MISSION STATEMENT:

to provide correct financial assistance and other benefits to eligible persons in time.

The Department of Social Security is responsible for the administration of Social Security Legislation, which provides for the payment of benefits under the contributory and the non-contributory schemes.

These schemes cover the entire population which is in some way recipient of such benefits. The Department is mainly involved in ensuring that financial support is given to those sections of the community which are mostly in need, namely those with a low-income, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

The core operations of the Department of Social Security are to:
- assess, pay and provide information on social security benefits
- encourage individuals and organisations to be aware of, and to comply with their obligations under social security legislation
- keep account of the social security system
- advise Minister on the development of effective and dynamic policies for social security

The Department of Social Security is set up of:
- Director General
- Director (Contributory Benefits)
- Director (Non-Contributory Benefits)
- Director (International Relations)
- Assistant Director (Contributory Benefits)
- Assistant Director (Non-Contributory Benefits)
- Assistant Director (Customer Care)
- Assistant Director (International Relations)
- Secretariat
- Legal Office
- Contributory Long Term Benefits
- Contributory Short Term Benefits
- Non-Contributory Benefits
- Family Benefits
- DAMP Unit
- Legal Office
- Information and Data Protection Office
- Central Registry
- International Relations Unit
- 24 District Offices
**DIRECTOR GENERAL**

The Director General is responsible for all activities on social security including (but not limited to) the implementation and execution of the provisions of the Social Security Act (Cap 318), the strategic development of local policy and standards in the field of social security, the change management function for the implementation of reforms in the social security system, monitoring developments and implementing Directives of the European Union and carry out other duties relating to Malta’s commitments in the Council of Europe, and ensuring that the Department of Social Security processes all benefit claims correctly and in time to eligible beneficiaries within the parameters of the provisions of the Social Security Act (Cap.318) and in line with Ministerial and Departmental policies.

**DIRECTOR (CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS)**

The Director (Contributory Benefits) is responsible for all activities relating to Contributory Benefits, including (but not limited to) assessing and paying of social security benefits, pensions and allowances according to the Social Security Act (Cap 318), ensuring that the Ministry’s social security policies, programmes and activities are coherent and consistent with Maltese government-wide policies;
facilitating excellence and ensure timeliness in the submission of information and practices on social security benefits and schemes as required, implementing, executing and accounting of the provisions of the Social Security Act (Cap 318), and effectively managing the staff in area of responsibility to ensure satisfactory morale and performance levels.

**DIRECTOR (NON-CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS)**

The Director (Non-Contributory Benefits) is responsible for all activities relating to Non-Contributory Benefits, including (but not limited to) more or less the same responsibilities as those for Director (Contributory Benefits).

**DIRECTOR (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)**

The Director (International Relations)'s responsibilities include (but are not limited to) managing the international aspect of all matters relating to social security. In general, the Director (International Relations) will act as the Department of Social Security’s focal point on matters relating to international relations, in the area of social security.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS)**

The Assistant Director (Contributory Benefits) is directly responsible to the Director (Contributory Benefits).

The main objectives of the Assistant Director (Contributory Benefits) are (but not limited to) providing support and advice to the Director (Contributory Benefits) on all matters relating to the Department of Social Security, and in particular on matters relating to Contributory Benefits.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (NON-CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS)**

The Assistant Director (Non Contributory Benefits) is directly responsible to the Director (Non-Contributory Benefits).

The main objectives of the Assistant Director (Non-Contributory Benefits) are (but not limited to) providing support and advice to the Director (Non-Contributory Benefits) on all matters relating to the Department of Social Security, and in
particular on matters relating to Non-Contributory Benefits.

THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CUSTOMER CARE)

The Assistant Director (Customer Care) is directly responsible to the Director (Non-Contributory Benefits) within the Department of Social Security.

The overall objectives of the Assistant Director (Customer Care) are (but not limited to) providing support and advice on all matters relating to the Department of Social Security, and in particular relating to Customer Care.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

The Assistant Director (International Relations) is directly responsible to the Director (International Relations) within the Department of Social Security.

The main objectives of the Assistant Director (International Relations) are (but not limited to) assisting the Director (International Relations) in carrying out and monitoring the European Union and International Relations functions of the Department of Social Security through the Department’s International Relations Unit.

DISTRICT OFFICES

In order to reach the goals laid down in its mission statement, the Department of Social Security provides its services from 24 District Offices spread around the Maltese Islands, 22 in Malta and 2 in Gozo. Through such an approach, the Department aims at reaching out to provide assistance and advice on social security matters in the community.

The district offices mentioned above are situated in the localities of Ħal Balzan, Il-Birgu, Birkirkara, Il-Fgura, Il-Żamun, Ħal Luqa, Il-Marsa, Il-Mosta, I-Limsida, In-Nadur (Gozo), In-Naxxar, Paola, Ħal Qormi, Ir-Rabat, Tas-Sliema, Il-Qawra, San Ħawn, Is-Siġġiewi, Il-Belt Valletta, Victoria (Żożo), Ħal Ħabbar, Ħal-Iebbuġ, Ħel-Qetan, and Ħel-Ibrir. The work carried out at district office level mainly consists of dealing with customers’ queries, filling in of applications for contributory and non-contributory benefits and pensions, and the registration under the Social Security Act of newly employed workers. The registration of unemployed persons is also
carried out at district offices by means of finger reading machines except for Il-Mosta and Il-Birgu where this service is available at the Employment & Training Corporation’s premises within the same locality.

The District Offices of Il-Qawra, il-Belt Valletta and Il-Birgu are integrated in a complex under the name of AĊĊESS. The main aim of the Aċċess Complex is to make it easier for the residents of that particular region to access a number of related services in an integrated manner (one-stop shop) comprising mainly of the Appoţţ Agency, the Social Security Department and the Employment & Training Corporation.

The Department also provides basic customer care service through Local Councils. To this effect, the Department is currently providing basic customer care service to the residents of Birċebbuţja, Il-żudja, ġal Kirkop, il-Mellieţa, Il-Qala, ġal Safi, Ta’ Sannat, Is-Swieqi, ix-Xagħra and Ix-Xewkija through the Local Council office.

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UNIT**

The Department of Social Security has very important international responsibilities and obligations to meet evolving from its commitments arising primarily from Malta’s membership in the EU and from a number of bilateral agreements it has with non-EU countries. In this regard, .the role of the International Relations Unit is crucial.

The role of the International Relations Unit is in fact to facilitate the coordination (i) of the social security EU regulations covering citizens residing and working in the European Union and the European Economic Area, and also (ii) of the bilateral conventions Malta has with other contracting states, and other conventions it may have with any other future contracting states in a courteous and timely manner by maintaining efficient networking with the relevant social security institutions, while maintaining the Department’s commitment towards our customers. It also coordinates other international obligations such as those emanating from the European Social Charter and the Revised European Social Charter of the council of Europe.

Amongst the main tasks and duties of this Unit there is the participation in meetings,
conferences and seminars abroad, especially those emanating from Malta’s membership in the European Union, the implementation and coordination of EC Regulations 883/04 and 987/09, the analysis of international (mainly EU proposals in the field of social security) and drawing up of Malta’s position in this regard, and dealing with several operational and policy queries made by internal and/or external stakeholders and also by the general public concerning internal social security issues.

INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION OFFICE

This office is responsible primarily for the Department’s obligations under the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. This office implements a number of other projects. These include the maintenance of the website with updated and more accurate information on social security matters which can be accessed at www.socialsecurity.gov.mt, the updating of all the Department’s applications for social benefits to reflect changes in the Social Security Act and the Department’s internal set up, and also to be in line with Directives 3 and 4 of the Public Administration Act. This office is also responsible for preparing information material about all social benefits paid by the Department.

In order to help the Department meets its corporate environmental responsibility, the IDPO is also active in devising a system through which all Government Gazettes, Legal Notices, Bye Laws, Bills, Parliamentary Acts and Departmental Orders are being circulated electronically with all staff. This eco friendly system not only helping to reduce the usage of paper but also reducing costs in the process.

CENTRAL REGISTRY

The Central Registry is responsible for the movement of documents within the Department including the upkeep and transfer of files and dealing with incoming and outgoing mail.

DAMP UNIT

The Data Audit Management Processing Unit (DAMP) is responsible for the processing and issuing of payments to beneficiaries of all social security benefits.
Payment processes are scheduled on a daily basis for different social security benefit payments due on a weekly, monthly and quarterly basis.

The annual amounts of social security benefits payable by cheque exceeds 580,000; beneficiaries paid through direct credit payments exceeds 1,600,000; while correspondence letters issued to beneficiaries related to social security benefits exceeds 750,000.

The main objectives of this section is to ensure business continuation at all times, provide a timely support service to DSS employees working on the Social Security IT system (SABS), audit and update data of claimants whilst maintaining a smooth running for all the day-to-day services offered.

LEGAL OFFICE

The Legal Office is responsible for providing legal advice to the Department’s different sections. In the absence of a resident lawyer, the legal office acts as a bridge between the Department and the Attorney Ženeral’s Office especially in contrasting interpretations of the legislation. Representatives from the legal office also submit to the Umpire, the necessary legal documentation in cases of redress. All these activities create the workflow of the legal office. The main functions are providing legal advice and guidance, prosecution and giving evidence in court cases and umpire cases, documentation preparation and drafting and providing legal advice and guidance. This is a core function of the legal office. During the Department’s everyday life, quite a number of legal issues require qualified advice from legal advisors. In such matters the Attorney Ženeral’s Office comes into the scene for advice. This is a healthy process in keeping the Department’s activities in strict compliance with new legislation.

CONTRIBUTORY LONG TERM BENEFITS

Retirement Pensions
Contributory retirement pensions can be divided into two schemes, the flat rate pensions and the two-thirds pensions.

The flat rate pensions are awarded to pensioners who also receive a service pension and to pensioners who have a low pensionable income. The two-thirds pensions are awarded to all other pensioners.

A full retirement pension requires a yearly average of at least 50 contributions from 1956 or from age 19 (whichever occurs later) and/or from age 18 if born after 1958 up to the last full year prior to the year of retirement. With effect from January 2014, the pension age has increased to 62 for both males and females and the accumulation of contributions for a full two-thirds pension has increased to 35 years.

Invalidity Pensions

Contributory invalidity pensions are awarded to persons who have at least paid 250 contributions and are suffering from a medical condition which according to the medical board of the Social Security Department renders them as permanently incapable for any full-time and/or any part-time employment.

Such persons must be incapable for work (suffering from their medical condition) for at least six months prior to their claim and in continuous employment and/or registering for work on the Part 1 register held by the Employment & Training Corporation for at least one (1) year.

There are eight rates of Invalidity Pension according to the yearly average of contributions paid and/or credited and the civil status of the claimant. These rates are not related to the salary earned while in employment.

Widows Pensions

Contributory widow’s pensions are awarded to widows whose spouse had paid not
less than 156 contributions and to widows where their spouse died as a result of a personal injury during the course of their duties (employment).

A widow’s pension is also payable in full without any deductions if widow is carrying out a full-time gainful occupation and, where a widow re-marries, a flat rate widow’s pension will be due.

**NON CONTRIBUTORY BENEFITS**

Non-Contributory Age Pensions

Unemployed persons who are residents in Malta, over 60 and do not qualify for a contributory retirement pension because they do not have the minimum number of contributions paid or credited, may be entitled to a non-contributory age pension if they satisfy the capital and income means test.

Medical Benefits

The Medical Section is responsible for the issue of four Non-Contributory Benefits.

These are the Medical Assistance (SKA), Milk Grant (MG), Leprosy Assistance (LA) and the Tuberculosis Assistance (TA).

When the application is received at the Registry from the District Office, a file is opened and this is then referred to the Medical Section for the Assessment.

In the case of the Medical Assistance and the Milk Grant a Financial Test is carried out and if the Capital and Means Test are above the established limits, case is rejected.

On the other hand if this test is satisfied, case is sent to be seen by the Medical Panel.
If the Medical Board does not approve that claimant is suffering from the medical condition indicated on the application, then claim is rejected on medical grounds.

If the Medical Board approves claim, then assistance is paid from the Saturday following date of application.

Applications for Leprosy and Tuberculosis Assurances are not means tested and are not seen by the Department’s Medical Board.

The following is a small list which may serve as a guide to view Schedules in connection with the Sickness Assistance, the Tuberculosis Assistance, the Leprosy Assistance and the Milk Grant.

One may also make use of the Social Security Act Chapter 318 to view Schedules in connection with the Sickness Assistance, the Tuberculosis Assistance, the Leprosy Assistance and the Milk Grant;

Schedule 2 Part II Sickness Assistance
Schedule 5 Part I Diseases & Conditions in respect of which Sickness Assistance may be payable
Schedule 7 Scale rates of means governing Sickness Assistance
Schedule 9 Weekly rates payable for Sickness Assistance, Tuberculosis Assistance, Leprosy Assistance & Milk Grant

The Social Assistance Section and the Unemployment Allowance Section are two other Sections which form part of the Non-Contributory Section. Benefits awarded by this section are primarily the Social Assistance (SA); Unemployment Assistance (UA), Social Assistance for Carers (SAC), Carers Pension (PW), Unemployment Assistance (UA); and Age Pension (AP), Non-Contributory Disability Pension (HP), and Non-Contributory Blind Pension (BLD Pens).

Irrespective of whether or not claimants had contributed by paying any National Insurance (NI) Contributions prior to their claim, beneficiaries may apply for Non-Contributory benefits. However, these benefits have to undergo a Financial Means
Test.

Social Assistance

A head of household who is not fit for employment due to sickness or due to physical or mental illness

-- Single Parent (SUP) or Separated Person (SA) who cannot engage in full-time employment due to family responsibilities

-- Single persons (SA) who are over 18 years of age and live either alone or with someone else (excluding their parents), and cannot engage in gainful occupation or register for employment due to illness. A head of household who is medically unfit for employment is referred for a medical examination appointed by the Department. SA is paid at the eligible rate every four weekly intervals in advance together with the bonuses.

With effect from January 2014, a person who has been in receipt of SA for an aggregate period of two years within the last three years and who starts a gainful occupation with earnings not less than the national minimum wage, will have his/her SA tapered over a three year period as follows:

65% of SA during the first year
45% of SA during the second year
25% of SA during the third year.

Drug Addict Allowance

A person who is undergoing a drug or alcohol rehabilitation therapeutic programme is eligible for this benefit. An official document from the institution concerned is received by the Department confirming date when programme was initiated.

Social Assistance For Carers (SAF)
To be entitled for this benefit, claimant must either be single or a widow (male or female), who are taking care of a sick relative by themselves on a full time basis. Relatives must be the parents, grand-parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, brothers or sisters’ in-laws and father/mother in laws. Claimants and patients are to give proof that they are residing in the same residence. Case will be referred for a medical examination.

Carers Pension (PW)

The same criteria applies as per SAF cases, however patient has to be either wheelchair bound or bed ridden. Case will be referred for a medical examination and simultaneously to the Departments’ Social Worker to assess situation.

Unemployment Assistance (UA)

Head of household who is seeking employment and is registering for work under Part 1 of the register with ETC is eligible for this benefit.

Rates payable are the same as those awarded by SA, however UA is paid weekly once claimant registers for work in that same week. Bonuses are also awarded with this benefit.

Dependents of persons who for a specific reason are struck from registering under Part 1 by ETC and are registered under Part 2 can apply for SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD (SAB). Their application is assessed by the same board, who decides if assistance is issued or not.

With effect from January 2014, a person who has been in receipt of UA for an aggregate period of two years within the last three years and who starts a gainful occupation with earnings not less than the national minimum wage, will have his/her UA tapered over a three year period as follows:
65% of SA during the first year
45% of SA during the second year
25% of SA during the third year.

Age Pension (AP)

Claimants awarded AP does not have enough NI Contributions to qualify for a Contributory Pension. This pension is awarded to persons reaching 60 years of age (male / female) and who satisfy the financial means test. Payment is every four weeks and bonus is awarded only if claimants are not in respect of this bonus from another section or entity.

Non-Contributory Disability Pension (HP/SHP)

A person who is 16 years of age, and who provides a medical certificate indicating the disability may be entitled to receive Disability Pension if he/she is certified, by a Medical Panel appointed by the Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity, as suffering from a severe disability. Applicants must be 16 years old and Maltese citizens.

NON-CONTRIBUTORY BLIND PENSION

Claimant must be 14 years of age or over, and provide a medical certificate from an ophthalmologist from Mater Dei Hospital explaining the patient's visual medical condition. This Benefit is means tested. Claimant's income, together with the rate of Pension for the Visually Impaired must not exceed the National Minimum Wage as applicable to an 18-year-old person.

SHORT TERM BENEFITS

Sickness Benefit

Sickness benefit is payable to gainfully occupied persons who submit a medical certificate (blue type) that certifies them as suffering from an illness which
temporarily precludes them from carrying out their gainful occupation who have paid or credited an accumulation of fifty (50) social security contributions in total and an average of twenty (20) social security contributions in the preceding two (2) years prior to their claim.

The first medical certificate should reach the Department within ten (10) days from the examination date (first day of sickness) and where the sickness period exceeds one week, an intermediate certificate should be submitted until the final certificate which confirms that the claimant has recovered and will return to work.

Sickness benefit is paid from the fourth day of any sickness period claimed and is exhausted after 156 days, however payment may be extended up to 468 days in every two year period subject to the decision of a medical panel. The final exhaustion will take place when the number of benefit days paid exceeds the number of contribution weeks paid by claimant.

Injury Benefit

Injury benefit is paid to persons who suffer an injury during the course of their employment after the necessary form (NI30) is submitted. Obviously the employee claiming injury benefit should be registered under the Maltese Social Security Act and his employment registered with the Employment & Training Corporation (ETC).

Payment of injury benefit is due with effect from the fourth day of any injury period and can continue in payment up to a maximum of 52 weeks subject to the decision of a medical panel.

Unemployment Benefit

Unemployment benefit is paid to persons who are registering as unemployed under the Part 1 register as held by the Employment & Training Corporation who have paid or credited an accumulation of fifty (50) social security contributions in total and an average of twenty (20) social security contributions in the preceding two (2) years.
prior to their claim. The unemployment benefit rate which is paid for a maximum of six (6) months may be increased to a special unemployment benefit rate

Special Unemployment Benefit

If a person who is in receipt of Unemployment Benefit satisfies the conditions for the award of unemployment assistance, his benefit is increased to a Special Unemployment Benefit.

Marriage Grant

The marriage grant is awarded to persons who get married, who are ordinary residents in Malta and who have been in employment or in self-occupation for at least six months at any time prior to their marriage.

FAMILY BENEFITS

Children Allowance

Children’s Allowance can be divided into two sections, the Children’s Allowance flat rate and the means tested Children’s Allowance benefit.

The Children’s Allowance Żlat Rate is awarded to families whose reckonable income exceeds the maximum threshold of €24439 and children are under 16 years of age.

Żamilies with a reckonable income below the maximum threshold of €24439 and whose children are under 16 years of age may be entitled to a higher rate of Children’s Allowance. Żamilies whose income is below the maximum threshold can also be entitled to Children’s Allowance in respect of children who are over 16 years but under 21 years, provided they are undergoing a full time educational course without receiving any remuneration or registering for work and were never in employment.
Child in Care Allowance

Foster Care Allowance is awarded to foster cares who have been certified by the Aħenzija Appoħp that they are the official Żoster Carers of a child. Żoster Care Allowance will be paid up to age 21 provided the fostered child is still under the care of the foster parents.

Foster Care Allowance will only be paid if the application is approved and rubber stamped by Aħenzija Appoħp.

If the family is fostering more than one child, the family will be eligible to Foster Care Allowance for all the children the family is fostering.

Foster Care Allowance is not means tested and is paid at a fixed rate.

Żoster Care Allowance cannot be paid in conjunction with Children’s Allowance for the same child.

Disabled Child Allowance

Disabled Child Allowance is awarded to a family who has the care and custody of a disabled child.

In order to benefit from this Allowance, an application must be submitted, signed by both parents where applicable and endorsed by a doctor to certify the child’s medical condition. Where available, supporting documents regarding the medical condition of child should be submitted with the application. A medical panel appointed by the Department of Social Security examines the child and the medical panel decides whether the child qualifies for the Disabled Child Allowance. The medical panel may approve Disabled Child Allowance up to age 16 (14 in case of visually impaired cases) or for a period of time, in which case a review will be
effected after the lapse of the time indicated by the medical panel.

Disabled Child Allowance is not means tested and is paid at a fixed rate until child reaches his 16th birthday (14 in cases of visual impairment).

Disabled Child Allowance can be paid in conjunction with either Children’s Allowance or Children’s Allowance Żlat Rate or Żoster Care Allowance.

Maternity Benefit

Maternity Benefit is awarded to a pregnant woman by virtue of being pregnant.

A woman who opts to avail herself of Maternity Leave shall not be entitled to any Maternity Benefit. Thus a claimant must either be unemployed or else if still in employment, claimant must not have availed herself of Maternity Leave. The application must be submitted either after claimant reaches her eighth month of pregnancy or within six months from the birth to the child. Maternity benefit is not applicable in cases of adoptions.

Maternity Benefit is not means tested and is paid at a fixed rate.

Maternity Leave Benefit

Maternity Leave Benefit is paid to those who are Maltese or EU or EAA citizens or those with refugee status, resident in the Maltese islands and have availed of all maternity leave. Claimant is to apply for Maternity Leave Benefit at the end of her maternity leave. However, it is not paid if 6 months from the end of the maternity leave have expired. This benefit applies to employed persons who have availed of all the maternity leave as stipulated by the Employment and Industrial Relations Act or to those self employed persons who would be eligible to maternity leave. Maternity benefit is not applicable in cases of adoptions.

Supplementary Allowance
All those who are a head of household and have an income that does not exceed the limit set for Supplementary Allowance may receive Supplementary Allowance. The limit may change every year. Supplementary Allowance rates vary according to income subject to a maximum rate.

Senior Citizen Grant

The annual Senior citizen Grant is paid to all those residents in the Maltese islands who are over 75 years of age living in the community and not residents of an elderly institution or hospital.

Rates
The following links to the current rates as paid by the Department of Social Security:

Department of Social Security Annual Reports

You can find the latest Department of Social Security Annual Reports by clicking on the following link:
