

# Department of Social Security

## Overview

The Department of Social Security is responsible for the administration of Social Security Legislation which provides for the payments of benefits under the contributory and the non-contributory schemes. These sections 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 vulnerable and are mostly in need, namely those with a low-income, the sick, the elderly and the unemployed.

## Total Expenditure

The total expenditure on Social Security Benefits for 2013 reached €810.2m, reflecting an increase of €41m over the previous year.

The following table shows the expenditure on all Social Security benefits payable under the Social Security Act, (Cap 318) during 2013. This table comprises the contributory and non-contributory benefits issued by the Department.

Table 1

Type of Benefit	2012	2013	(+ or -)
Pensions in respect of Retirement	392,966,449	409,538,262	16,571,813
Pensions in respect of Invalidity	25,058,718	25,634,606	575,888
Pensions in respect of Widowhood	108,375,572	113,843,454	5,467,882
Benefit in respect of Industrial Injuries	1,518,266	1,564,801	46,535
Benefits in respect of Unemployment	2,257,211	2,673,559	416,348
Children's Allowance	39,322,802	42,794,375	3,471,573
Maternity Benefit	2,218,586	2,163,862	-54,724
Sickness Benefit	6,618,649	6,774,005	155,356
Orphan's Allowance	88,937	84,050	-4,887
Marriage Grant	870,489	774,810	-95,679
Bonus	54,314,674	59,299,086	4,984,412
<b>Total</b>	<b>633,612,365</b>	<b>665,146,883</b>	<b>31,534,518</b>
Pensions in respect of Age/Visually Impaired	19,893,076	21,057,452	1,164,376
Pensions in respect of Disability	11,200,966	11,961,735	760,769
Social Assistance	69,020,495	75,127,686	6,107,191
Disabled Child Allowance	731,418	795,979	64,561
Medical Assistance	17,782,089	18,285,330	503,241
Bonus	10,286,768	11,004,927	718,159
Supplementary Allowance	6,596,495	6,811,331	214,836
<b>Total</b>	<b>135,511,307</b>	<b>145,044,440</b>	<b>9,533,133</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>769,123,672</b>	<b>810,191,323</b>	<b>41,067,651</b>

## New Social Security Measures

The Department was responsible for implementing a number of measures, most of them announced in the 2013 Budget.

Pensioners in receipt of a social security pension were once again awarded the full cost of living as in the previous year with a 2/3 increase in the pension weekly rate and the remaining 1/3 paid as a cost of living bonus at the start of the year.

The age related to the Senior Citizen Grant of €300 was extended from the age of 80 years to the age of 78 years for persons who reside in their own residence or with relative.

Another €200 from one's service pension, bringing the total to €1266, is no longer considered in the assessment process of the social security pension entitlement.

Maternity Leave Benefit increased to cover four additional weeks instead of two.

Persons over the age of 65 years who are at risk of poverty were awarded an additional €100 over and above the Supplementary rate.

The Child Allowance maximum rate extended for those in employments with a salary equal to the national minimum wage.

The Child Allowance Fixed Rate for high income increased to €450 per year per child

Disabled persons born before January 2007 benefit from the same income/earnings assessment as for those married after January 2007

The pension apportionment between a pensioner who resided in a state financed residence and spouse who remains at home, increased from 40/60 to 30/70 and spouse at home is guaranteed the rate of a single person on Age Pension, that is, if 70% is less than the Age Pension rate for a single person

Parental credits are due to persons born between 1952 and 1961. Conditions for persons born after 01/01/1962 apply but maximum award is equal to one year per child and two years are applicable if child is severely disabled.

Credits are awarded to youths under the age of 25 who carry out voluntary work in Malta and/or abroad up to a maximum of 5 years as long as s/he returns to employment or self-employment for a minimum of 5 years

Credits are also due to a person whose application for Carer's Pension is rejected on means testing but satisfied the medical panel and the contribution test

Credits are also due to a person who is eligible to Social Assistance for Carers and satisfies the contribution test

The option to choose the highest Pensionable Income to persons born after 01/01/1962 who retire through an Early Retirement Scheme in anticipation of privatisation, extended to persons who retire in anticipation of restructuring as well

The Widows' Pension flat rate awarded also to widows/ers who re-married before January 2007

### Contributory Scheme

The total revenue collected during 2013, in terms of the Social Security Act (Cap 318) amounted to €645,296,850 which reflects an increase of €36,724,648 over the previous year.

These figures are broken down in the following table:

Table 2

Type of Contribution	2012 (Actual)	2013 (Actual)	(+ or -)
Class I - Contributions in respect of Private Industry	281,027,560	300,001,226	18,973,666
Class I - Contributions in respect of Government Employees	87,626,255	91,093,713	3,467,458
Class II - Contributions by Self-Employed persons	36,286,691	36,427,738	141,047
Further Contributions	2,279,341	4,010,521	1,731,180
State Contribution	201,350,343	213,761,639	12,411,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>608,572,202</b>	<b>645,296,850</b>	<b>36,724,648</b>

### Contributory Pensions

The following table shows the number of persons in receipt of a Contributory Pension at the end of 2013. Here the upward trend in the number of pensioners, especially the new retirees continued with a net increase of 2.12% being recorded in the number of retirement pensioners over the previous year.

As a result of the budget speech for 2013 all pensioners were awarded the full cost of living increase. Thus two-thirds of the cost of living increase €2.72 was added to the weekly pension rate and the remaining one third amounting to €1.36 was given in one lump payment in advance for the whole year.

As in previous years the maximum pensionable income for Social Security purposes was once again increased by the cost of living allowance to reach the amount of €17,629.

Table 3

Type of Benefit	2012	2013	+ or -
Retirement Pension	8,277	7,440	-837
Increased Retirement Pension	2,139	2,017	-122
National Minimum Retirement Pension	8,858	8,720	-138
Decreased National Minimum Pension	115	108	-7
Increased National Minimum Ret. Pension	3,095	3,155	60
Two-Thirds Pension	37,136	39,603	2,467
Invalidity Pension	512	427	-85
Increased Invalidity Pension	176	140	-36
National Minimum Invalidity Pension	4,514	4,516	2
Decreased National Minimum Invalidity Pension	6	6	0
Widow's Pension with Service Pension	333	321	-12
National Minimum Widow's Pension	8,249	8,087	-162
Widow's Special Allowance	-	-	-
Widow's Benefit	-	-	-
Widow's Allowance	-	-	-
Early Survivor's Pension	1,843	1,819	-24
Survivor's Pension	6,253	6,905	652
Disablement Pension	308	295	-13
Orphan's Allowance	18	16	-2
Parent's Allowance	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81,832</b>	<b>83,575</b>	<b>1,743</b>

### New Pension claims

During the period under review the pensions section within the Department of Social Security continued processing new claims for Retirement, Widows and Invalidity Pensions. The number of new claims for a Retirement Pension amounted to 1707, 909 new claims were submitted for a Widows Pension and 524 new claims were submitted for an Invalidity Pension.

### Pension reviews

During the same period, revisions were undertaken for Retirement, Widows and Invalidity Pensions in connection with the new collective agreement for Civil Service employees that came into effect during 2012 and by virtue of the service pension budget measure announced in the budget for the year under review.

Through the above mentioned collective agreements, circa 33,000 pensioners had their pension reassessed and arrears paid accordingly and another 5,000 pensioners benefitted from the service pension budget measure mentioned as well.

### Short Term Benefits

During 2013, the Short Term Benefit (STB) Section in Gozo continued with the normal duties of processing claims pertaining to sickness benefit, unemployment benefit and injury benefit where an increase in the number of claims was recorded over the previous year as per table 2 further below. As per table 3, there was an increase in the submission of weekly medical certificates for sickness benefit purposes which had to be keyed in in order for such claims to be assessed and paid accordingly.

As in the previous years, the Gozo Branch once again managed to issue the annual reviews of Supplementary Allowance claims on time and as in previous years the whole staff compliment performed their duties mostly via Telework. The total number of Supplementary Allowance claims reviewed amounted to 27,526 of which 25,092 were reviews to ascertain entitlement for year 2012/2013 and 2,434 claims pertained to late or change of status applications. Total number of Marriage Grant Applications processed during 2013 was 1,597.

The Short Term Benefits Section also continued with the processing of Energy Benefit applications. A total of 2,797 new applications were assessed and the relative vouchers issued accordingly and another 334 vouchers were also issued to charitable institutions.

The section also re-issued 4,049 vouchers which had expired and also took action on 160 cases which were referred by the Benefit Fraud & Investigations Directorate.

The Call Centre in Gozo is manned by staff trained to perform Customer Care & information duties by telephone on 25903000. During 2013 Call Centre answered 68,941 calls from various DSS enquiring clients.

## Short-Term Benefits

Table 4

Type of Benefit	Number Of Claims		
	2012	2013	+ or -
Sickness Benefit	124,888	125,837	949
Unemployment Benefit	17,440	17,850	410
Special Unemployment Benefit	935	1,137	202
Injury Benefit	3,053	3,056	3
Marriage Grant	3,610	3,227	-383
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149,926</b>	<b>151,107</b>	<b>1,181</b>

Table 5

Type of Medical Certificate	2012	2013	+ or -
First/Final (less than 4 days)	76,014	76,662	648
First/Final (from 4 to 6 days)	29,453	29,396	-57
First (open)	19,421	19,779	358
Intermediate	96,088	96,908	820
Final	17,699	17,985	286
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>238,675</b>	<b>240,730</b>	<b>2,055</b>

## Children's Allowances and other Family Benefits

### Children's Allowance Benefit (CA)

During the year 2013 the Children's Allowance in Gozo section reviewed all the Children's Allowance claims that were in payment with a view to establish the new Children's Allowance rates for the benefit year starting July 2013.

A total of 23,338 beneficiaries were paid through the process for Children Allowance Flat Rate (CAFR); while 19,722 beneficiaries were paid through the Children Allowance Means Test (CAMS) in July 2013. The number of household in receipt of Children's Allowance benefit at 31st December 2013 was 43,060.

Apart from the annual review as described above the Children's Allowance section received 2510 requests for an adjustment in the payment rate of the Children's Allowance benefit due to a change in the family's circumstances such as additional children and termination of employment. These adjustments necessitate a review over and above the annual review indicated in the previous paragraph. A further 841 claims were also processed in connection with marriage separations, new marriages and deaths of one of the spouses.

During 2013 the Children's Allowance Section also received 1857 new claims (1st time application). New claims fall under the Quality Service Charter (QSC). All claims received were processed within the time limit established by the QSC.

### Maternity Benefit (MB)

During the year under review a total of 2116 Maternity claims were received by the CA section and given that this benefit also falls under the QSC, all claims were processed and paid within the established time-frame.

### Maternity Leave Benefit (MLB)

Maternity Leave Benefit proceeded normally following its introduction in 2012. Maternity Leave Benefit claims received and processed by the end of 2013 were 1437.

### Disabled Child Allowance (DCA)

During the year the CA section received 253 new applications for this benefit. 143 of these claims were accepted while 61 claims were rejected by the Medical Panel. At the end of 2013 the remaining 49 claims were still pending the Medical Panel examination. Thus the number of families who received DCA at 31st December 2013 stands at 939. During this year 131 claimants who were already in receipt of DCA had their claim reviewed by the Medical Panel.

### Foster Care Allowance (FCA)

21 homes/institutes, which together host 166 children, had the Foster Care Allowance paid to them during 2013.

## Foreign Correspondence

The CA section is also responsible for answering various queries sent by EU Member States (E and F Forms) regarding family benefits. A number of requests were generated from the CA section to establish competence/payment entitlement for family benefits.

### Children's Allowances and other Family Benefits

Table 6

<b>Number of Families in receipt of Means tested Child allowance</b>			
<b>Type of Allowance</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
(a) Child Allowance only:			
(i) One eligible child	12,792	11,252	-1,540
(ii) Two eligible children	7,211	6,377	-834
(iii) Three eligible children	1,769	1,625	-144
(iv) Four or more eligible children	485	468	-17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,257</b>	<b>19,722</b>	<b>-2,535</b>



Table 7

<b>Number of families in receipt of the minimum rate of Child Allowance</b>			
<b>Type of Allowance</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
Child Allowance only:			
(i) One eligible child	11,576	12,058	482
(ii) Two eligible children	7,800	9,404	1,604
(iii) Three eligible children	1,251	1,621	370
(iv) Four or more eligible children	187	255	68
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,814</b>	<b>23,338</b>	<b>2,524</b>

Table 8

<b>Number of families in receipt of Disabled Child Allowance</b>			
<b>Type of Benefit</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
Disabled Child Allowance	863	939	76
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,095</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>-40</b>

Table 9

<b>Number of claims for maternity leave and maternity leave benefits</b>			
<b>Type of Benefit</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
Maternity Leave Benefit	952	1,437	485
Maternity Benefit	2,232	2,116	-116
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,095</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>-40</b>

### Overpayments Section

The Overpayments Section started effective operations in June 2012 and started gaining momentum in 2013. Its goals are to detect, follow-up, and recover outstanding non-performing overpayments by various debtors to DSS. It also performs necessary searches at the Public Registry to trace, wills and heirs of deceased debtors. Debtors who come to an agreement to pay debt by monthly instalments are also monitored periodically, and are intimated for repayment in case of default. A Legal Officer provides advice to the section and proceeds with legal action against individuals who deliberately fail to come to a repayment agreement with DSS.

During 2013 the Overpayments Section sent 2,041 Intimation Letters, performed 254 searches with Public Registry and were almost entirely responsible for the recovery of €1,300,721.04. The Legal Officer also issued 122 Judicial Letters and another 55 Intimation Letters in 2013.

### Non-Contributory Scheme

The number of persons in receipt of non-contributory Age, visually impaired, mentally/severely disabled, and carer's pension/allowance paid under the Act increased by 3.03% when compared to the previous year as shown in the following table:

Table 10

<b>Type of Pension/Allowance</b>	<b>No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2012</b>	<b>No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
Old Age	5,007	5,171	164
Visually Impaired	212	219	7
Mentally/Severely Disabled	2,391	2,445	54
Carers	141	151	10
OAA	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,751</b>	<b>7,986</b>	<b>235</b>

## Social, Medical Assistance and Supplementary Allowance

There was a marginal increase of 1.55% in the number of beneficiaries when compared to the previous year. The number of such beneficiaries remained just over the 59,000 mark.

The following table shows the number of households benefiting from Non-Contributory assistance paid under the Act.

Table 11

	<b>No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2012</b>	<b>No of Beneficiaries as on 31.12.2013</b>	<b>+ or -</b>
Unemployment Assistance	5,762	5,914	152
Social Assistance*	11,965	13,131	1,166
Sickness Assistance	13,639	13,539	-100
Milk Grant	111	107	-4
Leprosy Assistance	35	33	-2
Tuberculosis Assistance	0	1	1
Supplementary Allowance	26,734	26,424	-310
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,246</b>	<b>59,149</b>	<b>903</b>

\* Social Assistance means SA/SAF/SUP/DAD

## Customer Care and District Offices

In order to reach the goals laid down in its mission statement, the Department of Social Security provides its services, apart from its Head Office in 38, Ordnance Street Valletta and another back office in St. Francis Square in Victoria Gozo, also 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, Birkirkara, Fgura, Ħamrun, Ħal Luqa, Marsa, Mosta, Msida, Nadur (Gozo), Naxxar, Paola, Qormi, Rabat, Sliema, Qawra, San Gwann, Siġġiewi, Valletta, Victoria (Gozo), Vittoriosa, Ħaż-Żabbar, Ħaż-Żebbug, Żejtun, and Żurrieq. 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 Mosta and Vittoriosa where this service is available at the Employment & Training Corporation's premises within the same locality.

The District Offices of Qawra, Valletta, Msida and Vittoriosa are integrated in a complex under the name of ACCESS. The main aim of the Access 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 Appoġġ Agency, the Department of Social Security and the Employment & Training Corporation. This concept could expand to other regions in the future.

During 2013, the Department served an estimated total of 730,000 customer visits through its 24 front offices around Malta and Gozo. The majority of these, around 82%, were served face to face while the rest mainly by telephone. The figures include returning customers with most of them benefitting from non-contributory benefits and hence are economically inactive. The above figures show that through all its front offices, the Department of Social Security in 2013 served, face to face or by telephone, an estimated average of 2,800 persons a day or 122 persons a day per office.

### District Offices' Set-up

A major reform implemented in 2012 led to the restructuring of district offices and appointments of Regional Coordinators and District Managers. The continuing expansion of the Department has seen its business activities spread across the mainland. This naturally imposed entirely new demands on the Department's services and challenges to managing the operations staff. The most important feature of this reform was the Regionalization of the District Offices. While all District Offices remain an integral part of the Department, they are now operating on a regional basis, both in terms of management of resources as well as to the provision of service.

The number of full-time opening District Offices (called parent offices) in the mainland were downsized to 18 with the remaining 4 offices (called satellite offices) opening daily but on shorter schedules of 5 hours daily. Furthermore basic customer care service from the local councils, besides those of Gudja, Xagħra and Mellieħa, was extended to Sannat in Gozo.

### Provision of customer care through Local Councils

In its quest to extend its services in the Community, the Department's long-term vision is to provide basic customer care service through Local Councils. Following the agreement reached with the Gudja Local Council in 2010 which led to the successful launching of a pilot project in August of that year, the project was during 2012 extended to another seven Local Councils. In September 2013 customer service was terminated in five local councils due to the very low level of customer demand. Discussions were held with interested Local Councils (is-Sannat, Ħal Safi, Ħal Kirkop, is-Swieqi, Qala, Kerċem, Birżebbuġa and Wied il-Għajn). In October 2013 an agreement was reached with the Sannat Local Council which led to provision of basic customer service at the end of November 2013 from the administrative offices of same council.

### Appointments of Regional Coordinators and District Managers

The District Offices' Reform saw the addition of a new grade – Regional Coordinator. In essence the five Regional Coordinators are now acting as the assistants to the Assistant Director (Customer Care) for their respective regions and will have to primarily address issues/problems in their regions themselves, e.g. staff needs and issues, rosters, providing a District Manager at the satellite offices twice a week, sending replacement staff, service from their respective Local Councils, etc.

The Regional Coordinators however have to work together as a team, with their respective District Managers and with management (primarily the Assistant Director Customer Care) to

ensure that the service delivery at local council level, at satellite district office level, at parent district office level and at regional level, hence at national level, is uniform and of the highest quality throughout.

The District Offices' Reform of 2012 saw also the appointment of new District Managers. As to be expected in such an important role, the area manager has a wide range of responsibilities. These include providing their teams with a stimulating and supportive environment, maintaining and increasing standards of customer service, driving team performance and training and development of the operations staff. District Managers will have a large measure of autonomy, working alongside with Regional Coordinators and the Assistance Director Customer Care.

### Refurbishment of District Offices

Minor maintenance works were carried out during 2013. Refurbishment plans in 2014 will see upgrades in the branch offices of Birkirkara, Qormi, Żejtun and Qawra. The Department will also seek to identify unallocated government premises or issue an expression of interest for alternative premises of the Marsa/Ħamrun branch offices.

### Training for District Officers

Training sessions to the regional coordinators and district managers on various types of contracts were held during 2013 in collaboration the Legal Office of the Department. Preparations got underway to deliver trainings sessions to all front line personnel on insurability issues. The sessions will be held in 2014. Customer service training courses were also delivered to district managers to enhance their competence when dealing with staff and serving the public.

It is the intention of the Customer Care Unit to collaborate closely with the Centre for Research and Training (CDRT) to deliver specialised courses in customer service skills to all the District Office staff. Plans got underway for the delivery of training programmes to address gaps in KSAs (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of members of staff in district offices.

### Web based applications

2012 saw the launch of web based applications to be used by district office staff. The new applications include the generation of the Social Security Number and the standard District Office Call Letter (DOCL). The end of 2013 saw the release of the automated assessment of the Free Medical Aid (Pink Form) in the branch office of Birkirkara as a pilot test. It is envisaged the pink card functionality assessment will be fully released in all branch offices by the end of February 2014. Another major application in the pipeline is the generation of financial statements of collected overpayments. It is expected the application will be released on the live environment by the end of 2014.

Initial preparations were made where steps were taken to secure SABS on-line services that can be also accessed from district office users' terminals. 2014 will see the first of a series of online services that will include the pensions applications and the marriage grant form.

## Participation in media programmes, seminars and activities

Participation in various programmes aired on local radio and television stations continued to be the most dominant with the aim of promoting the services rendered by the Department in general and to make the general public more aware of the benefits paid under the Social Security Act. Regional Coordinators and District Managers also attended and participated in seminars to improve and update their knowledge and expertise on customer care and to inform other participating entities on the provisions of social security legislation.

The district office staff of the Valletta, Qawra, Msida and Birgu branches in collaboration with other entities participated in various activities held at their respective Access Centres with the aim to promote the services of the Department in the community through information leaflets and first hand advice on social security matters.

## International Relations Unit

### The Department's international obligations

The Department of Social Security (DSS) has substantial international obligations to meet. Such obligations stem primarily from Malta's membership in the EU as well as from a number of bilateral agreements it has with third countries i.e. Australia, Canada and New Zealand (the latter bilateral agreement was concluded and came into force during 2013). In this context, 2013 was another productive year for the International Relations Unit (IRU) which continued to work on a number of important tasks listed hereunder.

### Life Certification

The Life Certification system is providing the DSS with the necessary tools to maintain adequate contact with pensioners not living in Malta who receive a Maltese pension, with whom the Department has no direct communication.

By means of this system, the International Relations Unit is in a position to know about significant changes in each pensioner's circumstances. A Life Certification form is mailed to the pensioner's address which s/he has to return with the necessary information about any change in address and/or status and with information details of the next of kin with whom the IRU can make contact in case of need. The Certificate also needs to be endorsed and stamped by an official witness. Such a system is proving useful in cases of unreported deaths of pensioners as it is minimizing the payment of undue pension payments.

The following are the number of Life Certificates issued by the IRU during 2013.

Table 12

<b>To Maltese pensioners living in</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Canada	849
EU	187
Rest of the World	52

It is pertinent to mention that the Department of Social Security has a data exchange agreement in place with the Australian authorities, through which data concerning mutual customers is exchanged on a regular basis.

### Participation in Meetings Abroad

The field of Social Security has a more concrete and important dimension when seen in a wider international perspective, considering that the scope of social security is to protect and support the citizen. IRU staff members have actively participated in several meetings held abroad, covering a wide spectrum of social security related issues. Thus, through their participation, the issues, concerns and Malta's positions, as a Member State of the EU were voiced. During the year under review, the IRU has continued to actively participate in the Administrative Commission for the coordination of social security systems, the MISSOC network (both standing committees of the European Commission), EESSI related meetings and the H5NCP network. The Unit has also participated in other one-off meetings dealing with several social security issues within a European and International perspective.

### Determination of Legislation Applicable

One of the main responsibilities of the IRU is the determination of the legislation applicable. Such duties emanate from Regulations (EU) No. 883/2004 and No. 987/2009.

Out of the requests forwarded to the IRU for continued insurability under the Maltese social security system, the Unit processed those of individuals performing duties in another EU Member State mostly on a posting assignment. The Unit received various applications in this regard. It then analysed and vetted all the requests in accordance with Regulation (EC) 883/2004. Accordingly, the Unit issued 164 A1 forms (Certificate concerning the Social Security legislation which applies) for each accepted case as requested by the Regulation.

Also in connection with the abovementioned insurability duties carried out by the IRU, during the year 2013 this unit was involved in various meetings with foreign and local companies and other individuals to discuss social security issues, emanating from the EU Regulations mentioned above. The IRU carried out the necessary research and analysed all cases presented. Having gone through this exercise, the appropriate advice was given to the respective stakeholders/entities involved, regarding the insurability position of employees/self-employed individuals to be engaged in employment activity in another EU Member State and EU nationals to be involved in employment activity in Malta. This year the IRU also embarked on an exercise in bringing together the different stakeholders

involved with the insurability of mariners working on board vessels carrying the Maltese flag to discuss the way forward with regard to the insurability of such workers.

### Issuance of E-forms

All benefits paid under Regulation (EU) No. 883/2004, fall under the responsibility of the IRU. These obligations imply the exchange of information with other EU Member States, in respect to the various benefits. In this regard, during 2013, the IRU issued the following forms:

Table 13

<b>FORM</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
U004 (SALARY INFORMATION FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PURPOSES)	13
E104 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR SICKNESS BENEFIT PURPOSES)	176
E205 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR PENSION PURPOSES)	563
U1 & U002 (CERTIFICATE OF PERIODS OF INSURANCE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT PURPOSES)	417
E001 (REQUEST AND PROVISION OF GENERAL INFORMATION)	146
E210 (NOTIFICATION OF DECISION CONCERNING A CLAIM FOR PENSION)	85

### New pension claims received by the IRU

The following table provides data about the number of incoming pension claims received by Malta from other countries and the number of outgoing claims made by Maltese residents claiming a foreign pension.

Table 14

<b>2013</b>	<b>Incoming</b>	<b>Outgoing</b>
UK	57	137
Australia	185	186
Canada	37	87
Other	94	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>443</b>



## Number of queries dealt with by the IRU

During the year under review, the IRU front desk office received around 5004 queries from the general public. 4,174 of these queries came via email. Another 830 queries reached the IRU via letters, faxes, phone calls or by the persons themselves calling at our offices.

Apart from pension claims, the Unit processed 166 cases of persons transferring their Unemployment Benefits to Malta under Art 64 of Reg. (EC) 883/2004. For each of these cases the form U009 was issued and sent to the Member State of origin, confirming that the jobseeker in question is registered as a jobseeker in Malta. For 16 out of these 166 cases, we were asked to provide monthly feedback on the applicant's job-seeking activities and a U013 form was issued for these 16 cases.

Furthermore, 8 persons opted to transfer their Maltese benefits to another EU Member State.

The IRU also provided information to the continuous flow of requests emanating from EU institutions and social security institutions in other Member States, ranging from clients' personal information to requests for contribution records. The IRU continued to strengthen its internal IT infrastructure and services in order to process claims and requests with more efficiency, thus offering a better service to our customers.

## Information Data & Protection Office

The Information and Data Protection Office continued to deal with queries related to the administration of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. The office dealt with 9 major requests for information or clarification on Data Protection issues besides innumerable verbal requests for advice. No requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act were received. The office also dealt with 4 requests for information concerning Ombudsman Cases.

During 2013, the office continued to update the Department's website and also its internal intranet portal which contains substantial information which staff requires for the day to day delivery of its duties. As part of this Office's duties to coordinate the participation of staff in media programmes to disseminate information to the public, it oversaw the Department's participation in various programmes on local TV & Radio stations to provide the necessary information to the general public and create awareness on social security matters.

This office continued to take care of the Department's publications. It drew up a social security leaflet with information on all the benefits which was then distributed to all households in Malta and Gozo. It also prepared an information booklet on how the application form for a Children's Allowance is to be filled in. This booklet was meant to be distributed with each and every application sent to prospective beneficiaries. However, it was put on hold given the planned paperless application. The section intends to upload the same leaflet on the website for those still requiring aid in filling it up.

The DSS Link, the Department's in-house magazine has been issued regularly with various informative articles about social security matters for staff in the Department's quest to

continuously train and keep staff updated with social security developments. The mailing list of this magazine has also been broadened widely.

The Information and Data Protection Office also carried out various other tasks within its scope such as the compiling of the Department's Annual Report, the continuous updating of the Department's overview, the dissemination of circulars, government publications such as issues of the Government Gazette, issue of Legal Notices, Acts and Bye-Laws. It also took over the general maintaining of the Department's generic email.

The Information and Data Protection Office was also responsible for the graphical layout of all leaflets, posters and other printed material dealing with information and with the activities organized in the Department for training and social purposes, the organizing of seminars and conferences of the Department, besides the attending itself to seminars locally and abroad, the assisting in local fairs disseminating general information to the general public on social security matters.

## Appeals to the Umpire

The following table shows how the number of appeals that wer up for one or more hearings during 2013 as dealt with as compared with the same figure of 2012.

<b>Appeals</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
A. No of Appeals for hearing:		
(i) Brought forward from previous years	982	699
(ii) Lodged during the current year	846	856
(iii) Differed	0 1828	271 1826
B. No of Appeals settled:		
(i) Decided against appellant	611	490
(ii) Decided in favour of appellant	66	37
(iii) Withdrawn by appellant	319	269
(iv) Cancelled	50	32
(v) Revoked by Department	76	309
(vi) <i>Sine Die</i>	7	11
(vii) Awaiting reply from appellant/Department	0 1129	2 1150
<b>Outstanding Appeals</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>676</b>

Appeals re Invalidity Cases	2012		2013	
A. No of Appeals for hearing:				
(i) Brought forward from previous years	105		88	
(ii) Lodged during the current year	186		177	
(iii) Differed	0	291	9	274
B. No of Appeals settled:				
(i) Decided against appellant	97		47	
(ii) Decided in favour of appellant	73		94	
(iii) Withdrawn by appellant	17		17	
(iv) Cancelled	16		20	
(v) Revoked by Department	0		0	
(vi) <i>Sine Die</i>	0		4	
(vii) Awaiting reply from appellant/Department	0	203	0	182
<b>Outstanding Appeals</b>		<b>88</b>		<b>92</b>

## Staff

During 2013, the staff complement of the Social Security Department remained the same when compared to 2012, including those members of staff seconded from IPSL, as shown in the following table:

Table 15

	<b>31.12.2012</b>	<b>31.12.2013</b>
General Service Grade	251	252
Industrial/Messengerial	41	41
IPSL	13	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>305</b>

Grazio Barbara  
Director General

27.03.2014