



**BROKEN
CHALK**

Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of the United
Nations Human Rights Council 4th Cycle – 45th Session

Right to Education

Country Review: Malta

Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

July 2023

By Asha Ouni

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31687406567

upr@brokenchalk.org

www.brokenchalk.org

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Broken Chalk is an Amsterdam-based NGO established in 2020 that monitors and minimises worldwide human rights violations in education. We aim to promote universal and equal access to education for all.

We encourage and support achieving societal peace with our international sponsors and partners by advocating for intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and tackling educational inequalities.

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Introduction

1. Broken Chalk is a non-profit organisation with one main goal - To protect human rights in education. The organisation started with a website and articles and is currently working on multiple projects, each aiming to fight human rights violations in the educational sphere. As the UPR is related to human rights violations, inequalities, human trafficking, and other violations, Broken Chalk prepares this article for the 45th session regarding Malta.
2. The principles, aims, objectives, and regulations of the education system in Malta are laid down in Education Acts Chapters 327 and 605 of the Laws of Malta and pegged to the Malta Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. State, Church and Independent schools provide education. It comprises childcare (for children 0-3 years old), two years of kindergarten (for 3-5-year-olds), 11 Years of compulsory education including six years of Primary school (mainly for 5-11-year-olds), a 2-year orientation cycle (middle school, for children aged 11-13) and a 3-year cycle of specialisation (secondary school, for children aged 13-16-year-olds), during which students pursue academic or vocational subjects.
3. Malta is committed to providing quality education for its population. However, like many countries, Malta faces educational challenges that impact the effectiveness and inclusivity of its education system. Recognising and addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering an equitable and high-quality education system that prepares students for the demands of the modern world.

Quality of education

4. Malta is one of the lowest achievers in three crucial areas: reading, maths, and science. Around 35% of 15-year-olds today are underachieving in those areas, a troubling indication for their career prospects in some lucrative fields.
5. Malta's test-obsessed system focuses on heavy-stakes exams forcing teachers to teach for the test. That incentivises cramming information, which fails radically in terms of actual educational retainment.
6. The country has one of the highest rates of early school leavers, with around 30% of the workforce having, at best, a secondary school level of education.
7. There is a highly unequal situation regarding people who attend state and public schools. People who participate in public schools are far more disadvantaged than students who attend private or church schools. A European Commission study found that the gap between private and state schools is equivalent to two more years of teaching, meaning that private school students are far more equipped once they leave secondary schools. Malta has created an environment where some students have access to better resources simply because they can afford it.

Language barrier

8. Malta's multicultural and multilingual society encompasses students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

9. While English is widely used in Malta, some students may face difficulties due to limited English proficiency. This can affect their ability to comprehend and engage with English-medium instruction, especially in science, mathematics, and social studies. Limited English proficiency can also impede effective communication with teachers and peers, hindering their overall learning experience.
10. Adapting curricula to ensure accessibility and comprehensibility for students with varying language abilities can be challenging. Teachers may need to invest additional time and effort in translating materials, providing explanations, and using instructional strategies that support students who need to be more fluent in English. This can burden teachers and potentially affect the pace and depth of curriculum coverage.

Teachers shortages

11. Teachers remain underpaid and understaffed, with the government facing teaching shortage after teaching shortage amid disputes over the lack of qualifications with unions.

Technology in education

12. While efforts have been made to integrate technology into education, there may be challenges related to using digital tools and resources in classrooms. Access to devices, more teacher training on technology integration, and disparities in digital literacy levels can help seamlessly integrate technology into teaching and learning processes.
13. The Maltese educational system needs to pay more attention to digital literacy. Ideas of computational thinking, critical thinking, information processing, and many others are foreign to Maltese students.

Parental engagement

14. Far too many people in Malta are dismissive of academia, viewing it as an elitist bastion when it is the foundation of providing a voice to the many people on the island. Fostering a positive educational environment from a young age is vital to ensuring lifelong learning.

Recommendations

15. Allocate sufficient financial resources to education to address infrastructure needs, enhance teacher training, provide necessary learning materials, and support inclusive practices—Prioritise education in budget allocations to ensure a well-funded and sustainable education system.
16. Developing inclusive language policies can help mitigate language barriers and support students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This may include providing additional language support services, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) programs or bilingual support, to ensure students can access and succeed in the curriculum. Clear guidelines and resources for teachers can help them effectively support students with limited language proficiency.
17. Invest in infrastructure and resources to enhance digital literacy skills among students and teachers. Provide training programs to equip teachers with the skills to integrate

technology effectively into teaching and learning processes. Ensure equitable access to digital resources and promote responsible and safe use of technology.

18. Foster strong partnerships between schools, parents, and communities. Encourage parental involvement in their children's education, provide opportunities for community participation, and establish mechanisms for gathering feedback and input to ensure the education system meets the needs of all stakeholders.

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+31685639758 | info@brokenchalk.org | www.brokenchalk.org

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