**Committee:** UNICEF (Junior)

**Country:** The Republic of Malta

**Agenda Item(s):** Fighting against social exclusion and child poverty, providing education during emergencies

Malta is a [Southern European](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Europe) [island country](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_country) in the Mediterranean Sea with a population of nearly 500 thousand people and is ruled by parliamentary republic. Malta is classified as an advanced economy together with 32 other countries according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and 17.1 % of the population lives below poverty line.

There are currently 79,163 children up to the age of 17 in Malta. Of these 21.2% or 16,782, are at risk of poverty and 18,049 at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The most vulnerable children were aged 10-14, in which case the rate was of 30.6 %.  Thirty-three per cent live in the South Harbour or South-eastern regions and 35% have mothers who are inactive, that is not actively seeking to work. Almost half the children have both parents in employment. According to another study of Eurostat , in 2020, 22.6% of Maltese minors were found to be at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In Malta, many of the social protection provisions and services provided by the State are offered to the public free of charge. The National Strategy Report (NSR) for Social Protection and Social Inclusion constitutes Malta’s main policy document in the field of combating child poverty and promoting their social inclusion and wellbeing. Malta’s current NSR gives recognition that children and young people living within particular contexts and situations are a vulnerable population and have been identified as being at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion and have been a priority for the recent NSRs. Malta has signed most of the international treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. However, not all of the treaty instruments have yet been incorporated into domestic law, and this prevents their correct application. Children’s rights are therefore not fully protected by the laws of Malta. In Malta, the [employment of children](https://www.humanium.org/en/child-labour/) under 15 is prohibited by law. However, monitoring of the situation by the government is insufficient. In addition, reports indicate that many children are employed before this age in family businesses and in tourism-related activities (kitchen helps, vendors, etc.). Fortunately, such work is generally not harmful to their [health](https://www.humanium.org/en/fundamental-rights-2/health/) and is performed during the summer holidays. Despite a national policy on specialised [education](https://www.humanium.org/en/right-to-education/), [children with disabilities](https://www.humanium.org/en/disabled-children/) are often marginalised and therefore very difficult to integrate into society.

Education in Malta is compulsory for all children and youths aged from five to sixteen years. This is defined in Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta - The Education Act - and subsequent amendments. Compulsory education covers six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary education. It is offered full-time and free in all state schools, but parents can opt to educate their children in Church or Independent schools. During Covid-19,teachers and children will have to continue wearing masks while at school, with kindergarten teachers required to wear both a mask and a visor. Certain subjects such as physical education and lessons in laboratories are no longer banned as they were in 2020. Education Minister states that depending on their size, certain schools will retain a hybrid model of online and classroom lessons. Social distancing will remain mandatory, the minister said, with desks spaced at between one and two meters depending on the child's age. School assemblies can be held, but social distancing and the principle of bubbles must be respected.

Activities involving parents remain banned. If a child or a member of their household tests positive for coronavirus, the whole family will have to quarantine. Vaccinated students will have to quarantine for seven days and take a test before returning to school. Non-vaccinated students will have to quarantine for 14 days.

Malta believes there are much more ways to improve the conditions of the children internally such as providing medical care, adapting healing classrooms for integration of them in the education system. Malta calls all the member states to action for creating a new world for those vulnerable children who will be our future generations.