



MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT,
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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FOREWORD



The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals constitute a vision for a sustainable future and a global call for action. Delivering on this commitment will require all stakeholders to play their part – governments, civil society and the private sector – and to collaborate as never before. The scope of the Agenda and its level of ambition attest to the economic, social and environmental challenges of our time that are of concern to countries and people everywhere.

The Maltese Government is committed to achieve and promote Sustainable Development across the workings of Government whilst mainstreaming it across all levels of society. In this context, Government will continue to ensure that sustainability remains the fundamental and overarching objective of all its policy initiatives and measures. We must ensure that our policy agenda brings about a systemic change in which economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection go hand in hand and are mutually reinforcing.

This Report provides insights into the range of policy measures and actions taken by the Government in 2017 to roll-out and implement EU and internationally agreed commitments for Sustainable Development at the national level. It takes into account all three dimensions of Sustainable Development, be it our growth strategy, social agenda, our energy and climate goals, our environmental ambitions, as well as our research and innovation initiatives.

We want to make sure that all of our policies balance social, economic and environmental considerations and contribute to a good standard of living for all Maltese population.

Hon. José Herrera

Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change

INTRODUCTION

About this Report

This Report is being prepared by the Sustainable Development Directorate within the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC) for the purpose of complying with Part VI, Article 14 of the Sustainable Development Act (Chapter 521)¹, which requires the Competent Authority to produce a Report to be submitted to the Minister responsible for Sustainable Development, delineating the activities carried out by the Competent Authority during the previous financial year. In terms of the Act, the Minister shall provide a copy of the Report to be laid on the Table of the House of Representatives and a debate held thereon as soon as practicable.

This Annual Report provides a national perspective of the measures which are currently being implemented by the Maltese Government to address and further mainstream sustainable development across all sectors. This approach assimilates the collaborative efforts of all Ministries and offers an integrated way to achieve a sustainable future for the Maltese Islands where no one is left behind.

¹Sustainable Development Act, available at:
<http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=11917&l=1>

Policy Background

The Need for Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in different ways. However, the most popular and classical definition is that from the 1987 Brundtland Report, Our Common Future, which states:



Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

In other words, in order to achieve sustainability we must balance and maximise economic, environmental and social factors in the course of development. It is therefore no coincidence that this Report is centred on these three dimensions of Sustainable Development. This interconnectedness is better illustrated by the diagram.

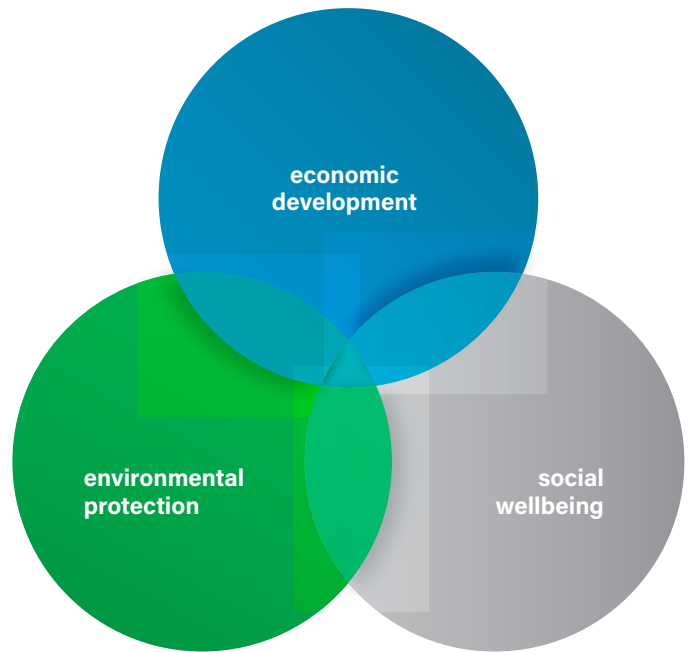


Diagram 1: The Three Pillars of Sustainable Development

The Global Framework

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015 represent a unique achievement for the international community. It reflects an ambitious and transformative framework that has the potential to steer global development onto a path where human welfare and human rights, economic prosperity and stable societies can be secured in an environmentally sustainable manner, and extreme poverty is eradicated.²

The 2030 Agenda consists of shared principles, 17 goals and 169 targets,

means of implementation and a common follow-up and review mechanism. The goals of the 2030 Agenda are global and apply equally to all countries in the world. Successful implementation requires participation and input across all levels of society, but governments have primary responsibility for the implementation and achievement of the Goals. According to the 2030 Agenda,



The Sustainable Development Goals and targets are integrated

and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each Government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies.

²Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Diagram 2: Sustainable Development Goals³

³ Source: UN Website, available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

EU Commitments for Sustainable Development

The European Union (EU) has played an active role in shaping the sustainable development agenda and is committed to be a frontrunner in implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda through the efforts of its Member States.

On 22 November 2016, the EU presented its response to the 2030 Agenda and adopted a Sustainable Development Package containing:

- An overarching Communication on next steps for a sustainable European future accompanied by a Staff Working Document⁴ that describes in broad terms the contribution of the various EU policies and legislation to the SDGs.
- A proposal for a revision of the European Consensus on Development that will serve as the basis for further discussions with the Council and the European Parliament⁵
- A post-Cotonou framework on the future relations with the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States⁷

Key EU actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Incorporating the SDGs into EU policies and initiatives across the board, with sustainable development as an essential guiding principle for all EU Commission policies; | 4 Launching a high-level multi-stakeholder platform, supporting the exchange of best practices on implementation across sectors at national and EU level; |
| 2 Providing regular reporting of the EU's progress as of 2017; | 5 Launching a longer term vision with a post 2020 perspective; and |
| 3 Taking the implementation of the 2030 Agenda forward with EU Governments, the European Parliament, other European institutions, international organisations, civil society organisations, citizens and other stakeholders; | 6 Continue working with external partners, using all the tools that are available under its external policies and support in particular the efforts in developing countries. |

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-next-steps-sustainable-europe-20161122_en.pdf

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/swd-key-european-actions-2030-agenda-sdgs-390-20161122_en.pdf

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/communication-proposal-new-consensus-development-20161122_en.pdf

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/joint-communication-renewed-partnership-acp-20161122_en.pdf

Malta's Commitments towards Sustainable Development

Malta participated as a member of the EU in the process of development of the 2030 Agenda. In September 2015 the country became a signatory to the Agenda and its 17 SDGs. This means that Malta must keep its promises to contribute towards the achievement of these Goals.

National Sustainable Development Policy and Framework

Malta is one of the few countries having a specific Sustainable Development Governance model in place which is underpinned by the Sustainable Development Act.⁹ This legislative framework mandates Government to mainstream sustainable development in its operations as well as raising awareness on the subject across all sectors of Government and society at large.

One of the core functions of the Sustainable Development Directorate is to develop, implement and monitor Malta's National Sustainable Development Strategy. During 2017, the Sustainable Development Directorate continued with its work on the development of the National Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. Specifically, this Directorate started the process of developing a Vision Document that will characterise the foundations upon which the new Sustainable Development Strategy will be underpinned. This is an opportune moment for Malta as it will permit us to incorporate, at an early stage, our work to contribute not only towards the Agenda 2030 but also beyond.

MESDC has a leading role, however, ownership by the various Ministries is essential if the Strategy is to be truly holistic, effective and contributing to the SDGs. During 2017 various meetings with individual Ministries were held for such purpose. Furthermore, during 2017, the Sustainable Development Focal Points Network, consisting of representatives from all Ministries, was tasked with the objective of contributing towards the delivery of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy

which will have 2050 as its horizon. The Network ensures that all Ministries, Departments and Entities contributed effectively towards the Strategy.

Government cannot deliver a sustainable future alone. Any successful Development Strategy needs broad participation if it is to succeed. Cooperation with Local Councils, regional players, civil society representatives, the private sector and society at large is imperative. In this regard, throughout 2017 the Sustainable Development Directorate held various meetings with constituted bodies, civil society representatives and the private sector to get the most holistic view of the issues at hand.

The Sustainable Development Directorate also continued with its collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO) to collect the necessary statistical information in relation to EU SDGs indicators.

On its part, the Guardian of Future Generations met eight times during 2017 and discussed the measures that are currently in place or being considered, planned and implemented in various policy areas.

In December 2017, MESDC launched, for the first time, a fund for sustainable development with a value of 30,000 euro. Seventeen project proposals were submitted and the evaluation process to choose the best three projects from the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) started during the same month.

⁸ SDG Index available at, <http://www.sdgindex.org/assets/files/2017/2017-SDG-Index-and-Dashboards-Report--full.pdf>

⁹ Sustainable Development Act available at, <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=22669&l=1>

Malta's participation at EU and International Level

Maltese EU Council Presidency

During the first half of 2017, Malta presided upon the EU Council and steered discussions on the commitments of the EU and its Member States to implement in full the 2030 Agenda. The Sustainable Development Directorate within MESDC assisted in the drafting of the Council Conclusions 'A sustainable European future: The EU response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' which were adopted by the General Affairs Council of 20 June 2017.

These Council Conclusions set out the EU's response to the 2030 Agenda and its approach to how it

is being implemented at EU level. They cover the next steps, the means and resources required, how multilateral stakeholders can be involved, and measures on future monitoring and review. The Council calls on the Commission to set out by mid-2018 an implementation Strategy with timelines, objectives and concrete measures to implement the 2030 Agenda in all EU policies. The Commission should also identify by mid-2018, gaps where the EU needs to do more by 2030 in the areas of policy, legislation, governance structures for horizontal coherence and implementation.

Other International Events



Malta believes that the integration of the environmental value within our policy measures on growth and sustainability, aiming at mitigating and reducing pollution can strengthen and indeed provide a new impetus in the socio-economic dimension.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change,
Hon. José Herrera

Between 4 and 6 December 2017, MESDC participated in the Third Session of the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the UNEA was 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet'.

During his intervention at the High-Level Segment Official Opening Statement, Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Hon. José Herrera stressed that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda brings with it a recognition of the need to integrate efforts to prevent pollution across all policy sectors.

UNEA-3 adopted 11 non-binding Resolutions¹¹ urging accelerated action and reinforced partnerships and submitted 3 Decisions related to

organisational matters. A Ministerial Declaration "Towards a pollution-free planet" was also signed¹². Each Resolution addressed a specific dimension of pollution, including: combating the spread of marine plastic litter and microplastics; eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting sound management of used lead-acid batteries; improving air quality globally; addressing water pollution; managing soil pollution; and controlling pollution in areas affected by terrorist operations and armed conflict.



¹¹ UNEA-3 Resolutions and Decision are available at, <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/index>

¹² The Ministerial Declaration is available at, <https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/ministerial-declaration>

ENABLING
SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMIC
GROWTH

Government is committed to increasing economic growth and employment with the objective of steering the Maltese economy onto a path of sustainable growth and rising employment.

During 2017, Government continued to implement responsible and growth-enhancing policies and measures with a view to not only creating individual and corporate wealth but, more importantly, to bring thousands of families out of poverty or out of the risk of poverty. Measures were also taken to improve the competitiveness and creating the right environment where businesses, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), can thrive. This is essential to increasing productivity, increasing investments and creating more jobs in the private sector.

The aim is to move towards a sustainable economic model focusing on the decarbonisation of the economy, promoting research and innovation, enhancing sustainable production and consumption patterns and creating sustainable employment. This approach supports the efforts towards achieving internationally agreed SDGs namely 4, 6-9, 11, 12 and 14.



Diagram 3: Sustainable Development Goals¹³

¹³Source: UN Website, available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Economic Growth

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 8.1 Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.

Malta's economy in real terms has maintained its positive momentum, registering a 6.6% increase. Provisional estimates indicate that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2017 amounted to €11,108.6 million, an increase of €916.9 million when compared to 2016.

Real GDP Annual Growth Rate - Percentage

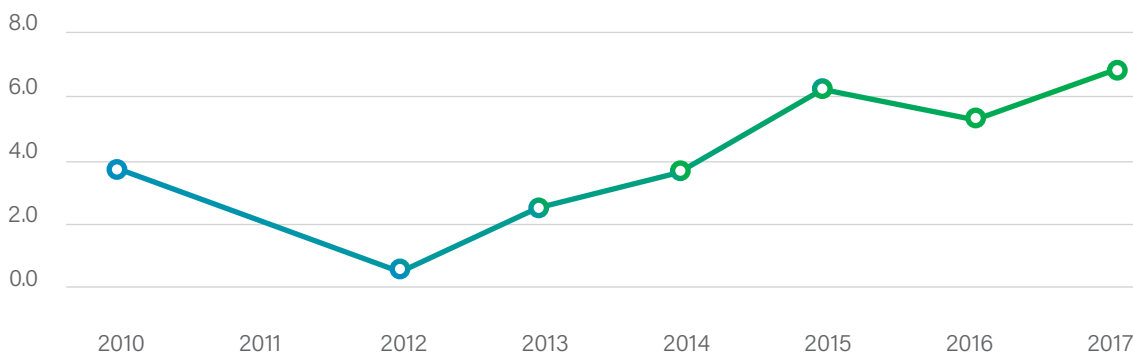


Figure 1: Real GDP Annual Percentage Growth Rate¹⁴

Fiscal Consolidation

During the last four years, Government managed to successfully consolidate public finances, turning a deficit of 3.5% of GDP in 2012 to a surplus of 1.1% of GDP in 2016. Moreover, in 2017, the fiscal surplus is estimated to have outperformed the Government's revised target of 0.8% of GDP. A budget surplus inherently implies more sustainable public finances and allows more room to address structural challenges, including infrastructural, human capital and technology, thus further strengthening potential growth and supporting higher living standards. Over the medium-term, the Maltese Government is targeting a stable general Government surplus at 0.5% of GDP.

Downward Debt Trajectory

The gradual but consistent improvement in the budget balance positively impacted the Government debt ratio which fell below the 60.0% target in 2016. The debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to continue exhibiting a downward trajectory over the medium-term. Further improvements in the underlying debt dynamics are expected to be secured through an improvement in the primary surplus, positive growth prospects, sustained investor confidence, and an efficient and effective debt management system. It is indeed Government's fiscal policy to ensure that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, Government borrowing is used for productive purposes and the accumulation of capital assets, and not to finance recurrent expenditure.

¹⁴ NSO data available at: https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_A1/National_Accounts/Pages/Gross-Domestic-Product.aspx

Strategic Hub for International Trade

Government is committed to placing Malta on the map as an international logistics hub through an expansion of the nature and volume of activities in free trade zones. In order to exploit Malta's potential, during 2017 work continued on the Government's plans for the development of an international logistics centre by means of a Public Private Partnership.

The International Logistics Hub is intended to:

- Provide customs-related advantages as well as exemptions from Maltese and EU taxes in a controlled environment;
- Foster economic activity and employment;
- Inject increased investment to industries in specialised services and generate adequate employment prospects and business opportunities;
- Develop new and innovative work practices and procedures for diverse new business lines on a global basis; and
- Yield significant and sustained economic benefits in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution, including multiplier effect on other local businesses.

Investments in Industrial Areas

In 2017 a number of tenders were issued, evaluated and adjudicated which will see the extension of the Xewkija Industrial Zone to cater for two different lines of activity with an investment of €16 million for new business workshops as well as for financial services, ICT, research and development (R&D), innovation and training software development among other type of operations. The underlying intentions are the transfer of business activities away from the village core, enabling further economic growth through better diversification in the economy, and to provide further job opportunities for people living in Gozo.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 8.2 Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.

SDG 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

SDG 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

SDG 9.2 Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries.

SDG 9.5 Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending.

Supporting and Rewarding Businesses

New Schemes

Malta Enterprise launched several new measures aimed at supporting R&D and Innovation activities within industry, namely:

- Aid for R&D Projects, which allows companies to claim tax credits on costs incurred directly or indirectly in carrying out an R&D project or projects relevant to the company's trade;
- Innovation Aid for SMEs, which allows eligible SMEs to recover part of the costs incurred for the temporary engagement of highly qualified personnel from large undertakings and Research and Knowledge-dissemination organisations in the form of tax credits; and
- Tax Credits for R&D and Innovation, which is open to all undertakings that employ for a period of at least twelve months a person holding or reading for a doctoral degree in science, information technology or engineering.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

SDG 9.3 Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets.

SDG 12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

These new measures were launched at the Research and Innovation Café organised by Malta Enterprise on 31 October 2017 with the support of the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) within the context of SME Week 2017, which amongst others gave a detailed insight and updates on the various national and EU R&D funding initiatives.

Malta Enterprise also launched the Catering Capacity Building Scheme with the aim of assisting hospitality and catering establishments engage a chef to support in capacity building, innovation, and in the development of operations. Eligible undertakings, including self-employed operators, will be supported through a tax credit representing a percentage of the eligible expenditure and wages of the international experienced chefs, up to a maximum of €10,000 per undertaking. The scheme was launched in collaboration with the Institute of Tourism Studies and will be running until 31 December 2018.

Less bureaucracy in opening a business and small start-ups



has been re-launched in new offices in Mrieħel. Business First is now a limited liability company owned by Malta Chamber of SMEs (GRTU) and Government. Business First had initially started in 2011 with the purpose of providing the most essential business services in one location. Its primary aim has always been to reduce bureaucracy and to help speed up the provision of Business Services by offering a one-stop-shop solution.

This new company will be enhancing the one-stop-shop model by offering a wider scope of services. Business First will offer more opportunities for Government Departments and other bodies to provide their services directly from its offices in order to cut down on excessive red-tape in obtaining information and carrying out the required procedures to set up and run a business. Furthermore, through the continuous effort of updating paper based forms into electronic services, Business First will be providing real-time services to businesses throughout their setting up phases and further on.

In November 2017, Business First launched a series of information sessions specifically targeting SMEs. These short sessions which are free tackle subjects that are of interest to Maltese Businesses, including information on related Government initiatives, to help SMEs become aware of them and ultimately encourage uptake.

Promoting and Rewarding Business Organisations



The 2017 Sustainable Enterprise Award-Giving Ceremony was held on 25 November 2017. The aim of the Sustainable Enterprise Awards is to recognise, promote and reward Enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, for their efforts to change their practices with the aim of increasing economic, social and environmental sustainability.

Promoting Sustainable Procurement Practices

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 12.7 Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.

The Government is committed to continue to lead by example in environmental performance through sustainable public procurement practices.

Green public procurement (GPP) is a win-win tool, which leverages economic and environmental objectives. On the one hand, it enables the public sector to obtain the best value for money and procure low-carbon, environmentally-friendly goods, works and services. It therefore represents an efficient use of public finances and promotes environmental improvement. On the other hand, GPP represents a business opportunity for the suppliers of goods and services, rapidly pushing the boundaries of the growing market for environmentally-positive products and services.

The below tables contain relevant statistical data on GPP collected in 2017. This is generic information which reflects how many tenders were greened during 2017.

Table 1 GPP Compliance by Number - 2017

Total number of tenders published	Total number of tenders screened by GPP coordinators	Total number of tenders under the scope of GPP	Total number of tenders compliant with GPP
4346	1072	428	269

Table 1 above shows the GPP compliance by number during 2017. It is important to note that the total number of tenders screened by GPP coordinators excludes tenders issued by the Medicines and Medical Devices team within Central Procurement and Supplies Unit (CPSU). This also applies to Table 2 with regard to the total value of tenders published.

Table 2 GPP Compliance by Value - 2017

Total value of tenders published (€)	Total value of tenders under the scope of GPP (€)	Total value of tenders compliant with GPP (€)	% of GDP in terms of 'greened' procurement
358,914,679.6	122,850,431.94	55,598,951.59	0.5

Table 2 above shows that for the data collected during 2017, Government expenditure amounted to €358,914,679.6 of which €55,598,951.59 were potentially 'greened'.

In terms of reaching the 50% target¹⁵, this transpires that Malta has exceeded the target for tenders including GPP by number (63%). Expressed as a function of tenders by value Malta is broadly in line with the 50% target, having achieved compliance of 45.26% of tenders under the scope of GPP.

Table 3 Percentage Compliance for Mandatory GPP Product Groups – 2017

Copying and Graphic Paper	Office IT Equipment	Textiles	Gardening Products and Services	Cleaning Products and Services	Thermal Insulation	Wall Panels
100	81.5	80	61.9	76.7	63.3	93.8

As per results in Table 3, the 100% mandatory target has only been achieved for GPP product group 'Copying and Graphic Paper.' As for the non-mandatory criteria, the national target for 30% was achieved for the following product groups: 'Furniture,' 'Construction,' 'Hard Floor Coverings' and 'Windows, Glazed

Doors and Skylights.' It is important to note that during 2017, no tenders fell under the scope of the non-mandatory GPP product groups for 'Mobile' and 'Combined Heat and Power.'

A crucial role of the GPP office in implementing the Malta's National Action Plan for GPP is that of training. The GPP Office together with the Institute of Public Service, and the Procurement Reform Unit at OPM delivered twenty-nine, five-hour training sessions during 2017.



These sessions targeted 536 personnel involved at the various stages of the procurement chain. A series of presentations, questionnaires and case studies were drafted for each Ministry in order to specifically address their difficulties.

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¹⁵In 2008, EU Member States agreed to a political indicative target of greening 50% of the procurement that falls under the scope of GPP by 2010.



Sustainable Tourism Practices and Heritage Conservation

Government's policy and vision for tourism integrates the principles of sustainable development by focusing on destination management, enhancing quality across the tourism value chain whilst reducing seasonality. In order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of the Maltese tourism's inherent attractiveness and competitiveness, the industry needs to operate within a sustainable national framework whilst contemporarily contributing to that same framework. Whilst recognising that tourism brings about vibrant economic growth, full recognition is given to the fact that it creates its pressures on sustainable development and in this regard, the sector is contemporarily sensitive to these very pressures.

Employees working in the tourism industry are critical brand communicators and that through their skills and aptitudes they contribute to communicate an effective message and image about Malta and Gozo. In this regard, education, capacity building, training and lifelong learning opportunities in tourism will be safeguarded.

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) will continue to encourage the private sector to invest in staff development and to reward and give public recognition to the efforts of those employees who excel in the delivery of their service by communicating a positive image about Malta and Gozo.

Actions undertaken to address investment in the human resource relate to the STAR Awards and the Erasmus + Improving the Digital Skills and Quality Performance

within the catering sector in Malta. In April 2017, ITS launched a Recognition of Prior Learning scheme through which employees stand to gain from recognition and accreditation processes thus leading to more qualified employees in the sector.

The longest-term forecasts for tourism growth worldwide indicate that over the coming years we shall be operating in a market of experienced frequent travellers who know what they want and will have a thirst to experience and savour as much as possible during their trips. Furthermore, the pattern of travel is changing and the previous model of long annual holidays is being replaced with shorter, more frequent holidays. Proactive promotional and marketing efforts by the MTA to address these shifting trends through an adequate approach and via the most influential media continued in 2017.

Management of cultural attractions is key towards practices adopted in favour of sustainable tourism development. The cultural assets located in the Maltese Islands play a critical role and in this regard capital investment is constantly taking place in support of our environmental and cultural resources. This include amongst others the work undertaken in preparation for Valletta 2018-European Capital of Culture, work on the project to restore and introduce innovations in the Mediterranean Conference Centre, as well as a 25 million euro EU-Funded project aimed at regenerating the Lower Valletta area.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

SDG 6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.

SDG 7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.

SDG 7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology.

SDG 8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead.

SDG 8.9 By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

SDG 9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.

In 2017 there was an increase in direct investment by the private sector in urban conservation areas as a result of the Palazzini Initiative. This initiative was launched with the aim of catalysing the conservation and rehabilitation of historic properties by encouraging their adaptive reuse as luxury heritage accommodation. This initiative aims to assist investors administratively by simplifying and streamlining bureaucratic procedures.

Tourism can also contribute towards a green economic transition. Measures and initiatives aimed at increasing operational efficiency, reduction of GHG emissions, waste and resource management practices are instrumental for the achievement of SDGs. Investing in sustainable production and consumption models

in relevant economic sectors, not only addresses environmental issues but also enhances social cohesion and social responsibility, thus reinforcing the link between the three sustainable development pillars.

'CONSUME-LESS in Mediterranean Touristic Communities' is an INTERREG Mediterranean project being led by the Energy and Water Agency. The Ministry for Gozo is also participating in this Project, which brings together other organisations from Italy, Spain, Albania and Greece to develop sustainable strategies for the tourism sector in coastal Mediterranean areas. The project looks at a sustainable tourism model using an innovative communication and territorial marketing campaign.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

SDG 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

SDG 12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimise their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

SDG 12.8 By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

SDG 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

SDG 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.

SDG 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.

The aim is to achieve reduction in water and energy consumption and waste generation, the enhancement of local products and natural resources, the increase in tourism flows and in tourists' awareness on the importance of adopting environmentally sound lifestyles. Gozo has been identified as pilot area for starting an eco-label system among hotels, restaurants and tourist shops that consume less. The kick-off meeting for the project together with the first and second technical and steering committees were held in Malta and Greece respectively. In November 2017, a tender for the supply and delivery of promotional material in relation to the Project has been issued and work started on the drafting of the tender for door-to-door visits.

MTA continued to operate the Eco-certification scheme, a national voluntary award scheme which focuses on best practices covering environmental, socio-economic and cultural sustainability of hotels and farmhouses on the Maltese Islands.

Malta being an island state depends heavily on coastal and maritime tourism. In this regard, efforts continued to protect our marine environment. Key measures related to coastal areas included, the awarding of Blue Flag beaches and beach management by MTA, maintenance of coastal tourism zones, maintenance of the bathing water quality and support offered towards management plans for Marine Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Natura 2000 sites.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE

This Chapter focuses on the social dimension of sustainable development, encompassing Government's measures aimed at ensuring a dignified life for the entire population, so that everyone is enabled to fulfil his or her potential within a healthy environment. In order to achieve this objective, throughout 2017 Government continued to pursue coherent and effective measures that focus not only on income, but extend to other key dimensions of well-being, including equal rights and opportunities, poverty reduction and social inclusion, integration, education and training as well as good health.

In this regard, this Chapter highlights the measures and initiatives undertaken by Government which are linked to the 2030 Agenda namely SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11 and 16.

2030 Agenda Related Goals



Diagram 4: Sustainable Development Goals¹⁶

¹⁶Source: UN Website, available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Good Health and Wellbeing

In terms of Health, life expectancy at birth was 82.6 years in 2016, up from 78.5 years in 2000 and above the EU average of 81 years.

Life Expectancy at Birth - Years

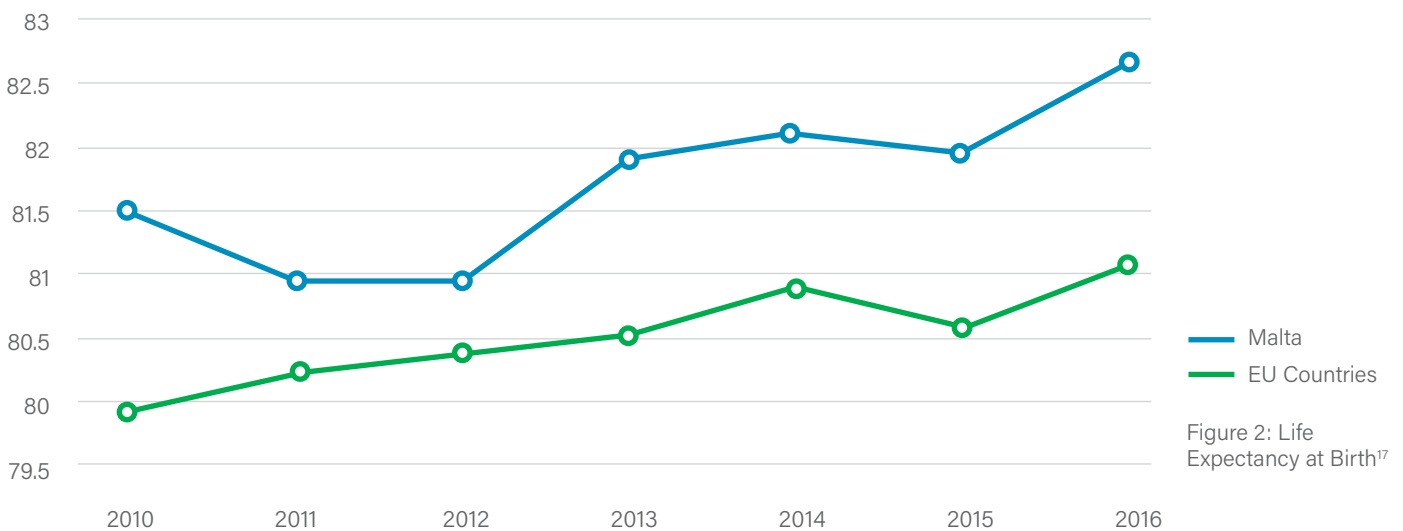


Figure 2: Life Expectancy at Birth¹⁷

Moreover, large part of the Maltese population (72.9%) reports to be in good health, above the EU-28 average (67.5%).

Self-percieved health (Very Good or Good) - Percentage of Population

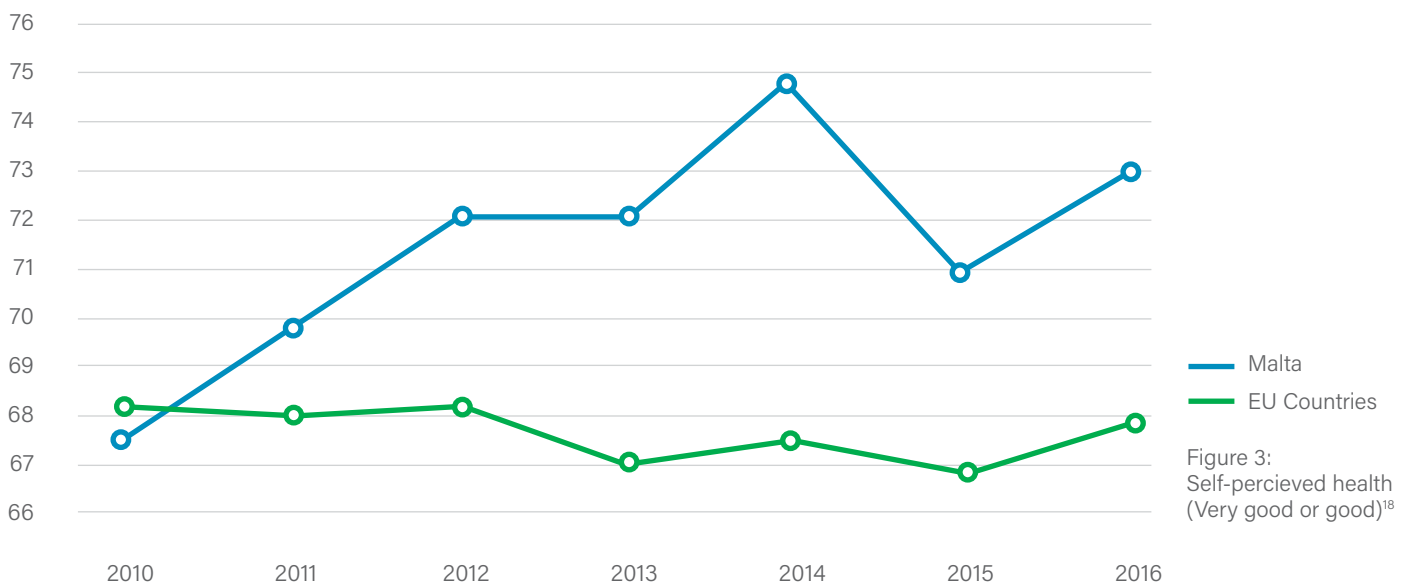


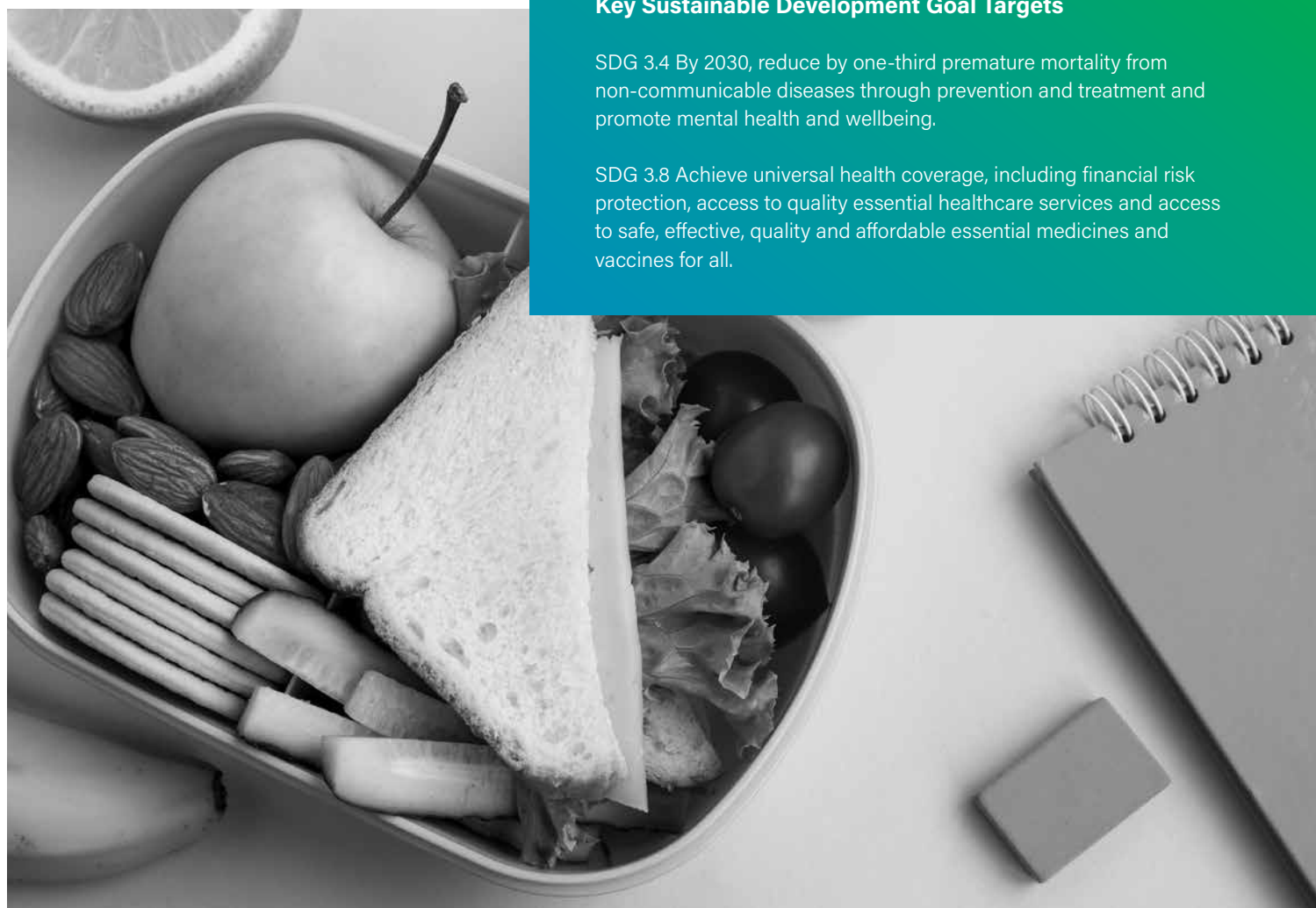
Figure 3: Self-percieved health (Very good or good)¹⁸

¹⁷ EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

¹⁸ EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

Furthermore, according to the list published in September 2017 by the medical journal The Lancet, Malta is the world's 8th healthiest place. The Lancet analysed living conditions in no less than 188 counties using the UN's SDGs as guideposts to measure the quality of life in 33 areas such as poverty, clean water, education, disease, violence, road injuries, pollution and mortality rates. Malta was given maximum points in a number of areas, including child mortality, malaria, and deaths resulting from poisoning. Malta was also awarded very good points (over 90) with regard to inoculation, sanitation, water quality and hygiene. Malta ranked 14th place in a similar analysis published in 2016. This means that during 2017 considerable improvement has been registered, leading to Malta advancing by six places on this list.

Addressing Non-communicable Diseases



Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and wellbeing.

SDG 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

In view of the high rates of overweight and obesity among both children and adults in Malta, obesity prevention is a priority for the Government. Work done in 2017 included the development of Council Conclusions on halting the rise in childhood overweight and obesity¹⁹ adopted during the Maltese EU Council Presidency. Furthermore, Malta also hosted the World Health Organisation (WHO) Fourth High-level Meeting of Small Countries, during which the Malta Statement on Ending Childhood Obesity²⁰ was signed. The Maltese Presidency was also instrumental in the development of the Public Procurement of Food for Health Guidelines.²¹

Diabetes is a condition which affects many Maltese people. It is estimated that around 10% of the population above 18 years are living with this condition, a proportion of whom are undiagnosed.²² In 2017, the Government continued working on the implementation of measures relating to the National Strategy for Diabetes (2016-2020), including the introduction of free glucose monitors and glucose-testing sticks for all insulin-dependent diabetics. Furthermore, diabetic patients who are on Schedule V started benefiting from free dental treatment, subsidies on spectacles and antibiotics. Screening services for peripheral vascular disease in diabetic patients was also introduced.



The Government is committed to continue investing in the fight against cancer, by investing in more modern and effective medicines. A total of 1800 individuals are now diagnosed with cancer every year in Malta and this is expected to continue rising and surpass 2100 new diagnoses per year by 2020.²³ In October 2017, the Ministry for Health launched the National Cancer Plan, which sets out an integrated and comprehensive plan of action for the next five years (2017-2021). It will continue to build on the successes of the first National Cancer Plan and address pending and emerging new challenges in cancer control. The National Cancer Plan presents detailed measures and identifies outcomes planned to tackle cancer; including the reduction of cancer incidence, improvement of cancer survival and the improvement of the patients' experience and quality of life.

The Joint Action for the European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control (CANCON), which started in 2014 and of which Malta was an associated partner, was concluded with a Final Conference that was held in Malta on 14 and 15 February 2017 under the auspices of the Maltese tenure of the Presidency of the EU Council. CANCON was conceived to bring together participating organisations, institutes, universities and health care providers, and the EU Commission with the ultimate aim of contributing in different ways to reducing the cancer burden in the EU.

¹⁹ Council Conclusions available at, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9977-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

²⁰ Further information available at, <http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2017/europes-small-countries-commit-to-ending-childhood-obesity>

²¹ Guidelines available at, <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/public-procurement-food-health-technical-report.pdf>

²² National Strategy for Diabetes (2016-2020) available at, <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/NDS-EN.pdf>

²³ National Cancer Plan available at, <http://www.iccp-portal.org/system/files/plans/MinistryForHealth-Cancer%20Plan.pdf>

Throughout 2017, the Government launched new chemotherapeutic drugs on the national formulary.

A less invasive vacuum-assisted biopsy was also introduced for suspected breast cancer cases, avoiding the need for these patients to be sent abroad for investigation. Furthermore, the Oncology Centre has embarked on the gradual introduction of precision radiotherapy techniques and dedicated annual budgets started to be appropriated to allow for upgrades in the availability of indicated cancer drugs.

The Government also invested in upgrading of renal machines. This 5.6 million euro investment is an important addition to dialysis services offered at Mater Dei Hospital, with some patients needing it for three times a week.



In August 2017 a stroke rehabilitation unit at Karin Grech Hospital was also inaugurated. With a dedicated interdisciplinary team of professionals, a fully equipped gym and the latest medical innovative technologies, stroke patients in Malta now have a much better chance for positive results and outcomes.

Addressing Communicable Diseases

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, waterborne diseases and other communicable diseases.

SDG 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

In August 2017, the Ministry for Health continued working on the development of the National Strategy for the elimination of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).²⁴ The Vision is to reach a state where transmission of HCV is halted in Malta by 2025, and everyone living with HCV has access to safe, affordable and effective prevention, testing, care and treatment services.

The year 2017 also saw the introduction of rapid HIV testing at genitourinary clinic as well as in some private pharmacies. Furthermore, as one of the Maltese Presidency of the EU Council initiatives, a technical meeting bringing together leading experts on HIV prevention and control from across the EU, was held in Malta. Discussions focused on how Europe can improve its response to HIV and achieve the targets outlined in the SDGs, the actions agreed at the UN High-Level meeting on HIV/AIDS and those adopted in the Global Health Sector Strategy at the World Health Assembly. The Malta Declaration on HIV/AIDS was issued.

The rate of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) bloodstream infections at Mater Dei Hospital has dropped from 2 patients per 1000 days in 2009 to 0.2 patients per 1000 days in 2016. This translates to a 90% reduction in MRSA bloodstream infections at Mater Dei Hospital in response to a multi-modal prevention strategy.

Achievements relating to healthcare services and medicines

Throughout 2017, the Government continued to work towards the increase of availability of biosimilar medication on the national formulary, thereby increasing access to medicines and contribution to greater health system sustainability.

The +70 Home Delivery Scheme managed by the Pharmacy of Your Choice Unit (POYC) was extended to all localities.

The Government continued to further develop Malta's e-health infrastructure through various projects and initiatives under the national e-health programme for 2017-2020. For instance, through the Coverage Project, work started on the development of a national electronic health record. Furthermore, new POYC scheme membership electronic cards, which are replacing the paper-based patient voucher, started to be distributed during 2017.

²⁴ Vision Document available at, https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEH-HEALTH/Documents/Hepatitis%20C%20Book_web%2020180130.pdf



Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Throughout 2017, the Government continued with its ongoing efforts to reduce waiting lists and initiatives to address backlog of patients awaiting elective surgeries.

The Government also continued to invest in primary healthcare facilities and services. In line with the strategy of upgrading and refurbishing the Health Centres, new plastering, wound care and phlebotomy clinics were opened at Floriana Health Centre. Furthermore, the wound clinic service at Floriana Health Centre has been extended to give further accessibility to clients.

Works on the conversion of the ex-Msida berġa into the new Occupational Health Unit (OHU) have been concluded. Works started on the conversion of an ex-MCAST workshop in Xewkija, Gozo, into a peripheral clinic (berġa) and into a blood donation centre. The blood donation centre will help to promote voluntary blood donation by the general public.

Plans have been finalised regarding the major refurbishment of the Gżira Health Centre. The aim is to convert the Gżira Health Centre into a state of the art premises, with enhanced client accessibility.

Following the introduction of a Queuing Ticketing system at Mosta Health Centre, similar installations have been installed at Rabat, Cospicua, Paola, B'Kara and Floriana Health Centres. As a result of these installations, improved patient flow has been noted in the respective Health Centres. Tender documentation was also prepared so that similar systems are installed at Qormi, Gżira and Kirkop Health Centres, as well as the replacement of the system at Mosta Health Centre.

March 2017 saw the official launch of the Primary Health Care Department Call Centre. This project required a substantial investment in the technical infrastructure of the Primary Health Care Department with consequent capital expenditure of around €75,000. This had to be supported with an adequate manpower planning, with the recruitment of staff to manage over 1,200 calls that are received on a daily basis. The call centre staff were also provided with the necessary training in telephone handling skills, communication skills, as well as training on the software and hardware that is being utilised in the call centre. The call centre is the first of its kind in Malta's public health sector and has the scope of centralising appointments and providing the necessary information regarding primary care services to the public. This initiative has also alleviated the Health Centre reception staff from an excessive amount of calls, thus allowing them to focus more on the clients attending the Health Centres.

In 2017 work also started on the new project relating to the construction of the Paola Primary Health Care Southern Regional Hub. The Paola Regional Hub project has been allocated 80% of funding through the European Regional Development Funds. The total investment in this project will be around 40 million euro and will include the consolidation of present services as well as the introduction of new services such as an emergency operating theatre, minor surgery facilities, mental health services, a dental clinic, a sexual health clinic and various other new services. An estimated 125,500 persons will benefit from this regional hub which will cater for the southern region of Malta. It is estimated that by 2023, around 6,000 day care surgeries would be taking place annually at the regional hub, alleviating Mater Dei Hospital from a substantial part of the minor surgery list.

Works on new Health Centre in Kirkop, which is expected to be of service to 25,800 persons, started on 9 October 2017. The project involves the conversion of the existing premises into a new, fully fledged, energy efficient Health Centre.

The Chronic Disease Management Clinic (CDMC) was also extended to further Health Centres. Since the introduction of the CDMC in 2014, the clinic has provided a holistic patient centred approach with regards to patients with chronic diseases.

A new Movement and Physical Activity Programme for the elderly with the scope of maintaining a person's strength, mobility and balance was also launched. The programme is held at Birkirkara Health Centre. These classes will help keep senior citizens mobile and active as well as enabling them to prevent falls which is a major health hazard.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Primary Care Department, Aġenzija Support and the Malta Down Syndrome Association concerning health screening and other services for adults with Down Syndrome.

During 2017 training in non-technical skills for all department of health staff also commenced. Furthermore, the Islands and Small States Institute at the University of Malta was officially designated a WHO Collaborating Centre on Health Systems and Policy in Small States. Its work will involve co-organisation of capacity-building events on health system leadership and governance in the small state context and supporting health information, evidence generation and the development of appropriate performance assessment mechanisms in small health systems.

These initiatives will not only provide for better working environment for the staff but will offer a better experience to clients.

Rights and wellbeing of children and young people

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

SDG 3.2 By 2030, end preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.

SDG 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

SDG 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

SDG 3.a Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.



The first National Children's Policy was launched²⁵ in November 2017. This Policy reflects Government's commitments to recognise, respect and promote children's rights and their overall wellbeing. In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this Policy seeks to promote the wellbeing, 'best interests' and empowerment of all children, through the protection of their rights and freedoms, the provision of high quality services, and their active participation across all sectors of society, to enhance their present and future prospects.

As from 1 January 2017, smoking in vehicles in the presence of children under the age of 16 is now prohibited. In 2017, a national screening programme for Autism Spectrum Disorder called 'Lenti fuq l-Iżvilupp ta' Wliedna' was launched. This screening programme offered by the Education Department together with the Health Services helps to identify signs of developmental delays, learning difficulties and/or educational needs at an early stage. This programme does not replace the on-going care offered by the Well Baby Clinic, the paediatrician, or the dentist but is an added service.



Better Working Conditions for All

The Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2017 amounted to a weekly increment of €1.75. This raise was given to everyone, including, as per normal practice, pensioners and those in receipt of social benefits.

The National Agreement on the Minimum Wage was signed by the Social Partners on 28 April 2017 and became effective by means of Legal Notice 144 of 2017. By means of this Agreement, employees on a minimum wage will, upon completion of the first year of employment with the same employer, be entitled to mandatory increases (over and above COLA adjustments for 2017, 2018 and 2019) of €3 per week in the second year of employment, and upon completion of the second year, to an additional €3 per week. Workers earning a salary that exceeds the minimum wage will also be able to qualify for a partial salary increment on the second and third year of employment. The Agreement also stipulates that for the

years 2018 and 2019, the weekly cost of living allowance will be supplemented by an additional €1 increase each year. This effectively means that between 2018 and 2019, the minimum wage will have been increased by €8.

In 2015 Legislation was enacted to specifically address equal pay and precarious work. The main intent of this legislation is to ensure that contractors awarded contracts by Government Departments or Public Sector organisations observe employment laws. Any companies which do not observe employment laws are disqualified from participating in Government and public sector tendering processes. This ensures that any contracts awarded by Government departments or public sector organisations do not lead to precarious employment situations. Also, the salaries of employees of private contractors who provide services to Public Entities and Government are pegged with that of Government

²⁵ National Children's Policy available at, <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/National%20Children%27s%20Policy%202017.pdf>



Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 8.3 Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.

SDG 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

SDG 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

SDG 10.1 By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.

SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

SDG 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

SDG 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

SDG 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

employees performing similar duties. In 2017, wide ranging consultations were held with all stakeholders involved regarding the proposal which would place wages and working conditions of employees engaged by sub-contractors in the private sector on the same level as those of regular workers at the same place of work.

Consultations with the social partners have been initiated on the proposal of introducing paid special medical leave, in addition to the statutory sick leave, to employees who are diagnosed with cancer and who are undergoing treatment or some form of cancer therapy. Furthermore, consultations with all stakeholders have been initiated regarding the proposal whereby parents will be able to benefit from sick leave entitlement when their children are sick.

In 2017, paid leave for prospective parents seeking medically assisted procreation was introduced. Prospective parents who undergo IVF treatment in Malta or abroad are entitled to 100 hours of leave with full pay. These 100 hours shall be shared with 60% going to receiving parent and 40% going to the other prospective parent. These 100 hours may be used in a non-continuous manner. Additionally, these 100 hours shall be available for up to 3 IVF processes. If only one prospective parent is employed, that person shall be entitled to 60 hours if it is the receiving person or 40 hours if it is the other prospective parent.

Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

In 2013, there were 99,000 persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion, however in 2016 this number decreased to 85,000 equivalent to 20.1% of the Maltese population. This percentage is below the EU average of 23.5% who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

People at Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion - Percentage of Total Population

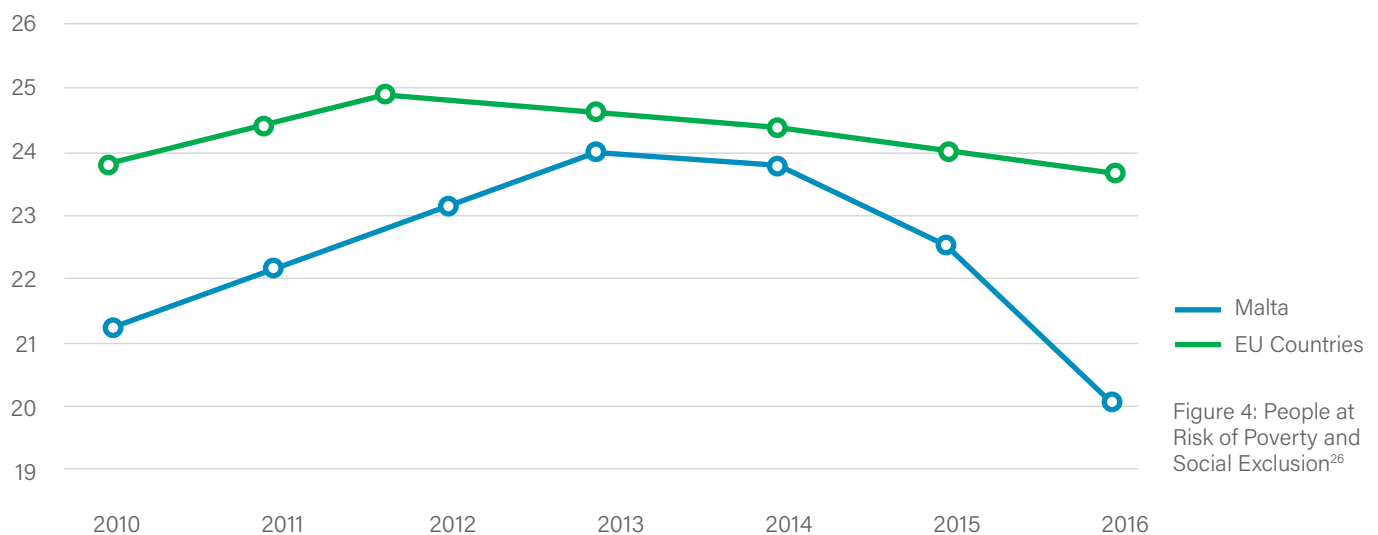


Figure 4: People at Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion²⁶

In 2017, an Implementation and Evaluation Report²⁷ covering the years 2014-2016 was launched to monitor and measure the impact of the measures and initiatives that have been undertaken to address the actions emanating from the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion.

National developments were measured through progress reports drawn up by relevant stakeholders and statistical analysis arising from a review of general economic and living conditions indicators published by Eurostat and the National Statistics Office. These were complemented by relevant in-house statistics compiled by the different Ministries.

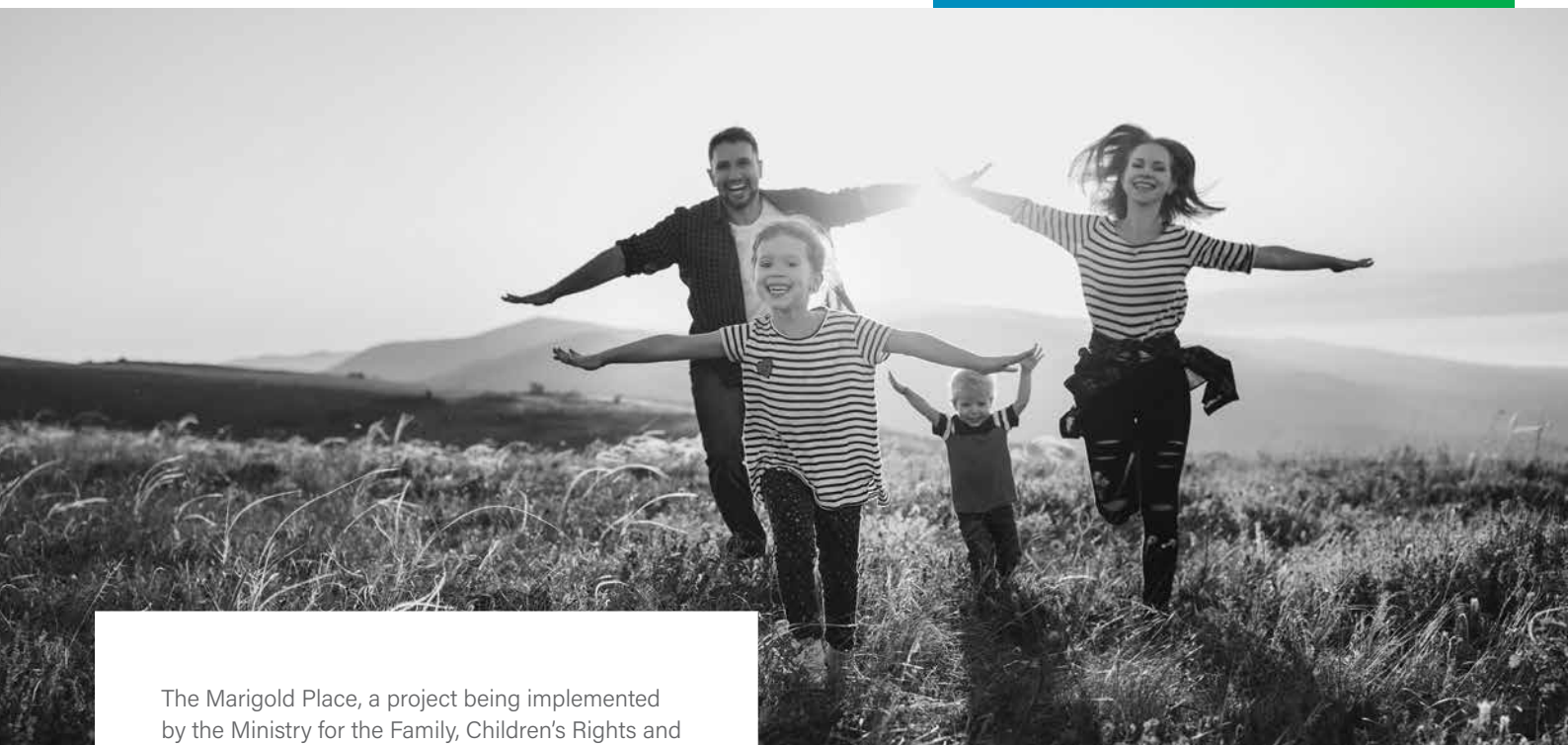
This reporting exercise not only reflects the effectiveness of the yearly budget measures and core business initiatives which were implemented by the various Ministries in their commitment to combat poverty and social exclusion, but also helps to map the way forward with regards to the planning and development of new measures, programmes and initiatives that could contribute towards the alleviation of poverty and the promotion of social inclusion.

²⁶ EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

²⁷ Implementation and Evaluation Report available at, <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/Poverty%20Booklet.pdf>

In 2017 the Housing Authority, with the assistance of EU funds, embarked on an important project spreading over five years to install lifts and carry out embellishment works in Government Housing Estates. The embellishment and maintenance of common parts and the installation of lifts will be carried out in 211 buildings which house

around 4,400 persons, including 1,200 elderly persons and 200 persons with disabilities. Apart from the buildings themselves, the embellishment works will also include surrounding areas where residents will have access to a better and more attractive neighbourhood.



The Marigold Place, a project being implemented by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity with the assistance of EU Funds will support the integration of vulnerable persons within the community through public infrastructure and community based services intended to alleviate vulnerable persons out-of-poverty and social exclusion. Through the project a dilapidated building in Marsa will be refurbished and regenerated with the aim to provide the adequate infrastructure for the provision of therapeutic and mentoring interventions, as well as other informational and advice services in order to bring target group closer to labour market.

Another project being implemented by the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social, in collaboration with other entities

and transnational partners, is 'Knowledge, Training, Communications and Support Measures in Support of Vulnerable Groups.'

This project involves:

- 1 Training of persons working with disadvantaged groups;
- 2 Financial Literacy and Retirement Education, Awareness and Pilot Project;
- 3 Research, Pilot Project and Awareness on Disability; and
- 4 Enhancing the Social Security Services Support Measure.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

SDG 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

SDG 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

SDG 1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

SDG 1.b Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

SDG 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

SDG 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

SDG 8.5 By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

'REACH: Fair and inclusive society that promotes and advocates independent living and employment', a project currently being implemented by Aġenzija Sapport, aims at promoting and advocating independent living and employment in Naxxar. This project incorporates semi-independent living arrangements and designed with a special social benefit in mind, intended for improved quality of life. Specifically, the project will support the integration of vulnerable persons within the community through public infrastructure by providing them residential and employment opportunities. Vulnerable persons will be brought closer to the labour market through support and training offered at the community centre

and workshops, further promoting social inclusion and reducing the risk of their exposure to poverty. Apart from equipping persons with disability with independent living and employability skills, the project will provide improved social services including a respite, therapeutic treatments, physiotherapy area, gym, pool and other amenities.

Another project being implemented by Aġenzija Sapport, is 'INK: Person-focused inclusion project' INK project is aimed at maximising the abilities of persons with disability, supporting their chances of inclusion in the labour market and strengthening their social engagement. To achieve such aim the project will pivot

SDG 11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.

SDG 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

SDG 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

round the following main deliverables:

- Training and support, skills and site audits (firms/ companies/departments);
- Certification and recognition;
- Research and innovative measures;
- Continuation of the National Database for persons with disability; and
- Transnational cooperation.

Six Independent-Living Training Centres will serve as facilities from which training will be provided further. An INK training placement scheme will also facilitate some beneficiaries to integrate into mainstream employment.

Strategy towards Population-Ageing

The share of the population aged 65 years and over is increasing in every EU Member State, including Malta. For instance, during the last decade we have witnessed a 4.9% increase.

Given the population-ageing phenomenon, sufficient savings are encouraged so as to be able to meet the future income requirements of the larger inactive section of the population. The Strategy for Retirement and Financial Capability which was launched in January 2017 aims at improving the citizen's financial capabilities before and after retirement, helping the citizen to take informed financial decisions that fit their individual circumstances.

The Government continued to address adequacy by incentivising the take-up of voluntary occupational pensions. The Voluntary Occupational Pension Scheme Rules, which were introduced by virtue of Legal Notice 228 of 2017, provides tax credits to both employees and employers (including self-occupied persons) with the aim to incentivise an occupational pension system in Malta. A qualifying employee is eligible for a tax credit amounting to 15% of the aggregate amount of qualifying contributions made during a year, up to €150. A qualifying employer is also entitled to a tax credit amounting to the lower of 15% of the amount of qualifying contribution paid during a year and €150. The total deductions that can be claimed by the qualifying employer in respect of qualifying contributions, shall in respect of each qualifying employee amount to the lower of the qualifying contribution actually paid and €2,000.

Measures aimed at supporting the income of specific groups of pensioners were also taken. In fact, pensioners aged over 61 will no longer pay tax on the pension or pensions they might have from different sources such as social security pensions, treasury pensions as well as other local or foreign pensions, up to a maximum of €13,000. This reform will be spread over a period of two years. At the end of the two years a pensioner would have benefited from tax cuts up to a maximum of €585 per annum. With respect to entitled beneficiaries of a minimum pension for



married couples and to a non-contributory age pension, these will experience an increase in their pension of €4 per week. The Budgets for 2017 also raised the amount of service pension that is not taken into consideration for social security pension assessment purposes by another €200.

In order to retain the fiscal equity that exists between single and married computations, in the case of married pensioners, apart from the total removal of income tax on pensions up to €13,000, another tax-free amount came into effect with respect to income from any source up to a maximum of €1,000. Persons on a single rate will be benefiting from a tax-free pension income up to €10,500 in 2017. Persons on the married rate will benefit from the full tax-free amount

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

SDG 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

for pension that is up to €13,000 as of 2017. The other tax-free income for married pensioners will be spread out to cover €500 in 2017. Pensioners qualifying for the parent rates will also benefit from this measure since in 2017 a tax-free pension income on the first €11,500 applied for each parent.

In addition, the Budget for 2017 has addressed the gender inequality in the pension benefit rate, with females benefiting from an increase in the pension rate of up to €20 per week.



Violence Free Society

Government is committed to further prevent or curb domestic violence and gender based violence. During 2017, work continued on the process of amending existing legislation in order to strengthen the Domestic Violence Commission and to ensure that all legal provisions that directly or indirectly impinge on aspects related to violence against women and domestic violence are fully in line with the Council of Europe Convention on prevention and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), which Malta ratified in 2014. Particularly, in 2017 the Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence Bill, that will repeal and recast the Domestic Violence Act and amend various other laws, continued to be discussed in Parliament. The aim is to ensure that adequate and sufficient protection is available to victims of violence, and ensure that justice is made with regard to perpetrators of such violence.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

SDG 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

SDG 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

SDG 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

On 23 November 2017, the Commission on Domestic Violence, in collaboration with a number of public and voluntary organisations, launched 'Love doesn't Hurt', a 16 days nation-wide campaign, during which various events took place. The Campaign which formed part of a wider international movement designed to raise awareness about domestic violence and violence towards women, culminated with a solidarity march on 10 December 2017.

During the same month the Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan (Vision 2020)³⁰, which is the first national framework to ensure that legislation, policies and services address victims' needs holistically and as a societal concern, was launched. This Strategy is based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention:

- 1 Prevention whereby preventing gender-based violence and domestic violence requires far-reaching changes in attitude of the public at large, overcoming gender stereotypes and raising awareness;
- 2 Protection whereby legal and policy measures will be in place to protect victims and witnesses from all forms of violence, which also includes the availability and accessibility of support services for victims experiencing such violence;
- 3 Prosecution whereby in conformity with the fundamental principles of human rights and having regard to the gendered understanding of violence, ensuring that effective investigation and prosecution of offences; and
- 4 Integrated policies ensuring that stakeholders work in a coordinated approach in carrying out risk assessments and devise an accurate safety plan for victims experiencing gender-based violence and domestic violence.

In 2017, the Women's Consultative Council has been set up to strengthen the dialogue between the Government and civil society. The Council, is made up of 23 representatives from registered organisations who work on women's rights.

Human Rights and Integration

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

SDG 11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanisation and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

In 2017, Malta retained its top ranking position, with an 88% score, on the 'rainbow map' of rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people (LGBTI). ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index showcases the current state of play of the laws, policies and practices that affect LGBTI people in Europe today.

³⁰ Action Plan available at, https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/GBV_DV%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20publication.pdf

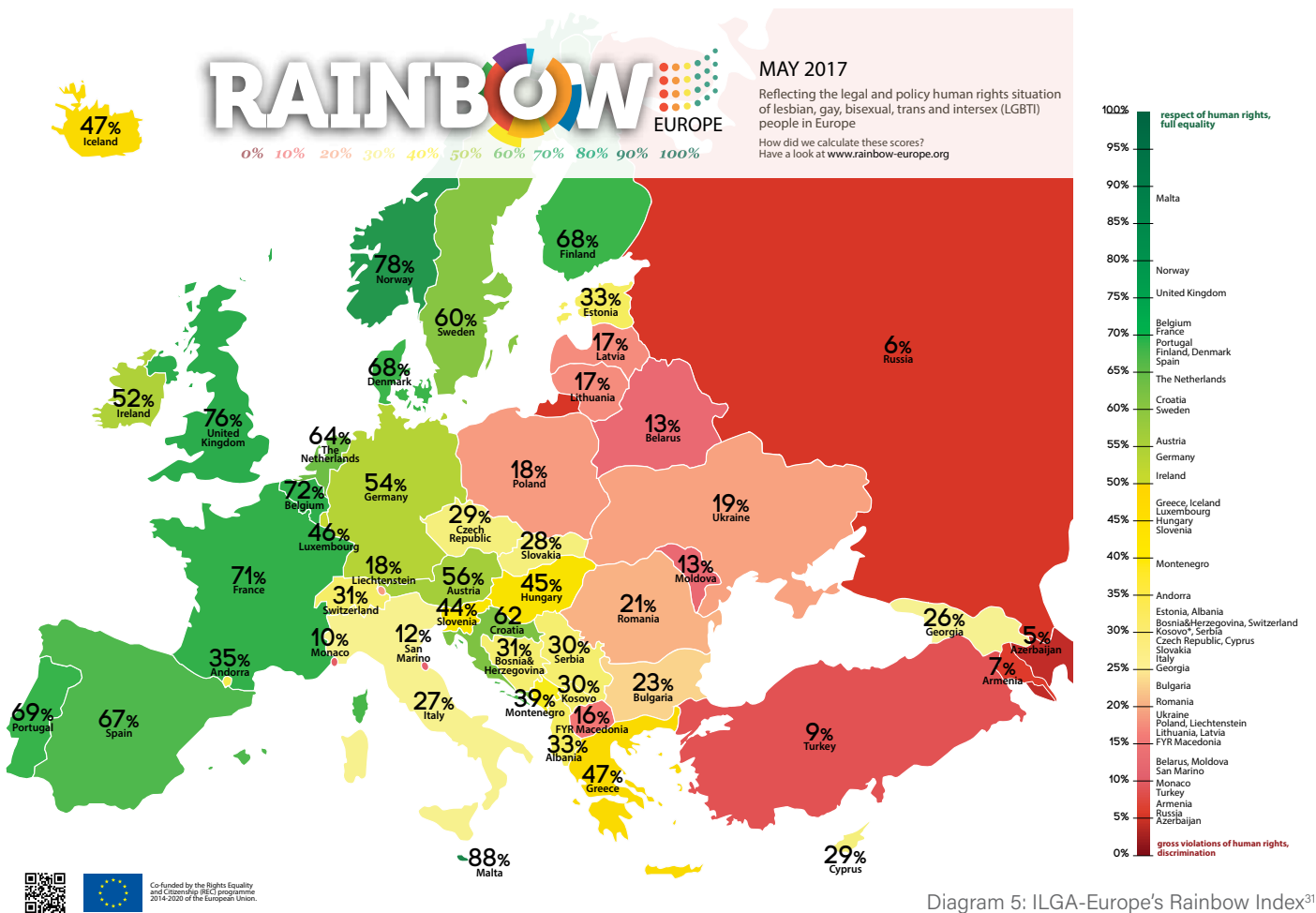


Diagram 5: ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index³¹

On 12 July 2017, Parliament approved the Marriage Equality Bill during its third and final reading, making Malta the 25th country in the world, and the 15th in Europe, to approve such a law. The aim of this law is that of modernising marriage law through the mainstreaming of equality for all. This means that the institution of marriage is now fully gender neutral to ensure that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and genderqueer (LGBTIQ) persons are free to contract a marriage with their loved ones, be they of the same or a different sex, and also to parent children without having unnecessary references to their gender or biological make-up on their children's birth certificates. It also means that all discrepancies between husband and wife have now been removed. For example, both are now free to adopt or take on their partner's surname without distinction. Their siblings would then take on the family surname that the couple chooses on their marriage day. The Government also rolled out the 'X' non-binary gender marker on ID cards and passports. This will be further facilitating the lives of trans and intersex people as they would no longer be restricted to identifying themselves as male or female on their official documents.

Malta today is a receiving country in terms of migration flows, and in turn is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically, culturally and linguistically. On 15 December 2017, Malta's first-ever Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan 'Integration = Belonging' was launched³². This Migrant Integration Strategy creates a framework for understanding successful integration through the level of the migrants' own sense of belonging to Maltese society and the space Maltese society allows for such integration in its different sectors and strata.

The process launched by this first Strategy is especially necessary as this diversity is expected to continue to increase in the years to come, especially in view of the projected labour market needs. A key initiative of the Strategy to ensure its effectiveness is the setting up of an Integration Unit within the Human Rights and Integration Directorate. This Unit will serve as the main Governmental coordinating body that imparts information, receives integration requests and follows migrants' progress on their integration in Malta.

³¹ Source: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/>

³² Migrant Integration Strategy, available at, <https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/migrant%20integration-EN.pdf>

Investing in People: Education, Knowledge and Skills

Education and training are the principal foundations to ensure both economic and social progress. Aligning skills with labour market needs plays a crucial role in all of this.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

SDG 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

SDG 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

SDG 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

SDG 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.



Education and Training

The need for the introduction of vocational subjects had long been felt by secondary schools. To date there are five vocational subjects offered to secondary school students, namely Agribusiness, Hospitality, Health and Social Care, Information Technology and Engineering Technology. During scholastic year 2016-17 the overall uptake of the five SEC vocational subjects in state and non-state secondary schools was 1550. During scholastic year 2017-18 the overall uptake of the five SEC vocational subjects in state and non-state secondary schools is 2388, an uptake increase of 54%.

On 22 March 2017, the Erasmus+ project Explore More was officially launched. It brought together four partners – Prisms (Malta), the Department of Education Services (Malta), the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of Crete (Greece) and Associação Mais Cidadania (Portugal) – in order to create an interactive platform to facilitate career choices for students aged between 11 and 15. Furthermore in July 2017, the Ministry for Education and Employment organised the 'I Choose - Nagħzel il-Karriera Tiegħ' event for the third consecutive year. This is another opportunity whereby students can explore further career options as they leave compulsory education.

Introduced in January 2014, the Alternative Learning Programme (ALP) is intended for Year 11 students who would benefit from an out-of-school programme offering a combination of academic and vocational subjects. The students who are offered a place on the programme would normally not be sitting for any SEC examinations and face challenges following the standard curriculum. As from scholastic year 2016/2017, the ALP+ was also launched, where students can continue their learning experience at a post-secondary level whilst receiving a monthly stipend. In scholastic year 2014/2015, there were 272 students who attended ALP, and in scholastic year 2015-2016 there were 253 students. The intake for scholastic year 2016/2017 was of 154 students for the ALP and 25 students for the ALP+.

Notwithstanding the fact that prevention is the most effective pillar to tackle Early School Leavers as it comprises actions at a very early stage, compensation is essential for those young people who do not manage to fully benefit from compulsory education. In this regard, in 2017 Government continued to encourage educational initiatives to enable early school leavers to get back into education and training through second-chance education and training opportunities. Government also continued with its work in favour of literacy through the enhancement of services offered by public libraries and the National Literacy Agency.

The share of 30 to 34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment in Malta continued to increase in 2017 (30.5%).

Tertiary Educational Attainment - Percentage of Population Aged 30 to 34

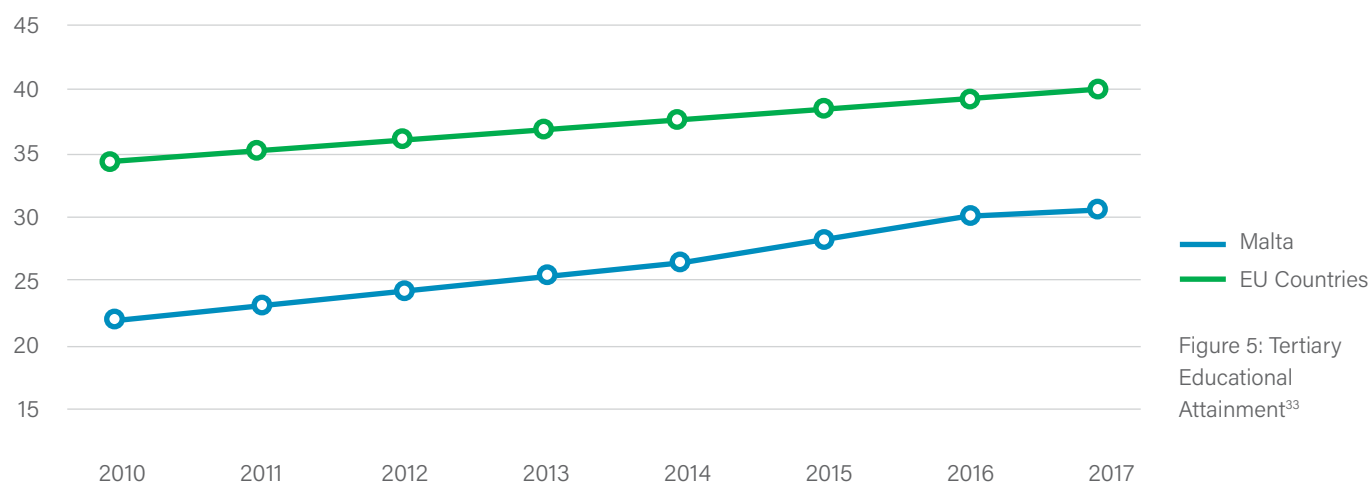


Figure 5: Tertiary Educational Attainment³³

³³ Source: EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

Furthermore, adult participation in learning stood at 9.4% in 2017. This rate is up from 7.5% the previous year.

Adult Learning - Percentage of Population Aged 25 to 64

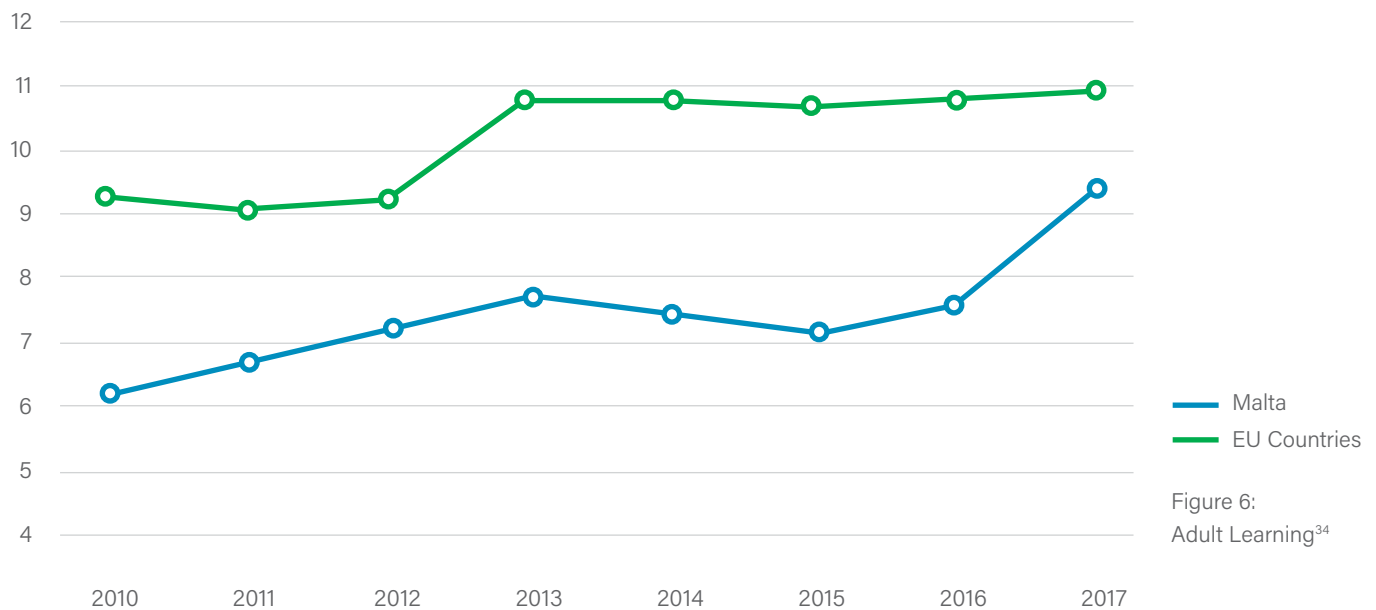


Figure 6:
Adult Learning³⁴

The Government has launched various initiatives varying from the offering of scholarships to financial incentives. For instance, by mid-November 2017, 655 students have been awarded and are benefitting from the Endeavour Scholarships Scheme. The Reach High Scheme was launched in 2015 and 16 awardees were financed to carry out post-doctoral research in their respective area of study. By mid-November 2017, thirteen papers were published. Since the inception, the Master in Entrepreneurship (MEnt) programme has gone from strength to strength and 100 MEnt students graduated by the end of November 2017. Many of the students already started their own business and, some students even ventured abroad their business. The course enables the students to apply their knowledge in their line of work.

Measures and initiatives were also taken to further facilitate on-going training of all educators who are either new recruits or in service. As of October 2017, the Faculty of Education within the University of Malta started offering a new Master in Teaching and Learning (MTL) in a number of vocational subjects which include: Agribusiness; Computing – including Information Technology and VET IT; Design and Technology – including VET Engineering Technology; Hairdressing and Beauty; Health and Social Care; Hospitality; Media Literacy; Retailing; and Textiles and Fashion.

³⁴Source: EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>



In November 2017, around 120 participants successfully completed the National Diploma in Teaching Adults, a comprehensive course that teaches the theory, skills and practise of adult education, including assessment, delivery, design and development and evaluation.

During the scholastic year 2016-2017 the Department for Learning and Assessment Programmes (DLAP) in partnership with the Institute for Education organised two phase course sessions addressed to educators in all cycles. The training provided participants an opportunity to explore the broader perspective of Education for Sustainable Development that moves beyond the traditional view that is exclusively limited to the natural aspect, including waste separation, afforestation and climate change. Educators discussed the relevance of and the implication of certain SDGs still not commonly addressed in learning programmes, namely, sustainable cities and communities, peace and social justice, reduced inequalities, gender equality and quality education. Participants discussed the importance of employing pedagogies that lead to the fostering of 21st century skills and competences as means of nurturing responsible, active, employable and innovative citizens.

During scholastic year 2017-2018 DLAP has maintained its commitment in providing continuous support in sound cross-curricular embedding of Education for Sustainable Development and related skills and competences. Apart from support provided during curriculum time slots with primary educators, DLAP coordinated numerous professional development sessions in various schools.

The DLAP also re-activated Malta's membership in the GLOBE Programme to promote further teaching and learning of science while enhancing environmental literacy and stewardship and fostering scientific discovery. This is a worldwide community of students, teachers, scientists and citizens working collaboratively in data collection to better understand, sustain and improve the Earth system and global environment. In this context DLAP has initiated training for Science and Geography teachers, Education Officers and Heads of Department who will eventually assist teachers and schools in the implementation of GLOBE Programme.

Enhancing Skills

In order to better respond to future needs of the labour market and social systems, it is imperative that skills forecasting and up-skilling processes take into account the long-term needs of the labour market. Thus, partnerships between academic institutions and the labour market are critical. In order to formalise a structure for such horizontal exchanges, achieve better skills forecasting and respond to the challenges of technological progress, the Ministry for Education and Employment has launched a National Skills Council (NSC).

The NSC:

- 1 taps into studies carried out by different entities to assess the skills shortages on a national level and in particular sectors;
- 2 is also involved in the setting up of Business-Education encounters to facilitate the feedback to and from while at the same time seeking a slightly longer-term qualitative forecast by the key stakeholders in each sector;
- 3 is encouraging and facilitating educational institutions building bridges with industry, to make sure we diminish the skills gap;
- 4 aims to review the past and present available skills within our labour work force and recommend policy changes to minimise the skill gaps that exists in some of sectors.

In July 2017, the NSC setup a sub-committee, with the remit of:

- reviewing existing pertinent documentation, consult with relevant players in the field, including EU stakeholders;
- identify a workable approach to address identified digital skills mismatches and related issues;
- draw up a list of priority actions taking into consideration multiple stakeholders including private training providers; and
- develop a report for the NSC with an analysis of the digital skills gap in Malta and a set of recommendations.

In parallel, another sub-committee was tasked to study the work-based learning (WBL) options that are currently in place within the education system and is looking at widening the opportunity and options of WBL experiences in all educational institutions and at different levels of the education system.

In collaboration with the UNESCO Science, Education and Culture Centre in Gozo, DLAP re-activated Malta's participation in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project. Through this initiative schools in all cycles and sectors are invited to organise curricular programmes aimed at promoting a culture of Sustainable Development, aligned to UNESCO priorities. This initiative, was piloted in two schools namely, St Thomas More College Zejtun Primary A and St Ignatius College, Handaq Middle School. Zejtun Primary A implemented a school wide vision of embedding 21st century skills in daily learning. This was complemented by a student-led initiative that involved the development of Garaxx Numru 21, which is an alternative learning space to encourage skill-based learning. On the other hand, Handaq Middle School in collaboration with MCAST Institute of Art and Design developed an alternative assessment programme that included artistic expression as an inclusive assessment tool alongside traditional written forms.

PROTECTING
THE
ENVIRONMENT

The Maltese Government is committed towards the transition to a green economy, sustainable use of natural resources and energy efficiency. The Government therefore continued with its ambitious and efficient green transition while at the same time ensuring jobs and competitiveness. Emissions need to decrease further. The global nature of this challenge necessitates international solutions. In this regard, Malta is working to speed up the green transition globally and has ratified the Paris Agreement.

The Government continued to invest in incentives for the production and promotion of high quality local agricultural produce. The Government also continued to invest in measures to protect biological diversity and marine life, as well as on the setting up of autonomous structures for the protection of the environment and our resources. In this regard, the Government has set forth various policies and measures which are linked to the 2030 Agenda namely SDGs 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

2030 Agenda Related Goals



Diagram 6: Sustainable Development Goals³⁵

³⁵ Source: UN Website, available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>

Climate Change

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

SDG 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.

SDG 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.

SDG 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.

SDG 13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilising jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalisation as soon as possible.



During 2017, Malta being the country presiding the EU Council Presidency had a pivotal role in international negotiations on climate change issues. Under the realm of the EU Council Presidency, Malta continued to build on the momentum achieved through the Ratification of the Paris Agreement, and took a leading role in ensuring successful preparation and coordination of EU position for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference (COP 23) held between 6 and 17 November 2017 in Bonn Germany. Specifically, an informal Workshop on Climate Change was held in Malta between 19th and 20th January 2017 setting the work plan of the Working Party on International Environment Issues (WPIEI) and EU Member States' meetings which were subsequently held in Brussels and in Bonn during the actual UNFCCC Conference.

The scope of COP 23 was to discuss the enabling frameworks that will make the 2015 Paris Climate Change Agreement fully operational and accelerate the transformation to sustainable, resilient and climate-safe development. The Paris Agreement which entered into force on 4 November 2016 sets out a global framework for climate action and the necessary transition to a low-carbon future in order to limit global warming to well below 2°C.

Following intensive discussions, the Environment Council held on 28 February 2017 presided by the Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Hon. José Herrera, a General Approach was reached on the review of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). The ETS is one of the main tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The review will contribute to the EU's goal of cutting its emissions by at least 40% by 2030 (1990 levels), as committed to under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.



At the national level, MESDC continued with its work on the development of Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS)³⁷. On 29 May 2017, the Strategy Vision document was published for consultation for an 8-week period. As part of this consultation exercise, on 14 July 2017 the Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC), in conjunction with MESDC, organised a public session to further explain the concept behind the LCDS, providing a forum for discussion. This consultation session was well-attended by a number of stakeholders representing both the public and the private sectors.

The main aim of this Strategy is to transform Malta into a low-carbon and climate resilient country through symbiotic societal and economic collective actions by 2050. In this way Malta will be in a position to mitigate against greenhouse gas emissions thereby reducing its vulnerability, and increasing its adaptive capacity, to climate change.

³⁷ Vision Document available at, https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MSDEC/Documents/MSDEC%20LCDS%20Vision.PDF

Clean Energy

Malta has no fossil-fuel resources and limited renewable indigenous energy resources and has to import over 95% of its energy requirements. Several developments have taken place over the past years to ensure a shift towards cleaner energy. These include the overhaul of the conventional generation sector as well as the promotion of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency measures.

Eurostat statistics published in February 2018 focusing on the progress of the EU towards its 20% energy efficiency target by 2020 identified Malta amongst those Member States that reduced most of their primary energy consumption with a 22.5% reduction between 2006 and 2016. This is mainly due to the investments made in the energy sector, which led to improved power generation and distribution efficiency.

Primary Energy Consumption

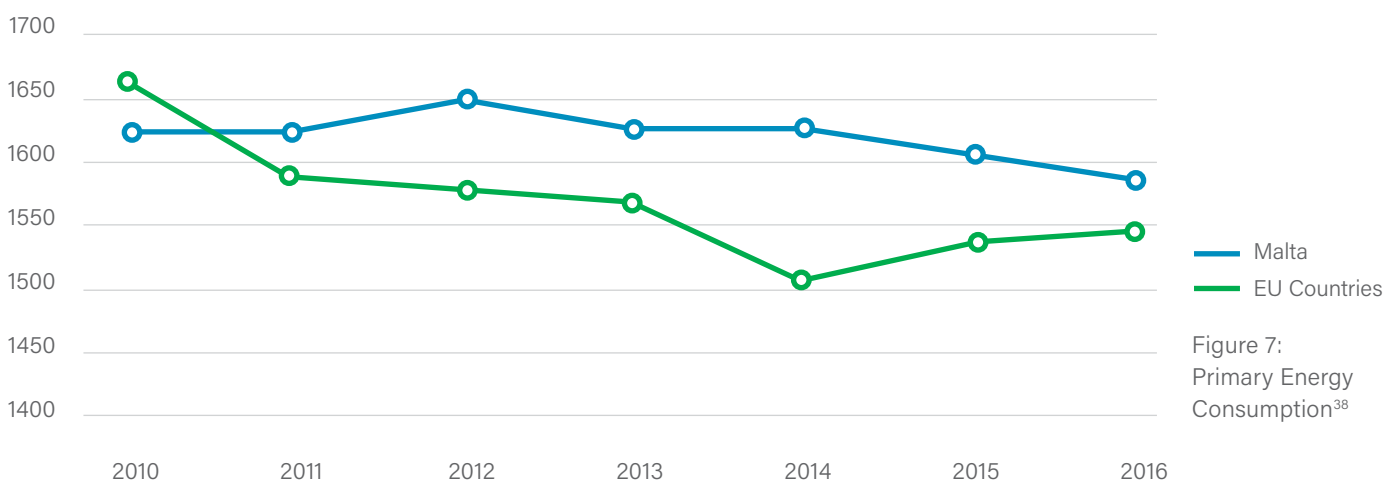


Figure 7:
Primary Energy
Consumption³⁸

³⁸ Source: EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services.

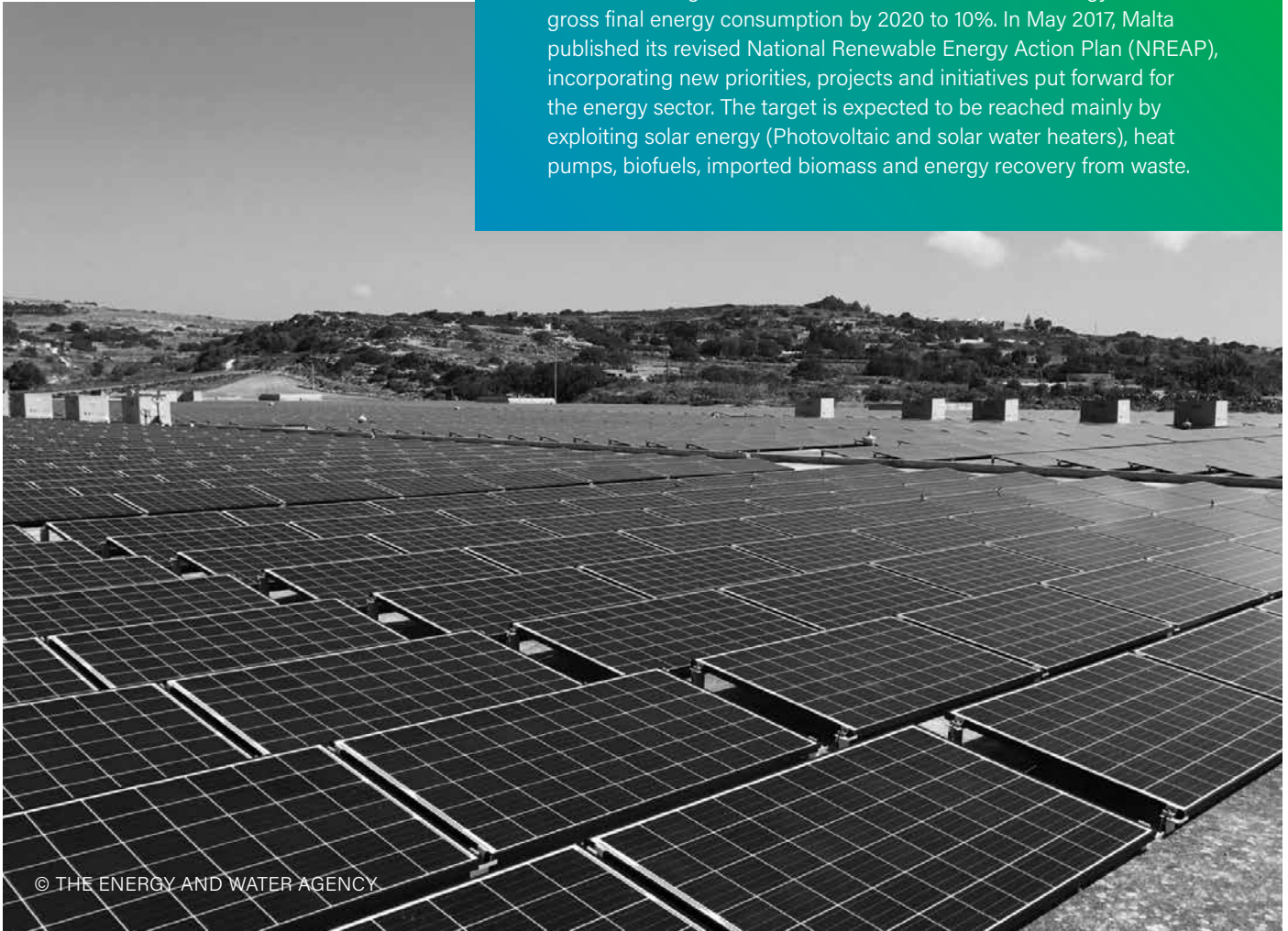
SDG 7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

SDG 7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.

SDG 7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology.

Renewable Energy

Malta has a target to increase its share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by 2020 to 10%. In May 2017, Malta published its revised National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), incorporating new priorities, projects and initiatives put forward for the energy sector. The target is expected to be reached mainly by exploiting solar energy (Photovoltaic and solar water heaters), heat pumps, biofuels, imported biomass and energy recovery from waste.



During 2017, the Government continued to implement a number of initiatives to further exploit renewable energy sources. In particular, the Government extended grant schemes on the purchase of solar water heaters and solar photovoltaic installations for households, as well as feed-in tariffs schemes for solar photovoltaic installations. Furthermore, in October 2017 a support scheme for Heat Pump Water Heater, was launched. This scheme is similar to that already available for solar water heating. Interested applicants can benefit from a grant of up to 40% of the eligible cost, capped at €400.

The PV generation capacity by the end of 2017 was 112 MWp having increased by over 15MWp during 2017. It is envisaged that a cumulative PV capacity of around 185MWp are needed by 2020 for Malta to meet its renewable energy target. This would occupy a footprint of around 2.7km².

Following the publication by the Planning Authority of the Solar Farms Policy in October 2017, the Energy and Water Agency launched a competitive bidding process for the allocation of support for 15MWp of PV systems having a capacity of at least 1MWp. Further allocations through a similar process are expected to be launched in the coming years for developing an estimated 50MWp of PV capacity occupying 700,000 square metres. The competitive process ensures that the most cost-efficient projects are chosen and assisted.

In 2017, a total of 366 households started benefitting from their participation in a communal PV scheme. Earnings are scheduled on a six month basis and all beneficiaries forming part of the scheme were selected on the basis that they do not have access to a private roof and thus cannot install a PV system. The communal PV scheme was backed up by a 997kWp PV farm (equivalent to approximately 3700 panels) which is expected to generate about 1500MWh annually.

Furthermore, in April 2017 the Government developed a partnership with representative organisations of private enterprises to develop solar farms on property owned by Government or its entities. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with two key stakeholders to establish a joint venture with the Water Services Corporation (WSC) to develop these Solar Farms on the roofs of the following reservoirs: Ta' Tomna, in Mellieħa; Ta' Qali; and Ta' Ċenc in Gozo. This investment is expected to generate about 3,200,000 kWh/year of alternative energy.

Energy Efficiency



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The last heavy fuel oil power plant in operation in Malta, the 1992 Delimara 1 plant, was withdrawn from operation, and placed on cold standby on 24th April 2017. On the same day, the new Delimara 4 Gas-Fired high efficiency combined cycle gas turbine (CCGT) as well as natural gas (LNG) supply and regasification facilities were inaugurated.

Malta's electricity generation mix is no longer dependant on heavy fuel oil plants in order to reduce the carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions of the country whilst at the same time ensuring secure, sustainable and affordable energy supply. Instead, the country is adopting a diversified energy mix based on two gas-fired plants, the Malta-Italy Interconnector, grid-connected renewable energy sources and an adequate level of emergency capacity through the gasoil-fired Delimara 2 plants.

The Government of Malta pursued the development of the gas pipeline with Sicily. This has been identified as a Project of Common Interest (PCI 5.19) and once complete, shall deliver natural gas for electricity generation and other future market needs. The basic design and route identification study have

been completed and have been co-funded under the CEF programme. The permitting procedures in Malta and Italy are under way, and related studies, preliminary marine survey, FEED study, EPC tender preparation and financial engineering are being prepared.

During 2017, Enemalta plc continued to implement a number of upgrades in its Distribution Centres to consolidate the national electricity distribution grid. Furthermore, in June 2017 Enemalta started operating a new centre in Marsa for the planning and control of electricity distribution. This centre forms part of a €5 million investment in new technologies for better control of the distribution system, in order to continue improving the quality of our electricity supply. In September 2017, MCAST and Enemalta plc signed a collaborative agreement to build a formal framework of collaboration through research projects and

scholarships. Through this collaboration MCAST will provide its support and expertise to help develop, accredit and deliver relevant training programmes related to power and energy systems for the continued professional development of Enemalta plc's technical employees.

In April 2017, Malta submitted its National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP 2017), in line with Directive 2012/27/EU to the European Commission. It takes note of the various actions taken at national level, and reviews the indicative 2020 national target notified to the EU Commission, and the actions necessary to achieve the mandatory cumulative end-use energy savings target.

The Investing in Energy Project is an outreach project through a public-private partnership between The Energy and Water Agency, the Malta Chamber (as the industry representative body) and the Malta Business Bureau. The project, launched in 2016, aims to bring about an improvement in energy efficiency within SMEs in NACE codes C (Manufacturing) and G sectors (Wholesale and Retail). It also aims to generate needed data and information to inform policy decisions and actions. In 2017, five Level 1 energy audits were carried out amongst medium size enterprises by the in-house certified auditors of The Energy and Water Agency.

An application to obtain EU funds for the project "Retrofitting of Street Lighting in Arterial and Distributor Roads in Malta with Energy Efficient LED Luminaries", costing in total approximately €2.3 million, was approved at the start of 2017. The project's main scope is that of reducing energy consumption by approximately 1,600MWh annual primary energy and greenhouse gas emissions by about 640 tonnes. Work on the preparation of the required tenders for the actual implementation of the project has been completed and the tender has been issued. Through this project, 3083 street lamps in arterial and distributor roads will be retrofitted with LEDs.

After conducting circa 1000 house visits nationwide in 2016, the Energy and Water Agency identified vulnerable persons within the Maltese social strata as those who could best benefit from targeted energy efficiency measures. A specific scheme was designed to identify vulnerable

households, conduct home visits and provide advice on how to reduce energy and water consumption, and if merited (depending on the condition of the appliance) replace the most inefficient appliance with a new model. The Agency, in collaboration with LEAP carried out 470 house visits, out of which, 250 households qualified for the replacement scheme, as an old and inefficient domestic appliance was found to be used by the individual. This appliance, being a washing machine, an air-conditioning unit or a refrigerator, was replaced with a new energy efficient model, free of charge. Apart from enhancing such families' standard of living and lowering their energy bills, the measure will also offset 20 tons of CO₂ emissions through energy savings.

The Energy and Water Agency continued with its service in households through home visits carried out free of charge; sharing knowledge with residents on how to lower their energy and water bills through the implementation of practical energy efficiency and water conservation measures. During 2017, Agency officials made 102 house visits upon request, providing valuable advice on energy efficiency and water conservation.

In 2017, the Ministry for Energy and Water Management and the Energy and Water Agency in cooperation with relevant stakeholders and Ministries, continued its work on the development of a holistic National Energy and Climate Plan covering the period 2021-2030, in line with the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union proposal. An Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee (IMSC) was setup to oversee the drafting process. The Plan, needs to be submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2018.

On 3 August 2017, the project Shared Knowledge for Renovation Energy in Buildings by Public Administration (SHERPA) managed by the Ministry for Gozo was awarded. This Project funded under the Interreg Med Directive 2014-2020, aims at increasing the capacity for better management energy in public buildings at a transnational level. The project scope is to strengthen the capacities of public administrations at regional and sub-regional level to improve energy efficiency in their public buildings stock and reduce CO₂ emissions.



Waste Management

During 2017, the Directorate for the Environment and Climate Change, within MESDC continued to monitor the implementation of Waste Management Plan for the Maltese Islands 2014–2020. This Plan represents Government's vision document in respect of waste management. It is intended to set out a holistic strategic direction in which Government envisaged the sector to be taken forward. The Plan covers the different waste streams in a holistic manner with a view to providing solutions which complement and reinforce one another.

The Directorate continued to work on various measures to further increase the value of waste in order for it to be managed more sustainably. For instance a number of studies were carried out to determine the most feasible financial and economic option between local energy recovery from waste, exporting the waste or further landfilling.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

SDG 12.3 By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses.

SDG 12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

SDG 12.5 By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

After the successful implementation of the organic waste pilot project which now includes 9 localities in Malta and the entire Gozo region, studies continued on how to further address and mitigate the issue of food waste. The aim is to progressively extend this on a national scale as this would permit organic waste to be treated at one or more of our facilities where, apart from renewable energy, compost is being produced and used for Wasteserv projects.

The “Don’t Waste Waste” campaign which was launched in April of 2016 continued in 2017. The main objectives for this three year extensive communication campaign on waste management are to reinforce the need for a resource based approach to waste management by recognising the necessity to reduce the generation of waste, look for opportunities to reuse resources beyond their primary use and to seek all opportunities to recycle as much of the remaining fraction to extend the life cycle



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of resources found in waste. With this campaign MESDC, in collaboration with Wasteserv and supported by the Environment and Resources Authority, aims to encourage the general public to contribute in reducing, reusing and recycling their waste hence moving it up the waste hierarchy, such that it is managed in a responsible manner on both an individual and national level.

On 13 September 2017, the ecoGozo Regional Development Directorate, within the Ministry for Gozo, hosted a Ministerial Conference on waste management. The primary objective of this Conference was to bring together all the major stakeholders in waste management in Gozo to discuss issues relating to waste generation and collection in Gozo and to propose potential short-term and long-term solutions.

In 2017, work was carried out to strengthen legislation and enforcement in respect of dumping of waste. A Consultative Committee was set up and met for the first time on 29 September 2017. A consultation exercise with relevant stakeholder on the initial draft legislation was also carried out. It is believed that the legislative amendments which include stronger enforcement and severe penalties in this area are to come into force in 2018.

Several talks were held with consultants with the aim of identifying the best way to implement a deposit refund system for the collection of beverage plastic and glass bottles and cans.

In 2017, the Directorate also continued working on an Action Plan dealing with the Local Councils’ role in waste management.

This Plan, will aim to address several aspects listed in the Waste Management Plan for the Maltese Islands 2014–2020. It will include a reform in the collection of waste on a regional basis, regulation of commercial waste, establishing waste recycling goals for every Local Councils in order to contribute for the national goals and legislative amendments in the Act regulating the Local Councils for a clearer definition of their roles.

The exhaustive list of environment-oriented items included under the excise duty regime, in 2017, consists of the following: pneumatic tyres; chewing gums; plastic bags; bottled water; non-alcoholic beverages; and toiletries. Other items that are indirectly environment-related and incorporated within the excise duty system are petroleum, tobacco, electricity, cement and construction components and other fixtures.

The significant volume of toiletries and personal hygiene products imported and/or locally produced comes at an environmental cost, not only in terms of packaging waste but even their content usually ends up in the country's sewage system. A tax in this direction is thus helping alleviating such burden. Cement and construction related duties are all related to the negative externalities exerted by the current boom in the construction industry and were introduced with a view to minimise negative environmental impacts and to promote sustainable development.

Water Conservation

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 12.2 By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources.

SDG 6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

Water demand in the Maltese Islands is estimated to stand at around 60 million m³ per year (Malta's 2nd River Basin Management Plan), or around two times the volume of water which can be sustainably sourced from our natural water resources. This highlights the need for water resources to be used effectively and efficiently in all water using sectors in order to ensure that we have sufficient resources to meet the national water demand.

Malta's 2nd RBMP thus proposes a strategy based on the application of water demand management and water supply augmentation measures to comprehensively address the national water demand whilst ensuring sustainable use of natural water resources.

Water reuse is one of the main measures which are being considered under the 2nd RBMP. During the year 2017 farmers in the Mellieħa and Manikata areas started reaping the benefits of the first of three polishing plants built by the Water Services Corporation. These polishing plants

(two in Malta and one in Gozo) will be treating wastewater at a tertiary level to produce around 7 million m³ of highly polished reclaimed water (HPRW) for use in agriculture, landscaping and industry. A rising block tariff mechanism has been established for the use of this water under the Water Supply Regulations which aims to incentivise the efficient use of this new water resource.

This investment will effectively broaden the national water resource base by providing opportunities for shifting the water use of the agricultural and commercial sectors to

a new alternative resource, thus contributing to achieve sustainable water use outcomes, in good part by reducing extraction of groundwater.

During 2017, the Government continued to implement a number of initiatives to further encourage the harvesting and use of rainwater in the domestic sector. In particular, the Government extended the Domestic Cisterns Restoration (Wells) Scheme. Eligible expenditure includes repairs of cisterns (wells) and installation of second class water systems. During this same year the Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS) received 145 applications for participation in this scheme. A total of €31,152 was paid to 39 beneficiaries during 2017, while the total investment (i.e. grant paid plus non eligible expenditure) amounted to €69,617.

The National Water Conservation Awareness Centre (Għajn) inaugurated in May 2017, aims to raise awareness on the challenges facing the water sector in the Maltese islands and hence the need for the conservation and management of this scarce natural resource. The importance of water for sustaining the natural environment of the Maltese Islands is also highlighted. Furthermore, the Centre will be integrated within the National Water Conservation Campaign and will serve as a focal point of activities undertaken under this campaign.

The Department of Curriculum Management and the eLearning Department, in collaboration with the HSBC Water Programme – Catch the Drop campaign hosted GO WITH THE FLOW 2017, the Water Programme quiz that marked World Water Day 2017. The activity, that was open to Year 7 and 8 students, was held on 22 March 2017 at St Nicholas College Dingli Secondary School. 125 students from 25 different schools participated in this event. The quiz gave students the opportunity to answer questions related both to the historical and social value of water in Malta and also wise consumption and conservation of water. Schools placing in the top three positions won the opportunity to implement a school based water conservation project sponsored by the HSBC Water Programme.



Sustainable Agriculture

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 2.4 By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

Agriculture is a critical and significant cultural, economic and environmental asset for Malta. Through appropriate recognition and support of this sector, land farmers and livestock breeders should strive to overcome those factors that are inhibiting economic growth and sustainability.



The Agriculture Directorate is the Competent Authority in Malta to ensure the implementation of Malta's EU obligations with regard to the protection of groundwater from Nitrate contamination specifically from agricultural sources. The Nitrates Action Programme has been designed to reduce the impact of nitrates on water sources by nitrates used in agriculture. On the spot inspections and reports by concerned third parties were carried out throughout the year 2017 to oversee that agricultural operators are operating in conformity with the implementation of the Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (SL549.66)³⁹. Breaches in respect of the legislation are addressed first through administrative procedures and if the business operator remains in breach criminal proceedings follow.

In 2016 the Agriculture Directorate initiated work on a joint project 'FOWARIM' (Fostering Water-Agriculture Research and Innovation in Malta) under the Horizon 2020 Program. This Project aims to stimulate research and sustainable water use in Agriculture. Throughout 2017, this project gave the opportunity to a number of interested officers to follow training courses related to water and agriculture.

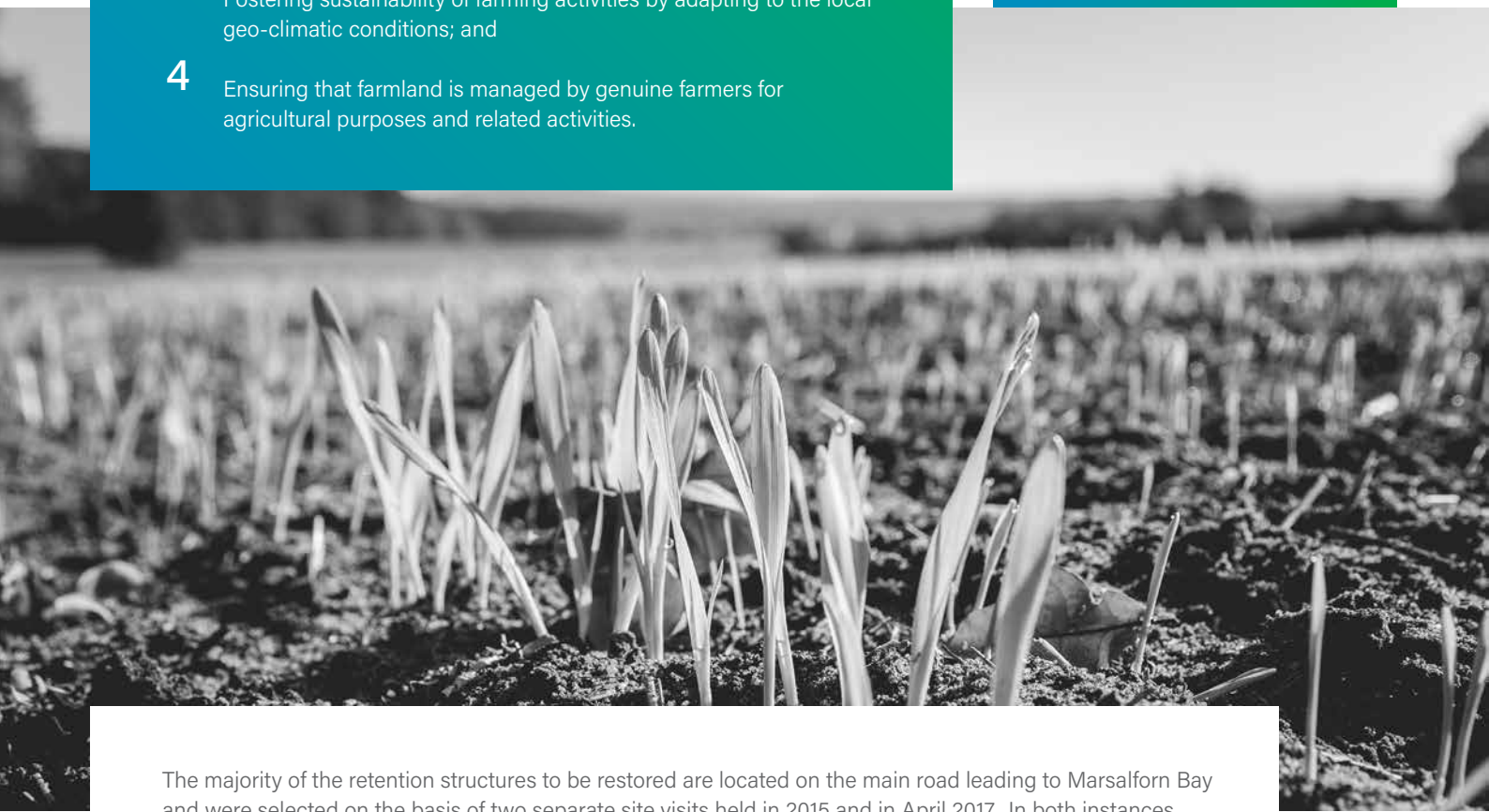
Work has been ongoing throughout 2017 for the finalisation of the National Agricultural Policy. The Agricultural Policy for the Maltese Islands 2018-2028 is intended to provide a clear direction to all relevant stakeholders ranging from public entities involved with certification, permitting and decision making to private entities directly involved in the agricultural scenario who intend to invest or diversify their business. As the overarching objective for this Agricultural Policy, a 'vision' for the Maltese agriculture sector was identified and agreed upon between Government entities, representatives of the private sector and the farming community.

³⁹ SL549.66 available at, <https://eracms.gov.mt/en/Pages/S-L-549-66-Nitrates-Action-Programme-Regulations.aspx>

This vision contemplates the development of a policy that targets the following critical targets:

- 1 Increasing the competitiveness of active farmers and livestock breeders by focusing on quality and encouraging diversification;
- 2 Facilitating the entry of young farmers by creating a cost-effective agri-business sector;
- 3 Fostering sustainability of farming activities by adapting to the local geo-climatic conditions; and
- 4 Ensuring that farmland is managed by genuine farmers for agricultural purposes and related activities.

In 2017, the Ministry for Gozo submitted an application form under the Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020⁴⁰ for the restoration and building of 4,000-m of rubble walls located at Marsalforn Road within Marsalforn Valley.



The majority of the retention structures to be restored are located on the main road leading to Marsalforn Bay and were selected on the basis of two separate site visits held in 2015 and in April 2017. In both instances, these structures were found to be in a perilous state and in danger of collapse, which would threaten the sustainability of the area's habitats. Restoration works will commence upon the award of funds. The relevant permit application was submitted to the Planning Authority on 27 February 2017.

During 2017, a mycology laboratory for researching and experimenting on diseases and moulds in plants, vegetables and fruits was set up at the Gozo Experimental Farm in Xewkija. The primary objective is to assist Gozitan farmers in preventing diseases in their agricultural produce and to commence mycology research in Gozo. The laboratory is designed to expand Government services in the agricultural sector, including conservation and research. Recently, three species of fungi were discovered in the Maltese Islands, one of which is new to Europe. These species do not have any mycotoxins or pose any risk to public health.

⁴⁰ Measure 4 Investments in Physical Assets; Sub-measure 4.4: Support for non-productive investments linked to the achievement of agri-environment-climate objectives

Parks and Afforestation

In 2017, the Parks Afforestation, Countryside Restoration and Initiatives Directorate (PARKS) carried out various restoration projects in existing public gardens as well as forestation projects and urban greening projects in a number of localities in Malta. Six urban greening projects were carried out in the Local Councils of Naxxar, Marsa, Valletta, Ħamrun, Ғaż-Ғebbuġ, and Għarb in Gozo where a number of trees and shrubs were planted in the urban areas of these Local Councils.

Reforestation and habitat restoration projects were carried out in Swatar, Wied Blandun, Baħar iċ-Ĉagħaq, M'Xlokk, Ta' Qali, the Family Park of M'Scala, Xrobb l-Għaġin, Buskett, Ғal Far, Salina and in various urban areas, where 3,965 trees and shrubs were planted. Restoration projects began in the gardens of Argotti, Ġnien l-Għarusa tal-Mosta, the picnic area in Ta' Qali and the garden known as il-Foss in Ғaż-Ғabbar. These restoration projects involve the planting of trees and shrubs as well as maintenance works and the installation of new facilities for the public. Argotti gardens are being converted to botanic gardens where around 192 trees and shrubs of 112 different species shall be planted. Extensive restoration of the bastions that surround these gardens, as well as St Philips garden, is also taking place. Maintenance works and installation of turf, playing equipment, new lighting and CCTV camera systems were carried out in the Salini Park and the Family Park in M'Scala.

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.

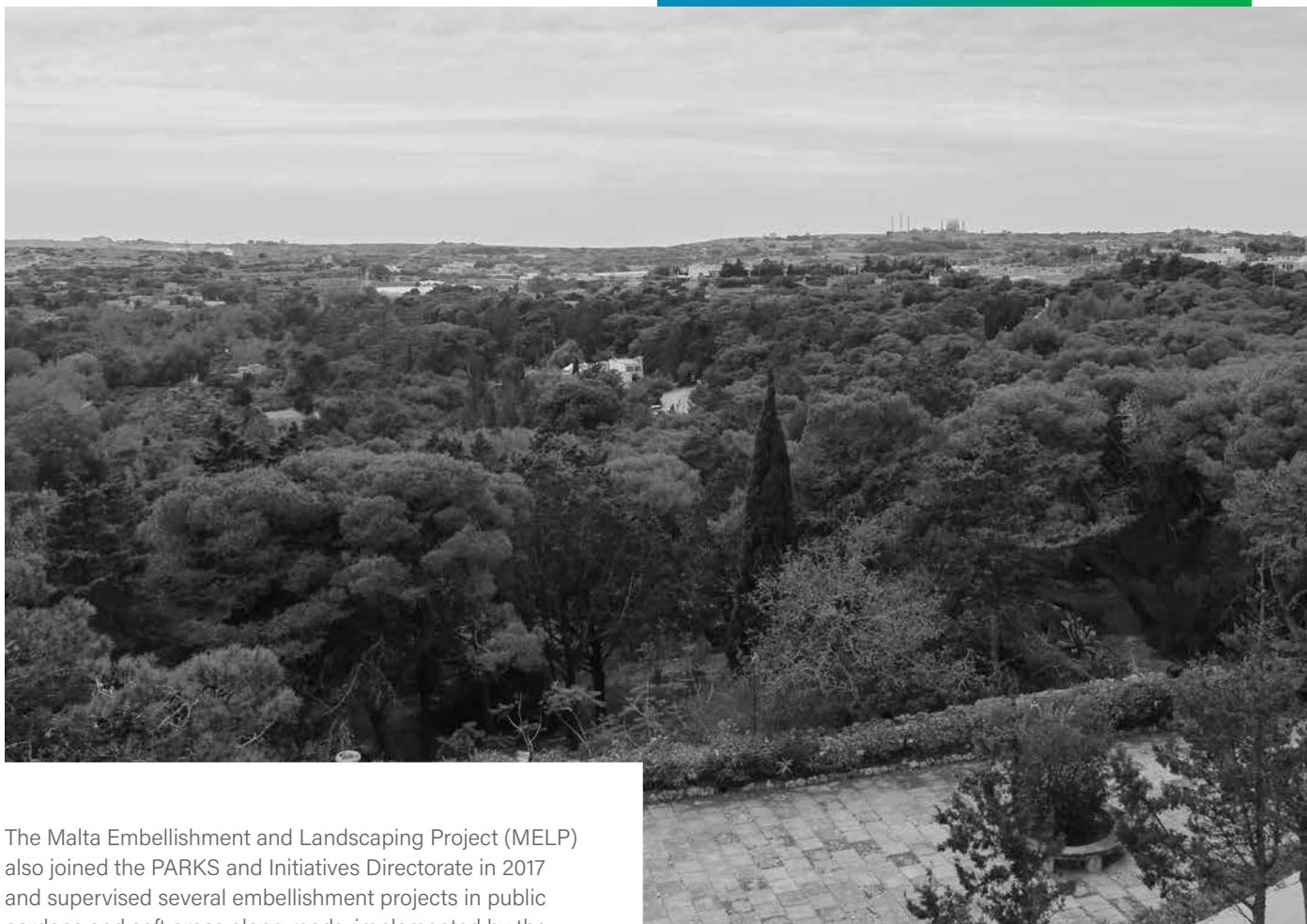
SDG 15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements.

SDG 15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.

The Life + project in Buskett continued in 2017 and 2,373 indigenous trees and shrubs were planted. These were propagated from local stock in the PARKS Directorate nursery in Ta' Qali. Intensive restoration of rubble walls, soil retaining walls and arched buttresses along the watercourse in Buskett was also carried out and an existing room in Buskett was restored and converted to an information point for the general public.

In addition, 1,943 trees were planted in various localities in Malta within the framework of the 34U and Ekoskola initiatives.

In 2017 the Valley Management Unit joined the PARKS and Initiatives Directorate, which carried out several restoration projects and maintenance works in the valleys of Wied Baqqiegħa limits of Ғaż-Ғebbuġ, Wied Qirda limits of Siġġiewi and Ғebbuġ, Wied is-Sewda and Wied iċ-Ĉawlsli limits of Qormi, Wied Irmiedi limits of Attard, Wied Qannotta limits of Burmarrad, Wied ta' Għajn Ғejtuna, limits of Mellieħa and Wied Garnaw, limits of Santa Luċija. In addition, they carried out maintenance work on rubble walls and stone water channels in various valleys and also implemented clean-ups of various watercourses.



The Malta Embellishment and Landscaping Project (MELP) also joined the PARKS and Initiatives Directorate in 2017 and supervised several embellishment projects in public gardens and soft areas along roads, implemented by the Environmental Landscapes Consortium (ELC).

The final phase of the restoration of the disused quarry at Il-Qortin ta' Isopu in Nadur, Gozo was completed. To date, the project has involved significant earth-moving and re-contouring works covering an area of around 20,000-m². The project included the afforestation of the majority of the area and the formation of new levels in order to avoid overspill of material onto the surrounding protected area which is mainly garigue. It also included the construction of a reservoir and the planting of approximately 3900 trees and shrubs. Moreover, the levelling of soil and the installation of an irrigation system as well as the formation of paths has been completed earlier this year. The access road to the park has been resurfaced and the construction of ancillary facilities on the existing committed footprint was concluded. These facilities include a guardroom, pump room, store and sanitary facility, construction of rubble walls and installation of signage.

During 2017, Eco-Gozo Regional Development Directorate, within the Ministry for Gozo continued with its work on The Gozo Biodiversity Explorer, an initiative aimed at creating awareness and environmental consciousness on Maltese biodiversity. The first part of this project included the design, creation and installation of acrylic plaques for the trees located at Villa Rundle Gardens and at the bottom of Marsalforn Valley. These plaques contain professional botanical information about each tree and shrub at these locations in both English and Maltese. The plaques at Marsalforn were installed in November 2016, and around 140 plaques were installed at Villa Rundle Garden during 2017. The second planned phase of the initiative is to digitalise the botanical database by developing a mobile app that users can access via Android or IOS. The app will contain more detailed information about the trees, including pictures.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics.

SDG 14.7 By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

SDG 15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species.

SDG 15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts.

SDG 15.a Mobilise and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems.



During 2017 the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) worked on a number of projects targeting the improvement of sustainability within the fisheries sector. An integral part required to achieve these goals is the Data Collection Multi Annual Programme (DC-MAP), which is an important part of supporting the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The scope of the CFP is the conservation and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources from the environmental, economic, and social perspectives. The DC-MAP provides a wide range of fisheries data required for scientific advice in the management of the fishery resource. This data is used in the assessment of the state of exploited marine resources, marine ecosystem and the socio-economic performance of the fisheries, aquaculture and processing sectors. Notably, reliable fisheries' data is needed to assess the health of fish stocks and the marine environment and meet EU's objective of ensuring sustainable fisheries by 2020 at the latest.

The DFA is a partner in the LIFE BaHAR for Natura 2000 (N2K) which aims to extend existing marine Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) and identify new SCIs for inclusion within the Natura 2000 network. The aim of this project is to gather existing and new data on the location, range and conservation status of marine habitats as listed in the Habitats Directive, primarily; Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time; Reefs; and Submerged or partially submerged sea caves. Since 2016, Malta's Marine Protected Areas cover a total area of 3,487 kilometres squared, 29.9% of Malta's Fisheries Management Zone.

Marine Protected Areas

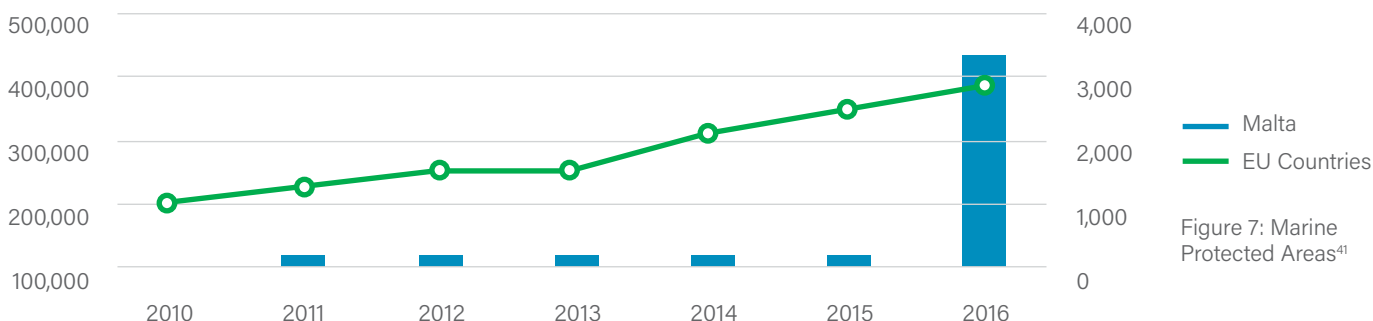


Figure 7: Marine Protected Areas⁴¹

Marine Protected Areas Network Towards Sustainable Fisheries in the Central Mediterranean (MANTIS), is another project in which the Department is an active partner whereby the main aims are:

- To review and integrate the knowledge produced in previous national and EU funded projects on space time dynamics of exploited living resources and on Ecosystem Approach to Fishery in the Central Mediterranean; and
- To investigate how a network of Marine Managed Areas (MMAs) can contribute to improve sustainable fisheries in the Central Mediterranean including the Strait of Sicily and the Adriatic Sea, whilst promoting ecosystem services such as reservoirs of biodiversity and functioning food webs.

⁴¹Source: EU SDG indicators available at, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators>

MedSudMed "Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and the Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily" is a regional project with four participating countries (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia), executed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The Project's main objective is to improve the knowledge on fishery resources and their ecosystems – as a contribution to the development of responsible fisheries management – by supporting research activities related to the interactions between demersal and small pelagic fishery resources and biotic and abiotic environmental factors. Initiated in 2017, this project:

- 1 provides standard operating procedures used for carrying out on-board surveys.
- 2 creates a document on history and technical specifications on Fishing gears commonly used in Malta.
- 3 provides surveys for pilot studies on small scale fisheries spatial distribution through face to face meetings with fishers.

DFA in partnership with the National Literacy Agency (NLA) and the Department of Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DCLE) also started working on a promotional campaign, entitled Nesploraw Flimkien it-Teżori tal-Baħar!. The main aim of this project, part financed by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF 2014-2020), is to communicate three messages:

- 1 awareness about the state of the local fish stocks;
- 2 sustainable fish consumption; and
- 3 the role of each of us in assisting conservation efforts.

The project targets learners attending primary schools Years 3 and 4. The objective of the project is to deliver a classroom activity in all Primary Schools across Malta and Gozo between 9 April and 31 May 2018. A related illustrated educational book in English and Maltese accompanied by a hand glove puppet will be distributed to each class. The final phase of this project will consist of an open weekend activity for the general public between 29 June and 1 July 2018. During this activity, drawings and other creative material submitted by students following school activities will be exhibited.

The Aquaculture Directorate is mainly responsible for setting and implementing National Policies related to aquaculture as well as conducting research activities in order to increase the competitiveness of the sector. Sustainable Development plays a key role within the Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands, Towards Sustainability, 2014–2025. As part of this Strategy, a set of regulations overseeing the operational permitting of aquaculture establishments has been published and implemented in the year 2017. Moreover, in order to reduce the impact of tuna farming operations on the inshore, these have been shifted further offshore, with the farms operating in the southern end of the Island being shifted to the South-East Aquaculture Zone. The tuna farms operating in the Northern end of the island have been relocated temporarily to a site further offshore – off the Sikka l-Bajda, until a permanent Aquaculture Zone to the Northwest of the Island is designated and becomes operational.

With respect to research activities, the Aquaculture Directorate has continued its efforts in diversifying the aquaculture sector. These efforts were mainly related to the diversification in commercially attractive food fish, such as the Red Porgy, Scorpion Fish and Grey Mullet, as well as through the introduction of research related to ornamental species aquaculture. All these efforts are aimed at reducing any pressure created by the respective fishery. The Directorate is also contributing towards the conservation of the Maltese Killifish as well as Sea Turtles through a partnership with Nature Trust.

Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure



Key Sustainable Development Goal Targets

SDG 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.

SDG 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Upgrading road infrastructure

In the roads sector, in 2017 the infrastructural works concentrated mainly on works related to the Kappara project which addressed a major traffic bottleneck. Its estimated cost is that of 33 million Euro. As at end of September, the area of Gżira was completed in terms of services and asphaltting of the first layer. This included construction of service ducts, shifting of some services, formation and widening of roads and construction of central strips and footpaths. Other works done include the reconstruction of Wied Għollieqa Bridge in the valley and the construction of columns to support the composite steel/concrete construction of the flyovers. The flyovers were constructed, asphalted and opened to traffic by 17th September 2017 as committed. In the meantime, excavation works for Reggie Miller Underpass were done so that this structure was completed under the road, whereas the access stairs and ramps were constructed at a later date. The replacement of the University of Malta Underpass also started during the month of September where works on the first third of this section were ongoing. In addition, works were underway on the Gżira side. The project also included the wall cladding of residences bordering the project, together with the formation of the slip roads on the San Ġwann side and services in Sliema Road, San Ġwann.

At the same time, preparatory work continued in relation to the other major traffic bottle neck, Marsa-Addolorata Junction. Since 2016, Transport Malta has been working on the Planning Application requirements, as set out by the Planning Authority (PA) and the Environmental and Resources Authority (ERA). These included the carrying out of a number of studies focusing particularly on air quality and geology. Other requirements included the presentation of storm water and landscaping plans. The PA permit was issued in January 2017. This project is planned in three phases in order to ensure continued access and the smooth allocation of financial resources. The tender for the demolition of factories has been awarded and works commenced in November 2017 and are at an advanced stage. The tender for the reconstruction of Triq Aldo Moro and Triq il-Gvern Lokali has been awarded. Works for this phase of the project are expected to commence in the first quarter of 2018. The third tender which will include the structural works was launched in October 2017.

Furthermore, an extensive project which will improve main arteries in the area of Santa Luċija was also launched. This junction is one of the main access points for the localities of Santa Luċija, Tarxien and Paola. This project will consist of the building of two new tunnels in conjunction with the roundabout, an investment which exceeds €20 million.

Various works were conducted in Lija, Imgiered Road and Marsa Road, Gudja and Paola roundabouts as well as the four-phase project being carried out in a main road in Qormi. In addition, preparatory work started on the widening of the Hamrun bypass between the Santa Venera tunnels and the slip road leading to Ħal Qormi.

Other works included the maintenance and repairs on arterial and distributor roads as well as the asphaltting of new residential roads.



Once complete, these projects will contribute towards the elimination of bottlenecks and an improved traffic flow during traffic peaks which will result in time savings, reduction on daily fuel costs and vehicle maintenance costs. This is expected to have ripple effects on the journey time of public transport and hence may encourage more people to use this service instead of their private cars.

Alternative and Greener Ways of Transport

During 2017, the Government continued to invest in a greener transport system by launching and extending several incentives to reduce traffic congestion during peak hours by encouraging a modality shift to other forms of transport such as ferryboats and public buses. During 2017 the Government continued to promote the upgrade of more environmentally friendly vehicles

through various schemes in order to reduce emissions generated from road traffic and thus improving air quality. For instance, the grant scheme to incentivise vehicle owners to convert their vehicle to autogas was further extended with another allocation of €50,000. From 2015 until 2017 there were 700 approved LPG conversion applications.



PHOTO DOI - Clodagh Farrugia O'Neill

In 2017 €450,000 was allocated to the promotion of electro mobility to encourage the purchase of electric vehicles. By the end of 2017 €437,000 was provided in grants resulting in the registration of 73 electric vehicle.

The sum of €1,544,000 was allocated to vehicle owners when scrapping an old vehicle and replacing it with a new vehicle. Up to end of December 2017, 1,557 vehicles were scrapped and replaced with less polluting vehicles, while 128 were replaced with hybrid vehicles.

During 2017, work started on the Government's plan for sustainable transport by Public Entities. As a result of this measure, Government Entities with more than 50 employees have to prepare a

sustainable transport plan. By the end of December 2017, 14 Entities submitted their plan to the Transport Authority. It is expected that as a result of this measure, a number of employees will be making use of more sustainable transport. Furthermore, the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects has developed an Action Plan that will roll out in the course of 2018 pilot project with the adoption of a Green Travel Plan launching voluntary schemes for employees within the Ministry. The ultimate aim is to use the pilot project and its resultant experience in order to design a toolkit for other Ministries to implement similar initiatives in their Ministries.

Public Transport

During the year 2017 public transport carried over 48 million passengers, an increase of 11.4% on the previous year. The take-up of 'tallinja card' in 2017 is considered to be quite high where up to December 2017 take-up was recorded at over 284, 600.

In 2017 further changes to the routes serving various localities were implemented and Malta Public Transport has increased the number of Night Service trips in order to service the same localities in a more efficient manner.

Furthermore, in an effort to encourage more people to use public transport instead of their own private vehicle, every individual reaching the age of 18 in the course of 2017, was given a one year free travel pass for public transport amounting to a maximum of €312 for every individual. Around 5,000 persons aged 18 years benefitted from the scheme during 2017. It is hoped that these youth continue to use this mode of transport even after obtaining their driving license.

Valletta Ferry Services and Malta Public Transport also launched a new service whereby holders of a tallinja card can benefit from reduced rates when paying with their tallinja card for their journey on the Sliema to Valletta and the Three Cities to Valletta ferries.

A number of measures were also undertaken in an effort to make available a better level of information to passengers. In 2017, Malta Public Transport received the Best App award for the tallinja mobile app and won the Bus Excellence Award for its outstanding public bus service in the 2017 IRU Smart Move Awards.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The past year has been a continual advancement in adopting progressive steps in the field of Sustainable Development.

One must appreciate that Sustainable Governance is not a straightforward approach and its implementation is an ongoing challenge. Sustainable Development is a broad-based concept that impinges on all sectors and activities of Government as well as other actors in society. The dimensions of sustainability are multi-faceted covering economic, social and environmental aspects. In order to be effective, decision-making and administrative action need to be long-term and transformative, enhance policy coherence and provide a sense of ownership and inclusion.

Consistency and coherence between different policy sectors such as economic development and trade, foreign affairs and national security, environment, climate change and energy, natural resources, agriculture and fisheries, education and employment, social affairs and healthcare, are therefore essential to the fulfilment of Sustainable Development.

The promotion of Sustainable Development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a dynamic and long-term process and it therefore requires a systematic follow-up, review and development mechanism. One of the main tasks of the Sustainable Development Directorate, within MESDC, is precisely to monitor and assess the implementation of Malta's development commitments and policies. As a result, this Directorate is playing a major role in the follow-up and review of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Annual Reports on Sustainable Development not only serve as a self-assessment mechanism for the Maltese Government but also strengthens its responsibility towards the Maltese citizens with respect to sustainable development issues. The participation of Parliament in the discussion on Sustainable Development issues and in the follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is important to ensure policy coherence and full accountability. Effective Sustainable Development policies and initiatives are highly dependent on human behaviour, effective participation and communication as well as links amongst all stakeholders.

All actors must therefore pull together to enable Malta to achieve sustainable shifts that contribute towards addressing inconsistencies whilst at the same time utilising our natural and human resources efficiently.



MINISTRY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT,
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

