



Malta's Progress
Towards the SDGs
A REVIEW





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EDUCATING
FOR CHANGE



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At its essence, sustainability means ensuring prosperity and environmental protection without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. A sustainable world is one where people can escape poverty and enjoy decent work without harming the earth's essential ecosystems and resources; where people can stay healthy and get the food and water they need; where everyone can access clean energy that doesn't contribute to climate change; where women and girls are afforded equal rights and equal opportunities. There is no country or society where sustainability is not important or necessary. We all share the responsibility to work for a sustainable future and we will all reap the benefits.

**Ban Ki-moon, UN
Secretary-General,
17 December 2014**

Introduction

At the end of 2015, the Member States of the United Nations came together to finalise a set of global goals that would set the pace and targets for achieving sustainable development over the next 15 years. The goals are broad; contrary to the Millennium Development Goals, these goals were aimed at all Member States, recognising that the environment is a shared global resource, that conflict, poverty and health can be mitigated through regulation around small arms and mutually beneficial trade relations, and acknowledging that even in high-income countries a number of social, economic and environmental challenges persist.

This resulted in a far-reaching, comprehensive document, against which progress could be measured at national, regional and global level. Yet, following the global political commitment, it is the responsibility of each national government to enact the necessary legislation and policy to ensure that all targets are reached and that they are reached in a way that is neither counterproductive nor unsustainable.

This research set out to explore, and engage with each Goal, and the ways in which Malta's current state of affairs and policy (both domestic and foreign) relate to each area. It aims to highlight some of the key statistics, policies, achievements and challenges in Malta's contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In doing so, the study makes a number of key observations. The first is that much of the policy and legislation to which we refer was enacted before the SDGs were established and, hence, whilst there are indeed policies around each of the themes of the SDGs, this does not mean that the language or indeed targets (if any) relate specifically to the goals and targets of the SDGs. One such example is Malta's ODA policy, which is not aligned with the SDGs despite the fact that a number of areas covered by the ODA policy relate to the SDGs. Another key observation is that there is little to no link between a number of policy areas (education

and health, for instance) and sustainability. Finally, there is a general lack of statistical data in most areas, particularly of disaggregated data by various social and economic criteria.

This report is organised by SDG, and builds on statistics and policy to build a picture of Malta's current actual and political efforts towards achieving the MDGs. This research finds that, whilst we have been able to pinpoint various areas and aspects in statistical evidence and in the legal/policy framework that strongly relate to the SDGs, there is a lack of comprehensiveness in addressing these goals and in comprehending Malta's role both in contributing at the national level, as well as in making a significant contribution (despite being a small country) at the global level – via bilateral or multilateral channels, through the provision of financial contributions as well as expertise and in being a strong diplomatic voice on a number of issues affecting populations around the world.



1 NO
POVERTY



**End poverty in all its
forms everywhere**

Overview

Goal 1 targets global poverty, with the main aim of reducing it by at least half the proportion of people living in poverty according to national definitions. It also promotes ensuring social protection systems and measures for all, including substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Although Eurostat data shows that Malta's performance in terms of poverty risk hovers around the EU average (European Commission, 2016 a; 2016 b; 2016 c) it also implies that, despite favourable economic performance, the benefits of economic growth do not reach the most vulnerable.

One of the specific targets under Goal 10 deals with equal rights to economic resources and basic services, ownership and control over property, inheritance, natural resources, new technology and financial services. As shown under Goal 10, the prevalence of inter-generational transmission of socioeconomic disadvantages, these targets merit political attention in Malta.

MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY

VULNERABILITY

GROWTH RATE

BASIC SERVICES

SOCIAL PROTECTION

RESILIENCE

Malta's progress towards Goal 1

The main policy contributing towards the achievement of poverty reduction in Malta is the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity's National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024. The strategy takes a multi-dimensional approach to the reduction of poverty. It seeks to reduce poverty and social exclusion by promoting wellbeing and an improved quality of life for all.

The policy's three main themes are: increasing national sustainable development, promoting empowerment and social solidarity, and consolidating social services. It focuses on four vulnerable groups: children, the elderly, the unemployed and the working poor.

The policy takes into account six dimensions: income and social benefits; employment; education; health and environment; social services; and culture. The document contributes towards the Europe 2020 strategy (adopted in 2010 to encourage sustainable and inclusive growth) which targets, among others, areas of employment and poverty reduction and social inclusion.

In working towards these joint targets, Malta aims to:

- Lift around 6,560 persons out of risk of poverty or social exclusion;
- Promote employment to 70% of population aged 20-64 years (MFSS, 2014).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- 22.4% of the population in Malta was at risk of poverty and social exclusion (EC 2016 a).
- Over 1 child out of 4 was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EC 2016 b).
- 23.7% of the population aged 65 or over was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EC 2017a).
- 8.1% of the population was living with severe material deprivation (EC 2017 b).
- 34.2% of the disabled population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EC 2016 c).
- Malta's social-protection gross expenditure as a percentage of the GDP remained almost static between 2011 and 2014, varying between 18.6% to 18.8%, a much lower percentage than the EU 28 average, which was 27.6% in 2014 (EC 2017 c).

Policies, Programmes & Legislation

- National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2014-2024
- National Reform Programme - Malta (2015)
- The National Employment Policy (2014)
- Jobsplus Strategic Plan 2016-2018
- Chapter 318 of the Laws of Malta Social Security Act
- Chapter 452 of the Laws of Malta Employment and Industrial Relations Act, 2014
- Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, 2000

Children and Families

In 2014, the Maltese government introduced a child supplement for low-income households (parents earning less than €11,000 annually) to combat child poverty and support families (MFSS, 2015; MFIN, 2015). In 2014, the Housing Authority allocated €1 million for subsidised private rental residences from which 1,029 households benefited (MFIN, 2015). In its reflections on the green paper on the MFSS framework on poverty reduction, Caritas Malta (2014) recommended that the national minimum wage (NMW) should be supplemented by welfare benefits to assist those who depend on the NMW to make ends meet. However, Caritas (2016) points out that the minimum essential budget to ensure a decent living has been growing faster than disposable income.

Senior Citizens and the Elderly

The Malta National Reform Programme for 2015 stipulates that pensions not exceeding the minimum wage will not be taxed. In 2015, the government also decided to rectify the situation of persons born between 1950 and 1956 who are in employment but would not have made enough contributions to qualify for a contributory retirement pension by the time they reach pension age. This target group can now pay back a maximum of five years of contributions to qualify for a pension. Meanwhile, persons born between 1941 and 1953 who paid contributions, but did not qualify for a pension, will receive a yearly lump sum (MFIN, 2015). According to Caritas, there remains a need to extend

free or subsidised provision for facilitating independent living for different groups within the elderly population who have a low income or who encounter unexpected long-term financial burdens (Caritas Malta, 2016).

Persons with Disability

Since 2015, disabled persons in employment earning more than the NMW are entitled to a full disability pension. Furthermore, fiscal incentives for trusts and foundations catering for disabled people were introduced, mainly: exemption of capital-gain taxes and elimination of stamp duty on documents, as well as the transfer of the parents' residential property for disabled children (MFIN 2015). The 2015 Budget also included fiscal incentives for employers to hire disabled persons (MFIN, 2014), and a disability quota for companies with over 20 employees requires recruiting at least 2% of staff from among persons with disabilities or paying a financial contribution from 2017 (Jobsplus, 2017).

Nevertheless, in 2014, 493 persons were still actively seeking employment (MFIN 2015). One of the local newspapers, MaltaToday (January 2017) reported that 474 individuals with disability were still seeking employment, while 575 employers were in breach of the law requiring companies employing more than 20 workers to maintain a disabled-employee quota of at least 2%. These employers are asked to pay a financial contribution, amounting to over €1.4 million in total. However, it remains unclear as to how, or whether, disabled persons will benefit from these contributions.

Key challenges

- In its reflections on the green paper on the MFSS framework on poverty reduction, Caritas Malta (2014) noted that the increase of the NMW in Malta did not take into account the changes in the expenses of Maltese families such as internet, electronic devices and white goods - which did not exist (or were rarer) in households in the 1970s. Hence, the NMW today is not enough to assure beneficiaries a decent standard of living.
- Whereas poverty-risk gaps among age groups and genders are not as significant in Malta as in other European countries, persons with disability are at a considerably higher risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- The social-protection gross expenditure (as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) has fallen since 2010, when it was 19.1% (EC, 2017 c).
- To improve the level of opportunities for socioeconomic mobility in Malta (MFSS, 2014).

Recommendations

- Streamline the social inclusion and protection system to focus on socioeconomic mobility, not only 'harm reduction'.
- Urgently address intergenerational transmission of poverty by providing safety nets to families at risk.
- Ensure that financial contributions, chosen by employers who are unwilling or unable to meet the disability quota, are sourced to increase the welfare of persons with disability.
- Revise income support to vulnerable groups with a view to take into account rising costs of living.

2 ZERO
HUNGER



**End hunger, achieve food
security and improved
nutrition and promote
sustainable agriculture**

Overview

Goal 2 poses the task to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030, and commits to universal access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food throughout the year. For Malta, access to - and awareness of - healthy eating is significant; the first Food Consumption Survey that looked at foods consumed by the adult population (carried out in 2010 by what was then the Malta Standards Authority) showed that the Maltese have poor eating habits: they consume high amounts of sweets and sugary foods; and consumption of vegetables is low (PSH, 2014). Whereas daily consumption of fruit and vegetables did not differ much from the EU average, Malta performed better (at 17% consuming more than five portions) than the EU average (at 11.6%) when it comes to the lowest earners within the population (the first income quintile). The incidence of no daily fruit-and-vegetable consumption was over seven percentage points lower than the EU average (Eurostat 2016 a). Nevertheless, obesity rates were alarmingly high in Malta, at 29.8% for the population aged over 19 and even higher among children (European Commission, 2016).

Goal 2 also commits to doubling agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, and to ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices. In 2010, family labour accounted for over 90% of the volume of work carried out in agriculture in Malta. However, there are as yet no policies to strengthen family farming in general (FAO, 2017).

MALNUTRITION

FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

AGRICULTURAL TRADE

FOOD COMMODITY MARKETS

Malta's progress towards Goal 2

Availability of food products

Malta has undergone major changes in the type and quality of food products available on the market since the 1990s. Despite the benefits of diversity, the downside was an increase in the availability of unhealthy food products high in energy, fat, saturated and trans fatty acids, salt and sugar. Market competition resulted in a decrease of the number of small corner shops. Trade agreements, common market(s) and trans-national marketing of food products and food chains, as well as a huge increase in the number of fast food outlets made it difficult to control the local market and the supply of unhealthy food products (PSH, 2014).

Nutritional needs and habits

Over the last twenty years, successive governments have introduced initiatives for food and nutrition. These included prenatal maternal, breastfeeding and weaning programmes; national awareness-raising and education campaigns on healthy eating and promoting seasonal food; skills development with regard to healthy cooking for the family within a budget; and weight management classes for overweight and obese persons. Nutrition education is included in the national curriculum. The Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan (HELP) document, issued in 2007 by the Ministry of Education,

Youth and Employment (currently Ministry for Education and Employment or MEDE) lists permissible and prohibited food and drinks for consumption during school hours and highlights health, nutrition and food preparation issues, among others.

On the other hand, constant media campaigns of high-fat, sugar and salty (HFSS) foods aimed at children is luring schoolchildren and their parents away from adopting healthy eating habits. An exploratory study has been undertaken with a view to analyse the type of food and beverage advertisements broadcasted on Maltese TV channels, the results of which are expected to lead to the formulation of relevant guidelines (PSH, 2014).

Food assistance

In 2014, Malta started using the European Commission's Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD). Malta received nearly €4 million for the period 2014-2020. Through this fund, households with the lowest means started receiving food packages (GoM, 2014). This initiative also links with the Goal 1 target of reducing poverty.

In light of the dramatic increase in obesity amongst school children, the European Commission introduced the School Fruit Scheme (whereby kindergarten and primary school children receive a free portion of fruit or vegetables each week) in the scholastic year 2009/2010. The main objective was to promote the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption as part of a healthy diet (MSDEC).

Agriculture

Malta ranked among the top three in terms of most intensive livestock production in the EU (Eurostat, 2016 b).

Family farming plays a crucial role in Malta's agriculture (FAO, 2017). The National Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 includes support for agricultural diversification, offering new employment opportunities for farm-family members in households on low incomes; support for investments in processing/marketing and/or development of agricultural products; and support for investments in infrastructure related to development, modernisation or adaptation of agriculture. It also includes measures intended to assist young farmers in Malta to take over farms and improve their efficiency (EAFRD, 2014). The results of these measures have not been evaluated at the time of writing.

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2015, 13.1% of the population in Malta could not afford a meal with meat, chicken/poultry, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day (NSO, 2016).
- Among asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and rejected asylum seekers surveyed, this rate stood at 40% (JRS Malta & Aditus Foundation, 2016).

Policies & Strategies

- Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for Malta 2015-2020
- A Whole School Approach to a Healthy Lifestyle: Health Eating and Physical Activity Policy (2015)
- A Healthy Weight for Life: A National Strategy for Malta 2012-2020
- A National Agricultural Policy for the Maltese Islands 2016-2025 (at draft stage)

Key challenges

- Malta does not yet have legislation that aims at reducing the impact of the marketing of HFSS foods to children (PSH, 2014).
- No national studies have been conducted to determine the extent of micronutrient deficiencies amongst the Maltese population. These deficiencies may contribute to chronic diseases, which could impact women, children, middle-aged and older people. This presents a challenge for public health to understand and prevent these deficiencies (PSH, 2014).
- There is a dearth of adequate information on the quantity of food and drink consumed by the Maltese population; such information is necessary for monitoring nutrition trends and evaluate interventions in the area of nutrition (PSH, 2014).
- Although the regulation of school tuck shops is in line with current healthy dietary recommendations, there are problems with full compliance, as currently the Education Division monitors tuck shops for food safety only and not for nutritional purposes (PSH, 2014).

Recommendations

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the current food assistance and healthy lifestyle schemes, and revise them to meet the most pressing challenges.
- Invest into closing the gaps in fruit and vegetable consumption between the top and bottom income quintiles.
- Explore good practices in other countries to reduce marketing pressures favouring unhealthy eating habits; this could be achieved through broadcast time regulations, relevant taxation and subsidies.
- Invest in improving the efficiency and reducing the environmental footprint of local farming practices.



3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



**Ensure healthy lives and
promote well-being for all,
at all ages**

Overview

Goal 3 is about ensuring health and well-being for all, at every stage of life. It addresses health priorities including reproductive, maternal and child health, and communicable, non-communicable and environmental diseases. This includes: the promotion of good physical and mental health, and the prevention and treatment of illness and disease; reducing the mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease; and reducing the suicide rate. These targets are of great significance, when considering that diseases of the heart and circulatory system (i.e. cardiovascular diseases) account for 38% of all deaths in Malta in 2014 (DHIR, 2015). According to Eurostat (2017), diabetes accounted for 5% of deaths and respiratory diseases – 10%.

This SDG also focuses on achieving (by 2020) the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, strengthening the implementation of tobacco control, and halving the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. In Malta, weekly binge drinking doubled between 2002 and 2008, with monthly binge drinking tripling during the same period – mainly among young people (Tilney, 2015). In 2016 the total number of recorded accidents totalled 15,245, which is approximately 42 accidents per day. 1,853 of these accidents were classified as traffic casualties, of which 82.9% were considered slight, 15.9% grievous and 1.2% fatal (NSO, 2017). According to Eurostat, Malta registered from 11 to 26 deaths resulting from traffic accidents in the years between 2011 and 2014 (Eurostat, 2017).

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

COMMUNICABLE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

TOBACCO CONTROL

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Malta's progress towards Goal 3

Health Care in Malta

Primary health care in Malta is delivered through general practitioners working in nine health centres, and general practitioners working in private practice. Primary health care public services are free. Secondary and tertiary health care services are delivered at the general hospital, an oncology centre, a dermatology centre, and a geriatric/rehabilitation hospital. A district general hospital delivers care in Gozo. Specialist outreach services are increasingly being provided from the community-based health centres. The total health expenditure as a percentage of the GDP was 9.1% in 2013 (slightly below the EU average of 9.6%), with public spending accounting for 5.6% of the GDP, which was below the EU average of 7.3% (Tilney, 2015).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In Malta, the prevalence of diabetes amongst adults (aged 20-79 years) is 13.9%, compared to the EU average of 9.1% (IDF, 2015).
- In 2014, Malta had the highest rate of obesity in the EU, with 26% of the adult population (18 years and over) being obese (Eurostat, 2016e).
- In 2014, coronary heart disease was the leading cause of premature deaths in males (deaths before the age of 70) accounting for 11.6% of premature deaths. In females, it was the second leading cause of premature deaths following breast cancer (7.4% and 6% respectively) (DHIR, 2015).
- The overall self-reported prevalence of hypertension in Maltese women is 23%, and 22% in men; and is more prevalent with increasing age (DHIR, 2015).

Non-communicable diseases – obesity

Malta has the highest rate of obesity in the EU, with the proportion of obese men being 28.1% and that of women being 23.9%. A clear age effect emerges: while about one young adult out of 10 is obese, in older persons the prevalence is one in three (Eurostat, 2016). However, the issue is not confined to the older population; in 2015, a study found that 40.8% of primary and secondary school children were overweight or obese (Grech et al, 2015). This is also related to the fact that Malta is one of the EU countries with the lowest levels of participation in exercise and sport; data from 2013 shows that 75% of the population in Malta never exercises or does sport. In 2013, Malta was the EU Member State with the highest increase from 2009 in the proportion of the population who never exercises or does sport (EC, 2014).

Measures to combat the issue include: setting up a pilot service of child-obesity clinics; educating parents of children aged 0-3 years on the importance of appropriate weaning foods and on preparing age-adequate healthy meals and snacks; introducing the 'walking bus' initiative, aimed at encouraging schoolchildren to walk to school, if situated in the same locality; and the implementation of a pilot project in 2012 introducing young people to different sports, in order that they could take up one or more activities that they truly enjoy (PSH, 2014).

The national health strategy for 2012-2020 ("A Healthy Weight for Life") projects that the national health-care cost attributed to obesity will increase from €25,390,000 to €34,980,000 by 2020, in the event of no change in the proportion of overweight and obese individuals in the population, and no changes in the average health care usage (MHEC, 2012).

Communicable diseases: sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Due to the persistent stigma surrounding STIs, it is difficult to collect accurate data. In Malta cases of sexually transmitted infections are mainly reported by the Genitourinary (GU) Clinic at Mater Dei Hospital. However, patients who prefer to be seen by GPs and the Gynaecology Department go unreported. Hence, the statistics available on STIs are skewed (Carabot, 2007). In 2011, the GU Clinic received a total of 2,462 (61% male and 39% female) attendances, of which 77% were new cases (Ministry for Health, 2013).

Malta's National Sexual Health Strategy plans for programmes and initiatives that seek to enhance relationship skills and sexual relationships; address gender issues; increase awareness on sexual health; raise awareness on contraception; and aim at developing risk-reduction skills, such as the adoption of

protective measures (MHEC, 2011). The first nationwide sexual-health survey revealed that 45% of persons aged 16 to 18 did not use contraception, despite having many partners. This figure increased to 55% for persons aged between 19 to 29, and 65% for those aged 30 to 40. This evidence shows the necessity of tackling the basic issues of sex education in schools and health promotion across the Maltese Islands (NSM, 2012).

Policies, Strategies & Legislation

- A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2014-2020
- A Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Disease in Malta (2010)
- A Healthy Weight for Life: A National Strategy for Malta 2012-2020
- A Whole School Approach to a Healthy Lifestyle: Health Eating and Physical Activity Policy (2015)
- A National Policy for Sport in Malta & Gozo 2017-2027 (discussion document)
- Chapter 455 of the Laws of Malta: Sports Act, 2003
- Communicable Disease Control Strategy for Malta (2013)
- The National Sexual Health Policy for the Maltese Islands (2010)
- National Sexual Health Strategy (2011)
- Guidelines on Sexuality and Relationships Education in Maltese Schools (2013)
- National Breastfeeding Policy and Action Plan 2015-2020
- Road Safety Strategy Malta 2014-2024
- National Drugs Policy (2008)
- Guidelines: Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes and Interventions in State Schools (2013)
- National Alcohol Policy (launched for consultation in October 2016)
- Chapter 315 of the Laws of Malta: Tobacco (Smoking Control) Act, 1986
- Chapter 525 of the Laws of Malta: Mental Health Act, 2012

Substance abuse: alcohol

The National Report on the Drug Situation in Malta states that alcohol continues to be the most consumed substance in Malta. Just over three quarters (75.9%) of survey respondents – equivalent to 209,000 individuals – indicated that they had consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime (NFP, 2016). The draft National Alcohol Policy was opened to consultation in October 2016 but, to date, has not been formally adopted.

Substance abuse: tobacco

Research conducted by the National Report on the Drug Situation in Malta found that 45% (equivalent to 124,000) of the respondents indicated that they had smoked tobacco at least once in their lifetime. This is a significant decrease from the 52.3% of respondents who reported ever smoking in the 2001 Survey (NFP, 2016).

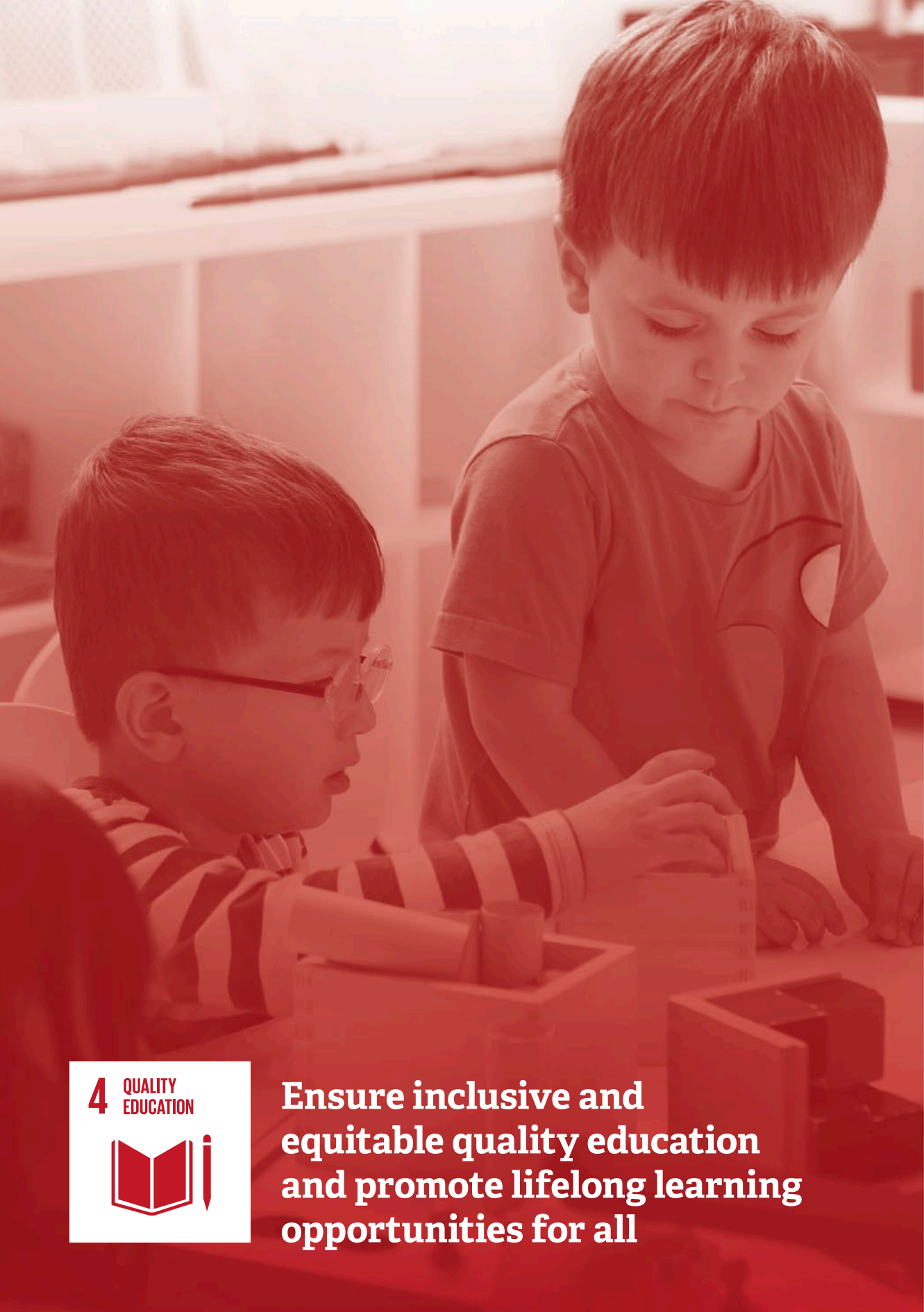
Prevalence of diabetes
amongst adults
(aged 20-79 years)
is 13.9%, compared to
the EU average of 9.1%.

Key challenges

- The incidence and prevalence of excess weight and obesity in both children and adults is expected to continue to grow over the coming years, thus aggravating the severe health, economic and social consequences of this widespread condition (MHEC, 2012).
- The use of alcohol in Malta far outweighs all other substance use (NFP, 2016). Furthermore, a large number of road injuries and fatalities on Maltese roads are a result of drink-driving. A Eurobarometer study (2010) found that 91% of respondents in Malta did not know the legal limit of drink-driving. Although it is illegal to consume or purchase alcohol consumption under the age of 17, it is easily available to purchase and consume in public places (MFSS, 2016).
- There is still a stigma surrounding STIs in Malta, which often leads to lack of treatment and prevention, as well as lack of reporting of STIs. Limited awareness about contraception exacerbates this issue.

Recommendations

- Mainstream incentives for the Maltese population (all ages) to engage in exercise, physical activity and sport in education-related policies and those covering other areas.
- Implement the National Alcohol Policy, together with a strategy targeting alcohol use and abuse through a multi-sectoral approach.
- Commission a comprehensive research and data collection exercise regarding STIs in Malta, so as to be able to better gauge the situation and how to combat it.



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



**Ensure inclusive and
equitable quality education
and promote lifelong learning
opportunities for all**

Overview

The purpose of Goal 4 is to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education by 2030. It also addresses equal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, as well as increasing the number of youth and adults who have technical and vocational skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, another target addresses literacy and numeracy for youth and adults. This includes the provision of inclusive and effective learning environments for all, ensuring equal access to education and training for the socially disadvantaged (including persons with disability and vulnerable children).

The targets of this SDG are significant, when considering: Malta's current levels of school drop-out rates; the high levels of children with low literacy, numeracy, science and digital skills; and the low level of children mastering higher-order thinking skills. To address these gaps, the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2015 aims at offering all children, youths and adults the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills. In addition to skills, the said framework aims to develop attitudes towards becoming active citizens, and to succeed at work and in society, without hindrances from differences in socioeconomic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status. (MEDE, 2014a).

**FREE PRIMARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL
AND TERTIARY EDUCATION**

**EFFECTIVE LEARNING
OUTCOMES**

LITERACY AND NUMERACY

GENDER DISPARITIES

**INCLUSIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENTS**

Malta's progress towards Goal 4

Education in Malta is offered through three different channels: the State, the Church, and the private sector. The government subsidises church schools (on the understanding that these do not charge tuition fees) and gives tax rebates to parents sending their children to private schools (MEDE, 2014c).

Literacy

The National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014-2019 identifies a number of initiatives that have been launched, such as:

- promoting the foundations of literacy education, targeting children aged 0-3 and their parents;
- mobilising home and classroom libraries;
- appointing 'reading ambassadors';
- implementing 'Alternative Learning Programmes' (ALPs) intended for secondary school students requiring additional support;
- implementing 'Reading Champions' and 'Reading Buddies' programmes to encourage children and teenagers to inspire others to read (MEDE, 2014d).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2013, the early-school-leaving rate in Malta was 20.9% – well above the EU average of 11.9% (MEDE, 2014b).
- In 2011, Malta's mean reading score (477) was significantly lower than the international average (500) and was ranked 35th of 45 participating countries in the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS), a comparative study of the reading attainment of 10-year olds (MEDE, 2013).
- The percentage of 15-year-olds in Malta who are low achievers in reading literacy was 36.3% in 2009, significantly higher than the EU average of 19.7% (MEDE, 2014d).

Early school-leaving (ESL)

The ESL rate is a social phenomenon that plagues education in Malta. Early school-leavers are young persons who leave education and training without going further than early secondary education. The ESL rate for Malta in 2013 was the second-highest in the EU. Early school-leavers tend to have limited life chances, and are generally channelled towards dead-end jobs. They are more prone to join the ranks of working or non-working poor, and be at risk of social exclusion (MEDE, 2014b).

The aim of the Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving in Malta is to reduce the ESL rate to 10% by 2020, in line with EU targets. It proposes to tackle this issue through prevention, intervention and compensation measures, including setting up an inter-ministerial committee, and an ESL Unit and working group; as well as constructing a comprehensive data-collection department. Other measures include: providing free childcare for the early years (0 to 3); incorporating vocational education and training in mainstream education; and developing eLearning content to better respond to students' learning needs.

The Plan also takes into account:

- high-achieving students;
- the need for educating parents accordingly;
- building bridges with the wider community;
- the importance of the improvement of existing early warning systems, especially those related to school attendance and student performance;
- consolidating support networks around students at risk;
- empowering students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- supporting teenage mothers to stay in education and training;
- providing quality secondary education for disabled persons for better life chances (MEDE, 2014b).

Lifelong learning

The percentage of 30- to 34-year-olds in Malta attaining tertiary education in 2016 was 29.8%, significantly lower than the EU 28 average of 39% (EC, 2017). It is also lower than the national target of 33% and the Europe 2020 average target of 40% (MEDE, 2014e). Furthermore, there is a much higher percentage of adults (25-64 years) with low-level education (that is, having a lower than primary and early-secondary education) in Malta (55.4%) than the EU average of 23.1% (EC, 2017).

Malta's current lifelong-learning strategy (see text box) elaborates 10 strategic objectives on which 40 indicative programmes are designed. The objectives include: (1) stimulating participation in lifelong learning; (2) placing the learner at the centre; (3) improving skill sets for professional development and employment mobility; (4) developing support structures for adult learning; and (5) improving governance in the lifelong-learning sector, exploring structural, institutional, fiscal, legal, political and administrative measures available.

One of the programmes involved commissioning a study to investigate the feasibility of setting up a lifelong-learning village in 2015. Instead, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh was given funding to set up a Youth Village, a residential centre for youth interactions (MFIN, 2016). Another initiative aims at introducing digital literacy courses at the University of Malta and MCAST, since digital literacy is a vital component of 21st century adult education (MEDE, 2014e).

Inclusive education environments

Knowledge about the incidence of trans, gender-variant or intersex children and youths is scarce both in Malta and internationally. Hence, it is difficult to determine to what extent learning environments are safe and encouraging to them. However, it is known that trans, gender-variant and intersex persons encounter difficulties ranging from negative reactions to bullying in school across the EU (MEDE, 2015), including in Malta (Baldacchino & Grech, 2008). The Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy aims to foster a school environment that is inclusive, safe and free from harassment and discrimination. This policy states its commitment to the students' privacy, inclusive language and school-community partnerships (MEDE, 2015).

The above-mentioned policy is in line with the Respect for all Framework, which states MEDE's commitment to render the Maltese education system one that is based on equity, social justice, inclusion and diversity (MEDE, 2014f).

In 2011, Malta's mean reading score (477) was significantly lower than the international average (500).

Policies and Frameworks

- Framework for the Education strategy for Malta 2014-2024: Sustaining Foundations, Creating Alternatives, Increasing Employability
- A National Curriculum Framework for All (2012)
- Addressing Attendance in Schools Policy (2014)
- A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early School Leaving In Malta (2014)
- Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020
- A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014-2019
- Respect for All Framework (2014)
- Managing Behaviour in Schools Policy (2015)
- Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy (2014)
- Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy (2015)

Key challenges

- There is a shortage of teachers in core areas (English, maths, science, physical education, and primary schools in general).
- Various factors within the education system have led to schools being only partially able to effectively implement inclusive education, resulting in an integrative approach being adopted for only some learners, rather than all learners (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014).
- School staff do not feel sufficiently enabled to meet individual learning needs; teacher training, provision of support, and the degree of centralisation do not seem to reinforce inclusive practices (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014).

Recommendations

- Develop and implement incentives for young professionals to qualify and work as teachers.
- Develop an adult literacy curriculum framework that would help reduce illiteracy in adults.
- Engage in further training and empowerment of school staff towards the implementation of inclusive education for all students.
- Mainstream inclusive education throughout all legislation and practice, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Further incentivise schools to be proactive and provide inclusive school environments, together with the setting up of induction, cultural-orientation and integration programmes for migrant students and their parents (MEDE 2014b).
- Set specific benchmarks and develop indicators to measure the results of programmes and policies.



5 GENDER
EQUALITY



**Achieve gender equality and
empower all women and girls**

Overview

Goal 5 calls for gender equality for women and girls everywhere. In 2014, Malta ranked 46th in the global Gender Equality Index (UNDP, 2015). This goal aims to end all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices against women and girls.

This SDG also calls for the recognition and valuing of unpaid care and domestic work, and for women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. This area is pertinent to Malta when considering that, with regard to the percentage of women in the national parliament, Malta was at the 139th position in the world as of the end of 2016 (IPU, 2016). Finally, Goal 5 aims at ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

LEADERSHIP

DECISION-MAKING

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Malta's progress towards Goal 5

Malta was ranked 108th out of 144 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, based on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment (WEF, 2016).

Employment and the labour market

While male employment rates were consistently higher than those relating to females in all EU 28 Member States in 2015, the difference between employment rates by sex stood at 27.8 percentage points in Malta, which had the third-lowest female employment rate: 53.6%, as against 81.4% for men (EC, 2016). However, the rate of female participation in the labour market has increased since 2000, when it was 34.9% of the active population aged 20 to 64, to 44.3% in 2010, to over 50% in 2015 (EC, 2017).

Large gender pension gaps also exist in Malta (over 35%) due to instances of insufficient accumulation of pension contributions by women during working-age years. Furthermore, more than 20% of the potential female workforce in 2012 was inactive or working part-time because of personal and family responsibilities (EC, 2015).

In April 2014, the government introduced a free childcare scheme for children under the age of 3, to incentivise parents (mothers in particular) to return to, or remain in, work (EC, 2015).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- Women in national parliament:
Following the Maltese 2013 general election, only 12.9% of the members of parliament were women (IPU, 2016). Following the June 2017 general election this percentage increased to 14.9%, with 10 female members of parliament out of a total of 67 (HoR, 2017).
- Labour market:
In 2015, the rate of female participation in the Maltese labour market stood at 56.2% (EC, 2017)
- Gender pay gap:
In 2014, the gender pay gap as difference in hourly wage rates in Malta was 10.6%, while the gender pay gap as difference in monthly earnings was 18.4% (UNECE, 2016).

Legislation

- Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta: Equality for Men and Women Act, 2003
- Chapter 481 of the Laws of Malta: Domestic Violence Act, 2006

Care and domestic activities

Women are disproportionately in charge of care and domestic activities. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) reports that 65% of women (compared to 17% of men) did the cooking and housework daily for at least 1 hour daily, a situation which deteriorated from 2005 to 2012 in Malta (EIGE, 2016).

Representation of women and men

In 2012, this was more pronounced in both corporate boards and management positions, compared to the EU27 average. The female share amounted to 3.0% in Maltese boards (EU27 average 14.0%) and 20% in management positions (EU27 average 33%).

Attainment of tertiary education by women

In 2012, this had increased to 14.1%, which was still significantly below the EU27 average of 24.8%, and one of the lowest values of all compared countries (EC, 2012).

Domestic violence

The newspaper, The Malta Independent, reported in 2014 that, between 2009 and 2013, a total 4102 cases of domestic violence were reported. It ranks as the most frequent crime in Malta after theft (Borg, 2014).

The rate of female participation in the labour market has increased since 2000.

Key challenges

- In 2012, Malta reached the score of 46.8 out of 100 on the Gender Equality Index, (where 1 stands for total inequality and 100 for full equality, scored on six domains: work, money knowledge, time, power and health), increasing by 3.4 points from 2005. Despite this progress, Malta remains behind the EU28 average. The biggest challenges lie in the unequal division of time spent on care, domestic tasks and social activities (EIGE, 2016).
- Besides the distribution of care work, there exist differences between women's and men's access to leisure, sporting and voluntary activities, with these differences having consequences on the work-life balance of women (EIGE, 2016).
- Malta still has significant imbalances in the domain of power, where Malta scored 28.3 out of 100 on the EIGE Index (EIGE, 2016).
- The promotion of gender-atypical fields of study also remains a main challenge in Malta (EC 2012).

Recommendations

- Develop a comprehensive policy and strategy for gender equality, promoting equality for women and girls in all spheres of life.
- Increase the number of women in the labour market through measures such as: increased parental leave, and flexible hours in all sectors.
- Strengthen work-life balance for women, including recognising and valuing domestic and care work.
- Introduce incentives and measures such as temporary gender quotas, for women to reach and hold high-level positions in all spheres (including political and other work sectors).
- Introducing gender-monitoring and evaluation systems that ensure that gender is mainstreamed within public and private bodies.

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



**Ensure availability and
sustainable management of
water and sanitation for all**

Overview

Goal 6 is about ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. These targets are extremely relevant to Malta, which suffers from a scarcity of freshwater whose management is not sustainable in the long term (EC, 2017). Goal 6 seeks to improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising the release of hazardous materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater, and increasing recycling and safe reuse by 2030. It also aims to increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and to ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater. Being the EU country with the lowest level of annual water resources per inhabitant, and the smallest share of freshwater renewable resources (EC, 2017), Malta bases its water procurement on desalination which translates into high cost and strong environmental impact (MTCE 2012). However, water resources and the high cost of providing water through reverse-osmosis plants has received little attention in public debate (Pirota et al, 2016).

DRINKING WATER

WATER RESOURCES

WATER-RELATED ECOSYSTEMS

SANITATION FACILITIES

WATER AND SANITATION MANAGEMENT

Malta's progress towards Goal 6

Freshwater

Freshwater resources per inhabitant are considered an important indicator for measuring the sustainability of water resources. Relatively low volumes of freshwater resources per inhabitant — below 3000m³ per inhabitant — have been recorded in Malta (EC, 2017). According to UNESCO (2012), a country experiences “water stress” when its annual water resources drop below 1700m³ per inhabitant; records for Malta show that the current volume of water resources is at 185m³ per person (EC, 2017).

Indeed, the Maltese Islands have always suffered from water scarcity. During the last century, this scarcity was due to the huge demands placed on Malta's limited resources by the increasing population, irrigated agriculture, and tourism. Despite the fact that public water agencies have invested heavily in improving water production and distribution, the exploitation of groundwater resources still reaches unparalleled levels (Spiteri et al, 2015). Malta's considerable use of desalinated water has also come at a high financial and environmental cost, due to the imported fossil fuels used to run the desalination plants, and the increased emissions from power generation (MTCE, 2012). However, in 2013 Malta abstracted 107.51m³ per inhabitant of fresh surface and groundwater, which compares well with other EU countries (EC, 2016b).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- Malta has the lowest level of annual water resources in the EU: 185m³ per person (EC, 2017).
- Fresh water is a scarce natural resource for Malta, due to its high population density and arid climate (MTCE, 2012).
- Malta has the least freshwater renewable resources (cubic metres per inhabitant) among EU countries. In fact, in 2014 only 209.83 m³ of freshwater per inhabitant were produced through renewable resources (EC, 2016a).

Policies & Legislation

- The 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District 2015 - 2021
- Subsidiary Legislation 423.20 of the Laws of Malta: Water Policy Framework Regulations (2004)
- National Environment Policy (2012)
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2012)

Malta bases its water procurement on desalination which translates into high cost and strong environmental impact.

Domestic and commercial water

In Malta, the production of water for domestic and commercial use is heavily dependent on reverse osmosis plants. Until recently, the government's approach to the issue of water scarcity was rather inconsistent and inadequate for protecting Malta's water reserves. The second national water-catchment management plan aims to further consolidate the objectives of the first plan. This will be complemented by increased monitoring of groundwater extraction.

Wastewater

Wastewater-treatment coverage reached 100% in 2011 (up to 20.7% in 2010) in Malta, due to the construction of new wastewater treatment plants (EC, 2017). However, treated sewage effluent is still under-utilised, despite the fact that the country has invested in treatment plants to treat all sewage (Spiteri et al, 2015).

Meanwhile, the National Environment Policy (2012), aims to ensure that the extraction of freshwater resources stays within the sustainable yield of the aquifer, and that the quality status of the water meets EU standards. These goals are to be achieved through: conservation measures; water-pricing policies aiming at the efficient use of water resources; and the use of alternatives to groundwater, such as recycled wastewaters and renewable resources, including rainwater runoff (MTCE, 2012).

Key challenges

- Malta still lacks a comprehensive water policy, even if various aspects of this area are covered through more specific policy documents.
- Current practices on the desalination of water, namely the use of reverse osmosis processes, incur high environmental and financial costs.
- Use of freshwater renewable resources remains critically low, thereby negatively impacting its sustainability.
- The excessive consumption of underground water remains a concern to be addressed through regulation and enforcement. This consumption, coupled with low levels of support, creates a high risk of low-quality underground water.

Recommendations

- A comprehensive water policy comprising, as minimum, water extraction, management and use, also clearly identifying the institutional framework; responsibility for water management amongst government institutions should be clearly adopted.
- Improve the management of renewable freshwater through measures such as a better collection of rainwater (including rain-water harvesting), and awareness-raising on water use and management.
- Consider implementing measures to make treated effluent useable.

7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



**Ensure access to affordable,
reliable, sustainable and
modern energy for all**

Overview

Goal 7 aims to substantially increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix and in the total final energy consumption by 2030. Malta's obligations in the field of renewable energy are laid out in the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC (EU, 2009), which establishes an overall policy for the production and promotion of energy from renewable sources in the EU. Besides requiring individual national targets to fulfil at least 20% of the EU's total energy needs with renewables by 2020 (for which Malta has the lowest target – 10%), all EU countries must also ensure that, by 2020, a minimum of 10% of their transport fuels come from renewable sources. EU countries are obliged to set out how they plan to meet these targets, and the general course of their renewable energy policy in their national renewable-energy action plans (EC, 2017).

Goal 7 also seeks to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and to enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology. Under the Energy Efficiency Directive (EU, 2012), Member States have to set indicative targets (including on final energy consumption) for 2020. In 2014, Malta had already almost exceeded its 2020 target, which is equivalent to a 43% increase, when compared with 2005 (EEA, 2016). Regarding access to electricity, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia suffer a lack of this source of energy (The Washington Post, 2015), while in the EU 100% of the population of each country had access to it since 2000 (IndexMundi, 2012).

CLEAN FUELS AND
TECHNOLOGY

RENEWABLE ENERGY

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

CLEAN ENERGY RESEARCH
AND TECHNOLOGY

Malta's progress towards Goal 7

Renewable energy

While the EU is on track towards meeting the renewable energy target for 2020, Malta is one of the few EU Member States that is not (EEA, 2016).

Solar radiation is very stable and predictable in Malta, and solar intensity is amongst the highest in the EU, rendering the yield of photovoltaic (PV) systems one of the highest in Europe. PV installations are generally considered as a low-risk investment in Malta, with very predictable returns. Renewable energy in Malta is mostly operational through solar water heaters and PV installations and the use of bio-fuels (OPM, 2016).

SWHs are estimated to contribute 0.92% of the 10% national renewable-energy sources (RES) target by 2020. Since 2005, the government has launched a number of grant schemes to promote the use of SWHs for households, including rebates on the purchase price (OPM, 2016).

Installations of PV systems are expected to contribute 4.7% out of the 10% national RES target by 2020. Support from EU/national capital grant incentives and feed-in tariff schemes, and the reduction in cost of module production, have rendered roof-mounted PV systems more attractive and affordable,

and hence larger and more numerous. In the non-residential area, support schemes were initially part-funded under the European Regional Development Fund programme, and catered for the generation of electricity from renewable sources or efficiency measures in the industrial/commercial sector. Further support schemes were made available to the agricultural and tourism sectors, as well as for renewable energy-related projects for education, NGOs, religious institutions and local councils. This resulted in an increase in PV capacity uptake by the commercial and industrial sector from 2009 onwards. Subsequently, support for PV in the non-residential sphere was shifted from a system of grants to a feed-in tariff mechanism (OPM, 2016).

It is also to be noted that there are land issues in Malta, given its size and high population density (OPM, 2016); in 2012, almost one third (32.9%) of the country's surface area was classified as artificial land cover, by far the highest percentage in the EU (EC, 2013). Since PV technology is land-intensive, it poses a problem for Malta where land is scarce and expensive, also rendering visual impact inevitable (OPM, 2016).

Taking the above into account, the draft Solar Farm Policy (2014) provides guidance for the location of new solar farms, and identifies design criteria and mitigation measures to address their potential impact. It also aims to facilitate Malta's achievement of its 2020 EU targets. The said draft policy, which defines a solar farm as a sizeable commercial installation with a footprint larger than 1000m², recommends that solar farms be sited in the vicinity of urban areas or areas with high electrical consumption. The policy gives priority to large-scale rooftops, car parks, industrial areas and quarries (MEPA¹ and MEH², 2014).

Energy efficiency

On the basis of its consumption of primary energy in 2014, Malta is one of 3 EU countries that are not on track in meeting their 2020 energy-efficiency target (EEA, 2016). Measures taken in this regard include the setting of an obligation scheme on Enemalta Corporation, which was responsible for the importation, storage and wholesale of 89% of all fuels used in Malta in 2013, to cover part of the target set in accordance with the EU 2012 Energy Efficiency Directive (MEH, 2014). Two major measures brought into effect since 2014 were the progressive domestic and residential household tariffs for electricity consumption which is designed to promote energy efficiency, and the 'Eco-reduction' mechanism. The Water Services Corporation also embarked on several projects in 2014 and 2015 towards addressing various aspects of energy efficiency in its operations, including studying the current usage of energy to help identify cost-saving opportunities through enhanced efficiency. The Corporation is drafting a strategy to implement optimal cost-effective measures (MEH, 2016).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2014, Malta had the second-lowest share of renewable energy in the gross final energy consumption (4.7%) in the EU (EC, 2016).
- Malta has committed to reach the national target of 10% share of energy from renewable sources in its final energy consumption by 2020, in order to achieve the 20% target of the EU as a whole (EEA, 2016)

Policies & Strategies

- The National Energy Policy for the Maltese Islands (2012)
- The National Renewable Energy Action Plan 2015-2020 (consultative document)
- (Draft) Solar Farm Policy (2014)
- Planning Guidance for Micro-Wind Turbines (2010)
- Malta's National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (2014)
- Nearly-Zero Energy Buildings Plan for Malta (2015)
- A Solid Waste Management Strategy for the Maltese Islands (2001)
- Greening Our Economy – Achieving a Sustainable Future (2015) (consultation document)
- National Action Plan on sustainable public procurement 2010-2012
- National Environment Policy (2012)

¹The Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) has been replaced by the Planning Authority (PA) and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA).

²This was the name of the Ministry before May 2016. Subsequently, it fell within the purview of the Office of the PM and, as of June 2017, falls within the portfolio of Ministry for Energy & Water Management.

Solar radiation is very stable
and predictable in Malta,
and solar intensity is amongst
the highest in the EU.

Key challenges

- Malta's solar potential is hindered by the lack of legal protection of solar rights. Such protection interferes with other property rights, which have developed due to the limited availability and high value of land, parcelling and inheritance (OPM, 2016).
- The proliferation of PV systems has generated concern on their visual impact affecting the urban landscape and skyline in village cores; PV systems on rooftops are often visible from street level and adjoining streets (OPM, 2016).
- A trend in the building sector has seen the redevelopment of single-unit households into multiple dwellings, rendering the installation of SWHs ineffective, due to the height of the building as well as limited roof accessibility (OPM, 2016).

Recommendations

- Consider better protection of solar rights as a result of an enhanced balance between solar and property rights.
- Explore alternative options of PV system installations that reduce the visual impact, such as the solar road recently built in France.
- Alternative modes of achieving renewable energy targets should be explored, given that PV systems and SWHs alone are insufficient to meet Malta's targets.



8 DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH



**Promote sustained, inclusive
and sustainable economic growth,
full and productive employment
and decent work for all**

Overview

Goal 8 addresses full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Its targets include: sustaining per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances; achieving higher levels of economic productivity and the annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person; promoting development-oriented policies supporting productive activities and decent job creation; reducing the proportion of youth not in employment; implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

In Malta, unemployment has reached an all-time low, but fares well when compared to other EU Member States. However, Malta, too, faces labour-market challenges. On the one hand, the number of unemployed youths dropped from approximately 4,300 persons in 2009 to approximately 4,100 persons in 2012. On the other hand, Malta's NEET ('not in employment, education or training') rate grew from 9.8% in 2009 to 11.1% in 2011, reflecting an increase in the number of inactive youths. Furthermore, despite higher numbers of hours worked, Malta's labour productivity per hour has been declining consistently over the years. Rising labour costs, together with diminishing productivity per labour hour, are contributing to Malta's decreasing competitiveness in contrast with other EU Member States (MEDE, 2014).

DECENT JOBS

EQUAL PAY

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

LABOUR RIGHTS

ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

MATERIAL FOOTPRINT

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

DOMESTIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Malta's progress towards Goal 8

Economic productivity

Malta's economic performance has been robust and resilient over the recent years. The real GDP growth recovered relatively quickly after the country's 2009 recession, until in 2015 it exceeded its pre-crisis peak. Finalisation of EU-funded projects from the programming period of 2007-2013 boosted Malta's investment in 2014-2015, contributing to economic expansion. Improved competitiveness of some traditional sectors, coupled with the emergence of new labour-intensive and export-oriented activities, has reinforced economic growth. This has resulted in the generation of new jobs, which is currently higher than during the boom preceding the 2008 financial crisis. As a result of the strong revenue growth, the general government budget deficit has also decreased in recent years (EC, 2016).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- As a result of its robust economic performance, Malta's GDP per capita is projected to reach 97% of the EU average in 2017 (EC, 2016).
- Malta is the only EU Member State with a diminishing stock of capital per person employed in the recent past (MEDE, 2014).
- In 2015, Malta had an unemployment rate of 5.4%, compared to the EU28 average rate of 9.4% (EC, 2017a).
- Among employers seeking candidates for high-skill positions in Malta, 55% report difficulty in recruiting appropriate candidates for these roles (MEDE, 2014).

Policies, Strategies & Legislation

- The National Employment Policy (2014)
- National Youth Employment Strategy (2015)
- Chapter 370 of the Laws of Malta: Investment Services Act, 1994

Investment

Despite the increase in the creation of jobs, as well as the number of hours worked, investment levels in Malta's economy are low in comparison to the level of economic development. Between 2002 and 2012, Malta's average annual investment rate as a percentage of the GDP was approximately 14%, which is on par with the EU average. However, while Malta's physical capital stock per capita was €24,000, the EU average physical capital stock per capita amounted to €70,700 – almost three times as much as that of Malta. This demonstrates significant underinvestment in the country: Malta's investment rate as a percentage of the GDP should be at least 4 to 5 percentage points higher than that recorded between 2002 and 2012. This underinvestment is attributed to factors including: weak foreign direct investment, declining labour productivity, rising labour costs, increasing costs of production, and limited human capital resources.

To address declining productivity, the government has introduced a number of family-friendly policies and flexibility measures to encourage healthier work environments and increased productivity in the workplace. The National Employment Policy commits to implementing the 'New Skills for New Jobs' initiative, with the goal of identifying emerging trends and anticipating the corresponding skills required. This initiative is also aimed at enhancing the match between skills and labour market requirements. Furthermore, Jobsplus (formerly ETC – Employment & Training Corporation) and MCAST will be implementing new apprenticeship and traineeship schemes providing work exposure for students (MEDE, 2014). The government has also introduced measures – such as those described in the sections below – in order to increase human capital resources (MEDE, 2014).

Employment and skills

Between 2000 and 2012, Malta has undergone the third-largest increase (from among the EU Member States) in the employment rate among the 20 - 64-year-olds in the population. The total employment rate increased from 57.5% in 2000 to 61.5% in 2012. This positive trend is a result of more women entering the labour market. Indeed, the number of women moving into the public sector or expanding the private sector has been on the rise from 2004 to 2012: the percentage of women (in public sector or expanding private sectors) as a ratio of total employment rose from 51.2% in 2004 to 56.2% in 2012 (MEDE, 2014).

Youth employment

As regards youths aged between 20 and 24 years, Malta has been doing well compared to the EU28 average; this population group has a 66.3% employment rate, in contrast to the 51.7% in the EU. The same observation could be made for the 25-29 age group, in relation to which Malta boasts an 88.3% employment rate - again better than the EU28 average of 73.9% (EC, 2017b).

In 2014, the government set up the Employment Aid Programme, which includes an apprenticeship programme for students, and promotes flexible working arrangements. Similarly, the Youth Guarantee Scheme is aimed at improving the employability or education prospects of young people aged 16 to 23 who are unemployed, inactive, or have just finished compulsory schooling (MFSS, 2015; MFIN, 2015). This is also linked to the targets of Goal 1 to reduce poverty. In fact, Malta's approach to poverty reduction has been strongly linked to the belief that the best way to reduce poverty and social exclusion is through labour-market activation (MFSS, 2015).

Persons with disability and employment

The number of persons with disability in employment dropped from 1,472 in 2004 to 1,247 in 2012. Despite schemes and initiatives targeted towards this social group, their employment rate is only 4.5%. The National Employment Policy commits to replace short-term programmes and schemes with long-term policies aimed at guaranteeing a steady flow of services promoting the activation of persons with disability into employment (MEDE, 2014).

In 2015, Malta had an unemployment rate of 5.4%, compared to the EU28 average rate of 9.4%.

Key challenges

- Despite the general decrease in government budget deficit, primary current expenditure has been growing faster than potential GDP. This could create problems in case of shocks to tax revenues (EC, 2016).
- Sustainability challenges are still present. The limited investor base for the government, while shielding it from volatility of international financial markets, also implies a lack of diversification and spillover risks between different domestic sectors (EC, 2016).
- Inefficiencies in network industries, the public administration and the judicial system obstruct the business environment (EC, 2016).

Recommendations

- Explore the areas where public sector expenditure could be reduced or streamlined without undermining commitments to sustainable and inclusive society.
- Implement measures to attract new investors so as to diversify the market; diversification in investments could become a higher priority.
- Streamline the education system (general and vocational) to address the skills mismatch.
- Take measures to render the network industries, public administration and the judicial system more efficient so as to remove bottlenecks within the business environment.
- Review tourism policy to encourage the sustainable creation of quality jobs for the local population.
- Revise labour-market activation measures for persons with disability and NEETs, using good practices from other EU countries and taking full advantage of EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Erasmus+ and other mechanisms.

Photo: John Haslam



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



**Build resilient infrastructure,
promote inclusive and
sustainable industrialisation
and foster innovation**

Overview

Goal 9 focuses on three interrelated key aspects. It addresses quality infrastructure that is reliable, sustainable and resilient, together with inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and innovation in all spheres. Because of Malta's geophysical specificity, this SDG is very relevant to the country, which has been trying to address key challenges in these fields with different results. When compared with other countries, it is evident that there is room for improvement in Malta. Since Malta is currently the country with the densest roads in the world (WEF, 2015a), one example is the pressing need for the reduction of road density. Furthermore, Malta's expenditure in research and development is quite low, especially when compared with the EU average (EC, 2016a). Indeed, Malta's insufficient capacity to innovate is deemed as one of its most problematic factors for doing business in the country (WEF, 2015b). Therefore, the goal of boosting investment in infrastructure and innovation is extremely pertinent for Malta.

QUALITY AND RESILIENT
INFRASTRUCTURE

EMPLOYMENT

GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

SMALL-SCALE ENTERPRISES

RESOURCE-USE EFFICIENCY

TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITIES

Malta's progress towards Goal 9

Infrastructure: transport and roads

As far as transportation is concerned, Malta is performing well with respect to air transport and port infrastructures, whose quality scores rank 30th and 20th respectively, out of 141 countries around the world (WEF, 2015a). However, the picture is not as optimistic for ground-transport in Malta. Indeed, Malta being the only country (together with Cyprus) in the EU not having neither a railroad nor inland waterways (EC, 2016b), it is also the country with the highest road density in the world. This might be one of the reasons why, in 2015, the quality of its ground-transport network ranked 110th out of 141 countries around the world. The quality of roads is indeed another of Malta's weaknesses, scoring 85th out of 141 countries in 2015 (WEF, 2015a). Such rankings indicate that measures need to be taken to improve the overall ground-transport network on the Island.

In its 2017 Budget Speech, the Ministry of Finance (MFIN) announced various measures aimed at addressing some of these factors. A tax deduction of 150% (up to a maximum of €35,000 yearly) is offered to companies granting free public transport to their employees. Additionally, youths turning 18 in 2017 are being granted one year of free public transport, up to a maximum of €312 per person (MFIN, 2016). These measures are consistent with, and add to, the actions taken for 2016 when MFIN announced that work will be commencing on a National Cycling Plan (MFIN, 2015).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- Malta ranks 1st for road density out of 141 countries worldwide (WEF, 2015a).
- Malta ranks as 85th (out of 141 countries worldwide) for quality of roads (WEF, 2015a).
- Malta ranks as 110th country (out of 141 countries worldwide) for quality of ground-transport networks (WEF, 2015a).
- In 2015, Malta spent 0.77% of its GDP on research and development, compared to an EU28 average of 2.03% (EC, 2016a).

Policies & Strategies

- Road Safety Strategy Malta 2014-2024
- Malta National Electromobility Action Plan (2013)
- National Transport Strategy 2050 Malta (2016)
- National Transport Master Plan 2025 Malta (2016)

Technological readiness and research & innovation

In the last quarter of 2014, internet broadband subscriptions increased by 6.0% when compared to 2013 levels (NSO, 2015). According to the Global Competitiveness Index 2015-2016, Malta is doing quite well in terms of fixed-broadband internet subscriptions, for which it ranked 11th out of 140 countries in the world. Furthermore, as regards internet bandwidth (kb/s per user), Malta ranks 3rd out of 140 countries (WEF, 2015b).

On the other hand, Malta's expenditure for research and development, as a percentage of its GDP (0.77%), is significantly lower than the EU 28 average (2.03%) (EC, 2016a). Worldwide, Malta is ranked as 64th out of 140 countries as regards company spending on research and development. As for capacity for innovation, Malta was ranked 73rd out of 140 countries worldwide by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2015b).

To better facilitate research and innovation, the Budget 2016 document announced that enterprises employing persons in possession of a doctorate, or are in the course of reading for a doctorate, in science, information technology or engineering, will be given a fiscal credit of up to a maximum of €10,000 when such employment has been held for more than one year (MFIN, 2015).

Sustainable industrialisation

One of the key factors fostering industrialisation is a strong and accessible system of credit to enterprises, especially small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). According to the EU Annual Report on SMEs, 50% of Maltese SMEs have benefited from credit line or overdraft in the six months preceding the report,

compared to the EU28 average of 37%; whereas 22% of them obtained bank loans, which compares well with the EU28 average of 19% (EC, 2015).

In Malta, one of the measures helping small start-ups is that youths graduating from post-secondary institutions over the past three years, and who set up companies with an annual turnover of less than €80,000, are entitled to exemption from audit in the first two years of the start-up. Those opting to undertake an audit, they would receive a tax rebate of 120% (MFIN, 2016). Furthermore, the Budget 2016 document announced incentives offered by Malta Enterprise for small enterprises requiring additional space for the purpose of manufacturing. One of these incentives entailed financial compensation for relocation amounting up to €10,000 per eligible businesses, and valid for a period not exceeding two years (MFIN, 2015).

In 2016, MFIN announced that companies investing in electric vehicles with no carbon dioxide emissions could benefit from a tax rebate equivalent to 150% of outlay, taken against income for the year of purchase. This was raised from the previous 125%. Furthermore, those companies purchasing hybrid vehicles with emissions of up to 70g/km could benefit from a tax rebate of 125%. Meanwhile, private users could benefit from a scheme offering grants of €7,000 towards the purchase of a new electric vehicle when their old vehicle is scrapped, and €4,000 towards the purchase of an electric vehicle when the old vehicle is not to be scrapped (MFIN, 2015).

Key challenges

- The low research and development expenditure affects the Maltese potential for innovation.
- The poor quality of roads and the absence of alternative options have a significant impact on the quality of the ground-transport network. This is also the main reason why Malta is the country with the highest road density in the world.

Recommendations

- Increase research and development expenditure from public and private sources as a percentage of GDP, aimed at reaching the EU28 average, as the minimum target.
- Expand measures to foster employment of PhD holders in private enterprises to include professionals from fields not limited to ICT, engineering and science.
- Involve stakeholders to examine the feasibility of a more sustainable transport system. This might include railroads, waterways and more sustainable vehicles. Road density should be addressed with the target of a significant decrease that has to be consistent over time. Given its high ICT penetration, Malta is well-placed to explore the benefits of teleworking, ICT-based mobile work, and similar new forms of employment that would reduce daily commutes by personal/private means of transportation.



10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



**Reduce inequality within
and among countries**

Overview

Goal 10 addresses inequality within and among countries. Inequality encompasses a broad range of aspects, including income, educational opportunities, access to the labour market, social integration, and all kinds of discrimination. While achievements have been made in recent years in Malta regarding the LGBTIQ sphere - including the introduction of legislation against discrimination in the workplace and the right to civil unions for same-sex couples, and subsequently marriage equality - other groups such as migrants still face inequalities. This is compounded by the lack of a national integration policy, which the government has promised to develop in 2017.

POLITICAL INCLUSION

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

FISCAL, WAGE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES

Malta's progress towards Goal 10

Socioeconomic inequalities

The Gini coefficient of equalised disposable income is a useful tool for evaluating the inequalities within a country, and to measure the distribution of resources amongst the population. A zero score of the Gini coefficient corresponds to the utopic balance in the distribution of resources, while a score of 100 indicates the highest possible rate of inequality. In the years 2010-2015 Malta scored an average of 27.76 on the Gini coefficient, which is consistently lower than the EU28 average of 30.68 (EC, 2017a). This means that the distribution of material resources in Malta is generally more equitable than in most countries in Europe. Nevertheless, in Malta more than 8 persons out of 100 are living in conditions of relative poverty. According to the National Statistics Office (NSO), in 2015, 8.5% of the Maltese population was living in households with an income below 50% of the national median income (NSO, 2016).

Intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic inequalities

While formal education plays an important role in reducing inequalities, the gap of poverty risk between low-educated persons and the population in general is lower than in most of the EU - on par with Scandinavian countries (Eurostat, 2017). Hence, it would be valuable to evaluate whether low levels of education persist over time, across generations. Malta is the EU country with the largest persistence of low education, transmitted from parents to the progeny. In 2011, 73.5% of individuals whose parents had a low level of education, had low educational attainments themselves. Furthermore, among the EU Member States, Malta has the highest rate (25.6%) of low levels of education among children of highly educated parents (Eurostat, 2017). This pattern is consistent with the transition of ability to make ends meet from one generation to another.

Consistently with the EU28 average, socioeconomic mobility in Malta is low. According to a survey carried out by Eurostat in 2011, only 28.2% people in Maltese households making ends meet with ease had spent their childhood in a household that had economic difficulties. Correspondingly, 71.8% of respondents who do not encounter large difficulties today, were not facing them in their childhood household. However, 46.7% of the population experiencing difficulties to make ends meet at the time of the survey, did not encounter such difficulties as children (EC, 2017b). These results should be contextualised in relation to the aftermath of the most recent economic crisis. Nevertheless, it seems that lower income has a higher persistence over generations than is the case with higher income. Therefore, looking at intergenerational transmission of both income and education inequalities, a similar pattern can be observed: inequality in Malta is relatively stable and specific, and the same families seem to be adversely affected across generations. Moving up the social ladder seems to be harder than going down, and the said education issues appear to be feeding such socioeconomic inequalities.

Social-equality legislation

The Equality Bill, issued in 2015 for consultation, transposes EU Directives on equal treatment in Malta by targeting discrimination on the most common grounds. This bill establishes that any behaviour listed therein, and leading to unequal treatment in nine areas listed, is against the law. It establishes that any behaviour listed therein that would lead to inequality in nine areas listed, is against the law. The bill also stipulates that, "No person, establishment or entity, whether in the private sector or within the public administration, shall discriminate against any other person". The bill also establishes that the burden of proof of unequal treatment is incumbent on the

defendant (MSDC, 2015). The mandate of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) is intended to be widened to become a National Human Rights and Equality Commission, which is to act as both a national human-rights institution, as well as a pro-equality body. To this end, a consultation process was launched in December 2014 and closed in January 2016 (EC, 2016).

Inequalities: third-country nationals (TCNs)

According to Malta's country profile on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), the overall level of integration of migrants in Malta is low. Malta ranks 33rd out of the 38 countries analysed, its main weaknesses resting in the access to nationality, education opportunities and political participation (MIPEX, 2015). The minister at the helm of the then-named Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (or MSDC)³ has announced that an integration policy will be launched in 2017 (MaltaToday, February 2017). As it stands, Malta is unlikely to be counted among the countries with well-managed integration strategies (SDGs indicator 10.7.2).

Civil society plays a significant role in the integration of TCNs in Malta. The African Media Association Malta (AMA) has developed a migrant skills register, which interviews and profiles migrants, creating a resource for potential employers and enhancing migrants' opportunity to work. It also provides training for migrants to nurture skills (AMA, 2017). Another migrant-community organisation, Third Country National Support Network (TSN Malta) works for the welfare and integration of TCNs (TSN Malta, 2015). The Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants (FSM) works for the integration of migrants through support services, education, research, capacity building and advocacy (FSM, 2015). Throughout 2014, there were a number of new developments among civil society groups working on social inclusion, including the President's Foundation for the Welfare of Society and the Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHROM) (Pfc, 2015). However, it is too early to measure the results of their actions.

Legislation

- Equality Bill (2015)
- Chapter 540 of the Laws of Malta: Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act, 2015
- Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Chapter 452) Equal Treatment in Employment (Amendment) Regulations, 2014)
- Chapter 530 of the Laws of Malta: Civil Unions Act, 2014
- Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta: The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act, 2000

Facts & Figures in Malta

- The Gini coefficient (scale from 0 to 100) of equalised disposable income for Malta is 27.76 (average of the 2010 - 2015 period) (EC, 2017a).
- In Malta, 8 out of 100 persons are living in relative poverty (NSO, 2016).
- Among EU countries, Malta has the largest persistence (73.5%) of low education, transmitted from parents to the progeny (Eurostat, 2017).
- In 2014, Malta ranked 33rd out of 38 countries for the overall integration of migrants, according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX, 2015).

³This ministry has been renamed (with effect from June 2017): Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (MEAE).

Inequalities: LGBTIQ persons

Steps forward have been made at the legislative level towards reducing inequalities concerning LGBTIQ persons. As an example, the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act sets out the right for everyone to develop their own gender identity, and for this identity to be recognised in all situations. The Act bans discrimination based on sex, and gender identity or expression. It also establishes that individuals seeking psychological support or medical interventions related to sex or gender have the right to legal provision of health services (Laws of Malta, 2015). The amendments made in 2014 to the Employment and Industrial Relations Act also give legal basis for prohibiting discrimination towards transgender people in the workplace (Laws of Malta, 2014a). The Civil Unions Act⁴ recognises the right to register civil unions for same-sex couples, and provides for the recognition and registration of civil unions registered abroad.

In both cases, once registered, unions are equal to civil marriage. Partners in a civil union are also deemed eligible to adopt, under the same Act, with the same rights and obligations that apply to different-sex couples (Laws of Malta, 2014b).

Inequalities: persons with disability

The Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act as amended by the Act XXIV of 2016, constitutes a step forward in the development of the legislative framework concerning inequality for persons with disability. It lists 14 group-specific rights and sets up the role of Commissioner for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, who is appointed by the Prime Minister, as the function responsible for the adherence to the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act (Malta, 2000; 2016). However, inequalities affecting persons with disability are still widespread, as discussed under Goals 1 and 8 of this report.

Key challenges

- Despite income inequality in Malta being lower than the EU28 average, a 27.7 average score of the Gini coefficient for the period 2010-2015 (EC, 2017a) shows that the country is not on track towards being an equitable and just society.
- In Malta, income inequality appears to be transmitted from one generation to another. Most people currently not facing difficulty to make ends meet lived in well-off households during their childhood. In parallel, the majority of people currently struggling economically were experiencing the same conditions in their household of origin. Furthermore, moving up the social ladder over generations seems to be more difficult than going down.
- Malta is the EU country with the largest persistence of low education, transmitted from parents to the progeny. The intergenerational persistence of low educational attainments could reinforce income inequalities by affording fewer job opportunities and less-valued work skills to individuals coming from vulnerable groups.
- The planned National Human Rights and Equality Commission, which is supposed to take over from the NCPE, has not yet been created. Together with the lack of a national integration policy, this would have been a key development for Malta towards reversing low scores on migrant overall integration.

Recommendations

- Commission reliable studies on the intergenerational transmission of inequalities (educational, income, etc.), with the participation of relevant stakeholders - to inform a new strategy to fight such phenomena.
- Identify and tackle the social mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of inequalities (e.g. early school leaving, school segregation, etc.).
- Prioritise on the adoption of a national integration policy. This should have the widest possible impact in responding to the key problems of integration on the Maltese Islands.
- Provide students belonging to vulnerable groups with further and better educational opportunities, for example: study grants assigned by the University of Malta giving priority to students coming from households in relative poverty.

⁴The Civil Unions Act has been amended by the Marriage Act and other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2017 (ACT XXIII of 2017 of the Laws of Malta), granting further rights to same-sex couples.



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES



**Make cities and human
settlements inclusive, safe,
resilient and sustainable**

Overview

The aim of Goal 11 is indeed an urgent priority in response to the rapid urbanisation processes that have been taking place over the last century. Consequently, for the first time in history, in 2008 the urban population outnumbered the rural population. Nevertheless, this process of rapid urban resettlement is far from completed. In fact, according to the United Nations (UN), it is expected that, "by 2050, two-thirds of the world population will be living in urban areas" (UN-HABITAT Global Activity Report 2015). Making sure that urban areas are safe, sustainable, resilient and inclusive must be a priority of all governments, especially of those where urbanisation is already quite high. This is a concern for Malta, which is ranked the 8th most urbanised country in the world. However, concerns of housing, waste management and public transportation in the Maltese Islands leave much room for improvement in order to succeed in meeting the targets of Goal 11.

URBANISATION

GOOD-QUALITY HOUSING

SUSTAINABLE URBAN AREAS

WASTE REDUCTION

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Malta's progress towards Goal 11

Population density

With its 1,369 inhabitants/km² as per 2015, Malta is by far the most densely populated country in the EU, and one of the most densely populated countries in the world (EC, 2017). In light of these figures, it is clear that Malta should adopt efforts towards sustainable development of settlements. More importantly, in order for such efforts to be successful, it is essential that such efforts be shared by all social actors with a commitment of improving their urban areas. As mentioned earlier, according to the UN, in 2014 Malta was the eighth-most urbanised country in the world, with 95.3% of the population living in urban areas. It is being envisaged that by 2050 97.2% of the Maltese territory will become urbanised.

Whilst, on one hand, rapid urbanisation could put many constraints on resources, on the other hand, it could foster economic and social development. In order to address the former issue, it is essential that development of cities and other urban areas be governed appropriately through sustainable forward-looking strategies. Thus, urbanisation must be governed in finding a balance between rural and urban areas. Due to the structure of Malta's geography, the aims and targets of Goal 11 should be taken very seriously.

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2015, 95% of Maltese population was living in towns (World Bank, 2016).
- In 2014 Malta ranked as the 9th country in the world, according to the number of motor vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants (NationMaster, 2017).
- In 2014, 11% of the Maltese population was living in housing with leaking roof / damp walls / floors / foundation or rot in window frames (EC, 2016a).
- Among the Maltese population, in 2014, 37.7% of persons living in residential areas suffered from pollution, grime or other environmental problems (EC, 2016b).
- Malta's municipal waste production is among the highest in the EU28, with no improvement between 2005 and 2015. (EC, 2017a)
- In 2012, 58,24% of waste generated in Malta was landfilled. The EU28 average is 22.75%. (EC, 2015a)

Policies

- Development Control Policy, Guidance and Standards 2015 (MEPA, 2015)
- National Environmental Policy (MSDEC, 2012)
- National waste management plan 2013-2020 (GoM, 2013)

Housing

Malta does not have a national housing policy and, unsurprisingly, the prices of property on the Islands have risen significantly since 2000. In 2016, the property price index was at 219.7% of the index in 2000 (Central Bank of Malta, 2016), whereas the minimum wage (NMW) in 2016 only reached 110.3% of its value in 2010 (EC, 2016). More specifically, between 2013 and 2016 the NMW only rose by 3.6% (EC, 2016) while the property price index rose by 26.48% (Central Bank of Malta, 2016).

This means that, not only did the house prices increase steadily, but also that the property purchasing-power of people on the NMW was dramatically reduced. This would also apply to all residents not having experienced an increase in their earnings at the same speed as property prices.

Given Malta's specific characteristics concerning size, population density and tourism flows, the price of property has to be a top concern at all times. The free market of property is hindering residents from being able to afford renting or owning property.

Illegal building

No reliable data was found on illegal buildings in Malta. However, the fact that this is a very real situation in the country has been indirectly confirmed by the statement of the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, who was quoted by the Times of Malta (August 2016) as stating, "The reality is that if we were to enforce every single illegality, we'd have to knock down three quarters of the buildings in the country".

In 2016, new regulations concerning existing unauthorised buildings were set to amend the Development Planning Act (L.N. 285 of 2016). Such regulations set up a scheme enabling citizens to regularise unauthorised existing building developments (e.g. new buildings or new illegal parts of regular buildings). Although this might be useful for the government for a variety of reasons not analysed here, such choices certainly do not contribute to the achievement of Goal 11.

Quality of houses

The quality of houses inhabited by the population is one of the main indicators of how inclusive and safe human settlements are. In 2013, Malta was the seventh country in Europe with homes that were too dark. In fact, 7.4% of all houses are considered to be too dark, despite the favourable geophysical conditions of the

Island. This could affect the well-being of inhabitants. Another worrying factor for the health of residents is represented by damp walls/floors or foundations, and leaking roofs. In 2013, 11% of the Maltese population lived in houses in such conditions, which is lower than the EU28 average (15.7%). However, this evidence shows that there is much room for improving the housing quality in the Maltese Islands (EC, 2016a).

The quality of living settlements is also to be assessed through the evaluation of their environment. According to Eurostat, in 2013, 30.3% of the Maltese population was living in houses the sustainability of which was threatened by excessive noise. This is well above the EU28 average of 18.4%. A similar, yet worse, pattern could be identified when analysing the environmental problems affecting houses, including, but not limited to, pollution and grime. In fact, while in EU28 the 14.3% of the population lives in houses affected by external environmental problems, in Malta this problem is experienced by 37.7% of residents. (EC, 2016b).

Transport

The poor quality of ground-transport infrastructure in Malta, as well as having the highest road density in the world (see Goal 9), affects the resilience and sustainability of human settlements in this country. Malta was ranked the 110th country in the world for quality of ground-transport networks (WEF, 2015a). Additionally, in 2014 Malta was also ranked the 9th country in the world for quantity of vehicles per capita, with 693 vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants (NationMaster, 2017). This is affecting the mobility on the Maltese Islands, the pollution (e.g. environmental, acoustic, etc.) and, more broadly, the well-being and the sustainability of life on the Maltese Islands.

Waste

The municipal waste production in Malta is among the highest in the EU28, and the situation has not shown any signs of improvement between 2005 and 2015 (EC, 2017). In fact, the municipal waste production keeps increasing at the second highest rate in Europe (+2.54% / year) (EC, 2017) and the 88% of treated municipal waste in landfill (EC, 2016) is extremely high, when compared to the EU28 average of 28%. Malta is the second country in Europe in terms of treated municipal waste that is landfilled (EC, 2016).



In 2014 Malta ranked as the 9th country in the world, according to the number of motor vehicles per 1,000 inhabitants.

Key challenges

- Malta is by far the most densely populated country in the EU, and one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Nevertheless, it is expected that urbanisation of the Maltese territory will continue growing to 97.2% by 2050.
- The prices of property in Malta have risen significantly since 2000. In 2016, the property price index was at 219.7% of the index in 2000, whereas the NMW increased by just 10% between 2010 and 2016. Hence, property purchasing power of the Maltese has been decreasing steadily, and the lack of a National Housing Policy contributes to worsen the overall picture.
- Illegal buildings in Malta deeply affect the sustainability of housing on the Maltese Islands. The lack of reliable data on existing illegal buildings and the recent scheme introduced by the government to regularise unauthorised existing building developments are a deep concern for the sustainability of urban areas in Malta.
- Quality of houses in Malta is strongly affected by dark dwellings, damp walls, floors and foundations, and especially by excessive surrounding noise.
- Extremely poor quality of the ground-transport network, together with the remarkably high number of vehicles per capita, threatens mobility on the Maltese Islands.
- Municipal waste production in Malta is among the highest in the EU28, and 88% of treated municipal waste is landfilled, which ranks Malta as the second country in Europe in terms of landfilled treated municipal waste.

Recommendations

- Protect and expand green spaces, along with safe and resilient non-urbanised public areas. This can be achieved by demolishing illegal, unsafe and unsustainable buildings, and creating parks and free, accessible, green areas.
- Investigate and implement strategies to guarantee that property prices do not rise much faster than the NMW, to the detriment of property purchasing power. This could be achieved either by providing vulnerable groups with subsidised mortgages, or by raising the NMW at the same rate of average housing price in Malta.
- Set up new, independent studies on the quantity and quality of illegal buildings in Malta, to plan and implement a strategy aiming at fostering sustainability. This should include stopping late regularisations of unauthorised building developments.
- Set up a group of national and international experts to cooperate with stakeholders in order to find a definitive, sustainable solution for public transport on the Maltese Islands. This should be followed by awareness-raising campaigns aimed at reducing the number of vehicles per capita in the long term.



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



**Ensure sustainable
consumption and
production patterns**

Overview

Goal 12 deals with mainstreaming sustainable consumption and production into national policies. Its targets include: fostering sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; reducing global food waste; achieving environmentally sound management of chemicals and all waste throughout their life cycle; and reducing the generation of waste. With reference to waste management in particular, various factors including Malta's high population density, its limited land space, its lack of economies of scale, and the effects of Malta's climatic conditions make it difficult for Malta to move waste management up the waste hierarchy through increased prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery (MSDEC, 2014).

NATURAL RESOURCES

MATERIAL FOOTPRINT

FOOD WASTE

MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS AND WASTES

REDUCTION, RECYCLING AND REUSE

HARMONY WITH NATURE

Malta's progress towards Goal 12

'Greening' the economy

The consultation document entitled, "Greening Our Economy – Achieving a Sustainable Future" states Malta's commitment towards 'green' growth. It emphasises that green economy is gaining momentum in Malta. The government has undertaken initiatives aimed at raising awareness on sustainable development (MSDEC, 2015). These initiatives include developing a National Education for Sustainable Development Strategy, for which public consultation closed in May 2016 (MEDE, 2016). This strategy would aim at ensuring that education for sustainable development reaches all the population - formally, non-formally and informally (MSDEC, 2015). However, although it was being projected that the strategy was to be finalised by the end of 2016 (MSDEC, 2015), it has not been published.

The 'Greening Our Economy' consultation document also proposes to mainstream sustainability in training programmes by the end of 2017, and to develop focused training programmes through the University of Malta and/or MCAST. These programmes would be aimed at developing the new skills required to further the green economy, with particular reference to sustainable development, and the development and inspection of green buildings. The consultation document also proposes to develop, by the end of 2017, an outreach programme for households and businesses to provide recommendations on how households could be rendered more sustainable. Another resolution is creating one-stop-shop offices in various areas around Malta in order to increase the level of public outreach in promoting efficiency, while at the same time cutting down on traffic, since the population would then be served within the community in which they reside (MSDEC, 2015).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- Generation of hazardous waste increased by 36.4% in 2015 as a result of higher amounts of discarded vehicles and chemical wastes (NSO, 2017).
- The total amount of solid waste generated in 2015 amounted to 1.9 million tonnes, down by 2.4% from 2014 (NSO, 2017).

Waste

For a long time, Malta has relied on disposal as the main waste-treatment operation, and hence depending primarily on landfilling. Recently, Malta has been making improvements in the waste management sphere through upgrading waste infrastructure, setting up waste separation and recycling systems, and through education programmes (including those in schools). In 2008/9, the Eco-Gozo Directorate within the Ministry for Gozo, together with the Institute for Sustainable Energy within the University of Malta, carried out a project focusing on all households in Gozo in order to, among other aspects, encourage appropriate waste-management practices. An information booklet containing relevant information was also distributed to families. The government is also seeking to minimise waste production and ensure sustainable management of the eventual waste generated. The Waste Management Plan 2014-2020 aims to move waste management in Malta up the waste hierarchy through increased prevention, reuse, recycle and recovery (MSDEC, 2014).

Various factors make it difficult for Malta to move waste management up the waste hierarchy through increased prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery.

Food waste

The 'Greening Our Economy' consultation document states the importance of supporting businesses, local authorities and third-sector organisations to help reduce food waste at home, in supply chains, across the public sector, and within the businesses. It also seeks to carry out a research and assessment exercise by the end of 2017 to determine the amount of waste from food and beverage suppliers, and to draw up protocols with a view to channelling this surplus food and drink to the most deprived and/or farms as animal feed (MSDEC, 2015).

Policies

- Greening Our Economy – Achieving a Sustainable Future (2015) (consultation document)
- Waste Management Plan for the Maltese Islands: A Resource Management Approach 2014-2020 (2014)
- Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (2015)
- National Environment Policy (2012)

Key challenges

- Malta does not possess facilities to store and treat hazardous substances, which means that these are exported (MSDEC, 2014).
- EU waste legislation promotes principles of self-sufficiency and proximity. However, being an island state Malta encounters a number of challenges in this respect; one of these is the fact that the recovery of dry recyclables for export towards recycling into new products abroad comes at a high price due to the distances between Malta and mainland Europe and other countries, rendering waste transport expensive (MSDEC, 2014).
- Very limited availability of data, and lack of reporting on successes and challenges in business and the public sector hinder the relevant authorities from developing evidence-based policies.

Recommendations

- Urgently develop a hazardous-waste policy and action plan.
- Involving the relevant stakeholders, both local and international, in order to devise the most effective waste-management system possible for Malta as a small island state.
- Conduct a study to set the baseline for sustainability-related challenges and practices in business and the public sector.



13 CLIMATE
ACTION



**Take urgent action to
combat climate change
and its impacts**

Overview

Goal 13 deals with strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters. It also sets the aim to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning. Furthermore, this SDG calls for improving education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning. Due to its small size and its location in Southern Europe, Malta is a vulnerable country in terms of the predicted climate change impacts (MEPA, 2015). The country ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994, and subsequently ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. As an EU Member State, Malta's climate change obligations include reaching the 2020 target of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels (MSDEC, 2015). Malta was the only EU Member State to not reach its 2014 ESD (Effort Sharing Decision) target with regards to GHG emissions, an area in which Malta is experiencing difficulties in staying on track (EEA, 2016).

RESILIENCE AND ADAPTIVE
CAPACITY

RISK-REDUCTION
STRATEGIES

CLIMATE CHANGE MEASURES

CLIMATE CHANGE

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Malta's progress towards Goal 13

Precipitation and sea-level changes

The Maltese Islands are experiencing a decrease in annual precipitation, possibly leading to episodes of drought. More intensive storms also lead to flash flooding. Furthermore, predicted global sea-level changes are likely to affect coastal areas and groundwater, thus affecting ecological processes and systems upon which the majority of socioeconomic activities and infrastructure depend (MEPA, 2015).

Greenhouse gas emissions

In 2013, 2014 and 2015, Malta failed to limit its GHG emissions to below its annual ESD targets. Despite a target that was higher than its 2005 base-year levels, Malta's emissions remained above its 2014 ESD target by 0.1 million annual emission allocations (AEAs), equal to a gap of 11%. Since the difference between Malta's actual emissions and its targets for 2014 and 2015 exceeds 5% – a limit up to which it is possible to borrow AEAs from the following year (60,000 AEAs) – Malta needs to use additional flexibilities (such as buying AEAs from other Member States) to comply with the ESD (EEA, 2016).

In 2012, transport accounted for 2.1% of the energy sector emissions of GHGs. The Strategic Plan for Environment and Development, providing a policy framework up to 2020, states that while the use of alternative sources of car fuel might improve local air quality, they are not likely to generate a significant reduction to GHG emissions. There would be a more significant GHG emission reduction if there was a shift from private car use to public transport. However, car ownership and use have increased over the years

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2014, Malta had the highest greenhouse gas emissions (in CO₂ equivalent, indexed to 1990) of all EU Member States (EC, 2016).

whereas, until recently, use of public buses has declined. Nonetheless, the new fleet of ecological buses has helped reduce carbon emissions, both at Valetta Terminal, as well as various pollution hotspots around Malta.

One of the thematic objectives of the Plan is to support the implementation of the Public Transport Strategy by identifying stretches of the road network where bus priority routes could be introduced, in order to facilitate the channelling of trips to public transport. Additionally, the Plan requires transport assessments for a wider range of travel-generating schemes and seeks the inclusion of public transport, walking and cycling prioritisation measures in road improvement, traffic management schemes. It also promotes the use of inner-harbour water-based transport (MEPA, 2015). At the time of writing, it was too early to discuss the results achieved.

Education and increasing awareness

A Climate Change Platform (CCP) has been set up at the University of Malta (UoM) with the objective of facilitating collaboration between UoM entities and academics, as well as promoting research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change (UoM, 2016). The CCP has organised seminars on relevant themes, including disaster risk management and low-carbon economy in Malta. The Institute for European Studies at the UoM also delivers a module that is taught to both European Studies students and is also open to the public. This module – Sustainable Development and the EU – looks at concepts and trends of sustainable growth and development (Moncada, 2017).

Policies, Strategies & Legislation

- Chapter 543 of the Laws of Malta: Climate Action Act, 2015
- National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (2012)
- National Strategy for Policy and Abatement Measures Relating to the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2009)
- Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (2015)
- Greening Our Economy – Achieving a Sustainable Future (2015) (consultation document)
- National Environment Policy (2012)
- Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020

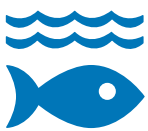
Key challenges

- There is a continuing decline in the use of public buses, but an increase in car ownership - both contributing to Malta's high GHG emissions.
- Malta has started developing a national low-carbon development strategy according to the requirements under the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). However, despite the urgent need for such a strategy, it is still to be finalised.

Recommendations

- Introduce more incentives for use of public buses - targeting not just youths but also people of all ages, especially those of working age - through taxation, smart routing and priority lanes. This could be linked to incentives aiming at decreasing car ownership, and incentives to encourage car-pooling.
- Finalise, and implement with immediate effect, the Low Carbon Development Strategy.

14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



**Conserve and sustainably
use the oceans, seas and
marine resources for
sustainable development**

Overview

Goal 14 aims to prevent and reduce marine pollution, whilst sustainably managing and protecting marine and coastal ecosystems. Coastal and marine areas constitute Malta's main natural resource capital, and hence the need to protect and sustainably manage these resources (MEPA, 2005).

This SDG also aims at minimising the impacts of ocean acidification and regulating harvesting, and ending overfishing, and illegal and unregulated fishing. While the fishing industry in Malta has a negligible economic contribution (equivalent to about 0.1% of GDP), it has a social and cultural importance for Malta. Most Maltese fishers rely on the sale of prized species that are made available to the consumer as fresh fish, caught during relatively short fishing trips.

MARINE POLLUTION

COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

OCEAN ACIDIFICATION

SUSTAINABLE FISHING

SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARINE RESOURCES

MARINE TECHNOLOGY

Malta's progress towards Goal 14

Fisheries and aquaculture

Maltese fisheries are multi-species and, therefore, not species-sensitive. The Maltese fleet is predominantly small-scale and, in 2012, full-time employment in the fishing and aquaculture sector amounted to approx. 1200 persons. Being promoted as an eco-island, Gozo (the second-largest island in the Maltese Archipelago) has maintained a higher share and dependence on agriculture and fishing when compared to Malta (MEA, 2014). There are three significant seasonal fisheries in Malta, namely for: bluefin tuna, swordfish and lampuki, which is often called dolphin fish, but bears no relation to dolphins (MEA, 2014).

Overfishing is negatively affecting stocks within the Mediterranean; blue fin tuna and swordfish are among the overexploited species (FOP, 2008). The Maltese aquaculture sector is economically dominated by tuna-penning operations, and sea bass and sea bream farms. Maltese aquaculture produce is almost entirely exported to the European and Asian markets (MEA, 2014).

The Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (within the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change or MSDEC) ensures the sustainability of fish species in the seas, and addresses the requirements in the fisheries sector (Malta Marittima, 2015). In its Partnership Agreement for the 2014-2020 programming period (implemented through investments from the European Structural and Investment Funds) Malta's government proposes to support investments to increase diversification within the maritime and fishing industry in order to ensure the sustainability of the fishing sector. Malta's fisheries sector has also benefited from European funding to stimulate the development

Facts & Figures in Malta

- Maltese fishing accounts for around 0.03% of the total EU catch (MEA, 2014).
- At the end of 2012, the annual volume of fish landings at the official market in Malta amounted to 1,042 tonnes - 141 less than in 2011 (MEA, 2014).
- In 2010, the agriculture and fishing sectors constituted 4.4% of Gozo's gross value added (GVA) - well above the 1.6% contribution of this sector to the Maltese GVA.
- In 2015, the entire spread of Maltese bathing water sufficiently met water quality standards (EEA, 2016).

of an economically profitable and environmentally-friendly fishing industry, as well as one that contributes to the well-being of the populations dependent on it. One measure was the reduction of Malta's Fishing Vessel Register, resulting in the reduction of bluefin tuna and swordfish licences. Other measures included: training courses to fishermen in order to provide enhanced knowledge of health and safety measures and diversification of activities, and a ban bottom fish trawling to rebuild stocks of hake.

In order to diversify the fisheries sector, the government also supported investments in processing and marketing, the modernisation of fish processing and packaging plants, and investments in aquaculture. The 2007-2013 programming period also saw the development of new infrastructure for the proper landing and storage of fish in designated ports, as well the building of a new fish market. Through the 2014-2020 programming period, it is intended that

Overfishing is negatively affecting stocks within the Mediterranean; blue fin tuna and swordfish are among the overexploited species.



Malta fosters the transition to sustainable fishing: that is, fishing which is more selective, produces less unwanted catch, and creates less damage to marine ecosystems. It aims to restore and maintain populations of fish stocks above biomass levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield.

Another objective of this programming period is to make the aquaculture industry economically viable, green and globally competitive, whilst providing healthy and highly nutritional products, through increasing investments in aquaculture (through streamlined licensing and administrative procedures and greater sector support). Finally, the Integrated Maritime Policy supports priorities that generate savings and economic growth, such as: marine knowledge; maritime spatial planning; integrated coastal zone management; integrated maritime surveillance; the protection of the marine environment and biodiversity; and the adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change on coastal areas. The government also seeks to promote greater partnerships between fishers, scientists and managers (MEA, 2014).

Policies, Strategies & Legislation

- National Environment Policy (2012)
- Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2020
- National Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (2005)
- Fisheries Management Plan (2013)
- Malta's National Strategic Plan for Fisheries 2007-2013
- Chapter 479 of the Laws of Malta: Fishing Waters (Designation) and Extended Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2005
- Chapter 425 of the Laws of Malta: Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, 2001
- Integrated Maritime Policy (2015)
- Subsidiary Legislation 465.09: Management of Bathing Water Quality Regulations (2009)

Coastal and marine areas

Malta's coastal and marine environment contains rich biodiversity and provides a rich ecosystem (including fish and the water itself). Coastal and marine waters in Malta provide numerous facilities, including: recreation/tourism, water and food, transport, trade, and absorption of inert waste and treated sewage effluent (MTCE, 2012). The National Action Plan for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities aims at eliminating contaminants being discharged into the marine environment by 2025 (MEPA, 2005). The National Environment Policy states that it will promote the designation of marine protected areas, including marine Special Protection Areas (aimed at the protection of birds), adding to the current number of sites, and promoting the management of these sites, with a view to achieving the ecological and socioeconomic goals set out for each area (MTCE, 2012).

Beaches and bathing water

The National Environment Policy also states that beaches (sandy beaches in particular) will be given special importance for integrated management approaches, due to their being sensitive ecological areas with high socioeconomic value. At the same time, these areas are subjected to considerable pressures (MTCE, 2012). Bathing-water monitoring is carried out by the Health Inspectorate Services within the Environmental Health Directorate which, during the bathing season, issues a weekly report, with the classification for each bathing area being based on the *Escherichia coli* and intestinal Enterococci counts. Environmental health officers carry out routine site inspections so as to check for any possible sources of pollution (EEA, 2016).

Key challenges

- The status of 36% of Maltese species and 29% of Maltese habitats listed in the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) is still unknown; a significant number of these habitats relate to the marine environment. Such gaps in knowledge obstruct the development and implementation of effective protection and conservation (MTCE & MEPA, 2012).
- There is a loss of traditional skills and knowledge in the fisheries sector (MEA, 2014). This is linked to the aging profile of the local fishing community: according to the data available as at 2006, just over 56% of registered fishermen were over 40 years of age, whereas only 11% were under the age of 25. This highlights the need to undertake initiatives to attract new fishers (FOP, 2008).

Recommendations

- Ensure ongoing monitoring of fish stocks in the Mediterranean, with rapid interventions for short- or medium-term bans on particular types of fishing or of catching particular types of fish.
- Invest in research on Malta's habitats in the marine environment to develop and implement their effective protection and conservation.
- Improve and maintain conservation of coastal and marine areas, at above the 10% agreed threshold.
- Publish monitoring data relating to subsidies of fisheries, to ensure that they do not contribute to pollution or environmental degradation.
- Collaborate with small island developing states (SIDS) to share knowledge and resources on the sustainable use of marine resources.
- Maintain access of fishing for small-scale artisanal fishers.



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

15 LIFE
ON LAND



Overview

Goal 15 deals with: protecting, restoring, and promoting the sustainable use of, terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests; combat desertification; halt and reverse land degradation; and halt biodiversity loss. Despite its small size, Malta holds a varied and interesting array of habitats. It is home to endemic, indigenous and migratory species, which are essential elements of national heritage and identity. Maltese habitats of conservation interest include cliffs, sand dunes, salt marshes, woodlands, garrigue areas and coastal waters.

Agricultural and urban biodiversity are increasingly being recognised as important constituent elements of biodiversity, meriting specific conservation measures on the Island. However, habitats and species continue to be threatened by land development, invasive species, over-exploration and the rising effects of climate change (MTCE, 2012). Malta has committed to halting biodiversity loss by 2020, but urgent action is needed to meet this target (MTCE & MEPA, 2012). According to the Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI), Malta falls into the bottom ranks internationally (rank 37) in terms of environmental policies. Its score on this measure has declined by 0.3% in relation to 2014 (SGI, 2016).

CONSERVATION

RESTORATION

NATURAL HABITATS

GENETIC RESOURCES

POACHING AND TRAFFICKING OF PROTECTED SPECIES

Malta's progress towards Goal 15

Introduction

Malta is not a resource-rich country, and its key resources of fresh water, limestone, soil and land (particularly coastal land) are in short supply (MTCE, 2012). Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation caused by agricultural expansion, intensification and rapid development are the most significant threats (at European level) to Malta's species. For freshwater species, major threats include pollution caused by agricultural, and forestry effluents. Other major threats come from farming and ranching as a result of agricultural expansion and intensification, urbanisation, and tourism (IUCN, 2013). Malta has a population of less than half a million but receives approximately 1.2 million tourists each year. This high human pressure, coupled with drastic changes in land use, has had a direct impact on the degradation of ecosystem services. In particular, tourism has played a major role in the overdevelopment of coastal regions, and this has accelerated a special form of desertification known as 'littoralisation', while also increasing eutrophication of the Mediterranean Sea (Zdruli, 2011).

Biodiversity

Despite its small size, Malta hosts a relatively significant number of species of flora and fauna, of which a substantial amount is endemic. Some of these habitats and the species inhabiting them are important at the national level, as well as at the European level, and require a holistic effort to protect them in a sustainable manner. Despite the introduction of substantial legal protection for important habitats and species during the last 15 years, the loss of Malta's biodiversity continues. Being a small island state with a high population density, its terrestrial natural habitats are limited in extent and are confined to specific areas. For example, forest remnants are only found in a few localities, and sand dunes have regressed through the years, with the result that species requiring such a habitat for their survival have become increasingly threatened. Furthermore, cliffs are mainly found towards the northwest and southern areas of the Maltese Islands; they are particularly important for a number of endemic species, such as the Maltese rock-centaury, Malta's national plant (MEPA, 2010).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In order to protect its natural heritage, Malta has given legal protection to just over 13% of its land area, and to 11km² of its territorial waters (MTCE, 2012).
- The status of 29% of Maltese habitats and 36% of Maltese species listed in the Habitats Directive is still unknown. In addition, 64% of habitats and 44% of species have an inadequate or bad conservation status (MEPA, 2010).

Malta is host to an estimated 4,500 species of animals and plants. This number represents 3% of the total species described for Europe. Approximately 6% of the species assessed by the European Red List (concerning species) are present in Malta. Of the total number of species assessed in the country, 2% are considered threatened and at least 4% fall within the 'Near Threatened' (NT) category at European level. Species that are considered threatened at the European level in Malta are found mostly in marine/coastal areas and in shrublands (IUCN, 2013).

Malta's National and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has integrated into its framework the outcomes of the 2010 Nagoya Conference of the Parties to the United Nations 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, as well as targets and objectives related to the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020. Malta's strategy stresses that safeguarding the country's biodiversity presents many challenges, due to its inherent characteristics as a densely-populated, small island state. Man-made pressures such as pollution, over-exploration and the mismanagement (both by individuals and the state) of resources poses some of the main threats to biodiversity (MTCE & MEPA, 2012). In the case of the majority of species risking extinction the threat is due to habitat destruction; in order to protect them, Malta has implemented a scheme for safeguarding of habitats. In 2010 Malta had a total of 43 special areas of conservation of international or national importance, in line with the EC Habitats Directive [92/43/EEC], of which 41 are terrestrial (covering 13.3% of land area) and two are marine. These sites are considered 93% sufficient in ensuring adequate protection to the Maltese terrestrial habitats and species of community interest (MEPA, 2010).

The strategy of the National Environment Policy for conserving biodiversity and ecosystems ties in with the review of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy in the light of Lisbon 2020 targets. In order to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020, the National Environment Policy rests on three pillars: (1) providing a comprehensive policy framework for protecting biodiversity; (2) improving the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity; and (3) reducing direct pressure on biodiversity and promoting sustainable use of land (MTCE, 2012). Additionally, Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan aims at filling knowledge gaps on biodiversity and mobilising resources in support of effective conservation. It expects to achieve this by increasing awareness on biodiversity and engaging the public in supporting conservation initiatives in their localities. Another method is strengthening the integration of biodiversity considerations within the decision-making process to be included in policies, plans and programmes (MTCE & MEPA, 2012).

Policies & Legislation

- Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2020: Working Hand-in-Hand with Nature
- National Environment Policy (2012)
- Subsidiary Legislation 549.44 of the Laws of Malta: Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (2006)
- Eco-Gozo: A Better Gozo - Proposed action 2010-2012 (2009)

Land degradation

One of the main reasons for the severe land and terrace degradation in Malta is largely due to land abandonment, which took place in the 1960s (Cyffka & Bock, 2008). Soil erosion on the Maltese Islands has been recognised as a looming desertification and land degradation process, and a major threat to the sustainability of the agricultural sector. Soil is one of Malta's most important natural resources, and having socioeconomic and ecological importance. Malta's soil is threatened by a number of pressures, such as the loss of organic matter and related decline in biodiversity, contamination, soil sealing, and erosion. To conserve soil, Maltese farmers have been using the age-old practice of creating a series of terraces retained behind dry rubble walls (MEPA, 2010). A number of soil protection measures have already been implemented through rural development programmes, such as: the maintenance of rubble walls (which also provide an important habitat for a variety of flora and fauna of national and EU interest); the establishment and maintenance of conservation buffer strips; and the support for organic farming and low-input farming. The Code of Good Agricultural Practice will continue to be used to promote soil protection (MTCE, 2012).

Recognising the fundamental role of maintaining agricultural activity in efforts to conserve the environment, to maintain the countryside, and preserve its landscape quality, the whole territory of Malta has been classified as a 'less-favoured area' (LFA) under the European agricultural policy. Thus, a significant proportion of countryside areas is subject to protective legislation, with the majority of this land being part of the EU Natura 2000 network of protected areas. In order to better integrate environmental considerations into agricultural practices, the National Environment

Policy aims at enhancing the stewardship role in protecting the rural environment through rural development and other agricultural programmes. Among these are afforestation projects aimed at supporting the growth of Mediterranean forest and maquis vegetation (MTCE, 2012).

'Greening' Malta

Green infrastructure is a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. Strategically planned networks of green elements provide various benefits, including protecting biodiversity and enhancing the ability of ecosystems to deliver services such as water purification and air quality. Malta's green infrastructure serves as a holistic framework for resource planning and conservation. This involves improving the ecological coherence of Natura 2000 via its integration into the broader landscape and, as a result, curbing habitat fragmentation. Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2020 explicitly addresses green infrastructure and connectivity. At the national level, there are measures to protect ecological corridors in the form of rubble walls, which also enhance connectivity while providing refuge for fauna. These structures also allow excess rainwater to drain from the fields, simultaneously benefiting agriculture production and minimising soil erosion. They are good examples of how green infrastructure helps to deliver multiple benefits, such as storm-water management, maintenance of the water table, and interconnected wildlife refuge (EC, 2016).

Key challenges

- The environment is not seen as a fundamental cornerstone of Malta's economy (MTCE, 2012).
- Tourism, which is considered a key element in Malta's economy, plays a significant role in the degradation of ecosystems. A similar trend could be seen with Malta's ever-increasing infrastructure and its impacts on Malta's ecosystems.
- There is a lack of specialised skills and fundamental knowledge in areas such as biodiversity (MTCE, 2012).

Recommendations

- Support further studies and monitoring to sustainably address the threats to Maltese habitats and species, and to promote the skills and knowledge needed to protect Malta's biodiversity loss.
- Promote urban biodiversity through protecting, enhancing and increasing urban green spaces. Prioritise sustainable infrastructure growth.
- Set up an inter-ministerial committee involving ministries responsible for tourism and the environment towards helping to mitigate the negative influences of tourism on Malta's biodiversity.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Overview

Goal 16 seeks the promotion of peaceful societies, based on equality, transparency, access to justice and respect of fundamental freedoms. Steps forward were made in the recent years in Malta. For example, an increase of domestic-violence reports suggests better awareness on the issue. Furthermore, Malta also encounters challenges in procedures concerning financial flows, corruption and transparency, and the justice system. Recent scandals have led to diminished trust in public institutions. On the other hand, the Maltese population is quite active in terms of elections at both national and European levels.

VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

EXPLOITATION

JUSTICE

CORRUPTION

RULE OF LAW

TRANSPARENCY

PARTICIPATORY AND REPRESENTATIVE DECISION-MAKING

Malta's progress towards Goal 16

Violence (including homicide and domestic violence)

The number of intentional homicides in Malta was 6 in 2014 and peaked at 12 in 2012 (Eurostat 2017). Reports of domestic violence in Malta continue to increase: in 2015, they reached 1205 (up from 116 reports in 2007 and 1046 in 2014). This means an increase of 1038% between 2007 and 2015, which may or may not be an indication of increased cases of domestic violence, given that we have no data on actual incidence but only rates of reporting. 78% of women in Malta have recently seen or heard awareness-raising campaigns addressing violence against women (FRA, 2014). The Domestic Violence Unit within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services provides specialised social work services to victims of domestic violence (FSWS, 2012a). NGOs also provide support and information. Between January and June 2015, Aġenzija Appoġġ (the national agency for children, families and the community) followed 67 cases of child sexual abuse. The victims, 35 of whom were boys and 32 girls (15 of whom were under the age of 5), had been mostly abused by family members (FSWS, 2015).

Human trafficking

Since 2012, Malta has consistently held the Tier 2 ranking in the Trafficking in Persons Report, issued by the US Department of State. It is primarily considered a destination country for trafficking towards sexual and labour exploitation, as well as being a country of transit. Identification of trafficked persons and prosecution of traffickers remain a matter of grave concern, in spite of the action plans that were adopted in this respect, as well as capacity-building sessions and awareness campaigns.

Facts & Figures in Malta

- An increase of 1038% in reported cases of domestic violence over the years between 2007 and 2015 was recorded (Formosa, 2016).
- Malta scored 55 on the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2016, on a score from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (Transparency International, 2016)
- More than 25% of the prison population in Malta was in pre-trial detention in 2016 (US State Department, 2017).

Policies & Legislation

- Chapter 481 of the Laws of Malta: Domestic Violence Act, 2006
- National Children's Policy (2016)
- Malta Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Persons (January 2015-December 2016)

Financial flows

The Financial Secrecy Index of the Tax Justice Network analyses the transparency of countries concerning finance and taxes. Malta has an average score of 50, which ranks it as the 27th country (out of 102 analysed) on the secrecy score. In this area, Malta's main weaknesses are: the non-disclosure or prevention of trusts or private foundations; the non-obligation for companies to publish their ownership details online; and the allowance of harmful legal vehicles as regards cell companies and trusts with flee clauses (TJN, 2015). Furthermore, Malta serves as a tax base for numerous multinational companies, which channel their profits into Maltese subsidiaries. Tax law in Malta allows foreign companies to register in the country, and paying favourable tax rates while the work is carried out abroad. This implies that Malta is being used as a tax haven for companies, which do not pay any tax in other countries (Sammut, 2016).

Corruption and transparency

On a score from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean), Malta scored 55 on the Corruption Perceptions Index in 2016, two points down from 57 in 2012 (Transparency International, 2016). Transparency International reports that patronage and clientelism persist in Malta. Despite having substantial legal mechanisms in place, Malta has undergone numerous corruption scandals in recent years. Malta is the only EU country to have an incumbent minister named in the 2016 Panama Papers scandal. The main challenges Malta faces in relation to corruption are: irregularities in procurement, conflicts of interest among government ministers and the "revolving door" between Malta's "close-knit political and business class" (Transparency International, 2017). Maltese parliamentarians work as MPs on a part-time basis while also maintaining their private practices, raising the potential for conflicts of interest due to personal and professional networks and business links. The Code of Ethics for the members of the House of Representatives is due for revision. This Code does not deal sufficiently with significant issues, such as third-party contacts and misuse of confidential information and public resources (CoE, 2015).

The justice system

Although the Maltese justice system has seen considerable improvements over recent years, long delays continue to impede it. Council of Europe (CoE) data indicates that the disposition time of civil and commercial litigious cases has dropped from 849 days to 536 days between 2010 and 2014. The number of pending cases was at 10295 in 2010, 8882 in 2012 and 9885 in 2014. Nevertheless, scandals involving judges have left a negative impact on the reputation of the Maltese judicial system. The CoE reports that the system governing the appointment and discipline of judges needs to be restructured to instil more transparency and independence in these processes. Currently, a holistic reform of the judicial system is taking place, and measures increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the justice system (and consequently the public trust) have been proposed. These measures are currently awaiting implementation (CoE, 2015). The National Justice Reform process includes proposals around reforms in the administration of justice, the creation of the Office of Court Attorneys, a Legal Aid Agency and the Asset Management Bureau.

Public access to information

The Freedom of Information Act (2009) establishes the right to the general public to information held by public authorities, in order to promote added transparency and accountability in government. Decisions are to be made within 20 days and the Information and Data Protection Commissioner is empowered to decide on appeals when such requests are denied.

Trust and participation in national and European institutions

The level of confidence of Maltese citizens in EU Institutions is generally higher (58%) than the EU28 average (42%) (EC, 2016a). Engagement with elections is also high. Turnout for local and European elections are also relatively high: 92% in the last general election (2017) and 74.8% in the last European Parliament Elections (EC, 2016b).

An increase of 1038% in reported cases of domestic violence over the years between 2007 and 2015 was recorded.

Key challenges

- Malta has a relatively low level of trust in public institutions.
- Whilst the Maltese population is active in electoral processes, particularly in national elections, there is still a lack of representation in these processes from minority candidates.
- Malta suffers from a serious lack of processes, skills and training in the identification of trafficked persons and prosecution of traffickers.
- Companies are not obliged to publish ownership details online, which is one of the key factors contributing to Malta's ranking in 27th place in the Financial Secrecy Index (TJN, 2015).
- Patronage and clientelism are common in Malta, leading to a system that is often inaccessible and prone to conflicts of interest.

Recommendations

- Seek to address the options of Malta being used as a tax haven by international enterprises.
- Improve legislative, policy and other measures to address corruption at administrative, political and judicial level, thereby inspiring greater trust in these institutions among the Maltese public.
- Strengthen measures that allow for the effective identification and prosecution of crime including homicide, violence against women and human trafficking.
- Update the Code of Ethics for ministers, parliamentary secretaries and parliamentary assistants, and create a commission to monitor compliance.
- Evaluate and set up practical approaches to limit the potential financial harm of international companies registered in Malta.
- Proactively engage in efforts to address all forms of crime, including violence against women and human trafficking, through the investment of greater resources in the capacity building of entities involved in the identification and protection of victims and the prosecution of offenders.
- Further implement without delay the reforms in the administration of justice, to build on the recent positive developments in reducing case-disposition periods.



17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



**Strengthen the means of
implementation and revitalise
the global partnership for
sustainable development**

Overview

The focus of Goal 17 is to create an inclusive global partnership, built upon a set of shared principles, goals and values, to enhance the quality of life for everyone at the global, regional, national and local level. Partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society are essential for a successful sustainable-development agenda. In order to be able to deliver on sustainable-development objectives Member States must mobilise resources to revitalise global partnerships for sustainable development. In 2015 EU Member States spent 0.47% of the collective gross national income (GNI) on official development assistance (OECD, 2017). For countries that joined the EU in 2004 or after, such as Malta, the target is 0.33% of GNI but Malta has also fallen short of reaching this (Eurostat, 2016). In 2002 EU imports from developing countries were valued at €358.8 billion, which increased to €834.9 billion in 2014 (Eurostat, 2016). This section looks at Malta's progress in four key areas: capacity building, ODA expenditure, remittances; and trade.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

CAPACITY BUILDING

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

REMITTANCES

GENUINE AID

Malta's progress towards Goal 17

Capacity building

Historically, Malta was on the receiving end of aid. However, once it joined the EU in 2004 it was expected to become a donor and to develop an aid policy. Malta rectified its Official Development Assistance Policy in 2014, in line with the SDGs – prior to this it mainly delivered aid through minor and informal channels. The ODA Policy focuses on ten overarching areas, ranging from poverty reduction to climate change. Whilst the said policy does not focus on a specific country or region, it indicates that priority for development assistance will be given to North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Palestine (ODA Policy, 2014). Malta's ODA Policy rests on two legal bases: (1) The Lisbon Treaty (Art.21 and Art.28-211 of TFEU); and (2) The ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

In 2016, Malta funded twelve ODA projects, notwithstanding the small budget dedicated to NGOs. The projects focused on different areas, such as children's well-being (through the "Smile Kids" project, which will provide funds for the refurbishment of 3 child care centres in Morocco) to health care, (through the hopeXchange project which will provide funds for additional equipment for the Hopexchange Medical Center in Ghana (MFA, 2016c).

Malta is a small donor with limited human and financial resources, and it has sought to achieve maximum aid effectiveness and efficiency by channelling its ODA through international organisations, trilateral cooperation, the private sector and NGOs (MFA, 2014). Most NGOs in Malta are based on volunteering members. However, they are also relatively small in terms human resources and financial capacities.

According to Kopin and SKOP (2012) this has often had an impact on the establishment of institutional and operational structures, opportunities to build organisational capacities and the ability to engage in medium/large scaled projects. They also stress that the NGOs are often unfamiliar with Malta's ODA Policy and the work of the Maltese government in the field of overseas development (Kopin & SKOP, 2012).

Kopin and SKOP (2012) stress that Maltese NGOs find it difficult to engage with local councils, due to various factors, including: scarce funding opportunities; a lack of communication and limited information; complicated bureaucracy procedures; and a non-consultative climate. CONCORD (2016) states that over the past three years there has been a steady decrease in funds allocated to NGOs for implementing projects overseas. The total allocation for this has dropped from €247,775 in 2014 to €222,770 in 2016.

Despite its efforts since the development of its ODA Policy, Malta still lags behind in important areas such as transparency, when it comes to its capacity building overseas. In 2014, Malta through its Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA)⁵, scored a "very poor" rating in an aid-transparency index, coming 64th out of the 68 donor organisations and countries surveyed. Malta is not a member of the International Aid Transparency Initiative, but is part of the EU's collective commitment to both the EU Transparency Guarantee and the relevant Busan common standard, of which the International Aid Transparency Initiative is a core component (The Malta Independent, January 2016).

Facts & Figures in Malta

- In 2016, the Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs funded twelve development projects overseas (MFA, 2016c).
- In 2014, Malta scored a “very poor” rating in an aid transparency index ranking 64th out of 68 countries surveyed.
- Malta’s total net disbursement for the ODA in 2015 was 0.17% of the GNI, despite Malta’s individual commitment to reach the target of 0.33% ODA/GNI for 2015.

Policy

- Official Development Assistance Policy and a Framework for Humanitarian Assistance (2014 – 2020)

ODA expenditure

In 2015, only seven countries in the world met the target set by the United Nations (UN) with a minimum ODA expenditure of 0.7% of the GNI, and most countries did not achieve it (UN, 2016). Specifically, in 2015 Malta’s total net disbursement for the ODA was of €14,932,310.76, according to the ODA Statistical Report for 2015 (MFA, 2016a). This equals to 0.17% ODA/GNI consistently with a decrease that has been taking place since 2011, when it stood at 0.25% (OECD, 2017). This percentage compares badly with the EU28 average of 0.46% (Eurostat, 2016) of the GNI spent on ODA. In view of the net Maltese disbursement for ODA, which was as low as €34.4 per capita a year in 2011, as per latest data available (Eurostat, 2016), Malta ranks 18th among the EU28. The national efforts are acknowledged in the Malta country report (EC, 2015) issued by the European Commission where the ODA/GNI rate of 2014 was presented as an increase from the previous year and a step towards Malta’s individual commitment to reach the target of 0.33% ODA/GNI for 2015. This target has clearly been missed.

The above appears in a worse light, when considering that the 2015 ODA budget includes the €2,335,796, which the Ministry for Home Affairs and National

Security (MHAS) has spent on refugees and asylum seekers for accommodation, medical services, etc. (MFA, 2016a). If the data were to cover the actual contribution sent by Malta to developing countries, the share would then be even lower than it already appears to be. In fact, a report issued by CONCORD tries to shed light on the financial flows indicated as ODA expenses by EU Member States, questioning their genuine contribution to development. The said report states that, “According to aid effectiveness principles, these items [e.g. tied aid, spending on refugees and students in donor countries] do not contribute to international development, nor do they represent a genuine transfer of resources to developing countries. They are added simply to inflate ODA figures.” (CONCORD, 2016) According to their calculations, Malta is among those EU countries that tend most towards inflating their aid to developing countries. Its genuine aid, in the view of CONCORD, would thus amount only to the 0.11% of the GNI for 2015. A substantial decrease in refugee costs in recent years has exposed the government’s lack of vision and its weak political will to provide assistance to developing countries (CONCORD, 2016).

Remittances

Remittances represent an important source of funding for developing countries. In fact, as stated by IndexMundi, they “have grown in importance over the past decade. In a number of developing economies, receipts of remittances have become an important and stable source of funds that exceeds receipts from exports of goods and services or from financial inflows on foreign direct investment.” (IndexMundi, 2015) Remittances sent from Malta in 2014 amounted to \$1,017,711,000. Although data on remittances is not always reliable and consistent across countries, this compares very well with other European countries (for instance, in the same year, remittances sent from Spain and Italy amounted to \$363,413,300 and \$11,153,840,000, respectively). Thus, wealth created in the Maltese economy seems to be great contribution to the development of other countries. Considering that approximately half (15,407 in 2016) of the total foreign population in Malta comes from outside EU28 (EC, 2017), it is likely that such money will be channelled towards those developing economies (such as Libya or Somalia) from which most TCNs residing in Malta originate (The Malta Independent, 2014).

⁵ This ministry has been renamed (with effect from June 2017): Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (MFTP).

Trade

According to the MFA (2014), Malta could provide added value in those sectors where it holds significant experience, such as tourism, financial services and SMEs. It argues that these areas should be targeted to provide consultancy and support to developing countries. Providing technical expertise in these areas could do much towards unleashing the economic-growth potential of developing countries, especially those with significant similarities to the Maltese context. The SGI suggests that Malta actively assists other small states through the Commonwealth by making available its acquired experience as a developed small island state. In general, Malta follows the lead of the EU, and its policies on tariffs are in line with those agreed on in Brussels. Additionally, international organisations such as the International Trade Centre seek to assist Malta in creating sustainable trade linkages with the developing world by sourcing good-quality products from these growing export markets (ITC, 2014).

In its 2017 report, the World Bank stated that Malta remains the most difficult location in the EU in which to do business. On a global level, Malta climbed up slightly from the 80th to 76th place. This, of course, brings to light the question of whether Malta is falling behind to the extent that it becomes debatable as to whether it could continue offering help and assistance to developing countries in this field. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that there is limited information available concerning Malta in this respect, and no reliable statistical data available on Aid for Trade (EC, 2015).

Key challenges

- NGOs are often unfamiliar with Malta's ODA Policy and the work of the Maltese government in the field of overseas development (Kopin & SKOP, 2012)
- Scarce funding opportunities, a lack of communication and information, and complicated bureaucracy procedures make it difficult for NGOs to access the limited number of financial resources made available at the national level. This caused Malta to score 64th out of 68 countries in the Aid Transparency Index. (The Malta Independent, January 2016).
- Over the last years, the funds allocated to NGOs for implementing projects overseas suffered from a steady decrease, instead of the expected increase consistent with the commitment of dedicating 0.33% of Malta's GNI to ODA. (Eurostat, 2016)
- The fact that Malta has been assessed by the World Bank as the most difficult EU country in which to do business raises concerns on its ability to help developing countries in the field of business and trade.
- Lack of reliable, good-quality data on remittances sent to developing countries and aid for trade at the institutional level.

Recommendations

- Separate any refugee-related costs from the ODA expenditure.
- Increase the amount of funds available to improve the development impact of aid.
- Make a national call for proposals for overseas development projects more transparent by publishing all of the necessary details.
- Increase genuine aid by designing an effective new development cooperation policy, strategy and action plan.

Conclusion

Malta has carried out a significant amount of work towards addressing the various areas that ultimately contribute towards achieving the SDGs. However, it is still a long way off from having a broad-ranging and truly comprehensive (inwards and outwards-facing) sustainable development agenda that sets out how and with which allocated resources this contribution will be made.

Achieving the SDGs will require all Member States of the United Nations to come together and commit to prioritising these targets. Given the current global climate of intractable conflict, mass displacement and rapid environmental degradation, not only must all nations strive to halt and reverse the short- and long-term impact of these factors through investment and expertise, but Malta in particular must also play a strong role in advocating for those who are at critical risk of losing their lives (be it due to war, malnutrition, or poverty), or at risk of suffering long-term morbidity because of natural or man-made events.

Sustainable development relates to challenges that affect populations across the world, yet some populations are especially vulnerable to these adverse conditions. Sustainability is about achieving better equity and representation, justice and safe environments, respect for humans, animals, and forests and vegetation, collaboration on a wider scale than ever seen before, and achieving significant positive social change to an unprecedented scale.

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Note

The links below are correct as at date of access / completion of this report.

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