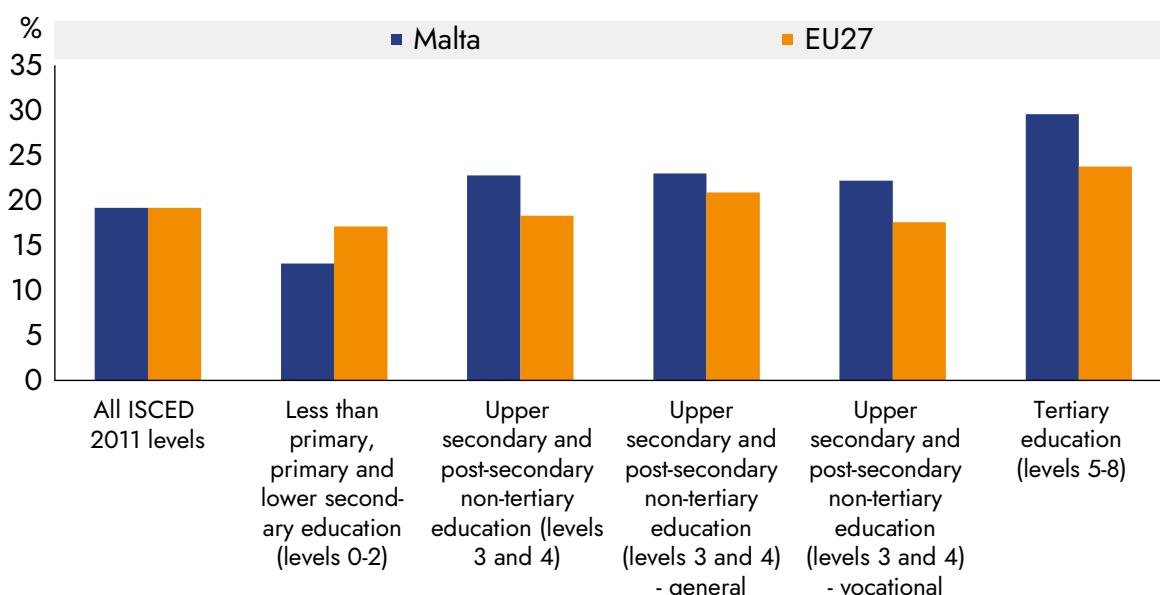
5. ENCOURAGING AND INCENTIVISING ADULTS TO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Encouraging and incentivising adult learning is essential for equipping workers with the skills needed for the digital and net-zero transitions. Evidence shows that adults are more likely to engage in learning when they understand its benefits and expect positive outcomes (OECD, 2023_[147]; OECD, 2025_[4]). In Malta, however, adults' motivation to learn is slightly below the EU average and is primarily driven by external rewards such as better employment prospects, higher pay, promotions, or increased status (Eurostat, 2022_[148]; Borg and Pace, 2022_[149]; Cedefop, 2021_[150]). While externally-driven motivation can prompt learning, fostering inherent motivation to learn is particularly

important in Malta, where many adults perceive little immediate need to upskill or reskill due to a tight labour market with readily available employment opportunities (OECD, 2025_[4]).

Logistical barriers, such as time constraints, also limit participation in learning. In Malta, 64% of adults cite busy work schedules as a barrier – well above the EU average of 40% – while 38% report family responsibilities, compared to 26% across the EU (Eurostat, 2024_[151]). Although providers have introduced more flexible learning options (e.g. self-paced courses on MEYR's Learning Box (Learning Box, 2025_[152])), demand could be further stimulated by creating easier access pathways, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as adults with lower educational attainment, who face greater challenges in accessing education and training and are less motivated (see Figure 2.5) (Eurostat, 2024_[151]).

Figure 2.5. Share of adults aged 25 to 64 years who wanted to participate in education and training but encountered difficulties, 2022



Source: Eurostat (2022_[153]), *Population not participating in education or training by main reason and educational attainment level*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_aes_197__custom_17749085/default/table.

To better encourage and incentivise adults to participate in learning activities, the TSI project team recommends: (1) complementing existing awareness-raising initiatives with a comprehensive, integrated national campaign to promote lifelong learning; (2) strengthening existing incentives for adult learners by allocating more benefits and/or easing eligibility criteria for target groups to encourage training in areas of skills shortage; and (3) increasing uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VINFL), with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups.

Recommendation 18: Complement existing awareness-raising initiatives with a comprehensive, integrated national campaign to promote lifelong learning

The National Skills Council in Malta has conducted several campaigns to raise awareness about lifelong learning, emphasising the importance of transversal skills and adapting to digital tools and AI (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

Building on this momentum, stakeholders are enthusiastic about launching a comprehensive nationwide campaign that highlights the relevance of lifelong learning in the context of the digital and net-zero transitions, available opportunities and incentives, and how diverse audiences can access them. Based on current

trends and contexts, the campaign could explore a broad range of communication channels, including traditional media (e.g. television, social media, podcasts) and non-traditional approaches (e.g. stakeholder events, guerrilla marketing²).

Defining clear target audiences is critical to the campaign's success. For example, the UK's It All Starts with Skills campaign focuses on employers interested in upskilling, young people starting their careers, and career changers aged 24–59, using tailored, action-oriented messaging to reach each group effectively (see Box 2.18) (UK Department for Education, 2025_[154]; OECD, 2024_[155]). In Malta, the National Skills Council is developing learner personas to better understand target audiences' behaviours, motivations, and circumstances, which can inform the design of the national lifelong learning campaign.

To ensure inclusivity and reach disadvantaged adults, Malta could collaborate with trusted intermediaries such as employers, NGOs, and civil society organisations that already engage with these groups. Core messages could highlight the flexibility and accessibility of Malta's skilling initiatives, address common participation barriers such as time constraints and negative past experiences with formal education, and emphasise the benefits of continuous upskilling in a rapidly evolving labour market.

2 Guerilla marketing refers to an advertising strategy that uses unconventional and relatively low-cost techniques, preferring creativity and innovation over traditional methods. Examples include flash mobs, graffiti or street art. (Yüksekbilgili, 2014_[267]; Navrátilová and Milichovský, 2015_[268]).

BOX 2.18. UNITED KINGDOM: TAILORING LIFELONG LEARNING CAMPAIGN MESSAGES TO DIVERSE AUDIENCES

In 2023, the UK Department for Education launched the *It All Starts with Skills* campaign to raise awareness of new skilling initiatives among three priority groups: (1) employers seeking to upskill staff or recruit talent; (2) young people aged 14–19 making informed career choices; and (3) career changers aged 24–59 needing new skills to adapt to the labour market.

The campaign’s central message emphasises that every individual and business has untapped potential, with skills as the key to unlocking it. Recognising the differing needs and life stages of each audience, the campaign tailors its messaging accordingly: a “punchy and provocative” tone for young people to explore diverse training options; a “supportive and encouraging” tone for career changers to build confidence in pursuing new opportunities; and a “clear and direct” tone for employers, highlighting the business value of training. Promotional materials feature real-life examples of individuals who have benefited from the Department for Education’s initiatives. Communication channels include social media, television, radio, print, billboards, and cinema, ensuring broad visibility and engagement across target groups.

Source: UK Department for Education (2025_[156]), ‘It all starts with skills’ campaign introduction and background, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/it-all-starts-with-skills-campaign-introduction-and-background/it-all-starts-with-skills-campaign-introduction-and-background>; UK Department for Education (2025_[154]), *It all starts with skills: Campaign guidelines*, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6853d2d3679778c74ec15eac/It_all_starts_with_skills_campaign_guidelines.pdf; OECD (2024), *Outline for a communication campaign to raise awareness of the National Skills Strategy for Bulgaria*, <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/dg-reform/bulgaria/Outline-for-a-communication-campaign-to-raise-awareness-of-the-national-skills-strategy-for-Bulgaria.pdf>.

Recommendation 19: Strengthen existing incentives for adult learners by increasing benefits and/or easing eligibility criteria for target groups to encourage training in areas of skills shortage

Many adults choose to participate in training opportunities because they believe that they can acquire skills that are relevant and valued in the labour market (OECD, 2019_[157]). Making informed training choices requires access to accurate and up-to-date information on skills that are in high demand today and those expected to grow in importance in the future (see Priority Topics 1 and 2).

Many OECD countries go further by steering training choices towards shortage areas by varying the level of incentive in areas of critical skills shortages. For example, in Belgium, jobseekers in Wallonia receive a training bonus when enrolling in courses linked to shortage or critical sectors identified by the regional employment office (see Box 2.19) (Forem, 2025_[158]). In Malta, a similar approach is already applied in higher education, where Student Maintenance Grants provide larger allowances to students pursuing “High Priority” courses (University of Malta, 2024_[159]).

BOX 2.19. BELGIUM: PROVIDING BONUSES TO JOBSEEKERS FOR TRAINING IN AREAS OF CRITICAL SKILLS SHORTAGE

In Belgium, *Incitant+* is a EUR 350 one-time bonus provided to jobseekers registered with the Walloon Office for Training and Employment (Forem) who have successfully completed an accredited training programme in shortage sectors. Individuals will have to attend a minimum of 35 hours of training per week for a duration of at least four weeks, and completion must be evidenced by a training certificate. Shortage sectors are determined by Forem, which annually conducts SAA exercises using statistical analysis of job offers and expert consultations to identify occupations where recruitment is difficult or qualified candidates are lacking. Forem also publishes a list of eligible training centres and courses. In addition to the one-time training bonus, jobseekers can access employment support, including a preparatory module to strengthen job interview skills.

Source: Forem (Forem, 2025_[158]), *Incitant+, une prime à la formation*, <https://www.leforem.be/citoyens/incitants-financiers-formation/incitant-plus.html>; Forem (2025_[164]), *Difficultés et opportunités de recrutement: Métiers / fonctions critiques et en pénurie en Wallonie*, <https://www.leforem.be/content/dam/leforem/fr/documents/chiffres-et-analyses/analyses/analyse-liste2025-fonctions-critiques.pdf>.

However, the adult learning system does not yet adopt this targeted method. While Jobsplus operates tailored schemes for specific groups (e.g. Job Brokerage Scheme for migrant jobseekers (JobsPlus, 2025_[160]), VASTE Programme II for persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged or vulnerable groups (JobsPlus, 2025_[161])), major schemes (e.g. Investing in Skills Scheme, Bridging the Gap Scheme (JobsPlus, 2025_[162]; JobsPlus, 2025_[163])) are currently not structured to encourage participation in areas of critical skills shortage.

To strengthen the alignment between skills supply and labour market demand, Malta would benefit from reviewing its incentive framework and explore increasing the value

of subsidies, offering more time allowances for training (see Recommendation 21), and easing eligibility criteria in specific sectors or for demographic groups. Such decisions could be informed by the results of SAA exercises (see Recommendations 2 and 3), with particular attention to skills needed for the digital and net-zero transitions as well as the sectors identified as strategically important in the Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021–2027 and Malta Vision 2050. At the same time, integrating clear and accessible information on these incentives into a nationwide awareness campaign would help ensure that learners understand their relevance to specific skilling areas, further promoting participation in training (see Recommendation 18).



Recommendation 20: Increase uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning (VINFL), with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups

Malta has made significant progress in recent years in the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and the validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL), supported by policies, regulations, and dedicated governance bodies (OECD, 2025_[164]; Eurydice, 2025_[165]).

To maximise the impact of these services, it is important to strengthen visibility and uptake, especially among disadvantaged groups. Participation in training remains lower among disadvantaged groups, such as adults with lower levels of educational attainment (Eurostat, 2024_[166]), who often have limited experience in formal education and face greater barriers to accessing training opportunities (Meghnagi and Tuccio, 2022_[167]; Eurostat, 2022_[168]).

To this end, Malta could scale up existing outreach efforts. This is especially relevant in sectors critical to economic development, such as tourism and construction, where adults with low qualifications are common. MFHEA representatives report ongoing collaboration with industry leaders, including employers and sectoral authorities, to promote RPL and VINFL services to disadvantaged groups. A comparable approach in the Netherlands – where government partnerships with the private sector and social partners have increased RPL requests across population groups – demonstrates the potential of such engagement (see Box 2.20) (OECD, 2022_[169]).

Central to these efforts is the improved collection and use of data on RPL and VINFL uptake. Data could be disaggregated by age, gender, educational attainment, and skill type to provide detailed insights into service effectiveness. Beyond uptake, assessing outcomes and impacts is equally important, including the extent to which RPL and VINFL facilitate access to higher education, additional training, and improved labour market prospects for target groups.

BOX 2.20. NETHERLANDS: LEVERAGING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS TO BOOST THE VALIDATION OF PRIOR LEARNING UPTAKE

The Netherlands has a long-standing tradition in implementing the validation of prior learning – *Erkenning van Verworven Competenties* (EVC) in Dutch – which includes RPL and formal accreditation procedures.

The development of the EVC system focused on encouraging participation, with the government collaborating with a broad network of stakeholders to create favourable conditions for implementation and foster a culture supportive of EVC. These partnerships included schools, colleges and universities, as well as social partners such as trade unions and employers, who helped integrate EVC across various contexts such as workplaces, volunteering, job-seeking and reintegration, and education and training. Strong cooperation between the government and social partners continues today, contributing to broader coverage and higher participation in RPL among employees, jobseekers, and adults seeking to return to education or training. This collaboration is reinforced through collective labour agreements, which grant employees the right to EVC and allow the use of sectoral training and development funds for this purpose. In many sectors, social partners are also directly involved in designing EVC procedures.

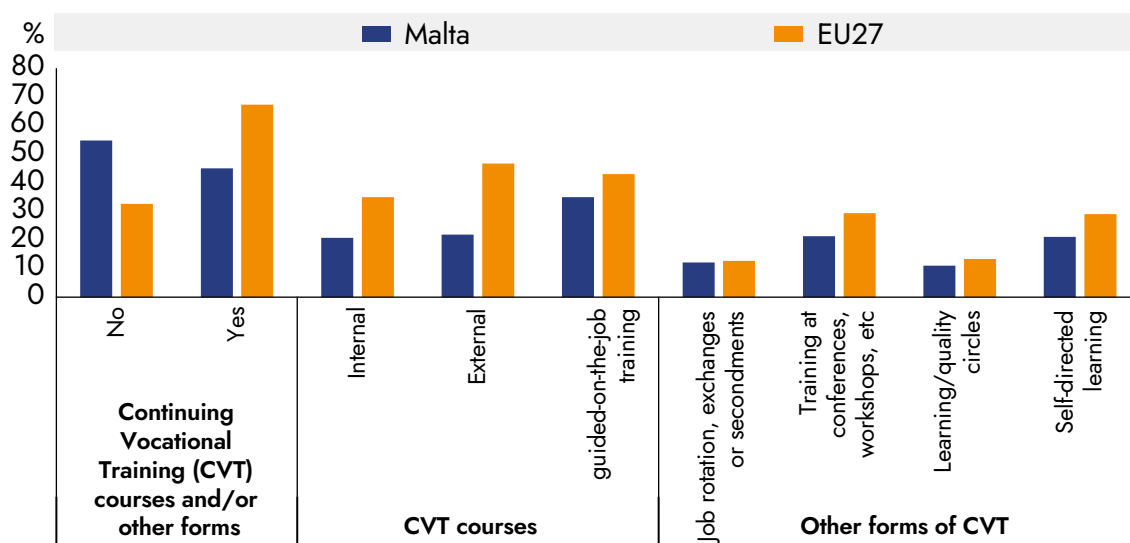
Source: Cedefop (2016_[170]), *2016 Update to the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning – Country Report: Netherlands*, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2016_validate_nl.pdf; OECD (2022_[169]), *The recognition of prior learning: Validating general competences*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/04/the-recognition-of-prior-learning_f83256d2/2d9fb06a-en.pdf.

6. INCENTIVISING EMPLOYERS TO STIMULATE LEARNING IN THEIR ORGANISATIONS

Employers play a central role in addressing Malta's skills challenges by providing high-quality, relevant training. At the individual and firm level, training is essential to promoting job satisfaction and ensuring that all workers, especially those with low qualifications, have opportunities to upskill for the digital and net-zero transitions. Consequently, this can help enterprises not only fill skills gaps, but also more easily adapt to emerging technologies and workplace processes (OECD, 2025_[4]; OECD, 2021_[171]). At a broader level, continuous workplace upskilling can support employees to develop higher-level skills, strengthening Malta's competitiveness, especially in smart specialisation areas (Xjenza Malta, 2021_[172]).

However, many Maltese employers – especially SMEs – are reluctant to provide training or face constraints such as limited time, capital, and human resources. Concerns over employee turnover are heightened by a tight labour market, where poaching is a common concern among employers (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). Consequently, Maltese enterprises provide less training than the EU27 average across all enterprise sizes and types of training (see Figure 2.6) (Eurostat, 2020_[173]). Given the benefits of employer-provided training and the strategic role of employers in driving growth and competitiveness, enhancing their participation in Malta's adult learning system is a key priority.

Figure 2.6. Share of enterprises providing training by type of training, 2020



Source: Eurostat (2020_[173]), *Enterprises providing training by type of training and size class - % of all enterprises*, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_cvt_01s__custom_18030888/default/table.

To incentivise employers to stimulate learning in their organisations, the project team recommends: (1) assessing the feasibility of introducing legislation on training during working hours, training leave, and payback clauses; (2) strengthening in-house training within enterprises through the provision of practical tools for workplace learning; and (3) matching readily available trainers with enterprises – particularly SMEs – to ensure reliable access to expertise.

Recommendation 21: Assess the feasibility of introducing legislation on training during working hours, training leave, and payback clauses

Promoting learning in enterprises requires addressing key barriers to worker participation, notably time constraints. Across OECD and EU countries, lack of time due to work and family

responsibilities is among the most frequently cited obstacles (OECD, 2025_[174]). In Malta, this barrier is particularly acute: 64% of adults report that busy work schedules prevent them from engaging in training, compared with 40% on average across the EU (OECD, 2025_[4]). Malta could introduce several initiatives to address these time constraints.

First, Malta could conduct a feasibility study on introducing legislation on training during working hours. Embedding training within regular working hours – rather than treating it as an additional burden – can help normalise participation, strengthen the culture of lifelong learning, and ensure equitable access to training across enterprises. Many OECD and EU countries address time-related barriers through legislation requiring enterprises to provide a minimum number of training hours, with participation recognised as working time

(OECD, 2025_[174]; OECD, 2025_[4]). Potential legislation in Malta could draw on the example of Portugal, where employees are entitled to a minimum of 35 hours of annual training (see Box 2.6 in the Analysis Report) (Diário da República, 2009_[175]; OECD, 2025_[4]). This approach ensures that training occurs during regular working hours, rather than evenings or personal time, and can be linked to career progression.

Eligible training could include short courses, targeted skills-based programmes, and non-formal or informal learning opportunities. Priority could also be given to transversal skills, which are increasingly valued in Maltese workplaces (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2025_[176]), alongside skills supporting the digital and net-zero transitions and sector-specific needs identified in Malta Vision 2050. In addition, the feasibility study could also assess tailored support for SMEs, including financial subsidies and access to a pool of readily available trainers (see Recommendation 23).

Second, Malta could assess the feasibility of introducing a training leave policy, which is currently available only in the public sector and in some private companies at the discretion of the employer. A paid training leave scheme would enable employees to take time away from work to upskill, while government support could help reduce the financial burden on enterprises (OECD, 2025_[174]). Luxembourg offers a useful reference point: workers are entitled to up to 20 days of training leave, and enterprises receive financial support through a wage replacement scheme (see Box 2.21) (Cedefop, 2020_[177]). In Malta, a feasibility

study could explore whether a similar model would be appropriate, potentially supported by legislation and collective agreements to ensure buy-in from both employers and unions. It would also be important to align uptake with enterprise training plans and monitor progress against agreed objectives and key performance indicators.

Although training during working hours and paid leave offer clear benefits for both workers and firms, many Maltese employers remain reluctant to invest in training due to the risk of poaching. The risk of losing trained employees to competitors compounds existing employee retention pressures in a tight labour market (OECD, 2025_[4]; Eurofound, 2019_[178]).

To mitigate this risk and encourage employer investment, Malta could assess the feasibility of introducing payback clauses, which are contractual agreements allowing employers to recover part of their training costs if an employee leaves soon after (OECD, 2017_[179]). At present, Maltese employers and employees may agree on training responsibilities and include a payback clause for training costs above EUR 1 000 (Cedefop, 2020_[177]). However, the absence of a dedicated legal framework limits enforceability, as poaching firms may choose to cover reimbursement costs, leaving initial employers partially exposed. Moreover, many employers recognise that although payback clauses can protect their investments, obliging employees to remain after training could reduce job satisfaction and productivity (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]).

A payback clause policy in Malta would therefore need to be carefully designed, striking

BOX 2.21. LUXEMBOURG AND CZECHIA: PROMOTING EMPLOYEE UPSKILLING WHILE SAFEGUARDING EMPLOYER INVESTMENTS IN TRAINING

Luxembourg: Helping employers shoulder the cost of a paid training leave policy through a wage replacement scheme

Luxembourg provides a paid training leave scheme under the Law of 24 October 2007, enabling employees and self-employed workers to participate in training, prepare for exams, and complete related tasks. The law sets out eligibility conditions, duration, and a wage replacement mechanism. Eligible groups include private sector workers with at least six months under the same employer, as well as self-employed individuals and liberal professionals registered with the social security system for at least two years. Workers may take training leave equivalent to one-third of course hours, capped at 20 days over two years. During leave, the government compensates wages at the employee's average daily wage, up to four times the minimum wage. Eligible training includes courses offered in Luxembourg and abroad by recognised professional chambers, schools, municipalities, public agencies, and approved private providers.

Czechia: Protecting employers' training investments through a payback clause

In Czechia, payback clauses can be applied to training leading to formal qualifications (ISCED levels 3–8) and relevant occupational courses, as well as to training costs exceeding CZK 75 000 (EUR 2970). The employer agrees to fund the training, while the employee commits to remaining employed for an agreed period, although for no more than five years. In the case of premature departure, the employee is required to reimburse the employer for training costs, and the repayable share declines in proportion to the length of employment, as a proportion of the total compelled duration of employment. The clause applies in cases of voluntary resignation within the binding period, dismissal for serious contract breaches, or failure to complete the training. Payback clauses are legally enforceable under Act 262/2006 (Labour Code), allowing disputes to be settled in court.

Source: Cedefop (2020_[177]), *Paid individual training leave*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/paid-individual-training-leave-0>; Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth (2024_[182]), *Congé individuel de formation*, <https://men.public.lu/fr/systeme-educatif/professionnel/conge-individuel-de-formation.html>; Cedefop (2020_[181]), *Payback clause: Czechia*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/financing-adult-learning-db/search/payback-clause-28>.

a good balance between employers' interest in recouping investments and employees' right to mobility. Legislation could define eligible training (e.g. cost, duration, type) while keeping administrative requirements minimal. It could also include provisions for cases in which the training participant is insolvent, as well as mechanisms for extra-judicial settlement (OECD, 2021_[180]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025_[14]). It would be important to avoid blanket application

of the payback clause policy regardless of the employee's reason for departure, and to ensure that penalties are reasonable and proportionate. For example, Czechia limits obligations to five years and reduces reimbursement based on employment duration (see Box 2.21) (Cedefop, 2020_[181]). Malta could consider a similar approach, with provisions negotiated with employer associations and trade unions to support fair and effective enforcement.

Recommendation 22: Strengthen in-house training within enterprises through the provision of practical tools for workplace learning

In a rapidly evolving labour market, where skills requirements are constantly shifting, enterprises increasingly need the capacity to deliver in-house training. Internal training can not only reduce costs for larger firms and lower transaction costs for smaller firms, but also ensures that learning is directly tailored to business needs, equipping employees with skills that are immediately relevant. Furthermore, in-house training can strengthen internal cohesion by fostering internal bonds and communication. As firms increase in size, they tend to insource training (e.g. creation of in-house training centres or separate training subsidiaries), as they can reduce per-employee costs the more frequently they provide training (Galanaki, Bourantas and Papalexandris, 2008_[183]; OECD, 2021_[171]).

In Malta, both employees and employers are showing a growing preference for in-house training, which is seen as a sustainable response to skills gaps (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2025_[176]). Yet many enterprises in Malta remain underprepared: only 23% have a designated training function (EU average: 36%), 18% a formal training plan (EU average: 24%), and 21% a dedicated training budget (EU average: 25%) (Eurostat, 2020_[184]).

To address this gap, Malta could provide enterprises with practical tools to assess training needs, such as accessible self-assessment instruments tailored particularly to SMEs. An

EU-level feasibility study provides guidance on how such a tool could be tailored to the needs of enterprises, especially SMEs (see Box 2.22) (European Commission, 2022_[185]). Beyond diagnostics, enterprises also require step-by-step guidance to translate assessment results into concrete training plans. Latvia provides a good example: the SME Digital Maturity recommender is an online tool that allows SME managers to assess their digital maturity and provides them with recommendations for upskilling and reskilling (see Box 2.22) (Digital Skills & Jobs Platform, 2024_[186]). Another example comes from Italy, where a self-assessment tool helps firms evaluate their current workforce capabilities and identify gaps in skills relative to their strategic objectives.

It is also important for Malta to encourage low-cost forms of non-formal and informal workplace learning, such as job rotation and mentoring, which are still not commonly used in Malta (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2025_[176]). Job rotation not only develops problem-solving skills through exposure to unfamiliar tasks in different teams, but also sustains productivity by providing internal replacements when employees are absent. In addition, mentoring enhances workplace integration and enables knowledge transfer from experienced colleagues (OECD, 2021_[171]). Malta could promote workplace learning by raising awareness of its benefits and available incentives (e.g. the Mature Workers Scheme (JobsPlus, 2025_[187])), providing practical guidance on implementation, and offering targeted training for human resource personnel.

BOX 2.22. EU, LATVIA AND ITALY: SUPPORTING SMES TO ASSESS SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH PRACTICAL TOOLS

EU: Designing a self-assessment tool on skills management practices for SMEs

SMEs across the EU face persistent shortages of qualified employees, limiting innovation, while often lacking the capacity to assess and address skills needs. To respond, the European Commission conducted a feasibility study on developing a self-assessment tool for skills management, tailored to SMEs.

The study confirmed the potential value of such a tool, provided it is free of charge (with optional paid features), easily accessible online, and requires minimal time from users. The tool should employ surveys to assess employee satisfaction, organisational culture (e.g. communication, knowledge sharing), and key skills management practices, including recruitment, training, work organisation, and HR strategies. To enhance usability and uptake, the study recommends integrating visual features and prioritising flexibility and user-friendliness. As limited awareness of the importance of skills management remains a barrier among SMEs, the study suggested that cooperation with intermediary organisations, such as one-stop shops, chambers of commerce, and development agencies, can help maximise reach and impact.

Latvia: Assessing SME's digital maturity through an online tool

In Latvia, the SME Digital Maturity Recommender is an online tool that provides managers in SMEs with a comprehensive assessment of their digital business maturity. The assessment methodology was developed by the Latvian Information and Communications Technology Association (LITKA) and covers 10 business dimensions: (1) digital transformation and competition, (2) financial data management, (3) human resources environment, (4) customer relationship management, (5) resource management, (6) communication and customer relations, (7) digitalisation of processes, and (8) security policy and practices, (9) digitalisation in production, and (10) innovation and growth perspectives. The tool was designed to be user-friendly. Upon completion of the assessment, the tool generates an assessment of the SME's digital maturity levels, including benchmarking against industry competitors. It also provides tailored recommendations for investments in relevant upskilling and reskilling opportunities, supporting firms in planning workforce development and adapting to digital transformation. In addition, it offers guidance on initiating internal discussions on digitalisation and its strategic importance to the firm. As of 2023, 1115 businesses have completed the assessment.

[cont.] Box 2.22. EU, Latvia and Italy: Supporting SMEs to assess skills needs through practical tools

Italy: A self-assessment tool for firm's skill needs

The self-assessment tool developed by the OECD for Italy is a skills-needs questionnaire for firms designed to help companies systematically evaluate their current workforce capabilities and identify gaps in skills relative to their strategic objectives. It prompts firms to reflect on four key areas – company characteristics, the skills profile of employees (present and future), human resources management practices (including training), and medium-term strategic goals – and thereby to map existing skills and unmet needs. The tool is intended to be practical for SMEs, even those without dedicated HR staff, and to encourage more frequent and structured skills analysis that can inform training investment decisions.

Source: European Commission (2022_[185]), *Feasibility study for a (self-) assessment tool on skills management practices in SMEs*, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9319d22a-3ae8-11ed-9c68-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>; Digital Skills & Jobs Platform (Digital Skills & Jobs Platform, 2024_[186]), *Diginno Tool – SME Digital Maturity Recommender*, <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/inspiration/resources/diginno-tool-sme-digital-maturity-recommender>; Digital Skills & Jobs Platform (2023_[188]), *“Smart Latvia” – Supporting SMEs’ Digital Transformation*, <https://digital-skills-jobs.europa.eu/en/inspiration/good-practices/smart-latvia-supporting-smes-digital-transformation>; OECD (2022), *Incentivising Business Investment in Skills: A Self-Assessment Tool for Firms’ Skill Needs*, <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/it/about/programmes/dg-reform/incentivare-l%27investimento-in-competenze-delle-imprese-italiane/A-self-assessment-tool-for-firms%27-skill-needs-EN.pdf>.

Recommendation 23: Match readily available trainers with enterprises – particularly SMEs – to ensure reliable access to expertise

While in-house training capacity is a valuable asset for enterprises, firm size strongly influences whether training is delivered internally or outsourced. SMEs often lack the human and financial resources to design and implement their own programmes, making access to affordable, high-quality external training essential. However, many enterprises that outsource training lack formal procedures to select providers, risking lower quality and poor value for money (OECD, 2021_[171]). OECD and EU

countries also enhance access to training by pooling resources, particularly through training networks. In Ireland, for example, Skillnets support enterprises to assess training needs and provide training when they are unable to create programmes on their own (see Box 2.23) (OECD, 2025_[4]; OECD, 2021_[171]; ILO, 2017_[189]).

While it is important for Malta to support enterprises in building their in-house training capacity (see Recommendation 22), options to outsource remains indispensable, particularly for SMEs: only 6% of small enterprises have staff representatives involved in defining the content of training, versus 11% of

BOX 2.23. IRELAND: PROVIDING AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY EXTERNAL TRAINING TO ENTERPRISES THROUGH SKILLNET BUSINESS NETWORKS

A frequently cited good practice in enterprise training is Ireland's **Skillnet Business Networks**, clusters of enterprises that collaborate to identify skills needs and provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities. Today, 70 networks operate across diverse sectors, including aviation, construction, robotics and artificial intelligence, as well as across regions. Skillnets support enterprises by assessing skills needs through research and consultations, helping firms develop in-house training capacity, and directly delivering training programmes where firms cannot do so themselves. They also offer financial support, with training courses generally priced at market rates, though member enterprises may benefit from discounts. Uptake is particularly strong among SMEs, and evaluations indicate high satisfaction with Skillnets' training provision, alongside positive impacts on long-term enterprise performance.

Source: National Enterprise Hub (2025_[192]), *Skillnet Ireland: Become part of a team of private companies working together to address skill needs*, <https://www.neh.gov.ie/business-supports/skillnet-ireland-training-programme>; OECD (2025_[41]), *Shaping Malta's Future Through a National Skills Strategy and Targeted Maritime Sector Measures: Analysis Report (Output 2)*, <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/dg-reform/malta/Analysis-Report.pdf>; OECD (2021_[171]), *Training in Enterprises: New Evidence from 100 Case Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7d63d210-en>; ILO (2017_[189]), *Upskilling SMEs*, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40ed_emp/%40emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_609267.pdf.

medium enterprises and 13% of large enterprises (Thake, 2012_[190]; Eurostat, 2020_[191]). Outsourcing training is thus a viable option for many employers in Malta, if not a necessity.

To support outsourced training, the NSC could collaborate with the Chamber of SMEs to identify enterprises with training needs but that lack the necessary expertise to deliver training, and subsequently match them with trainers who can reliably deliver training during working hours. This would be particularly valuable, as many employers report difficulties in securing trainers during regular working hours (TSI consultations of stakeholders,

2025_[141]). Coordinating a pool of readily available trainers would help to ensure predictable access to external expertise for enterprises and could complement existing financial incentives, such as the Investing in Skills scheme (JobsPlus, 2025_[162]), which already helps enterprises offset the cost of external training. Malta could also explore partnerships with foreign training providers proficient in the languages most commonly used in Malta. This would be particularly beneficial in a small labour market such as Malta's, as it would expand supply and introduce international expertise and good practices.

7. MAKING BETTER USE OF AVAILABLE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TALENT

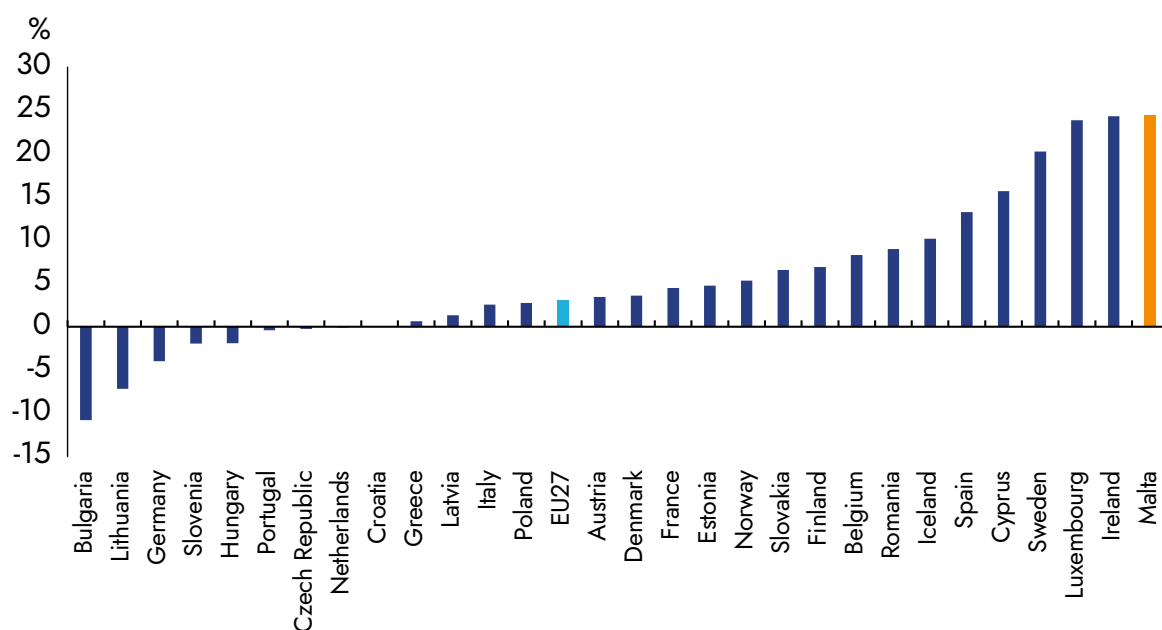
Developing relevant and advanced skills across the life course is essential, but equally important is their effective use in work and society. Maximising skills utilisation allows individuals, enterprises and countries to reap the full economic and social returns on training investments (OECD, 2019^[12]).

For Malta, with its small population, ensuring the full and effective use of the skills of its workforce – both domestic and foreign – is critical to ensuring Malta’s competitiveness and excelling in smart specialisation areas (Xjenza Malta, 2021^[172]). With the highest projected employment growth in the EU by 2035 (24%), Malta has to ensure that workplaces are equipped with the practices and facilities needed to harness talent effectively (see Figure 2.7) (Cedefop, 2024^[193]).

Malta is already performing well: more employees in Malta (96%) are likely to think that they do useful work in comparison to the EU27 average (86%) (Eurostat, 2015^[194]). Moreover, 83% of enterprises in Malta have management leaders who often/fairly often provide interesting and stimulating work to motivate and retain employees, versus 67% across the EU27 (Eurofound, 2019^[195]).

However, opportunities still remain to further strengthen Malta’s use of skills. This includes increasing the share of individuals with management skills, as well as improving the in-house capacity of enterprises to develop new products and services (Eurofound, 2019^[195]). Moreover, brain drain is a significant concern among stakeholders, as more young, highly qualified professionals seek opportunities abroad (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; Fragile States Index, 2024^[196]).

Figure 2.7. Future employment growth across EU Member States, 2022-2035



Source: Cedefop (2024^[193]), *Cedefop Skills Forecast: Future employment growth*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/skills-intelligence/trend-focus/future-jobs#1>.

To make better use of available and domestic and foreign talent, the TSI project team recommends: (1) providing user-friendly information and targeted support for firms – particularly SMEs – to adopt workplace productivity practices; (2) supporting enterprise leaders and managers to promote strategic foresight and workplace innovation, and stimulate demand for higher-level skills; (3) enhancing validation systems to enable the effective use of skills card systems and examine the feasibility of extending their application and integrating them into existing digital platforms; (4) developing a certificate recognising transversal skills to strengthen workers' employability and support skills-based hiring practices; and (5) conducting a study on the causes, scale and socio-economic impact of brain drain to inform policies for talent retention and attraction.

Recommendation 24: Provide user-friendly information and targeted support to help firms – particularly SMEs – adopt workplace productivity practices

Enterprises can fully leverage the skills of domestic and foreign talent through workplace productivity practices (often also referred to as high-performance workplace practices [HPWPs]). These are practices that aim to improve work organisation and job design (e.g. teamwork, autonomy, task discretion, mentoring, job rotation, applying new learning), as well as management practices (e.g. employee participation, incentive pay, training practices, flexibility in working hours) (OECD, 2019^[12]; OECD, 2021^[197]; Johnston and Hawke, 2002^[198]).

The promotion of workplace productivity practices merits policy attention, as having a highly skilled population does not automatically ensure that workers are performing tasks that match their skills, nor that they are using these skills optimally to enhance productivity and competitiveness (OECD, 2019^[12]). Governments can support enterprises by raising awareness of the benefits of workplace productivity practices, promoting knowledge sharing and offering managerial skills training (OECD, 2019^[12]).

In Malta, practices such as flexible hours and remote work are increasingly adopted and preferred by employees, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic (Fiorini, 2025^[199]; Farrugia and Chan, 2024^[200]). However, challenges still remain, notably a lack of knowledge among employers of how to apply them effectively, especially in SMEs with resource constraints (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2025^[176]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).

A first step for Malta is to offer accessible, practical guidance through a centralised, user-friendly online platform. To maximise reach and cost-efficiency, the platform could be integrated into existing enterprise-facing websites and promoted in partnership with key stakeholders, including employer organisations and Jobsplus. As with Recommendation 22 on strengthening in-house training, the platform can also provide a comprehensive suite of resources, including diagnostic tools for enterprises to assess current adoption of workplace productivity practices (see Latvia in Box 2.22) and concise information sheets on additional tools. In Malta, tailoring the content of the platform by sector and enterprise size can help ensure relevance and practical utility.

The platform could also offer access to personalised support, particularly for SMEs, which often experience employee shortages despite a strong desire to innovate their workplace practices and implement tools to maximise productivity (Malta Chamber of SMEs, 2024^[201]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]). Targeted support is especially important for SMEs, as employee shortages remain their most pressing challenge. Strengthening SMEs' capacity to adopt workplace productivity practices can help align existing skills with organisational needs and maximise the potential of smaller workforces.

Targeted support for SMEs could also include access to mentoring and coaching for managers and HR personnel, as well as financial subsidies to engage external experts for organisational management and

innovation projects. Germany provides a useful reference: SMEs can receive assistance from regional consultation centres – including a free initial session – to explore how to innovate company processes and promote employee-oriented practices. Further expert advice is available with subsidies of up to 80% of consulting costs depending on firm size (see Box 2.24) (Die Bundesregierung, 2022^[202]; IHK-Projektgesellschaft mbH, 2022^[203]).

In Malta, access to external experts and related subsidies could be further reinforced by peer learning networks, enabling knowledge exchange between large and small enterprises. Participation from foreign firms could further enrich these networks by introducing international best practices (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).



Recommendation 25: Support enterprise leaders and managers to promote strategic foresight and workplace innovation, and stimulate demand for higher-level skills

To be successful in today's knowledge economy, countries need to not only develop higher-level skills in their workforce, but also ensure that there are adequate opportunities to fully utilise and deploy these skills in the labour market. Employers play a central role in driving demand for higher-level skills and enhancing competitiveness by improving work organisation, stimulating innovation in products and processes, and fostering job creation in higher-value sectors (Froy, Giguère and Meghnagi, 2012^[205]; OECD, 2017^[206]).

Malta Vision 2050 and the Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021–2027 highlight the country's ambition to move into higher-value sectors through targeted investments in research and innovation. Achieving these goals requires not only skilled employees but also employers – more specifically enterprise leaders (e.g. chief executive officers, chief financial officers) and managers – who actively identify growth opportunities, operationalise strategies to mobilise internal talent, and embed workplace productivity practices (see Recommendation 24).

Malta could support enterprise leaders and managers to routinely engage in strategic thinking, including foresight practices (see Recommendation 2), helping them anticipate long-term changes from the digital and net-zero transition and identify opportunities for growth (Schwarz et al., 2023^[207]). Complementing existing initiatives to stimulate R&D activities (e.g. DiHubMT, Malta Enterprise's Research and Development Incentive) and in line with recommendations from the National Employment Policy 2021-2023, targeted training in innovation management and strategic foresight can encourage employers to integrate creativity and entrepreneurship into daily operations (DiHubMT, 2025^[208]; Malta Enterprise, 2024^[209]). Finland's WORK2030 programme offers a useful model, combining research-backed tools, training, and experimentation to enhance organisational and individual creativity (see Box 2.25) (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2023^[210]).

For SMEs in Malta, complementing training with mentorship and networking opportunities for managers and leaders can help to further build capacity in developing growth strategies. Support could emphasise creating demand for high-skilled roles aligned with the digital and net-zero transitions. While existing R&D schemes often target sectors such as gaming and tech, extending support to all sectors can help embed innovation and strategic foresight throughout the Maltese economy.

BOX 2.25. FINLAND: PROMOTING CREATIVITY AND EXPERIMENTATION IN ENTERPRISES TO SUPPORT JOB CREATION

Finland's WORK2030 programme supports enterprises in reforming operations, leveraging technology, and fostering workplace innovation. The programme focuses on three areas: conducting foresight and research, strengthening competence and renewal capacity, and reforming operational practices. A key element of the programme is promoting creativity as a driver of innovation and competitiveness. Eleven organisations and sixteen companies collaborated to develop tools that measure and enhance creativity at both individual and organisational levels, delivering online training in partnership with researchers and experts.

The programme's immediate impact was evident in participating organisations' ability to adopt new solutions and operational methods, thereby supporting job creation and reinforcing conditions for future employment growth. As of 2023, WORK2030 has directly reached nearly 14,000 jobs, with an additional estimated 260,000 jobs affected indirectly through activities such as communication campaigns.

Source: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2023_[210]), *WORK2030 – Development programme for work and wellbeing at work*, <https://stm.fi/en/work2030-development-programme-for-work-and-wellbeing-at-work>; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2023_[211]), *External evaluation of the WORK2030 programme (in Finnish)*, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164945/STM_2023_26_rap.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y; Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (2023_[212]), *WORK2030 Final Webinar (in Finnish)*, <https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/hubfs/TY%C3%962030%20p%C3%A4%C3%A4t%C3%B6swebinaari.pdf>.

Recommendation 26: Enhance validation systems to enable the effective use of skills card systems, and examine the feasibility of extending their application and integrating them into existing digital platforms

Several OECD and EU countries – for example France's *Passeport de compétences* (Mon *Passeport Compétences*, 2025_[213]), Germany's *ProfilPASS* (DIE, 2025_[214]), and the Netherlands' *Passport for Work* (OECD, 2023_[215]) – have implemented skills cards to strengthen skills utilisation by validating individuals' skills for work in specific industries and linking them to sectors with labour shortages.

Skills cards document skills developed through formal and non-formal education and training as well as through informal learning. They rely on standardised assessments that support a skill-based approach to hiring. For employers, skills cards provide verified evidence of applicants' abilities, fostering greater confidence in prospective on-the-job performance. For employees, they offer a consolidated record of competencies, facilitating mobility across jobs and sectors while reducing administrative requirements linked to training (OECD, 2023_[215]; ILO, 2023_[216]). Skills cards are particularly valuable in countries that rely on foreign labour, where training and qualification standards could vary (OECD, 2025_[4]).

In Malta, skills cards have been introduced in the tourism and construction sectors (Institute of Tourism Studies, 2025; Building and Construction Authority, 2025) (Skills Pass, 2025^[217]; Building & Construction Authority, 2025^[218]). The idea of expanding the skills cards to other sectors is widely supported in Malta, and the National Skills Council has already begun a feasibility study to inform how to strengthen the validation system and support their application into other areas of the economy. The study aims to include a cost-benefit analysis for each economic sector (based on NACE codes) and identify a list of sectors that would benefit from the introduction of skills cards, ranked by priority to guide implementation (OECD, 2025^[14]).

Experience from other EU and OECD countries, such as the Netherlands, suggests that strong coordination with labour market actors, such as employers, is essential for the successful implementation of the skills cards (OECD,

2023^[215]). In Malta, the thematic committees (see Recommendation 29) could play a central role expanding the use of skills cards.

The thematic committees could define the sector-specific skills and standards to be included in the skills cards. They could also determine appropriate validity periods based on the pace of change within their respective sectors, while considering making transversal skills valid indefinitely to facilitate mobility (see Recommendation 27), particularly for third-country nationals. Malta could also consider integrating the skills cards into existing digital infrastructure, such as BlockCerts via e-ID, to improve cost-efficiency and user familiarity (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]). The United Kingdom offers a useful reference point: a recognised provider consolidates multiple qualifications into digital skills cards, simplifying employer verification (see Box 2.26) (NOCN Group, 2025^[219]).

BOX 2.26. UK: FACILITATING SKILLS RECOGNITION FOR EMPLOYERS THROUGH DIGITAL SKILLS CARDS

Developed by the NOCN Group, a private training provider, the International Skills Card consolidates users' qualifications – including most UK regulated credentials – and achievements such as health and safety programmes and short industry-led courses. These qualifications are recorded on a photo ID-style card, providing a recognisable visual identity, while the underlying information is stored digitally and securely. Cards can be scanned via an application, linking to a learner database that enables rapid identification and verification of skills. NOCN's skills cards have been widely used in the UK to help employers manage workforce qualifications. In the construction sector, they are applied through the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS), which was established upon employers' request to develop common standards for plant operators. Since being launched in 2003, hundreds of thousands of CPCS skills cards have been issued across more than 60 occupational categories, making them a well-recognised and trusted tool across the sector.

Source: NOCN Group (NOCN Group, 2025^[219]), *NOCN International Skills Card*, <https://www.nocn.org.uk/international/international-products-and-services/nocn-international-skills-card/>; NOCN Group (2025^[220]), *Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS)*, <https://www.nocn.org.uk/products/competence-cards-and-tests/construction-plant-competence-scheme-cpcs/>.

Recommendation 27: Develop a certificate recognising transversal skills to strengthen workers' employability and support skills-based hiring practices

Transversal skills are increasingly valued in Malta, with 63% of employers identifying them as the most important asset for workplace success. Evidence also points to their contribution to workplace productivity, teamwork and leadership (Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2025^[221]). Nevertheless, employers continue to report challenges in recruiting new workers with well-developed transversal skills, such as communication (including active listening), teamwork, problem solving, critical thinking and creativity (JobsPlus and MFHEA, 2021^[222]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).

As Malta seeks to strengthen transversal skills development throughout the life course (see Priority Topic 4), it is equally important to establish robust mechanisms for assessing, validating and certifying these skills. Standardised assessment, validation and certification can increase employers' confidence that job candidates possess the required transversal skills, while supporting recognition across sectors (OECD, 2025^[223]). The introduction of a transversal skills certificate has already been noted in the National Employment Policy 2021-2030 and was reaffirmed by stakeholders during consultations for this project, reflecting growing stakeholder demand for greater visibility of transversal skills in recruitment and workplace practices (Ministry for Finance and Employment, 2021^[19]; TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).

It is important that any assessment and validation process aligns with existing frameworks, including the Quality Assurance Guidelines of Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (MFHEA, 2024^[224]). The assessment and validation process could cover transversal skills acquired through a wide variety of settings, including school, previous employment, volunteering, and community work (Cedefop, 2025^[225]).

Assessment methods should also be diverse and inclusive, drawing on multiple procedures (for example self-assessments, e-portfolios, situational judgement tests) that reflect individuals' varied experiences and preferences. For example, in Iceland, the VISKA project involved a validation process that combined interviews and self-assessments with other documentation of transversal skills, such as recommendations from previous employers and work samples (see Box 2.27) (TRANSVAL EU, 2021^[226]; VISKA, 2018^[227]). As with the skills cards (see Recommendation 26), Malta could consider integrating the transversal skills certificate into existing digital infrastructure (e.g. BlockCerts via e-ID) to promote cost-efficiency and user familiarity.

BOX 2.27. ICELAND: VALIDATING TRANSVERSAL SKILLS THROUGH A COMBINATION OF APPROACHES

The Visible Skills for Adults (VISKA) is a policy experimentation project implemented in Belgium (Flanders), Norway, Iceland and Ireland. It aims to make the skills of adults more visible through the validation of non-formal and informal learning, with a focus on supporting disadvantaged groups such as migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and low-skilled adults to transition into employment and access targeted training. In Iceland, the project beneficiaries include migrants with competences in trade-related fields and who are seeking further education and employment opportunities.

The validation process begins with an introduction to its objectives and the relevant competence standards, followed by reflective exercises and group work. Participants document skills acquired through work, personal and community activities and provide supporting evidence such as employer recommendations, job descriptions, diplomas, certificates and work samples. They then undertake a structured self-assessment aligned with the standards, drawing on real-life examples. The process concludes with an individual interview with a counsellor, providing a formative assessment of how participants could further develop or mobilise their skills for employment. Successful candidates receive a certificate detailing the competences assessed, alongside a diploma.

Source: TRANSVAL EU (TRANSVAL EU, 2021^[226]), *Validation of Transversal Skills Across Europe: European State of the Art Report*, https://www.transvalproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/D2.1_State-of-the-Art-Report_EN_public.pdf; VISKA (2018^[227]), *Criteria for assessing transversal skills*, <https://ba.boostskills.eu/files/5-criteria-for-assessing-transversal-skills.pdf>.

Recommendation 28: Conduct a study on the causes, scale and socio-economic impact of brain drain to inform policies for talent retention and attraction

In an increasingly globalised world, labour mobility is a central feature of modern labour markets, enabling workers to move between jobs both domestically and internationally.

While mobility allows countries with skills shortages, such as Malta, to attract foreign talent, it can also facilitate the emigration of highly qualified locals. If unmanaged, this emigration can reduce the supply of skills that can be utilised in the labour market, limiting countries' ability to recoup returns on workforce development investments (OECD, 2019^[12]; OECD, 2024^[228]).

In Malta, employee turnover is a pressing concern for employers (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, 2022^[229]). The inability to retain technical and intellectual skills is constraining development by reducing the availability of skilled and productive labour (Fragile States Index, 2024^[196]). Employee turnover and emigration feature in critical sectors, such as health (Camilleri, 2024^[230]; EY, 2022^[231]; Grech, 2011^[232]). Notwithstanding such indicators, official statistics showed that in 2023, 1117 citizens moved out of the country while a further 2200 returned, suggesting an opportunity for Malta to build on this positive momentum and address brain drain challenges (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]).

Recent policy initiatives also point to growing recognition of the importance of engaging with Maltese nationals and descendants living abroad. In the 2026 Budget, the Government announced a new measure aimed at supporting descendants of Maltese citizens aged between 18 and 30 to come to Malta to work or study, while strengthening their connection to the country and its cultural heritage. However, to maximise the effectiveness of such measures, a more comprehensive understanding of the scale, drivers and socio-economic impact of brain drain is required, including the motivations and barriers faced by different groups of emigrants and returnees.

In this light, Malta could benefit from a comprehensive study to assess brain drain, complementing sector-specific studies already available online. The macro-level study to be developed would examine both push (factors driving emigration) and pull (factors attracting workers abroad) factors. It is important for the study to use multiple data sources, including graduate tracer surveys, migration registers (if available), and stakeholder consultations, and disaggregate data by sector, demographics, and qualification level.

Based on these findings, evidence-informed recommendations could inform a talent repatriation strategy, including incentives such as time-limited tax breaks, improved job prospects, competitive salaries, and measures to foster entrepreneurship and innovation (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; Camilleri, 2024^[230]). For example, Italy introduced a tax incentive scheme in 2010 to address brain drain among young, highly-skilled nationals. Evidence suggests that eligible individuals were 27% more likely to return (see Box 2.28) (Bassetto and Ippedico, 2024^[233]).

Additionally, Malta could consider developing a diaspora engagement strategy and pilot skills transfer mechanisms, enabling Maltese abroad to contribute to domestic development. In Lithuania, this dual approach combining talent repatriation and diaspora engagement is used, ensuring that individuals have multiple avenues to fully utilise their skills regardless of their location (see Box 2.28) (Gal j Lietuva?, 2025^[234]; Lithuanian Public Employment Service, 2025^[235]; Global Lithuanian Leaders, 2024^[236]).

BOX 2.28. ITALY AND LITHUANIA: COMBATting BRAIN DRAIN THROUGH TARGETED RETURN MIGRATION POLICIES

Italy: Providing tax incentives to young, highly skilled expatriates

In 2010, Italy introduced a preferential tax incentive scheme through the Law of 12/30/2010 n.238 to encourage the return of young, highly skilled nationals. The scheme exempted income from employment, business, and self-employment from taxation by up to 20 percent for women and 30 percent for men. Eligibility criteria included a university degree (minimum undergraduate), birth after 1 January 1969, and at least two years of residence in Italy prior to moving abroad. While the incentives were initially expected to last two to four years, their effective duration ended up being five years.

Evidence using administrative data suggests that eligible Italian expatriates were 27% more likely to return following the introduction of the 2010 tax incentive scheme. Furthermore, a cost-benefit analysis demonstrated that the scheme largely paid for itself, as its target group – young, highly-skilled expatriates – can contribute fiscally over a longer time horizon. The tax incentive scheme has since then undergone several changes in 2015, 2019 and 2023. Major changes include extending eligibility criteria to expand the scope of the scheme, as well as increasing the number of years in which beneficiaries are required to stay in the country.

Lithuania: Complementing return migration with diaspora engagement

Lithuania adopts a comprehensive approach to leveraging the human and economic capital of its workforce abroad, combining return and reintegration efforts with diaspora engagement. One key initiative is *Gal j Lietuvą?*, implemented by the Public Employment Service as part of the Interinstitutional Action Plan of the Demographic, Migration and Integration Policy Strategy 2018-2030, which targets Lithuanians who have emigrated and are considering returning to live and work in the country. The programme provides information on the Lithuanian labour market, organises events to connect diaspora members with potential employers, and facilitates job negotiations. Returning workers employed in shortage occupations may also receive a one-time grant of EUR 4 255.

In parallel, Lithuania actively engages its diaspora to enable contributions of knowledge and skills from abroad. The *GLL Business Advisors* programme, run by Global Lithuanian Leaders, connects diaspora professionals with emerging enterprises, innovators, and entrepreneurs in Lithuania. Participating enterprises can access tailored advice and guidance from highly skilled diaspora experts, including support for international market expansion.

[cont.] Box 2.28. Italy and Lithuania: Combatting brain drain through targeted return migration policies

The Ministry of Economy and Innovation covers a one-time consultation fee, ensuring that enterprises benefit from diaspora expertise without financial barriers. In 2023 alone, more than 35 consultations were organised with 27 diaspora professionals, as well as ten international missions organised in partnership with diaspora professionals and their networks.

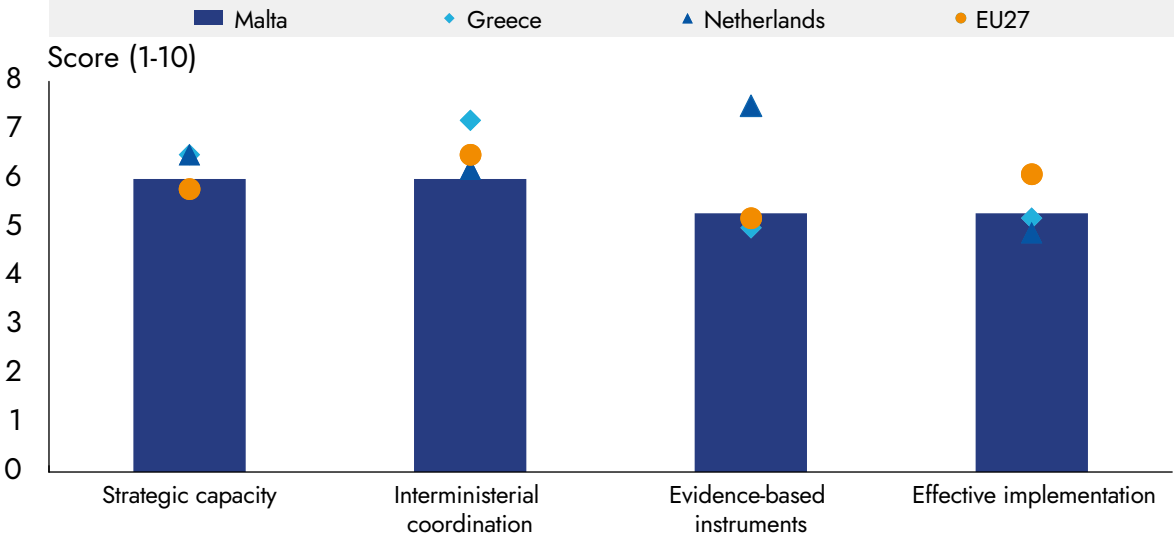
Source: Bassetto & Ippedico (Bassetto and Ippedico, 2024^[233]), *Tax incentives and Return Migration*, https://ippedico.github.io/website/ippedico_JMP.pdf; Documentazione Economica e Finanziaria (2011^[237]), *Legge del 30/12/2010 n.238 – Incentivi fiscali per il rientro dei lavoratori in Italia*, <https://def.finanze.it/DocTribFrontend/getAttoNormativoDetail.do?ACTION=getSommaro&id={9AEAEAE9-3D5F-45FF-8496-96179FED94AF}>; OECD (OECD, 2024^[238]), *Migration Policy Debates N°35: Why do OECD countries offer tax relief programmes to attract foreign migrants and returning nationals?*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2024/06/why-do-oecd-countries-offer-tax-relief-programmes-to-attract-foreign-migrants-and-returning-nationals_f4973c5d/5a23e2a3-en.pdf; Galij Lietuva? (2025^[234]), *Homepage*, <https://galijlietuva.lt/>; Lithuanian Public Employment Service (2025^[235]), *Arrival allowance for employees recruited from abroad*, <https://uzt.lt/darbo-ieskantiems/paramos-priemones/atvykimo-ismoka-is-uzsienio-pitrauktiems-darbuotojams/302>; Global Lithuanian Leaders (2024^[236]), *GLL Business Advisors*, <https://lithuanianleaders.org/business-advisors-2/>; Global Lithuanian Leaders (2023^[239]), *2023 Annual Activity Report*, https://lithuanianleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2023_Annual-Report_GLL-1.pdf.

8. STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE SKILLS SYSTEM

Given the cross-sectoral nature of skills strategies and their alignment with multiple national priorities, effective implementation of Malta's National Skills Strategy requires active engagement across government, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders. Evidence indicates that, compared with the EU average and project comparison countries such as Greece and the Netherlands, Malta has room to strengthen key skills governance elements, such as strategic capacity, inter-ministerial coordination, evidence-informed policymaking, and effective implementation (see Figure 2.8) (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022^[240]).



Figure 2.8. Malta’s performance in key governance indicators central to skills policy implementation, 2022



Note: **Strategic capacity**, as defined in the Sustainable Governance Indicators, refers to the ability of strategic planning units and bodies to influence government decision-making, as well as the extent to which government regularly takes into account advice from non-governmental experts during decision-making. **Inter-ministerial coordination** captures how effectively line ministries, cabinet committees, and officials align policy proposals with government priorities, using both formal and informal mechanisms, including digital tools for policy development and monitoring. **Evidence-based instruments** describe the systematic use of data and analyses – such as regulatory impact assessments – to review and refine new and existing policies. Finally, **effective implementation** encompasses the government’s capacity to achieve policy objectives, monitor ministry-level execution, ensure adequate funding, and manage other factors essential for successful policy delivery.

Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (2022_[240]), *Sustainable Governance Indicators 2022*, <https://www.sgi-network.org/2022/Downloads>.

Successfully navigating the digital and net-zero transitions will require coordinated action to close skills gaps and deliver timely, relevant, and high-quality training (OECD, 2020^[24]; OECD, 2024^[13]). In Malta, stakeholder meetings led by the National Skills Council have improved the inclusiveness and responsiveness of skills interventions while raising the profile of skills on both the political agenda and industry priorities. These efforts can be reinforced through formal, regular consultation mechanisms to systematically integrate stakeholder input, build broad ownership, and strengthen commitment to the National Skills Strategy (OECD, 2024^[13]; OECD, 2025^[4]). Clear roles and responsibilities for improving skills performance are also necessary to ensure accountability and shared ownership among all partners.

To better strengthen the governance of the skills system, the TSI project team recommends: (1) strengthening skills coordination to better align skills supply and demand in the thematic areas of Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy; and (2) regularly reviewing action plans and strengthening reporting mechanisms to ensure that the strategy remains a living document and supports effective and responsive implementation.

Recommendation 29: Strengthen skills coordination to better align skills supply and demand in the thematic areas of Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy

Industry-led bodies for skills policy at the sectoral level play a crucial role in aligning skills supply and demand within specific sectors. On the demand side, these bodies identify current and future skills and qualification needs, monitor shortages, approve apprenticeship frameworks (e.g. entry requirements, learning

outcomes, duration), and encourage employer investment in training. On the supply side, they advise on creating new training opportunities, adapting curricula to industry needs, accrediting providers, ensuring learning quality, and supporting skills assessment and validation (ILO, 2020^[241]; ILO, 2021^[242]; OECD, 2025^[243]). For example, Australia's Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) are industry-led bodies that link skilling opportunities to workforce challenges across different sectors (see Box 2.29) (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2025^[244]). Establishing such industry-led bodies, which can be referred to as Industry Skills Alliances, would ensure better governance on skills supply and demand per sector.

In Malta, the National Skills Council organises CareerScape, which brings together representatives from education, industry and government to discuss emerging careers in 13 sectors. CareerScape is, however, not a formal body and does not hold an official mandate for shaping skills policy (TSI consultations of stakeholders, 2025^[14]; National Skills Council, 2024^[245]).

At the same time, Malta already has a number of sector-based coordination structures in place, notably the thematic committees established under the Smart Specialisation Strategy (Xjenza Malta, 2021^[172]).

Rather than establishing new standalone Industry Skills Alliances, Malta could consider assigning the core functions of Industry Skills Alliances to these existing thematic committees, through a clearer and more formalised mandate for skills-related coordination. Under this approach, the thematic committees could be formally

tasked with addressing both demand- and supply-side dimensions of skills policy within their respective sectors, drawing on evidence from skills assessment and anticipation (SAA) exercises (see Recommendations 2 and 3). This would represent an expansion of their current advisory role, moving beyond strategic discussion to include structured input on skills needs, training provision and workforce development, while remaining aligned with the objectives of the Smart Specialisation Strategy (Cedefop, 2017^[246]; Legiżlazzjoni Malta, 2012^[247]).

On the demand side, thematic committees acting in this enhanced capacity could identify employers' current and emerging skilling needs and contribute to the development of National Occupational Standards, in collaboration with Sector Skills Units where appropriate. On the supply side, they could work with employers and training providers to create specialised learning opportunities (see Recommendation 16), facilitate access to relevant training, and support initiatives such as skills cards (see Recommendation 26) and other mechanisms for recognising and validating skills, thereby promoting lifelong learning.

As part of the TSI project, Malta is recommended to pilot this enhanced role within the existing maritime thematic committee. The maritime committee could effectively act as a Maritime Skills Alliance, serving as a formal coordination platform for maritime education and training, workforce planning, and industry development. The proposed Maritime Skills Alliance would serve as a formal coordinating body, convening key maritime stakeholders for

maritime education and training, workforce planning, and industry development. Lessons from the maritime pilot could inform the gradual roll-out of similar enhanced mandates across the other thematic areas of the Smart Specialisation Strategy and, where relevant, Industry Skills Alliances could be established in other strategic sectors of the Maltese economy where thematic committees do not yet exist, particularly in line with the Malta Vision 2050.

The effectiveness of this approach will depend on clear governance and representative membership supported by appropriate coordination with the National Skills Council. It is important for membership to be representative and inclusive, ensuring the presence of industry, employer organisations, and academic experts, with group size adjusted to sectoral complexity (typically 7 to 30 in other EU countries). This multi-stakeholder approach can help effectively combine sector-specific knowledge with technical expertise (European Commission, 2023^[248]).

Under the guidance of the National Skills Council, it is recommended that the thematic committees with an enhanced skills mandate meet regularly – at least quarterly – and establish their own operating procedures. These would include setting clear agendas, appointing rotating chairs, and adopting transparent protocols for decision-making and stakeholder engagement. Clarifying and strengthening the skills-related role of existing committees would help ensure coherence, reduce fragmentation, and support more effective implementation of Malta's skills policy objectives, aligned with the broader objectives of Malta Vision 2050.

BOX 2.29. AUSTRALIA: ALIGNING SKILLS SUPPLY AND DEMAND THROUGH JOBS AND SKILLS COUNCILS (JSCS)

Australia has established **Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs)** to give industry a leading role in shaping the vocational education and training (VET) system. Each JSC operates as a not-for-profit company that is both owned and led by industry actors, working closely with Jobs and Skills Australia, the country's main agency responsible for skills policy. Employing a multi-stakeholder, tripartite approach, JSCs bring together employers, unions, and governments to ensure that skills supply meets evolving labour market demand. Their core functions encompass both the demand and supply sides of skills, backed by SAA intelligence on emerging challenges. On the demand side, JSCs are responsible for creating workforce development plans, maintaining alignment with national skills priorities, and identifying sector-specific skills needs. On the supply side, they map career pathways, develop and update VET training opportunities, and support providers to improve training quality and assessment practices.

Currently, there are ten JSCs in Australia, with each one covering both traditional and emerging fields. For example, the [Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance](#) covers the traditional industries of manufacturing and engineering (e.g. food, pharmaceuticals, print), but also emerging industries including defence and space technologies. In 2025, the alliance published the *Manufacturing Workforce Plan: Pathways to Transformation*, which built on previous plans and identified growth opportunities in sub-sectors in line with national priorities (e.g. digitalisation, net-zero transition), as well as evolving job roles and required skills. To achieve workforce planning targets, the Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance then examines current gaps in available training packages and develops new training opportunities.

Source: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (2025_[244]), *Jobs and Skills Councils*, <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/jobs-and-skills-councils>; Manufacturing Industry Skills Alliance (2025_[250]), *Manufacturing Workforce Plan 2025*, <https://manufacturingalliance.org.au/manufacturing-workforce-plan-2025-download/>.

Recommendation 30: Regularly review action plans and strengthen reporting mechanisms to ensure that the strategy remains a living document and supports effective and responsive implementation

The success of Malta’s National Skills Strategy depends on a structured approach to implementation, supported by a dedicated action plan that defines responsibilities, funding sources, timelines, milestones, implementation targets, and monitoring and reporting requirements. This TSI project will provide a proposal for this action plan.

It would be important to embed flexibility in the action plan to ensure its continued relevance amid rapidly evolving labour markets. Megatrends such as the digital and net-zero transitions, as well as unforeseen shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic or changes in government, can shift skills priorities and delay policy implementation (OECD, 2024_[13]). To ensure timely delivery, other EU countries with skills strategies regularly review their strategies and action plans, incorporating up-to-date information on current and future skills needs (OECD, 2024_[13]; Greek Public Employment Service, 2023_[251]; OECD, 2020_[252]).

Given Malta’s National Skills Strategy spans a 10-year horizon, policymakers could benefit from shorter-term action plans that are regularly renewed. For example, Latvia’s six-year strategy (2021–2027) was implemented through consecutive two-year plans (2021–2023, 2023–2025, 2026–2027) (see Box 2.30) (OECD, 2024_[13]). Malta could adopt a similar approach, treating its action plan as a living

document, reviewed every two or three years to reflect progress against established targets and emerging labour market insights from SAA exercises (see Recommendations 2 and 3).

It is important for each policy recommendation in the National Skills Strategy to be assigned a timeframe – Phase 1 (2026-2027), Phase 2 (2028-2030) and Phase 3 (2031-2035) – with full strategy completion by 2035. By setting a clear timeline for each policy recommendation, Malta can set the pace and expectations for all actors to implement the measures assigned to them (Viennet and Pont, 2017_[253]; OECD, 2020_[252]). The task of determining the appropriate timeframe for each recommendation could be carried out in collaboration with the policy owners, taking into account potential implementation risks and establishing contingency plans where necessary. The action plan proposal developed through this TSI project, will also determine timeframes in consultation with policy owners and other stakeholders.

To ensure timely implementation, a designated contact point within the National Skills Council could oversee regular progress updates (e.g. monthly) via the established performance management system. Where agreed with relevant stakeholders, minor, ad hoc adjustments to timelines (e.g. delays of one to two months) could be permitted to accommodate unforeseen challenges. This approach can help maintain implementation momentum while ensuring the strategy remains adaptable and responsive to evolving circumstances.

BOX 2.30. LATVIA: ENSURING RESPONSIVENESS AND FLEXIBILITY THROUGH ACTION PLAN RENEWAL CYCLES

Latvia's Education Development Guidelines (EDG) aim to ensure high-quality and inclusive education and training opportunities that support sustainable national growth. The latest EDG focuses on enhancing teachers' academic and pedagogical training, increasing adult learning participation, investing in digital skills, and strengthening strategic capacity for skills policy. While the EDG covers a six-year period (2021–2027), Latvia has adopted separate two-year implementation plans for 2021–2023, 2023–2025, and 2026–2027. This renewal cycle, strongly supported by stakeholders, involves consultations to review emerging trends and challenges, alongside an analysis of national and EU data. By combining qualitative stakeholder insights with quantitative evidence, Latvia can adjust targets, refine policy measures, and ensure that the implementation remains responsive and aligned with evolving skills needs.

Source: Cabinet of Ministers (2021_[254]), *About the Education Development Guidelines for 2021-2027*, <https://eprasmes.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Latvijas-Izglitiba-attitiba-pamatnostadnes-2021-2027.pdf>; OECD (2020_[252]), *OECD Skills Strategy Implementation Guidance for Latvia: Developing Latvia's Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ebc98a53-en>; OECD (2024_[13]), *Insights from Skills Strategies in the European Union: Lessons Learnt for Developing and Implementing Effective Skills Policies*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0bf9e78e-en>.

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