

FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



**FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**  
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**Foundation for Educational Services**

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# FES BOARD MEMBERS



**Ms Pamela Schembri**  
Chairperson



**Dr Tiffany Attard**  
Board Member



**Ms Philippa Attard**  
Board Member



**Ms Helen Farrugia**  
Board Member



**Ms Sharon Grech**  
Board Member



**Prof. Andrew Azzopardi**  
Board Member



**Mr Mario Grima**  
Board Member



**Mr Jesmond Aquilina**  
Board Secretary





**Group photo from L to R:**

Dr Tiffany Attard, Ms Philippa Attard, Ms Pamela Schembri, Mr Michael Bondin, Ms Helen Farrugia, Ms Sharon Grech, Mr Jesmond Aquilina

**In absentia** Prof Andrew Azzopardi and Mr Mario Grima



Message by the

## **MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH, AND INNOVATION**

**Hon. Dr Clifton Grima**

Now in its 23rd year, the Foundation for Educational Services, a public entity within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation, is an integral part of our Education System, not only by contributing towards a holistic education for our children, but as an invaluable support to our families in striking a balance between work and family.

The excellence of the various services provided to our community by FES is the result of the total dedication of the administration and staff, as it strives to offer quality educational services through structured contemporary programmes, financial sustainability, and ethical behaviour.

Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16 give the students the opportunity to experience education in a fun and interactive way, which is a paradigm for a qualitative educational experience. Childcare Services provided by the Foundation see the children develop from an early age when quality service provision is crucial and of the utmost importance.

As a Government, we are committed to seeing that in this ever-changing world, we meet the demands of parents and families. FES is always receptive to these demands, hence the opening of new Childcare Centres, and a first – the extension of Childcare Centre hours - reassuring that working parents have a more than adequate place where their children can stay and continue their development.

As Minister for Education, I not only commend all the work being done, but also extend my commitment to see that all the needed support is given to FES, as we work together to continue to enhance our services, address the needs of parents and custodians, and continue giving the best of services.

I thank all those involved in the success of the past years and reaffirm my support, as we continue to evolve, to meet the ever-changing demands of service users.



Message by the

## **PERMANENT SECRETARY WITHIN THE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT, RESEARCH, AND INNOVATION**

**Mr Matthew Vella**

Once a scholastic year comes to an end, the work of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) is far from over. Rather, FES would be gearing up for the opening of another Skolasajf, promising a host of superb activities. FES is always diligently preparing and planning a wide range of programmes to help parents balance work and family-related duties throughout the year.

Last year, the Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation (henceforth The Ministry) collaborated with FES on a strategic foresight plan to ensure that its services reflect both current needs and future visions. The newly launched National Education Strategy 2024-2030, based on three pillars: Wellbeing, Growth & Empowerment, and Equity & Inclusion, aims to rebrand and re-conceptualise Klabb 3-16 and SkolaSajf. This rebranding will provide children with robust accredited programmes featuring clear learning outcomes and effectiveness criteria ingrained within quality assurance mechanisms.

These programmes will be available for compulsory school age children and aim to focus both on the curricular and non-curricular aspects, embedded with digital skills within a context of sustainability, wellbeing, global citizenship and life skills and will be promoted through a campaign so that more children frequent these programmes. Furthermore, the public will have access to the list of programmes, enabling parents to make informed choices.

This paradigm shift—from initiatives to robust accredited programmes—is a crucial part of the transformation within the education sector which ensures a holistic experience, fostering growth, self-actualisation, active global citizenship and the development of essential twenty-first-century skills. Additionally, the programmes will sustain Malta's effort to achieve the European targets and Sustainable Development Goals, particularly goal number 4: Quality Education, with a strong focus on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).

It is worth noting that The Ministry is placing significant importance on ECEC by investing heavily in this area. The goal is to ensure high-quality pre-compulsory settings and its aim is to establish a specialised unit to support Childcare Centres and the creation of a more robust legislative framework. Given that staff at Childcare Centres play a vital role in children's development, health, wellbeing, and daily routines, highly educated staff are essential as they are more likely to create stimulating learning environments and provide excellent care and support. Therefore, the provision of continuous professional development for staff in pre-compulsory settings is another component which the National Education Strategy will heed on.





**Last year, the Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation (henceforth The Ministry) collaborated with FES on a strategic foresight plan to ensure that its services reflect both current needs and future visions.**



This effort complements the work of the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), which, through the A Quality Assurance Framework for Education in Malta (0-16 years), aims to ensure high quality education in Childcare Centres to children from a young age. Furthermore, the Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) 2023-2030 strategy launched last year, shifts the prevalent use of compensation measures to address ELET, towards a more preventive approach that addresses challenges from a young age.

In conclusion, I commend the dedicated staff who care for the children as if they were their own and who strive to make the programmes as enjoyable and engaging as possible. I also extend my gratitude to the managerial staff for ensuring the smooth running of programmes. I am confident that FES will continue to work closely with The Ministry to achieve the targets set by the National Educational Strategy 2024-2030.



Message by the

## CHAIRPERSON OF THE FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

**Ms Pamela Schembri**

### **A Year of Growth, Partnership, and Commitment**

This past year has been one of significant growth and adaptation for the Foundation for Educational Services (FES). We have remained dedicated to enhancing educational services for children and families in Malta, which is a commitment that has continued to be strengthened as we address the evolving needs of our communities.

The extension of service hours in six of the FES childcare centres continued to be consolidated, with the demand increasing for this critical support to parents balancing work and family responsibilities. While we wholeheartedly support the importance of parental involvement, we also recognize that reliable childminding services are essential for many families. This initiative underscores our dedication to helping parents feel confident that their children are in a safe, supportive environment.

This summer, we had the privilege of providing 12,027 children with a memorable experience through our Skolasajf service. Parents entrust us with their children's care during these months, knowing that our programmes foster structured learning and play. At FES, we believe that summer should be a time for fun and exploration, but also for continued learning. Skolasajf offers the structure children need while introducing them to new skills, hobbies, and interests in a relaxed, friendly environment. Here, children find a place to explore, connect with peers, and enjoy

summer together in a meaningful way. Our programs also emphasize hands-on learning. By engaging in arts and crafts, sports, culinary endeavours, artistic performances, technological trials, scientific explorations, and other creative activities, children learn by doing—an approach that builds confidence and independence. We hear time and again from parents, who love to see their children coming home excited about their latest creations and sharing stories of their day's adventures. Our diverse range of activities, including external visits and project-based learning, ensures that each day brings something new.

This year, partnerships continued to play a key role in our success. Through collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, both in Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16, we introduced new initiatives that enriched our programs. These partnerships allowed us to provide innovative learning experiences that children truly benefit from. Working together with local organizations enables us to offer a broader range of activities that spark curiosity and encourage children to explore their talents. One such initiative involved collaboration with local band clubs, offering children a safe and welcoming space to learn music. By integrating music education into our programs, we not only foster creativity especially in the sphere of the immediate locality, but also provide children with valuable skills and the joy of self-expression. We believe that learning should be a community effort, and we invite more

local groups, volunteers, and stakeholders to join us in this mission, ensuring that every child in Malta has the opportunity to discover their potential.

One ongoing challenge that we face is staffing, especially during peak times like summer. This year, we relied once again on the dedication of young student playworkers who brought fresh enthusiasm to our programs. We view this as an opportunity to invest in the next generation of educators. Our young staff members are offered training about the duties and are also paired with more experienced playworkers to gain hands-on training, practical skills, and a deeper understanding of child development. This mentorship model allows them to learn the ropes, preparing them to make a positive impact in classrooms and communities.

As part of our commitment to building a sustainable future, FES has taken steps to reduce our environmental footprint. From initiatives within our programs to operational changes at our head office, we are working to adopt environmentally friendly practices wherever possible. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of sustainability among our staff, students, and community partners, emphasizing the importance of caring for our environment as an integral part of education.

At FES, we constantly seek to improve our services, driven by a child-centered approach that prioritizes the well-being and development of each child. Our goal is to earn the trust of parents and the community, ensuring that our programmes meet the highest standards of care and educational value. Moving forward, we aim to engage more stakeholders and community members in our work, inviting feedback and ideas to help us better serve Malta's children and families.

None of our accomplishments would be possible without the support of our dedicated partners. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Minister for Education Dr Clifton Grima and the



**This year, partnerships continued to play a key role in our success. Through collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, both in Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16, we introduced new initiatives that enriched our programs.**



Permanent Secretary Mr Matthew Vella, whose steadfast backing has been instrumental in the growth and success of FES. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the FES Board and the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin, who have been a constant source of support and guidance. We are grateful to our staff, whose dedication and hard work make a difference every day, and to the parents and children who trust us to provide safe, enriching, and impactful educational experiences.

As we reflect on a successful year, we remain unwavering in our commitment to enhancing educational services in Malta. Every decision we make is guided by our dedication to the welfare and growth of Malta's children. Our work is about more than just providing care; it is about fostering a positive, nurturing environment where every child feels valued and supported. We look forward to continuing this journey, knowing that with each step, we are helping to create a brighter, more hopeful future for all of Malta's families.



Message by the

## CEO OF THE FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

**Mr Michael Bondin**

Over the past 23 years, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) has served as Malta's national agency dedicated to helping families be a unit of educational support to their children. From its inception as the provider of educational courses for parental support, the Foundation then moved towards also helping parents achieve a work-life balance by providing quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), and continued support as children move to compulsory education. Its initiatives also contribute to Malta's efforts to meet European targets and Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goals 4 and 8, which focus on improving educational access, quality, and equity, and addressing gender disparities in the workforce.

ECEC services are crucial for increasing women's participation in the labour market. Since the introduction of free childcare in 2014, along with a rapidly growing childcare sector, Malta has seen a remarkable rise in female employment, now at 74%, which stands higher than the EU average. FES is a key player in the childcare sector, currently operating 12 of Malta and Gozo's 200 childcare centres. As a public sector entity, FES ensures that childcare remains accessible and affordable, especially for parents who are ineligible for free childcare, or those needing specialised care for their children. The Ministry for Education, Youth, Sport,

Research, and Innovation (referred to as "the Ministry") is heavily focused on ECEC, investing in high-quality pre-compulsory settings. The Foundation for Tomorrow Schools is building two new childcare centres, in Victoria (Gozo) and in Msida. These centres, each with a capacity of 50 children and employing a total of 30 staff members, will be passed on to FES for their administration.

Research shows that quality ECEC is crucial for children's cognitive, social, and educational development. To ensure that while parents work, children's well-being and development are fully supported, FES emphasizes quality standards in line with national objectives. Recognizing the vital role of childcare staff, FES prioritizes continuous professional development to maintain a well-trained workforce, capable of creating engaging learning environments and providing excellent care.

In partnership with the Ministry, FES has developed a strategic foresight plan to align educational services with both current and future needs. A central component of this vision is the new National Education Strategy 2024-2030, which rests on three pillars: Wellbeing, Growth and Empowerment, and Equity and Inclusion. Key to this strategy is the rebranding and enhancement of Klabb 3-16 and SkolaSajf into accredited,

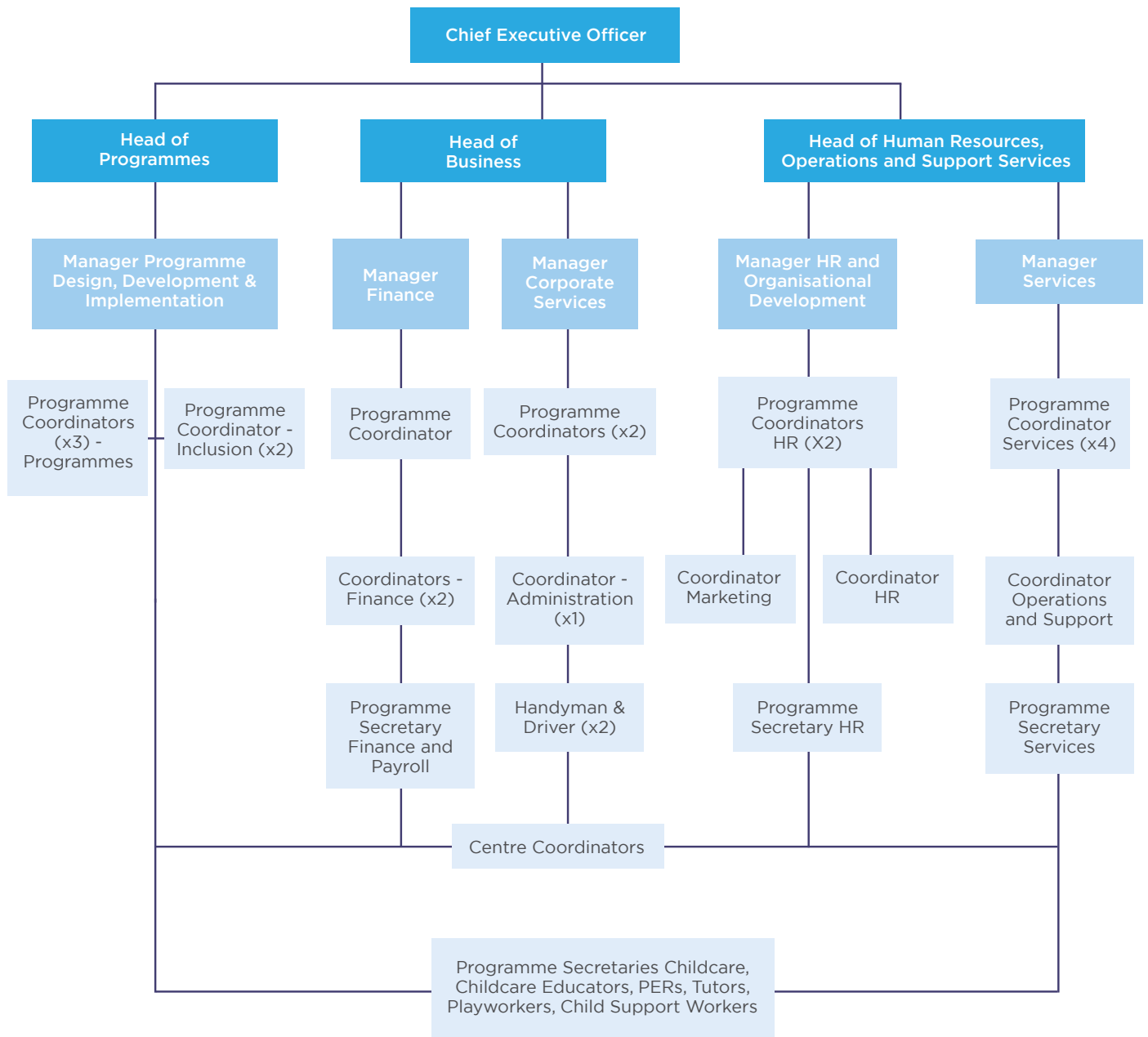


comprehensive programmes focused on learning outcomes, impact measures, and quality assurance.

These programmes, targeted at children of compulsory school age, will incorporate both academic and extracurricular elements, promoting digital skills within a framework of sustainability, well-being, global citizenship, and essential life skills. The initiatives will also consider factors such as the duration of children's engagement in the Klabb 3-16 service, participation rates, and the involvement of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

To expand participation, a promotional campaign will raise awareness among parents, providing clear information to help them make informed choices for their children. This transition—from themed activities to structured, accredited programmes—marks a significant shift in the education sector. It aims to deliver a holistic learning experience that fosters growth, self-actualization, active citizenship, and critical twenty-first-century skills, further advancing Malta toward its European educational objectives.

# THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



# THE PROGRAMMES DEPARTMENT





# THE PROGRAMMES DEPARTMENT

## The Organisation of the Programmes Department

The Programmes Department is responsible for the programme design and service provision in all FES centres, across the three services of Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf. During 2023, the department encompassed the fields of programme design, development and implementation; inclusion; training development and delivery; market research; and marketing and communications, which included also corporate social responsibility events.

Throughout the year of 2023, the human capacity of the Programmes Department consisted of a total of 7 employees. The department was led by the Head of Programmes, and was managed by a Manager Programmes. There were also 5 Programme Coordinators (1 for Childcare,

2 for Klabb 3-16/Skolasajf, and 2 for Inclusion) and a Coordinator (Marketing).

The role of the Programme Coordinators entails a high degree of creation and of quality control, with the provision of guidance and recommendations based on observation and evaluations, in their respective fields. To be able to do this, Programme Coordinator carry out support visits in the centres and hold meeting with staff members to identify best practices, and also to determine any gaps in the service. The Programme Coordinators were also in charge of identify and guide staff members in the centres who would be struggling in their delivery, to ensure a controlled and uniform delivery of service.

A total of 63 support visits were carried out by the Programme Coordinator in charge of Childcare, 90 support visits by the Programme Coordinators in charge of Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf, and 106 support

visits by the Programme Coordinators in charge of Inclusion. Once a visit is over, the Programme Coordinators write a report, refer arising issues to the relevant departments, and ensure follow-ups to resolve problems affecting the service.

## Programme Design, Development, and Implementation

### The Childcare Programme

The implementation of a Child-led Approach was continued during 2023. Following the training of four childcare centres during the previous year, the last six centres were trained in this pedagogy that acknowledges the children's interests. During the month of March, the Centre Coordinators of the centres of Il-Kuluri, Il-Ferrovija, Il-Merill, It-Tghanniq, Il-Pespus, and Pizzi Pizzi Kanna, followed the same two-week course as their colleagues. The course was delivered by the Programme

Coordinator in charge of Childcare within the Programmes Department. This year-round time, it was Sardinella's turn to host the Centre Coordinators for the hands-on training, as the child-led approach was already the basis for all the learning opportunities that were presented in the centre.

Supported by the centre's Childcare Educators, the Centre Coordinators participated in the centre's planning and preparation, based on the children's interests and needs. They focused on observations that are crucial in an emergent curriculum pedagogy, focusing on the learning environment, the resources, the children's engagement with the resources and the interaction going on.

The afternoons served to discuss the morning observations and other concerns with the Centre Coordinator of Sardinella and the trainer. The Centre Coordinators had the opportunity to participate in workshops about loose parts and schematic play. During these two-week training, two professionals were also invited to share their experience when working with babies and toddlers. Once again, this peer-to-peer learning encouraged collaboration between the Centre Coordinators, enabling them to build a strong relationship amongst themselves, share knowledge, and cultivate a collaborative work environment.

Following the training, each Coordinator held a seminar with their respective Childcare Educators to share their experience and the way forward to embark on this new pedagogy. The Centre Coordinators trained their own staff with the intention of ingraining the child-led pedagogy in the daily activities, and improving the skills set of their teams. Videos, images and documentation



captured and used by the trainees, helped the Educators to see the children's reactions and understand more fully the observations recorded by the Centre Coordinators.

Following the one-day seminar each centre launched the child-led approach process. Each centre continued to be supported by the Programme Coordinator (Childcare) from the Programmes Department, with frequent visits to the centres.

### Training for Learning Stories

With the child-led approach being implemented in all the centres, the next step was to finalise the Learning Stories. Learning stories are an analysis of learning and are a way of documenting children's behaviour during their learning and developmental journey. The educator observes the children and creates a narrative about what the educator would have heard and interpreted.

The stories are always positive and depict the children's strengths and dispositions for learning. This will enable the Childcare Educators to build an assessment of each child that is authentic, as it is built on a pedagogy built on children's interests. The learning stories are updated every month and shared with the parents during their review meetings with the Centre Coordinator.

Hands-on training on the creation of the learning stories was carried out at each respective centre with the Childcare Educators. The stories were monitored by the Programme Coordinator (Childcare) to provide support and ensure uniformity across the centres.

### Support Visits

Regular visits are made to each centre. During the last year 63 centres were visited. The implementation of the CLA was the main focus of these visits, to ensure that the process runs its course smoothly and offer support to the Childcare Educators and Centre Coordinators. The staff were also guided on the type of resources aimed to stimulate the children's interests and curiosity. In this regard, FES continued to invest on various resources to help the Educators while planning and preparing learning opportunities that enable the children to keep engaged and acquire different skills and abilities.

### The Klabb 3-16 Programme

The Programmes Department provides the staff members working with the service users of the Klabb 3-16 centres, with a monthly programme of daily activities that cater for all age groups. In 2023, the monthly programmes provided the Klabb 3-16 workers with 394 activities suitable for children in the early years group (3 years and 7 years), and 323 activities suitable for primary-aged children (8 years and over).

The monthly programmes encourage children to think outside their small world and look beyond and be curious about it. The non-formal approach to learning remains a crucial part of the Klabb 3-16 focus, with the constant of trying to instil the love towards learning through curiosity and creativity. By fostering creativity, children are encouraged to imagine new worlds and discover new elements. The Klabb 3-16 programme of activities encourages and facilitates that children discover and reach their potential, by supporting their holistic development.

The topics for each monthly programme aim to reflect current topical subjects. For example, the January 2023 reached

for the moon and beyond, and invited children to think about what it would feel like to manoeuvre items while wearing an astronaut suit in space. A specific activity focused on the use of a Microgravity Science Glovebox, which is a piece of equipment that allows astronauts on the International Space Station to perform a wide range of experiments in a fully sealed and controlled environment. A craft activity inspired by this scientific device, using a cardboard box filled with items to explore, sealed with cling film, and armed with large gloves, provided children with knowledge about the existence, and a simulation of, this gadget.

The gloves also made one realise the difficulty of handling delicate and small items, and performing simple tasks. This challenge was in turn used to channel the children's awareness towards collaboration and perseverance in our lives to achieve what may be deemed as impossible, just like space travel.

In March 2023, the programme explored the astonishing girls and women in the world especially in societies where they still struggle with issues of gender parity. The activities also looked at stories of children who have positively impacted their communities and sometimes also national and international spheres. Through these activities, the message imparted to our service users is that there is potential that is within every individual, even at a young age. Age is not a limitation, and it is the spirit and determination of an individual that make the biggest difference.

In May, the programme explored *All kinds of jobs!*. This approach not only enabled children to become aware of the world around them through the services of non-regular workers, but also opened to them the world of careers and occupations. Whilst the youngest groups explored

more traditional jobs like farmers, builders, and mayors to name a few, the older groups explored a wider range of more contemporary jobs like being a blogger, a musician, a coder, a sportsperson and an activist.

The whole list of monthly topics is listed below:

- January - Out of this world
- February - European culture
- March - The Extraordinary Girls and women in the world
- April - Stories that feed our imagination (Primary years)/ Nursery Rhymes, sing-along and stories (Early Years)
- May - All kinds of jobs
- June / July bridge Holidays - A spirit of Celebration!
- *July to start of September (Skolasajf Programme)*
- September - Returning to Hogwarts (Bridge Holidays)
- October - Fairytales and Fantasy
- November - Journey through time
- December - The Magic of Kindness

### Partnerships during the Klabb 3-16 service

The Klabb 3-16 service also acts as a platform for partnering entities and individuals, who may express an interest in partnering with FES to deliver a specific activity according to their expertise. The aim of this collaboration was part of the FES' endeavours to make extracurricular activities, such as artistic programmes, more accessible to the children attending the Klabb 3-16 service.

One such an initiative happened at the St Paul's Bay Klabb 3-16 centre, where **Ms Yvette Gixti**, an established musician, provided an excellent opportunity for children's participation in a combination of various artistic expressions, aimed at children in the Early Years group. The activities had various elements to keep the children engaged, such as music, singing,



learning about an instrument (ukulele), movement, storytelling, dramatization and team-building games. The activities also lent themselves to teach children about virtues conducive to a positive behaviour, such as respect, kindness, sharing, and friendship.

Another collaboration was with the NGO **Happy Parenting - Malta (For Happier Children)**, to deliver a music and art programme to students attending the B'Kara Klabb 3-16 Centre. This project was funded by the Small Initiatives Support Scheme (SIS) managed by the Malta Council for- the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) supported by the Ministry for Inclusion, Voluntary Organisations, and Consumers' Rights (MIVC).

The music sessions were led by the tutor Ms Liana Agius, who taught the students how to play the ukulele. This instrument was chosen as it is economic, portable and it is easy to play. The ukulele can also encourage students to use their voices more and therefore improve their singing skills. During the sessions, the students learnt how to play the most common chords used on the ukulele i.e. C major, A minor, C7, F major, G major, G7 and E minor. They were also introduced to reading TABs which is a notation system used to notate melodies for string instruments. At the end of the sessions the students were able to play simple songs.

Throughout the course of the art sessions, delivered by the tutor Mr Ryan Galea, the participants were encouraged to explore expressive art using the main seven art elements and main eight principles of art to create personal art. Children were introduced to the basic art elements such as shapes, lines, colour and texture, and taught that when using these elements effectively, one can draw anything. They also had the opportunity to use what they would have learnt to create artworks with a theme. The chosen theme was "Happy Children". Everyone was free to share their thoughts about the title, created different original artworks about the theme, and also worked together to create a collaborative art piece.





During the last quarter of 2023, FES received sponsorship from the **HSBC Malta Foundation**, which enabled FES to offer drama sessions to 4 groups of students in the Klabb 3-16 centres of Qormi San Bastjan and Luqa. The course was delivered by Centrestage Malta and focused on empowering children with the skills of self-esteem, confidence, and creativity. The course was spread over ten sessions per group and culminated in a short presentation for the parents, where the children showcased the skills acquired during their participation.

The course culminated in a delightful presentation where the children showed their parents what they had learnt. They also went a step further by engaging their parents in icebreakers and team activities that left everyone with a big smile on his face.

The start of the school term in October also marked the start of a collaboration between FES, the **French Embassy in Malta**, and the Alliance Francaise de Malte. The French Embassy sponsored a French language and culture awareness programme, delivered by a tutor from the *Alliance Francaise de Malte*. The course was delivered at the Pembroke Klabb 3-16 Centre, and it proved to be a rewarding and fascinating experience. The French language is known for its beauty and elegance, and the students

eagerly discovered the nuances of its pronunciation. Different games and activities were used to help the students increase their vocabulary, which some even supplemented with further research at home.

Their uptake of the new vocabulary was an enriching experience, not only for the student but also for their tutor from Alliance Francaise de Malte. The interaction with the tutor, who is a French national, and the games and non-formal activities implemented, provided an enriching environment, allowing the students to expand their awareness about the French language and French culture.



**AMBASSADE  
DE FRANCE  
À MALTE**

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



## The Skolasajf Programme

During summer, the Programmes Department creates a catalogue of activities surrounding a theme chosen by the Klabb 3-16 children. At the beginning of the scholastic year 2022/2023, a brief survey was created for parents and staff to share with their children or group respectively. The essence was to give children a platform to voice their interests and as a collective create the Skolasajf 2023 theme and subthemes.

Every family with an active profile on the portal was sent the brief survey, which elicited 356 anonymous responses. Further participation happened as a response to an adapted version sent to all the Klabb 3-16 Centre Coordinators to forward to their staff members.

The responses were analysed, and they showed an overarching theme reflecting the embracing of diversity and uniqueness, cherishing equality, and inclusion, being brave, stopping bullying, friendships, kindness and teamwork. As a result, the emergent slogan was titled 'Peace by Piece', which urged people to do their part, no matter how small, as all the individual "pieces of peace" will build the peace that is so needed by everyone. Peace does not mean only not fighting. It

is also ways how one can learn to be calm and appreciate others; how to take care of the natural environment to pass it on to future generations; how to be honest and not sow the seeds of discord among friends and colleagues; and being able to take morally good decisions that will have a positive impact on others. The collective of everyone will help to build a better and stronger society.

The main theme was complemented by the new Skolasajf logo, which was inspired by the winning design submitted by Amy Aquilina Castagno in the Skolasajf Logo Competition. The competition rewarded the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd placed entries with prizes from *Copyclub Live* and *Heritage Malta*.

The next stage in the development of the main theme was to explore it from various perspectives. This resulted in the following seven sub-themes, which enabled a more focused interpretation of the main theme.

- The World and Peace
- Being at Peace with Nature
- Building our abilities
- Diversity, uniqueness and Equality
- Mistakes Make Heroes!
- Ways of Communicating
- Sports and Healthy Eating – Fuelled by Fun

The subthemes aimed at creating an understanding of the world, and how each individual can impact peace in one's own daily life and in the lives and their families and communities. They had the objective of empowering children to be the agents of change, and to build on their strengths to help nurture peace.

Over 124 activities were created to explore the above subthemes. Furthermore, there was also a Sports and Games Programme, a series of outings, and a complimentary programme with external partners. There were water activities that served to



increase the fun factor but also acted as a relief during the hot summer days. During these games, staff ensure that there is no wastage of water, and create different games as means of reminding children that there are many ways how to enjoy oneself and still respect the environment. There were also cooking activities that build on the children's life skills as well as reinforce healthy eating.

Skolasajf 2023 was also the mark of the launch of a new project, by employing a number of young adults in the role of Performing Arts Playworkers. Though the service was run as a pilot project in a selected number of centres, the feedback received was indeed very positive and encouraging. The children were engaged in dance, drama, and music, according to the preferred artistic form of the selected playworkers. These sessions allowed children to explore different art forms which they may never had the chance to experience and served also as an outlet of self-expression. Children who tended to shy away from such form of group and expressive interactions, could be observed to have a change in their attitude, slowly showing an enhanced confidence level and a desire to shine just like their friends.

Activities happening during Skolasajf can also be project-based, often culminating in an artistic outcome that makes students and educators alike, beam with pride. Some examples of these events include the annual art installation that is embarked on by the students at the Valletta Skolasajf Centre. This year the Centre Coordinator Mr Keith Scicluna directed the students to create two massive hands encircling a globe, embodying the cradling of the world as a form of care and nurture to promote peace. These pictures show the works in progress and also the final product of the art piece. This installation was made possible thanks to the generous commitment of the Valletta Local Council.

The students at Valletta Skolasajf inaugurated the artwork in the presence of the FES Chairperson Ms Pamela Schembri, the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin, the Valletta Mayor Mr Alfred Zammit, and the Valletta Head of School Mr Saviour Agius.





Another event marked the launch of the second edition of the publication *Aħna t-tfal, Hbieb tal-Animali* at the centre of Skolasajf Marsascala San Gwakkin. It consisted of 38 pieces of writings written by students who attended Skolasajf during the summer of 2022. Based on an initiative by the Animal Welfare Directorate, and the Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare, the book makes children think about the animals with whom we co-habit on this planet, and the need to take care of them. The writing activities served as a literacy workshop moderated by the class Playworkers as they guided the

children through rhyme or prose. The workshops were also an opportunity to foster creativity and imagination, as they pondered on their pets and the other animals so useful to mankind.

The book was launched in the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries, Aquaculture and Animal Rights, Dr Alicia Bugeja Said, officials from the Animal Welfare Directorate, the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin, and the main guest of honour, LUNA, the lovely dog visiting the Skolasajf Centres on a regular basis.

## Partnerships during the Skolasajf Programme

The figures related to the partners enhancing the Skolasajf Programme continued to impress, with FES welcoming a new record of partners during 2023.

| Description                                                                         | 2023 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Total number of partners                                                            | 62   |
| Partners doing centre-based sessions                                                | 60   |
| Number of centre-based sessions, which includes multiple visits by the same partner | 1253 |
| Partners hosting centres to visit their premises (outings)                          | 18   |
| Total number of outings organised with partners                                     | 113  |

The outings in Gozo were made possible thanks to the committed support shown annually by the Ministry for Gozo and the ECO Gozo Directorate, who once again sponsored the transportation costs.

One of the partners of FES during Skolasajf was the **Malta Film Commission**, which invested heavily in 2023 in education about the film industry, and the opportunities for people to explore the employment prospects in the sector.



Skolasajf students from 10 centres were offered a totally complimentary 2-week intensive course about film. This collaboration was strengthened by a signed agreement between the Malta Film Commission and the Foundation for Educational Services, aimed to provide a more streamlined approach to initiatives and continuous support on various initiatives.

Titled **Time for Movies**, the project presented during Skolasajf 2023 was a short course in basic film production, aimed to inspire and create awareness about this rich artistic medium that enthral so many people. Apart from the theory aspect that explored the history of



film, the students also took on different roles needed in a film crew.

The students were guided through the history of film, the work behind the scenes that leads to the production of a film, script writing and editing, and firsthand experience in filming and editing. The different modules of the course were delivered by Maltese educators who had been trained by American tutors with years of experience in film education. Each group of children from the different centres wrote and acted in their own original film. They created a story and wrote the script and were then involved in the filming and editing of the short feature films. The pictures presented here are a glimpse of what the students experienced as they progressed from the theory stages to the filming, sound recording, and editing of their films.

The schedule for the 10-day course ran as follows:

- *Day 1 and 2 - Introduction Stage - Laid the foundations of filmmaking with lessons and games covering genres, framing, shot sequencing, and types of shots and sizes.*
- *Days 3, 4 and 5 - Production Stage - Students started to develop a script and find the locations, costumes, props, and familiarised themselves with the equipment used for filming.*
- *Days 6, 7 and 8 - Filming Stage - Students shot their films and sound recordings across various areas of the MCAST campus.*
- *Days 9 and 10 - Editing and Closure - Films were edited and finalised.*

The productions showcased the output of the students' budding talent and empowered them with skills and knowledge useful in their personal and academic journeys. The students had a great time not only working as a group, but also in meeting professionals in the field, discovering a world quite



different from their everyday routine, and using equipment which they had never used before. Their scripts of their final productions showed a fertile imagination that reflect the creative influence of contemporary fiction books and drama.

Another major partner in the delivery of the Skolasajf Programme, was the **eSkills Malta Foundation**. eSkills Malta Foundation is working tirelessly to contribute to the increase in digital skills and the development of the IT profession. To this aim, eSkills Malta Foundation sponsored for the second consecutive year, a robotics and coding programme in 30 Skolasajf Centres. These interactive classes provided young students with an exceptional academic experience, fostering creativity and nurturing programming skills in a virtual robotic environment. Robotics is instrumental in cultivating critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and bridging the gap between theory and application. Moreover, it encourages collaboration, nurtures a passion for STEM, and prepares students for the technological future. The overwhelming positive feedback from Skolasajf staff and students highlights the significance of robotics in empowering tomorrow's innovators and shaping a brighter, more technologically advanced future for Malta.

The skills and values that FES tries to impart in its programme of activities, are also reflected in the partnerships chosen to enhance the programme. Literacy is a main staple, which also found its way in the activities conducted by partners such as Inizjamed, Fondazzjoni Saghtar, and the Malta Embassy in Rome.

**Inizjamed**, which is a voluntary non-governmental cultural organization committed towards the regeneration of culture and artistic expression, carried out two creative writing workshops led by author Claudia Grixti. The children were guided to work on their own writing and were then encouraged to share it.

**Fondazzjoni Saghtar** within the Malta Union of Teachers is a registered voluntary organisation with an educational and professional remit. The main aim for the activities at Skolasajf was to promote literacy and a love for reading. The older students had the opportunity to leaf through various editions of the Saghtar magazine and look at them in an investigative manner. The magazines included a wealth of resources with fiction and non-fiction material, games, jokes and so much more, which gave plenty of opportunity for educational and fun activities including group work and quizzes. The younger students had storytelling sessions, games and activities related to Saghtarin.

The **Malta Embassy in Rome** partnered with FES to celebrate the European Day of Languages, which has the aim of creating awareness about Europe's linguistic and cultural richness, and the joy of learning a new language. The Embassy invited the Skolasajf students to draw some scenes from *Alice in Wonderland* to ultimately create an audiovisual featuring the drawings. The students were introduced to the book, and guided through the story and its interpretation, before they gave

life to their assigned scenes through their drawings. The children were also invited to read parts of the story and produce audio recordings of their voices. The drawings and recordings were sent to the Embassy in Rome, and these were used to produce an animation, featuring the recorded Maltese language with Italian subtitles. The final production was used during an exhibition in Rome.

Another partnership that brought the Skolasajf students close to the world of local government and the value of citizenship, was the work carried out with the **Eastern, Western and Southern Regional Councils**.

During 2023, the Eastern Regional Council was officially declared as the European Region of Sport 2023. This was celebrated with a theatrical production titled "Have a Ball", which aimed to promote different sports. The characters encouraged the audience to practice sports, shared fun facts about different sports, showed different props/equipment such as balls and rackets, mentioned different legends of the respective sports, looked at the history and origins of the respective sports, stating the rules of the respective sports, amongst others. The partner performed this show at some of centres.





The Western Regional Council participated in Skolasajf with five different activities that enabled the children to be exposed to different areas such as technology and artisan work, life skills and art. These included a course in basic First Aid, a virtual reality adventure that allowed the students to experience the wonders beneath the sea, lessons in crib making and also art lessons, and an intergenerational experience with older members of the community of the locality of the centre. During the latter experience, the students first hosted the guests at their schools, and then they were invited to visit the Day Centre and engage in activities such as crafts, preparation of food, and listening to experiences of their childhood.



The Southern Regional Council marked the year with the title of the Southern Region of Culture 2023. To celebrate this title, the Region embarked on different events and activities based on 4 main pillars of the right seed for the right pot, shared cultural landscapes, participatory cultures, and regional futures. The students had the opportunity to meet with the President of the Region, hear an explanation on how the region works, and engaged in a Q&A session. This increased the awareness about the local government and regional council. As a memento, the children were given yoyos are made from reclaimed sustainable wood, hence a resource that does not harm or create pressure on the environment.



Another major commitment of FES, through its Skolasajf programme, is to expose children to a variety of artistic expressions, such as the field of music. On the forefront of this genre are the Maltese band clubs. These are considered as an integral part of Malta's cultural and social spheres. They are vital for the preservation and promotion of Maltese music, and hence their significance in the Maltese



culture. These institutions also serve as musical institutions that provide music education to children and young adults, helping to foster new generations of musicians. Considering this wide spectrum of offerings, FES reached out by issuing an expression of interest for participation to a number of band clubs. Eight band clubs accepted the invitation to partner with FES for outreaches in the centres of their locality.

These organisations were:

- 12th May Band Club, Zebbug Malta
- Ghaqda Banda, Zajtun
- Ghaqda Karmelitana - Banda Queen Victoria, Zurrieq
- Ghaqda Kazin Banda San Filep
- Peace Band Club, Naxxar
- Soc Muz La Stella Levantina AD1894 - Banda Santa Marija, H'Attard
- Socjeta Muzikali Santa Marija, Qrendi
- Socjeta Santa Marija u Banda Re Gorg, Mqabba

Among the activities carried out were visits to the band clubs where the students were shown the resources of the respective music academy and given information on how they too can be trained for free to become musicians.

There were also visits to the stores housing the street decorations; the process of, and attempts at, making the 'liedna'; the history behind the humorous and often tongue-in-cheek verses recited during the feast marches; and also an introduction at music theory.

The 12th of May Band Club of Haz Zebbug also organised a concert for the students of the Haz Zebbug Skolasajf centre, the music for which was composed by the musical director Maestro Hermann Farrugia Frantz. Together with other musicians from the same band, they delivered five practice sessions to rehearse the students for the concert which consisted of live narration and singing while accompanied by the live band. This performance that combined different art forms, showed the students how one can draw inspiration from different genres, with the combination of prose, poetry, and music.

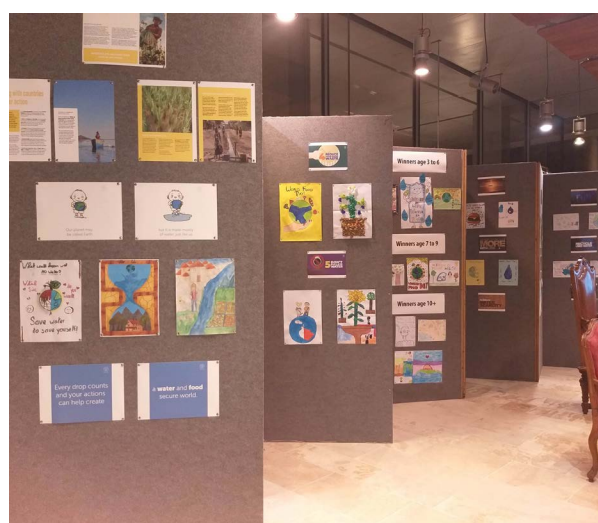
The following section presents the full list of all the partners who joined FES in its Skolasajf 2023 journey.

1. 12th May Band Club, Zebbug Malta
2. ALKA Ceramics
3. Ambjent Malta
4. Animal Welfare Directorate
5. Armed Forces of Malta
6. ARPA-MAFA-Roadshows
7. BeSmartOnline
8. Blue Flag - Malta Tourism Authority
9. Blue Flag Gozo Globe Programme
10. Central Bank of Malta (CBM)
11. Community Police Teams (Malta Police)
12. Delegate of Evangelisation - Zuntier Project
13. Dental Health (Gozo)
14. Dental Hygiene Services (Malta)
15. Dr. Api Malta - Dog Therapy Sessions
16. Eastern Region - European Region of Sports: 'Have a ball project'
17. E-Bug - Malta Medical Students Association
18. Emergency Response and Rescue
19. E-Skills Malta Foundation
20. Faraxa Publishing
21. Foundation for Social Welfare Services Gozo
22. GEMMA Financial Literacy / HSBC
23. Ghajn - Water Conservation Centre
24. Ghaqda Banda, Zejtun
25. Ghaqda Karmelitana - Banda Queen Victoria, Zurrieq
26. Ghaqda Kazin Banda San Filep
27. Gozo Artisan Network - Artisan Classes
28. GreenPak Coop Society LTD.
29. Happy Parenting Malta
30. Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
31. Heritage Malta
32. Hiliet il-Komunita - FSWS
33. Inizjamed
34. JAYE Malta Foundation
35. La Salle Handball Club
36. Learning Hub - Gozo
37. L'Isle Adam Band Club
38. Malta Cadets Safety Training Services
39. Malta Embassy in Rome
40. Malta Film Commission
41. Malta Foundation for the Well Being of Society
42. Malta Paralympic Committee
43. Malta Union of Teachers - Fondazzjoni Saghtar
44. MISSIO
45. MMSA
46. Nobel Digital Courses
47. OASI Foundation - Social Awareness
48. Opening Doors Association
49. Peace Band Club, Naxxar
50. Prayer Spaces
51. Programm Tbissima
52. Rainforest Café Malta - Bay Group
53. Saving Our Blue Campaign - Marine Litter Campaign
54. Sedqa - Malta Branch
55. Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta (SEM)
56. Soc Muz La Stella Levantina AD1894 - Banda Santa Marija, H'Attard



57. Socjeta Muzikali Santa Marija, Qrendi
58. Socjeta Santa Marija u Banda Re Gorg, Mqabba
59. Spazju għall-Qalbi (Beloved Space) - Storytelling
60. Local Council Valletta
61. Transport Malta
62. Wasteserv

Students were also encouraged to participate in competitions as a way of driving them to learn new skills and comprehend the idea of being around equally and more talented individuals. This gives children a perspective of reality, which can be very helpful for each individual to grow in their field and as a person. Following is a full list of the competitions that were presented during Skolasajf 2023.



| Partner                   | Title of Competition                       | Competition Details                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| JAYE Malta                | JA`s Junior Entrepreneurs Competition      | During the sessions conducted by JAYE Malta, the facilitators presented the children with a task to gauge their entrepreneurial abilities and participate in a competition. A group of children from different centres were chosen and proved to have quite a good understanding of what it means to create a feasible business, while also being able to effectively work in a team environment. Moving forward, the selected teams were invited to compete in a final event against other schools in a Junior Entrepreneurs Presentation night. |
| Gemma Financial Literacy  | Socially Responsible Competition           | A competition was held with the aim of designing a poster showing the importance and advantages of Socially Responsible Investing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| E-Skills Malta Foundation | Robot Creation Competition                 | The students were asked to create their own 3-d robot. This was also incorporated as a fun hands-on activity during the sessions. Since the theme for this year's Skolasajf was 'Earth Heroes, Unite', the best way to showcase was to have an environmental sustainable robot, one made from material which would otherwise have been thrown away, such as, but not exclusive to: plastic bottles, paper rolls, used paper, plastic used containers, and more!                                                                                   |
| Wasteserv                 | Communicating with Art -Poster Competition | Students were encouraged to form a team, brainstorm, create a design for a poster that reflects the correct way how one should separate waste.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                           |                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Malta Food Agency         | World Food Day Competition                                | <p>The aim of World Food Day is to promote worldwide awareness about hunger, how lack of access to water triggers conflicts, and to promote action for the future of food, people and the planet.</p> <p>The Malta Food Agency collaborated with Skolasajf, to organise a <b>national poster competition</b> underlining and depicting the <b>FAO World Food Day theme of 2023: Water is life, water is food - Leave no one behind.</b></p> <p>The posters were used in an exhibition in the Foyer of the House of Parliament in Valletta, in October 2023.</p> <p>Children were invited to imagine a world where everyone has access to food and water, and then unleash their creativity by designing a poster showing how they too take action to reduce water waste so that there will be water for food.</p> |
| European Day of Languages | European Day of Languages-Alice in Wonderland Competition | <p>The chosen theme for this years' celebration, was inspired by the book <b>Alice in Wonderland</b> by Lewis Carroll. The project of the Maltese in Rome was based on the Maltese translation of the same book, Alice fl-Art tal-Ghegubijiet, with the idea of promoting our language, while exchanging knowledge and creating fun activities for children. This project was important to highlight the importance of bilingualism from a young age.</p> <p>The drawings by the students were animated through audio-visual effects as well as sound bites of children recounting parts of the story in the Maltese language, with Italian subtitles.</p>                                                                                                                                                        |

## Inclusion Matters

During 2023, the Foundation for Educational Services remained committed to prioritizing children in all its services of Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf. This was evident in the continued investment in the Inclusion Unit, whose aim is to promote an inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, can participate in education alongside their peers.

The Inclusion Unit works hand in hand with the staff in the centre from all the services offered by FES, to support students with special educational needs and behavioural challenges, to prevent exclusion and foster equity, to create integration with mainstream services, and to meet legal and ethical obligations.

The recommendations provided by the Inclusion Unit help to ensure a more inclusive and safe service, and hence the contribution to the fulfilment of the Foundation's mission to support an evolving society through a holistic service to the child.

### FES Inclusion Policy

The FES Inclusion Policy guides educators in prioritizing the child's needs. It emphasizes collaboration, respect, and adapting teaching methods and resources to address individual educational and developmental needs. Educators in all our services, Childcare, Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf, are encouraged to seek professional support when they perceive a risk of exclusion. Therefore, the PC Inclusion supports those educators in their practices so that they ensure that the children entrusted in their care have their needs met.

### The Programme Coordinator - Inclusion

The importance of the Inclusion Unit within the Programmes Department is becoming more apparent, as the referrals from the centres are increasing with each passing year. In fact, the year 2023 continued to register a notable rise in demand for the services provided by the Programme Coordinator Inclusion (PC Inclusion). The significance of the work in this area of education has spurred the fulfilment of the request for a second Programme Coordinator (Inclusion), who joined the Foundation in June 2023.

The PC Inclusion assists every child with their unique educational needs, regardless of whether they have a Statement of Support. The main priority is to endeavour to make all children feel that they belong to the centre they are in.

The first contact of the PC (Inclusion) with a child needing support from the stage of kindergarden onwards, is the evaluation of the client's application that requests the service of a Child Support Worker, and approve support accordingly. One is to bear in mind that the FES programmes prioritise minimizing support during the non-formal activities to promote children's independence. However, if there are sensory, physical, developmental delays, or medical conditions, support is provided based on staff availability. The PC (Inclusion) also carried out visits to the centres to observe the children who have support or are exhibiting forms of behaviour that warrants such an observation. The visits are an opportunity to also identify the right Child Support Worker to fit the child's needs, discuss with the staff member the details of the observation and a way forward.

The PC (Inclusion) then drew up 'Action Plan' for the educator to follow in order to address the child's physical, intellectual, language, educational, and social needs. However, it must be noted that these strategies are guided by the child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) that builds on the child's strengths and addresses the child's individual educational needs by outlining goals and the necessary accommodations.

In the field of childcare, the evaluation process was a little different, since at that age there is no diagnosis yet. However, observations reported by the Childcare Educators initiates an observation process which may lead to a referral to professionals at the Child Development and Assessment Unit (CDAU), stakeholder consultation meetings, and eventual customised Action Plans.

The following statistics record the work done by the Inclusion Team (Programme Coordinators and Regional Coordinators) towards the provision of support to the children using the FES services and to the staff taking care of the children. The figures show that support is not provided only to children with a statement of needs, but also to children who may exhibit a form of behaviour that is indicative of underlying problems, be they psychosocial or physical.

| Description                                                                                                                                                                   | Totals |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Visits conducted in the centres                                                                                                                                               | 106    |
| number of children provided with personalised support in K3-16                                                                                                                | 308    |
| number of children provided with personalised support during Skolasajf 2023                                                                                                   | 1164   |
| number of children approved personalised support in Childcare                                                                                                                 | 4      |
| number of follow-ups in Childcare                                                                                                                                             | 175    |
| number of follow-ups in K3-16                                                                                                                                                 | 461    |
| number of follow-ups during Skolasajf 2023                                                                                                                                    | 1279   |
| number of children requiring nursing service in Childcare                                                                                                                     | 1      |
| number of children requiring nursing service during Skolasajf 2023                                                                                                            | 27     |
| number of collaborative meetings with professionals/ parents/staff, including. support meetings/supervision with staff and training sessions (both lecture format & hands-on) | 262    |

Additionally, during 2023 the Inclusion Team was also involved in:

- setting up and delivering training to the Childcare Centre Coordinators, on

the use of the *Boardmaker* (an online platform of special education tools)

- identifying the use of Twinkl as a resource and started providing printable visuals and resources directly from the Inclusion Unit
- supporting Childcare Centre Coordinators during supervision sessions with Childcare Educators on inclusion matters.
- induction training to new Childcare Centre Coordinators and Childcare Educators
- introducing the nursing service to childcare centres, enabling children who have health problems to access the service
- training for Playworkers and Child Support Workers; induction training session to Regional Coordinators and to Centre Coordinators for Skolasajf and K3-16
- streamlining the nursing service Skolasajf applications to avoid any breaches to GDPR
- setting up a handing over document to be used between Child Support Workers during the Skolasajf service
- collaborating with the NGO *Voice for Inclusion* to oversee the service being provided in the Sannat Special Unit
- enhancing collaborative practices by holding talks with the Foundation for Social Welfare Service, and with the Institute of Family Therapy, to increase collaboration with FES

### Support during the Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf 2023 programmes

During the Klabb 3-16 service, support was offered to children with a Statement of Needs. A total of 115 Child Support Workers (CSWs) were employed to provide assistance both during the after-school service and throughout the scholastic holidays. These CSWs not only adhered to the Plan of Action outlined

by the PC Inclusion but also adapted the Programme of Activities to achieve the specified goals.

CSWs working during Skolasajf follow a similar procedure. Skolasajf, which is the largest project by FES to date, has seen a continuous increase in the number of children with a Statement of Support. During the Skolasajf 2023 programme, FES employed 580 Child Support Workers to assist children with specific needs in mainstream centres. Students in Resource Centres were also supported by 81 Child Support Workers and 56 of the centres' actual staff members.

Additionally, due to the growing demand for support, FES also hired two Regional Coordinators (RC) Inclusion. These RC Inclusion coordinators were responsible for supporting Skolasajf Resource Centers and other mainstream schools on-site, following guidance from the PC Inclusion. This collaborative effort played a crucial role in effectively meeting the needs of the children.

The service to students in Resource Centres continued to be consolidated even during 2023, as the service continued to be offered during the different scholastic holidays, enabling working parents to continue with their work duties. For the second year, the Skolasajf service was delivered over a 5-day week for the whole duration of the service. In collaboration with the National School Support Services (NSSS), the PC Inclusion ensured that children requiring medication received appropriate care from the nursing contractor. Medication administration took place in both mainstream schools and Resource Centres. Notably, during Skolasajf 2023, a total of 27 children benefited from the nursing service.

## Supporting Children in the FES Childcare Centres

During 2023, FES operated the twelve State's childcare centers, which adhere to the National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for children aged 0 to 3 years. These standards include specific child-to-educator ratios. However, during 2023, FES received requests from clients to admit children who required care in smaller groups due to disabilities or medical conditions. FES, recognizing its social responsibility, made efforts to accommodate these requests whenever possible. The decision depended on factors such as the timing of the request, the number of children and staff, and the center's capacity. In 2023, FES continued to accept such requests and even trained selected staff members to provide optimal care. The positive outcome was not only the satisfaction of assisting families but also observing improvements in the children's personal and social development.

Besides supporting children with individual educational needs, all children attending FES childcare centres are supported through the implementation of the Emergent Curriculum or the Child-Led Approach (CLA). Training in the CLA approach was finally completed by the first quarter of 2023; thus all FES childcare personnel have received training in this pedagogical approach. The beauty of the CLA is that it is a child-centred curriculum which revolves around the child's interests. However, it also offers the opportunity to the Childcare Educator to observe and discover the child's developmental needs and be in a position to scaffold learning so that the child would continue on his / her developmental journey. Consequently, besides fostering intrinsic motivation within the children leading to enhanced engagement, longer attention span and meaningful learning, the CLA pedagogical

approach ensures that every child is included; that every child feels that s/he belongs to his / her peer group.

## Peer collaboration across the Programmes Department.

In addition to the Programme Coordinator (PC) Inclusion, during 2023 there were three other Program Coordinators responsible for programme development and implementation within the centers. These Programme Coordinators conducted support visits to assist all stakeholders across the three different services, that is Childcare, Klabb3-16 and Skolasajf. The primary purpose of these visits was to:

- Monitor service quality.
- Ensure adherence to FES policies.
- Provide support to staff members when needed.
- Emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive environment where all children feel they belong.

Before visiting a center, the Program Coordinators communicated with the PC Inclusion, who could request follow-ups on specific cases. During the visit, they discussed the strategies being used by the centre's personnel to support the children's skills and personal and social development. The Programme Coordinators concluded their visit by reporting and discussing any observed difficulties concerning the children with the PC Inclusion.

## Responding to vulnerable families

The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) collaborates with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) to support vulnerable families. The FES Social Board accepts FSWS referrals for services such as Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf. Successful applicants receive fee exemptions and prioritized access. In 2023, the FES Social Board approved 27 cases for Childcare, and 45 cases for Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf.

During 2023, FES renewed its commitment towards the Karl Vella Foundation (KVF) and facilitated the recruitment of people suitable to address the children's emotional and psychological problems, by providing two Playworkers, 3 Child Support Workers and a HW Tutor. This provision of manpower ensures that children attending KVF are provided with homework assistance, engagement in non-formal activities and given support to those having individual educational needs. It must be noted that the Karl Vella Foundation was established to provide educational and psychological support to children of families disrupted by serious illness or loss of a family member. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed upon by the two entities, continues to solidify the FES' corporate social responsibility and commitment to support KVF in its mission.

Another official collaboration was made with the NGO **Voice for Inclusion** in Gozo. FES was one of a three-party agreement, with the Ministry for Gozo and with Agenzija Sapport, to support the Voice for Inclusion Association in Gozo, to strengthen the summer service at the Sannat Special Unit for students with disabilities in Gozo. Until 2022 there were two summer services in Gozo, being offered at the same time; a service from FES at the Sannat Unit and another service financed by the Ministry for Gozo and Agenzija Sapport, operated by Voice for Inclusion Gozo. Through the agreement, these two services and resources were combined into one service to give an enhanced and more effective experience to the students.



## Training development and delivery

The purpose of training is to provide potential employees with all the necessary skills, capabilities, and knowledge. At FES, we are committed to train our workforce as we believe that with the right training, the employee will have job security and satisfaction. When properly trained, the employee will have all the skills needed prior to starting the job and this improves efficiency and productivity as well as have less supervision and fewer accidents in the workplace. Several courses were held at the FES Head Office and externally, for staff working at Head Office and in the Childcare and Klabb 3-16 / Skolasajf Centres.

The Programmes Department made a direct contribution in 2023 in the following courses:

- The Klabb 3-16 Induction Course which was delivered both as a refresher for current employees and as the first step for new employees embarking on their role as playworkers or child support workers.
- The Course for Prospective Child Support Workers. This prepares aspiring Child Support Workers how to work and interact with children who have different educational needs. The course covers different forms of abilities and learning styles.
- The Course for Prospective Playworkers with Extra Responsibilities, where employees are trained to assist and also replace the Centre Coordinator when they are absent.
- The Boardmaker Course was a refresher course about this special education platform that specialises in child

education and communication for children who have communication difficulties. It enables the user to create customized material and visuals that facilitate the learning experience of these children.

- Additional courses for FES staff, making them wholly qualified for the delivery of the FES Programmes, were:
- The Food Handling Course to prepare staff for instances where they handle food during the course of their duty.
- The Paediatric First Aid training for staff in childcare centres. The aim of this training was to help staff deal with situations of emergency and accidents which can occur in childcare centres. This will further ensure the safety of children under our care.
- Training on General Data Protection Regulation, especially in relation to situations which staff can come across during the course of their duties. They were also provided with basic information on the General Data Protection Regulations and made aware of the FES retention policy.
- The evaluation of Skolasajf 2023 by the Head Office team. During this event, each department engaged in in-depth discussions focusing on the different aspects of Skolasajf and challenges associated with each department. The seminar served as a collaborative platform, allowing each department to share insights, experiences, and perspectives related to their respective areas. Through these discussions, the team aimed to gain a holistic understanding of Skolasajf's performance, identify areas of improvement, and strategise for the following year's Skolasajf.

In addition to the above entrusted with the organisation of the Skolasajf service, FES has always believed in the training of its workforce to enable them to fulfil their job duties. In 2018, the Programmes Department embarked on the creation of the Playworkers and the Child Support Workers courses. This training development was done in-house, including the creation of content, the administration of the course, and the delivery of lectures by the Head and Manager of the Programmes Department and by additional external lecturers.

At the beginning of 2023, developments were made to the way the training started to be delivered to the Skolasajf Playworkers and Child Support Workers who were not hailing from the field of education. Talks were held between FES and the Institute for Education (IfE), for the latter to endorse and organise the courses based on content requirements as stipulated by FES, for all Playworkers and Child Support Workers who would be engaged to work during Skolasajf 2023, and eventually also during Klabb 3-16. This agreement obliged IfE to take care of all the logistics involved in organising courses for about 900 participants.

These courses seek to impart the necessary skills the Playworker and the Child Support Worker need in their work with the children entrusted in their care. Moreover, the course content aims to foster an inclusive and diverse mindset among Playworkers and Child Support Workers. It encourages them to embrace diversity while working with children, collaborating with colleagues, and in their personal lives. Additionally, the courses cover strategies for handling challenging behavior, disabilities, and communication difficulties in children.

The Programmes Department drew up the course modules for a more comprehensive

content and collaborated with the Institute for Education (IfE) to endorse and organise the courses. This new venture continued throughout the year, with the prospect of extending it for future years.

The training for childcare staff, specifically focused on the Emergent Curriculum, was also concluded in 2023. The training was led by the Programme Coordinator in charge of Childcare, where she led the Centre Coordinators in an immersive experience, pairing the theoretical aspect of the training with firsthand work with the children in a childcare care setting. The two-week training was part of the Train the Trainer approach, with the aim of guiding the respective centre's staff in the launching of the emergent curriculum with the children in their centres. The peer-to-peer training experience and hands-on training encouraged the Centre Coordinators to share knowledge and to cultivate a collaborative work environment. This was followed by six individual micro-seminars within each participating centre, where the Centre Coordinators trained their own staff with the intention of ingraining the child-led pedagogy in the daily activities, and improving the skill set of their teams. By March 2023, the intensive training came to a close as all the staff members within each FES Childcare Centre started implementing the Emergent Curriculum.

Further training for childcare staff was delivered in the form of the two Childcare Seminars organised by the Programmes Department, held as part of the educators' continuing professional development. The first seminar was titled '*Honing our Personal Development Skills – Values and Practices*', where the staff listened to talks, and engaged in discussions, on subjects related to their line of work.

The guest speakers were then invited to deliver their presentations, as follows:

- 'Data Protection Issues' by Ms Amanda Mifsud, Corporate Manager at FES.
- 'Parental Alienation' by Mr Anthony Cauchi from the NGO Happy Parenting (Malta).
- 'Oral Communication, Storytelling and Reading aloud to toddlers and young children' by Ms Christine Grech.
- 'The physical handling of children from 3 months to 3 years', by Ms Stephanie Azzopardi, Occupational Therapist at CDAU

The second seminar organised through a collaboration between FES and the Ministry for Education, Youth, Research





Abela (senior lecturer at MCAST), Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri (Senior lecturer at the Child and Family Department, Faculty for Social Wellbeing), and Ms Georgina Fardoe (Specialist in Early Years). This collaboration was based on the common denominator of education, care and protection of children in an early years' setting, and how helping the family is another way of helping the child.

The Programmes Department was also responsible for the organisation of the training for the Sports Playworkers. They completed an intensive session with SportMalta coaches, held at the Kirkop Sports Complex. The session started with a lecture by Mr Robert Portelli, Head of Sport Programmes at SportMalta. Mr Portelli delivered an engaging session on the fundamental principles of physical

education, how it benefits the human body, and how to encourage children to embrace a lifestyle that includes physical activity. He also discussed the use of the Skolasajf Sports and Games Manual and ways how to implement it. This lecture was followed by two gruelling sessions of group work and sport activities under the guidance of four SportMalta coaches.

Skolasajf 2023 also offered a new area for training, as the new non-formal educational domain in the field of performing arts was introduced as a way of enriching the Skolasajf programme of activities. This involved the recruitment of a number of young adults in the role of Performing Arts Playworkers. This not served as a major injection of artistic forms in the summer service, but also gave a niche work opportunity to University and MCAST students following a course in Performing Arts. Eligible were also applicants who study a performing art as a separate artistic discipline on a personal initiative. Before embarking on their service in the centres, the Performing Arts Playworkers attended an intensive workshop at *The Studio Theatre* within the Manoel Theatre, focusing on the interrelationship of the different art forms and how to manage groups of children within a non-formal setting.

## Market Research

In 2022, FES commissioned market research to assess the demand of the extended hours of childcare to be offered by the FES centres. The survey's aim was to analyse how the public reacted to the possibility of having childcare centres available from 6am till 6pm, on Saturdays, and to identify any preferred locations. The fieldwork took place between August and November 2022.

In 2023, FES commissioned another market research to analyse the demand for childcare services during night shifts till early mornings and weekends, including public holidays. FES worked with the research company to create a questionnaire where the questions targeted the desired information required to be able to determine the feasibility of the proposed service. This involved meetings with the identified company to conduct the research, to explain the scope of the research and the required deliverable. Other areas of discussion were the identification and inclusion of areas that needed to be addressed through the questionnaire, drawing up of the questions, and the layout of the questionnaire. The sample size, a description of the target respondents, and the methodology were also discussed at length.

The target audience was to be employees who work atypical hours, such as those working in factories, hotels, 24/7 retail outlets, hospitals, and the airport. However, this stratified sampling was not achieved because of the lack of accessibility to the data of the target population. Though the final results were not conclusive as the final population was not representative, it underpinned the fact that FES was being tasked with a job that was beyond its remit. This factor led to ensuing meetings with Jobsplus, as the entity responsible for the collection and management of such data. Till the end of the year, this matter was not yet resolved as meetings with MEYR and Jobsplus were still ongoing.

## Marketing and Communications

Marketing can be as essential to an organisation's success, as the quality of the products and services it offers. A promotional mix is essential to an effective marketing strategy, and its tools are advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, and public relations (PR). Their combination was used according to the FES' needs, promoting its programmes, services, and vacancies, and influencing the public to act accordingly. The Marketing Unit within the Programmes Department continued to focus on using the promotional mix as a tool to create meaning and value for the services offered by FES. Other goals were the engagement with the clients, the creation of a community of clients who understand the FES services and work and attract service users and new internal clients. The following is a glimpse into the wide-ranging spectrum of activities undertaken by this Unit, ranging from filming and editing, to creating and uploading social media content; from meeting with media suppliers to creating schedules for events; from meetings with HR personnel to designing posters for recruitment purposes.

The ongoing staffing situation meant that the bulk of the work of the Marketing and Communications Unit was channelled towards recruitment. However, advertising was just one-fourth of the promotional tools used. The unit offered more potential in terms of the organisation's positioning, which is especially useful should there be a public PR mishap; in terms of understanding clients and their needs by efficient and effective communication with them; and in terms of promoting the output of the entity. The Marketing unit also filmed and edited a series of short videos about the roles available

for potential Klabb 3-16 employees. The videos were uploaded on the FES YouTube channel to inform prospective applicants about the job opportunities at FES, offering a clear understanding of the responsibilities involved.

All this included Public Relations, which communicated the Foundation's services and image to the public, and created and kept a positive image for the entity while promoting it. This media-relationship management did not address clients directly through advertising but created a more subtle interest around the FES' services. Such efforts included for example press conferences and outreaches, press releases, corporate social responsibility, and public initiatives such as competitions, signing of agreements with other entities, and the maintenance of good relationships with different stakeholders that may in some way impact the Foundation's operations and output.

The use of Facebook was another strong PR platform. Answering Messenger queries as soon as possible, helped to create more positive customer interactions. The informative content uploaded on FB twice a day, helped to promote the Foundation's work in the field of ongoing professional development of the staff, and in the services of Childcare, Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf. This content educated consumers about the FES services and helped to establish FES as the primary service-provider with trustworthy information. The daily uploads helped to make FES a visible, easy-to-find brand with informative content. The daily Facebook activity was critical to serve as an opportunity to humanize the Foundation and make it easier to relate to and trust.

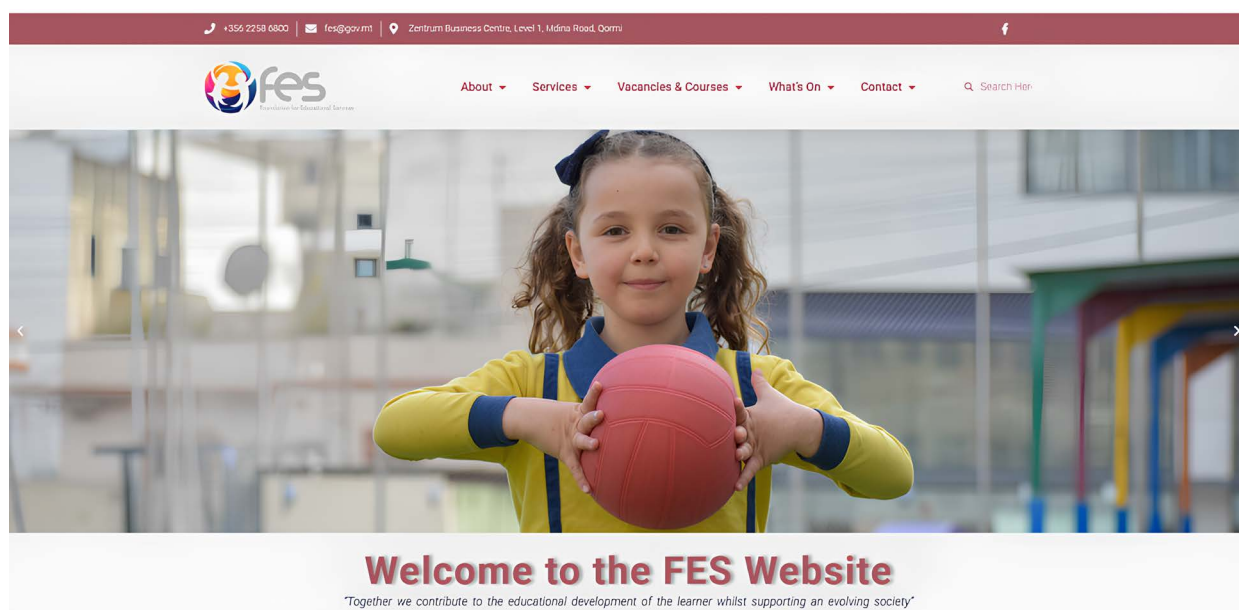


Public relations were also in play in the organisation of press conferences. The latter pose their own form of challenges, which include managing the message, dealing with difficult questions, and ensuring media attendance. The Marketing Unit organised four such press events during 2023. It is worthy to note here that such events are organised with the collaboration and support of the Communications Officer at the Ministry for Education. The Marketing Unit prepared press releases and also information packs to help in the distribution of the messages to the media.



The first press conference was held in March 2023, to mark the opening of the Skolasajf applications. It was held at the San Gwann Primary School, and was attended by the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Dr Clifton Grima, the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin, the St Clare College Principal Mr Jonathan Attard, and the Head of School Mr David Caruana.

The whole event started off with Minister Grima being greeted by a class of Year 1 students who welcomed him and the guests to the school with a sweet choral song. Two students, Mattea Mintoff and Liam Galea, then skilfully compered the event. While addressing the conference, the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin spoke about the benefits derived from the service for students and parents, and also about the work involved to deliver this service to over 12,000 students. It was also the occasion to launch the Skolasajf 2023 logo, inspired by the winning design of Amy Aquilina Castagno, who won the Skolasajf Logo Competition.

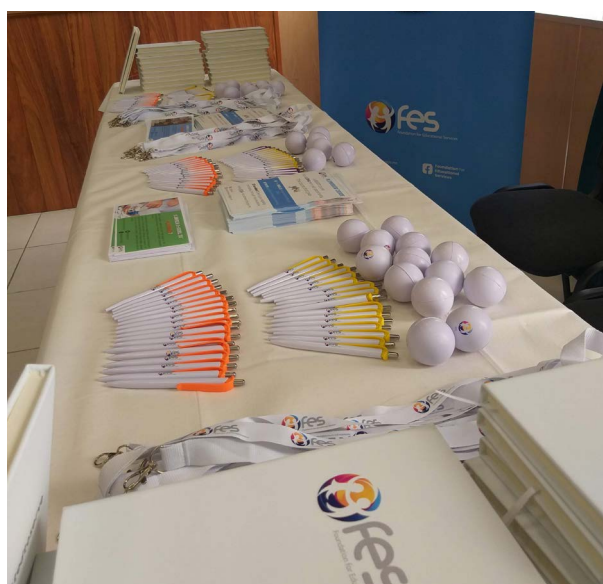
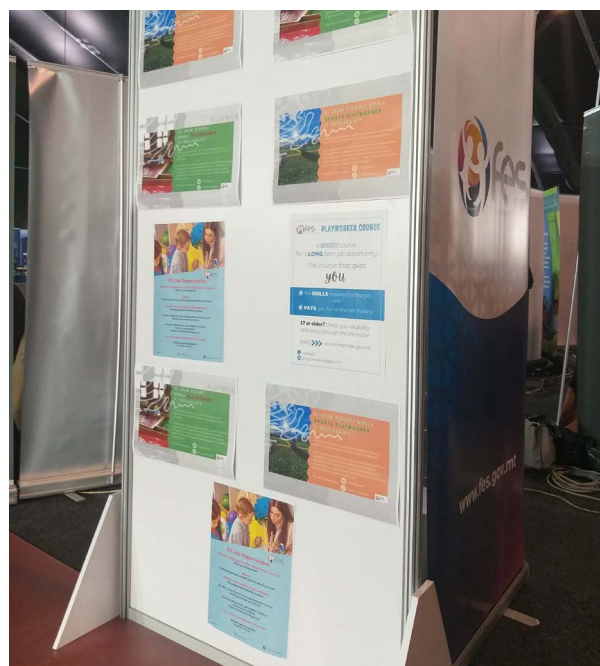


The event was also the occasion to launch the revamped FES website, which has been given a new look, bearing corporate colours and with better accessibility to information and applications for services. This was the result of the diligent work by the Corporate Department at FES for their work on this website, especially to the Manager of the department, and the Programme Coordinator in charge of Technical Support, whose technical expertise proved to be a great asset for this project.

The second press event for the year was organised to mark the official signing of an agreement between FES, the Ministry for Gozo, and Agenzija Sapport, as a collective collaboration to sponsor the Voice for Inclusion Association Gozo in its summer service to students with disabilities in Gozo. The event was held at the Sannat Special Unit in Gozo and was attended by Education Minister Clifton Grima, Minister for Gozo Clint Camilleri, and Minister for Inclusion Julia Farrugia Portelli.

The third press conference was held in July for the official launch of the Skolasajf 2023 service by Hon Minister Dr Clifton

Grima. The event was held at Skolasajf Gharghur, and the guests were shown around the different classrooms by the Centre Coordinator, where they could witness the different range of activities being implemented with the children. The last press conference was organised during the October FES Childcare Seminar, which was served as a platform for a collaboration between FES and the Ministry for Education, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), and the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC), through the participation of the Committee for Positive Parenting and the Strengthening of the Family.- The participants were addressed by Minister Dr. Clifton Grima (MYER), by Minister Dr. Michael Falzon (MSPC), by Mr Michael Bondin (CEO, FES), by Ms Ruth Sciberras (Chairperson of the committee), by Prof. Angela Abela (Vice Chairperson of the committee), Ms Claire Abela (senior lecturer at MCAST), Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri (Senior lecturer at the Child and Family Department, Faculty for Social Wellbeing), and Ms Georgina Fardoe (Specialist in Early Years). This collaboration was based on the common denominator of education, care and protection of children in an early year



setting, and how helping the family is another way of helping the child. Another promotional mix tool is Direct Marketing, which was employed to provide a more personal approach by directly following up clients' requests on Whatsapp, and also ensuring a monthly issue of the FES Newsletter is sent to all the registered service users. This form of direct communication encourages two-way communication where clients in the target cohort of prospective clients are reached on a personal level.

The FES Newsletter *In Touch* continued to be published monthly by the Marketing

Unit, and had reached its 62nd edition by the end of 2023. This form of communication allowed FES to deliver content directly to the clients' email, sending it only to those clients who had "subscribed" to the newsletter because they wanted to be kept updated about news and services.

Traditional and digital advertisements were also used to create awareness about the messages that FES wanted to communicate from time to time. The total cost for the year 2023 was that of €3,358.16, which covered sponsored posts on Facebook, and mass media advertising, which also took the form of television and radio interviews. FES personnel from Head Office were guests on chat shows, to discuss the Foundation's current service applications, job vacancies, programmes being offered, and training courses available for prospective employees. In these cases, the Marketing Unit liaised directly with the programme's presenters before the programme, to discuss the angle of the programme, and then created information packs for the same presenters to be used during the interviews.

Another form of the integrated marketing mix used was that of personal selling, through the participation in fairs and other outreach programmes. Staff from Programmes Department manned the FES stand at the *I Choose Fair* at the MFCC at Ta' Qali, interacted with guidance teachers, and provided students from different schools with information about the services and job opportunities that await them, in their next step of their educational journey.

A second participation was at the *MCAST Freshers' Week* in MCAST Paola, Mosta and Gozo campuses. This time the students were of post-secondary level and were thus more interested in the immediate job opportunities that FES had to offer. The FES staff explained the different roles at the different FES services, and were on hand to answer any questions, especially regarding Klabb 3-16 recruitment and childcare placements for students.

Worthy of mention is also the close collaboration with servizz.gov, which is the agency bringing all government services together. The support of this agency is not only in the assistance that it provides the public at the registration stage of applications for the FES Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf services. It also uses its own social media platforms to promote the FES adverts and offers publicity opportunities to FES representatives on radio and TV shows.

In September 2023, the Marketing Unit was detailed to the remit of the HR Department, so that it could be more exclusively employed in the area of recruitment.

### Corporate Social Responsibility

The Programmes Department was once again entrusted with the organisation, promotion, and management of events that would in some way benefit a local charitable organisation. For the year 2023, these took the form of two major fund-raising initiatives and a food-drive. Staff at Head Office and at the Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf centres were encouraged to create innovative ways how to organise philanthropic activities to collect funds for organisations which are registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations. During 2023, six organisations benefitted from these collections.

| Beneficiary Organisation | Amount collected |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| MCCF                     | €14,361.80       |
| Dar Merhba Bik           | €231.00          |
| Puttinu Cares            | €121.70          |
| Service Dogs             | €195.28          |
| Dar tal-Providenza       | €415.00          |
| Pink October             | €2,777.08        |

*Malta Community Chest Fund:* Skolasajf centres once again excelled themselves in a show of solidarity, with the organisation of fund-raising events to collect money for the national charity. In December 2023, members from the FES Management Team and other staff members, paid an annual visit to H.E. the President of Malta, Dr George Vella, with the total sum collected, thanks to the generosity of children, parents and staff of Skolasajf 2023. The final figure stood at €14,361.80. The FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin presented the cheque and explained how this handsome sum was the result of a number of fund-raising activities that not only inspired the children to be creative, but also to be altruistic and appreciative



The FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin, presented the sum of €2,777.00 to Ms Alexia Demicoli, Chief relations Officer at Hospice Malta, during a Christmas gathering for staff from Head Office and the Childcare and Klabb 3-16 Centres. Ms Demicoli thanked everyone for their generosity and spoke about how the funds will enable Hospice Malta to help more people in the area of palliative care. The money was collected from the various initiatives organised during the months of October and November, which not only served to raise funds, but also to raise awareness about the need of a better lifestyle and care for oneself.

of all the things that enrich their lives. H.E. Dr George Vella thanked everyone involved for the continuous support provided to the MCCF through the Skolasajf initiatives. He talked at length about the sterling work being carried out by the MCCF with the people who need its services. The expenses involved are on the rise with each passing year and the need for the ongoing support is crucial.

*Hospice Malta:* The annual solidarity by the staff and service users at FES towards the Pink October and Movember campaigns, once again translated into a handsome sum of money to support the services offered by Hospice Malta.

*Food Bank:* The Food Bank Campaign has become a staple in the FES diary. Children, parents, and staff in the centres and at Head Office, collected non-perishable items to contribute to the ongoing service given by the Food Bank Lifeline Foundation. In fact, the Foodbank van was kept busy going from one centre to another, collecting the donations by the Childcare and Klabb 3-16 Centres, and the FES Head Office.



# THE HUMAN RESOURCES AND OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT





## THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The Human Resources Department plays a pivotal role in supporting the Foundation's mission to enhance educational services across Malta. In 2023, the HR team focused on strengthening the workforce through strategic recruitment, professional development, and fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture. It is understood that the employees are the cornerstone of the Foundation's success, and thus the HR Department is committed to creating an environment where every individual can thrive and contribute effectively to achieve the FES' goals.

This year, the department placed a strong emphasis on aligning HR strategies with the Foundation's broader objectives, ensuring that the talent pool is equipped to meet the evolving demands of the educational sector. Key initiatives included

the launch of targeted training, programs to upskill staff, enhanced recruitment processes to attract diverse and skilled professionals, and a renewed focus on employee well-being and engagement.

This consolidates the FES beliefs that employees' effectiveness is the critical component in improving children's achievement. The wellbeing of employees is of utmost importance and hence, FES always strives to provide an adequate support to those in need. With this in mind, employees are encouraged to refer to their Centre Coordinator on any problems encountered, who in return, will do their utmost to assist the employees by clarifying expectations, helping in meeting expectations, and provide high-quality feedback and support.



A challenge presented by the ever-increasing demand for the services provided by FES, is the need to have a strong team at Head Office level. To be able to meet service demand the HR Department is responsible to engage seasonal workers at Head Office level. Skilled and committed employees across numerous centres is a priority. All employees who are selected to work with FES receive the employee handbook at contract signing stage. This helps the employee to be aware of the relevant policies one has to abide with throughout the employment period.

By investing in the staff members, the HR Department aims to support the Foundation's vision of high quality in educational services. This chapter provides an overview of the achievements, challenges, and future plans to continue empowering the FES team and building a Foundation that nurtures both personal growth and professional excellence.

## Supporting service provision within the entity

The Human Resources Department is responsible for meeting the staffing needs of the organisation, including providing personnel for Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf Centres. Beyond recruitment, the HR Department must stay informed about the staffing requirements of each centre and take appropriate action as needed. Additionally, HR supports Centre Coordinators in managing employee performance. The department is also responsible for conducting a training needs analysis to effectively plan necessary training programs.

### Skolasajf 2023

Like every year the HR Department is heavily involved in the preparations for Skolasajf. The process starts as early as November of the previous year. This entails preparing all the documentations and permits required to carry out the recruitment process, publication of the different vacancies, selection and appointment of candidates, sending and vetting of contracts and registering employees with Jobsplus. Throughout the process for Skolasajf 2023, the HR Department went through an average of 2,000 applications. These employees were required to work in 55 centres distributed around Malta and Gozo, both in mainstream and in Resource centres. The recruitment process for Skolasajf is one of the major tasks of the HR Department.

*Tables 1, 2 and 3 :- Skolasajf 2022 Recruitment Statistics* below, provide the number of employees contributing towards Skolasajf 2023. The figures show a marked increase over the recruitment figures of the previous year, due to the increase in the number of students' registrations.



## Malta

| Call Title                                     | Total number of employees working with Skolasajf 2023 |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Playworker Skolasajf                           | 1142                                                  |
| Child Support Worker Skolasajf                 | 564                                                   |
| Playworker with Extra Responsibility Skolasajf | 90                                                    |
| Centre Coordinator Skolasajf                   | 43                                                    |
| Regional Coordinator Skolasajf                 | 9                                                     |

|                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Playworkers Performing Arts Skolasajf | 16          |
| Sports Playworker Skolasajf           | 85          |
| MITA Student                          | 15          |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>1964</b> |

*Table 1:- Skolasajf 2023 Recruitment Statistics in Malta*

## Gozo

| Call Title                           | Total number of employees working with Skolasajf 2023 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Playworker                           | 42                                                    |
| Child Support Worker                 | 26                                                    |
| Playworker with extra Responsibility | 1                                                     |
| Centre Coordinator                   | 4                                                     |
| Regional Coordinator                 | 1                                                     |
| Sports Playworker                    | 3                                                     |
| MITA Student                         | 3                                                     |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>80</b>                                             |

Table 2:- Skolasajf 2023 Recruitment Statistics in Gozo

## Resource Centres

| Call Title                           | Total number of employees working with Skolasajf 2023 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Child Support Worker                 | 81                                                    |
| Playworker with extra Responsibility | 56                                                    |
| Centre Coordinator                   | 9                                                     |
| Regional Coordinator                 | 2                                                     |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>148</b>                                            |

Table 3:- Skolasajf 2023 Recruitment Statistics in Resource Centre

A series of induction meetings was held with employees in the different roles. These were held with the Regional Coordinators, Centre Coordinators, and Playworkers with Extra Responsibilities.

The department was liaising continuously with the Institute for Education who were responsible to organize training for prospective Playworkers and Child Support Workers. A majority of employees working with FES throughout Skolasajf are employed on a definite contract. Additionally, a number of FES part-time employees on an indefinite contract, opted to take on different roles for Skolasajf. This practice is encouraged since it provides employees with a well-rounded experience of various roles within the organization. This approach also promotes the development of new skills and knowledge.

Throughout Skolasajf, there was a strong collaboration between the Centre Coordinators, Regional Coordinators, and the Human Resources Department. The procedures in place ensured that any staffing issues were promptly addressed.

## Childcare

The Human Resources (HR) Department within the Foundation for Educational Services plays a crucial role in ensuring that each of the 12 childcare centres operates smoothly and effectively. Hereunder are some of the tasks performed by the Human Resources Department to support service provision within the childcare centres.

**Staff Recruitment and Hiring:** Throughout the year interviews were carried out for the roles of Centre Coordinators and Childcare Educators. This required constant liaison with the Services Department who are in charge to monitor the daily operations of the service to ensure that each centre has the right number of workers in place. Moreover, the department was also assisting the management team in the creation of a new role within the childcare centres i.e. the role of a Coordinator's Assistant. The department was also involved in plans



to open two new childcare centres. Also, it was essential for the department to ensure that employees were available to cover extended hours within six childcare centres.

**Performance Management and Support:**

The HR Department supports the centre coordinators in managing and evaluating employee performance. This includes conducting regular meetings, addressing concerns, and recognizing achievements. HR also offers guidance and support on managing employee relations, which is key in a childcare setting. Moreover, retaining skilled childcare staff is essential. Consequently, the HR Department is responsible to developing strategies for employee well-being and retention, offering support programs, fostering a positive work environment, and encouraging open communication.

**Compliance with Regulations:** HR ensures that each centre meets all legal and regulatory requirements, including requirements set by DQSE. This is particularly important in childcare, where

compliance is essential for maintaining trust and safety. This required the organisation of training to be certified in Paediatric First Aid, and Food Handling, and to become a Fire Warden, so to ensure that all childcare staff have the required qualifications.

**Klabb 3-16**

The Human Resources (HR) Department was essential to supporting the successful operation of the Foundation for Educational Services in the service provision of 35 Klabb 3-16 centres. With such a wide network of centres to manage, HR takes on multiple responsibilities that ensure each centre is well-staffed, compliant, and capable of delivering high-quality, consistent services across locations.

The HR Department was constantly responsible for the recruiting, hiring, and onboarding of the necessary staff including Centre Coordinators, Playworkers, Child Support Workers, Playworkers with Extra Responsibilities, and Tutors. One constant challenge



encountered in this area is the lack of shift availabilities provided by employees and a high employee turnover. Given the number of centres, it is a must for the HR department to focus on strategic workforce planning, to identify both short-term and long-term staffing needs to ensure that each site has the personnel required to operate smoothly. Applications for Klabb 3-16 staff are open all year round, to meet any shortcomings of staff due to resignations, and also for the continuous increase in children's registrations. The HR Department is also responsible to support Centre Coordinators in the performance management of their employees. To achieve this aim, the HR team maintains regular communication with the Centre Coordinators, addressing specific staffing needs, operational challenges, and support requests. This coordination enables HR to quickly address any issues, share best practices across centres, and ensure alignment with the organisation's overall mission and goals.

By taking on these responsibilities, the HR Department ensures that each Klabb 3-16 centre has the support, structure, and resources it needs to deliver safe, engaging, and reliable services. The HR team's role is critical to maintaining consistency and quality across the organization's entire network of centres, contributing directly to the success and reputation of the organization.

## Training

Throughout the year, the Human Resources Department at the Foundation for Educational Services prioritized comprehensive training programs to enhance the skills, knowledge, and overall effectiveness of our staff across all centres. Training initiatives included organization of different training sessions for childcare staff, and induction programmes for employees within Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf. This helped to ensure that all team members are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of the children in our care. Additionally, tailored sessions as required for employees focused on leadership, team dynamics, and performance management, fostering a culture of support and accountability. To adapt to evolving educational standards, the HR Department supported the entity in the organisation of training in collaboration with the Institute for Education and other educational organisations. These efforts not only improve service quality across our organization but also support employee growth and engagement, contributing to higher retention and a stronger, more resilient workforce.

## Operations and Support Services

The Operations and Support Services Department is responsible for the supervision of the day-to-day operations of the different services offered by FES, which are Childcare, Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf. The Services Department has to work hand in hand with the other departments within the entity to ensure a smooth running of the service, however it is also responsible for tasks related to the admin of the centres, such as checking about staff availabilities in the centres, and availability of classrooms in schools for service delivery.

The present structure of this department is the following: Head of Human Resources and Operations and Support Services, Manager Operational and Support Services, four Programme Coordinators, a Coordinator, and a Programme Secretary. There were no changes to the human capacity of the department during 2023, however there was a change in the division of labour. There was the appointment of one Programme Coordinator responsible for childcare centres. This ensured consistency of services within all the FES childcare centres. The other three Programme Coordinators within the department overview the operations of the Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf centres.

Another crucial role within the Services Department is the management of the portal through which parents apply for the service. This requires mostly contact with the parents and guiding them with any queries they need. It also requires constant communication with the service provider of the portal so that an efficient service is provided throughout. Another task within the Services Department is to coordinate

transport required both for Klabb 3-16, Resource Centres and Skolasajf Services. The Coordinator within the Services Department is in charge of this task. This required constant collaboration with the Transport section of MYER. The Coordinator is also responsible of the CRM which is a database incorporating all queries received from Servizz.gov. These queries are to be answered in a timely manner.

The Services Department also supports the entity through the collection of data and statistics in relation to the number of registrations, attendances, complaints and feedback. This task helps to strengthen services provided by the entity, address any weak areas and plan for future projects.

### Klabb 3-16

At the end of June 2023 there were 34 centres operating in Malta and one in Victoria Gozo. Two new centres were opened in September 2023 at Tarxien and Gudja. The small population of the centres warranted the allocation of one Centre Coordinator for both centres.

As of September 2023, there were 31 Centre Coordinators in Malta and 1 Centre Coordinator in Gozo. There were 25 Playworkers with Extra Responsibilities (PERs) who assist the centre coordinators in centres which have more than 100 registrations. Other workers involved in the operations of Klabb 3-16 are Playworkers, Child Support Worker and Tutors.

In the beginning of September 2023, 4582 children were registered for the service. By the end of June 2023 there were 5940\_ applications for the Klabb 3-16 service.

As per procedure, all applications are to be submitted online through the FES Portal. Applicants who found difficulty to access the online system were helped through the continued liaison with servizz.gov. servizz.gov also answered calls through the Freephone 153, and emails, from the general public about Klabb 3-16.

### Klabb 3-16 during holidays

The Klabb 3-16 service is offered also during the scholastic holidays, to children of working parents. Service during the holidays is available from 7am till 5.30pm. The table hereunder explains the number of applications received for the holidays throughout 2023.

| Period                      | Number of Service users |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Carnival Holidays           | 1164                    |
| Easter Holidays             | 1677                    |
| Bridge Holidays (June)      | 1758                    |
| Bridge Holidays (September) | 2139                    |
| Mid-term Holidays           | 1209                    |
| Christmas Holidays          | 1328                    |

The number of applications from the four Resource Centres in Malta was as follows:-

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Guardian Angel          | 8 |
| Helen Keller            | 8 |
| San Miguel              | 3 |
| Wardija Resource Centre | 8 |

The provision of the service throughout scholastic holidays required more liaison with the Heads of Schools to ensure continuity in the provision of the service. It also required collaboration with the HR Department to ensure provision of staff. With respect to the service in the

Resource Centres, there was also constant liaison with the MEYR Transport Section to ensure all students could access the service as required.

### Skolasajf 2023

Skolasajf is an annual national programme catering for learners during the summer holidays. It extends the service usually provided by Klabb 3-16, such that it offers service users an educational experience during the summer holidays. This programme is offered in a number of schools around Malta and Gozo, so as to meet the needs of the families.

In 2023, the service of Skolasajf was provided in 58 primary schools across Malta and Gozo, including five Resource Centres. All centres offer the core programme of activities between 8:30am and 12:30pm. However, 35 centres also offered extra hours of service from 7:00am till 8:30am, and from 12:30pm till 5:30pm. Extra hours are offered to children of working parents.

There were also some centres, both in Malta and Gozo which, due to the limited number of applications received, were amalgamated with other centres. Transport was provided for students travelling from the closed centres to the host centres. The following centres were amalgamated as follows:



| <b>Malta</b>         |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Closed Centre</b> | <b>Hosting Centre</b> |
| Senglea & Vittoriosa | Cospicua              |
| Kalkara              | Xghajra               |
| Pieta                | Marsa                 |
| Qormi SG             | Qormi SB              |
| Mtarfa               | Rabat                 |
| Kirkop               | Safi                  |
| Msida                | St. Venera            |

| <b>Gozo</b>          |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Closed centre</b> | <b>Hosting Centre</b> |
| Xewkija              | Victoria              |
| Għarb/San Lawrenz    | Żebbuġ                |
| Kerċem               | Sannat                |

Number of applicants for Skolasajf 2023  
(Core Hours)

| <b>Centres in Malta</b> | <b>Number of applications</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Attard                  | 375                           |
| Birkirkara              | 451                           |
| Birzebbugia             | 280                           |
| Cospicua                | 74                            |
| Dingli                  | 119                           |
| Fgura                   | 448                           |
| Floriana                | 85                            |
| Gharghur                | 138                           |
| Gudja                   | 108                           |
| Gzira                   | 160                           |
| Hamrun GP               | 255                           |

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Hamrun SS               | 54  |
| Lija/Balzan/Iklin       | 179 |
| Luqa                    | 272 |
| Marsa                   | 108 |
| Marsascala - St Anne    | 223 |
| Marsascala - St Joachim | 381 |
| Marsaxlokk              | 103 |
| Mellieha                | 356 |
| Mgarr                   | 306 |
| Mosta                   | 343 |
| Mosta Annex             | 155 |
| Mqabba                  | 178 |
| Naxxar                  | 333 |
| Pembroke                | 356 |
| Qawra                   | 545 |
| Qormi San Bastjan       | 421 |
| Qrendi                  | 80  |
| Rabat A                 | 283 |
| Safi                    | 97  |
| St. Julians             | 127 |
| San Gwann               | 346 |
| Siggiewi                | 338 |
| Sliema                  | 331 |
| St. Paul's Bay          | 302 |
| St. Venera              | 372 |
| Tarxien                 | 380 |
| Valletta                | 64  |

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Xghajra        | 67           |
| Zabbar A       | 297          |
| Zabbar B       | 182          |
| Zebbug - Malta | 337          |
| Zejtun         | 397          |
| Zurrieq        | 413          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>11219</b> |

| <b>Centres in Gozo</b> | <b>Number of applications</b> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ghajnsielem            | 179                           |
| Victoria               | 186                           |
| Zebbug                 | 40                            |
| Sannat                 | 118                           |
| Xaghra                 | 132                           |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>655</b>                    |

| <b>Resource Centres</b> | <b>Number of applications</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Guardian Angel          | 57                            |
| Helen Keller            | 24                            |
| San Miguel              | 24                            |
| Sannat                  | 7                             |
| Wardija                 | 41                            |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>153</b>                    |

Number of applicants for service in centres offering after hours

| <b>Name of the centre</b> | <b>AM</b> | <b>PM</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Attard                    | 91        | 102       |
| Birkirkara                | 120       | 129       |
| Birzebbuga                | 49        | 53        |
| Cospicua                  | 10        | 9         |
| Fgura                     | 105       | 116       |
| Floriana (Valletta)       | 21        | 18        |
| Gzira                     | 26        | 50        |
| Għargħur                  | 29        | 38        |
| Hamrun                    | 99        | 104       |
| Luqa                      | 65        | 74        |
| Marsascala St Joachim     | 96        | 109       |
| Marsascala St Anne        | 52        | 63        |
| Mellieha                  | 64        | 75        |
| Marsaxlokk                | 12        | 10        |
| Mgarr                     | 64        | 69        |
| Mosta                     | 80        | 95        |
| Mosta Annex (KG)          | 52        | 66        |
| Mqabba                    | 49        | 59        |
| Naxxar                    | 104       | 126       |
| Paola                     | 8         | 9         |
| Pembroke                  | 84        | 92        |
| Qawra                     | 152       | 191       |
| Qormi SB                  | 89        | 80        |
| Rabat                     | 116       | 144       |

|                    |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| San Giljan         | 21          | 51          |
| San Gwann          | 74          | 100         |
| Siggiewi           | 81          | 95          |
| Sliema             | 62          | 96          |
| St. Paul's Bay     | 65          | 79          |
| St. Venera (Msida) | 81          | 100         |
| Tarxien            | 9           | 50          |
| Zabbar A           | 99          | 125         |
| Zabbar B           | 39          | 36          |
| Zebbug - Malta     | 88          | 87          |
| Zejtun             | 94          | 96          |
| Zurrieq            | 87          | 96          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>2483</b> | <b>2892</b> |

|                           |           |           |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>GOZO</b>               |           |           |
| <b>Name of the centre</b> |           |           |
| Victoria - Gozo           | 45        | 47        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>45</b> | <b>47</b> |

## Childcare

As part of its operations, FES manages the State's 12 childcare centres. The underlying philosophy in the management of the childcare centres is to offer a high-quality service to all children up to three years of age. The aim of childcare centres is to support and strengthen the family unit, guided by the underlying principle that the family is the best environment for personal growth. In fact, the majority of the parents who send their children to our centres are working parents. This was made more possible through the Free

Childcare Scheme. The FES Centres also attract non-working parents whose main aim to send the children to one of our centres is for socialisation purposes.

The Programme Coordinator responsible for the childcare centres from the Services perspective, ensures that the centres are assisted consistently in their daily operations. The FES Childcare Service is provided from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 16:00, excluding Public Holidays, weekends, and shut down days. Six of the centres also provided an extended service as they were open from 6am to 6pm. The centres were Il-Kuluri - Birgu, Ix-Xemx - Qawra, Pizzi Pizzi Kanna - Naxxar, Il-Ferrovija - Birkirkara, Zmeraldi -Haz Zebbug, and Il-Merill - Pembroke. Throughout 2023 plans were underway to provide the extended service also in the centres of Is-Sardinella ( San Gwann) and Il-Bebbuxu (St Venera), in 2024. This project required also constant communication with Healthmark, the private company contracted for the provision of supplementary childcare educators, as required according to the exigencies of the service.

Applications for the FES childcare service are received by the Centre Coordinators either through emails, phone calls, or even walk ins in the centres. Every application is processed, and an individual assessment is carried out in order to determine the applicant's needs. Applications are filled in and submitted manually.



The following list provides a description of registrations per centre.

| Childcare Centre          | Total number of service users in 2023 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Birgu, Il-Kuluri          | 42                                    |
| Birkirkara, Il-Ferrovija  | 57                                    |
| Cospicua, Il-Bejta        | 38                                    |
| Floriana, It-Tgħanniq     | 35                                    |
| Haż-Żebbuġ, Żmeraldi      | 47                                    |
| Marsa, Il-Pesp            | 38                                    |
| Naxxar, Pizzi Pizzi Kanna | 50                                    |
| Pembroke, Il-Merill       | 78                                    |
| Qawra, Ix-Xemx            | 57                                    |
| San Ġwann, Is-Sardinella  | 70                                    |
| Santa Venera, Il-Bebbuxu  | 45                                    |
| Siggiewi, Id-Denfil       | 74                                    |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>631</b>                            |

Centre Coordinators within childcare centres are also supported to ensure that a quality service is provided. This requires daily monitoring of what is going on in the centres, and with day-to-day issues and challenges. Centre Coordinators are also in constant liaison with other departments at Head Office including the Programmes Department, Corporate, Finances and the Human Resources Department.

#### Plans for the coming year

The Services Department is committed to ensure a high quality of service provision throughout all the centres. It is also committed to assist the entity to develop its operations. For these reasons plans were being made to open two new childcare centres – one in Gozo and one in Msida. This Department was also responsible to plan refurbishment projects within childcare centres for the year 2024. Plans were also done to open two more centres for the Klabb 3-16 service.



# THE BUSINESS SUPPORT DEPARTMENT (CORPORATE SERVICES AND FINANCE)



# THE CORPORATE SERVICES UNIT

During 2023 the Corporate Service Unit saw a rise in workload namely due to an increase in maintenance projects carried out, leading to added procurement procedures required to finish the same projects. The addition of a part-time Coordinator Administration was of great help in relation to procurement below the €5,000 threshold as well as Skolasajf preparations. Towards the end of the year, an additional Programme Coordinator Procurement joined the unit as well, not only with the intention of better streamlining procurement procedures, but also in preparation for the retirement of the other employee in the same grade.

## 1. Estate Management

### 1.1 Head Office

Following the major refurbishment exercise carried out at Head Office in 2022, the furniture within the Services Unit was changed to better suit the needs of the staff. An electrical pole was also installed to increase the number of internet, telephone and electrical points within the central part of the office.

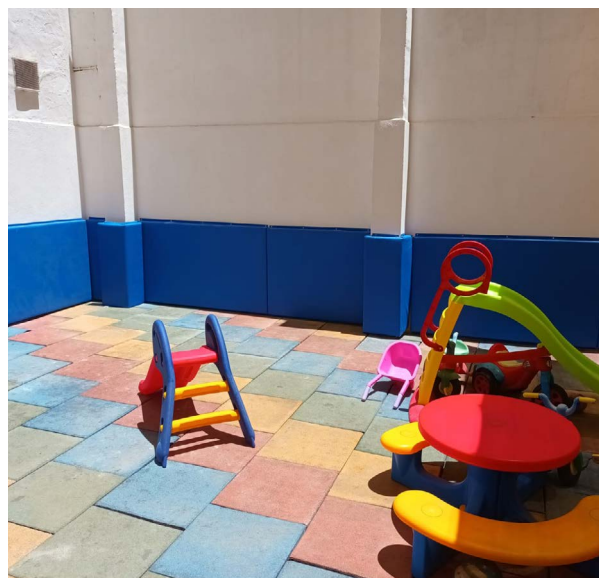
### 1.2 Childcare Centres

A major development in relation to maintenance within childcare centres in 2023 was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Foundation for Tomorrow Schools (FTS), to assist in procurement matters namely related to the installation of turf in all childcare centres and other major maintenance projects required. As at year end, a site visit was carried out in all childcare centres with the FTS architect and measurements were taken, so that the relative tenders for

the removal of existing soft flooring and installation of turf could be prepared.

The below list explains the major works carried out in childcare centres during 2023.

- i. B'Kara – all the centre's window were equipped with mosquito nets with the help of the MEYR maintenance team.
- ii. Birgu – FES contracted an engineer to create an EPC certificate for this centre, since it does not form part of a school setting.
- iii. Bormla – quotes were obtained to refurbish the centre's outdoor area. The walls were very old and crumbling – these were plastered, covered in appropriate gypsum and painted accordingly. The soft foam that covered the same walls was also changed. A small canopy was installed to prevent pigeon excrements from falling directly into the outdoor area.
- iv. Floriana – membrane works were carried out in the bathroom area.
- v. Marsa – this centre was earmarked for an extensive refurbishment exercise in 2024 and as at year end, discussions were still underway about the way forward.
- vi. Naxxar – all chairs and tables used by children within this centre were changed. There was also a problem with the water supply; new pipes were installed, and alterations made to the water tanks, to ensure that the centre does not risk remaining without a water supply. One of the large mirrors in the children's play area had to be removed due



*The before and after of the Bormla childcare outdoor area*

- to humidity; the wall was treated, and the mirror affixed again. Like Marsa, this centre was selected to undergo a refurbishment exercise in 2024, and discussions were still underway.
- vii. Pembroke – the kitchen was moved from one of the rooms into a new space created within the centre’s large corridor, while the remaining section of the corridor was transformed into an activity area. This entailed liaising with the planning authority and DQSE for the necessary permits, the passing of new electricity and water points, procurement and installation of the new kitchen and new appliances. The room where the kitchen was previously situated, was transformed into another baby room.
- viii. San Gwann – discussions were made with the architect and DQSE to develop an unused area in the reception into a store and a waddlers area. Plans were submitted to the Planning Authority and when the approval was received, quotes were obtained to have the necessary gypsum structures and aluminium doors installed. In addition, works were also carried out in the outdoor area to make the ramp leading to the garden more accessible.
- ix. Santa Venera – following works carried out by the landlord in 2022 to remove an old stage from the back of the centre, this area was transformed into a baby room. Like Birgu, an engineer was engaged to create an EPC certificate for this centre. As at year end, discussions were still underway with Curia to renew the leasing contract for a further one year.
- x. Siggiewi – towards the end of the year, discussions were made to change the centre’s kitchen. Drawings were prepared and quotes obtained for both the kitchen and required gypsum works. These works are planned to be carried out by March 2024.
- xi. Haz Zebbug – a welcome sign was fixed to the centre’s façade, making it more discernible from the street. The sleeping area was also changed into a baby room area.
- xii. Qormi – as at end of 2023, the childcare centre in Qormi was



*Installation of a new kitchen at the Pembroke childcare centre*

still closed. It was cleaned up in preparation for the refurbishment works planned by the Foundation for Tomorrow Schools.

Apart from interventions in the existing centres, the Corporate Services Unit continued helping with maintenance issues arising within the privatised centres as follows:

- i. Gzira – discussions were held with the FTS in relation to the creation of a switch room within the centre. As at year's end, the FES was still

waiting for further guidance from the FTS. In addition, measurements were taken to change the centre's outdoor soft flooring to turf and an old fence was replaced with a sturdier aluminium one.

- ii. St Julian's – this centre was successfully passed on to the private provider on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023.
- iii. M'Scala – meetings were held with the private service-provider and the DQSE, and some minor interventions were required for the licence to be issued. The planned



*Redesign of the reception area at the San Gwann childcare centre*



*A new fence at the Gzira childcare centre*

- takeover date is January 2024.
- iv. Gharghur –a very old and humid wall in the centre’s outdoor area was covered with turf.
- v. Paola – towards end of year, various spalling and hair line cracks were noted in a particular area within the centre. Following a visit by an architect, it was determined that urgent structural works had to take place. One of the facades had to be dismantled and assembled again, and two windows needed to have their lintels changed. Discussions were underway with the masons and preparations were made for the masonry works, plastering of the façade, removal of electrical wirings and other interventions needed to ensure that the works were carried out as instructed by the architect. As at year’s end, the FES was still waiting for Enemalta to remove an electricity pole from the façade of the centre, so that works could start.

By end of 2023 both the Gozo and Msida childcare centres, which are going to be operated by the FES, were still in construction phase.

### 1.3 Klabb 3-16/Skolasajf Centres

General maintenance interventions were done in both Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf centres as well.

In early 2023, the works that were previously agreed to in 2022 with the Head of School at Mosta Annex were carried out. These included gypsum, plastering and painting works, to have a separate office for Klabb 3-16. New furniture was also acquired to furnish the space.

The largest maintenance project for 2023 where Klabb is concerned was in Rabat. During summer, the school where the centre was operating from went through a major refurbishment exercise. This led to the shifting of classes and the office multiple times to ensure the health and safety of the children attending the service. At the end of Skolasajf, the Klabb shifted operations to the newly inaugurated school in Rabat as well. All Klabb possessions were shifted once again, this time to a permanent office, and quotes were issued for new furniture.

At M’Scala St Anne, the Klabb office was also moved to a different location within the same school. New furniture was procured for this centre as well as for B’Kara and Attard.

At M’Scala St Joachim, after discussions with the Head of School, an area within the school was identified to create a store. Quotations were issued for the installation of the gypsum structure, aluminium door and shelving.

Gypsum works were also carried out in Zejtun Klabb. This included closing off the upper area of the office, which once formed part of a larger room. This helped to reduce the noise and draught coming from the adjacent area.

Throughout the year, various maintenance interventions were requested, mostly to address items broken during Klabb or Skolasajf operations. As part of the yearly procedure, additional fans were fixed in Skolasajf centres as required.

## 2. Procurement

The Procurement function is getting more important for the Foundation. Purchasing is getting larger and more complex, frequently requiring expert advice on what is the best way forward, both in terms of value as well as to adhere to the public procurement regulations.

Throughout the year 928 purchase orders were issued. These were all matched with their respective invoice, certified, and passed over to the Finance Department for processing. Purchases which were considered important include:

- the engagement of a nurse to assist a particular child at San Gwann childcare centre.
- the engagement of care workers to assist within the Qawra and St Paul's Bay Klabb 3-16 centres.
- the introduction of garbage collection service across all childcare centres.
- engineer electrical testing across all childcare centres.
- chairs suitable for all childcare educators.
- procurement of resources needed at the new Gudja and Tarxien Klabb 3-16 centres.
- procurement and distribution of toys across all Klabb 3-16 centres.
- procurement and organisation of two team building events for FES Head Office staff.

Apart from the minor items for which 3 quotes were requested, the list below explains the tenders/requests for quotations which were dealt with throughout 2023:

- Call for Quotations/Expressions of Interest
- i. CFQ/FES/001/2023 - Call for Quotations - Provision of Legal Services

- ii. CFQ/FES/004/2023 - Call for Quotations - Provision of Medical Services
- iii. CFQ/FES/005/2023 - Call for Quotations - Nursing Services at San Gwann Childcare Centre
- iv. CFQ/FES/006/2023 - Call for Quotations - Accounting Services
- v. EOI/FES/001/2023 - Expression of Interest - General Hand & Messenger (Part Time) - April
- vi. EOI/FES/003/2023 - Expression of Interest - General Hand & Messenger (Part Time) - September
- vii. EOI/FES/002/2023 - Expression of Interest - Part-Time Administration Assistant - May
- viii. EOI/FES/004/2023 - Expression of Interest - Part-Time Administration Assistant - November

Requests for Quotations on the ePPS

- i. CFQ/FES/003/2023 - Care Workers for Resource Centres - re-adapted & published as tender

Tenders

- i. SPD1/2022/181 - framework contract for the supply of drinking water canisters, dispensers and stands for the Foundation for Educational Services
- ii. SPD1/2023/106 - framework contract for the provision of the service of care workers for the foundation for educational services - as at year end, this tender was published but yet to be concluded.
- iii. SPD1/2023/134 - tender for the supply and delivery of one (1) electric passenger vehicle for the foundation for educational services - as at year's end, this tender was published but yet to be concluded.
- iv. Tender for nursing services in Resource Centres during holidays - this was published jointly with National School Support System



*New welcome signs at the Haz Zebbug childcare centre*

As explained previously, towards the end of the year, a new Programme Coordinator Procurement joined the team. The plan for 2024 is to increase the total number of Request for Quotations issued on the EPPS, thus being more transparent in relation to purchases that exceed the €5000 threshold and amalgamating purchases of the same service/goods under one contract.

### 3. IT

With the overall increase in reliability on information technology, the demand for technical support assistance is always on the increase. The Programme Coordinator Technical Support continued building on the initial work started in the previous years, providing continuous assistance to all FES staff.

#### 3.1 Punch Clocks in Klabb 3-16 Centres

The FES embarked on a pilot project, whereby two Klabb 3-16 centres can start using a mobile application from which employees can sign in and sign out, at every shift. As at year's end, discussions were still taking place with the supplier and the Data Protection Office on the best way forward.

### 3.2 Ilearn Changeover

Throughout the year MEYR have changed the networking system across several primary schools. During 2023, approximately 700 ilearn accounts were distributed amongst all Klabb 3-16/ Skolasajf centres, to enable FES staff to log-on to the schools' wifi and digital equipment. Discussions were also taking place with MEYR for the creation of an FES domain; as at year's end, further guidance was still required on the best course of action.

### 3.3 Telecommunications

Since digital cameras could no longer be procured due to a discontinuation in production, mobile phones with incorporated cameras were distributed across all childcare centres. Inactive sim cards were also provided with these phones, so that if there is a fault in the fixed line these can be activated, and the phones used for such purpose as well.

An automated attendant was installed at Head Office, namely on the FES generic telephone number 2258 6800. When calling this number, users are now being prompted to select the language and consequently the department that they wish to speak to.

### 3.4 Portal

Various issues cropped up throughout the year in relation to the portal that required MITA intervention. Assistance was provided in this regard and the relevant ERFS' were uploaded. In addition, two different systems were created on MITA's Segregated Hosting Environment (SHE) so that the new supplier could have access to the live and test environments on the FES portal.

The FES was also requested to introduce the E-ID system in its existing portal. Towards year end, discussions were underway with MEYR to establish the best way forward.

### 3.5 CCTV cameras in childcare centres

By the end of 2023, all FES childcare centres were equipped with CCTV Cameras. During 2023, installations took place in Birgu, Bormla, Pembroke and Siggiewi. In addition to this, the network video recorder (NVR) was upgraded in the Birkirkara childcare centre to ensure proper CCTV operation. An additional camera was installed at the Qawra childcare centre to provide additional security in the centre's outdoor area, due to a recent break-in.

### 3.6 Photocopiers

Following the award of a contract through a call for tenders, photocopiers were successfully delivered and installed at Head Office and a new code system was introduced. This entailed that staff have to enter a code to release photocopy jobs, thus increasing security and accountability.

Through a separate tender, photocopiers were also successfully delivered and installed at all Klabb centres. These further enhanced Klabb operations and decreased the need to seek third-party printing services.

### 3.7 Website

Following months of preparation, the FES new website was launched in March 2023. Apart from the user interface overhaul of the site, it is now accessible from a variety of devices. Regular updating and maintenance were carried out throughout the rest of the year.

### 3.8 Procurement

Procurement of IT related equipment was done by the Programme Coordinator Technical Support, who also provided assistance during the evaluation of tenders. Such purchases included toners for all Klabb 3-16 printers; walkie talkies to be used as communication devices in large centres Klabb 3-16 centres; more mobile phones for all Klabb 3-16 and childcare centres; better quality laptops across the board; monitors and docking stations for HO staff; and tablets to be used by Programme Coordinators during their support visits within FES centres.

### 3.9 Skolasajf

Skolasajf is a major annual project for FES, that carries its own specific IT requirements. Government accounts were created for all the additional Skolasajf staff members. Specific IT-related material such as cameras, mobile phones, walkie talkies and printers were distributed to Skolasajf centres to further facilitate operations at centre level. Like previous years, during the Skolasajf period an ICT student joined the Corporate Services assisting the Programme Coordinator Technical Support with various day-to-day issues.

### 3.10 Others

On a daily basis, the Programme Coordinator addressed troubleshooting issues related to hardware, software, networking, and telephony. In some cases, coordination with the MEYR networking team was required to solve networking issues and to install new network points where required.

## 4. Administration

With the ever increase in requests for maintenance and resources, the administrative burden on the Corporate Services Unit is more challenging. As explained earlier on, in 2023 a part-time Coordinator Administration joined the unit in May to further assist with these requests. The collective work of the Coordinator Administration, Administration Assistant, Handyman, and Driver, strive to provide all centres with the resources needed and maintain a safe environment.

### 4.1 Centres Upkeep

Basic administrative tasks such as AC servicing, fire extinguisher servicing, electrical appliances and electrical installation testing, legionella testing, and pest control, were carried out at regular intervals at Head Office and in the childcare centres. The Manager Corporate Services and Coordinator Administration liaised with Health and Safety Officers and architects to ensure that a good level of health and safety is maintained throughout. In turn, coordination was done with the FES handyman and MEYR to carry out the maintenance tasks needed.

### 4.2 Inventories

On a yearly basis, the Coordinator Administration asked childcare centre coordinators to provide updated inventories and liaised with the Administration assistant to keep the one at Head Office updated as well. These were then submitted to the FES insurance company to ensure that documentation and insurance coverage is always up to date.

### 4.3 Cleaning

The FES uses the same tender issued by MEYR in relation to the provision of cleaning services, across all centres. In 2023 there was a transition between one contractor and another. Constant communication was done with new contractor to ensure that all the cleaners were transferred accordingly. Apart from this, daily issues in relation to cleaners' absenteeism, lack of cleaning material, issues with the performance of the cleaners provided, were reported to the Corporate Services Department. These were in turn addressed with MEYR or directly with the contractor. The reconciliation process involved was enhanced by obtaining the cleaner's timesheets on a monthly basis, in order to ensure the accuracy of the filed timesheets and record absenteeism.

In relation to childcare, one standard cleaning schedule was introduced amongst all centres. This helped to create standardisation.

### 4.4 Stationery

All stationery orders are centralised at Head Office level, where Childcare and Klabb3-16 Centre Coordinators submit their requests, and then delivery is made by the supplier directly to the centre. For Skolasajf, orders are done beforehand by the Manager Corporate Services and by the Coordinator Administration, to ensure adequate supply and distribution in time before the commencement of Skolasajf.

### 4.5 Drinking Water

In 2023 the contract signed with the drinking water supplier expired and a new contract was signed following a call for tenders. Since the supplier who was awarded the new contract was different from the previous one, the Coordinator Administration had to liaise with the old supplier to have all water dispensers and canisters collected, and to liaise with the new one to deliver the same items.

### 4.6 Fire Drills

All the evacuation plans in childcare centres were updated and one standard fire drill evacuation procedure was created for all centres. Fire alarms were also tested and centres who had difficulties in carrying out a fire drill were assisted accordingly.

### 4.7 Skolasajf

Skolasajf on its own brings a lot of other administrative work, which needs to be in place before the Skolasajf centres open their doors. These include: the procurement and distribution of all cleaning material and stationery items, liaising with MEYR regarding the cleaners and security guards needed, liaising with Local Councils to ensure that the street signs reflect the appropriate road closure time, liaising with LESA and Police Officers to provide traffic management assistance during admission and dismissal times, liaising with Head of Schools in relation to the schools' contracts and other urgent maintenance issues in centres, risk assessments for employees under 18 years of age, and informing all Centre Coordinators regarding general routine administrative tasks in relation to resources and centres upkeep.

In 2023, the number of security guards was increased. All centres who had more than one entrance/exit, were given the second security guard for added security. In addition, a number of Skolasajf centres requested barriers to close off the adjacent streets; these were provided accordingly for the first time.

## 5. Data Protection

In the role of Data Protection Officer, the Manager Corporate Services continued to address queries related to data protection. Following feedback received from staff, the Data Protection and Retention Policies were updated on a regular basis, to ensure that all aspects related to the FES areas of work were being covered.

Throughout 2023, various training sessions were offered to staff, in relation to Data Protection. All new recruits received in-depth training on data protection during their induction session; the roles of the Data Protection Commissioner, Data Controller and Data Protection Officer; the rights of data subjects; and what constitutes a data breach. These sessions helped the new employees understand the importance on adhering to the Data Protection Regulations, to ensure that sensitive data such as children's records is maintained in an adequate manner and safeguards are applied against any possible breach.





# FES AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2023



A person wearing a blue button-down shirt is shown from the chest down, typing on a black laptop. The background is a solid light blue. Overlaid on the image are several semi-transparent white icons representing audit and financial concepts: a document with a checkmark, a checklist, a magnifying glass, a shield with a checkmark, a folder, a gear, and a document with a checkmark. The overall theme is professional and focused on financial auditing.

## Statement of comprehensive income

|                                                |      | Year ended 31 December |                  |
|------------------------------------------------|------|------------------------|------------------|
|                                                | Note | 2023                   | 2022             |
|                                                |      | €                      | €                |
| Revenue                                        | 14   | 16,230,795             | 14,236,814       |
| Operational expenses                           | 15   | (14,165,159)           | (12,299,185)     |
| <b>Surplus from operations</b>                 |      | <b>2,065,636</b>       | <b>1,937,629</b> |
| Administrative expenses                        | 15   | (1,461,402)            | (1,313,951)      |
| Finance income                                 | 17   | 49,592                 | 14,519           |
| Finance expense                                | 18   | (11,561)               | (6,062)          |
| <b>Surplus before tax</b>                      |      | <b>642,265</b>         | <b>632,135</b>   |
| Tax charge for the year                        | 19   | -                      | -                |
| <b>Surplus for the year</b>                    |      | <b>642,265</b>         | <b>632,135</b>   |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b> |      | <b>642,265</b>         | <b>632,135</b>   |

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

**Detailed statement of comprehensive income**  
For the financial year ended 31 December 2023

|                                     | Pages | Year ended 31 December |                  |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------------------------|------------------|
|                                     |       | 2023<br>€              | 2022<br>€        |
| Government contribution             |       | 1,230,000              | 1,230,000        |
| Surplus/(deficit) from operations   | 35-34 | 835,636                | 707,629          |
| <b>Total operating surplus</b>      |       | <b>2,065,636</b>       | <b>1,937,629</b> |
| Administrative expenses             | 33    | (1,461,402)            | (1,313,951)      |
| Finance income                      |       | 49,592                 | 14,519           |
| Finance expense                     |       | (11,561)               | (6,062)          |
| <b>Surplus/(deficit) before tax</b> |       | <b>642,265</b>         | <b>632,135</b>   |

## Detailed statement of comprehensive income (operational segments)

For the financial year ended 31 December 2023

|                                       | Childcare<br>2023<br>€ | Skola saif<br>2023<br>€ | Klabb 3-16<br>2023<br>€ | Resources<br>centres<br>2023<br>€ | Other<br>2023<br>€ | Total<br>€          |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Income from Clients                   | 100,303                | 629,433                 | 948,983                 | -                                 | -                  | 1,678,719           |
| Income from government                | 1,901,248              | -                       | -                       | -                                 | -                  | 1,901,248           |
| <b>Total revenues from operations</b> | <b>2,001,551</b>       | <b>629,433</b>          | <b>948,983</b>          | <b>-</b>                          | <b>-</b>           | <b>3,579,967</b>    |
| Reimbursements:                       |                        |                         |                         |                                   |                    |                     |
| Government                            | 2,795,738              | 4,433,017               | 4,006,095               | 82,876                            | 103,102            | 11,420,828          |
| EU Funding                            | -                      | -                       | -                       | -                                 | -                  | -                   |
| <b>Total reimbursements</b>           | <b>2,795,738</b>       | <b>4,433,017</b>        | <b>4,006,095</b>        | <b>82,876</b>                     | <b>103,102</b>     | <b>11,420,828</b>   |
| <b>Total Inflows</b>                  | <b>4,797,289</b>       | <b>5,062,450</b>        | <b>4,955,078</b>        | <b>82,876</b>                     | <b>103,102</b>     | <b>15,000,795</b>   |
| Expenditure:                          |                        |                         |                         |                                   |                    |                     |
| Operational expenses                  | (1,096,574)            | (902,510)               | (663,905)               | (28,510)                          | -                  | (2,691,499)         |
| Wages                                 | (2,516,978)            | (4,397,111)             | (4,025,428)             | (429,990)                         | (104,153)          | (11,473,660)        |
| <b>Total outflows</b>                 | <b>(3,613,552)</b>     | <b>(5,299,621)</b>      | <b>(4,689,333)</b>      | <b>(458,500)</b>                  | <b>(104,153)</b>   | <b>(14,165,159)</b> |
| <b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>          | <b>1,183,737</b>       | <b>(237,171)</b>        | <b>265,745</b>          | <b>(375,624)</b>                  | <b>(1,051)</b>     | <b>835,636</b>      |

### Detailed statement of comprehensive income (operational segments)

For the financial year ended 31 December 2023

|                                       | Childcare<br>2022<br>€ | Skola saif<br>2022<br>€ | Klabb 3-16<br>2022<br>€ | Church<br>schools<br>2022<br>€ | Other<br>2022<br>€ | Total<br>€          |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Income from Clients                   | 179,813                | 425,650                 | 847,963                 | -                              | -                  | 1,453,426           |
| Income from government                | 1,367,844              | -                       | -                       | -                              | -                  | 1,367,844           |
| <b>Total revenues from operations</b> | <b>1,547,657</b>       | <b>425,650</b>          | <b>847,963</b>          | <b>-</b>                       | <b>-</b>           | <b>2,821,270</b>    |
| Reimbursements:                       |                        |                         |                         |                                |                    |                     |
| Government                            | 2,140,294              | 5,044,639               | 2,817,109               | -                              | 183,502            | 10,185,544          |
| EU Funding                            | -                      | -                       | -                       | -                              | -                  | -                   |
| <b>Total reimbursements</b>           | <b>2,140,294</b>       | <b>5,044,639</b>        | <b>2,817,109</b>        | <b>-</b>                       | <b>183,502</b>     | <b>10,185,544</b>   |
| <b>Total Inflows</b>                  | <b>3,687,951</b>       | <b>5,470,289</b>        | <b>3,665,072</b>        | <b>-</b>                       | <b>183,502</b>     | <b>13,006,814</b>   |
| Expenditure:                          |                        |                         |                         |                                |                    |                     |
| Operational expenses                  | (612,086)              | (863,443)               | (615,114)               | -                              | -                  | (2,090,643)         |
| Wages                                 | (2,281,570)            | (4,190,420)             | (3,553,297)             | -                              | (183,255)          | (10,208,542)        |
| <b>Total outflows</b>                 | <b>(2,893,656)</b>     | <b>(5,053,863)</b>      | <b>(4,168,411)</b>      | <b>-</b>                       | <b>(183,255)</b>   | <b>(12,299,185)</b> |
| <b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>          | <b>794,295</b>         | <b>416,426</b>          | <b>(503,339)</b>        | <b>-</b>                       | <b>247</b>         | <b>707,629</b>      |

## NOTES



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