

MINISTRY FOR THE FAMILY AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Overview

The Corporate Services Directorate (DCS) offers assistance and guidance to the Permanent Secretary and all other departments, entities, commissions and agencies within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS) on matters dealing mainly with financial planning and management, procurement and capital projects. This is done in line with established Financial and Public Procurement Regulations, other legislation and also circulars issued by the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry for Finance, Treasury and Department of Contracts. The Director Corporate Services works in close coordination with the Human Resources Directorate and the Information Management Unit of the same Ministry.

This Directorate has the following sections falling under its remit: Financial Reporting, Accounts, Accounts Special Items, Advances, Contracts and Procurement, Office Management and Registry, Special Accounts, Social Security Accounts (Benefits), Reconciliation and Maintenance.

Financial Reporting

This section was mainly responsible for the drawing up of the monthly financial reporting and Cash flow projections, the quarterly Accrual Accounting report and other submissions as requested by the Treasury and Ministry for Finance. This section was highly involved in drafting replies to Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and for the preparation and coordination of the 2014 Financial Management and Business Plans. Another important project carried out was the administration of the Community Inclusive Employment Scheme (CIES). This involved direct communication with ETC, Department for Local Government and a number of Local Councils. This section also prepared consolidated lists of Direct Orders, Variations, Award of Tenders, Quotations, Expression of Interest and Contracts for Service of all Contracting Authorities falling within MFSS portfolio. These lists were then published in the Government Gazette.

Accounts Section

This year proved to be a very difficult one due to the fact that before the Budget was formally approved in Parliament this office had to report within one third of the 2012 approved budget, as per Financial Regulations. This brought about abnormal situations which were much challenging. In fact, where usually within few hours the DAS system used to be updated to reflect the approved budget, during this year this office had to keep constant coordination with the Treasury until end of the year so as to ascertain that the Ministry was in line with the approved 2013 financial estimates.

This section was responsible for the issue of a Bonus to non Government Pensioners, remuneration to Board members and also assisted in compiling information for Parliamentary Questions.

As of this year the remuneration to all MFSS Board members was reviewed and fell within the remit of this office. This entailed discussions and close collaboration with the Department of Inland Revenue. A memo to all Board secretaries was issued by this office and payments were effected accordingly.

Advances Section and Accounts Special Items

The officers within this unit made a concerted effort to close some 2011 and 2012 Advance files, and ensure such files are closed within a reasonable time. A Travel Memo was compiled, while certain forms were reviewed. MFSS processed all MEUSAC travel for the entire year, and all MSDC travel from April onwards.

This section administered about 140 different travel preparations for officers who had to travel on work related with this Ministry. It is to be noted that the preparation involved is substantial and has to be carried out in a diligent manner, due to the fact that travel is audited by the Treasury, Finance and in certain circumstances by External Auditors. On a number of circumstances guidance from Ministry of Finance and Treasury was sought to verify that issue of subsistence and contingency were in line with PSMC and other regulations. Throughout this year this unit sought quotations from various leading travel agencies and Air Malta.

A senior officer was actively involved in the preparation or finalising of lease agreements, in consultation with MFSS's Legal Counsel, in respect of Innocenti Programme with Richmond Foundation and the Archdiocese of Malta. Another lease agreement was signed for the new Zurrieq DSS District Office. This office can also meet other Ministerial exigencies.

The Section liaised with the Ministry, DCS, DSS and other MFSS entities to supply information regarding MFSS-occupied Government-owned premises – in connection with MECW's energy and resource efficiency project. As requested by the Government Property Division, the Section also compiled an extensive questionnaire. Following this exercise the Government Property Division adopted a new billing system whereby an individual bill for each property was issued.

The list of items of a historical or artistic nature, held by MFSS at the Ministry and at the Permanent Secretary's Office, was reviewed prior to March General Elections and reviewed again as soon as the new Minister and Parliamentary Secretary occupied the premises.

Other tasks met by this office included:

- Drafting of memos regarding lights being left switched on and overtime requests
- Compilation of information on the Accounting Structure, including grade/position, qualifications, experience in accounting, brief description of duties – as per MFIN (FPMD) request
- Co-ordination of information from all MFSS entities regarding 2012 Water and Electricity Bills
- Additional feedback regarding Sustainable Waste Management
- Liaison with colleagues to provide OPM with information on Area, KWH/m², Consumption KWH/Annum of some MFSS-occupied Central Government Buildings for Energy Audit purposes

Contracts and Procurement

The aim of this section is to provide for sections falling within MFSS with all the requirements they require to operate in a well kept environment. This is adhered to by observing the Public Procurement Regulations, Financial regulations and any other circulars. The change in Ministry brought about a number of new tenders and quotations that had to be issued. In fact during this period this office issued and awarded 120 quotations (RFQs) and 4 tenders. The hallmark of the RFQs was the call for the lease of vehicles for both the Minister and Parliamentary Secretary. The method the call was processed, prices and conditions achieved was undoubtedly exemplary.

One of the Procurement Managers serves as secretary to the Departmental Contracts Committee (DCC) and another senior officer within this office represents the Permanent

Secretary on the DCC. The secretary prepared the checklists for 120 submissions that were presented to the board by contracting authorities within MFSS and MSDC.

This section also keeps regular updating of MFSS inventories, particularly of Palazzo Ferreria and the Department of Social Security district offices. During this year staff within this unit performed various exhaustive exercises to clear stores and write off unserviceable items. This was done in coordination with the Director and the Permanent Secretary.

As already indicated an important fact that has highly impacted on the sections mentioned above is that as from March till December 2013, these sections were also responsible to provide service and assistance to the newly set out Ministry for Social Dialogue and Civil Liberties. This involved subsequent responsibility on this Directorate and it was not an easy task to cater for two Ministries and also to provide the necessary training to MSDC staff on such matters of a delicate and rather beauracratic nature.

Social Security Accounts Benefits

This section administered the allocated budget of the Social Security Benefits and the revenue derived from the National Insurance Contributions. During year 2013, payments effected by Debit Advices amounted to circa €814.5 million. These were processed through 780 Debit Advices. Moreover, about 600 schedules of payment and 120 multi-payments were referred to Government Departments, Entities and private companies in lieu of payment of sickness benefits due to employees falling on half pay. Regarding pensioners living abroad, weekly payments were effected either by direct credit or through Maltese Embassies. Such payments amounted to circa €13 million.

As of this year a new Initiative was introduced – Transfer of Pension Rights – whereby Maltese nationals employed with the European Commission or agencies can opt to transfer their respective National Insurance Contributions to the Commission. This procedure is being administered by the International Relations Directorate but payments are issued by this section. In 2013 payments from this fund totalled to €1,659,000.

This office with the assistance of the Inland Revenue Department monitored the revenue derived from the payment of National Insurance Contributions. The amount collected, including State Contribution, amounted to circa €645.3 million; thus exceeding the estimated revenue by €4.3 million.

Special Accounts

This section is mainly responsible to verify and compile the Arrears of Revenue report. It is to be noted that during this year a gradual increase in overpayments of Social Security Benefits was reported; the amount as at end of year exceeded €19 million.

The senior officer responsible for the running of this section gave his full support in the setting up of an Overpayments section in Gozo in order that this unit functions efficiently and according to financial regulations. A manual of procedures was compiled in this regard. This office also overviewed both *write-off* and *cancelled* reports carried out by various authorised officers within the Department of Social Security (DSS). This exercise entails a number of checks and balances which are discussed with Director General DSS and Directors. During this year this office was also requested to assist the National Audit Office with regards to an audit report on the social security benefits. Meetings were held with DSS, MITA and other stakeholders regarding new reporting procedures for the automation of the Special Accounts section. Moreover, this unit persisted its auditing of MITA/SABS reports, mostly the *settled* and *debtor's report*.

Reconciliation

The main task of this Section was the reconciliation of all social security benefits transactions. Furthermore it also monitored and reconciled the encashment of energy benefit vouchers. To this end, close liaising with Social Security, ARMS, DAMP and local banks occurred.

The below table indicates the amount of cheques, direct credits and energy benefit vouchers that this section verified during 2013.

Cheques	ACRT Count	Energy Benefit Vouchers	Total
589,846	1,325,227	117,493	2,032,566

Office Management and Registry

This section managed the smooth running of a number of contractual agreements, mainly the cleaning contract, supply of photocopiers to District Offices and Head Office, fire alarm system and air conditioning systems.

During this year this section was involved in coordinating the installation of the new chillers system at Palazzo Ferreria and ACCESS centres, and oversaw that the new systems provided effective and efficient service. Two officers from this section were also involved in the installation of evacuation plans, emergency exits and provision of Fire Extinguishers as a result of the risk assessment exercise which was carried out in 2012. Another important exercise carried out by this unit was the post occupancy evaluation exercise within Palazzo Ferreria.

The Registry was involved in the usual registry works, file movement, creation of new files especially files relating to payment for Board members. Furthermore an exercise to replace thorn file covers was embarked upon.

Maintenance

The maintenance team was instrumental in a number of refurbishing works within the Ministry, mostly on work related with the new Permanent Secretary's offices. Extensive plastering and painting works in the Minister's and Secretariats' offices at Palazzo Ferreria were carried out. Furthermore works were also carried out at SVPR.

The carpenters manufactured various furniture items whilst other tradesman carried out maintenance jobs including replacement of drainage and water pipes.

Another important task was the evaluation of an Expression of Interest for a new Area office in Zurrieq and a subsequent contract. After a recruitment exercise four officers were identified to serve as 'On Call Officers' after office hours in case there is a Fire Alarm alert or if requested by the main communication providers that have their services installed upon Palazzo Ferreria roof.

Information Management Unit

Information, Communications and Technology (ICT) is one of the key resources within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (MFSS). It focuses on improving the way that MFSS uses technology as a sound and effective foundation for delivering its corporate objectives. The right approach to and proper investment in ICT gives MFSS the opportunity to transform the way it does business. Keeping this in mind, the primary focus of the Information Management Unit is

the strategic direction and management of information by ensuring that data is translated into information as a strategic resource.

Administrative Support

The Administrative Support Unit (ASU) offered a first line of support for ICT services for all staff within the Ministry's portfolio. The ASU aimed at serving as an ICT helpdesk in order to filter queries and requests forwarded by line departments, identifying the query or request. It also procured ICT items in order to assist line departments deliver services efficiently and effectively.

Responding to growing dependence on ICT entailed the provision and maintenance of a resilient and reliable operations service in support of organisational objectives. The main priority was therefore to ensure that MFSS's investment in ICT solutions was adequately protected. This is done through effective contractual frameworks which are currently ongoing. This guaranteed that agreed service delivery and support is provided in a cost-effective, secure and efficient manner.

Contractual arrangements covered the full spectrum of ICT services including network management, desktop support and application support/development. Getting the most from selected service providers and from the cost effective use of technology helped to deliver efficiency savings and reduce costs, thus creating long-term cost-effective solutions.

Social Policy Information Centre (SPIC)

The Social Policy Information Centre (SPIC) is an information centre offering greater access to citizens for the provision of information related to Social Policy services. It is an additional channel through which the general public may obtain information.

SPIC, continually provided a telephony-based service offering all necessary and relevant information to all citizens of Malta and Gozo about social services and other services offered by departments and entities within the social policy portfolio. The utmost priority would be to deliver an excellent service by making the user's phone call or request a positive experience, ultimately providing a faster and better answer.

Benefit Processing and Data Management

IMU offered a timely and smooth support service to the Department for Social Security (DSS) with regards to the processing and issuing of social security benefits as well as ensuring consistency and integrity of the data stored within the Social Security Benefits System (SABS). By taking a proactive approach, IMU strived in proposing changes within those processes that can be automated or improved thus reducing the load on DSS line sections.

The focus in this area was on the processing and issuing of payments to beneficiaries entitled to social security benefits. In addition correspondence letters are also issued to beneficiaries related to social security benefits. IMU processed benefits in an effective and timely manner keeping in mind that these benefits constitute a vital help to thousands of citizens. Payment processes are scheduled on a daily basis for different social security benefit payments due on a weekly, four weekly and quarterly basis.

The payment of such benefits was either made by cheque or paid directly to beneficiary's bank accounts. This involved liaison with the local banks and the postal service due to the large amount of cheques and direct credits transactions. Each year, the number of social security benefits paid by cheque to beneficiaries amounted to 600,000 payments. Moreover, those beneficiaries paid through direct credit payments total to over 1.1 million yearly, while

correspondence letters issued to beneficiaries related to social security benefits amounts to 560,000.

eStrategy

The Ministry's direction was to continue to improve the spread of online services to the general public. The Department for Social Security in collaboration with MITA will be embarking on a programme of works 2013 – 2016 to expand upon the existing services as well as a programme of simplification of Bureaucracy Initiatives, whereby beneficiaries will no longer be required to apply for their benefit entitlement.

Through the website, IMU ensured that its content is maintained, updated and of high standard at all times and is always seeking to enhance, identify and extend components of the existing sites, or seek specific business areas in order to offer new services through the website.

HR MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE

OVERVIEW

The Human Resources Management Directorate is the focus of all HR and people management matters within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. Amongst others it provides support services and advice to the Permanent Secretary, to the Directorates, line Departments and organisations/entities within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. It also ensures that the policies and procedures of the Public Service and relevant legislation are adhered to. Furthermore, the Directorate assisted regularly internal and external clients providing support and information on an ongoing basis on a wide range of HR issues or as may be requested by central government.

The Directorate co-ordinated activities of a corporate nature and sought to achieve uniformity in implementing policy directives issued by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Public Administration HR Office as well as by the Ministry itself.

Recruitment

Following the approval of vacancies emanating from the Capacity Building Exercise as well as *ad hoc* requests, the Directorate issued of a total of 13 different calls for application. The Directorate is responsible for obtaining the necessary approvals, drafting and publishing of calls, compiling of list of applicants for selection boards and eventually the processing of appointments and drawing up of contracts or appointment letters as required.

The Directorate also facilitated various Vacancy Requests Forms on behalf of the various entities falling under the Ministry's remit. This role of the Directorate is to process the VRF in line with RRAG and MFIN regulations.

Promotions and progressions of general service grades and departmental grades were also processed and deadlines were respected in the vast majority of the cases. The Directorate also assisted in the drafting of Contracts for Service, ensuring compliance with MFIN regulations. The Directorate also liaised with the Directorate for Corporate Services especially with respect to procurement regulations.

Records

The directorate is also responsible for keeping up-to-date records of employees. This includes updating of vacation and sick leave records, timely renewals of family-friendly applications in line with the central policy, and the processing of the Performance Management Programme. Furthermore, the Directorate is also responsible for the issuing of the GP 47 – Service and Leave Record for all members of staff.

The Directorate has also consolidated and expanded the statistical data pertaining to employee absenteeism, leaves and family friendly measures. The infoshare portal has been utilised as a platform to upload and update the data. This has ensured that a more coordinated and efficient approach is adopted to data management.

Discipline

The Directorate's remit also includes the administration of Disciplinary Procedures. Emphasis on professional people management is promoted in order to try and instil in our staff good practices and raise awareness of and compliance with procedures and regulations. However, when needed, disciplinary action is taken in line with the parameters established in the Public Service Commission Regulations.

Salaries and Remuneration

The HR Directorate is responsible of the processing, computation and data management of the payroll of employees falling under our remit. Queries from staff are answered professionally and the section interfaces with the Treasury in Gozo and with the HR Management Systems Directorate in order to ensure the timely and correct computation of salaries. Following the coming into force of the Collective Agreement, Personal Record Sheets, and other records were updated.

HR Management Staff

The staff complement within the Directorate remained within the same level as the previous year. The Directorate holds regular staff meetings to review work practices with the aim of improving our service delivery. As part of the performance management plan, members of staff were encouraged to attend specifically selected training courses organised by the CDRT with the aim of improving their work performance and as part of their continuous professional development. A team building session for all the members of staff was also held.

Training and Development

The HR Management Directorate continued to promote an organisational culture built on training and development by facilitating access to the programmes provided by CDRT particularly ESF funded programmes.

Moreover, between June and September 2013, the HR Management facilitated the first social policy teaching course. The lectures were delivered by Professor Maurice Mullard, Reader Emeritus at the University of Hull. Thirteen lectures were delivered and participants actively participated in the Course through group sessions and group presentations. Over seventy employees participated.

Employee Support Programme

Throughout 2013, the HR Management Directorate collaborated closely with the Employee Support Unit in order to promote further this service and to foster within our Ministry a culture of staff well-being and employee support. The Directorate also promoted and participated in a number of training initiatives which were organised for this purpose.

EU AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE

Introduction

In 2013, the EU Affairs Directorate (formerly Policy Development and EU Affairs Directorate) was entrusted with the task of coordinating the Ministry's response in EU and other international fora, as well as to contribute to the drawing up of policies in respect of matters pertaining initially to the Ministry for Justice, Dialogue and the Family, and subsequently the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, as a result of the change in Administration following the General Election held on 9th March 2013.

Besides monitoring developments in these areas at both EU and international level, while also coordinating the formulation of Ministry positions in such areas, after holding consultations with relevant stakeholders, the EU Affairs Directorate also monitored developments at both EU and international level in respect of those areas pertaining to the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, given the absence of an EU Affairs Directorate in this Ministry.

The EU Affairs Directorate also provided positions to other Ministries whenever required. Moreover, the Directorate coordinated the participation of Ministry officials in various conferences, meetings, and other events, taking place abroad. Of particular relevance was the participation in EU-related Ministerial Council meetings of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO), and of the Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA), as well as the respective Informal Ministers' Council meetings organised by the Irish and Lithuanian EU Presidencies.

In addition to EU Affairs, the Directorate also dealt with matters relating to International Affairs, particularly in the areas of social affairs and justice. Many of the requests originated from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and mainly referred to documentation sent from the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

With regards to Policy Development, the Directorate also incorporates within its structures the Research Unit and the Social Inclusion Office. The Research Unit, which started operations in January 2010, is entrusted with undertaking data and research analysis in the formulation of policy development related to social affairs. On the other hand, the Social Inclusion Office is a key component of social policy development and upholds the overall responsibility for the promotion of social inclusion issues in Malta.

EU Affairs

Drafting of Positions: During 2013, the EU Affairs Directorate drafted or coordinated the drafting of 146 Instruction Notes for EPSCO and JHA Working Parties, COREPER I and II, and Committees' meetings. In addition to this, the Directorate drafted 43 Briefing Notes, 26 Background Notes, and 36 Lines to Take/Speaking Notes in connection with participation in EPSCO and JHA Ministerial meetings and conferences, bilateral meetings with the European Commission, and meetings attended by the Permanent Representative of Malta to the European Union.

Participation in Inter-Ministerial Committee: The Directorate actively participated in all the Inter-Ministerial Committee for EU Affairs meetings held in 2013. In this regard, the Directorate last year prepared a total of 4 Explanatory Memoranda outlining Government's position on new proposals and communications issued by the European Commission for which the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, as well as the Ministry for Justice, Dialogue and the Family, prior to 9th March 2013, were the designated implementing Ministries. The explanatory memoranda were cleared by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for EU Affairs and subsequently approved by Cabinet of Minister before being transmitted to the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Union Affairs of the House of Representatives for its approval.

In addition to the above, the Directorate also provided its feedback in relation to numerous other Explanatory Memoranda for which the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, as well as the formerly Ministry for Justice, Dialogue and the Family, were participating Ministries.

Hereunder are other highlights of the Directorate's actions in 2013 in the area of EU Affairs.

Europe 2020 Strategy: Throughout 2013, the EU Affairs Directorate continued to monitor developments in EU discussions and provide its views when requested, as well as to hold consultations where necessary, with regards to Malta's contribution towards the European Semester discussion, particularly in relation to Malta's Country Specific Recommendation on Pensions and the EU's Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction headline target.

European Council Conclusions: The EU Affairs Directorate also coordinated Ministry's response with regards to the formulation of Malta's position for the four European Council meetings held in 2013.

Infringements: During the course of 2013, the EU Affairs Directorate coordinated Ministry response with regards to the following infringements:

In 2013, the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity continued to monitor developments on Infringement No. 2009/2161 concerning the calculation of pension entitlements in Malta, specifically with regards to the application of Article 46b of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 and Article 54 of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 with regard to persons receiving a Maltese statutory social security pension and a civil service pension from another EU Member State. The infringement originates from complaints made by Maltese citizens who previously worked under UK civil servant schemes to the effect that the amount of their UK pensions is deducted from their Maltese retirement pension. Malta maintains that it is correctly applying the above-mentioned Articles with respect to all pensions paid by any EU Member State and which fall within the scope of the Regulations being cited. Therefore, in Malta's opinion, there is no breach of Community law. The European Commission is nevertheless expected to refer case to the Court of Justice of the European Union;

The EU Affairs Directorate also coordinated Malta's response with regards to Pre-Infringement Memorandum (EU Pilot) received from the European Commission on 9th April 2013 in which various questions were raised regarding the transposition by Malta of received

from the European Commission on the implementation of Directive 2006/54/EC on the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast). Malta submitted its clarifications to the European Commission on 18th June 2013. Following the receipt of an additional Pre-Infringement Memorandum (EU Pilot) on 14th November 2013 in which the Commission services requested further detailed information in relation to the following: (a) occupational Social Security schemes; (b) rules for reimbursement of contributions; and (c) burden of proof. Malta reply was prepared following consultations with relevant entities and uploaded onto the EU Pilot application on 20th December 2013.

Attendance in EU Meetings: In 2013, officials from the Directorate regularly attended EU meetings of the Social Protection Committee and the Indicators Sub Group of the Social Protection Committee, as well as other EU-related meetings and events, whenever such participation was requested.

Director (EU Affairs) also represented the Ministry at the following EU Council meetings: (a) EPSCO Council of the 28th February 2013 (Brussels, Belgium); (b) Informal JHA Council of 18th January 2013 (Dublin, Ireland); and (c) JHA Council of the 8th March 2013 (Brussels, Belgium).

During 2013, the EU Affairs Directorate coordinated the participation of Ministerial delegations led by Hon. Minister Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, at the Informal EPSCO Council held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on the 11th-12th July 2013, the EPSCO Council held in Luxembourg on 15th October 2013, and the 19th Meeting of the Housing Ministers of the Member States of the EU held in Brussels, Belgium, on the 8th-10th December 2013.

Moreover, the EU Affairs Directorate coordinated the participation of a Maltese delegation attending the 3rd Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion which was held in Brussels, Belgium, from the 26th-27th November 2013.

Visit to Malta of EU Commissioner: One of the highlights from an EU Affairs point of view was the visit to Malta of Mr László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, who attended on 12th December 2013 the official launching by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity of the EU funded project '*Leap! Building the Future Together: Promoting Social Mobility*'.

International Affairs

In 2013, the Directorate also coordinated the Ministry's response to requests for information received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on United Nations' Conventions and Protocols as well other international institutions of which Malta is a Member State, such as the Commonwealth and the Council of Europe, relating to such issues as human rights, discrimination, women's rights, empowerment and other equality matters, including on sexual and reproductive health and rights (when still Ministry for Justice, Dialogue and the Family) as well as social issues, such as social security provisions, welfare services, disability, children's rights, family matters, poverty reduction and social exclusion. Similarly, whenever requested, the Directorate provided its feedback to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in relation to meetings attended by representatives of this Ministry.

An inter-ministerial delegation led by Mr Frans Borg, then Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Justice, Dialogue and the Family, attended the 62nd Session for the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child held in Geneva, Switzerland, on the 17th January 2013. A Malta statement was prepared and presented for this meeting outlining developments on

Malta's second periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child submitted to the United Nations Committee in May 2010.

Policy Development

The EU Affairs Directorate coordinated the Ministry's response towards the drawing up of the measures included in Malta's National Reform Programme 2013 in respect of the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction national target. The National Reform Programme was published in April 2013.

During 2013, the Directorate's Research Unit continued with its work on Malta's headcount national poverty reduction target in relation to the Europe 2020 headline target, that included addressing the technical issues encountered in combining and merging data retrieved from a number sources in collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the European Union SILC team.

Furthermore, the Policy wing of the EU Affairs Directorate is coordinating Ministry response in relation to the Sustainable Development Act (2012). The Director (EU Affairs) has been designated as the Ministry's Sustainable Development Coordinator, while every entity within the Ministry has appointed a Sustainable Development Focal Point. The Directorate has also participated in an introductory meeting chaired by the Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, which was held on Wednesday 11th December 2013.

Also, as part of the Sustainable Development Act 2012 initiative, the Policy wing within the Directorate also coordinated the Ministry's response relating to the implementation of the National Environment Policy (NEP). More specifically, this response concerned one of the measures contained in this Policy which dealt with social housing.

On the other hand, the main highlight of the work carried out by the Social Inclusion Office, which also forms part of the policy wing of the Directorate, was the drawing up of Malta's National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion for 2013. This was presented to Cabinet of Ministers on 8th October 2013 and transmitted to the EU's Social Protection Committee (SPC) on 12th October 2013.

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION DIRECTORATE – SOCIAL AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE

The role of the directorate

During 2013, the Directorate continued to focus on its dual core functions, namely: a) monitoring and reporting upon the implementation status of social affairs measures emanating from national documents; and b) promoting, supporting and monitoring the use of EU funds so as to ensure that departments and entities within the Ministry reap the full benefits arising from such funding opportunities.

In view of the two key functions outlined above, during 2013 the Directorate:

- monitored the social affairs measures and initiatives arising from the National Reform Programmes (NRP), the National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion (NSR) and the National Budgets;
- disseminated information regarding EU funding opportunities;
- oversaw the implementation of EU co-financed projects;
- verified the eligibility of all payment claims and monitored the disbursement of funds with regards to ESF and ERDF co-financed projects falling within the Ministry's remit;

- co-ordinated preliminary preparations for the new EU programming period (2014-2020);
- provided feedback to EU documents mainly focusing on EU funding; and
- invested in staff training.

MONITORING OF ENDORSED SOCIAL AFFAIRS MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

Following the publication of the 2013 National Budget and the National Reform Programme, the Directorate extrapolated those measures that *prima facie* appeared to pertain to the remit of the Ministry. A total of 38 new social affairs measures (25 from the National Budget and 13 from the National Reform Programme) were identified and the Directorate then proceeded to establish which Department or entity within the Ministry was responsible for the implementation of each measure. Once ownership was confirmed, the Directorate undertook the necessary discussions so as to ensure that milestones and corresponding timeframes were established for each measure thus facilitating implementation assessment and reporting.

Besides monitoring these 38 new measures, the Directorate also continued to oversee the implementation of ongoing measures emanating from national documents published in previous years. As a result of this regular monitoring, during 2013, the Directorate supervised and reported upon the progress and implementation status of a total of 103 measures. Bi-annual and other *ad hoc* reports were compiled thus facilitating the early detection of any issues that could hinder the timely implementation of each measure as well as facilitating early remedial action as and where possible.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION RE EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

In its constant endeavour to promote the use of EU funds, during 2013 the Directorate continued to disseminate all relevant information that it received on EU funding opportunities to each department and entity within the Ministry. The Directorate attributed particular focus on the centralised programme entitled PROGRESS. Through its alternate member on the PROGRESS Committee, the Directorate took an active part in disseminating calls for proposals and corresponded both with the national contact points as well as with officials within the EU Secretariat with regards to written procedures, annual reports and other *ad hoc* tasks.

Besides disseminating information and keeping itself posted with developments, the Directorate also vetted applications to be submitted under PROGRESS with a view to assist applicants to improve the quality of their applications prior to directly submitting them to the European Commission. The alternate member attended the PROGRESS Committee meetings held in April and November, the latter being the last meeting under the current PROGRESS Programme.

OVERSEEING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU CO-FINANCED PROJECTS

The Directorate monitored a total of 10 EU co-financed projects that included three projects being implemented by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) which entity, since March 2013, started to form part of the remit of the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties but whose projects continued to be overseen by the Programme Implementation Directorate (Social Affairs) until the end of the year.

During 2013, these 10 projects (9 co-financed under the ESF and 1 under ERDF) had reached different phases of implementation. Whereas four of them (ESF 3.43, ESF 3.47, ESF 3.61 and

ESF 3.62) were in their closing stages, two were ongoing (ERDF 136 and ESF 3.105), a further three (ESF 3.196, ESF 4.220 and ESF 3.234) were approved during 2013 and were thus still in their initial implementation phase, while one project (ESF3.112 -Training rehabilitation workers for persons with visual impairment by FSWS) had to be withdrawn. The beneficiary organisation was compelled to withdraw this project since the sole bidder for running the training programme was not technically compliant with the tender requirements and it was not possible to redesign the project and have it implemented within the set time-frames without jeopardising the quality and level of the training programme as desired in the original project document.

In line with its monitoring role, during 2013 the Directorate:

- carried out a number of physical on-the-spot-checks and in particular covered 25% of the training programme delivered as part of the ESF 3.105 project
- convened three Ministerial Projects Steering Committee (MPSC) meetings. During such meetings, Project Leaders had the opportunity to provide and discuss updates on the various aspects of their projects as well as bring up for discussion any problems or challenges being faced by the projects. Since the MPSC brings together representatives from key stakeholders such as the Managing Authority, Treasury, Certifying Authority and the Contracts Department, the issues presented could be addressed instantly thus facilitating decisions and plans of action...
- attended project progress (bilateral) meetings convened by the Planning and Priorities Coordination Departments as well as the bi-annual Monitoring Committee meetings organised by the Managing Authority.
- reviewed Project Progress Reports (PPRs) which are compiled bi-annually by Projects Leaders so as to ensure that the reports submitted to the Managing Authority are as accurate and detailed as possible.

VERIFICATION OF PAYMENT CLAIMS

As the Directorate responsible for EU funding at Line Ministry level, during 2013, the Directorate vetted a total of 288 Invoice Status certificates while payments effected by Treasury amounted to €693,897.

CO-ORDINATION OF PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW EU PROGRAMMING PERIOD (2014-2020)

Following meetings and discussions with the various departments and entities within the Ministry, the Directorate compiled a list of project proposals envisaged to be carried out during the upcoming 2014-2020 Programming Period.

The Directorate also coordinated the submission of the three ex-ante conditionalities, namely (i) disability, (ii) active ageing, and (iii) combating poverty and social exclusion, which conditionalities were set by the European Commission as pre-requisites for applying for EU funding under the 2014-2020 programming period under each respective thematic objective.

BENEFIT FRAUD AND INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

OVERVIEW

The Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department (BFID) focuses its resources on investigating all reports of alleged abuse in Social Security benefits and on initiating investigative exercises to curb social benefit abuse.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

BFID continued to receive reports on alleged social benefit fraud from two main sources; the general public and the Department of Social Security (DSS). The general public is aware of the effective operations of BFID and has therefore continued to submit a large number of reports, most of which were anonymous. These reports were received by phone, including the freephone (80072345), through emails, through letters and other media. BFID has on its webpage the facility to submit on-line requests for investigation in Maltese and English. Staff from DSS also continued to submit a substantial number of *Requests for Investigation* on the template that was provided to them by BFID. During the year, BFID continued to take the initiative to identify other sources/trends where benefit fraud was suspected and to take appropriate action to curb such abuse. BFID regularly monitors closely all financial data that is uploaded on the SABS computer system operated by DSS. This data, which is obtained from the local financial institutions, is used to investigate, monitor and thereafter make recommendations to DSS to suspend the claims of those beneficiaries of non-contributory means tested benefits whose financial means exceed the applicable financial scales. Further investigations are then conducted in those cases where the claimants to such benefits register a sudden substantial increase in their financial assets.

OPERATIONS

In 2013 the Department cooperated fully with the National Audit Office which was conducting a Performance Audit on the issue of Addressing Social Benefit Fraud. During the year the Department assigned some of its resources to conduct an exercise through which it succeeded to update its database with information on cases that had been investigated and referred to DSS for action from that end. Through this exercise a considerable number of cases were closed when the relative input on the action taken by DSS was obtained and inserted in the database. The number of on-site inspections conducted by BFID Inspectorate in 2013 was 2,135.

From the on-site inspections and from all other investigations conducted by BFID, 1,040 cases were concluded during the year. The operations of BFID during 2013 included one specific investigative exercise on social security beneficiaries. This exercise focused on social security beneficiaries who were suspected of having left Malta and were still receiving social benefits that are not payable outside Malta. Of all the cases investigated by BFID during the year, 661 were not considered to be in breach of the Social Security Act (Cap 318).

BFID recommended to DSS that the remaining 379 cases which were considered to be in breach of the provisions of the Act be suspended and that any resulting overpayments be collected. Up to the end of December 2013, BFID had received full or partial feedback on the 565 cases that were evaluated by DSS and these resulted in the suspension of a total of 838 social benefits (vide table). A number of these cases had more than one benefit in payment. By the end of the year, BFID was still expecting full or partial feedback from DSS on 2,093 cases.

The estimated annual savings for 2013, collated from the feedback received from DSS, totalled €3,391,478.

Suspended Benefits	
Invalidity Pension	1
Supplementary Allowance	51
Child Allowance	95
Sickness Assistance	147
Social Assistance	242

Unemployment Assistance	94
Age Pension	56
Social Assistance - Single Unmarried Parent	70
Social Assistance Carers	4
Carers' Pension	1
Special Unemployment Benefit	4
Disability Pensions (Non-contributory)	1
Social Assistance Board	1
Contributory Pensions – TTP, ESRP, NMWP	1
Energy Benefit	70
Total	838

By the end of 2013, BFID had 424 cases pending investigation or conclusion.

It is estimated that during the period 2006 - 2013 the Benefit Fraud and Investigation Department contributed through its operations to savings amounting to **€27,866,585**. This was achieved with a Cost/ Savings ratio of **€7.53 : €100**

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL WELFARE STANDARDS

ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

In 2013, this office continued to provide financial and administrative services to the department as well as answering to queries in connection with childcare facilities from the child care freephone installed at same office besides other general office duties such as Registry duties, maintenance of premises and administration of DSWS email account.

With regards to finance, the Administration Office worked out monthly revised estimates and coordinated funds accordingly.

The Administration Office apart from performing routine internal management tasks also carried out the tasks mentioned hereunder: - preparation of a Comprehensive Spending Review in terms of MF Circular 4/2013 – The 2014 Budget Process and spending Reviews

Capacity Building

In 2013, four (4) officers namely, two Research Officers, Junior Legal Officer and an Assessor were recruited according to the authorisation Capacity Building Exercise in April 2012. The Research Officers (one Female and one Male) are working in the Research Standards Development Unit and Central Authority Functions Unit, whilst the Junior Legal Officer (Male) is working at the Office of the Director and the Assessor (Female) within the Welfare Services Assessment Unit.

WELFARE SERVICES ASSESSMENT UNIT

In 2013, the WSAU also benefitted from part of the time of an Officer in Scale 5 who took on the co-ordination of the implementation of the National Standards for Out of Home, together with other duties separate from WSAU.

Assessing Child Day Care Facilities

Throughout 2013, the assessment of facilities providing child day care services remained the main focus of the Welfare Services Assessment Unit. In line with the motoring process requested by this Department in the National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities (2006), in 2013 DSWS carried out compliance assessments in sixty-seven (67) registered child day care facilities for children 0-3years. As per legal notice 54 of 2008 the Welfare Services Assessment unit also processed applications for facilities to be registered as educational establishments.

As part of its remit to promote good quality services in the child care sector, during 2013 the WSAU invested the time, energy and expertise of its Assessors in the development of a 20 minute video clip. The dvd, which exposes the main features for parents to look out for when selecting a good quality service for their children, is utilised in the sessions regarding Child Care which are delivered as part of the Parent Craft series of lectures. Assessors from WSAU delivered a total of 24 of these sessions to parents, where the video is followed by a question and answer session.

The current administration has established that the regulation of child day care will be transferred to the Ministry for Education's portfolio at the end of 2014, while introducing a free child-care scheme. In preparation for a smooth transition in terms of both these initiatives WSAU together with RSDU has engaged in several meetings with the respective departments within the Education Division to exchange data and lay the foundations for the change-over.

Assessment of Adoption Agencies

The Welfare Services Assessment Unit acts on behalf of the Central Authority, in line with the Adoption Administration Act (2008), to assess adoption agencies for the renewal of their accreditation certificate. During 2013 WSAU carried out 1 such assessment, which consisted predominantly of observation of the training being provided by the respective agency to Prospective Adoptive Parents. There were no applications for the accreditation of new adoption agencies during the same period.

Implementation of National Standards for Out of Home Care

The services of an officer in Grade 5 enabled WSAU to resume its efforts in the implementation of the out of home sector. Various meetings were held with different levels of stake holders in the sector to re-introduce the process and other meetings were held with out of home care service providers focusing on the development of policies and procedures which reflect the relevant out of home care sector.

A number of providers have developed policy and procedure documents which are now being vetted by WSAU. Other service providers are benefitting from the assistance of the WSAU Assessors to develop theirs.

An initial meeting was also held with Appogg which is a key component in the out-of-home care continuum which children go through and which is also regulated by the National Standards for Out of Home Care.

Care Orders

Those Assessors from the WSAU who hold a Social Work qualification are also called upon to provide those parents whose children are subjected to a Care Order the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about the same care order. During 2013 a total of 17 such meetings were held.

THE RESEARCH AND STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT UNIT

Throughout 2013 the Research and Standards Development Unit carried out its ongoing activities, such as developing and maintaining databases, carrying out research and developing Standards. The RSDU was actively involved in setting up Standards for children's indoor play areas, out-of-home care, services related to the Adoption of children, residential services that cater for people with Addictions and those that cater for persons with disability. The RSDU was also involved in fine-tuning of the Free Childcare Initiative, the development of the Early Years Whitepaper and the development of a National Literacy Strategy.

Research on Child day care Facilities

- Developing and maintaining databases of data collected during Assessments by the WSAU

Throughout 2013 the RSDU developed databases in which the RSDU collated all the data collected by the WSAU during inspection visits. In 2013 the RSDU worked on developing such databases for assessments carried out in 2006-2013. These databases are aimed towards facilitating the extraction of data when needed, as well as enabling the analysis of data regarding the overall situation of Child Day Care Facilities registered with the DSWS. The RSDU is responsible for updating and maintaining these databases as per data collected by WSAU Assessors.

- Analyses of data collected during Assessments by the WSAU

In 2013 the RSDU analysed and issued internal reports on the data collated during inspection visits. This data was heavily used in the development of the White Paper entitled 'Early Childhood Education and Care in Malta: The Way Forward'. These reports included:

- Compliance to Child Carer Ratios stipulated in Standard 1 (2012)
- Staff Turnover in Childcare centres (2011-2013)
- Complaints received by the DSWS vis-à-vis Child Day Care Facilities (2008-2012)
- The implementation of Standard 5: Child Care, Learning and Play (2012)

- Survey on the Availability and Affordability of Child Day Care Facilities

In April 2013 the RSDU launched a survey on the Availability and Affordability of Child Day Care Facilities of which 59 having provisional registration replied as with 10 child care centre having temporary registration participated. This means an overall response rate of 95.8% (n=69). Results were presented in a report, which contributed to the development of the White Paper entitled 'Early Childhood Education and Care in Malta: The Way Forward' and the details of the Free Childcare Initiative.

- Survey on the Use and projected Demand of Child Day Care Facilities

In June 2013 the RSDU carried out a survey that gauged the impact of the Free Childcare Initiative on the use of Childcare Centres and on the working hours of women. 648 parents/guardians participated in this survey. Results from this survey, issued by the RSDU, contributed to the development of the White Paper entitled 'Early Childhood Education and Care in Malta: The Way Forward' and the details of the Free Childcare Initiative.

Research and Standards Development related to Residential Services for people with difficulties relating to Addictions

- **National Standards for Services that cater for people with problems related to Addiction**

Following the public consultation period carried out in November-December 2012, the finalised National Standards for Residential Facilities which provide accommodation to people with Drug, Alcohol and Gambling-related issues were presented to Hon. Minister Coleiro Preca for publication.

- **Workforce Mapping Exercise**

In 2013, the RSDU analysed data collected in 2012 through the workforce mapping exercise carried out within residential services that cater for people with addiction. This served to identify the job descriptions, qualifications, training and work experience held by persons working in such services which will help the NCFHE develop qualification requirements and Occupational Standards for the field.

Adoption Services

In 2013, the Draft Standards for the Adoption Services were presented to the Minister for Family and Social Solidarity and the Commission on Child Policy and Strategy for their consideration and direction regarding launch for public consultation.

Development of Standards for Residential Services for Persons with Disability

Following Malta's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability towards the end of 2012, in 2013 the DSWS started carrying out its obligations in this convention by preparing the regulatory framework for this sector, starting with Residential Facilities. The RSDU carried out desk research about legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines that regulate Residential Services for Persons with Disability overseas and prepared a draft by amalgamating several sets of Standards used in Scotland into one document. In order to garner more insight on the most pertinent matters in this regard, the RSDU carried out 5 focus groups amongst service users and one-to-one meetings with each service provider. The RSDU also formed a working group to discuss the Scottish Standards and come up with a Maltese Draft Standards for Residential Services for Persons with Disability. In 2013 the working group met 5 times.

Standards for Indoor Play Areas for Children

The RSDU continued to participate in a technical committee whose remit was to develop the Standard for Indoor Play Areas for Children. This was an initiative of the Commissioner for Children, carried out by the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority. The technical committee convened in December 2011 and, together with Hon. Helena Dalli, launched the Draft Standard in August 2013 for public consultation. The technical committee agreed on a finalised Standard in December 2013. The technical committee met 11 times throughout 2013.

National Children's Policy

The RSDU and Manager (WSAU) were involved in the finalising of the National Children's Policy. This involved vetting the feedback obtained during the public consultation period, meeting and liaising with stakeholders to garner further insight, liaising with Hon Minister Coleiro Preca and the National Commission on Child Policy and Strategy, as well as updating and editing the Draft Children's Policy.

ERDF SECTION

In 2013, the sum of €384, 525.83 was disbursed to sixteen Beneficiaries – four in Call 1, three in Call 2, and nine in Call 3. Total savings amounted to €8, 397.85. One project was withdrawn by the Intermediate Body due to the fact that in spite of given extension till end of August 2013, Beneficiary did not manage to submit claim.

The Intermediate Body corresponded with PPCD and Line Ministry to issue the fourth and last call under this cohesion period in view of the fact of the savings registered and due to the fact that the IB carried out a research exercise among the childcare facilities registered with the department and other entities who expressed interest to apply for funding should Call 4 is issued. A pre-announcement was also issued on local papers and on the Government Gazette on 26th May 2013. Forty one entities replied that they would apply for funding should the call is issued.

The call was eventually launched on the 5th September 2013 and closed at noon of Thursday 17th October 2013. Twelve applications were received by noon of Thursday 17th October 2013.

The Project Selection Committee evaluated the twelve applications where five out of the twelve applications were found to be ineligible and rejection letters were sent to the unsuccessful applicants on Thursday 7th November 2013. Three out of the five applicants appealed. Consequently, the Project Leader coordinated the set up of the Appeals Board which convened on the 27th November 2013. The Appeals Board agreed with the decisions reached by the Project Selection Committee and consequently, the rejected applicants were informed accordingly. The Grant Agreements were scheduled to be signed on Thursday 5th December 2013, by the Intermediate Body was recommended to halt the process during the Ministerial Steering Committee Meeting which was held on Thursday 28th November 2013, due to an unexpected issue raised by MEPA via letter dated 14th November 2013.

The Project Leader was also requested by MITA to give feedback in the form of a questionnaire. The aim of the questionnaire was to reduce administrative burdens for Beneficiaries by implementing the concept of e-Cohesion, which concerns the electronic exchange of information between Beneficiaries and programme bodies during the next programming period 2014 – 2020. Consequently a meeting was then organised to discuss this feedback.

LEGAL OFFICE

In March 2013, Director's Office within DSWS was assigned a Legal Officer to work on a full time basis for the department. During this year the legal officer worked on further developing the draft regulatory law that shall establish the legal basis as well as regulatory functions of the DSWS.

The Legal Officer assisted in the National Commission for Child Policy and Strategy in developing the Child Protection (Out of Home Care) Bill which law is currently in its second reading before Parliament. Other work carried out by the legal officer involved assisting in legal issues concerning adoption agencies, legal notices for new Hague Member States, assisting the Central Authority Unit in handling the legal aspects of incoming and outgoing cases on International Child Abduction, Maintenance and other relating requests under EC Regulation 2201/2003 as well as representing Director in the relevant court cases.

CENTRAL AUTHORITY FUNCTIONS

Adoptions

Accreditation

In 2013, the Central Authority started preparing for the renewal of the accreditation of the agencies. Together with the Research Unit the CA also carried out 2 research exercises, mainly; a questionnaire addressed to the adoption applicants who have finalised the adoption process which findings were used as part of the assessment of the agencies and financial interviews with the aim of collecting information about the expenses related to adoption, results of which were presented to Minister. CA continued collecting adoptions registers as per Adoption Administration Act.

Draft Agreements and Inter-country adoptions

During 2013 the CA renewed the Memorandum of Understanding with Slovakia, revived contacts with Poland and initiated contact with China, Vietnam and Chile.

Varied adoption queries

The CA dealt with a number of queries including:

- Prospective Adoptive Parents living abroad
- Foreigners wishing to adopt from Malta
- Relative adoptions
- Adverts
- Adoption statistics
- Private contacts
- Post Adoption Reporting matters
- General queries from adoption agencies

Tracing

Together with the WSAU the CA assisted a number of adoptees who have now reached the age of 18 to trace their biological family.

Criteria

In view of the changes to the Adoption Board, the CA has throughout 2013 worked with the Adoption Board to establish criteria for foreigners living in Malta and wishing to carry out adoption procedures from Malta and presenting these criteria to Ministry for political direction.

Fostering

Together with WSAU the CA continued working on the renewal of accreditation. Meetings were also carried out between the CA and FSWS to clarify fostering related matters.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Overview

The Department of Social Security is responsible for the administration of Social Security Legislation which provides for the payments of benefits under the contributory and the non-contributory schemes. These sections cover the entire population which is in some way

recipient of such benefits. The Department is mainly involved in ensuring that financial support is given to those sections of the community which vulnerable and are mostly in need, namely those with a low-income, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

Total Expenditure

The total expenditure on Social Security Benefits for 2013 reached €810.2m, reflecting an increase of €41m over the previous year.

The following table shows the expenditure on all Social Security benefits payable under the Social Security Act, (Cap 318) during 2013. This table comprises the contributory and non-contributory benefits issued by the Department.

Table 1

Type of Benefit	2012	2013	(+ or -)
Pensions in respect of Retirement	392,966,449	409,538,262	16,571,813
Pensions in respect of Invalidity	25,058,718	25,634,606	575,888
Pensions in respect of Widowhood	108,375,572	113,843,454	5,467,882
Benefit in respect of Industrial Injuries	1,518,266	1,564,801	46,535
Benefits in respect of Unemployment	2,257,211	2,673,559	416,348
Children's Allowance	39,322,802	42,794,375	3,471,573
Maternity Benefit	2,218,586	2,163,862	-54,724
Sickness Benefit	6,618,649	6,774,005	155,356
Orphan's Allowance	88,937	84,050	-4,887
Marriage Grant	870,489	774,810	-95,679
Bonus	54,314,674	59,299,086	4,984,412
Total	633,612,365	665,146,883	31,534,518
Pensions in respect of Age/Visually Impaired	19,893,076	21,057,452	1,164,376
Pensions in respect of Disability	11,200,966	11,961,735	760,769
Social Assistance	69,020,495	75,127,686	6,107,191
Disabled Child Allowance	731,418	795,979	64,561
Medical Assistance	17,782,089	18,285,330	503,241
Bonus	10,286,768	11,004,927	718,159
Supplementary Allowance	6,596,495	6,811,331	214,836
Total	135,511,307	145,044,440	9,533,133
Grand Total	769,123,672	810,191,323	41,067,651

New Social Security Measures

The Department was responsible for implementing a number of measures, most of them announced in the 2013 Budget.

Pensioners in receipt of a social security pension were once again awarded the full cost of living as in the previous year with a 2/3 increase in the pension weekly rate and the remaining 1/3 paid as a cost of living bonus at the start of the year.

The age related to the Senior Citizen Grant of €300 was extended from the age of 80 years to the age of 78 years for persons who reside in their own residence or with relative.

Another €200 from one's service pension, bringing the total to €1266, is no longer considered in the assessment process of the social security pension entitlement.

Maternity Leave Benefit increased to cover four additional weeks instead of two.

Persons over the age of 65 years who are at risk of poverty were awarded an additional €100 over and above the Supplementary rate.

The Child Allowance maximum rate extended for those in employments with a salary equal to the national minimum wage.

The Child Allowance Fixed Rate for high income increased to €450 per year per child

Disabled persons born before January 2007 benefit from the same income/earnings assessment as for those married after January 2007

The pension apportionment between a pensioner who resided in a state financed residence and spouse who remains at home, increased from 40/60 to 30/70 and spouse at home is guaranteed the rate of a single person on Age Pension, that is, if 70% is less than the Age Pension rate for a single person

Parental credits are due to persons born between 1952 and 1961. Conditions for persons born after 01/01/1962 apply but maximum award is equal to one year per child and two years are applicable if child is severely disabled.

Credits are awarded to youths under the age of 25 who carry out voluntary work in Malta and/or abroad up to a maximum of 5 years as long as s/he returns to employment or self-employment for a minimum of 5 years

Credits are also due to a person whose application for Carer's Pension is rejected on means testing but satisfied the medical panel and the contribution test

Credits are also due to a person who is eligible to Social Assistance for Carers and satisfies the contribution test

The option to choose the highest Pensionable Income to persons born after 01/01/1962 who retire through an Early Retirement Scheme in anticipation of privatisation, extended to persons who retire in anticipation of restructuring as well

The Widows' Pension flat rate awarded also to widows/ers who re-married before January 2007

Contributory Scheme

The total revenue collected during 2013, in terms of the Social Security Act (Cap 318) amounted to €645,296,850 which reflects an increase of €36,724,648 over the previous year.

These figures are broken down in the following table:

Table 2

Type of Contribution	2012 (Actual)	2013 (Actual)	(+ or -)
Class I - Contributions in respect of Private Industry	281,027,560	300,001,226	18,973,666

Class I - Contributions in respect of Government Employees	87,626,255	91,093,713	3,467,458
Class II - Contributions by Self-Employed persons	36,286,691	36,427,738	141,047
Further Contributions	2,279,341	4,010,521	1,731,180
State Contribution	201,350,343	213,761,639	12,411,296
Total	608,572,202	645,296,850	36,724,648

Contributory Pensions

The following table shows the number of persons in receipt of a Contributory Pension at the end of 2013. Here the upward trend in the number of pensioners, especially the new retirees continued with a net increase of 2.12% being recorded in the number of retirement pensioners over the previous year.

As a result of the budget speech for 2013 all pensioners were awarded the full cost of living increase. Thus two-thirds of the cost of living increase €2.72 was added to the weekly pension rate and the remaining one third amounting to €1.36 was given in one lump payment in advance for the whole year.

As in previous years the maximum pensionable income for Social Security purposes was once again increased by the cost of living allowance to reach the amount of €17,629.

Table 3

Type of Benefit	2012	2013	+ or -
Retirement Pension	8,277	7,440	-837
Increased Retirement Pension	2,139	2,017	-122
National Minimum Retirement Pension	8,858	8,720	-138
Decreased National Minimum Pension	115	108	-7
Increased National Minimum Ret. Pension	3,095	3,155	60
Two-Thirds Pension	37,136	39,603	2,467
Invalidity Pension	512	427	-85
Increased Invalidity Pension	176	140	-36
National Minimum Invalidity Pension	4,514	4,516	2
Decreased National Minimum Invalidity Pension	6	6	0
Widow's Pension with Service Pension	333	321	-12
National Minimum Widow's Pension	8,249	8,087	-162
Widow's Special Allowance	-	-	-
Widow's Benefit	-	-	-
Widow's Allowance	-	-	-
Early Survivor's Pension	1,843	1,819	-24
Survivor's Pension	6,253	6,905	652
Disablement Pension	308	295	-13

Orphan's Allowance	18	16	-2
Parent's Allowance	-	-	-
TOTAL	81,832	83,575	1,743

New Pension claims

During the period under review the pensions section within the Department of Social Security continued processing new claims for Retirement, Widows and Invalidity Pensions. The number of new claims for a Retirement Pension amounted to 1707, 909 new claims were submitted for a Widows Pension and 524 new claims were submitted for an Invalidity Pension.

Pension reviews

During the same period, revisions were undertaken for Retirement, Widows and Invalidity Pensions in connection with the new collective agreement for Civil Service employees that came into effect during 2012 and by virtue of the service pension budget measure announced in the budget for the year under review.

Through the above mentioned collective agreements, circa 33,000 pensioners had their pension reassessed and arrears paid accordingly and another 5,000 pensioners benefitted from the service pension budget measure mentioned as well.

Short Term Benefits

During 2013, the Short Term Benefit (STB) Section in Gozo continued with the normal duties of processing claims pertaining to sickness benefit, unemployment benefit and injury benefit where an increase in the number of claims was recorded over the previous year as per table 2 further below. As per table 3, there was an increase in the submission of weekly medical certificates for sickness benefit purposes which had to be keyed in in order for such claims to be assessed and paid accordingly.

As in the previous years, the Gozo Branch once again managed to issue the annual reviews of Supplementary Allowance claims on time and as in previous years the whole staff compliment performed their duties mostly via Telework. The total number of Supplementary Allowance claims reviewed amounted to 27,526 of which 25,092 were reviews to ascertain entitlement for year 2012/2013 and 2,434 claims pertained to late or change of status applications. Total number of Marriage Grant Applications processed during 2013 was 1,597.

The Short Term Benefits Section also continued with the processing of Energy Benefit applications. A total of 2,797 new applications were assessed and the relative vouchers issued accordingly and another 334 vouchers were also issued to charitable institutions.

The section also re-issued 4,049 vouchers which had expired and also took action on 160 cases which were referred by the Benefit Fraud & Investigations Directorate.

The Call Centre in Gozo is manned by staff trained to perform Customer Care & information duties by telephone on 25903000. During 2013 Call Centre answered 68,941 calls from various DSS enquiring clients.

Short-Term Benefits

Table 4

Type of Benefit	Number Of Claims		
	2012	2013	+ or -
Sickness Benefit	124,888	125,837	949
Unemployment Benefit	17,440	17,850	410
Special Unemployment Benefit	935	1,137	202
Injury Benefit	3,053	3,056	3
Marriage Grant	3,610	3,227	-383
TOTAL	149,926	151,107	1,181

Table 5

Type of Medical Certificate	2012	2013	+ or -
First/Final (less than 4 days)	76,014	76,662	648
First/Final (from 4 to 6 days)	29,453	29,396	-57
First (open)	19,421	19,779	358
Intermediate	96,088	96,908	820
Final	17,699	17,985	286
TOTAL	238,675	240,730	2,055

Children's Allowances and other Family Benefits

Children's Allowance Benefit (CA)

During the year 2013 the Children's Allowance in Gozo section reviewed all the Children's Allowance claims that were in payment with a view to establish the new Children's Allowance rates for the benefit year starting July 2013.

A total of 23,338 beneficiaries were paid through the process for Children Allowance Flat Rate (CAFR); while 19,722 beneficiaries were paid through the Children Allowance Means Test (CAMS) in July 2013. The number of household in receipt of Children's Allowance benefit at 31st December 2013 was 43,060.

Apart from the annual review as described above the Children's Allowance section received 2510 requests for an adjustment in the payment rate of the Children's Allowance benefit due to a change in the family's circumstances such as additional children and termination of employment. These adjustments necessitate a review over and above the annual review indicated in the previous paragraph. A further 841 claims were also processed in connection with marriage separations, new marriages and deaths of one of the spouses.

During 2013 the Children's Allowance Section also received 1857 new claims (1st time application). New claims fall under the Quality Service Charter (QSC). All claims received were processed within the time limit established by the QSC.

Maternity Benefit (MB)

During the year under review a total of 2116 Maternity claims were received by the CA section and given that this benefit also falls under the QSC, all claims were processed and paid within the established time-frame.

Maternity Leave Benefit (MLB)

Maternity Leave Benefit proceeded normally following its introduction in 2012. Maternity Leave Benefit claims received and processed by the end of 2013 were 1437.

Disabled Child Allowance (DCA)

During the year the CA section received 253 new applications for this benefit. 143 of these claims were accepted while 61 claims were rejected by the Medical Panel. At the end of 2013 the remaining 49 claims were still pending the Medical Panel examination. Thus the number of families who received DCA at 31st December 2013 stands at 939. During this year 131 claimants who were already in receipt of DCA had their claim reviewed by the Medical Panel.

Foster Care Allowance (FCA)

21 homes/institutes, which together host 166 children, had the Foster Care Allowance paid to them during 2013.

Foreign Correspondence

The CA section is also responsible for answering various queries sent by EU Member States (E and F Forms) regarding family benefits. A number of requests were generated from the CA section to establish competence/payment entitlement for family benefits.

Children's Allowances and other Family Benefits

Table 6

Number of Families in receipt of Means tested Child allowance			
Type of Allowance	2012	2013	+ or -
(a) Child Allowance only:			
(i) One eligible child	12,792	11,252	-1,540
(ii) Two eligible children	7,211	6,377	-834
(iii) Three eligible children	1,769	1,625	-144
(iv) Four or more eligible children	485	468	-17
TOTAL	22,257	19,722	-2,535

Table 7

Number of families in receipt of the minimum rate of Child Allowance			
Type of Allowance	2012	2013	+ or -
Child Allowance only:			
(i) One eligible child	11,576	12,058	482
(ii) Two eligible children	7,800	9,404	1,604
(iii) Three eligible children	1,251	1,621	370
(iv) Four or more eligible children	187	255	68
TOTAL	20,814	23,338	2,524

Table 8

Number of families in receipt of Disabled Child Allowance			
Type of Benefit	2012	2013	+ or -
Disabled Child Allowance	863	939	76
TOTAL	3,095	3,055	-40

Table 9

Number of claims for maternity leave and maternity leave benefits			
Type of Benefit	2012	2013	+ or -
Maternity Leave Benefit	952	1,437	485
Maternity Benefit	2,232	2,116	-116
TOTAL	3,095	3,055	-40

Overpayments Section

The Overpayments Section started effective operations in June 2012 and started gaining momentum in 2013. Its goals are to detect, follow-up, and recover outstanding non-performing overpayments by various debtors to DSS. It also performs necessary searches at the Public Registry to trace, wills and heirs of deceased debtors. Debtors who come to an agreement to pay debt by monthly instalments are also monitored periodically, and are intimated for repayment in case of default. A Legal Officer provides advice to the section and proceeds with legal action against individuals who deliberately fail to come to a repayment agreement with DSS.

During 2013 the Overpayments Section sent 2,041 Intimation Letters, performed 254 searches with Public Registry and were almost entirely responsible for the recovery of €1,300,721.04. The Legal Officer also issued 122 Judicial Letters and another 55 Intimation Letters in 2013.

Non-Contributory Scheme

The number of persons in receipt of non-contributory Age, visually impaired, mentally/severely disabled, and carer's pension/allowance paid under the Act increased by 3.03% when compared to the previous year as shown in the following table:

Table 10

Type of Pension/Allowance	No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2012	No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2013	+ or -
Old Age	5,007	5,171	164
Visually Impaired	212	219	7
Mentally/Severely Disabled	2,391	2,445	54
Carers	141	151	10
OAA	0	0	0
Total	7,751	7,986	235

Social, Medical Assistance and Supplementary Allowance

There was a marginal increase of 1.55% in the number of beneficiaries when compared to the previous year. The number of such beneficiaries remained just over the 59,000 mark. The following table shows the number of households benefiting from Non-Contributory assistance paid under the Act.

Table 11

	No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2012	No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2013	+ or -
Unemployment Assistance	5,762	5,914	152
Social Assistance*	11,965	13,131	1,166
Sickness Assistance	13,639	13,539	-100
Milk Grant	111	107	-4
Leprosy Assistance	35	33	-2
Tuberculosis Assistance	0	1	1
Supplementary Allowance	26,734	26,424	-310
Total	58,246	59,149	903

* Social Assistance means SA/SAF/SUP/DAD

Customer Care and District Offices

In order to reach the goals laid down in its mission statement, the Department of Social Security provides its services, apart from its Head Office in 38, Ordnance Street Valletta and another back office in St. Francis Square in Victoria Gozo, also from 24 District Offices spread around the Maltese Islands, 22 in Malta and 2 in Gozo. Through such an approach, the Department aims at reaching out to provide assistance and advice on social security matters in the community.

The district offices mentioned above are situated in the localities of Ħal Balzan, Birkirkara, Fgura, Ħamrun, Ħal Luqa, Marsa, Mosta, Msida, Nadur (Gozo), Naxxar, Paola, Qormi, Rabat, Sliema, Qawra, San Gwann, Siggiewi, Valletta, Victoria (Gozo), Vittoriosa, Ħaż-Żabbar, Ħaż-Żebbug, Żejtun, and Żurrieq. The work carried out at district office level mainly consists of dealing with customers' queries, filling in of applications for contributory and non-contributory benefits and pensions, and the registration under the Social Security Act of newly employed workers. The registration of unemployed persons is also carried out at district offices by means of finger reading machines except for Mosta and Vittoriosa where

this service is available at the Employment & Training Corporation's premises within the same locality.

The District Offices of Qawra, Valletta, Msida and Vittoriosa are integrated in a complex under the name of ACCESS. The main aim of the Access Complex is to make it easier for the residents of that particular region to access a number of related services in an integrated manner (one-stop shop) comprising mainly of the Appoġġ Agency, the Department of Social Security and the Employment & Training Corporation. This concept could expand to other regions in the future.

During 2013, the Department served an estimated total of 730,000 customer visits through its 24 front offices around Malta and Gozo. The majority of these, around 82%, were served face to face while the rest mainly by telephone. The figures include returning customers with most of them benefitting from non-contributory benefits and hence are economically inactive. The above figures show that through all its front offices, the Department of Social Security in 2013 served, face to face or by telephone, an estimated average of 2,800 persons a day or 122 persons a day per office.

District Offices' Set-up

A major reform implemented in 2012 led to the restructuring of district offices and appointments of Regional Coordinators and District Managers. The continuing expansion of the Department has seen its business activities spread across the mainland. This naturally imposed entirely new demands on the Department's services and challenges to managing the operations staff. The most important feature of this reform was the Regionalization of the District Offices. While all District Offices remain an integral part of the Department, they are now operating on a regional basis, both in terms of management of resources as well as to the provision of service.

The number of full-time opening District Offices (called parent offices) in the mainland were downsized to 18 with the remaining 4 offices (called satellite offices) opening daily but on shorter schedules of 5 hours daily. Furthermore basic customer care service from the local councils, besides those of Gudja, Xagħra and Mellieħa, was extended to Sannat in Gozo.

Provision of customer care through Local Councils

In its quest to extend its services in the Community, the Department's long-term vision is to provide basic customer care service through Local Councils. Following the agreement reached with the Gudja Local Council in 2010 which led to the successful launching of a pilot project in August of that year, the project was during 2012 extended to another seven Local Councils. In September 2013 customer service was terminated in five local councils due to the very low level of customer demand. Discussions were held with interested Local Councils (is-Sannat, Ħal Safi, Ħal Kirkop, is-Swieqi, Qala, Kerċem, Birzebbuga and Wied il-Għajn). In October 2013 an agreement was reached with the Sannat Local Council which led to provision of basic customer service at the end of November 2013 from the administrative offices of same council.

Appointments of Regional Coordinators and District Managers

The District Offices' Reform saw the addition of a new grade – Regional Coordinator. In essence the five Regional Coordinators are now acting as the assistants to the Assistant Director (Customer Care) for their respective regions and will have to primarily address issues/problems in their regions themselves, e.g. staff needs and issues, rosters, providing a District Manager at the satellite offices twice a week, sending replacement staff, service from their respective Local Councils, etc.

The Regional Coordinators however have to work together as a team, with their respective District Managers and with management (primarily the Assistant Director Customer Care) to ensure that the service delivery at local council level, at satellite district office level, at parent district office level and at regional level, hence at national level, is uniform and of the highest quality throughout.

The District Offices' Reform of 2012 saw also the appointment of new District Managers. As to be expected in such an important role, the area manager has a wide range of responsibilities. These include providing their teams with a stimulating and supportive environment, maintaining and increasing standards of customer service, driving team performance and training and development of the operations staff. District Managers will have a large measure of autonomy, working alongside with Regional Coordinators and the Assistance Director Customer Care.

Refurbishment of District Offices

Minor maintenance works were carried out during 2013. Refurbishment plans in 2014 will see upgrades in the branch offices of Birkirkara, Qormi, Żejtun and Qawra. The Department will also seek to identify unallocated government premises or issue an expression of interest for alternative premises of the Marsa/Ħamrun branch offices.

Training for District Officers

Training sessions to the regional coordinators and district managers on various types of contracts were held during 2013 in collaboration the Legal Office of the Department. Preparations got underway to deliver trainings sessions to all front line personnel on insurability issues. The sessions will be held in 2014. Customer service training courses were also delivered to district managers to enhance their competence when dealing with staff and serving the public.

It is the intention of the Customer Care Unit to collaborate closely with the Centre for Research and Training (CDRT) to deliver specialised courses in customer service skills to all the District Office staff. Plans got underway for the delivery of training programmes to address gaps in KSAs (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of members of staff in district offices.

Web based applications

2012 saw the launch of web based applications to be used by district office staff. The new applications include the generation of the Social Security Number and the standard District Office Call Letter (DOCL). The end of 2013 saw the release of the automated assessment of the Free Medical Aid (Pink Form) in the branch office of Birkirkara as a pilot test. It is envisaged the pink card functionality assessment will be fully released in all branch offices by the end of February 2014. Another major application in the pipeline is the generation of financial statements of collected overpayments. It is expected the application will be released on the live environment by the end of 2014.

Initial preparations were made where steps were taken to secure SABS on-line services that can be also accessed from district office users' terminals. 2014 will see the first of a series of online services that will include the pensions applications and the marriage grant form.

Participation in media programmes, seminars and activities

Participation in various programmes aired on local radio and television stations continued to be the most dominant with the aim of promoting the services rendered by the Department in general and to make the general public more aware of the benefits paid under the Social

Security Act. Regional Coordinators and District Managers also attended and participated in seminars to improve and update their knowledge and expertise on customer care and to inform other participating entities on the provisions of social security legislation.

The district office staff of the Valletta, Qawra, Msida and Birgu branches in collaboration with other entities participated in various activities held at their respective Access Centres with the aim to promote the services of the Department in the community through information leaflets and first hand advice on social security matters.

International Relations Unit

The Department's international obligations

The Department of Social Security (DSS) has substantial international obligations to meet. Such obligations stem primarily from Malta's membership in the EU as well as from a number of bilateral agreements it has with third countries i.e. Australia, Canada and New Zealand (the latter bilateral agreement was concluded and came into force during 2013). In this context, 2013 was another productive year for the International Relations Unit (IRU) which continued to work on a number of important tasks listed hereunder.

Life Certification

The Life Certification system is providing the DSS with the necessary tools to maintain adequate contact with pensioners not living in Malta who receive a Maltese pension, with whom the Department has no direct communication.

By means of this system, the International Relations Unit is in a position to know about significant changes in each pensioner's circumstances. A Life Certification form is mailed to the pensioner's address which s/he has to return with the necessary information about any change in address and/or status and with information details of the next of kin with whom the IRU can make contact in case of need. The Certificate also needs to be endorsed and stamped by an official witness. Such a system is proving useful in cases of unreported deaths of pensioners as it is minimizing the payment of undue pension payments.

The following are the number of Life Certificates issued by the IRU during 2013.

Table 12

To Maltese pensioners living in	Amount
Canada	849
EU	187
Rest of the World	52

It is pertinent to mention that the Department of Social Security has a data exchange agreement in place with the Australian authorities, through which data concerning mutual customers is exchanged on a regular basis.

Participation in Meetings Abroad

The field of Social Security has a more concrete and important dimension when seen in a wider international perspective, considering that the scope of social security is to protect and support the citizen. IRU staff members have actively participated in several meetings held abroad, covering a wide spectrum of social security related issues. Thus, through their participation, the issues, concerns and Malta's positions, as a Member State of the EU were

voiced. During the year under review, the IRU has continued to actively participate in the Administrative Commission for the coordination of social security systems, the MISSOC network (both standing committees of the European Commission), EESSI related meetings and the H5NCP network. The Unit has also participated in other one-off meetings dealing with several social security issues within a European and International perspective.

Determination of Legislation Applicable

One of the main responsibilities of the IRU is the determination of the legislation applicable. Such duties emanate from Regulations (EU) No. 883/2004 and No. 987/2009.

Out of the requests forwarded to the IRU for continued insurability under the Maltese social security system, the Unit processed those of individuals performing duties in another EU Member State mostly on a posting assignment. The Unit received various applications in this regard. It then analysed and vetted all the requests in accordance with Regulation (EC) 883/2004. Accordingly, the Unit issued 164 A1 forms (Certificate concerning the Social Security legislation which applies) for each accepted case as requested by the Regulation.

Also in connection with the abovementioned insurability duties carried out by the IRU, during the year 2013 this unit was involved in various meetings with foreign and local companies and other individuals to discuss social security issues, emanating from the EU Regulations mentioned above. The IRU carried out the necessary research and analysed all cases presented. Having gone through this exercise, the appropriate advice was given to the respective stakeholders/entities involved, regarding the insurability position of employees/self-employed individuals to be engaged in employment activity in another EU Member State and EU nationals to be involved in employment activity in Malta. This year the IRU also embarked on an exercise in bringing together the different stakeholders involved with the insurability of mariners working on board vessels carrying the Maltese flag to discuss the way forward with regard to the insurability of such workers.

Issuance of E-forms

All benefits paid under Regulation (EU) No. 883/2004, fall under the responsibility of the IRU. These obligations imply the exchange of information with other EU Member States, in respect to the various benefits. In this regard, during 2013, the IRU issued the following forms:

Table 13

FORM	AMOUNT
U004 (SALARY INFORMATION FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PURPOSES)	13
E104 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR SICKNESS BENEFIT PURPOSES)	176
E205 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR PENSION PURPOSES)	563
U1 & U002 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PURPOSES)	417
E001 (REQUEST AND PROVISION OF GENERAL INFORMATION)	146

E210 (NOTIFICATION OF DECISION CONCERNING A CLAIM FOR PENSION)	85
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New pension claims received by the IRU

The following table provides data about the number of incoming pension claims received by Malta from other countries and the number of outgoing claims made by Maltese residents claiming a foreign pension.

Table 14

2013	Incoming	Outgoing
UK	57	137
Australia	185	186
Canada	37	87
Other	94	33
Total	373	443

Number of queries dealt with by the IRU

During the year under review, the IRU front desk office received around 5004 queries from the general public. 4,174 of these queries came via email. Another 830 queries reached the IRU via letters, faxes, phone calls or by the persons themselves calling at our offices.

Apart from pension claims, the Unit processed 166 cases of persons transferring their Unemployment Benefits to Malta under Art 64 of Reg. (EC) 883/2004. For each of these cases the form U009 was issued and sent to the Member State of origin, confirming that the jobseeker in question is registered as a jobseeker in Malta. For 16 out of these 166 cases, we were asked to provide monthly feedback on the applicant's job-seeking activities and a U013 form was issued for these 16 cases.

Furthermore, 8 persons opted to transfer their Maltese benefits to another EU Member State.

The IRU also provided information to the continuous flow of requests emanating from EU institutions and social security institutions in other Member States, ranging from clients' personal information to requests for contribution records. The IRU continued to strengthen its internal IT infrastructure and services in order to process claims and requests with more efficiency, thus offering a better service to our customers.

Information Data & Protection Office

The Information and Data Protection Office continued to deal with queries related to the administration of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. The office dealt with 9 major requests for information or clarification on Data Protection issues besides innumerable verbal requests for advice. No requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act were received. The office also dealt with 4 requests for information concerning Ombudsman Cases.

During 2013, the office continued to update the Department's website and also its internal intranet portal which contains substantial information which staff requires for the day to day delivery of its duties. As part of this Office's duties to coordinate the participation of staff in

media programmes to disseminate information to the public, it oversaw the Department's participation in various programmes on local TV & Radio stations to provide the necessary information to the general public and create awareness on social security matters.

This office continued to take care of the Department's publications. It drew up a social security leaflet with information on all the benefits which was then distributed to all households in Malta and Gozo. It also prepared an information booklet on how the application form for a Children's Allowance is to be filled in. This booklet was meant to be distributed with each and every application sent to prospective beneficiaries. However, it was put on hold given the planned paperless application. The section intends to upload the same leaflet on the website for those still requiring aid in filling it up.

The DSS Link, the Department's in-house magazine has been issued regularly with various informative articles about social security matters for staff in the Department's quest to continuously train and keep staff updated with social security developments. The mailing list of this magazine has also been broadened widely.

The Information and Data Protection Office also carried out various other tasks within its scope such as the compiling of the Department's Annual Report, the continuous updating of the Department's overview, the dissemination of circulars, government publications such as issues of the Government Gazette, issue of Legal Notices, Acts and Bye-Laws. It also took over the general maintaining of the Department's generic email.

The Information and Data Protection Office was also responsible for the graphical layout of all leaflets, posters and other printed material dealing with information and with the activities organized in the Department for training and social purposes, the organizing of seminars and conferences of the Department, besides the attending itself to seminars locally and abroad, the assisting in local fairs disseminating general information to the general public on social security matters.

Appeals to the Umpire

The following table shows how the number of appeals that were up for one or more hearings during 2013 as dealt with as compared with the same figure of 2012.

Appeals	2012	2013
A. No of Appeals for hearing:		
(i) Brought forward from previous years	982	699
(ii) Lodged during the current year	846	856
(iii) Differed	0 1828	271 1826
B. No of Appeals settled:		
(i) Decided against appellatant	611	490
(ii) Decided in favour of appellatant	66	37
(iii) Withdrawn by appellatant	319	269

(iv) Cancelled	50	32
(v) Revoked by Department	76	309
(vi) <i>Sine Die</i>	7	11
(vii) Awaiting reply from appellant/Department	0 1129	2 1150
Outstanding Appeals	699	676

Appeals re Invalidity Cases	2012		2013	
A. No of Appeals for hearing:				
(i) Brought forward from previous years	105		88	
(ii) Lodged during the current year	186		177	
(iii) Differed	0	291	9	274
B. No of Appeals settled:				
(i) Decided against appellant	97		47	
(ii) Decided in favour of appellant	73		94	
(iii) Withdrawn by appellant	17		17	
(iv) Cancelled	16		20	
(v) Revoked by Department	0		0	
(vi) <i>Sine Die</i>	0		4	
(vii) Awaiting reply from appellant/Department	0	203	0	182
Outstanding Appeals		88		92

Staff

During 2013, the staff complement of the Social Security Department remained the same when compared to 2012, including those members of staff seconded from IPSL, as shown in the following table:

Table 15

	31.12.2012	31.12.2013
General Service Grade	251	252
Industrial/Messengerial	41	41
IPSL	13	12
Total	305	305

DEPARTMENT FOR THE ELDERLY AND COMMUNITY CARE

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

During the year 2013 the Department for the Elderly and Community Care continued to address the challenges related to demographic change and societal changes to promote active ageing and improved quality of life for elderly persons. The increasing numbers of elderly persons require different forms of support and healthcare services. This presented an opportunity to explore ways to provide user centred care provision focusing on tangible benefits and long term care sustainability. The Department continued to increase its community services as part of its commitment to continue to support elderly persons living in the community and postpone entry into long term care.

Achievements in this legislation

Changes in admission policies were introduced with the review of applicants being carried out by a medical team and the tool in use evaluates dependency levels of and also assesses the physical, mental and social status so as to be able to determine the needs of the individual and what type of LTC setting would provide the most suitable care.

During the year 2013, the Department for the Elderly and Community Care focused on the following objectives:

- a) The provision of domiciliary services to enable the elderly person to remain living in familiar surroundings within the community. During 2013 the DECC continued to expand the Community Care Outreach Service and worked in collaboration with Mater Dei Hospital and Rehabilitation Hospital Karin Grech to bridge the gap and fragmentation of care. Together with the Department of Orthopaedics, and orthogeriatric service was initiated at MDH, where specified patients were jointly managed by orthopaedic surgeons and geriatricians in the pre and post operation periods of their stay in hospital.
- b) The setting up and running of Day Centres in various localities to enable the elderly person to continue to lead an active life in the community. During 2013 two new Day Centres were opened in Mgarr and Kirkop.
- c) Providing rehabilitation services and the best possible conditions for health improvement in geriatric institutions. During 2013 the Department focused on ensuring that services delivered added value through better health outcomes for elderly persons.
- d) Providing residential care to elderly persons who are unable to benefit from any of the foregoing services. In addition more long term care beds were purchased in the private sector as part of the Public Private Partnership.
- e) Provision of ongoing training to both existing staff and training directed to fill in gaps in current human resources.

The total budget allocation for the year 2013 was €1,719,000 for Capital Expenditure and €66,520,000 for the Recurrent Expenditure. (This allocation to cover also SVPR)

PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Department of Geriatrics

During 2013, the Geriatrician Services in Government Community Residential Homes as well in Public Private Partnership (PPP) and Public Church Partnership (PCP) Residential Homes continued to be delivered. During December 2013, this specialised geriatric service was augmented with four (4) resident specialists to assist Dr. Antoine Vella and Dr. Joe Dimech. In this manner all current residential homes will be visited by a resident specialist on a more frequent basis

The scope of the Rehabilitation Hospital Karin Grech is to provide assessment and post-acute care and rehabilitation to a wide range of persons including younger adult patients (between 16 and 60 years of age) and the elderly (60 years and above). As in previous years, all post-acute patients received an opportunity for maximal functional recovery. The ultimate goal remained that of encouraging patients to remain living in the community and to support relatives in their caregiver role.

The Geriatrician offers specialist medical support to General Practitioners (GP's) and other Homes' Professional Care Staff, in the management of frail older residents under their care in the Community Homes. It is envisaged that the integration of Geriatrician input with the rest of the Geriatric Multidisciplinary Team will help to enable frail older people in care, to continue to enjoy the maximum health and functional independence possible in the Community Homes; an intervention that should contribute to a decrease in avoidable admissions to acute hospital care.

In-patient Admissions:

- In 2013, there were a total of 1529 admissions to RHKG (a decline of 35 admissions from the previous year 2012). There were 1287 to the Geriatric Rehabilitation Wards and 277 to the Physical Rehabilitation Ward.

- The average age of all in-patients admitted in 2013 was 79.1 years.
- There were 923 female admissions and 606 male admission (M:F 1:1.52)
- A total number of 1319 patients were transferred from MDH (89.8% of all admissions) as compared to 1406 patients (89.9%) in the previous year.

In 2013, functional assessments continued to be carried out on all long-term patients at RHKG to determine appropriate placement. The Barthel Index, the Mini-Mental State and the Medical Status was used to identify the patients' needs.

Out of the 347 long-term patients identified in 2013, 123 patients were still at RHKG at the end of the year. In the previous year 2012, there were 143 LTC patients at the hospital at the end of the year.

The destinations for the discharged 367 LTC patients in 2013 were as follows:

- 93 to SVPR (as compared to 91 in 2012).
- 119 to PPP schemes (122 in 2012).
- 32 to St. Jeanne Antide, San Gorg Preca and Santa Bernardetta Wards at MCH (39 in 2012).
- 7 to Government Community Homes (7 in 2012).
- 69 to Zammit Clapp Nursing Home (69 in 2012).
- 5 to Own Home (as in 2012).

- 2 to Private Homes.
- 56 deceased while still at RHKG (as compared to 71 in 2011).

RESIDENTIAL HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY

During 2013, the Department continued to sustain its efforts to offer all residents in Government Residential Homes a better environment and more effective care. In this regard works continued to be carried out in all Homes and Human Resources were deployed accordingly in keeping with the gradual transformation of these Homes into Nursing Homes to cater for the increasing dependency of their residents.

During the year under review, routine maintenance and up keep of both home premises and equipment were carried out in all of our eight (8) elderly homes. All eight (8) government homes were further provided with various variable height adjustable beds according to their particular needs through the collaboration of SVPR and MDH.

The Government Homes` Meals Board continued to meet during 2013 in order to (i) safeguard the nutritional and dietary requirements of our elderly residents, (ii) offer a variety of menus and (iii) provide food according to the residents` needs and desires.

As part of an ongoing in-service training for all Heads of Homes, Nursing and Caring staff various courses and seminars were organised and attended to by the above mentioned staff with respect to various topics such as Dementia Care, Continence Care, Elderly Abuse, Leadership and Management Skills and others.

As regards to structural, electrical and mechanical present and future requirements in our four (4) Government managed elderly homes an agreement had been reached with FMS to handle such requests. Recently there has been a change in policy and we have been directed to forward such requests to ARC Studio Ltd. Consultants.

Existing Homes: Extensions and increase in Bed Complement during 2013

During December 2013, civil works commenced in three (3) particular Homes namely Mellieha Home, Zammit Clapp Hospital Residential Home and Zejtun Home to further increase the number of existing beds.

These respective extension of beds` projects where fully completed and operational by the first week of March 2013.

Mellieha Home

26 additional beds were made available at Mellieha Home namely 18 beds at the former CPU within Ground Floor, and another 8 beds in a formerly multi-purpose room at Level 3. All additional 18 beds at the former CPU cater for high dependency residents.

Zejtun Home

37 additional beds were made available at Zejtun Home. 47 beds out of a total of 204 beds were made available as high dependency beds. The Zejtun Home project included the introduction of a private dining room on each and every floor. The smaller dining areas in each floor, instead of one large dining area at ground floor, gave a better dining experience to Zejtun Home residents and exclusivity per floor

Zammit Clapp Hospital Residential Home

33 additional beds were made available at ZCH Residential Home.

Homes' Admission, Deaths and Transfers during 2013

Mosta Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	16	12	6	3

Floriana Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	11	11	4	1

Mtarfa Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	19	21	3	0

Msida Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	7	8	3	1

Cospicua Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	23	8	8	3

Żejtun Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	67	22	10	0

Mellieħa Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	49	28	2	2

Zammit Clapp Residential Home: Admissions, Deaths, Transfers Totals for period January to December 2013.

	Admission	Deaths	Transfers	Went back Home
<i>Total</i>	51	31	10	3

The Bed Status within the Government Elderly Homes as on 31st December 2013 was as follows:

BED STATUS IN GOVERNMENT HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY					
<i>Home</i>	<i>Males -60</i>	<i>Females -60</i>	<i>Males +60</i>	<i>Females +60</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cospicua	3	0	28	104	135
Floriana	0	0	12	32	44
Gzira	0	0	0	0	0
Mellieħa	8	3	40	128	179
Mosta	0	1	21	44	66
Msida	0	0	10	54	64
Mtarfa	3	2	22	95	122
Zammit Clapp Hospital	2	1	34	92	129
Żejtun	1	3	34	165	203
<i>Total</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>201</i>	<i>714</i>	<i>942</i>

Public Private Partnership Scheme

Due to current demographic change, that is population ageing, the Government is estimating that an approximate 300 long-term beds are needed on a yearly basis.

In view of the above, during the third quarter of 2013, as part of Government's quest to develop further Public Private Partnership models in long-term care, an expression of interest was issued to call for operators in the private sector to provide a range of social and health care services, ranging from assisted living accommodation to more intensive nursing care in long term care.

During 2013, the Department for the Elderly and Community Care maintained its agreements with private entrepreneurs for the provision of beds for Government referred residents in private home settings within Casa Arkati at Mosta, Villa Messina at Rabat, Casa Serena at St. Paul's Bay, Central Home at Mosta, Roseville at Attard and Prince of Whales at Sliema. An additional Public Church Partnership agreement continued with the Archdiocese of Malta Homes for the Elderly for the purchase of beds at Casa Leone St Julians, Holy Family Home Naxxar, Dar Sant Anna Senglea and Dar Saura Rabat.

GOVERNMENT HIRED BEDS UNDER THE PPP AND PCP SCHEMES IN PRIVATE/CHURCH HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY					
<i>Home</i>	<i>Males -60</i>	<i>Females -60</i>	<i>Males +60</i>	<i>Females +60</i>	<i>Total</i>
Casa Arkati	1	1	12	44	58
Casa Leone	0	1	4	25	30
Casa Serena	0	0	18	74	92
Central Home	1	1	8	81	91
Dar Sant Anna	0	0	9	12	21
Holy Family Home	0	0	5	9	14
Roseville	1	0	25	54	80
Saura Home	0	0	7	9	16
Villa Messina	1	0	14	56	71
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	0	0	3	20	23
<i>Total</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>384</i>	<i>496</i>

Community Homes Audit and Management Team

During 2013, the “Audit and Management Team”, formerly established in 2012, continued operating within the Elderly and Community Care Department with the following responsibilities:

- assisting in the drawing up of a Master Contracts Document for the Issue of a Contracts tender entitled “*Services Tender for the Provision of Long term Care Accommodation to persons who are referred by the Department for the Elderly and Community Care*”.
- revising present agreements at point of closure to come in line with the Masters Contracts Department;
- assessing and coordinating the allocation of new residents and transfers to vacant PPP beds based on their dependency level, and filling up these vacant beds in real time;
- assessing and approving PPP requests for changes in residents’ dependency leading to revisions in payments/relocation;
- ensuring that care/ contractual obligations are met through ongoing audit (assessment of environmental, clinical and administrative standards); performing Extra Care Services (ECS) Assessments at Cospicua and Zejtun Homes;

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Day Centres

In January 2013, Kirkop Day Centre was opened and Mgarr Day Centre was opened on 26th February thus bringing the total of Day Centres to twenty one. The total number of new applicants during 2013 was 192. During this year there were 1505 regular members - 151 males and 1354 females.

During the year in review, elderly persons were involved in a variety of activities such as sewing, crafts and decorating the premises for special events. The purpose of this is to encourage the members to use their skills and to learn new ones. They were also encouraged to take part in dancing, singing, acting, writing poems and guitar lessons and others.

Day Centres also organised a “Sports Day”, “Jum L-Anzjan” and “Annual Exhibition” where all Elderly members from different Day Centres could participate. This provided the elderly persons with an opportunity to show their capabilities and talents as well as encourage other elderly persons to participate in future activities.

Telecare Service

This emergency telephone, community service (inaugurated in March 1991; a venture between the GO plc and the Department of the Elderly and Community Care), is mainly for elderly persons and others with special needs. The service is progressing in the 22nd year of operation and aims at providing “peace of mind” in one’s home, especially at times of an emergency such as the need for a doctor, ambulance in the case of a fall or police in case of a crime.

The administration of the service is carried out at the Telecare Centre where Telecare applications are registered, assessed and processed. GO plc is responsible for the purchasing and maintenance of the Telecare sets and other equipment necessary for the running of the PNC system.

As from the 21st November, 2013 an upgrade from Telecare to Telecareplus was launched. Existing clients can upgrade to Telecareplus with a fee of 4 Euros per month plus 25 Euros deposit on the equipment. The existing pink form concession still remains. New clients are now served with Telecareplus equipment.

Statistics of the year under review

As at end of 2013 the total amount of installations reached the grand total of 8877, 8357 in Malta and 520 in Gozo.

Hereunder is a breakdown of calls traffic in the control room 2012-2013.

Month	No of Calls (Year 2012)	No of Calls (Year 2013)	Remarks
January	17821	a	
February	16545	a	
March	16995	a	
April	14626	4082 from 22/4	
May	13481	15909	An increase of 18.01%
June	12815	15685	An increase of 22.39%
July	12444	15574	An increase of 25.157%
August	12275	14953	An increase of 21.816%
September	12838	15467	An increase of 20.47%
October	13330	17808	An increase of 33.59%
November	14355	17023	An increase of 18.58%
December	15844	15904	An increase of 04.00%

Incontinence Service

During the year 2013, for Scheme A there were 324 new applications while 124 others stopped the service. This means that up to the end of 2013, there were 1521 persons making use of this service.

In 2013, 807 new applications were registered in Scheme B, while 846 stopped the service. This means that a total of 2552 benefited from the service up to the end of 2013.

During the year 2013, the Electoral Office processed 9,807 cards for new holders (60+) and (75+). 2,308 lost cards were passed on to the same office and all cards were renewed. The total number of Kartanzjan beneficiaries stood at 109,581.

Social Work Unit

The main aim of this Unit is to provide help in the form of psychological support, counselling and guidance. It also discusses all referred social cases.

The work of the Unit is to take care of all assessments following requests from elderly client in need of 'Home-Help', 'Admission to Homes', 'Admission to SVPR and 'Court Cases'.

The unit consists of four (4) full time social workers. In addition 2 (Part Time) social workers at SVPR (which are paid by SEDQA) handle part of the case load referred to the Social Work Unit.

Cases Worked	SOCIAL CASES	HOMES & S.V.P.R.	HOME HELP
TOTAL	110	193	628

The Social Assessment of Admission Applications for the Government Homes and St.Vincent de Paul Residence started to be processed by Karen Grech Rehabilitation Hospital as from June 2013.

Home Help Unit

The principal aim of Home Help Service is to enable elderly people and people with disability and special needs to live as independently as possible and to encourage them to better their quality of life. It is meant to compliment not replace family support. Allocation of service is granted on the basis of social needs and/or medical problems and limitations.

Priority is given to elderly persons living alone, old persons, persons with disability and special needs, very dependent persons, persons at risk because of certain conditions such as dementia, disorientation or confusion, persons living in substandard housing, persons with psychological needs, persons needing respite and as temporary service for acute situations.

During 2013, the Board of Allocation met 16 times. The role of this Board is to decide whether this service is given or not depending on the social assessment and the medical certificate.

Up to the end of 2013, there were 2795 households who benefited from the service with a total of 3742 of beneficiaries. During 2013, 633 new cases were presented.

Number of meetings	Date of meeting	Cases viewed	Approved Case	%	Cases Not Approved	%	Weekly hours approved
1	17/01/2013	53	35	66	18	34	70
2	14/02/2013	58	53	91	5	7	108
3	06/03/2013	58	49	84	9	16	100
4	19/06/2013	34	24	70	10	30	48
5	10/07/2013	37	23	62	14	38	46
6	16/07/2013	37	19	51	18	49	38
7	06/08/2013	46	27	58	19	42	56
8	03/09/2013	27	23	85	4	15	46
9	11/09/2013	30	22	73	8	27	44
10	02/10/2013	32	23	71	9	29	46
11	16/10/2013	42	26	61	16	39	52
12	30/10/2013	39	19	48	20	52	39
13	13/11/2013	40	23	57	17	43	46
14	27/11/2013	33	22	67	11	33	44
15	04/12/2013	32	20	62	12	38	40
16	19/12/2013	35	22	63	13	27	45
	TOTAL	633	430	Avg: 68%	203	Avg: 32%	868

CommCare Assessment Unit

The CommCare Assessment Unit strives to ensure that all patients who receive care in the community are appropriately cared for, whilst also acting as a bridge between the health and social care services in the community. The CommCare team is comprised of nurses, a

physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker, personal carers and administrative staff. This team dynamic allows for the opportunity to provide supportive and comprehensive delivery of care, which results in addressing the needs of individuals more effectively. In order to achieve this, the following aims have been identified:

- To act as a monitoring unit for domiciliary care.
- To coordinate services and manage care plans for patients on an individual basis.
- To maintain and continue to develop a multidisciplinary approach in case management incorporating both health and social aspects through Outreach.
- To analyse data collected to address current needs and plan for future developments.
- To identify and strengthen assessment data needed to develop community health.

CommCare Outreach Team

The CommCare Outreach Team is a multidisciplinary team with Nurses, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and specifically trained personal carers.

Referrals received from CommCare call centre are passed on to the Outreach team and first time assessments are carried out and an evaluation of needs carried out via a single shared assessment. Patients may be identified as requiring solely clinical care (MMDNA) but other patients and families may be identified as potential recipients for CommCare team input so as to empower patients and families, support patients and family to regain or retain skills to promote functionality and independence and to support patients and their families during the convalescent phase for enabling. Thus, patients and their families benefited from a more complete deserved service.

Telephone Rebates

This service came into force in January 1996 whereby the client can apply for a discount on the rental charges of the telephone if in possession of a Kartanzjan and a Schedule V card. In 2013 there were 168 New Applications and 645 Cancellations. By the end of 2013 the number of beneficiaries stood at 3982.

Meals on Wheels Service

The Meals on Wheels service, run by the Maltese Cross Corps, remained popular with the elderly. In fact the year 2013 proved to be a successful year whereby due to the high quality of food which is professionally prepared by the personnel at the kitchen of St. Vincent the Paul Residence, its meticulous presentation in hygienic containers and its timely delivery, the requests for the service have continued to increase.

The main activity of the M.C.C., in collaboration with the Elderly & Community Care Department, is the delivery of meals to the elderly and persons with special needs. The meals are prepared in the modern kitchen of the St. Vincent de Paule Residence and delivered to the beneficiaries by distributors engaged by the M.C.C. The service started in July 1991 as a pilot project in Guardamangia and Floriana; now, in view of the increasing demand for it the M.C.C. had to increase its fleet of three vans to four in August. As at end of 2013 there were 1200 registered beneficiaries of which 378 beneficiaries making regular use of the Service. An averager of 300 meals are delivered daily to beneficiaries in 46 localities in Malta. This year the number of meals delivered will exceed 90,000 as against 87,500 in 2012. The M.C.C. has a waiting list of more than 200 for the service. The menu is varied and of good quality. The following are three examples of menus served to our "clients":

Baked Rice
Chicken Steak
Fresh Fruit

Vegetable Soup
Cottage Pie
Fancy Cake

Ravioli
Plaice
Fresh Fruit

Sometimes the menus are changed to cater for individual needs and tastes. The beneficiaries pay €2.21 for each meal.

Night Shelters

The Zejtun Night Shelter, is run by Gesu Nazzarenu nuns, and is available only to the female gender. It incorporates 8 single rooms, a dining room complete with a kitchen, a living area and sanitary facilities including a shower. There are 8 females who are currently using same facilities.

The Mellieha Night Shelter is a mixed gender Night Shelter. It consists of: a lobby, a kitchen/dining room, four (4) twin rooms with a bed capacity of eight beds, a toilet and a shower/hair salon combined room. At present 4 persons make use of the service, 1 male and 3 females.

The Night Shelter at SVPR is run by SVPR nursing management and provides accommodation for 3 males in single rooms and one female room with 2 beds and 3 single rooms for females: 8 beds in total for both genders. It incorporates a dining room complete with a kitchen, a reception and a living area with TV. Sanitary facilities consist of a shower and two toilets. There is one room used as a changing room for staff and a store room.

Communication Unit

The Communication Unit was responsible for the SVPR Monthly Calendar of Events: Compiling the necessary information and producing a monthly calendar of events (twelve in all) for all Residents at St.Vincent de Paul, depicting events taking place.

The Launch of 'L-Anzjan Illum': For the past six years, this unit has been producing a five to six page monthly leaflet directed specifically towards the Elderly residing at St.Vincent de Paul Residence which are distributed amongst the residents.

The Launch of 'L-Anzjan Illum'. A new version was introduced whereby amongst various changes were made there was also the introduction of new concept of On-Line Service where any elderly, not only in SVPR, but now, accross Malta & Gozo can simply send us an e-mail, and he/she will start receiving this monthly publication on-line on their own computer at the comfort of their own home. At the same time we're promoting a cleaner environment through less use of paper and ink.

Care Assistants Courses Media Campaign: First call for this year, January 2013 - The Communications Unit was responsible for the issuing of a 'Call for Quotations' for the promotion of Care Assistant Course campaign within the local newspaper, and the respective coordination of the already mentioned through various Units within the Elderly Department. This also involved uploading of related information plus the necessary forms on the Elderly Department website.

This Unit this year was also involved in the set-up of a communications and logistics strategy for the selection of candidates to take part in one of the INIA course entitled, "International training programme 'Policy formulation, planning, implementation and monitoring of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing'".

Department Website Content: Upkeep and update of the website, so that it is used as a tool of information when promoting an event or making any calls, recruitment, tenders, others.