



Consultation document on reforms to the Education Act

Education is fundamental for our country's economic and social development and for retaining a competitive edge in a world economy. It is essential for democratic governance and social inclusion, as well as for personal fulfilment and prosperity. Government is committed to build on the successes of the past to further strengthen education in Malta and Gozo.

The Education Act - Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta - lays down the principles underlying Malta's educational system and policy. The overarching benefit of the Act is the education of all generations. It establishes the structures and actors which formulate and implement educational policy for the benefit of our children, youths and Maltese society at large. It lays down the basic right of every Maltese citizen to receive education and instruction, the obligations of the State to ensure the existence and accessibility of schools and other institutions of learning, and the rights and duties of parents in relation to their children's education including the right of parents to send their children to the school of their choice. Furthermore, the Education Act establishes the principles underpinning the Government's role in the provision of education in Malta, the decision making structures in this field, together with many other important issues such as the regulation of the teaching profession and the functioning of all schools and colleges including church schools and independent schools. All these issues have a direct impact on the quality of our educational system and the manner in which education is actually delivered. The Act also establishes and regulates the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and other entities in the educational sector such as the National Commission for Further and Higher Education.

The Education Act has served our country well and much has been achieved. However, it is important to ensure that it is kept up to date to reflect the new challenges of today's world. It is essential that the Act continues to provide the operational structures required to address weaknesses and deficiencies in the educational systems which it sets up and regulates, and to ensure that it is fully capable of delivering Malta's educational policy. In particular, it is important to ensure that all the necessary legal principles and structures are in place to implement the Malta Education Strategy for the next ten years (2014 - 2024). This strategy will have a number of important objectives including the following: improving the quality and effectiveness of our country's education, ensuring a fairer, more inclusive and more democratic educational system, increasing the level of student achievement across all levels, and improving the transition from early childhood to primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary education. It will also aim at establishing greater synergy between all institutions and departments within the Ministry for Education and Employment, central Government and other Ministries, the European Union and at global level, as well between education, the economy and civil society.

For this reason, while launching a nationwide consultation process on a ten year integrated strategy for education in Malta and Gozo, the Ministry for Education and Employment is also launching a consultation process with all stakeholders involved in the educational sector and with Maltese society at large on amendments to the Education Act - Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta. The purpose of the consultation is to seek ideas and encourage feedback on the way forward, and discuss possible reforms on all issues currently regulated by the Education Act and related matters. These issues include the following:

- The role and function of the education central authorities including the Directorates of Education and other entities and commissions established by law;
- The rights and obligations of parents in the provision of education to their children;
- Students' rights and increased student involvement;
- The reduction of early school leavers;
- The promotion of civic involvement, employability and active citizenship;
- The better functioning and management of State Schools and Colleges;

- The regulation of the teaching profession and of education providers in all sectors, including church and independent schools, at all levels from early childhood to tertiary education and lifelong learning;
- The better coordination of all actors and stakeholders involved in the educational sector, and the involvement of social partners;
- The rationalisation of resources and the promotion of innovative technology including digital education; and
- The reduction of bureaucracy and inefficiency.

The aim is to ensure that the Education Act will be capable of delivering and sustaining an educational policy for Malta and Gozo for the future which will ensure an excellent standard of education for a better quality of life for all learners and which will equip learners to live in an inclusive and multicultural society able to celebrate diversity and the enjoyment of human rights for all.

All persons or organisations wishing to participate in this consultation process on the reforms to the Education Act are kindly requested to submit their views to the Ministry for Education and Employment by 31st March 2014 using the following e-mail address: education@gov.mt or through www.education.gov.mt/educationact

The Education Act can be accessed on the following link:

<http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8801&l=1>

The Ministry for Education and Employment would like to take the opportunity to thank all contributors for their participation in the consultation process.