



The use of IT systems to identify skills and professional development needs within the Public Service

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Information Technology Audit

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List of Abbreviations

AMS	Absence Management System
CDRT	Centre for Development, Research and Training
CSS	Central Salaries Section
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
EEA	European Economic Area
EIRA	Employment and Industrial Relations Act
e-mail	Electronic Mail
eRFS	Electronic Request for Service
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
HR	Human Resources
HRIMS	Human Resources Information Management System
IMU	Information Management Unit
IPS	Institute for the Public Services
IT	Information Technology
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MEIB	Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business
MEU	Management Efficiency Unit
MFIN	Ministry for Finance
MIS	Management Information System
MITA	Malta Information Technology Agency
MJCL	Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
NAO	National Audit Office
NSO	National Statistics Office
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PAA	Public Administration Act
PAHRO	Public Administration Human Resources Office
PMP	Performance Management Programme
PPS	Principal Permanent Secretary
PREU	Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union
PSD	People and Standards Division
PSMC	Public Service Management Code

RMS	Records Management System
SDO	Staff Development Organisation
SIS	Schools Information System
STS	Student Teachers System
TMS	Training Management System

Executive Summary

Introduction

The scope of this Information Technology (IT) audit is to analyse the extent and effectiveness of the use of IT systems in the identification of skills, professional development and training needs across a selected number of Ministries, namely the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Ministry for Finance (MFIN), the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) and the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (MJCL). Whilst the focus and format of this audit report is somewhat different in nature from the previous IT audit reports carried out by the National Audit Office (NAO) over the past six years, this audit exercise still sought to determine whether the IT systems analysed have the necessary controls to maintain the confidentiality and the integrity of the available data.

This audit report looks into Human Resources (HR) Management in the Public Service, focusing mainly on how the four selected Ministries identify and develop the necessary skills/competencies required by their own workforce, together with any related professional development needs. In this context, the NAO focused its study on three areas, namely the role of the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within the People and Standards Division (PSD); how the Ministries selected for the purpose of this IT audit comply with the directives and policies issued by OPM; and how the selected Ministries maintain their HR data.

To achieve the above objectives, an extensive review of literature on skills gaps and professional development within the context of the Public Service was undertaken. In particular, the *'Capability in the civil service'* report (NAO, United Kingdom, 2017) and the *'Human Resources and Skills Development Strategic Policy Framework – A way forward for 2014-2020'* report (OPM, Malta, 2015), were of particular interest to the NAO. Apart from these, other local policy documents and annual reports compiled by OPM, MFIN and the former Public Administration Human Resources Office (PAHRO) within OPM were also reviewed.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The main IT systems used by the HR functions of every Ministry selected for the purpose of this IT audit (Chapter 2 refers) were reviewed in this report, focusing mainly on whether these IT systems could help in the identification of skills and professional development to address the competencies required within the selected Ministries. The main findings and corresponding recommendations are listed below:

- a. In terms of the Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS), the NAO is concerned that Ministries and line departments are still relying on this legacy system. This

poses problems due to compatibility issues with the latest Microsoft Windows Operating Systems, obsolescence or lack of security/technical support.

Although the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate's intention is to phase out the HRIMS application once all the relevant data is centralised into one HR system, the NAO recommends that all the functionalities and data residing on the existing HRIMS application are included in the new system.

- b. The NAO is concerned with the inconsistencies observed across the different Ministries and line departments in terms of the responsibility for updating personal details on HRIMS. This may give rise to errors due to the additional human input.

The NAO recommends that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate ensures that all the Ministries follow a common process flow and in the case of personal details, these should always be updated directly on HRIMS by the respective Ministries and line departments.

- c. The NAO observed that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate has a backlog of six months of data that need to be inputted and updated on to the HRIMS application. This is partly attributed to the fact that certain entities under the Ministry's portfolio are not submitting the *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* and/or the corresponding documentation on time.

The NAO recommends that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate should draw up a policy or procedure that binds the Ministries and the respective line departments/entities to submit all the necessary documentation on time. Furthermore, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate should properly address the backlog of HR data awaiting inputting into the system and seek a solution, IT based or otherwise, to reduce the said backlog to a more reasonable volume (timeframe) thus ensuring that, as far as possible, the HRIMS application is always updated with the latest amendments.

- d. The NAO questions the fact that whilst the data collection phase of the skills profiling exercise was carried out in 2010 and the Government has procured five additional Dakar modules in 2015, the Skills and Qualifications module, essential for the identification of employees with specific skills and qualifications, has not yet been implemented across the Public Service.

Although the NAO is aware that some, possibly random, updates were made to the skills profiling data by some of the selected Ministries, the Office is highly concerned with the validation of the data as a whole. In particular, from observations carried out by the NAO, it appears that the updating of this data is done out of the Ministry personnel's own initiative, and is only applicable to either newly engaged employees, or to existing officers as long as the HR personnel are informed.

The NAO suggests that before the Skills and Qualifications module is implemented across the Public Service, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate ensures that all the information relating to existing Public Service employees is updated and data migrated to the new module, especially the data relating to those employees who were newly recruited within the Public Service since the exercise was carried out.

- e. A new Performance Appraisal module, which forms part of the Dakar system, was launched in mid-2016 and implemented, over a number of phases (initially covering a small group of Ministries and eventually followed by all the rest), until all the eligible Government employees were inputted in the system. However, since not all Government employees have initiated and/or completed the new appraisal process, further effort is required to increase the overall uptake of this new electronic format.

Whilst this Office acknowledges the fact that, there is a learning curve in adapting to this new electronic format, the NAO has reservations on the reason why user training on this new module, prior to its introduction, was delivered to Supervisors and Next-level Supervisors only. In fact, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate stated that training on the Performance Appraisal module was not provided to the remaining Public Service officers. In this context, the NAO recommends that in the future, it should be ensured that the introduction of any new IT system or module be supplemented with the appropriate level of training, including the provision of hands-on training, for a representative proportion of the target users or contact persons.

- f. In terms of career progressions and promotions, the NAO observed that the selected Ministries, have their own separate processes and methodologies for dealing with these.

In this regard, the NAO is of the opinion that such processes and methodologies should be streamlined and consistent throughout each Ministry or line department.

- g. The NAO observed the widespread use of Microsoft Excel worksheets to supplement the existing HR systems to facilitate the HR officers' day-to-day operations, especially if a particular HR system does not offer the required functionality. These worksheets involve substantial manual inputting and possible duplication of processes, which are more prone to human errors. For instance, it was observed that every Ministry selected for the purpose of this IT audit records all absences (vacation, study, sick, cultural leave etc.) in Microsoft Excel worksheets, since the users usually feel that these worksheets are more practical and give them better control of such updates. At the same time, these users continued to record these absences manually on the Public Service officer's personal card (such as vacation leave), or 'yellow card' (for sick leave) amongst other manual documents, and certain absences (vacation or sick) are also inputted in the Dakar's Absence Management module.

The NAO recommends that the use of these 'cards' is phased out completely, whilst all kinds of absences are eventually recorded centrally in the Dakar's Absence Management module.

The audit report also reviewed the role of the Institute for the Public Services (IPS) as the central training organisation for the Public Service. The NAO observed that whilst the IPS offers sponsorships on behalf of the Government of Malta to Public Service officers, the Scholarships Unit within MEDE also administers various Scholarship Schemes that are offered to the general public (Chapter 3 refers). The main findings and corresponding recommendations are listed below:

- a. Public Service officers wishing to attend training courses organised by the IPS, must download an application form from the IPS website and then submit the relative application form either through the Government e-mail or by post. In addition, the processing of these applications as well as the preparation, co-ordination and scheduling of a typical training course is carried out manually by the respective section within IPS.

In this regard, the NAO is concerned with the high dependency of manual input, which could lead to inefficiencies and inaccuracies. Thus, the NAO recommends the introduction of a web-based application form that would be integrated to the new Training Management module. In addition, the IPS should ensure that this new Training Management module would eventually automate both the online submission and processing of such application forms.

- b. The NAO is concerned that the Ministries selected for the purpose of this IT audit do not keep track of those Public Service officers within their Ministry who have attended training courses organised by the IPS. In this regard, the selected Ministries have to resort to the IPS to generate such a report when the need arises.

On the other hand, certain Ministries keep a separate physical file to record those individuals who attended specialised training courses, both locally as well as abroad.

The NAO questions how employee-training needs assessments are being carried out, since basic information of professional development/training courses attended by Public Service officers is not being kept by the selected Ministries.

The NAO believes that line managers should maintain and have access to information regarding professional development and training courses attended by Public Service officers under their responsibility. Such records should be kept by the Ministry's HR section and a copy of the certification obtained is stored in the Public Service officer's personal file.

- c. Whilst reviewing the Training Management System (TMS) application and filtering a specific training attendance report, the NAO observed a number of discrepancies. For instance, it was noted that the Commerce department, which now falls under the remit of the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business (MEIB), is still linked to MFIN. Similarly,

NAO officials who attended training courses in 2015 and 2016 at the former Centre for Development, Research and Training (CDRT), were inputted in the system under MFIN.

Considering that the current TMS will be replaced and all the data will be integrated in Dakar, the NAO recommends that the IPS, together with the Ministry's Information Management Unit (IMU), kicks off the process and ensures that all the data residing in TMS is properly maintained. Thus, any amendments in the data would be addressed immediately before the current data is migrated in the new module.

- d. The TMS applications went through a number of enhancements since the system was implemented in 2005. However, the system has a number of limitations and thus the IPS has no other alternative but to use Microsoft Excel worksheets in the management of the training courses on offer at the Institute.

The NAO is of the opinion that the IPS together with the Ministry's IMU should look into the new Training Management module and ensure that the limitations encountered with the existing TMS applications will effectively be addressed by the new system.

- e. Additionally, due to certain limitations on the existing TMS application, two separate Microsoft Access databases were created to address the needs of the IPS on two specific training courses, namely the Public Management toolkit and the Induction training courses. The NAO observed that both databases are accessible by a generic admin or user login and are shared amongst most of the IPS users.

In this context, the use of shared usernames and passwords amongst a number of employees goes against Information Security best practices and is, thus, totally unacceptable. Even though all the actions done by every user on both databases are recorded in an audit trail, the NAO is of the opinion that the use of shared generic login credentials is to be immediately discarded, and instead every user is provided with a personal login which can be easily identifiable by the system administrator when viewing the audit logs. In addition, both databases can also be integrated with the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) Active Directory whereby the same CORP login credentials used by the IPS users to login on to the Government network, are used to login on the Public Management toolkit or the Induction training databases respectively.

Overall, the NAO is concerned that the selected Ministries do not have a uniform formal approach for the identification of skills that their Ministries/departments require, nor do they have the tools in place to achieve this objective. Only MEDE, to a certain extent, could identify the skills/qualifications of their teaching workforce in Government schools through their STS application.

In this context, the NAO opines that unless the Skills and Qualifications module of the Dakar system is implemented across Government, Ministries will be limited in their ability to plan ahead and fill the workforce capability gaps in a comparable or structured way.

Furthermore, the NAO questions how employee-training needs analysis are being carried out within the selected Ministries, given that basic information of professional development/training courses attended by Public Service officers is not maintained by the respective Ministry.

Thus, the NAO recommends that in the short-term, the PSD should take the initiative to ensure greater standardisation of HR processes mentioned in this audit report and the continuous updating of all relevant HR records, which are required for the identification of skills and professional development needs. In the long-term, the NAO recommends that the key stakeholders should take the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of a fully comprehensive HR system as outlined in the *“Human Resources and Skills Development Strategic Policy Framework – A way forward for 2014-2020”* HR Management plan.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This introductory Chapter provides a brief overview on the subject under review, focusing on the IT systems that are used across Government departments for the identification of skills and professional development to address the competencies required within the Public Service. The IT audit's scope, objectives and the methodology used in this regard, are listed hereunder together with a brief summary of each Chapter.

1.1 Setting the context

The Public Service¹ is considered as the core of the Government's administrative machinery, which also includes statutory authorities and agencies. At the time of the drafting of this report, the Public Service workforce in 2016 amounted to 31,355, as shown in Table 1 (with the corresponding data graphically represented in Figure 1), which include Public Officers who are seconded/detailed with Public Entities.

To ensure that the Government's administrative machinery implements its policy effectively, the right number of people with the right skills in the right place are needed, supported by effective accountability, governance, systems, processes and information. In this regard, Government attempts to achieve the right mix by recruiting new 'specialists' to complement its existing workforce. However, the Administration is aware that filling the skill gaps by recruiting the right people is not an easy task, especially if they are recruited from the private sector, due to the fact that Government is effectively competing with this sector for such 'specialist' skills.

Table 1 provides an analysis by category of the Public Service workforce in 2016, whereby the highest number of workers were employed in the Educational category, followed by the Nursing/Paramedical and the General Service categories, through which the female workforce superseded the male workforce in these specific categories.

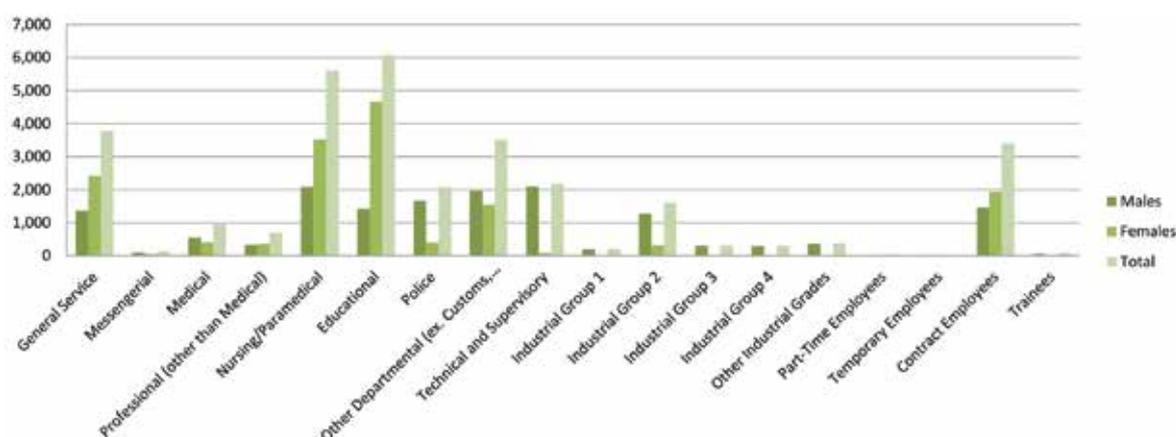
¹ The term Public Service refers to Ministries and Government departments.

Table 1 - Public Service Workforce by Category - 2016

Category	Males	Females	Total
General Service	1,372	2,413	3,785
Messengerial	91	54	145
Medical	556	409	965
Professional (other than Medical)	333	358	691
Nursing/Paramedical	2,075	3,525	5,600
Educational	1,425	4,654	6,079
Police	1,663	405	2,068
Other Departmental (e.g. Customs, Printing, etc.)	1,963	1,555	3,518
Technical and Supervisory	2,094	80	2,174
Industrial Group 1	192	9	201
Industrial Group 2	1,279	324	1,603
Industrial Group 3	310	7	317
Industrial Group 4	294	18	312
Other Industrial Grades	360	16	376
Part-Time Employees	21	17	38
Temporary Employees	1	1	2
Contract Employees	1,465	1,938	3,403
Trainees	67	11	78
Grand Total	15,561	15,794	31,355

Source: Research and Personnel Systems Directorate – People and Standards Division

Figure 1 - Public Service Workforce by Category - 2016



In this context, it is interesting to note that over the span of five years, the Public Service workforce has seen a considerable increase in the amount of female employees. In fact, from 2011 to 2016, the number of female workers increased by 2,471, that is a growth of 18.5% which contrasts to

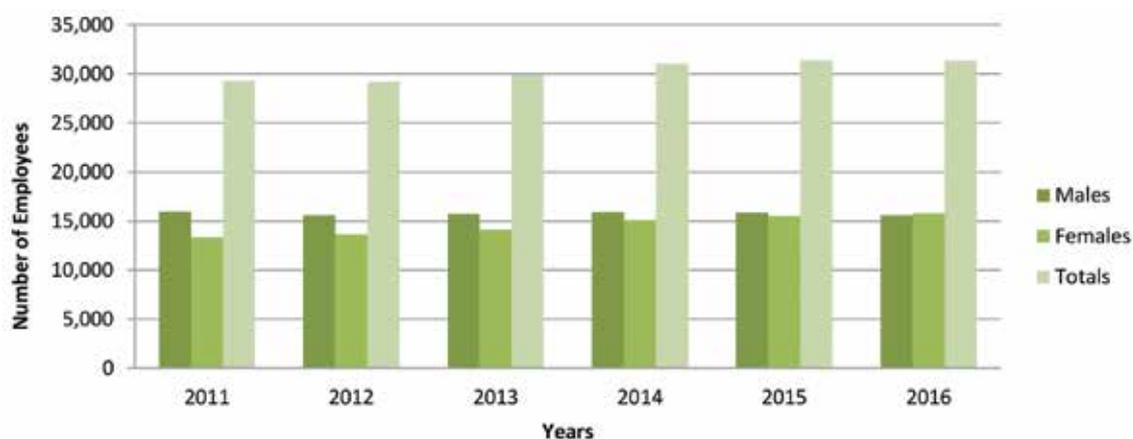
the number of male workers, which saw a decline of 2.37%, that is 379 less male workers since 2011 (as presented in Table 2 and the corresponding Figure 2). As a result, in 2016, the number of female workers within the Public Administration exceeded that of male workers by 1.5% for the first time. This clearly indicates that the female participation within the Public Administration has steadily increased over the years. This is mostly attributed to the various measures that successive Government administrations have introduced over the past years, such as the introduction of family-friendly measures, flexible work schedules and teleworking, the setting up of childcare centres and other Government incentives, including income tax rebates that encourage women to return to work.

Table 2 - Total Number of Employees within the Public Service by Gender

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Males	15,940	15,557	15,730	15,908	15,882	15,561
Females	13,323	13,612	14,133	15,101	15,516	15,794
Totals	29,263	29,169	29,863	31,009	31,398	31,355

Source: Research and Personnel Systems Directorate – People and Standards Division

Figure 2 - Total Number of Employees within the Public Service by Gender



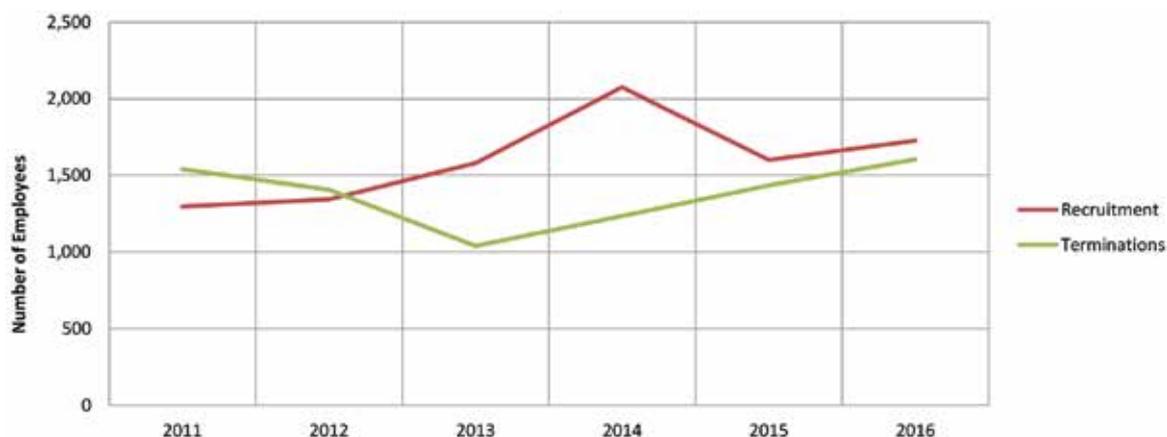
With a staff complement of such magnitude (31,355 Public Service employees in 2016, as shown in Table 2), refreshing and replenishing staff levels through recruitment is inevitably an ongoing process. In this regard, the number of employees who were recruited and those who terminated their employment within the Public Service over the span of five years is represented in Figure 3 (with the corresponding figures presented in Table 3).

Table 3 - Comparative analysis on the number of employees who were recruited with the number of employees who terminated their employment within the Public Service between 2011-2016

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Recruitment	1,298	1,344	1,580	2,075	1,601	1,726
Terminations	1,541	1,406	1,040	1,236	1,434	1,604

Source: Research and Personnel Systems Directorate – People and Standards Division

Figure 3 - Comparative analysis on the number of employees who were recruited with the number of employees who terminated their employment within the Public Service between 2011-2016



The Pre-Budget Document 2014 stated that it intends to improve the operations of the Public Administration through the creation of dynamic organisations, which respond efficiently and effectively to current and future challenges, thus giving more value-added services to citizens.

In this context, whilst providing central direction to Ministries on the strategic, tactical and operational functions of HR Management, the former PAHRO participated in the collective management of the Public Administration by contributing towards the creation and formulation of HR policies that addresses both organisational and workforce needs. In addition, PAHRO aimed to streamline HR systems and processes to reduce the bureaucratic overload and increase efficiency. In 2011, PAHRO continued to progress from the traditional concept of micro HR Management, towards a macro perspective with a comprehensive outlook to workforce planning, change management, guidance and support provision to Ministries and departments. It also monitored the implementation of HR Management in Ministries and departments, as well as promoted leadership development.

In September 2016, the PSD was setup and replaced PAHRO. The PSD, is led and coordinated by the Director General (People and Standards) supported by three directorates, namely, People Resourcing and Compliance, People Support and Well Being and the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate. In this regard, the PSD will continue to spearhead the implementation of the provisions of the Public Administration Act, progressive HR strategies and policies, the increased decentralisation of procedural processes to line Ministries and Departments, and the ongoing streamlining of the business of Government in the field of HR Management.

1.2 The regulatory framework of the Public Service

The Public Service is regulated primarily by the Constitution of Malta² and the Public Administration Act (PAA)(Cap. 497)³. Also of importance are the regulations of the Public Service Commission (S.L. Const. 0.01, 0.03, 0.05). Other regulatory instruments governing the Public Service are the directives issued by the Principal Permanent Secretary (PPS) under the Public Administration Act, and the Public Service Management Code (PSMC)⁴.

1.2.1 Public Service Management Code

The PSMC⁵ was first issued in 2002, and its contents are constantly updated to reflect ongoing HR Policy developments. The PSMC provides a set of management guidelines and policies on HR Management within the Public Administration, to ensure better and streamlined HR practices, as well as good governance. Its provisions are based on the Constitution of Malta, the PAA, the Code of Ethics⁶, the Employment and Training Services Act (Cap. 343), and the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (EIRA) (Cap. 452). The PSMC provides the core principles and values, which bind the employees to behave in a professional manner to ensure the delivery of efficient and effective work performances.

The PSMC has been assigned the legal status of a directive under the PAA, whereby the provisions of the Code are binding and enforceable in terms of Article 15(2) of the Act. This reinforces the importance of this Code, as reflected by Directive Number 1⁷ issued by the PPS. This legal authority includes the power to initiate disciplinary proceedings in case of Officers failing to comply with directives issued by the PPS (PAA, Article 15(2)).

1.3 The Public Service – Way forward

“An efficient and effective Public Administration, capable of addressing the needs of its clients in a timely and qualitative manner, is key for sustaining a thriving economy. Success is not a destination but an ongoing journey that needs to be consistently championed by challenges emanating from dynamics such as demography, economy, technology, the environment, legal and social aspects and the financial situation of the country”.

² The Constitution of Malta

³ Chapter 497 – Public Administration Act

⁴ The Public Service Management Code

⁵ The Public Service Management Code replaced the former Estacode

⁶ Code of Ethics for Employees in the Public Sector

⁷ Directive 1 – Assignment of Legal Status of Directive to the Public Service Management Code

The above context was put forward in the Human Resources Management Plan entitled “*Human Resources and Skills Development Strategic Policy Framework – A way forward for 2014-2020*”, which was tabled in Parliament in October 2015. The aim of this report is to identify the salient gaps that need to be bridged in order to align the Public Administration’s Human Resource Management practices and policies with Government’s overall strategic direction. The Strategic Objectives and Initiatives were formulated into a seven-year roadmap, with the aim of addressing the resultant gaps and feeding new requirements for inclusion in subsequent strategic programmes. In this regard, the key strategic objectives highlighted in this report include:

- **To reassess the optimal size of the Public Administration to meet current and future needs** – the first step towards an effective workforce planning is for the organisation to be consistently up-to-date on its current and future needs. Along with the headcount reviews, a review of position descriptions should be carried out to ensure that these are relevant to the job requirements of the Public Administration. In order to reap the best results from the aforementioned reviews, the Public Administration needs to further invest in its analytical capabilities through enhanced workforce planning tools and processes.
- **To review the Performance Planning and Management system** – the revised system needs to boldly communicate the message that Performance Management is not about establishing a top-down, backward-looking form of appraising Public Employees, but rather a forward-looking and developmental process, through which Management can support team members and increase their engagement, motivation and job performance.
- **To deploy a fully comprehensive HR information system** – the deployment of a comprehensive HR information system will contribute towards strengthening the institutional and administrative capacity. Through the procurement of HR modules, Directorates responsible for HR matters, within Ministries, shall be equipped with valuable information enabling better informed decisions in the area of management of staff, as well as support decisions related to any proposed reforms, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service.
- **To develop employee competence and skills** – the Public Administration aims to build upon its efforts to sustain staff development, in order to equip its employees to deal with increased administrative demands. Development needs to increasingly be competence-based and value driven.

1.3.1 Human Resources Information Systems

In 1996, the Government of Malta acquired its first inter-Ministerial HR tool known as HRIMS. The system was developed in-house by the Malta Information Technology and Training Services (now MITA). Though it was introduced as a 'prototype', it continued to serve its purpose well for many years, to the point that it is now considered to be the backbone to Government’s HR function. However, the need for a replacement of this system was felt with the increasing demand

for an improved and more powerful system capable of handling the increasing requirements of the Public Service.

In the meantime, following the Legal Notice 327 of 2009⁸, the responsibility for the governance and administration of the Government payroll was transferred from the Treasury department to OPM. In addition, during that same year, a tender was awarded by MITA to Dakar Systems to replace the payroll system in use at that time. This new payroll system also contained basic HR functions, being the first building block towards a consolidated HR Information System. The strategic shift towards one integrated HR/Payroll System is aimed at achieving advantages such as significant savings in data entry, as the two functions would be captured in one single database resulting in a drastic reduction of possible errors relating to mismatched data.

Further to the above, in 2015, PAHRO embarked on a new project for the implementation of five HR modules to complement the existing Dakar HR/Payroll System, which include the Absence Management, Performance Appraisals, Recruitment, Skills and Qualifications, and Discipline modules, with the aim of having one fully comprehensive HR Information System.

1.3.2 Performance Management Programme

In 1994, the Maltese Public Service introduced a Performance Management Programme, better known as PMP, for its employees with the aim of gradually phasing out the Performance Rating Reports and replaces them with a new appraisal system. The PMP was a performance evaluation system in which the performance of employees was assessed against approved output and quality standards. It aimed to offer better and closer working relationships between supervisors and their employees.

However, as from 1st January 2016, the PMP was suspended in preparation for the introduction of the new appraisal system⁹ (being one of the new Dakar modules), which was in line with Government's commitment towards the renewal and strengthening of the operational capability of the Public Service, as well as the continuous development of its HR skills and competences. During this period, the *'Interim Performance Management Programme Form'*¹⁰ was to be used as a substitute for PMPs. This document served the same purpose as any PMP document required for the period 1st January to 30th June 2016.

In August 2016, the new Performance Appraisal module was launched within the Public Service¹¹. The main objective of this new system was the holistic assessment of the employee performance as part of the overall Public Service Performance Management Programme. This tool aims at enhancing employee accountability and job satisfaction, whilst giving visibility on training and development needs.

⁸ Financial Administration and Audit Act (Cap.174)

⁹ OPM Circular No. 23/2015

¹⁰ Interim Performance Management Programme (PMP) Form

¹¹ OPM Circular No. 20/2016

The implementation of this new system¹², which forms part of a fully integrated HR Management System for the entire Public Service, was gradually implemented in a number of phases (covering a group of Ministries at a time) until all Ministries were included and all the eligible employees had been registered in the system. PAHRO communicated with the respective Directors of Corporate Services, or the person responsible for performing such functions within Ministries, to provide direction and support for the execution of the implementation strategy.

1.3.3 Skills Profiling

The skills profiling exercise¹³ originates from the Flexicurity Pathway report issued by the European Expert Group on Flexicurity in June 2007. The Flexicurity Pathway report stipulates that a skills audit of the national working population is to be carried out. To this end, Government, as an employer, has conducted a skills audit of its workforce in 2010.

From a management perspective, skills profiling assists in identifying skills gaps, that is, the skills possessed by employees compared to the skills needed by the organisation to carry out its mandate, and to identify measures to bridge identified gaps (through training, redeployments, etc.). On the other hand, from an employee's perspective, individuals will benefit from better opportunities for their own self-development, as well as higher satisfaction and motivation at their place of work.

An individual's skills profile is a summary of his/her work experience, skills and abilities. The skills profile includes the Present Employment Details, Formal Qualifications, Employment History, including Part-Time Employment, Language Skills, Organisational and Social Skills, Computer and IT-related Skills, Technical and Artistic Skills, Work Preferences and Job Mobility. On the first day of employment with the Public Service, new recruits are requested to compile their skills profile, so that the relevant database is kept up-to-date.

1.4 Audit Scope and Objective

The scope of this IT audit is to analyse the effective use of IT systems in the identification of skills, professional development and training needs across the selected Ministries. The audit sought to determine whether these systems have the necessary controls to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and availability of HR data, as well as to review the built-in functionality of these IT systems in view of the needs of the respective HR functions. In this regard, the audit report identified any potential risks and made the necessary recommendations to mitigate these risks.

The IT audit was divided into four different stages:

- i. Initially, an informal meeting was carried out in the selected Ministries to gather preliminary data and gain a better understanding on the Ministry's portfolio, its' HR function and the IT systems in use.

¹² Refer to Section 2.2.2.2 of this report.

¹³ Refer to Section 2.2.2.1 of this report.

- ii. Subsequently, a pre-audit questionnaire was sent to each selected Ministry/department to gather the necessary documentation/information on the auditee prior to undertaking the site audit visits.
- iii. The NAO reviewed the data collected from the pre-audit questionnaire and examined how the IT systems identified in the questionnaire are being used to achieve their objectives.
- iv. A number of on-site audit visits were then scheduled with the auditees, as deemed necessary, to review the HR processes and procedures related to these IT systems and to assess whether these systems were being maintained and used effectively.

Thus, the objectives of this report were to:

- Document all the information collected during the site visits and meetings held with key stakeholders and officials within the selected Ministries.
- Summarise the documentation collected and elicit the area/s of concern.
- List all the findings and identify any potential risks.
- List all the recommendations to mitigate those risks.

This audit report will therefore be looking into HR Management, focusing mainly on how Government Ministries identify and meet the skills needed by their own workforce, and the professional development requirements for every individual, thereby addressing the competencies required in their respective Ministry, including the line departments. In this context, the NAO has decided to focus its study on:

- The role of the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within PSD.
- How Ministries comply with the directives and policies issued by OPM.
- How Ministries maintain their HR data.
- How effective are the HR IT systems used by the Ministries to identify the professional development needs.

After due consideration on the composition of the Public Service workforce, the NAO has decided to randomly select four Ministries, which should however ensure a variation in complexity and size. Hence, for the purpose of this study, OPM, MFIN, MEDE and MJCL were selected in this regard.

1.5 Audit Methodology

To achieve the above objectives, an extensive review of literature on skills gaps and professional development within the context of the Public Service was undertaken. The *'Capability in the civil service'* report (NAO, United Kingdom, 2017) and the *'Human Resources and Skills Development Strategic Policy Framework – A way forward for 2014-2020'* report (OPM, 2015), were of particular interest to the NAO amongst others reports. Apart from these, other local policy documents and annual reports compiled by OPM, MFIN and the former PAHRO, referred today, as PSD, were also reviewed.

In addition, as already mentioned above, the NAO drafted a pre-audit questionnaire, which was sent to MFIN, MEDE and MJCL, whilst a different pre-audit questionnaire was sent to the PSD and the former CDRT, referred today as IPS. Based on the feedback provided in the pre-audit questionnaire reports, a number of interviews were held with the relevant stakeholders and key officials between Q1-Q2 2017, whilst the drafting of the report was carried out between Q3-Q4 2017.

1.6 Structure of the Report

Following this introductory Chapter, the report discusses in more detail the use of HR IT systems and the professional development in the selected Ministries. Each of the Chapters includes the relevant findings and recommendations made by the NAO.

a. Chapter 2 – Ministry-Level Human Resources IT Systems

This Chapter focuses on the main IT systems used by the HR functions of every Ministry selected for the purpose of this IT audit. In this regard, this Chapter reviewed how the HR data is being maintained, the adherence to Government directives and internal policies, and whether the relative security controls are in place. Furthermore, this Chapter also assessed whether these IT systems could help in the identification of skills and professional development, to address the competencies required within the selected Ministries.

b. Chapter 3 – Professional development in the Public Service

This Chapter provides a holistic overview on the role of the IPS as the central training organisation of the Public Service. In view of the fact that around 8,000 Public Service officers attend at least one of the 500 courses offered throughout the year, this Chapter reviewed how such courses are managed, scheduled and delivered by the IPS. Furthermore, this Chapter also reviewed how the Scholarships Unit within MEDE administers the various Scholarship Schemes that are offered to the Public, and hence, applicable also to Public Service officers.

c. **Chapter 4 – Management Comments**

The final chapter lists all the management comments submitted by the auditees from the respective Ministries selected for the purpose of this IT audit.

1.7 Acknowledgement

The NAO would like to express its appreciation to all the key stakeholders who were involved in this audit, including the Ministry's IMU, HR officials and other key stakeholders within the selected Ministries, and all the officials within the IPS and the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within OPM, for their time and assistance.

Chapter 2

Ministry-Level Human Resources IT Systems

This Chapter focuses on the main IT systems in use within the HR offices of each of the Ministries selected for the purpose of this IT audit. In this regard, this Chapter reviews whether these IT systems could help in the identification of skills and professional development to address the competencies required within the selected Ministries. Furthermore, this Chapter also reviews the process by which the HR data is being maintained and adherence to Government directives and internal policies.

2.1 Human Resources Management Structure and Function

HR Management can be defined as *“the policies and practices involved in carrying out the ‘people’ or human resources aspects of management position, including recruitment, screening, training and appraisal”* (Dessler, 2007).

A prerequisite for strategic HR Management lies in the ability of an organisation to define what its mission is and how it will go about achieving it. Strategy is dependent on the target and thus, the more precise and accurate this is, the more focused can be the HR practices employed to achieve it.

In this context, an HR Management plan report entitled *“Human Resources and Skills Development Strategic Policy Framework – A way forward for 2014-2020”*, was tabled in Parliament in October 2015. As highlighted earlier in the previous Chapter, the aim of this HR Management plan report is to identify the salient gaps that need to be bridged in order to align the Public Administration’s HR Management practices and policies with Government’s overall strategic direction. The strategic objectives and initiatives form part of a seven-year roadmap, with the aim of addressing the resultant gaps and feeding new requirements for inclusion in subsequent strategic programmes.

PSD plays a pivotal role in the Public Service, especially in the formulation, development and promotion of progressive HR policies, strategies and management systems, to support the business needs of Government, and to assist and support Ministries/departments in achieving Government plans and programmes. In this regard, the PSD’s mission statement states that:

“Our vision is achieved by executing the People Business Strategy of the Public Service through constant collaboration with line Ministries, whom we hold as our strategic partners. Through delegation of authority, we strive together for the fulfilment of holistic HR policies and management systems, their implementation, monitoring and constant re-evaluation. Continuous improvement of people performance and wellbeing, and sustaining quality service are two major priorities”.

In this context, during the course of the audit process, the NAO interviewed and observed how the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within PSD provides direction to line Ministries on the strategic, tactical and operational functions of HR Management. In this regard, the main objectives of the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate are:

- To further develop and maintain a service-wide, comprehensive human resource information system with a view to provide regular, accurate, timely and qualitative information appraisal for optimal planning.
- To further develop and implement an effective employee development and performance appraisal module.
- To manage the introduction of modern electronic systems for the purpose of recording attendance.
- To assist departments to rationalise the use of their staff and to review their work systems and methods.
- To undertake research into and keep abreast with new developments in the field of HR Management Systems and build up an adequate library for this purpose.
- To organise and maintain necessary fora for Directors (Corporate Services) and Human Resources Managers, and to keep them aware of new developments and procedures.
- To collect data in connection with studies being carried out across the Public Administration by means of surveys, questionnaires, etc.
- To further develop and maintain the website(s) relative to the PSD and the Recruitment Portal and ensure that they are continuously up-to-date.

An equally pivotal role is played by Ministries in implementing policy directives issued by OPM and MFIN. Hence, the HR function or directorate within each respective Ministry serves as an important reference point and provider of data/information on HR issues for the whole Ministry and its line departments, divisions and entities. In this regard, every HR function or directorate strives to provide the required support services in HR Management within their respective Ministry.

2.2 Human Resources Systems

HR systems are the electronic tools used to access HR-related information and perform HR-related functions. Such tools are used to combine a number of necessary HR functions, such as storing employee data, managing payrolls, recruitment processes, performance appraisals, HR planning and absence management, amongst others. Thus, these tools ensure that everyday HR processes are manageable and easy to access.

Whilst early HR systems were narrow in scope, typically focused on a single task, such as improving the payroll process or tracking employees' working hours, today's HR systems cover the full spectrum of tasks associated with HR departments, including tracking and improving process efficiency, managing organisational hierarchy and simplifying financial transactions of all types. In short, as the role of the HR departments expanded in complexity, HR technology systems evolved to fit these needs.

In this context, this section provides a brief overview of the strategic and operational functions adopted, with respect to HR Management by OPM and the three Ministries reviewed in this audit. This section also focuses on how the HR IT systems assist in the identification of skills and professional development to address the competencies required within the selected Ministries.

2.2.1 Human Resources Information Management System

In 1996, the Government of Malta acquired its first inter-Ministerial HR tool known as HRIMS, which was developed in-house by the Malta Information Technology and Training Services (now MITA). Although it was introduced as a 'prototype' to explore and identify the HR IT needs of the Public Service, the system was eventually retained by Government, and it has continued to serve its purpose well for many years across all Ministries and line departments was still in use at the time of the audit (Q1 2017). In fact, it transpires that 17 officials within OPM and 318 officials within the Ministries and line departments are still using this system. Apart from the fact that HRIMS contains all the HR data of all Public Service officers, it also stores HR data of around 1,800 employees, who were detailed with various Government entities, and whose data, including their last post and salary scale (including any progression that have been awarded) can only be retrieved from this system.

In the meantime, since the HRIMS application is obsolete and only works on 32-bit Microsoft Windows operating systems, the NAO was informed that a new web-based version of HRIMS was being launched at the time of the audit. Currently, the deployment of this web version of HRIMS, which was developed by a local third party firm, is only restricted to Government officials who own a workstation with a 64-bit Microsoft Windows operating system or new officials who were recently recruited with the Public Service and require access to the HRIMS application.

During the course of the audit, the NAO reviewed how the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate administers the HRIMS application and provides assistance to all the HR personnel within their respective Ministries and line departments. Furthermore, the NAO interviewed and observed how the HR personnel within the respective Ministry, selected for the purpose of this IT audit, utilize the HRIMS application and how they liaise with the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate to ensure that the HRIMS data is continuously updated.

In this regard, the NAO observed that while some Ministries (MEDE and MJCL) have access rights to amend only personnel details (e.g. surname, marital status, telephone number and home address) another Ministry (MFIN) only has read-only access. Thus, any amendments to personal

details of officials within MFIN have to be submitted by the HR function within Central MFIN¹⁴ to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, through an e-mail, for the latter to update the official's details in the system accordingly.

The NAO was informed that the responsible officials within an HR department may have either read-only or read/write access to amend minor personnel details on HRIMS. On the other hand, officials within the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate have full access rights on HRIMS to add/modify personnel's details related to appointments, promotions, progressions, terminations, transfers, resignations or to add new personnel who are recruited within the Public Service. Furthermore, this Office was also informed that whilst certain officials within the Ministry's HR departments can modify minor personnel details in the current HRIMS application, the new HRIMS web portal does not permit any official within the Ministry's HR departments to modify any personnel details, with the only exception that they can type in any remarks in the appropriate box.

In addition to the above, if any personnel details need to be amended, every Ministry is obliged to fill in an *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* to report any officials within the Public Service who may have resigned, terminated their employment or have been transferred to another department/Ministry amongst others. This sheet should then be sent by the respective Ministry to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, on a monthly basis, to update the data on HRIMS accordingly. Furthermore, the NAO was informed that if a Public Service officer was appointed to a new position, the Ministry must also send a copy of the respective letter of appointment (by e-mail or by post). These letters of appointment are used as evidence to confirm that the details of the movement/appointment of the employee listed in the *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* are correct, before updating HRIMS. In this regard, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate keeps a personal file for each Public Service officer to retain such documents (in addition to each Government employee's personal file, which 'moves' with him/her during their term of employment). Unfortunately, the NAO was informed that sometimes there are instances whereby the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate only receives the letter of appointment or the *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'*. In this regard, whenever this is the case, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate has to chase the respective Ministry to send all the missing documentation.

In this context, the NAO was also informed that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate has a backlog of six months of data that need to be updated on to the HRIMS application. Upon enquiry, it was established that this backlog is attributed to the fact that certain entities are not adhering to submitting the necessary documentation on a monthly basis as required. In fact at the time of the site audit visit (April 2017), the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate argued that a substantial number of returns were late submissions and in this regard, the NAO observed that the Directorate were still inputting data in HRIMS (from the returns) for the period July 2016.

¹⁴ Central MFIN refers only to the HR function at the Ministry's Head Office.

2.2.2 Dakar System

Following Legal Notice 327/2009, the responsibility for the governance of the Government payroll was transferred from the Treasury department to OPM, whereby OPM became responsible for the correctness of computations of salaries according to the applicable rates and regulations, for the proper deductions from salaries on account of contributions or other liabilities, and should certify each payroll or voucher accordingly. During that same year, the Dakar system was selected, following a tendering process, to replace the existing payroll system. It is worth noting that this Dakar system, which went live in January 2011, also contains basic HR functions, which would eventually form the first building block towards a consolidated HR Information system.

In 2013, a draft business requirement document was prepared by MITA and the former PAHRO, in order to establish requirements for the supply, installation, commissioning, customisation, maintenance and support of five new modules to be incorporated into the present Dakar payroll system. These modules, which were eventually procured by the Government in 2015, consisted of the Absence Management System, Skills Inventory and Qualifications Management, Performance Management, Recruitment and Promotion Management, and Discipline Management modules. The implementation of these five new modules would enhance the Public Service's HR Management competence, and enable Management to obtain valuable information for the better management of its employees.

2.2.2.1 Skills Profiling

The term "profiling" refers to the assessment performed by the employer or superior of an employee's 'needs' and their relative 'fit' to opportunities within the current structure of the entity, in order to provide a basis for allocating or targeting employment services, and for matching to appropriate/relevant vacancies. In this context, skills profiling tools are mainly used to:

- Diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses within the context of personal action planning.
- Assess the risk of long-term unemployment among unemployed individuals and those about to become unemployed.
- Segment jobseekers according to the level of assistance they are considered to require to successfully achieve (re-) integration.
- Target appropriate services, measures and programmes considered most suitable to meet the requirements of the individual's 'profile'.

Skills profiling tools can also be used in the matching process, thus enabling employers to include more detailed information on the competence requirements, including technical, generic, and soft skills in their job vacancy descriptions. This is an important advancement, as such tools are likely

to improve the matching process (in terms of quality, efficiency, and potential for automation), as well as to support jobseekers in broadening their job search, and enable them to explore the transferability of their skills to new occupational choices.

In addition, skills profiling tools may also help to empower jobseekers by giving them the knowledge of those skills that will enable them to move between jobs, occupations and sectors, with important implications in terms of the quality of matching. As matching is bi-directional, the quality of the process is determined by the level of detail collated, both in the profiling process for jobseekers and in the specification of vacancies. Thus, skills profiling has to be understood as a process targeted at jobseekers and employers in terms of how the demand and their vacancies are specified. This process therefore established an understanding of a common set of skills and competences that may then be linked to some extent, to existing occupational classifications.

The development of a common understanding and a common set of skills and competences is a prerequisite for effective profiling and matching. In this regard, a number of European Union (EU) Member States, including the Maltese Government, have invested in efforts to standardise the description of competence profiles (in the form of occupations or job openings) and to make them comparable.

In this context, the Flexicurity Pathway¹⁵ stipulates that a skills audit of the national working population must be carried out. As a result, the Maltese Government committed itself to undertake a skills audit of the Public Service working population by November 2010. The objective of this exercise was twofold:

- i. To provide Management with the necessary information to enable it to take informed decisions.
- ii. To assist Management in determining the training needs of the public administration workforce for the increased efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of public services.

With the collaboration of the Management Efficiency Unit (MEU), the former PAHRO was entrusted with the planning, formulation and implementation of the skills profiling exercise across the Public Service. The exercise's compilation phase was carried out utilising two different approaches:

- i. An online self-administered questionnaire¹⁶ for officers having access to the Government Intranet and who are IT proficient.
- ii. A face-to-face interview for those who needed assistance in compiling the named questionnaire.

¹⁵ Flexicurity Pathway – Turning hurdles into stepping stones report

¹⁶ Skills Profile Questionnaire

The self-administered questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes for compilation whereas the face-to-face interview took around half an hour. In this regard, the strategy adopted by PAHRO included the involvement of the Directors (Corporate Services) and HR Managers, particularly where assistance needed to be given to employees having trouble in filling and completing this questionnaire. In fact, a number of potential trainers were identified by HR Managers, with 65 officers attending the training sessions organised for this specific purpose. The Directors (Corporate Services) had to ensure that all the officers within their respective Ministry compiled the skills profile, and that the set timeframes and deadlines were adhered to.

The data collection phase of the skills profiling exercise, which kicked off in January 2010 and was completed by April 2010, was staggered by Ministry. Public Service officers within each Ministry were notified electronically to initiate the process and were only allowed to complete and submit their skills profile within a two-week timeframe. It is worth noting that all the personal data collected in the skills profiling questionnaire was solely used for the purpose of building a skills profile of the workforce in the Public Service for the better management of public employees.

In this context, an individual's skills profile is a summary of his/her work experience, skills and abilities. The skills profile includes the present employment details, formal qualifications, employment history and part-time employment, language skills, organisational and social skills, computer and IT-related skills, technical and artistic skills, work preferences and job mobility.

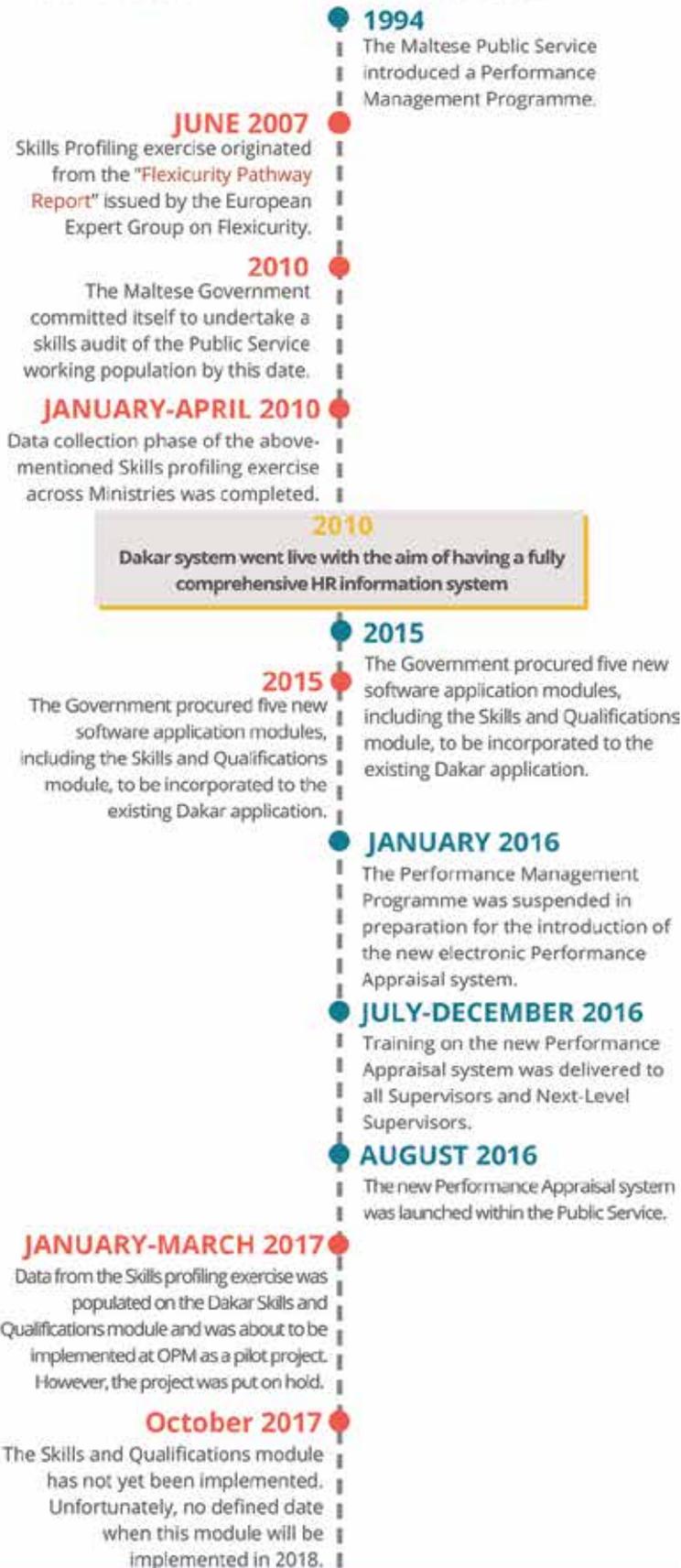
Thus, one can argue that from a management perspective, skills profiling assists in identifying skills gaps (the skills possessed by employees compared to the skills needed by the organisation to carry out its mandate) and to identify measures to bridge identified gaps (through training, re-deployments, etc.). On the other hand, from the employees' perspective, every officer will benefit from better opportunities for their own self-development, and higher satisfaction and motivation at their place of work.

During the course of the audit, the NAO was informed that the PSD was in the process of launching the Skills and Qualifications module, as part of the Dakar System, across the Public Service. The module was populated from data collated in the skills profiling exercise and was to be implemented at OPM as a pilot project in Q1 2017, so much so that OPM's skills profiling data had already been populated in the said module. However, the NAO was informed that the implementation of the Skills and Qualifications module had to be put on hold to give priority and provide assistance on the Performance Appraisal module, since this was the first time that the end-of-year appraisal process was being carried out electronically, across the Public Service.

In the meantime, following a decision by top Management, another module took priority over the implementation of the Skills and Qualifications module, this being the introduction of a new online Leave application module. The latter will be integrated to the existing Absence Management system, to cater for the application of vacation, study, cultural, etc. leave electronically, whilst discarding the current manual process.

SKILLS PROFILING

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL



2.2.2.2 Performance Appraisals

In line with Government's commitment towards the renewal and strengthening of the operational capability of the Public Service, as well as the continuous development of its HR skills and competences, in August 2016 a new Performance Appraisal module was designed and launched within the Public Service.

The main objective of this new system was the holistic assessment of the individual as part of the overall Public Service Performance Management Programme. This new system aims at enhancing employee accountability and job satisfaction, whilst giving visibility on training and development needs. This will not only create an environment of motivation with an eagerness for higher achievement, but also helps to identify and develop future leaders.

The NAO observed that the implementation of this new system, which forms part of a fully integrated HR Management System for the entire Public Service, was implemented over a number of phases (covering a group of Ministries), until all the Ministries were included and all the eligible employees had been inputted on the system. In this regard, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate monitored the whole implementation of the Performance Management Programme across line Ministries and departments.

During the course of the audit, the NAO interviewed and observed how the Ministries selected for the purpose of this audit are using this new Performance Appraisal module and how the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate are monitoring the uptake of this new system and providing assistance across the Public Service. In this context, the NAO was informed that a helpline and a generic e-mail address¹⁷ were setup within the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, whereby two officials were assigned the responsibility of assisting any users, Supervisors or Next-Level Supervisors, on any related queries, which they might have on the whole Performance Appraisal process. The two officials also focus on the monitoring and auditing of the information inputted, the uptake of the system, and to maintain the system as a whole. To supplement this new system, the NAO also observed that the two officials are using a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets. For instance, a separate worksheet is being utilized for each section/unit within each Ministry/department to maintain a list of all the employees working in that section/unit, along with the employee's respective Supervisor and Next-Level supervisor.

Whilst reviewing the Performance Management module, the NAO took note of the actual setup of the Performance Appraisal process employed within this module, and throughout the Public Service. The actual process is split into four separate stages, namely, *Initialisation*, *Start-of-Year*, *Mid-Year*, and *End-of-Year*. For each stage, there are three statuses, namely *New*, *Pending* and *Completed*.

¹⁷ performanceappraisal@gov.mt

As their name suggests, the Initialisation process and the *Start-of-Year* process must be initialised by the Supervisor at the beginning of the review period (year), to kick off the process. An e-mail is then sent to the Appraisee, informing that the *Start-of-Year* has been completed by the Appraiser. Subsequently, the Appraisee can then commence with the appraisal process from his/her end.

Upon completing a stage, each officer will automatically move on to the next stage, without the possibility of skipping any stage/s, until all four stages have been completed and the process is closed off for that year. As a result, within any particular section, an officer can move on and eventually reach the final stage, whilst another officer might still be stuck at the first stage. On the other hand, officers have the possibility of initialising a new year (e.g. 2017), even if the process for the prior year (e.g. 2016) has not yet been completed and closed off. This is allowed so as not to halt one's progress in a new section or under a new Supervisor, in case of a prior dispute in a previous section or under a previous Supervisor. Meanwhile, the Supervisor can opt to modify details that fall under the respective tabs in the system, which include the work plan, personal attributes (social skills, work ethics and values), and career development amongst others, at any stage during the whole process. It should also be noted that if an officer is transferred to a different section/unit, the whole four-stage process has to be completed twice, that is, once for the period/section before the user was transferred and again for the period/section after the transfer was completed.

An e-mail notification is automatically sent to the Appraisee subsequent to every review by the Supervisor, although this is currently not done in real time. In this regard, the NAO was informed that the introduction of instant e-mails is included with the planned enhancements. Moreover, the Appraisees have the possibility to input their comments and remarks, such as a disagreement with their Supervisor's opinion, at each stage. No Appraisee/Supervisor/Next-Level Supervisor is able to remove, change or overwrite another user's comments/remarks. In this regard, it should also be mentioned that currently, Supervisors are not obliged by the system to add comments/remarks to justify the rating they award to an officer, although, the two officers within the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate claimed that ideally this procedure would become customary.

Finally, the Next-Level Supervisor only intervenes at the final *End-of-Year* stage. Nevertheless, the Next-Level Supervisors have the option to access and view (only) the officer's appraisal progress during any of the earlier stages for monitoring purposes.

During its' review, the NAO also noted that the markings allotted by the Next-Level Supervisor at this stage are based on a specific formula. The final mark is based on three parts, with parts 1, 2, and 3 having a maximum of 20, 60, and 20 marks respectively, totalling 100 marks. In this regard, the NAO was informed that whilst the Performance Appraisal module does not provide any online assistance on how these should be calculated, guidance on this matter is provided in the online user manual.

Upon enquiring on the Ministry/department users' acceptance and uptake of the new module, the two officers within the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, commented that as at

the time of the site audit visit (6th April 2017), there were still a number of users who had not yet even logged on to the new system, even though, at the latest, this should have been accessed by end January 2017 (being the latest date when the 2016 Performance Appraisals were due for submission).

With reference to the (annual) completion of the (whole) Performance Appraisal process, it was explained that the responsibility to ensure that these are prepared, rests on the Supervisor or the Next-Level Supervisor, and ultimately falls on the Ministry's Director of Corporate Services (and not the employee). In this regard, it was also clarified that the employee progression (where and when applicable) may be withheld or delayed, as a consequence of a Performance Appraisal not being prepared.

When finalising the Performance Appraisals for 2016, the NAO was informed that Public Service officers had to liaise with the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate on a number of occasions to ensure that the *End-of-Year* Performance Appraisals are properly filled in. In this regard, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate claimed that they were inundated with phone calls from Public Service officers to provide assistance on the Performance Appraisal module, even though, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate had provided training to all Public Service officers in a Supervisory role (around 1,000 officers, the majority of which attended) on this new module.

In the meantime, the two officers within the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate informed the NAO that self-explanatory user manuals, which are updated by the Directorate from time to time, are accessible online through the system itself. In addition, the NAO was also informed that an information session had also been held for Permanent Secretaries, during which an information booklet (including usage statistics and names of Public Service officers who did not attend to training), had been handed out.

In addition, this Office was also notified that further training on the new Performance Appraisal module is planned to be provided to Government officials within the Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union (PREU) in Brussels. In this case, it is envisaged that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate will deliver hands-on training on the Performance Appraisal module or might use the teleconferencing equipment to deliver such training at the Auberge de Castille (OPM) Conference room.

The NAO noted that, at the time of the audit meeting, only the Public Service officers who authenticate (log in) to the CORP Domain are able to use the Performance Appraisal module. As a result, there are a number of Public Service officers who cannot access the Performance Appraisal module, due to the fact that they authenticate to a different Domain Controller (e.g. iLearn (Schools), AFM, Embassies Domains). Since the Dakar application is only integrated with the CORP Domain, ideally all users should authenticate on the same (CORP) Domain. Upon enquiry by the NAO, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate stated that together with MITA, they are trying to find a workaround so that all Public Service officers would be in a position to use the

new Performance Appraisal module. The same applies to Public Service officers who are not on the Government Payroll, typically being engaged by a Public Sector entity (e.g. Foundation for Medical Services personnel could not use the Performance Appraisal module initially). In this regard, the NAO was informed that as a temporary solution, these Public Service officers were still set up with a 'limited' account on the Dakar Payroll module, with no salary scale or amount being allotted, to enable these users to access this Performance Appraisal module from the Dakar system.

Finally, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate stated that a few enhancements should be implemented to the current Performance Module (e.g. to minimise the number of tabs visible on screen) according to the different stages (e.g. *Initialisation of Appraisals*, *Start-of-Year*, *Mid-Year*, and *End-of-Year*) and/or levels (e.g. Appraisee, Next-level Supervisor), which are aimed at making the system/process more user friendly. Furthermore, the NAO was also informed that a number of enhancements and alerts (about 47 in total) for this module are in the pipeline, and it is planned that these should be implemented by May 2017. However, the NAO was not informed of any progress registered in the implementation of these enhancements.

2.3 Ministry-level Human Resources Systems

Apart from the HRIMS and Dakar systems, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate and the three Ministries selected for the purpose of this IT Audit, heavily depend on the use of Microsoft Excel worksheets in their day-to-day operations, as well as a number of other IT systems, which were specifically procured and used by each respective Ministry.

2.3.1 Ministry for Education and Employment

The HR Directorate within MEDE embraces the various HR and Personnel Management functions of the Ministry. The Directorate, which is made up of the HR Administration, Records, Leaves and Recruitment sections, utilizes a number of specific HR-related systems, as well as a variety of Microsoft Excel worksheets, apart from the Dakar and HRIMS applications used across the Public Service.

2.3.1.1 Student Teachers System

The Schools Information System (SIS) application was the initial system that was deployed in the school's administration offices to collate teachers' and students' data, in two separate database instances, for every Government Primary, Secondary and Post-Secondary schools across the Maltese Islands. In 2012, a new system, referred to as the Pearson e1 application, was then deployed across all the Government schools with the intention to migrate all the students' and teachers' database from the SIS application to the Pearson e1 application. Unfortunately, the Pearson e1 application could not cater for the needs that were already defined in the teacher's database in terms of HR data, and thus only the student's database was migrated/integrated into the Pearson e1 application.

Thus, the SIS application, presently known as the Student Teachers System (STS) application, was still in use to collate all the personal details of teachers, learning support assistants, kindergarten assistants, Assistant Heads and Head of Schools, employed within the Government schools. At the time of the audit, the STS application has around 120 active user accounts, most of which belong to the personnel within the Education Resources Directorate, (which is responsible for the overall maintenance and upkeep of the STS database), the personnel within the HR Directorate, and some of the administration staff across the Government schools. Having said that, the NAO was informed that the STS application is mainly used by the Education Resources Directorate to amend movements of teachers (from one school/College to another), and by the HR Administration section within the HR Directorate to record any leave availed during the scholastic year or to amend/add any qualifications attained by an individual.

Whilst reviewing the STS application, the NAO observed how the HR Administration section utilizes the system to input or amend individual qualification details and link these details with the entitled qualification allowance as per collective agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT). In the event that the details of a particular Diploma, Degree, Masters or Doctorate are not listed in the STS application, the HR Directorate would then contact the Education Resources Directorate to amend accordingly.

In the meantime, there may be instances whereby requests to generate specific reports from the STS application are made. In this regard, the NAO was informed that originally, the built-in reporting tool did not meet the Education Resources Directorate's requirements and thus a number of template reports were created to aid users to generate the required data accordingly. For this purpose, MITA created a functionality in STS database through which all data is exported into a Microsoft Access database. All the reports are then generated from a reporting module, created in-house through Microsoft Access by an Education Resources officer (presently occupying the position of Director Education Resources), to cater for the needs of the Education Resources Directorate. However, the NAO was informed that the export functionality in STS only works with Microsoft Windows 7 operating system. Furthermore, the Education Resources Directorate stated there is only one workstation remaining, which still uses the Microsoft Windows 7 operating system within MEDE, and that can be used to generate such an export. The NAO notes that this poses a serious risk to the day-to-day running of this Directorate and its dependencies.

Finally, the NAO was informed that MEDE intends to phase out the current STS application together with the Pearson e1 application and replace them with two separate data management systems. In this regard, the STS application will be replaced with a new Records Management System (RMS), which will be integrated with the current Dakar application, and which will include details of all teaching staff as well as any teaching and non-teaching grades within MEDE. On the other hand, the Pearson e1 application will be replaced with a Management Information System (MIS), which will be integrated with the new RMS application. The MIS will mainly contain information on all the students enrolled in all Government schools. Any related teacher information required could then be retrieved from the RMS application. During the course of the audit, the NAO was also informed that whilst the implementation of the MIS application was still at the early procurement stage, a

contract was already in place with a local supplier for the RMS application. In fact, the initial stage of the implementation of the RMS application should be carried out in mid-2017.

2.3.1.2 *Microsoft Excel worksheets*

As already indicated earlier on in this report, to supplement the existing HR-related software applications, MEDE utilizes a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets. These are used to maintain records related to family friendly measures, allowances (including qualification allowance), and progressions of all teaching, technical, industrial and messengerial grades within the Ministry.

In this regard, the NAO observed that the HR Administration section utilizes a Microsoft Excel worksheet to record those employees who are working on teleworking or reduced hours. This worksheet is then forwarded to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate on a monthly basis to ensure that their records are updated accordingly.

Moreover, the HR Administration section also maintains a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets related to allowances payable to all teaching and non-teaching grades, including various qualification allowances and any other allowances to entitled teachers/officers according to the collective agreement with the MUT. A separate worksheet is kept for each year, to record the qualification allowances, apart from recording details of the respective allowance in each entitled officer's personal file. These worksheets are continuously updated and if an allowance needs to be amended or an individual becomes entitled to a particular allowance, the HR Administration section would liaise with the Gozo Salaries section accordingly. In addition, the HR Administration section also keeps track of teaching grades (or any other MEDE officials) who opt to provide private tuition, or carry out any other part-time work, after office/school hours, in a different Microsoft Excel worksheet.

Other sections within the HR Directorate also maintain separate Microsoft Excel worksheets containing HR data relating to pensions, transfers, movements or engagements of employees, individuals working on reduced hours, flexi-time or teleworking, resignations or termination of employments, appointments or progressions of general grades, leave records, etc. within MEDE.

In terms of career progressions, the NAO observed that MEDE utilizes a reporting application, referred to as Foxfire, to retrieve data from the HRIMS application. Foxfire is installed on a shared network drive and can only be used by one user at a time. The aim of this application is retrieve Public Service officers' last date of appointment from HRIMS, which is then used to manually determine which MEDE employees are eligible for a career progression in a particular year. This process is usually carried out annually in the beginning of January, whereby a report is generated from the Foxfire application and all the data is then exported and saved in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. Once the data is sorted out monthly, and filtered according to the different grades, the HR Administration section would then identify which Public Service officer is eligible for progression in that particular year. To supplement this, the HR Administration section must log on to the STS application and check whether the Public Service officer has ever applied for any unpaid vacation

leave or career break, or been granted permission to perform alternative duties, all of which would affect the progression due date.

When a Public Service officer is deemed eligible for a career progression, the HR Administration section would issue a progression report, which is sent by e-mail to the respective Head of School and College principal for approval. Upon approval, an official communication is derived from the Director General Operations within MEDE, and sent to the individual. The latter will be informed of their career progression and the allowances due arising for his/her new position/scale within Government. Additionally, the respective officers' Personal Record Sheets (held at the Records Section within the HR Directorate) are always checked and verified, and eventually updated with such changes.

2.3.2 Ministry for Finance

Whilst reviewing the HR IT systems used within MFIN, in particular HRIMS, the NAO observed that when compared to the other sampled Ministries, (MJCL and MEDE), Central MFIN do not carry out any updates of users' HR data directly on HRIMS, whereas the other Ministries have limited access to update certain personnel details in HRIMS (e.g. change in home address, surname or contact number etc.). In this regard, the NAO observed that Central MFIN are under the impression that they only have read-only access on HRIMS. Thus, in the event that a small change in home address, surname or contact number is required, an e-mail is sent to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within OPM to update HRIMS and amend the personnel details accordingly.

In addition, as part of this process, the HR office fills in an '*Employee Movements Information Sheet*' listing all the transactions that are required to be updated or modified in HRIMS. This sheet, which would include any personnel movements within Central MFIN, in terms of career progressions, promotions, resignations, termination or transfers, is sent to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate on a monthly basis. In the event that a Public Service officer has been promoted, a scanned copy of the letter of appointment is also attached and sent to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate.

With reference to the skills, knowledge, qualifications, experience and special abilities of every Public Service officer within Central MFIN, the NAO was informed that Central MFIN do not keep any records to keep track of an individual's skills profile, notwithstanding the fact that the skills profiling exercise was carried out in 2010. However, it was also explained that discussions are currently underway within MFIN to address this issue, particularly taking into consideration the Skills and Qualifications module, which should be incorporated with the existing Dakar systems and implemented across the Public Service in 2017.

Furthermore, similar to the other Ministries, the NAO observed that Central MFIN utilizes a substantial number of Microsoft Excel worksheets to supplement the existing HR IT systems. These worksheets are stored in very well structured folders, which are only accessible by Central MFIN and are hosted on a shared network drive at MITA's Segregated Hosted environment.

The NAO was informed that Central MFIN has created a Microsoft Excel worksheet that lists all those MFIN employees who are in line for their next career progression or promotion in a particular year. In this regard, the NAO observed that the preparation of progressions and promotions concerning Central MFIN employees is carried out manually from start to end. In fact, at the end of the year, Central MFIN manually goes through every physical personal file stored within the office, and every Public Service officer who is eligible for a progression or promotion in the upcoming year is manually listed in this Microsoft Excel worksheet. To supplement this, Central MFIN also records eligible Public Service officers on the HR office's generic mailbox calendar throughout the year to notify them when a particular Public Service officer within Central MFIN is due for a progression or promotion. Throughout this whole process, Central MFIN does not use the HRIMS application to extract any data related to positions, substantive grades, dates of last promotions/progressions and dates when next promotions/progressions are due. Instead, as highlighted earlier, all this is carried out manually by going through all the physical personal files (around 172 personal files) and record all the necessary information in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. As a result, the NAO notes that this manual process is lengthy to complete, when this whole process can be partly facilitated by extracting a report from HRIMS and saving the report data in Microsoft Excel format. In addition, the NAO also observed that the current manual process unnecessarily increases the possibility of errors due to the high dependency on human input.

In terms of line departments, the NAO was informed that the preparation of progressions and promotions is triggered by the HR function within every line department. As a result, Central MFIN is only informed by the same line departments (not through HRIMS) when a promotion or career progression has been approved and awarded to a Public Service officer. This implies that unless a line department informs Central MFIN, an officer's progression or promotion may go unnoticed, since the notification progress is not an automatic one. In this regard, the NAO notes the increased risks arising from additional dependency on human input.

Apart from the recording of progressions and promotions, Central MFIN utilizes other Microsoft Excel worksheets to keep track of Public Service officers within Central MFIN who are teleworking, working on reduced hours and flexi-time, as well as those Public Service officers who have applied for overtime, time-off, vacation leave, and sick leave. In terms of vacation leave and sick leave, these are initially recorded in Dakar's Absence Management system and then populated in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. However, vacation leave is also manually recorded on the Public Service officer's personal card, whilst sick leave is manually recorded in the officer's 'yellow card'. In the meantime, a hard copy of any application/approval of special leave (e.g. maternity, parental, study, cultural, sports etc.) is kept in the Public Service officer's personal file. Similarly, a hard copy of all the application/approval forms related to teleworking, reduced hours, flexi-time etc. are also kept in the Public Service officer's personal file. The NAO observes that this current manual process of recording vacation and sick leave in personal cards results in duplication of work effort and hopes that this is reduced or even eliminated once the new online Leave application module is integrated with the Absence Management system and implemented across the Public Service in 2017.

Finally, Central MFIN also maintains other worksheets related to: disciplinary action against Public Service officers within its Ministry; absences from work due to attendance to external training or conferences/seminars; and details of Public Service officers who do not have a substantive grade and are employed on a contract basis.

2.3.3 Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government

During the course of the audit, the NAO observed that the HR section within the Corporate Services Directorate at MJCL, maintains a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets, related to *'Progressions and Promotions'*, *'Employees on Contract positions'*, *'Employees who are due for a Confirmation of Appointment'*, *'Employees on different family-friendly measures'* and *'Employees on Reduced Hours'* amongst others. A number of other worksheets, such as those listing the entities falling under MJCL, and all the Directors heading the various departments and entities under MJCL, are also kept. The NAO is pleased to note that all these Microsoft Excel worksheets are stored in a well-structured folder on a shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment.

As highlighted earlier in the report, the HR section within every Ministry must fill in an *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* listing all the transactions that should be updated or modified in HRIMS. These transactions include all staff movements, i.e. new recruitments, progressions and promotions, whether any resignations/retirements were recorded in that particular month and the reason behind their resignations/retirements, for instance, whether an official was dismissed, retired, deceased, resigned or service contract was terminated etc. The *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* may also include details of officials who were transferred from a particular department/Ministry to another, and the date when the officials were transferred. All this information is sent on a monthly basis to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate through the Government e-mail, whilst a copy of this sheet is stored electronically on the shared network drive. In the following months, the HR section would then check whether the changes submitted in the *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* were recorded in HRIMS, to ensure that all the personnel details are continuously updated.

In this context, the NAO learned that since HRIMS and Dakar applications do not have the requisite built-in knowledge of Government HR procedures (such as those relating to internal promotions and progressions), various procedures are totally dependent on human input. As a result, the NAO noted that most Microsoft Excel worksheets are created out of the individual's personal interest to remedy such shortcomings – a case in point is the *'Employees who are due for a Confirmation of Appointment'* and the *'Employees who are due for a Progression'* worksheets. In this regard, the NAO observed that the HR section within the Corporate Services Directorate extracts a report from the HRIMS application annually and all the information is populated in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. As a result, the HR section is in a better position to kick off the relevant process when an MJCL official is due for a confirmation of appointment or a progression.

Meanwhile, the NAO was informed that the HR section was collating a database, also in Microsoft Excel format, related to qualifications, knowledge and skills attributed to MJCL's personnel. In view

of the fact that a similar exercise was already carried out across the Public Service in 2010, the HR function clarified that since the Ministry's portfolio had vastly changed since then, the HR function felt the need to refresh and update the qualifications, knowledge and skills database pertaining to MJCL's personnel. In this regard, this process is still in its initial stages and the HR function has only recently started collating such information. Whilst the NAO commends the initiative, the HR function admitted that this was not an easy task and understands the fact that employees might not fully co-operate, since not everyone is willing to divulge all the academic qualifications that they possess. Such employees might be wary that providing such information would have an adverse effect on their individual career options, such as being transferred to another department or Ministry against their will, which is often not the case. The NAO was assured that all the information collected is kept confidential within the HR function and stored on the shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment.

2.3.4 Research and Personnel Systems Directorate – Office of the Prime Minister

As highlighted earlier in the report, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate provides guidance and support, and also monitors the implementation of its HR IT systems (mainly Dakar and HRIMS) in Ministries and line departments. In this regard, Ministries and line departments are obliged to inform the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate of any employee movements, such as transfers, resignations, terminations, progressions and promotions, and should also submit monthly returns listing Public Service officers who reported sick or who may have applied for and were granted permission for teleworking.

During the course of the audit, the NAO was informed that Public Service officers who are working on reduced hours, flexi-time or teleworking are not recorded on HRIMS, but to date are only recorded in a Microsoft Excel worksheet at Ministerial/departmental level. However, even though there is no specific field in HRIMS to indicate if a Public Service officer is working on telework for instance, such data is still recorded as a remark in HRIMS by the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate. In this regard, the NAO was informed that Ministries and line departments must forward monthly reports to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate listing Public Service officers who may have applied for and have been granted permission to telework, or if a Public Service officer, who is currently on teleworking arrangements, has amended his/her existing working hours.

Contrary to the above, when it comes to Public Service employees working on reduced hours, no returns or any other information is received or collected, and such information is not recorded in HRIMS or even a Microsoft Excel worksheet. In this regard, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate stated they only rely on the Dakar Payroll module to check and verify whether a Public Service officer is working on reduced hours or not.

The NAO was also informed that all the data gathered above (from payroll and from the returns submitted) is then collated by the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate and used to prepare a '*Full Time Equivalence*' report, which is then passed onto the National Statistics Office (NSO) every months.

Meanwhile the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate also keeps track on the number of Gozitan employees working in Malta, across the Public Service, as well as in the Public Sector. It should be noted that this data, which is forwarded to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate by the respective Ministries, cannot be recorded on HRIMS, and thus is only being recorded on a separate Microsoft Excel worksheet.

Finally, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate also receives sick leave reports, submitted by the respective Ministry, on a monthly basis, and records all this information in a specific Microsoft Excel worksheet. This sick leave report includes a list of those Public Service officers, within the respective Ministry, line departments and entities, who reported sick during a particular month. Such reports are normally generated by the HR section within the respective Ministry, line departments or entities, from the Dakar's Absence Management module, which is then extracted, filtered and saved in Microsoft Excel worksheet, before it is forwarded to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate.

2.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

The NAO is concerned that Ministries and line departments are still relying on such a legacy system, which may be problematic due to compatibility issues with the latest Microsoft Windows Operating Systems, obsolescence or lack of security/technical support.

Although the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate's intention is to phase out the HRIMS application, once all the relevant HRIMS data is centralised into one HR system, the NAO recommends that the Directorate ensures that all the functionalities and data residing on the existing HRIMS application are included in the new system.

A number of inconsistencies between the different Ministries and line departments were observed by this Office in terms of who is responsible to update personal details on HRIMS. Whilst MJCL and MEDE have access rights to update personal details directly on HRIMS, MFIN do not follow suit and instead submit an e-mail to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate so that the latter can update HRIMS accordingly. The NAO notes that apart from obvious inconsistencies of administration/management of data between the different Ministries, this increases the possibility of errors due to the additional human input in the process. In this regard, the NAO recommends that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate ensures that all the Ministries should follow a common process flow and in this case, personal details should always be updated directly on HRIMS by the respective Ministries and line departments.

The NAO observed that in the event that a Public Service officer is appointed to a new position, there are various instances whereby the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate do not receive a copy of the official letter of appointment but are only informed of such appointment by Ministries through the '*Employee Movements Information Sheet*'. Thus, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate has to waste time and resources chasing the respective Ministry or line department to submit the relevant documentation.

The NAO further observed that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate have a backlog of six months of data that needs to be inputted and updated on to the HRIMS application. This is partly attributed to the fact that certain entities under the Ministry's portfolio are not submitting the *'Employee Movements Information Sheet'* and/or the corresponding documentation on time, if at all, as already stated above. In addition, based on observations carried out during the audit fieldwork, the NAO notes that this backlog may also be partly attributed to understaffing at the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, in particular when considering the amount of manual input that is carried out by this Directorate. In this regard, the NAO recommends that the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate should draw up a policy or procedure that binds the Ministries and the respective line departments/entities to submit all the necessary documentation on time. Furthermore, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate should properly address the backlog of HR data awaiting inputting into HRIMS, and find a solution, IT based or otherwise, to decrease the said backlog to a more reasonable volume/timeframe, thus ensuring that the HRIMS application is always updated with the latest amendments.

With reference to the skills profiling exercise, the NAO questions the fact that whilst the data collection phase of the skills profiling exercise was carried out in 2010, and the Government has procured five additional Dakar modules in 2015, however, the Skills and Qualifications module (which forms part of these Dakar modules) has not yet been implemented across the Public Service. Even though the NAO is aware that some, possibly random, updates were made to the skills profiling data by some of the selected Ministries, the NAO is highly concerned with the validation of the data as a whole. In particular, from observations carried out by the NAO, it appears that the updating of this data is done out of the Ministry personnel's own initiative, and is only applicable to either newly engaged employees, or to existing officers, as long as the HR personnel are informed. In addition, the NAO cannot be sure that such ongoing exercises are carried out regularly, and across all Ministries and line departments.

Thus, the NAO opines that before the Skills and Qualifications module is implemented across the Public Service, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate ensures that all the information relating to existing Public Service employees is updated before the data is migrated into the new module, including those employees who were newly recruited within the Public Service since the exercise was first carried out.

The NAO notes that the implementation of a new Performance Appraisal module, which forms part of the Dakar system, was implemented in mid-2016. In terms of the uptake of the system, at the time of the audit, 88% of the Government user population had completed the *Initialisation* process for the 2016 appraisal, but this dropped to 71% of Government user population who had completed the *Start-of-Year* for 2016. These figures continued to drop, since whilst just 68% of Government user population completed the *Mid-Year* appraisal for 2016, only 63% of the Government user population had completed the *End-of-Year* appraisal for 2016.

In this regard, this Office acknowledges the fact that there is a learning curve in adapting to this new electronic format. However, the NAO questions the reason why user training on this new module, prior to its introduction, was delivered to Supervisors and Next-level Supervisors only.

In fact, the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate stated that training on the Performance Appraisal module was not provided to the remaining Public Service officers. User training was offered to about 1,070 officers, although 105 individuals did not attend. In this context, the NAO was briefed by a number of key HR personnel at the sampled Ministries who argued that the delivery of this training could have been handled much better, particularly with some hands-on training rather than just a presentation session. However, whilst the Directorate acknowledged the fact that no hands-on training was provided, neither the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate nor the IPS, have the facilities and/or resources required to deliver such extensive training. The NAO was informed that it was practically impossible to deliver hands-on training to such a large audience (having a Supervisory role only), due to the lack of training resources and facilities¹⁸ at IPS. Additionally, the NAO was also notified that in order to facilitate the use of the new electronic Performance Appraisal module, a self-explanatory user manual was created by the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate and uploaded onto the system, whereby an end user could easily download and follow step-by-step instructions on how to fill-in and complete a Performance Appraisal throughout all the stages. In light of the above, the NAO recommends that in the future, it should be ensured that the introduction of any new IT system is supplemented with the appropriate level of training, including the provision of hands-on training, for a substantially representative proportion of the target users.

Further to the above, although the NAO commends the effort involved in moving from a manual to an electronic Performance Appraisal process, the NAO encourages the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate to ensure that this new system is perceived as a proactive form of Public Service officer appraisal through which Management can support team members and increase their engagement, motivation and job performance.

The NAO observed that the selected Ministries have their own processes and methodologies for dealing with career progressions and promotions. Whilst MEDE utilizes a specific application, named Foxfire, to generate a report from HRIMS, extract the report in Microsoft Excel worksheet and determine which MEDE Public Service officer is eligible for a career progression in a particular year, MFIN, on the other hand, tackles this process differently. In this regard, Central MFIN do not refer to the HRIMS application but rather go through every personal file and manually input all the details of those Public Service officers who are eligible for a career progression in a particular year in a Microsoft Excel worksheet. In this regard, the NAO is of the opinion that such processes and methodologies should be streamlined and consistent throughout each Ministry or line department.

In terms of the widespread use of Microsoft Excel worksheets, the NAO acknowledges the fact that such worksheets are very useful, particularly when filtering data after generating a report from an existing HR system. Such worksheets also facilitate the Public Service officers' day-to-day operations, especially if an HR IT system does not offer the required functionality (for instance, to record who is teleworking). However, the NAO is concerned that overall, there is substantial manual inputting

¹⁸ The IPS can only accommodate 12 users in every Training Lab. Thus, in total the IPS can only accommodate 24 users concurrently if both Training Labs are utilised to deliver such training courses.

and possible duplication of processes, which are more prone to human errors. For instance, it was observed that every Ministry selected for the purpose of this IT audit, records all absences (whether it's vacation, study, sick, cultural leave etc.) in such Microsoft Excel worksheets, since the users usually feel that these worksheets are more practical and give them better control of such movements. At the same time, these users have continued to record these absences manually on the Public Service officer's personal card (such as vacation leave) or the 'yellow card' (for sick leave) amongst other manual documents. In addition, certain types of absences, such as (vacation leave) are also being inputted in the Dakar's Absence Management module since the introduction of this application. The NAO recommends that such manual processes, especially the use of these 'cards', are phased out completely, whilst all kinds of absences are eventually recorded centrally into the Dakar's Absence Management module.

In conclusion, the NAO is concerned that the selected Ministries do not have a common formal approach for the identification of the skills their Ministries/departments require, nor do they have the tools in place to achieve this objective. In this context, during the site audit visits, the NAO observed that the selected Ministries were not even in a position to quantify what skills they have, whether these are in the right place and what additional skills they need. Only MEDE, to a certain extent, could identify the skills/qualifications of their teaching workforce in Government schools through their STS application.

In this context, the NAO opines that unless the Skills and Qualifications module of the Dakar system is implemented across Government, Ministries will be limited in their ability to plan ahead and fill the workforce capability gaps in a comparable or structured way.

Chapter 3

Professional development in the Public Service

Any organisation, public or private, depends on the knowledge, skills, expertise and motivation of its HR. Meeting the development needs of employees should therefore be amongst an organisation's major and long-term aims. This priority aim can be addressed by:

- Providing employees with training opportunities to achieve maximum effectiveness in the shortest possible term.
- Ensuring that employees develop their skills and capabilities to be able to operate flexibly and respond rapidly to changes within their organisations.
- Ensuring that the best use is made of the natural abilities and individual skills of all employees for the benefit of the organisation and their career.

The *'Manual on Staff Development in Public Administration – 4th Edition, 2014'* highlights that development and training are a continuous and systematic process. All training should be based on the identification of the organisation's needs in relation to its corporate functions, policies and objectives. Training in Public organisations should also take account of the wider context of Public Administration, and should aim to make staff aware of their professional and ethical obligations, which apply to them as public employees under the PAA.

Training is not effective unless it has a purpose, which can only be defined if the training needs of an organisation and its employees are duly identified and analysed. Such an analysis should concentrate on:

- How an organisation is performing and how it should perform.
- The skills and abilities of its workforce and whether they are related to the organisation's needs.
- What type of work individual employees are actually doing.
- What their duties should be in relation to the overall performance targets of their employing organisation.

Training needs, therefore, should primarily be analysed for the organisation as a whole, secondly for groups or units with particular functions, and thirdly for individual employees. These needs

should be summarised in order to establish the areas and priorities for training, and the form of training to be adopted. Therefore, the overall summary should include the number of employees in each category, the number of employees requiring training, the type of training to be provided, and an indication of training priorities.

3.1 Institute for the Public Services

The IPS is the central training organisation of the Public Service, providing training to Public Service officers at all levels from clerical staff to top Management. It also carries out research on matters relating to organisation and management in Maltese Public Administration. The Institute is a legal entity set up under the Education Act (Chapter 327) in partnership with the University of Malta and the Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). This not only facilitates the accreditation of the training programmes offered, but also ensures that the tertiary-level training needs of Public Service officers are adequately catered for.

The Institute's origins go back to 1989, when the Public Service Reform Commission issued a far-reaching report, which recommended, among many other things, that the Public Service should have its own central training department. As a result, the Staff Development Organisation (SDO) was duly established within OPM during the following year. In 2010, this organisation was transformed into the CDRT, which in turn evolved into the IPS in 2016.

The Institute is governed by an Executive Board and managed by the Head of IPS. Most of its staff work within the Institute's Training and Development Directorate, which is responsible for all the training programmes on offer other than the academic programmes of study, short courses abroad, international conferences and seminars.

Apart from the Training and Development Directorate, the IPS also includes a unit devoted to research. The research undertaken by the Institute is focused on issues of management and organisation in Public Administration. Through its research, the Institute acts as a think-tank, generating ideas as inputs to the decision making process, and supporting the development of strategies and initiatives relating to change and renewal in public administration.

The research projects undertaken by the Institute and its predecessor organisation (CDRT) have dealt with, among other things:

- The selection process for Public Service officers in general service grades and the career progression of Public Service officers who obtained academic sponsorships.
- Inspections of private firms by public authorities.
- The allocation of statutory ministerial responsibilities.

- The use of exit interviewing as a people management practice.
- The ideal hours of service delivery by Government departments from clients' point of view.

The Institute's research output normally takes the form of research papers, which are presented to higher authorities for their consideration. However, the Institute goes beyond this, as the need arises, and it has also drafted official policy documents and legislation. In fact, the IPS/CDRT's research has contributed directly to change initiatives such as the streamlining and simplification of selection processes in the Public Service, and the reform of Government inspections of private firms.

3.2 Professional development across Ministries

Professional development can be defined as the process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities either in the workplace, or through an outside organisation, or by watching others perform their job. Professional development helps build and maintain morale of staff members, and is thought to attract higher quality staff to an organisation.

3.2.1 Training programmes

The IPS offers an extensive portfolio of training programmes and boasts around 8,000 participants who are trained every year through some 500 courses. These training programmes are delivered in line with a competency framework, which Government considers essential, and a priority for line managers and Public Service officers to help them in their personal development and career progression. In this regard, the IPS groups the various training courses under five encompassing areas, namely:

- i. Continuous Development Training.
- ii. Corporate Services Training.
- iii. Policy and Government Training.
- iv. Management Development Training.
- v. Information Technology Training.

The above training areas are normally open to Public Service officers only and each training area is further subdivided to cater for a specific audience. In this context, the courses on offer at IPS in every training area are listed by competencies, namely Managerial (Scales 1–10), Aspiring Managers, or Clerical and Supervisor (Scales 11–16). The competencies are intended to:

- Establish a framework with different categories of training, which Government considers essential, and a priority for officers within the Public Administration.
- Help line-managers and employees easily identify relevant training under the different categories.

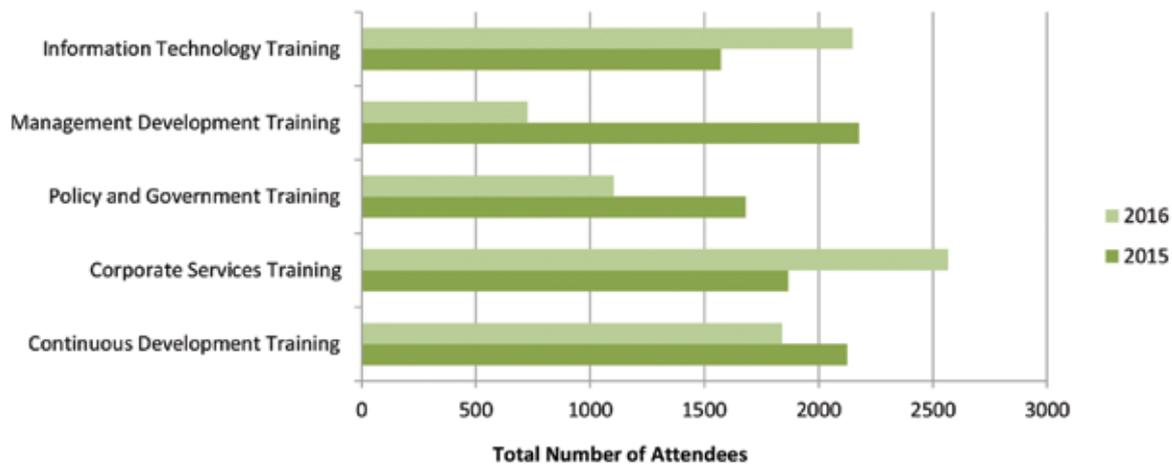
During the course of the audit, the IPS provided the NAO with a statistical report of the total number of Public Service officers who attended any one of the courses offered at the Institute under each training area during 2015/2016. As shown in Table 4 (represented graphically in Figure 4), the number of Public Service officers who attended at least one of the courses on offer by the Institute under the respective training area was 9,424 for 2015 and 8,385 for 2016.

Table 4 - IPS Training Areas

Training Area	2015	2016
Continuous Development Training	2,126	1,841
Corporate Services Training	1,867	2,566
Policy and Government Training	1,681	1,104
Management Development Training	2,178	726
Information Technology Training	1,572	2,148
Totals	9,424	8,385

Source: Institute for the Public Services

Figure 4 - IPS Training Areas



To apply for any one of the courses on offer at the IPS, one has to fill in the relevant application form, which can be downloaded from the IPS website¹⁹. Whilst most of the courses on offer have a standard form, some courses that constitute part of the Public Management Toolkit programme, for instance, have their own specific application form. The standard application form requires

¹⁹ Standard Application form

applications to be supported by a nominating officer. The latter should be the applicant's line manager whose role is to ensure that the training is relevant to the applicant's work, and to approve the application if he/she is satisfied on this count. The nominating officer may recommend staff for training on his/her own initiative if he/she considers the training beneficial to the Ministry, line department or entity.

In this context, the NAO was informed that most of the application forms are received by e-mail through the IPS generic mailbox²⁰. However, there may be instances whereby the application form is received by hand or by post. All the application forms received by post or by hand are sorted out by the Administration section and forwarded to the relevant section/s within IPS. Whichever the case, all the personal details of the applicant and the relevant course for which the applicant has applied for are inputted in the relevant TMS application, whilst every applicant is put on a waiting list by the respective unit responsible for that particular training course. Upon completion, an acknowledgement is sent by e-mail to the respective applicant. However, there may be instances whereby applicants are not accepted, especially if the course that they have applied for is not relevant to the applicant's work. Ideally, Public Service officers should attend training after a training needs analysis has been carried out within their Ministry, line department or entity.

Such training needs analysis makes it possible to establish the areas and priorities for training and the form of training to be adopted. In addition, modular courses such as the Public Management Toolkit, are designed to equip future and current holders of headship posts with a wide range of competences. These are a mix of Public Service related knowledge together with an established set of skills that are universally acknowledged as essential.

Meanwhile, the NAO was informed that training courses are planned by the IPS according to the number of potential applicants (as recorded in the waiting list), and the tutor's availability to deliver a particular training course. To this extent, the NAO observed that the process for preparing, co-ordinating, and scheduling a typical training course is carried out manually by the respective section. Once a particular course has enough potential applicants, the IPS will kick off the process of scheduling the course as long as funds²¹ are available. The IPS must first co-ordinate with the tutor on his/her availability and establishes the dates when the course can be delivered. When a potential date for the course has been set, every applicant who is on the waiting list for that particular course will then receive an e-mail informing him/her when the course will be offered by the IPS. In this regard, it is to be noted that the IPS tries to accommodate around 20 applicants for every course unless the course on offer is IT related, since the IT training rooms can only allocate 12 applicants (1 workstation for every official) at a time.

However, it was explained that since circa 50% of the applicants interested in a particular course would dropout for a number of reasons by the time the specific course is scheduled, the IPS would usually wait to have more than 20 potential applicants (sometimes even up to 40 applicants)

²⁰ training.development.ips@gov.mt

²¹ The training courses on offer at IPS are funded either by National funds or through a framework agreement.

before preparing for the training course and setting a specific delivery date/s. Moreover, if the minimum number of applicants is not met, the IPS would publish an advert for that particular training course on the Government's Intranet to attract potential new applicants. Eventually, when the required number of potential applicants have committed themselves to attending the relative training course, the training room where the course will be delivered is booked for that date/s.

Upon successful completion of the course, the applicant's status will be changed in the TMS application from 'selected' to 'completed' and a Certificate of attendance will then be handed in to the applicant. Finally, following the successful course completion, line managers who had initially nominated and endorsed the '*Course Application form*' are contacted by the IPS to obtain their feedback and evaluation on the applicant's progress following the course attendance.

It is to be noted that the IPS courses are normally free of charge for Public Service officers. However, each course carries its own specific cancellation fee, which is incurred if an applicant who has been accepted for the course fails to attend without giving a valid reason.

3.2.2 Government Training Expenditure

During 2016, Government invested €1,362,000 under Recurrent Expenditure Item 32, which encompasses training expenditure. The expenditure under this Item excludes the general 'internal' training provided through the IPS to Ministries and line departments, as described in the preceding section of this Chapter.

Table 5 - Government Training Expenditure under line Item 32

Year	Actual Expenditure under line Item 32 - Training	Total Operational & Maintenance Expenses	Total Number of Employees within the Public Service
2011	€ 1,190,000	€ 109,496,000	29,263
2012	€ 987,000	€ 115,578,000	29,169
2013	€ 961,000	€ 127,578,000	29,863
2014	€ 1,105,000	€ 138,687,000	31,009
2015	€ 1,088,000	€ 160,294,000	31,398
2016	€ 1,362,000	€ 176,008,000	31,355

Source: MFIN Financial Estimates 2013-2018 and the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate

Furthermore, Table 5 shows that during the period 2011 to 2016, training expenditure hovered between €961,000 and €1,362,000.

In light of the above, it is worth noting that during this six-year period, the Government's Total Operational and Maintenance Expenditure increased steadily year on year, going from €109,496,000 to €176,008,000, whilst the total number of Public Service employees has remained constantly in the range of 30,000, as highlighted both in Table 5 above and earlier on in Chapter 1.

Apart from the Recurrent Expenditure Item 32, the NAO observed that under the OPM recurrent vote, the IPS has another specific training related fund – Programmes and Initiatives Item 5757 – Public Service Training (Table 6 refers). Upon further enquiry, the NAO was informed that these funds serve for operational purposes within the Institute.

Table 6 - Other training related funds under OPM vote

Year	Actual Expenditure under line Item 5757 - Public Service Training
2015	€ 121,678
2016	€ 96,635

Source: MFIN Financial Estimates 2017-2018

In fact, these funds primarily cover the costs incurred by IPS to pay all the tutors’ fees for actual courses delivered as well as various other ancillary costs directly related to the provision of training courses by IPS, such as the rental fees incurred for courses/seminars delivered at 3rd party premises, amongst others.

3.2.3 Academic Sponsorships

When training in specific and specialised areas is required, Ministries and line departments use external, local or overseas resources in order to enhance the academic level and particular skills and abilities of their employees. This type of training requires careful planning and study. The courses offered by local and overseas educational institutions and training organisations should be evaluated beforehand to ensure that they provide the type and level of training required by the Ministry and line departments and the respective employee.

In this context, the *‘Manual on Staff Development in Public Administration – 4th Edition, 2014’* stipulates that line departments may resort to this form of training, either locally or overseas through the grant of:

- Full or partial Government sponsorship to Public Service officers and persons selected for appointment.
- Partial Government sponsorship to Public Service officers who have been awarded scholarships or bursaries by foreign Governments, international bodies and organisations after direct and outright nomination by the department or after selection limited only to serving officers.
- Facilities of study leave (paid or unpaid) or time-off to individual officers who, on their personal initiative, follow courses locally or overseas.

Apart from its extensive portfolio of training programmes, the IPS also offers sponsorships on behalf of the Government of Malta to Public Service officers with the aim of helping them continue their formal education, gain Tertiary-level qualifications and develop their careers. Sponsored courses vary from Diploma courses to Master’s Degree programmes and are offered primarily by the Institute’s partner organisations, namely the University of Malta and MCAST.

Table 7 - Scholarship funds allocated for Public Employees under OPM vote

Year	Actual Expenditure under line Item 5759 - Scholarships for Public Employees
2015	€ 18,000
2016	€ 40,000

Source: MFIN Financial Estimates 2017-2018

In this regard, the NAO observed that specific funds are allocated by IPS (under the OPM vote) for academic sponsorships to Public Service officers – Programmes and Initiatives Item 5759 – Scholarships for Public Employees.

In view of the above, the NAO gathered that in 2015, €18,000 were allocated for this matter, whilst another €40,000 were then allocated in 2016 (Table 7 refers).

The sponsored courses vary from year to year, although some courses feature regularly, notably the BA (Hons) Public Administration and the MBA (Public Management) offered by the University of Malta and the BA (Hons) Public Projects offered by MCAST. These courses have been designed to meet the requirements of the Public Service, and indeed MCAST’s BA (Hons) Public Projects is offered exclusively to Public officers and Public sector employees who apply through IPS.

The sponsorships offered by the Institute are normally advertised through OPM circulars in the months of July and August, and these circulars provide instructions on how to apply for sponsorships. The number of sponsorships for each course will depend on the funds available. If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of places available, a selection process would be held. Sponsorships may include paid study leave, part-payment of course fees or both, depending on the course. Prior to the commencement of their studies, selected officers would be required to enter into a binding commitment to serve the Government for a specific period, as defined by the “*Manual on Staff Development in Public Administration (Appendix III)*” after the completion of their studies. These scholarships are offered by the Public Service to its employees in the knowledge that employees are the Ministry, line department or entity’s most important asset, and in keeping with the concept of lifelong learning and the development of a learning culture.

Similarly, the Scholarships Unit within MEDE administers the various Scholarship Schemes that fall under the Ministry’s remit, including the Malta Arts Scholarships, Malta Government Scholarship, the Malta Sports Scholarships and the Endeavour Scholarship scheme amongst others.

Table 8 - Scholarship funds allocated under MEDE vote

Year	Actual Recurrent Expenditure		
	Item 5446 - Malta Government Scholarships Fund / Endeavour B	Item 5567 - Arts Scholarships Fund	Item 5630 - Sports Scholarships Scheme
2012	€ 490,068	€ 246,468	€ 47,679
2013	€ 849,838	€ 187,962	€ 89,999
2014	€ 671,262	€ 245,417	€ 69,650
2015	€ 590,827	€ 240,512	€ 112,588
2016	€ 626,986	€ 241,167	€ 120,000

Source: MFIN Financial Estimates 2014-2018

The NAO was informed that all the scholarship schemes highlighted above are funded separately under the MEDE vote (Table 8 refers). In terms of line Item 5446 – Malta Government Scholarships Fund/Endeavour B, prior to 2014, this vote was only intended to cover scholarships awarded under the Malta Government Scholarships Scheme (Postgraduate), which scheme was first launched in 2006, whilst the last call under this scheme was awarded in 2014. As from 2015, the Malta Government Scholarship Scheme (Postgraduate) was merged with the Endeavour Scholarships Scheme and referenced as Endeavour B. Meanwhile, the Endeavour A is part of this Scheme, which is connected to the new ESF (European Social Fund) Project [ESF.03.015]. Five calls are expected to be issued under the Endeavour A, with €7.7 million being allocated for Scholarships Grants to support programmes at MQF Level 7 and 8. The Scholarships awarded under the Endeavour A are part-financed by the EU with co-financing rate of 80% out of EU funds and 20% out of National Funds. Following the 3rd Call publication of both the Endeavour A and B rankings, 655 Scholarships have already been awarded under Group A compared to the 178 scholarships awarded under Group B since 2015.

Whenever a new Scholarship scheme is launched, MEDE issues a press release and the media is invited to attend for the launch. To qualify for any of the Scholarship schemes on offer, the applicant must go through the full set of regulations, which can be downloaded from the Scholarships Unit's website²². Through this website, prospective applicants should access the respective online application pertaining to each Scholarship scheme administered by this Unit. The publication of rankings for each scheme are also eventually viewed on this website, once the selection process is completed.

In addition, if the applicant is employed within the Public service, he/she must provide an approval/covering letter from the respective Permanent Secretary, together with the supporting documents requested for each scheme. The use of an e-ID is not required or favoured, in view of applications submitted by foreign nationals. However, all applicants must apply online through the Scholarships Unit's website and should ensure that their application has been successfully submitted. Applicants are advised to keep a printed copy of the Application form together with a

²² MEDE's Scholarships website

printed copy of the electronically generated acknowledgement. Any other supporting documents which are not uploaded with the online application, should be handed over to the Scholarships Unit before the application deadline (usually every application should be submitted within a month from the opening date). In the meantime, any queries related to a particular Scholarship can be forwarded by e-mail or sorted out over the phone.

Subsequently, by closing date and time of application, the application will no longer be accessible. The Scholarships Unit would liaise with the Ministry's IMU and MITA, to generate a report of all the applications that have been received electronically, since the Scholarships Unit does not have the facility to generate such report itself. The Directorate would then extract and filter the report data in a Microsoft Excel worksheet, which is then saved on a shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment. This worksheet is 'vetted' to ensure, for instance, that no duplicate applications exist, before it is put to various administrative uses, such as recording scheduled interview dates, markings obtained by every applicant during interviews, etc. The NAO was also informed that this report is also useful when ESF audits are being conducted.

3.3 Human Resources Training systems

An HR Training system is mostly designed to handle all the back-office tasks associated with running training sessions, including the processing of application forms, scheduling of courses, attendance record keeping and the generation of various reports amongst others.

In this context, the TMS, also referred to as the SDO Training database, is the main software application used within IPS. Since the TMS application, which was launched circa 2005, is not a web-based application, the software must be installed on every user's workstation and each user is provided with a login and a password. Thus, whenever a new user requires access to the TMS application, an electronic request for service (eRFS) is raised with MITA for the installation of the TMS application on the user's workstation and for the creation of a new user account. Whilst the latter is managed by the Ministry's IMU (OPM), the installation of the TMS application is carried out remotely by MITA.

The NAO observed that access to the TMS application has been granted to all the Area Coordinators (in charge of a particular training area as highlighted earlier on) and to their respective staff. It should be noted that each section within IPS is given specific access to TMS according to the particular area under its responsibility (e.g. the Management Development section can access/input/select Management courses only).

Whilst reviewing the TMS application, the NAO observed that the system offers a number of reports, whereby the IPS can generate quarterly or annual reports, reports by department, or an event status report. For instance, the IPS can generate an event status report of all Public Service officers of a specific grade who have completed a course/s at IPS during a given year. The report can be then printed or extracted and saved in a Microsoft Excel worksheet.

In spite of the above, the NAO was informed that in the event that changes or maintenance is required on TMS, such as adding new courses, new tutors, new Government departments or 'transferring' a department under a different Ministry, the IPS does not have the functionality to amend any of the fields on TMS. In this regard, the IPS must liaise with the Ministry's IMU to amend the fields accordingly.

Meanwhile, it is envisaged that the current TMS application is replaced with a new training management system that is integrated with the current Dakar application used across Ministries. In this regard, the NAO was informed that certain officials within IPS have already attended training on this new training management system. However, following enquiries by the NAO, at the time of the audit, the IPS are not in a position to state how the data from the existing TMS application will be migrated on to the new training management system or when it will be implemented within IPS.

Apart from the TMS application, the IPS has two separate Microsoft Access databases, to cater for the Public Management Toolkit and Induction training courses respectively.

The Public Management toolkit is a modular training programme aimed at Public Service officers who are currently in headship positions, as well as those aspiring to be in such a position but do not possess the necessary skills, or who have identified skills gaps in core areas of Public Management. The toolkit is also intended for those individuals who need a quick refresher or reinforcement of their existing skills. Thus, the Public Management toolkit gives a short but comprehensive overview of some core competencies, which are essential for all senior managers in the Public Service. Since the Public Service officers who will be reading for the Public Management toolkit will be assessed with a written exam, a small Microsoft Access database was created to cater for the whole Public Management toolkit, since the existing TMS application does not offer the functionality to record any grades/marks obtained for any courses, which are assessed upon completion.

In this regard, the NAO observed that the Administration section within IPS handles all the application forms related to the Public Management toolkit and is responsible for inputting the applicant's details in the system. To supplement this, the Administration section compiles a list of all the applicants who wish to read for the Public Management toolkit in a Microsoft Excel worksheet and forwards the list to the respective sections within the IPS together with the corresponding application forms. In turn, within their own specific areas, every section would then access the Toolkit database to schedule and coordinate the courses, keep track of who attended for each module and record the respective grades/marks obtained by each individual, before a certificate of attendance is awarded to the applicant upon the successful completion of the modules.

A similar Microsoft Access database was specifically created to cater for the Induction training courses that are now being offered by IPS. In this regard, the NAO was informed that this database had just been launched in January 2017 to record all the clerks or principals who were recently recruited within the Public Service and who will be following an induction training programme. Due to the fact that at the time of the site audit visits, this database had just been launched, it was

still in the process of being fine-tuned to cater for the respective needs/requirements of IPS.

The NAO was also informed that when new principals and clerks were recruited within the Public service, PSD forwarded a list of all the individuals who were eligible to attend this induction training programme. Upon inputting all the personal details of these individuals in the new database, the IPS then scheduled the dates when the induction training will be offered and informed every individual accordingly through the Government e-mail. During the course of this training programme, the responsible officers within IPS would mark whether the individual has attended all the training modules or he/she did not turn up for any one of the modules on offer. Upon completion of the full training programme, every individual is assessed and the mark attained is recorded in the database before a certificate of attendance is awarded.

Both the Public Management toolkit database and the Induction Training database must be installed on every workstation and are accessible through a shared username and password. Furthermore, the NAO was informed that every section within IPS takes it in turn, on a pre-scheduled daily basis, to back up the databases and save the backup file on a shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment.

It was also observed that the IPS can generate a number of reports from a pre-defined list of query reports created on both the Public Management toolkit database and the Induction Training database. Additionally, every user can also create tailor made reports through the Microsoft Access's query builder functionality.

Finally, upon enquiry by the NAO during audit testing, it was gathered that in order to supplement the IT systems highlighted above (TMS, Public Management Toolkit database and the Induction Training database), every section within IPS utilizes a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets. In this regard, it was explained that before the TMS application was implemented, the former SDO used to record all the applicant's details and the corresponding courses they had applied for/attended in Microsoft Excel worksheets. The latter were used for circa 10 years and only ceased to be updated upon the introduction of the TMS application. However, these worksheets are still being kept for historical/reference purposes and are stored on a shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment. In addition, every section maintains a number of Microsoft Excel worksheets to record marks/grades awarded to applicants upon completion of a written exam, to record those individuals who may have failed and need to re-sit a written exam, and to record all the applicants who are on a waiting list for a particular course, amongst others. Similar to the Microsoft Access databases highlighted above, these Microsoft Excel worksheets are stored in a well-organised folder structure on a shared network drive hosted at MITA's Segregated Hosted Environment.

3.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Public Service officers wishing to attend training courses organised by the IPS must download an application form from the IPS website and then submit the relative application form either through

the Government e-mail or by post. In addition, the processing of these applications as well as the preparation, co-ordination and scheduling of a typical training course is carried out manually by the respective section within IPS. In this regard, the NAO is concerned with the high dependency of manual input, which could lead to inefficiencies. Thus, the NAO recommends the introduction of a web-based application form that should be integrated to the new Training Management module. Moreover, the IPS should ensure that this new Training Management module would eventually automate both the online submission and processing of such application forms.

Whilst reviewing the training programmes on offer at IPS, the NAO noted that certain ICT Training courses are offered at both Standard and Advanced levels, e.g. ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) Standard or Advanced Excel. Even though every application form received is endorsed by the respective line manager or supervisor, the IPS should emphasise that an application for an Advanced level course will be accepted as long as he/she has attended or is already in possession of a Standard level in that particular subject.

The NAO observed that none of the selected Ministries keep track of those Public Service officers within their Ministry who may have attended one of the courses on offer at IPS. In fact, prior to the site audit visits, the NAO had forwarded a pre-audit questionnaire to the selected Ministries, in which they had to submit a report to the NAO with the total number of Public Service officers and the training courses/seminars they had attended in 2015 and 2016. Unfortunately, none of the Ministries was in a position to forward such information and in fact each Ministry had no other option but to resort to the IPS to generate such a report, being that the IPS is the central training organisation of the Public Service and maintains such records.

On the other hand, the NAO observed that certain Ministries keep a separate physical file to record those individuals who attended specialised training courses, which are offered either locally or abroad²³. Whilst this Office commends this initiative taken by the respective HR sections, however the NAO is of the opinion that unless this information is stored electronically, kept centrally and made available to all the relevant entities/departments, such specialised training courses may remain unnoticed unless the HR section or line managers recall that such information is kept aside in a separate physical file.

In this context, the NAO questions how the training needs analysis is carried out within the selected Ministries to establish the areas and priorities for training, especially when a performance appraisal is carried out, if a basic list/record of those Public Service officers who attended any training courses/seminar during a particular year is not being kept. In view of this, the IPS reiterated that whilst the Ministries are encouraged to keep track of those Public Service officers who attended a particular training course/seminar during a particular year, it seems that none of the Ministries were taking up this recommendation. The NAO believes that line managers should maintain and

²³ OPM Circular 32/1999 – Approval of External Training Initiatives – Ministries and line departments are required to monitor and retain statistical information on training activities, which are undertaken throughout the year. In this regard, a comprehensive list of training initiatives approved and implemented at both Ministerial and departmental level should be kept and a copy of the list is forwarded to the IPS on 1st January and 1st July of each year.

have access to professional development and training courses attended by Public Service officers under their responsibility. Such records should be kept by the Ministry's HR section and a copy of the certification obtained is stored in the Public Service officer's personal file.

Meanwhile, during the course of the audit, the selected Ministries eventually forwarded a detailed report listing the total number of individuals, within their respective Ministry, who attended to any one of the courses on offer at IPS during 2015 and 2016. Whilst reviewing these reports, which were originally generated by the IPS from the TMS application, the NAO observed that a specific report had a number of discrepancies. In this regard, even though the Ministries are updated, the departments or line entities that fall under a particular Ministry portfolio were not updated on the TMS application. Thus, the NAO noted that the Commerce department, which should fall under the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business (MEIB), is still linked to MFIN. Similarly, the NAO, which was setup by Article 108 of the Constitution in 1997, became autonomous from the MFIN, but unfortunately the NAO officials who attended to training courses in 2015 and 2016 at the former CDRT, were inputted in the system under MFIN.

The NAO recommends that the IPS together with the Ministry's IMU should kick off a process to ensure that all the data found in TMS is properly maintained and utilised. Given the fact that the current TMS will be replaced and all the data will be integrated in the Dakar application, any changes that are required should be addressed immediately.

Even though a number of enhancements have been made on the TMS application since it was implemented in 2005, the NAO was informed that the system still has a number of limitations. For instance, whenever the IPS would like to schedule a particular course for applicants who are on the waiting list, the TMS application does not offer the functionality to export the list to a Microsoft Excel worksheet but only offers the user the option to print the list. Another limitation is that the IPS cannot record the marks obtained by an individual on certain courses on offer, which are assessed by an exam upon completion. Finally, the IPS cannot input any remarks such as the reason why the applicant could not attend a particular course he/she had applied for, or to record the dates when the IPS had sent an invite to the applicant to attend a course he/she had applied for, and the applicant did not reply.

In these instances, the IPS has no other alternative but to record all the above in different Microsoft Excel worksheets, to facilitate their day-to-day operations rather than record all of the above in the TMS application.

The NAO therefore suggests that the IPS together with the Ministry's IMU office should look into the new Training Management module and ensure that these issues highlighted above are addressed before the new Training Management module is implemented.

In terms of the Public Management toolkit and the Induction Training databases, the NAO already acknowledged that these Microsoft Access databases were created due to certain limitations on the existing TMS application and thus were specifically designed to address the needs of the IPS to

cater for these new training courses on offer. However, whilst reviewing both databases the NAO observed that every database is accessible either through a generic admin or user login. Whilst the admin credentials are used by a limited number of users to input or amend existing applicant's personal details and courses, the user logins are used by the remaining users within the different sections to relate courses to the existing applicants and to schedule the courses accordingly. The same user account is also used to generate reports from the defined list of query reports, which can be then exported and saved in Microsoft Excel worksheet.

In this context, the use of shared usernames and passwords amongst a number of employees goes against Information Security best practices. Primarily, having a shared username and password can make monitoring and creating an audit trail difficult, even more so if there are multiple logins to an account at the same time. Secondly, there is also minimal accountability for shared accounts, as one cannot determine who did what in a particular timeframe. Finally, in terms of password management, a password cannot be changed without coordinating the change with everyone that uses that particular user account so that his/her access is not impacted.

The NAO noted that the audit trails on both databases records the date when any amendments were made in the system, who made these amendments and all the changes (modification of data) made in the system. Even though the system is accessed by a shared generic username, the audit trail will retrieve the username that is used on the workstation to log on to the network. However, the NAO would still recommend that the use of shared generic login credentials is discarded, and instead every user is provided with a personal login, which can be easily identifiable by the system administrator when viewing the audit logs, and granted administrative or user access rights accordingly. The Microsoft Access databases can also be integrated with MITA's Active Directory whereby the same CORP login credentials used by the IPS users to login on to the Government network, is used to login on the Public Management toolkit or the Induction training databases respectively.

A limitation on the Public Management toolkit database is that applicants who have to re-attend a particular course (for example, after failing to pass a compulsory exam) are removed from the waiting list once they have attended for the first course. Another shortcoming of the Public Management toolkit database is that if the applicant has attended the full training programme but failed a particular assessment, the system does not offer the functionality to record the grade if the applicant has been re-assessed again in that particular module. In both these instances, the IPS has to resort to the use of a Microsoft Excel worksheet to keep a record of attendance of all the applicants who attended the Public Management toolkit together with the mark obtained and if the individual has to be re-assessed if he/she had initially failed the exam.

Chapter 4

Management Comments

The following Management Comments were submitted by the respective auditees.

4.1 Research and Personnel Systems Directorate – Office of the Prime Minister

The People and Standards Division is pleased to note that its efforts towards the effective implementation of HR IT systems within the Public Service are, in their great majority, to the satisfaction of the NAO. The Research and Personnel Systems Directorate within the People and Standards Division is fully committed to continue to implement strategies, processes and procedures of added value for the benefit of the Public Service.

Regarding NAO's first concern that Ministries and departments are still relying on legacy systems, this problem has been identified some time ago, and People and Standards Division together with MITA took steps for an interim solution by making a technology refresh of HRIMS, to enable this system to function on 64-bit operating systems. The People and Standards Division is also currently working on a requirements gathering document for a new IT system intended to fill the gap which will be left with the decommissioning of HRIMS. This system will be instrumental in standardising all the HR functions within the Public Service into one corporate system. Considering that the main Dakar system is a payroll system, the new personnel module will be the link, which will eventually, be used to consolidate the present payroll system, together with all the HR modules being developed, into one corporate and comprehensive HR system.

At present, all new employees are entered into the Dakar HR suite by employees of the Gozo Central Salaries Section (CSS) via the payroll system. It is best that employees are entered from this personnel module, and by the respective line departments, and CSS will only be responsible for the salaries element, i.e. for attaching employees to a valid salary scale and step. This is the proposed way forward.

With regard to the inconsistencies observed by NAO in different Ministries and departments when it comes to responsibilities to update personal details on HRIMS, it is to be noted that all responsibilities for the updating of data was explained to line departments from the outset – line departments were responsible for the updating of a couple of fields, like the employees' home address, level of education, etc, while People and Standards Division were responsible for entering new employees into the system, terminations, progressions and promotions. Such information was and still is being taken from Employee Movement Sheets, which are received from line departments every month, or when changes occur – whichever comes first. Information is also taken from letters of appointment and copies of employment contracts, which are regularly

received from line departments. Some Ministries were not aware that they could make changes in HRIMS, and so send all their changes to the Research and Personal Systems Directorate to perform.

With the new on-line HRIMS, which was recently launched across the public service, things became a little different, as the departments are now only allowed to insert details within the 'Information' fields in free text – all other changes are performed by the People and Standards Division. This further increases the urgency for the introduction of a new personnel system, where the decentralisation and delegation of appointments, as per Directive 9, would be further practiced.

The backlog of six months' data mentioned in the report, which needed to be inputted and updated in HRIMS, has now been eliminated, since a new Clerk has since joined the Directorate. Moreover, line departments who are not being compliant in sending Employee Movement Sheets are being scrupulously followed and action has been taken so as to ensure that these sheets are submitted in a timely manner. In addition, line departments will also be asked to submit a copy of the 'Salary Amendment Form' i.e. the form line departments send to CSS for payroll amendments, to the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate, so that HRIMS will have two sources of information.

With regard to the data already collated as part of the skills profiling exercise, the Skills and Qualifications Module of Dakar was almost completed and was ready to be launched across the Public Service last year, but, as mentioned in the NAO report, all efforts had suddenly to be diverted from this module onto the new Performance Appraisal module, which was considered as more urgent at that time. So, the Skills and Qualification module had to be temporarily postponed. Still, no time has been lost, since the Directorate has embarked on a cleansing exercise of the data submitted, and it is the intention of this Directorate to launch this module with 'cleaned' data. Naturally, all departments would need to contact each individual to complete any missing qualifications details. This Directorate should also ensure that new entrants within line departments are, actually, being asked to complete a form, electronic or otherwise, which will be used to populate the fields of this module.

With the introduction of the new Recruitment module, each prospective applicant would be required to insert his/her qualifications as part of his/her on-line application. These qualifications would, eventually, be transferred to the Skills and Qualifications module once an 'applicant' becomes an 'appointee'.

With regards to the new Performance Appraisal module, this system has been simplified and made more 'user friendly' by taking onboard suggestions given by users, and also any feedback made during training sessions. All users were alerted of these changes via e-mail when these changes came into effect during September 2017.

It is to be stressed that the People and Standards Division provided training to all supervisors using the system as mentioned in section 2.4 'Conclusions and Recommendations' of this document – which was no easy task. Training is also continuous and on-going for all new supervisors who start using the system. In addition, Supervisors are also being trained on the theory of performance

appraisal, and how an effective performance appraisal should be made. Training has also been extended to Induction where all employees appointed to a General Service Class grade have a session on Performance Appraisal within their Induction training. Moreover, all users, i.e. Appraisees, Supervisors and Next-level supervisors are provided with a comprehensive user manual, inclusive of screen-shots, which is available once they log into the system. A dedicated telephone line and generic e-mail address have also been provided, so that users can have first-level of support immediately.

Considering the large number of supervisors, which required training, it would have been a very time consuming task to offer hands-on training on the system. Training rooms at IPS contain only twelve PCs, and would take a very long time to train all Supervisors. Up to now, a total of 1,073 Supervisors have been trained.

On a more positive side, comments on the new Performance Appraisal system recently launched upgrade have been very encouraging, and queries on the system, both by telephone and by e-mail, have now diminished considerably. Moreover, all users except those on the iLearn platform are now logging into the system by CORP authentication. Every effort is being made to bring all users to log into the system via CORP authentication.

The system has also been upgraded with a system of alerts and e-mails. With this upgrade, a Supervisor or Next-level Supervisor performs or closes an appraisal, the system automatically alerts the other party of this action. Supervisors can also be alerted via e-mail during certain times of the year, for example, towards the middle of June, when Supervisors need to be alerted to start preparing the mid-year review, and towards the end of the year to close the appraisal. These changes help make the system even more powerful and effective.

Whilst at time some line departments continue to make use of their own Excel sheets and systems even though the People and Standards Division gives them the necessary tools to facilitate and simplify their everyday duties, actions are taken to address this shortcoming. Efforts are made to challenge the Ministry's/department's – the Director of Corporate Services, the Assistant Directors, etc., to scrap their modus operandi in favour of other methods, for such new methods simplify process and are more efficient. MFIN have been a typical example. Unfortunately, the People and Standards Division has no control over their actions, although totally in agreement on NAO's observation, the People and Standards Division will follow up on the recommendations that such methodologies and processes should be streamlined and consistent throughout each Ministry and line department.

On the observation made on the recording of absences, the Absence Management System (AMS) of Dakar was designed to capture all absences – from vacation leave to IVF Leave. A comprehensive training programme was initiated before and during this module's launch, and usage was gathering momentum. Though training has been provided to all users who will be using this system, resistance to the system, as usually happens, has been evident. This Office has been making continuous efforts to ensure that all departments are recording their absences on AMS, and is

henceforth giving strict instructions that AMS will be the only system used and thus follow up on NAO's observations. The Research and Personnel Systems Directorate issues reports on a regular basis to enquire which departments are not using the system, and the relevant DCS informed accordingly. The DCSs are also being regularly told to update AMS during regular fora organised by the Research and Personnel Systems Directorate. The People and Standards Division Permanent Secretary has given clear instructions and requested the support of all Permanent Secretaries of ensure that everyone's duty to update this module is not a mandatory.

The issue of duplication of records has been going on for a long time. Many people simply are not confident with an electronic record on screen, but are very confident with printed paper. The rule of thumb is that if the computerised record gives exactly the same information (or more) of a paper record, this is duplication, and one of them should go. The yellow sick leave card should definitely be scrapped since the Dakar AMS gives exactly the same information, but on a computerised screen, with the added benefit of reporting. However, we have reservations regarding the sick leave card (GP 44). Employees usually apply for vacation leave and receive relevant approvals on this card. So, until an online vacation leave system is procured and fully functional, which module will definitely be mapped to the e-mail boxes of the respective employee's supervisor, then the vacation leave card has to stay for the time being, since it is the only document which shows the supervisor's approval.

With reference to the final remark regarding the standardisation of the HR processes, it is to be noted that an in-house working group, composed of representatives from OPM's IMU, Research and Personnel Systems Directorate and IPS have prepared a detailed requirements' analysis for a new Training Management Systems (TMS) for IPS. This document points to the urgent need of having a Training Management System, which would encompass the current and possibly future training requirements at IPS, and to explore the possibility of investing in an upgrade of the current Dakar Training Management System. The upgrade would consist of a technology refresh from a client/server to a web based solution incorporating all functions and data being offered by the different solutions/platforms in use at IPS today, and interoperable with the Dakar Payroll and HR modules. This document has been approved by both the People and Standards Division Permanent Secretary and the Strategy and Operations Permanent Secretary within OPM, and will serve as a requirements document on which the design of the TMS will be based. Eventually, OPM will liaise with Dakar to obtain a formal solution scope, a statement of works, including effort and maintenance, and a clear timeline for implementation. Once agreed with Dakar's proposed deliverables, OPM will forward a request to engage Dakar services for the implementation of this system.

This system will, eventually, be linked to the online Performance Appraisal module in use within the Public Service. At the end of each Performance Appraisal cycle, Supervisors would suggest to an employee a number of training sessions. The electronic Performance Appraisal form would be accepting a list of available courses at IPS, and when selected, the details of the employee would be automatically populated into the IPS TMS vetting list, awaiting confirmation.

On conclusion, the People and Standards Division is committed to making every effort towards the implementation of NAO's recommendations in the shortest possible time, as well as ensuring that all systems and processes function smoothly, flawlessly and with the minimum of manual interventions, and as transparent as possible.

4.2 Institute for the Public Services

- The Training and Development Directorate within IPS is responsible for all training and events organised by IPS, with the exception of academic sponsorships.
- At present, all training courses are funded through National funds.
- Item 32 consists of funds for training that are allocated to different Ministries and appears in the recurrent vote of each Ministry. Up to 2014, training organised by IPS's predecessor organisation the Centre for Development, Research and Training (CDRT) was funded through Item 32. As from 2015, however, CDRT/IPS training started to be funded through line Item 5757 in the OPM recurrent vote. At present, therefore, IPS training is funded solely through line Item 5757.
- The limitations of the current Training Management system will be resolved through the launch of a customised training module within the Government-wide Dakar system. This module will also supersede the Public Management Toolkit and Induction Training databases. This will also address the issue of training course participants being shown under the incorrect Ministry, since information in Dakar will be updated on an ongoing basis.
- The issue of shared login credentials will be addressed with a view to every user being provided with his/her own login details.

4.3 Ministry for Education and Employment

- **Changing personal data on HRIMS**
Current situation: Changes in personal details (names, addresses etc.) must be updated by the People and Standards Division at OPM. Due to the workload for OPM, to cover all Ministries request, this may result in backlog.

Suggestion: MEDE Administration should once again have access that allows changes to be made as and when required. This will also mean simplification of the process.
- **Employment Returns**
Current situation: Presently to generate a report on the total number of staff by grades MEDE requests the People and Standards Division to run the report for their perusal.

Suggestion: Access is to be given to allow MEDE Administration to run these reports ourselves as was previously done.

- **Pensions Reports**

Current situation: Reports on pensions can be generated but they have very limited information. The reports which MEDE Administration used to generate from the almost obsolete Foxfire can no longer be accessed.

Suggestion: The system needs to be adapted in such a way that MEDE Administration can generate the same pensions reporting information as was done previously.

- **Reporting on unpaid leave**

Current situation: For GP47 purposes, the new updated HRIMS does not allow MEDE Administration to extract information on unpaid leave (Absence History) prior to 2014. Some limited information is available from DAKAR.

Suggestion: HRIMS should allow MEDE Administration to extract this information given it is required information for the GP47 document.

- **STS**

Current situation: STS is a database created in 2006 for MEDE, which is still being used, however its replacement has not yet been released.

Suggestion: Any replacement of STS (or updating) must, as a minimum, retain the current functionalities of the present system.

- **The RMS project**

MEDE awaits feedback from the People and Standards Division at OPM with regard to DAKAR's strategy with respect to this project.

4.4 Ministry for Finance

- *It is stated that MFIN do not carry out necessary updates of users' HR data directly on HRIMS and that officers have the impression that they only have read-only access, such that any minor amendments are sent to the People and Standards Division for the updating of HRIMS.*

This office confirms that MFIN officers were not aware that they could carry out necessary updates of users' HR data directly on HRIMS. However, and following the NAO report, action was taken to ensure that officers dealing with HR issues at MFIN are given access to HRIMS, and that they are aware of its functions. There are presently six Officers at Central MFIN, three at Customs Department and two at the Office of the Commissioner for Revenue who have access to HRIMS.

- *The report also refers to the ‘Employee Movement Information Sheet’, which is to be sent to People and Standards Division on a monthly basis.*

Since the NAO report, backlogs at MFIN have been cleared. MFIN is currently submitting the said sheet on a monthly basis as required.

- *The report refers to a lack of skills profiling tracking on the part of MFIN.*

It is true that no proper Skills and Qualifications inventory was ever directly kept by MFIN following the People and Standards Division skills profiling exercise. As the report states, discussions on this matter are underway, “particularly taking into consideration the Skills and Qualifications module, which should be incorporated with the existing Dakar systems and implemented across the Public Service in 2017”. Once the system is in place, MFIN would be taking action to insert/amend the skills inventory of its present and future staff.

- *Another issue of concern emerging from the NAO report relates to the substantive use of Microsoft Excel Sheets to supplement existing HRIMS systems. Highlighted in the report is the manual preparation of progressions and promotions in the absence of extraction of data from HRIMS. This bureaucratic procedure is rendering the process too lengthy and it increases unnecessarily the possibility of errors due to the high dependency on human input. Moreover, the report notes that the triggering of progressions or promotions in respect of officers in line departments are made by the line departments themselves to central MFIN. This course of action may result in failure to inform Central MFIN to the detriment of the officer concerned whose progression/promotion would have gone unnoticed and there would be increased risk for additional dependency on human input.*

Following the NAO report, in order to tackle the issue relating to progressions/promotions and ameliorate the process, a calendar was created by the Ministry’s HR staff, outlining the due dates for the promotion and/or progression of officers. Although this is not an automatic system per se, the calendar has been organised year by year, month by month, department by department until year 2022. This has somehow alleviated and facilitated the process, such that it is a faster and more practical method than having to go through personal files to determine when an officer is due for promotion or progression.

Apart from progressions and promotions, the report noted a number of other HR functions recorded and processed through Microsoft Excel sheets, such as teleworking, reduced hours, flexi-time, applications for overtime, time-off, vacation leave and sick leave. Since the audit was conducted in April, there have been some changes in the processes of keeping track of the above-mentioned records and various actions have been taken: overtime is recorded in the EPS Dakar System and vacation/sick Leave are recorded in the Absence Management System of the Dakar System. Finger Tech Ingress card-swiping system (implemented on 16th June 2017) is used to justify any absences including vacation leave, sick leave and time-off.

This system of card swiping is not linked to the Dakar system but is used as a verification system for vacation and sick leave.

4.5 Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government

Introduction

The management would like to thank the National Audit Office for conducting an Audit entitled as 'The use of IT systems to identify skills and professional development needs within the Public Service' involving various ministries incorporating the Ministry for Justice Culture and Local Government (MJCL). The management is taking note of the report especially the areas related to MJCL and is committed towards continuous service improvements. The directorate is already targeting the way forward along the lines highlighted hereunder.

Training

Introduction to new systems from central Authority takes time and sometimes further in-house training and hands on applications are needed to address enquires that may arise. The office of the Corporate Service Directorate (DCS) within The Ministry for Justice Culture and Local Government (MJCL) shall be engaging a new Assistant Director to focus on training and other related duties to address the Ministry training requirements. This will be done by conducting training needs analysis to identify skills gaps in every area within the Ministry departments and directorates. This process of data collection will establish the training needs. Subsequently, shall liaise with the Institute for Public Service or other training institutions foreign and local to conduct such training. Training at private institutions will take place depending on the budget presented for each financial year. Induction courses for new recruits are in the pipeline and shall be conducted in house regularly to address the Ministry needs. It is being proposed that training sessions shall be targeted for specific roles.

The Institute for Public Service prospectus highlights several training courses that meets the employee's needs. The DCS office within MJCL ensures that once the prospectus is launched it is disseminated amongst staff. Data is collected and staff apply for training. MJCL urges employees to further their knowledge by attending training courses both locally and abroad and share their knowledge with their colleagues.

IT applications databases

As clearly indicated in the report, the office of the DCS within MJCL maintains several databases which are stored in a well-structured folder and hosted at MITA's segregated environment. Unless the DAKAR systems and modules are fully operational the Ministry is not in position to change its current systems that is utilising Excel and Access databases. Databases are needed to facilitate the day to day operation of the HR section within the DCS which is the focal point of the Ministry.

MJCL had access rights only to update personal data on HRIMS, however, since the module has changed HR has no access to input personal details. Data as promotions, progressions, appointments, transfers and others are being updated by the People Resourcing and Compliance Directorate within the People and Standard Division. The absence leave, vacation leave and other related matters are all inputted on the DAKAR management module.

One of the forms mention in the NAO report is the employment return sheet. Human resources within MJCL endeavour to submit the employment return form regularly with all necessary updates. To facilitate process and ensure that Appointment letters are received by respective directorates and hence data updated regularly, apart from the People Resourcing and Compliance Directorate the office of the DCS shall inform also the Research and Personnel System Directorate.

A team including Information Management Unit representatives within MJCL will be appointed to evaluate improvements to facilitate further the databases managed by the Human Resources within DCS.

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