News Release

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Education Statistics

Foreign Language Learning

Statistics on the teaching/learning of foreign languages in schools in Malta and Gozo during 2002/2003 reveal that, in general, the Maltese educational system provides for the teaching of foreign languages from the lower secondary level upwards. Apart from English being taught from the early stages of compulsory education, only a very small number of independent private schools provided also the teaching of Italian and French to some 62 children towards the end of their primary education.

A closer look at the distribution of languages studied during 2002/2003, shows that at the lower secondary level (forms I to V), Italian maintained its popularity among students' first choice for the studying of a foreign language. In fact, those who took Italian as a first foreign language accounted for 50.9 per cent of the total number of students who were studying a first foreign language. Italian as a first foreign language, however, seemed to be much popular amongst boys. The percentage of boys studying Italian as their first foreign language stood at 61.7 per cent - against the 40.1 per cent for girls. For girls the highest preference for the studying of a first foreign language in 2002/2003 was for French. In fact 40.1 per cent of girls against 27.0 per cent of boys chose French as their first foreign language. These two percetages account for 38.1 per cent of the total number of students who were studying a first foreign language, making French as the second most studied first foreign language among the 11 to 16 year olds.

Apart from Italian and French, there were 1,673 students or 6.0 per cent of the total number of students who were studying a first foreign language, who opted to take German, while another small number of students, just 1.2 per cent took Spanish. Only 5 students took Arabic, as their first choice.

A similar pattern followed in the choice of a second foreign language; Italian proved once again to be the most favourite as some 3,788 students or 52.9 per cent of the number of students who studied a second foreign language, opted for Italian while those who took French accounted for 31.5 per cent. The number of female students who took Italian as a second foreign language accounted for 67.0 per cent of the total female students taking a second foreign language. Logically, this shows an opposite trend to that evidenced in the choice of a first foreign language. Whilst female students gave preference to French as their first choice for foreign language, the majority of them prefered Italian as their second choice. On the other hand, 50.8 per cent of the male students opted for French and 31.4 per cent chose Italian as their second choice. Only 14 students opted for Arabic and another 6 students chose Russian as their second foreign language.

Some 1,190 students or 4.2 per cent of the total number of students at lower secondary did not take any foreign languages, other than English of course. From these 70.9 per cent were boys.

The teaching/learning of foreign languages in schools in Malta and Gozo continues also at the upper secondary level. Taking the Junior College as an example, one finds that in 2002/03, 69.2 per cent of the students were study at least one foreign language (including English). Out of the total of these students 56.2 per cent were studying only one foreign language, 19.4 were taking two foreign languages and 1.4 per cent were taking three foreign languages. The rest or 23 per cent of the students were not taking any foreign language but were studying Maltese since it is compalsory for all students at Junior College to study a language being local or foreign.

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The English language was chosen by 66.6 per cent of the students who were taking a foreign language at Junior College, making English as the first most studied foreign language among these students. Italian and French followed with 22.3 per cent and 6.9 per cent, respectively. There was another small fraction (4.2 per cent) of students who were studying German and Spanish.

Within a European context, Malta compared favorably with other EU member states, other candidate countries and EFTA/EEA countries in the average number of languages learnt at lower secondary level (Isced 2). In fact, Malta had an average of 2.2 languages per pupil whilst the EU average was 1.3 languages per pupil. The highest average was that recorded by Luxembourg at 2.5 and the lowest by United Kingdom with an average of 0.8 languages per pupil.The candidate countries Cyprus and Estonia, had an average of 1.9 and 1.4 languages per pupil, respectively.

Chart 1.Distribution of students by language 1999/2000 - 2002/2003

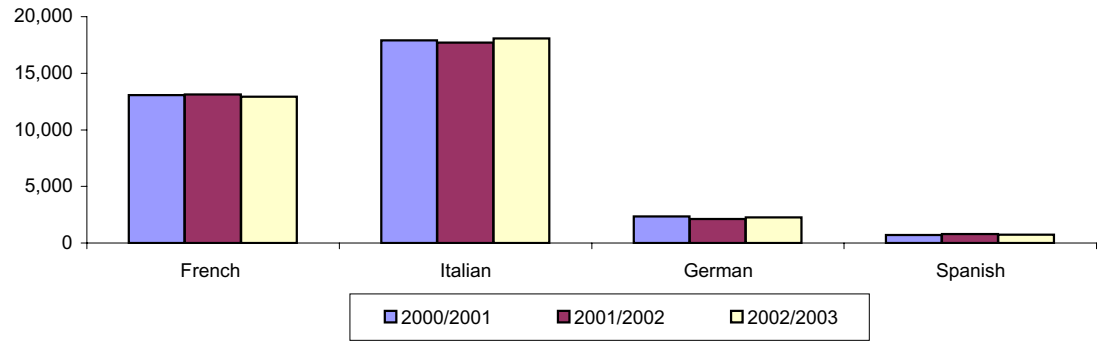


Chart 2. Percentage distribution of foreign languages learned: 2001/2002

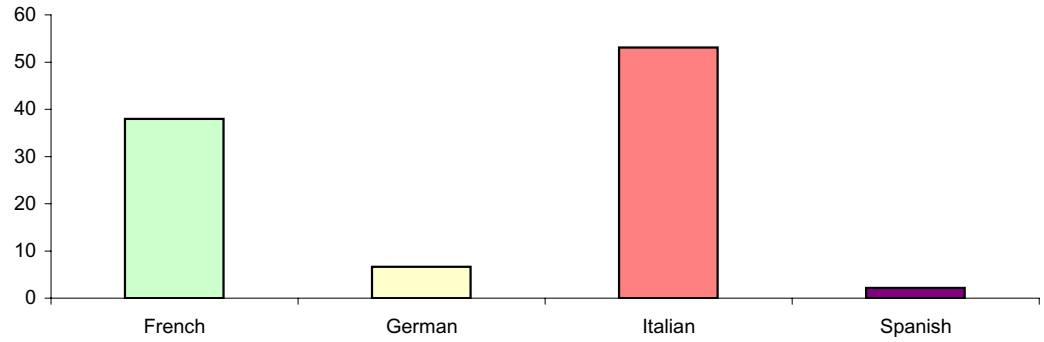
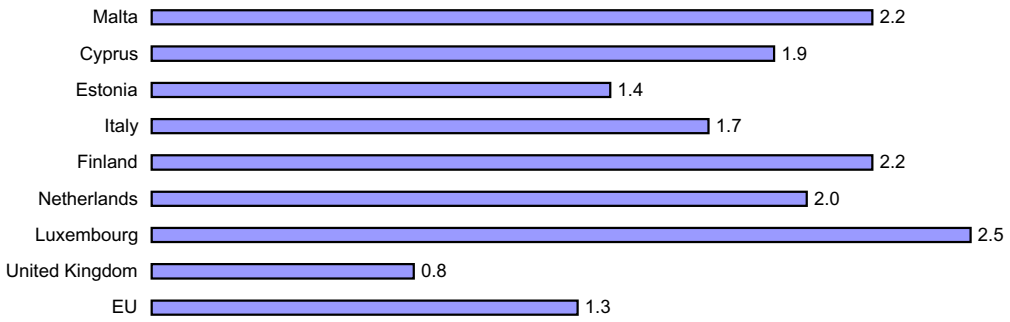


Chart 3. Average number of foreign languages learned per pupil in lower secondary education (Isced 2): 2001/2002



Note: Only a selected number of countries have been used for comparison

Source: Key data on Education in Europe 2003

Table 1. Distribution of students studying a first foreign language in government secondary schools*: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Spanish		Arabic		Not taking any Languages other than English		Total Students		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
Class 1	341	726	79	170	1,265	851	12	63	1	1	33	-	1,731	1,811	3,542
Class 2	405	775	115	166	1,230	859	27	55	-	1	1	3	1,778	1,859	3,637
Class 3	395	775	101	188	1,211	922	14	35	-	-	2	28	1,723	1,948	3,671
Class 4	383	874	83	167	1,207	865	23	27	-	-	5	9	1,701	1,942	3,643
Class 5	375	810	73	187	729	845	8	24	1	1	313	12	1,499	1,879	3,378
	1,899	**3,960**	**451**	**878**	**5,642**	**4,342**	**84**	**204**	**2**	**3**	**354**	**52**	**8,432**	**9,439**	**17,871**

Table 2. Distribution of students studying a second foreign language in government secondary schools*: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Spanish		Russian		Arabic		Total		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
Class 1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Class 2	1	-	4	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	5	-	11	1	12
Class 3	27	42	8	45	71	185	17	86	-	1	-	3	123	362	485
Class 4	7	50	9	63	44	238	21	115	-	3	-	6	81	475	556
Class 5	36	78	11	54	117	331	38	130	-	1	-	-	202	594	796
	71	**170**	**32**	**162**	**232**	**756**	**76**	**331**	**1**	**5**	**5**	**9**	**417**	**1,433**	**1,850**

* Including Boys'/Girls' , Area Secondary schools, and Junior Lyceums

Table 3. Distribution of students studying a first foreign language in government dependent private secondary schools: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Spanish		Arabic		Not taking any Languages other than English		Total Students		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
Class 1	261	634	31	12	518	73	-	-	-	-	14	3	824	722	1,546
Class 2	286	611	50	6	476	86	-	-	-	-	6	2	818	705	1,523
Class 3	288	444	51	17	488	197	-	-	-	-	18	4	845	662	1,507
Class 4	305	482	44	13	465	168	-	-	-	-	29	4	843	667	1,510
Class 5	275	451	52	13	468	159	-	-	-	-	271	222	1,066	845	1,911
	1,415	**2,622**	**228**	**61**	**2,415**	**683**	-	-	-	-	**338**	**235**	**4,396**	**3,601**	**7,997**

Table 4. Distribution of students studying a first foreign language in independent private secondary schools: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Spanish		Not taking any Languages other than English		Total Students		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total
Class 1	144	59	8	10	120	154	4	4	11	10	287	237	524
Class 2	106	65	-	-	145	149	3	5	5	3	259	222	481
Class 3	89	62	8	6	139	109	9	3	11	5	256	185	441
Class 4	60	74	5	3	111	104	3	3	35	3	214	187	401
Class 5	75	50	7	8	96	77	1	2	23	15	202	152	354
	474	**310**	**28**	**27**	**611**	**593**	**20**	**17**	**85**	**36**	**1,218**	**983**	**2,201**

Table 5. Distribution of students studying a second foreign language in government dependent private secondary schools*: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Not taking any Languages other than English		Total Students		
	Males	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Total**
Class 1	313	54	147	17	26	611	14	3	500	685	1,185
Class 2	308	78	70	42	125	572	6	2	509	694	1,203
Class 3	179	60	25	4	37	303	18	4	259	371	630
Class 4	163	50	26	2	78	319	29	4	296	375	671
Class 5	153	66	18	2	113	270	-	10	284	348	632
	1,116	**308**	**286**	**67**	**379**	**2,075**	**67**	**23**	**1,848**	**2,473**	**4,321**

Table 6. Distribution of students studying a second foreign language in independent private secondary schools*: 2002/2003

	French		German		Italian		Spanish		Total		
	Males	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Males**	**Females**	**Total**
Class 1	76	113	13	13	117	27	-	-	206	153	359
Class 2	93	102	9	10	91	41	-	-	193	153	346
Class 3	27	61	-	-	19	2	-	-	46	63	109
Class 4	9	50	-	1	13	17	1	-	23	68	91
Class 5	5	47	1	1	12	7	-	-	18	55	73
	210	**373**	**23**	**25**	**252**	**94**	**1**	-	**486**	**492**	**978**

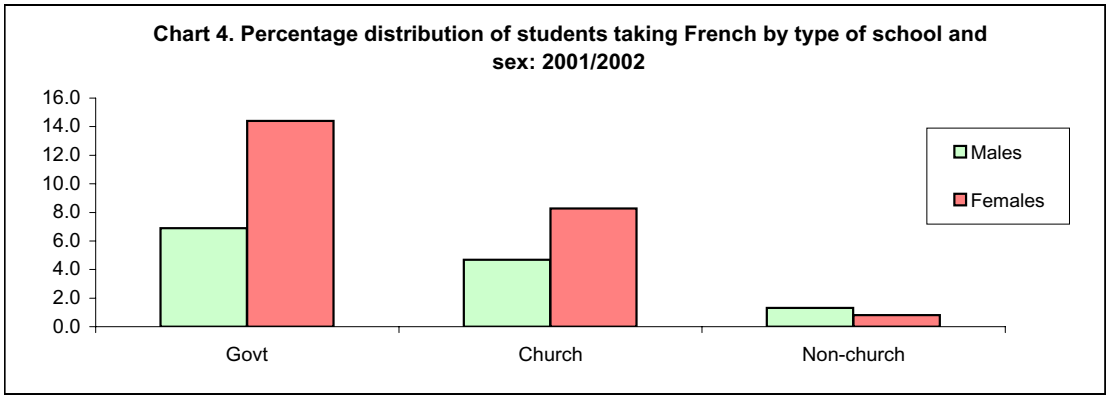


Chart 4. Percentage distribution of students taking French by type of school and sex: 2001/2002
16.0
14.0
12.0
10.0
8.0
6.0
4.0
2.0
0.0
Govt
Church
Non-church
Males
Females

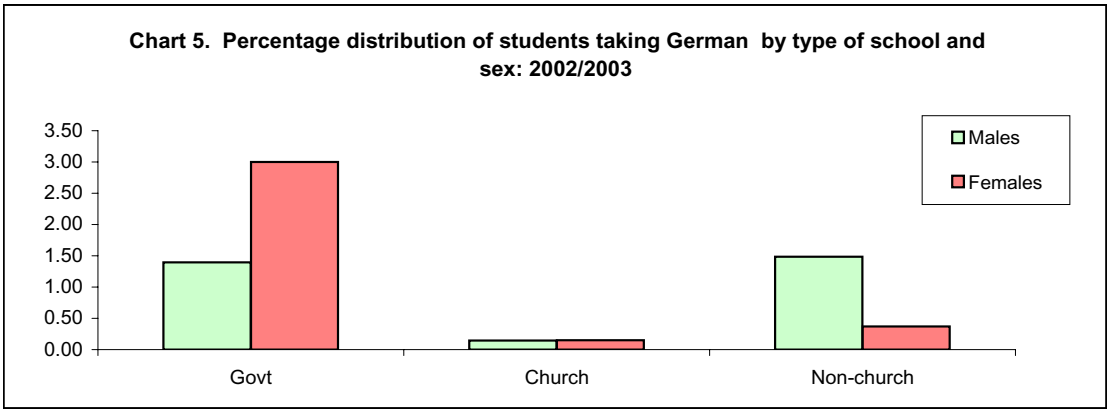


Chart 5. Percentage distribution of students taking German by type of school and sex: 2002/2003
3.50
3.00
2.50
2.00
1.50
1.00
0.50
0.00
Govt
Church
Non-church
Males
Females

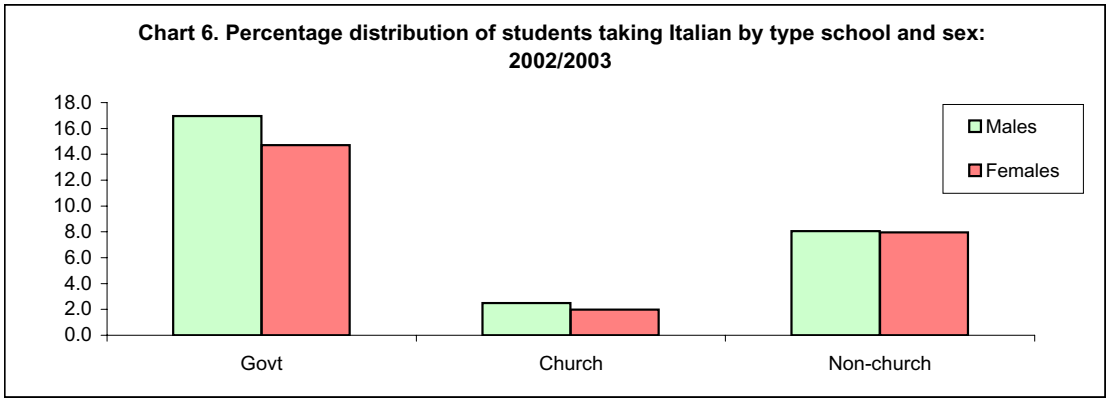


Chart 6. Percentage distribution of students taking Italian by type school and sex: 2002/2003
18.0
16.0
14.0
12.0
10.0
8.0
6.0
4.0
2.0
0.0
Govt
Church
Non-church
Males
Females

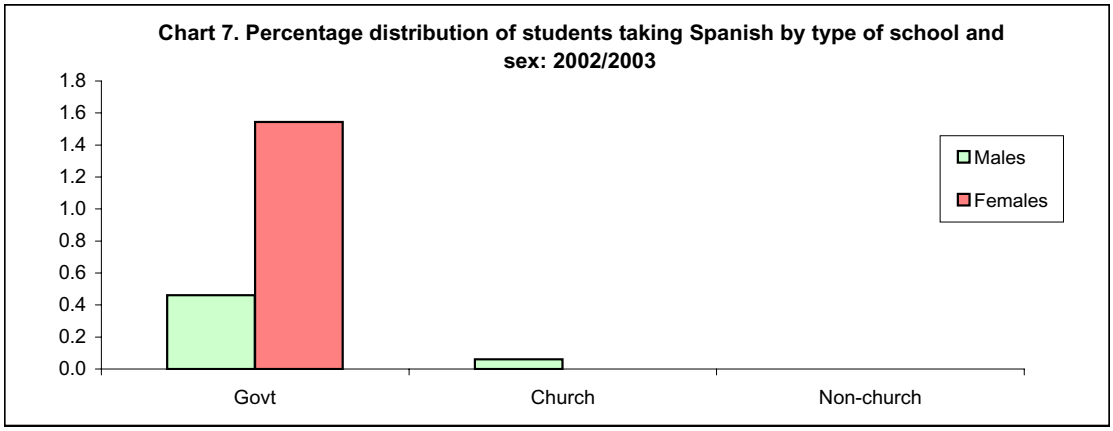


Chart 7. Percentage distribution of students taking Spanish by type of school and sex: 2002/2003
1.8
1.6
1.4
1.2
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
Govt
Church
Non-church
Males
Females

Table 7. Students at the Junior College classified by the language being studied, age and sex: 31st March 2003

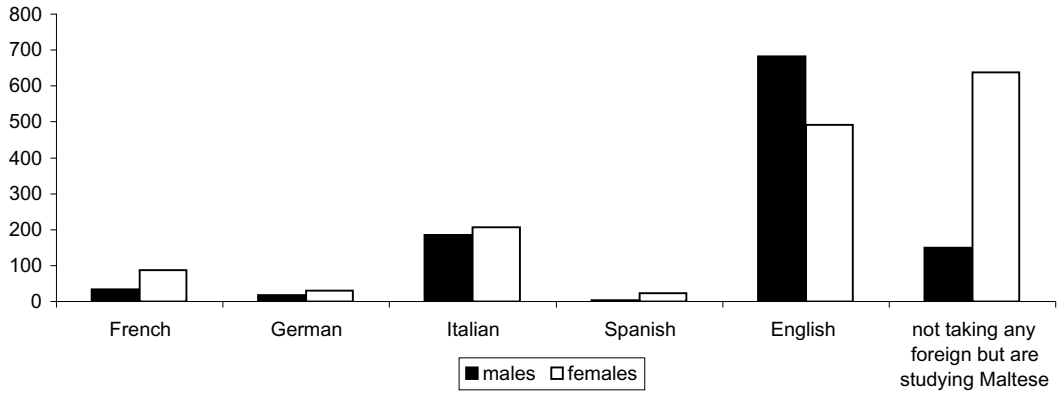
	Males	Females	Total
French	34	87	121
German	18	31	49
Italian	186	207	393
Spanish	3	24	27
English	683	491	1,174
not taking any foreign but are studying Maltese	150	637	787
Total	**1,074**	**1,477**	**2,551**

Table 8. Foreign language learning at the Junior college: 31st March 2003

	Males	Females	Total
taking one foreign language	890	543	1,433
taking two foreign language	134	360	494
taking three foreign language	8	27	35
not taking any foreign language	42	547	589
Total	**1,074**	**1,477**	**2,551**

* including English Language as a foreign language

Chart 8. Students at the Junior College classified by the language being studied, ag and sex: 31st March 2003



Methodological Notes

1. The data contained in this release were obtained from a census among all schools (public, church and private) at primary and secondary level. The questionnaire required information on the different foreign languages learnt by each student between September 2002 and June 2003. Another similar questionnaire was sent to Junior College.

2. Students attending area secondary schools study one foreign languages up to form III, an additional languageis taken in forms IV & V, whereas students attending the Junior Lyceums study one foreign language in forms I & II, and an additional foreign language from forms III to V.

3. The selection of languages is made from a set list of foreign languages which includes French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

4. In terms of Eurostat definitions English is considered as a foreign language. In Malta however, it is an official language and is therefore taught as a compulsory language in primary and lower secondary schools (Isced 1& 2).

5. The data in this release is to be considered as final and is not normally subject to revision.