Foundation for
Tomorrow's Schools

ANNUAL REPORT
2024

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About this report

This is the annual report of the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS) for the year 2024. This report provides an overview of the progress of projects and the main administrative functions of the FTS in the year under review.

To access an electronic version of this report as well as previous reports, you can visit the FTS website www.fts.mt.

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Design

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Cover

The design of the front cover of this Annual Report is inspired by the Modernist architectural limestone mesh at the former Msida Primary School, designed by the late Architect Renato Laferla in the 1950s, and which has been preserved and incorporated in the architecture of the new school.

Published in March, 2025

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Message from the Minister

As we continue to build a future where every child has access to high-quality education, the government remains fully committed to investing in schools, ensuring that students and educators have the resources they need to thrive.

Our investment focuses on empowering schools to deliver world-class education, fostering an environment of innovation and excellence that will benefit generations to come.

We are prioritising the modernisation of school infrastructure to create safe, sustainable, and engaging learning environments. At the forefront of this massive investment is the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools (FTS), which is responsible for medium to major scale projects, ranging from the construction of new schools and the extensive refurbishment of existing facilities.

We are ensuring that all schools, including sports and recreational facilities, are equipped with the latest technology and meet the highest standards of safety and accessibility. These improvements are not just about physical spaces – they are about creating a conducive environment for learning, creativity, and wellbeing.

The past year was a year of great achievements for the government with the completion and subsequent opening of Malta's first carbon-neutral public school at Msida. Spanning 10,000 square metres, the school is designed to meet contemporary educational needs while adhering to high environmental standards. The project is a model for sustainable school construction.

Another great achievement was the completion and subsequent opening of the Middle School and Primary School at Victoria, Gozo. Through this project we completed the holistic regeneration of the educational campus at Victoria, which now comprises educational facilities for our children from childcare to post-secondary education.

Looking ahead, we will continue our investments in educational infrastructure. The government is confident that in the coming years FTS will keep up the momentum and deliver more projects in line with its vision and plan.

I take this opportunity to thank the FTS, namely its Chairperson, Dr Cory Greenland and Board Members, the Chief Executive Officer, Dr Neville Young, the Management team, and all its employees. I assure them of my continued support in ensuring that together, we will continue to build an education system that empowers every learner and strengthens our nation.

The Hon. Dr Clifton Grima
Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation

Message from the Chairperson

The year 2024 was pivotal for the Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools, marked by both opportunities and challenges. Throughout the year, we successfully delivered projects that have significantly enriched Malta's educational infrastructure, as outlined in this publication.

We also made significant progress on ongoing school construction and improvement projects, which are assigned to FTS by the Government as part of the Ministry responsible for education's work programme. Through these efforts, FTS ensures that critical educational facilities remain aligned with modern requirements and that assigned school projects are delivered efficiently on schedule, and to the highest quality standards.

The FTS Board maintained an active role in fulfilling its oversight and strategic responsibilities, fostering a strong and collaborative relationship with the executive management team. Our unwavering commitment to good governance remained at the core of our operations, ensuring that policies and procedures uphold the highest standards in administration, procurement, and financial oversight through internal and external auditing. Additionally, we placed a strong emphasis on compliance with health and safety regulations; whereby we constantly risk assess and monitor health and safety operations of contractors and sub-contractors operating in our project sites.

Investing in our employees' professional growth continued to be a cornerstone of FTS's strategy. We facilitated further training and international exposure, enabling our staff to engage in valuable knowledge exchange with counterparts across the European Union. These initiatives have broadened our organisational expertise and provided essential learning opportunities that strengthen our workforce. Furthermore, we actively sought local training opportunities to empower our employees to reach new heights in their respective fields. By fostering a culture of continuous professional development, we are reinforcing the knowledge base that drives FTS forward, ensuring that our team remains at the forefront of best practices in educational infrastructure development.

Looking ahead to 2025, FTS remains steadfast in its mission to enhance Malta's educational landscape within its focused remit and in its execution of functions or projects assigned to it by the Ministry responsible for education. The upcoming year will see the completion and delivery of new schools and infrastructure upgrades, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for future projects that will further support the evolving needs of students and educators.

Looking ahead to 2025, FTS remains steadfast in its mission to enhance Malta's educational landscape within its focused remit and in its execution of functions or projects assigned to it by the Ministry responsible for education.

The inauguration of a new or upgraded school is not merely the completion of a construction project but a testament to years of meticulous planning, from the initial conceptual stages within the FTS offices to the final realisation of a fully operational educational facility that will serve future generations. It is surely of great satisfaction for all members of our team to see our projects come to life whenever educators and students occupy their new second homes.

The success of FTS is driven by collective dedication and collaboration across multiple levels. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to the Minister and the entire team at the Ministry, our committed Board Members, and our dedicated workforce under the leadership of our Chief Executive Officer.

May the future continue to prioritise investment in educational infrastructure, recognising that strengthening the very foundation of our education system is an investment in Malta's long-term growth and success.

Dr Cory Greenland
Chairperson

We believe it is our responsibility to maximise the sustainability, circularity and operational efficiency of our newly built educational facilities.

Message from the Chief Executive Officer

2024 was driven by the completion and handing over of three major projects, namely the Gozo College Victoria Primary and Middle Schools and the St. Therese College Msida Primary School, all in time for scheduled scholastic intakes.

These projects - which also included the construction of substantial ancillary areas and facilities for educational, recreational and sports related activities amongst others - required our full focus, detailed planning and coordination, coupled with our unwavering commitment to maintaining high standards of corporate governance which remains supported by robust internal policies and practices. We are adamant that good corporate governance is fundamental in ensuring proper project management and smooth operations in the interests of all stakeholders and the public.

Today, whole-life carbon is increasingly becoming a major factor in the design of all new building typologies. We believe it is our responsibility to maximise the sustainability, circularity and operational efficiency of our newly built educational facilities. Albeit construction projects having significant impacts on the environment, transforming the way we design our built environment is fundamental to combatting the climate emergency.

In this respect, 2024 will go down in our history as one of the most eventful years on record as we registered our yet most meaningful transformative achievement with the newly inaugurated Msida Primary School. It was a privilege for me to witness this remarkable development and of spearheading a new era of sustainable progress and innovation to which we had previously committed through the adoption of our ZERO CARBON branding. Whilst ZERO CARBON represents our green transition in all of our new projects by creating environmentally responsible educational spaces, the Msida Primary School represents this resoluteness in our approach to a healthier future through sustainable and environment standards and serves as a showcase for future builds to come. By adopting a three-tier approach based on the iSBEM-mt for non-residential buildings, the newly built school sets out new environment standards in Malta's public educational facilities as it is the first-ever carbon neutral public school to achieve a net zero CO_2 emission with an EPC rating of -9 and a classification rating of A+ building thereby being considered as a positive net renewable energy producer.

As we eagerly anticipate several landmark projects to be launched in the coming year, the year under review underscores how our core operations have been shaped by our principles. We adopted a user-centric approach which prioritises understanding the needs and experiences of the end-users, with our progressive approach being represented through the integration of sustainability principles in pedagogical planning through the optimisation of indoor health, air quality, high energy efficiency, low carbon emissions and extensive use of renewable energy systems.

Schools are at the heart of the Maltese community. As we reflect on the achievements of 2024, it is evident that the intricate role of our newly built schools are not only changing the lives of students but also the future and wellbeing of our communities. Simultaneous to the newly built Msida Primary School, we delivered a dedicated childcare centre, a multipurpose hall, substantial external and internal recreational and sports areas as well as an underground car park facility of approximately 200 spaces all to be utilised by the local community outside normal school hours. The same facilities were delivered in our handing over of the Victoria Primary and Middle Schools. The Gozo campus now comprises of a childcare centre, multipurpose hall, and extensive external sports spaces, with archeological findings being integrated within the built areas to be enjoyed by the users and local community. In this respect, our construction industry has a unique ability to impact broader societal issues such as empowering communities through education, bettering landscapes and physical spaces through direct improvement works and enhancing wellbeing.

A quick review of our past performance shows that whilst we remained primarily focused on the works in Msida and Victoria, we were also carrying out other significant projects. Most notable among these projects is the construction works on the new football ground complex at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School as well as the pedestrianisation of the educational campus in Naxxar which exceeded the 50% rate of construction, and a number of outdoor recreational and play areas for our children.

Entering 2025, our determination to secure a sustainable future in our new educational facilities remains steadfast. Guided by the goal of carbon neutrality, we remain determined to embrace green procurement practices, integrating low-carbon materials, and pledging carbon neutrality throughout construction phases. Together with our stakeholders, we will continue to shape the future of our educational facilities and pedagogical environments.

I conclude by thanking all those - management, employees, stakeholders and contractors - who contributed and helped us realise such great achievements this year. Lastly, I thank the FTS Chairperson, Dr Cory Greenland, and the Board Members, for their unwavering support, and who remained all the time vigilant on our operations and internal control measures through effective internal audits. Through the Board's support and direction, management has likewise remained committed to embrace international educational opportunities and networking partnerships. These opportunities, enhance our educational environment, promote cultural exchange, and support the personal and professional growth of our professional staff.

Dr Neville Young
Chief Executive Officer

Projects and Initiatives

Aerial shot of the new Msida Primary School.

Reimagining Our Educational Facilities

According to the World Economic Forum, 65% of children entering primary schools in the last decade will end up working in new job types that don't as yet exist, most of which are likely to have an increased premium on both digital and socio-emotional skills.

They will be introduced to wholly new business models whose workforces are much more distributed. In an increasingly interconnected world, future workers will be expected to collaborate with peers residing in various parts of the globe, understand cultural nuances and use digital tools to enable these new types of interconnections.

In this regards FTS is proactively shaping the way we design the physical environment of our new buildings to adapt to the pedagogical needs – making it future ready – of our students and educators as well as to the needs of society at large. To-date our projects provide flexible learning environments aimed at increasing students' motivation to learn and empower them throughout their learning journey.

We are motivated by the ability to contribute to child-friendly education and to social propserity where generations intersect. The intended outcome of our projects is to provide an important paradigm shift in education through a user-centric approach which prioritises understanding the needs and experiences of the end-users making use of the educational facilities.

FTS recognises the fact that ensuring all children have equal access to quality education is key to building a resilient society. The purpose of our projects is indeed multifaceted, and primarily focuses on providing equal access to quality education, addressing societal needs, and enhancing the educational experience. Through our projects we are creating environments that foster growth, inclusivity, innovation and community development. The goal is to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have equal access to high-quality education that prepares them for the future, whilst driving innovative pedagogies through different approaches.

Moreover our projects are strategically planned and designed with sustainability in mind, making use of green spaces, energy-efficient materials, renewable energy sources, and eco-friendly construction practices thereby creating environmentally responsible spaces that are both aesthetically pleasing and sustainable. We are actively engaged in projects aimed at revitalising the educational infrastructure whilst fostering environmentally responsible practices. Accordingly, in December 2023, FTS has pledged its unwavering commitment to a healthier future through the adoption of its ZERO CARBON branding identified by a color variant of its logo thereby representing a green transition in all of its new projects, whether new school builds and/or retrofits.

Having surpassed all expectations with the newly constructed St. Therese College Msida Primary School, 2024 will go down in the history of FTS as yet the most meaningful year in our perseverance and ambition to disrupt and reconfigure the existing energy requirements to school building systems towards nearly zero energy buildings.

As always we've been guided by our purpose and core values, i.e. to create high quality learning spaces in a sustainable manner to serve as a cornerstone for present and future generations and communities entrsuted to us and society at large.

We're proud of the progress we've made and the way we are shaping our future, and we're excited to share it with you.

Completed Projects

Construction of the New Gozo College Victoria Primary School and the Extension and Major Refurbishment of the Gozo College Victoria Middle School

The Victoria educational campus demonstrates FTS's dedication to providing accessible, high quality educational spaces aimed at equipping our children with the skills they need to excel in today's competitive market and the tools and opportunities to succeed in a rapidly evolving world. We created an environment where students can excel both academically and personally.

It would be amiss to refer to this project in the singular or otherwise to refer solely to the construction of a new primary school as it comprises of:

- the extension and complete renovation of the middle school,
- the construction of the new primary school,
- the construction of the first state childcare centre in Gozo,
- a communal multipurpose hall, and
- substantial outdoor areas for play, sports and recreational activities.

In its entirety the project is part of the holistic regeneration of the educational campus in the bustling and vibrant heart of Victoria and the development is located on the perimeters of the city, beyond the walls of the Ċittadella, described by the Planning Authority as being an area of archeological importance both due to scheduled structural remains and to nearby modernist buildings.

The new campus is indeed one of its kind in Malta since it now includes educational facilities catering for all levels of education, that is, from the very first entry level up to the post-secondary level.

The Architectural Design – A Showcase of Traditional and Contemporary Flavours

Historians noted that until the mid-twentieth century Gozo was not exposed to the impact of the Modernist Movement as the island's conservative artistic and cultural milieu did not constitute fertile ground for significant forays into modern architecture with ecclesiastical architecture being the main generator and barometer of architectural developments on the island. In this aspect, the adjacent Ninu Cremona Lyceum, formerly the Technical School and Lyceum, has been described as one of the genesis of modernist architecture in Gozo when some of the more avant-garde International Style primary schools were built in Gozo, by the late architect and town planner, Joseph Huntingford.

The main entrance of the new Victoria Primary School.

Architectural structures at the new Victoria Primary School.

Outdoor covered corridor at the new Victoria Primary School.

Covered outdoor corridors with trees at the new Victoria Primary School.

During the period 1951 – 1961, Huntingford was prolific in undertaking the design and construction of several government primary schools in Gozo, all interpreted in a modernist architectural language. These included the primary schools of Għajnsielem, Għarb, San Lawrenz, Ta' Sannat, Ix-Xagħra, Iż-Żebbuġ, Il-Qala as well as the Technical School and Lyceum in Victoria. All his architectural designs represented a radical departure from the anachronistic Victorian-era inspired designs of previous school buildings. Perit Prof. Conrad Thake observed in his studies that Huntingford had single-handedly heralded in the advent of modern architecture in Gozo: *"It was a symbiotic relationship in as much that Gozo had benefitted considerably from his talent and endeavours, the island provided Huntingford with an ideal setting to experiment and implement his ideas."*[1]

Huntingford's architectural layouts broke away from the traditional insular block form of classrooms enclosing internal courtyards, and were designed on vast open sites, the classrooms were well-lit by natural light and special attention was paid to the relationship between the external and internal circulation spaces by integrating open colonnades and covered walkways. These schools were not only innovative on the basis of their design but also incorporated the use of reinforced concrete which was still a relatively alien building material on the local architectural scene at the time.

Guided by an understanding of the inherent values attached to the architectural features and surrounding context, the heritage and architectural values of the original fabric of the school's building were preserved whilst acting as catalyst for new interventions. Huntingford's original design, which positioned classrooms along the north façade and corridors on the south, allowed for an efficient and scalable expansion. Additional classrooms could simply be added to the south side, effectively flanking the corridors with classrooms on both sides. The original arrangement effectively allows to double the number of classrooms without requiring any additional circulation space, making future growth seamless and cost-effective.

The newly constructed facilities offer striking buildings, with V-shaped steel structures, protruding cantilever, a walk-though bridge, and bamboo shutters on the south facing façade. The latter was an architectural interpretation and adaptability of the Maltese 'ħasira' into contemporary use. The load-bearing steel frames on the facades were intentionally left exposed to serve as fixing edges for the shading louvers. The locally sourced bamboo louvers are fastened to a sliding steel frame with a securing steel angle bolted to the frame. This detail allows for a quick disassembly of the bamboo louvers when replacement is required.

The architectural design was made by Perit Nicholas Mallia and is indeed a combination of traditional and contemporary flavours in full respect to the original school fabric as well as the existing neighbouring educational and immediate adjacent buildings.

Whilst the old educational building was retained in its entirety, the architectural conceptual drawings of the new schools' buildings carefully retained the original features of the external envelope and remained faithful to the original design of the existing school fabric and nearby buildings. Functional playgrounds, surrounded by plants and greenery, are found within the whole complex which softens the general appearance of the architecture.

1 Mediating between Reality and Fantasy – Joseph G. Huntingford and Julio Lafuente, Pioneers of Modern Architecture in Gozo, C. Thake.

The Remarkable Archeological Findings

The site of the Rabat Middle School was known to be archaeologically sensitive due to the discovery of a classical Roman quarry in the vicinity. As a result, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) required the presence of an archaeologist throughout the duration of the excavation works. This precaution proved essential, as significant archaeological discoveries were uncovered during every phase of the excavation.

Many of these archaeological remains are unique to Gozo. For this reason, parts of the original school building structural plans were redesigned to protect these uncovered features of cultural heritage significance and new plans, now constructed, were redesigned and include within the structure an interpretation space to preserve and elevate these extensive archeological findings.

During the early stages of the project, excavation works were subject to the continuous unearthing of remarkable archeological findings which cover a vast area of the construction site. Because of this, most of the excavation works had to be carried out with small machinery and hand tools under the constant monitoring of the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage for a careful and thorough investigation of unearthed material. Our discoveries revealed an extensive quarrying activity in this area. The dimensions of these blocks match those found during restoration works at the Cittadella a few years earlier, which were known to date back to the Classical Roman period. This discovery, along with other findings in the vicinity, strongly suggests that the lower area of Rabat functioned as a quarry - potentially for centuries - serving as a crucial source of building materials for the Romans during their time in Gozo.

On another part of the area, a change in the soil was noted, both in its consistency and also color. On top of that, a number of pottery shards were discovered and eventually, during this careful and meticulous material removal intervention, including the sieving of soil

View of the Cittadella from the school grounds.

Aerial shot of the new Victoria Primary and Middle Schools.

being removed, two irregularly shaped features were noted. The curving cuts within the globigerina bedrock, creating what looks to be an underground complex, have a distinctive difference to the perpendicular cuts belonging the quarrying activity, and albeit hard to understand the purpose behind these ancient features or its dating, might appear to have had a funerary function. This was the first discovery of this kind in Gozo and it is thought that the circular pit is a Punic tomb that predates the quarry. The overlap of the quarry on the tomb is an indication that the Romans preserved the tomb and worked around it.

In another area of the site, a set of amphorae in a 'circular' pattern where discovered, believed to be a burial arrangement. This site has only been partially excavated, and further excavations are expected to reveal more about the enigmatic formation. The surrounding area has also been redesigned to create a dedicated workspace for future excavation efforts.

Further axcavations revealed three large water reservoirs. While the exact period of these wells remains unknown, it is evident that they underwent several phases of expansion over time. The foundations of the new b uildings were redesigned to preserve these reservoirs, while the wells have been cleared of debris and are now being reused for irrigation.

Excavations in areas abutting the main road, uncovered the remains of a medieval farmhouse, believed to have remained in use until the early 1900s. It is likely that the structure was abandoned when the road network to Rabat was improved. The excavation of this site was particularly labour-intensive due to the large volume of debris that had to be removed by hand. Once the site was surveyed and documented a decision was taken to preserve the majority of the remains. As a result, the ground slab of the building was redesigned to clear the remains, with a suspended slab placed 1 meter above the intended floor level. An accessible route was also included for future inspections and educational visits.

Factsheet:

- Extensive quarrying activity, possibly dating back to the Roman period.
- Irregularly shaped features with curving cuts within the globigerina bedrock, have a distinctive difference to the perpendicular cuts belonging the quarrying activity creating what looks to be an underground ancient complex having a funerary function.
- Cisterns indicating a possible Medieval intervention in the area.
- A set of amphorae in a 'circular' pattern possibly belonging to the Punic period.
- Uncovering of a medieval farmhouse believed to have remained in use until the early 1900s.

The Childcare Centre – Gozo's First State Owned

Albeit segregated with an independent and separate access, FTS constructed the first ever government owned childcare centre in Gozo within the new primary school building. The childcare centre, fully equipped with specialised and state of the art equipment and a large variety of resources, was completed and handed over to the State agency, Foundation for Educational Services (FES), in 2024.

Newly named 'Djamant', the childcare centre has the capacity to cater for approximately 89 children in three distinct and separate activity areas with two rooms specifically reserved for babies. The centre has its own dedicated outdoor area which has been surfaced with specialised playful and colourful rubber flooring. The centre was designed to support the emotional needs and the development of young children where children can spend time with peers in a supervised and safe environment, with supportive, caring, and responsive adults. This experience supports the children's emotional health and development whilst the resources found in 'Djamant' exposes the children to new and different activities and experiences.

The new childacre centre was officially inaugurated by the Hon. Minister Clifton Grima, Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, and the Hon. Clint Camilleri, Mnister for Gozo and Planning, on the 27th January 2025.

The Middle School

The Victoria Middle School was handed over to the Gozo College in early 2024, immediately after the Christmas recess. Works on the middle school included both an extension to the existing building, as well as the complete refurbishment thereof into a modern state-of-the art educational facility.

An inclusive design which underlines quality education aimed towards accessible, quality and responsive learning environments were the core aspects of the new facility's planning and detailing of the school's extension and extensive refurbishment resulting in the construction of a highly energy-efficient new facility with spacious classrooms and improved air quality, and air-conditioning. The new school is also equipped with state-of-the-art digital equipment, reflecting a modern and digitilised learning environment.

New spaces for the teaching of extra-curricular subjects, including science laboratories, a dedicated multipurpose hall, and a gymnasium were constructed with all areas of the building accessible to all through the installation of lifts.

Various energy efficient measures were introduced aimed at reducing the school's primary energy demand,

The design concept was based on an environment that promotes our natural-born curiosity which forms the basis of the desire to play and is the primary driving force for creative and critical thinking

Statement by Perit Nicholas Mallia

As the supervising architect of this project, I feel honoured and privileged to have been entrusted with such a responsibility. It has been a journey of toil, tears and sweat and I would do it all over again just for the satisfaction of witnessing the beneficiaries – the pupils attending this school – playing enthusiastically in playgrounds surrounded by trees, a sight that I had conceived in mind just a few years before.

The success of a project of this scale is never single handed, credit is due to all those who assisted in this endeavour, in particular Perit Joe Cassar – my mentor, friend and closest ally who believed in the vision from the beginning, the FTS CEO, Dr Neville Young, who took the plunge with us to do something different and gave us his un wavering support to implement the project uncompromised, FTS employees who ensured the successful project implementation, and the contractors on site who were willing to work with methods and solutions that at times they were unfamiliar with.

The architectural and planning process behind the newly completed Victoria Primary and Middle Schools, emerged from the pressing need for a new primary school to replace the outdated school at Triq il-Vajringa, which lacked sufficient learning and recreational space for both pupils and their educators. After extensive site analysis and exploration of alternative locations, the final decision was made to expand and integrate the new school within the existing Middle School complex, optimising available space while preserving important archaeological findings.

The design approach combined modernist principles with a playful, child-centric aesthetic, incorporating vibrant colours, landscaping and nature into the built environment. Special attention was given to preserving the original school building originally designed by Perit Joseph Huntingford, which remained central to the project's identity.

Sustainability and environmental sensitivity were key considerations, with natural light and shading systems, such as bamboo louvers, integrated to optimize the wellbeing of occupants. Furthermore, the complex seamlessly incorporates archaeological discoveries, such as a Roman quarry and presumed Punic tomb, by preserving and showcasing these historical elements within the school's educational spaces.

This project stands as a testament to the fusion of modern educational facilities, thoughtful preservation of history, and sustainable design in a unique context.

including water safety fixtures, the re-installation and refurbishment of solar photovoltaic panels, the installation of heat pump water heaters, double-glazing apertures, high efficiency LED lighting luminaires and an air-conditioning system throughout the whole school with a SCOP and SEER of a minimum of 3.2.

Factsheet:

- Middle School capacity: Approx. 432 students
- 34 classrooms
- 4 science labs
- 3 ICT labs
- 2 Design & Technology labs
- 2 Home Economics labs
- Dedicated multipurpose hall
- Indoor gymnasium

The Primary School

The original school was built in Triq il-Vajringa in Victoria in 1854 and started to function in 1856. The building was extended in 1893 and a large hall was later built on the first floor to serve as a public library. Further extensions were made in 1919.

In line with statutory guidelines and Malta's 2021 – 2030 National Strategy on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the new primary school is accessible to all and offers alternative means of access to users with special needs. The new school building houses sixteen classrooms for primary education and ten classrooms for kindergarten including classrooms for specific subjects, such as science, information technology and the arts. Together, the primary school and the kindergarten have a capacity to cater for approximately 650 pupils.

The finishing designs adopted by the architect reflect the school's ethos and mission, which prioritises the wellbeing of pupils and where success is not measured in terms of examination results but on happiness. In this respect, extensive use of colourful media was incorporated both internally and externally, partly in line with the colours of the school logo, aimed at nurturing positive relations and creating a happy, warm and friendly environment whilst promoting the highest standards possible for the children to be equipped with the necessary skills, including collaboration and teamwork, creativity and imagination, critical thinking and problem solving.

Factsheet:

- Primary School capacity: Approx. 650 pupils (from Kindergarten to Year 6)
- 26 classrooms
- Designs reflect the school's ethos and mission of a happy environment through the extensive use of colourful media.

The Maltese ‘Hasira’ integrated as a feature in the building.

The architectural design is indeed a combination of traditional and contemporary flavours.

The Outdoor Areas

Play is fundamental to children’s positive cognitive evolution, wellbeing, and their ability to develop analytical and problem skills which are essential to succeeed in the future. That is why the design concept was based on an environment that promotes our natural-born curiosity which forms the basis of the desire to play and is the primary driving force for creative and critical thinking as well as learning. Through play, we investigate and discover the world, and we connect with other people as we engage with our surroundings. Play sets the basis for us to explore and refine our competencies, acquire new knowledge, and discover potential throughout our lives.

Special provision was made for extensive open playground spaces on a footprint of 3,000 square meters, in between and around the building whereby space and play is connected with spatial freedom through the animating of the urban landscape with a touch of a child’s imagination. For the same reason the school grounds enjoy abundant and playful use of colour and ample use of vegetation as a core element of the building fabric.

Another architectural feature is the covered walkways in the form of a bridge at differenet levels of the building constructed to connect the school’s entrance and administration block to the different parts of the primary school complex. Whilst the ample use of colour, vegetation and bridge give form to a differentiated learning landscape, integrating innovative design concepts with forward-thinking pedagogy, they promote cohesion and create a dynamic and inspiring learning environment that celebrates excellence.

Another characteristic feature of the outdoor play areas is the use of the ‘hasira’ as a shadowing device to the apertures on the buildings facde. The careful choice of the ‘hasira’ as a natural material is that it is low-tech and very effective whilst promoting a touch of local character to the buildings.

Aerial shot of the new Msida Primary School.

The main entrance of the new Msida Primary School.

Construction of the New St. Theresa College Msida Primary School

The construction of the new Msida Primary School within St. Theresa College, is FTS's showcase of its unwavering commitment in building healthier futures for the years to come and indeed goes beyond the statutory requirements as laid down in the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive - EU 2018/844.

The new Msida Primary School is located on the same site which was previously occupied by the old school building. The site is bound by Triq Victor Denaro on the North-West, Triq l-Iskola on the North-East, Triq San Alwiġi on the South-East, and Triq Mikiel Anton Vassalli (at a lower level) on the South-West boundary. Part of the façade of the previous school in the form of a mesh of limestone on the modernist style, which was designed by the late Architect Renato Laferla in the mid-1950's, was preserved and incorporated within one of the internal yards. Perit Laferla was exceptionally sensitive to the achievement of the pioneers of the Modern Movement in Europe and beyond and, as such, he is considered to be instrumental in introducing much needed fresh ideas in architectural development in the Maltese islands. On the architectural plans of the Msida school, Laferla himself related that *"I never designed another school like Msida – I later felt it was too 'wild' and preferred more order in my designs."*[2]

Demolition of the old school building, as well as the bulk excavation of the site, commenced in 2020 and was thereafter followed by the construction of the new educational facilities. The new school opened its doors in September 2024 for its first intake. It was officially inaugurated by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Robert Abela, and the Minister for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, the Hon. Clifton Grima, on the 22nd November 2024.

2 From "Modernist Architecture in the 1950s and '60s: The Maltese Public and The Architects", by P. Bianchi, 2009, "Modernist Malta: The Architectural Legacy", 2009, Kamra tal-Periti.

Pedagogical Requirements

The school is constructed over a land surface area of approximately 14,000 m^2 and includes 40 state-of-the-art fully air-conditioned classrooms, which cater to approximately 500 student capacity. Additionally, the school has a new childcare center, a public library, a multipurpose hall that can accommodate about 300 people and an underground car park of circa. 200 vehicles. As part of the project a new separate building was also built to house the Msida Sea Scouts.

The school's facilities, including the multipurpose hall and the underground car park, are intended for use by the local community after school hours. This dual-purpose design ensures that the infrastructure supports both educational needs during the day and community activities afterward.

In addition, the school has substantial outdoor areas to serve as alternative educational spaces, and also as play and recreational areas. It is absolutely necessary that outdoor physical activity not only benefits a child's health but improves classroom performance, increases cognitive development and hones social skills. An air-conditioned indoor gym is also incorporated within the school building to serves the same purposes albeit the outdoor area cannot be used in view of inclement weather.

Each classroom is spacious and equipped with modern educational facilities, ensuring an optimal learning environment. Dynamic and versatile functional learning spaces have been included in the pedagogical planning of the school building. The aesthetic layout design of the classrooms emphasizes flexibility and adaptability, allowing for various teaching methods, from traditional setups to more interactive and collaborative learning spaces. The classroom arrangement within the school building is strategically planned to facilitate easy access

One of the old facades of the old school, designed by Architect Renato Laferla, has been integrated in the new designs.

The new school is seen as delivering significant social benefits for the local community, reinforcing its role as a model for future constructions.

spaces, and sanitary facilities, ensuring a smooth flow of student movement throughout the day.

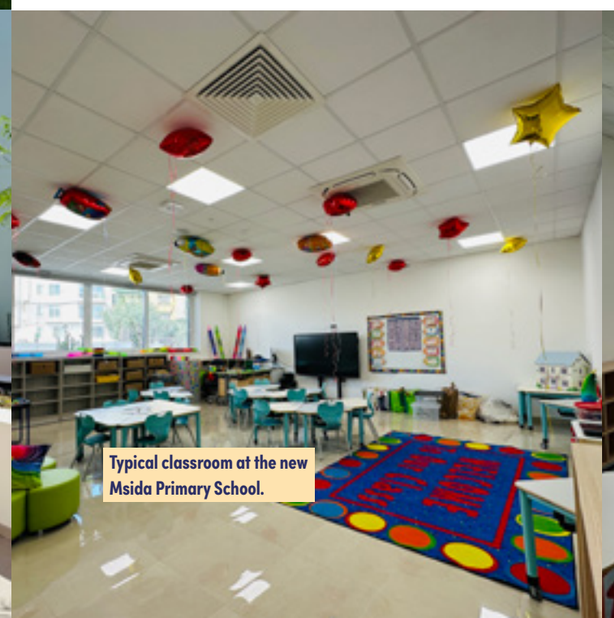
The new school was designed to ensure accessibility for all, including persons with disabilities. The design process involved consultations with various stakeholders, including the Autism Parents Association and the Msida Local Council, to address and resolve complex accessibility and inclusion matters. The school's outdoor landscape and play areas were designed to be safe, welcoming, and accessible to all, reinforcing the commitment to equal access.

The design and material choices were made after consultations with potential users and stakeholders. This included engagement with the Autism Parents Association and other local authorities, aiming to create a school environment that meets the needs of the entire community and promotes strong community collaboration. The new school is seen as delivering significant social benefits for the local community, reinforcing its role as a model for future constructions.

The investment for the construction of the new Msida Primary School is part of Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan and was co-financed under the NextGenerationEU Programmes. This indicates a focus on making such high-standard facilities affordable and sustainable in the long term.

Aerial shot of the new Msida Primary School.

The main entrance of the new Msida Primary School.



Typical classroom at the new Msida Primary School.

The new Msida Childcare Centre.

Aerial shot of the new Msida Primary School which achieved a net zero CO_2 emission with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of -9 and a classification rating of A+ and is thus considered as a positive net renewable energy producer.

The new Msida childcare centre.

Outdoor playground at the new Msida childcare centre.

Our Green Deal

The newly constructed Msida Primary School is our best green deal so far. It sets new environment standards in Malta's public educational faciltiies and serves as a pilot project for future investments aimed to showcase the optimisation of indoor health, air quality, high energy efficiency, low carbon emissions and extensive use of renewable energy systems.

FTS had, in collaboration with the University of Malta, conducted preliminary technical studies on the architectural design concepts aimed at arriving to appropriate and cost-optimal measures to bring the designs to nearly zero-energy status. The design thereof was made to best-practice standards and in such a way so as to ensure as low as possible energy requirements. The study was based on the officially recognized Simplified Building Energy Modelling for Malta software (iSBEM-mt) for non-residential buildings whereby a three-tier approach was adopted in terms of energy efficiency measures, namely the building envelope, the energy systems and renewables.

The design and construction of the school takes into account climate adaptation measures. Whilst specific energy efficiency measures include the use of low emissivity double-glazed windows and external envelope insulation; the school extensively utilizes renewable energy systems, including a rooftop solar photovoltaic installation with a capacity of 300 kWp. These measures not only ensure energy efficiency but also contribute to the school's net positive renewable energy production. Resource efficiency is also achieved through the adoption of other eco-friendly measures, including the recycling of rainwater for landscape irrigation and sanitary facilities. Water-saving fixtures further enhance resource efficiency by reducing water wastage.

Indeed the school building achieved a net zero CO_2 emission with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of -9 and a classification rating of A+ and is thus considered as a positive net renewable energy producer. This exceptional rating makes it the first of its kind in the Maltese Islands in terms of educational facilities and buildings.

Factsheet:

- Malta's first carbon-neutral public school.
- Solar photovoltaic installation with a capacity of 300 kWp.
- Recycling of rainwater for landscape irrigation and sanitary facilities.
- School building achieved a net zero CO_2 emission with an EPC rating of -9.
- Classification rating of A+.

The Childcare Centre

A new childcare center was also constructed within the precincts of the new Msida Primary School. The centre is designed to accommodate up to 120 children and is divided into several segments to cater for different age groups, ensuring that each child receives age-appropriate care and education.

The facility includes dedicated play areas, rest zones, and learning spaces that promote early childhood development. Additionally, a devoted outdoor play area that encourages physical activity, health goals and social interaction is included within the centre's footprint. The childcare centre is an integral part of the government's commitment to providing comprehensive education services from early childhood onward, supporting the developmental needs of young children while fostering a nurturing environment.

The Communal Library

The library at the new Msida Primary School provides a backdrop for key community resources within the school. Accordingly it is positioned to engage successfully with the wider community through a dedicated accessibility route.

The space is designed as a welcoming and relaxing learning zone, yet providing an alternative stimulating and flexible environment where the wellbeing of pupils can be fostered and encouraged. The library is also designed to provide both quiet reading areas and spaces for group work. It gives users access to computers and other digital learning tools. Its separate entrance ensures that it can also function as a community library outside school hours. The library's capacity and resources underscore the school's dedication to fostering a love for reading and lifelong learning. This space can thus provide outreach to the community whilst also shaping and enriching the culture of the school.

The multipurpose school hall.

The multipurpose school hall.

Backstage facilities at the new multipurpose school hall.

The hall is equipped with modern audiovisual equipment, flexible seating arrangements, and stage facilities, making it suitable for a variety of activities.

The Multipupose Community Hall

The multipurpose community hall within the new school is designed to accommodate up to 300 people, making it a versatile space for school functions and community events thereby maximizing again the potential for community engagement.

The hall is equipped with modern audiovisual equipment, flexible seating arrangements, and stage facilities, making it suitable for a variety of activities, including school assemblies, cultural performances, and community meetings, thereby fostering a real sense of community spirit. The contemporary design of the hall emphasizes accessibility and inclusiveness, with features and amenities such as wheelchair ramps and hearing loops, ensuring that all members of the community can participate and engage in events. Surface elements include acoustic tiles aimed at reducing noise and reverberation.

The hall's availability to the public after school hours reflects the school's commitment to serving as a multifunctional and dynamic social venue for the local community, fostering a strong connection between the school and its surrounding neighborhood. Concomitantly, the use of dynamic urban spaces is actually crucial to our future progress as they offer solutions that are sustainable in the truest sense, benefiting both the environment and the community, especially in an age where urban sprawl and the loss of green spaces pose major challenges.

Statement by Prof. Inġ. Charles Yousif

The new St. Theresa College Primary School at Msida has all the necessary measures and capacity to remain resilient to future climate change. The Energy Efficiency First Principle was adopted, whereby energy efficiency measures addressed the building envelope (wall and roof insulation, double-glazing and shading), followed by high efficiency building energy systems (filtered fresh air ventilation, efficient air-conditioners, LED lighting, heat pump water heaters), and topped up with renewable energy (solar photovoltaics) and system controls (timers, sensors, control). The school has achieved an Energy Performance Rating of A+ with excess renewable energy generation.

New synthetic turf at Mosta Primary School.

New synthetic turf at Tal-Pieta` Primary School.

New synthetic turf and rubber flooring at Rabat (Malta) Middle School.

New synthetic turf at Hal Kirkop Primary School.

New synthetic turf at Hamrun (Dun Frans Camilleri) Primary School.

New synthetic turf at San Gwann 'Is-Sardinella' Childcare Centre.

Refurbishment and Upgrading of Outdoor Facilities

During the year under review, we refurbished and upgraded several outdoor sports and recreational facilities at schools and childcare centres with a capital investment in excess of one million Euro. Through these interventions, we provided for accessible and inclusive spaces as well as convenient and enjoyable play and recreational environments.

Works included the plastering and painting of these outdoor spaces and the laying of new synthetic turf. Works on the childcare centres were done on behalf of the Foundation for Educational Services (FES).

Refurbishment and upgrading works were carried out as follows:

- Maria Regina College Mosta Primary School
- St. Benedict College Ħal Kirkop Primary School
- St. George Preca College Paola Primary School
- St. George Preca College Ħamrun (Dun Frans Camilleri) Primary School
- St. Claire's College Pembroke Primary School
- St. Therese College Ħal Lija Primary School
- St. Nicholas College Rabat (Malta) Middle School
- 'It-Tgħanniqa' Childcare Centre Floriana
- 'Id-Denfil' Childcare Centre Siġġiewi
- 'Pizzi Pizzi Kanna' Childcare Centre Naxxar
- 'Is-Sardinella' Childcare Centre San Ġwann
- 'Il-Kuluri' Childcare Centre Birgu
- 'Il-Pespus' Childcare Centre Marsa
- 'Il-Qawsalla' Childcare Centre Gżira

The Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary sports ground under construction in May 2024.

The Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary sports ground under construction in May 2024.

The Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary sports ground under construction in May 2024.

Minister Clifton Grima's visit on site in May 2024. Here the Minister is seen (L to R) with the FTS CEO Dr Neville Young and the FTS Chairperson Dr Cory Greenland.

Projects in Progress

Construction of a New Football Stadium at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School Naxxar & Pedestrianisation of the Naxxar Educational Campus

At Naxxar we are currently undergoing works in relation to two major projects, namely: (i) the construction of a new football stadium at Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, and (ii) the pedestrianisation of the Naxxar educational campus.

Construction of a New Football Stadium

Works on the new football stadium are moving along well. Spread over 9,800 sq meters, the stadium will include a pitch for 11-a-side games and a stand for spectators. It also includes other facilities, including sanitary facilities, showers and changing rooms.

The stadium will complement the existing sports facilities found in the educational campus, including the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School as well as the Maria Regina Middle School, whilst also serving the local community.

Until end of 2024 all excavation works were completed and construction works were in progress. Unforeseen rock structural issues were found adjacent to the existing schools and neighbouring buildings which required highly technical interventions including rock bolting and piling. The construction phase is expected to be completed by the end of 2025 and will be followed by mechanical, electrical and finishes works.

Pedestrianisation of the Naxxar Educational Campus

Along with the construction of the football stadium, construction works are also being carried out concurrently on an underground car park over which the football stadium is being built and a vehicular tunnel which will connect the car park with the main entrance of the schools' complex. The project, albeit separate, will complement that of the construction of the football stadium.

The intended outcome of this part of the project is to offer the Naxxar educational campus a safe and vehicle free environment.

Architect's render of the new Naxxar Primary School, where the old school facade will be kept in place.

We delivered a resilient performance during 2024 and successfully handed over three schools in time for the scheduled students' intake, we also prepared the groundwork for new schools infrastructure for the years to come.

Upcoming Projects

We are excited by the growing opportunities ahead. Whilst we delivered a resilient performance during 2024 and successfully handed over three schools in time for the scheduled students' intake, in parallel we also prepared the groundwork for new schools infrastructure for the years to come. The projects are listed below.

Construction of a New Primary School at Naxxar

This project will involve the complete demolition and rebuilding of the Maria Regina College Naxxar Primary School, except for three of the existing facades. These will be kept because of their architectural characteristics. The existing school building is a Grade 2 listed building.

The new school will have 46 classrooms, including 20 classrooms for kindergarten spread over five floors, with two of them being under street level. The outer design of the new third floor will retain the existing façade features albeit through the use of contemporary materials. The new school will have classrooms for specific subjects such as art, music, drama, and an industrial kitchen. The school will also have sports facilities, as well as recreational spaces, a multi-sensory room, and a multipurpose hall. The project includes a communal library which will be made available to the local community after school hours.

Architect's render of the new Naxxar Primary School, where the old school facade will be kept in place.

Construction of a New Primary School at Mellieħa

This project will involve the rebuilding of Mellieħa Primary School which forms part of the Maria Regina College over the existing school footprint as well as extending unto neighbouring adjacent land.

The new school will be spread over four floors above street level, including a receded floor at third floor level and include the construction of an underground car park for over 100 vehicles, a new childcare center, a kindergarten, the primary school, conference rooms, a library, a hall, and a gym, as well as ancillary facilities. The project includes the construction of a new dedicated substation.

Since the area is archaeologically sensitive due to the presence of underground shelters and rock-cut features related to former military activities, all excavation works will be monitored by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. Some existing archaeological features are integrated within the architectural drawings to be retained within the new educational facilities.

Architect's render of the new Mellieha Primary School.

Architect's render of the new Sensory-Hydrotherapy Pool at San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre at Pembroke.

Construction of a Sensory-Hydrotherapy Pool at San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre at Pembroke

St. Claire's College San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre provides education on a full-time basis to pupils aged three to eleven, with individual educational needs. The centre also provides services to approximately sixty pupils from State, Church, and independent schools. All pupils have complex needs and the learning process is based on a sensory experience.

We will construct a dedicated pool complex spread over an area of 557 square meters with accesses from the existing school and also from a separate independent entrance for after school hours use. The building will be developed adjacent to the current educational facility which is housed in a former military complex, and which is listed as a Grade 2 building. Particular importance was given to the architectural design of the pool complex which reflects the existing beautiful architectural characteristics of the existing building comprising of limestone arches and balustrades.

The complex will include a specialised sensory-hydro-therapy pool and a jacuzzi, as well as six fully equipped sanitary facilities and showers, a first aid room, storage spaces, a pump room and two multipurpose rooms which can accommodate up to thirty persons each.

Architect's render of the motorised retractable canopy at Ħad-Dingli Secondary School.

Installation of a High Quality, Motorised Architectural Retractable Canopy at Ħad-Dingli Secondary School

This project involves the installation of a permanent structure in the playground of the secondary school at Ħad-Dingli and which will include a retractable canopy so that the school can organise outdoor activities when the weather is not favorable. The canopy will cover a space of approximately 875 square meters.

During the year under review, the planning application was approved by the Planning Authority, and works have been contracted. Works will start during the summer recess of 2025.

Architect's render of the new Sensory-Hydrotherapy Pool at San Miguel Primary Education Resource Centre at Pembroke.

Architect's render of how the Zebbug (Gozo) Primary School will look after the major refurbishment.

Extensive Refurbishment of the Żebbuġ Primary School in Gozo

This project involves the extensive refurbishment of the existing Żebbuġ Primary School within the Gozo College. The school is housed in a one-storey building and was designed by Architect Joseph Huntingford. It opened its doors in 1958. The building is spread over approximately 2,300 square meters.

Architect's render of how the Ta' Kercem Primary School will look after the major refurbishment.

Extensive Refurbishment of the Ta' Kerċem Primary School in Gozo

The Ta' Kerċem Primary School within the Gozo College will be extensively refurbished and renovated. The school is housed in a two-storey building and opened its doors in 1921. The building is spread over approximately 1,200 square meters.

Our People

Our People

At FTS, our people are our greatest asset. In 2024, we continued to invest in our workforce, fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity.

Our strategic HR initiatives focused on talent acquisition, employee engagement, leadership development, and workplace wellbeing to ensure a motivated and high-performing team.

This year, we continued to strengthen our learning and development initiatives, as well as our diversity and inclusion efforts. We remain committed to nurturing a dynamic and resilient workforce that drives our entity's success.

Demographics

As at the end of the year under review, the number of employees stood at 42. Two-thirds of the employees were men, while a third were women. Fifteen employees had technical or supervisory roles, while eleven were warranted professionals (architects, engineers, and an accountant). The majority of the warranted professionals were women.

Most employees had at least one qualification at MQF Level 5 or higher. The rate is 79%.

The average age of employees at the end of the year was 44.

Work-Life Balance Measures and Family-Friendly Initiatives

During the year under review, FTS continued to put into practice its commitment towards the wellbeing of its employees through the implementation of work-life balance measures and family-friendly initiatives. To this effect, FTS has in place an internal policy on work-life balance.

FTS offers its employees the opportunity to work with a flexi-time schedule with an amount of core hours during the day which have been set as fixed hours of work subject to operational exigencies.

As at the end of 2024, nine employees were working on a remote work schedule due to their family responsibilities. This represents 21% of the total workforce. Five of these employees (55.6%) were men, while four (44.4%) were women.

FTS employees also have the opportunity to work on a reduced hours of work schedule owing to family responsibilities. As at the end of the year, FTS had only one employee benefiting from this measure.

During the year under review, other employees made use of different special paid and unpaid leave owning to personal circumstances in line with the provisions of the law and the FTS Collective Agreement. Four employees made use of maternity and/or paternity leave as applicable.

Training and Development

Over the past year, we made significant investments in the training and development of our employees, reinforcing our commitment to continuous learning and professional growth. Our commitment to workforce development resulted in improved employee engagement. Moving forward, we will continue to invest in innovative training solutions to support our employees' career growth and align with our entity's long-term goals.

During the year under review, FTS employees received a total of 427 training hours. The number of training hours and financial investment in employees in 2024, was almost double that of the previous year.

The following is a list of training programmes attended by our employees during 2024:

Training Programme:	Training Provider:	Number of Employees Trained:	Number of Training Hours Per Programme:	Total Number of Training Hours:
Updates to Employment Legislation	Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD)	1	6	6
Compliance Monitoring in Public Sector Entities Directive 7.3	Institute for the Public Services (IPS)	1	16	16
Empowering OHS Practitioners: Setting Higher Standards for Safety Excellence	Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA)	1	5	5
DIALux evo for Beginners	DIAL GmbH	1	30	30
DIALux evo for Advanced Learners	DIAL GmbH	1	24	24
M24017 - Beyond the Bottom Line: Redefining Success	The Malta Institute of Accountants	2	6.5	13
Accounting with SAGE Evolution 200	Progressive Information Systems Ltd.	3	6	18
Procurement by Contracting Authorities	Department of Contracts	1	4	4
Continuous Development Award in Public Procurement Regulations	Institute for the Public Services (IPS)	1	40	40
Industrial Relations in the framework of the Maltese Labour Law	Institute for the Public Services (IPS)	1	2	2
The De-Carbonisation Process Conference	Malta Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies Association	3	5	15
Electrical Domestic Installation (Licence A)	Ing. Dunstan Micallef	1	160	160
PRINCE2® Foundation and Practitioner 7th Edition	PwC	1	31	31
Award in Employment Law - MQF Level 5	Malta Employers Association (MEA)	2	24	48
FHRD Annual Conference 2024	Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD)	1	8	8
HR Competencies Online S1: Compensation & Reward	Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD)	1	2	2
HR Competencies Online S2: Emotional Intelligence	Foundation for Human Resources Development (FHRD)	1	2	2
The Social Security Pensions – Practical Information & Related Provisions	University of Malta (Department of Accountancy)	1	3	3
Totals:				**427**

During the year under review, we continued to invest in the training of our people through the sharing of insight and knowledge with various counterparts from across the European Union. FTS employees were given the opportunity to participate in study visits in other European states with the aim of learning and enriching our expertise in various areas.

HR Metrics in 2024:

Employees

42

Employees at 31/12/2024

Graduates

79%

of employees are graduates following tertiary level of education – with 39% being women

Employee Turnover Rate

9.5%

Average Age

44

Employees who made use of Maternity or Paternity Leave

4

Employees on a Remote Working Arrangement

21%

of employees are working on a remove working arrangement due to family responsibilities – with 55.6% being men

Management Team

33%

are women on the Management Team

Employees Working with Flexitime

100%

Implementation of a Policy on Preventing and Managing Conflict of Interest

In late 2023, the Principal Permanent Secretary issued a directive aimed at preventing and managing conflicts of interests by Public Administration employees and board members. OPM Directive 16, aims to promote high ethical standards in the Public Administration, ensure integrity and transparency, and provide public employees and board members with guidelines, policies, and procedures to ensure the effective identification, reporting and management of conflict of interest situations.

Each Public Sector entity, like FTS, was expected to transpose the directive into a policy applicable to all employees and board members. During the year under review, FTS launched the 'Policy on Preventing and Managing Conflict of Interest' which replaced a previous internal policy on corporate gifts.

The new FTS policy, in line with OPM Directive 16, guides employees to identify and manage conflict of interest situations, such as the acceptance and giving of gifts, hospitality, and other benefits; employment before and after FTS; private work; and political participation. It also provides guidelines on how one can report a conflict of intertest situation and the receipt of gifts, hospitality and other benefits.

New Time and Attendance Recording System

Following the introduction of a new software for the management of vacation leave, sick leave, and other types of leave in the previous years, during 2024 we introduced a new time and attendance recording system for employees who are assigned work duties from sites.

While employees based at the office are required to record their attendance through an electronic palm-reader, employees who spend most of their working days on sites are now required to record their attendance through a mobile application using a geofencing system.

This measure was also introduced as a health and safety measure so that FTS can easily identify the presence of its employees on a particular site in the case of an accident.

Development of a New Collective Agreement

The FTS Collective Agreement expired at the end of 2024. During the year under review, we were laying the groundwork for the development of a new agreement and initiated discussions with the Industrial Relations Unit (IRU) within the People and Standards Division (P&SD), and with the General Workers' Union (GWU). The latter is the officially recognised union representing employees, selected by the employees themselves.

FTS aims to conclude the new Collective Agreement in 2025 and that such agreement will yield in a more productive and harmonious work environment.

FTS has a very cordial relationship with the union and its representatives, built on mutual respect, open communication, and a shared commitment to the success of both the entity and its employees.

Finance and Procurement

Finance and Procurement

Procurement processes are regularly audited by FTS's outsourced internal auditors as well as external auditors.

Internal Controls Overview

The integrity of our financial reporting, operational efficiency and regulatory compliance remains a top priority at FTS.

As part of our commitment to maintaining transparency, accountability and good governance, we continually evaluate and strengthen our internal control systems. We continue to invest in employee training and the segregation of duties to mitigate the risks of fraud, error, and inefficiency.

The FTS Board monitors the entity's control environment mainly through internal audits carried out quarterly during the year as well as the annual external audit. All members on the FTS Board are non-executive.

Audit Committee

The FTS Audit Committee plays a crucial role in overseeing the financial reporting process, internal controls and the audit functions of the entity. It reviews audit plans and observations of the external and internal auditors, and ensures that management takes the necessary action to improve control systems or reporting processes. The Audit Committee reports to the FTS Board and comprises of non-executive members.

Financing

Cashflow requirements in accordance with our five-year plan were presented and discussed with all stakeholders and approval was given unto FTS to enter into negotiations with financial institutions for new loan financing to the tune of €115 million. During 2024, FTS benefited from €5 million in EU funds under the Cohesion Programme 2014-2020 as well as the reimbursement of funds in respect of projects financed under the NextGenerationEU Programmes by means of Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), totalling €24.9 million. By the end of 2024, €16 million in RRP funds had been disbursed.

Procurement

During 2024, the Procurement Unit stayed committed to executing FTS's procurement plan in alignment with its five-year strategy, enhancing its operational efficiency in processing procurement requests to ensure adherence to projects' deadlines. FTS's Procurement Unit works within a robust structure of good governance, adhering to public procurement regulations that are also reflected in FTS's Manual of Procedures.

Procurement processes are regularly audited by FTS's outsourced internal auditors as well as external auditors.

In terms of monetary value, the total amount of published tenders during the year under review was in excess of €34 million excluding VAT.

The following table illustrates our procurement behaviour during 2024:

Published Open Calls	Number of Calls	Estimated Value (excluding VAT)
FTS tenders published through the Department of Contracts	6	€33,392,400
FTS tenders published through the Sectoral Procurement Directorate	21	€1,311,000
Departmental calls published directly by FTS	4	€38,400

During the reporting period, FTS procurement employees participated in a five-day training programme. This programme, facilitated by the Department of Contracts in collaboration with European Dynamics, focused on updates to various modules within the Electronic Public Procurement System (ePPS). The training will further empower our procurement team to be more efficient in their day-to-day work.

FTS maintains ongoing communication with the Department of Contracts to provide updates on forthcoming projects and to further incentivise collaborative efforts. The implementation of innovative procurement methodologies, designed to adapt to the evolving demands of the sector, will ensure enhanced quality for clients and more effective project deliverables.

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Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools

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