

SFC2021 Programme supported from the ERDF (Investment for jobs and growth goal), ESF+, the Cohesion Fund, the JTF and the EMFAF - Article 21(3)

CCI	2021MT05SFPR001
Title in English	Fostering the socioeconomic wellbeing of society through the creation of opportunities for all and investment in human resources and skills
Title in national language(s)	MT - Nippromwovu t-tishih soċjoekonomiku permezz tal-holqien ta' opportunitajiet indaqs u investiment fir-rizorsi umani u l-hiliet
Version	1.2
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	01-Jan-2021
Eligible until	31-Dec-2029
Commission decision number	C(2022)7939
Commission decision date	28-Oct-2022
NUTS regions covered by the programme	MT - Malta MT0 - Malta MT00 - Malta MT001 - Malta MT002 - Gozo and Comino/Ghawdex u Kemmuna MTZ - Extra-Regio NUTS 1 MTZZ - Extra-Regio NUTS 2 MTZZZ - Extra-Regio NUTS 3
Fund(s) concerned	ESF+
Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> under Investment for jobs and growth goal for the outermost regions only

Table of Contents

1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses.....	7
Table 1	18
2. Priorities.....	24
2.1. Priorities other than technical assistance	24
2.1.1. Priority: 1. Enhancing Employability and Labour Market Resilience	24
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy; (ESF+)	24
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	24
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	24
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	28
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	28
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	29
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR ..	29
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR.....	29
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	29
Table 2: Output indicators	29
Table 3: Result indicators	30
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	30
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	30
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing.....	30
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	31
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes.....	31
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	31
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons (ESF+)	32
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	32
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	32
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	34
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	34
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	35
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR ..	35
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR.....	35
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	35
Table 2: Output indicators	35
Table 3: Result indicators	36
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	36
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	36
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing.....	36
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	37
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes.....	37
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	37
2.1.1. Priority: 2. Fostering Active Inclusion for All	38

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups (ESF+)	38
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	38
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	38
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	42
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	42
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	43
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	43
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR	43
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	43
Table 2: Output indicators	43
Table 3: Result indicators	44
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	44
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	45
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing	45
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	45
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes	45
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	45
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants (ESF+)	47
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	47
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	47
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	49
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	49
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	49
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	50
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR	50
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	50
Table 2: Output indicators	50
Table 3: Result indicators	50
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	51
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	51
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing	51
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	51
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes	51
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	51
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services (ESF+)	53
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	53
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	53
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	56
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	57

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	57
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	57
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR.....	58
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	58
Table 2: Output indicators	58
Table 3: Result indicators	58
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	58
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	59
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing.....	59
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	59
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes.....	59
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	60
2.1.1. Priority: 3. Quality and inclusive education and enhanced lifelong learning for growth.....	61
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities (ESF+).....	61
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	61
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	61
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	64
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation.....	65
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	65
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	66
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR.....	66
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	66
Table 2: Output indicators	66
Table 3: Result indicators	67
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	67
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	67
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing.....	67
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	68
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes.....	68
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	68
2.1.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility (ESF+)	69
2.1.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	69
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	69
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	71
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation.....	72
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	72
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	73
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR.....	73
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	73
Table 2: Output indicators	73
Table 3: Result indicators	73

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	74
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	74
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing	74
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	74
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes	74
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	75
2.1.1. Priority: 5. Enhancing Social Innovation	76
2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups (ESF+)	76
2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds	76
The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:	76
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	78
Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation	78
Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR	78
The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR	79
The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR	79
2.1.1.1.2. Indicators	79
Table 2: Output indicators	79
Table 3: Result indicators	79
2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	80
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	80
Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing	80
Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus	80
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes	80
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	80
2.1.1. Priority: 4. Addressing Material Deprivation (Support to the most deprived under specific objective set out in point (m) of Article 4(1) of the ESF+ Regulation (ESO.4.13))	82
2.1.1.2. Specific objective: ESO4.13. Addressing material deprivation	82
2.1.1.2.1. Interventions of the Funds	82
Types of support	82
Main target groups	83
Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support	84
Criteria for the selection of operations	85
2.1.1.2.2. Indicators	86
Table 2: Output indicators	86
Table 3: Result indicators	86
2.2. Technical assistance priorities	87
2.2.1. Priority for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(4) CPR: TA. Technical Assistance	87
2.2.1.1. Intervention from the Funds	87
The related types of actions – point (e)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR	87
The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:	88
2.2.1.2. Indicators	88
Table 2: Output indicators	88
2.2.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention	89
Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field	89
Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes	89
Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension	89
3. Financing plan	90
3.1. Transfers and contributions (1)	90
Table 15A: Contributions to InvestEU* (breakdown by year)	90
Table 15B: Contributions to InvestEU* (summary)	90

Justification, taking into account how those amounts contribute to the achievement of policy objectives selected in the programme in accordance with Article 10(1) of the InvestEU Regulation	91
Table 16A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management (breakdown by year)	91
Table 16B: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management* (summary)	91
Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management - Justification	91
Table 17A: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds* (breakdown by year)	91
Table 17B: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds (summary)	92
Transfers between shared management funds, including between cohesion policy funds - Justification	92
3.2. JTF: allocation in the programme and transfers (1)	92
3.3. Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review	92
Table 19A: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review within the programme (breakdown by year)	92
Table 19B: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review, to other programmes (breakdown by year)	92
3.4. Transfers back (1)	93
Table 20A: Transfers back (breakdown by year)	93
Table 20B: Transfers back* (summary)	93
3.5. Financial appropriations by year	94
Table 10: Financial appropriations by year	94
3.6. Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing	95
Table 11: Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing	95
4. Enabling conditions	96
5. Programme authorities	128
Table 13: Programme authorities	128
The repartition of the reimbursed amounts for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR if more bodies are identified to receive payments from the Commission	128
6. Partnership	129
7. Communication and visibility	132
8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs	134
Table 14: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs	134
Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates	135
A. Summary of the main elements	135
B. Details by type of operation	141
C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates	152
1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc.)	152
2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) CPR is relevant to the type of operation.	153
3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission.	155
4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate.	158
5. Assessment of the audit authority(ies) of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data.	159
Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs	160
A. Summary of the main elements	160
B. Details by type of operation	161
Appendix 3: List of planned operations of strategic importance with a timetable	162
DOCUMENTS	163

1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses

Reference: points (a)(i) to (viii) and point (a)(x) of Article 22(3) and point (b) of Article 22(3) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR)

1. Economic, Social, Territorial disparities and Inequalities

Malta is one of the most densely populated EU MSs, having a total area of 316 km² and 1,595 persons per km² in 2019[1], which is ever-increasing.[2] The heavy increase in inbound tourism also impinges on the country's economy; increasing the pressure on its environment, infrastructure, and services.

Malta has an ageing population, with the share of population aged 65+ years registering an increase of 4.5% between 2009 and 2019.[3] The economic old-age dependency ratio has also increased from 26.1% to 27.6% between 2014 and 2019. Between 2014 and 2018, the working-age population grew due to the net inward migration.[4] Such factors all contribute to ease pressures stemming from rising old-age dependency. On the other hand, the number of children and youngsters has decreased, with Malta registering one of the lowest fertility rates in Europe, standing at 1.13% in 2020, in comparison to 1.50% for the same year for the EU-27.[5]

Malta has a small, open, and diversified economy that is highly exposed to international market forces. In 2019, Malta's real GDP growth rate stood at 5.3%, which is higher in comparison to the EU-27's growth rate of 1.5%.[6] COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the Maltese economy and its public finances. This required Government intervention to support the economy and ensure that the crisis does not result in long lasting damage to the country's financial sustainability. In 2020, in response to the socioeconomic repercussions of COVID-19, Malta's growth rate stood at -8.2%, which indicates a contraction in comparison to the EU-27's growth rate of -5.9%[7]. Nevertheless, despite being directly hit by the containment measures adopted in the wake of COVID-19, the performance of the Maltese labour market remained relatively steady.

The measures introduced by Government in response to the pandemic, together with the resilience of the labour market ensured that high levels of employment were retained, with the employment rate standing at 73% in the second quarter of 2020. Furthermore, Malta's unemployment rate in July 2020 stood at 4.3%. Overall, activity rates for people aged 15-64 stood at 76.4% in Q2 2020, an increase of 0.9% compared to Q2 2019.[8] Despite the pandemic, in December 2021, the unemployment rate stood at 3.4% which is lower than the 4.3% registered in the same month of 2020[9]. A key measure introduced in March 2020 was the Wage Supplement Scheme[10], coupled with various measures to businesses earmarked to support their operations. Such measures have been supported through the flexibility to allocate savings under the 2014-2020 programmes to COVID-19 related interventions,[11] the SURE initiative[12] and Malta's allocation under REACT-EU.[13]

2. Challenges identified in CSRs and national strategies, market failures and investment needs

Malta's economy is highly exposed to international market forces and has relied on an export-oriented strategy. Instances of market failure are more prevalent in Malta due to the lack of physical and human resources, higher unit costs, limited economies of scale and difficulties in developing sufficient critical mass. The provision of services by the market in areas which are of a public nature, such as health, social and educational, would be unlikely to meet the characteristics of the service as required by public policy.

Labour Market

The Maltese labour market has experienced significant growth over the past years, with increasing employment rates and low unemployment rates, resulting in improvements in the Social Scoreboard indicators.[14] The Europe 2020 target of having 70% of the 20-64-year-olds as employed was reached between 2016-2018. In September 2021, 11.1% of the employed population worked part-time whilst 89.0% were in full-time employment.[15] The unemployment rate stood at 3.4% in December 2021.[16] This has also been reflected in the results obtained in SDG 8.[17]

The links between gender and specific types of economic activity is still evident. Employment levels by males are predominant in most economic activities, whilst female employment registers higher in finance and insurance; education; and human health and social work.[18] Employment in Gozo increased by 47.5% between 2009-2019; with the highest share of employees working in market services.[19] The level of jobseekers has decreased by 79.3% in the past years.[20] Economic projections produced by the Commission suggest that the economy is expected to register a GDP growth rate of 6.2%.[21]

Employment Rates and Gender

Malta's female employment rate has improved from 54.3% to 69.6% since 2014.[22] All age groups have registered improvement, especially in the 25-29 and 30-34 age brackets.[23] Although the greatest gender pay gap is observed in the 65+ age bracket, it is still high in other age groups, with the lowest noted in the 15-25 age group. In April 2014, Government launched the Free Childcare Scheme,[24] which provides free childcare services to parents/guardians. This scheme, together with other 'making work pay' initiatives,[25] is an important contributor towards the increase in female employment rates. In 2020 the gender pay gap stood at 10%.[26] With regard to self-employment, the female component remains comparatively low evidencing scope for further efforts to promote self-employment and sustain the increasing growth of females in employment.[27]

Youth Employment and Elderly Participation in the Labour Market

In 2019, some 53.9% of the total population of 15-24 year olds were in employment, which is significantly higher than the EU-27 average of 37.7%.[28] Between 2014 and 2019, the rate for unemployed young people, decreased from 10.3% to 9.3%.[29] Malta has also registered considerable improvements with regard to NEETs[30] through the Youth Guarantee Scheme.

The Mature Workers Scheme[31] launched in 2014 is directed towards employers recruiting persons aged 45-65 who have been registering for work. Although the activity rate for the 55-64 age group has increased since then, the local average of 51.8% is still significantly lower than the EU-27 average of 62.3% in 2019.[32] Thus, sustaining and increasing employment participation rates for different target groups, especially in terms of female employment and the elderly, remains important.

Social Cohesion

Malta has implemented several actions to address its EU 2020 target to lift 6,500 people out of poverty,[33] such as further investment in education and in-work benefits.[34] In 2016, Government launched a measure whereby employers who employ more than 20 people are required to include persons with a disability, amounting to at least 2% of the total workforce,[35] thus decreasing people with disability registering for work.

At Risk of Poverty

By 2020, the AROPE rate had declined to 19.9% of the total population from the 23.9% in 2014.[36] Nonetheless, the unemployed in Malta experience a high AROPE rate at 49.7%.[37] Age and sex variants impinge on the rate of poverty and material deprivation. Across different age cohorts, females are more susceptible to being AROPE, with the lowest rates registered for under 16 years, and the highest for 55+ years. These trends are noticeable across both gender[38] suggesting a link with variables related to work and employment.

Furthermore, low education levels experience higher AROPE rates. In 2020, adults with lower education level attainments were at the highest AROPE (27.6%) among adults holding all other ISCED levels, with females at a higher risk (30.5%) than their male counterparts (25.0%).[39] The higher the attainment levels of parents, the less the likelihood that the child will face poverty and social exclusion. Thus, further development of the education sector is a necessary investment for enhanced inclusion, as well as social integration.

In 2020, AROPE by type of household shows that overall households with dependent children have a higher risk at 17.5%. The type of household that experienced higher rates from 2018 is the 'two adults, three or more dependent children' category reaching a rate of 35.8% in 2020 from 27.3% in 2018.[40] Children are also considered to be one of the main vulnerable groups in terms of poverty and social exclusion, and they tend to have a higher AROPE rate than the general population. In 2020, the AROPE rate for Malta for those younger than 18 stood at 22.6% compared to 19.9% of the total population.[41] In 2019, 23% of the 0-17 age group were at risk of poverty and exclusion, which is 4% higher than the rate pertaining to the rest of the population.[42]

In 2020, 3.1% of persons with a disability experienced overburden because of housing cost, compared to 2.7% of the population with no disability in Malta.[43] The percentage of people (population aged 16+) with activity limitation struggling to make ends meet in Malta stood at 8.6%, compared to the 4.1 of persons without a disability.[44]

Material Deprivation

In 2020, the material deprivation rate for Malta (8.7%) compared well with the EU-27 rate (13.8%).[45] Regarding severe material deprivation, which is one of the multidimensional poverty criteria towards sustainable development,[46] Malta's rate (2.3%) was lower than the EU-27 average (7.4%).[47] Malta has registered progress on SDG 1.[48] Moreover, females Malta registered a higher deprivation rate than their male counterparts.

In 2020, 4.9% of the population could not afford an everyday meal with protein or vegetables.[49] Food deprivation has severe and broad implications across all age groups, including medical (including mental health), social and economic problems.[50] Additional initiatives are necessary to ensure the sustainable integration of persons suffering from material deprivation into society and to ensure basic livelihood and wellbeing.

Homelessness

The incidence of homelessness in Malta remains very low.[51] In 2020, 78.6% of all households owned their main dwelling, of which 57% never had a mortgage or have repaid their debt in full.[52] To continue

preventing homelessness, Government adopts a proactive approach, through roll out of schemes to purchase affordable housing, whilst developing social accommodation, amongst others.

TCNs and economic migrants

Over recent years, the percentage of foreign nationals in Malta has increased exponentially.[53] In 2019, Malta had the highest rate in the EU-27 of migration influxes, with 56 immigrants per 1000 inhabitants.[54] In 2018, the amount of employed foreign nationals in Malta and Gozo amounted to 67,596 persons, with almost 53% from EU member states, 46% TCNs and 1% from EFTA countries.[55] Although wages, income and living conditions of TCNs in Malta are found to be more favourable than in other EU countries, around 25% of TCNs in Malta are associated with relative poverty, especially those employed in sectors such as construction and tourism.[56]

Education and Training

As outlined in the EC's 2021 *Ageing Report*, Malta's demographic growth is expected to continue in the next decade resulting in the enhanced need for an increased digitalised and labour-market relevant provision of schooling, to sustain Malta's economy and continue fostering a culture of education and lifelong learning (LLL).[57]

Early School Leaving (ESL)

Although in 2020 the ESL rate in Malta was still lagging behind the EU-27 average at 9.9%, Malta has registered a reduction of over 4.4 percentage points since 2014.[58] Since then, several actions have been launched, including the mainstreaming of vocational and applied subjects within the lower secondary school system.[59] Through the RRP, Government will continue supporting the Reading Recovery programme which supports students in achieving essential basic skills and aims to prevent literacy failure and ESL. The introduction of new revised syllabi has also contributed towards positive trends in this area.[60] Engagement at primary level was further enhanced through the introduction of digital technologies and e-content under the 2014-2020 programme. A targeted approach towards primary students with low literacy skills was also supported through out-of-class sessions during school hours. Measures enabling the early identification and development of ESL prevention strategies have also been supported through the TSI.[61]

In recent years, a learning outcomes approach has been integrated in the national schooling system. The developed pedagogical tools for teachers were based on the National Curriculum Framework. The Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) and the ALP+ also aim to further reduce the ESL rate, funded through national funds. The roll out of the One Tablet Per Child Project, funded under the 2014 – 2020 programme, addresses technological disparities amongst students and fostering digitalisation from an early age.

Together with experts from the European Network for Basic Skills (EBSN), all the courses in Basic Skills (up to level 2) in literacy, numeracy and digital skills have been redesigned to include new modular course work, new delivery techniques, new modes of assessment, and student guidance and mentorship. The drafting of the first *Basic Skills Strategy* will introduce a Skills Checker for self-measurement of literacy, numeracy and digital skills levels as an indicator and assistance to project further educational trajectory, an educators' training specialising in basic skills pedagogy, and the provision of career and pastoral guidance, including for students with basic skills. This is being developed as part of the education reform under the RRP.

Reduction in ESL rate still requires a multi-faceted approach covering various reform measures and investments both under ESF+ and reforms, including through the RRP. ESF+ resources remain key to support the development of educational programmes, quality education provision, and the continued recognition of formal and non-formal learning, amongst others.

Further and Higher Education (FHE)

The provision of quality and recognised VET programmes in Malta has changed the education landscape dramatically in recent years and has given alternative options for young people.[62] Tertiary educational attainment has also improved considerably over recent years, with Malta achieving its Europe 2020 target of 34.7% in 2018.[63] With regard to education achievements by gender, Malta registered the largest increase of 25.9 percentage points in the EU-27 MS for Doctoral graduates.[64] In 2017, participation in credit mobility programmes ranked low at 5.4%.[65] Despite the progress achieved, more efforts are needed to improve access to and quality of FHE.[66]

In recent years, several investments have been undertaken to introduce new education pathways in VET. It is often considered as one of the most effective ways in reducing ESL rates and youth unemployment. Absenteeism numbers for VET students are marginally lower than non-VET students. Under ERDF 2014-2020 Government has invested in VET infrastructure with the aim of reducing ESLs. Further investment in VET infrastructure is foreseen under the ERDF/CF/JTF programme, complementary to ESF+ resources.

Adult Learning

In Malta, adult learning and participation rates in education and training registered increases from 16.5% in 2014 to 20.7% in 2021.[67] On the other hand, in 2021, Malta had the 2nd highest percentage of adults with lower secondary education at 38.4%, however, a positive trend is noted along the years.[68] Support to improve the skills of low skilled adults remains important, as also outlined in the *Country Report for Malta (2020)* and as targeted in Malta's RRP.

Skills Gap

Despite the expansion of the labour force in recent years, ensuring that employers can retrain and retain skilled workers is of utmost importance. Furthermore, an increase in researchers and human capital capable of initiating and directing research initiatives is dependent on an education system which fosters transversal skills of creativity, critical thinking, productivity, and problem-solving. Improving the learning journey through a more student-centred pedagogy for the provision of quality education and addressing labour market skills gaps is therefore important.

The European Green Deal is also expected to have an impact on the employment market and the required skills. Eurostat reports that 'Employment in environmental goods and services sector'[69] are limited for Malta, however, it also indicates a percentage increase in this sector between 2014-2016.[70] Having the right skills is critical to make the transition to a low-carbon economy, with the emphasis placed on improving current skills and training to provide new green skills.[71]

3. Contribution to social ambitions

Investments supported under the ESF+ shall aim to foster an inclusive social environment in line with the EPSR, foster an environment conducive to a healthy labour workforce and sustain a new generation of quality education provision, whilst addressing the challenges faced by the current low-skilled adult population. Around 4.8% of the Programme will support youth employment whilst 4.4% will aim to address child poverty and foster child wellbeing. Furthermore, around 33% of the Programme is earmarked to directly contribute towards CSRs, in particular those related to investment in education and skills and resilience of health systems.[72]

The Programme will also aim to address territorial disparities between Malta and Gozo. Building on previous programming periods, Government remains committed to earmark at least 10% of all cohesion policy and agriculture funds for Gozo. Initiatives foreseen under this Programme will particularly complement horizontal and targeted investments in Gozo supported under the ERDF.

4. Complementarity and synergy with other forms of support[73]

ESF+ measures will complement ERDF interventions, primarily under POs 1 and 4, and RRP investments, in terms of providing the necessary combination of infrastructure and skills to enable jobs and growth; access to and improved education, health and social services, R&I and entrepreneurship; the digital transition, and measures to foster inclusion. It will also complement interventions under PO2 of the ERDF, CF, JTF and RRP investments to provide training, reskilling opportunities and pedagogies towards a green economy. ESF+ support will also complement cross-border programmes in areas such as green and digital cooperation, and the social dimension.

ESF+ interventions will also complement interventions under AMIF: the migration fund will target the integration of migrants and TCNs at reception stage, whilst the ESF+ will focus on the longer-term integration and inclusiveness of various vulnerable target groups, including TCNs. Complementary actions which are sector specific are envisaged under the CAP SP and EMFAF including the promotion of research and training in fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, and rural development.

In addition, Government will seek to maximise the potential synergies with other EU programmes such as ERASMUS+ and the European Solidarity Corps, and possibly the EGF in relation to unexpected restructuring events which might impact employment in a significant manner, amongst others. Measures related to fostering climate actions through education and employment initiatives under the ESF+ may also be complemented by measures under the forthcoming Social Climate Fund. Whilst support under the TSI will be sought as the main source for institutional capacity, synergies with ESF+ are also envisaged in terms of the implementation of measures that may emanate from TSI projects.

A holistic approach is being adopted at programming stage whereby the Programming of all EU funded plans and programmes is coordinated within the same Division. Interventions will complement initiatives supported through national funds as outlined in Malta's National Reform Programme, sectoral strategies (including enabling conditions), action plans and other strategic documents. The EU Programmes Agency (EUPA), that provides support to individuals and entities benefitting from ERASMUS+ and the European Solidarity Corps, falls within the remit of the Ministry responsible for EU Funds, thereby ensuring complementarity also at programming stage.

5. Challenges in administrative capacity and governance and simplification measures

Administrative Capacity

Based on lessons learnt, ensuring that the required HR capacity is deployed in the implementation of funds is essential for an effective and efficient management and control system. To ensure retention rates of personnel, it is equally important that these resources are well-trained. This approach is important for the implementation and control systems of the funds and shall be further enhanced in the 2021-2027 period.

During the implementation of the previous programming periods, stakeholders sustained their efforts towards ensuring that an adequate amount of HR capacity is deployed within the system. Further training of the staff involved in the implementation of the funds, in order to increase retention rates and ensure an adequate staff complement, is envisaged as outlined under the TA priority.

Governance

The Managing Authority (MA) has adopted an Anti-Fraud Policy and an Anti-Fraud Strategy to maintain high legal, ethical, and moral standards, to adhere to the principles of integrity, objectivity and honesty. Through these documents, the MA has adopted several specific measures:

Risk Assessment Tools - The MA has adopted the Arachne risk assessment tool, a specific risk-scoring tool, and a fraud risk register, a periodic risk assessment exercise[74] covering the likelihood and impact of specific and commonly recognized fraud risks. The MA also compiles a risk-assessment register which includes all foreseeable risks and controls needed to mitigate such risks. These are live tools enabling a continuous process of identifying new risks together with mitigating control measures to reduce the incidence of these risks and their impact.

Complaint Mechanism and Whistleblowing - The MA's Manual of Procedures, in line with the Anti-Fraud Strategy, includes a chapter on the reporting of irregularities and fraud, establishing procedures to be followed, including preventative and detective measures.

Conflict of Interest - The Code of Ethics sets standards of behaviour for all staff and covers conflict of interest, the confidentiality agreement, the acceptance of gifts or benefits, the use of official information, the use of official facilities and equipment, etc. Furthermore, all new recruits are requested to sign and declare that they are free from conflict of interest and are requested to sign a Declaration of Integrity, Confidentiality, and Impartiality.

The Programme will support increased capacity building for carrying out quality evaluations and monitoring. Any applicable best practice examples will be explored throughout the implementation of the programme.

The implementation of SCOs and other simplification measures adopted during the 2014-2020 has proven to be successful in reducing administrative burden and facilitating implementation. These will continue to apply and be strengthened where relevant as outlined in Appendix 1. Additional SCOs may be developed

in the course of programme implementation, as necessary.

Where the total cost of an operation does not exceed EUR 200,000 the contribution provided to the beneficiary from the funds will take the form of unit costs, lump sums, or flat rates, except for operations for which the support constitutes State aid. Where flat-rate financing is used, only the categories of costs to which the flat-rate applies may be reimbursed in accordance with reimbursement of eligible costs actually incurred by a beneficiary.

Apart from open calls, restricted calls for applications may be issued (except for interventions targeting multiple beneficiaries), for the Ministry/ies responsible for employment, human rights, equality and non-discrimination and inclusion, amongst others, as the responsible/competent public authority/ies to implement the project/s. Restricted calls may also be considered for Voluntary Organisations. Funds may also be allocated directly to small projects or projects that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of a particular SO which arise during the implementation period but outside the period of an open call as recommended by the MA. The MA shall invite the responsible / competent authority under the different Priority/SO to submit application/s which will be assessed by the Project Selection Committee to ensure good quality proposals against the criteria as approved by the Monitoring Committee for the selection of operations. No public calls will be issued for the management of aid schemes. Intermediate Bodies designated by the MA will be allocated a budget and will manage the scheme on behalf of the MA. The selection criteria will be drawn up by the MA and approved by the MC.

During the implementation of the Programme the MA will promote the strategic use of public procurement to support POs, including professionalization efforts to address capacity gaps. Beneficiaries should be encouraged to use more quality-related and lifecycle cost criteria. When feasible, environmental (e.g. green public procurement criteria) and social considerations as well as innovation incentives should be incorporated into public procurement procedures.

6. Lessons learnt from past experience

A mid-term review of the Key Processes involved in the implementation of EU Funds was carried between 2020 and 2021. Stakeholders identified the need for improved communication and assistance from project design and application, up to the closure of the project. A wider dissemination of Calls was also deemed to be required using different media channels, including social media. The use of simplified language rather than technical wording was also recommended.

The need for greater simplification was also highlighted by many smaller beneficiaries. The same administrative, monitoring and verification obligations apply to all projects, irrespective of the type of beneficiary, budget, size, and scope of the EU funded interventions. Throughout the previous programming period, some delays in the selection process were recorded. Thus, pre-identified projects will be allowed the possibility of a quality review process, rather than the existing full selection process.

On the implementation of priority axes under the ESF Programme, some of the challenges met include difficulty in capturing all facets of interventions, particularly where actions going beyond training were supported. Participant profiles were also a relevant component in not only targeting initiatives to their needs but also achieving foreseen targets.

- [1] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00003/default/table?lang=en>
- [2] Ibid.
- [3] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20more%20than%20one,from%205.8%20%25%20to%2014.6%20%25.
- [4] https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/Economic_Survey_2020_with_cover.pdf
- [5] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00199/default/table?lang=en>
- [6] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00115/default/table?lang=en>
- [7] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00115/default/table?lang=en><https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tec00115/default/table?lang=en>
- [8] https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/The_Budget_2021/Economic_Survey_2020
- [9] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2022/01/News2022_011.pdf
- [10] <https://covid19.maltaenterprise.com/wage-supplement-main/>
- [11] Regulations (EU) 2020/460, Regulation (EU) 2020/558
- [12] Council Regulation (EU) 2020/672
- [13] Regulation (EU) 2020/2221
- [14] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard-indicators>
- [15] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/12/News2021_232.pdf
- [16] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2022/01/News2022_011.pdf
- [17] Country Report Malta 2020, p. 70
- [18] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Documents/2019/News2019_110.pdf
- [19] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/employmenttrends#title3.6>
- [20] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/jobseekers-data>
- [21] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-performance-and-forecasts/economic-performance-country/malta/economic-forecast-malta_en
- [22] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/lfsi_emp_a/default/table?lang=en
- [23] Country Report Malta 2020.
- [24] <https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/FCS%20Brochure%20EN.pdf>
- [25] <https://education.gov.mt/makingworkpay/Documents/Consultation%20Document%20-%20Making%20Work%20Pay.pdf>
- [26] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_20/default/table?lang=en
- [27] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/12/News2021_232.pdf
- [28] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=tepsr_wc160
- [29] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem150/default/table?lang=en>
- [30] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard-indicators>

- [31] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/mature-workers-scheme>
- [32] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=tepsr_wc160
- [33] https://mfin.gov.mt/en/Library/Documents/NRP/NRP_2019.pdf
- [34] <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/Poverty%20Strategy%202014%20English%20Version.pdf>
- [35] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/employers-mt-MT-en-GB/employing-persons/employing-persons-disability>
- [36] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_lm410/default/table?lang=en
- [37] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem210/default/table?lang=en>
- [38] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tepsr_lm410/default/table?lang=en
- [39] http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps04&lang=en
- [40] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/09/News2021_175.pdf
- [41] Ibid., p.10.
- [42] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2019/News2019_188.pdf
- [43] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dhc060/default/table?lang=en
- [44] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dm060/default/table?lang=en
- [45] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tessi080/default/table?lang=en>
- [46] Country Report Malta 2020.
- [47] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/yth_incl_090/default/table?lang=en
- [48] Country Report Malta 2020. 0
- [49] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/hlth_dm030/default/table?lang=en
- [50] FEAD Operational Programme 2014-2020.
- [51] <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/Poverty%20Strategy%202014%20English%20Version.pdf>
- [52] https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2021/10/News2021_187.pdf
- [53] https://era.org.mt/en/Documents/ERA%20-%20STATE%20OF%20THE%20ENV%20REPORT_V2.pdf
- [54] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics
- [55] [https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/foreigners-data#:~:text=1.1%20Type%20of%20Employment%20of%20Foreign%20Nationals%20\(2009%2D2019\),-Employed%20foreign%20nationals&text=As%20at%20end%20of%20December,were%20in%20part%20Dtime%20employment](https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/labour-market-information/foreigners-data#:~:text=1.1%20Type%20of%20Employment%20of%20Foreign%20Nationals%20(2009%2D2019),-Employed%20foreign%20nationals&text=As%20at%20end%20of%20December,were%20in%20part%20Dtime%20employment)
- [56] <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en>
- [57] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip142_en.pdf
- [58] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=edat_lfse_14&lang=en
- [59] <http://www.myjourney.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MY-JOURNEY-BOOKLET-WEB-UPLOAD-24FEB17.pdf>
- [60] <http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/>
- [61] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/tsi_2021_country_factsheet_malta.pdf
- [62] https://db.nomics.world/Eurostat/educ_uoe_enrs04
- [63] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-pillar-of-social-rights/indicators/social-scoreboard->

indicators

[64] European Commission, *She Figures 2021*, p. 26.

[65] JRC computation based on Eurostat/ UIS/OECD Data in EC (2019) Education and Training Monitor: Country Analysis (Malta)

[66] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Educational_attainment_statistics

[67] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/product?code=trng_lfs_10

[68] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00197/default/table?lang=en>

[69] https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=env_ac_egss1&lang=en

[70] (when compared to the undulating pattern for the EU-27)

[71] <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/3057>

[72] This figure may include double counting. Minimum thematic concentration obligations for these areas are not obligatory for Malta.

[73] Additional complementarities are outlined under Section 2 of this Programme.

[74] This is also undertaken whenever a significant alteration to the management and control system is made.

1. Programme strategy: main challenges and policy responses

Table 1

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;	Despite the positive performance experienced in employment rates over the past years leading to the achievement of the Europe 2020 targets, gaps still exist amongst certain categories of job seekers , specifically youth, women, the elderly, unemployed and low skilled, which call for additional measures that improve access to employment. It also reflects Principles 3 and 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), targeting equal opportunities and active support to employment. Focus shall be directed to all jobseekers to ensure that the necessary support is provided. This will be undertaken to: - support the jobseekers struggling to access the labour market; - address the persistent gender employment gaps; - focus on sustaining youth employability; - give a further boost to the employment rate of the elderly and low skilled adults since rates are still lower than the EU-27 average; - facilitate access to employment to the unemployed and low skilled considering that the unemployed and adults with lower education attainment levels have higher AROPE; - improve employability prospects of the long-term unemployed through work and training programmes; - support training towards green and digital jobs; and - promote female entrepreneurship. This SO will support investment facilitating access to the labour market and empowering all segments of Maltese society by addressing inequalities and shortcomings. Considerable improvement in this area has been noted, however further interventions are required to sustain the success achieved and to ensure that job seekers are given meaningful access to employment and increased opportunities to participate fully in society. Interventions under this SO will therefore target different groups, supporting their reintegration within the labour market. The Social Scoreboard Indicators related to NEETs, youth unemployment rate, employment rate and unemployment rate will be directly targeted. These interventions are also expected to have an indirect impact on other Social Scoreboard indicators, including AROPE rates. In addition, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to actively address the new challenges in sustaining and supporting long term economic recovery is also considered as an essential requirement.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance	In recent years, female employment trends have been on the increase. However, whilst females tend to outperform males in terms of educational achievement, this is not translated into an equal representation in the labour market. Government has been at the forefront of the promotion of equal opportunities through reforms aimed at improving women's economic independence, including through the review of unequal taxation and refund practices, and has also been actively facilitating

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
	including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons	women's return to work through the Free Childcare Scheme. The latter has been particularly important considering that the childbearing age cohort of women is particularly affected in terms of full-time employment. Such measures have significantly increased the number of children attending childcare from 1,745 in 2013 to 6,413 in 2019. Whilst these measures helped achieve an improved gender balanced labour market, Government is committed to further facilitate the entry into the labour market of women in an effort to achieve improved gender balance. Furthermore, since women are often the primary carers of dependant persons, such support is also necessary, to shift away from gender bias in instances of care responsibilities. This is in line with the National Employment Policy 2021 – 2030, published in October 2021 which highlights the need to upskill and reskill the Maltese workforce, including low skilled workers, addressing pay inequalities and gender imbalance as well as promoting skills development in automation and other technological advancements, amongst others.[1] This also ties with Principle 2 of the EPSR on gender equality and Social Scoreboard Indicators on gender employment gap, gender gap employment in part-time employment and gender pay gap in unadjusted form. Over the years, Government has also been promoting work-life balance by acting as an example for improved working flexibilities, including through the adoption of a remote working policy launched in 2021. This is particularly important considering that Government remains the largest employer in Malta. Nevertheless, further efforts are required to continue promoting equal opportunities. [1] The National Employment Policy 2021-2030, MFE, October 2021.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning	Malta has registered considerable progress in the field of education and training, with improved ESL rates, improved tertiary education attainment levels and increasing adult participation in education and training. The 2020 CSR 2 and 2019 CSR 3 still call for Malta to invest in the quality and inclusiveness of education and skills, in view of: - increasing demographic growth putting further pressures on the education and training systems; - a growingly diverse student population; - an ESL rate which is still higher than the EU-27 average; - a level of basic skills at school level that remains low across all socio-economic backgrounds and with variations between groups too; - tertiary education attainment levels which are still lower than the EU average; - limited education support programmes for persons with disability, including following compulsory schooling; and - high percentage of adults with lower secondary education. This Programme shall aim to improve the learning journey for all, through inclusive and quality education. The reduction of ESL remains another important priority, as well as the need to develop more student-centred education for a more inclusive and high-performing education system at different levels. This also ties in with the need to further increase tertiary education attainment levels in order to sustain Malta's efforts over the last

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
	mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities	years, whilst steering society towards skills that are required by the labour market, including in STEM, green, digital, smart specialisation related subjects and subjects linked to emerging labour market needs. Quality education calls for strengthened education systems and structures, including through capacity building measures. Assessment of current programmes, the implementation of innovative content and pedagogies by means of the development of new courses and teaching practice cycles remains core at improving the quality of the education experience. These initiatives contribute towards Principle 1 of the EPSR regarding education, training and lifelong learning and a number of Social Scoreboard Indicators, including early leavers, tertiary education attainment, training and adult participation in learning.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility	In recent years, Malta has seen a positive shift towards adult learning and participation rates in education and training. However, a high percentage of adults with low education attainment persists. In this regard and as outlined in the 2020 CSR 2, further efforts to increase the take up of education and training amongst the adult population are necessary. This is also necessary in view that the contribution of SMEs to upskilling employees remains below EU average, including the low uptake of existing support schemes.[1] In this regard, further investment is required to steer society towards an LLL culture and to support employers in retraining skilled workers, including foreign workers. Government has invested in various schemes to address this, including investment in enterprise-led training, with the aim of meeting current and future skills needs. However, the existing skills gap in various sectors calls for the need to address any skills mismatch, partly through the adaptation and upgrading of skills, including in the green and digital transitions, which are considered necessary to support a future-looking, technology-driven economy. These initiatives also contribute towards Principle 1 of the EPSR regarding education, training and lifelong learning and a number of Social Scoreboard Indicators including adult participation in learning. [1] Country Report Malta 2020, Commission Staff Working Document [SWD (2020) 150 final], p. 30, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0517&from=EN
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability,	Alleviating the needs of people facing different forms of disadvantages is at the core of Malta's ESF+ Programme. Despite the progress that has been registered over the years, active inclusion measures remain important in ensuring that everyone has better opportunities in life. In this regard, through this SO, action is necessary to empower vulnerable people and facilitate their sustainable integration for improved active participation in society. Investment through this SO is necessary as a result of the persistent challenges that exist, including: - different vulnerable groups are faced with different disadvantages calling for targeted support measures for an inclusive society ensuring that

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
	in particular for disadvantaged groups	no one is left behind; - women are more susceptible to AROPE across all age groups; - families with dependent children and families with low levels of education have higher AROPE, which impacts on the life chances of children; - children tend to have higher AROPE than the rest of the population; and - persons with disability face considerable changes in terms of inclusion and face financial constraints to live independently. In this context, measures aimed at addressing lacunas which limit the active participation of vulnerable individuals, including persons with disability, through specific measures that enhance their active social participation and increase their economic independence are deemed necessary. In this context, social innovation actions are deemed necessary to develop a new way of supporting such cohorts which aims to combat stigmas, inequalities, and discriminations. These initiatives contribute towards Principles 3, 4, 11 and 17 of the EPSR targeting active support to employment, childcare and support to children, and the inclusion of people with disabilities. Interventions supported through this SO are expected to address a number of Social Scoreboard Indicators, including AROPE, at-risk-of-poverty-rate for children and the disability employment gap.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants	Malta relies on a positive net inward migration of TCNs and economic migrants to sustain its economic growth. As a result, it is becoming more ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse. As outlined in the Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan[1] the continued facilitation of sustainable/long-term socioeconomic integration across ethnicities and cultures remains important to achieve social cohesion. In this regard, it is important to channel investment to facilitate social integration as well as integration in the labour market, also in line with The National Employment Policy 2021 – 2030[2] and the Country Report for Malta (2020).[3] Whilst such needs will be primarily addressed through the AMIF programme mainly at reception stage, the ESF+ shall continue to serve as an overarching funding pillar which supports economic integration in a holistic and long-term manner. Initiatives supported are expected to contribute towards Principles 1, 3 and 4 of the EPSR and Social Scoreboard Indicators related to the employment rate and activity rate and AROPE. [1] Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, Integration=Belonging Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan Vision 2020, https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/migrant%20integration-EN.pdf [2] Ministry for Finance and Employment, The National Employment Policy 2021 – 2030, https://finance.gov.mt/nep/Documents/NATIONAL%20EMPLOYMENT%20POLICY%202021.pdf [3] Country Report Malta 2020, p. 5
4. A more social and inclusive Europe	ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to	An inclusive society requires the availability of robust health, care and social protection systems that are accessible in order to ensure that they can support those that are mostly in need. Government

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services	continuously aims to ensure that the health sector is improved and remains free, thus accessible to all in a fair manner and irrespective of socioeconomic background or status. In this regard, the need for improved social protection, health, and long-term care services, including the prevention of health determinants and inequalities remains important. Investment in this SO aims to contribute towards the resilience of the healthcare system as called for in the 2020 CSR 1, including training and capacity building measures of professionals in the field, and the enhancement of service provision. Such investment will be complemented by interventions in the care and social fields for the country to be equipped with relevant and updated quality systems safeguarding vulnerable, disadvantaged, and deprived persons. Specific focus shall also be directed towards children and young persons, also within the context of the Child Guarantee and the corresponding draft national action plan, in order to widen their opportunities, given that they are potentially one of the main vulnerable groups in terms of poverty and social exclusion. These initiatives relate to Principles 12, 16, 18 and 20 of the EPSR targeting social protection, healthcare, long-term care, and access to essential services. Initiatives supported through this SO are expected to contribute towards Social Scoreboard Indicators related to AROPE, AROPE of children and adult participation in learning.
4. A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights	MD13. Support to the most deprived under specific objective set out in point (m) of Article 4(1) of the ESF+ Regulation (ESO.4.13)	Malta's material deprivation and severe material deprivation rates have been decreasing since 2014. Despite Malta having adequate social benefits in alleviating the risk of poverty, there are still pockets in society suffering from material deprivation, which for certain categories, including single earner households, persons with disability, low skilled and children of low skilled and foreign parents, is more predominant. Since 2019, poverty reduction impact of social transfers has decreased from 30.6% in 2018 to 21.0% in 2020 and is now lower than the EU average.[1] In view of this, ESF+ is expected to complement national efforts aimed at addressing the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has also further impacted these vulnerable groups. Food deprivation has severe and broad implications across society. Apart from proving to be a long-term economic setback, the under or malnourishment of persons, including children, is also a medical and social problem. Food deprivation in youths and adults significantly reduces the potential for attaining education or skills that would allow them to attain and/or retain a job that halts the inevitable dependency on welfare schemes. Actions envisaged through ESF+ include the provision of food supplies and information related to service provision. This shall ensure the sustainable integration of persons suffering from

Policy objective or JTF specific objective	Specific objective or dedicated priority *	Justification (Summary)
		material deprivation to break the cycle of poverty and contribute to the reduction of the number of people facing material deprivation. Whilst support under this SO will primarily address food deprivation, support across other Priorities, especially Priorities 1 and 2 shall complement this intervention. Accompanying measures will be provided through the setting up of an information point at collection stage. Information will also be provided on ongoing ESF+ initiatives that can provide such beneficiaries with further support, to provide a holistic framework of support towards the most materially deprived. Initiatives supported are expected to contribute towards Social Scoreboard Indicators related to AROPE, AROPE of children, severe material and social deprivation, severe material, and social deprivation for children. [1] http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do

* Dedicated priorities according to ESF+ Regulation

2. Priorities

Reference: Article 22(2) and point (c) of Article 22(3) CPR

2.1. Priorities other than technical assistance

2.1.1. Priority: 1. Enhancing Employability and Labour Market Resilience

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy; (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The ESF+ Programme will support activities aimed at facilitating access to the unemployed, including long-term unemployed and the inactive, youths and disadvantaged people and also by sustaining the rates of those already in employment, including also through job mobility. Such measures will primarily focus on the provision of support schemes, training, and apprenticeships, which shall also address challenges ensuing from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the considerable improvement achieved, challenges persist for certain employment categories. Further efforts are required to ensure that economic improvements are for the benefit of all, including disadvantaged people. Support under this SO will contribute towards the ambitions of Malta's *National Employment Policy*.^[1]

List of potential interventions:

Youth Guarantee

This Programme will continue enabling and supporting young persons to have the opportunity to play an active role in society thereby targeting the respective Social Scoreboard indicators, including youth unemployment rate and NEET rates. The ESF+ will build upon the current Youth Guarantee initiative by providing opportunities and support for youths in furthering their learning experience beyond compulsory schooling through education, training, employment, and mobility-related initiatives. The Youth Guarantee will be reviewed to extend its scope to support towards mobility in line with the ALMA initiative to the benefit of targeted groups.

The Youth Guarantee scheme shall target young people aged 15 to 25 covering several initiatives such as NEET Activation Schemes (providing personal/professional training, mentoring and work placements); SEC and Vocational Preventive Classes (providing summer revision classes to students who fail Ordinary level exams or VET levels Level 1-3); and ICT Summer Courses (providing ECDL modules or other IT courses).[2] Support will be directed to young people who have been particularly hard hit by the crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training for Employment Initiative

Building on the Training for Employment initiative implemented under the 2014-2020 period, the funded actions will support individuals in acquiring relevant labour market skills and competencies through training, furthering their studies beyond compulsory education and skills development, including basic skills, as well as through work exposure, placement measures and apprenticeships across different sectors of the economy, amongst others. This initiative aims to assist those who wish to develop and/or improve their skills by participating in off-the-job training, by refunding costs related to training after successful completion. This is expected to improve employability of participants.[3]

This Programme will also serve as the main EU funding instrument dedicated to employment and training policies which will complement interventions under various other EU funds and national initiatives with the objective of fostering green and digital transitions. These are in line with the short to medium term EU ambitions under the Green Deal and the European Digital Strategy, amongst others.

Malta's decarbonisation efforts will require upskilling and reskilling to ensure that the skills, including blue skills, of the workforce remain abreast with economic development and labour market needs. The ESF+ will also support training programmes and related information campaigns to facilitate employability in these sectors to fully exploit and to maximise the transition process foreseen.

Ensuring the well-being of the workforce is also a critical facet that the ESF+ aims to support since a socio-economic environment requires a strong performing workforce for the businesses to thrive. Consequently, strengthening the well-being of the workforce will remain important.

Access to Employment Scheme

Incentives for vulnerable groups will also be supported via the continuation of the Access to Employment Scheme, that provides employment aid to enterprises to promote recruitment of more challenged jobseekers and inactive persons.[4] Enhanced incentives for specific target groups, including older workers, women, persons with disability and TCNs, are also foreseen. These are expected to contribute towards the integration, retention, and progression of disadvantaged groups in the labour market, as well as aid in preventing inflows into long-term unemployment. Support with aim to facilitate access to self-

employment for jobseekers and inactive people, amongst others, through the provision of learning, mentoring, and funding programmes.

With the aim to facilitate stronger systems and structures that facilitate employability, the programme also foresees the support of capacity building measures for job coaches, mentors and others working in the business creation dimension and in the employability field in general.

Work Programme Initiative

ESF+ will further support the continuation of the Work Programme Initiative supported under the 2014-2020 Programme, which aims to enable the long-term unemployed, aged 25 years and over, to move into and within the labour market. Investment aims to empower this cohort through the provision of individual profiling, training, and work placements, thereby bridging the gap between labour market needs and the skills and competencies of the long-term unemployed. This initiative will also target low skilled adults, to increase their participation in the labour market and preventing their transition to long-term unemployment in as far as possible.

Fostering a Culture of Social Entrepreneurship

This SO will support social entrepreneurship and the development of social enterprises, i.e. enterprises with a social purpose, complementing Government's work in this sector and the establishment of the *Social Enterprise Act*,^[5] providing the necessary legal framework which enables social enterprises to develop and operate. The focus is to promote social entrepreneurship that could be done through the development and rollout of social programmes and the introduction of appropriate support measures. Support will target helping individuals identify their own potential through training, mentoring, coaching, and upgrading of skills, knowledge, and competencies, amongst others. This is considered important to continue fostering social cohesion and will build on Malta's strong sense of community and sustain a culture of solidarity as well as to indirectly promote gender mainstreaming. Such actions are also expected to contribute to social innovation, under P5.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities

Overall, this SO will be further complemented by efforts foreseen under Priority 3. Priority 3 is earmarked to provide both generic and specific learning opportunities to further reduce barriers to active labour market participation and improved mobility. This includes upskilling and reskilling initiatives. Complementarily, Priority 2 will provide a targeted approach to address vulnerabilities which currently limit individuals in becoming active citizens. Complementarity with the RRP is also foreseen, given the reform foreseen in relation to reinforcing the resilience of the labour market.

In view of emerging needs, such as those that may be impacted by the situation in Ukraine, additional support mechanisms may be identified during the implementation of the programme.

Expected Results

- Increasing employment rates, including for older workers, women, and youth; and
- Increasing the number of individuals with skills related to the digital and green transformation of the labour market.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] <https://finance.gov.mt/nep/Pages/default.aspx>

[2] Such initiatives are foreseen to build on the 14-20 schemes under ESF.

[3] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/training-pays-scheme>

[4] <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/a2e-scheme>

[5] <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/630/eng>.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target groups are:

- Job seekers / workers, unemployed and inactive people, including women, low skilled adults and older workers and other disadvantaged categories of persons;
- Young unemployed and inactive, young NEETs, young early-school leavers;
- Professionals and other workers in the field of employment, including persons working with young people; social partners and NGOs duly registered under the respective legislation; and
- Employers.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference, is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling conditions.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	2,517.00	17,770.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECO02	Unemployed, incl. long-term unemployed	persons	986.00	6,962.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECO04	Inactive	persons	1,304.00	9,205.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	PSO01	Total number of participants below 30 years of age	Number	1,725.00	12,174.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECR01	Participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	persons	32.00	2021	35.00	MA monitoring tool	
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECR03	Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	persons	59.20	2019	60.00	MA monitoring tool	
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	EECR05	Participants in employment six months after leaving	persons	42.10	2021	45.00	MA monitoring tool	
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	73.30	2019	75.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	134. Measures to improve access to employment	13,800,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	135. Measures to promote access to employment of long-term unemployed	900,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	136. Specific support for youth employment and socio-economic integration of young people	6,000,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	138. Support for social economy and social enterprises	600,000.00
1	ESO4.1	Total			21,300,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	21,300,000.00
1	ESO4.1	Total			21,300,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	21,300,000.00
1	ESO4.1	Total			21,300,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	01. Contributing to green skills and jobs and the green economy	1,848,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	13,800,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	10. Addressing challenges identified in the European Semester	5,652,000.00
1	ESO4.1	Total			21,300,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	8,280,000.00
1	ESO4.1	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	13,020,000.00
1	ESO4.1	Total			21,300,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The ESF+ Programme will support activities aimed at achieving a more balanced labour market, with a primary focus on women, given the lower female participation rate in the labour market when compared to men. Considerable progress has been achieved in the employment rates of women, also due to the introduction of free childcare provision and other measures aimed at facilitating an improved work-life balance, however disparities still exist which call for directed action to further contribute towards the narrowing of gaps. Interventions will aim to target the gender employment gap Social Scoreboard indicator.

List of potential interventions:

Facilitating female participation in the labour market and promoting gender balance

Taking into consideration the lower participation of women in the Maltese labour market, the ESF+ Programme will be directed towards measures addressing equal opportunities through a gender targeting approach. The goal is to provide women with the necessary resources, information, skills and support measures to be active citizens, whilst also aiming to attain a labour market which is more balanced, and reduce the gender pay gap. In this context, the carrying out of studies and campaigns that contribute towards this objective will also be considered including with the aim of increasing the participation of women in decision making positions. This will build on the positive trends in educational achievement whereby women tend to fare better than men on average.

Women also play an important role in the care of dependents, involving both children and the elderly. This, at times, hinders the active participation of females in the labour market. By means of the ESF+ Programme, initiatives directed at encouraging the involvement of women, including carers, in the workforce is foreseen. In this regard, ESF+ may provide support in terms of respite services, especially for parents, guardians, or carers of persons with a disability and other dependents, such as the elderly. Such respite programmes will partly relieve such carers, that are often women, from these responsibilities, therefore enabling better participation within the labour market. This will be complemented by initiatives that contribute towards the active involvement of men in unpaid caring responsibilities which is key to enable women to take on paid work. Interventions may include, amongst others, sensitisation measures to combat gender stereotypes, contributing towards facilitating the transition to a dual-carer / dual-earner model, whereby both women and men engage in paid work and unpaid care, more equally, thereby paving the way to achieve a more gender balanced labour market.

The ESF+ Programme shall also contribute toward addressing the stereotype notions within Malta's gender employment perceptions which is a key element in dealing with some of the challenges that the labour market is facing, both in terms of levels of overall employment rates and equal opportunities. In this regard, research and targeted support measures including campaigns and information sessions, are necessary to address gender stigmas with respect to certain jobs/ career paths as well as to continue fostering and developing a culturally integrating society and to provide further insights into how these challenges can be addressed.

Efforts to support women in a targeted manner and hence addressing gender biased poverty pertaining to the participation in the labour market, are also envisaged. In this respect, ESF+ may support assessments on the economic independence of women, with a specific focus on purchasing power. This would enable a better understanding of the barriers encountered by women in Malta, and identifying necessary services to overcome such barriers.

Female entrepreneurship is another facet that needs addressing in terms of business creation, with the aim to encourage female participation across various strands of the labour market ladder. This will also complement investment aimed to strengthen business development under the ERDF 2021-2027 Programme. This will contribute towards two key Social Scoreboard indicators relating to the employment rate and gender employment gap.

Gender mainstreaming is another dimension that the ESF+ aims to foster to primarily support women in the constraints they face in relation to labour market inequalities and imbalances, complementing actions supported under Priority 2. Measures supported will be in line with the draft *Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan* which aims to capture, amongst others, training towards public administration officials on the subject matter and programmes directed towards women, including outreach activities, guidance, training and mentoring in areas such as entrepreneurship, information, and communications technology (ICT), as well as leadership and management, amongst others. Creating more awareness and preparedness within the private sector for a more balanced labour market, the development of gender mainstreaming guidelines to address specific circumstances and the undertaking of studies will also be considered with the context of the *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy*.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities

Overall, this SO will be further complemented by efforts foreseen under Priority 2, providing a comprehensive approach towards addressing the social disparities created by the gender gap.

Expected Results

-Increasing female participation in the labour market.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target groups are:

- Unemployed women;
- Inactive women;
- Vulnerable women; and
- Women with specific difficulties to access the labour market.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its

preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion, and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	180.00	1,269.00
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	PSO02	Number of actions supported	Number	0.00	2.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	EECR05	Participants in employment six months after leaving	persons	44.10	2021	45.00	MA monitoring tool	
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	72.90	2019	75.00	MA monitoring tool	
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	PSR03	Improved/Introduced new systems/services	Number	2.00	2013	2.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	142. Measures to promote women's labour market participation and reduce gender-based segregation in the labour market	3,000,000.00
1	ESO4.3	Total			3,000,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	3,000,000.00

1	ESO4.3	Total			3,000,000.00
---	--------	-------	--	--	--------------

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	3,000,000.00
1	ESO4.3	Total			3,000,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	3,000,000.00
1	ESO4.3	Total			3,000,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	ESO4.3	ESF+	Transition	01. Gender targeting	3,000,000.00
1	ESO4.3	Total			3,000,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: 2. Fostering Active Inclusion for All

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

This SO aims to enhance active inclusion, while providing vulnerable individuals with opportunities for a better quality of life. This SO will support the empowerment of vulnerable people by increasing their skills, competencies, and wellbeing to improve their life chances, leading towards economic independence, as outlined in the national strategic vision *Striving for Excellence: Driving Social Innovation through Regulation (2020-2027)*[1] while also targeting various Social Scoreboard Indicators.

List of potential interventions:

Support services and life skills for social housing beneficiaries

This intervention foresees support towards tailor-made initiatives, including relevant training and support services such as social work and psychological support, that will enable vulnerable social housing beneficiaries to improve their life skills, including how to manage their income, social, financial and legal responsibilities, and how to become active citizens. This intervention will also strive to address economic and social vulnerabilities, including through promotion of services and enhancement of community activities.

Active Ageing Projects

Support will be provided for projects whose aim is to provide support to ageing persons, providing them with opportunities to remain actively engaged within the community. In view of Malta's ageing population, supporting such interventions has become crucial, to ensure that ageing persons can be provided with opportunities to remain active within the labour market and within society and to foster independent living, thereby ensuring a healthy, independent, and secure life as they age. Support is foreseen to include the setting up and delivery of services and support for their participation in events, and measures fostering intragenerational skills transmission, amongst others.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

This intervention aims to strengthen and empower families in vulnerable situations, through the provision of functional family therapy services. Such actions will also aim to foster improved parent empowerment and functional family nuclei. FFT is specifically designed to cater for at-risk groups, with the aim of addressing their specific needs, to support their integration within the community, enabling active citizenship. The aim is to nurture a healthy environment for parents and children alike.

After-Care Services

Empowering youths and providing them with the necessary skills to transition into adulthood is important, especially in the case of youths that have spent time institutionalised in a care-home environment and are now old enough to live independently. This SO will therefore provide support in the form of counselling, therapy, and provision of basic skills, including life, literacy, and digital skills, supporting youths transitioning out of institutionalised care and into independent living. This intervention aims to provide youths with the necessary skillset required to join the labour market, obtain financial independence, and thrive within the community.

Investing in youth rehabilitation

As outlined in the *National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion*[2], a safety-net approach is required to prevent and intervene to safeguard those at-risk and vulnerable groups, including young people with challenging behaviours.

ESF+ resources will provide a holistic rehabilitative approach, including the development of programmes for rehabilitation for vulnerable young people, including those very emotionally disturbed or with very challenging behaviour. This will include therapeutic services to re-integrate youth within the community and thrive independently and avoid the need for long term care provision. Such disadvantaged youths shall be provided with the necessary therapies and skills within a safe and secure environment. This investment complements ERDF support under the 21-27 programme to develop the youth rehabilitation centre. Such targeted and holistic approach will aim to prepare these youths for a full integration and participation in society and the labour market, facilitating their transition into adulthood.

VASTE Programme

Government is committed to enhance active inclusion prospects for people with disability to increase their employability. Acknowledging that disability is

not homogenous,[3] there will also be a focus on tailored services enhancing the employment prospects of people with disabilities. Support measures shall aim to cover generic and specific training services to achieve skills relevant for work and independent living, work exposure support, apprenticeships as well as job coaching, guidance, mentoring services and awareness raising.

The ESF+ also aims to build on the success achieved under the VASTE initiative implemented under the ESF 2014-2020, bringing vulnerable people closer to the labour market. Training support may include:

- Pre-Employment training courses offered to persons with different disabilities/vulnerabilities, spanning over several hours;
- Basic ICT Training, providing practical knowledge in relation to several basic skills including Internet use, email proficiency, and the use of Microsoft Office;
- Sheltered Employment Training, providing hands-on training in different tasks such as back office, assembly of products and packaging, amongst others, with the assistance of Job Coaches. Soft skills such as work ethics, independent living, communication, and social skills are also included;
- Headstart, simulating a work setting, helping individuals improve relationships and social skills, understand work-related skills and foster workplace ethics;
- Mentoring services, provided prior and during employment, as necessary;
- Supported Employment, providing participants with training and re-training on specific job tasks, as per participant's needs, with the support of Job Coaches and the identification of a 'work buddy' who handholds the vulnerable individual to retain employment.

Enhancing accessibility to information is also an objective in *Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons*.^[4] In this regard, the promotion of opportunities for both employers and employees will complement this measure, with the aim to facilitate and promote accessibility to employment related services that are available for persons with a disability.

Supporting the active role of voluntary organisations

Voluntary organisations play an active role in the area of inclusion whereby they act as important service providers. Government will thus support voluntary organisations to reach out to vulnerable people to facilitate their inclusion processes. This intervention therefore aims to provide opportunities for the third sector to deliver services and implement projects aimed at supporting vulnerable groups, to foster better social inclusion.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities

Interventions foreseen under this SO will be implemented in synergy with specific employment measures under Priority 1, and education and LLL measures

under Priority 3.

Interventions under this Priority are also intrinsically linked to Government's efforts to equip disadvantaged groups and the organisations supporting them, including NGOs with the necessary support to encourage integration. Such efforts will complement targeted interventions for persons with a disability and with challenging behaviours under the ERDF whilst measures targeting community care will also complement initiatives under LEADER implemented through the CAP SP.

Expected Results

- Increase social integration for disadvantaged groups;
- Strengthen the employability of persons at risk of poverty and persons with a disability; and
- Reduce child poverty.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] Social Care Standards Authority *Striving for Excellence: Driving Social Innovation through Regulation Strategic Vision 2020-2027*
https://scsa.gov.mt/en/Documents/Publications/SCSA_Vision_ENG.pdf

[2] Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, 'National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2021-2024'.

[3] Parliamentary Secretary for Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, *The Malta National Strategy for Persons with Disability* (2015), <https://activeageing.gov.mt/en/Documents/SOCIAL%20POLICY%20WEB.pdf>

[4] Ministry for Inclusion and Social Wellbeing, 'Freedom to Live' – Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons, <https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf>

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target groups to be supported under this SO are the vulnerable groups, persons facing social exclusion and discrimination, covering, amongst others:

- Persons with a disability;
- Vulnerable young people;
- Persons with mental health problems;
- Vulnerable Women;
- Vulnerable older persons;
- Low-skilled adults
- Unemployed;
- Working poor; and
- Voluntary organisations.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring

Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling conditions.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	715.00	5,047.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECO12	Participants with disabilities	persons	202.00	1,429.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSO03	Number of non-governmental organisations supported	Number	1.00	4.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECR01	Participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	persons	32.00	2021	35.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECR03	Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	persons	80.80	2019	82.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECR05	Participants in employment six months after leaving	persons	29.10	2019	30.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	47.50	2019	50.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSR02	Vulnerable persons with improved well-being upon leaving	Percentage	33.00	2020	35.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSR03	Improved/Introduced new systems/services	Number	3.00	2020	3.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	147. Measures encouraging active and healthy ageing	3,000,000.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	5,850,000.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	153. Pathways to integration and re-entry into employment for disadvantaged people	4,350,000.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	158. Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	600,000.00
2	ESO4.8	Total			13,800,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	13,800,000.00
2	ESO4.8	Total			13,800,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	13,800,000.00
2	ESO4.8	Total			13,800,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	06. Addressing child poverty	57,600.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	13,742,400.00
2	ESO4.8	Total			13,800,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	5,520,000.00
2	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	8,280,000.00
2	ESO4.8	Total			13,800,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The ESF+ Programme will be mobilised to facilitate the socioeconomic integration of TCNs, including through initiatives steered by public entities and voluntary organisations. Whilst support will mostly be funded under the AMIF Programme, which will primarily target the integration, of non-EU- migrants (TCNs) at reception stage, the ESF+ will focus on the longer-term integration and inclusiveness of various vulnerable target groups, including TCNs. Within this context TCNs are being addressed in a targeted manner under this SO but also horizontally across the programme.

List of potential interventions:

Facilitating the socioeconomic integration of TCNs

Malta is increasingly becoming more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse. In this regard, due attention will be given towards supporting measures contributing to the vision of belonging, in line with Malta's *Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan* launched in December 2017.[1] Awareness-raising campaigns and events shall include, amongst others, campaigns educating citizens about migration and integration and enabling them to find out how they can participate in the integration process. Measures to overcome segregation, prejudice, and discrimination against TCNs and economic migrants will also be supported. Moreover, research activities focusing on the integration needs of TCNs will also be considered.

In addition, the ESF+ Programme will fund measures facilitating access towards labour market integration, inclusive support schemes and other support measures contributing towards the goal of long-term integration and belonging. The latter could encompass LLL and integration programmes to enable TCNs to become active members of society, as well as equipping a pool of cultural mediators and health liaison officers with the necessary skills to strengthen their integration role. Such measures will aim to build on the support provided under the AMIF Programme 2014-2020 as well as the establishment of the Migrant Learners Unit which has been supported through the SRSP[2]. Such initiatives are in line with the objectives of the *Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan (2020)* which aims to strengthen the overall respect towards diversity and social cohesion to ensure that no individual is left behind.[3]

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities under this Programme and other programmes/initiatives

This focused approach on TCNs and economic migrants adopted under this SO will be complemented by thematic investments under the employment,

education and inclusion SOs whereby measures envisaged under ESF+ will also be open to this cohort. In addition, investment under this Programme will ensure complementarity with any initiatives supported by the AMIF.

Efforts to strengthen institutional and administrative capacity may also be supported through the TSI in synergy with initiatives supported under ESF+. Complementarities with mobility opportunities under EURES may also be explored.

Expected results

Increase the socioeconomic integration of TCNs.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, *Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan Vision 2020*,

<https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/migrant%20integration-EN.pdf>

[2] The SRSP has been succeeded by the TSI.

[3] Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (2017) *Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan Vision 2020*,

<https://meae.gov.mt/en/documents/migrant%20integration-en.pdf>

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target groups to be supported under this SO are:

- TCNs;
- Employers; and
- The general public.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	EECO13	Third country nationals	persons	171.00	1,208.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	EECR01	Participants engaged in job searching upon leaving	persons	22.40	2021	23.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	PSR02	Vulnerable persons with improved well-being upon leaving	Percentage	33.00	2020	35.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	157. Measures for the social integration of third country nationals	900,000.00
2	ESO4.9	Total			900,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	900,000.00
2	ESO4.9	Total			900,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	900,000.00
2	ESO4.9	Total			900,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	05. Non-discrimination	450,000.00
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	450,000.00
2	ESO4.9	Total			900,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	360,000.00
2	ESO4.9	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	540,000.00
2	ESO4.9	Total			900,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The ESF+ will support the improvement of social services, the accessibility of healthcare systems and the sustainability of long-term care, also in view of new exigencies arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Interventions will also be steered towards improving social protection systems to better respond to individual needs.

List of potential interventions:

Training for Health Professionals, including in long-term care and disability

The ESF+ Programme will support capacity building related to systems and structures within the health and care services with the objective to provide the highest possible standard. Funds will be steered towards upgrading skills and competencies of medical professionals, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and other workers within the health care and disability sector in view of addressing the constant challenges that the sector faces, both as a result of the dynamics of an ageing population as well as emerging new challenges. Actions shall also contribute to the reduction of health inequalities, including through actions promoting healthier lifestyles and improved wellbeing. Interventions will reflect the ambitions of the draft *National Health Systems Strategy 2020-2030*. Through this SO, ultimately patients, including vulnerable people, those receiving long-term care and persons with a disability, are expected to benefit through improved services and better care. These measures will complement actions under ERDF and the RRP in relation to community-based and long-term care to create alternative resources in primary care, facilitate the acute care service system as well as foster prevention and early detection measures.

Specialised training in Child Protection Services

The strengthening of the social protection systems and structures is a necessary pillar in Government's mission to improve the integration chances for vulnerable people, including children. As a result, ESF+ will seek to improve the effectiveness and resilience of social protection systems through measures

to enhance service provision. This will be achieved through the training and upskilling of professionals, carers, and other service providers of social protection services, with a specific focus on child protection services. Initiatives directed towards professionals working with this vulnerable group will be supported to update their skills and knowledge, as well as their ability to deal with emerging and complex situations. This will provide better services for children who are involved in prosecution, legal cases, including as victims or witnesses.

Child Guarantee Initiatives

Child poverty is often the result of an accumulation of multiple factors, including poor housing, limited opportunities, risk of discrimination, violence, and unequal access to important health and education services.[1]

Building on Malta's comprehensive systems, this SO aims to alleviate negative social inheritances. The focus is primarily on children and young persons who could be addressed within the context of the Child Guarantee Initiative[2] and the *National Children's Policy*[3], covering measures pertaining to healthcare, housing, sports and education, amongst others, possibly including the provision of material aid such as the provision of one healthy meal every school day; school uniforms, prescription glasses and books, amongst others.[4] Other initiatives may include the provision of digital services and tools, as to improve the digital skills of children and tackle the digital divide from an early stage. Support may also be provided to ensure equal access to school-based activities such as sports, artistic and cultural activities. Initiatives supported shall be in line with Malta's National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Child Guarantee that is being developed as well as the EU strategy on the right of the Child. Measures fostering the children's active participation in civic and democratic life shall also be considered.[5] This will complement initiatives under the other SOs under this Priority and Priorities 3-5.

Actions envisaged include improving access, broadening the services provided, particularly health, therapy and education related services; and carrying out research studies, training, and awareness campaigns. Additionally, early identification of at-risk children and the implementation of the right forms of support, as well as the provision of support via community outreach through schools, coupled with positive parenting to foster stability in the family will be supported.

Addressing children's developmental/medical needs holistically

The individual needs of children with development challenges require specific attention to ensure that these are assessed and identified at an early stage. Early intervention would enable professionals to build on the children's strengths whilst mitigating challenges to allow for a better quality of life. Such therapies will foster greater changes of independence in adult life. It is key that the services being provided are continuously assessed and adapted in line with evolving methodological approaches.

Whilst under the ERDF 21-27, resources will be mobilised to centralise services related to the Child Development Assessment Unit (CDAU) and the Child and Young People's Service (CYPS), through the development of appropriate infrastructure, ESF+ resources will complement this initiative by supporting the assessment of current services provided for children with developmental/medical needs to reform the support structure and services currently offered to these children across various sectors including health and education. ESF+ will finance studies, adaptation and development of programmes, and training for professionals involved in the provision of such services, for an improved service delivery across various services including medical, educational and social. This will aim to provide children and youth with a holistic service, enabling better treatment options and a better outcome, thus facilitating their integration into society, including the labour market. This intervention will also contribute to the objectives of the European Child Guarantee by further enabling access to key services

Support for Social Partners and other NGOs

Supporting social partners, civil society, voluntary organisations, workers' and employers' organisations and other NGOs that are duly registered under the respective legislation, to strengthen their contribution towards the formulation of national social, education and employment policies as well as to create awareness on policies and services available in these sectors remains important. Such support will be implemented through various means including training, networking measures and activities jointly undertaken by social partners, amongst others. Such efforts will aim to increase the knowledge, competencies, and preparedness of the organisations/groups with a view to be in a better position to contribute towards the development and implementation of new policies, thereby improving the representation of vulnerable groups at policy making level.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities under this programme and other initiatives

Investment under this SO will complement interventions under SO (vii) primarily by equipping the relevant structures with the necessary skills and competences to provide improved services. Furthermore, interventions under this SO will complement investments in health infrastructures foreseen under the ERDF and RRP as well as measures supported under the Health Programme with the aim of increasing health resilience and sustainability, amongst others.

In view of emerging needs, such as those that may be impacted by the situation in Ukraine, additional support mechanisms may be identified during the implementation of the programme.

Expected Results

Improved health and care services, including long-term care, social protection services and reduced health inequalities.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] Eurocities, Fighting child poverty in European Cities, 2020

[2] Measures supported will be in line with the National Action Plan that is being developed.

[3] Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, 'National Children's Policy', 2017.

[4] In line with Malta's Draft Early childhood education and Care policy Framework, the Educational Inclusion Policy (Draft) and the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024, amongst others.

[5] <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9968&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1>

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target group of this SO are:

- Health and care patients and workforce;
- Social protection users and workforce;
- Persons with special needs and other disadvantaged persons; and

- Children with development challenges.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion, and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	928.00	6,549.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	PSO03	Number of non-governmental organisations supported	Number	1.00	5.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	EECR03	Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	persons	61.00	2021	65.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	79.60	2019	80.00	MA monitoring tool	
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	PSR03	Improved/Introduced new systems/services	Number	3.00	2020	4.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	158. Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	3,960,000.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	160. Measures to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems (excluding infrastructure)	9,600,000.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	163. Promoting social integration of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including the most deprived and children	4,200,000.00
2	ESO4.11	Total			17,760,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	17,760,000.00
2	ESO4.11	Total			17,760,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	17,760,000.00
2	ESO4.11	Total			17,760,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	06. Addressing child poverty	4,492,200.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	07. Capacity building of social partners	1,800,000.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	08. Capacity building of the civil society organisations	900,000.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	6,967,800.00

2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	10. Addressing challenges identified in the European Semester	3,600,000.00
2	ESO4.11	Total			17,760,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	7,104,000.00
2	ESO4.11	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	10,656,000.00
2	ESO4.11	Total			17,760,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: 3. Quality and inclusive education and enhanced lifelong learning for growth

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

Interventions shall be aimed at reducing ESL rates and increasing participation in FHE, bringing the desired levels of education outcomes at par with EU levels. Actions include improving the quality of education and providing further and enhanced opportunities.

List of potential interventions:

Promoting quality education and reducing ESL

Malta has progressed in narrowing the gap with the EU average on the rate of ESL, especially through the introduction of a structured vocational pathway, and implementation of vocational subjects in secondary schooling. ESF+ will address other measures identified by national strategies to reduce ESL in Malta.[1] Such initiatives include preventive and active measures across the education cycle. Thus, the introduction of innovative teaching and learning tools remains a priority.

Further integration of digital technologies as part of the national curriculum within compulsory schooling, with a focus on secondary schools, is foreseen. ESF+ will support the development of new pedagogies that incorporate digitalisation as an educational tool. Support will also focus on the provision of portable technologies, relevant e-content, and software platforms, aimed at creating a holistic digital education learning experience where the focus will be on how the technology can be used to aid learning. Capacity building measures are also foreseen for educators, pupils, and their guardians, to equip them with the necessary skills to maximise the benefits of such investment.

Developing Inclusive Education pathways

Equally important is the need to develop inclusive education pathways for children with special education needs, including for persons with a disability to ensure that these are equipped with specific solutions supported by the necessary accompanying measures that address their distinctive needs. ESF+ will therefore support the promotion of quality education and improved accessibility by developing more inclusive pathways. Actions will include the purchase of apposite equipment as well as specific training for staff, guardians and students tailored to pupils' needs in line with the children's developmental/medical needs. This will ensure that the transition towards more quality and digitalised educational methods is also seamlessly implemented for this cohort. Further actions shall include awareness campaigns against bullying and prevention from cyber bullying, amongst others.

Enhancing FHE

- Provision of Scholarships through non-repayable grants

Government aims to support scholarships for advanced studies (including at Master levels and PhDs) to better enable students to take advantage of market and career opportunities and respond to future economic, cultural and social needs. Support will cover areas of priority such as STEM, green transition, digitalisation, the blue economy and other emerging sectors, as well as those sectors related to national priorities and labour market gaps, amongst others. Such efforts also aim to contribute towards reducing the rate of low skilled adults which will be supported at lower levels of education under this programme and the RRP. Particular attention will be provided to under-represented and vulnerable persons such as persons with a disability as well as persons from a low socio-economic background, amongst others.

- Provision of Scholarships through financial instruments

Increased participation in quality high level education remains important to compete and meet the challenges of emerging markets and socio-economic needs. Building on the financial instruments utilised in the 2014-2020 programming period, a blended financial instrument offering a combination of a guaranteed soft loan and a grant in the form of an interest rate subsidy is foreseen and is aimed to meet the financing needs of students seeking to pursue accredited courses in MQF levels 5-8 and other internationally recognised certificates. Areas of support may include tuition fees, accommodation costs, subsistence expenses, amongst others.

Addressing skills gaps through the development and running of new courses

The ESF+ Programme will support the development of education and training programmes primarily in new emerging sectors related to the transition to the green and digital economy, the emerging requirements of the Industry 4.0, including automation and other technological advancements, the creative industry and ICT sectors, smart specialisation areas and other sectors related to development needs and challenges emanating from Malta's realities, amongst others. Furthermore, this Programme will support the development and running of socio and psychosocial courses to address the different local needs, while including a 'train-the-trainer' approach.

These will be complemented by the establishment of new teaching pedagogies, enhancement of accreditation systems (including the shift to credit systems based on learning outcomes), the adaptation of current programmes and the creation of new and innovative content, as necessary.

Improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems

Capacity building measures for professional development are needed to keep upgrading competences and skills. ESF+ shall therefore support the training of educators to enhance their competencies and knowledge in line with changing and emerging programmes and pedagogies. Investment may also support the mobility of teachers, trainers, and other learning staff to improve the education experience, whilst ensuring complementarity with Erasmus+.

Support shall also be provided towards the alignment of studies with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. This will further enable access to further and higher education, foster the recognition of learning (including formal, informal and non-formal) and further enable international student mobility.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities under this Programme and other initiatives

Complementary initiatives under this Programme are foreseen with Priority 1 and SO (g) in relation to the intrinsic link between education and employment measures.

Investments targeting ESL will build on the support received under the SRSP targeting measures on the early identification of students at risk of ESL. Interventions will also complement measures enhancing vocational education, strengthening early-school leaving prevention, strengthening skills development, developing new education pathways, and implementing an effective education policy monitoring system outlined under the RRP and measures strengthening education facilities under ERDF. Credit mobility opportunities in other countries shall be primarily targeted through the Erasmus+ whereby an

Erasmus exchange semester has already been identified across various further and higher education institution, thus encouraging students to take up Erasmus+ mobility opportunities.[2] Efforts to strengthen institutional and administrative capacity in the education sector may also be supported through TSI.

Expected Results

Reduce ESL rates, improve levels of basic skills and increase overall attainment rates;

Enhance digital literacy and improve quality, inclusiveness, and accessibility of education at all levels; and

Increase participation in tertiary education.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] MFED, *Early Leaving from Education and Training Policy* (2030) (Draft).

[2] <https://www.um.edu.mt/studentlife/internationalopportunities/erasmus/umstudents/>, <https://www.mcast.edu.mt/erasmus-charter-for-higher-education/>

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target groups of this SO are:

- Pupils / students;
- Early-school leavers;
- Pupils/students with special learning needs, including people with disabilities;
- Individuals aiming to further their education; and
- Professionals / employees in the education sector.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion, and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The ex-ante assessment undertaken for the financial instrument under the ESF OP was concluded in January 2018, followed by the roll out of the instrument in Q4 2019. The assessment concluded that beyond the grant scholarship schemes there is still a market gap in terms of financing, due to the fact that the current (and projected) supply of financing assistance for education is failing to satisfy the actual demand and the existent market instruments are failing to address the present needs. Since the implementation of the financial instrument is still in the early stages, further assessment at this stage would not capture its impact. Thus, the foreseen financial instrument under this SO will be based on the ex-ante assessment carried out in 2018 (Article 58(3) (b) CPR). Complementarity between FIs and non-repayable grants will be sought, where possible.

The possibility to revisit and update this ex-ante assessment during the implementation of this Programme shall remain and is foreseen within the context of the thematic evaluation being carried out by the MA.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	4,015.00	28,344.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	EECO09	Participants with lower secondary education or less	persons	2,599.00	18,344.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	EECO11	Participants with tertiary education	persons	200.00	1,412.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	PSO02	Number of actions supported	Number	1.00	5.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	EECR03	Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	persons	98.20	2019	92.00	MA monitoring tool	
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	97.70	2019	92.00	MA monitoring tool	
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	PSR03	Improved/Introduced new systems/services	Number	3.00	2020	4.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	145. Support for the development of digital skills	13,500,000.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	149. Support for primary to secondary education (excluding infrastructure)	13,500,000.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	150. Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	14,296,357.00
3	ESO4.6	Total			41,296,357.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	38,296,357.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	04. Support through financial instruments: guarantee	3,000,000.00
3	ESO4.6	Total			41,296,357.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	41,296,357.00
3	ESO4.6	Total			41,296,357.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	01. Contributing to green skills and jobs and the green economy	579,271.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	06. Addressing child poverty	864,000.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	9,936,001.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	10. Addressing challenges identified in the European Semester	29,917,085.00
3	ESO4.6	Total			41,296,357.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	16,518,543.00
3	ESO4.6	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	24,777,814.00
3	ESO4.6	Total			41,296,357.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

The actions that the ESF+ Programme will address under this SO focus on enhancing access to LLL for the labour force with the aim of upgrading competencies, skills, and qualifications, fostering employability and adaptability. It will seek to support the implementation of actions in line with Malta's *Draft National Lifelong Learning Strategy* which is driven by its vision for adult education that delivers economic development, social and civic participation, personal fulfilment, and wellbeing, whilst keeping in mind any actions necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interventions will be directed towards individuals at different stages of their lives wishing to upgrade their skills, competences, and knowledge through different means, whether through formal, non-formal and informal learning, thereby covering different levels of the learning cycle. Interventions will range from addressing basic skills, improving employment prospects and supporting enterprises for growth.

Interventions are expected to target various policy areas, including the transition to the green and digital economy, the blue economy, emerging requirements of the Industry 4.0 including automation and other technological advancements, the creative industry and ICT sectors, improved service delivery amongst others.

Interventions will target various Social Scoreboard indicators, including adult participation in learning and tertiary education attainment.

List of potential interventions:

Training programmes to support LLL in the public sector

Measures aimed at fostering LLL amongst public service employees provided primarily by the Institute for the Public Services, will also be supported through the ESF+ with the aim of enabling individuals to gain additional skills in relation to a shift towards digitalisation, improved service delivery, adaptation to different new digital realities and working models and modernisation of the workforce and administration, amongst others. ESF+ is therefore expected to support the development of modules aimed at training employees within the public administration.

This will aim to widen employees' career path possibilities as well as provide better mobility prospects across the labour market. In this regard, this SO will support actions covering the delivery and implementation of training and education programmes supporting the adaptation and upgrading of skills of the workforce, in order to meet labour market challenges and reflect the ambitions of the *National Employment Policy*.

LLL programmes under this SO could also support the delivery of community learning, with the aim of facilitating and promoting alternative, locally coordinated adult education programmes at community level. Investment in this lifelong learning measure will be complemented by capacity building support for LLL structures and systems, which is covered under SO (f). This approach will provide for a comprehensive improvement in education and training structures and systems for the benefit of all learners.

Promoting the adaptation of enterprises and entrepreneurs through training aid

Through this SO, the ESF+ Programme will provide opportunities for learning beyond compulsory schooling and formal academic and vocational streams. It will therefore finance actions aimed at increasing the participation in continuous education and learning leading to a competitive and flexible workforce. Following the positive return on investment in LLL, the *Investing in Skills* scheme will be extended, with actions directed to improve and upgrade the skills of individuals within the private sector and other non-government organisations that are duly registered in line with national regulatory requirements, with the aim to increase productivity and enhance adaptability. Furthermore, as part of the shift towards green and digital transitions, fostering LLL is deemed to play a key role in creating the necessary awareness and upskilling in the environmental and digital sectors. In this regard, efforts to promote LLL as a means of fostering the green and digital transitions, including focus on the sustainable blue economy to complement EMFAF, as well as emerging labour market needs will also be promoted.

Investing in postdoctoral research and fellowships

Malta aims to invest ESF+ resources in human capital with a focus on emerging labour market sectors, including in the areas of green, digital and innovation. This will be complemented by ERDF resources targeting the same areas.

Human capital investment will therefore be directed towards post-doctoral research and fellowships to support the drive towards research fields such as green, digital and STEM as well as smart specialisation areas which will be prioritised. Support will also be provided to address the evolving development needs and challenges characterising Maltese society, in line with Malta's national priorities.

Building on similar measures under the 14-20 ESF programme, participants will be provided with a work contract or similar that provides them with

adequate rights in terms of social security and social protection. In cases where the research takes part partially or entirely abroad, requirements related to the participants' return to Malta after the completion of the post-doc will be included in the respective call/s.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities under this Programme and other initiatives

Interventions for LLL will complement investment in education by providing opportunities to extend educational possibilities beyond the traditional educational cycle in an effort to foster a culture of LLL. This will in turn enable improved labour market possibilities. Interventions will complement support received under the TSI in relation to the capacity building of the public administration, amongst others, and will also complement initiatives for R&I foreseen under the ERDF as well as research projects under Horizon Europe. These interventions will also complement RRP measures related to strengthening skills development with particular focus on low-skilled adults.

Expected Results

Increased adult participation rate in education, training and LLL, including for low-skilled adults.

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The target groups to be supported under this SO are:

- Employees;
- Unemployed;
- Inactive;
- Enterprises; and
- Social Partners and other non-government organisations that are duly registered in line with national regulatory requirements.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion, and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	EECO05	Employed, including self-employed	persons	7,512.00	53,024.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	EECO19	Number of supported micro, small and medium sized enterprises	entities	96.00	678.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	EECR03	Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving	persons	70.30	2019	71.00	MA monitoring tool	
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	EECR06	Participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving	persons	34.90	2019	35.00	MA monitoring	

										tool	
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	PSR01	Participants gaining a certification upon leaving	Percentage	98.80	2019	92.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	146. Support for adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change	6,000,000.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	151. Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	6,000,000.00
3	ESO4.7	Total			12,000,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	12,000,000.00
3	ESO4.7	Total			12,000,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	12,000,000.00
3	ESO4.7	Total			12,000,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
----------	--------------------	------	--------------------	------	--------------

3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	01. Contributing to green skills and jobs and the green economy	480,000.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	03. Investing in research and innovation and smart specialisation	1,920,000.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	7,680,000.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	10. Addressing challenges identified in the European Semester	1,920,000.00
3	ESO4.7	Total			12,000,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	4,800,000.00
3	ESO4.7	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	7,200,000.00
3	ESO4.7	Total			12,000,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: 5. Enhancing Social Innovation

2.1.1.1. Specific objective: ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups (ESF+)

2.1.1.1.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: points (d)(i), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi) and (vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

The related types of actions – point (d)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation:

Under this Priority, ESF+ will support actions of social innovation, that is the development and implementation of new ideas and solutions aimed at meeting social demands. The goal therefore is to improve the wellbeing of citizens through emerging approaches and scaling them up to improve practices, service delivery and accessibility. Interventions aim to foster independent living to improve the quality of life of various disadvantaged groups, including those affected by rare/uncommon diseases, the elderly, and people with a disability. This Priority will provide an opportunity to support interventions that will drive societal progress. In line with the European Commission's Guidelines, support will be directed towards initiatives representing new responses to pressing social demands aimed at improving well-being. Social entrepreneurship actions supported under SO 1 are also expected to indirectly contribute to social innovation.

List of potential interventions:

Actions for Social Innovation directed towards new/improved ways to enhance well-being

In this regard, forms of social innovation will be supported to ensure that social demands affecting vulnerable groups in society are addressed through new and/or non-traditional approaches.[1] ESF+ will support studies, training, development of programmes related to the establishment of new services as well as the re-invention of current services, including the way they are implemented, monitored, rolled out. Such support will therefore include, amongst others, the identification of innovative solutions that aim to support patients with rare diseases, as well as the need to foster the independence of older people and people with disabilities, enabling them to live a more active life within their community. Focus shall also be directed towards supporting the creation of collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, in an effort to boost capacities to continue shaping policies.

This SO will target the creation of new social relationships or collaborations between partners that make up Malta's health, care and social protection systems in order to have robust systems in place to address socioeconomic challenges. In this regard, the approach is to target the stakeholders that work in the relevant fields, for the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities under this programme and other initiatives

Investment under this Priority will complement interventions under Priority 2, supporting the creation of new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations for the provision of improved services that result in better integration within the community of the target groups previously mentioned. Interventions will also complement other innovative approaches adopted under Priority 2 such as support for social enterprises as well as support fostering ALMA initiatives under Priority 1.

Expected Results

Improving the wellbeing of patients, including those with rare diseases

Enhancing the independence of older people and people with a disability

Increasing the implementation of social innovation actions

Flexibility Facility

In line with Article 25 (2) of the CPR, interventions under this SO may finance, in a complementary manner and subject to the limit of 15% of ESIF for the Programme, actions falling within the scope of assistance from the ERDF, provided that they are considered necessary for the satisfactory implementation of the operation and are directly linked to it. The flexibility facility will not necessarily reach the full 15%. The use of the facility will be monitored through the SFD.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] The guidelines issued by the European Commission provide inspirational practices supporting people throughout their lives.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The main target group of this SO are:

- persons with special needs and other disadvantaged persons; and
- health service providers, carers.

Actions safeguarding equality, inclusion and non-discrimination – point (d)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 6 ESF+ Regulation

Several efforts have been undertaken during the previous programming period to safeguard equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination, including initiatives aimed at promoting civil rights and equal opportunities. Complementary measures aimed at improving gender equality in matters pertaining to the labour market were also at the forefront of national policies. Such principles will continue to be upheld under this programming period.

With specific reference to the ESF+ Programme, the active involvement of the relevant authorities during the different cycles of the Programme, including its preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, shall continue to be ensured. The participation of the relevant authorities in the ESF+ Monitoring Committee, in accordance with the respective Terms of Reference is another important measure which shall contribute towards safeguarding equality inclusion and non-discrimination. Measures to safeguard equality, inclusion and non-discrimination will also be in line with the respective enabling condition.

Such principles shall also be addressed at project level, by means of their inclusion as selection criteria in order to encourage project promoters to factor them in their project proposals. A help desk that was set up under the previous programmes to assist project promoters in their effort to integrate equal opportunities, inclusion, and non-discrimination in their project ideas, will remain in force.

Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of territorial tools – point (d)(v) of Article 22(3) CPR

The targeted territories are Malta and Gozo.

The interregional, cross-border and transnational actions – point (d)(vi) of Article 22(3) CPR

In line with Article 15 of the ESF+ Regulation, this SO may support transnational and cross-border co-operation with the aim of promoting mutual learning, thereby increasing the effectiveness of policies supported by the ESF+.

The planned use of financial instruments – point (d)(vii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Taking into consideration the nature of the target group and the envisaged interventions the use of financial instruments is not foreseen under this SO.

2.1.1.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 8 ERDF and CF Regulation

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	EECO01	Total number of participants	persons	124.00	878.00
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSO02	Number of actions supported	Number	0.00	2.00

Reference: point (d)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline or reference value	Reference Year	Target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSR02	Vulnerable persons with improved well-being upon leaving	Percentage	33.00	2020	29.70	MA monitoring tool	
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	PSR04	Number of tested initiatives/programmes	Number	3.00	2020	3.00	MA monitoring tool	

2.1.1.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference: point (d)(viii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	2,400,000.00
5	ESO4.8	Total			2,400,000.00

Table 5: Dimension 2 - form of financing

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	01. Grant	2,400,000.00
5	ESO4.8	Total			2,400,000.00

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	06. ITI - Islands and coastal areas	2,400,000.00
5	ESO4.8	Total			2,400,000.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	06. Addressing child poverty	76,800.00
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	2,323,200.00
5	ESO4.8	Total			2,400,000.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	02. Gender mainstreaming	960,000.00
5	ESO4.8	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	1,440,000.00
5	ESO4.8	Total			2,400,000.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

2.1.1. Priority: 4. Addressing Material Deprivation (Support to the most deprived under specific objective set out in point (m) of Article 4(1) of the ESF+ Regulation (ESO.4.13))

2.1.1.2. Specific objective: ESO4.13. Addressing material deprivation

2.1.1.2.1. Interventions of the Funds

Reference: Article 22(3) CPR and Article 20 and Article 23(1) and (2) ESF+ Regulation

Types of support

This Programme aims to provide the most deprived with periodic distribution of food to alleviate the risk of poverty and help improve their standard of living[1]. Support will focus on the provision of food items, indicatively: couscous, legumes, pasta, rice, canned food, such as fish chunks and vegetables, amongst others.

Eligible actions:

Purchase of food by the beneficiary

This covers the collection, storage, transport, and distribution of food by the beneficiary to the end recipients.

Purchase of vouchers/top up cards

Should a voucher system be considered, the creation, development, implementation, monitoring and ancillary requirements may be supported.

The Ministry responsible for Social Policy will order food packages and notify beneficiaries in advance. The supplier will provide and deliver food packages at the distribution points. The Partner Organisation will be responsible to store food packages. Uncollected packages would be distributed first during the next distribution. The eligible households are envisaged to receive the packages three times a year.

Accompanying measures

To ensure better uptake of existing services, a specific desk will be set up at collection points, providing beneficiaries with targeted information concerning

services they can benefit from under both national and EU Funds.

Complementarities/synergies with other priorities

Interventions under this SO will complement initiatives under ESF+ and various national schemes, including measures related to employment, education, social cohesion and measures fostering life skills and addressing homelessness.

Expected Results

- Reduce material deprivation.
- Provide beneficiaries with one-to-one, targeted information on the social services from which they can benefit.

Support under this SO will aim to address food deprivation, while support across other SOs shall serve as accompanying measures to provide a holistic support framework. Food provision will complement the school fruit and milk schemes under the CAP.

DNSH Assessment

The types of actions have been assessed as compatible with the DNSH principle since they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature.

[1] National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction, 2014-2024.

Main target groups

The indicative list of target groups:

- Households in receipt of a disability pension and individuals not in employment;
- Families with children under the age of 18 and income not exceeding the National Minimum Wage;
- Households eligible for a non-contributory means-tested Age Pension;
- Households receiving a non-contributory benefit;
- Families who receive non-contributory benefit and pass the means test and have 2 or more children under the age of 16;
- Families who have children under the age of 18 and have an income of less than 80% of the National Minimum Wage; and
- Households receiving the Energy Benefit.

The eligibility criteria is based on the experience gained during the implementation of the FEAD Operational Programme 2014-2020 as well as the implementation of the State Funded Food Distribution Scheme (SFFD). In this regard, the proposed eligibility criteria target the most vulnerable persons in a more comprehensive manner. The Ministry responsible for Social Policy also collaborates closely with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are catered for in an appropriate manner. The Ministry responsible for setting up the eligibility criteria is the Ministry responsible for Social Policy, currently the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights.

Except for interventions targeting multiple beneficiaries, a restricted call for applications will be issued for the Ministry responsible for Social Policy as the responsible / competent public authority to implement the project targeting direct final beneficiaries. The MA shall invite the responsible / competent authority to submit an application which will also be assessed by the Project Selection Committee (PSC) to ensure good quality proposals against the criteria as approved by the Monitoring Committee for the selection of operations.

Decryption of the national or regional schemes of support

Real income and social benefits

The Social Security Non-Contributory Scheme was improved between 2017 and 2019; changes were made to the Carers Allowance, Disability Pension, and Disability Assistance amongst others.

Tapering of benefits

As of 2014, persons who enter the labour market after having registered for work for more than 1 year maintain access to unemployment benefit, which decreases gradually over 3 years.

In-Work Benefit

This scheme supports those in gainful employment that have dependent children under the age of 23. Specific income brackets apply for various supported groups.

Other nationally funded measures aimed at addressing risk of poverty and social exclusion, amongst others:

- A higher payment Children's allowance rate is applied to those having custody of children under 16 years where the declared household income is less than the established threshold. Parents having custody of children with a disability are in receipt of a disabled child allowance;
- Single unmarried parents that are not engaged in gainful employment receive an allowance when having care and custody for one or more children;
- Free Childcare Scheme, launched in 2014, provides free childcare services to parents/guardians in employment or in education, for children between 3 months and 3 years;
- Disability assistance for those aged 16 years or more and suffering from severely debilitating conditions. An increased allowance may also be awarded to those who are absolutely unable to work;
- Increase in the minimum wage (2017);
- Full Pension Entitlement to elderly persons who continue working beyond retirement age;
- Bonus to retirees (mostly women) aged 62-74 years and who are not entitled to a pension;
- The GEMMA initiative, a financial capability portal that aims to improve the personal financial capability of those going through life events and retirement, enabling them to reach better informed financial decisions;
- Equity Sharing scheme aimed at supporting prospective homeowners who have not been able to purchase property due to difficulties accessing bank loans;
- Maintenance Grants are provided to all students in FHE, a supplementary allowance applies for disadvantaged groups, including persons with a disability;
- Energy Benefit, to mitigate the effect of the increase in expenditure on utility bills of low-income families.

Criteria for the selection of operations

Common Criteria

- The operations shall respect eligibility rules set out in Articles 18-24 of the ESF+ Regulation pertaining to the ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation; and
- The operations shall fall within the scope of the ESF+ Programme, taking into account the principles set out in Article 6 of the ESF+ Regulation and, where relevant, the requirements of national public procurement law.

Specific Criteria

The following specific criteria will be adopted depending on the nature of the operation:

- Purchase of food or other basic material by the beneficiary. The type and quantity of food products purchased correspond to the identified needs.

2.1.1.2.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit
4	ESO4.13	ESF+	Transition	EMCO01	Total value of distributed food and goods	euro

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Reference value	Reference Year	Source of data	Comments
4	ESO4.13	ESF+	Transition	EMCR01	Number of end recipients receiving food support	persons	12,555.00	2021	MA monitoring tool	

2.2. Technical assistance priorities

2.2.1. Priority for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(4) CPR: TA. Technical Assistance

Reference: point (e) of Article 22(3) CPR

2.2.1.1. Intervention from the Funds

The related types of actions – point (e)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR

The proper implementation of the ESF+ 2021-2027 Programme shall be addressed by means of several initiatives under Technical Assistance funds, including preparatory actions, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and also the control of the financed interventions. In this regard, Technical Assistance shall be instrumental in implementing clear, simple, and transparent processes, whilst strengthening pertinent organisational capacity, with the ultimate aim of reducing any administrative burdens, enhancing knowledge-transfer, improving outreach, enhancing communication and promoting networking across key stakeholders. Furthermore, Technical Assistance may be used to support studies on the implementation and programming of funds, as well as studies in the sectors covered through this Programme, primarily employment, social, health and education.

In this regard, the ESF+ Programme may support the following:

- Actions pertaining to the preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, complaint resolution, as well as control and audit;
- Actions pertaining to information, communication and networking, including media advertising, audio-visual products, informative publications and collateral materials, social media as well as a specific portal promoting EU Funds;
- Actions for the reduction of the administrative burden which may be incurred by beneficiaries, including electronic data exchange systems;
- Actions to reinforce the capacity of MS Authorities and beneficiaries in order to be able to administer and use the Fund appropriately;
- Actions to support the strengthening of the institutional capacity of partners, in particular local authorities, economic and social partners and non-governmental organisations, in order to assist in their participation in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes. Support may take the form of *inter alia*, dedicated workshops, training sessions, coordination and networking structures or contributions to the cost of participating in meetings with regard to the above; and
- Any necessary actions supporting the preparation of the programme post-2027.

The Authorities involved in the programming and management of the Programme shall be supported in strengthening their organisational capacity not solely through increased resources, as required; but also through the enhanced development of existing resources with a specific focus on the acquisition of the relevant skills through training activities organised both locally and abroad, with the aim of ensuring effective monitoring and control procedures and the attainment of good results. To this end, the MA shall, on a periodical basis, hold training events and or seminars addressing various issues on shared

management, which will be open not only to the authorities but also to the beneficiaries, as applicable.

The MA shall also maintain a website with all the relevant information that could assist beneficiaries from application stage to project implementation and closure. Technical Assistance shall also be used to further develop and support the ESF+ electronic information system so as to reduce administrative burden and speed up processes as much as possible. This system, which shall record data in line with the applicable rules, may be accessed by the key stakeholders of the ESF+ Programme as well as the respective projects. It shall be the direct point of reference for beneficiaries and key stakeholders with regard to the processing and recording of data, whereby beneficiaries shall be able to register their progress in implementation and also apply for payments, which claims shall be subsequently processed by the relevant Authorities accordingly. Training shall also be provided on the use of the above-mentioned system, as required.

The actions referred to above may concern previous as well as subsequent programming periods.

The main target groups - point (d)(iii) of Article 22(3) CPR:

The Technical Assistance budget, based on the actions outlined above, shall be managed by the ESF+ MA on a demand-driven basis. The main direct target groups shall include the MA, the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority, the Division responsible for EU funds programming, potential beneficiaries, members of the Monitoring Committee, as well as the relevant partners.

Through the actions implemented under Technical Assistance, the final beneficiaries of the ESF+ Programme shall benefit from an overall strengthened capacity, improved practices and procedures.

2.2.1.2. Indicators

Reference: point (e)(ii) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 2: Output indicators

Fund	Category of region	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone (2024)	Target (2029)
ESF+	Transition	PSO04	Total number of participants leading to the reinforcement of the capacity of the MS authorities, beneficiaries and relevant partners	Number	188.00	1,329.00

ESF+	Transition	PSO05	Number of evaluations and studies carried out	Number	1.00	5.00
ESF+	Transition	PSO06	Number of information and communication measures undertaken	Number	2.00	10.00
ESF+	Transition	PSO07	Staff costs relating to the preparation, implementation, monitoring and control	Euro	3,325,000.00	9,975,000.00

2.2.1.3. Indicative breakdown of the programmed resources (EU) by type of intervention

Reference point (e)(iv) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 4: Dimension 1 - intervention field

Priority	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
TA	ESF+	Transition	179. Information and communication	665,127.00
TA	ESF+	Transition	180. Preparation, implementation, monitoring and control	5,987,239.00
TA	ESF+	Transition	181. Evaluation and studies, data collection	591,224.00
TA	ESF+	Transition	182. Reinforcement of the capacity of Member State authorities, beneficiaries and relevant partners	221,709.00
TA	Total			7,465,299.00

Table 7: Dimension 6 – ESF+ secondary themes

Priority	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
TA	ESF+	Transition	09. Not applicable	7,465,299.00
TA	Total			7,465,299.00

Table 8: Dimension 7 – ESF+*, ERDF, Cohesion Fund and JTF gender equality dimension

Priority	Fund	Category of region	Code	Amount (EUR)
TA	ESF+	Transition	03. Gender neutral	7,465,299.00
TA	Total			7,465,299.00

* In principle, 40 % for the ESF+ contributes to gender tracking. 100 % is applicable when Member State chooses to use Article 6 ESF+

3. Financing plan

Reference: points (g)(i), (ii) and (iii) of Article 22(3), Article 112(1), (2) and (3), and Articles 14 and 26 CPR

3.1. Transfers and contributions (1)

Reference: Articles 14, 26 and 27 CPR

Programme amendment related to	<input type="checkbox"/> contribution to InvestEU
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer to instruments under direct or indirect management
	<input type="checkbox"/> transfer between ERDF, ESF+, Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds

(1) Applicable only to programme amendments in accordance with Articles 14 and 26 except complementary transfers to the JTF in accordance with Article 27 CPR. Transfers shall not affect the annual breakdown of financial appropriations at the MFF level for a Member State.

Table 15A: Contributions to InvestEU* (breakdown by year)

Contribution from		Contribution to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	InvestEU window	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

* For each new request for contribution, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Table 15B: Contributions to InvestEU* (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Sustainable Infrastructure (a)	Innovation and Digitisation (b)	SME (c)	Social Investment and Skills (d)	Total (e)=(a)+(b)+(c)+(d)
Total						

* Cumulative amounts for all contributions done through programme amendments during the programming period. With each new request for contribution, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Justification, taking into account how those amounts contribute to the achievement of policy objectives selected in the programme in accordance with Article 10(1) of the InvestEU Regulation

--

Table 16A: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management (breakdown by year)

Transfers from		Transfers to	Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Instrument	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

Table 16B: Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management* (summary)

Fund	Category of region	Total
Total		

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region.

Transfers to instruments under direct or indirect management - Justification

--

Table 17A: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds* (breakdown by year)

Transfers from		Transfers to		Breakdown by year							
Fund	Category of region	Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Transfer to other programmes. Transfers between ERDF and ESF+ can only be done within the same category of region.

Table 17B: Transfers between ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund or to another Fund or Funds (summary)

		ERDF			ESF+			CF	EMFAF	AMIF	ISF	BMVI	Total
		More developed	Transition	Less developed	More developed	Transition	Less developed						
Total													

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during the programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and category of region.

Transfers between shared management funds, including between cohesion policy funds - Justification

3.2. JTF: allocation in the programme and transfers (1)

3.3. Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review

Table 19A: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review within the programme (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to	Breakdown by year			
Category of region*	Category of region*	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Applicable to ERDF and ESF+ only

Table 19B: Transfers between categories of region resulting from the mid-term review, to other programmes (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to	Breakdown by year			
Category of region*	Category of region*	2025	2026	2027	Total

* Applicable to ERDF and ESF+ only

3.4. Transfers back (1)

Table 20A: Transfers back (breakdown by year)

Transfers from	Transfers to		Breakdown by year							
InvestEU or other Union instrument	Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total

(1) Applicable only to programme amendments for resources transferred back from other Union instruments, including elements of AMIF, ISF and BMVI, under direct or indirect management, or from InvestEU.

Table 20B: Transfers back* (summary)

From	To						
InvestEU / Instrument	ERDF			ESF+			Cohesion Fund
	More developed	Transition	Developed	More developed	Transition	Developed	

* Cumulative amounts for all transfers done through programme amendments during programming period. With each new request for transfer, a programme amendment shall set out the total amounts transferred for each year by Fund and by category of region.

3.5. Financial appropriations by year

Reference: point (g)(i) of Article 22(3) CPR and Article 3, 4 and 7 JTF Regulation

Table 10: Financial appropriations by year

Fund	Category of region	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026		2027		Total
							Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	Financial appropriation without flexibility amount	Flexibility amount	
ESF+*	Transition	0.00	21,253,080.00	21,595,102.00	21,944,070.00	22,300,016.00	9,239,765.00	9,239,764.00	9,424,930.00	9,424,929.00	124,421,656.00
Total ESF+		0.00	21,253,080.00	21,595,102.00	21,944,070.00	22,300,016.00	9,239,765.00	9,239,764.00	9,424,930.00	9,424,929.00	124,421,656.00
Total		0.00	21,253,080.00	21,595,102.00	21,944,070.00	22,300,016.00	9,239,765.00	9,239,764.00	9,424,930.00	9,424,929.00	124,421,656.00

* Amounts after the complementary transfer to the JTF.

3.6. Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: point (g)(ii) of Article 22(3), Article 22(6) and Article 36 CPR

For programmes under the Investment for jobs and growth goal where technical assistance in accordance with Article 36(4) CPR was chosen in the Partnership Agreement

Table 11: Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Policy / JTF specific objective number or technical assistance	Priority	Basis for calculation Union support	Fund	Category of region*	Union contribution (a)=(g)+(h)	Breakdown of Union contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of national contribution		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)
						Less flexibility amount (g)	Flexibility amount (h)		Public (c)	Private (d)		
4	1	Public	ESF+	Transition	24,300,000.00	20,654,718.00	3,645,282.00	16,200,000.00	16,200,000.00		40,500,000.00	60.0000000000%
4	2	Public	ESF+	Transition	32,460,000.00	27,590,623.00	4,869,377.00	21,640,000.00	21,640,000.00		54,100,000.00	60.0000000000%
4	3	Public	ESF+	Transition	53,296,357.00	45,301,285.00	7,995,072.00	35,530,905.00	35,530,905.00		88,827,262.00	59.9999997748%
4	4	Public	ESF+	Transition	4,500,000.00	3,824,948.00	675,052.00	500,000.00	500,000.00		5,000,000.00	90.0000000000%
4	5	Public	ESF+	Transition	2,400,000.00	2,039,972.00	360,028.00	1,600,000.00	1,600,000.00		4,000,000.00	60.0000000000%
TA36(4)	TA	Public	ESF+	Transition	7,465,299.00	6,345,417.00	1,119,882.00	4,976,866.00	4,976,866.00		12,442,165.00	60.0000000000%
Total			ESF+	Transition	124,421,656.00	105,756,963.00	18,664,693.00	80,447,771.00	80,447,771.00		204,869,427.00	60.7321735712%
Grand total					124,421,656.00	105,756,963.00	18,664,693.00	80,447,771.00	80,447,771.00		204,869,427.00	60.7321735712%

* For ERDF: less developed transition, more developed, and where applicable, special allocation for outermost and northerly sparsely populated regions. For ESF+, less developed, transition, more developed and, where applicable, additional allocation for outermost regions. For Cohesion Fund: not applicable. for technical assistance, application of categories of region depends on selection of a fund.

** Indicate the total JTF resources, including the complementary support transferred from the ERDF and the ESF+. The table shall not include the amounts in accordance with Article 7 JTF Regulation. In case of technical assistance financed from the JTF, the JTF resources should be split into resources related to Articles 3 and 4 JTF Regulation. For Article 4 JTF Regulation, there is no flexibility amount.

4. Enabling conditions

Reference: point (i) of Article 22(3) CPR

Table 12: Enabling conditions

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
1. Effective monitoring mechanisms of the public procurement market			Yes	<p>Monitoring mechanisms are in place that cover all public contracts and their procurement under the Funds in line with Union procurement legislation. That requirement includes:</p> <p>1. Arrangements to ensure compilation of effective and reliable data on public procurement procedures above the Union thresholds in accordance with reporting obligations under Articles 83 and 84 of Directive 2014/24/EU and Articles 99 and 100 of Directive 2014/25/EU.</p>	Yes	<p>LN 352 of 2016 – Public Procurement Regulations (https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2016/352/eng?fbclid=IwAR12WxV0wrlgyoGAS32myHR90l30QKL9WK4fdQNaxXr-MPID6CB50W-lyzU)</p> <p>LN 351 of 2016 – Public Procurement of Entities operating in the Water, Energy, Transport and Postal Services Sectors Regulations (https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2016/351/eng?fbclid=IwAR3BiHHVgWUepdcv_b3WpSKz29G-fkneTzvMGj6eOlAlwww_SriXMFd0x8E)</p> <p>LN 411 of 2011 – Public Procurement of Contracting Authorities or Entities in the fields of Defence and Security Regulations</p>	<p>The Department of Contracts (DOC) is the single centralised public procurement institution for most functions on the national level. It is responsible for developing standard procedures and routines, for developing a procurement policy, preparing guidelines and instructions, the national contribution to EU advisory committees, the Maltese Public Procurement Network participation, collecting statistical data and advises Government on public procurement policy, amongst others.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place to ensure the compilation of effective and reliable data as per SL 601.03 (Articles (12)(1)(a) 12(2), 13(n) and 14) and SL 601.05 (Articles 33 and 34(n)). Within this context, a monitoring report is prepared and submitted to the European Commission based on statistical quantitative data extracted from Government's e-Procurement Platform. Qualitative information is collated directly from each Ministry and relevant bodies. In addition, both articles mentioned in the regulations outline the roles that the office of the Director of Contracts must fulfil to ensure adherence to the public procurement</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							regulations as laid down in the legislations.
				<p>2. Arrangements to ensure the data cover at least the following elements:</p> <p>a. Quality and intensity of competition: names of winning bidder, number of initial bidders and contractual value;</p> <p>b. Information on final price after completion and on participation of SMEs as direct bidders, where national systems provide such information.</p>	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>Arrangements are in place that enable the Department of Contracts (DoC) to extract information related to the names of the winning bidders, number of initial bidders and contractual value from the electronic Public Procurement System (ePPS). Following the adoption of the Public Procurement Regulations, Government enacted the ePPs to significantly reduce administrative burden in line with the concept of e-cohesion, as per the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.</p> <p>Even though the national system does not automatically disclose information on final price after completion of projects, a specific module entitled Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS) is integrated within ePPS to enable the disclosure of data and documents at all stages of the contracting process by defining a common data model.</p> <p>This is aimed to increase contracting transparency, improve accountability, and capture salient statistics with the scope of enhancing in-depth analysis of contracting data by a wide range of users. Information regarding the participation of SMEs as direct bidders can be extractable from the ePPS portal.</p>
				3. Arrangements to ensure monitoring and analysis of the	Yes	Contracts Circular No 19/2016 – The New Public Procurement Regulations	The DOC is a single centralized public procurement institution for most

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				data by the competent national authorities in accordance with article 83 (2) of directive 2014/24/EU and article 99 (2) of directive 2014/25/EU.		2016 (https://contracts.gov.mt/en/Circulars/2016/Documents/Circ19_2016.pdf)	<p>functions on the national level. Complementing its monitoring and evaluation role are Ministerial Procurement Units which have been established within Ministries, as per Contracts Circular No 19/2016, to be responsible for procurement practices at Ministerial level while ensuring decentralisation of procurement practices. A separate Post-Contracts module titled the Contracts Register, includes information related to the contract signing and post-contract stage. The information contained within the Contracts Register can be made available through the aforementioned OCDS module. Thus, information pertaining to the full procurement cycle may be made available.</p> <p>In line with Article 83(2), procurement related information is consolidated in an EU Monitoring Report, prepared every three years for formal submission to the European Commission. This report gathers and systematises the collection of relevant procurement statistics across Government by the DOC via the ePPS, also addressing qualitative elements which are coordinated by this department through relevant Ministries.</p>
				4. Arrangements to make the results of the analysis available to the public in accordance with article 83 (3) of directive 2014/24/EU and article 99 (3)	Yes	Article 12(1a), 13(n) and 14 of LN 352 of 2016 and Article 33 and 34 (ni & ii, o) of LN 351 of 2016 (https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2016/351/en/g?fbclid=IwAR3BiHHVgWUepdcv_b3)	The necessary arrangements are in place with regard to the publication of results in line with SL 601.03 Articles 12(1a), 13(n) and 14 and SL 601.05 respectively (Article 33 and 34(n), (i & ii, o)). The

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				directive 2014/25/EU.		WpSKz29G-fkneTzvMGj6eOlAlwww_SriXMfd0x8E)	EU monitoring report is prepared every three years and includes data on procurement above the EU threshold, in line with the Directive. The information extracted from this report is already made available to the public through the ePPS. Any data concerning procurement below the EU threshold is published in the Government Gazette.
				5. Arrangements to ensure that all information pointing to suspected bid-rigging situations is communicated to the competent national bodies in accordance with Article 83(2) of Directive 2014/24/EU and Article 99(2) of Directive 2014/25/EU.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	Arrangements are in place to detect suspected bid-rigging situations by competent bodies. In this regard, the Director of Contracts, in line with Regulation 12(2) of the Public Procurement Regulations, which stipulates that in cases of misconduct involving violations or systematic problems, the Director shall be empowered to report the matter to competent authorities. A Compliance and Monitoring Unit has been set up within DoC that tackles initial investigations, that could be followed up by the Malta Police Force, the Internal Audit and Investigations Department and the National Audit Office, on a case-by-case basis.
2. Tools and capacity for effective application of State aid rules			Yes	Managing authorities have the tools and capacity to verify compliance with State aid rules: 1. For undertakings in difficulty and undertakings under a recovery requirement.	Yes	Art 57 and 58 of the Business Promotion Act (Chapter 325) (https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/325/eng)	The State Aid Monitoring Board (SAMB) is the national authority responsible for State aid issues. State Aid monitoring rules are implemented in line with Council Regulation (EU) No 1589/2015. The rules of procedure establish the

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>reporting obligations to SAMB by State aid grantors of aid granted. The SAMB keeps regular contact with key State aid grantors and with the Managing Authorities (MAs) and Intermediate Bodies (IBs).</p> <p>Support to undertakings is provided in line with State Aid rules. MAs verify compliance with State aid rules through the SAMB. MAs or IBs also verify whether applicants are undertakings in difficulty based on information submitted in applications for funding. The latter are also sent to Tax Authorities and the Malta Business Register for verification as well as other registers such as the Malta Association of Credit Management and VIES VAT number validation site. Regarding undertakings subject to an outstanding recovery order, checks and verifications would be made with the SAMB.</p> <p>The SAMB also guides the State aid grantors to carry out the necessary checks to ensure that undertakings in difficulty are excluded from benefitting from aid measures.</p>
				2. Through access to expert advice and guidance on State aid matters, provided by State aid experts of local or national bodies.	Yes	Covenant between MAs and SAMB	As the National State Aid Authority responsible for State aid issues, the SAMB keeps regular contact with the respective Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies to provide them with the necessary guidance and support on State aid matters.

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>This process facilitates compliance with the provisions of applicable rules and Regulations from formulation stage till actual implementation of State aid schemes. This process has been adopted in previous programming periods and will continue to be adopted under the 2021 – 2027 programming period.</p> <p>Dissemination of knowledge and technical expertise on State aid issues is provided to Government Ministries and agencies involved in State aid, prospective beneficiaries, the Managing Authority, intermediate bodies, and other local entities responsible for auditing and certifying the implementation of funds. A Covenant was finalised between the MAs and the State Aid Authority in Malta detailing coordination mechanisms related to EU funded projects.</p>
3. Effective application and implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights			Yes	<p>Effective mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter') which include:</p> <p>1. Arrangements to ensure compliance of the programmes supported by the Funds and their implementation with the relevant provisions of the Charter.</p>	Yes	Covenant between MAs and Ministry responsible for Human Rights	<p>With regard to arrangements to ensure compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Managing Authorities and the Ministry responsible for Human Rights have finalised a covenant to formalize the arrangements required for ensuring compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Furthermore, a monitoring unit within the Policy Development & Programme Implementation Directorate under the responsibility of the Ministry responsible for Human Rights has been set up to ensure compliance with the</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							Charter. The Unit in liaison with the Human Rights Directorate will be receiving requests from the Managing Authority/s to assess and ensure that project proposals are compliant with the Charter provisions during both the preparation and the implementation of the Programmes and operations supported by EU Funds.
				2. Reporting arrangements to the monitoring committee regarding cases of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with the Charter and complaints regarding the Charter submitted in accordance with the arrangements made pursuant to Article 69(7).	Yes	(Refer to previous document)	<p>The Ministry responsible for Human Rights will be represented on the Monitoring Committees of applicable programmes to report on cases of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds as well as complaints reported in accordance with Article 69(7) of the CPR. Furthermore, the Ministry will also form part of the Inter-ministerial Consultative Committee on EU Funds. Such provisions are stipulated in the agreement mentioned above. Furthermore, the Covenant also outlines the areas of cooperation between the MAs and the responsible entity for human rights throughout the programming period.</p> <p>With regard to reporting arrangements, the MA will inform the Monitoring Committees on: 1) The cases on non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with the Charter and complaints regarding the Charter; 2) The assessment of the case/s; and 3) The action/s taken/to be taken. This report will be provided during the MC as part of the update on the implementation of</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							the Enabling Conditions. Further information on the reporting arrangements to the Monitoring Committee can be found in the Covenant drafted between the MAs and the Ministry responsible for Human Rights.
4. Implementation and application of the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC			Yes	A national framework to ensure implementation of the UNCRPD is in place that includes: 1. Objectives with measurable goals, data collection and monitoring mechanisms.	Yes	Malta's 2021 - 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons (https://inclusion.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Disability-Doc-ENG-SEP-21.pdf) Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act (Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta) (https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/413/eng/pdf)	Malta's National Disability Strategy addresses aspirations stemming from the 2014 National Disability Policy and lays out a national plan to improve the quality of life of disabled persons and their families. The Strategy includes several actions as well as timeframes for every specific action in line with the requirement of this criterion. The Strategy will be implemented through a National Coordination Mechanism (Inter-Departmental Coordination Committee/Inter-Ministerial Administrative Committee on Disability) and consultations with stakeholders (Civil Society Participation Mechanism) as required by the United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD). Implementation will be monitored through the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability's (CRPD) UNCRPD Monitoring Unit, and breaches addressed through CRPD's Directorate for Investigations,

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>Compliance and Enforcement.</p> <p>As outlined under Objective 2 of the Strategy, a National Disability Register will be set up to facilitate data collection. The register will also be linked to an Integrated Disability Assessment system.</p>
				2. Arrangements to ensure that accessibility policy, legislation and standards are properly reflected in the preparation and implementation of the programmes.	Yes	<p>Accessibility Standards for All in a Built Environment Regulations - Legal Notice 198 of 2019 (https://legislation.mt/eli/sl/413.3/20190828/eng)</p>	<p>From a legal point of view, several measures have been developed to ensure compliance with accessibility policy, including the development of Accessibility Standards for all in the Built Environment Regulations, 2019 (Subsidiary Legislation 413.03).</p> <p>As to the preparation of the programmes, consultations with CRPD were held as part of the consultations on the programme objectives to ensure that the accessibility policy, legislation and standards are properly reflected in the preparation of the programmes in line with Article 9 of the CPR.</p> <p>A monitoring mechanism for the implementation of Article 9 UNCRPD covering the ESI Funds cycle was set up for the 2014 – 2020 programming period between CRPD and the relevant Managing Authority (MA). A similar monitoring mechanism will continue to be implemented during the 2021-2027 programming period, in line with the Covenant that is in place between the MAs and CRPD covering the 2021-2027</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							period.
				3. Reporting arrangements to the monitoring committee regarding cases of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds with the UNCRPD and complaints regarding the UNCRPD submitted in accordance with the arrangements made pursuant to Article 69(7).	Yes	Covenant between MAs and CRPD	<p>Reporting arrangements adopted for the 2021 – 2027 programming period will continue to build on the arrangements made in the 2014-2020 period, whereby project applications are sent to CRPD for vetting their compliance with the UNCRPD, and with necessary standards and procedures. In line with the Covenant, CRPD, the responsible entity, will be included as a member of the Monitoring Committee of applicable programmes to report on cases of non-compliance of operations supported by the Funds as well as complaints reported in accordance with Article 69(7) of the CPR. It will also form part of the Inter-Ministerial Consultative Committee on EU Funds.</p> <p>Further information on areas of cooperation between the MAs and CRPD throughout the programming period can be found in the Covenant.</p>
4.1. Strategic policy framework for active labour market policies	ESF+	ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth	Yes	<p>A strategic policy framework for active labour market policies in the light of the Employment guidelines is in place and includes:</p> <p>1. Arrangements for conducting jobseekers' profiling and assessment of their needs.</p>	Yes	<p>Employment and Training Services Act 2019 (https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=12361)</p> <p>National Employment Policy 2021-2030 (https://finance.gov.mt/nep/Documents/NATIONAL%20EMPLOYMENT%20POLICY%202021.pdf)</p>	<p>Jobsplus is a public Corporation set up through the Employment and Training Services Act (Chapter 594) and is Malta's Public Employment Service by assisting jobseekers in finding suitable employment.</p> <p>Upon registration with Jobsplus, jobseekers are allocated an employment advisor and scheduled a guidance appointment during which a jobseekers' profile is updated in the profiling</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;					<p>database followed by career guidance and a personalised action plan. Jobseekers are also matched to relevant vacancies and receive daily auto-mailers about vacancies. Regular meetings with the employment advisors are carried out.</p> <p>A list of vacant job opportunities is available on: https://jobsplus.gov.mt/. Jobseekers are also encouraged to participate in training programmes as part of standard operations which will continue to be applied in the 2021 – 2027 period.</p> <p>In terms of policy development in 2014, Malta had launched a National Employment Policy. In 2021, Government developed the National Employment Policy 2021-2030 which aims to consolidate the successful measures implemented under the current policy and present tangible solutions for new emerging challenges.</p>
				2. Information on job vacancies and employment opportunities, taking into account the needs of the labour market.	Yes	<p>Occupational Handbook 2018 (https://secure.etc.gov.mt/homedir/temp/Occupational_Handbook_Softview_v2.pdf)</p> <p>Jobsplus, ‘Annual Report 2021’ (https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/publications/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=53933)</p>	<p>Jobseekers can search for vacancies on Jobsplus’ online platform or by visiting its offices. Persons registering for employment with Jobsplus are referred to a vacancy that corresponds to their skills profile through a matching system.</p> <p>Moreover, the Occupational Handbook published in 2018 provides a forecast for the 246 occupations listed in the publication. It offers information on job description, duties and work</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>environment, and median pay, amongst others. The handbook is publicly available online on: https://secure.etc.gov.mt/homedir/temp/Occupational_Handbook_Softview_v2.pdf and is promoted amongst registered jobseekers.</p> <p>Malta's occupational forecasting model linked to the labour market was revisited in 2020 by the Slovak University to cater for unforeseen economic shocks. The model is in place and is being used to quantify and predict developments in labour demand and supply in Malta including, amongst others, expansion and replacement demand by occupation/qualification and the identification of labour market mismatch and shortages. Furthermore, the forecasting tool will be implemented in the drafting of a new Employment Policy.</p>
				3. Arrangements for ensuring that its design, implementation, monitoring and review is conducted in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>Jobsplus carries out inter-ministerial and inter-departmental discussions on the implementation and recommendation of active labour market policies and engages actively with stakeholders as part of its operational processes. These stakeholders have Policy Making, Consultative, and Service Delivery functions. Jobsplus also consults with Employers, Employers' Association and Regulatory Bodies and Trade Unions on Active Labour Market Policy Measures. Moreover, besides chairing the Intermediary Body Steering Committee,</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>during which stakeholders are invited to attend and discuss the implementation of Aid Schemes, Jobsplus also participates in bilateral meetings with the Managing Authority for EU Funds and line-Ministry project steering committees.</p> <p>Jobsplus also seeks employers' feedback while designing new courses or updating existing ones and gathers feedback on the employers' anticipated training needs to design new courses and increase the employability of jobseekers.</p>
				4. Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review of active labour market policies.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>Jobsplus conducts periodical reviews on the labour market, the services offered, and the skills needed by economic industries.</p> <p>Monthly performance reports about inputs, outputs and outcomes at Jobsplus' services are also compiled by the Performance Management Department.</p> <p>In addition, any reviews to labour market policies take into account the outcomes of such performance reports and reviews. Furthermore, policy reviews are also carried out in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders.</p>
				5. For youth employment interventions, evidence-based and targeted pathways towards	Yes	Towards 2030 - Reaching out to, working with and supporting young people	In 2014 Government launched a National Youth Policy which outlines a series of actions aimed at youths,

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				young people not in employment, education or training including outreach measures and based on quality requirements, taking into account criteria for quality apprenticeships and traineeships, including in the context of Youth Guarantee schemes implementation.			including NEETs. Building on the current policy, in 2020 Government embarked on the drafting of a 2030 National Youth Policy adopting a holistic approach towards youth wellbeing including emphasis on employability and the promotion of the Youth Guarantee scheme. Despite Malta's incidence of NEETs, which is lower than the EU average, the profiling of NEETs is carried out to identify effective measures and initiatives. Unemployed youths registered with Jobsplus are assigned an employment advisor and provided with a personal action plan and training courses to enhance their skills and employability. Additionally, the Youth Guarantee Scheme provides targeted pathways for NEETs through the NEET Activation Scheme II which offers work-exposure and traineeships, SEC Revision Classes, MCAST Preventive Classes and the ICT Courses, all aiming at increasing educational attainment and youths' employment prospects. The scheme also aims to promote personalised assistance to youths at risk of social exclusion and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.
4.2. National strategic framework for gender equality	ESF+	ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a	No	A national strategic policy framework for gender equality is in place that includes: 1. Evidence-based identification of challenges to gender equality.	No	(Draft) Gender Equality & Mainstreaming Strategy & Action Plan 2022-2027	The Draft Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan (GEMSAP) 2022-2027 is foreseen to be launched by the end of 2022 and will be published on the following link: https://homeaffairs.gov.mt/en/Pages/Home.aspx .

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons					<p>GEMSAP identifies some of the obstacles mostly faced by women and aims to strengthen the gender perspective into all stages and sectors of policymaking. These challenges are clearly visible from data available in the Gender Equality Index (GEI) of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), EUROSTAT and the National Statistics Office (NSO).</p> <p>This document recognises 8 objectives, including the barriers and challenges women face to enter and remain in the labour market. Objective 2 aims to guarantee equal access to employment in all sectors, combat segregation and ensure equal pay for equal value through strengthening gender mainstreaming in the workforce, training and addressing the Gender Pay Gap, amongst others.</p> <p>Documentation on the challenges encountered in various specific sectors is also collated annually by the NSO on employment statistics and child-care facilities usage, amongst others.</p>
				2. Measures to address gender gaps in employment, pay, pensions, and to promote work-life balance for women and men, including through improving access to early childhood education and care, with targets, while respecting the role and autonomy of the social partners.	Yes	(Refer to previous document)	GEMSAP focuses on 8 strategic objectives. The measures mentioned in Criterion 2 are all addressed and included within these objectives. This document includes actions to promote work-life balance (Objective 5), to increase women's participation in the labour market (Objective 2) and to enhance women's economic

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>independence and empowerment (Objective 3), amongst others. These extend to co-responsibility and balance of work, private and family life and equal access (Objective 5) and opportunity to the workplace in all sectors and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value (Objective 2).</p> <p>Several measures have been implemented over recent years to address the participation of women in employment and introduce family friendly measures such as the free childcare scheme, tapering of social benefits for women returning to the labour market, breakfast and after school clubs for children in public schools and policies for parental leave amongst others which are also featured within this document with the aim to enhance and strengthen such positive measures. Such measures are envisaged to continue being implemented.</p>
				3. Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review of the strategic policy framework and data collection methods based on sex-disaggregated data.	Yes	(Refer to previous document)	GEMSAP will include arrangements for the monitoring and review of the strategic policy framework. All Ministries will be required to strengthen the collection of gender disaggregated data in all areas that fall under their remit as highlighted in Objective 1: Strengthening of Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality. Nonetheless, actions involving the collection of such data will continue to be monitored by the Human Rights Directorate (HRD)

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>and the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC). At the end of each quarter, a report will be drawn up focusing on the progress achieved as part of the monitoring mechanism, highlighted in Section E ‘Monitoring and Evaluation’ of the Strategy. Such outcomes will also be recorded in an annual report presented during an annual conference which will set the basis for future policies aimed at targeting any identified gaps (Pg. 30).</p> <p>An independent body will also be engaged to evaluate interim and final reports to ensure a stronger monitoring system.</p>
				4. Arrangements for ensuring that its design, implementation, monitoring and review is conducted in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including equality bodies, social partners and civil society organisations.	Yes	(Refer to previous document)	<p>GEMSAP has been developed following a public consultation and one to one meetings with all respective Ministers and their technical experts, and discussions within the Consultative Council for Women’s Rights which is made up of organizations working in the field of women's rights.</p> <p>This document also foresees the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to ensure coordination between Ministries and the HRD. In the first six months of operation, the IMC will come up with an adequate timeline of work and objectives for each measure in cooperation with stakeholders. The IMC will consist of Ministerial focal points, who are able to push the agenda forward and report on progress made.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							Moreover, an independent body will be engaged to evaluate interim and final reports to ensure a stronger monitoring system. An annual conference will be organised to provide an update on the implementation of the GEMSAP, and serve as a networking event between equality bodies, social partners, IMC members, and civil society organisations. The monitoring and evaluation of this Action Plan will also feed into the second Action Plan, following the completion of this first document.
4.3. Strategic policy framework for the education and training system at all levels	ESF+	ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult	Yes	A national or regional strategic policy framework for the education and training system is in place and includes: 1. Evidence-based systems for skills anticipation and forecasting.	Yes	Framework for the education strategy for Malta 2014 – 2024 (https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/documents/policy%20documents%202014/booklet%20esm%202014-2024%20eng%2019-02.pdf)	An education policy framework titled Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014 – 2024 is in place and being implemented. The four overarching goals of the Framework will continue to be pursued beyond 2024. The purpose of the Education Excellence exercise was to kick start the renewal, alignment, support and subsequent implementation of the Ministry responsible for Education's strategies and policies. A number of policies have been reviewed and renewed with a life cycle spanning up to 2030. These are underscored by the four broad goals of the Framework for Education Strategy 2014-2024. The broad goals of the Framework for Education Strategy are to provide more opportunities and flexibility in the education system. Malta committed itself to continue to take measures to

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility					modernise curricula, improve quality in teaching and assessment and promote digital skills. Therefore, the Ministry has extended the period of the Framework up to 2030. Jobsplus conducts periodical reviews on the labour market, the services offered, and the skills needed by economic industries.
				2. Graduate tracking mechanisms and services for quality and effective guidance for learners of all ages.	Yes	(Refer to previous document)	MFHEA is the lead entity responsible for Graduate tracking. In view of the Eurograduate technical report, Malta prepared a strategic road map to develop its capacity and readiness to participate in a European Graduate Survey by 2022 as a basis for a national systematic graduate tracking initiative to ensure that graduate tracking studies at EU and national level become systematic. A national Working Group on Graduate Tracking is being set up to include main stakeholders to develop a national model for graduate tracking and prepare for Malta's participation in the Eurograduate study planned for 2022. Co-operation with national entities on career guidance initiatives is also held at VET, post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions. Malta will be implementing the Eurograduate survey using the questionnaire developed by the project

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							consortium as it is, with adaptations to the national contexts. All data will be collected in line with the five areas for data collection through collaboration and communication with stakeholders, promotion of survey, preparation for participation and implementation of Eurograduate initiative.
				3. Measures to ensure equal access to, participation in and completion of quality, affordable, relevant, non-segregated and inclusive education and training, and acquisition of key competences at all levels including higher education.	Yes	<p>Inclusion Policy (2021 – 2030)</p> <p>National Vocational Education and Training Policy (2015) (https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/National-Vocational-Education-and-Training-Policy.pdf)</p> <p>(Draft) National Strategy for Digital Education and Transversal Skills 2030</p> <p>(Draft) 2030 Strategic Vision for Further and Higher Education in Malta</p> <p>Malta Qualifications Framework Impact Review - Final Report (2021) (https://mfhea.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FinalReport_Feb2021.pdf)</p> <p>MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027</p> <p>University of Malta Strategic Plan 2020-2025</p>	<p>Measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Free state schools for ages 3-18; •Free childcare scheme and students' maintenance grants at further and higher education; •Learning support educators for children with disabilities; •Through MQF, students transition from VET to academic education and vice versa; •My Journey Reform; •Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools ensures inclusion for students; Two Targets address Smooth Transitions in Schools and Different Pathways available, from early years to secondary. Information on Post-Secondary opportunities and pathways for students in Year 11 are carried out yearly, including for students with individual educational needs and prospective ESLs; •Malta's National Curriculum Framework for All (2012); •Specific learning outcomes for digital education;

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Malta's National Literacy Strategy 2021-2030 is raising literacy levels. Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan reforms includes "Reading Recovery"; •MCAST mainstream courses at all levels of the MQF; •The Institute for Education offers qualifications up to Master Degree, awards in education and post graduate certificates, and courses at the University of Malta.
				4. A coordination mechanism covering all levels of education and training, including higher education, and a clear assignment of responsibilities between the relevant national and/or regional bodies.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>A Policy Coordination Unit has been set up within the Ministry responsible for Education to liaise with the working group/committee of experts monitoring the implementation of current policies and drafting new or renewed policies.</p> <p>The Policy coordination unit will be working towards the implementation of the newly introduced monitoring system. After the adoption of each policy's work plan outlining key measures and indicators, the related monitoring arrangements will take place. The policy owners shall report their progress in implementing the measures according to their work plan.</p> <p>While the main focus of the Policy Coordination Unit has so far been the ongoing renewal of the strategic policy framework; the appointment of monitoring bodies responsible for the evaluation and review process of the</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							ongoing implementation of the strategic framework shall now be the main priority. The process and methods identified shall include an internal exercise within the strategy unit for the selection of appropriate bodies within the necessary expertise to assess on a cyclical basis.
				5. Arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review of the strategic policy framework.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>A Policy Coordination Unit has been set up within the Ministry responsible for education to liaise with the working group/committee of experts monitoring the implementation of current policies and drafting new or renewed strategies. Various policy documents are currently being reviewed to incorporate new trends in educational needs and objectives, also to take into account the new realities brought about by COVID-19.</p> <p>All the Strategies falling within the remit of the Ministry contribute towards the overarching Strategic Policy Framework on Education (2014 - 2024). It is envisaged that the policies which are currently being reviewed and updated will include an evaluation process that is inherent in their implementation, which is envisaged to be carried out through research studies. In addition, it is also foreseen that the new policies for lifelong learning, inclusion, higher education, national literacy and digitalisation, amongst others, will include an evaluation/research of their policies as</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							part of the action plan. Further details on monitoring and evaluation can be found in Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan.
				6. Measures to target low-skilled, low-qualified adults and those with disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and upskilling pathways.	Yes	(Draft) National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2030 (https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/LLL%20POLICY%20Document.pdf) MCAST RPL Policy available on (https://www.mcast.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/DOC_358_CORP_REV_A_RECOGNITION-OF-PRIOR-LEARNING-RPL-POLICY.pdf)	Several measures encouraging lifelong learning are in place. Further and higher education institutions implement a maturity clause for several courses, encouraging all adults to continue pursuing an education. The validation assessment of informal and non-formal learning is also continuously extending, an important step in promoting lifelong learning and facilitating access to learners not possessing any qualifications from formal education. Guidance services are also offered to finding the most adequate course. Lifelong learning courses are also offered to working adults whilst traineeship programmes and work exposure schemes are also offered to workers. In addition, MCAST offers part time evening courses whilst Jobsplus offers training opportunities to any individual of working age, irrespective of skills levels and employment status. MCAST offers the possibility of admissions to courses at all MQF Levels via alternative routes.

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							Moreover, Jobsplus offers the Trade Testing System, set up in order to assess individuals who do not possess formal qualifications. A Certificate of Competence is awarded on successful pass.
				7. Measures to support teachers, trainers and academic staff as regards appropriate learning methods, assessment and validation of key competences.	Yes	LN 243 of 2017 – Institute for Education (https://legislation.mt/eli/ln/2017/243/eng)	<p>The Institute for Education (IfE), originally set up as an Institute in 2015 by virtue of Legal Notice 140 of 2015 (as amended by Legal Notice 240 of 2015), and then reconstituted as an agency by virtue of Legal Notice 243 of 2017, provides initial teacher training and continuous professional development to all those who give service in the education sector. Since its inception the IfE has created qualifications and awards in order to facilitate and improve Initial Teacher Training (equivalent to qualifications up to MQF level 7), a Master Degree for prospective Leaders in the Education sphere, a Master Degree in STEM Education and Management, and continuous professional development for Educators. The IfE is continuously creating courses to cater for the different needs of educators. It has also developed stand-alone accredited awards, and sessions both for educators and parents.</p> <p>Other higher educational institutions such as MCAST and the University of Malta also offer continuous professional development training to support educators and members of the Senior</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							Management Team.
				8. Measures to promote mobility of learners and staff and transnational collaboration of education and training providers, including through recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications.	Yes	Manual of Procedures for Provider licensing and Programme Accreditation (2016)	<p>The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) helps individuals in the transfer, recognition and assessment of their learning outcomes to facilitate mobility of learners. ECVET 2019 has been officially finalised and discussions have started on ECVET 2020. This process continues to provide guidelines on Recognition of Prior Learning which may be used by accredited educational institutions.</p> <p>Various educational institutions coordinate the mobility of educators through EU funded programmes such as ERASMUS+ to provide an opportunity to all learners to visit schools in the EU to promote the Education Strategy and enhance the possibility to achieve the aims set out in the Strategy.</p> <p>With regards to the recognition of learning outcomes and qualifications, the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) is responsible with the accreditation of courses and training programmes in Malta, in line with SL 327.433. A manual of procedures in conformity with legislation was published in 2016. The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre is the competent body within NCFHE recognising qualifications against the MQF.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
4.4. National strategic policy framework for social inclusion and poverty reduction	ESF+	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups	Yes	<p>A national or regional strategic policy or legislative framework for social inclusion and poverty reduction is in place that includes:</p> <p>1. Evidence-based diagnosis of poverty and social exclusion, including child poverty, in particular as regards equal access to quality services for children in vulnerable situations as well as homelessness, spatial and educational segregation, limited access to essential services and infrastructure, and the specific needs of vulnerable people of all ages.</p>	Yes	<p>National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion (2014-2024) (https://family.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Poverty-Strategy-14-EN.pdf)</p> <p>Implementation and Evaluation Report (2017-2019) (https://family.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/NSP-Web.pdf)</p> <p>A Social Vision for Malta 2035 - Shaping the Future of Our Society (https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MFSS/Documents/A%20Social%20Vision%20for%20Malta%202035.pdf)</p>	<p>A National Strategic Policy document on Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion was published in 2014. Chapter 2.2 includes evidence-based diagnosis on poverty, including child poverty, and also delves on the evidence-based analysis on poverty through socio-demographic trends, geographical distribution, and data on the main vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Since ‘Children’ are one of the main vulnerable groups, the Policy document also focuses on the main challenges, trends and data available on child poverty.</p> <p>Chapters 2.2 and 3 illustrate the situational analysis of poverty and social exclusion:</p> <p>By June 2021, 115 measures were implemented in the Income and Social Benefits Dimension ; 54 measures were implemented addressing the educational dimension; 43 measures implemented in the Health and Environment Dimension; 32 measures implemented in the Social Services Dimension (Social Welfare); 19 measures implemented in the Social Services Dimension (Housing) and 8 measures implemented in the Culture Dimension.</p> <p>These will continue to be implemented on a regular basis.</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							A new poverty strategy will be developed in 2024.
				2. Measures to prevent and combat segregation in all fields, including social protection, inclusive labour markets and access to quality services for vulnerable people, including migrants and refugees.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>The Ministry responsible for social policy will continue to implement measures promoting social protection, inclusive labour market and access to quality services. 694 measures were implemented in areas such as social welfare and housing, in line with Policy Actions identified in the National Strategic Policy document.</p> <p>By June 2021, 74 measures were implemented under Policy Actions Nos 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14 within the Income and Social Benefits Dimension (Chapter 3.1); 57 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1–13 within the Employment Dimension (Chapter 3.2), 91 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1–11, 13, 14 and 17 within the Education Dimension (Chapter 3.3), 97 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1-10 within the Health and Environment Dimension (Chapter 3.4), 242 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1-5, 8-25 within the Social Services Dimension (Social Welfare) (Chapter 3.5), 51 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1, 2, 3 and 5 under the Social Services Dimension (Housing) (Chapter 3.5) and 82 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1-9 under the Culture Dimension (Chapter 3.6).</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
				3. Measures for the shift from institutional to family- and community-based care.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>A total of 189 measures were implemented focusing on families and community care. Such measures are in line with the Policy Actions identified in the National Strategic Policy document.</p> <p>By June 2021, 10 measures were implemented under Policy Action No 13 within the Income and Social Benefits Dimension (Chapter 3.1), 29 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1, 2 and 6 under the Employment Dimension (Chapter 3.2), 28 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1, 7, 8, 14 within the Education Dimension (Chapter 3.3), 24 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 3, 6 and 7 within the Health and Environment Dimension (Chapter 3.4), and 98 measures implemented under Policy Actions Nos 1, 9 - 14, 20, 21 and 23 within the Social Services Dimension (Social Welfare) (Chapter 3.5).</p> <p>Such measures will continue to be implemented on a regular basis.</p>
				4. Arrangements for ensuring that its design, implementation, monitoring and review is conducted in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including social partners and relevant civil society organisations.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>An Inter-Ministerial Committee monitors and evaluates the progress sustained within different policy areas. Building on extensive consultations held with a wide range of stakeholders at the design phase of the Strategy, consultations are also conducted with relevant stakeholders involved in its implementation. Policy priorities and initiatives presented in this Strategy</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>were developed and implemented using citizens' consultation platforms. Consultations at sectorial level with the relevant social partners and related stakeholders are conducted in the implementation of the framework. The budget measures are presented for public consultation at the MCESD. An information campaign targeting the general public is held via media advertising. These consultations create synergies between the different sectorial strategies and the Poverty and Social Exclusion Strategy.</p> <p>Every 3 years, an Implementation and Evaluation Report is compiled that provides an overview of the measures and statistical analysis.</p> <p>In 2022 a strategic vision for the social sector in Malta was published for consultation, which provides the basis for the renewed framework beyond 2024.</p>
4.6. Strategic policy framework for health and long-term care	ESF+	ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including	No	<p>A national or regional strategic policy framework for health is in place that contains:</p> <p>1. Mapping of health and long-term care needs, including in terms of medical and care staff, to ensure sustainable and coordinated measures.</p>	No	<p>A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2020-2030: Investing Successfully for Healthy Future (Draft)</p> <p>Building Resilience Transforming Services - A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020-2030 (2019) (https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental_Health_Strategy_EN.pdf)</p>	<p>The Draft National Health System Strategy (NHSS) for Malta 2020-2030: Investing successfully for a Healthy Future is foreseen to be finalised and published by November 2022 on the Ministry website https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Pages/health.aspx. The Strategy identifies population growth, ageing and diversity as the main challenges to the Maltese health system as outlined under Chapter 3 of the draft Strategy.</p> <p>Policy actions to address these</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
		healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services					<p>challenges are included throughout the NHSS and represent the core mission objectives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve population health and wellbeing; • To improve the individual patient care experience; • To improve value in healthcare; and • To improve the experience of providing care for the health workforce. <p>The NHSS encapsulates strategies that will facilitate the planning and implementation of policies, initiatives and investments by Health and other sectors to improve the health of the local population by preventing avoidable illness, detecting diseases as early as possible, reducing health inequalities and delivering quality health services.</p>
				2. Measures to ensure the efficiency, sustainability, accessibility and affordability of health and long-term care services, including a specific focus on individuals excluded from the health and long-term care systems, including those who are hardest to reach.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>The draft Strategy incorporates several relevant measures, primarily aiming to improve population health and well-being (Chapter 4). Measures include improving the citizen's quality of life, addressing the widening health gap and addressing inequalities through the health systems (including through training).</p> <p>The draft Strategy also denotes the importance of improving the individual patient care experience (Chapter 5), including through enhancing equity through improved access to services,</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>and the provision of integrated services through information technology.</p> <p>Measures related to improving the value of healthcare (Chapter 6) are also included, such as increasing capacity, delivering innovative services, modernise and upgrade existing infrastructure, develop networks and operationalise interconnectivity with other hospitals and institutions in other Member States, as well as develop environmentally friendly facilities and services.</p> <p>In addition, the draft Strategy also delves into harnessing innovation, technology and research in order to enhance efficiency, sustainability and affordability of the health system (Chapter 8).</p>
				3. Measures to promote community and family- based services through de-institutionalisation, including prevention and primary care, home-care and community-based services.	Yes	(Refer to previous documents)	<p>Several relevant measures are incorporated within the draft Strategy which relate to such services. Chapter 5 elaborates on the strategic shift required to ensure coherence across healthcare and other organisations and emphasises the need for ambulatory and community settings thus removing barriers to access community and primary care services. Furthermore, the need to exploit the benefits of digital technologies is highly evident, in addition to improve preventive and rehabilitative efforts for better longer-term outcomes, as well as</p>

Enabling condition	Fund	Specific objective	Fulfilment of enabling condition	Criteria	Fulfilment of criteria	Reference to relevant documents	Justification
							<p>enhancing community support systems for the elderly.</p> <p>Chapter 6 also underscores the objective of enhancing capacity for treatment and care in the community through the development of Health Hubs, the upgrading of Health Centres, and the establishment of multi-disciplinary group family practices and community services for children and adolescents.</p>

5. Programme authorities

Reference: point (k) of Article 22(3) and Articles 71 and 84 CPR

Table 13: Programme authorities

Programme authorities	Name of the institution	Contact name	Position	Email
Managing authority	Planning and Priorities Coordination Division within the Ministry responsible for EU Funds	Jonathan Vassallo		jonathan.vassallo@gov.mt
Audit authority	Internal Audit and Investigations (EU Funds) within the Ministry responsible for Internal Audit	Stefan Manicolo		stefano.manicolo.1@gov.mt
Body which receives payments from the Commission	Certifying Authority within the Ministry responsible for EU funds	Edwin Camilleri		edwin.a.camilleri@gov.mt

The repartition of the reimbursed amounts for technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR if more bodies are identified to receive payments from the Commission

Reference: Article 22(3) CPR

Table 13A: The portion of the percentages set out in point (b) of Article 36(5) CPR that would be reimbursed to the bodies which receive payments from the Commission in case of technical assistance pursuant to Article 36(5) CPR (in percentage points)

6. Partnership

Reference: point (h) of Article 22(3) CPR

Malta is committed to ensuring that the principles of partnership and multi-level as set out in Article 8 of the CPR, and as further defined in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014[1], are taken into account and promoted in the design and implementation of this Programme. In this regard, various stakeholders were involved in the consultation process of this Programme at different stages. During 2020, a series of thematic committee meetings as well as a meeting focusing on Gozo's needs that were held throughout 2020 which were set up to provide strategic input and guidance to the programming process. The adopted approach was based on desk-based research by technical experts on Malta's development needs. This captured the Policy Objectives and the Fund Specific Objectives, amongst others, as set in the proposed regulatory framework delving into the situation analysis and development needs of each thematic area. An assessment on Gozo's needs was also undertaken. The outcome of the research was presented during the relevant Thematic Committee and participants were invited to confirm or otherwise the information provided, as well as identify other areas of relevance, which were possibly not yet captured in the delivered presentation.

The key stakeholders that participated in these Thematic Committees included Government entities, urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, environmental partners, as well as bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, youths, gender equality and non-discrimination. The outcome of these meetings was taken into consideration in the drafting of this Programme. Amongst others, comments raised which are relevant to this programme, included:

- The need to stimulate further research by higher education institutions and other organisations, including NGOs;
- To further support enterprises, also within the context of internationalisation, digitisation, green economy and Industry 4.0. Start-ups and scale ups were also referred to;
- The need to invest in mental health and in genetic screening;
- The need to focus on persons with disability with the aim to address their specific needs;
- The need to invest in education;
- The need to attract more enterprises to Gozo, focus on niche tourism, enhance the tourism product and focus on a greener Gozo, including sustainable mobility.

Another consultation exercise was carried out with the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), which is the formally established structure in Malta where social dialogue and public consultations take place. The Council is composed of the main socioeconomic partners in Malta representing the main employer bodies, trade unions and civil society, as well as the Government.

Following the consultations outlined above, in 2021, a wide public consultation was launched on the ESF+ document for public consultation. This consultation exercise served to inform the public on the vision and strategy that Government has for the utilisation of the funds and to provide an opportunity to the public to provide feedback and identify ways on how the programme could be improved. Feedback was received from a number of organisations, including the public administration, social partners and the voluntary sector. A number of independent individuals also provided their input to the process. The submissions received are broadly reflected in the Programme. The Main recommendations from the public consultation exercise include the following:

- The importance of providing incentives for employment creation, including through supported

employment and work exposure measures for people facing challenges to access employment;

- Socio-economic development for the private sector, covering training support (including in areas such as the green and digital sectors), and wage subsidies for job maintenance;
- The need to focus on enhancing job mobility besides strengthening employability;
- The provision of basic skills remains important;
- Focus on mental well-being and mental health;
- Increased support to social partners;
- Efforts to overcome gender stereotypes and seek to address horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, by also focusing on men as care givers;
- Capacity building measures for professionals in the employment, social, health and education field, including parent empowerment;
- Supporting persons with disability to integrate in the labour market, coupled with the need to train / coach employers and employees to facilitate integration;
- The need to further support lifelong learning and further / higher education;
- To have tailored initiatives in terms of the education, social and health sectors; and
- Support to be provided through the Child Guarantee to address poverty, amongst other areas.

Further information on the partnership process may be found [here](#).

As indicated previously in the document, in order to strengthen social dialogue throughout the implementation of the Programme, the ESF+ will support the capacity building of social partners and other non governmental organisations that are duly registered under the respective legislation as key stakeholders in shaping social, education and employment policies.

With reference to actions to be taken during the implementation of the ESF+ Programme, a Monitoring Committee (MC) shall be set up within three months of the Programme's approval to monitor the implementation of the Programme in line with Articles 38-41 of the CPR, the composition of which shall reflect a multi-level governance approach. In accordance with Article 3 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014[2], the members of the MC shall consist of partners from competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners, and bodies representing civil society (including environmental authorities/partners, entities/experts responsible for promoting equality and non-discrimination, and non-governmental organisations).

Efforts and initiatives undertaken during the previous programming period to ensure the involvement of the relevant entities responsible for promoting equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in the various stages of implementation of the ESF Operational Programme will continue under the post-2020 Programme, in accordance with national practices. In this regard, the participation of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) in the MC is envisaged, as entities responsible for promoting equality and non-discrimination in the implementation of the Cohesion Policy Funds. Furthermore, the entity responsible for the implementation of the Charter for Fundamental Human Rights will also be included in the MC.

The MC shall meet at least once a year to review the implementation of the ESF+ Programme, including progress made towards achieving its objectives and examine any issues that affect such performance. The MC shall be consulted at various stages in the implementation of the Programme, in accordance with responsibilities outlined in Article 40 of the CPR, such as providing an opinion on the amendments to the Programme as proposed by the MA, amongst others. MC consultations may also be undertaken through

written procedures in line with the applicable Terms of Reference. Partners are thus kept updated on the state-of-play of the implementation of the Programme and are also invited to provide feedback and their contribution accordingly. On the basis of Article 40 (1) of the CPR, MC members shall also examine the progress made in carrying out evaluations, syntheses of evaluations and follow-up actions pertaining to any findings, as well as the implementation of communication and visibility actions.

Following the best practice applied under the previous ESF OP, one-to-one bilateral meetings and communication exchanges shall also be held with the relevant experts in particular with those partners who need to be consulted more frequently, in view of the implementation of specific programme objectives. Relevant partners shall also be involved in the implementation and monitoring of ESF+ operations through bilateral meetings during which feedback and input of the attending partners is taken into consideration.

The relevance of the partnership and multi-level governance shall also be reflected in ESF+ Application Forms, whereby in line with the applicable ESF+ selection criteria approved by the MC, additional points may be awarded for national synergies between institutes and public bodies, and also for projects involving multiple collaborations. In addition, these forms shall consist of a specific section whereby details of project partners are to be provided in relation to roles being taken and envisaged activities being implemented, with the aim of ensuring increased effectiveness and success of proposed operations.

[1] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the ESIF.

[2] Ibid.

7. Communication and visibility

Reference: point (j) of Article 22(3) CPR

Communication and visibility measures shall build upon the *Communication Strategy for Malta: ESIF (2014-2020)*[1], with the aim of building on lessons learnt, while increasing transparency and visibility of the Fund.

The envisaged approach shall consider: the legal framework, defined objectives, Malta's experience in communicating EU Funds, MA responsibilities, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, target audiences, key communication channels and messages, relevant monitoring and evaluation indicators, budget and timeframes.

Communication and visibility initiatives will be clear, concise, and allow for any necessary changes to ensure a strong impact and the widest outreach possible, including:

- The provision of unbiased information on ESIF opportunities to potential project proponents;
- An updated portal to act as the main point of information for Applicants, Beneficiaries and the General Public, while addressing the requirements of Article 49 of the CPR and complementing actions via other media that will serve to target specific cohorts. The EU Funds website provides information on EU funded programmes. A new portal for all the funds is being developed. The latter will be in line with the information policies on accessibility emanating from Malta's 2021-2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons;
- The promotion of the implementation of the Programme priorities and its progress;
- Visibility of results by paying particular attention to operations of strategic importance;
- Assistance to beneficiaries in understanding publicity requirements;
- Consistency of messages and branding through the publication of Visual Identity Guidelines and publicity kits in order to ensure appropriate and consistent recognition of the funds; and
- Promotion of the role of each ESIF, and the EU's contribution to the overall socioeconomic development, including the contribution to the European Green Deal Strategy.

The main activities and responsibilities of the Managing Authorities:

- Organising a major information event for the launch of the Programmes;
- Promoting funding opportunities and achievements of the Programme to different target groups;
- Communicating the benefits of EU funds through targeted activities with a special focus on green and smart issues, where applicable;
- Displaying the EU flag at the MA premises;
- Publishing and updating the beneficiary online list;
- Promoting projects and programmes on the web and social media in English and/or in Maltese;
- Involving relevant stakeholders, as necessary;
- Using social media in a dynamic, attractive and contemporary way; and
- Implementing a hybrid of media campaigns, and holding at least one physical event per year.

The main target groups are:

- The **Public**, sub-divided into:

- o The Professional Public and Potential Multipliers of Information, including the media, information agencies, research/academic institutions, local councils, social partners, NGOs, trade and professional groups, potential contractors, economic operators, lobby groups and other organisations;
- o The General Public, including different age groups, specific sub-groups which particular programmes or measures are designed to benefit;
- o Sensitive cohorts who might require the necessary adaptation of communication tools, e.g., when dealing with the use of sensitive information.

- **Beneficiaries and Potential Beneficiaries**, including public sector organisations, Ministries, departments, entities, authorities, public commissions, public sector foundations, local councils, other organisations such as social partners, business organisations, NGOs and VOs who conform to the eligibility criteria, as well as public or private firms which may be eligible for funding through Aid Schemes.

Downloadable Communication and Visual Identity Guidelines and publicity kits will include information and publicity requirements, and information on the appropriate use of the logos/emblems on different media, amongst others.

Monitoring and evaluation of communication activities shall be undertaken on the achievement of output indicators, as follows:

- a) number of publicity measures implemented by 2029; and
- b) number of research activities/evaluations carried out by 2029.

Communication networks shall be established in line with Article 48 of the CPR. A National Communication Coordinator has been nominated to act as a contact point for all CPR funds. The Communications unit is centralised within the Strategy and Implementation Division within the Ministry responsible for EU Funds. In terms of budgetary allocation, the use of 9% of the TA allocation for ESF+ is foreseen.

With regard to the electronic exchange of data, the Management and Information System (MIS) is a centralised system and is used by the main stakeholders, such as the Managing Authority, Beneficiary, Audit Authority and Line Ministry. Other stakeholders such as the Commission, OLAF and ECA may also access information stored on the MIS. The MIS system collects and stores data on final beneficiaries, contractors, subcontractors and beneficial owners and will continue to do so for the 2021-2027 Programme.

[1] Communication Strategy for Malta: ESIF (2014-2020) (PPCD, 2015).

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Reference: Articles 94 and 95 CPR

Table 14: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 94 and 95 CPR	Yes	No
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under the priority according to Article 94 CPR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption, the programme will make use of reimbursement of the Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs according to Article 95 CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1: Union contribution based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
1	ESF+	ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;	Transition	1.10%	134. Measures to improve access to employment	2. Per Diem	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
1	ESF+	ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;	Transition	0.24%	134. Measures to improve access to employment	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
1	ESF+	ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons	Transition	7.83%	142. Measures to promote women's labour market participation and reduce gender-based segregation in the labour market	2. Per Diem	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
1	ESF+	ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons	Transition	1.69%	142. Measures to promote women's labour market participation and reduce gender-based	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
					segregation in the labour market						between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
2	ESF+	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups	Transition	1.70%	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	2. Per Diem	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
2	ESF+	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups	Transition	0.37%	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
2	ESF+	ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants	Transition	26.08%	157. Measures for the social integration of third country	2. Per Diem	EECO13. Third country nationals	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
					nationals						under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
2	ESF+	ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants	Transition	5.62%	157. Measures for the social integration of third country nationals	3. Travel	EECO13. Third country nationals	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
2	ESF+	ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services	Transition	1.32%	158. Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	2. Per Diem	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
2	ESF+	ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services	Transition	0.28%	158. Measures to enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
											per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
3	ESF+	ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities	Transition	14.64%	150. Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	1. Participation in Tertiary Education	EECO11. Participants with tertiary education	Provision of a provisional transcript will trigger milestone 1 and provision of a certificate of accreditation or a final transcript reimbursement of milestone 2	Milestone 1 amounts to 95% of the total ECTSs achieved. Milestone 2 amounts to the remaining 5% of the total ECTSs achieved.	Unit cost	For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in Malta: €58 per ECTS achieved For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in other countries (excluding Malta) and Joint Programmes of Study: €100 per ECTS achieved
3	ESF+	ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities	Transition	0.57%	150. Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	2. Per Diem	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
3	ESF+	ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities	Transition	0.12%	150. Support for tertiary education (excluding infrastructure)	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
3	ESF+	ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility	Transition	2.83%	151. Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	1. Participation in Tertiary Education	EEO05. Employed, including self-employed	Provision of a provisional transcript will trigger milestone 1 and provision of a certificate of accreditation or a final transcript reimbursement of milestone 2	Milestone 1 amounts to 95% of the total ECTSs achieved. Milestone 2 amounts to the remaining 5% of the total ECTSs achieved.	Unit cost	For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in Malta: €58 per ECTS achieved. For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in other countries (excluding Malta) and Joint Programmes of Study: €100 per ECTS achieved
3	ESF+	ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility	Transition	1.96%	151. Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	2. Per Diem	EEO05. Employed, including self-employed	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
3	ESF+	ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility	Transition	0.42%	151. Support for adult education (excluding infrastructure)	3. Travel	EEO05. Employed, including self-employed	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
5	ESF+	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups	Transition	9.78%	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	2. Per Diem	EEO01. Total number of participants	Number of nights spent abroad per person	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad	Unit cost	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	Estimated proportion of the total financial allocation within the priority to which the SCO will be applied in %	Type(s) of operation covered		Indicator triggering reimbursement		Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Type of SCO (standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates)	Amount (in EUR) or percentage (in case of flat rates) of the SCO
					Code(1)	Description	Code(2)	Description			
5	ESF+	ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups	Transition	2.11%	152. Measures to promote equal opportunities and active participation in society	3. Travel	EECO01. Total number of participants	Number of persons travelling	Unit cost per person travelling	Unit cost	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and the Annex IV to the EMFAF regulation

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

B. Details by type of operation

Operation type short title	1. Participation in Tertiary Education
The managing authority received support from an external company to set out the simplified costs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of external company	The Study was conducted by the National Commission for Further and Higher Education in Malta (NCFHE)
1. Description of the operation type including the timeline for implementation (1)	<p>A number of operations / schemes, funded under the ESF+ Programme II for the 2021-2027 Programming Period which aims at fostering the socioeconomic wellbeing of society through the creation of opportunities for all and an investment in human resources and skills, will fund scholarships at the tertiary level of education to different target groups, specifically at EQF – European Qualification Framework level 7 among others through different courses with different ECTs (the unit cost being an amount/ECT) and the first reimbursement of 95% will be done upon the provision of a provisional transcript (Milestone 1) and the final 5% will be reimbursed upon provision of the final transcript or final certification achieved. This activity, which is usually launched by entities promoting further studies, is aimed at individuals who wish to continue their education at higher levels. The main target groups are individuals, including but not limited to employed persons, aiming to further their education under ESO4.6 and ESO4.7.</p> <p>This type of activity is planned to be made available from 2023 till 2029 or until funds are exhausted.</p>
2. Specific objective(s)	<p>ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities</p> <p>ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility</p>
12. Total amount (national and Union) expected to be reimbursed by the Commission on this basis	15,518,200.00

Indicators

3. Indicator triggering reimbursement (2)	Provision of a provisional transcript will trigger milestone 1 and provision of a certificate of accreditation or a final transcript reimbursement of milestone 2
4. Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Milestone 1 amounts to 95% of the total ECTSs achieved. Milestone 2 amounts to the remaining 5% of the total ECTSs achieved.
5. Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Unit cost
6. Amount per unit of measurement or percentage (for flat rates) of the SCO	For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in Malta: €58 per ECTS achieved For study programmes at EQF L 7 undertaken in other countries (excluding Malta) and Joint Programmes of Study: €100 per ECTS achieved
7. Categories of costs covered by the unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Tuition and Bench Fees
8. Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation?	No
9. Adjustment(s) method (3)	The rates will be adjusted in line with the cost of inflation at a national level. The rates of inflation are published by the National Statistics Office on an annual basis and can be found at: https://nso.gov.mt/en/nso/Selected_Indicators/Retail_Price_Index/Pages/Index-of-Inflation.aspx . Hence this adjustment methodology may be applied every year to new calls for applications once a new rate is published by the National Statistics Office. Such calls will include the relevant rates applicable.
10. Verification of the achievement of the units delivered - describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the units delivered - describe what will be checked and by whom during management verifications - describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store relevant data/documents	<p>Beneficiary / Intermediate Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks the eligibility of the participant, the EQF level of the study programme, the details included in the participant's unconditional letter of acceptance (ULA) and application submitted by the applicant to ensure that the programme of studies is accredited and at EQF L7 – 100% checks - Collects the necessary documentation as proof that training has taken place (e.g. provisional transcript, certificate of qualification/certification) – 100% checks - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the payment conditions set out in the Grant Agreement – 100% checks <p>Line Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that reimbursement takes place against a provisional transcript or certification of qualification / certification and in line with the course outlined in the agreement terms for that participant – 100% checks - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the payment conditions set out in the Grant Agreement – 100% checks <p>EU Payments Unit:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that reimbursement takes place against a provisional transcript or certification of qualification / certification and in line with the course outlined in the agreement terms for that participant – 100% checks - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the payment conditions set out in the Grant Agreement – 100% checks <p>Managing Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks the eligibility of the participant in terms of the application submitted vis-à-vis the conditions of eligibility published in the Call for applications – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that a study programme, letter of acceptance and application were submitted by the applicant for an accredited EQF L7 programme of studies – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that the agreement terms were signed between the Beneficiary / Intermediate Body and the participant in line with the application submitted and that the correct rate per ECTS is outlined in the participants' agreement terms– sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the payment conditions set out in the Grant Agreement – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation. <p>Accounting Function</p> <p>Raise claims for reimbursement raised in a Statement of Expenditure – 100% checks</p>
11. Possible perverse incentives, mitigating measures(4) and the estimated level of risk (high/medium/low)	<p>A participant does not complete the entire course and the number of ECTS achieved is less than that foreseen in the agreement terms.</p> <p>Risk Level: Medium</p> <p>Mitigating measure: The rate per ECTS established in the agreement terms between the Beneficiary / Intermediate Body and the participant is adhered to. Reimbursement takes place based on the number of ECTS achieved and in line with the rate per ECTS outlined in the agreement terms.</p> <p>Furthermore, an amount equivalent to 5% of the total amount of the course is only paid upon provision of the certificate of qualification / accreditation to push students to achieve the desired result.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A participant does not achieve enough ECTS to qualify for a lower level of qualification / certification

	<p>Risk Level: Low</p> <p>Mitigating measure: Reimbursement takes place only in line with the number of ECTS achieved irrespective of the fees that the student might have already incurred on the ground and as documented through a transcript.</p> <p>- Creaming participants to ensure that only participants who can successfully complete the programme of studies are given a Grant</p> <p>Risk Level: Low</p> <p>Mitigating measure: The call for applications are open to all applicable participants forming part of the target group of the Investment Priority under which the operation / scheme is funded. Furthermore, the last milestone is not high to ensure that Beneficiaries are not penalized for applying for such grants.</p>
--	---

B. Details by type of operation

Operation type short title	2. Per Diem
The managing authority received support from an external company to set out the simplified costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of external company	
1. Description of the operation type including the timeline for implementation (1)	<p>A number of operations / schemes funded under the ESF+ Programme, as well as ERDF and CF operations funded under the 2021-2027 Programming Period may require support in travelling abroad, either by the project participants themselves, by the trainers and/or support workers, by Beneficiaries implementing the operations as well as by the different stakeholders in the different phase of the programme within the framework of the approved operations. Eligible stakeholders may be deemed to include the following: project participants, scholarship awardees, trainers, support workers, beneficiaries, members of the Beneficiary organisation, and members of the contracting Authority who would be providing a service/works/supplies to the Beneficiary organisation. It stands to be noted that this list might not be exhaustive and might not include all eligible stakeholders. Travel abroad will be supported in line with the exigencies of the programme and its various actions in order to achieve the set objectives.</p>

	<p>It is important to note that apart from the information included under Section A, these unit costs target all of the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - P1 SO(a) – 134, 135, 136, 138 - P1 SO(c) – 142 - P2 SO(h) – 147, 152, 153, 158 - P2 SO(i) – 157 - P2 SO(k) – 158, 160, 163 - P3 SO(f) – 145, 149, 150 - P3 SO(g) – 146, 151 - P5 SO(h) – 152. <p>This cost category is available for all eligible operations funded through this Programme from the start of its eligibility period till the end.</p>
2. Specific objective(s)	<p>ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;</p> <p>ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons</p> <p>ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities</p> <p>ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility</p> <p>ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups</p> <p>ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants</p> <p>ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services</p>
12. Total amount (national and	3,130,035.00

Union) expected to be reimbursed by the Commission on this basis	
--	--

Indicators

3. Indicator triggering reimbursement (2)	Number of nights spent abroad per person
4. Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Unit cost per person per night spent abroad
5. Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Unit cost
6. Amount per unit of measurement or percentage (for flat rates) of the SCO	The relevant rates per country covering per diem may be found in Circular MF 201/92/B under 'Other Documents'. Any updates to the Circular will be automatically applicable to this SCO.
7. Categories of costs covered by the unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	<p>The per diem allowance covers accommodation costs and subsistence allowance in respect of breakfast and two main meals, and sundry expenses. The relative components of the subsistence allowance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accommodation 50% of the overall rate - Breakfast 10% of the overall rate - Lunch 10% of the overall rate - Dinner 10% of the overall rate - Sundry expenses 20% of the overall rate.
8. Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation?	No
9. Adjustment(s) method (3)	<p>Rates may be adjusted in line with any adjustments published by the Ministry for Finance and Employment from time to time on the official Ministry site - https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Ministry/Departments-Directorates-Units/fpmd/Pages/Per-Diem-Rates.aspx. Given that these rates are based on a national scheme and issued by a separate entity, the frequency of adjustment and related adjustment trigger is subject to any circumstances or factors taken into consideration by the Ministry for Finance and Employment at the time. It is up to the respective Managing Authority and their Beneficiaries to ensure that the latest rates are always applied from the moment they are published.</p> <p>In the case of the per diem rate for Malta, this may be adjusted in line with any adjustments published by the European Commission from time to time to its official per diem rates as published on ec.europa.eu. Given that this rate is based on another Union policy and issued by a separate entity, the frequency of adjustment and</p>

	related adjustment trigger is subject to any circumstances or factors taken into consideration by the European Commission at the time.
<p>10. Verification of the achievement of the units delivered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the units delivered - describe what will be checked and by whom during management verifications - describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store relevant data/documents 	<p>Beneficiary / Intermediate Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks the eligibility of the participant in terms of the application submitted vis-à-vis the conditions of eligibility published in the Call for applications, where applicable – 100% checks - Collects the necessary documentation to ensure that the per diem given is in line with the Beneficiary's Travel Policy and agenda to which the per diem is tied to – 100% checks - Checks that a claim for reimbursement is processed through the Managing Authority's Management Information System in line with official guidance (e.g. published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>Line Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that the claim for reimbursement processed by the Beneficiary through the Managing Authority's Management Information System is in line with official guidance (e.g. published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>EU Payments Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that the claim for reimbursement processed by the Beneficiary through the Managing Authority's Management Information System is in line with official guidance (e.g. published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>Managing Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks the eligibility of the participant in terms of the application submitted vis-à-vis the conditions of eligibility published in the Call for applications, where applicable – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that the correct rate in line with the applicable Ministry for Finance Circular (or official per diem rates issued by the European Commission for the above Malta rate only) is applied – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the deliverables set out in the Call for applications/Eligibility Rules/Grant Agreement or any other guidance issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation. <p>Accounting Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise claims for reimbursement raised in a Statement of Expenditure – 100% checks.
11. Possible perverse incentives,	- Perverse incentive/problem: Beneficiaries applying this unit cost

mitigating measures(4) and the estimated level of risk (high/medium/low)	<p>wrongly, outside the requested parameters.</p> <p>Risk level: Low</p> <p>Mitigating Measure: Managing Authority to issue clear guidance on what constitutes travel costs and ensure that such guidance is made available online to potential applicants. Furthermore, all stakeholders may be guided by the Manual on Transport and Travel Policies and Procedures issued by the Ministry for Finance which contains specific guidance in this regard.</p> <p>- Perverse incentive/problem: Beneficiaries who incur higher costs than what will be reimbursed through this unit cost.</p> <p>Risk level: Low</p> <p>- Mitigating Measure: The Ministry for Finance ensure that internal research is carried out from time to time to ensure that the rates set remain valid and a good proxy of current market prices. Any revisions made are disseminated throughout Government Departments/Ministries through the Government intranet portal, as well as published on the Ministry for Finance official portal.</p>
--	--

B. Details by type of operation

Operation type short title	3. Travel
The managing authority received support from an external company to set out the simplified costs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of external company	
1. Description of the operation type including the timeline for implementation (1)	<p>A number of operations / schemes funded under the ESF+ Programme, as well as ERDF and CF operations funded under the 2021-2027 Programming Period may require support in travelling abroad, either by the project participants themselves, by the trainers and/or support workers, by Beneficiaries implementing the operations as well as by the different stakeholders in the different phase of the programme within the framework of the approved operations. Eligible stakeholders may be deemed to include the following: project participants, scholarship awardees, trainers, support workers, beneficiaries, members of the Beneficiary organisation, and members of the contracting Authority who would be providing a service/works/supplies to the Beneficiary organisation. It stands to be noted that this list might not be exhaustive and might not include all eligible stakeholders. Travel abroad will be supported in line with the exigencies of the programme and its various actions in order to achieve the set objectives.</p> <p>It is important to note that apart from the information included under Section A, these unit costs target all of the following measures:</p> <p>- P1 SO(a) – 134, 135, 136, 138</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - P1 SO(c) – 142 - P2 SO(h) – 147, 152, 153, 158 - P2 SO(i) – 157 - P2 SO(k) – 158, 160, 163 - P3 SO(f) – 145, 149, 150 - P3 SO(g) – 146, 151 - P5 SO(h) – 152. <p>This cost category is available for all eligible operations funded through this Programme from the start of its eligibility period till the end.</p>
2. Specific objective(s)	<p>ESO4.1. Improving access to employment and activation measures of all jobseekers, in particular youth people, especially through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged groups on the labour market, and of inactive people, as well as through the promotion of self-employment and the social economy;</p> <p>ESO4.3. Promoting a gender-balanced labour market participation, equal working conditions, and a better work-life balance including through access to affordable childcare, and care for dependent persons</p> <p>ESO4.6. Promoting equal access to and completion of quality and inclusive education and training, in particular for disadvantaged groups, from early childhood education and care through general and vocational education and training, to tertiary level, as well as adult education and learning, including facilitating learning mobility for all and accessibility for persons with disabilities</p> <p>ESO4.7. Promoting lifelong learning, in particular flexible upskilling and reskilling opportunities for all taking into account entrepreneurial and digital skills, better anticipating change and new skills requirements based on labour market needs, facilitating career transitions and promoting professional mobility</p> <p>ESO4.8. Fostering active inclusion with a view to promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active participation, and improving employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups</p> <p>ESO4.9. Promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants</p> <p>ESO4.11. Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services</p>
12. Total amount (national and Union) expected to be reimbursed by the Commission on this basis	674,738.00

Indicators

3. Indicator triggering reimbursement (2)	Number of persons travelling
4. Unit of measurement for the indicator triggering reimbursement	Unit cost per person travelling
5. Standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Unit cost
6. Amount per unit of measurement or percentage (for flat rates) of the SCO	- EUR 23 per participant for travel distances between 10 and 99 km - EUR 180 per participant for travel distances between 100 and 499 km - EUR 275 per participant for travel distances between 500 and 1999 km - EUR 360 per participant for travel distances between 2000 and 2999 km - EUR 530 per participant for travel distances between 3000 and 3999 km - EUR 820 per participant for travel distances between 4000 and 7999 km - EUR 1,500 per participant for travel distances between 8000 km or more
7. Categories of costs covered by the unit cost, lump sum or flat rate	Travel Costs, excluding hospitality and per diems
8. Do these categories of costs cover all eligible expenditure for the operation?	No
9. Adjustment(s) method (3)	<p>Rates may be adjusted in line with any adjustments published in the latest available version of the ERASMUS+ Programme Guide. Given that these rates are based on another Union policy and issued by a separate entity, the frequency of adjustment and related adjustment trigger is subject to any circumstances or factors taken into consideration by the European Commission at the time. Every time the rates in that Union policy are updated these are applied across the board, including in the implementation of the relevant Programmes which are making use of them. It is up to the respective Managing Authority and their Beneficiaries to ensure that the latest rates are always applied from the moment they are published.</p> <p>Furthermore, Beneficiaries implementing the approved operations will have the possibility to apply for exceptional costs for expensive travel, i.e. beneficiaries will be allowed to claim financial support for expensive travel costs of participants amounting to 80% of total eligible costs. This will be allowed provided that beneficiaries can justify that the unit costs per travel distance do not cover at least 70% of the travel costs of the participants in line with the rules of the ERASMUS+ Programme. If awarded, the exceptional costs for expensive travel will replace the above travel rates.</p>
10. Verification of the achievement of the units delivered	<p>Beneficiary / Intermediate Body:</p> <p>- Checks the eligibility of the participant in terms of the</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe what document(s)/system will be used to verify the achievement of the units delivered - describe what will be checked and by whom during management verifications - describe what arrangements will be made to collect and store relevant data/documents 	<p>application submitted vis-à-vis the conditions of eligibility published in the Call for applications, where applicable – 100% checks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collects the necessary documentation in line with official guidance (e.g. through published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority as proof that travel has taken place – 100% checks - Checks that a claim for reimbursement is processed through the Managing Authority's Management Information System in line with official guidance (e.g. through published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>Line Ministry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that the claim for reimbursement processed by the Beneficiary through the Managing Authority's Management Information System is in line with official guidance (e.g. through published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>Payments Unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks that the claim for reimbursement processed by the Beneficiary through the Managing Authority's Management Information System is in line with official guidance (e.g. through published circulars) issued by the Managing Authority in this regard – 100% checks <p>Managing Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checks the eligibility of the participant in terms of the application submitted vis-à-vis the conditions of eligibility published in the Call for applications, where applicable – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that the correct rate in line with the ERASMUS+ Programme is applied – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation - Checks that reimbursement takes place according to the deliverables set out in the Call for applications/Eligibility Rules/Grant Agreement or any other guidance issued by the MA in this regard – sample basis or 100% depending on the volume of participants in an operation. <p>Accounting Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise claims for reimbursement raised in a Statement of Expenditure – 100% checks
<p>11. Possible perverse incentives, mitigating measures(4) and the estimated level of risk (high/medium/low)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perverse incentive/problem: Beneficiaries applying this unit cost wrongly, outside the requested parameters. <p>Risk level: Low</p> <p>Mitigating Measure: MA to issue clear guidance on what constitutes travel costs and ensure that such guidance is made available online to</p>

	<p>potential applicants.</p> <p>- Perverse incentive/problem: Beneficiaries who incur higher costs than what will be reimbursed through this unit cost.</p> <p>Risk level: Medium</p> <p>Mitigating Measure: MA to issue clear guidance ensuring that applicants and Beneficiaries are aware that this is an average cost and if travel expenses are not procured in advance, the amount that will be reimbursed through this unit cost might not cover such expenses.</p>
--	--

(1) Envisaged starting date of the selection of operations and envisaged final date of their completion (ref Article 63(5) CPR).

(2) For operations encompassing several simplified cost options covering different categories of costs, different projects or successive phases of an operation, the fields 3 to 11 need to be filled in for each indicator triggering reimbursement.

(3) If applicable, indicate the frequency and timing of the adjustments and a clear reference to a specific indicator (including a link to the website where the indicator is published, if applicable).

(4) Are there any potential negative implications on the quality of the supported operations and, if so, what measures (e.g. quality assurance) will be taken to offset this risk?

C. Calculation of the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates

1. Source of data used to calculate the standard scale of unit costs, lump sums or flat rates (who produced, collected and recorded the data, where the data is stored, cut-off dates, validation, etc.)

a. Operation Type: Participation in Tertiary Education for courses at MQF/EQF Level 7

The data used for the setting of these standard scale of unit costs is historical data from the ESF 2007-2013 Programming Period in Malta, specifically ESF1.225 – *MASTER IT!* scholarships scheme gathered over a three-year period. The data was inserted by the Beneficiary in the Structural Funds Database 2007-2013 and verified by the Managing Authority. It was then passed on to the National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) who were responsible to analyse the data for scholarships at EQF Level 7 and issue recommendations as outlined in the study attached to this application.

b. Operation Type: Per Diem

Official Government Manual on Transport and Travel Policies and Procedures, as well as the Ministry for Finance circular MF 201/92/B dated 18th October 2017 explaining the Class A and Class B rates and how these may be applied. For the per diem rate for persons travelling to Malta, the official per diem rates published by the European Commission has been used.

In the case of non-government officials, the same principle as for government officials will apply. Officials holding a senior position within the respective organisation are awarded Class A rates while all other officials are awarded Class B rates.

c. Operation Type: Travel

ERASMUS+ Programme Guide

2. Please specify why the proposed method and calculation based on Article 94(2) CPR is relevant to the type of operation.

a. Operation Type: Participation in Tertiary Education for courses at MQF/EQF Level 7

The data used is verified by the Managing Authority and is for the same EQF level programmes of study (EQF L7) that the Managing Authority wishes to apply it too.

The proposed methodology establishes a rate per ECTS covering programmes of study at MQF Level 7. This was applied from Call 5 onwards to the ESF scholarship grants provided under the 2014-2020 Programming Period in Malta, which financed programmes of studies at EQF L 7 from all over Europe. Most of these programmes of study are based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), though there were instances where study programmes had their own credit system (such as study programmes emanating from the UK). In these cases, the study sets a conversion rate which would become applicable in such situations. In using the ECTS (and the applicable conversion rate, where relevant), the study ensures common ground for support for all participants irrelevant of the programme of study they choose to undertake.

A standard rate was set for study Programmes based in Malta, whilst another rate was set for study programmes based out of Malta and for Joint Programmes of study. The setting of these rates ensures that the form of support is standardized and is not dependent on the area of study, length of programme, and modality of study (full time, part time, distance learning, mix). This avoids potential market distortions.

From a technical point of view the research conducted by NCFHE aimed to identify the most influential factors (also referred to as independent variables) influencing the cost per ECTS (referred to as the dependent variable). Regression analysis was used to explore the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and to analyse the extent to which the various variables in the dataset were influencing the cost per ECTS. The dependent variable under review was the cost per ECTS based on the invoice while the independent variables entered in the model were:

- Country of study
- Modality of study
- Categorisation of programme of study per *Endeavour* area[1]
- Start year of the programme
- Value in ECTS of the programme
- Value of the programme in years

The stepwise procedure was applied whereby three models were arrived at and for every model an

additional variable was introduced depending on its significance to influence the cost per ECTS. Refer to Section 5 of the report compiled by NCFHE for specific details. In conclusion three variables were identified: country of study, value in ECTS, and categorisation of programme of study as per *Endeavour* area, in this order of importance that could be used to determine the average rate for the cost per ECTS. A further analysis was then undertaken for each of these independent variables and conclusions and recommendations were provided accordingly.

The chosen recommendation, i.e.

Part 1

- for programmes of study undertaken in Malta, a rate of €58 per ECTS achieved was based on the following recommendation:

The analysis of programmes of study undertaken in Malta indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the average cost per ECTS by value in ECTS of the programme of study. It is therefore plausible to apply one standard rate per ECTS for programmes undertaken in Malta. This would serve both the principle of simplification while at the same time providing adequate support to participants.

Part 2

- for programmes of study undertaken in other countries excluding Malta and Joint Programmes of study, a rate of €100 per ECTS achieved were based on the following recommendation:

That they best served the purpose of simplification and that the rates per ECTS proposed when applied to the number of ECTS which was most common in both categories (i.e. Malta and foreign countries/Joint programmes of study) matched closely and best reflected the statistically significant differences identified.

b. Operation Type: Per Diem

The proposed method is based on the official guidance issued by Government when it comes to the application of standard daily rates of subsistence (per diem) allowance to cover complete periods of 24 hours and are fixed for countries to which public officers may be sent for duty visits / training. This applies to all areas falling under the remit of Government.

In comparison to the envisaged operations benefitting under ESF+, ERDF and CF funded programmes, these may also fund per diems as eligible expenditure. The operations benefitting from such funds vary in nature however the scope behind the funded per diems is usually for persons to go abroad and receive training, to bring trainers to Malta in order to offer training to a large group of participants, for persons to participate in workshops abroad, for project partners to come and give their contribution as expert advice to Malta, or for Maltese beneficiaries to travel to other countries to receive expert advice or contribute their expertise on the funded-action. Given the similarity of actions between these two, it is being recommended that the same standard unit costs covering per diems as published by the Ministry for Finance are also applied under ESF+, ERDF and CF funded programmes being that the nature of the actual expenditure is also the same.

The same argument is being put forward for the use of the per diem for persons travelling to Malta.

For those countries which are not included in the guidance list issued by the Ministry of Finance and

Employment and hence in this Appendix, the Managing Authority may refer itself and its beneficiaries to the Commission list of per diem, as and when needed. Such unit costs will be applied in line with Article 53 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

c. Operation Type: Travel

The proposed methodology is taken from the ERASMUS+ Programme which sets out standard mobility rates for the purpose of financing mobility actions, among others, deemed as necessary to achieve the objectives and results of an operation. The Erasmus+ Programme is designed to support Programme Countries' efforts to efficiently use the potential of Europe's talent and social assets in a lifelong learning perspective, linking support to formal, non-formal and informal learning throughout the education, training and youth fields. The Programme also enhances the opportunities for cooperation and mobility with Partner Countries. Key Action 1 of this Programme includes mobility actions for students undergoing studies and traineeships, as well as mobility actions for staff for teaching and training purposes. Key Action 2 covers capacity-building projects in higher education promoting cooperation and partnerships that have an impact on the modernization and internationalization of higher education institutions and systems in Partner Countries. Key Action 3 supports policy dialogue through the network of Higher education Reform Experts in Partner Countries neighboring the EU, the international alumni association, policy dialogue with Partner Countries and international attractiveness and promotion events.

In comparison, the envisaged operations benefitting under ESF+, ERDF and CF funded programmes may also fund travel costs and claim it as eligible expenditure, as part of a wide-ranging operation. The operations benefitting from such funds vary in nature however the scope behind the funded mobility expenses is usually for participants to receive training, to bring trainers to Malta in order to offer training to a large group of participants, participate in workshops or courses abroad, for project partners to come and give their contribution as expert advice to Malta, or for Maltese beneficiaries to travel to other countries to receive expert advice or contribute their expertise on the funded-action. Given the similarity of actions between these different Union Policies, it is being recommended that the same standard unit costs covering travel costs as published under the ERASMUS+ Programme are also applied under ESF+, ERDF and CF funded programmes being that the nature of the actual expenditure is also the same. This was confirmed with the Head of the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) in Malta at the start of the beginning of the 2014-2020 Programming Period.

[1] Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Financial Services and Support, International Educational Services, Life Sciences, Science Technology, Engineering / Environment and Mathematics (STEM), Tourism, Transport and Advanced Logistics.

3. Please specify how the calculations were made, in particular including any assumptions made in terms of quality or quantities. Where relevant, statistical evidence and benchmarks should be used and, if requested, provided in a format that is usable by the Commission.

a. Operation Type: Participation in Tertiary Education for courses at MQF/EQF Level 7

The research was carried out based on the database of ESF1.225 participants. This scholarship scheme supported individuals undertaking an EQF L 7 degree in Malta or abroad. The database of ESF1.225 participants consisted of 596 cases. A number of these cases were excluded from the research for the

following reasons:

- participants that withdrew mid-way from the programme of study and therefore the total cost of the programme of study was not available
- cases without information on the number of credits for the programme of study
- recipients of bursaries because the cost of tuition expenses did not reflect the cost generally paid by other students for the same programme of study
- missing receipts or capping of grants awarded which led to an incomplete total cost of the programme of study undertaken
- programmes of study undertaken in countries which do not charge tuition fees
- cases with administration fees only
- influential cases and outliers

In total 165 cases were excluded from the analysis to ensure that the remaining dataset was based on common ground.

The cost per credit was calculated by dividing the total cost reported for tuition expenses, including bench fees, by the total number of credits of the programme of study and calculating an average rate per ECTS. This was done for all variables and all scenarios.

A common credit system was used to calculate the cost per credit – ECTS. For programmes of study not calculated in ECTS, the research specified the conversion rate used to enable the use of ECTS throughout the whole dataset.

For each scenario the advantages and disadvantages were outlined in comparison to the statistical significance of the variables considered for each scenario. The report also outlines the feasibility of using the averages rates per ECTS as set for each scenario in terms of simplification and practicality for the Beneficiary / Intermediate Body.

b. Operation Type: Per Diem

Reference is made to Article 53(3)(d) of the Common Provision Regulation stating that the *amounts for the forms of grants referred to under point (b), (c) and (d) of paragraph 1*, may also be established *in accordance with the rules for application of corresponding unit costs, lump sums and flat rates applied under schemes for grants funded entirely by the Member State for a similar type of operation*. Further to the reasoning provided in section 2 above, it is deemed that this satisfies the Regulation's requirement that such simplified cost options applied under schemes for grants funded entirely by the Member State are implemented for a similar type of operation. The exact same method and rates arriving at the unit costs per person per night abroad will be applied.

The relative components of the subsistence allowance are:

- Accommodation 50% of the overall rate
- Breakfast 10% of the overall rate
- Lunch 10% of the overall rate

- Dinner 10% of the overall rate
- Sundry expenses 20% of the overall rate.

The total per diem allowance entitlement for travel abroad is calculated on the number of nights spent abroad multiplied by the per diem allowance, irrespective of the time of departure from Malta. In instances where officers may be required to attend consecutive meetings abroad, the extension of an additional overnight stay abroad, where it proves to be more economically feasible than returning to Malta after the first meeting is allowed. When such is the case, and the Ministry/Department/Public Sector Entity concerned opts to adopt such a measure, prior approval from the Ministry for Finance and Financial Services through the Public Sector Performance and Evaluation Directorate would need to be sought. An e-mail justifying such an option is to be sent to pspe.mfin@gov.mt. Such an extended stay would be considered as part of the duty abroad. In cases of periods of duty exceeding three (3) months, the Department is to contact the Director Corporate Services, Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and provide all details necessary to determine the appropriate expatriation allowance payable. Subsequently the Department is to seek final approval of the People and Standards Division at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry for Finance and Financial Services.

When accommodation and breakfast are provided for free, the per diem allowance shall be reduced by 60%, provided that, if breakfast is against payment, the reduction shall be 50%. A reduction of 10% shall be made in respect of every meal provided free of charge; as part of a participation fee; or claimed as hospitality. Instances may arise when the host organizer/s of the meeting pays the participating officer an allowance to cover the hotel, meals and all other sundry expenses incurred during the meeting, despite the fact that such an officer would have already been paid a subsistence allowance by his/her department/entity/Ministry. The officer concerned is to reimburse such an allowance to his/ her department/entity/Ministry.

In case of an early departure from Malta which is followed by a late arrival on return, an additional 20% of the per diem daily allowance is allocated, covering an additional meal and half of the allocation for sundry expenses. The additional 20% per diem is only applicable when the whole stay abroad is work related, i.e. there is no extension to staying abroad which is requested by the delegate for personal reasons. The officer travelling qualifies for the additional 20% per diem when the difference between the time of departure from Malta and the time of departure from the country of destination (irrespective of the number of days in between) exceeds six (6) hours. In case of multiple flights on return, the time of departure on the last leg of the return trip is taken. In the case of long-haul air voyages involving overnight flights, 50% of the diem rate applicable to the country of destination is payable for such a night.

Public officers who travel abroad on official duty and return back on the same day are entitled to 50% of the applicable per diem daily subsistence.

In the event of a cancellation of a return flight no subsistence allowance will be given for extra hours or day spent abroad. Additional justifiable expenses incurred due to the cancellation or delay, are to be approved by the respective Permanent Secretary or Director for Corporate Services and reimbursed as contingency expenses on the presentation of receipts.

In case that a person is travelling overseas for training and spends more than 15 nights abroad, 50% of the Class A per diem allowance starts applying from the 16th night onward. This applies only in cases where the person travelling is going abroad strictly for training of a long duration (longer than 15 days). This is in line with the MFIN per diem rates for overseas training subsistence allowance published here - <https://finance.gov.mt/en/the-ministry/departments-directorates-units/fpmd/pages/per-diem-rates.aspx> and

as explained in the Manual on Transport and Travel Policies and Procedures issued by the Ministry for Finance.

c. Operation Type: Travel

Reference is made to Article 53 (3)(d)] of the Common Provision Regulation stating that the *amounts for the forms of grants referred to under point (b), (c) and (d) of paragraph 1*, may also be established in accordance with the rules for application of corresponding unit costs, lump sums and flat rates applicable in Union policies for a similar type of operation. Further to the reasoning provided in section 2 above, it is deemed that this satisfies the Regulation's requirement that such SCOs applicable in other Union policies are implemented for a similar type of operation. The exact same method and rates arriving at the unit costs per person per distance travelled covering travel costs will be applied.

4. Please explain how you have ensured that only eligible expenditure was included in the calculation of the standard scale of unit cost, lump sum or flat rate.

a. Operation Type: Participation in Tertiary Education for courses at MQF/EQF Level 7

The dataset presented to NCFHE for their research was extracted by the Managing Authority from the Structural Funds Database 2007-2013 from the ESF1.225 operation. The Managing Authority went through all the cases presented in the dataset, irregularities documented and worked only with data where the full cost of the study programme was available in line with Section 3 of the NCFHE study.

b. Operation Type: Per Diem

In line with the Government's Manual on Transport and Travel Policies and Procedures issued by the Ministry for Finance available here, the per diem allowance covers accommodation costs and subsistence allowance in respect of breakfast and two main meals, local travel, telecommunications and all other incidental and sundry expenses.

The per diem allowance is all-inclusive, except for:

- (i) hospitality expenses;
- (ii) expenses relating to hotel/airport transfers and local transportation to/from airport, although, in such cases use of taxis should be justified and, where practical, no effort should be spared to utilize the most economic means of transportation available;
- (iii) expenses relating to the administration of obligatory vaccines for the immunization of officers in correspondence with the country being visited.

c. Operation Type: Travel

Rates are set in line with already approved rates by the European Commission in the ERASMUS+

Programme Guide. In line with the published Programme Guide, these rates cover the cost of a round trip for travel costs only and do not include costs tied to contingency money, hospitality and per diems.

5. Assessment of the audit authority(ies) of the calculation methodology and amounts and the arrangements to ensure the verification, quality, collection and storage of data.

The Audit Authority's assessment is being provided as a separate document uploaded under under 'Other Documents'. Further assessments may be included in future Programme amendments.

Appendix 2: Union contribution based on financing not linked to costs

A. Summary of the main elements

Priority	Fund	Specific objective	Category of region	The amount covered by the financing not linked to cost	Type(s) of operation covered		Conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Indicator		Unit of measurement for the conditions to be fulfilled/results to be achieved triggering reimbursement by the Commission	Envisaged type of reimbursement method used to reimburse the beneficiary(ies)
					Code (1)	Description		Code (2)	Description		

(1) This refers to the code for the intervention field dimension in Table 1 of Annex I to the CPR and the Annex IV to the EMFAF regulation

(2) This refers to the code of a common indicator, if applicable

B. Details by type of operation

1.Promoting quality education and reducing early school leaving

The ESF+ Programme shall contribute towards undertaking preventive and active measures across various years of education, with a view to strengthen education quality, including through digital means as well as improve staff competences in line with pedagogical developments. This initiative will therefore promote capacity-building measures for educators, pupils and their guardians, in addition to developing inclusive education pathways for all children.

Indicative timeframes for ESF+ Operation of Strategic Importance

Planned Operation: Application, Procurement and Content Development for Years 7 to 11

Estimated Start Date: 2022

Estimated End Date: 2024

Planned Operation: Distribution, training and licensing

Estimated Start Date: 2023/2024

Estimated End Date: 2027/2028

DOCUMENTS

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
Legal Notice 411 of 2011 Public Procurement of Contracting Authorities or Entities in the fields of Defence and Security Regulations	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_LN 411 of 2011_G.1	Ares(2022)6225907	Legal Notice 411 of 2011 Public Procurement of Contracting Authorities or Entities in the fields of Defence and Security Regulations	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Covenant between SAMB and MA	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_Covenant between SAMB & MAS_G.2	Ares(2022)6225907	Covenant between SAMB and MA	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Covenant between the Managing Authorities and the Ministry responsible for Human Rights	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_Covenant_EU Charter HR_G.3	Ares(2022)6225907	Covenant between the Managing Authorities and the Ministry responsible for Human Rights	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Covenant between the Managing Authorities and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_Covenant between MAS & CRPD_G.4	Ares(2022)6225907	Covenant between the Managing Authorities and the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
National Youth Policy 2021 – 2030	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_National Youth Policy 2021-2030_T4.1	Ares(2022)6225907	National Youth Policy 2021 – 2030	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2022 – 2027	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_Gender Equality & Mainstreaming Strategy 2022-2027_T4.2	Ares(2022)6225907	Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2022 – 2027	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	MCAST Strategic Plan 2022-2027	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
University of Malta Strategic Plan 2020-2025	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_UoM Strategic Plan 2020-2025_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	University of Malta Strategic Plan 2020-2025	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
2030 Strategic Vision Further and Higher Education	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_2030 Strategic Vision FHE - Malta_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	2030 Strategic Vision Further and Higher Education	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Manual of Procedures for Provider Licensing and Programme Accreditation	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_Manual of Procedures for Provider Licensing and Prog. Accred_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	Manual of Procedures for Provider Licensing and Programme Accreditation	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Inclusion Policy	Supplementary	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_MFED_Inclusion_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	Inclusion Policy	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
	Information						
National Strategy for Digital Education 2021	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_National Strategy for Digital Education 2021_draft_T4.3	Ares(2022)6225907	National Strategy for Digital Education 2021	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Draft National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2020-2030	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2020-2030_FINAL_100622_T4.6	Ares(2022)6225907	Draft National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2020-2030	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Do No Significant Harm Assessment In relation to the ESF+ Programme 2021-2027	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_DNSH	Ares(2022)6225907	Do No Significant Harm Assessment In relation to the ESF+ Programme 2021-2027	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
SEA Screening Template in relation to the ESF+ Programme 2021-2027	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_SEA	Ares(2022)6225907	SEA Screening Template in relation to the ESF+ Programme 2021-2027	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
ESF+ SCOs - Review of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for the Endeavour Scholarships Scheme	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_SCO_Tuition Fees	Ares(2022)6225907	ESF+ SCOs - Review of the Standard Scale of Unit Costs for the Endeavour Scholarships Scheme	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
ESF+ SCOs - Review of the unit costs to be used for travelling costs incurred per person travelling abroad	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_SCO_Travel	Ares(2022)6225907	ESF+ SCOs - Review of the unit costs to be used for travelling costs incurred per person travelling abroad	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
ESF+ SCOs - Review of the Unit Costs to be used to calculate the amount that could be claimed per diem allowance per person per night spent abroad	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_SCO_Per Diem	Ares(2022)6225907	ESF+ SCOs - Review of the Unit Costs to be used to calculate the amount that could be claimed per diem allowance per person per night spent abroad	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Indicators Report Annex I- Intervention Logic (IL)	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_IR_IL	Ares(2022)6225907	Indicators Report Annex I- Intervention Logic (IL)	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Indicators Report	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_IR_v.2	Ares(2022)6225907	Indicators Report	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Indicators Report: Annex II - Indicators Methodology (IM)	Supplementary Information	26-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_IR_IM_v.3	Ares(2022)6225907	Indicators Report: Annex II - Indicators Methodology (IM)	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent by
ESF+ SCOs - List of per diem allowances per person per night spent abroad	Supplementary Information	31-Aug-2022	MT_ESF+_SCO_Per Diem Rates	Ares(2022)6225907	ESF+ SCOs - List of per diem allowances per person per night spent abroad	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia
Programme snapshot 2021MT05SFPR001 1.2	Snapshot of data before send	08-Sep-2022		Ares(2022)6225907	Programme_snapshot_2021MT05SFPR001_1.2_en.pdf	08-Sep-2022	Pace, Maria Pia