

FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES **ANNUAL REPORT** 2024



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Message by the

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

Hon. Dr Clifton Grima

Now in its 24th year, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) - a public entity operating within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation—continues to play a vital role in our national education system. Beyond enriching the educational journey of our children, FES stands as a pillar of support for families, helping them navigate the balance between professional responsibilities and family life.

The exceptional quality of services provided by FES is a direct result of the unwavering dedication and professionalism of its administration and staff. Their commitment to delivering structured, innovative, and ethically sound educational programmes ensures that FES remains financially sustainable while meeting the evolving needs of our communities.

Flagship initiatives such as Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16 offer students an engaging, interactive, and enjoyable approach to learning—setting the standard for a well-rounded, quality educational experience. The Foundation’s Childcare Services play a crucial role in early childhood development, offering children a safe and nurturing environment during their formative years, where quality care makes all the difference.

As a Government, we are firmly committed to supporting families in today’s dynamic world. FES has consistently responded to these changing needs, most recently through the expansion of its childcare provision - including the establishment of new centres and the landmark extension of operating hours. These measures provide much-needed reassurance to working parents, who can rely on FES to offer a dependable and developmentally focused space for their children.

As Minister for Education, I wholeheartedly commend the outstanding work being carried out by FES. I also reaffirm my full commitment to providing the necessary support so that together, we can continue strengthening our services, meeting the needs of parents and guardians, and delivering the highest standards of care and education.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the Foundation’s continued success over the years and look forward to the future as we adapt and grow in response to the ever-changing needs of the families we serve.



Message by the
**CHAIRPERSON OF
THE FOUNDATION FOR
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

Ms Pamela Schembri

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela

As Chairperson of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), it gives me great pride to reflect on 2024 — a year of meaningful growth, renewed purpose and tangible achievements across our programmes. Together, we have strengthened our commitment to children, families and communities, ensuring that every moment of our work contributes to a brighter future.

In 2024 FES has expanded and refined its services in the three cornerstone areas: after-school care through Klabb 3-16, summer-holiday learning via Skola Sajf, and quality early-years care in our network of childcare centres. Each has seen important developments.

Klabb 3-16 has continued to offer a welcoming, supportive environment for children aged 3-16 after school hours, helping families balance work and home life. In 2024, we implemented new content in collaboration with external partners: for example, financial-literacy sessions in 28 state schools engaged nearly 300 children, equipping them with early money-management competence and entrepreneurial thinking. These enhancements reflect our ongoing effort to broaden the scope of non-formal learning and embed real-life skills in our after-school provision.

Skola Sajf also delivered strongly in 2024 under the theme “Life is My Adventure!”. The programme ran across state primary schools and five Resource Centres in Malta and Gozo. Children were offered fun, creative and educational activities — from arts & crafts, sports and games, to outings, cookery sessions and collaborative workshops with NGOs. Importantly, extended hours were once again available to support working parents. This inclusive, flexible design demonstrates FES’s responsiveness to family needs in modern society.

Childcare Centres remain an essential pillar of our work, serving infants and toddlers across Malta. In 2024 several of our centres benefitted from major upgrades in their outdoor recreational spaces — refurbished playgrounds, new synthetic turf and safer infrastructure — in coordination with the Foundation for Tomorrow’s Schools. These improvements not only enrich the children’s daily experience but reaffirm our commitment to quality, safe and stimulating early years provision. Moreover, the growing recognition of the FES childcare service underscores the vital role it plays in supporting working families.

Behind all these successes lies the dedication of our staff, the trust of families, and the support of our education partners. Our ability to further refine programmes, upgrade facilities and respond to evolving needs in 2024 marks a step-change in how FES operates: proactive, inclusive, and future-facing.

Looking ahead, our mission remains clear: to ensure that every learner — whether in after-school care, summer school, or early years — is nurtured, engaged and empowered. We will continue to innovate, collaborate and build on the strong foundations laid in 2024, so that our services keep pace with the changing demands of children, families and society.

My heartfelt thanks go to the entire FES team led by our CEO Michael Bondin, the board of directors, the Head office management and staff, educators, support staff, and our partners and stakeholders. Your commitment and expertise are the foundation upon which our accomplishments rest. Together, we will continue to make a difference.

Lastly, my heartfelt thanks go to the families — the parents and guardians who entrust us with their most treasured possession, their children.





Message by the **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

Mr Michael Bondin

Never before has Malta witnessed such an unprecedented demand for early childhood education and care. At the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), we take pride in being at the forefront of this national shift -expanding access, improving quality, and supporting families in their daily realities.

The year 2024 marked another important milestone for FES, with the number of operating childcare centres reaching 12, and works underway to open the first State childcare centre in Gozo in 2025. These modern, bright, and inviting centres stand as a testament to our commitment to excellence - offering nothing but the best for the children entrusted to our care, and for the dedicated educators who nurture them.

The integration of childcare centres within primary school buildings has proven particularly valuable. This approach not only facilitates a smoother transition from childcare to kindergarten but also provides parents with a convenient “one-stop” solution, especially for families with multiple children. Looking ahead, FES is set to further expand its network with new centres in Floriana, Qormi, and Mellieħa.

While growth in provision remains a clear priority, we are equally committed to ensuring that quality remains the cornerstone of our services. FES is a strong advocate of the emergent curriculum - a child-led approach that respects each child’s pace, curiosity, and individuality. Delivering this vision requires continuous professional development, pedagogical monitoring, and above all, a team deeply committed to reflective practice.

We also believe in the power of early intervention. Our professional support teams work closely with educators and families to identify developmental needs early on and recommend targeted strategies - ensuring that no child is left behind. In line with our social mission, FES goes a step further by offering reduced ratio support to identified children, ensuring that inclusion and equity are not just ideals but daily practice.

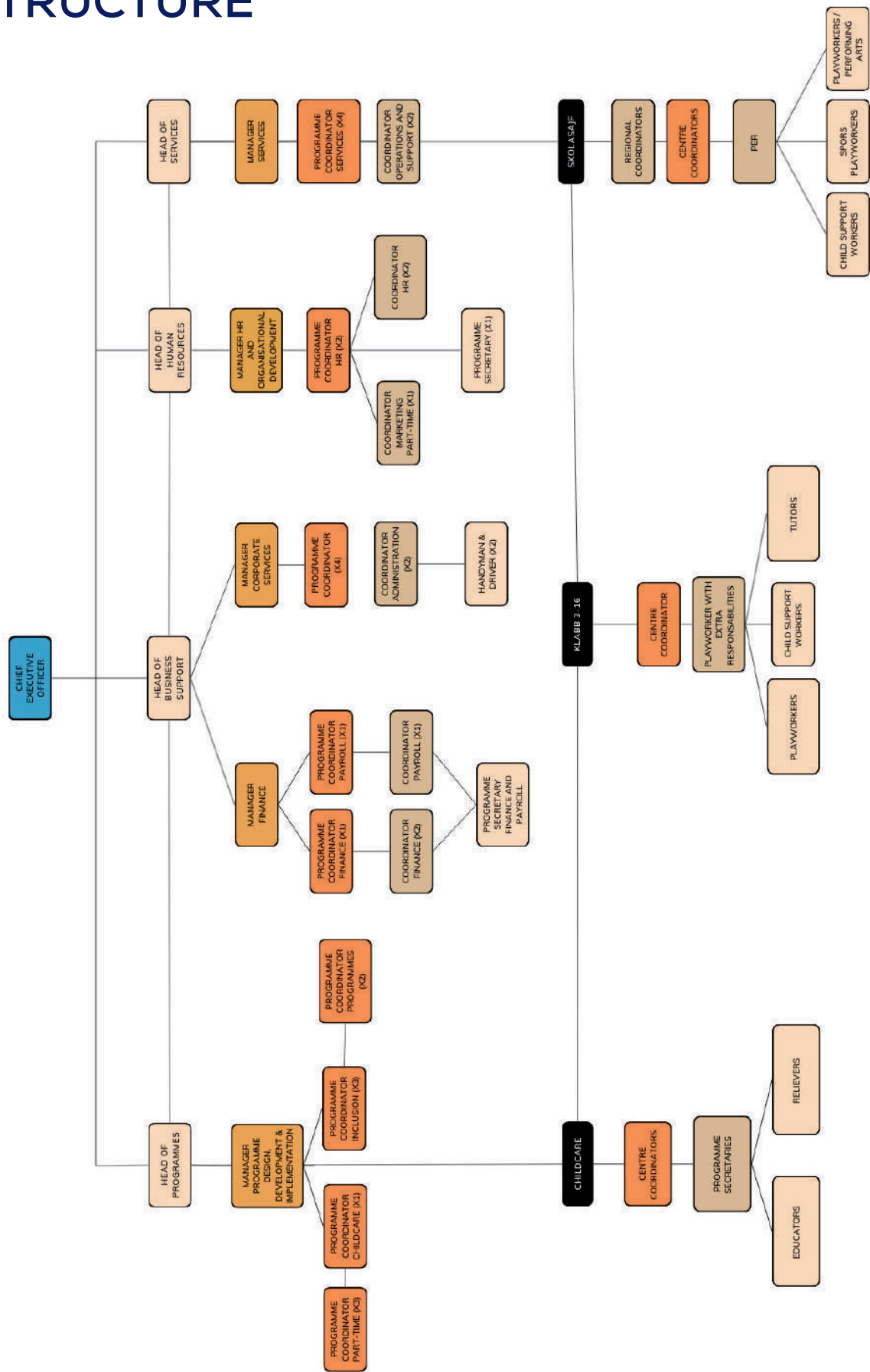
The Klabb 3-16 service continues to grow at an impressive rate, with demand increasing by an average of 15% year on year. This service is vital for parents striving to balance work and family life, and its popularity underscores the trust families place in FES. However, as demand rises, challenges inevitably follow - particularly in staffing. Malta’s record-high employment and part-time participation rates have limited the available pool of potential employees. Yet, where others might see constraint, we see opportunity.

FES is exploring ways to create a specialised workforce for this sector, working closely with the Institute for Education (IfE) to strengthen our existing courses, and also to introduce a skills pass for those aspiring to work with children. This will not only improve service continuity but also establish childcare and after-school education as a respected professional pathway. While our services aim to support parents, the well-being, engagement, and development of the children remain at the heart of our mission.

Meanwhile, Skolasajf continues to deliver an essential national service, stabilising at around 12,000 participants annually across 58 centres. The strength of this programme lies not only in its reach but also in the breadth of partnerships it sustains — now exceeding 90 collaborators. Skolasajf offers children a safe and stimulating environment during the summer months, giving parents peace of mind while providing young learners with opportunities to play, explore, and socialise in a structured yet enjoyable setting.

As we look ahead, we recognise that maintaining this momentum requires continuous innovation, investment, and resilience. Our vision is clear: to provide accessible, high-quality educational services that support every child’s potential and empower families across Malta and Gozo. The challenges are real - but so is our determination to meet them head-on, with creativity, care, and commitment.

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



THE PROGRAMMES DEPARTMENT





The Organisation of the Programmes Department

The remit of the Programmes Department encompasses the programme design and delivery across all FES centres offering the three core services: Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf.

In 2024, the department’s scope included programme design, development, and implementation; inclusion practices; training design and delivery; research and policy design, and EU projects; media activities; digitisation and system enhancements; and also, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

The capacity of the Programme’s Department increased during 2024 with the addition of two new Programme Coordinators, in the field of programme design, development and implementation, and in the area of inclusive practices respectively. This brought the total number of employees to 8 full-timers and 4 part-time employees, led by the Head of Department and managed by a Manager Programmes.

The Programme Coordinators play a crucial role in both creative development and quality assurance.

They provide guidance and recommendations based on ongoing observations and evaluations within their respective service areas of Childcare, Klabb 3-16/Skolasajf, and Inclusion. To achieve this, they conducted regular support visits to centres and hold meetings with staff to identify best practices and address any service gaps.

Additionally, the Programme Coordinators were responsible for identifying staff members who were experiencing challenges in their delivery and offered targeted support to ensure consistency and high-quality service across all centres.

During 2024, the Programme Coordinators carried out a total of 359 support visits, broken down as follows:

- 55 visits by the Childcare Programme Coordinators
- 129 visits by the Klabb 3-16 Programme Coordinators
- 175 visits by the Inclusion Programme Coordinators

Following each visit, the Programme Coordinators prepared detailed reports, referred any identified issues to the relevant departments, and followed up to ensure that all matters are addressed effectively and that service standards are maintained.

The Childcare Service

The fourteen childcare centres operated by FES provide children with high-quality, personalised care in a nurturing and stimulating environment. Each centre promotes positive learning experiences, social interaction, and personal growth. These outcomes have been further strengthened through the introduction of the Emergent Curriculum across all FES childcare centres.

The Emergent Curriculum is a child-centred approach that builds on children’s natural curiosity, interests, and experiences. It encourages educators to observe children closely and design learning opportunities that respond to their evolving needs and ideas. This approach fosters creativity, independence, problem-solving, and social-emotional development while ensuring that learning remains meaningful and engaging.

The Programme Coordinators within the Childcare Unit observe practice, provide feedback, and share best practices across centres to ensure that the curriculum remains dynamic, inclusive, and aligned with FES’s educational standards.

Childcare Support Visits

To maintain the quality and consistency of implementation, the Emergent Curriculum is monitored through regular support visits, reflective meetings with educators, and continuous professional development sessions. Throughout 2024, the two PCs managed to fulfil 37 visits across all the centres, to engage in discussions about the proper implementation of the Emergent Curriculum, address any concerns or challenges, and to plan the next steps to support the centre coordinators and educators.

Thus, carrying out support visits in the FES childcare centres is a vital component of the organisation’s quality assurance process, ensuring that all practices align with the standards set by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE). These visits provide an opportunity to monitor, evaluate, and enhance the quality of care and education being delivered across centres. Through regular on-site observations, constructive feedback, and collaboration with centre staff, the visits help maintain consistency, identify areas for

improvement, and promote the continuous professional growth of educators. Moreover, they ensure that the centres uphold the highest standards of safety, inclusion, and child development. In this way, the Programme Coordinators carrying out the support visits reinforce the FES’s commitment to delivering a nurturing and high-quality early years learning experience for every child.

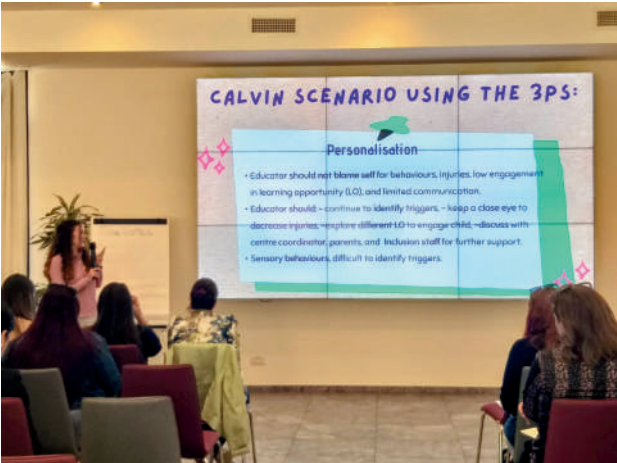


Childcare Seminars

The Foundation for Early Childhood Studies (FES) is also committed to supporting the professional growth and continuous learning of childcare educators. As part of this mission, FES organises two annual seminars specifically designed for educators working in early childhood settings. These seminars provide valuable opportunities for participants to deepen their knowledge, share best practices, and engage with current research and innovations in early childhood education. Through these gatherings, FES aims to foster a collaborative community of educators dedicated to providing high-quality care and education for young children.

The first of the bi-annual seminars was held in April 2024. Titled **‘The Wholesome Child – Resilience, Creativity, and Good Health’**, the seminar focused on the ability of the people taking care of the child to be resilient, creative, and in good health, as conducive to the child’s own physical and mental well-being.

The first session by the PC Inclusion Ms Nicole Bonello, following her Erasmus training about ‘Resilience’. The presentation included the discussion of the various elements that define resilience. The presentation took the audience on a reflective journey about why resilience is important, its building blocks, and how to take care of oneself when building one’s resilience to face life’s adversities.



The second session was delivered by an Early Childhood Educator Ms Mildred Bonanno Atanasio, and focused on the importance of 'Creativity in Early Childhood Education'. Basing her delivery on her experience and her studies, the speaker took the audience through a journey that started with their own definition of creativity, to the myths and truth surrounding this abstract concept, and finally to the identification of one’s unique creative contributions to the team at work and in one’s personal life.



The concluding session was delivered by guests from the Social Determinants of Health Unit within the Department for Health Regulation. Ms Lara Muscat, Ms Cynthia Mallia & Ms Meleane Heimoana Saliba discussed the 'Social Determinants of Health', which are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. Understanding these determinants can help FES staff as service providers, to cater better for the needs of the children in their care.



The second seminar took place in October where the presentations were a mixture of theory and workshops that enabled an active and engaging participation of all those present. Titled **TEAM TIME – Embracing new practices, reviewing current practices and Team Building**. This turned the seminar in an interactive and learning experience, with the sharing of ideas, best practices, and also the challenges faced at the workplace.

The first session focused on ‘Supporting Communication

Development in Childcare Settings’ and was delivered by Dr Elayne Azzopardi and Ms Diona Cilia Farrugia. Dr Elayne is the Speech and Language Pathologist responsible for Early Assessment and Intervention area of practice within Speech and Language Centre, Ministry of Health and Active Aging.



The work includes a new initiative to train childcare centre staff on young children’s communication skills, developmental milestones, when to refer for speech and language pathology services and what they can do to stimulate communication development within their childcare centre. The aim of this initiative is to equip all childcare centre staff of Malta and Gozo with key information to make effective early referrals should they see communication red flags as well as to empower them with strategies that they can carry out in their day-to-day activities. FES was proud to be part of this pioneering work as it embarked on the training of the childcare staff with this introductory session to the sterling work.

This was followed by the session titled ‘*Guiding Young Children Through Change - Practical Strategies for Supporting Early Years Transitions*’. Delivered by Ms. Eliza Cachia, Senior Lecturer in Early Years at MCAST (Institute of Community Services, MVEAR), the session explored effective transition practices within early childhood settings. Ms. Cachia highlighted the importance of supporting children emotionally and socially as they move through different stages of their early learning journey—whether transitioning between home and childcare, transitions within the same childcare setting, and also transitions from childcare to kindergarten. She discussed research-based approaches and practical strategies that educators can adopt to create smoother, more positive transitions for young children. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their own practices, share experiences, and consider ways to strengthen collaboration with families and colleagues to ensure every child feels secure, confident, and ready to engage in new environments.



The final session saw the childcare staff from all centres come together to participate in a series of engaging team-building exercises that fostered collaboration, communication, and a sense of unity across the different teams. These activities encouraged participants to work collectively toward shared goals, highlighting the importance of teamwork and mutual support within early years settings. Through fun and interactive challenges, educators not only strengthened their professional relationships but also built new friendships and deepened their sense of collegiality.

CPD for new FES Childcare Educators

FES believes in continuous training of its employees, as a direct path to offering the best service. Training sessions were held with newly recruited Childcare Educators, who attended intensive 2-day seminars on the theory behind the Emergent Curriculum, its implementation, and its benefits for the young children in our care.

The sessions focused on acquiring a deeper knowledge of the child-led approach and how it leads towards an authentic assessment of the children’s development. The participants were also given the opportunity to work in teams during different workshops, including one consisting of playing with loose parts. These helped them to understand that when children engage in exploration and learning using loose parts, they develop confidence, nurture their creativity, gain problem-solving abilities, and naturally cultivate inventiveness. These essential skills lay the foundation for their growth into adults who exhibit similar qualities.





The Klabb 3-16 monthly thematic programme

While the Klabb 3-16 service provides parents with peace of mind by ensuring their children are safely cared for after school hours, FES also strives to offer added value through meaningful enrichment opportunities. These come in the form of non-formal learning activities, delivered both through engaging in-house thematic programmes and through collaborations with external partners who contribute specialised sessions based on their expertise.

While the Klabb 3-16 service provides parents with peace of mind by ensuring their children are safely cared for after school hours, FES also strives to offer added value through meaningful enrichment opportunities. These come in the form of non-formal learning activities, delivered both through engaging in-house thematic programmes and through collaborations with external partners who contribute specialised sessions based on their expertise.

The goal was to provide a learning environment where children could discover, imagine, create, and connect with their peers, developing not only knowledge but also empathy, resilience, and a love for learning.

January: Winter and Nature’s Wonders

In January, children explored the beauty and science of winter, observing how nature transforms during the colder months. They learned about winter weather patterns, animals that hibernate, and how living things adapt to survive the season. Activities included sensory exploration, science-based experiments, and creative winter crafts inspired by snow and ice. Through these experiences, children developed an understanding of seasonal changes, enhanced their curiosity about natural phenomena, and expressed their ideas artistically. They also strengthened their observation skills and appreciation for the wonders of the natural world.

February: Art

February was dedicated to artistic exploration and creative expression. Children were introduced to various forms of art. They learned about famous artists and experimented with different techniques. The theme helped children’s express emotions, develop imagination, and appreciate art as a universal language that connects cultures. It also promoted collaboration, patience, and pride in one’s work, fostering confidence and creativity in every child.

March: The Adventure of Transportation

During March, children embarked on a journey through the fascinating world of transportation. They explored how people and goods move from one place to another by land, air, and sea. Through play, and imaginative storytelling, children learned about movement, direction, and road safety. This theme promoted curiosity about how things work and encouraged hands-on problem-solving.

April: Minibeasts

The exploration of minibeasts allowed children to step into the world of insects and tiny creatures that play vital roles in nature. Through outdoor observations, and creative representations, they discovered habitats, food chains, and the importance of biodiversity.

This theme inspired scientific thinking and curiosity. It also fostered respect for all forms of life, encouraging children to see the beauty and purpose in even the smallest creatures.

May: The Human Body

In May, children turned their curiosity inward to discover the wonders of the human body. They explored how their bodies move, grow, and function through experiments, games, and art-based learning. Lessons on hygiene, nutrition, and exercise promoted self-awareness and healthy habits.

Children learned to understand the body parts basic functions and appreciate the importance of taking care of themselves. The theme also supported emotional literacy, as discussions about feelings and self-care helped children understand both physical and emotional well-being.

June and July: Travelling

The summer months took children on a journey of discovery across continents. They explored countries, cultures, traditions, and landmarks through stories, crafts, music, and role play. This theme encouraged curiosity about the wider world and respect for cultural diversity.

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September: Back to school

September focused on the transition from holidays back to the rhythm of school life. Children reflected on their summer adventures and memories while preparing for the new season ahead.

Through creative discussions, art, and outdoor activities, they shared experiences, and they learned about the gradual shift from summer to autumn. The theme encouraged reflection, emotional awareness, and readiness for a new learning journey. It provided a gentle closure to the summer months while reigniting enthusiasm for the months ahead.

October: Autumn Adventures

October celebrated the colours, textures, and sensations of autumn. Children explored falling leaves, woodland animals, and seasonal changes through art, stories, and outdoor discovery. This theme enhanced children’s observation and descriptive skills, supported fine and gross motor development, and promoted teamwork. It also nurtured appreciation for nature’s cycles and the beauty of change.



November: Sustainability and Caring for Our Planet

This programme focused on the importance of caring for the Earth. They explored environmental themes such as recycling, conservation, and the responsible use of resources.

Through eco-friendly crafts, discussions, and practical activities, they learned how small actions can make a positive difference. This theme encouraged critical thinking about environmental issues, fostered a sense of responsibility, and empowered children to act as young caretakers of the planet.

December: Magic Moments and the Spirit of December

December brought a celebration of kindness, joy, and togetherness. Children participated in festive crafts, music, and storytelling that highlighted empathy and giving.

Through shared projects and creative performances, they expressed generosity, reflected on community values, and celebrated the joy of being part of something special. The month provided a meaningful conclusion to the year, filled with laughter, warmth, and shared memories.

Partners as part of the Klabb 3-16 Programme

The Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights was one of the salient partners, though the dedicated financial-capability initiative GEMMA - Know, Plan, Act. The main objective of the programme is to improve financial literacy across all age groups, including children, by promoting the knowledge and skills needed for responsible money management.

The course offered students tangible group exercises to acquire responsibility and the autonomy to handle money wisely and complete simple budgeting tasks. The learning outcomes also included the introduction of decision-making skills such as when running a small business, media literacy through the critical consideration of the messages in advertisements, and the need for honesty, fairness and cautiousness when dealing with money.

The programme was carried out in the Klabb 3-16 centres of St Paul's Bay, Birkirkara, Marsascala St Joachim, Zurrieq, Qawra, St Venera, Paola, and Luqa.

The **Virtues through the Arts** music programme was resumed at the St Paul's Bay Klabb 3-16 centre, where musician Ms Yvette Grixti offered young children a rich opportunity to explore a mix of artistic activities. Aimed at the Early Years group, the sessions featured engaging elements such as music, singing, learning about the ukulele, movement, storytelling, dramatization, and team-building games. Through these activities, children were also introduced to important virtues that support positive behaviour, including respect, kindness, sharing, and friendship.

The **Edward e Bono Institute for Creative Thinking and Innovation** was a new partner to Klabb 3-16, with the celebration of the International Dot Day on 10th September. This day is dedicated to fostering creativity and encouraging individuals to leave their positive imprint in the world. This event is celebrated globally in over 190 countries and was initially sparked by the book *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds.

The day was celebrated at the Zejtun Klabb 3-16 Centre, thanks to the initiative by Prof. Margaret Mangion, Associate Professor at the Edward e Bono Institute for Creative Thinking and Innovation, at the University of Malta.

Prof Mangion held three different sessions, addressing different age groups from as young as 5 years, based on the belief that creativity and creative thinking are vital skills that should be nurtured from an early age. These skills help children develop problem-solving abilities, enhance their ability to think critically, and foster a sense of confidence and self-expression.

The children were led through discussions, storytelling, and artistic projects, which not only stimulated their creative thinking process, but also allowed them to explore their unique input in the event.

A French Language Appreciation Programme was also implemented in the Klabb 3-16 Centres of Pembroke and San Gwann. The programme was generously sponsored by the French Embassy in Malta and was delivered by a French tutor from the Alliance Française de Malte.



Learning a foreign language is a wonderful way of introducing a child to a new culture, but it also has other benefits. These include the improvement of memory skills and the ability to focus and giving students the confidence to engage with their peers, especially in an environment so rich in diversity as our schools.

The opportunity of learning different languages in fact ranked high in the list of desired skills, as expressed by students during the public consultation sessions about the National Education Strategy 2024-2030. Foreign languages were described by the same students as an essential empowerment tool, especially in today's day and age where communication with foreign cultures is more accessible through travel and online contact.

The sessions held during the Klabb 3-16 service offered students a fun way to learn about the French culture and new French vocabulary, through the use of games, quizzes, discussions and short related videos.

The **National Literacy Agency** returned as a consistent partner with the allocation of tutors to carry out ongoing reading sessions in 32 Klabb 3-16 centres, on multiple days of the week. Led by the mission of the Agency to promote and sustain ongoing high-quality literacy practices across all segments of the population, the tutors read stories in Maltese and in English to different year groups.



The tutor-led reading sessions offered the children valuable support by building their vocabulary, improving listening and comprehension skills, and boosting their confidence as readers. Through the engaging stories and guided discussion, children were helped to develop stronger critical thinking, creativity, and focus. The sessions also created positive, enjoyable experiences with books, while helping to foster a lifelong love of reading.

The **HSBC Malta Foundation** has been an ongoing supporter of Klabb 3-16 initiatives through direct sponsorship and also through the support of third-party initiatives.



These have included a number of art and drama courses, which enabled children to get a taste of such artistic expressions, especially to those children who did not have the opportunity to attend such extra-curricular activities outside of their school. The collaboration between HSBC Malta and FES thus addressed the prevalent issue of limited cultural capital among children, attributed to restricted time for extracurricular activities due to their parents' late work hours.

The HSBC Malta Foundation sponsored the NGO Happy Parenting - Malta (For Happier Children), for the delivery of a 10-session art course on the theme of sustainability. These were delivered by an art instructor at the St Venera Klabb 3-16 centre. The sessions did not just enable the children to use colours and different media to translate their thoughts into a visual expression but served also as a reflective exercise as they were guided to ponder on a number of environmental concerns. In one session the children worked together to give their personal interpretation of planet Earth, with a split artwork depicting a serene green landscape on one side and a bustling scene replete with factories and power stations on the other. In our subsequent gathering, the participating young artists collaboratively crafted a piece symbolizing drought.



The HSBC Malta Foundation also sponsored a 8-month long drama programme which had started in October 2023 and continued till the end of May 2024. During 2024, courses made up of 10 creative sessions were held in each of the Klabb b3-16 centres of Marsascula St Joachim, Zabbar B, Zurrieq, Attard, and Fgura, reaching students who showed interest in attending the sessions.

The sessions focused on empowering children with the skills of self-esteem, confidence, and creativity, with a final showcase that served as a platform for parents to witness their children’s achievements. One of these final events, held at Zabbar B, was attended by the Minister for Education Dr. Clifton Grima, the Executive Director and Head of Business Development at HSBC Malta Michel Cordina, and the FES CEO Michael Bondin. Feedback from parents was very positive, with remarks that the children benefitted greatly as they found themselves immersed in the vibrant world of creativity and expression through the drama sessions, which helped to enhance their emotional and social development.

Transport Malta joined the list of Klabb 3-16 partners as it plays a significant educational role, particularly in road safety and sustainable mobility. It offered a short programme of offered three sessions in the centres of Zejtun, Birzebbugia, Luqa and Qormi San Bastjan, teaching them how to interpret traffic signs, cross roads safely, use pedestrian crossings, and understand the behaviours needed to stay safe. There was also an emphasis on safe cycling and a practical component with respect to safety tips about cycling and walking on the road. The students were also given the opportunity to sit for a voluntary multiple-choice questionnaire to test their knowledge about the subject, and a certificate of participation was presented to all.



Another successful collaboration was also achieved with **Bank of Valletta**, through the generous sponsorship of three courses, related to Movement through Dance, Sustainability through Basic Sewing Techniques, and Mindfulness.



The *Movement through Dance* course was designed to introduce the students to the joy and basic techniques of dance, and give them the confidence to choreograph their own routines. The tutor led the students through creative movement, rhythm, and coordination exercises, to enable them to develop their motor skills, body awareness, musicality, and self-expression. Each session was an opportunity to cover different dance styles, including also basic stretches and body movements to improve flexibility and coordination. This course was delivered in the centres of Hamrun, Imsida, and Gzira.



The *Sustainability through Basic Sewing Techniques* was an extra-curricular programme based on the concept of Textiles and Sustainability, and which was implemented in the Klabb 3-16 centres of Mosta and Zabbar B. The programme taught the life-skill of sewing and was devised by two teachers of the VET subject Fashion and Textiles.

The programme gave students the occasion to use resources associated with the art of sewing, such as sewing machines, fabric shears, rotary cutters, measuring tapes, tailors' chalk, and different fabrics with different textures. However, it was also an opportunity for them to develop their creative skills, help build confidence, and instil a sense of pride in their finished creations.

They were also encouraged to solve problems, think logically, and get an insight into design, as they learnt about measurements, placement, and function.

Another learning outcome of the programme was that the students learnt more about sustainable fashion, and the impact of textile production on the environment. The fabric pieces used were offcuts donated by local shops, which rather than going to waste, were used to teach the students about upcycling and repurposing old fabric into something new.



The students also benefitted from the *Mindfulness course*, which was the third initiative sponsored by Bank of Valletta. This was delivered over the span of 100 sessions in the Klabb 3-16 centres of Qawra and St Paul's Bay. Through this course, children were introduced to the art of paying gentle, non-judgmental attention to the present moment, and to connect more deeply with our surroundings. The exercises included simple, playful practices such as short breathing exercises to help them notice their breath in a fun way. Guided imagery, mindful listening games, and quiet moments of observing sensations—like feeling their feet on the floor—also built awareness without pressure. These engaging and consistent sessions spanned over two terms, enabled the certified Mindfulness tutors to help the children develop emotional regulation, focus, and a sense of calm.



The Skolasajf Programme of Activities

The theme for Skolasajf 2024, Life is My Adventure, was created directly from the extensive feedback gathered from children during Skolasajf 2023. Hundreds of responses were collected and analysed, and from their ideas the overarching theme and its sub-themes emerged. The programme was divided into two age groups, Early Years and Primary, with 100+ activities holistically designed to foster development across multiple learning domains through play.

Each of the sub-themes inspired by the same slogan, reflected the children’s interests: Celestial Explorers grew from their fascination with space; Botanical Breeze from their love of nature; Culinary Quest from their enthusiasm for cooking; Creative Oasis from their interest in imaginative expression; Time Travel from their curiosity about the past; and Seaside Safari from their enjoyment of coastal environments.

Activities across these sub-themes were intentionally crafted to support a wide range of developmental areas. Cognitive development was encouraged through problem-solving, exploration, and inquiry-based learning. Language and communication skills were strengthened through discussions, storytelling, collaborative play, and expressive arts.

Social and emotional development was fostered through teamwork, role-play, self-expression, and opportunities to build confidence in a safe environment. Physical development was supported through regular sports sessions, movement-based activities, fine-motor tasks, hands-on exploration, and outdoor play. Creative and aesthetic development thrived through open-ended artistic experiences, music, drama, and imaginative scenarios. For Early Years children, learning through play remained at the centre of every activity. Primary-aged children experienced more advanced activities, which were still play-based but were focused on developing discussion, independence, critical thinking, and self-regulation.

Throughout Skolasajf 2024, great importance was placed on adapting every activity so that each child could participate meaningfully. This was particularly crucial for children requiring additional support, who were guided by dedicated Child Support Workers. Despite challenges such as periods of extreme heat, staff across all centres worked collaboratively to ensure that every day remained safe, engaging, and memorable. Centres enriched the experience through water games, outdoor play, outings, centre-based events, and fun charity drives, all of which provided enjoyable and inclusive opportunities for learning. The programme was further strengthened by the involvement of over ninety partners across Malta and Gozo, who offered children a wide range of sessions that broadened their perspectives, expanded their knowledge, and added an exciting dimension of discovery and enjoyment to their summer experience.

Together, these elements created a truly holistic and inclusive programme that reflected the spirit of Life is My Adventure. Built on children's voices, enriched through diverse sub-themes, strengthened by thoughtful adaptations, and supported by committed staff and partners, the programme offered every child the chance to explore, learn, and grow. Each day provided new opportunities for children to embrace their own unique adventure.

The Skolasajf Partners

During Skolasajf 2024 there was a total of 91 total external partners. 67 partners carried out the sessions at the respective Skolasajf Centres and 24 partners invited different centres to visit their centres in the form of an outing.

All this totalled to 226 outings and 1544 centre visits. 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.

The below is the list of partners who participated during Skolasajf 2024.

- *Active Agent Unit within the Department for Health*
- *Ambjent Malta*
- *Animal Welfare Directorate and the Office of the Commissioner for Animal Welfare*
- *Alka Ceramics*
- *Armed Forces of Malta*
- *ARPA*
- *Band Clubs (various)*
- *BeSmart Online*
- *Birkirkara Community Services*
- *Blue Flag Malta*
- *Blue Flag Gozo Globe Programme*
- *BOV Financial Literacy*
- *Central Bank of Malta*
- *Community Police Teams (Malta Police)*
- *Dental Hygiene Services (MDH, DPHU and GGH)*
- *Directorate for Sustainable Development*
- *Diversity Day in Birzebbugia*
- *Eastern Regional Council Region of Culture*
- *E-Bugs (through the Malta Medical Students Association)*
- *Eco Gozo Directorate/Heritage Malta*
- *E-Skills Malta Foundation*
- *Emergency Response Rescue Corps*
- *Foundation for Social Welfare Services (Gozo)*
- *GEMMA Financial Literacy*
- *Ghajn-Water Conservation Centre*

- *GreenPak Coop Society*
- *Gozo Artisan Network*
- *Health Promotion and Disease Prevention*
- *Health4EUKids*
- *Maritime Museum (Heritage Malta)*
- *Heritage Malta Gozo*
- *Inizjamed*
- *Junior Achievers Young Enterprise (JAYE)*
- *Malta Foundation for the Well Being of Society*
- *Malta Rescue Corps*
- *Malta Union of Teachers*
- *Malta Paralympic Committee*
- *MISSIO*
- *Malta Medical Student Association*
- *Mosta Community Services Youth Workshop*
- *National Blood Transfusion Centre (NBTS)*
- *National Literacy Agency (NLA)*
- *Nobel Digital Courses*
- *OASI Foundation*
- *Opening Doors Association*
- *Prayer Spaces*
- *Virtues through the Arts*
- *Rotary International Club*
- *Saving Our Blue Campaign*
- *Sedqa (Malta Branch)*
- *Service Dogs Malta Foundation*
- *Servizzi Ewropej Malta (SEM)*
- *Spazju Għall-Qalbi*
- *Transport Malta*
- *Xummiemu & Kenniesa Tal-Futur*
- *Wasteserv*





The collaboration with these partners enriches the Skolasajf programme and maximises the learning potential of students attending its services. While each programme is tailored to suit specific age groups, they all share a common aim: empowering children through the development of transversal skills. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, citizenship, digital and media literacy, and intercultural understanding. This approach reflects the National Education Strategy 2024–2030, which focuses on supporting students in acquiring basic skills, socio-emotional competencies, and civic responsibilities under the pillars of Wellbeing, Growth and Empowerment, and Equity and Inclusion.

What follows is a brief overview of the programmes delivered by some of the Skolasajf 2024 partnering entities, grouped according to the main learning domains, and how their content was designed to meet pedagogical needs.

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Inter- and Intra-personal Skills / Resilience / Self-care

- *Birkirkara Community Services – Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services*

These sessions focused on communication, building relationships, creative thinking and budgeting through interactive activities, games, and exercises.

- *Mosta Community Services – Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services*

Through the themes of Growth, Mindset and Positivity, students learned emotional regulation skills, explored the use of gratitude journals, and discussed the ripple effect of positivity. They also examined different communication styles—passive, assertive, and aggressive—and reflected on resilience, confidence, strengths, and opportunities.



- *Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society*

Sessions gave children a voice while promoting awareness of diversity, inclusion, and the core principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- *E-Bugs – Malta Medical Students Association (Public Health)*

Peer-education sessions helped children learn about microbes, hand and respiratory hygiene, and proper antimicrobial use.

- *Foundation for Social Welfare Services Gozo*

Children participated in activities on social and effective communication skills, self-love, and healthy versus unhealthy coping strategies, helping them understand their abilities, talents, and unique qualities.

- **Sedqa – Malta Branch**

Sessions addressed effective communication, self-love, coping mechanisms, and wellbeing in relation to technology.

- **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

Children were informed about the harmful effects of energy drink consumption and smoking.

- **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention – Mental Health**

Interactive discussions raised awareness on mental health in the community as well as physical wellbeing.

- **Health4EUKids – Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

Presentations focused on the importance of water consumption and hydration, along with themes of mental health such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-compassion.

Information Technology / Digital Literacy

- **BeSmartOnline! Project (FSWS, Commissioner for Children, DLAP, Malta Police Cyber Crime Unit)**

Partners promoted the online reporting platform for harmful content, www.childwebalert.gov.mt, and held interactive sessions on responsible and safe use of online technologies.

- **eSkills Malta Foundation**

Students learned the basics of game design, creating their own characters and environments while also being taught online safety practices. A video demonstrated practical applications of game development, helping to inspire interest in coding and digital creativity.

- **Digital Literacy**

The Valletta Local Council offered a sponsorship for a computer course for the Valletta Skolasajf children. The programme was designed specifically to help children master key Information and Communication Technology (ICT) concepts, equipping them with valuable skills to carry out their schoolwork and projects.



Citizenship

- **Armed Forces of Malta**

Visits to AFM premises allowed students to learn about regimental roles, explore military kits, and take part in command tasks and games.

- **Community Police Teams (Malta Police)**

Children received talks on police duties, responsible use of emergency numbers, road safety, and stranger danger.

- **Malta Rescue Corps**

Sessions highlighted the organisation's humanitarian mission to protect and preserve human life without discrimination. Children were educated and trained in responsible citizenship and empathy.

- **National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS)**

The partner promoted its mission to ensure a safe and sustainable blood supply and raised awareness about the importance of voluntary blood donation and tissue donation services.

Critical Thinking / Entrepreneurship

- **Junior Achievement Young Enterprise (JAYE)**

JAYE delivered two programmes across all Skolasajf centres in Malta and Gozo:

- **Economics for Success**

Designed for children aged 10–14, this programme helped students understand their roles as consumers, employees, taxpayers, investors, and borrowers. They applied financial literacy skills to distinguish between needs and wants and make sound financial decisions.

- **It's Our Planet**

Through hands-on experiences, students learned how their everyday actions can contribute to protecting and improving the environment.



The role of Band Clubs in the Skolasajf programme

The Maltese summers are synonyms with the festas that happen every week in the different towns and villages, and they hold a uniquely important place in Maltese musical and cultural life. That is why the participation of different band clubs as partners in the Skolasajf programme is increasing from one year to another.

Band clubs are not just musical ensembles but also act as community hubs, educational centres, and guardians of tradition. They play a vital role in Maltese music by preserving traditional marches, supporting village feast culture, and providing accessible music education to people of all ages. These are just some of the reasons why Skolasajf encourages different band clubs to be part of the Skolasajf programme, where they can also attract young students to be part of the festa culture and possibly encourage them to learn a musical instrument at their music academy. This early involvement ensures that Malta's rich band tradition continues to thrive across generations.

During Skolasajf 2024, the following band clubs took part in various ways:

- Ghaqda Kazin Banda San Filep (Haz Zebbug)
- Ghaqda Banda Zejtun 1933 (Zejtun)
- L'Isle Adam Band (Rabat)
- Peace Band Club, Naxxar
- Soċjetà Filarmonika Banda Marija Assunta (Attard)
- Soċjetà Mużikali La Stella Levantina A.D. 1894 (Attard)
- Socjeta Muzikali Santa Marija (Qrendi)
- Socjeta Muzikali Madonna tal-Gilju (Imqabba)
- St Leonard Band Club (Hal Kirkop)
- St Joseph Band Club (Hamrun)
- Victory Band Club (Naxxar)
- St Julian's Band Club (St Julian's)
- 12th of May Band Club (Haz Zebbug),





Some band club welcomed students for a visit at their premises so that the students could appreciate the historic place, see some of the traditional feast decorations, and witness the process of making and restoring the same decorations. They were also shown the music rooms and band instruments, where free tuition is available for all. Other band clubs participated by members of the clubs visiting the Skolasajf Centres to deliver information sessions and also with instruments in hand to create a festa atmosphere within the centre. In other instances, musicians from different band clubs joined forces to form a collective and entertained the children with a mini festa of their own.



Another amazing initiative which happened during Skolasajf 2024, was the project Music 4 You that saw the performance of an original mini opera titled ‘Our Planet’. This musical project was sponsored by Agenzija Zghazagh and was the fruit of a collaboration between the Foundation for Educational Services and five different band clubs. With a story line written by Romona Marie Grech, music composed by Maestro Hermann Farrugia Frantz, and artistic direction by Ronald Saliba, this project enabled young musicians from the St Leonard Band Club (Hal Kirkop), St Joseph Band Club (Hamrun), Victory Band Club (Naxxar), St Julian’s Band Club (St Julian’s) and from the 12th of May Band Club (Haz Zebbug), to perform in the five Skolasajf centres of the clubs’ own localities. Maestro Herman Farrugia Frantz visited each Skolasajf Centre two weeks prior to the concert to brief and provide instructions to the Centre Coordinators and the playworkers what is required from the children during the concert. The concert ‘Our Planet’ involved narration, singing and performing with percussion instruments, along with the musicians of the different bands.

The Inclusion Service

Throughout 2024, the Foundation for Educational Services continued to uphold its core commitment to place children at the heart of all its initiatives, including Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf.

The principles of inclusive education embody the fundamental rights of all learners, as outlined in key international frameworks such as the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The early years of education, including those within Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings, are crucial in laying the foundations for inclusive learning. During this stage, children develop holistically—personally, emotionally, and socially—while cultivating a positive attitude towards learning, nurturing curiosity, and building self-esteem.

Through its inclusive approach, the non-formal education provided by FES also through the Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf services, supports the development and enhancement of learners’ soft skills and serves as a bridge to formal education. Ensuring equitable access to high-quality education, implementing early interventions, and adopting inclusive pedagogies are key to improving the lifelong success and wellbeing of all children.

The FES’ dedication to inclusive practices was clearly reflected in the ongoing strengthening of the Inclusion Unit within the Programmes Department, with a bolstered capacity due to the ever-increasing demands for specialised support, and the growing diversity of children. This included the hiring of three part-time Regional Coordinators (Inclusion) for the Skolasajf period, and a part-time Programme Coordinator (Inclusion) to help in the Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16 services.



Another valuable addition was the employment of a third full-time Programme Coordinator (PC) in the third quarter of 2024. This addition enabled the division of the Unit’s remit to have a more focused service, with two PCs focused on the Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf services, and the third PC dedicated solely to Childcare. This allocation became necessary with the increasing number of children being enrolled in the FES childcare service, exhibiting challenging behaviours or have special needs. This division served to consolidate the building of learning environments that welcome and value every child. It also reflects the Unit’s central mission to ensure that all children—irrespective of ability, background, or circumstance—can learn, play, and grow alongside their peers in an atmosphere of respect and understanding.

All this happened within the framework of the FES Inclusion Policy, that guides educators in placing each child’s individual needs at the centre of their practice. It promotes a culture of collaboration, mutual respect, and flexibility in teaching approaches and resource use, ensuring that learning experiences are tailored to meet every child’s developmental and educational requirements. Across all FES services—Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf—educators are encouraged to seek guidance and professional assistance whenever they identify potential barriers to participation or inclusion. In these instances, the Inclusion Programme Coordinators provide targeted support to help educators implement inclusive strategies, ensuring that every child entrusted to their care receives the attention and opportunities necessary to thrive.

In fact, during 2024, the Inclusion Unit continued to work closely with staff across all FES centres, to provide guidance and practical support for children with diverse learning needs and behavioural challenges. Its efforts focused on preventing exclusion, promoting equity, and encouraging the seamless integration of all learners within mainstream services, while also ensuring adherence to both ethical and legal frameworks.

This was possible through the ongoing support visits to the centres by the Programme Coordinators (Inclusion), with ongoing support and training to staff, observations and the drawing of personalised Action plans for the children, and continuous recommendations and hands-on assistance, to ensure inclusive and nurturing environments for every child.

There were also several collaborative meetings held with medical and educational professionals, and parents, to ensure that all relevant information was gathered to provide the best possible support for each child. These meetings created valuable opportunities to share insights, discuss strategies, and align approaches between educators, medical specialists, allied health professionals, and families. Through this open exchange of information, the team was able to develop a clearer understanding of each child’s unique needs and to implement more effective, coordinated support plans. These aligned what was being done in the childcare centres, with the professionals’ recommendations, and with what was being done at the child’s home.

All this work reflects the commitment to early intervention, and reinforced the Foundation’s overarching mission, which is to contribute to an evolving society by offering holistic, child-centred services that support every aspect of children’s development and well-being.

The following statistics highlight the work carried out by the Inclusion Team, in providing support both to children attending FES services and to the staff responsible for their care. The data illustrates that assistance is extended not only to children with an official statement of needs, but also to those who may display behaviours suggesting underlying psychosocial or physical challenges.

Description	Totals
visits conducted in the centres	175
number of children provided with personalised support in K3-16	346
number of children provided with personalised support during Skolasajf 2024	1001
number of children approved personalised support in Childcare	4
number of follow-ups in Childcare	202
number of follow-ups in K3-16	517
number of follow-ups during Skolasajf 2024	1258
number of children requiring nursing service in Childcare	1
number of children requiring nursing service during Skolasajf 2024	24
number of collaborative meetings with professionals/parents/staff, including support meetings/supervision with staff and training sessions (both lecture format & hands-on)	287



Inclusion within the Childcare Setting

Inclusion within the childcare setting encompasses a wide range of tasks aimed at ensuring that every child, educator, and family is supported in an equitable and welcoming environment. During the period under review, induction and training were provided to two new full-time Programme Coordinators and one part-time Programme Coordinator, ensuring that all staff members are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote inclusive practices.

Professional Development for Programme Coordinators (Inclusion)

Programme Coordinators within the Inclusion Unit also engaged in ongoing professional development to strengthen their skills and ensure they could provide effective support across all FES services. Throughout the year, coordinators participated in a range of training sessions and conferences covering diverse aspects of inclusion and child development. These included the two FES Childcare Seminars, training on Mental Health awareness and also on Resilience Building, as well as HR training organised by FES. Coordinators also attended a Mental Health Conference and a specialised session on Mental Health in Youth, which provided valuable insights into supporting children and young people’s emotional well-being. Another conference focused on Wilderness Therapy, which provided valuable insights into alternative and therapeutic approaches to supporting children’s development and well-being.

Further training focused on practical communication strategies such as Keywords Signing, which promotes inclusive communication with children of varying abilities. Additionally, coordinators explored the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) electronic devices, which included both speech-generating systems and tablet-based applications designed to facilitate communication and engagement.

These professional learning opportunities ensured that Programme Coordinators remained equipped with up-to-date knowledge and practical tools to deliver inclusive, informed, and responsive support to children, families, and staff within FES services.



The inclusion team also supported the ongoing improvement of internal systems to enhance consistency and quality across centres. Events such as the Moving On Celebration were supported to ensure that all activities were inclusive and accessible to every child and family. In addition, specific efforts were made to strengthen parental engagement within childcare settings, recognising the essential role of families in fostering inclusion.

Regular reviews of available resources and procedures were carried out to ensure they meet inclusive standards. Evacuation plans were examined and updated to guarantee accessibility and safety for all children and staff. Similarly, inclusive procedures were reviewed and revised where necessary to reflect best practice.

Further initiatives included contributing to a collaborative project with Ekoskola aimed at embedding sustainability and inclusion within childcare. Finally, procedures were updated to maximise professional support within childcare services, ensuring that staff are continuously empowered to provide inclusive, high-quality care.





Access to the FES Services

The FES services are available to all children irrespective of their background and needs. FES is aware that its services may be beneficial to children who hail from a disadvantaged background, hence its policy to help children from such backgrounds to access the childcare, after-school and summer services.

With reference to the National Strategy on Poverty, the FES is aware that the multifaceted root of poverty goes beyond the financial situation, in particular social inclusion and social services. The FES validates that there are children who are victims of abuse and/or come from disadvantaged backgrounds including mental health difficulties, addictions, criminality and social discrimination. The entity is determined to promote social inclusion and facilitate access to its services.

The Free Childcare Scheme is available where a household has both working parents (or single in the case of sole custody) or where the parent/s is/are in education with a registered institution.

The Jobsplus Free Childcare Scheme provides parents/legal guardians of children aged up to 3 years with free childcare services, given that they are in employment or studying with a registered educational institution. The free childcare service is also extended to children whose parents are not in employment due to terminal illnesses. However, FES also considers social cases which are not eligible for free childcare in either of these eligibility criteria.

FES works closely with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services for the referral of such cases. Both FSWS and FES have an independent board to evaluate the applications to ensure that access to the childcare service is still available on an equal footing to access to the service. Requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, upon a thorough evaluation of the personal and household situation, and the conclusion that the childcare setting would be a better alternative than a domestic setting for the welfare of the child. Due diligence is also covered by a second evaluation by the FES Social Cases Board, to eliminate possible cases of abuse and also to ensure to the service can be given safely to the child. Should FES deem that the client should benefit from such a free service, it will accept the request. Should the client not be deemed eligible for free childcare, FES offers highly subsidised rates which are the most competitive in the market, thus further facilitating access the to the FES childcare services.

This aspect of free childcare by FES is not covered by the Jobsplus Free Childcare Scheme and so FES shoulders the financial cost, to help the family circumvent the disparity brought about by the socio-economic background.

Referrals from FSWS are also submitted for the waiver of fees for the Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf services. The request may also address the need to use extended hours, usually reserved solely for working parents or those parents who are in full-time education.



The FES childcare service is also made accessible to non-working parents who are not classified as social cases, with the calculation of monthly fees at a highly reduced rate. The maximum is based on the number of days per week. The monthly tariff is worked pro-rata according to the number of days used per week.

The FES also offers subsidy on the afterschool Klabb 3-16 fee (for children aged 3 years and over), depending on the household income.

Access is also facilitated for children who may be exhibiting difficult behaviours or have a medical condition that would need specialised care. In both cases, the Inclusion Team members hold meetings with medical professionals to identify the specific needs of the child and build an appropriate action plan.

Measures to address the child's needs in a childcare setting may include a reduced child to educator ratio. Whereas the usual ratio for toddlers is 1:6, children with special educational and care needs may benefit from a reduced ratio of 1:3 or even 1:1 to ensure high-quality, inclusive care, with the necessary individual attention and support. This practice of a reduced ratio is not on a national level. FES provides such support to minimise social exclusion and deprivation among children in their access to affordable, and in some cases free, childcare (under the age of 3 years).

Requests for childcare for children with a medical condition are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with consultation meetings with medical and allied health professionals, to enquire whether a safe service can be provided within the childcare centre. If the service can be given, the staff members are trained to address the child's specific needs.

The adjustment in staff to child ratio, while essential for meeting the child's developmental and emotional needs, results in a reduced number of enrolments per staff member, which impacts overall service capacity and associated income. The resulting loss in income is not covered by the Free Childcare Scheme. Consequently, FES is unable to recoup these expenses, nor does it have a dedicated budget allocated for this purpose. As a result, funds must be drawn from various other budget lines.

During the Klabb 3-16 and the Skolasajf service, children with a Statement of Needs benefit from one-to-one support.

In cases of children with medical conditions attending childcare, there were instances where FES sought it more beneficial for the best care of the child, to enlist the services of a nurse to help administer a prescribed regimen of medication and care at specified times.

The service of the administration of prescribed medicine by a nurse was also available once again Skolasajf 2024.

Accessibility for parents who have long or flexible working hours, has also been increased in the FES childcare centres, through the extended opening hours. The full list of localities where centres were operating between 6am and 6pm by the end of 2024 was Birgu, Santa Venera, San Ġwann, Birkirkara, Naxxar, Pembroke, Ғaż-Ғebbug, and Qawra



During scholastic holidays and summer holidays, the Klabb 3-16 service is also available from 7:00am till 5:30pm (for working parents).

It is to be noted that accessibility is also enabled by FES, by the support and sponsorship provided to other institutions. During 2024, FES renewed its commitment to the **Karl Vella Foundation (KVF)** and supported the recruitment of personnel to address the emotional and psychological needs of children attending the Foundation. In 2024, FES started sponsoring the wage for a full-time employee in the grade of a Child Support Worker.

This provision of staff ensures that children benefiting from KVF services receive homework support, participate in engaging non-formal educational activities, and obtain tailored assistance to meet their individual educational needs.

It is worth noting that the Karl Vella Foundation was established to provide educational and psychological support to children from families affected by serious illness or the loss of a family member. The existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FES and KVF continues to reinforce FES's corporate social responsibility and its ongoing commitment to supporting the Foundation's mission.

In addition, FES honoured also the official collaboration with the Voice for Inclusion NGO in Gozo. Through a tripartite agreement with the Ministry for Gozo and Aġenzija Sapport, FES contributed to strengthening the summer service at the Sannat Special Unit, which caters for students with disabilities in Gozo.

Peer Collaboration within the Programmes Department

In addition to the work carried out by the Programme Coordinators for Inclusion, there was also a strong collaboration with the other Programme Coordinators within the Klabb3-16/Skolasajf and Childcare services, both in the Programmes Department and in the Services Department. These Coordinators conducted support visits with the primary objective of monitoring service quality, ensuring adherence to FES policies, providing support to staff as needed, and also promoting an inclusive environment where all children feel a sense of belonging. The latter was essential to extend the reach of service in all the centres, which was not possible with just 3 staff members in the Inclusion Unit.

Prior to visiting a centre, Programme Coordinators liaised with the PC Inclusion, who could request follow-ups on specific cases. During visits, they reviewed the strategies being employed by centre personnel to support children's skill development, as well as their personal and social growth.

Each visit concluded with a report and discussion of any observed challenges concerning the children, which was shared with the PC Inclusion to ensure appropriate follow-up and support.

Research Initiatives and EU Projects

During 2024, the Programmes Department undertook research activities aimed at assessing service quality, user satisfaction, and emerging community needs to inform programme design and strategic development. In parallel, the department also worked in collaboration with the Research and School Internal Review Directorate within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, to provide support to academic researchers and students conducting studies related to FES services. This support included approvals and access to relevant information, coordinating research approvals, and ensuring that all research activities were conducted in line with organisational and ethical standards.

The latter initiative brought FES into collaboration with two Senior Lecturers (Early Years) at the Institute of Community Services (ICS) within the Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST), who requested support to conduct a research study to explore children's transitions from childcare to kindergarten. The data collection process was carried out through a qualitative study and was based on semi-structured interviews with Childcare Centre Coordinators and members of School Leadership Teams responsible for kindergarten. This collaboration enabled FES to reflect on and analyse its own practices, providing the foundation for the eventual development of an evidence-informed Transitions Policy within its childcare centres.



Building on the insights gathered through research findings, which clarified both the needs of our target audiences and the strategic gaps within our current practices, the Programmes Department worked with the CEO to extend this investigative approach beyond the local context. An Erasmus+ grant proposal was submitted to the European Union Programmes Agency, the national agency in Malta responsible for coordinating EU-funded programmes. The scope of the proposal, titled *Is the grass greener on the other side?* A cross-border exchange and cooperation exercise between Malta and Estonia, was to enable FES staff across the services and from Head Office, to undertake a structured period of job-shadowing in organisations in Estonia. In this way, the employees would be able to observe other operational models, management practices, and innovative solutions. The proposal was thus submitted with the intention of broadening the scope of inquiry, deepen the understanding of sectoral best practices, and provides practical, experience-based data that can inform the development of more effective and internationally aligned strategies within the FES.



The topics of the proposed project covered early childhood education and care, initial and continuous training for educators, and quality assurance. The hosting organisations were identified through the support provided by Dr Kenneth Vella, the Non-Resident Ambassador to Estonia and Finland.

The proposal was submitted in the first quarter of 2024, and FES was informed that the proposal had been accepted for Erasmus+ funding in the fourth quarter of 2024. This set the wheels in motion to contact the selected hosting organisations to set the logistics involved. The timeline proposed that the mobility was to take place in the end of the first quarter of 2026



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Digital Transformation and System Enhancements

Throughout 2024, the Programmes Department continued to strengthen its commitment to innovation and service, through the adoption of a series of digital measures enhance accessibility, streamline operations, and improve overall efficiency.

These measures included the utilisation of Google Drive as a secure cloud storage system for the digitisation and retention of activity plans submitted by staff members working within Klabb 3–16 and Skolasajf centres. This process was introduced for both data retention and quality assurance purposes, ensuring that activity plans met required standards and were effectively implemented in practice. The system also facilitated timely submission of plans and provided a clear structure for review and feedback.

To promote accountability and security, each centre was assigned two drives: a Google Drive created by the Programmes Department and a Google Staff Drive accessible to educators. Staff uploaded their activity plans to the staff drive, which were then reviewed by the Centre Coordinator before being transferred to the departmental drive. This system ensured a transparent record of submissions, including upload dates and times, and streamlined communication between educators and management.

Programme Coordinators carrying out support visits during the scholastic year, and Regional Coordinators conducting inspection visits during Skolasajf 2024, also made use of the same platform to upload their reports, thereby centralising documentation, improving access to records between departments, and improving consistency in record-keeping across all centres.

Corporate Social Responsibility

In 2024, the Programmes Department was once again responsible for organising, promoting, and managing events intended to support local charitable organisations. These efforts included two major fundraising initiatives which saw staff at Head Office, as well as those working in Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf centres, coming together in creative ways to run philanthropic activities and raise funds for organisations registered with the Office of the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations.

The Skolasajf initiatives alone, resulted in 13 organisations receiving substantial monetary support.

Beneficiary	Amount Collected (€)
MCCF	13,000
AAA	270
Puttinu	1072.4
Embrace Diversity	975
Inspire	581.16
Smiling with Jerome	375.94
RMJ	420.4
Arka	250
Dar Nazzaret	175
Service Dogs Malta	344
MS Malta	161.5
MTF	97
Dar Tal-Providenza	410
Total	18,132.40

The fund-raising events to collect funds for the national charity The Malta Community Chest Fund remained the strongest drive, with the participation of all the centres and offices. This show of remarkable solidarity resulted in the collection of €13,000, which were presented by members of the FES Management Team, to Her Excellency the President of Malta, Dr Miriam Spiteri Debono.



The FES Chairperson Ms Pamela Schembri and the FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin presented the cheque, highlighting that this impressive total resulted from several fundraising activities designed not only to encourage creativity among the children but also to instill values of altruism and gratitude for the blessings in their lives.

H.E. Dr Miriam Spiteri Debono thanked all those involved for their ongoing support of the MCCF through the Skolasajf initiatives. She highlighted the exceptional work of the MCCF in helping those who depend on its services and emphasized that such essential fundraising efforts are crucial to making these services possible.

Another successful show of solidarity during 2024 was towards the sterling work carried out by Hospice Malta. Once again, the staff and service users at FES showed their support through the Pink October and Movember campaigns, resulting in a generous contribution to support Hospice Malta’s services. FES CEO Mr Michael Bondin presented €1,100.00 to Ms Alexia Demicoli, Chief Relations Officer at Hospice Malta, during a Christmas gathering for staff from Head Office as well as the Childcare and Klabb 3-16 Centres.

Ms Demicoli expressed her gratitude for everyone’s generosity and explained how the funds will help Hospice Malta extend its palliative care services to more people, to keep making a difference in the lives of many more patients and their families at a most vulnerable time. The money was raised through various initiatives held in October and November, which not only helped collect funds but also promoted awareness about the importance of a healthier lifestyle and self-care.

Media Activities

While the Programmes Department was no longer directly responsible for marketing matters related to FES during 2024, it still oversaw a number of marketing initiatives that were directly related to Skolasajf. These included the coordination of a number of media appearances on radio and TV, press conferences that were either totally organised by the Programmes Department on behalf of FES or worked in conjunction with external partners to make them happen, and the daily updating of the FES Facebook page during Skolasajf.

The first initiative was the launch of the **Skolasajf Logo Competition** for the theme ‘Life is my Adventure’, which garnered hundreds of responses. The first three winners were eventually the guests of honour in second initiative which consisted of a press conference held at the San Miguel Resource Centre in Pembroke in March 2024. The press conference was addressed by the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Clifton Grima, who announced the opening of the Skolasajf applications and also awarded prizes to the winners of the competition.



Photo DOI - Alan Saliba



Photo DOI - Alan Saliba



Photo DOI - Alan Saliba

Minister Grima stated that Skolasajf is an excellent service which, in addition to supporting the education system, also responds to the realities and needs of modern life. He noted that Skolasajf provides children with alternative learning experiences from a young age, helping to lay the foundations for a brighter future.

This event was followed by another press conference in July 2024, to celebrate the actual start of Skolasajf 2024. The event was held at the Sliema Skolasajf centre and saw Minister Clifton Grima being welcomed by students in the different areas of the school, who were already busy delving into the programme of activities which had been prepared for them.



August saw the Mosta Skolasajf Centre hosting the launch of the **Sustainable Development Strategy for Malta**, geared towards children. The event included five stations of engaging activities as part of the commitment of the Directorate for Sustainable Development to make sustainability ideas approachable and entertaining for younger students. The strategy was made available in Maltese and English, to enable children to learn about change and sustainability, and also to inspire them to pass the message to their family and friends.

Among the guests on the day were the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Clifton Grima, the Minister for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration of the Grand Harbour Miriam Dalli, and Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights Michael Falzon. They toured the activities and also participated with the children, as they discussed the strategy during the various workshops.



Another public initiative was the one organised with **Transport Malta** at Skolasajf Zejtun, where it conducted training sessions for children to raise awareness about different modes of transport and promote road safety among young students.



Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Public Works, Chris Bonett, visited the centre to observe the sessions and emphasised the responsibility to educate future generations on the use of various forms of transport and to encourage walking, particularly for short journeys. The training offered by Transport Malta included interactive workshops that also focused on road safety, such as how to cross the road, the importance of wearing helmets when riding a bicycle, and the respect for traffic signals.



For the twelfth consecutive year, **Europe Direct Valletta and Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta (SEM)**, in collaboration with FES, delivered interactive EU educational sessions at Skolasajf for around 350 children aged 8–12 across Malta and Gozo. During one of the 2024 EU-themed activities, the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Dr Clifton Grima met the children from the Hal Kirkop Skolasajf Centre, where they learned about different countries through an interactive game. The sessions introduced students to the EU's principles, Member States, and the motto "United in Diversity" through presentations, discussions, and an engaging game using a mini robotic ball to explore different countries' languages, traditions, and landmarks.



Another initiative was organised at the Marsascala St Anne centre, in a bid to help the national cleanliness mascot Xummiemu to promote an educational campaign focused on promoting public cleanliness. As the central character of the campaign, Xummiemu toured different centres and helped children understand the importance of keeping outdoor spaces clean.



During the activities, children learned about recycling and about the importance of avoiding illegal waste disposal. They are also encouraged to become Xummiemu Rangers, committing to support Xummiemu's mission by speaking up or acting when they witness illegal dumping.

Minister for Education Clifton Grima and Parliamentary Secretary for Public Cleanliness Glen Bedingfield visited the Skolasajf centre during one of these sessions. Minister Grima praised the initiative for teaching young people to appreciate and safeguard the environment, while Parliamentary Secretary Bedingfield stressed the importance of building a culture of cleanliness, noting that maintaining the country's environment is a shared responsibility.

The financial literacy programme **GEMMA** concluded with a media event celebrating two groups of Skolasajf children, aged 7 to 11, who had participated in the GEMMA competitions. The children were recognised for both their creativity and teamwork. One group decorated a tree with words related to financial literacy, while the other designed a logo for the 2024 GEMMA competition.

Minister for Social Policy and Children’s Rights, Michael Falzon, commended the winning teams and reiterated GEMMA’s commitment to reaching children and other age groups, helping them develop a practical understanding of responsible money management through lessons delivered by teachers and finance professionals.

The FES Chairperson Ms Pamela Schembir joined Minister Falzon in congratulating the children for their creativity, noting how they transformed the abstract concepts of financial literacy into meaningful images, demonstrating both reflection and understanding.



Although it was impossible to feature the full range of activities taking place across all centres, the Programmes Department made every effort to publish as many updates as possible, highlighting the excellent work carried out by Skolasajf staff. In this regard, Facebook remained a key PR platform for the Foundation. With informative posts published up to three times a day, the content not only showcased the diverse activities happening in the centres but also kept parents well informed about their children’s experiences.

The steady flow of updates further enhanced FES’s visibility, helping to establish it as an accessible and easily recognisable brand. This consistent online presence also played a vital role in humanising the Foundation, making it more relatable and reinforcing public trust.



Foundation for Educational Services

Intro

FES is an entity within MEYR that provides a range of innovative educational services.

Page · Education

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Foundation for Educational Services

12 September · 🌐

🌱🌟 Hands-On Environmental Awareness Outing 🌱🌟

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Xrobb l-Għagin Nature Park Outing



THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT





Service Overview - 2024

The Human Resources Department plays a pivotal role in advancing the Foundation’s mission to deliver high-quality educational services across Malta. In 2024, our focus remained on cultivating a motivated, skilled, and resilient workforce through strategic recruitment, professional growth, and a strong culture of care and inclusion. We recognise that our people are at the heart of our success, and we remain dedicated to creating an environment where every employee can thrive and contribute meaningfully to our shared goals.

Throughout the year, we aligned our HR strategies with the Foundation’s wider objectives to ensure our talent is well prepared to meet the evolving needs of the education sector. Key initiatives included targeted training programmes to strengthen staff competencies, refined recruitment processes to attract a diverse pool of professionals, and renewed efforts to enhance employee well-being and engagement.

By continuing to invest in our people, the HR Department underpins the Foundation’s vision of excellence in education. This section outlines our 2024 achievements, ongoing challenges, and future priorities aimed at empowering our workforce and supporting both personal and professional growth.

Supporting Service Provision

The HR Department ensures that all Foundation services—childcare centres, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf—are adequately and effectively staffed. Beyond recruitment, the team monitors staffing levels throughout the year, responding promptly to emerging needs. HR also supports coordinators in managing employee performance and conducts regular training needs analyses to plan and implement relevant development initiatives.

Skolasajf 2024

As in previous years, the HR Department was central to the planning and execution of Skolasajf, with preparations beginning as early as November of the preceding year. Our responsibilities included preparing all required documentation and permits, managing recruitment and selection, issuing and reviewing contracts, and registering employees with Jobsplus.

In 2024, approximately 3,000 applications were processed for positions across 55 Skolasajf centres in Malta and Gozo, including both mainstream and resource centres. With 12,000 registrations requiring a workforce of about 2,000 employees, Skolasajf recruitment continues to be one of our largest and most complex annual undertakings.



Staff Training

A series of induction meetings were held with regional and centre coordinators, as well as playworkers with additional responsibilities. Moreover, the department worked closely with the Institute for Education, which delivered specialised training for prospective playworkers and child support workers. While most Skolasajf employees were engaged on fixed-term contracts, several part-time staff on indefinite contracts also took on new roles, enriching their skills and experience within the organisation.

Throughout the programme, close collaboration between HR, centre coordinators, and regional coordinators ensured that staffing matters were efficiently resolved.

Childcare Services

The HR Department plays an essential role in maintaining smooth operations across the Foundation's 12 childcare centres. Key areas of focus include:

- Recruitment and Staffing:** Ongoing interviews for Centre Coordinators and Child Care Educators ensure that every centre is staffed with qualified professionals. HR also supported the introduction of the new Coordinator's Assistant role and contributed to plans for two new centres. Additionally, the department coordinated staffing for extended operating hours at six centres. Moreover the HR Department was in liaison with other departments in preparation of the new child care centre in Gozo.
- Performance Management and Support:** HR works closely with centre coordinators to evaluate employee performance, hold regular feedback meetings, and recognise achievements. We promote well-being and retention through proactive engagement and open communication.
- Regulatory Compliance:** The department ensures all centres adhere to DQSE and other regulatory standards. Training in paediatrics, food handling, and fire safety was organised to keep staff certifications current and centres compliant.



Klabb 3-16

The HR Department also supports the efficient operation of over 30 Klabb 3-16 centres across Malta and Gozo. Our work includes:

- **Recruitment and Onboarding:** Continuous recruitment for Centre Coordinators, Playworkers, Child Support Workers, and Tutors ensures adequate staffing throughout the year. Open applications help address shortages and respond to increased enrolment.
- **Workforce Planning:** Strategic workforce management guarantees each centre is properly staffed, with additional seasonal support provided at head office during peak periods.
- **Performance Management:** All new recruits receive a comprehensive employee handbook upon contract signing, ensuring clear understanding of organisational policies. Regular communication with regional coordinators supports smooth operations and swift resolution of challenges.
- **Quality Assurance:** HR reinforces best practices across centres, helping maintain consistent standards and a positive working environment.

Training and Development

In 2024, the HR Department placed strong emphasis on continuous professional development. Training and learning initiatives included:

- Induction sessions for new employees across Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf services.
- Leadership and team-building workshops for coordinators and senior staff.
- Bespoke training in performance management and effective communication.
- Collaborative programmes with the Institute for Education and other partners to align with evolving educational standards.

These initiatives enhanced staff capabilities, boosted engagement and retention, and contributed to a more confident, adaptable workforce ready to meet the Foundation's growing demands.

Looking Ahead

As we move into 2025, the HR Department remains focused on strengthening our people-first culture. Our priorities include expanding professional development opportunities, implementing digital HR systems for greater efficiency, and continuing to attract, develop, and retain top talent to support the Foundation's mission of educational excellence.



The Marketing and Communications Unit

Since 2024, the HR Department has encompassed the Marketing function as part of its remit.

It continued to play a vital role in the success of the Foundation, standing alongside the quality of services provided. Throughout the year, the Marketing Unit, focused on building awareness and creating value around the Foundation's offerings. Particular emphasis was placed on client engagement, fostering a sense of community, and attracting both service users and prospective employees. The unit undertook a broad range of activities, including social media content creation, media coordination, event scheduling, recruitment campaigns, and visual design.

Given the ongoing staffing needs, much of the unit's effort was directed towards recruitment. However, advertising represented just one aspect of its broader function. The unit played a key role in strengthening the Foundation's positioning, managing communication with the public, and enhancing client understanding through consistent and effective messaging.

Key Campaigns and Initiatives

Throughout the past year, various campaigns and outreach efforts were implemented to enhance visibility and engagement with the community.

Fresher's Week at MCAST

The Marketing Unit actively participated in Freshers' Week at the MCAST campuses in Paola, Mosta, and Gozo. These events provided valuable engagement opportunities with post-secondary students. Staff members were present to provide detailed information on the various roles offered within services such as Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf, addressing questions related to student recruitment.

In addition to part-time and full-time roles, the discussions also highlighted opportunities for apprenticeships and internships-key components of many MCAST programmes. This presence helped to strengthen awareness of the Foundation's role as an accessible and supportive employer for students seeking practical experience and entry into the workforce.



Open Day at Djamant Childcare Centre - Gozo

An Open Day was held at the newly opened Djamant Childcare Centre in Gozo, serving as a key initiative to introduce the facility to the local community. The event was specifically designed to foster public engagement and to allow families, particularly prospective parents, the opportunity to visit the premises, explore the environment, and better understand the services provided by the Foundation.

To make the experience both informative and enjoyable, a variety of interactive activities were organised throughout the day. These were carefully selected to appeal to both children and adults, creating a welcoming and engaging atmosphere for all attendees. One of the main highlights of the event was the use of tuft trays-a hands-on educational tool commonly used in early years learning settings. These were set up with thematic, sensory-rich activities that not only captivated the interest of the children but also served as practical demonstrations of the types of learning experiences offered at the centre. This gave parents a clearer understanding of how play based learning is implemented in a structured and meaningful way.

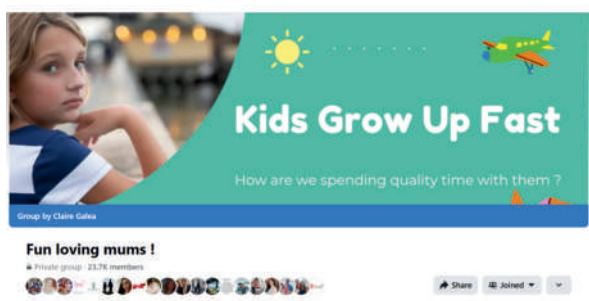


Staff members played a crucial role during the event, actively engaging with parents and visitors by providing guided tours of the facility, answering questions, and offering detailed explanations of the daily routine, educational approach, and safety measures in place. Their presence ensured that all attendees left the event with a deeper appreciation for the services and values upheld by the Foundation.

The Open Day also helped to strengthen relationships within the community, increase visibility of the Foundation's work in Gozo, and ultimately encourage enrolment by building trust and familiarity with the new centre and its team.

Collaboration with Fun Loving Mums

A strategic collaboration was established with the Facebook community group Fun Loving Mums Malta, which consists of over 23,000 members—primarily made up of parents, guardians, and caregivers. This group provided a highly relevant and targeted platform through which to engage with a specific segment of the population most likely to benefit from the Foundation's services.



Through this collaboration, it was possible to share timely information about the Foundation's childcare services, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf initiatives, as well as recruitment opportunities. Content shared included key application dates, service eligibility, benefits of the programmes, and direct links for further information or to submit applications. By engaging with this online community, the Foundation was able to interact with users in real time, respond to comments or questions, and benefit from organic peer-to-peer engagement and word-of-mouth sharing within the group.

This approach allowed for a more personalised method of outreach, fostering trust and familiarity with the audience. Additionally, because the group is composed of users who are already actively seeking resources and support related to parenting and childcare, the collaboration allowed messages to be delivered in a space where users were already engaged and receptive.

Media Campaigns on Television and Radio

Traditional media channels remained instrumental in reaching households across Malta and Gozo, playing a key role in the Foundation's wider promotional strategy. Promotional content and interviews were strategically featured across all major national television networks, including TVM, ONE, Net, and F Living. These media appearances ranged from participation in popular morning and afternoon talk shows to pre-recorded segments, where the entity's representatives provided insight into the services offered, upcoming initiatives, and recruitment opportunities.

In addition to these informative segments, targeted television advertisements were scheduled to air during high-viewership time slots-most notably right before the evening news broadcasts. This specific timing was selected to ensure maximum exposure, capitalising on one of the most watched and high-traffic periods on local television.

Complementing the television coverage, a series of radio advertising campaigns were launched across various leading stations, including Radju Malta, Magic, ONE Radio, and Net FM. These radio spots were tailored to appeal to a wide audience, including parents, prospective employees, and members of the general public. By leveraging a variety of channels and formats, the campaigns achieved broad demographic coverage, consistent message dissemination, and reinforced brand visibility.

Collectively, the combined use of television and radio helped strengthen the Foundation's presence in the public sphere, promote its services effectively, and support ongoing recruitment efforts. This integrated approach to traditional media allowed for meaningful engagement with the community while maintaining visibility across Malta and Gozo.

Social Media

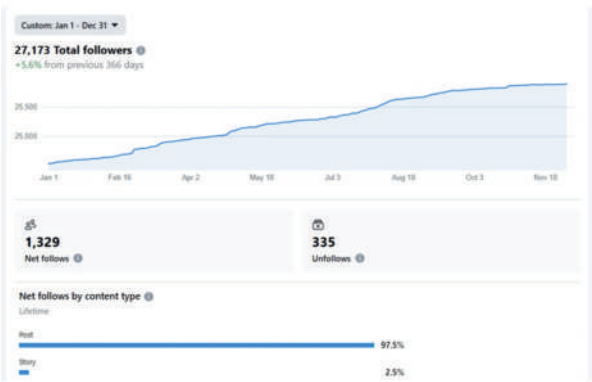
Social media remained a key pillar in the Foundation's communication strategy, with Facebook continuing to serve as the primary platform for public engagement. Prompt responses to queries received via Messenger contributed to an improved user experience and fostered stronger relationships with the public. Consistent content uploads, provided valuable information on core services such as Childcare, Klabb 3-16, Skolasajf, and staff development initiatives. These efforts helped to maintain a trustworthy presence while increasing visibility and relatability within the community.



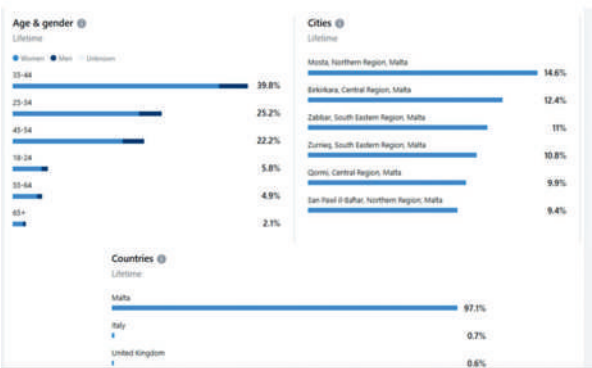
In addition to Facebook, significant attention was given to expanding reach through Instagram and TikTok, with the aim of building a younger, engaged online community. As part of this initiative, a campaign was launched during Freshers' Week, whereby individuals were encouraged to follow the Foundation's social media platforms in exchange for merchandise giveaways. This not only boosted follower engagement but also contributed to greater awareness of the Foundation's work and values among the student demographic.

Facebook Performance and Audience Insights (1st January-31 st December 2024)

Throughout the calendar year of 2024, Facebook continued to serve as the primary social media platform used by the Foundation to communicate key updates, engage with the public, and promote services and initiatives. Between 1st January and 31st December 2024, the Foundation's official Facebook page recorded a **growth of 1,329 new followers**, bringing the total follower count to **27,173** by year-end.



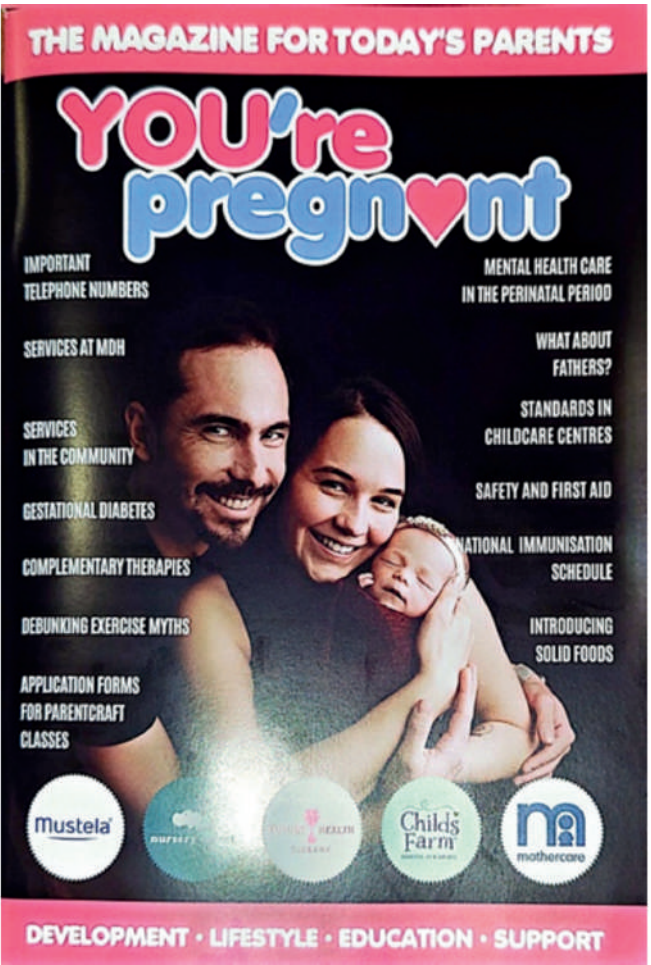
This growth reflects the effectiveness of the Foundation's ongoing digital strategy, which prioritised consistency, responsiveness, and relevance in the content shared. Posts were carefully curated to provide value to users-ranging from information about childcare services, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf, to staff development initiatives and recruitment opportunities. The platform was also used to answer public queries in real time through Messenger, offering a direct and efficient customer service channel.



Demographic data from the platform highlighted that the majority of followers were women between the ages of 35 and 44, a key target audience for services related to parenting, early childhood education, and after-school care. Understanding this demographic helped shape the tone and scheduling of posts, making the content more engaging and relatable to the audience.

Print Media

Visibility in the 'You're Pregnant' magazine played a strategic role in reaching a targeted audience of expecting and new parents, aligning with the Foundation's objective to raise awareness about the childcare services it offers. The inclusion of a dedicated, informative page in the publication allowed the Foundation to communicate directly with one of its most relevant demographic groups at a critical time in their parenting journey.



The feature provided essential information about the Foundation's network of childcare centres, including the locations of the facilities, their respective opening hours, and the types of services available. This ensured that readers had immediate access to practical details that could help them make informed decisions about early childhood care. In addition, the page guided parents on where to seek further information about the services, directing them to the Foundation's official platforms for more detailed guidance, application procedures, and eligibility requirements.



Given the wide circulation and specialised focus of 'You're Pregnant', this initiative allowed the Foundation to build trust with its audience by presenting itself as a reliable and professional service provider within the childcare sector. Furthermore, it supported long-term outreach efforts by strengthening the Foundation's brand visibility in a family-focused publication, ultimately contributing to increased engagement and potential service uptake.

Digital Media via Gwida.mt

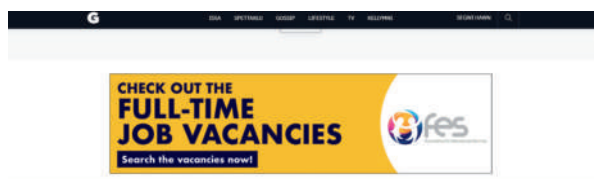
A targeted collaboration was established with Gwida, a popular Maltese digital media platform, to enhance the visibility and reach of the Foundation's services and initiatives. This collaboration was strategically designed to leverage Gwida's strong presence both on its website and across its extensive social media platforms, which collectively engage a following of over 80,000 users.



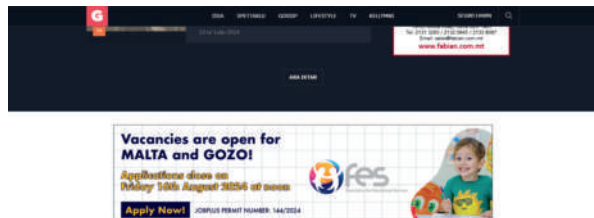
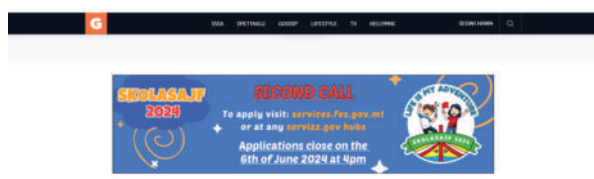
As part of this partnership, banner placements were strategically positioned across the portal's article pages, ensuring continuous visibility of the Foundation's brand and offerings to users browsing a variety of content. These banners served as a direct channel to raise awareness about the Foundation's childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf services, as well as recruitment opportunities.



In addition to banner placements, sponsored articles were developed and published on Gwida's website and shared through its social media channels. These articles featured informative content, highlighting key aspects of the services provided by the Foundation, including the benefits they offer to families and prospective employees. Various articles also focused on employment prospects, providing insight into available roles and the application procedures. By combining service information with recruitment messaging, the collaboration helped to attract both service users and potential applicants.



Being a locally based and Maltese-language platform, Gwida was especially effective in delivering messages to the local population in a culturally familiar and accessible format. The platform's strong local identity and widespread readership made it an ideal partner for communicating with diverse demographic groups across Malta and Gozo. This collaboration significantly contributed to the Foundation's goal of increasing community awareness, improving engagement, and positioning itself as a key provider of family and educational services within the national context.



Tools Used for Promoting Vacancies

Recruitment remains a crucial operational pillar for the Foundation, ensuring continuity and quality in the services provided. While Head Office staff are essential for the daily administration and strategic execution of services, the successful implementation of programmes such as Skolasajf and Klabb 3-16 relies heavily on seasonal and part-time staff. Timely and effective recruitment is therefore fundamental to delivering a seamless and high-quality service experience.

To reach the appropriate candidates for different roles, multiple specialised platforms were utilised throughout the year. Finance-related vacancies were promoted via Accountants.com.mt, a niche platform targeted specifically at professionals in the accounting and financial services sector.

For other core roles within Head Office, Skolasajf, Klabb 3-16, and Childcare services, the Foundation made use of wider-reaching recruitment platforms such as Alfred Jobs and Job Hound. These platforms offered high visibility among jobseekers and were effective in attracting a diverse range of applicants suited for both full-time and part-time positions across various departments.

This multi-platform recruitment approach ensured that vacancies were promoted strategically based on the role and audience, contributing to the continued success of the Foundation's operational and programme delivery goals.

Conclusion

The upcoming year will focus on building upon previous achievements. Plans include hosting an Open Day for the opening of the next FES childcare centre in Msida, with the aim of increasing community engagement and service awareness.

Participation in additional fairs and outreach events is also scheduled, to further promote the range of services offered by FES. On the digital front, efforts will be directed toward expanding social media reach, supporting wider visibility and public engagement.

These initiatives are designed to strengthen service impact, improve accessibility, and ensure continued alignment with the evolving needs of children, families, and the wider community.

THE OPERATIONS & SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT



Our Journey Throughout 2024

The Operations and Support Services Unit within the Foundation for Educational Services aims to ensure the smooth, efficient, and effective delivery of services, including Childcare, Klabb 3-16, and Skolasajf. The unit oversees day-to-day operations, provides administrative and logistical support, and ensures that all service users, including parents, children, and staff, are supported. These efforts uphold a high standard of service provision across all centres.

Department Structure

The Operations and Support Services Department became a separate unit with its own Head of department to provide overall strategic direction, in December 2024. Reporting directly to the Head is the Manager – Operational and Support Services, responsible for the coordination and supervision of the department's daily functions.

Supporting the Manager is a team composed of:

- Four Programme Coordinators, who provide operational support to centre coordinators and service users.
- Two Coordinators, responsible for Transport and CRM, administration of the portal, Scheme 9 data collection, student placements within centres as well as supporting service users.
- A Programme Secretary, who ensures the smooth flow of administrative support across the department and with the service users.



Changes in Human Capacity

At the end of 2024, a dedicated Headship position was established for the Services Department. Previously, the headship was shared between two departments; however, with the introduction of a Head of Operations and Support Services focused solely on this area, the department is now better positioned to enhance quality of service delivery.

In preparation for Skolasajf, staffing was strengthened through the recruitment of additional staff on definite contracts. This included the appointment of a Programme Coordinator responsible for centres operating during core hours, supported by Regional Coordinators. These Regional Coordinators report directly to the Programme Coordinator and provide essential support by conducting multiple daily visits throughout Skolasajf to ensure smooth centre operations.

During the summer months, the Services Department also supports young people by offering students still in education the opportunity to gain experience through administrative work placements. This approach assists the department in managing seasonal workloads while providing students with valuable exposure to practical work environments.

Services Department Roles and Responsibilities

The Services Department plays a central role in overseeing daily operations, ensuring that services are delivered efficiently and consistently. Its responsibilities extend beyond routine management to include collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, such as parents, centre coordinators, Heads of Schools, Head of College Networks, and external service providers such as NSSS, servizz.gov & MEYR.

Programme Coordinators support centre coordinators by providing immediate guidance and operational assistance. The department also manages the parent application portal, assisting families with queries while maintaining constant communication with the portal's service provider to ensure a smooth and reliable process.



Transport is another key area of responsibility. The department coordinates transport for Klabb 3-16, Resource Centres, and Skolasajf Services, in collaboration with the Transport section of MYER. One of the Coordinators manages the CRM system, which incorporates queries received from Servizz.gov and ensures timely responses. The department is also entrusted with specific Scheme 9 tasks and the management of student placements within the centres.

The department supports quality assurance and planning through systematic collection and analysis of data, including registrations, attendance records, complaints, and feedback. This information helps to strengthen services, identify areas for improvement, and inform the planning of future initiatives.

In addition, the department actively engages in feedback collection from parents, issues expressions of interest to assess demand for new centres, provides training for new staff and entities, and ensures continuous professional development. In 2024, all team members completed advanced Excel training to enhance data management and analysis capabilities. The team also participated in SWOT analyses and contributed to establishing goals for the upcoming year, ensuring continuous improvement and strategic alignment.

Klabb 3–16 Service

During 2024, applications for Klabb 3–16 were submitted online through the FES portal, consistent with previous years. FES continued its collaboration with Servizz.gov, which supported prospective service users experiencing difficulties with the application or payment process. Servizz.gov also provided assistance by responding to calls and emails received through the national helpline 153.

By the end of June 2024, a total of 37 centres were operating in Malta and one in Victoria, Gozo.

At the beginning of September 2023, 5,023 children were registered for the service. By the end of June 2024, the number of registered applications had increased significantly to 7,015.

In September 2024, three new centres were opened in Għaxaq, Marsa, and Msida in response to parental demand and following assessments of community needs through expressions of interest.



Operational improvements were also implemented, including:

- The adjustment of staggered dismissal times from every hour to every half hour;
- The introduction of a revised attendance fee structure, changing from €0.80 per hour to €0.20 per 15 minutes, offering greater flexibility for parents;
- The enhancement of the pick-up card system introduced during Skolasajf 2024, with the issue of more durable and visually distinctive cards;
- The allocation of an additional staff member per centre to cover absences due to sick leave (SL) or vacation leave (VL).

Given the sustained high demand for the service, external (contracted) employees were also engaged to ensure that the service could be offered to as many families as possible.

Klabb 3–16 continues to play a vital role in supporting working parents, while providing children with a safe, structured, and engaging after-school environment across Malta and Gozo.

Klabb 3-16 during holidays

The Klabb 3-16 service is offered also during the scholastic holidays, to students 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 2024. During 2024 this service was also offered in Resource Centres during the scholastic year holidays.

Period	Number of Service users
Carnival Holidays	1766
Easter Holidays	2156
31st May 2024	1359
Bridge Holidays (July)	2214
Bridge Holidays (September)	2672
Mid-term Holidays	2077
Christmas Holidays	1421

RESOURCE CENTRES					
Period	Helen Keller	Wardija	Guardian Angel	San Miguel	Hand in Hand
Carnival Holidays	7	3	4	1	0
Easter Holidays	6	2	5	2	1
31st May 2024	4	1	3	0	0
Bridge Holidays (July)	10	4	4	2	6
Bridge Holidays (September)	10	6	6	4	7
Mid-term Holidays	5	4	5	1	0
Christmas Holidays	5	2	6	1	0

The opening of Resource Centres throughout scholastic holidays required more liaison with the head of school to ensure continuity in the provision of the service. It also required collaboration with the HR Department to ensure provision of staff. There was also constant liaison with the transport section within MYER to ensure all students could access the service as required.

Skolasajf 2024

Skolasajf is an annual national programme designed to cater for learners during the summer holidays. It extends the services provided by Klabb 3–16, offering service users an educational and engaging experience throughout the summer months. The programme is delivered in schools across Malta and Gozo to meet the diverse needs of families.

In 2024, Skolasajf was offered in 51 primary schools, five Resource Centres, and Hand-in-Hand. All centres provided the core programme of activities between 8:30am and 12:30pm. Additionally, 38 centres offered extended hours—from 7:00am to 8:30am and from 12:30pm to 5:30pm—to support the needs of working parents.

For the first time, service users were issued pick-up cards to facilitate the safe and efficient collection of children from schools. This system proved effective in strengthening security and improving the overall dismissal process.

In cases where a limited number of applications were received, certain centres in both Malta and Gozo were amalgamated with other centres. Transport was provided to ensure that students from closed centres could attend the designated host centres without disruption. The centres amalgamated were as follows:

Malta	
Closed Centre	Hosting Centre
Senglea & Cospicua	Vittoriosa
Kalkara	Xgħajra
Pieta	Marsa
Mtarfa & Baħrija	Rabat
Safi	Kirkop
Msida	St. Venera

Gozo	
Closed centre	Hosting Centre
Xewkija	Victoria Middle School
Għarb & Żebbuġ	San Lawrenz
Kerċem	Victoria Middle School
Xagħra	Nadur
Għajnsielem	Qala

Number of applicants for Skolasajf

Name of centre	Number of applicants
Attard	387
Birkirkara	462
Birżebbuġia	202
Bahrija	3
Cospicua	4
Dingli	114
Fgura	432
Floriana	79
Għargħur	146
Għaxaq	138
Gudja	87
Gżira	173
Hamrun GP	289
Kalkara	25
Kirkop	61
Lija/Balzan/Iklin	126
Luqa	243
Marsa	87
Marsascala St Joachim	402
Marsascala St Anne	218
Marsaxlokk	104
Mellieħa	337
Mġarr	314
Mosta	339
Mosta Annex (KG)	161
Mqabba	162

Msida	28
Mtarfa	25
Naxxar	305
Paola	234
Pembroke	360
Pieta	14
Qormi SB	332
Qormi SG	77
Qrendi	78
Rabat	304
Safi	30
San Giljan	147
San Gwann	337
Senglea	9
Siggiewi	335
Sliema	316
St. Paul's Bay	247
St. Venera	318
Tarxien	215
Valletta	48
Vittoriosa	48
Xghajra	48
Zabbar A	276
Zabbar B	181
Zebbug - Malta	365
Zejtun	351
Zurrieq	428
Total no. of students in Malta	11137

Number of Applicants in Resource Centres

Name of the centre	Number of Applicants
Guardian Angel RC Hamrun	57
Helen Keller RC Qrendi	21
San Miguel RC Pembroke	24
Sannat Special Unit - Gozo	67
Wardija Resource Centre	55
Total no. of students in Resource Centres	224
Hand-in-Hand	22

Number of Applicants in GOZO

Name of centre	Number of applicants
Victoria	217
Xaghra	81
Għajnsielem	42
Għarb	17
Kerċem	12
Nadur	127
Qala	84
San Lawrenz	30
Sannat	87
Xewkija	26
Żebbuġ	4
Total no. of students in Gozo	727

Number of applicants for service in centres offering after hours

Name of the centre	Extra hours AM	Extra hours PM
Attard	150	211
Birkirkara	155	258
Birzebbuga	82	99
Fgura	169	226
Floriana	35	42
Gharghur	38	66
Ghaxaq	40	42
Gzira	54	115
Hamrun GP	41	155
Luqa	91	117
Marsascala St. Anne	83	107
Marsascala St. Joachim	128	206
Marsaxlokk	27	36
Mellieha	92	167
Mgarr	106	134
Mosta	130	173
Mosta Annex	50	79
Mqabba	66	73
Naxxar	118	194
Paola	88	111
Pembroke	101	203
Qawra	193	368
Qormi SB	115	167
Rabat A	125	144

San Giljan	40	83
San Gwann	133	195
Siggiewi	111	169
Sliema	52	170
St. Paul's Bay	576	866
St. Venera	128	178
Tarxien	76	90
Victoria Gozo	66	99
Vittoriosa	9	8
Zabbar A	132	139
Zabbar B	60	48
Zebbug - Malta	130	172
Zejtun	122	155
Zurrieq	34	168

Skolasajf 2024 once again confirmed its role as a key support for families, balancing the educational, social, and care needs of children with the work commitments of parents.

Childcare

As part of its operations, FES manages 13 childcare centres across Malta and 1 in Gozo. These centres operate on the principle of providing high-quality care for children up to three years of age, with the aim of supporting and strengthening the family unit. This approach is guided by the belief that the family remains the best environment for a child’s personal growth and development.

The majority of families making use of our services are working parents, supported through the Free Childcare Scheme. At the same time, our centres also welcome children of non-working parents, many of whom value the service for its socialisation benefits.

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The childcare centres are overseen by a Programme Coordinator within the Services Department, who ensures ongoing guidance and support in their daily operations. Standard opening hours are Monday to Friday, from 07:30 to 16:00, excluding public holidays and shutdown periods. To further meet the needs of families, eight centres also offer extended hours from 06:00 to 18:00. These are: Kuluri (Birgu), ix-Xemx (Qawra), Pizzi Pizzi Kanna (Naxxar), il-Ferrovija (Birkirkara), Żmeraldi (Żebbuġ), il-Merill (Pembroke), Sardinella (San Ġwann) and il-Bebbuxu (Santa Venera).



During 2024, FES made significant progress on the development of a new state-of-the-art childcare centre in Gozo, which is the first government-run centre on the island. This is set to open its doors in 2025. Similarly, work continued on the planning and design of another childcare centre in Msida, which will form part of the new school currently under construction. The Services Department plays a crucial role in these projects, contributing to the design, layout, and aesthetics of the centres, as well as providing input on creating an optimal learning environment for children.

FES works in close collaboration with Healthmark, the service provider for childcare educators. This partnership ensures that centres are adequately staffed at all times, thereby maintaining consistent service quality.

Applications for childcare are managed by Centre Coordinators, who can be contacted by email, phone, or in person. Each application undergoes an individual assessment to identify the specific needs of the family. At present, applications are completed and submitted manually. However, the Services Department is committed to continuous improvement and is working towards the launch of an online application system in the coming year. The following list provides a description of registrations per centre.

Centre	Service users in 2024
Birgu, Il-Kuluri	48
Birkirkara, Il-Ferrovija	56
Cospicua, Il-Bejta	33
Floriana, It-Tgħanniq	31
Haż-Żebbuġ, Żmeraldi	46
Marsa, Il-Pesp	37
Naxxar, Pizzi Pizzi Kanna	58
Pembroke, Il-Merill	73
Qawra, Ix-Xemx	59
San Ġwann, Is-Sardinella	78
Santa Venera, Il-Bebbuxu	51
Sigġiewi, Id-Denfil	74
Total	644

Centre Coordinators within the childcare centres are provided with ongoing support to ensure high-quality staff performance. This involves daily monitoring of centre operations, regular supervision of staff, and assisting employees in addressing day-to-day challenges.

Coordinators also maintain constant liaison with other departments at Head Office, including Programmes, Corporate, Finance, and Human Resources. This approach reflects FES’s belief that employee effectiveness is a critical factor in improving children’s outcomes.

The wellbeing of employees is of utmost importance to FES. Staff are encouraged to approach their Centre Coordinator regarding any challenges they encounter. Coordinators provide guidance by clarifying expectations, offering high-quality feedback, and supporting employees in meeting professional standards. Through this framework, FES consistently upholds national standards and has successfully passed all quality assurance visits conducted by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DWSE) with exemplary results.

Plans for the Coming Year

The Services Department remains committed to maintaining a high standard of service across all centres and supporting the ongoing development of FES operations. Plans for the coming year include:

- In the coming year, FES aims to open two new childcare centres, one in Gozo and another in Msida. These centres will expand access to quality early childhood education and care, while also supporting working families through increased availability of government-run childcare services.
- Introduce the childcare application online through the FES portal system, thus becoming more sustainable. In the coming year, FES aims to digitalise the childcare application process by integrating it into the existing FES portal. This initiative will streamline the application experience for parents and guardians, reduce the use of paper-based forms, and enhance data accuracy and processing efficiency. This transition to a digital platform will enhance service accessibility and efficiency while supporting FES’s commitment to sustainable and environmentally responsible practices.
- Implementing refurbishment projects within existing childcare centres.
- FES plans to extend its services to children attending resource centres, with the aim of providing additional support to working parents. This initiative will ensure that children who attend resource centres, can also benefit from a safe, engaging, and inclusive environment beyond regular school hours.

These initiatives reflect FES’s commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the evolving needs of families and staff.

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Introduction

The year 2024 was marked by significant operational growth across all service areas of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES). From expanding infrastructure and enhancing health and safety standards to modernising IT systems and strengthening governance frameworks, the Corporate Services Unit played a pivotal role in sustaining service quality and compliance. This report provides a comprehensive overview of key initiatives undertaken during the year, highlighting progress in childcare and Klabb 3-16 centres, Skolasajf preparations, procurement activities, IT advancements, administrative operations, and data protection measures. It reflects the collective effort to align resources, technology, and processes with the evolving needs of the organization and its stakeholders.

1. Estate Management

Head Office

The office space once again proved inadequate due to the growing number of staff. By year-end, discussions were underway with the landlord to explore possible options for expanding the premises. In addition, an EV point was installed at the Head Office Car Park to facilitate the charging of the newly acquired electric vehicle.

Childcare Centres

Throughout 2024, significant efforts were made to enhance the safety, functionality, and overall quality of childcare centres. These initiatives focused on addressing structural issues, improving outdoor environments, upgrading electrical systems, and ensuring compliance with health and safety standards. In addition to refurbishments and maintenance in existing centres, preparations for new facilities progressed steadily, while support continued for privately managed centres to resolve operational challenges. The following list outlines the major interventions carried out during the year.

B’Kara – In 2024, the centre experienced issues with pigeons. Spikes were installed along the perimeter of the outdoor area as a mitigation measure. Following discussions with the Local Council, a drop-off point was created in front of the main entrance to facilitate parking for parents. The outdoor area was also equipped with a new and safer aluminium boundary fence.

Birgu – Under the agreement with FTS, Birgu’s outdoor area was refurbished. Boundary walls were plastered and painted, and turf was installed. MEYR’s maintenance team added a fixed canopy to provide shade. The centre also faced electrical issues that damaged several appliances and wiring systems. Remedial works were carried out by the electrical contractor to resolve these problems.



Bormla – The issue of pigeon droppings, which began the previous year, persisted in 2024. Discussions were held with the Head of School and Precincts Officer to find a solution. A net was installed over the outdoor area to deter pigeons, but the building structure could not support it, and it was removed. The matter was escalated to MEYR to explore further solutions for reducing pigeons in the area.

Floriana – Through the agreement with FTS, the outdoor soft flooring was removed and a membrane installed to prevent water ingress. This was covered with turf, eliminating tripping hazards posed by the old flooring.



Marsa – Critical safety concerns were addressed after reports of falling debris near the main entrance. An architect’s inspection and method statement guided remedial works. Temporary security measures ensured safe access during inspections. After repairs, the architect confirmed the entrance was structurally sound, allowing normal operations to resume. The outdoor space was also refurbished with new turf. However, due to limited resources, further refurbishment was postponed.

Naxxar – The centre replaced slippery outdoor flooring with synthetic turf. Electrical upgrades were initiated to address load issues, including installing new circuits and replacing damaged cables for compliance and reliability. A part-time cleaner was introduced. Due to limited resources, additional refurbishment was deferred.

Pembroke – In 2024, window films were installed to reduce glare and improve energy efficiency. A part-time cleaner was engaged to maintain cleanliness. The centre also underwent a license revision process with DQSE to reflect structural changes completed the previous year.



San Ġwann – The outdoor area was refurbished with synthetic turf, boundary wall adjustments, and minor repairs to outdoor fixtures. A part-time cleaner was introduced to support increased attendance.



Santa Venera – The operating contract with Curia was successfully renewed, ensuring continuity of services. The centre was also equipped with an AED.

Siggiewi – In 2024 the centre’s kitchen was changed since it was very old and beyond repaired. In addition, the outdoor play area was repaired and repainted. Damaged plaster was removed, walls were fixed, and a fresh coat of paint applied. Culverts were cleaned, and scaffolding removed after works concluded in August. Turf was installed as part of a wider project. The centre was also equipped with an AED.



Żebbuġ – The outdoor play area was upgraded with synthetic turf in 2024 and additional canopy for the babies’ area installed.

Qawra – Staffing arrangements were confirmed, including a dedicated cleaner for daily upkeep and an additional part-time cleaner. Outdoor improvements included installing and securing gazebos to enhance play areas.

Qormi – By year-end 2024, the childcare centre remained closed but was cleaned in preparation for refurbishment works planned by the Foundation for Tomorrow Schools.

Msida – By the end of 2024, significant progress was made toward opening the new centre. Final layout plans were approved, and procurement of furniture and educational resources was completed (€39,827.68). Compliance processes with DQSE were initiated, including steps for temporary registration and licensing. Outstanding issues and minor finishing works were still being followed up with FTS.



Gozo – By the end of 2024, the Gozo Child Care Centre was nearing completion. Construction works were finished, and key compliance requirements, including fire safety and accessibility standards, were addressed. The facility was furnished, equipped through an investment of €36,773.78, and supported by operational guidelines and staffing plans. Safety checks were completed, and procurement of essential resources finalized. The centre was on track for its official opening in early 2025.



Apart from interventions in the existing centres, the Corporate Services Unit continued helping with maintenance issues arising within the privatised centres. At Qawsalla in Gżira plans initiated to upgrade outdoor areas with turf and secure fencing. Pepprina in Paola focused on structural and safety upgrades following a risk assessment, including masonry works, plastering and finishing works to its main façade. Lelluxa in Luqa addressed electrical issues by transitioning to three-phase power and replacing sockets. Nannakola in Għargħur resolved electrical installation concerns and improved outdoor area conditions.

Klabb 3-16/Skolasajf Centres

In 2024, several key developments were carried out across Klabb 3-16 centres. Mellieħa was equipped with new shelving and office furniture while St' Paul's Bay was equipped with new storage facilities. Tarxien was provided with adequate office space supported with storage solutions and new office furniture. St Julian's Klabb office was plastered and freshly painted. Rabat successfully established itself within the new school set up with a new office as well. Other centres had their offices relocated within the same school building due to better space optimisation. These included Santa Venera, B'Bugia, Zurrieq and Rabat Gozo. New Klabb centres were introduced in Marsa, Għaxaq and Msida, and at year end preparations were underway for reopening Qormi San Ġorġ in January 2025. These centres required the liaising with the Head of Schools to identify an appropriate office space and the procurement of all the necessary equipment to operate.

Where Skolasajf was concerned, Naxxar operations were moved to the Middle School and Żejtun to the Secondary School. These shifts were done to provide children with an air-conditioned space that is not available within the primary schools. In addition, due to major maintenance within the B'Kara primary school, operations were also shifted to a different part within the same premises due to health and safety measures.

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 1028 purchase orders were issued, an 11% increase from the previous year. These were all matched with their respective invoice, certified, and passed over to the Finance Department for processing. 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 2024:

Call for Quotations/Expressions of Interest:

- CFQ/FES/001/2024 - Contract for the engagement of legal services
- CFQ/FES/002/2024 - Contract for the engagement of a nurse for Childcare San Gwann till September 2024
- CFQ/FES/003/2024 - Contract for the leasing of garage from 01/03/2024 – 31/08/2024
- CFQ/FES/004/2024 - Contract for the service of Electrician
- CFQ/FES/005/2024 - Contract for the purchase of garbage bags
- CFQ/FES/008/2024 - Contract for the purchase of disposable gloves
- CFQ/FES/012/2024 - Contract for the engagement of legionella testing
- CFQ/FES/011/2024 - Contract for the engagement of Portable Appliance Testing
- CFQ/FES/013/2024 - Contract for the engagement of Risk Assessments for pregnant employees and employees under the age of 18
- CFQ/FES/014/2024 - Contract for the purchase of purchase of paper hand towels
- CFQ/FES/015/2024 - Contract for the engagement of architect services
- CFQ/FES/019/2024 - Contract for the engagement of consultancy services with regards to the creation of a tender for a new FES Portal
- CFQ/FES/020/2024 - Contract for a venue to hold the Childcare seminar on 25/10/2024
- CFQ/FES/017/2024 - Contract for the engagement of Accountancy services in May 2024
- CFQ/FES/021/2024 - Contract for the engagement of Accountancy services in November 2024
- EOI/FES/001/2024 - Contract for the engagement of an Administration Assistant in June 2024
- EOI/FES/001/2024 - Contract for the engagement of an Administration Assistant in December 2024

Tenders:

- SPD1/2024/018 – Supplies Framework Contract for the Supply and Delivery of Stationery and Environmentally Friendly Office Paper
- SPD1/2023/106 - Contract for Care Workers for Resource Centres during holidays and SkolaSajf
- SPD1/2021/218 – Renewal of Policy Document for the Insurance of FES
- SPD1/2023/134 - Purchase of an Electric Vehicle
- CT2223/2021 - Renewal of Childcare Educators Tender
- DES 120/2017 - Renewal of Head Office Tender
- CT2194/2024 – Framework Contract for the Provision of Nursing Services
- CT5048/2024 - Negotiated Procedure for the Services of Full-time Applied Behaviour Analyses 9ABA) Programs for MEYR Clients with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Preliminary Market Consultations:

- PMC/FES/002/2024 - Preliminary Market Consultation for Childcare service during Atypical hours
- PMC/FES/001/2024 - Preliminary Market Consultation for Extracurricular Activities during Klabb 3-16

Direct Orders:

- DO/MF/001/2024 - Contract for an HR Database system
- DO/MF/005/2024 - Contract for the leasing of garage from 01/09/2024 – 31/08/2025
- DO/MF/003/2024 - Engagement of Nurses during July Bridge Holidays, SkolaSajf, September Bridge Holidays, November Bridge Holidays and Christmas Holidays

In early 2024, the department experienced the retirement of a Programme Coordinator for Procurement and Administration, creating a gap within the team. Nevertheless, the unit successfully increased the total number of CFQs issued on the ePPs compared to the previous year.

3. IT

With the growing reliance on information technology, the demand for technical support continues to rise. In October 2024, a new employee joined the department, strengthening the team's capacity to meet these needs. The Programme Coordinators for Technical Support built on the foundations laid in previous years, ensuring consistent assistance to all FES staff and supporting the unit's ongoing commitment to efficient service delivery.

Notifications Portal Transition

The transition to the Notifications Portal was actively managed during 2024. It entailed the successful adoption of the portal's SMS and bulk notification features, along with integration requests for API keys. MITA provided guidance on scheduled delivery changes and SMTP routing, ensuring operational continuity.

Domain Registration and Device Integration

The fes.edu.mt domain was successfully registered, and accounts were created for operational use. Laptops were joined to the iLearn domain and configured to be part of the SCHOOLS iLearn MEYR network.

Migration to Azure B2C Authentication

The migration from MITA Legacy ADFS to Azure B2C was completed in 2024. MITA confirmed the disabling of ADFS relying parties and successful cutover to B2C for both test and live environments.

Cloud Mailbox Migration

Cloud mailbox migrations were initiated in 2024, with MITA issuing start and completion notices for individual accounts. Bulk migration processes and pricing guidance were communicated to ensure smooth transition to Exchange Online.

SharePoint Site Creation

FES successfully established its SharePoint site in 2024. MITA provided enablement support, including RFS processes and storage model guidance. Migration is being planned to start in 2025.

Persons Register Onboarding

The transition from the Common Database (CdB) to the Persons Register was formalised in 2024. By end of 2024, the Technical Support section initiated internal role assignments to FES Employees who needed access to the Person Register.

Azure Migration for SFM

The migration of the SFM system from Azure Stack Hub to the cloud was executed with MITA oversight. Overall system resilience and performance were increased. Enhanced redundancy, robust disaster recovery capabilities, and higher availability were achieved through hosting on Azure's global infrastructure, supported by the extensive capabilities of the public cloud platform.

Gozo Childcare Centre IT Setup

Procurement and configuration of IT equipment for the Gozo childcare centre were completed in 2024. This included the purchasing and installation of all the necessary hardware and liaising with MEYR regarding networking issues.

Hardware Issues

During 2024, significant improvements were implemented to strengthen operational efficiency across centres. Corporate telephony was upgraded through the deployment of an automated attendant on the main number and integration with the PABX GO system, ensuring streamlined call management. In parallel, tablets were rolled out to Programme Coordinators and management, following successful pilot programs and subsequent distribution to support on-site visits and enhance mobility. Additionally, IP reservations for printers at childcare centres and Klabb 3-16 locations were completed in coordination with MEYR/IMU, securing reliable network connectivity for essential printing services. The year also marked the start of the Windows 11 upgrade initiative, with multiple laptops procured and deployed to modernize the device fleet and improve performance across the organization.

Procurement

Procurement of IT related equipment was done by the Programme Coordinator Technical Support, and where tenders were involved, assistance was provided during evaluation.

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 was distributed to Skolasajf centres to further facilitate operations at centre level.

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

The Corporate Services Unit faced increasing operational pressures in 2024 due to a surge in maintenance and resource requests, significantly heightening its administrative burden. The unit, originally composed of one full-time coordinator for administration, one part-time coordinator, and a single handyman, experienced further strain when, despite engaging a second handyman in August to address workload demands. The original handyman proceeded on long-term sick leave just one month later. This staffing challenge, coupled with the growing volume of maintenance requests, underscored the need for additional support and resource planning to sustain service delivery standards.

Centres Upkeep

In 2024, routine health and safety and maintenance tasks continued to be carried out at regular intervals across Head Office and childcare centres. These included air-conditioning servicing, fire extinguisher servicing, electrical appliance and installation testing, legionella testing, and pest control, all in line with established compliance requirements. Contracts were issued for Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) and legionella testing, ensuring systematic checks throughout the year. The Manager Corporate Services and Coordinator Administration maintained close liaison with health and safety officers and architects to uphold high standards of safety across all premises. Coordination with the FES handyman and MEYR remained integral for executing maintenance works and addressing urgent upkeep needs.

Inventories

In 2024, the Coordinator Administration continued the yearly exercise of requesting updated inventories from all childcare centre coordinators and worked closely with the Administration Assistant to ensure the Head Office inventory remained accurate. These consolidated inventories were then submitted to the FES insurance broker to maintain up-to-date documentation and ensure comprehensive insurance coverage across all premises and equipment. Towards year end, the Klabb 3-16 inventories were also being reviewed through on-site visits – these are planned to be completed in 2024.

Cleaning

In 2024, cleaner management remained a key operational focus. Regular deployments were coordinated for childcare centres, Klabb 3-16 and Skolasajf centres, with adjustments for new openings such as in Msida. Replacements were arranged during absences or emergencies to maintain hygiene standards. Challenges arose in certain locations due to shortages and quality concerns, prompting discussions on service reliability and potential alternatives. Coordination with the contractor ensured timely provision of additional cleaners where required, particularly during transitions and cleaning after extensive pest control treatments.

Stationery

In 2024, stationery procurement continued to be centrally managed at Head Office. Childcare and Klabb 3-16 Centre Coordinators submitted their requests through the established process, and deliveries were made directly to centres by the contracted supplier. For Skolasajf, orders were prepared well in advance by the Manager Corporate Services and Coordinator Administration to guarantee timely supply before programme commencement. Communication with centres focused on delivery schedules, invoice verification, and the submission of signed copies to ensure accountability and smooth distribution.

Skolasajf

As in previous years, Skolasajf required extensive advance planning and cross-departmental coordination. Beyond the central procurement and direct-to-centre distribution of cleaning materials and stationery, a structured delivery schedule and a second-order window were communicated to coordinators to ensure stock continuity during the programme. FES also continued its annual practice of installing additional fans in Skolasajf centres where needed.

With MEYR, the team set and monitored the deployment of cleaners and security guards. Security planning started in May with coordination meetings held with MEYR and the contractor. Traffic management remained a joint effort with Local Councils and LESA/Police for admission/dismissal support.

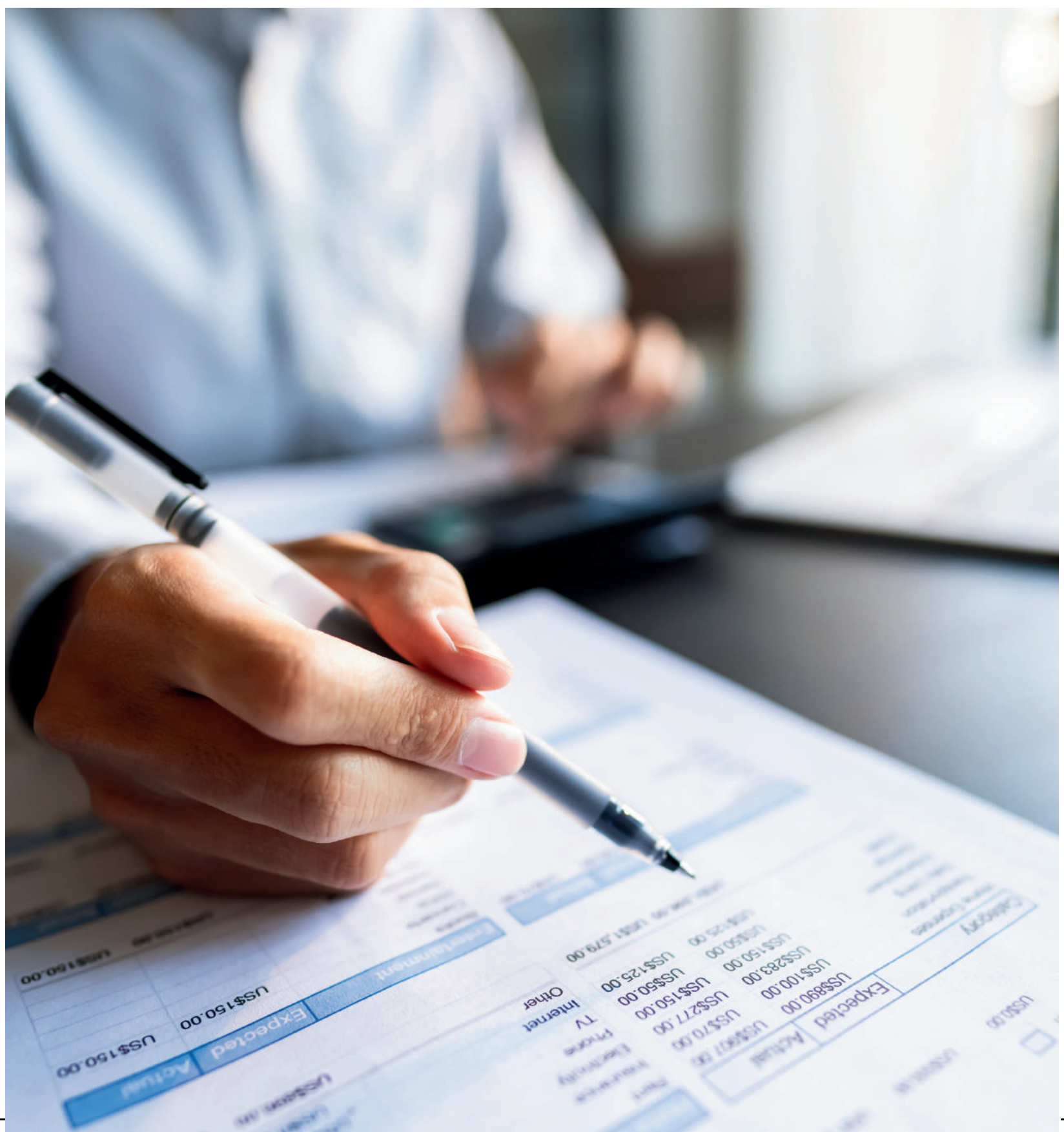
Readiness of school facilities was documented through the 2024 Skolasajf school contracts: CCTV positioning/access and fire alarms/extinguishers had to be in working order; fans and A/Cs were to be serviced, and corresponding remotes provided ahead of opening; cleaning arrangements and responsibilities with the College Precincts were formalised so day-one hygiene matched term-time standards.

5. Data Protection

In 2024, the Manager Corporate Services, acting as Data Protection Officer, continued to address queries and compliance requirements. The Data Protection and Retention Policy underwent multiple updates, ensuring alignment with GDPR and operational needs across childcare centres, Skolasajf, and Klabb 3-16 services. Internal discussions focused on refining retention periods and strengthening breach response procedures.

Training remained a priority: induction sessions for new recruits included modules on GDPR principles, roles of the Data Controller, Data Protection Officer, and IDPC, rights of data subjects, and breach management. Updated training materials highlighted real-life examples of personal data breaches and reinforced safeguards for handling sensitive data such as children's records. These sessions aimed to embed a strong data protection culture and ensure compliance across all service areas.

FES AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2024



Statement of comprehensive income

		Year ended 31 December	
	Note	2024	2023
		€	€
Revenue	14	18,423,053	16,230,795
Operational expenses	15	(16,847,531)	(14,165,159)
Surplus from operations		1,575,522	2,065,636
Administrative expenses	15	(1,673,228)	(1,461,402)
Finance income	17	56,341	49,592
Finance expense	18	(8,869)	(11,561)
(Deficit)/surplus before tax		(50,234)	642,265
Tax charge for the year	19	-	-
(Deficit)/surplus for the year		(50,234)	642,265
Total comprehensive income for the year		(50,234)	642,265

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

Detailed statement of comprehensive income
For the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Pages	Year ended 31 December	
		2024 €	2023 €
Government contribution		1,230,000	1,230,000
Surplus from operations	35-36	345,522	835,636
Total operating surplus		1,575,522	2,065,636
Administrative expenses	34	(1,673,228)	(1,461,402)
Finance income		56,341	49,592
Finance expense		(8,869)	(11,561)
(Deficit)/surplus before tax		(50,234)	642,265

Detailed statement of comprehensive income (operational segments)
For the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Childcare 2024	Skola sajf 2024	Klabb 3-16 2024	Resources centres 2024	Other 2024	Total
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Income from Clients	157,304	655,032	1,025,226	-	-	1,837,562
Income from government	2,319,925	-	-	-	-	2,319,925
Total revenues from operations	2,477,229	655,032	1,025,226	-	-	4,157,487
Reimbursements:						
Government	2,597,965	5,080,333	5,105,333	190,039	61,896	13,035,566
EU Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total reimbursements	2,597,965	5,080,333	5,105,333	190,039	61,896	13,035,566
Total Inflows	5,075,194	5,735,365	6,130,559	190,039	61,896	17,193,053
Expenditure:						
Operational expenses	(1,210,719)	(985,073)	(854,529)	(69,643)	-	(3,119,964)
Wages	(2,791,234)	(5,438,388)	(5,226,821)	(210,820)	(60,304)	(13,727,567)
Total outflows	(4,001,953)	(6,423,461)	(6,081,350)	(280,463)	(60,304)	(16,847,531)
Net surplus/(deficit)	1,073,241	(688,096)	49,209	(90,424)	1,592	345,522

The amount of € 461,571 included in Klabb 3-16 Reimbursements from Government refers to the recharge of accrued wages provided for in the current year but claimed from the subsequent year's budget allocation

Detailed statement of comprehensive income (operational segments)
For the financial year ended 31 December 2024

	Childcare 2023	Skola sajf 2023	Klabb 3-16 2023	Resources centres 2023	Other 2023	Total
	€	€	€	€	€	€
Income from Clients	100,303	629,433	948,983	-	-	1,678,719
Income from government	1,901,248	-	-	-	-	1,901,248
Total revenues from operations	2,001,551	629,433	948,983	-	-	3,579,967
Reimbursements:						
Government	2,795,738	4,433,017	4,006,095	82,876	103,102	11,420,828
EU Funding	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total reimbursements	2,795,738	4,433,017	4,006,095	82,876	103,102	11,420,828
Total Inflows	4,797,289	5,062,450	4,955,078	82,876	103,102	15,000,795
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)
Total outflows	(3,613,552)	(5,299,621)	(4,689,333)	(458,500)	(104,153)	(14,165,159)
Net surplus/(deficit)	1,183,737	(237,171)	265,745	(375,624)	(1,051)	835,636

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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