

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY 2004

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The National Youth Policy of Malta considers the personal, social, political and spiritual development of young people within a holistic perspective.
- 1.2 In this respect the Youth Policy is intended to promote, in an integrated manner, young people's economic, social and cultural situations, such as their education and their access to information and advice, employment, housing, health and leisure. The ultimate aim of this National Youth Policy is to encourage young people to participate in society and to educate them towards an active form of citizenship.
- 1.3 The State recognises the role of the National Youth Council (an active full member of the European Youth Forum) as an autonomous body that represents youth organisations.
- 1.4 The State recognises the role of the Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta.
- 1.5 The State recognises the role of Non-Governmental Organisations, Youth Centres and youth groups.
- 1.6 The State recognises those young persons who are not members of any organisation.
- 1.7 The State recognises the important contribution of the Catholic church in youth work in Malta.
- 1.8 This policy sets the parameters within which youth work should be carried out.
- 1.9 For the purpose of this policy the word "Youth" means a person between the ages of 14-30. Notwithstanding the establishment of this specific age range, the National Youth Policy of Malta also recognises that there are various phases of what is called 'youth', and that they range from pre-adolescence to young adulthood.
- 1.10 For the purpose of this policy, 'disadvantaged youths' are youths who today face discrimination because of life circumstances arising from their socio-economic, health, religious or educational backgrounds.

2. Ministry for Youth and the Arts

- 2.1 The Ministry for Youth and the Arts, in conjunction with state-recognised bodies (cf. 1.3 –1.7) is also responsible for the promotion and implementation of the National Youth Policy as outlined in this document.
- 2.2 The Ministry will consult this policy on a regular basis and, in collaboration with the National Youth Council, the Maltese Association of Youth Workers, the directorship of the Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta, youth organizations and other

stakeholders, will revise it and organize a National Consultative Meeting for this purpose at least once every three years.

2.3 With the implementation of the Youth Policy, the Ministry shall organize government projects for youth and, concurrently, acknowledge, evaluate and promote initiatives taken by youth organizations.

2.4 In conjunction with the Ministry responsible for youth, Government recognizes that young people have particular needs and aspirations. In this respect, every possibility which offers young people access to a variety of opportunities that are intended to complement their formal education is explored.

3. Aims

This Policy aims to foster a society which (particularly for young people)

- 3.1 ensures an adequate quality of life;
- 3.2 ensures social justice, opportunity and equity;
- 3.3 promotes the authenticity of the identity, diversity and responsible independence of young people; and
- 3.4 promotes active citizenship and participation.

4. Principles

In a general way, the State recognises that this policy:

- 4.1 affirms the important role of young people in the development of Maltese society;
- 4.2 fosters an environment where young people will find fulfilment. In order to achieve this, the State shall make provision for young people's basic needs, their social needs and their personal development;
- 4.3 acknowledges that young people are able to make responsible choices in their life-course, as well as to understand the implications of these choices, and to take appropriate decisions;
- 4.4 cultivates an environment where young people will find a culture of peace, equality and equity, access to education and full and correct information;
- 4.5 promotes, through mentoring, the delegation of responsibility to young people through collective work from various quarters, such as, the Government, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, the media, educational institutions, the private sector, the family, the community in general and young people themselves;
- 4.6 understands that there are young people who require particular attention. It is the State's responsibility to provide and support adequate services with the aim of maximising their potential;
- 4.7 recognises that young people have a right to participate actively in the public sphere of society. Young people's genuine participation assumes a positive contribution towards decisions that concern them now and in the future;

- 4.8 acknowledges the value of sustainability and solidarity across generations so as to ensure that present needs are met without compromising the abilities of different generations; and
- 4.9 encourages transparency, democracy and accessibility in institutions and organisations working with young people and in programmes aimed at young people.

5. Policy Objectives

In a specific way, the State follows a policy that:

- 5.1 strives to understand the aspirations of youth and to empower them to achieve these aspirations. Youth empowerment is based on the belief that young people are the resource of their own development. They must, therefore, be both the architects and agents in designing their ways and means to meet contemporary challenges. Youth Empowerment includes the participation of young people in decision-making and in issues such as economic, social and cultural development, access to information and advice, vocational training, employment, housing, health and leisure;
- 5.2 acknowledges that participation goes hand in hand with providing young people with correct information which is indispensable for the development of active citizenship. Young people expect to have full access to information on all policies concerning them;
- 5.3 furthers the equality of access to information technology and *it* provides the necessary training;
- 5.4 encourages voluntary service in the form of social participation and integration, educational experiences and accreditation for employment. The State should recognize, encourage and support young people who are involved in voluntary work;
- 5.5 continues to support Agencies and organisation which provide services to minority groups;
- 5.6 supports NGOs that are concerned with democracy, peace, spirituality, participation, unemployment, social exclusion, human rights, inter-regional dialogue, and ecology;
- 5.7 helps youth further appreciate cultural diversity;
- 5.8 cultivates a value system which recognises respect, honour and ethical behaviour both in the public and private sphere;

- 5.9 recognises that traditional collective models are rapidly changing as a result of increasingly individualised pathways. Public and private authorities, and social agencies need to take this into account when formulating policies.
- 5.10 ensures the right to full accessibility for persons with disabilities, such as mobility, sight, hearing and learning

6. Education

In the field of Education, the State follows a policy that:

- 6.1 recognises education not only as a basic right but also as the best avenue through which youth could develop their talents and become fulfilled human beings. Education helps in the process of socialisation, integration and empowerment of individuals as well as in the development of a participatory and democratic society;
- 6.2 keeps abreast with current and developing educational systems and provides human, infrastructural, technological and other resources;
- 6.3 considers the problem of illiteracy among young people as a matter of concern, thus demanding a concerted effort with the task of eradicating this social ill;
- 6.4 complements formal education with non-formal and informal education. In the field of non-formal and informal education, the role of professional youth and community workers is to be given due recognition;
- 6.5 ensures that the various educational and employment bodies implement measures for the accreditation of prior learning and skills acquired through non-formal learning/education;
- 6.6 promotes the right of information to all students at all levels.
- 6.7 gives on-going access to lifelong learning. Effective career and vocational guidance needs to be provided to all young people and stronger measures need to be taken to integrate the disadvantaged and those at risk;
- 6.8 incorporates the pedagogical system whereby students are prepared to
- learn through theory and practice
 - understand that the process of learning does not stop with the acquisition of certificates, but is a continuous process spread over the life of an individual and;
 - to appreciate the acquisition of knowledge through the best learning methods, rather than learning in an examination-oriented system;

- 6.9 while developing students' individuality and potential, it provides them also with the necessary means and skills for searching and sifting information and knowledge. The quality and effectiveness of school education needs to ensure that young people are provided with skills to make the appropriate career choices that may effect their lifecourse.
- 6.10 ensures the dissemination of information about human rights principles inherent in the Constitution of Malta and in international conventions and legislation to which Malta is signatory;
- 6.11 strives to involve as much as possible young people and students in the process of establishing, evaluating and reviewing curricula and other components of the country's educational system. Students are not mere receivers but active stakeholders of this system and therefore their participation should always be guaranteed and maximised; and
- 6.12 encourages the setting up of student councils and other structures for the proper representation of students in the decision-making processes.

7. Health

In the field of Health, the State follows a policy that:

- 7.1 takes a holistic view of health which does not only include cure and therapy but also primary health care, prevention and promotion. It incorporates the wider spectrum of physical, mental and psychological perspectives;
- 7.2 promotes an early introduction to Health Education. Health Education, started at an early age, is a positive drive for a strong foundation in healthy living. It is intended to focus on preventive and harm-reduction measures;
- 7.3 recognises that the mental and psychological health of young people and its management are a specialised branch and thus they necessitate specialised treatment and facilities;
- 7.4 addresses, in the various sectorial policies and through suitably qualified professionals, hazards arising from certain types of behaviour such as careless driving, promiscuity or unprotected sex, addiction, malnutrition and risky leisure styles; and

- 7.5 concerns itself with health and safety at work in seeing that adequate resources are to be provided
for education and for the promotion of safety standards.

8. Employment

In the field of Employment, the State follows a policy that:

- 8.1 recognises the right of young people to work and the duty of society to provide them with a wide selection of job opportunities and relevant basic skills;
- 8.2 safeguards young people from the threats of exploitation, such as employment below the legally-consented age, wages and benefits which do not ensure a decent standard of living, harassment, and disregard for the Health and Safety Act ;
- 8.3 appreciates the fact that work is one of the avenues for a young person's self-realisation. In this respect, all employers are encouraged to foster opportunities for the personal development of young people in terms of autonomy, leadership and creativity;
- 8.4 encourages the advancement of schemes which support young people who display an enterprising drive;
- 8.5 promotes the concepts of flexi-time, reduced hours, job-sharing and parental leave while safeguarding workers' rights and conditions as stipulated by law;
- 8.6 ensures that employers do not discriminate in any manner in their methods of recruitment and job advancement;
- 8.7 recognises and supports Agencies, Trade Unions and other organisations in their role as agents for the initiation of young people into the culture of work, towards their development, training and formation and for the enforcement of current legislation;
- 8.8 in conjunction with the educational system, ensures that young people's initial educational level is not below that required for their successful entry into the world of work;
- 8.9 facilitates the transition between educational institutions and the world of work through the establishment of better contact and on-going co-operation between schools and the business community;
- 8.10 adopts an integrational approach by means of which students who interrupt their studies in the formal system will still find the opportunity to enhance their educational capital

through other means, such as, the formal recognition of non-formal and informal education;

- 8.11 makes the creation of new job opportunities a priority in a genuine effort to reduce the level of unemployment of young people and/or their duration in the unemployment pool to the lowest minimum;
- 8.12 supports organisations which create employment and internship opportunities for enterprising youth through Government grants, credits, financial and professional means; and
- 8.13 promotes parity of esteem between vocational and academic qualifications.

9. Culture

In the field of Culture, the State follows a policy that:

- 9.1 recognises the contribution of young people to Maltese culture. It is essential for the National Youth Policy to be linked with the nation's cultural policy so as to have a clear definition of the role and importance of culture in the development process of young people. Both policies would thus establish the strategies and mechanisms for effective and lasting impact and ensure the ongoing strengthening and enrichment of the processes;
- 9.2 recognises the uniqueness of Maltese cultural heritage and the significance of its expression in order that young people be given every opportunity to learn about and to appreciate their cultural heritage. Programmes aimed at safeguarding this heritage are to be encouraged;
- 9.3 promotes the nurturing of individual creativity and allows access to and participation in cultural expression, so that young people may be encouraged to dedicate some of their leisure time to creative work and participation in cultural activities;
- 9.4 facilitates the use of culture as an agent for social transformation through:
 - a. the organisation of practical sessions in the visual and performing arts, prime examples being literature, drama, media-forms and information technology resources, amongst others;
 - b. the strengthening of structures focused on creativity by organising them on professional lines;

- c. the support offered to young people so as to be able to present their creative expression to as wide an audience as possible; and
 - d. the creation of space for the plurality of expression and tolerance of diversity in a spirit of cultural democracy and respect for human rights.
- 9.5 ensures that young people are not exploited through:
- a. inadequate prices related to young people's financial means;
 - b. disregard of the current Health and Safety Regulations;
 - c. the abuse of their talents – (both current and potential); and
 - d. the violation of their sexuality
- 9.6 ascertains the representation of young people on various cultural bodies;
- 9.7 supports groups and associations that promote and organise amateur cultural activities;
- 9.8 encourages the further development of libraries at local level as a significant measure for the development of young people's cultural habits;
- 9.9 considers the Maltese language as an intrinsic part of our national culture. Young people have the right to learn the use of the Maltese language correctly and to be given opportunities whereby they can express themselves in their native language in all cultural fields in the strong belief that language should not be the cause of inequality;
- 9.10 promotes the concept of multi-lingualism

10. Environment

In the field of Environment, the State follows a policy that:

- 10.1 encourages young people to adopt a pro-environmental attitude. Environmental awareness should be stepped up and promoted as an intrinsic attitude;
- 10.2 promotes the protection of the environment in order to provide a better standard of living and a higher level of public health. Open spaces and urban recreational green areas need to be a necessary aspect of planning policies, such as pedestrian village cores;
- 10.3 supports environmental awareness programmes and projects in the national curriculum from the early school years. Programmes in environmental management and protection, in which young people can participate, such as the establishment of new Nature Reserves, are to be set-up;
- 10.4 encourages young people to adopt environment-friendly measures, such as the use of recycled paper and energy-saving apparatus.

- 10.5 considers the organisation of the Public Transport system as a measure that meets the needs of young people and that provides effective environmental education;
- 10.6 helps young people to take an active role in the protection and improvement of the environment for a sustainable future. Environment is indisputably a factor that affects everyone; and
- 10.7 takes all the necessary measures to create an awareness of the perils of pollution and to minimise its presence in any form.

11. Leisure

In the field of Leisure the State follows a policy that:

- 11.1 provides for leisure education as a basis for the formulation of a comprehensive, unified policy;
- 11.2 ensures that all young people, irrespective of their abilities / needs:
 - a. are given the opportunity to acquire basic sport skills;
 - b. are provided with safe and healthy forms of entertainment; and
 - c. are given the opportunity to reach levels of personal achievement and / or publicly-recognised levels of attainment.
- 11.3 creates an environment whereby disadvantaged, and in particular disabled youth, may share and enjoy the same leisure activities as any other youth;
- 11.4 encourages young people to engage in altruistic and philanthropic work..

12. Participation

In the field of Participation, the State follows a policy that

- 12.1 ensures that the participation levels of young people in all spheres of society are genuine in character. That is, while tokenistic participation is to be avoided, young people's competent influence must also be ensured;
- 12.2 affirms the importance of an easily-accessible, adequate and relevant information programme as a fundamental requirement for the eventual effective participation of young people in community life. For this reason a direct means of communication for

the drafting and implementation of policies has to be developed so that young people's voices are heard;

- 12.3 recognises that young people's competent influence should be assessed and achieved through dialogue, equitable representation and the 'open method of co-ordination' as proposed by the European Commission White Paper (2001) on 'A New Impetus for European Youth';
- 12.4 acknowledges that schools, youth organisations, the National Youth Council, local councils and other non-associated groups are the domains that should provide an ideal opportunity for nurturing participation skills and their implementation;
- 12.5 pledges to further strengthen and support consultation structures and mechanisms in the proper manner and extent so as to ensure the involvement of young people in regular meetings and initiatives both at the local and international level.

13. Mobility

In the field of Mobility, the State follows a policy that

- 13.1 encourages young people to develop intercultural understanding, to prevent the creation of an insular mentality, to strengthen fundamental values such as human rights, to combat racism and xenophobia, to develop a sense of solidarity, and to continue to acknowledge and understand the various forms of cultures;
- 13.2 considers young people as agents of change, peace and progress. The relationship with Europe and the Mediterranean should be based on collaboration that enhances the values of both regions. Young Maltese people should recognise the importance of social responsibilities, such as, democratisation, active citizenship and participation; and appreciate the value of intercultural understanding;
- 13.3 continues to encourage and support youth mobility through various national and international programmes such as local youth exchange programmes organised by schools and local councils, the European Commission, and the European Youth Centres;
- 13.4 ensures that competent bodies continue to promote initiatives and to educate young people about the YOUTH Programme, EURO-MED ACTION Programme, EVS programme, SOCRATES, LEONARDO, scholarships, traineeships, etc. Young people have the right to know about the existence of such programmes so that they can eventually participate and benefit from such educational programmes;

- 13.5 expects the State and social agencies to provide special, educational or unpaid leaves and subsidised travel fares for young people who participate in conferences, symposia, seminars and other relevant activities that deal with youth issues that are of national importance;
- 13.6 strives to establish and improve upon the electronic and other network systems in order to help communication and to enable fora, exchanges, etc to take place, and considers the compilation of a database comprising those entities and organisations concerned with young people and its updating as essential in order to ensure maximum participation;
- 13.7 promotes a more accessible environment in all the initiatives taken. Due consideration is to be given to minimizing disabling barriers, such as financial burdens.

14. Information, Communications and Technology

In the field of Information, Communications and Technology, the States follows a policy that :

- 14.1 will further develop Guidance and Counselling services in order to provide information about further educational opportunities, career requirements, training courses, youth activities by non-governmental organisations, job opportunities, and national and international youth events;
- 14.2 guarantees the availability, and full accessibility, of information in youth information centres situated in various central localities. These centers will also provide information regarding travel opportunities, leisure, youth cards, current affairs and other material relevant to young people;
- 14.3 recognizes the Internet as a necessary educational tool. The State needs to ensure that it is made available and that it becomes fully accessible to all young people.
- 14.4 ensures the continual updating of the existing web portal, YOUTHNET, where issues that are pertinent to young people are discussed. The services offered by YOUTHNET ought to include measures meant to facilitate consultation and participation by providing:
 - a directory of organizations
 - an events calendar
 - resource-matching services
 - a bulletin board, and
 - moderated discussion fora;
- 14.5 provides for assistance in the use of ICT to those young people who are not yet accustomed to it through promotional campaigns, as a means of communication. Educational campaigns meant to safeguard the unwary from Internet abuse and scams which afflict this information medium must also be provided.

15. Youth at Risk

In the field of Youth at Risk, the State follows a policy that:

- 15.1 acknowledges that some groups of young people may be considered at risk because of life-circumstances arising from their social, economical, educational or health

backgrounds and conditions. This applies particularly to young people who already belong to disadvantaged groups;

- 15.2 treats and deals with immediacy the issue of homelessness that makes young people even more vulnerable. This particular circumstance, in turn, brings about other risk factors;
- 15.3 addresses this particular time in the young person's life. Following an accurate 'needs and assessment' analysis, appropriate services need to be set up or improved upon. The main aim of these services should always be that of enhancing the young person's resilience while also addressing one's vulnerabilities. This should bring about empowerment in the young people's life enabling them to move on;
- 15.4 ensures that these services are provided by a team of different professionals, working together, in order to nurture a holistic approach for therapy, support, formal, non-formal and informal education;
- 15.5 makes the providers of these services accountable to a central body in order to avoid replication.

16. Structures

16.1 National Youth Agency

16.1.1 A National Youth Agency needs to be set up with the aim of promoting youth development within society and of providing a legal framework on matters relating to young people.

16.1.2 This Agency will co-ordinate and monitor a cross-sectoral policy on youth by:

- advocating for young people;
- keeping abreast with young people's living conditions;
- supporting youth organizations as well as developing associative life;
- enhancing local youth activity;
- monitoring and updating the National Youth Policy of Malta every three years;

- providing additional and/or specific training to trainers, youth leaders and youth workers;
- participating in international activities; and
- providing an accessible resource centre.

16.1.3 The National Youth Agency shall be managed, within an established statutory framework, by a body representative of the government, of professional youth and community workers, and of elected members from:

- the National Youth Council
- the Maltese Association of Youth Workers
- the Youth Studies Programme of the University of Malta,
- local councils, and
- non-governmental organizations.

16.2 Training for Youth and Community Workers

16.2.1 The Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta aims to:

- (a) provide professional training for prospective youth and community workers;
- (b) undertake research on, and analysis of, issues that concern Maltese young people, in particular;
- (c) provide information and to make suggestions about policies that concern Maltese young people, within the local and foreign contexts; and
- (d) to develop an international dimension through contacts with foreign universities and institutions in youth studies.

16.2.2 The State recognizes the work undertaken by the Youth Studies Programme by:

- (a) making use of research and suggestions presented by course participants, graduates and the Research Programme in the drawing up of policies;
- (b) recognizing the status of professionally-trained youth and community workers and by making

provision for their services; and
(c) by supporting the Programme and its activities both morally and financially.

16.3 National Youth Council

- 16.3.1 The National Youth Council is a voluntary non-governmental organisation which strives to be a protagonist in Malta's civil society.
- 16.3.2 The National Youth Council embraces a wide representation of youth organisations and serves as a forum for dialogue between young people so that they can be more effective in society. It also facilitates networking and promotes cooperation among youth organisations.
- 16.3.3 The National Youth Council strives to represent the interest of young people both in national and international fora and activities. It undertakes to increase the participation of young people and youth organisations particularly in decision-making spheres. Minority and disadvantaged youths who tend to be under-represented are given special attention.
- 16.3.4 The National Youth Council serves to channel the flow of information* and opinion between young people and decision-makers.
- 16.3.5 The National Youth Council is the consultative body for the State on all matters concerning Maltese youth, and consequently Government provides office space and administrative support to the National Youth Council. Government will also help the Council by providing funds that are to be administered autonomously by the Council. At the end of each financial year, the Council will present an annual financial report.

16.4 National Youth Day

National Youth Day in Malta is celebrated on the 21st of March. On this day, state authorities publicly give recognition to the vital role that young people play in society. Through a number of activities organised by the Ministry responsible for youth, young people find the opportunity to openly demonstrate their potential.

17. Conclusion

- 17.1 This document is a statement which goes beyond the remedial and which is intended to ground the stated and the written versions*. The policy is meant to garner the action of policy makers, to ensure proper implementation, and to acknowledge the competent influence of young people, of the National Youth Council, of the Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta, and of the Maltese Association of Youth Workers. Above all, it should guarantee young people's citizenship status without reserve.
- 17.2 In this respect, the National Youth Policy of Malta is an affirmation, by Government and by its associates in this particular sphere, of their belief in collaboration and partnership in thought and action about young people's personal, social and political development.
- 17.3 Finally, this Policy contemplates the creation of a Youth Service that is based on young people's expectations and needs for today and tomorrow without having recourse to yesterday's modes of thinking and acting. It proffers to exclude any hint of measures which may perpetuate a sense of powerlessness, apathy and indifference in young people. Equity, equality, empowerment and emancipation are the cornerstones on which the National Youth Policy of Malta stands.

18. Strategy

- 18.1 The intrinsic value of the National Youth Policy of Malta lies in the commitment it is meant to engender in all those concerned with the well-being of Malta's present and future young generations.
- 18.2 In this respect a concerted and dialogical effort is expected of the nation through its component official and voluntary institutions, namely: Central Government, Ministries,

Public Authorities, Local Councils, Non-Governmental Organisations, the National Youth Council, the Youth Studies Programme at the University of Malta, the Maltese Association of Youth Workers, youth organizations, and young people themselves, whether represented or not.

- 18.3 Commitment and effort can only be translated into reality if the implementation of both the spirit and the word of the document are taken in hand in both timely and earnest fashion.