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Education is one of the most important building blocks of a thriving economy and a successful and vibrant society. In the knowledge economy, competences such as literacy, numeracy and computer skills are critical to a nation’s success. More than ever before, education is the key to the future well-being of Maltese citizens.

But in the future, education will be less about academic knowledge and more about developing the right competences and skills. Flexibility, self-discipline, creativity and entrepreneurship, decision-making and communication skills will be essential to personal development and employment. These are the vital tools needed by contemporary society in a highly competitive, global economy.

As the Minister responsible for Malta’s education, I look to the National Commission for Further and Higher Education not only to ensure the right standards are championed and adhered to in further and higher education in Malta through the licensing of service providers and the screening, validation and accreditation of their programmes, but also for acting as an independent and consultative agency to government – an educational think-tank – in these fields.

As this Annual Report demonstrates, 2013 has been a year of change and the need for consolidation for the Commission in the wake of an expanded role, a major move to new premises and a considerable change-over of staff. The new Board did not take over until the early autumn and there was consequently an interruption to the Commission’s rhythm and output. Nevertheless, a fresh direction is being set under a new Board and a new Chief Executive Officer.

I am determined to see education in Malta make a great leap forward. A framework for the Education Strategy for Malta, 2014 to 2024 is being launched and I intend that the National Commission for Further and Higher Education will play an increasingly greater role in its development. The ‘internationalisation’ of education in Malta and the new possibilities offered by Open Education Resources and Digital Learning are among the many areas where the Commission can be expected to play a prominent part.
My Commission is composed of nine members and the Secretary to the Board. Its detailed roles are laid down by law and broadly embrace responsibility for licensing, accreditation, recognition and quality assurance of further and higher education in Malta and adherence to national and international educational benchmarks in these fields. It is the task of my Board to set the policy to be followed by the Commission in the achievement of its objectives and to support and guide the Chief Executive Officer in their implementation.

Following a disrupted start to 2013, the new Board did not begin functioning fully until the autumn. It inevitably had to concentrate its efforts initially on ensuring that the merger of the two organisations forming the National Commission for Further and Higher Education was successfully executed. The first step lay in the recruitment of a new Chief Executive Officer in November and the building of the administrative, financial and organisational structures necessary to enable the Commission to begin functioning effectively.

Much progress has been made. Much remains to be done. The Commission’s standard of accommodation needs improving. Staff conditions of service must be unified under a new collective agreement. IT systems need modernising and financial governance improved.

My Board is committed to ensuring that these fundamentals are properly addressed if progress in meeting the Commission’s prime roles is not to be handicapped. It has set the Chief Executive Officer a series of challenging but achievable targets for 2014. These have been cascaded down through the Commission in a comprehensive Work Plan for 2014.

As Chairman, I am most grateful for the high calibre of the members of my Board, and of the new Chief Executive Officer. The Commission contains some highly professional members of staff and we are determined to give the Chief Executive Officer and her team every support and encouragement to make the National Commission for Further and Higher Education an outstanding educational regulatory authority.

Mr Martin Scicluna
If we are a product of our past, then the National Commission for Further and Higher Education stands on solid ground. The combination of the technical Malta Qualifications Council together with the strategic National Commission for Higher Education has brought to NCFHE a unique combination of expertise and skills. The Commission has a wealth of knowledge ingrained in its staff members, in strategies drafted, in research and studies undertaken as well as in the ongoing accreditation and recognition structures.

I would like to see the Commission become a forward-looking entity and a strategic partner for the Education sector in Malta, for the providers, for the educators, for the policymakers and more importantly for the students.

I am building on the past experience of the Commission, restructuring internally to take into consideration new roles and responsibilities, and to create a lean, dynamic, responsive entity to complement the changing growing education sector as one of the key pillars of the economy in Malta.

Human resources are the cornerstone of our entity. As a service-oriented entity, our employees are at the forefront of my priorities in terms of capacity-building, re/up-skilling, enhancing motivation, improving professional satisfaction and providing for career progression. The NCFHE team has shown incredible resilience in handling the challenges brought about by the 2013 changes and has managed to remain focused and committed to the core concept of the entity.

By way of strategically looking ahead, my targets for NCFHE revolve around creating a more stable entity from the administrative and financial aspect; investing in our current human resources and complimenting them with additional resources where lacunae have been identified; improving our efficiency and effectiveness in the service delivery to our target audience; and consolidating the research/policy output aligned to government priorities and the education sector at large.

Ms Edel Cassar
Section 1:
Mission Statement

The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE), is responsible for the development of further and higher education, including vocational education and training, in Malta.

The NCFHE maintains the development of the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and oversees the training and certification leading to qualifications within the Framework which is not already provided for at compulsory education institutions or degree awarding bodies.

The Commission acts as the competent authority for licensing, accreditation and quality assurance of further and higher education as well as being the competent authority responsible for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and for classifying such validation at a level of the MQF.

In addition to promoting and facilitating access to formal, non-formal and informal learning and endorsing the transfer and progression of lifelong learning, the NCFHE advises the Government on the development, planning and governance of further and higher education policy.

The Commission also performs the function of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) under the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Act.

The Commission is remitted to recommend financial policies and alternative financing systems of further and higher education and addresses the issue of financing and accountability in the provision of further and higher education. The formulation of policies related to the international dimension of further and higher education and its expansion and diversification also fall within the remit of the Commission.
Section 2: List of Board Members

Council Members
(from January 2013 to March 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Dr James Calleja</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Prof Josef Bonnici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Joseph Farrugia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms Veronica Grech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr Alexander Manche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Anna Mifsud Bonnici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof John Portelli</td>
</tr>
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Secretary to the Board
Dr Maria Magro Scerri

Board Members
(from 17th July 2013 to date)

From 17th July 2013 the new NCFHE board was composed of the following board members:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chairman</th>
<th>Mr Martin Scicluna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Chairman</td>
<td>Mr Alexander Manche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Mr Lawrence Ancilleri</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Mr Charles Caruana Carabez</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Dr Jennifer Casingena Harper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Cory Greenland</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Prof Grace Grima</td>
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<td>Prof John Portelli</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Tanya Sammut Bonnici</td>
</tr>
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Secretary to the Board
Mr Benny Borg Bonello
Section 3:
Staff at the National Commission for Further and Higher Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Philip von Brockdorff</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer (until October 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Edel Cassar</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer (from 1st November 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Alexander Spiteri</td>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Valerie Attard</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Richard Curmi</td>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Svetlana Curmi</td>
<td>Senior Manager (until May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Benny Borg Bonello</td>
<td>Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Silvano Cristauro</td>
<td>Manager (until August 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Matthew Agius</td>
<td>Commission Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Kirsten Cutajar Miller</td>
<td>Commission Officer (until May 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Angelique Grech</td>
<td>Commission Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Maria Theresa Magro Scerri</td>
<td>Commission Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Louisa Pace Kiomall</td>
<td>Commission Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Christine Scholz</td>
<td>Commission Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Maria Tanti</td>
<td>Commission Officer (until February 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr David Bonello</td>
<td>Officer Licensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Shirley Micallef</td>
<td>Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Edward Sammut</td>
<td>Officer (until April 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Carla Hill</td>
<td>Senior Clerk (until March 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Jane Nind</td>
<td>Senior Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Alan Cauchi</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Kathleen Darmanin</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Pauline Demanuele</td>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Joseph Buhagiar</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Robert Duca</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 4:
A Year in Review

2013 has been a year of considerable change and instability at NCFHE. It has been marked by a general election, a re-structuring of responsibilities, a complete change of Board, a new Chief Executive Officer, considerable staff turnover and a move to new office accommodation.

Despite these changes, the Commission has maintained its work and output in a number of key areas of responsibilities and adapted well to its new roles and tasks.

4.1 BOARD MEETINGS 2013

In 2013 a total of five Board Meetings were held. The first meeting was held on the 4th February 2013 at the former NCFHE premises Casa Leoni, St Venera. This meeting was chaired by Dr James Calleja. The agenda of the meeting covered the NCFHE Work Programme 2013, the framework for licensing, accreditation and Quality assurance, the validation of informal and non-formal learning and the NCFHE website.

Dr Philip von Brockdorff updated the board about the work which had just commenced on the licensing of Further and Higher Education Institutions. He also reported about the need for the current licenses issued to those schools to become fully compliant with the new 2012 regulations.

Dr von Brockdorff informed the Board that the NCFHE will be responsible for the development and maintenance of a database which will contain publicly available information on local Further and Higher education providers and the programmes which they offer. All new licenses will have to abide with KNPD requirements.

Following the general elections on the 9th March 2013, Board Members submitted their resignation to the Minister. The new board members including the new Chairman were appointed on the 16th July 2013, with the latter taking up his post in September.
The second board meeting of 2013, which was composed of the new board members was held on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} September 2013. This meeting was chaired by the former chairman Prof James Calleja and the new chairman Mr Martin Scicluna. During this meeting the new role and functions of NCFHE were discussed.

Prof Calleja also gave an account of how the Commission had developed to the present stage – as a result of the amalgamation of the Malta Qualifications Council and the National Commission for Higher Education. During this meeting Prof Calleja informed the board that he was tendering his resignation since he had been appointed Director at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). He also announced that the current CEO Dr Philip von Brockdorff would be leaving the NCFHE to take up a new appointment.

Following this board meeting a Selection Board was set up for the selection of the new CEO. This board was made up of the Chairman Mr Martin Scicluna, the Deputy Chairman Mr Alexander Manche, Dr Tanya Sammut Bonnici, the incoming Permanent Secretary MEDE Mr Joseph Caruana and the former CEO Dr Philip von Brockdorff. The selection process was concluded on the 7\textsuperscript{th} October.

The third board meeting was held on the 9\textsuperscript{th} October 2013. One of the areas discussed in this meeting was the focus on internationalisation and investment in Further and Higher Education. The board also discussed the funding of state institutions and the issue of quality assurance. The Chairman informed the board that Mr Alexander Spiteri had been recently appointed as the Head of Quality Assurance at NCFHE and plans were in hand to implement the obligations under the LN 296 of 2012. During this meeting the board was briefed about the result of the CEO Selection Board. The board unanimously agreed to the recommendation of Ms Edel Cassar as the new CEO.

The fourth board meeting was held on the 18\textsuperscript{th} November 2013. This meeting was also attended by the new Chief Executive Officer, Ms Edel Cassar following her appointment on the 1\textsuperscript{st} November 2013. During this meeting, Ms Cassar spoke about the priorities she had commenced working upon primarily the collective agreement, recruitment and the organisational structure.

During this meeting Mr Alexander Spiteri, Head of Quality Assurance delivered a presentation on the European Social Fund Project. Mr Alexander Spiteri referred to another Leonardo project ‘From EQAVET to NQAVET’ which also commenced in 2013. Though the two projects are distinct there is a lot of common ground and synergy between the two projects and the NCFHE is undertaking both as one project.
The original European Social Fund project proposal was reviewed due to developments which took place in 2013 especially the setting up of a strong Quality Assurance unit within the NCFHE. One major amendment within this project was the inclusion of the University of Malta and the Department for Lifelong Learning as project partners. The inclusion of the University of Malta was crucial given the need to involve all the Further and Higher institutions in Malta in the development of the external quality assurance system. On the other hand the Department for Lifelong Learning was a major player in adult education with more than 12,000 participants in courses.

The other project aims at development of national guidelines regarding Quality in Vocational Education and Training and to promote the development of national Quality guidelines for Vocational Education and Training based on EQAVET. The major advantages of undertaking the two projects simultaneously would be to bridge the currently existing gap between legislative requirements and local quality assurance practice; to develop the internal capacity of the NCFHE in Quality Assurance; to develop a Quality Assurance Framework by using the strong points of both the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and EQAVET systems to meet ends for the Further and Higher Education; to develop Quality Assurance for distance learning programmes and to attain membership in ENQA and EQAR which are both vital for our international reputation.

During this Board meeting the Chairman presented a paper on 'Charging Policy for the Assessment of Qualifications'. A submission was subsequently made to the Minister recommending a regime of charging. This was followed by a paper by Dr Tanya Sammut-Bonnici on Marketing Malta Internationally in the Education Field. This paper considered all aspects of International Education including onsite education, online education, international qualifications, products and services such as ICT platforms, publishing and accreditation, mobility through Exchange Programmes, mobility through Funding Opportunities, and internationalisation of local fee-paying components of government funded education organisations. The board agreed that, subject to the Minister’s agreement a seminar would be organised in the Spring of 2014 to test out the possibilities for internationalisation with the major stakeholders.

The final council meeting was held on the 9th December 2013. During this meeting Ms Edel Cassar presented a report compiled by Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Manager on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning. This report focused on the setting up of a Sector Skills Committee. The report highlights the work
done on the first Sectoral Skills Unit which is childcare and outlines the work expected to commence on twelve more Sectoral Skills units which ideally will be set up in the context of the new 2014-2020 European Social Fund project. Ms Cassar also outlined the main points of the work programme for the first quarter of 2014.

During this meeting Ms Edel Cassar also presented the first formal CEO’s report to the board. One of the issues in the report is the Financial Management issue and a number of recommendations were made to strengthen the current financial management.

The Permanent Secretary MEDE Mr Joseph Caruana was also present for part of this Board Meeting. The Permanent Secretary said that he was closely following the progress made by NCFHE especially in the Quality Assurance area and intended to support the work of the Commission. Following the meeting the Permanent Secretary as well as the board members were introduced to the NCFHE staff.

4.2 WORK PLAN MILESTONES - 2013

1. The necessary structures to accredit, quality assure and license further and higher education programmes and public and private institutions were set up.

2. Participated in national and international activities that built resource-capacity and promoted a positive image of Malta’s further and higher education sectors including vocational training.

3. Maintained the newly launched NCFHE website updated with fresh information. This helped to increase awareness on the functions of the NCFHE and kept stakeholders well-informed on NCFHE activities.

4. Successfully completed the ECVET and EQAVET projects. The ECVET project focused on establishing a credit system for vocational training whilst the EQAVET project focused on quality assurance in vocational education and training.

5. Commenced work on the ESF Project – Making Quality Visible (MQV). This project will strengthen the remit of the quality assurance department and ensure implementation of the new legislation on quality assurance. It will also create a national awareness on quality assurance.


8. In 2013 the NCFHE continued to update existing protocols with private training institutions and continued to work on the level-rating of local qualifications. Regular meetings with public and private training providers were maintained.
In 2013 the Commission published the fifth edition of the annual Further and Higher Education Statistics Report. The report is the result of an annual survey carried out by the Commission amongst the Further and/or Higher Education service providers in Malta both in the public and private sector, in fulfillment of its functions under Article 66 (c), (d) and 68, of the Education Act, Laws of Malta.

The research gathers information on the number of persons registered as students in all of the listed Further and/or Higher Education service providers in Malta who are continuing their studies beyond the age of compulsory education. The report draws up findings on statistical analysis based on the academic year ended June 2012. Reference is made to past statistical data dating back to 1995 with the scope of providing means of statistical comparisons throughout the years. The report makes reference to other related studies on the sector carried out by NCFHE. It also makes reference to other sources of information such as international statistics based on Eurostat data with special reference to the Europe 2020 Strategy targets for the decade (2010-2020), and OECD data; where the report draws up comparisons between national and international statistics delving into benchmarking.

The results for the year 2012 are based on the information provided by a total of 50 Further and/or Higher Education service providers in Malta that responded to the survey including public and private service providers.

Some of the main highlights of this report show that in 2012, a total of 27,781 students in Malta over the age of compulsory education were furthering their studies. Of this total, the share of tertiary level/Higher Education students was 53%, whereas the share of students identified within Further Education was 47%, split 24% for
those specifically in the academic field, and 23% for those in the vocational field.

Overall, throughout the last decade (2002-2012) Malta witnessed a significant 74% increase in the total student participation rates in Further and Higher Education. Significant increases have also been witnessed specifically in the Higher level sector where, compared to the previous year, there was a 26% increase in the number of students in Higher Education.

Moreover, in 2012, 84% of the students enrolled in Higher Education were identified within programmes of study provided by public institutions, whereas 16% were identified within programmes of study provided by private institutions. For another consecutive year, more females (55%) than males (45%) were enrolled in Further academic-based education, whereas more males (57%) than females (43%) were enrolled in vocational education and training at a Further level.

Results from the analysis also indicate that from the total student population in Further and Higher Education, 74% of the students were following studies on full-time basis, whereas 26% were following studies on a part-time basis.

Statistics on participation rates in Higher Education by field of study and gender indicate that for the last five consecutive years, the field of Social Science, Business, and Law remained the most popular field of study with both sexes. Slight changes in the trend of students’ choices were however identified, where considering both sexes together for each field of study, it was found that for 2011 and 2012 the fields of Health and Welfare remained the second most popular area of study as opposed to its fourth placement in the previous years. Traditionally, the second most popular field of study with tertiary level students had been the field of Humanities and Arts.

Significant results from this survey also indicate that in 2012, after the end of compulsory education, 83% of the 17-year-old cohort population (at birth) in Malta are continuing education at Further or Higher levels. This indicates that reaching the target of 85% for 17-year-olds in Further and Higher Education by 2015, set by the NCHE Further and Higher Education Strategy 2020 Report is a realistic target for Malta.

When compared to the previous year, a 4% increase has been registered with 19-year-olds in Further and Higher education (56%), where if students follow the traditional route of education without any delays in transition, at this age, students would normally have started Higher Education. From a participation rate of 56%, 32% of 19 year olds were specifically identified within Higher Education, whereas 24% were identified within the Further level sector.
An analysis on tertiary student participation rates by the Malta Qualifications Framework level for the year 2012 shows that out of the total tertiary student population a share of 22% were enrolled in tertiary level programmes leading to qualifications at Malta Qualifications Framework level 5; 52% were enrolled in programmes leading to qualifications at Malta Qualifications Framework level 6; 26% in programmes leading to qualifications at Malta Qualifications Framework level 7; and 1% in programmes leading to qualifications at Malta Qualifications Framework level 8.

Results indicate that in Malta most tertiary level students fall within age bracket 19 to 23 years, with the 20 year old student cohort representing the highest share of students in tertiary education.

In 2012, the University of Malta registered a 12% increase in graduates (MQF levels 5-8) from the previous year. Over the last two years since 2010 the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology registered a 69% increase in the number of graduates at a Higher level (MQF levels 5-6); where in 2012 the total number of students that specifically graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree with Honours (MQF level 6) was that of 188 students.

In 2012, the Government of Malta awarded a total of 372 scholarships. Results based on a comparability study between national benchmarks and EU-27 targets in light of reaching the *Europe 2020 Strategy* goals reveal that Malta has reached the national Early School Leaving (ESL) target of reducing the Early School Leaving rate to 29% by 2020. By the end of year 2012, Malta registered a reduction in Early School Leavers to 22.6%.

The NCFHE is working on recommending a revised ambitious target for Malta.

Another headline indicator of *Europe 2020* focused on education and training is the EU-27 target to increase the share of the population aged 30 to 34 years having completed tertiary education to at least 40% by 2020; where as at 2012, Malta registered a rate of 22.4%.

Compared to the EU-27 average, that of 36% in 2012, and the national 2020 benchmark that of 33%, Malta still lags behind in this indicator.

As at the year end 2012, the EU-27 average for persons engaged in lifelong learning (i.e.: persons between 25 to 64 years old) was that of 9%; Malta registered 7%. More interesting results based on this survey and on other related studies focusing on specific scenarios in Further and Higher Education can be explored in detail in the report.
Section 6: National Student Survey

In the summer semester 2013 the NCFHE invited students from the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the Institution of Tourism Studies to participate in a national student survey. Apart from collecting data on their personal and family background, it looked into their pathways into further and higher education, their current study, work and financial situation, their participation in student mobility and plans for future study. Detailed and systematic data collection from students in Malta has been limited. Through this survey the NCFHE is seeking to build up available information on the social and economic conditions of student life.

This national survey carried out in 2013 was the second survey of this kind, with the previous one being carried out in the summer semester 2010.

These regular student surveys allow the NCFHE to monitor the social and economic conditions of student life in Malta. In this way, it enables the NCFHE to fulfill its role in advising the Ministry for Education and Employment on policy development in further and higher education that better meets the needs of students and facilitates participation in further and higher education.

During 2014 the NCFHE will analyse the data collected from students in the summer semester 2013 and disseminate its findings.

The data of the previous student survey (2010) are available online at: http://www.ncfhe.org.mt/content/home-documents-and-publications-ncfhe-publications/5963786/
Section 7:
Raising the Profile of the
Malta Qualifications Framework

7.1 ACCREDITATION

The table below shows the number of Applications for accreditation of courses received in 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MQF Level</th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
<th>Short Course</th>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
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In addition, another 24 courses which applied for accreditation in 2013 were withdrawn/shelved by the applicant institution. 10 study programme applications by the Institution of Tourism Studies and 5 study programmes applications by the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology stopped the process for accreditation since these institutions were given self-accrediting status through Legal Notice 296/2012.

The table below shows the number of Courses approved for Accreditation in 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MQF Level</th>
<th>Full time</th>
<th>Part time</th>
<th>Short Course</th>
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<td>8</td>
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</table>
7.2 SECONDARY SCHOOL CERTIFICATE AND PROFILE

By the end of December 2013 the NCFHE had 1250 registered organisations delivering informal education for students still in compulsory schooling. These organisations all offer some form of Informal Learning which is then included as part of the Secondary School Certificate and Profile for the relevant student. In 2013 there were a total of 250 new registrations.

7.3 THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

The NCFHE and the MEDE finalised talks with the National Statistics Office the result of which led to a report which was completed in early 2013. It was agreed that when collecting data on student participation and early school leavers, Malta was using a system which was not taking into account learner participation in certain courses (e.g. 11,800 students at the Directorate for Lifelong learning) and was also considering certain people to be early school leavers when they were not.

The outcome of this study was sent to Eurostat and it was approved in January 2013. As a result Malta has adjusted the methodology used in calculating the school leaving rate and the actual statistics themselves. Before this new remapping, the early school leaving rate was 33%, while with the new system it was 23%. The average school leaving rate in Malta is now standing at 17%.

7.4 NATIONAL COORDINATION POINT FOR THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

At the end of 2012 the NCFHE submitted the European Qualifications Framework - National Coordination Point Proposal for a 2013 Grant which was awarded in October 2012. This grant provided financial support for activities carried out in 2013 to implement the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 23 April 2008. The grant formed part of the Lifelong Learning Programme – Transversal Programme.

Activities included in this grant were a publicity campaign on the Malta Qualifications Framework and the setting up of a website on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning.

7.5 LICENSING

In 2013 the NCFHE received 64 requests from providers wanting to be licensed. Of these, 45 licences were successfully issued in 2013. 17 of these were full licences (5 years) whilst 28 were provisional licences (one year). 19 of the requests were refused due to providers
offering programmes that were not accredited on the Malta Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework and other programmes which are recognised by the industry, but which have not yet been formally accredited. The table below provides the breakdown of licences awarded in 2013 by type of provider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institutions with a Full Licence Licensed in 2013</th>
<th>Institutions with a Provisional Licence Licensed in 2013</th>
<th>Total Number of Institutions Licensed in 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further and Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education Institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education Centres</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a Foreign Language Centre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below provides the breakdown of the total number of licences up to the end of 2013 by type of provider.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institutions with a Full Licence</th>
<th>Institutions with a Provisional Licence</th>
<th>Total Number of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further and Higher Education Institutions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education Institutions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Education Centres</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English as a Foreign Language Centre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In line with Article 11 of Legal Notice 296/2012, the following State educational institutions are deemed to have a full licence:

- the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC)
- the Directorate for Lifelong Learning (DLLL)
- the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Monitoring Board
- The Centre for Development, Research and Training (CDRT)
- The Quality Assurance Department within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education;
- The Department of Curriculum Management within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education;
- the Students Services Department within the Directorate for Educational Services;
Nevertheless these entities are still legally bound to adhere to the quality assurance criteria established in the Legal Notice, including the accreditation of courses.

7.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE

During 2013, the NCFHE took important steps to strengthen its capacity and services in terms of quality assurance:

• A Quality Assurance Department was set up incorporating the work on programme and provider accreditation and focused on the holistic implementation of Legal Notice 296/2012 on Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations.

• The NFCHE received confirmation of funding through European Social Funds entitled ‘Making Quality Visible’. Further information on this Project is given in Section 9.

• The NCFHE is a partner in the EU project ‘Pathway from EQAVET to NQAVET’, which is funded through the Leonardo component of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The aim of this project is to adapt and implement at national level the EQAVET system of quality assurance for Vocational Education and Training programmes. The participation of the NCFHE is intended to ensure that the deliverables of this project complement the work already done on the adaptation of EQAVET to the Maltese context in previous years, as well as the deliverables of the European Social Fund-funded project ‘Making Quality Visible’ mentioned previously. The first partners’ meeting was held in Malta on the 14th and 15th November 2013.

7.7 VALIDATION OF INFORMAL AND NON-FORMAL LEARNING

During 2013, NCFHE embarked on developing systematic provisions for identification, assessment and recognition of skills and competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning or through work experience.

NCFHE met with interested stakeholders within the social care, motor industry, the media and the creative arts, and the ICT sectors as to develop occupational standards for occupations within the sectors. The main objective behind these information meetings with interested stakeholders was to better explain and guide the respective industry sectors in developing occupational standards that would reflect industry demands and
eventually be a benchmark for the development of training programmes and qualifications.

NCFHE has also met with validation assessors and prospective candidates who were to have their knowledge, skills and competences assessed and validated to guide the former in understanding better the validation process and the latter to be well prepared for the recognition of their informal and non-formal learning. For quality assurance reasons, NCFHE was also present on some occasions when observation of individuals in childcare centres was the assessment method applied.

In May 2013, the validation department within NCFHE was invited by the Thematic Working Group of Quality in Adult Learning to deliver a presentation on how the validation of prior learning can contribute towards the quality of adult learning. The peer learning activity was held at the Directorate of Adult Learning within the Ministry of Education and Employment in Floriana and was attended by participants from 15 different countries, including policy makers, experts and stakeholders.

The validation of informal and non-formal learning is already operating in one vocational area, namely the childcare sector. As part of this, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NCFHE to provide information and guidance to candidates and nominate experts within the specific sector to sit on assessment boards. To date nearly 140 people have had their knowledge, skills and competences assessed, recognised and validated within the childcare sector at Malta Qualifications Framework Levels 4 and 5.
Section 8: Participation in European Initiatives

Working Party Establishment and Services – Brussels, 14 January 2013

The purpose of this meeting was to continue discussions on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 36/2005/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation on administrative co-operation through the Internal Market Information System. This meeting dealt with Articles 1 to 22 and 49a to the end of the Directive.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator

Bi-lateral Meeting between the Government of Malta and the European Commission Unit on the Free Movement of Services – Brussels, 15 January 2013

A fruitful and positive discussion regarding the proposed amendments to the Directive 36/2005/EC was held with DG for the Internal Market and Services, Jurgen Tiedje. Of utmost importance were the discussions held with regards to Article 31 – Nurses for General Care and the issues of languages in Recital 19 and in Article 53 paragraphs 2–4. Malta registered some concerns regarding the current proposal and it was agreed that Malta proposes the relevant amendments in a textual proposal. During the meeting, Malta was also pleased to receive guidance from the Commission regarding the procedure to be adopted by the Competent Authorities in relation to the process of recognition and issuance of the European Professional Card.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator


The conference hosted around 150 attendees bringing together representatives of national ministries, social partners, Vocational Education and Training providers, sectoral representatives, industries, Vocational Education and Training learners and multipliers such as the lifelong learning programme national agencies.

The conference gave an overview of the results of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training projects. It offered an opportunity to reflect on the needs for further developments of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training by taking stock of the common challenges and the sharing of methods and tools elaborated by the projects.

Dr Maria Magro Scerri chaired a workshop about the EQAVET-Malta project whereby the aims and methodology of the tools were described. This
highlighted the EQAVET manual for institutions which had been developed through the project as well as the lessons learnt through the stock-taking tool.

Attendees: Ms Svetlana Curmi, Senior Manager; Ms Valerie Attard, Manager; Dr Maria Magro Scerri Commission Officer

**Thematic Working Group Meeting on Early School Leaving – Brussels, 28-29 January 2013**

This was the fifth meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving. The participants discussed the TWG Report on comprehensive policies against Early School Leaving and highlighted matters on data collection of Early School Leaving, the governance of education and cross-sectoral cooperation to address ESL.

Initial findings of an ECORYS study on 2nd chance education were discussed. Policy experiences were also shared during this meeting, which also allowed sharing of updates on the peer review exercise. Information on the 2013 Experimental Call and other TWG activities in 2013 was also given at this meeting. The meeting also served as an opportunity for the Steering Committee for the Peer Review, of which Malta is also a participant, to meet and discuss the event being planned for March 2013.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

**Working Party Establishment and Services – Brussels, 4 February 2013**

The purpose of this meeting was to continue discussions on the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 36/2005/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation on administrative co-operation through the Internal Market Information System. This meeting dealt with Articles 24 to 49 of the Directive. EP amendments were taken into consideration and discussed thoroughly.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator

**Second Bilateral Meeting on the European Semester 2013 – Brussels, 5 February 2013**

The bilateral meeting involved a number of technical topics and ranged a number of ministerial representatives across inter-ministerial topics. The Maltese delegation was led by Deputy Permanent Representative Patrick Mifsud. The meeting discussed matters related to the National Reform Programme Guidance. Topics included energy efficiency and renewables, education and family-friendly measures, and fiscal consolidation.
Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer


The purpose of this meeting was to discuss issues mainly related to the regulated professions database and updates about developments in member states on reform of regulated professions. During this meeting a study on updating and clarifying the list of activities in Annex IV was also presented and discussed. Minimum training requirements for architects also featured as part of the meeting’s discussions. Discussions were also held on adaptation measures relating to Croatia’s accession and relations with Montenegro.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator

EUROSTUDENT V Consortium Meeting – Berlin, 11-12 February 2013

This was the first consortium meeting bringing together the EUROSTUDENT V Partners from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Estonia, the Netherlands and Malta. The meeting mainly dealt with matters of project management. Presentations of EUROSTUDENT data collection by the Estonian and Dutch partners gave an overview of information collected by the national teams. The consortium identified the need to keep more regular contact with the country teams to better monitor whether the implementation is in line with the information provided prior to the preparatory seminars. During this meeting the categories and sub-categories for data collection were also set, ranging among aspects such as student income, student social background to age and gender, amongst others.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

Working Party Establishment and Services – Brussels, 14 February 2013

The purpose of this meeting was to examine the latest Presidency text 6185/1/13 REV with a particular focus on the revisions which have been made to the text following the comments of delegations at the Working Party meeting held on the 14th of January 2013 and the 4th of February 2013.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator

Presidency Conference on Quality Assurance – Dublin, 12-13 March 2013

One of four key Presidency conferences in education, this event was linked to training and
education initiatives aimed at boosting growth and confidence across the EU. The conference also included discussions on qualifications frameworks and the Directive for recognition of professional qualifications.

In the case of quality assurance, the concepts are already in place but what is needed is to ensure that the Quality Assurance systems also reflects what the labour market needs.

A Presidency statement on quality assurance in qualification frameworks draft was presented to delegates for consideration. The draft stated that skills development and investment in skills is critical for the future of Europe. In terms of Quality Assurance, the adoption of institutionally-based internal Quality Assurance complemented by external Quality Assurance, are essential.

Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer

Peer Review on Early School Leaving – Brussels, 15 March 2013

The focus of this experience was a peer review of policies and measures implemented by Bulgaria, Spain, Austria, Malta, Portugal, Luxembourg, Germany and Denmark. The countries presented a general overview of their policies and measures in Early School Leaving, relating also to each of their contexts.

Whereas some countries such as Austria have witnessed a regular decline in Early School Leaving, other countries found long-term challenges which were particularly problematic to address. Malta presented its definition of Early School Leaving and the outcome of the recent review of the calculation of the Early School Leaving rate in Malta and revised Early School Leaving rate for the years 2010 and 2011. It stressed that Malta recognises the importance of tackling Early School Leaving and has done so based on 3 pillars, namely the development of a robust statistical evidence on Early School Leaving; the implementation of various measures to tackle Early School Leaving and the development of a strategy on Early School Leaving.

During the workshops, two presentations were delivered on the situation in Malta. The first dealt with various measures currently implemented to tackle ESL, whereas the second dealt with the draft ESL strategy.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

ECVET Pilot Projects 4th Generation Seminar – Paris, 7-8 March 2013

As part of the project cooperation activities on a European level, representatives from the eight pilot projects of the 2011-2013 period met for
their fourth and final joint seminar. The aim of the seminar was to encourage project leaders to reflect on their own performance and to learn through good practices from other projects with regard to two specific topics, namely, ‘Validation and Recognition’ and ‘Communicating ECVET to Vocational Education and Training providers’.

The seminar also focused on the preparation of the final dissemination events at national level and the final conference at European level. Richard Curmi, of the Maltese VET-CCS (VET Credit Conversion System) project, presented the ‘ECVET Conversion Manual’ which is the main final product of the project.

Attendee: Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Manager

CEDEFOP ReferNet Centre/South Regional Meeting – Vienna, 11-12 April 2013

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the CEDEFOP ReferNet workplan for 2013 and finalise any pending matters for 2012. This meeting was one of two meetings held annually. The new short-term and long-term deliverables of ReferNet through the new team were presented at this meeting. An overview of the planned 2013-2014 activities was given. An updated questionnaire format to be used for the collation of data covering further topics was presented and discussed. The aims of the policy developments should also reflect specific short-term deliverables of the Bruges Communiqué. Early leaving from Vocational Education and Training was also one of the themes discussed. Work on brief leaflets of information on various Vocational Education and Training topics, referred to as ‘Spotlights’, were also planned. A peer review exercise of country reports also took place during this meeting.

Attendee: Ms Valerie Attard, Manager

Competency and Learning Outcomes Recognition for Migrants (COLOR) 4th Project Partners’ Meeting and Final Conference – Rome, 18-19 April 2013

This was the fourth and final project partners’ meeting for the COLOR project, together with the project’s final conference. The meeting sought to assess the progress made by partners across the different work packages since the previous partners’ meeting in Bucharest. It also sought to agree on a plan and timeframe to submit the complete final report of the project of the EACEA. The project partners underwent a review of all progress and results achieved, whilst also highlighted pending tasks across the work packages.

The final conference presented the project and the results achieved, shedding light on EU tools for transparency and how such tools can be used in innovative ways, such as in COLOR. Richard
Curmi from the NCFHE formed part of the panel on ‘ECVET challenges and opportunities’ during the conference.

Attendee: Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Manager

Employment Committee Ad-hoc Meeting – Brussels, 24 April 2013

This meeting served as a meeting of the Employment Committee (EMCO) Ad Hoc Joint Thematic Review on Youth – Education and Transition to Work. The opening presentation tackled a review on country-specific recommendations covering Education Reform and Transition to Work. In the case of Malta, low tertiary education rates and high Early School Leaving Rates were the main topics under discussion. Dr von Brockdorff informed the meeting that the revised 2020 target for Early School Leaving in Malta will be communicated to the Commission by end May 2013 following the end of consultations on the Early School Leaving strategy which was officially launched on 5 April 2013. There strategy was based on a two-pronged approach of Student Advisory Services and Employment and Training Corporation measures.

Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer

Erasmus Mundus National Structures Meeting – Brussels, 15 May 2013

This meeting served as the first annual meeting of the Erasmus Mundus National Structures in 2013. The Commission gave an overview of the 2013 scholarship selection and an update on the main features of the Horizon 2020. A state of progress of the Erasmus for All was also given which covered the three main Key Actions – joint masters degrees, capacity building actions and policy support. Updates were also given from the Erasmus Mundus National Structures about their various projects.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

4th Meeting of INTER-HED: An Online training course for Erasmus Mundus – Brussels, 16 May

The purpose of this meeting was to see to the administrative aspects of the project and decide on the way forward in regard to the face-to-face meeting at the end of the Inter-Hed online course. This 4th consortium meeting also served as a progress analysis of the project. The project involves drafting two modules from this online course, namely ‘Characteristics of a Joint Programme’ and ‘Characteristics of a Joint Degree’. The course developed so far was discussed in terms of content and structure. Other administrative matters were also dealt with.
Attendees: Ms Angelique Grech, Commission Officer; Ms Jane Nind Senior Clerk

20th Meeting of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group – Brussels, 29-30 May 2013

Bulgaria, Slovenia, Italia and Poland presented their referencing reports to the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group during this meeting. A general evaluation of the implementation of the EQF was also discussed whereby the conclusions of the analysis were that the objectives to promote lifelong learning, mobility and transparency of qualifications were in line with the overall strategic policy objectives of the ET2020 and EU2020.

The new mandate of the EQF Advisory Group was now set to cover the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning Recommendation and therefore the new role and working methods were discussed.

Attendee: Mr Matthew Agius, Commission Officer

20th Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks – Split, 16-18 June 2013

This meeting serves as a forum for updates related to developments related to the ENIC (European Network of National Information Centre) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) Networks and policies related to recognition. Reports of developments concerning a number of NARIC projects were tabled at this meeting. These involved the changing role of NARIC, the use of qualifications frameworks in recognition, and the European Area of Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions. Parallel workshops were also held during the meeting included topics such as social network tools to better reach potential users, challenges in recognition practices, and the role of ENIC and NARIC networks in reviewing national legislation. Elections were held for the ENIC Bureau and the NARIC Advisory Board for the 2013-2014 period.

Attendees: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer; Ms Jane Nind, Senior Clerk

CEDEFOP ReferNet Quality Working Group – Thessaloniki, 17-18 June 2013

This working group is composed of ReferNet representatives from the networks of Malta, Poland, Finland, Latvia and Slovakia.

The aim of the group is to initiate a systematic and on-going process that increases the quality of deliverables and processes in ReferNet. The processes, outcomes, evaluation and follow-up through the Pilot Peer Review for 2013 were discussed. The partners analysed the helpfulness of the guidelines provided so far and
outlined main points for improvement. Taking on board the outcomes of the discussions on the ‘Vocational Education and Training in Europe’ country report, this working group commenced discussions on defining the principles underlying the peer review to be organised in the second half of 2013.

Attendee: Ms Valerie Attard, Manager

**TEMPUS NTO-NCP Coordination Meeting – Brussels, 1-2 July 2013**

The main objective of the TEMPUS NTO-NCP Coordination meeting was to give an update on activities held in the previous year under the TEMPUS IV period and the applications received under the sixth call for proposals launched in December 2012 as well as information on the future of the programme under the Erasmus+. A high number of applications had been submitted by the close of the sixth call, showing that the information campaigns and positive experiences had been successful.

Maltese higher education institutions are project partners in four of the projects submitted. An overview report of the Higher Education Reform Experts was also given. Project field monitoring visits showed that all projects scored very well on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability criteria.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

**Education Committee Meeting – Vilnius, 15-16 July 2013**

This meeting served as a regular education committee meeting under the Lithuanian Presidency. The meeting discussed a paper on Leadership in Education which would serve as a background for drafting the Council conclusions in December. An information note on the European Alliance for Apprenticeships was also highlighted by the Commission during this meeting. A number of thematic clusters were being proposed with Malta being involved in the “Introducing apprenticeship-type schemes” cluster. The global dimension of European Higher Education also featured as a topic during this meeting outlining internationalisation and staff and student mobility issues.

Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer

**1st Formal Meeting with ACQUIN: European Social Fund Project ‘Making Quality Visible’ – Bayreuth, 29 July 2013**

This initial meeting was set up between NCFHE and the Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute (ACQUIN) as one of the project partners in the European
Social Fund project ‘Making Quality Visible’. ACQUIN were given an overview of the project and its deliverables. The project was intended to fully implement Legal Notice 291 of 2012 (Regulations on Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance), by preparing procedures and mechanisms for auditing of further and higher education institutions in Malta. The project would take on pilot audits in terms of internal and external auditing.

The meeting gave an overview of the project partners and their respective roles, particularly the national partners, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the Institute of Tourism Studies. The meeting also discussed quality assurance processes and needs for software development in terms of the project.

Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer; Ms Valerie Attard, Manager


The meeting dealt with the current and future work which needs to be taken on by the Member States to enhance the free movement of persons through the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications. The Commission presented the new developments in the present Regulated Professions Database and details of the revision of the generic professions. Further developments in a number of fields pertaining to this theme were discussed at this meeting, such as future work on the transposition of the revised Professional Qualifications Directive and the European Professional Card. A number of sector-specific concerns and relevant developments were also brought forward.

Attendee: Mr Benny Borg Bonello, Manager

Director General’s Meeting – Brussels, 23-24 September 2013

The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss methods on how to improve sustainability, efficiency and equity in terms of European Higher Education funding. The meeting involved a discussion based on presentations and a tour de table on the status quo which was then followed by a way forward session by looking at the 2014-2015 work programme.

Attendee: Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive Officer


This meeting was jointly organised by the European Commission and the co-chairs of
the Structural Reforms Working Group of the European Higher Education Area in order to facilitate exchange of views among the two European networks and strengthen links between the implementation and further development of European tools and policies that aim to increase the transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications. The range of tools and policies relating to this common field were discussed at the meeting in order to understand how best to cooperate. Quality assurance featured as a major pillar for this policy area to move forward and strengthen through mutual trust. Emerging links between the European Qualifications Framework and the QF-European Higher Education Area show that despite having the two processes in parallel, this has resulted in having much in common and both processes are working closely with one another.

Attendee: Mr Matthew Agius, Commission Officer

EUROSTUDENT V Intensive Seminar – Vienna, 25-27 September 2013

Through this intensive seminar, the NCFHE, in its role as the body responsible to conduct the national student survey collecting data for the EUROSTUDENT V survey, obtained detailed information and guidance on the regulations for data processing and delivery to EUROSTUDENT V. The seminar discussed in detail the regulations and technical aspects of the data collection process as well as the two major documents for guidance, namely the Manual for Data Processing and the Manual for Data Delivery.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer


The meeting served as an overall update of developments within the European Qualifications Framework, national developments and particularly with European Qualifications Framework-related or parallel tools. It was preceded by a joint meeting between the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group and the Structural Reform Working Group of the European Higher Education Area. Information on the latest developments of ESCO; the Copenhagen Process; and other relevant developments in European cooperation in the field of education and training, was given.

The Commission gave an overview of an evaluation of transparency tools such as EUROPASS and EQAVET. This underlined the positive experience of such processes whilst highlighting the need of further implementation and dissemination in order to achieve all the benefits of such tools.
Further discussions on the topic of relating international qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework were also held, with a number of proposals for a way forward being discussed. A proposal on the structuring of national reports on the follow-up of the Council Recommendation on the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning was also brought forward to the group.

Attendee: Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Manager; Mr Matthew Agius, Commission Officer

ESCO Conference – Brussels, 23-24 October 2013

The conference served as the official launch of ESCO – the classification of European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations, and the ESCO Portal. This was the first time that ESCO became publicly accessible. The conference exposed the role and benefits of ESCO as a multilingual tool. It identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training in 25 European languages. The system provides occupational profiles showing the relationships between occupations, skills, competences and qualifications. ESCO has been developed in an open IT format, is available for use free of charge by everyone and can be accessed through an online portal.

The aim of the conference was to discuss and stimulate the integration of ESCO within national systems. Speakers encouraged all participants to actively contribute throughout the development and continuous revision of ESCO. It was stated that ESCO is a long-term project that can only be achieved gradually and that requires a pragmatic, step-by-step approach.

Attendee: Ms Shirley Micallef, Officer


The purpose of this meeting was to learn through the exchange of experiences on developments related to quality assurance as well as to further establish contacts with higher education and quality assurance institutions, in the context of developments in the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms by the NCFHE. The seminar focused on how to build trust in the European Higher Education Area through quality assurance and on the roles of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Country-specific experiences and workshop discussions provided further information on the topic.

Attendees: Mr Sandro Spiteri, Head; Ms Valerie Attard, Senior Manager
The plenary meeting was preceded by an induction meeting focused on the familiarisation of new partners and new national team members with CEDEFOP experts involved in ReferNet activities and CEDEFOP projects. The 11th plenary meeting sought to put in context VET policy reporting and improve mutual understanding of requirements, constraints and guidelines for 2014. Another main objective was that of improving the quality of financial reporting.

The meeting also addressed the quality of reporting through finalising the peer review exercise and the adaptation of such an exercise to the needs and possibilities of partners. Parallel workshops on ‘Reporting on Vocational Education and Training’ and ‘Financial Issues’ were held.

This was the first plenary meeting chaired by the new CEDEFOP Director, Dr James Calleja, who stressed the importance of ReferNet in being a major tool for the EU to implement Vocational Education and Training policies and to inform on good practices in different countries.

Attendees: Mr Richard Curmi, Senior Manager; Ms Valerie Attard, Senior Manager

INTER-HED Final Consortium Meeting – Rome, 27-29 November 2013

This meeting was aimed at discussing the outcomes of the first online training course for Erasmus Mundus Administrators and to prepare for the first round of face-to-face meetings with the participants and to select the new participants for the second round of the online training course. The project addresses administrative and academic staff of Higher Education institutions involved in the implementation, assessment and monitoring of joint programmes, officers from Erasmus Mundus national structures, national authorities and higher education networks.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish selection criteria for the new participants of the second round of the online course. Upon agreement the selection process was also finalised.

Attendees: Ms Angelique Grech, Commission Officer; Ms Jane Nind Senior Clerk

EUROSTUDENT V Consortium Meeting – Belgrade, 29-30 November 2013

The second phase of the EUROSTUDENT V project was reviewed during this consortium meeting. This also served as an opportunity
to evaluate progress and to plan upcoming activities. A quality assurance report of the project was presented and a discussion on concerns and possible ways for improvement ensued. The consortium planned the way forward in terms of data analysis and set up a dissemination strategy for results of the project.

Attendee: Ms Christine Scholz, Commission Officer

**Meeting of the Group of Coordinators for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive – Brussels, 3 December 2013**

Reactions of the group on the implementation plan related to the transposition of the revised Professional Qualifications Directive were put forward at this meeting. The Commission also presented the process leading to the introduction of the European Professional Card for a number of professions. Practical aspects of the mapping of regulated professions and the use of IMI for the notification of new and amended titles which are to benefit automatic recognition were also discussed.

Attendee: Mr Benny Borg Bonello, Manager

**EQAR Seminar on ‘Peer-Learning: The Role of National Qualification Frameworks and Quality Assurance in Recognition’ – Sofia, 11 December 2013**

This seminar served as an instrument to update participants on the new developments on the use of the European Quality Assurance Register and cross-border quality assurance for recognition of foreign certification. It was jointly organised by the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education and the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia.

It sought to address ways of establishing an efficient framework for enabling the work of foreign EQAR-registered agencies and also discussed the role of external quality assurance as a reference point for recognition, together with national qualifications frameworks referenced to the European Qualifications Framework and the QF/European Higher Education Area.

Attendee: Mr Sandro Spiteri, Head

**22nd Meeting of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group – Brussels, 16-17 December 2013**

The meeting served as an update of developments within the European Qualifications Framework. Romania and Greece gave a draft overview of their state of play of their referencing process whilst the French Community of Belgium and Iceland presented their referencing reports.
Major points discussed at this meeting included the external dimension of the European Qualifications Framework in terms of its relationship with other qualifications frameworks beyond Europe, as well as relating international qualifications to the European Qualifications Framework. As a reflection on these two points, it seems that there are developments in terms of third countries and regions which are interested in aligning in some way or other to the European Qualifications Framework.

The site of the European Qualifications Framework Portal was shown to the group and the Commission was envisaging going live in early 2014. In terms of Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning, CEDEFOP gave an overview of the progress in terms of preparation of country reports and country fiches and that quality assurance of the reports would undergo in early January 2014.

Attendee: Mr Matthew Agius, Commission Officer
Section 9:

ESF Project

Developing and Implementing a National Internal/External Quality Assurance System for Further and Higher Education in Malta

One of the most important conditions for licensing higher and further institutions in Malta is regular internal and external quality assurance. This is also one of the main conditions for an improved educational experience of the students within the institution, and efficient management of the higher and further education institutions.

Legal Notice 296 of 2012 Further and Higher Education (Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance) Regulations defines the overall framework for quality assessment in Higher and Further Education (HFE) institutions and entrusts the NCFHE with quality assessment within the continuous licensing of Higher and Further Education institutions. The implementation of the legislative framework requires adequate procedures, tools, documentation and support for local institutions for periodic provider and programme quality reviews every five years.

European Social Fund Project 1.227 ‘Making Quality Visible’ seeks to implement this Legal Notice by preparing the necessary procedures and mechanisms for the correct auditing of the Further and Higher Education entities in Malta. The ultimate aim of the Project is to foster a national culture of quality in further and higher education provision. The relationship between internal and external quality assurance is illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Developing a National Culture of Quality in Further and Higher Education

The maintenance of quality provision rests in the first instance with the provider through its internal quality assurance (IQA) practices, which may also include third parties invited by the provider to review its IQA practices. These practices are subject to external quality assurance (EQA) by the NCFHE, which include regular institution and project audits. The NCFHE in turn is itself subject to international audit through its projected membership of the European Quality Assurance Register, or European Quality Assurance Register.

The Project partners of the NCFHE are:

- The University of Malta (UOM)
- The Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)
- The Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS)
- The Department for Lifelong Learning (DLLL)
- ACQUIN, the transnational partner of the project and an established cross-border Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency based in Germany.
The highlights of the project are three pilot internal and external audits within the three main State Further and Higher Education institutions, namely the University of Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology and the Institution of Tourism Studies, which will be conducted as part of the development process leading to the launch of the actual external audit system after the lifetime of the project.

A key player in the project process will be the Network of Quality Assurance Professionals in Further and Higher Education (Net-QAPE) that will be set up as part of the project. The aim of Net-QAPE is to bring together all personnel involved in quality assurance in the sector so as to provide concrete and ongoing support, up-skilling and continuous professional development. Net-QAPE will be closely involved in ensuring that the outcomes of the Project are reached, both for the service providers as well as nationally.

The project is innovative since as yet no external audit at institution and at programme level has ever been conducted by a local authority. The experience of conducting such an audit is innovative in itself with ACQUIN, a German higher education quality assurance agency with extensive national and cross-border experience, providing the lead in this external audit process as the transnational partner in the project. This experience would benefit the three entities hosting the audits since it is through such an internal and external audit that improvements in both institutions can effectively take place.

The project is also aimed at assisting NCFHE in building our capacity to support an external audit, and equally important to familiarise all local institutions with audit procedures including self-assessment.

**ESF MQV First Project Partner Meeting – 3\textsuperscript{rd} December 2013**

The first activity of the European Social Fund Project ‘Making Quality Visible’ was the first Partners’ Planning and Preparation Seminar held on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of December 2013 at the Intercontinental Hotel.

**ESF MQV Launch Seminar – 19\textsuperscript{th} December 2013**

The second activity was the Launch Seminar of the Project, attended by 100 stakeholders in further and higher education. This was also held at the Intercontinental Hotel on the 19\textsuperscript{th} of December 2013.

This seminar explored in detail how service providers will be supported concretely, as well as their role in the fulfilment of the project outcomes. Net-QAPE was launched at this seminar, and membership made at the seminar was free of charge.
Section 10: International Projects

10.1 REFERNET

ReferNet is a network of institutions created by CEDEFOP in 2002 to provide information on national Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems and policies in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The network helps CEDEFOP understand the legal framework and the institutions involved in running Vocational Education and Training in each country and monitor developments and trends in Vocational Education and Training policies.

The core business of ReferNet has changed during the past decade, from documentation to policy analysis. Besides providing data and information on Vocational Education and Training systems, the network is also called upon to provide in-depth analysis of how each country is progressing in its implementation of common policy objectives in Europe.

The deliverables for 2013 included the following:
3. Vocational Education and Training in Europe – Reporting on National Vocational Education and Training systems – Spotlight
4. Thematic Article on Early School Leavers
5. National News items on VET

Ms Valerie Attard is currently the National ReferNet Representative. Ms Edel Cassar, Chief Executive NCFHE, replaced Ms Carmen Dalli as National ReferNet Coordinator in December 2013.

10.2 ECVET

Project Final National Conference, The Palace Hotel Sliema, 22nd February 2013

Over 100 participants attended the project’s final seminar. Participants included various representatives from the vocational education and training sector in Malta. The local partners in the project each gave a presentation on their experiences on the ECVET conversion exercise. These included the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology, the Institute of Tourism Studies, the Employment and Training Corporation and Clear Dimension. This full-day seminar also included a number of workshops chaired by the project partners. These workshops focused on the ways to overcome challenges when converting to ECVET. Ms Valerie Attard, Communications Manager NCFHE, also delivered a presentation on the dissemination and the project’s deliverables throughout the project’s two-year cycle. The participants were
presented with copies of all these deliverables during this seminar.

The ECVET Malta project was funded by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme (75%) and co-funded by the Government of Malta (25%).

10.3 EQAVET


In the past two years, Malta has been one of the European countries which have tried to develop a national approach to the European Qualifications Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). After days of hard work on the project, reflecting, discussing, developing tools and methodologies, the NCFHE as the coordinator of the EQAVET Malta Project and the Project Partners were able to present their results.

The EQAVET Malta project was funded by the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme (75%) and co-funded by the Government of Malta (25%). It aimed at developing a Tool to help Vocational Education and Training (VET) Institutions in Malta implement an Internal Quality Assurance System which is compliant with national and European standards.

The conference brought together 100 people. These participants included - : 
- Management, Academic and non-Academic Staff of both public and private Vocational Education and Training institutions;
- Students attending Vocational Education and Training Institutions;
- Practitioners in Quality Assurance;
- Employers Associations and Trade Unions.

The Conference offered an overview of the work carried out during the lifetime of the project. It also launched the Manual for VET providers. During this conference the methods and tools elaborated by the Project were explained and a discussion on how to best extend their use across Maltese Vocational Education and Training institutions was carried out. The conference offered the opportunity to take stock of common challenges and build on the experience developed by the Project Partners.

10.4 INTER-HED

The Inter-Hed project is addressed at administrative and academic staff of Higher Education Institutions involved in the implementation, assessment and monitoring of joint programmes, officers from Erasmus
Mundus National Structures, national authorities, Higher Education networks, organisations and associations dealing with internationalisation of Higher Education.

The aim of the Inter-hed project is the creation of an online course in order to collect and give professional information about Higher Education Systems and internationalisation policies. The contents of the course are being published on-line and are made available for everyone who is participating in it. The two on-line editions of the course last for 9 months each and end with a face-to-face day. Since the course is targeted at the administrative departments and is aimed at providing professional guidance, this is being administered on-line. During the course, real cases are analysed, with reference to the different models of Higher Education and the different management methods of joint courses. Each course unit oversees practical exercises.

The Inter-Hed project will end in September 2014. During the last meeting held in November 2013 the selection criteria for the new participants of the second round of the online course was established. As soon as these selection criteria were agreed the selection process was started and finalised. These criteria were first proposed by external experts, who were mainly concerned with the applications. However, the final selection was in the hands of the consortium i.e the partners of the project: Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Ireland, Malta and Belgium. The second on-line course will start in February 2014. The face-to-face will be held in September 2014 which will mark the end of the project.

10.5 EUROPASS

10.5.1 Europass Diploma Supplement Label

The National Europass Centre within the National Commission for Further and Higher Education awarded the University Of Malta the Europass Label Diploma Supplement. The University of Malta was the first in Malta to achieve this Label. An award ceremony was held at the Old University building in Valletta on the 17th May 2013 to celebrate this achievement. The award ceremony was addressed by Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive NCFHE, and Professor Juanito Camilleri, Rector of the University of Malta.

The need of the Europass Diploma Supplement is evident as new qualifications proliferate worldwide and countries are continuously changing their qualification systems and educational structures. With an increasing number of mobile citizens seeking fair recognition of their qualifications outside their home countries, the non-recognition and poor evaluation of qualifications is now more challenging then ever.
Since original credentials alone do not provide sufficient information, it is very difficult to gauge the level and function of a qualification without detailed explanations. The Europass Diploma Supplement is a response to these challenges, aiding mobility and access to lifelong learning opportunities. It promotes transparency in higher education and fair and informed judgement about qualifications. It also accommodates continuous changes in qualifications.

This event was organised by Mr Silvano Cristauro, Europass Coordinator, and Ms Valerie Attard, Communications Manager.

10.5.2 Europass Survey 2012

The Europass Survey of 2012 was finalised and published in the first quarter of 2013. Through this survey it emerged that employers consider Europass to be a useful tool in facilitating the recruitment process. One of the stumbling blocks of the issue of the certificate and diploma supplement in Malta is that since both certificates have to be issued by the Awarding body, in cases where the awarding body of a qualification being provided in Malta is a foreign awarding body, the latter might not be responsive to this need of issuing the certificate and diploma supplement. This especially applies if such foreign awarding body is not issuing certificate and diploma supplements in any country including its own.

10.6 EUROSTUDENT

Apart from collecting data on the social and economic conditions of student life at national level, the NCFHE also forms part of a European project called EUROSTUDENT. This project developed the common questionnaire for the national student surveys implemented in 27 different countries in Europe, including the national student survey in Malta. It also developed common criteria and guidelines for the reporting of this data and will compile it in a comparative report at European level to be published in February 2015.

As project partner, the NCFHE hosted two preparatory seminars in Malta in December 2012 and January 2013. These seminars provided national research teams with an overview of the entire phase of data collection, analysis and delivery of the data from the national student surveys carried out in the participating countries to the EUROSTUDENT project.

Apart from these seminars, the NCFHE will organise a seminar in 2014 discussing how data collected from the 27 different countries may be best used to inform policy development at national and international level.
Further information on the EUROSTUDENT project is available online at: http://www.eurostudent.eu/index_html

10.7 The Path from EQAVET to NQAVET

The objective of this project is to include European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) into National Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (NQAVET) and also to elaborate guidelines for other member states about such processes with regards to possibilities, barriers and lessons learned.

The aims of the project are:

• First, to develop national guidelines/recommendations regarding Quality in Vocational Education and Training based on EQAVET in 4 pilot EU countries by national and regional authorities by:
  a) adapting and/or developing an approach to the EQAVET Recommendation which is fit for purpose and tailored to national needs and requirements, promoting the development of a culture of quality improvement;
  b) elaborating adequate operational measures to implement the EQAVET recommendation and developing National Quality Assurance Frameworks (NQAF) for Vocational Education and Training.
• And secondly, to elaborate recommendation for Vocational Education and Training authorities (national/regional) in other member states based on experiences from above pilots for supporting them in their effort for development of their own national Quality guidelines/recommendation for Vocational Education and Training based on EQAVET.

It is anticipated that the project outputs/products/results will be used and implemented by a range of stakeholders, specifically:

• National agencies involved in Vocational Education and Training /Continuous Vocational Education and Training
• Policy makers at a local, regional, national and European level
• Vocational Education and Training providers (leadership and teaching staff)
• Lifelong Learning Institutes

The NCFHE is one of the partners in this project, together with the University of Malta and 6 foreign partners. This project started in 2013.
Section 11: Participation in National Projects

11.1 NATIONAL TEAM OF BOLOGNA EXPERTS GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY RESEARCH

In collaboration with the European Union Programmes Agency (EUPA) the NCFHE supported the National Team of Bologna Experts throughout 2013 in a research exercise on graduate employability, which was one of its focal points in the period from 2011 to 2013. Based on online surveys carried out between February and April 2013 among recent graduates as well as employers the National Team of Bologna Experts sought to explore employers’ expectations and the obstacles faced by graduates in today’s Labour Market.

The key findings of this research were presented in a conference entitled “European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training - Facilitating the transition between Vocational and Higher Education”, which took place at the Dolmen Resort Hotel in Qawra on 22nd November 2013. During this seminar, both the ECVET and Bologna National Teams joint forces in order to tackle the permeability between Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training. This event also served to bring together the views of the industry with those of the educational system to explore the employability of graduates. The full report was published by the European Union Programmes Agency at the end of 2013.

11.2 THE OFFICE OF THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION COORDINATOR

The Mutual Recognition Coordinator, Ms Shirley Micallef held regular meetings at the beginning of 2013 with various authorities to discuss Directive 36/2005/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and the professional card. A lot of work has been done at Commission level to address the concerns of the designated authorities and, amongst others, the distinction between the recognition of the qualification and the registration of the qualification.

Ms Shirley Micallef was appointed as Mutual Recognition Coordinator till March 2013.

11.2.1 Designated Authorities Meeting – Corinthia San Gorg, 25th January 2013

This meeting was chaired by Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator. Dr Angele Attard Chetcuti, MEDE was also invited to deliver a presentation during this meeting. Over twenty members from various Designated Authorities attended this half-day meeting. Dr Attard Chetcuti spoke about the European Professional Card (EPC).

The idea is to replace the recognition procedure by host member states. The council working party meeting which was held on 14th January 2013 was attended by Dr Angele Attard Chetcuti and Ms Shirley Micallef and during this meeting
the issue of the European Professional Card was discussed in great detail. Dr Angele Attard Chetcuti briefed the designated authority representatives about the outcomes of this council working party meeting.

This local Designated Authorities meeting was followed by a second meeting held on the 8th February.

11.2.2 Designated Authorities Meeting – The Palace, Sliema 8th February 2013

This meeting was chaired and organised by Ms Shirley Micallef, Mutual Recognition Coordinator. Around 20 representatives from various designated authorities attended this meeting. The meeting was also addressed by Dr Philip von Brockdorff, Chief Executive and Dr Angele Attard Chetcuti, MEDE. Dr von Brockdorff spoke about the work being done at the NCFHE and the fact that the ESF application on Quality Assurance was selected and so the NCFHE would be working on this application. This meeting also allowed the designated authorities the opportunity to network with other designated authorities and discuss areas of common interest.

11.3 NCFHE’S PARTICIPATION AS A LOCAL PARTNER

The following are a number of projects in which the NCFHE contributed as a local partner in 2013 -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESF Code</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.194</td>
<td>TLIENTEs - Nikbru, Nitgħallmu, Naħdmu</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.137</td>
<td>Train to Succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.139</td>
<td>Increasing Accessibility, Flexibility and Innovation to MCAST Lifelong Learning Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.186</td>
<td>Re-Skilling of Workers for the Local Film Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.201</td>
<td>Enhancing Employability through Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.138</td>
<td>Empowering Pyrotechnicians Longevity and Safety at the Workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.110</td>
<td>Better future: Promoting an Equal and Inclusive Labour Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.112</td>
<td>Training Rehabilitation Workers for Persons with Visual Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.181</td>
<td>Improving Public Management and Governance at Local Level</td>
</tr>
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12.1 PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL FAIRS AND EVENTS

During 2013 the NCFHE participated in a number of fairs and events in order to inform the general public about its services especially those of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre.

One such fair was the Annual Jobs and Training Fair organised by the Employment and Training Corporation through EURES. This was held on the 31st May and on the 1st June 2013. The NCFHE also participated in the ‘Jeunesse en Mouvement Fair’ which was held at St George’s Square Valletta on the 6th and 7th December 2013.

12.2 WEBSITES

The National Commission for Higher Education website and the Malta Qualifications Council website were placed offline and replaced with the new NCFHE website in Quarter 1 of 2013. This website - www.ncfhe.org.mt - contains information on the various sections within the NCFHE.

12.3 PUBLICATIONS

The Annual Report 2012 was finalised and printed in Quarter 1 of 2013. This report was compiled by Valerie Attard, Communications Manager, NCFHE.

The NCFHE also printed a number of flyers and information leaflets on the services offered by MQRIC.

12.4 PARTICIPATION IN THE MEDIA

During 2013 the NCFHE published a number of articles and adverts in the print media. Articles published in 2013 included information on the Europass project and information on the National Qualifications Framework.
Section 13:
Study Visits hosted by the NCFHE

Study Visit from Future Focus - 23rd April 2013

A group of teachers who participated in a study visit organised by Future Focus, a private training provider, spent a half-day at the NCFHE premises to learn about the functions and responsibilities of the Commission. This visit was coordinated by Ms Valerie Attard, Communications Manager.

Participants were briefed about the Europass project, the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre section, Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Licensing and the Validation of Informal and Non-Formal Learning. Participants were also given an overview of the Maltese educational system and the outcomes of the statistics report published by the NCFHE. 15 participants from various countries took part in this visit.

Study Visit organised by the European Union Programmes Agency – Belgium team of ECVET Experts – 20th May 2013

Around 16 participants from Belgium participated in this study visit. The participants were given an overview of the NCFHE and its various services, including those of the Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre.

Study Visit by Mr Jean-Michel Domingue, CEO, Tertiary Education Commission, Seychelles, 26-30 August 2013

This study visit incorporated a number of visits to private and public training providers. Mr Jean-Michel Domingue, CEO, Tertiary Education Commission was also given a detailed overview of the work carried out by the NCFHE. The study visit also incorporated meetings at the University of Malta and a meeting with Professor James Calleja, Permanent Secretary, MEDE. This study visit was organised by Ms Valerie Attard, Senior Manager.

The study visit gave an overview on the following areas -

• The nature of further and higher education which is on offer in Malta and its key successes and challenges.
• The nature and functions of the NCFHE, the legislation upon which it is based, and the process of establishment and consolidation of the organisation.
• NCFHE key successes and challenges.
• The process of developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the tertiary sector and the KPIs that have been developed.
• The Quality Assurance process in place.
• The relationship between the NCFHE and key stakeholders such as training providers.
• The role of the NCFHE in the transition of (and promotion of access for) students from general to tertiary education.
Section 14: Concluding Remarks

The Commission has seen a turning point in 2013 especially following the merging of two entities and consolidation exercise of resources available. The newly appointed Board is looking forward to setting annual work programmes and measuring performance more closely. The NCFHE is seeking to look internally and to re-engineer work processes where these are necessary in order to work more efficiently as well as effectively.

Undoubtedly, the Commission will continue to strive to be at the forefront in terms of research in further and higher education; to build on its history of annual statistical compilations; as well as to complement the data with qualitative methodologies. Understanding changing scenarios within the realms of further and higher education in Malta is the cornerstone to be able to recommend policy direction for Malta. While safeguarding quality provision of education programmes, the NCFHE fosters its role in the promotion of further and higher education also within the context of internationalisation of education in Malta.