The services that the Employment and Training Corporation provides to disadvantaged groups
Discussion Paper

Felix Borg
Employment and Training Corporation

1. Scope of paper and context

This paper is aimed at portraying the services that Malta’s Public Employment Service, the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) has offered and is offering to disadvantaged groups with a view of improving their employability and enabling them to seek employment. A chronological perspective will be taken in this paper so as to properly derive the developments that the Corporation went through in the provision of such services, the problems faced, the achievements, the disappointments and the lessons learned for continuous improvement.

For the purpose of this paper disadvantaged groups should be taken to comprise: persons with disability, persons with mental health problems, current/ex-substance abusers, ex-convicts, illiterate persons, very long-term unemployed, lone parents, and youth in institutional care who are or want to be active in the labour market. All those persons from these disadvantaged groups who are registered unemployed benefit from ETC’s mainstream services such as profiling and follow-up interviews by our employment advisers, referral to job opportunities and placement in employment, and training services. However, the main focus of this paper is on the custom-made services that ETC offers to these disadvantaged groups.

2. The national context

Government’s policies concerning disadvantaged groups are based on the principles of social inclusion and equal opportunities. Every support will be given to disadvantaged categories to enable them to integrate in the labour market, be it monetary or morale support. We recognise the value of all persons irrespective of their ability and disability, family circumstances, past or present addiction. We also recognise their potential for self-development that will empower them to improve their social and economic prospects. Malta believes in the principle of social inclusion.

In Malta, Section 15 of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1969 specifies that an establishment employing more than 25 persons must have 2% of its workforce made up of registered disabled persons. Such legislation was never enforced as it is has been the policy of government to try to reach the objective through persuasion rather than law enforcement. It is believed that if government tries to enforce the provisions of this act rigorously, then employers would employ persons with disability to satisfy their legal obligations but would never really integrate them within the workforce. Although employment law does not allow employers in Malta to discriminate in recruitment and selection, no specific legislation exists which compels employers to employ a number of persons from the other disadvantaged groups.
3. Corporate profile of ETC

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) is a public corporation set up by an act of parliament in 1990. It is a body corporate with a distinct legal personality. The Employment and Training Corporation is managed by a Board of Directors which includes representatives from the various stakeholder groups and social partners. Members are appointed on this Board by the Minister for Education, Youth and Employment. The Corporation is primarily responsible for providing a public employment service, maintaining an official register of persons seeking employment, managing state-financed vocational training schemes, maintaining labour market information promoting gender equality in employment and training and processing work permits for foreigners. The Corporation has been actively involved in the development of employment policy for Malta and in the implementation of active labour market policies.

4. Setting up of the Supported Employment Section

Since its establishment in 1990, the Corporation had always included disadvantaged persons who were registered unemployed in the provision of employment and training services. However, no particular focus was made on the creation of specialist services for these client groups as all clients were mainstreamed and serviced by the major ETC operational divisions. In mid-1996, it was realised that ETC’s successes in placing these disadvantaged and registered unemployed persons in employment were limited and action was taken to establish a Supported Employment Section that had to exclusively provide services for disadvantaged unemployed persons: persons with disabilities, current/ex-substance abusers, convicts/ex-convicts, and very long-term unemployed persons seeking employment. Services provided were to include vocational guidance, training and referral to job opportunities.

It is worthwhile mentioning at this point that only those persons coming from the mentioned category who identified themselves as having such a disadvantage and accepting to receive specialist services by ETC became clients of the Supported Employment Section. Disadvantaged clients retained and still retain the right not to be considered as such and to be provided mainstream services by sections of ETC other than the Supported Employment Section. Thus, the choice remains with the client.

4.1 Objectives and guiding principles

The new approach was to be personalised so that the Section will be offering a one-stop shop service to its clients. In providing services to disadvantaged clients, ETC officers had to build up a good rapport with the client and with other third parties (social workers, parents, agencies) with which the client is involved, in order to have a clear and detailed profile of the same client and to track the whole process which will lead the client into employment. A pro-active attitude was to be adopted to engage in outreach programmes to reach prospective clients who are not yet in a position to approach ETC because they are institutionalised, but at the same time they demonstrate their intentions of finding a job when leaving the institution.
4.2 Proper identification of client groups

The clients of the Supported Employment Section were classified into four categories namely:
1. Persons with disabilities (incorporating persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities, with sensory disabilities, and with physical disabilities);
2. Persons with mental health problems;
3. Persons graduating from a substance abuse programme (incorporating persons who were hooked on stimulants, depressants and/or hallucinogens substances and alcohol);
4. Persons who are/were imprisoned in a correctional facility or who are on probation or suspended sentence.

4.3 Process

Clients were to be grouped according to their respective category and form case loads. Each case load was to fall under the responsibility of a Case Officer whose duty was to follow each client until s/he was placed. The responsibility of the Case Officer included direct involvement in the preliminary assessment of the client, provision of vocational guidance and counselling, development of personal action plans, identification of training interventions, referral to jobs, and co-ordination with other involved agencies. The Case Officer could be assisted by job coaches or other professionals during the initial stage of the client’s employment or to retain employment.

Clients were to be referred to a case officer through any of the following channels:
1. Direct (When the client approaches the case officer directly).
2. Employment Services (When the client registers for work and is referred to the Section by the employment advisers at the Placement Section).
3. Schools (When the client is approaching school leaving age. Such clients will be reached through the Outreach programmes).
4. Rehabilitation Centres (When the client is attending a rehabilitation centre, such as at Caritas, Sedqa or the Correctional Facility).
5. Hospitals (When the client is residing in a hospital and his/her health condition is such that s/he will soon be leaving the hospital).
6. Government and Non-government Organisations (When the client approaches such organisations and he/she is referred to ETC).
7. Adult Training Centres (When the client is attending an Adult Training Centre and decides to leave the centre to enter into the open employment market).

A Multi Disciplinary Team had to be set up to assess clients composed of medical specialists, social workers, occupational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and other specialists. The report of the team was to be passed to the Case Officer, who would discuss the report with the client and other interested parties, and together draw up a personal action plan, which hopefully lands the client into employment.

The Personal Action Plan had to include an inventory of the skills and knowledge possessed by the client and qualifications achieved to date, the vocational strengths and weaknesses of the client and a summary of the assessment conducted by the Multi Disciplinary Team. Finally, the plan would include action stages which were agreed upon by the case officer and the client, highlighting the objective for each stage and when it is to be achieved.
Prevocational training was to be offered by ETC to clients lacking empowerment skills and lifeskills (such as communication skills, transport skills, time management etc.), which no employer has the time and interest to give. Once training was completed, the client had to be referred back to the case officer, together with a detailed report of his/her achievements.

Case officers were expected to adopt a pro-active approach by searching for employment opportunities for their clients themselves apart from tapping incoming vacancies. They had to identify jobs within industrial and commercial establishments which are highly suitable for clients through direct contact with employers at the latter’s establishments. If a job coach was needed, he was expected to deliver on-the-job training to clients at the employer’s establishment according to the requirements of the establishment and maintain effective relationships between clients and potential employers. The job coach was to follow his/her client on the job to check his/her progress and the training/work being provided by the employer.

Case officers could also make use of schemes to assist in the placing of clients in employment. One scheme that was already in existence, the Employment Training Placement Scheme, started being particularly targeted at these client groups while a new scheme was developed, the On-Line Scheme.

4.4 Employment Training Placement Scheme

The objective of the Employment Training Placement Scheme (ETPS) is to encourage employers to employ and train registered unemployed persons from disadvantaged categories by providing them with a subsidy that covers the induction training costs. The employer is expected to employ and provide hands-on training in the required skills while also facilitating and enabling the new employee to re-integrate himself or herself in the workplace. Under this scheme, a financial incentive equivalent to 50% of the national statutory minimum wage for the duration of the agreed training period is provided to the employer by ETC. Training programmes are agreed to between the employer and ETC and the duration of such programmes is directly related to the content; however, it cannot exceed 48 weeks. A contract is formally entered into between ETC, the employer and the client.

4.5 On-Line Scheme

The main objective of this scheme was to expose a disadvantaged person to a work environment and to convince a potential employer about his/her needs with a view to potential employment. Under this scheme, employment/training opportunities suitable for disadvantaged categories were identified by ETC officials at industrial/commercial establishments. In agreement with the management of the establishment, ETC placed the disadvantaged person at that establishment for on-the-job training. A contract was entered into between ETC and the training provider indicating the training to be undertaken and the duration of the training programme. The programme could last for 48 weeks. During this period, the participant would not be employed. S/he would, however, be given a weekly allowance of LM30 (€70) by ETC for the duration of the training programme.
4.6 Problems encountered with On-Line Scheme and ETPS

Despite the declared intention that both these schemes had to be offered to all disadvantaged groups serviced by the Supported Employment Section, the focus was only made on the integration of persons with disability who were registered unemployed. Little attention was paid to include the other disadvantaged categories in these schemes due to lack of enough human resources and in-house expertise in the areas.

The On-Line Scheme was essentially an on-the-job training scheme and the employer was not bound to employ the trainee at the end of the training period. Thus, many clients who were placed on these schemes were not subsequently employed by the establishment at which they undertook their on-the-job training. Although this was never a requirement, it was always the intention.

The ETPS provides financial assistance to employers for a temporary period. Because of these reasons, they informed ETC personnel that once the financial assistance offered by ETC stops, they will have to absorb the full wage cost and suffer the cost of lost output in addition to the normal labour cost. Moreover, employers tend to focus more on the disabilities rather than on the abilities of these individuals.

A problem that placement officers face when trying to place disabled persons in employment is that normally the latter are receiving disability pensions and they could be reluctant to miss out on those and start earning a minimum or close to minimum wage for a forty hour working week. Very often the difference in income would not merit the extra effort.

4.7 Proposal to change to an Ability Development Centre

In order to overcome some of the problems encountered in placing disadvantaged persons in employment, in 1998 a proposal was drawn up to set up an Ability Development Centre whereby disadvantaged persons would undergo a programme of tasks in various occupational fields at the workshops of ETC’s Supported Employment Section that will serve as an extended assessment of the client’s abilities and potential, and also to continue to build on the latter. As a start, a number of vocational training programmes were also developed and implemented in glass making, food preparation and production, and room attending.

4.8 Lessons derived from trying to adopt this approach

The Ability Development Centre concept, whereby persons with disability and with mental health problems were to be given pre and vocational training at ETC’s premises prior to job placement did not have the success desired. The reasons are the following:

a) the Corporation was never allocated enough money to finance the utilisation of Multi-Disciplinary teams or to set up fully equipped workshops at which persons with disability could be exposed to a range of job tasks to determine their abilities and to train them to obtain occupational skills. Consequently it had to resort to specific vocational training with the problems mentioned below;
b) persons with disability found it difficult to transfer the skills learned at the ADC in a sheltered environment to the actual workplace;

c) persons with disabilities found it difficult to relate to new superiors and to work within a competitive environment where they had to do work within deadlines;

d) the performance of persons with disability/mental health problems at the ADC did not necessarily reflect the performance that they demonstrated once they were placed in employment;

e) parents of persons with disability told ETC after the training that they were satisfied with the training at ETC but they rather keep their children at home now rather than ‘releasing’ them to enter the open labour market.

In addition, one can note from the above that the emphasis remained on meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and with mental health problems while the other disadvantaged categories were not directly serviced by ETC but were serviced through co-operation agreements signed with specialist NGOs and which are described later on in this paper.

Thus, the Ability Development Centre concept was dropped and staff at the Supported Employment Section started to focus on providing guidance to disadvantaged groups and referring them to ETC organised courses, NGO programmes or job placement. The On-Line Scheme was retained but its name was changed to Bridging the Gap Scheme and the allowance increased to LM35 per week and then to 80% of the national statutory minimum wage in 2005. However, it started being used more professionally to actually lead participants to open employment; in fact, results show that 60% of the clients placed on this scheme were either retained in employment by the same employer or else changed employer. The ETPS was retained and two thirds of persons placed on this scheme manage to retain their employment. In 2005 as well, the staff complement at the Section was doubled so that the advisor to client ratio on average currently stands at approximately 1:175. As can be seen from the output results in the appendices, ETC’s performance in meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups increased as years went by.

5. Services for persons with disability

At any one time, there are circa 300 – 350 persons registering for work. ETC recognises the specialist expertise that other organisations possess in providing services to disadvantaged groups with the aim of integrating them in the labour market. The ETC has therefore entered into formal co-operation agreements with Eden and Richmond Foundations. Eden Foundation provides services to persons with intellectual difficulties while Richmond Foundation provides services to persons with mental health problems.

Co-operation agreements with NGOs

Each agreement was entered into for three years. The main provisions of these agreements are that the Corporation will refer clients for training and pays for the services as indicated below. The Corporation undertakes to:
1. Subsidise the Project by a sum not exceeding Lm50,000 (€116,470) per annum based on set performance criteria.

2. Pay the Foundation the sum of Lm1,225 (€2,853) on the commencement of the nine-months training period for every client submitted. The Corporation is to refer 18 clients per annum and the number of clients for each intake should be not less than three and not more than six.

3. Pay the Foundation the total sum of Lm1,222 (€2,846) per client for a job placement and related follow-on support with the placement. This sum will be paid after completion of 520 hours in regular employment.

4. Make available the Bridging the Gap Scheme to the Foundation for a maximum period of one month on full time placements and two months for part-timers. If in any particular case the Foundation provides job coaching services to the client during the period covered by the Bridging the Gap Scheme the Corporation will pay the Foundation at the rate of Lm2.50 (€5.82) per hour.

The Foundations provide the following services:

Assessment: During the first month, trainees are assessed on specific areas and a Personal Vocational Profile is drawn up, containing the trainee’s Individual Training Programme.

Initial Training Phase: This is of 3 months duration, whereby the group of trainees move on to more specific and individualised training as outlined in the Personal Vocational Profile. These specified areas include:

- Self Care – Personal hygiene, appearance
- Domestic Skills – Cleaning, cooking, home safety skills
- Orientation – Time, place, person
- Community Skills – Monetary skills, writing, numbering, time management, shopping, transport, road safety
- Communication Skills – Language understanding, articulations, speech volume, non-verbal skills, communication level
- Personality / Social Adjustment – Shyness, over-activity/restlessness, aggression/bad temper, adaptability to situation/colleagues and staff/environment, appropriate sexual behaviour, participation in leisure activities
- General Physical Activity
- Working Skills – Attention span, independence at work, productivity, quality, etc.

Work Experience Phase: This phase consists of another 5 months of training and is provided at workplaces. The general aims of this phase of training is to enable clients to:

- Familiarise themselves with the various work routines and environments at work
- Develop qualities all employers seek to find in their employees
- Learn about their rights and responsibilities
- Learn how to follow instructions
- Learn to develop respect towards their superiors at the place of work
- Learn adequate ways of social interaction during working hours and break time
- Enhance their mobility in different work settings and environments
- Enhance life and social skills needed for an independent adult life.

**On-The Job Training:** This phase commences when the individual trainee is placed in gainful employment, and lasts approximately 3 months. The trainee may be accompanied by a job coach but once the trainee can cope somewhat independently, job coaching services are faded out gradually until the trainee functions independently.

**Follow-On Support:** This stage consists of periodical visits to the ex-trainees on their respective jobs. During such visits, the work and behavioural performance of the ex-trainees are discussed with their direct supervisors or managers with the aim of assisting the ex-trainees to retain their employment.

Foundations agree to:

1. refrain from charging fees or other form of payment to clients referred by the Corporation who utilise services provided under the programmes within this Agreement during the 9 months of training

2. submit reports of clients’ progress following the first three months of the Programme and completion of the next six months

3. provide an evaluation report to the Corporation one month prior to the expiry date of this Agreement, which report is to include:
   a. an analysis of the programmes and services delivered and the trends therein;
   b. identification of the factors that have proved critical to the success or failure of any of the programmes;
   c. the opportunities and/or threats pertaining to the future success of any of these programmes.

Each Agreement is managed by a Joint Working Committee (J.W.C.), which is responsible to oversee its successful implementation. The J.W.C. is made up of four members, two of whom are nominated by the Corporation and two of whom are nominated by the Foundation. Members of the J.W.C. will strive to take decisions on a consensual basis. The J.W.C. meets every two months or as often as required by either party.

Results obtained from these co-operation agreements indicate that initially, the Foundations were quite successful in training ETC’s clients and placing them in employment. However, as years are passing by, they are finding it increasingly difficult to find a job placement for the clients referred by ETC. This is occurring due to increased competitive pressures on employers who in turn demand skilled and highly productive personnel. Moreover, as these Foundations were primarily placing clients with large organisations, the latter became saturated and could not employ more disadvantaged clients. Thus, while meeting their training obligations, they are not reaching the placement targets assigned to them by ETC. The Corporation will be reviewing the terms of agreement reached with these Foundations in order to ensure that persons with disability or with mental health problems obtain quality services. Training these persons with no direct transition to employment could only raise expectations leading to big disappointments on the part of clients. Moreover, experience has shown that if employment does not come soon after training, the client will tend to forget what s/he has learnt and the gains achieved during training will be lost.
Launching of the ESF-funded Supported Employment Scheme

In 2005, ETC launched the Supported Employment Scheme aimed at the better integration of persons with disability or with mental health problems in the labour market. Employment provides the individual with a real job, benefits, and the dignity that arises from gainful employment.

The scheme works as follows. ETC places persons with disability/with mental health problems who are seeking employment on the ‘Bridging the Gap Scheme’ for a period of 8 weeks at an establishment with the necessary financial support. The Bridging the Gap Scheme provides the work exposure period during which the prospective employees can be assessed while at the workplace.

Following that, these persons are assessed by a multi-disciplinary team to determine the level of support needed. The multi-disciplinary team consists of ETC officials, an occupational therapist, and representatives of the employer. The assessment is based on:

a) progress reports compiled by the job coach for the period covered by the Bridging the gap Scheme
b) the evaluation report prepared by the Occupational Therapist after conducting ‘on the job’ visits and
c) feedback by employer.

The multi-disciplinary team classifies persons with disability according to their productivity level. The wage-subsidy is two-tiered, with Category A - High Support for trainees who are assessed to reach an efficiency level of up to 40%, and Category B - Low Support for trainees who are assessed to reach an efficiency level of up to 41 - 65%. The strategy behind this Scheme is based on the rationale that employers will support through their own resources those disabled persons whose productivity exceeds the 65% level of efficiency. On its part, the state finances the necessary support needed by those disabled persons whose efficiency falls below this level to enable them to be employed and retain such an employment, rather than having to pay welfare benefits instead.

The Employer pays the employee the minimum wage (circa Lm 60 per week) together with the yearly statutory bonuses (Lm 220) – Lm3,340 (€7,780) yearly. Five possible assistance options to employers were designed and are indicated in the table below together with the cost of each option, apart from the initial cost for placing each client on the Bridging the Gap Scheme. The costs of wage subsidies, job coaching and personal assistance are borne by the Corporation.
Bridging the Gap Scheme:

Allowance to trainee 8 weeks @ Lm 35 per week = Lm 280.00
Job Coach cost: 40 x 6hrs. @ Lm. 2.50 per hr. = Lm 600.00
Cost per client Total = Lm 880.00 (€2,050)

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<tr>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Job coaching services for four hours daily plus personal assistance: this works out at Lm 3,000 (€6,988) yearly per employee - Lm 2600 in job coaching services (4hrs. x 5 days x 52 weeks @ Lm 2.50/hr) and allowance of Lm 400 for personal assistance per annum</th>
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<td>Option 2</td>
<td>Allowance to employer without job coaching services or personal assistant: this works out at Lm 1,560 (€3,633) yearly per employee - Allowance equivalent to half the minumum wage per annum (52 weeks @ Lm30.00/week)</td>
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<td>Option 3</td>
<td>Allowance to employer plus personal assistant: this works out at Lm 1,960 (€4,566) yearly per employee - Allowance equivalent to half the minumum wage per annum (52 weeks @ Lm30.00/week) plus Lm 400 for the personal assistant per annum</td>
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<td>Option 4</td>
<td>Job coaching services four hours daily for forty weeks without personal assistant: this works out at Lm2,000 (€4,658) yearly per employee - Job coaching services on a temporary basis (4hrs. x 5 days x 40 weeks @ Lm 2.50/hr)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 5</td>
<td>Job coaching services four hours daily for forty weeks with personal assistant: this works out at Lm2,400 (€5,590) yearly per employee - Job coaching services on a temporary basis (4hrs. x 5 days x 40 weeks @ Lm 2.50/hr) Lm 2000 plus an allowance to employer of Lm 400 per annum for the personal assistant</td>
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Of the forty nine placements made to date, 8 persons (4 males & 4 females) have been placed on option 1; sixteen on option 2 (13 males & 3 females); and twenty five persons on option 3 (16 males & 9 females). No persons were placed on options 4 and 5. Thirty seven of the persons placed on this scheme are still in employment; for 25 of the clients placed, it was their first employment experience.

The factors that have made this Supported Employment Scheme successful include:

1) An assessment process to identify the competence level of the individual.
2) An individualised job match.
3) Individualised training and adaptation at the work site.
4) Individualised duration of support: both job coaching and any other assistance will be given on a one-to-one basis.
5) Regular follow-up and monitoring of clients by ETC officers, who review the client’s progress with the job coach.
6) The involvement of employers improved their awareness of disability issues and how they can build on the abilities, rather than fear the ‘disabilities’ of the employees.
7) The financial assistance provided to employers led to the job placement of persons with disability/mental health problems into employment.
8) The Scheme provided clear ‘pathways into employment’ for disabled people based on co-operation and support from employers.
6. Services to assist current/ex-substance abusers

The services offered to the circa 200 registered unemployed current/ex-substance abusers consist of:

- In-dept interviewing to identify the clients’ strengths and their training needs;
- Providing guidelines to clients on training, job search, employment, career development and social responsibility;
- Establishing goals through the formulation of a personal action plan;
- Motivating and assisting clients to follow their personal action plan;
- Referring clients to specialist agencies;
- Placing clients on the Bridging the Gap Scheme or Employment Training Placement Scheme.

A co-operation agreement was also signed in the late nineties between the Corporation and Caritas. The agreement continued to be renewed until end December 2007. This agreement provided for the latter NGO to offer training and rehabilitation to ETC clients composed of the following services:

a. individual needs assessment
b. pre-training motivation
c. consultancy and advice to clients regarding personal skills and talents
d. job placement
e. post-placement follow-ups and support

The Corporation has to subsidise these services by a sum not exceeding LM12,000 (€27,952) per annum based on agreed performance criteria. A minimum of 24 clients per annum had to receive the services listed above. The Corporation bound itself to pay LM3,600 (€8,386) per annum in advance for these services, and LM350 (€815) for each client completing three months of probation in gainful employment. A joint working committee was also set up on the same lines as written before.

In financial year 2005-2006, a 12-hour training programme in lifeskills and jobseeking skills was delivered to persons following a substance abuse rehabilitation programme at the San Blas Rehabilitation Centre run by Caritas. The course helped trainees in both their personal development (self esteem and self confidence) and also in their job-search and employability. A similar initiative was undertaken with temporary residents at the Dual Diagnosis Unit at Mount Carmel Hospital (catering for persons with mental health problems).

In mid-2006 an important initiative was launched, involving the establishment of an ‘(Ex-) Substance Abuse Monitoring Board’. This Board is made up of representatives of ETC, Sedqa and the Department of Social Security. The scope of the Board is to discuss and monitor particular cases of ETC clients with a view to determining whether clients need additional preparation before employment. This Board examines each case on its own merits and takes actions accordingly.

Apart from the above, in the last three financial years, nine and twenty three current/ex-substance abusers benefited from inclusion in the ETPS and Bridging the Gap Schemes respectively.
7. Services to assist convicts/ex-convicts

The services offered to the circa 120 registered unemployed convicts/ex-convicts consist of:

- In-dept interviewing to identifying the clients' strengths and their training needs.
- Providing guidelines to clients on training, job search, employment, career development and social responsibility
- Establishing goals (formulate a personal action plan)
- Motivate and assist client to follow their personal action plan.
- Placement on the Bridging the Gap or Employment Training Placement Scheme.

In 2004, ninety convicts attended the ETC's co-ordinated training programme at the Corradino Correctional Facilities. Such a programme provided training in basic computer skills, basic electrical installation, literacy in both Maltese and English languages and lifeskills. Another one hundred and seventy six persons were trained in 2005 and 2006 respectively at the same place.

Forty six convicts/ex-convicts benefited from placement under the ETPS or Bridging the Gap Scheme in the last three years. In 2006, ten of the persons utilising the Bridging the Gap Scheme were inmates nearing the end of their prison period.

Experience of working with unemployed offenders and substance abusers shows that client groups conform less to social norms than others. Their work records are much less stable and they hold low-paid jobs with poor prospects. The majority of the offenders show interest in entrepreneurship because it offers them a sense of independence. Most of the clients interviewed acknowledge that education and vocational training obtained correlates to better work opportunities but they show lack of commitment in following any training courses to enhance their vocational skills or level of education.

Clients need to be taught how to respect superiors and obey the latter's instructions. Most of them show lack of responsibility and commitment towards finding and keeping a job, following a training course, quitting drugs and living a conventional lifestyle. Their opinion is that certain members of society (especially employers) regard them as less worthy and they feel that they are not trusted due to their criminal records and past/present addictions. They experience social exclusion and they feel more at ease with other offenders or substance abusers.

8. Services to assist the very long term unemployed

The Corporation has two persons specifically dedicated to provide services to persons who have been registered unemployed for more than five years. At any one time, there are circa 400-450 persons making up this group. Every effort is made to provide guidance to this cohort and to draw up a personal action plan for them to assist them to increase their skills or find employment. However, unfortunately, the results obtained to date in training and employing these clients cannot be considered positive because of the reasons to be discussed below.

Judging by the behaviour of this client group, the Corporation suspects that a good number of these persons may be acting fraudulently and most of them do their utmost to retain their social benefits at all costs. During most of the interviews they show a very negative attitude towards regular employment and training, and do their best to give the impression that it is very hard for...
them to find employment. Some of them try to intimidate our staff through offensive attitude and language. Nevertheless, our staff do their best to understand and help the client by giving the best service we can offer.

A good number of our very-long term unemployed clients are well informed about how to ‘beat’ the system. Most of our clients are low skilled, illiterate, and have long unemployment histories. The social benefits they enjoy include the social assistance benefits, exemption from paying national insurance contributions, sickness benefits, free medicines, rent subsidies, water and electricity subsidies etc. Taken together, these may add up to more than the national statutory minimum wage and thus, disincentivise our clients to from taking up employment. Despite this scenario, we assist our clients by trying to motivate them towards regular employment. We refer them to courses which may increase their employability and submit them to employment opportunities. When clients declare that they have medical problems we refer them to the Department of Social Security. However, legislation compels us to enforce the law in respect of those persons who are registered unemployed and who demonstrate their unwillingness to work. Our Compliance Section may be asked to interview or follow clients who are suspected of abusing the system. In addition, when persons refuse an employment or training measure without a valid reason, the Corporation starts the process of removing these persons from the unemployment register.

9. Services to assist the illiterate jobseekers

The Corporation has been delivering literacy courses for illiterate unemployed for a number of years. It has ventured on addressing illiteracy as it is quite significant among the registered unemployed cohort and also because illiteracy is a significant disadvantage in seeking employment given that the labour market is continually demanding skilled personnel. We believe that becoming literate is the first step for a person to continue to develop his/her knowledge and skills. The Corporation provides literacy courses itself but it also has a co-operation agreement with Paolo Freire Institute for the purpose.

Literacy for Employment Courses were held throughout the last three financial years. As can be seen from the table in the appendix, no less than 1,117 persons were trained. During 2005 and 2006, a good number of literacy courses were financed from the European Social Fund. The courses were held in various localities to outreach to clients. Interviews for clients applying for literacy courses were held on a one-to-one basis so that each client was placed in sessions pertaining to their individual literacy levels. As part of the ESF project, training material in the form of Literacy Workbooks for Trainees and a trainers’ manual were developed to facilitate training sessions in the use of the Maltese language.

The agreement entered into with Paolo Freire Institute binds the latter to:

1. provide a Basic Literacy Programme in the Maltese language for about 40 participants in one year. This programme consists of a four-month literacy course. Tuition will be offered on a one-to-one basis and in very small groups for three days a week. On-going assessment and a final evaluation at the end of the course are carried out. Successful trainees are presented with ETC/Paolo Freire Institute certificates, and a progress report. The participants may also avail themselves of the services of the Institute social worker.
2. develop further the basic literacy training in the English language, which is to be offered to participants which have already attained proficiency of the Maltese Language. The emphasis will be on basic communication skills and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

3. develop a programme for dyslexic participants, to further train the volunteers in this specialist area so as to offer a special programme for a greater number of dyslexic adults.

4. organise at least one seminar for tutors and volunteers every four months to evaluate and plan ahead.

5. abide by the agreed assessment criteria for the certification of participants. At the beginning of each course the participants’ will be given a screening test to determine their literacy level. A similar test will be given at the end of the course to assess their progress.

6. refrain from charging fees or other form of payment to clients who utilise the services under this Agreement.

7. do their utmost to ensure that at least 75% of trainees complete the course.

8. do their utmost to ensure that at least 75% of the trainees who complete the course pass the final assessment.

9. submit monthly progress reports for every individual participating in the Programme including:
   a. The date when the client started participating in the Programme
   b. The date when the client finished/withdrew from the Programme and reasons therefor
   c. A description of the training received
   d. The number of training hours undergone by the client during that particular month
   e. The total number of training hours received by client till that month
   f. A description of the general progress of the client
   g. Assessment results obtained by the client.

10. Submit an annual report indicating the factors that have proven critical to the success or failure of the Programme, and the opportunities and/or threats pertaining to the future success of the Programme;

In return for the above services, the Corporation undertakes to:

1. Pay Paolo Freire Institute a sum not exceeding Lm6,000 (€13,976) for a minimum of forty (40) clients per annum;
2. Identify a maximum of twelve clients per four month term, who are registering for work, have special learning difficulties and/or suffer from social exclusion and are willing to undergo the literacy programme;
3. Monitor the delivery of the Literacy Programme.

A Joint Working Committee manages this agreement on the same lines as the other Joint Working Committees already mentioned.
10. Services to assist lone parents

Research

In 2005, in order to assist lone parents to participate in ETC measures, ETC extended the use of the ETPS to single parents who have custodial care for their children who are below 18 years of age. In this way, these clients will receive greater assistance from ETC in finding and retaining a job. In addition, such single parents are also assisted to obtain child care provision. ETC pays the child care provider for any child care costs incurred by a participant while the latter is on the scheme against receipts provided. ETC will reimburse child care costs at the maximum rate of 56 cents (€1.3) per hour.

A study was conducted by ETC to discover the work aspirations of lone mothers and whether benefits and other factors are hindering them from entering the labour market. The study was of a qualitative nature and involved 30 lone mothers. The main findings of the study reveal that mothers on benefits do consider taking up a job but there are a number of factors which are influencing their decision to take up work. Factors include their lack of qualifications, their children’s well-being, lack of financial stability since they would very likely have to opt for low paid work due to their low qualifications, little or no work experience, and health issues. Social benefits were the only source of income most of these mothers could rely on, and were often afraid to give them up. They explained that the wages offered to them by employers were almost equal to the amount received through social assistance. Moreover the jobs they could work in were primarily elementary jobs with little or no job security. However, many of them would like to work for social and financial reasons and did perceive the need for further training.

ESF-funded project

The Corporation recently launched an ESF funded project addressed at single mothers on benefits who are unemployed or inactive, have never worked and lack basic skills, or who worked before but need to update their skills. This project aims at providing them with the skills to find employment. Ten persons will participate in this scheme.

ETC will, through ESF funding, share the costs of the empowerment and training courses and of the traineeship programme with employers. Single mothers will receive a grant during the traineeship as remuneration for their contribution.

This project is divided into two phases. It is important to note that in order to encourage a smooth transition to work, all training provided in phase 1 and phase 2 will be of a maximum of 20 hours per week. The traineeship will not exceed a maximum of 20 hours per week.

Phase 1 – Standard training courses – 12 weeks

- An 80-hour specialized literacy training for those participants who have literacy problems. This course is not compulsory as it will be provided only to those participants who experience such problems.
- An 86-hour empowerment course, dealing mainly with self-development and job-motivational skills. This course is compulsory.

- A 57-hour Basic IT skills course aimed to deliver the skills required to enable a person who has no knowledge of computers achieve a certain level of competency. This course is compulsory.

Phase 2 – Traineeship – 36 weeks

- On completion of Phase 1, ETC together with the employer will undertake an assessment of the participant’s skills and identify any training required according to the duties assigned. Specialised training will be offered to participants on the basis of the assessment and their job inclinations. Training will be delivered over a maximum of 11 weeks.

- Participants will then undergo on-the-job training for 25 weeks for a maximum of 20 hours per week in order to get hands-on experience of the skills acquired during training. It will also be an opportunity to adapt to a challenging work environment and facilitate a smooth transition to work.

- The employer may also opt to personally provide on-the-job-training for the whole duration of the traineeship, that is, 36 weeks for a maximum of 20 hours a week.

A subsidy of Lm 0.56c per hour will be given to those mothers who will leave their children in a childcare centre for the duration of the training and placement with the employer. Transport costs will also be reimbursed in order to further encourage mothers to attend training and also to proceed with the placement with the employer. Participants will receive LM2 (€4.66) per hour during Phase 2 of the project.

11. Services to assist youth in institutional care

EQUAL project

During 2006, ETC supported the Housing Authority in its execution of the EQUAL programme for Youths in Institutional Care - a project co-funded by the EU to provide basic and advanced vocational training to those youths who are currently in institutional care and who did not have the resources to attend such training without financial and social help. On its part the Corporation addressed the training needs of these clients by facilitating their attendance to courses which suited them and which were paid for by ETC. Eighteen youth participated in this venture. On its part the Housing Authority assisted the selected clients with adequate housing.

ESF project

The project aims at providing training programmes for youth in institutional care. Due to the personal and social problems that they experience in life, these youths usually lack motivation
and are financially restricted as to which training programmes they can undertake. The Employment and Training Corporation aims to provide the mentioned youth cohort with an opportunity to follow their preferred training programmes. However, courses in I.T., literacy (Maltese and English), numeracy and life skills have to be attended.

Twenty (20) youths will be chosen and they will be granted a maximum of Lm1,414 each to cover the costs of a specialised training programme. A Training allowance of Lm 15 per week will be provided to the participants for the duration of the programme. Once the personal action plan is drawn up, the young persons participating in the project can start the training. This primarily consists of four phases, namely:

- Phase I: Life Skills (4 hrs x 10 days)
- Phase II: Maltese and English Literacy (2 hrs x 50 days each subject)
- Phase III: Numeracy Skills(2 hrs x 50 days)
- Phase IV: Information Technology (2hrs x 50 days)

Once trainees have successfully finished the first four phases, they are guided by qualified staff to embark on a specialized training programme of interest to them:

12. Conclusions

The ingredients for success in working with disadvantaged groups are to:

- Have committed and motivated staff showing empathy towards clients.
- Be an activist/advocate for client rights.
- Advise clients about their various rights and encourage them to join Disability Rights Groups.
- Manage effectively stressful situations.
- Manage offensive behaviour and language.
- Understand that each person has his/her own difficulties and adopt a client-centre approach.
- Respect the client and provide support to his/her family while overcoming the over-protection of some parents in the case of persons with disabilities/mental health problems.
- Provide support, empowerment, and individual attention without any prejudice.
- Advise persons with disabilities to keep on building on their abilities.
- Make disadvantaged clients aware that they have strengths and potential for learning thus building their self-esteem.
- Continuously update oneself about labour market requirements such as employers’ expectations.
- Refer to and work with other specialist organisations especially NGOs.
- Work closely with employers in obtaining work experience or job placements.
- Have smaller caseloads of disadvantaged persons.
- Appreciate that results come slowly but acknowledge as a big success every small achievement of a disadvantaged client.
## Appendix

### Profile of clients placed and trained Oct 2003 – Sep 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>LTU/ VLTU</th>
<th>Illiterate persons</th>
<th>Persons with disability/mental health problems</th>
<th>Current/Ex-convicts</th>
<th>Current/Substance abusers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2003/2004</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Placed directly in employment</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
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<td>104</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placed on Bridging the Gap Scheme</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained through Co-Operation Agreements</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained at the Corradino Correctional Facility</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td><strong>2004/2005</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Trained through mainstream/ESF-funded courses</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trained at the Corradino Correctional Facility</td>
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<td>--</td>
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<td><strong>2005/2006</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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