

# Children's Right to Play

*a study of maltese children's  
perceptions on cultural and  
recreational activities*

**Valerie Sollars**



Kummissarju għat-Tfal  
Commissioner for Children

a publication of the  
Office of the Commissioner for Children

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**Malta – December 2006**



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To all, a very big thank you.

## Biographies

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Ms Sonia Camilleri B.A. (Hons.), PGCE, is the Commissioner for Children. She has extensive experience in the education field with children both in Malta and abroad. She set up a kindergarten of the communities of Okpo and Kojedo in South Korea. Between 1995 and 1996 she represented parents and children on the Board set up by the Public Transport Authority, and since 2000 has been a board member of the Media Centre. Sonia Camilleri was President of the University Catholic Students Union in 1976; she assisted refugee families from Iraq, Nigeria and Bosnia; is the representative of the Focolare Movement in Malta; and gives marriage preparation courses at the Cana Movement.

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Ms Marian Muscat Azzopardi B.A. (Social Policy), B.A., M.A. (Human Rights), M.Phil. (Children's Rights) is a member of the Council for Children which is a consultative body of the Commissioner for Children. She has extensive academic experience both in Malta and abroad. She lectures at the University of Malta in Social Policy and Social Work, and works in the Department of Social Welfare Standards.

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Dr Valerie Sollars M.A.(Ed.Psych.), Ph.D.(Manch.) is a senior lecturer and the Head of Department of Primary Education within the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Dr Sollars was commissioned to draw up a national policy for Malta in Early Childhood Education & Care. She has participated in several international projects focusing on language learning, intercultural competence and the use of ICT in early childhood education. She is currently involved in co-ordinating and setting up a joint masters degree in early childhood education with five partner institutions using open-distance learning as the principle mode of delivery. Dr Sollars regularly participates in conferences both locally and internationally.



# Message from the Commissioner for Children

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*Sonia Camilleri*

Malta has traditionally played an international role in association with the Right to Play. Before the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was even being drafted, and two years before the 1979 International Year of the Child, a meeting was held in Malta hosting the first International Play Association which produced the International Declaration on the Right to Play. This Declaration, which has since been amended, is still considered of primary importance.

This project has brought together two aspects of the Commissioner's role, as outlined in the Commissioner for Children Act, of conducting research particularly in areas which are seen lacking, and of promoting the highest standards of leisure, play and recreational facilities for children. The decision to concentrate on the Right to Play during 2006 was primarily triggered by various complaints received at my Office which were related to the Right to Play. The year-long project had various components.

In July 2006 my Office organised the annual children's rights course for young people, entitled Rights4U, with a special focus on the Right to Play. The course was designed in a way that the different aspects of the Right to Play were experienced by the young people during the weekend. During the course the young participants conducted an on-site research in seven different localities looking for different play areas, sports facilities and entities which provide cultural activities. Following a proposal by the same participants, Mayors were presented with these findings and the young people had the opportunity to discuss their proposals in person.

In November 2006, the group of young people nominated by the Commissioner for Children for the session in Parliament for Children, dedicated their contribution to the Right to Play. They raised several interesting issues in particular they mentioned the need in Malta for alternative leisure facilities.

This year a questionnaire was sent to all Local Councils asking for information regarding play and recreational, sports and cultural opportunities in their localities. This data will further supplement the research in this publication, and will be included in this year's Annual Report.

The final phase of 'The Right to Play' project is this extensive research which has been carried out amongst children and young people, heads of school, parish priests, some NGO representatives, sports associations and cultural centres. The aim was of establishing what recreational and cultural activities children and young people engage in during school hours as well as in their free time, during the week and on the weekends. This task was entrusted to the capable hands of Dr Valerie Sollars.

I trust that this research will raise awareness amongst professionals and adults, and that it will be further used to highlight the need for the better implementation of Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

# Executive summary

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Valerie Sollars

1. Article 31 of the Convention of the Rights of Children explicitly states that<sup>1</sup>:

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

*States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

This implies that signatories to the Convention are responsible for the implementation of this right in their country.

2. Across the globe, international fora have expressed concern about changes in societies which are affecting childhood and children's development. The concerns include: the indifference to the importance of play by both policy makers and the general public; the growing emphasis on theoretical knowledge and academic success; the unhealthy competition to succeed in sports activities; parents' increased workloads, leaving little free time or energy to be with children; and the amount of time children spend in front of screens, be it TV, films, computers.
3. In the local context, anecdotal evidence does suggest that children and young people growing up in Malta have much pressure brought on by an exam-oriented education system. This means that academic success is rewarded to the exclusion of other activities.
4. If children and young people are giving priority to academic success, willingly or otherwise, it would suggest that there is limited, if any, time available for leisure, cultural, artistic and recreational activities.
5. Apart from the right to play and engagement in cultural and artistic activities as a means of recreation and leisure, such activities promote the overall, healthy development of the human being. Linguistic, physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social development depend on a healthy balance between work and relaxation.
6. Where young children are concerned engagement in playful, cultural, artistic and recreational activities is the way of learning which needs to be promoted.

## **The current study**

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The study was conducted with children in primary and secondary schools. The choice of schools included state, church and independent institutions. In all, 31 primary schools and 15 secondary schools participated in the study for an overall sample of 6,000 students.

The children and young people were given the opportunity to share their experiences in play, recreational, cultural and leisure time activities through a detailed questionnaire that was class administered. Information was sought about a number of cultural and recreational events held during schools hours as well as leisure time activities after school and on the weekends.

In an attempt to corroborate data collected from the children, questionnaires and interviews were measures used to collect information from heads of schools, service providers and adults responsible for religious societies/groups, dance, music, drama and football clubs.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>

## **Key findings**

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1. The majority of children in Primary schools as well as the higher classes in Secondary school (Forms 4 and 5) have only one P.E. lesson a week. In most schools there is a tendency to reduce P.E. lessons as the Junior Lyceum, SEC and MATSEC exams approach. Primary and Secondary schoolchildren agree that they have an insufficient number of P.E. lessons.
2. From amongst the participating Primary schools, only 22% have a gym. Consequently, P.E lessons are difficult or impossible to conduct on rainy days. This is especially true if the school does not have an indoor play area allowing for some physical activity.
3. The lack of indoor play areas poses difficulties for children to play during break time on rainy days. Classrooms and corridors feature highly as the main alternatives, albeit inappropriate ones.
4. Whereas primary school children capitalize on their break times to run around and get some exercise, secondary school students seem to prefer the more relaxed activities such as walking, talking/chatting, spending time at the cafeteria, visiting the computer labs or the library.
5. For primary school children, break-times tend to be quite short considering that half the allotted time is spent eating lunch.
6. In primary and secondary schools 71.2 % and 71.8% of the students respectively reported they never have a music lesson or have it once in a while.
7. Drama appears to be the least represented of the creative arts. Considering the benefits students can obtain through participation in drama, it is indeed a pity that so little importance is given to this activity. Drama helps children develop self-confidence and esteem. It can also allow students to express themselves, identify with or empathise with different characters in various circumstances and in so doing, rehearse or replicate real life situations.
8. Computer games are a new source of 'play' for the younger group whereas the older children use the computer mostly for chatting.
9. The video games console appeals more to boys than to girls but for older children, it appears to be losing its appeal.
10. A high percentage of children and young people watch a number of DVDs per week, contributing to a sedentary lifestyle. This appears to reinforce the whole picture emerging from the results: as children grow older, there is more limited physical activity and even in their free time, activities taken up tend to be free from any strenuous exercise.
11. Going to the cinema appears to be a favourite outing among young people, reinforcing the attraction of passive activity in front of a screen.
12. More boys than girls in both cohorts report that they practise sports. Boys seem to dominate sport activities, with football being one such example.
13. About 50% of the cohort claim that they practise some type of sport in their free time.
14. Whereas 'play' is a popular activity for young children and is given priority, especially on the weekend, this seems to be replaced with studying, homework and reading as children grow older.
15. At any time of the weekend, visiting, spending time with, and /or going out for lunch with grandparents, especially the grandmothers were frequently mentioned. Other relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins were also referred to.
16. Sunday afternoons is typically time for family outings to the countryside in winter and to the beach in summer. On the other hand, eating out at restaurants appears to be a favourite family activity for Saturday evenings.

## **General conclusions**

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1. There is general agreement that among the key factors which deter children and young people from attending after-school activities are the pressures brought on by an exam-oriented system, home-work and after school lessons.
2. Strong commitment and good time-management are essential. Especially where young children are concerned, many may rely on or even depend entirely on parents taking them and collecting them for after-school activities. Unless parents are available or willing to chauffeur or accompany their children, participation in activities remains an unattainable goal. For children and young people growing up with parents who are both in employment, taking children for after-school appointments that start any time between 3 and 5pm may be difficult to manage. For children and young people growing up with one parent, these difficulties may be even greater.
3. Financial considerations were not an issue raised directly with participants in the survey. However, some respondents mentioned it explicitly. In other instances, the responses given suggest that there are financial burdens and implications for users of the service. From the perspective of service providers, funds are necessary to maintain premises and equipment, purchase new apparatus and pay staff members. From the perspective of the users, in addition to fees, other costs are incurred to cover costumes, uniforms and specific clothing (sports-gears; dancing shoes and frocks); tools, equipment, accessories and consumables (e.g. musical instruments, music scores, manuscripts, theory examination past papers; materials for art and craft activities; transport costs when hiring coaches or vans etc.); paying for exams. In addition, some organizations which may not charge any fees and which may be subsidized (e.g. several religious groups and organizations), periodically have fund-raising activities. From time to time, they also organize cultural outings or events which entail some financial expense. Therefore, although not a direct focus of the study, and taken collectively, these issues raise concerns about whether leisure time activities are truly available and accessible for all.
4. With the exception of drama, the football clubs, music and dance schools also have an element of competition and examination. Various members of the football association amply highlighted the pressures of competition in football. Although many children and young people participating in this survey reported that they play musical instruments for relaxation and enjoyment, it is also true that many others sit for music exams. Heads of the dance and music schools reported that most of their children and students follow exams. The implication is clear: children who are sitting for exams must put in some effort to succeed and this requires time for practice and commitment.
5. The fact that there are so-many schools, opportunities, clubs and organizations to choose from on such a small island with a limited captive audience raises the issue of sustainability.

# Introduction

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Marian Muscat Azzopardi

Malta has come a long way since ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) but there is still so much more to accomplish and there is no room for complacency. We may not have any problems with accepting the principles underlying the UNCRC but, as is always the case, any area of policy has to compete with other areas for limited resources.

The Commissioner has each year focused on one Article from the UNCRC more fully than she did on others. This year, after discussing the matter with the Council for Children, she set up a small working group that was to help her focus on Article 31 of the Convention which says:

- That every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- That member governments shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

It must be stated that all the rights enshrined in the UNCRC are interrelated and indivisible. This means that this right has far reaching implications beyond the articulated rest and leisure, play and recreational activities, culture and the arts. A child's life is an undivided whole and neglect of any area of the child's life and life-chances has repercussions on the quality of the life and development of the child.

The principles underlying the Convention all relate directly to Article 31. For example, non discrimination, Article 2, is one of these basic principles and this implies equal opportunities and access for all children to the exercise and enjoyment of this right. Another example is Article 3 that embodies the best interest principle. Article 3 states that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. These principles also form an integral part of our legal system.

Article 31 is also directly linked to Article 6 that sets out the basic right to life and development. The inclusion of the concept of development with the right to life implies that the State is obliged to see to the developmental needs of the child. In fact, the Committee on the Rights of the Child states that:

*“The right-to-life article includes formulations about the right to survival and to development, which should be ensured ‘to the maximum extent possible’. The term ‘development’ in this context should be interpreted in a broad sense, adding a qualitative dimension: not only physical health is intended, but also mental, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.”*

In the UNCRC, the emphasis on a broad range of developmental areas is also reiterated in Article 29 which focuses on the right to education. It is also important to note that Article 31 links up with Article 24 that sets out the child's right to ‘the highest attainable standard of health’ and to ‘preventive health care’. The significance of this to the situation in Malta is surfacing in many local studies.

However, a brief look at the way in which focus on the particular rights set out in Article 31 has developed will help us understand what compliance to the full implications of this article might involve.

## **The emergence of Article 31**

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Although the first international children's rights declaration, the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child did not mention the right to play, it did state that ‘Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give.’ The first principle states that ‘The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development’. Taken together,

this means that we owe the child the best that we can give in the light of what we know about their healthy development. Though not explicitly articulated, the seeds are sown for the essential features of Article 31 of the UNCRC and its links with the related articles of the same Convention.

The 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child stated that "the child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation which should be directed to the same purposes as education." This Declaration was not binding but it exerted a great moral force and was the first to clearly depict children as subjects of rights and not only as recipients of care and protection

In Denmark, in 1961, we see the formation of The International Association for the Child's Right to Play (IPA). Over forty nations including Malta became affiliates. The roots of this association date back to the 30s when, in Scandinavia, there was already awareness of the emerging barriers to children's play. These barriers were partly the result of increasing urbanization and motor traffic which were still not affecting us in Malta.<sup>2</sup> In Scandinavia, early policy measures to counteract these measures included the allocation of specific areas with trained play leaders, the allocation of parks with play leaders and adventure playgrounds which allowed children to build their own habitats.

The primary aim of the IPA was, and still is, to advocate in favour of promotion and protection of the child's right to play. The formation of the IPA was an important event in the development of this right because from then, there was a strong international lobby for the promotion of the awareness of this right and for ensuring that States implement the right policy measures for compliance with the demands of this right. IPA is in a strong position to lobby at an international level because it is recognized by the UN Economic and Social Council and by UNICEF as an NGO with consultative status.

When 1979 was declared as the International Year of the Child (IYC), the IPA geared up to this opportunity to voice the full significance of the right to play. In 1977, in Malta, the IPA held the IPA Malta Consultation in preparation for IYC. Here it produced the IPA Declaration of the Child's Right to Play that was revised in 1982 and in 1989. Most countries contributed in one way or another to the IYC, but one wonders how much of this was merely lip service.

The final revision of the IPA Declaration coincided with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which is already mentioned above. In fact, IPA specifies that the IPA Declaration should be read in conjunction with Article 31 of the UNCRC.

The IPA holds that to promote the child's right to play, is arguably more important today than it was in the mid twentieth century. It states that barriers to free play still include quantity and quality of play space and play leaders. It specifies that what it means by this is trained 'animateurs' or facilitators rather than 'supervisors'. Other worrying factors of concern to IPA are the over-emphasis on formal learning, children's isolation, competition of entertainment pastimes and consequent shrinking of time for play. It stresses that we need to go further than providing safe playgrounds for children. It explains the importance of protecting their right to be free to explore and discover the physical and social world around them. This spontaneous behaviour of children is seen as fundamental to all aspects of child development and is a key component of preserving community and culture in the broadest sense. This time round, Malta has caught up with its International partners in voicing these concerns. The need to give due importance to the dictates of Article 31 has become a sad reality in Malta.

### ***The Right to Play in Malta***

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The Commissioner has entrusted Dr Valerie Sollars from the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta with the task of carrying out research that would provide a picture of Malta's compliance with Article 31. The results of this research are

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<sup>2</sup> My impression is that increasing urbanisation and traffic have gradually adversely affected children's right to play in Malta since the 50s and 60s.

published in this volume and should provide a platform for far more research in this area.

In her introduction, Dr Sollars eloquently describes aspects of the value of the right to play and its consequences. She highlights international concerns about changes in societies that have led to the diminishing opportunities for children to engage in quality recreational, cultural and creative activities. Dr Sollars alerts us to the important realization that due to increased direct emphasis on academic success we fail to give enough importance to the activities listed in Article 31 that are necessary for the child's full and healthy development. Dr. Sollars' insightful and professional analysis of the data collected locally is a mine of information and her conclusions need to be taken seriously if we are to claim that we are making the necessary efforts to implement this right.

Dr Sollars clearly brings out the indivisibility of children's rights. She amply shows the broad ramifications of the right to play and cites much international research in this area. She leaves no doubt in our minds as to the essential contribution that respect of this right can play in ensuring the well-being of children. She shows that play is essential to the development of the potential of all children.

Most findings of this research do not come as a surprise to us. They give scientific backing to what we all regretfully know. Our children are not given enough opportunities to freely access a wide range of quality rest, leisure and artistic activities. The Convention clearly places responsibilities on governments to respect and promote this right and to encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for participation in the relevant activities. This poses a serious and weighty responsibility on the State to fulfil its duty towards the needs of children in this area that cannot be taken lightly.

### ***Policy implications***

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Dr Sollars' study merits serious consideration. Proactive multidisciplinary measures for implementing more effective policy and raising awareness in this area are certainly required. IPA is helpful with suggestions about how this can be done.

In the area of Health, for example, it suggests the establishing of programs for professionals and parents about the benefits of play from birth onwards. It also suggests that the requirements of this right be incorporated into community programs designed to maintain children's physical and mental health. These suggestions should be taken seriously with regards to the full remit of Article 31.

In the field of Education, there are suggestions for the inclusion of opportunities for initiative, interaction, creativity and socialization through play in formal education systems. Of vital importance to us in Malta is the suggestion to reduce the incompatibilities between daily life, work and education by involving schools and colleges, and by using public buildings for community play, artistic, cultural and recreational programs.

Welfare policies, according to IPA, could include measures to ensure that play is accepted as an integral part of social development and social care and that play is part of community-based services designed to integrate children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities into the community. This needs to be extended to a wide range of creative, artistic and cultural activities.

Of course, the private sector has been quick to provide alternatives to traditional free-of-charge play environments. IPA acknowledges this growing phenomenon and suggests that in the field of leisure the State has a very important active role to play. Amongst other things, it suggests the public provision of time, space, materials, natural settings, and programs with leaders where children may develop a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and enjoyment through play. This includes the encouragement of the conservation and use of traditional games.

Article 31 needs to be put firmly on the agenda in the area of planning. Here too IPA has useful comments to make. Barriers to the enjoyment of this right are man-made and result from leaving the rights of children off the agenda when planning

urban and non-urban areas. This is the direct result of a lack of public awareness of the vital importance of this right.

In order to trigger off the above policy, the private and the public sector, parents and interest groups, should join efforts to raise awareness of the value of play. Play and the chances for a child's success in life should not be viewed as being in competition but as being complementary. Furthermore, for policy measures to succeed in this area there is need of ongoing monitoring of strategies and mechanisms aimed at implementing the relevant provisions of the UNCRC with respect to the leisure, recreation and cultural activities set out in Article 31. Such monitoring is necessary to ensure that policies lead to the relevant high quality, accessible and inclusive opportunities for all children and to ensuring that we overcome the particular barriers to the enjoyment of this right in 21<sup>st</sup> century Malta.



# The benefits of play, cultural and recreational activities

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Valerie Sollars

Children's right to play is an undisputed maxim embraced by many adults. Play and leisure-time activities are crucial to the well-being and healthy development of any human being. Although play as an activity may be more readily associated and linked to young children, in reality, there is no phase in the life of a human being when it can be said that play-days are over. Play and recreation assist and support development at many levels at different ages. Physical, emotional, personal and social, cognitive and linguistic gains can be attributed to meaningful, enjoyable activities and experiences. Play and learning are inextricably linked especially in the early years of life. Play is much more than a means of enjoyment and relaxation. Indeed, young children do not distinguish between work and play; play is to children what work is to adults.

Research evidence from a British research project with young children (Moyles & Adams, 2001)<sup>3</sup> has concluded that children are entitled to play experiences which:

- Engage them affectively and socially in their own learning and that of others;
- Offer meaningful and relevant contexts for learning;
- Promote curiosity and use of imagination and creativity in learning;
- Offer opportunities for exploratory and experiential activities with a variety of materials and resources in a range of contexts

Some theories of play emphasise its importance during childhood because of its long-term potential. Bruce (1996)<sup>4</sup> argues that it is a resource that helps adults lead a full life, deal with setbacks and tragedies and makes a 'major contribution to mental and physical health' (p. 1). Play is a resource that promotes creativity that can be used during adulthood. Play is also invaluable in its contribution to the development of thinking and ideas.

One of the difficulties in the local context apparently relates to the conceptualisation and understanding of play and learning. Many pay lip-service to the importance of learning through play but in reality, it appears that little is known about playful practice. Research conducted among 512 Maltese families indicates that some parents still need to be convinced that play in itself is not a waste of time, even at the early years stage, and that different types of play ought to be promoted to ensure children's overall development (Sollars, 2003)<sup>5</sup>. Given the right environment and appropriate resources, together with knowledgeable, skilled adults, play opportunities for children offer life-long learning experiences. Such opportunities are ones which motivate children, encourage them to try things out without fear of failing, appeal to their sense of curiosity and instil the love for learning.

Considering the rich and long-term potential effects of play on the lives of children and young people, it is little wonder that Article 31 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child declares children's right to "*rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts*". However, the International Play Association (Canada),<sup>6</sup> an organisation which aims at promoting play for children, claims that a number of factors potentially create barriers to children's right to play. These include:

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<sup>3</sup> Moyles, J. & Adams, S. (2001). *StEPs Statements of entitlement to play. A framework for playful teaching with 3 to 7 year-olds*. Buckingham: Open University.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, T. (1996). *Helping young children to play*. London: Hodder & Stoughton

<sup>5</sup> Sollars, V. (2003). Constructing a curriculum for early childhood education in Malta – The value of play for learning. *Researching Early Childhood*, (5), 161–178.

<sup>6</sup> *The child's right to play*. International Play Association (Canada). Available online: [http://www.ipacanada.org/home\\_childs.htm](http://www.ipacanada.org/home_childs.htm)

- Attitudes toward children's play, and/or lack of public awareness of the value of play.
- The perception that school work and the learning of specific skills is the best path to "success" in an increasingly competitive world economy.
- Increasing workloads have resulted in limiting parents' time and energy to play with their children and this in turn has resulted in children spending more time in organized programs.
- The number of hours children devote to TV, computers and computer games can be damaging in the absence of any control.

The association also recommends that professionals who come in direct or indirect contact with children should have an element of training about play in their professional development. This applies not only to teachers and educators, but even to coaches, health professionals, landscape and interior designers and architects.

In its declaration about the child's right to play, the International Play Association<sup>7</sup> lists a number of 'alarming trends' affecting childhood and children's development. Some of these trends include:

- Society's indifference to the importance of play.
- Over-emphasis on theoretical and academic studies in schools.
- Increasing commercial exploitation of children, and the deterioration of cultural traditions.
- Inadequate preparation of children to cope with life in a rapidly changing society.
- Over-emphasis on unhealthy competition and "winning at all costs" in children's sports.

Different types of play activities assist a person's overall development. Imaginative, creative, constructive and physical play all make a crucial contribution to one's development offering a range of benefits to children of different ages. Sport activities as well as expressive arts subjects, which include music, art and drama, are ways to ensure that while children and young people are having lots of fun doing a variety of activities, their holistic development is enhanced. Adults need to ensure that these experiences and possibilities are readily available for all children at all ages.

### ***Aims of the study***

There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that children and young people in the local context do not have opportunities to engage in 'fun' activities, nor do they engage in culturally-enriching activities especially after school. There seems to be agreement that academic pressure and an exam-oriented education system hinder children from participating in enjoyable, recreational and cultural activities. On the other hand, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly states that children have, "a *right to play and relax by doing things like sport, music and drama*"<sup>8</sup>.

This publication presents the results of a study conducted among primary and secondary school children in an attempt to establish what recreational and cultural activities they engage in during school hours as well as in their free time, during the week and on the weekends. The study also sought to find out which activities are

**Anecdotal evidence suggests minimal participation in recreational activities**

<sup>7</sup> *The Child's Right to Play*. Declaration of the International Play Association (World). Available: [http://www.ipaworld.org/ipa\\_declaration.html](http://www.ipaworld.org/ipa_declaration.html) (see Appendix G)

<sup>8</sup> Taken from the simplified version of the Convention on Rights of the Child, addressing children and young people and available on the website of the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young people. Available: [http://www.sccyp.org.uk/webpages/cypr\\_rightsofthechild.php](http://www.sccyp.org.uk/webpages/cypr_rightsofthechild.php)

popular with children, what/how they choose to spend their free time and indeed if children and young people do have free time which they can spend in recreational and cultural activities.

### **Survey participants**

In order to collect information about children’s recreational activities during school as well as after school, several participants were invited to take part in the study through a variety of data collection procedures.

#### **The children and student participants**

To ensure a fair representation of children’s and young people’s perspectives, questionnaires were drawn up and distributed among primary and secondary school children attending state, church and independent private schools.

#### **Participants in the current survey**

State primary schools from 19 localities were randomly chosen from around Malta and Gozo ensuring a distribution of schools from the north, south, central and inner harbour areas of the island<sup>9</sup>. In addition, three church schools and three independent private schools were also invited to participate. State secondary schools were also chosen to represent different localities / catchment areas. Boys’ and girls’ junior lyceums and area secondary schools in Malta and Gozo took part in the study. Three church and two independent private schools participated with their secondary school students. In all, 31<sup>10</sup> primary and 15 secondary schools were involved for an overall sample of 3,478 primary school children and 2,509 secondary school children. Details about the distribution of participants’ home town or village are available in Appendix A.

At each level in both primary and secondary sectors, approximately 50% of the school population were involved. If for example, a school had four Year 3 classes, two of these were randomly chosen for the study.

Type of school	Frequency	Percent
State	2455	70.6
Church	524	15.1
Independent	499	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1: Distribution of primary school children by type of school

Type of school	Frequency	Percent
State	1508	60.1
Church	565	22.5
Independent	370	14.7
Mixed group <sup>11</sup>	66	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2: Distribution of secondary school students by type of school

The questionnaires were administered with 7 to 11 year-olds in the primary schools (Years 3 to 6) and 11 to 15-year-olds (Form 1 to Form 4) in the secondary sector.

<sup>9</sup> In larger localities, state schools are divided into School A and School B. Schools A cater for years 1, 2 and 3 (5 to 8 year olds) and B schools have the upper three years of primary schooling (Years 4, 5 and 6; 8 to 11 year olds).

<sup>10</sup> Schools A and B are calculated as two separate schools. They each have their own administrative & teaching compliment. Six A, six B and thirteen C schools participated in the study.

<sup>11</sup> This group of students was made up of students who were following a *Children’s rights course*.

Year level	Frequency	Percent
Year 3	863	24.8
Year 4	874	25.1
Year 5	919	26.4
Year 6	822	23.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3: Distribution of primary school children by class level

Age groups	Frequency	Percent
6-year-olds	17	0.5
7-year-olds	409	11.8
8-year-olds	884	25.4
9-year-olds	930	26.7
10-year-olds	832	23.9
11-year-olds	381	11.0
12-year-olds	20	0.6
Missing info	5	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4: Distribution of primary school children by age

Year level	Frequency	Percent
Form 1	639	25.5
Form 2	677	27
Form 3	611	24.4
Form 4	516	20.6
Missing info	66	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5: Distribution of secondary school students by class level

Age groups	Frequency	Percent
11 year-olds	258	10.3
12-year-olds	655	26.1
13-year-olds	664	26.5
14-year-olds	617	24.6
15-year-olds	270	10.8
16-year-olds	31	1.2
Missing info	9	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>2504<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>99.9</b>

Table 6: Distribution of secondary school students by age

Among the primary school children, 48.4% (N=1683) were boys and 51.5% (N=1791) were girls. Among the secondary school cohort, 44.6% (N=1118) were boys and 55.4% (N=1389) were girls.

<sup>12</sup> In addition, there were three 10-year-olds, and a 17 and 18 year old in the sample.

## **Heads of School**

Heads of primary and secondary schools were asked to complete a questionnaire to provide general information about P.E., art, music and drama lessons, as well as resources available for these subjects. Information about break times, its duration, how children's time is organized for eating and playing and facilities available was also requested. The heads were also asked for information about school outings.

Twenty-seven of the thirty-one primary heads of school (87%) and twelve of the fifteen secondary heads of schools (80%) completed and returned the questionnaire.

## **Service providers – after school entities**

### **Cultural and leisure-time activities**

Apart from collecting information from children and young people, attempts were made to obtain information from a number of organizations which provide recreational and educational after-school activities. For this purpose, questionnaires were sent to the parish priests of all 68 parishes in Malta, as well as to the M.U.S.E.U.M. Society for boys and girls. Information about organizations and their activities as well as membership, attendance and regularity of activities was obtained from 22 parishes, 45 M.U.S.E.U.M centres for girls and 64 M.U.S.E.U.M centres for boys.

Information was also sought from sports, drama, music and dance schools which are perceived as offering recreational, cultural and leisure-time activities for children and young people. A questionnaire was sent to 43 Youth FA nurseries to obtain information about football clubs for young children and adolescents. Phone interviews were conducted with service providers running dance, music and theatre/drama schools. Responses were received from 20 youth football nurseries, 7 dance schools, one drama and one music school. Given the response rate by the service providers or heads of these schools, no generalizations can be made but the information gives indications about trends among young people who participate in recreational activities after school hours.

## ***Children and secondary-school aged students' questionnaire***

### **The questionnaire forms: differences & similarities**

There were two versions of the questionnaire: one was used with primary school children and the second version was used with secondary school students. There were 54 items and 57 items respectively. The modifications were slight. Both questionnaires were divided into two sections. The first section considered children's play and recreational activities during school hours. Children were asked about the way they spend their time during break and the adequacy of the break times. Additional information was sought concerning children's participation in physical education, music and art lessons. Such lessons are generally considered to be more interesting, enjoyable and possibly less stressful than other core subjects which are given more importance in the curriculum. Information about timetabled lessons for P.E., art, music, drama as well as school outings and break times was also sought from the heads of schools to corroborate what the students would have reported.

In the second section of the questionnaire, children were asked about their free time outside school hours and how they spend their time then. This included questions about their membership in clubs, religious groups, sport associations, dance, music and drama schools. Information was sought about typical activities children engage in during the weekend, outings they participate in with their family and friends.

In all instances, questionnaires were administered to a whole class. Data collectors read out the questions, instructing children to complete the questions individually and sequentially as they went through the list of questions.

Both versions of the questionnaire are included in Appendices B and C.

## ***Interviews / questionnaires for service providers***

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The questions asked of service providers were identical. General information was sought about the number, age and gender of children attending the school as well as the duration and frequency of lessons. Additional information focused on the school year, the opening hours and days. Service providers were asked for their opinions and experiences regarding student numbers and turnovers, the age and reasons when children and students start having difficulty to pursue the chosen activity. A list of the questions asked is included in Appendix D.

Similar questions were asked of parish priests and leaders of the M.U.S.E.U.M. catechism society. Information was sought about the various groups within parishes, the gender and age of members, the type and frequency of meetings and activities, sources of funding and difficulties faced by the organization. Details of the questions asked are available in Appendices E and F.

**Adults'  
perspectives and  
views**

# Analysis of data and results

Valerie Sollars

The results obtained from the questionnaires and interviews conducted with the various participants in the study are discussed in the subsequent sections. Where possible, children and young people's perceptions and claims are corroborated with those of the service-providers.

## Play and recreation at school

Frequency of physical education in schools

There seem to be a minimal number of physical education lessons at school. The majority of respondents reported that they have one lesson a week of Physical Education, with an almost equal number claiming that they have two or three lessons a week (Table 7).

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hardly ever	574	16.5	86	3.4
Irregular	490	14.1	100	4.0
Once a week	1202	34.6	1337	53.3
Twice or three times	1164	33.5	907	36.1
Four or five times	27	0.8	70	2.8
No answer	21	0.6	9	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 7: Frequency of P.E. lessons in primary schools

Although the majority of secondary school students reported having P.E. once a week, this result incorporates students who clarified that they do have a double lesson. Similarly, students who reported having four or five P.E. lessons a week specified that they have chosen the subject as their specialization, hence the higher number of lessons.

Physical Education in secondary schools

Information provided by the twelve Heads of schools, at the secondary level indicates that Form 1 and Form 2 students have two P.E. lessons a week throughout the whole scholastic year. In state secondary schools, there is only one P.E. lesson a week for Form 4 and 5 students whereas the heads of one church and the independent private schools reported two P.E. lessons for Form 4 and 5 students. Data about Form 3 are varied: 7 schools reporting only one P.E. lesson a week and 5 schools having two such lessons a week for this year group.

Physical Education in primary schools

The data from the primary school children is corroborated by the information reported by the Heads of school. According to the Heads, most children have one or two P.E. lessons a week. Two heads reported that the children at their school have 5 P.E. lessons a week but in one of these schools, the head specified that in the last three years of primary (Years 4,5,6) this is brought down to 3 lessons a week. Rather than the number of lessons, two heads reported that at their school, all the primary cohort have 1 hour of P.E. a week, in some instances this is divided into two 30 minute sessions. One school reported that the children have 2.5 hours a week for P.E. Two heads gave no details about the P.E lessons and another two reported that this is done irregularly or up to the teacher.

In the primary sector, most children reported doing their P.E. lesson with the P.E. teacher (61.5%; N=2140) whereas an almost equal number of children claim that they do these lessons with the class teacher only (35%; N=1218) or with the peripatetic teacher only (37.3%; N=1298). Since P.E. is one of a range of subjects taught at secondary school, 95.2% (N=2387) of the participating students understandably reported doing P.E. with the subject teacher.

The P.E. lesson is conducted in a variety of places (Table 8). For both primary and secondary schools, the school playground is the location where most P.E. lessons take place. Use of a gymnasium, alternative locations and the school hall are all more likely places for the P.E. lesson with secondary school students. In both cohorts, other locations identified by students for the P.E. lesson included tracks, football pitches, tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools (not on school premises) and specifically designated P.E. areas.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
School playground	3238	93.1	2194	87.4
Gymnasium	898	25.8	1372	54.7
School Hall	665	19.1	700	27.9
Other locations	448	12.9	524	20.9

Table 8: Locations where P.E lessons are held

The majority of primary and secondary students reported that the P.E. lesson could still be done on rainy days: 59.3% (N=2063) and 78.8% (N=1976) respectively. Yet, the likelihood of this taking place seems more feasible within the secondary schools. This result corroborates what students reported earlier about the facilities available for the P.E. lesson.

Among the 27 primary schools whose Heads returned the requested information, only six (22%) reported that a gymnasium is available at the school. An equal number reported the availability of pitches for volleyball, basketball and football. Within the participating secondary schools, six (50%) of the heads reported that a gymnasium is available; and nine (75%) have pitches available for football, volleyball and basketball<sup>13</sup>.

Balls seem to be the most popular item used during P.E. lessons with 98.5% (N=3426) of the primary school children and 95.1% (N=2386) of the secondary school students identifying them as a major resource. The older cohort specified a range of games as they specified the balls used, including volleyball, netball, basketball and football. Hoops are more popular with younger children: 91.7% (N=3189) primary school referred to hoops in comparison to 41.5% (N=1042) of the secondary school students. Primary school children also mentioned ropes (40.9%, N=1421), skittles (26.0%, N=906) and beanbags (53.0%, N=1843) as other major resources used during their P.E lessons. The equipment used among secondary school children appears to be more varied and 75.6% (N=1897) identified a range of equipment, including gym-related apparatus, discus, hockey sticks, nets and mats, bats, hurdles, rackets, beanbags, quoits etc. Some 23.6% (N=591) identified cones as another form of equipment.

The Heads of both primary and secondary schools confirmed the availability of a substantial amount of equipment: 77.8% (N=21) of the primary Heads and 58.3% (N=7) of the secondary Heads respectively.

Primary and secondary school children agree that they have an insufficient number of P.E. lessons (Table 9). Children and students were asked to identify reasons why P.E appeals to them. Four choices were given and respondents could choose a single or multiple reasons (Table 10).

<sup>13</sup> Given the small number of questionnaires with information from the schools, the details reported here are not necessarily generalisable to all the schools on the island. Percentages are quoted to allow for some comparison between the participating secondary and primary schools.



	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Enough P.E. lessons	730	21.0	643	25.6
Too many lessons	121	3.5	47	1.9
Too few P.E. lessons	2472	71.1	1735	69.2
No answer	155	4.5	84	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 9: Adequacy of amount of P.E lessons

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Good at it	2581	74.2	1449	57.8
Get away from class	1331	38.3	1163	46.4
Can move around	2281	65.6	1663	66.3
Get some fresh air	2444	70.3	1658	62.5

Table 10: Enjoyment derived from P.E lessons

The younger cohort seem to have a higher self-esteem where their performance is concerned, in comparison to the older children. However, it is also quite interesting to note that both cohorts agree that one benefit offered by the P.E. lesson is their getting to move around. One interpretation of this result could be that this is a reaction to sedentary activities which could dominate the classroom routine.

**Limited exposure to music and art**

Apart from P.E., students were also asked about the frequency with which they have music (Table 11) and art lessons (Table 12) at school.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	559	16.1	1270	50.6
Once in a while	1916	55.1	531	21.2
Once a week	664	19.1	493	19.6
Twice a week	224	6.4	187	7.5
Three times a week	51	1.5	2	.1
No information	64	1.8	26	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 11: Frequency of music lessons with primary and secondary school students

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	78	2.2	785	31.3
Once in a while	1652	47.5	735	29.3
Once a week	1369	39.4	409	16.3
Twice a week	266	7.6	445	17.7
Three times a week	24	.7	89	3.5
No information	89	2.6	46	1.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 12: Frequency of art lessons with primary and secondary school students

In both primary and secondary sectors, 71.2% and 71.8% of children reported that they never have music lessons or have it once in a while. Art seems to be more of a regular feature within the primary schools (Table 12). Although just under 50% of the children reported that they only have art lessons once in a while, 39.4% claimed that they have an art lesson every week.

According to the information provided by the Heads of school, in secondary schools, Music and Art in Forms 1 and 2 are only available for one or two lessons a week for one term only. Students in the upper forms (3-5) will only have art lessons if chosen as an option. In some secondary schools, there is no music teaching at all. Art rooms tend to be available in schools: 19 (70.4%) of the 27 primary schools and 8 (66.7%) of the 12 secondary schools have such rooms, as reported by the Heads of school.

Generally, in church and independent private schools, specialist teachers, are specifically employed to teach P.E., art, music and drama. In the state schools, the responsibility for these subjects falls upon the class teacher as well as peripatetic staff. However, although such staff might be visiting the school regularly, depending on the number of classrooms available, any individual class or child may not get to work with the peripatetic staff and therefore the onus is on the class teacher to ensure that these subjects are done regularly.

The peripatetic staff visiting state schools varies in the frequency with which they visit the same school, thus influencing the number of lessons a particular class would have. The Heads of the 21 state primary schools reported the following: in 14 schools, the P.E. teachers visit weekly (66.7%); in four others, the P.E. teacher is irregular in his/her visits (19%), whereas in three schools, s/he visits often. For music, ten heads reported that the music teacher visits weekly (47.6%); one head reported that the teacher is there often; in six schools (27%) the music teacher shows up twice a month and in another two schools (9.5%), the music teacher has an irregular timetable. For art, 13 heads (62%) report having the art teacher weekly; one head reported the art teacher visits often, three schools (14%) see the art teacher twice a month and two schools (9.5%) get irregular service. Drama appears to be the least represented of the creative arts subjects with ten heads reporting that the drama teacher visits irregularly and one school claiming that a drama teacher has not been assigned for the past six years. In four schools, the drama teacher goes weekly, in another two, the school reports that the drama teacher is there often and in another two schools, the drama teachers visits twice a month. Among the participating schools, both primary and secondary schools appear to have the facilities of a school hall and a stage which can be used for concerts, prize-days and similar occasions: 18 (66.7%) of the 27 primary schools and 9 (75%) of the 12 secondary schools reported the availability of a school hall and stage.

**Regularity of visits by peripatetic staff**

Children and students were asked to provide some information about the way break time is organised at school together with activities they engage in at this time. Most report that they have little time to eat and play (Table 13). However, it has to be noted that a number of students in the secondary sector commented that this lack of time applied to the first break but the second break was sufficient for them to eat and play.

**Organisation of break time**

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Enough time eat/play	1442	41.5	928	37.0
Little time to eat/play	1763	50.7	1482	59.1
Too much time	193	5.5	62	2.5
No information	80	2.3	37	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 13: Adequacy of time for eating and playing during breaks

**Duration of break time** In a school-day which lasts about 6 hours and 15 minutes, secondary school children get about 45 minutes of break-time. Secondary state schools have two breaks: a 15-minute and a 30-minute break. At a junior lyceum, on alternate days, the 30-minute break is longer and lasts 60 minutes. Two of the participating church schools reported having a 15-minute and a 60-minute break. One church school has only one 20-minute break for all students from Forms 1 to 5. The school day at this school is shorter than in others. Excluding breaks, the school day is about 5 hours 30 minutes long; there were slight variations around this time across schools.

**Primary school children get 45 minutes break in a six-hour day** In a school-day which lasts about 6 hours, primary school children get about 45 minutes of break-time. Within state primary schools, the first break lasts 15 to 20 minutes whereas the second break is 30 minutes long. In one participating church school, children have one 15 minute break followed by a 60 minute break at noon. In another church school, children have one break only. For the first two years of primary, (5 to 7 year olds) this is between 30 and 40 minutes; for the remaining four grades (7 to 11-year-olds) the one break lasts 20 minutes. Excluding breaks, the teaching time in primary schools is about 5 hours and 15 or 20 minutes long.

**Some playtime in primary school is taken up for eating lunch** Practically all heads of primary schools reported that during break time, children are expected to sit down and eat their lunch during some part of the break before going to play. Generally, heads reported that the time allocated for the break is equally divided between time sitting down eating and time when children are allowed to go to the playground. In secondary schools, seven of the twelve heads report that students are expected to sit down and eat before play but with the exception of one school, students are free to make their own arrangements.

Children and students were asked to identify what spaces are available in schools where they are allowed to play. The same question was asked to find out what is available and accessible on a sunny as well as a rainy day (Tables 14 and 15).

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Classroom	372	10.7	135	5.4
Playground	3228	92.8	2308	92.0
Corridors	311	8.9	252	10.0

Table 14: Play areas available on sunny days

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Classroom	2201	63.3	787	31.4
Playground	137	3.9	439	17.5
Corridors	1453	41.8	1308	52.1

Table 15: Play areas available on rainy days

**Limitations of school premises** School premises for rainy days are not highly amenable for coping with students who may want to engage in high-energy driven activities since pupils have to spend their break times in corridors or the classrooms. Neither of the two spaces would allow for much movement or mobility. Across the participating primary schools, ten primary school Heads (37%) reported that there is only one playground available in their school, seven (26%) have two playgrounds and five (18.5%) have three play areas. One private and one church school reported having five playgrounds. Among the 27 participating primary schools, 14 (52%) do not have indoor-play areas. In 12 of the 27 schools (44%), different groups of children use the playgrounds at different times because of limited facilities. In another 12 schools, all children play simultaneously but in different playgrounds. In three schools (11%), all students play at the same time, sharing the same playground.

Among participating secondary schools, the number of playgrounds available varies with three Heads reporting that there is only one playground, five have two play areas, and two have three playgrounds. One school identified four areas and an

independent private school claims 'several' playgrounds. In four of the schools, all students play in the same ground at the same time, whilst in five schools, all students have playtime simultaneously but they use different playgrounds. Only one secondary Head of school reported that different groups use playgrounds at different times because of limited facilities.

Children and students were asked to mention activities they engage in during break time. They were also asked whether they are allowed to bring games and toys from home. There is a sharp contrast between the two cohorts in comparing this latter issue: only 28.9% (N=724) of the older students reported that they are allowed to bring games with them in comparison to 60.3% (N=2098) of the younger children.

During break time some 77% of the secondary school students reported 'quiet' and 'relaxed' activities; they just eat, walk, talk, chat, gossip, discuss, do their homework. Students also mentioned visiting the library, the computer labs or participating in school meetings, a prayer meeting or watching tournaments. Some 66% mentioned taking part in tournaments or participating in sports. Basketball, football, volleyball, tennis and table tennis were among the sport activities mentioned. One student suggested a longer break as she has just about enough time to eat!

*... since there is limited time, I only manage to eat, I will appreciate if the break was longer*

*(Secondary school - Junior Lyceum girl, ID 1635)*

Among the younger cohort, practically all children mentioned activities which involve chasing each other. These include 'stuck in the mud', 'hide and seek', 'catch', 'water and freeze', 'lions and tigers', 'cat and mouse', 'cops and robbers' and 'prisoners'. Others referred to more traditional games including 'hopscotch' or 'passju', 'iż-żunżana ddur ddur', 'bum bum il-bieb', 'oranges and lemons', 'pass ta'ggant'. There was mention of 'mummies and daddies', 'trading stickers and cards', and some, though not many references were made to talking and walking, playing with the computer.

Educational outings offer another opportunity for young people to move away from the sedentary demands of the curriculum. Secondary school students were asked to list places they have visited during school outings. The range of places listed is quite impressive and can be divided into various categories (Table 16).

**Physical vs. non-physical activities during school break time**

**Educational outings – opportunities for cultural activities**

**Outings related to school subjects**

Fieldwork at Għajn Tuffieħa with Geography teacher; Inquisitor's Palace with History teacher; Geography trip to Sicily, Mount Etna – flight over volcano; Science fieldtrips; German resource centre; Marsa with P.E. teacher; Home Economics seminar; Drama – Scenes from Shakespeare.

**Museums & Places of interest**

Valletta, Mdina, Haġar Qim, Haġ Saflieni, Tarxien Temples; War rooms; Aviation museum; Roman villa; Rinella, Limestone Heritage, Palace Armoury; St. John's co-Cathedral; Birgu shelters; Valletta waterfront; St. James Cavalier; Manoel Theatre; Valletta library; University library; Simar nature reserve; Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti.

**Factories/Enterprises**

Benna; ST Electronics; Methode; Heritage Malta; Stock Exchange; Farsons; Institute of Tourism Studies; Malta Tourism Authority; Meteorological office; Technopark; Margo Brothers; hotels; Armed Forces of Malta; pottery; glass blowers; Careers orientation visits; Post-secondary institutions.

**Sport**

Pool at Ta' Qali; Sports day, Bobby Charlton Soccer ground; Luxol ground; Abseiling at Golden Sands.

**Philanthropic Activities**

Angela house; Cloistered nuns; Old people's homes; Visit to Razzett tal-Ħbiberija; Visiting people at Special Unit (Sannat).

**Religious / PSD activities**

Seminars; live-ins; Days of recollection; Sedqa seminar; Oasi.

Table 16: Locations visited by secondary school students on school visits

Given the places and locations identified by students, it is evident that locations are chosen to match areas of the curriculum as well as the needs of the students in relation to the world of work. The latter is emphasized by visits to career exhibitions, industry and enterprises. Several students indicated attending seminars although they did not always specify the main subject of the seminar. The historical and cultural richness of the Maltese islands offer schools more opportunities for outings. Quite a number of students also referred to pantomimes, plays, outings to the cinemas. Some even mentioned watching matches or attending prize-giving ceremonies at other schools.

**School outings are related to the curriculum**

The responses of the Heads of secondary schools who completed the questionnaire corroborate what students reported. Several specified that the outings are age appropriate, related to the curriculum and, in the upper forms, usually linked to post-secondary options, including further studies and work opportunities. The schools differ in the number of outings for the secondary classes, with the minimum being two outings per year group to a maximum of five outings per year group, over a scholastic year.

Although primary school children were not asked to give information about places they have visited during school outings, this information was collected from the Heads of school. Most of the sites identified by the secondary school students were also included on the itinerary of the primary schools (see Table 17).

Some heads of schools specified that outings are age-appropriate and related to topics being explored in classrooms. Examples cited included an outing to Marsaxlokk to accompany the topic the sea with Year 2 children or a harbour cruise for Year 5 children following on the topic of the three cities and the shipyard.

**Outings related to school topics**

Boat trips- harbour cruises; Science Fairs; Heritage walk; Village core; Health & Safety exhibition; art exhibitions; fieldwork in connection with science; Marine Wildlife Road Show; visiting other schools as part of twinning programmes; healthy breakfast; hands-on-farming; green week activity at Villa Rundle; Visiting local people – baker, mayor etc.

**Factories / Enterprises**

Printing Press; Meteorological office; Farson's Brewery; Consolidated Biscuits; Malta International Airport; Bristow Potteries; glass blowers; Akwakultura; Water Services (Ta'Kandja); Għammieri;

**Philanthropic Activities**

Razzett tal-ħbiberija; Open day at Appogg;

**Miscellaneous**

Mediterraneo; Playmobil; Popeye Village; Gymstars; Film/cinema; Bay Street; Plays; Fun day; Romp-around; Fun Walks; Theatre in Education; Musical;

**Museums & Places of interest**

Aviation Museum; Great Siege; Cottonera; Mdina; Valletta; St. James Cavalier; Għar Dalam; St. John's co-Cathedral; Il-Maqluba; Wied Għollieqa; Għadira Reserve; Limestone Heritage; Haġar Qim; St. Agatha's & St. Paul's Catacombs; Chadwick Lakes; Palace; Malta Experience; Gozo; Maritime Museum;

**Sport**

Ta' Qali Sports Complex; National Swimming Pool; Bobby Charlton Soccer School; rugby & football tournaments; swimming lessons; Marsa Sports Ground (sports day); netball/football league;

**Religious**

Passion Drama; Holy Week – statues; Church functions; Christams activity; visit to RTK studios for Gospel programme; Last Supper Table (Holy Week)

**Gardens**

Barrakka; Buskett; San Anton; Argotti; Ġnien l-Indipendenza; Gżira gardens; Santa Lucija Chinese Gardens;

Table 17: Locations visited by primary school students on school visits as identified by Heads of Schools

The number of outings for primary school children varies, with several schools having a minimum of 3 per school year for every age group. Many have 6 outings per year, or two outings per term but some reported having as many as 10 or 12 outings for a particular age group.

Frequency of school outings

### ***Play, recreation and free time after school***

As mentioned earlier, the questions in the second part of the questionnaire focused on children's free time and their activities after school as well as on the weekend. Tables 18 and 19 summarise the respondents' claims regarding their free time.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never have free time	290	8.3	290	11.6
Free time on a few days	1081	31.1	1054	42.0
Free time on most days	611	17.6	526	21.0
Free time everyday	1445	41.5	616	24.6
No information	51	1.5	23	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 18: Availability of free time after school hours

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never have free time	129	3.7	156	6.2
Free time on one day	644	18.5	879	35.0
Free time on both days	2640	75.9	1442	57.5
No information	65	1.9	32	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 19: Availability of free time during weekends

The younger children claimed to have more free time than the older students. This result applies to free time during the week and on the weekend. The older cohort claimed that they have more free time on the weekend than during the week. Respondents reported a variety of activities they do on the weekend. Tables 20 to 25 list the weekend activities respondents mentioned most frequently.

Younger children have more free time than older students

Taken collectively, it would seem that at any time of the weekend, several children and young people are spending time doing homework, studying and reading, spending time watching TV or DVDs and doing some activities on computers. All these activities do not necessarily promote a great deal of social interaction and communication - they can be quite solitary activities.

Leisure time activities focus more on passive participation

In contrast, among the participants of the current survey, attending sessions of training for a variety of sports, dance, drama and art schools was not something which featured very highly. It therefore appears that children and young people's patterns of leisure time activities focus more on passive participation rather than dynamic, interactive activities.

<b>Saturday a.m. (Primary school)</b>		<b>Saturday a.m. (Secondary School)</b>	
Study / HW / read	20.8%	Study / HW / read	38.9%
Playing <sup>14</sup>	17.5%	Sleep	9.0%
Sports (training, lessons, practice)	11.2%	Sports (training, lessons, practice)	8.0%
Lessons <sup>15</sup>	9.2%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	7.8%
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	7.0%	Computer / chat / Video games console / internet	7.6%
Shopping	5.8%	Shopping	7.5%
Computer & video games console <sup>16</sup>	5.6 %	Private lessons (school, dance, drama, music)	7.2%
Mass, altar boys' meetings, M.U.S.E.U.M. <sup>17</sup>	4.7%	Friends (going out; playing)	4.2%
Visiting relatives, mostly grandma	4.5%	Mass; altar boys' meeting; M.U.S.E.U.M.	3.2%
Helping with housework	3.3%	Helping with housework	2.9%
Others <sup>18</sup>	5.8%	Others <sup>19</sup>	5.1%

Table 20: Saturday morning activities

<b>Saturday afternoon (Primary school)</b>		<b>Saturday afternoon (Secondary School)</b>	
Playing	19.3%	Study / HW / read	32.3%
Study / HW / read	18.1%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	14.7%
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	10.7%	Computer/chat/video games console/MSN	12.3%
Sleep/nap	8.7%	Go out (including but not only, with friends)	9.6%
Computer/video games console	7.1%	Working	5.3%
Sports	5.3%	Sports	4.7%
Relatives, mostly grandparents	3.7%	Sleeping	4.5%
Go out	3.7%	Lessons (private, drama, music, dance)	3.3%
Mass, M.U.S.E.U.M., choir	2.8%	At home (relax, hanging out, listening to music, housework, practicing piano etc).	2.8%
Lessons (school, dance, drama, music, art)	2.1%	Relatives, mostly grandparents	2.2%
Others <sup>20</sup>	3.5%	Others <sup>21</sup>	4.1%

Table 21: Saturday afternoon activities

<sup>14</sup> Many children just reported playing but some specified whether it's with toys, friends, siblings and cousins.

<sup>15</sup> Private lessons (152 school work); piano (41); guitar (19); ballet (35); drama (38)

<sup>16</sup> None of the children mentioned the internet or MSN.

<sup>17</sup> 143 children mentioned going to mass on Saturday morning.

<sup>18</sup> Includes sleeping (74), looking after pets (26), going out (77), scouts (7), with friends (26)

<sup>19</sup> Includes 'working', generally with dad, mum, family shop (44); listening to music (11); at home (23); visiting grandparents (25); going to the library (13); guides' meeting (2); looking after pets (7)

<sup>20</sup> Includes shopping (55), housework (11), scouts (37), practising music instruments (17)

<sup>21</sup> Choir (8), Scouts (12), MUSEUM (12), church (26), shopping (44)

<b>Saturday evening (Primary school)</b>		<b>Saturday evening (Secondary School)</b>	
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	17.8%	Go out (Paceville; restaurants; friends; family)	36.4%
Go out with family / eat out	17.0%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	17.3%
Sleep	9.4%	Study / HW / read	7.7%
Go to mass	7.5%	Computer, chat, video games console, internet, MSN	6.9%
Study / HW / read	7.4%	Go to mass	6.0%
Play	7.4%	At home (sleep, hang around, listen to music)	4.3%
Computer, video games console, chat, MSN	4.9%	With relatives, mostly grandparents	2.1%
Visiting grandparents	3.4%	Others (sports, scouts, M.U.S.E.U.M.)	1.6%

Table 22: Saturday evening activities

<b>Sunday morning (Primary school)</b>		<b>Sunday morning (Secondary School)</b>	
Church / mass	41.6%	Church / mass	45.8%
Play	9.1%	Study / HW / read	15.3%
Study / HW / read	7.1%	Sleep	8%
With/visiting grandparents, aunts	6.7%	Going out, shopping, market	7.8%
Sport activities	4.9%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	4.9%
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	5.1%	Visiting grandparents	4.6%
At home, sleep, hobbies, free time, help mum / dad	4.9%	Sports (training, practice etc.)	4.0%
Go out, M.U.S.E.U.M., scouts, Youth centre, shopping	4.9%	Computer, chat, MSN, video games console	3.5%
		Others (piano, play, M.U.S.E.U.M., listen to music)	4.0%

Table 23: Sunday morning activities

<b>Sunday afternoon (Primary school)</b>		<b>Sunday afternoon (Secondary School)</b>	
Play	14.8%	Going out, to the beach, countryside	19.3%
Sleep, nap, rest	9.7%	Study / HW / read	18.6%
Grandparents (visiting, lunch with)	9.3%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	10.0%
Study / HW / read	9.3%	Computer, chat, MSN, Video games console, internet	8.8%
Go out	8.5%	At home, lunch with family, practice piano	5.9%
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	7.4%	Visiting grandparents	5.6%
Swim, walks, hike	4.5%	Sports	5.0%
Computer, chat, video games console	4.4%	Sleep / nap	4.8%
Church/mass	3.5%	Church / mass	1.6%

Table 24: Sunday afternoon activities



<b>Sunday evening (Primary school)</b>		<b>Sunday evening (Secondary School)</b>	
Watching TV / DVD / film / video	15.8%	Watching TV / DVD / film / video	20.8%
Sleep early, prep for school, at home	14.5%	Going out	12.8%
Going out, eating out, restaurant	11.4%	With friends	11.1%
Visiting relatives grandparents etc	10.2%	Study / HW / read	10.3%
Study / HW / read	6.8%	Home, prepare for school, sleep	10.1%
Church, mass	3.9%	Computer, chat, MSN, Video games console, internet	8.4%
Computer, Video games console	3.8%	Time with family, parents	8.4%
		Visiting Grandparents	6.5%

Table 25: Sunday evening activities

### ***Recreational activities within religious organisations***

Apart from identifying activities they do on the weekend, children and young people were asked to provide information about their membership and frequency of attendance with a variety of clubs, religious organizations, music, dance, drama and sport schools.

Information about religious organisations was included in the study for a number of reasons. The Church is still an influential authority in Malta and several thousand children across the island regularly attend after-school Catechism lessons. Apart from the spiritual aspect, the various religious organisations and societies in parishes organise cultural, educational and recreational activities for the young members.

One particular organisation which is known to attract many children and which has centres available in many towns and villages across Malta and Gozo is the M.U.S.E.U.M. Society. Not only is the Society involved in catechises but it is also well-known for the recreational activities organised particularly on the weekend. It is for this reason that detailed information was obtained about the M.U.S.E.U.M Society and reported in this survey. Data were collected from both the male and female sections of the Society. There was a 100% response rate from the leaders of the centres.

#### **Attendance for Catechism classes dwindles after Confirmation**

The information reported by children regarding their attendance at catechism classes is corroborated by what the centre leaders reported in their questionnaire. In Malta, children are obliged to attend catechism classes in preparation for receiving the sacraments of Holy Communion (typically at age 6 or 7) and Confirmation. Once they receive their Confirmation at the age of 10 or 11, after which attendance is not compulsory, the numbers dwindle rapidly.

	<b>Primary school children</b>		<b>Secondary school students</b>	
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Never	844	24.3	1906	76.0
Hardly ever	181	5.2	169	6.7
Once a week	266	7.6	99	3.9
Twice a week	1095	31.5	62	2.5
Three times a week	302	8.7	32	1.3
Four times or more	674	19.4	186	7.4
No information	116	3.3	55	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 26: Children and young people's attendance at M.U.S.E.U.M. centres

Data collected directly from the M.U.S.E.U.M Society and its various centres around Malta and Gozo, suggest that these centres attract many children especially under the age of 11. Some 5,251 girls and 11,060 boys attend the centres found in almost all localities in Malta and Gozo. The main aim of the society is the catechetical formation of young people as well as the preparation of children and young people to receive the sacraments.

The centres are open all the year round, four times a week in the afternoons/evening between Monday and Friday. There is some variation across opening arrangement of the centres over the weekend with some being open on both Saturdays and Sundays, for half a day or a full day. Five to ten-year-olds are expected to attend twice a week for catechism lessons; older children can go four times a week. During the week, formation and catechism lessons are organized. In some centres, there can be some time for playing but this depends on facilities/premises available and whether children have some free time. Weekend activities vary according to season. Boys are taken out on Sunday afternoons. They go swimming, in summer, to play football and for hikes. From time to time, day hikes and visits to Gozo are organized. Similarly, weekend activities for girls include retreats, live-ins, walks in the countryside or outings to the beach, craft activities, guitar lessons, cookery sessions, BBQs and playing board games. Plays and activities are also organized for various occasions, including Mother's Day, Christmas, children's first Holy Communion and Confirmation.

The Society is mostly funded by the contributions of its own adult members. Donations are accepted from parents but these are not mandatory or regular. Within the boys' centres, the adult members use some of their free time for maintenance work, thus avoiding labour costs. On the whole, the centres have access to audio-visual resources, including DVDs, cassette recorders and projectors. Some have the facility of a laptop. Musical instruments are also available in several girls' centres.

Most of the children attending the centres are 8 to 10-year-olds. Attendance among boys across all 64 centres was reported to be average. Attendance among girls across 45 centres was more diverse: 55.6% (25 centres) reported average attendance of their members, 37.8% (17 centres) reported a very healthy turnout and 6.7% (3 centres) believe that attendance is rather poor. Three of the centres which reported a healthy turnout, did specify that attendance is poor in summer as well as with the girls over the age of 10. The boys' centres also agree that attendance fluctuates over the year and most children attend during the school year. A drop in attendance during the summer months seems to be the norm.

**Most children attending are 8 to 10-year-olds**

Ages	5 to 7	8 to 10	11 to 13	14 to 16	17 to 18	Totals
Boys	1944	4637	3014	1300	165	11,060
Girls	1782	2382	864	181	42	5,251
<b>Total</b>	<b>3726</b>	<b>7019</b>	<b>3878</b>	<b>1481</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>16,311</b>

Table 27: Children attending M.U.S.E.U.M centres by gender and age

The leaders of the centres were asked to identify the age when student numbers and attendance start dwindling. For both boys and girls, young people seem to move away from the society between the ages of 11 and 14. Whereas the boys' centres unanimously perceive this problem to be related to peer pressure and loss of interest in religious matters, girls' centres claim a variety of reasons, including peer pressure (68.9%), too much homework (53.3%), exam pressure (46.7%) and loss of interest in religious matters (44.4%). This attrition is also attributed by the leaders of the girls' centres to other reasons (24.4%), including private lessons, moving away to other organizations in the parish, such as band clubs and the choir, or even beyond (e.g. drama), outgrowing the old group, especially in view of the fact that there is gender segregation and young people start developing other interests. Other reasons cited include parental pressure, lack of parents' interest and the mentality that once the sacrament of Confirmation has been received, there is no more obligation to attend catechism lessons.

**Students move away between the ages of 11 and 14**

**Participants attending events must be truly committed to an organization**

There are other difficulties the Society faces which make it more difficult for it to organize activities for children and young people. One difficulty shared and reported by both boys' and girls' centres concerns the overlapping dates for activities with other organizations. Given the range of organizations and activities available for children and young people today, coupled with time constraints brought about by demands of schooling, participants attending events must be truly committed to an organization as well as capable of managing their time well. Some leaders of the girls' centres, did specify that 'parents are more interested in their child's academic achievement rather than character formation', some children have a tight schedule because of private lessons, others have too much homework, and there could also be lack of interest, support or co-operation by the parents. Weekend activities may not be popular as children are visiting relatives and grandparents who may be living in other towns and villages.

**Finances and participation**

Although no claims can be made about how widespread the financial difficulty is, yet it is of some concern. Girls' centres reported that transport fees are perceived as too expensive and children barely get the money to cover these costs. In the absence of having one's own transport, money needs to be collected to take children to different places. In addition, "places of culture and interest can only be visited against payment". If there is little commitment from the young participants or their families, or in situations where "children opt out at the last minute" it becomes more difficult to organize outings. There are also electricity, water and phone bills to be paid for the various premises.

An additional difficulty faced by the girls' centres concern the premises from where they operate. Several reported that they do not have adequate premises, especially in the absence of a proper yard where children would be able to play. Comments included:

*"we would like to have a yard where children can play and where games like netball, tennis etc. could be organized. We need a bigger hall where children/parents can gather for particular occasions ..."*  
(Centre No. 45).

*"lack of space for plays on Sundays ... lack of funds for sport facilities at our centres"* (Centre No. 44).

The leaders of the girls' Society have one added difficulty: the female members are mostly elderly and therefore there are few young members available to organize activities for the children, apart from the catechism sessions.

The boys' centers do not appear to share these problems where premises are concerned but they do report difficulties about the Sunday football outings. Grounds previously available and accessible are now closed.

**Outings organised by the M.U.S.E.U.M Society**

Children and young people were asked whether they join the M.U.S.E.U.M Society for Sunday outings: 22.3% (N=776) of the primary school sample and 10.8% (272) of the secondary school students replied positively. When asked to identify locations which they visit, children mentioned many sites around Malta and Gozo including Buskett, Dingli, Bingemma, Kennedy Grove, Lunzjata Valley, Wied il-Ghasel, Salib ta' l-Għolja, Wied ta' Hal-Għaxaq, Miżieb, Girdenti, Ta' Qali, Wied Babu, Għajn Żejtuna, Gnejna, Għajn Tuffieħa, ir-Ramla and Marsalforn. Trips to Gozo and Malta were also included. Children mentioned BBQs, picnics, places where they can eat and play (especially football), hikes, walks in the countryside in winter and visits to the beach in summer. Seeing plays, films related to Jesus, going to mass together, visiting churches, processions and going to other M.U.S.E.U.M centres, historical places, gardens were all identified by the young respondents. Once again, these results confirm those reported by the Society leaders in their responses.

**Boys are more likely to attend M.U.S.E.U.M. centres and activities than girls**

When the results of the current survey were analysed by gender, there were some significant differences between boys and girls: within both cohorts, boys appear to go to the M.U.S.E.U.M. centres more frequently during the week and are also more likely than girls to join in the Sunday outings. This gap widens over age confirming the differences highlighted by the centre leaders.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Never go to M.U.S.E.U.M	343	20.4	500	27.9	782	70	1123	81
Four times or more a week	537	31.9	137	7.6	142	12.7	44	3.2
Join for Sunday outings	422	25.1	354	19.8	171	15.3	100	7.2

Table 28: Gender differences in attendance for M.U.S.E.U.M. activities

Students were asked whether they follow catechism classes at centres other than M.U.S.E.U.M. (see Table 29).

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	1569	45.1	1754	69.9
Hardly ever	117	3.4	130	5.2
Once a week	314	9.0	199	7.9
Twice a week	703	20.2	65	2.6
Three/four times a week	230	6.6	44	1.8
No information	545	15.7	317	12.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 29: Frequency of attendance for catechism, not at M.U.S.E.U.M. centres

The 20.2% (703) of the primary cohort who reported attending twice a week, would be accounted for by children who are obliged to attend such sessions between their First Holy Communion and their Confirmation.

Twenty-two out of sixty-eight parish priests (32%) returned information about the various clubs and groups operating in the parish. Across the twenty-two parishes, there are 94 groups, excluding the M.U.S.E.U.M centres for boys and girls in the various towns and villages<sup>22</sup>. It is estimated that approximately 4,004<sup>23</sup> children and young people are members of these groups. In every parish there is at least one group for altar boys (and girls), a choir, groups for children who are 11+ and have therefore received the sacrament of Confirmation, reaching the age when it is no longer obligatory to attend formal catechism sessions. There are also groups for pre-adolescents and youth groups. The groups are varied in their composition, with 32 being exclusively for boys, 24 for girls and 62 having both sexes.

**94 religious groups and clubs in 22 parishes**

The number of groups and services available depend on the size of the town or village as well as whether there are families with young children/adolescents in the area. In two of the larger parishes which returned the questionnaire, there are 12 and 15 groups respectively. In these parishes, one can find two or three groups of altar boys, totalling some 65 children and 800 children attending catechism. On the other hand, in one parish, where the town is divided into a number of parishes, there is only a group made up of 7 altar boys and 18 children who meet for catechism. From among the 22 parishes, two reported that there are few children in the parish and more altar boys are needed.

<sup>22</sup> The total number of groups in the parishes are 118 if M.U.S.E.U.M. centers are included.

<sup>23</sup> There are 7076 children attending when M.U.S.E.U.M centers are included. One parish did not submit any information regarding the membership of five organisations.

**Spiritual, personal, emotional & educational development**

The main aim of the groups is for spiritual growth and formation, attained through regular meetings, prayer meetings and discussions. Periodically, retreats, live-ins and seminars are organised. Apart from the spiritual element, the groups also promote educational, personal, social and cultural growth. These are achieved through social events including hikes, visits to places of interest, summer clubs and art and craft activities, to mention a few. One group which appears to be different to others is a commission for the parish youth and children – *Parish Youth Commission* and *Kummissjoni tfal tal-parroċċa* identified in two parishes. The children’s commission is made up of nine 8 to 12-year-old children, who meet once a month. The mission of this group is to co-ordinate activities done by the various groups and also to involve children directly with events in the parish. This group lacks time for more meetings. According to the parish priest, “there is not enough time for discussion. However, the children are too busy and do not have more time for additional meetings”.

With the exception of catechism classes, for which it is obligatory to attend twice a week, almost all the other groups have weekly meetings. In some parishes, the exception is the group for altar boys (and girls, where applicable) as they have three meetings in a week, together with the possibility of assisting in the liturgical service daily.

**Difficulties faced by organisations**

The parish priests report that for most of the activities, attendance is regular although with several groups, attendance is higher during the winter months than in summer. One parish identified a group where attendance is regular except when ‘O’ and ‘A’ level exams are being taken. Another priest blames the lack of attendance on the many extra curricular activities children are involved in. Other difficulties mentioned by various parishes include recruiting personnel who could support a group in its activities. This was mentioned in relation to work with pre-adolescents and youths as ‘lack of youth leadership’ in one instance and lack of initiative in another instance. One parish priest reported that “the co-ordinators themselves are students, they cannot devote more time to the group”. Sometimes, children are not to blame for the lack of commitment because they rely on parents and their timetable. In some parishes, there are too many children attending catechism lessons in comparison to the number of adults who can make a commitment to work with them for some years.

**More older than younger children claim to be members of religious organisations**

More secondary than primary school students claim to be members of religious organisations or groups: 25% (N=628) and 15.6% (N=544) respectively. The organisations mentioned by both groups are quite varied but are corroborated by data also sent in by the parish priests. Children and students reported being in youth groups, altar boys and girls, Legion of Mary, *Żgħażaġħ Azzjoni Kattolika*, Youth for Jesus, parish choirs, Maranatha, KFC Kids for Christ, pre-teens and adolescent groups, Kerygma and Focolare, amongst others. According to the respondents, in addition to meetings of a religious nature for character formation and to “learn about Jesus”, there are singing activities (choir practice), some guitar lessons and social activities including BBQs, hikes, picnics, swimming trips. Some organisations also do activities such as art and craft work with the children. Regular attendance is bound to be weekly or less frequently since few activities would be organised very often.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hardly ever	201	5.8	346	13.8
Once a week	292	8.4	380	15.1
Twice a week	74	2.1	85	3.4
Three times a week	35	1.0	28	1.1
Four or more times a week	94	2.7	50	2.0
No information	2782	80	1594	63.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 30: Frequency of attendance for activities organised by religious groups

Females within the older cohort dominate membership in religious organisations. This may arise from the relatively stronger male attendance within the M.U.S.E.U.M. Society.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Member of a religious group/society	309	18.4	286	16.0	206	18.4	451	32.5

Table 31: Boys' & girls' membership in religious groups

### ***On-screen entertainment and leisure-time activities***

Television, films, DVDs and computers are all other means of entertainment and leisure which capture the imagination of young people. A set of questions in the questionnaire sought to obtain information about children and young people's experiences with these media.

**Most children and young people watch TV daily**

Since young children find it difficult to estimate time, rather than asked about the duration of watching television or working with the computer, they were asked about the frequency with which they engage with the various resources.

	Primary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	2393	68.8
Most days	330	9.5
Sometimes	599	17.2
Hardly ever	123	3.5
No information	33	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 32: Frequency with which primary school children watch television

Not surprisingly, the majority of young children reported that they watch television daily. Among the older cohort, there seems to be more variation, with most respondents claiming to watch about two hours a day.

	Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour a day	654	26.1
About 2 hours a day	767	30.6
Three hours or more	481	19.2
Irregularly	543	21.6
No information	64	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 33: Amount of time spent watching television (secondary cohort)

	Primary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	943	27.1
Most days	687	19.8
Sometimes	1067	30.7
Hardly ever	310	8.9
No information	471	13.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 34: Frequency with which primary school children use computers

**Little time available for using computers on weekdays**

Considering trends in society and the interest generated by technology, it seems rather odd that practically 50% of the students participating in the study claim that they spend two hours or less a day at the computer. On the other hand, if one considers the time children and students spend at school together with time spent doing the homework and participating in organised activities after school-hours, it should not be surprising to learn that time available for using computers is quite limited, especially during the week.

	Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour a day	571	22.8
1 to 2 hours daily	697	27.8
Three to 4 hours daily	556	22.2
Irregularly	551	22.0
No information	134	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 35: Amount of time spent using a computer (secondary cohort)

Among the younger cohort, there appears to a slight difference between boys and girls in the use made of computers: 50.6% (N= 851) of boys in comparison to 43.4% (N=776) of girls claim to use the computer everyday or most days.

**Games for younger children, chatting among older students**

There are various activities children reported engaging in while using a computer (Table 36). Playing games is overwhelmingly the favourite activity for the younger children, whereas the older cohort appears to favour chatting. Unfortunately, data about the older children's engagement with computer games was not included but quite a number of children included this item with their list of activities.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Looking up info/preparing documents for school	1414	40.7	1029	41.0
Surfing the net	869	25	1123	44.8
Playing games	2528	72.7	---	---
Emailing friends	1029	29.6	665	26.5
Chatting	---	---	1513	60.3

Table 36: Activities engaged in when using computers

There appear to be gender-related differences in the type of activities children engage in when using the computer. Looking up information for school work, emailing and chatting seem to be activities which girls engage in more than boys.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Prep docs/looking up info for school	620	36.8	792	44.2	331	29.6	698	50.3
Emailing friends	451	26.8	577	32.2	245	21.9	419	30.2
Chatting	---	---	---	---	634	56.7	879	63.3

Table 37: Gender differences in activities engaged in when using computers

Video games consoles have also gained popularity with youngsters in the past few years. Among the younger cohort, there seems to be an equal number of children who use the video games console everyday or quite regularly while an equal number claim that they hardly use it or do so periodically (Table 40).

Boys keener than girls on video games consoles

	Primary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	741	21.3
Most days	461	13.3
Sometimes	735	21.1
Hardly ever	460	13.2
No information	1081	31.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 38: Frequency with which primary school children use video games consoles

Boys more than girls seem to be more likely to use the video games console daily or on most days (49.9%, N = 840, 20.1%, N=360 respectively).

	Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 hour a day	567	22.6
1 to 2 hours daily	324	12.9
Three to 4 hours daily	220	8.8
Irregularly	707	28.2
No information	691	27.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 39: Amount of time spent using a video games console (secondary cohort)

For all the hype which the video games console may have caused only a few years ago, it certainly does not seem to be a key attraction for young people's entertainment these days. Approximately 50% of the older participants in the current study claim that they only use the video games console for less than an hour a day or irregularly. However, when comparing the time spent by boys and girls on the video games console, it appears that boys spend more time than girls using the digital game.

The video games console appears to have lost its appeal



	Boys (N = 1118)		Girls (N = 1389)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1 to 2 hours daily	232	20.8	92	6.6
Three to 4 hours daily	181	16.2	38	2.7

Table 40: Time spent by boys and girls on the video games console

**DVD - an attractive option for young people**

Watching DVDs certainly seems to be quite a popular activity with children and young people, with 62.3% of the young group and 72.5% of the older children claiming that they watch one, two or three DVDs a week.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
One a week	1317	37.9	1115	44.4
Two or three a week	848	24.4	704	28.1
Four or five a week	264	7.6	190	7.6
More than 5 a week	655	18.8	286	11.4
No information	394	11.3	214	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 41: Number of DVDs watched during the week

Given the number of DVDs children seem to be watching in a week, it is not surprising that going to the cinema is not so popular with young people nowadays: 75% of the primary group and 67.2% of the older age group reported hardly ever or never going to the cinema.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	575	16.5	272	10.8
Hardly ever	2034	58.5	1416	56.4
Often (every 2 or 3 weeks)	596	17.1	585	23.3
Frequently (every week)	153	4.4	152	6.1
No information	120	3.5	84	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 42: Frequency with which children and young people visit the cinema

### ***Cultural activities after school hours***

**Low participation in cultural activities**

Considering that the number of music and drama lessons children participate in during school hours are rather limited, it seems that the only way to gain access to the world of music, drama and dance is to go for lessons after school hours. In the current survey, questions were asked to find out the extent to which children and young people are engaged with the arts. The results reveal that within the sample, there seems to be a rather low participation rate in these activities.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Play musical instrument	1059	30.4	577	23.0
Member of a dance school	529	15.2	310	12.4
Member of a drama/theatre school	209	6.0	158	6.3

Table 43: Children's interaction with the arts

Among the older sample, there are more girls than boys who claim that they play a musical instrument (25.8%, N= 358; 19.5%, N = 218 respectively). Another striking but not surprising gender difference resulted in membership at dance schools. Within the younger and older cohorts, girls dominate the dance scene.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Members of a dance school	83	4.9	489	27.3	38	3.4	296	21.3

Table 44: Boys' and girls' membership at dance schools

A number of factors could be contributing to the low number of students who participate in artistic activities. Lack of interest by parents and/or young children themselves could be one factor. Financial consideration may also be another issue, although the current research did not look into this factor. However, lack of time, school pressure and exams seem to be major factors, which hinder children and young people from pursuing these activities. The heads of seven dance schools, two drama schools and one music school, who between them have 1,459 students attending classes, unanimously agreed that students start leaving when exam time looms up, be it the Junior Lyceum exam for the 10/11 year-olds, or the MATSEC exams at school-leaving age.

**School exams are a major factor that hinder participation**

*Children start to decrease in number due to Junior Lyceum exams and private lessons. There is too much competition in the education system and you cannot blame the parents. It is not M.U.S.E.U.M. as it used to be. There is no opposition from the clergy as was the situation about twenty years ago when I first started. It's a real shame. There is no appreciation for arts and culture in Malta. We are not proud of our culture, and teachers are not encouraging it.*

*They usually start missing out during the 'O' Level year. However, they take up dancing again once the exams are over. During 'A' level time, the children usually maintain their normal routine.*

*At 'O' level age. Some stop and never return to dance again. Others reduce the amount of lessons for the period only. I think that some children are involved in too many activities, like dancing, singing, sports, sailing, which is crazy!*

*The most difficult age is at 14-15, the 'O' level stage. I encourage them to attend at least once a week. But there is lot of stress at school and so if they don't have time to attend at all, I don't pressure them.*

*Children miss out due to communion, tuition and 'O' Levels (especially). Children leave altogether due to various problems-financial, parents separating. Discounts are given for parents who find financial difficulties and sometimes we even offer them the costumes. However, most remain, as the school becomes like a club for them, especially the older children.*

*'O' level stage- they normally come back. 'A' level- they stop coming altogether.*

*Usually too much school pressure and exams*

*Exam pressure accounts for much of the non-attendance, and this can be seen from the sharp increase in non-attendance during the last term. Second to exam pressure is the fact that children nowadays have way too much on their plate.*

*Year 6 and 'O' level standard, due to exams.*

**Difficulties for recruitment**

Some heads admit that recruiting new students is becoming a challenge. A number of reasons contribute to this: competition from the same sort/type of schools seems to be one reason, but school-related work, activities by other clubs and the fact that parents are working, consequently having limited or no time to take and collect their children for activities, are all issues which can have a negative impact.

*Recruiting new students becomes tougher each year, as there are so many schools on the island.*

*Yes, due to competition. In Malta we have lots of dance schools, but XXX has made a name and we can keep the school going.*

*Not particularly (i.e. no difficulties in recruitment) but school homework, costs and also parents working contribute to decline in students*

*Advertising costs are hugely expensive, but one of the biggest competitors to any extracurricular activity remains the enforced evening doctrine classes.*

*Transport is a problem as our school is situated in XXX which is not central. Additionally, our qualifications are not recognized for university entrance and thus some youths do foreign exams.*

**Sitting exams in extra-curricular subjects**

The time factor becomes more crucial when one considers that many children attending extra-curricular activities eventually sit for exams in these activities too, which obviously means children need to find time to practise to refine their skills and techniques. With the exception of the drama schools, the heads of the music and dance schools reported that children are usually pursuing the activity with a view to sit for exams. In two of the seven dance schools, service providers reported that half the students are taking up dance for leisure and half for exams. With the music school and the remaining five dance schools, it is practically 100% exams. One service provider admitted that, *"their mothers generally would want them to sit for exams as it gives them a sense of satisfaction"*.

**Weekly lessons for drama and music**

Heads of the drama and music schools included in the survey reported that children go for a lesson on a weekly basis. Children attending dance schools have more lessons. In some schools, the very young children (3 to 4 year olds) may have one lesson a week, but generally, it seems that children older than 5 have two lessons a week. When exam time approaches, some dance schools would have children for three or four lessons in the week. One school organizes 4 lessons a week for the 15+ students regularly. The duration of the lessons vary but most are between one and one and a half hours long. Some shorter lessons are given to the very young children.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Once a week	165	4.7	114	4.5
Twice a week	19	0.5	22	0.9
Three or four times a week	13	0.4	18	0.7
No information	3281	94.3	2355	93.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 45: Frequency of attendance at drama schools

Children and students who claim to play a musical instrument reported that they do so mostly for leisure and relaxation rather than exams: 27.7% (N=965) and 31.8% (N=798) of the young and old cohort respectively claimed to play a musical instrument for relaxation; 9.8% (N=342) and 13.4% (N=466) of the young and older cohort sit for exams.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
School of Music	119	3.4	54	2.2
Privately (music teacher's house)	466	13.4	285	11.4
Private music school	158	4.5	82	3.3
Local band club	202	5.8	75	3.0

Table 46: Music tuition

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Once a week	267	7.7	132	5.3
Twice a week	199	5.7	87	3.5
Three or four times a week	60	1.7	83	3.3
No information	2952	84.9	2207	88.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 47: Frequency of attendance at dance schools

The students who go for dance lessons mentioned many types of dance: ballet, jazz, Spanish, hip-hop, ballroom and modern. These were also the types of dance generally mentioned by the service providers of the dance schools, some of whom believe that classical ballet is still the all-time favourite. Others believe that hiphop and modern jazz are gaining popularity with youngsters.

### **Young people and sports**

Approximately half the participants in both cohorts claimed that they practise some form of sport: 50.5% (N=1755) of the younger group of children and 56.1% (N=1407) of the secondary school students in the current study reported that they take part in sports. The majority reported that they were responsible for the choice made: 43.7% (N=1421) of the younger cohort and 53.9% (N=1353) of the older group chose their own sport. Both groups of respondents mentioned a broad spectrum of sports including football, basketball, netball and volleyball; tennis, gymnastics, swimming, sailing, martial arts, judo, kickboxing, karate, rugby, athletics and field events. Not all students mentioned that they are members of a sports club, organisation or association which suggests that a number of students would practice the sport without formal coaching or training.

**About 50% of respondents participate in sports**

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Football	935	26.9	690	27.5
Swimming	280	8.1	211	8.4
Basketball	244	7.0	268	10.7
Tennis	215	6.2	172	6.9
Gymnastics	127	3.7	59	2.4
Volleyball	18	0.5	128	5.1

Table 48: Selection of sports young people practise

**Boys and sports** If membership in religious organisations, participation in dance and music are activities which are more popular with girls, following sporting activities is an area dominated by boys.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Practise sports	1089	64.7	665	37.1	756	67.6	651	46.9

Table 49: Boys' and girls' participation in sports

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hardly ever	138	4.0	85	3.4
Once a week	673	19.4	372	14.8
Twice or three times a week	638	18.3	484	19.3
Four or five times a week	347	10.0	200	8.0
Daily	36	1.0	300	12.0
No information	1646	47.3	1068	42.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 50: Frequency with which children and students practise sports

There is also a marked difference between the boys' and girls' frequency of participation in sports, with boys reporting that they practice their favourite sports more frequently than girls do.

	Primary school children				Secondary school students			
	Boys (N =1683)		Girls (N =1791)		Boys (N =1098)		Girls (N =1389)	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
2 or 3 x a week	473	28.1	165	9.2	295	26.4	189	13.6
4 or 5 x a week	233	13.8	114	6.4	139	12.4	61	4.4

Table 51: Frequency with which boys and girls in both cohorts practise sports

**Youth Football Associations** There are a number of entities which provide children and young people with opportunities to practise sport. For the purpose of this study, only one of the major providers, which has been long established and is known to have some 10,000 children as members was contacted in order to gain some insights into children and youth's participation in such clubs.

The Youth Football Association has 43 clubs or nurseries in Malta which promote football among children. These clubs were contacted by an email, which was followed by a phone call to encourage the presidents or secretaries of the club to complete and return the questionnaire. Twenty clubs replied (46.5%). Across these clubs, there are 3,319 boys and 117 girls registered. The size of the clubs varies, from relatively small ones with some 62 children attending, to larger ones catering for 360 or even 540 children. Nine to eleven year-olds are the highest represented (911 children) followed by the six to eight-year-old group (823). There are just over 400 three to five-year-old children attending these nurseries. In some instances, children go for football training once a week, but going twice or even three times a week seems to be the norm. With older children (14+), two clubs indicated that children go daily. For most, sessions last one and a half hours. Where a one-hour session is available, it is usually for the youngest children.

Most clubs are open daily: during the week they are open in the evening whereas on the weekend, they have varying timetables depending on whether tournaments are underway. The earliest lessons start around 4.00pm, with the latest ending at about 9.00pm.

Respondents believe that most of the children go to the football nurseries willingly because children like football. One person claims that there are few unmotivated children attending the nursery. However, seven of the twenty respondents qualify their response by reporting that although most of the children go willingly, there are cases where the parents have taken the decision to send their children. Two respondents were rather positive about this by stating that parents encourage children towards sport:

**Children attend football nurseries willingly**

*Most of them come out of their own will, other parents think that sports is an asset in today's lifestyle so they make sure their children attend.*

*The children and youths decide for themselves. But normally parents encourage their children to participate.*

However, others do not seem so keen on the parents' role:

*In my opinion it is about ages. From 12 upwards the child decides and from 12 downwards the parents decide for the children.*

*60% willingly – 40 % parents decide*

*Mainly they come willingly, but there are some cases where parents decide for them.*

The running of football nurseries is not without its share of difficulties. As reported by personnel running dance schools, with so many nurseries to choose from, there seems to be lots of competition especially when vying for new recruits. However, the problems with nurseries are indirectly related to the number of clubs available. Difficulties also arise because of the size of the town/village, the nursery's reputation, its organization, fees and facilities available. The following are some of the replies reported in answer to whether the club has difficulties recruiting new students.

**Difficulties for football nurseries**

*No, because we have been established since 1983 and our set up is well organized by experienced people and well trained and qualified coaching staff.*

*Since we are situated in a small village we tend to have less members when you compare us with a nursery in a larger village. Moreover more established nurseries tend to be more popular because parents think that their children will make the grade and become professional footballers and they see more established nurseries as a better option.*

*No – XXX Nursery has a very good reputation – in fact we cap the groups at 36 boys per age-group – ratio of 12 boys per coach – we refuse about 50 new students a year because the age-group that they want to join is full.*

*No we don't have difficulties and this season we had an increase in recruitment. We adopt the policy that children who are 11/12 are not of a good level we introduce them to other nurseries.*

*Yes because at our nursery in XXX we do not have any kind of facilities. The children do not have any space where to train in XXX.*

*Yes we have great difficulty. 1) Due to parents' concern about school 2) Due to pressure from bigger nurseries 3) Due to the size of the village.*

*Yes especially in the younger age groups as surrounding towns are more financially sound, are an institution in the sport and have better facilities.*

**Formal schooling affects participation in sport**

Many of the respondents report that they do not have a high turn-over of students and there are few drop outs at the end of a season. However, football nurseries have the same experience as other after-school clubs and organizations and start losing out on members because of exams, school pressure and other interests. At least three respondents also believe that the boys get themselves involved into too many activities.

*6 year olds because of the First Holy Communion. 10 year olds school pressure (Common Entrance Exams). 15 year olds School pressure (Matsec Exams)*

*10 years and 16 years...when they are to sit for JL or O Levels. School, homework and private lessons tend to limit the attendance for some. At times jobs also limit the attendance of over 16 year olds*

*Usually it is when they reach the stage of sitting for junior lyceum exam due to exams pressure, private lessons etc. If they pass this stage it may recur at ages 13 – 14 due to new interests in life or due to peer pressure who may offer other attractions or due to the fact that they may feel that they are not up to the required standard*

*Cost is not an issue – Exams in the 15-16 yr old groups is - especially for the boys who do not play regularly for their team. In the younger age-groups [5-12] very few dropouts – in the older ones [13-16] when it is more competitive- the boys then start to realize that football is not for them and they take up another sport like waterpolo or tennis*

*Pressure of homework and exams. But one has to keep in mind the fact that nowadays there are a lot of organizations where our youths can attend. So the competition is much higher than it used to be.*

*15 – 16 yrs. Pressure of School Exams and some start to work.*

*Students start missing training from 13 years onwards because of GCE exams and then when they grow older, it's the pressure of Junior College and working after school hours.*

*15 yrs: most of the boys stop attending. Some start working, others because of school work & also involvement in too many activities.*

Fees and costs are also a concern. Although some believe that 'cost is not an issue', yet others feel that their club is at a disadvantage:

*Most of our students compare our nursery with others. In the XXX area it is difficult to collect such high fees compared to other nurseries so our activities are very limited.*

One respondent refers to 'big money being generated':

*Some nurseries just charge too much nowadays, they have become too costly. Apart from the fees, there are many overheads which the normal Maltese family can ill-afford ...*

**Competition in sport**

An interesting phenomenon, which appears to permeate the football nurseries, is the competitive element, which seems to be conflicting with the idea of play for leisure, relaxation and enjoyment. A number of clubs commented on the pressure being put on these children to succeed! There is also concern about 'making the grade', or, "they (boys) may feel that they are not up to the required standard'. As quoted earlier, one club has a policy of redirecting boys to other nurseries if they are not of a good level! Two respondents were vehement about this. One respondent claims that the problems for the nursery are the result of:

*Parental obsession with their son's football skills. Enormous pressure put on the boys [even at the tender ages] by the parents/supporters - to win at all costs. Bad behaviour by these parent/supporters during matches/tournaments – which will pass on to their OWN sons in the future*

The second respondent believes that:

*The pressure on the kids is too much. This is another reason why kids get fed up. There is pressure when the kids are with a so-called big nursery. The pressure is on them to win at all cost. It's not true that under-12 kids play for fun. Not anymore! ...so-called mature mothers literally screaming and shouting abuse and so-called intelligent fathers on the verge of hitting out at someone. Kids crying because they lost, coaches screaming and even swearing ... such is our called FUN for kids...*

The nature of the game changes around the age of 14 and this age coincides with other changes the child players are going through.

*After the age of 14, most kids have a big change. From so-called Fun tournaments on a small 5 a-side pitch, they change to a full-size eleven a-side competitive, national league. ...Whereas previously a player can miss without any problem a session or even a match, now things get more serious. The under-14 league is a National league, with fixtures, fines ... whereas it was laidback, now it has to be serious – more training sessions, more commitment and it comes at the worst age...*

Another issue of concern raised by a nursery representative is the reference made to children's signing of contracts: "kids don't know the meaning of the word contract but they have to sign one ...". Once these documents are signed, boys who may want to change clubs to be with their friends, are not released.

### **Membership in organisations and associations**

Apart from their participation in sports, dance, music, drama, and religious organisations, children were asked whether they were members of other clubs and if so, how frequently they attended activities organised by these associations. Several children and young people mentioned scouts, cubs/brownies and girl guides; others referred to band clubs, organisations such as Caritas and Oasi; being members of groups which are responsible for decorations for the village feast (*Grupp armar tal-festa*) and Carnival; Xummiemu Club, EcoSkola.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hardly ever	104	3.0	54	2.2
Often	188	5.4	145	5.8
Always	134	3.9	139	5.5

Table 52: Frequency with which children and students attend activities of various organisations

Members of the scouts clubs identified hikes, meetings, camps, going abroad, canoeing, parades, fund raising and visits to the elderly as some of the activities they participate in.

### **Playing fields: availability and use**

In the survey, participants were also asked about the availability of playing fields in the town/village where they live, the frequency with which they visit the playing fields and whether they are accompanied by friends or grown ups when they go to these locations: 82.7% (N = 2877) of the younger cohort and 81.5% (N = 2046) of the older ones reported that there are playing fields in their home town.

In both cohorts, many reported that they hardly ever visit the playing fields or do so infrequently: 42.3% among the younger children, 58.9% among the older group. As is to be expected, younger children tend to visit the playing fields more often than their older peers (Table 55). The majority of children claim that they are accompanied by grown-ups while older students go to playing fields with their

Many playing fields available ...

... little use made of playing fields



friends (Table 56). It would be interesting to find out what factors contribute to children making limited use of the playing fields.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hardly ever	1242	35.7	1104	44.0
Infrequently	578	16.6	374	14.9
Often	697	20.0	406	16.2
Regularly	307	8.8	162	6.5
Daily	265	7.6	125	5.0
No information	389	11.2	338	13.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 53: Frequency with which children and young people go to playing fields

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Unaccompanied	310	8.9	166	6.6
With friends your age	1280	36.8	1563	62.3
Accompanied by grown ups	1758	50.5	357	14.2

Table 54: Accompanying children and young people to playing fields

### ***Outings with family and friends***

In the last item of the questionnaire, young children were asked to identify locations they visit on family outings. Apart from family outings, the older cohort were also asked about places they visit when out with friends. 93.6% (N=3256) of the younger group and 85.3% (N=2140) of the older group reported that they go on family outings.

	Primary school children		Secondary school students	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Visiting relatives	2005	57.6	1234	49.2
Visiting museums	627	18.0	199	7.9
Picnics & hikes in winter	1699	48.8	856	34.1
Days/time by beach in summer	2642	76.0	1483	59.1
Walks along promenades	1618	46.5	718	28.6
Restaurants	2417	69.5	1541	61.4
Cinema	1630	46.9	685	27.3
Others (specify)	233	6.7	204	9.9

Table 55: Places children and young people visit on family outings

Time by the beach<sup>24</sup>, dining out and visiting relatives are the three most frequent activities engaged in by children, young people and their families. 'Other' activities specified by both cohorts include travelling, going abroad, going to the 'festa' and shopping sprees. Gozitan youngsters identified day trips to Malta; similarly, Maltese youngsters referred to visits to Gozo as outings with the family. One of the least popular activities with families and youngsters tends to be visiting of museums and places of historical interest.

**Eating out and time by the beach are popular family activities**

86% (N=2157) of the young people report that they go out with their friends. Table 58 shows how they spend their time when they are with friends. It is interesting to note that although some 56% of the older cohort reported that they hardly ever to go the cinema and only 29% report that they go often or frequently (see Table 42), going to the cinema appeals to young people as one activity to do when spending some time together.

**Going to the cinema is a popular outing**

	Secondary school students (N = 2059)	
	Frequency	Percent
Going to the cinema	1355	54.0
Visiting friends at home/watching DVDs	1259	50.2
Going to places of entertainment	1154	46.0
Restaurants	732	29.2
Participating in team sports	632	25.2
Doing voluntary work	175	7.0
Others (specify)	251	10.0

Table 56: Young people's outings with friends

The results to the final question further confirm young people's preference for 'non-active' events as the cinema and visiting each other at home, even watching DVDs together are among the most popular activities.

<sup>24</sup> This result may have been influenced by the fact that most of the data from schools were collected in June.

## Key findings and conclusions

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*Valerie Sollars*

The overall results of the survey reveal that there are many opportunities for children and young people growing up in Malta to engage in a variety of leisure-time and cultural activities after school hours and on the weekend. The range of opportunities is extensive: dance, music, drama, and sports schools are available and operating from various towns and villages on the island. There are also many opportunities for children and youngsters to develop their self-esteem, confidence, personal and social relationships through the several organizations set up by parishes and NGOs. There are indeed, a lot of activities to choose from. However, this does not imply that the opportunities available are equally accessible to all children and young people. It would be interesting to investigate further what reasons could possibly contribute to this inequality of access.

Some adult service providers agree that some activities are not well attended or do not get regular participants, contrary to expectations. The students and children themselves reinforce this view by reporting that they spend a substantial amount of time on the weekend doing school-related activities and opting to watch TV, DVDs or spending their time on the computer as preferred leisure-time activities. To an extent, all the activities students engage in can be quite lonely and solitary where participants are not necessarily active. In several ways, these results confirm the alarming trends to childhood as identified by the International Play Association (see page 15).

Spending time on quality, recreational and cultural activities would seem necessary and imperative especially when one considers the emphasis given to the academic aspect of education. As reported by students and heads of schools, there does not seem to be much importance given to cultural experiences and this is reflected in the minimal presence of subjects such as art, drama and music.

Physical education may have a slightly better status in comparison to some other subjects but there are still a limited number of lessons where children are physically active. On the other hand, sport seems to be dominated by males rather than taken up by girls and boys equally. Moreover, the drop in children's participation in sports as they grow older is also of concern in the light of recent, local statistics about obesity among children and young people in Malta.

The key findings of the study indicate that:

1. The majority of children in Primary schools as well as the higher classes in Secondary school (Forms 4 and 5) have only one P.E. lesson a week. In most schools there is a tendency to reduce P.E. lessons as the Junior Lyceum, SEC and MATSEC exams approach. Primary and Secondary schoolchildren agree that they have an insufficient number of P.E. lessons.
2. From amongst the participating Primary schools, only 22% have a gym. Consequently, P.E lessons are difficult or impossible to conduct on rainy days. This is especially true if the school does not have an indoor play area allowing for some physical activity.
3. The lack of indoor play areas poses difficulties for children to play during break time on rainy days. Classrooms and corridors feature highly as the main alternatives, albeit inappropriate ones.
4. Whereas primary school children capitalize on their break times to run around and get some exercise, secondary school students seem to prefer more relaxed activities such as walking, talking/chatting, spending time at the cafeteria, visiting the computer labs or the library.
5. For primary school children, break-times tend to be quite short considering that half the allotted time is spent eating lunch.
6. In primary and secondary schools 71.2% and 71.8% of the students respectively reported that they never have a music lesson or have it once in a while.

7. Drama appears to be the least represented of the creative arts. Considering the benefits students can obtain through participation in drama, it is indeed a pity that so little importance is given to this activity. Drama helps children develop self-confidence and esteem. It can also allow students to express themselves, identify with or empathise with different characters in various circumstances and in so doing, rehearse or replicate real life situations.
8. Computer games are a new source of 'play' for the younger group whereas the older children use the computer mostly for chatting.
9. The video games console appeals more to boys than to girls but for older children, it appears to be losing its appeal.
10. A high percentage of children and young people watch a number of DVDs per week, contributing to a sedentary lifestyle. This appears to reinforce the whole picture emerging from the results: as children grow older, there is more limited physical activity and even in their free time, activities taken up tend to be free from any strenuous exercise. This source of entertainment certainly appeals to the young generation.
11. Going to the cinema appears to be a favourite outing among young people, reinforcing the attraction of passive activity in front of a screen!
12. Boys dominate sport activities, especially football. More boys than girls in both cohorts report that they practise sports.
13. Whereas 'play' is a popular activity for young children and it is given lots of priority, especially on the weekend, this seems to be replaced with studying, homework and reading as children grow older.
14. At any time of the weekend, visiting, spending time with, going out for lunch with grandparents, especially the grandmothers were frequently mentioned. Other relatives such as aunts, uncles and cousins were also referred to.
15. Typical activities for Sunday afternoons include family outings to the countryside in winter and to the beach in summer. On the other hand, eating out at restaurants appears to be a favourite family activity for Saturday evening.

### ***General conclusions***

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1. There is general agreement that the pressures brought on by an exam-oriented system, home-work and after school lessons are among the key factors to deter children and young people attending other activities.
2. Strong commitment and good time-management are essential. Especially where young children are concerned, many may rely on or even depend entirely on parents taking them and collecting them for after-school activities. Unless parents are available or willing to chauffeur or accompany their children, participation in activities remains an unattainable goal. For children and young people growing up with parents who are both in employment, taking children for after-school appointments that start any time between 3 and 5pm may be difficult to manage. For children and young people growing up with one parent, these difficulties may be even greater.
3. Financial considerations were not an issue raised directly with participants in the survey. However, some respondents mentioned it explicitly. In other instances, the responses given suggest that there are financial burdens and implications for users of the service. From the perspective of service providers, funds are necessary to maintain premises and equipment, purchase new apparatus and pay staff members. From the perspective of the users, in addition to fees, other costs are incurred to cover costumes, uniforms and specific clothing (sports-gears; dancing shoes and frocks); tools, equipment, accessories and consumables (e.g. musical instruments, music scores, manuscripts, theory past papers; materials for art and craft activities; transport costs when hiring coaches or vans etc.); paying for exams. In addition, some organizations which may not charge any fees and which may be subsidized (e.g. several religious groups and organizations), periodically have fund-raising

activities. From time to time, they also organize cultural outings or events which entail some financial expense. Therefore, although not a direct focus of the study, and taken collectively, these issues raise concerns about whether leisure time activities are truly available and accessible for all.

4. With the exception of drama, the football clubs, dance schools and music school also have an element of competition and examination. Various members of the football association amply highlighted the pressures of competition in football. Although many children and young people participating in this survey reported that they play musical instruments for relaxation and enjoyment, it is also true that many others sit for music exams. The Heads of the music and dance schools reported that most of their children and students follow exams. The implication is clear: children who are sitting for exams must put in some effort to succeed and this requires time for practice and commitment.
5. The fact that there are so-many schools, opportunities, clubs and organizations to choose from on such a small island with a limited captive audience raises the issue of sustainability.

In the light of the demands made by school and society, with an emphasis to succeed academically, it seems difficult to expect children and young people to spend their free time perfecting skills related to what would have started off as a leisure-time activity.

In conclusion, it seems that play and recreational activities which offer opportunities for active and interactive participation need to be taken seriously as events which can truly offer learning opportunities occurring in a relaxed, enjoyable manner free from any unnecessary demands and competitive constraints imposed by adult perceptions and expectations of children and young people.

## Appendix A: Distribution of participants by localities

	Primary school cohort		Secondary school cohort	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No details given	21	0.60	19	0.76
Attard	60	1.73	104	4.15
B'Bugia	16	0.46	43	1.71
B'Kara	169	4.86	122	4.86
Baħar ic-Ċagħaq	7	0.20	5	0.20
Balzan	22	0.63	24	0.96
Bidnija	4	0.12	5	0.20
Bormla	59	1.70	48	1.91
Bugibba	48	1.38	11	0.44
Burmarrad	16	0.46	1	0.04
Dingli	5	0.14	34	1.36
Fgura	13	0.37	111	4.42
Floriana & Valletta	5	0.14	14	0.56
Għargħur	13	0.37	8	0.32
Għaxaq	5	0.14	19	0.76
Gudja	3	0.09	15	0.60
Gżira	130	3.74	40	1.59
Ħamrun	79	2.27	17	0.68
Haż-Żebbuġ	201	5.78	58	2.31
Ibraġġ, Madliena, High Ridge	47	1.35	41	1.63
Iklin	9	0.26	40	1.59
Kalkara	5	0.14	32	1.28
Kappara	14	0.40	21	0.84
Kirkop	9	0.26	3	0.12
Lija	17	0.49	13	0.52
Luqa	21	0.60	7	0.28
M'Scala	29	0.83	103	4.11
M'Xlokk	106	3.05	29	1.16
Marsa	21	0.60	0	0.00
Mellieħa	191	5.49	27	1.08
Mgarr, Żebbiegħ, Manikata	24	0.69	10	0.40
Mosta	237	6.81	101	4.03
Mqabba	122	3.51	2	0.08
Msida	126	3.62	48	1.91
Mtarfa	4	0.12	17	0.68
Naxxar (inc San Pawl tat-Tarġa & Birguma)	243	6.99	60	2.39
Paola	10	0.29	30	1.20
Pembroke & St. Andrews	45	1.29	36	1.43
Pieta & G'Mangia	11	0.32	9	0.36
Qawra	40	1.15	12	0.48

	Primary school cohort		Secondary school cohort	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Qormi	155	4.46	56	2.23
Qrendi	8	0.23	6	0.24
Rabat, Buskett , Baħrija & Mdina	22	0.63	91	3.63
Safi	8	0.23	5	0.20
Salina	4	0.12	0	0.00
San Ġwann	59	1.70	97	3.87
Senglea	3	0.09	34	1.36
Siggiewi	20	0.58	38	1.51
Sliema	118	3.39	57	2.27
St Paul's Bay	65	1.87	14	0.56
St Venera	16	0.46	33	1.32
St. Julian's	48	1.38	48	1.91
Santa Lucia	4	0.12	28	1.12
Swatar	23	0.66	10	0.40
Swieqi	48	1.38	61	2.43
Ta' Xbiex	16	0.46	9	0.36
Tarxien	8	0.23	31	1.24
Vittoriosa	38	1.09	9	0.36
Wardija	1	0.03	4	0.16
Xemxija	13	0.37	5	0.20
Xgħajra	1	0.03	8	0.32
Żabbar	13	0.37	159	6.34
Żejtun	128	3.68	48	1.91
Żurrieq	161	4.63	15	0.60
Fontana	15	0.43	10	0.40
Għajnsielem	6	0.17	22	0.88
Għarb	1	0.03	10	0.40
Għasri	1	0.03	6	0.24
Kerċem	5	0.14	15	0.60
Marsalforn	12	0.35	5	0.20
Munxar	2	0.06	13	0.52
Nadur	123	3.54	40	1.59
Qala	0	0.00	11	0.44
San Lawrenz	0	0.00	4	0.16
Sannat	6	0.17	16	0.64
Victoria	105	3.02	52	2.07
Xagħra	3	0.09	38	1.51
Xewkija	8	0.23	49	1.95
Xlendi	3	0.09	2	0.08
Żebbuġ	1	0.03	11	0.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>3478</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2509</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Appendix B: The younger children's questionnaire

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. This research is being done by the office of the Commissioner for Children with the support of staff from the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Please do not write your name or sign on any of the pages.

Gender:	Age:	Town/Village where you live:
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### Section A: Play, recreation, free time at school

1	How often do you have P.E during the week?	Hardly ever		
		Irregular (no fixed pattern)		
		Once a week		
		Twice or three times a week		
		Four or five times a week		
2	Do you do P.E. lessons:	With the class teacher only?		
		With the peripatetic teacher only (comes to school)?		
		With the P.E. teacher?		
3	At school, do you do P.E.	In a gymnasium?	Y	N
		In a playground?	Y	N
		In the school hall?	Y	N
		Other place (where)?		
4	If it is raining, can you still do your P.E. lesson?		Y	N
5	What equipment do you use during P.E. lessons?	Balls		
		Hoops		
		Bean bags		
		Skittles		
		Ropes		
		Other items (which are they?)		
6	Do you feel you have:	Enough P.E.lessons?	Y	N
		Too many P.E. lessons?	Y	N
		Too few P.E. lessons?	Y	N
7	I enjoy P.E lessons because	I am good at it	Y	N
		I get away from the classroom	Y	N
		I can move around	Y	N
		I get some fresh air	Y	N
8	How often do you have music lessons at school?	Never		
		Once in a while		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
9	How often do you have art lessons at school?	Never		
		Once in a while		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
10	At break-time, do you have:	Enough time to eat & play		



		Little time to eat and play		
		Too much time to eat & play		
11	On a sunny day, can you play:	In the classroom?	Y	N
		In the school playground?	Y	N
		In the corridors?	Y	N
12	On a rainy day, can you play:	In the classroom?	Y	N
		In the school playground?	Y	N
		In the corridors?	Y	N
13	Are you allowed to bring toys and games to school?		Y	N
14	How do you play at school with your friends?			

### Section B: Play, recreation, free time after school

15	After school:	I never have free time		
		I have free time on a few days		
		I have free time on most days		
		I have free time everyday.		
16	On Saturday and Sunday:	I never have free time.		
		I have free time on one day.		
		I have free on both days.		
17	How would you typically spend: Saturday morning:			
	Saturday afternoon			
	Saturday evening			
	Sunday morning			
	Sunday afternoon			
	Sunday evening			
18	How often do you go to the M.U.S.E.U.M?	Never		
		Hardly ever		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
		Four times or more a week		
19	Do you join the M.U.S.E.U.M for outings on Sunday?		Y	N
20	Where do you go for outings with M.U.S.E.U. M members?			
21	How often do you go for catechism lessons? (i.e. not at the M.U.S.E.U.M)	Never		
		Hardly ever		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three or four times a week		
22	Are you a member of any other religious group/society?		Y	N
23	If yes, what is the name of the religious organization/group?			
24	How often do you attend activities organized by	Hardly ever		

	this group?	Once a week	
		Twice a week	
		Three times a week	
		Four times or more a week	
		Daily	
25	List activities organized by this group? (Choir practice; meetings for altar boys; hikes; picnics....)		
26	Do you watch television	Everyday	
		Most days	
		Sometimes	
		Hardly ever	
27	If you have a computer at home, do you use it	Everyday	
		Most days	
		Sometimes	
		Hardly ever	
28	What do you do on the computer?	Look up information for school work	
		Surf the net	
		Play games	
		Email friends	
29	If you have a video games console at home, do you use it	Everyday	
		Most days	
		Sometimes	
		Hardly ever	
30	About how many DVDs do you watch in a week?	One a week	
		Two or three a week	
		Four or five a week	
		More than 5 a week	
31	How often do you go to the cinema?	Never	
		Hardly ever	
		Often (every 2 or 3 weeks)	
		Frequently (every week)	
32	Do you play a musical instrument?	Y	N
33	Do you play music:	For relaxation & enjoyment	
		To sit for exams	
34	Do you go for music lessons:	To the School of Music (Valletta)?	
		Privately (music teacher's house)?	
		At a private music school?	
		At the local band club?	
35	Are you a member of a dance school?	Y	N
36	What is the name of the dance school?		
37	What type of dance do you practice?		
38	How frequently do you attend the dance school?	Once a week	
		Twice a week	
		Three or four times a week	
39	Are you a member of a theatre school?	Y	N
40	What is the name of the theatre school?		
41	How frequently do you attend the theatre school?	Once a week	
		Twice a week	
		Three or four times a week	

42	Do you practise any sport?	Y	N
43	Did you choose this sport or was it chosen for you?	I chose it	Chosen by others
44	Which sport/s' club and/or association are you a member of?		
45	Which sport/s are you <b>actively</b> involved in? (football, tennis, swimming, athletics, judo, karate, basketball, others – please specify)		
46	How often do you practise the sport?	Hardly ever	
		Once a week	
		Twice or three times a week	
		Four or five times a week	
		Daily	
47	Write the names of any organization/society of which you are a member? (e.g. scouts; guides; etc.)		
48	How often do you attend activities organized by the organization?	Hardly ever	
		Often	
		Always	
49	What type of activities do you participate in with this organization?		
50	Are there playing fields in the town/village where you live?	Y	N
51	I go to the playing field:	Hardly ever	
		Infrequently	
		Often	
		Regularly	
		Daily	
52	If you go to playing fields, do you go:	Unaccompanied	
		With friends your age	
		Accompanied by grown ups	
53	Do you go on family outings?	Y	N
54	When you go on a family outing, where do you go?	Visiting relatives	
		Visiting museums	
		Picnics & hikes in winter	
		Days/time by the beach in summer	
		Walks along promenades in the evening	
		To restaurants for a meal	
		To the cinema	
		Others (where)	

## Appendix C: Questionnaire for secondary school-aged students

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire. This research is being done by the office of the Commissioner for Children with the support of staff from the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. Please do not write your name or sign on any of the pages.

Gender:	Age:	Town/Village where you live:
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### Section A: Play, recreation, free time at school

1	How often do you have P.E during the week?	Hardly ever		
		Irregular (no fixed pattern)		
		Once a week		
		Twice or three times a week		
		Four or five times a week		
2	Do you do P.E. lessons:	With the class teacher only?		
		With the peripatetic teacher only (comes to school)?		
		With the P.E. teacher?		
3	At school, do you do P.E.	In a gymnasium?	Y	N
		In a playground?	Y	N
		In the school hall?	Y	N
		Other place (where)?		
4	If it is raining, can you still do your P.E. lesson?	Y	N	
5	What equipment do you use during P.E. lessons? (e.g. balls, hoops, bean bags, others ... list)			
6	Do you feel you have:	Enough P.E.lessons?	Y	N
		Too many P.E. lessons?	Y	N
		Too few P.E. lessons?	Y	N
7	I enjoy P.E lessons because	I am good at it	Y	N
		I get away from the classroom	Y	N
		I can move around	Y	N
		I get some fresh air	Y	N
8	How often do you have music lessons at school?	Never		
		Once in a while		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
9	How often do you have art lessons at school?	Never		
		Once in a while		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
10	Where have you been on school outings this year?			

11	At break-time, do you have:	Enough time to eat & play		
		Little time to eat and play		
		Too much time to eat & play		
12	On a sunny day, can you play:	In the classroom?	Y	N
		In the school playground?	Y	N
		In the corridors?	Y	N
13	On a rainy day, can you play:	In the classroom?	Y	N
		In the school playground?	Y	N
		In the corridors?	Y	N
14	Are you allowed to bring games to school?	Y	N	
15	What do you do during break time at school with your friends?			

**Section B: Play, recreation, free time after school**

16	After school (choose one answer)	I never have free time		
		I have free time on a few days		
		I have free time on most days		
		I have free time everyday.		
17	On Saturday and Sunday (choose one answer)	I never have free time.		
		I have free time on one day.		
		I have free on both days.		
18	How would you typically spend: Saturday morning:			
	Saturday afternoon			
	Saturday evening			
	Sunday morning			
	Sunday afternoon			
	Sunday evening			
19	How often do you go to the M.U.S.E.U.M?	Never		
		Hardly ever		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		
		Four times or more a week		
20	Do you join the M.U.S.E.U.M for outings on Sunday?	Y	N	
21	Where do you go for outings with M.U.S.E.U. M members?			
22	How often do you go for catechism lessons? (i.e. not at the M.U.S.E.U.M)	Never		
		Hardly ever		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three or four times a week		
23	Are you a member of any other religious group/society?	Y	N	
24	If yes, what is the name of the religious organization/group?			
25	How often do you attend activities organized by this group?	Hardly ever		
		Once a week		
		Twice a week		
		Three times a week		

		Four times or more a week	
		Daily	
26	What activities does this group organize? (Choir practice; meetings for religious formation, hikes, picnics...)		
27	Approximately, how much time do you spend watching television?	Less than one hour a day	
		About two hours a day	
		Three hours or more a day	
		Irregularly	
28	Approximately, how much time do you spend at the computer?	Less than one hour a day	
		1 to 2 hours daily	
		3 to 4 hours daily	
		Irregularly	
29	What activities do you engage in on the computer?	Preparing documents for school work	
		Surfing the net	
		Emailing friends	
		Chatting	
30	Approximately, how much time do you spend with the video games console?	Less than one hour a day	
		1 to 2 hours daily	
		3 to 4 hours daily	
		Irregularly	
31	About how many DVDs do you watch in a week?	One a week	
		Two or three a week	
		Four or five a week	
		More than 5 a week	
32	How often do you go to the cinema?	Never	
		Hardly ever	
		Often (every 2 or 3 weeks)	
		Frequently (every week)	
33	Do you play a musical instrument?	Y	N
34	Do you play music:	For relaxation & enjoyment	
		To sit for exams	
35	Do you go for music lessons:	To the School of Music (Valletta)?	
		Privately (music teacher's house)?	
		At a private music school?	
		At the local band club?	
36	Are you a member of a dance school?	Y	N
37	What is the name of the dance school?		
38	What type of dance do you practise?		
39	How frequently do you attend the dance school?	Once a week	
		Twice a week	
		Three or four times a week	
40	Are you a member of a theatre school?	Y	N
41	What is the name of the theatre school?		
42	How frequently do you attend the theatre school?	Once a week	
		Twice a week	
		Three or four times a week	
43	Do you practise any sport?	Y	N
44	Did you choose this sport or was it chosen for you?	I chose it	Chosen by others
45	Which sport/s' club and/or association are you a member of?		

46	Which sport/s are you actively involved in? (football, tennis, swimming, athletics, judo, karate, basketball, others – please specify)		
47	How often do you practise the sport?	Hardly ever	
		Once a week	
		Twice or three times a week	
		Four or five times a week	
		Daily	
48	Write the names of any organization/society of which you are a member? (e.g. scouts; guides; etc.)		
49	How often do you attend activities organized by the organization?	Hardly ever	
		Often	
		Always	
50	What type of activities do you participate in with this organization?		
51	Are there playing fields in the town/village where you live?	Y	N
52	I go to the playing fields:	Hardly ever	
		Infrequently	
		Often	
		Regularly	
		Daily	
53	If you go to playing fields, do you go:	Unaccompanied	
		With friends your age	
		Accompanied by grown ups	
54	Do you go on family outings?	Y	N
55	When you go on a family outing, where do you go?	Visiting relatives	
		Visiting museums	
		Picnics & hikes in winter	
		Days/time by the beach in summer	
		Walks along promenades in the evening	
		To restaurants for a meal	
		To the cinema	
Others (where)			
56	Do you go out with your friends?	Y	N
57	Where do you go/what do you do with your friends?	Visit each other's house & watch DVDs	
		Go to the cinema	
		Go to entertainment places	
		Go for a meal at a restaurant	
		Participate in team sports	
		Do voluntary work	
Others (where/what)			

## Appendix D: Questionnaire for heads of drama, dance, music schools & football nurseries<sup>1</sup>

### Research: play and recreational activities for children and young people

How many students (by ages) are enrolled at your school?	3-5 year olds		
	6-8 year olds		
	9-11 year olds		
	12-14 year olds		
	15-17 year olds		
How many boys/girls attend?	Boys		
	Girls		
How frequently would students have lessons?	Once a week		
	Twice a week		
	Other arrangements (please specify)		
How long does a lesson/session last?	30 minutes		
	45 minutes		
	1 hour		
	1.5 hours		
Days when school is open	Monday to Friday		
	Monday to Saturday		
	Other arrangements (please specify)		
Is the school open...?	all day		
	evenings only		
	mornings only		
Is the school open all the year round?		Y	N
At what time would lessons for children / young people be held? (e.g. earliest: 4.00pm to 5pm; latest: 7pm to 8pm)	Earliest lesson:		
	Latest lesson:		
Do all students sit for exams or do some attend for leisure? (approximate % for both categories)		Exams	Leisure
In your opinion, do children come for drama willingly or do the parents decide this activity for them?			
Do you have difficulties recruiting new students? To what do you attribute this?			
Do you have a high turnover (students who start and stop within a few weeks or months)?			
At what age do children/students start missing out/stop attending? What reasons do they have? – Activity becomes too costly? Too much school pressure/homework? Exams? Loss of interest? Involved in too many activities?			

<sup>1</sup> Most of the questions asked the various service providers were identical, except for some details which would be specific to a specific type of school/service. (Example: What form/s of dance is/are taught? Which is the most popular form of dance taken up? What musical instruments are taught? What is the most popular instrument/least popular instrument student opt for? Is there a gender difference in choice of instruments)



## Appendix E: Questionnaire for M.U.S.E.U.M. leaders

Do not write or sign your name on any of the pages. Tick where appropriate.  
Town/Village where centre is situated: \_\_\_\_\_

Is the centre open:	Daily (Monday to Sunday)	
	Weekdays only (Monday & Tuesday; Thursday & Friday)	
	Weekends only (Saturday & Sunday)	
	Other arrangements (please specify)	
Is the centre open:	All day	
	Mornings only	
	Afternoons/Evenings only	
Is the centre open:	All year long?	
	Corresponding to school year (autumn – spring)?	
	Summer only?	
About how many boys attend the centre?		
Considering the size of the town/village where you are located, do you think this number (attendance) is:	Healthy/Quite strong	
	Average	
	Poor	
Approximately how many boys are there of each age group:	5 to 7 year olds	
	8 to 10 year olds	
	11 to 13 year olds	
	14 to 16 year olds	
	17 & 18 year olds	
Are boys <b>expected</b> to come a specific number of times during the week?		Y N
In reality, how frequently do most children come?	Daily	
	3 or 4 times a week	
	Once or twice a week	
	Whenever they feel like?	
Does attendance fluctuate with the time of year?		Y N
When do you get most children:	During the school year?	
	During the summer months?	
	No difference (constant attendance)	
At what age do children tend to leave / move away from the society?		
To what do you attribute children leaving:	Peer pressure	
	Too much H.W	
	Exam pressure	
	Loss of interest in religious matters	
	Other reasons (please specify)	
What activities are organized:	During the week?	
	On the weekend?	
How frequently are activities organized?	Daily	
	Alternate days	
	Weekly	
	Irregularly	
What resources are available at your centre to support the activities you plan?		
How does the society/organization fund itself? (assuming/knowing there are no membership fees)		
What difficulties does the society face in organizing activities for children and young people?		

## Appendix F: Questionnaire for parish priests

### Research: Play and leisure time activities for children and youths in the parish

In the first column, list the names of the organizations, clubs, groups, associations whose members are children and/or youths aged 3 to 18.

If there are more than 8 such groups in your parish, please add rows. Each row across both pages should contain information about ONE organization.

For example, if first society is *Grupp Abbatini*, all the information in the first row on both page 1 and page 2 should correspond to this particular group.

Footnotes have been included to specify the information required for each column. Where numbers are concerned, approximations are fine.

Name of organization/club (children to 18-year-olds)	Age group catered for <sup>2</sup>	Type of activities organised <sup>3</sup>	Gender membership <sup>4</sup>	Mission / Rationale <sup>5</sup>	Frequency of activities <sup>6</sup>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Name of organization (Corresponding to societies in order listed above)	Approximate number of members in society	Attendance <sup>7</sup>	Is centre/club open all the year round? <sup>8</sup>	Opening hours <sup>9</sup>	How does club/organization fund itself?	What difficulties does the club face?
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

<sup>2</sup> Age group: example, 5 to 15 year olds; 8 to 10-year olds etc.

<sup>3</sup> Type of activities: prayer meetings, retreats, hikes, choir practice, social outings, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Does the organization allow boys/girls only or both boys and girls

<sup>5</sup> Mission: spiritual formation; socialization; educational, others (please specify)

<sup>6</sup> Daily, weekly, every fortnight, monthly, irregularly

<sup>7</sup> Are there more children/youth attending in summer or in winter? Is attendance regular throughout the year? Well-attended/poor attendance

<sup>8</sup> Is the club/society/organization open in summer and winter? Summer only? Winter only?

<sup>9</sup> Is club open daily (7 days)? Mon to Saturday? Mon to Friday? Alternate days? All day; evenings only

# Appendix G: IPA Declaration of the Child's Right to Play

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## WHAT IS PLAY?

**CHILDREN** are the foundation of the world's future.

**CHILDREN** have played at all times throughout history and in all cultures.

**PLAY**, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to develop the potential of all children.

**PLAY** is communication and expression, combining thought and action; it gives satisfaction and a feeling of achievement.

**PLAY** is instinctive, voluntary, and spontaneous.

**PLAY** helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially.

**PLAY** is a means of learning to live, not a mere passing of time.

## ALARMING TRENDS AFFECTING CHILDHOOD

IPA is deeply concerned by a number of alarming trends and their negative impact on children's development:

- Society's indifference to the importance of play
- Overemphasis on theoretical and academic studies in schools.
- Increasing numbers of children living with inadequate provisions for survival and development.
- Inadequate environmental planning, which results in a lack of basic amenities, inappropriate housing forms, and poor traffic management.
- Increasing commercial exploitation of children, and the deterioration of cultural traditions.
- Lack of access for third world women to basic training in childcare and development.
- Inadequate preparation of children to cope with life in a rapidly changing society.
- Increasing segregation of children in the community.
- The increasing numbers of working children, and their unacceptable working conditions.
- Constant exposure of children to war, violence, exploitation and destruction.
- Overemphasis on unhealthy competition and "winning at all costs" in children's sports.

## PROPOSALS FOR ACTION

The following proposals are listed under the names of government departments having a measure of responsibility for children.

### Health

**Play is essential for the physical and mental health of the child.**

- Establish programs for professionals and parents about the benefits of play from birth onwards.
- Ensure basic conditions (nutrition, sanitation, clean water and air) which promote the healthy survival and development of all children.
- Incorporate play into community programs designed to maintain children's physical and mental health.
- Include play as an integral part of all children's environments, including hospitals and other institutional settings.

## **Education**

### **Play is a part of education.**

- Provide opportunities for initiative, interaction, creativity and socialization through play in formal education systems.
- Include studies of the importance of play and the means of play provision in the training of all professionals and volunteers working with and for children.
- Strengthen play provision in primary schools to enhance learning and to maintain attendance and motivation.
- Reduce the incompatibilities between daily life, work and education by involving schools and colleges, and by using public buildings for community play programs.
- Ensure that working children have access to play and learning opportunities outside of the system of formal education.

## **Welfare**

### **Play is an essential part of family and community life.**

- Ensure that play is accepted as an integral part of social development and social care.
- Ensure that play is part of community-based services designed to integrate children with physical, mental or emotional disabilities into the community.
- Promote measures that strengthen positive relationships between parents and children.
- Provide safe play environments that protect children against abduction, sexual abuse and physical violence.

## **Leisure**

### **Children need opportunities to play at leisure.**

- Provide time, space, materials, natural settings, and programs with leaders where children may develop a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and enjoyment through play.
- Enable interaction between children and people of all backgrounds and ages in leisure settings.
- Stop the commercial exploitation of children's play, and the production and sale of war toys and games of violence and destruction.
- Encourage the conservation and use of traditional indigenous games.
- Promote the use of cooperative games and fair play for children in sports.
- Provide all children, particularly those with special needs, with access to a diversity of play environments, toys and play materials through community programs such as preschool play groups, toy libraries and play buses.

## **Planning**

### **The needs of the child must have priority in the planning of human settlements.**

- Ensure that children and young people can participate in making decisions that affect their surroundings and their access to them.
- When planning new, or reorganizing existing developments, recognize the child's small size and limited range of activity.
- Disseminate existing knowledge about play facilities and play programs to planning professionals and politicians.
- Oppose the building of high-rise housing and provide opportunities to mitigate its detrimental effects on children and families. Enable children to move easily about the community by providing safe pedestrian access through urban neighborhoods, better traffic management, and improved public transportation.
- Increase awareness of the high vulnerability of children living in slum settlements, tenements, and derelict neighborhoods.
- Reserve adequate and appropriate space for play and recreation through statutory provision.

## **AFFIRMATION**

IPA is determined to sustain the momentum created by the International Year of the Child in 1979 to arouse world opinion for the improvement of the lives of children; and:

**AFFIRMS** its belief in the United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which in Article 7 states, "The child shall have full opportunity to play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right;" and endorses its belief in Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**RECOGNIZES** that the population of children in developing countries is three quarters of the world's total child population, and that efforts directed at the promotion of education and literacy, and the stopping of environmental deprivation would improve the capacities of the poorest.

**AFFIRMS** its commitment to working with other national and international organizations to ensure basic conditions of survival for all children in order that they may fully develop as human beings.

**ACKNOWLEDGES** that each country is responsible for preparing its own courses of public and political action in the light of its culture, climate and social, political and economic structure;

**RECOGNIZES** that the full participation of the community is essential in planning and developing programs and services to meet the needs, wishes, and aspirations of children;

**ASSURES** its cooperation with UN agencies and other international and national organizations involved with children;

**APPEALS** to all countries and organizations to take action to counteract the alarming trends which jeopardize children's healthy development and to give high priority to long term programs designed to ensure for all time: THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO PLAY.

## **ORGANIZATION**

IPA is an interdisciplinary non-governmental organization, providing an international forum and advocacy for the promotion of play opportunities.

IPA membership is open to any individual, group or organization which endorses the IPA Declaration of the Child's Right to Play.

IPA organizes regional and national conferences, workshops, symposia and study tours and holds a triennial World Congress. IPA also publishes a magazine, PlayRights, and produces publications and audiovisual material on aspects of play.

IPA offers advice to national governments and UN agencies on issues and problems related to the implementation of the Child's Right to Play.

**Within the local context, there is much anecdotal evidence about the emphasis given to academic success and undue pressure brought about by an exam-oriented education system. Consequently, children and young people's participation in recreational and culturally-enriching activities is limited. On the other hand, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly states that children have a right to play and relax by doing things like sport, music and drama.**

**This publication presents the results of a study conducted among primary and secondary school children in an attempt to establish what recreational and cultural activities they engage in during school hours as well as in their free time, during the week and on the weekends. The study also sought to find out which activities are popular with children, how they choose to spend their free time and indeed if children and young people do have free time which they can spend in recreational and cultural activities.**

*"The final phase of 'The Right to Play' project is this extensive research which has been carried out amongst children and young people, head of schools, parish priests, some NGO representatives, sports associations and cultural centres."*

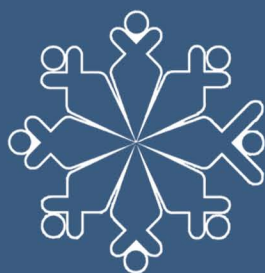
Ms Sonia Camilleri, Commissioner for Children, Malta

*"In her introduction, Dr Sollars eloquently describes aspects of the value of the right to play and its consequences.....Dr. Sollars' insightful and professional analysis of the data collected locally is a mine of information and her conclusions need to be taken seriously if we are to claim that we are making the necessary efforts to implement this right."*

Ms Marian Muscat Azzopardi, Consultant Children's Rights

*"Play and recreational activities which offer opportunities for active and interactive participation need to be seriously considered as events which truly offer learning opportunities. These can occur in a relaxed, enjoyable manner free from any unnecessary demands and competitive constraints imposed by adult perceptions and expectations of children and young people."*

Dr Valerie Sollars, Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Education



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