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# National Youth Policy Towards 2020

A shared vision for the future  
of young people



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A Shared Vision for the Future of Young People

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Policy Advisory Group:  
Ms Miriam Teuma (Chairperson)  
Dr Andre Borg  
Dr Joanne Cassar  
Dr Cory Greenland  
Mr Andrew Micallef  
Ms Beverly Saliba  
Mr Jason Zammit

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# Foreword

**EVARIST BARTOLO** Minister for Education and Employment

**T**he Government has taken a number of policy initiatives aimed at strengthening the delivery of effective services and ensuring quality outcomes for all. The purpose of these policy initiatives is to put in place clear policy aims and objectives, with accompanying actions that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound, and which will result in quality outputs and outcomes.

The National Youth Policy - Towards 2020, which will cover the period 2015-2020, and is aimed at supporting young people in the 13 to 30 age group, is another of these policy initiatives. For any policy to be effective and successful it must be

owned by all those concerned: the designers and implementers of the policy as well those the policy will impact on. Accordingly, it is being published following on extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including end users.

My Ministry and the Government are fully committed to realising the benefits of the new policy for all young people over the six year timeframe 2015-2020.

I want to express my thanks and appreciation to all those young people and all stakeholders who contributed to the making of this new policy: it is as much their policy as it is the policy of my Ministry and the Government.



# Introduction

**CHRIS AGIUS** Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport

**T**he National Youth Policy - Towards 2020, is part of the Government's policy for greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change.

For both the Government and the Ministry, a national youth policy needs to adhere to and be informed by certain principles and standards. The overall aim and strategic objectives need to be clear and achievable. The policy must be inclusive: one that all young people and those that work with and for them can shape and claim ownership of. It must be built on our knowledge and experience and take account of youth policy developments and implementation at European and international level. There needs to be a focus on "action" resulting in "tangible outcomes" so that young people, their

families and communities will benefit from the policy. The positive role that the voluntary youth sector and other relevant stakeholders can play in actively supporting and implementing the policy must be defined and activated.

I am confident that the new policy will meet and fulfil these expectations and that it has been strengthened and enhanced as a result of public consultation.

The effective implementation of the policy, over the six year timeframe 2015-2020, will be a priority not only for the Ministry and the Government, but for all those committed to helping and supporting young people to shape their own lives and futures.



# Background and context

**T**he National Youth Policy - Towards 2020, is underpinned by three separate but interlocking pillars.

The first pillar is the reality of the lives of young people in Malta today and how coherent policies, effectively implemented and actively supported, can help young people in meeting their needs and aspirations.

The second pillar is the development of youth policy over the past 20 years at both European and national level. The evolution and implementation of youth policy has provided us with not only the aims and objectives towards which such policy

should be directed, but also the underlying principles, methodologies, tools and administrative and financial supports.

The third pillar is the Government's policy for greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change. This policy is already evident in the Framework for the Education Strategy (2014-2024), the National Employment Strategy, the Green Paper - A Framework for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion (2014-2024), and the National Health Systems Strategy for Malta (2014-2020) as well as in a range of initiatives in such areas as literacy, early school leaving and the Youth Guarantee.



The reality of the lives of young people in Malta today



The development of youth policy over the past 20 years at both European and at national level



Greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change

The National Youth Policy- Towards 2020 is based on three interlocking pillars.



### 1.1 The reality of the lives of young people in Malta today

The social and cultural boundaries that have long distinguished childhood, youth and adulthood are rapidly changing. Children are physically developing earlier and faster and because of social media they have access to a virtual world outside their immediate families and communities. They are growing up in a world more culturally diverse. The period of transition from childhood to adulthood is becoming extended and more complex. The transition from education to employment reflects these complexities in particular. Traditionally, young people moved from formal education or training to work, with gender and socio-economic background being major determining factors. Today, education and work often occur simultaneously and re-training or lifelong learning is becoming a feature of adult life.

In terms of young people's personal lives, the traditional pattern was for them to progress from their teens, through heterosexual courtship, to marriage and parenthood. While this is still the general pattern for most, more young people are today exercising a greater variety of choices about lifestyle, relationships, leisure, and how they manage their money. Increased awareness and acceptance as well as legislative initiatives also make it possible for LGBTIQ young people to envisage a different future for themselves. As a result, the traditional family itself is undergoing change.

While young people today may have more personal freedom and choices than those of previous generations, the challenges and pressures are also significant. Peer pressure, parental expectations, exam stress, cyber bullying, health issues, substance misuse and the lure of a consumerist culture - what to buy, what to wear, what to listen to, what to watch - are but some of the challenges and pressures that confront young people today.

This trend towards greater individual freedom and choice is also apparent in areas of personal morality,

belief systems and public behaviour. Young people are more sceptical and questioning of religious and political institutions.

However, for most young people in Malta these changes, challenges and pressures can be faced with confidence and resolve. The evidence suggests that young people, in general, have firm emotional, cultural and spiritual foundations, which, together with the active support of their families and communities, the state, religious denominations and the wider society, enable them to face the future with confidence and resolve.

### 1.2 The development of youth policy in Europe

Following on consultation and an impact assessment in all the Member States, the European Commission published a new strategy: *An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering* in 2009. As a consequence, a new framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) was adopted by EU Youth Ministers on 27 November 2009.

The overall objectives of the framework for European cooperation in the youth field are to:

- i. create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market; and to
- ii. promote the active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people.

In achieving these objectives, a dual approach is to be adopted involving the development and promotion of both:

- i. specific initiatives in the youth field - i.e. policies and actions specifically targeted at young people in areas such as non-formal learning, youth work, mobility and information; and
- ii. mainstreaming initiatives - i.e. initiatives to enable a cross-sectoral approach where due account is taken of youth issues when formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and actions in other policy fields which have a significant impact on the lives of young people.

The main fields of action in which initiatives are to be taken are: education and training, employment and entrepreneurship, health and well-being, participation, voluntary activities, social inclusion, youth and the world, and creativity and culture.

There have also been a number of other significant developments at European level in relation to youth policy. *Europe 2020 - A European Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth* identifies seven flagship initiatives, one of which, *Youth on the Move*, seeks to increase the youth employment rate by making education and training more relevant to young people's needs, encouraging more of them to take advantage of EU grants to study or train in another country, and encouraging EU countries to take measures simplifying the transition from education to work.

*Erasmus+*, the new financial support framework for education, training, youth and sport (2014-2020) focuses on learning mobility, cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practice, and support for policy reform.

### 1.3. The development of youth policy in Malta.

It is now over 20 years since the publication of the first youth policy in 1993. Since then, Malta has experienced major changes, including membership of the European Union in 2004.

Malta's first National Youth Policy (1993) and the 1998 policy document sought to provide young people and policy makers with clear objectives in the political, social and economic development of the nation. The relevant Ministry had responsibility for implementing the policy with the support of the National Youth Council and national and local voluntary youth organisations.

The National Youth Policy (2004), which followed on a Council of Europe National Report on Malta conducted by an international group of experts, continued with the themes and concerns of the previous policies. It aimed to ensure social justice; opportunity and equity; promote the authenticity of the identity, diversity and responsible independence of young people; as well as promoting active citizenship and participation. The most significant



feature of the 2004 policy document however, was its reference to the need for a national youth agency.

The following National Youth Policy (2010-2013) had a number of significant features. First, it was based on an extensive consultation with all the relevant stakeholders. Second, it established an instrument for policy coordination and implementation, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, the National Youth Agency. Third, it emerged against the background of a new policy initiative at European Union level, the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018). It was the first policy approach to embed youth policy in the context of the UN Conventions and European policy documents.

#### 1.4 The Government's policy for greater democratic participation, equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change.

While mindful of policy development in the youth field over the past 20 years at both European and national level, and seeking to build on past achievements, the Government, in light of its policy for greater democratic participation (including the Vote 16 initiative), equitable economic and social progress for all, and inclusive change, decided on a new approach to national policy development for and with young people.

Accordingly, the Minister for Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, established a Policy Advisory Group with the task of drafting a new national policy for and with young people.

The Policy Advisory Group were asked to prepare a draft national youth policy for the Ministry's consideration and for consultation with all relevant Ministries, entities, the Church, the National Youth Council, Youth NGOS, youth workers, youth work professional bodies and stakeholders in the youth field and the broader public.

Following on the publication of a discussion document - *A shared vision for the future of young people - Draft National Youth Policy Framework, 2015-2020*, extensive consultations took place with a wide range of stakeholders, including Ministries, entities, NGOs, and other relevant organisations and groups in both the public and private sector. A national seminar, to discuss the draft youth policy, was also organised for young people and voluntary youth organisations.



# 2 A shared vision for the future

## 2.1 Vision

Young people should be respected, valued and listened to and be supported and encouraged in building fulfilling personal and social relationships and in developing their innate abilities and talents for the benefit of themselves, their communities and society.

## 2.2 Values

In seeking to realise this vision for the future of young people, the following overarching values shall inform all aspects of the national youth policy and its implementation.

**Respect** for the individuality, worth and dignity of all young people regardless of their beliefs, ethnicity, physical and mental capacities, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression; for the right to have their voices heard and to be informed on all issues that concern them; and for the right to determine their own future and happiness.

**Recognition** of the beliefs, culture, and shared experiences of the people of Malta and the rights and principles enshrined in the Constitution of Malta, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

**Sustained support** for all young people in developing their physical, intellectual and emotional capacities, skills, talents, strengths and abilities; in promoting their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, and in fulfilling their potential and aspirations and in meeting their needs.

**Solidarity** of young people, families and communities so as to ensure young people's active participation, sense of responsibility and caring, and capacity to build quality and life enhancing relationships with their parents, siblings, peers and elders in the home, school, workplace and community.



### 2.3 Principles

These overarching values will be underpinned and informed by the following principles.

**R Responsiveness.** Key stakeholders such as Government, civil society, religious denominations and the public and private sectors, as appropriate, should respond to the needs and concerns of young people and act in their best interests with a view to maximising their human potential.

**A Access.** Young people should have user-friendly access to quality services and equality of opportunity with the aim of ensuring their active participation in the economy and society.

**P Participation.** Young people should be consulted and be involved in all planning and decision making as active participants in their own development and in that of the wider society.

**I Inclusion.** Barriers and impediments to young people's active participation in the political, educational, social and economic spheres should be addressed and positive steps taken to help ensure that young people are not directly or indirectly excluded.

**I Integration.** Key stakeholders such as Government, civil society, religious denominations and the public and private sectors should cooperate and coordinate their efforts to ensure greater impact in supporting the development of young people and in helping them to realise their full potential.

**D Diversity.** The diverse backgrounds and identities of young people should be recognised and respected and the positive role they can play in their emotional, social, cultural and spiritual development acknowledged.

**E Empowerment.** Young people should be enabled to take control of their own lives and to take responsibility for their decisions and actions, to forge their own future and to bring about positive social change.

**E Equality.** Every young person is of equal value and should be given equal respect, dignity and opportunity, regardless of age, experience, beliefs, ethnicity, physical and mental capacities, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression.



# 3 Realising this shared vision

In realising this shared vision, the challenges and opportunities that face young people today in an increasingly globalised world need to be considered and a national youth policy has to be articulated and implemented to help young people meet these challenges and avail of the opportunities.

## 3.1 Aims of the National Youth Policy - Towards 2020

Youth policy, as it has evolved at European and international level, has two interrelated dimensions.

The first of these is what are often described as “core” services and activities such as non-formal education, participation, mobility and youth information. Youth work, in particular, is widely regarded as one of the main drivers of effective youth policy. Youth work is the process employed through which non-formal learning can come about. Youth work can be described as a planned learning

programme, project or activity aimed at the personal, social and political development of young people based on their voluntary participation and on mutually respectful and supportive relationships between young people and adults and built on a strong working relationship between the individual young person and youth workers.

Second, youth policy has a cross-sectoral aspect. This means that youth policy must encompass and contribute to those policy areas that impact on the lives, development and well-being of young people: education and training, employment, health, social inclusion, arts and culture, volunteering, etc.

Having regard to the changing lives of young people in Malta today and the need for employing effective strategies in support of them, the National Youth Policy - Towards 2020 focuses on all 13 to 30 year olds and has two related aims:

to effectively support and encourage young individuals in fulfilling their potential and aspirations while addressing their needs and concerns, and

to effectively support young people as active and responsible citizens who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of the nation and Europe.

### 3.2 Implementing the National Youth Policy-Towards 2020

While all relevant Government Ministries and entities together with private and non-governmental organisations - in particular, the National Youth Council, and the Gozo Regional Council - will be responsible for implementing the policy; overarching responsibility will rest with the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, or with such other designated Ministry.

The policy will be implemented on a proportionate and equitable basis on the islands of Malta and Gozo, having regard to the numbers of young people resident on each island and the availability of resources locally. Youth services on both islands will also be harmonised.

Particular attention will be paid to the unique and distinctive character and traditions of each island community. The policy will aim to further strengthen island communities by ensuring that the necessary support infrastructure is in place for young people to have places to meet, socialise, and develop their skills and capabilities.

The policy will be implemented through two specific but interdependent strategies that complement the two interrelated policy aims.

Each of the two strategies will have a number of designated Action Plans under which specific actions will be undertaken and implemented over the six year timeframe 2015-2020.



### 3.2.1 Strategy 1 – Youth Work and services for young people

#### Services, programmes, projects and activities in support of young people and youth organisations

The Ministry of Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport will have overarching responsibility for implementing this strategic approach, while Aġenzija Żgħażaġh will be responsible for strategic

planning and day-to-day operational matters in implementing the strategy.

The focus in this approach will be on supporting the personal development and well-being of young people through the employment of projects, initiatives and activities based on youth work and non-formal learning, as well as on information, participation and mobility, as set out in the following Action Plans:

#### **ACTION PLAN - New spaces at local community level for young people and youth organisations.**

Create new spaces and facilities at local community level to support the development of young people through their active involvement and participation in non-formal learning opportunities.

##### **Planned Actions**

- The physical infrastructure and human resource capacity of the youth activity centres at Villa Psaiġon and at Marsaxlokk, will be further developed and enhanced. Appropriate sport and recreational facilities will be made available at youth activity centres.
- Youth Hubs will be further strengthened and opening hours will be extended.
- The Youth Information One-Stop-Stop will be extended and youth information provision will reach out to the Maltese diaspora worldwide.
- Youth services will be expanded to include programmes and activities in secondary schools.
- A Youth Cafe and Youth Hub will be opened on Gozo, in cooperation with the Gozo Youth Services Coordinator.
- A Youth Village will provide a wide range of support services, programmes, activities and resources for young people and youth workers in a specially designed and centralised facility at Santa Venera.
- Youth Cafes will be established as an integral part of the Social Development Centres (Leap).

#### **ACTION PLAN - Awareness raising, listening to and supporting the voice of young people.**

Create initiatives and opportunities that enhance young people's social and political awareness and that enable their voices to be heard on issues that impact on their lives.

##### **Planned Actions**

- The Youth Information web portal and the online support service Kellimni.Com. will be further developed and expanded.
- Karta Żgħażaġh (the European Youth Card) will be promoted and further developed as a youth policy tool and mobility card.
- The Structured Dialogue will be expanded with a view to involving more young people and youth organisations through campaigns, debates and research on issues that impact on the lives of young people.
- Projects will be initiated to increase the political awareness and the democratic participation of young people.
- A training manual for youth participation will be developed and disseminated.



**ACTION PLAN - Initiatives for the active engagement, empowerment and participation of young people and youth organisations.**

Develop and implement initiatives, programmes and activities that actively involve young people and youth organisations in developing young people's competences and skills that enhance their future learning and employment prospects.

**Planned Actions**

- The Youth Empowerment Programme (which includes projects in literature, visual arts, media, music, volunteering, specialised study, community activity and empowerment) at both national and local level will be continued, further developed and expanded to include new and innovative projects.
- Youth. Inc will be further developed and expanded to ensure innovative and smooth transitions from school to further education and training and/or the labour market.
- The Youth Work Profession Act will be implemented, training will be provided for the professional development of youth workers and accreditation of youth work and non-formal learning progressed.
- Initiatives will be undertaken to integrate minorities in schools and the community and campaigns and educational programmes will be conducted to increase integration and raise awareness of diversity.
- Outreach and detached youth work services will be put in place to address, in particular, the needs of socially excluded and at risk young people.
- Youth organisations will be supported to further enhance their capacity, to recognise their contribution to lifelong learning and to increase their visibility.
- In cooperation with Gozo Youth Services, assistance and support will be provided to enhance community based networks and mechanisms to promote youth work, cultural events and other activities.

Additional actions, measures and initiatives under each of these Action Plans may be incorporated into the Annual Business Plans of Aġenzija Żgħażaġh for the years 2015-2020.



### 3.2.2 Strategy 2 - Cross-sectoral supports for young people.

#### Cross-sectoral supports that enhance their social participation, learning and employment prospects.

All relevant Government Ministries and entities will be responsible for this second strategic approach. Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ will have overarching

responsibility for promoting, coordinating and facilitating such cross-sectoral approaches. The focus will be on cooperation and mutual support and endeavour between relevant Ministries and entities in providing programmes, projects and activities for the development of young people's potential, skills and competencies in the designated Action Plans as outlined below.

#### **ACTION PLAN - Education and training**

Develop and implement initiatives that utilise both formal education and non-formal learning, as mutually reinforcing agents, with a view to enhancing young people's educational attainment levels and progression.

##### **Planned Actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in education and training**

- Early school leavers and young people not in education, training or employment (NEET) will be supported to develop their skills and enhance their further education and employment prospects.
- E-learning and lifelong learning among young people will be promoted.
- Career guidance and relevant professional advice for young people will be provided.
- The validation of non-formal and informal learning will be pursued.
- Reducing the gaps in educational outcomes between males and females and between students attending different schools will be pursued.
- Decreasing the number of low achievers and raising the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence will be supported.
- Initiatives to improve the educational achievement of young people at risk of poverty will be undertaken.
- Initiatives to raise levels of young people's retention and attainment in further, post secondary, vocational, and tertiary education and training will be undertaken.

#### **ACTION PLAN - Health and well-being**

Develop and implement initiatives that seek to improve the physical, mental and emotional health and well-being of young people and address issues that impact negatively on such well-being.

##### **Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in health and well-being.**

- Healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating and physical exercise for young people, will be encouraged and promoted.
- Young people with disabilities will be supported to participate fully in youth work activities.
- Young people's mental health and emotional well-being will be promoted.
- Young people's sexual health and responsible and caring behaviour in sexual relationships will be promoted.
- Substance/alcohol abuse and addictive behaviours, such as compulsive gambling, among young people will be tackled.
- Young people will be helped to confront bullying (including cyber bullying) and other anti-social behaviours.

**ACTION PLAN - Employment and entrepreneurship**

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing young people's participation in the labour market and their future employment, occupational and professional prospects.

**Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in employment and entrepreneurship.**

- Research on skills forecasting will be promoted and supported.
- Matching of occupations, skills and competences will be pursued.
- Work-experience initiatives for young people will be undertaken.
- Training designed to meet the needs of industry will be promoted and supported.
- Young people will be informed/advised and supported to access training, apprenticeships and other labour market oriented opportunities.
- Entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial spirit among young people through non-formal education and informal learning opportunities will be promoted.
- Young people interested in self-employment will be encouraged and supported.
- Work exchange opportunities abroad for young people will be promoted.
- The evidence-base of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) will be further developed.
- Initiatives aimed at supporting the integration of young people with disabilities into the labour market will be developed.

**ACTION PLAN - Arts and Culture**

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing young people's artistic gifts and promoting cultural and artistic awareness and participation in, and attendance at, cultural and artistic pursuits and events.

**Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in arts and culture.**

- Young people will be supported and encouraged to develop their creativity and skills in the visual arts and media.
- Young people's musical skills will be supported and encouraged.
- Young people will be provided with opportunities for the writing and staging of drama.
- Young writers will be supported and encouraged and literature for young people will be promoted and published.
- Greater access for young people to artistic and cultural sites, events and activities will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Young people's appreciation and active participation in the arts will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Work experience opportunities for young people in arts and culture related events and activities will be provided.

**ACTION PLAN - Social Inclusion**

Develop and implement initiatives with a view to enhancing the well-being and active participation of young people with fewer opportunities and those from a migrant background.

**Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in social inclusion.**

- Young people with disabilities will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people with a migrant background will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people from families at risk of poverty and social exclusion will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Young people with challenging behaviours will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.
- Gender equality, awareness and mutual respect among young people will be promoted.
- Young people leaving care detention will be encouraged and supported to integrate into community life and the labour market.
- LGBTIQ young people will be encouraged and supported to integrate and fully participate in social and community life.

**ACTION PLAN - Voluntary and Community activities**

Develop and implement initiatives to enable young people to be active members of their local communities and take responsibility for the quality of community life and the local environment.

**Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in voluntary and community activities.**

- Opportunities for intergenerational awareness and dialogue through the active involvement of young and older people will be created and facilitated.
- Youth Local Councils will be further developed and their numbers expanded.
- Youth environmental projects, activities and events at local community level will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Young people's awareness and appreciation of their local historical, architectural and cultural heritage will be strengthened.
- Young people's participation in the Youth Voluntary Work Scheme will be encouraged and facilitated.
- Young people's take-up of European Voluntary Service (EVS) and other youth exchange opportunities will be encouraged and promoted.

### **ACTION PLAN - Sport and Recreational activities**

Develop and implement initiatives to support young people's active participation in sports that enhance their physical and mental well-being, competitiveness and social relationships.

#### **Planned actions for cross-sectoral cooperation in sport and recreational activities.**

- An annual Youth Sports Week will be established to promote the value of exercise and the spirit of healthy competition among young people.
- Sport activities for the purposes of social inclusion and community integration will be promoted.
- Sport and recreational activities will be a feature of youth programmes and projects where appropriate.
- Initiatives relating to specific sports activities will be undertaken particularly during the summer months.
- Volunteering in sports as an extra-curricular educational activity will be promoted.

Additional actions, measures and initiatives under each of these Action Plans may be undertaken by the relevant Ministries and entities, in consultation with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, over the timeframe of the National Youth Policy (2015-2020).



# 4 Supporting this shared vision

In addition to the two strategies and accompanying Action Plans set out in the previous chapter, additional support measures, as outlined below, will be put in place to ensure that the National Youth Policy - Towards 2020 is effectively implemented, monitored and evaluated in line with best international practice and that a solid research base on young people's lives, experiences and aspirations is in place for the development of future national youth policy.

## 4.1. Resources and supports for Youth Policy

Resources and supports will be further developed and expanded over the period 2015-2020 with the twin objective of building the human and physical capacities of the youth sector, including the voluntary youth sector, and providing it with the skills and competences to support the development of young people.

The European Union Programme Agency (EUPA), through the Erasmus+ programme, will also help and support Aġenzija Żgħażaġh and relevant stakeholders to achieve the strategic aims of the National Youth Policy over the timeframe 2015-2020. In particular, the EUPA, through its multi-annual work plans, will actively engage with Aġenzija Żgħażaġh to ensure that concrete and constructive initiatives are undertaken for the benefit of young people and the voluntary youth sector and the attainment of the goals of Erasmus+.

Measures will also be put in place over the period 2015-20 to further enhance and support professionalism and the highest standards of quality, efficiency and safety among national and local youth organisations. In this regard, the Youth Work Profession Act, 2014, will give formal professional recognition and status to youth workers, as well as regulate the profession and determine the qualifications and conditions under which youth workers can acquire such recognition.

Further steps will be taken over the period 2015-2020, to engage with the private sector with a view to strengthening their support for and commitment to young people's development. The private sector has a vital and distinctive role to play in supporting the development of young people, particularly in such areas as further education and training, entrepreneurship and labour market participation and progression.

## 4.2. European and international dimension

The period 2015-20 has particular importance in light of the fact that Malta will, for the first time, hold the Presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2017 and Valletta will be European Capital of Culture in 2018. The Commonwealth Youth Forum will also be held in Malta in 2015. 2014 also saw the commencement of the new EU financial support framework for education, training, youth and sport *Erasmus+ (2014-20)*, and

a mid-term Work Plan for Youth under the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field will also be put in place over the period 2016-18.

Malta has been playing and will continue to play a proactive and positive role in the European youth policy field, through participation in and contributing to the Youth Working Party, Youth Ministers' Councils and EU Youth Conferences. The active ongoing involvement with the European Commission, the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Youth and other European bodies such as the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth, the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA), the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKYP) will continue over the period 2015-2020.

Malta's Presidency of the EU (January-June, 2017) provides an unprecedented opportunity not only to highlight the country's achievements and ambitions in the youth field but also to make a significant contribution to shaping and determining the future of youth policy in Europe. *Valletta 18* also provides the country with a showcase for promoting youth issues with the active involvement of young people and national and local youth organisations. Through the *Erasmus+* programme, initiatives will also be undertaken particularly during Malta's Presidency of the European Union and *Valletta 18*, to reach out to the Maltese diaspora worldwide with a view to fostering positive social and cultural relationships among young people based on mutual respect and shared heritage.

Additional resources will be made available to ensure that Malta's presidency of the EU, *Valletta 18* and other international events will be both memorable and productive for young people.

### 4.3. Research and Knowledge Building

The Government is committed to ensuring that youth policy is evidence-based and outcome-focused. Priority will continue to be given to research as it believes that this provides all those working with and for young people with an invaluable tool and source of relevant and up-to-date information. The research programme for the period 2015-20 will target the main areas that concern young people today, such as education (including the digital divide and skills gaps), employment, environment, rights and responsibilities, health and well-being, and justice.

### 4.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of the national youth policy over the period 2015-2020, will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Ministry for Education and Employment and the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport. Aġenzija Żgħażaġh will employ its Annual Reports to record progress in relation to Strategy 1, while an inter-Ministerial group will be established and led by Aġenzija Żgħażaġh to report annually on progress in relation to Strategy 2.

At the end of the period 2015-2020, an independent evaluation will be conducted on the overall impact of the policy and the benefits accruing for young people, the voluntary youth sector and the wider society.









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