



EARLY LEAVING FROM
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
STRATEGY

THE WAY FORWARD
2023-2030

ABRIDGED VERSION



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
DIRECTORATE FOR RESEARCH, LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Foreword by Hon. Minister Dr Clifton Grima

In 2015, Malta was one of the first EU countries to publish a specific strategy on Early School Leaving (ESL) for students who did not achieve superior secondary level qualifications. The EU recommends that there be such a policy and strategy in every country. More recently, ESL is being referred to as Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) in order to be inclusive of not only academic pathways but also vocational ones.

The first national strategy was a major development in Malta in the educational sphere. This strategy contributed to a constant and significant decrease in the number of students who leave education and training with less than an MQF Level 3 qualification.

According to EUROSTAT, Malta's ELET, age group 18-24, was 10.10% in December of 2022. The rate had reached a record high of 33% in December of 2005 and this recent rate is a record low. Malta has been one of the few countries that have constantly decreased the rate during the last years and has consistently been registering a decrease during the last 10 years. Since 2017 Malta registered the largest rate of reduction in ELET of all EU countries. The EU set an EU-level target stipulating that the share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9% by 2030.

We are looking ahead to enhance our results. "A holistic and inclusive approach to tackle Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) in Malta" is our way forward and will take us up to 2030.

Early leaving from education and training is a pressing issue in Europe with considerable costs for individuals and society. For these reasons, fighting ELET is a key element of the Education and Training 2030 Strategic Framework. Tackling ELET remains a top policy priority, hence the constant updating of our holistic strategy.

This National Strategy Policy enhances the base principles: ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning; reducing the gaps in educational outcomes



between boys and girls and between students attending different schools; decreasing the number of low achievers; raising the bar in literacy, numeracy, and science and technology competence; increasing student achievement; supporting the educational achievement of children at-risk-of-poverty and low socio-economic status; raising the levels of student retention and attainment in further, vocational, and tertiary education and training; and increasing participation in lifelong learning and adult learning.

To effectively implement this strategy, I strongly encourage that a strategic partnership be formed between educational institutions, guardians, communities, policymakers, employers, trade unions, and civil society that runs parallel to the current socio-economic realities. By working together, we will be more successful in tackling the early school leaving issue since, by doing so, we will achieve equity education, social justice, and inclusion.

Foreword by Permanent Secretary Mr Matthew Vella

The Maltese Education System is heading towards a more person-centred approach and holistic achievement. Students' wellbeing is best achieved when they are placed at the core of the education system.

Nevertheless, students' success is affected by a variety of influences, namely the family, the school, and the community. When these work in tandem to support and guide students, students achieve more. Thus, for improved quality and equity, the impetus of the strategy is the adoption of an integrated approach by sharing the responsibility with other Ministries and stakeholders to implement the family-school-community link programme. This strategy adopts a transformative approach and focuses on the engagement of parents and the community in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways.

Notably, since the development of the first National strategy for the Prevention of Early School Leaving from Education and Training, Malta has witnessed a marked decline in the number of students who leave early from education and training.

In this context, The Early Leaving from Education and Training Unit within the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability aims to consolidate and put forward strategic actions that continue to target the decrease of Early Leaving from Education and Training in Malta. Consequently, and on the bases of extensive evidence-based research, the strategy is composed on three strategic pillars which target prevention, intervention, and compensation measures respectively.

The main emphasis lies within the intervention pillar which promises a solid investment in early years' education leading to a shift from stand-alone initiatives to strong evidence-based programmes. This is complemented by the paradigm shift in the systematic monitoring and evaluation system of its methodology for increased effectiveness.



I am very positive that through this strategic plan which ensures a better collaborative and more integrated approach, Malta will continue to reduce Early Leaving from Education and Training rates and prepare students to become lifelong learners.

A HOLISTIC AND INCLUSIVE
APPROACH TO TACKLE
**EARLY LEAVING FROM
EDUCATION AND TRAINING
(ELET) IN MALTA**

THE WAY FORWARD

2023-2030

Developed in 2021 - Revised in 2022-2023

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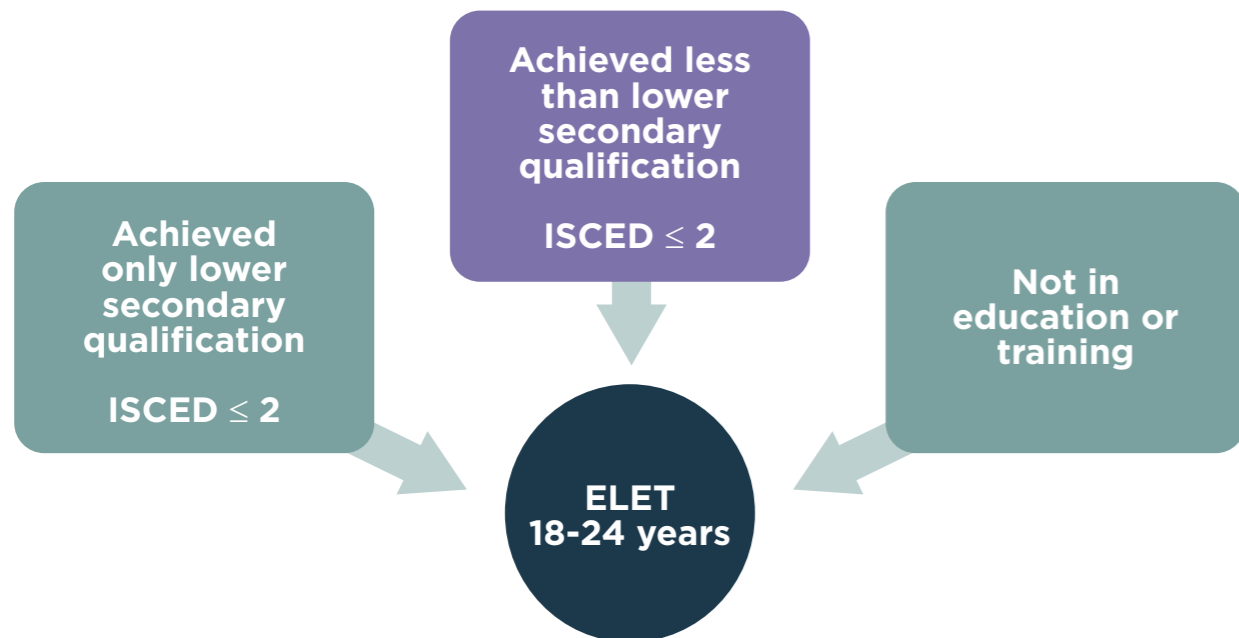
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Definition

The definition of Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET¹) in Europe comprises the following two factors about students:

- The highest level of education or training completed is lower secondary education, hence not completing upper secondary education.
- No education or training has been received in the four weeks preceding the 'Labour Force Survey'.

Consequently, the ELET percentage rate in Malta is calculated by the National Statistics Office (NSO) through the labour force survey and also published by Eurostat. The NSO defines ELET as the share of persons aged 18-24 who achieved low secondary education or less (ISCED \leq 2) and are not pursuing further education or training.²

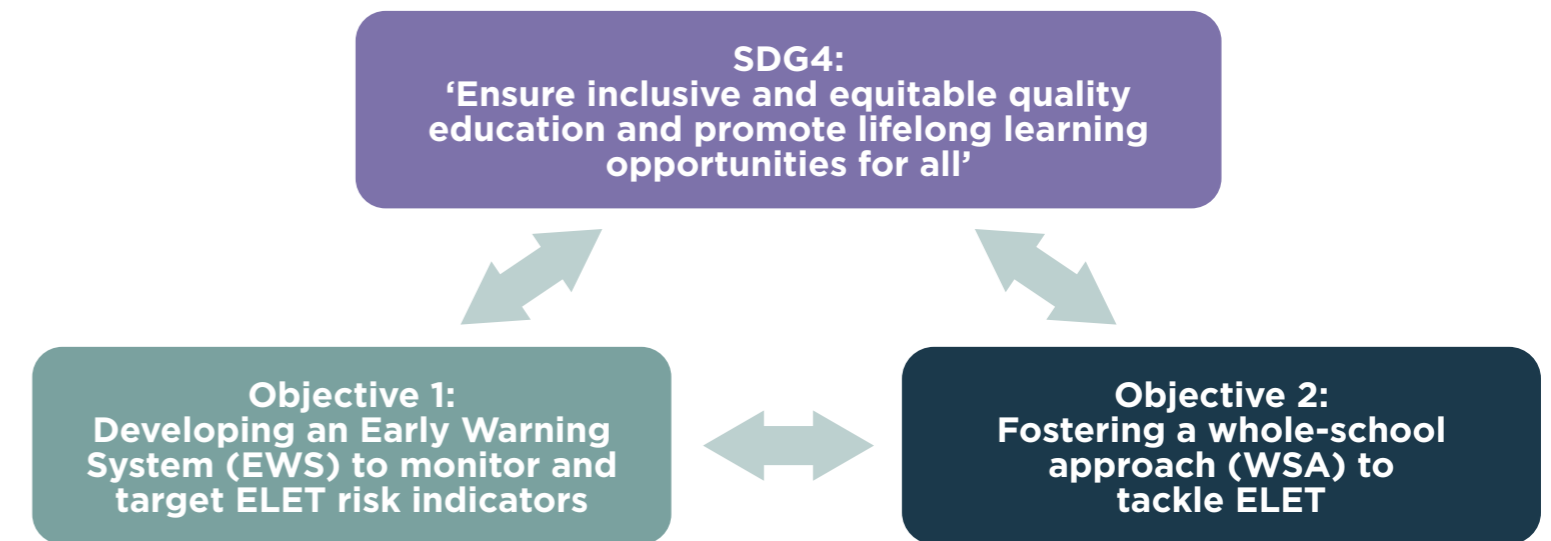


¹ ELET was previously referred to as ESL (early school leaving). ELET is also inclusive of vocational education.

² In line with EU definition and set criteria, ISCED 0 - 2 implies: No schooling, primary education, special schools for disabled, and persons who attained a secondary level education and have less than 2 O-levels or equivalent qualifications - Labour Market and Information Society Statistics Unit, 2021, p. 1

Strategy Aims and Objectives

This strategy was developed by the Early Leaving from Education and Training Unit (ELETU) within the Ministry for Education, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). The two overarching aims of the strategy link directly to strategic development goal 4³ and are depicted in the figure below. These objectives are also in line with national research,⁴ the European Council recommendations directly addressing the ELET ET2030 target pathways to school success,⁵ and the National Education Strategy, 2024-2030.⁶



These objectives aim to target the main ELET risk factor and are developed around three main pillars as subsequently explained.

³ UNESCO-UIS. (2018). Quick Guide to Education Indicator for SDG4. Available at: <http://www.arabcampaignforeducation.org/functions.php?action=files&table=files&ID=441>

⁴ ESLU, MFED. (2019). Centralised Monitoring and Early Identification of Students at Risk of Early School Leaving (ESL): Approaches to ESL prevention. (The project was commissioned by the European Commission's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) and awarded to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The current report was written by Dr. Eemer Eivers on behalf of IEA.

⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/60390/st14981-en22.pdf>

⁶ The Education Framework is currently being developed through consultation with multiple stakeholders (including educators, parents, students) and expected to be published in 2024.

The Three Pillars and ELET Risk Factors

Strategic actions that promote the whole-school approach are based on three pillars, namely prevention, intervention, and compensation. There are five main ELET risk indicators: 1. achievement; 2. behaviour and wellbeing; 3. chronic absenteeism; 4. disabilities and learning difficulties; 5. engagement; 6. family disadvantage and socioeconomic factors. Gender and health issues are also relevant markers that can be linked to each risk factor.

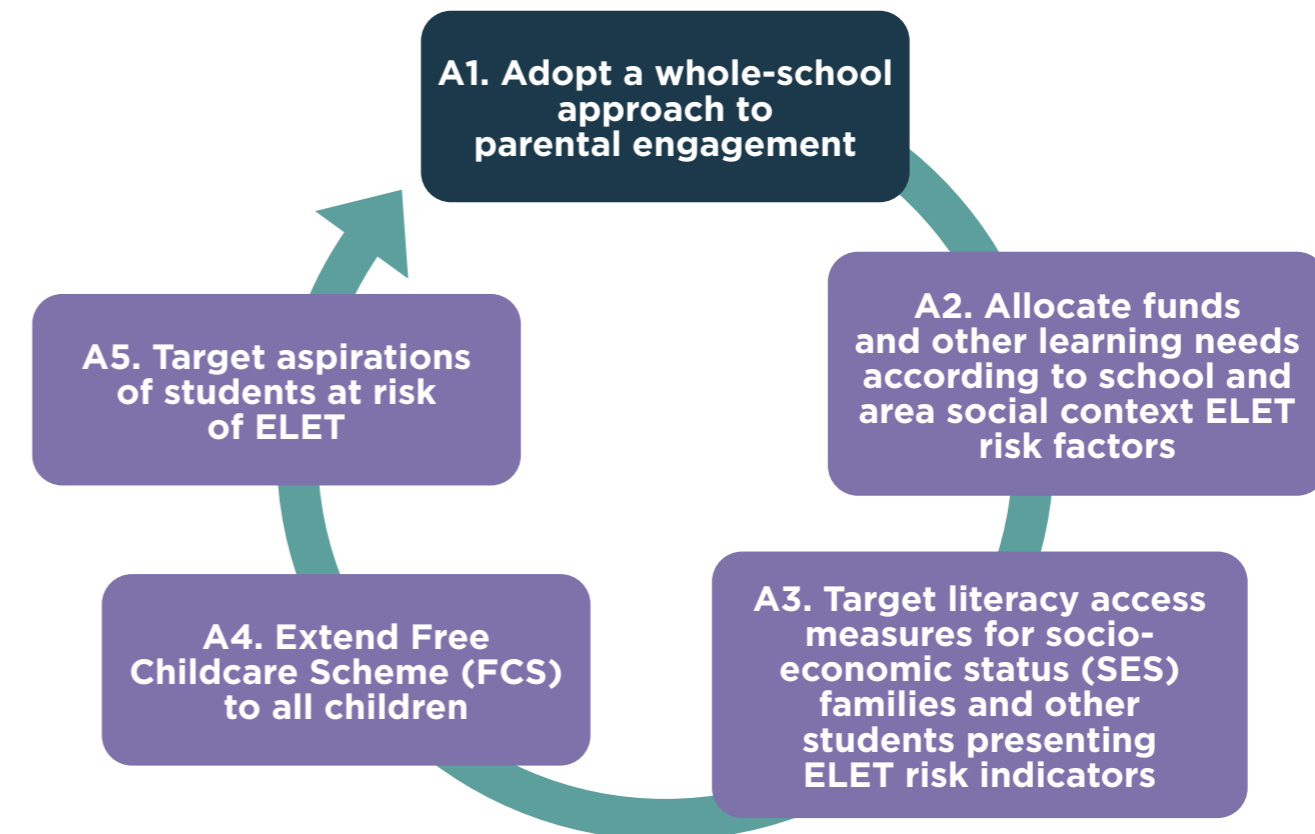


The Prevention Pillar and Strategic Actions

What is Prevention?

Prevention intends to prevent the risk of ELET through various measures from an early age to combat disadvantage. These should start from and focus on early childhood and care, wellbeing, capabilities and increased agency of the family unit and educators, and the structural system of education. Prevention measures aim to minimise any social, cultural, and economic gaps and increase the learning opportunities for the needs of diverse learners.

Preventive Strategic Actions

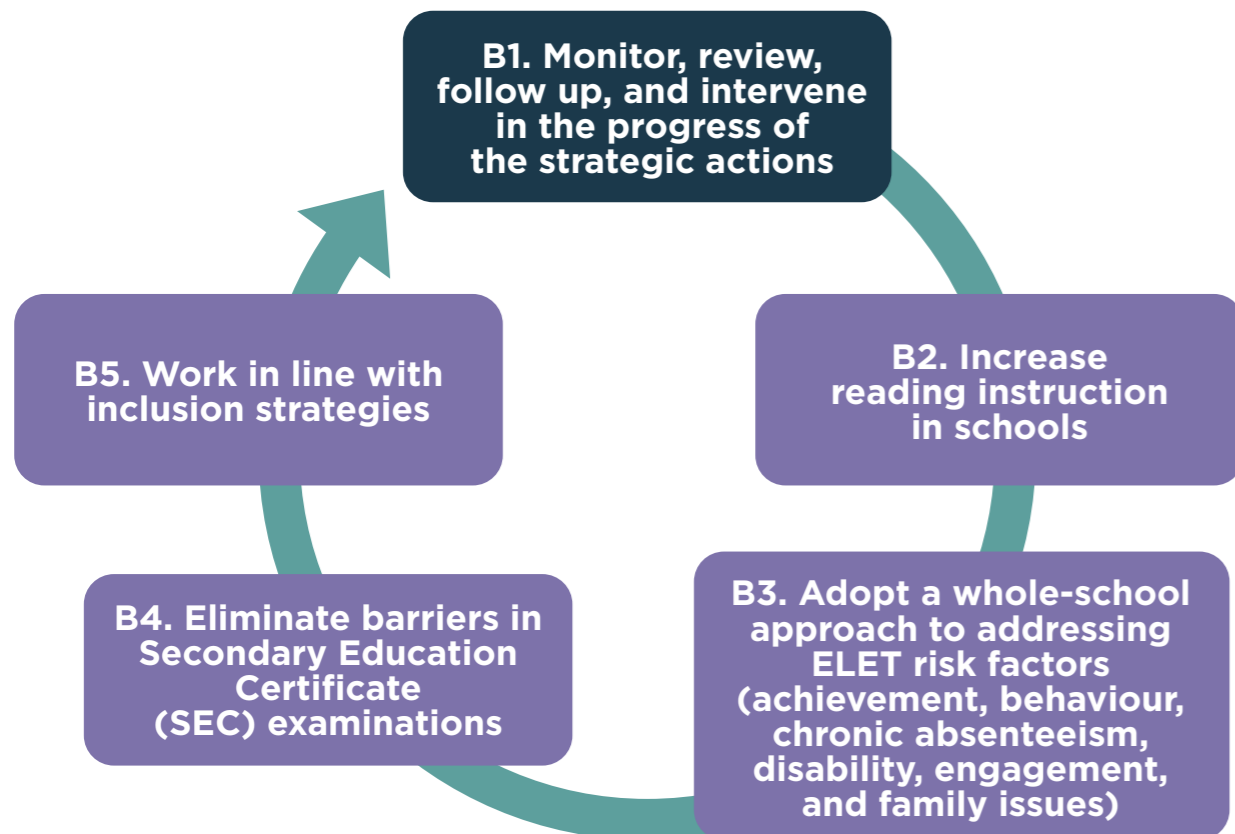


The Intervention Pillar and Strategic Actions

What is Intervention?

Intervention measures improve the quality of education by providing targeted support for students at risk. Schoolwide actions target all students, particularly those at risk of dropping out, while student-focused measures draw from early warning systems to individual holistic support. Intervention measures aim to identify a gap in wellbeing and capabilities in order to minimise educational inequity and increase agency.

Intervention Strategic Actions

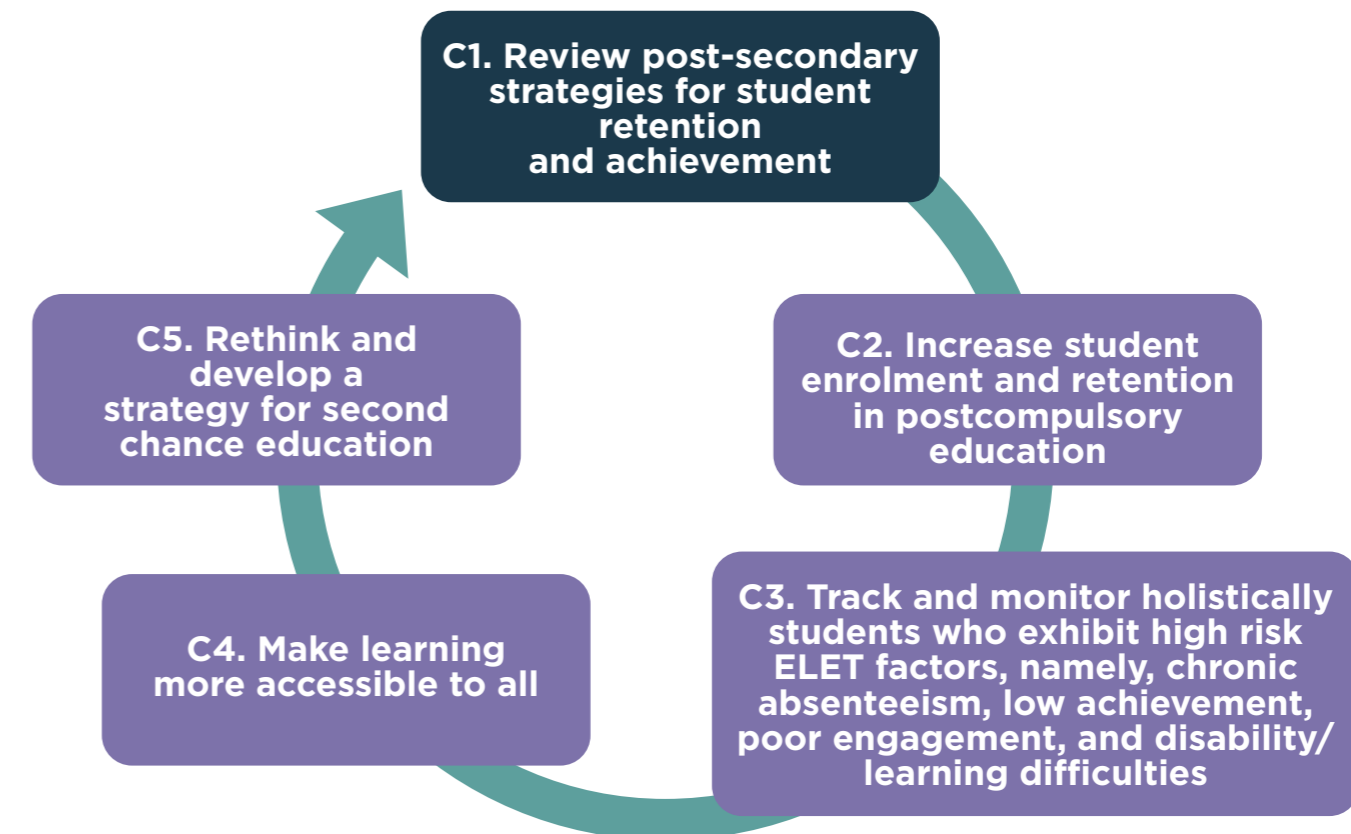


The Compensation Pillar and Strategic Actions

What is Compensation?

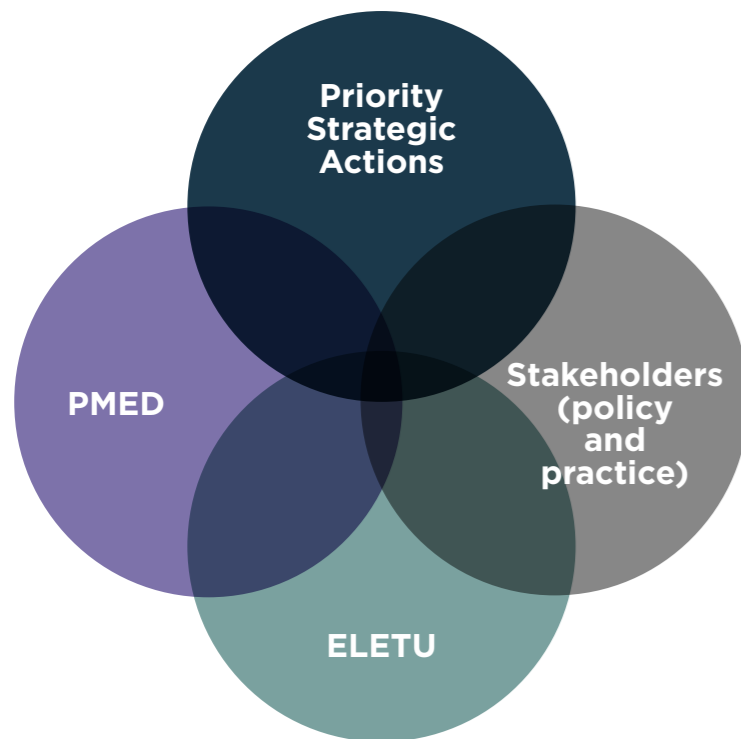
Compensation measures refer to initiatives to re-engage students who have disengaged or are in the process of disengaging from the educational system. Measures include second chance programmes, re-integration into mainstream schooling, and targeted individual support. In Malta, existing measures include several institutions and accredited programmes which emerged from the first strategy for the prevention of early leaving from education and training.

Compensation Strategic Actions



The Way Forward – Priorities, Implementation and Evaluation

Tackling ELET risk factors in the initial stages of children’s educational journey supports a more inclusive and holistic educational system, which is why this strategy adopts prevention and intervention strategic pillars as the first two actions to tackle ELET. This is why Prevention Measure A1 should be considered as the flagship of the strategy, followed by Intervention Measures B1 and B3. For a socially just system, it is also imperative to ensure equity through real opportunities by minimising inequalities and increasing student retention and enrolment in post-compulsory education. That is why Compensation Measures C1 and C2 are also considered a priority within this strategy. This strategy will be evaluated by the Early Leaving from Education and Training Unit, through periodic monitoring carried out by the programme and Implementation Unit within MEYR. Stakeholder consultation (educators, parents, children, psychosocial teams, ministries, and policymakers) will be imperative for data collection and for the strategic actions to be implemented.



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