



Achieving a Service of Excellence

A 5-YEAR STRATEGY FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE

QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL PERMANENT SECRETARY
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER



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List of Acronyms

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CEQMS	Central Electronic Quality Management System
CGD	Core Group Digitalisation
DESI	Digital Economy & Society Index
DLT	Distributed Ledger Technology
EVS	Electric vehicles
ESP	Employee Support Programme
FCR	First Contact Resolution
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GPP	Green Public Procurement
IPS	Institute for the Public Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology
MEI	Ministry for Enterprise & Industry
MFE	Ministry for Finance & Employment
MTCP	Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure & Capital Projects
NAO	National Auditor's Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOP	Once Only Principle
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
P&SD	People & Services Division
QSD	Quality of Service Directorate
RPA	Robotic Process Automation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
YoY	Year on Year

A continuation of changes

The renewal of the Public Service, in recent years, was not carried out just for the sake of it. We changed because there was a need for change. We needed to turn the Public Service into a machine, serving its customers without delay and in the best possible way. We had been too anchored in “we have always done it like this” to recognise how urgent was the need to renew and change. With the will and participation of many, we made changes unprecedented in the history of the Public Service. The Public Service was taken to a new dimension due to the fact that the renewal was carried out from within. The Public Service itself had assessed all the needs, designed the plans and set objectives. The objectives were ambitious but sceptics should have been confident in the flexibility and will of our employees.

We started by taking a look at what we did. This was the first step to lead us to the strategy that we now have in our hands. The strategy is based on what we have learned from what we have gone through. Sound and published studies at every step developed better understandings. We started on a firm basis. Our foundation was our experience and courage to analyse it. From there the three pillars emerged — the key elements on which we wanted to base the strategy: people, service and technology. At the beginning of this year, we set up four groups — one for each of the three pillars, to examine what we want for the next five years, and another for strategy writing. In each group we had people from the Public Service and outside. A broader discussion took place during Public Service Week 2021 and, in parallel, we organised customer focus groups to listen to and discuss the ideas and thoughts of public officers. Eventually, everything came together and started to take shape.

This strategy is special because it is the first one in the history of the Public Service that is holistic and brings everything together, ensuring all we do is coordinated and geared towards achieving one goal. The aim and vision is that the Public Service provides its clients with a service of excellence. You could say this is rhetoric but it's not. Eight years ago, many people questioned the vision of a Public Service accessible to everyone from anywhere 24 hours a day all year round. Today, we know that this was not just rhetoric because we are living it. The same is true for achieving an efficient service.

We cannot stop to rest just because we are satisfied with what we have done. We need to accelerate the second phase of the changes. Starting next year, 2022, this strategy starts a 5-year journey. The three principles underpinning each project and each strategy are high quality, accountability and sustainability. I believe that these, together with the long-standing will and flexibility of the Public Service, will help us to deliver the vision we have set.

I have full confidence in public officers.

Mario Cutajar

Principal Permanent Secretary and Secretary to Cabinet



2,300+

services



30,500+

Public Service
Employees



250+

headship positions²



175

Departments &
Directorates³



€1.2 billion

in operational costs
in 2020⁴



949,990

Freephone 153 calls
answered in 2020⁵



77.6%

of the population
is satisfied with
public service
provision⁶



75.2%

of our employees
are satisfied with
their work

Who we are

The Public Administration, which comprises the Public Service and the Public Sector, is composed of approximately 22% of the total number of gainfully occupied persons in Malta as at the end of 2020 according to the National Statistics Office¹. The Public Service acts as the backbone of the Maltese economy through the crafting and implementation of policy.

The Public Service consists of employees who serve in departments, directorates, schools, and health centres, among others whereas the Public Sector consists of agencies, authorities and entities where the government is the main shareholder.

The Constitution of Malta defines the Public Service as the services of the Government of Malta in a civil capacity. The Public Administration Act of 2019 defines it as an instrument for the common good. At the heart of the Public Service lies the public officer who, inspired by its vision and mission, whilst guided by the core values of integrity, respect, loyalty, trust, quality, accountability, impartiality and non-discrimination, strives hard to provide a service of excellence to the general public.

1 National Statistics Office News Release, 15 July 2021

2 Including Directors, Director Generals & Permanent Secretaries

3 This figure includes departments as listed in the Public Administration Act

4 Average expenditure includes operational costs + personal emoluments

5 Freephone 153 is the Government's services One-Stop-Shop helpline, administered by servizz.gov

6 Source: Renewal Study, 2020

Introduction





Notwithstanding the various challenges that the Maltese Public Service has faced, it has evolved significantly throughout its history, marking several achievements and milestones along the years.

The leadership of such a large organisation necessitates the setting out of a vision and mission to guide the way towards the achievement of these milestones, with the support of initiatives and projects. In recent years, several strategies have been released and implemented, covering a variety of areas ranging from mobile government to Artificial Intelligence to digital skills. To date, however, a single strategy has never been crafted for the Public Service as a whole.

Covering a period of 5 years commencing in 2022, this strategy sets out the plan for the Public Service that will focus on regeneration, rather than on renewal, as the Public Service continues along its trajectory of growth and development.

Whereas the focus on previous years was concentrated firmly on increasing the number of services provided online and accessible 24/7, that focus has now shifted to improving service delivery in the quest to provide a truly excellent service. Considering the vast number and variety of public services provided, this is no mean feat. The Public Service is fully committed to serving its clients to the best and fullest extent possible.

This shift has necessarily required the Public Service to reconstruct its mission and vision in line with its goal of providing a service of excellence. **Chapter 2** traces the Public Service's redefined mission and vision, as well as the themes and strategic objectives on which these are based. The latter two will guide the work of the 3 Pillars upon which this Strategy is based: Service, People and Technology.

Chapter 3 seeks to provide a clear picture of where the Public Service currently stands. This is done using a series of indicators and benchmarks to assess the Public Service's present scenario and the gaps which must be addressed in the journey towards achieving the vision and mission.

The work undertaken as part of this strategy must be measured in a consistent as well as ongoing manner to gauge the progress being made towards achieving the vision and its outcomes. To this end **Chapter 4** sets out the cycle through which we will measure our progress based on annual reviews of our initiatives' effectiveness, the results of which will determine whether they are sufficient for meeting our defined outcomes or need to be reviewed.

Our work programme is outlined in **Chapter 5** whilst **Chapter 6** shows the way forward for the next 5 years.

This strategy aims to be forward-looking, whilst building on the progress made so far through past and present strategies. It seeks to encompass the various facets of the Public Service for the benefit of its employees and its clients, the community and the environment, by setting the pace for the coming 5 years as well as for the future.

Vision, Mission, and Themes



The Public Service is the largest employer in Malta, not only in terms of the number of employees but also in terms of the number of clients and the variety of services provided. The long-term objective being introduced in this strategy, that of a seamless Public Service, seeks to consolidate public service provision such that interactions between the Public Service and its clients are no longer perceived as a struggle.

The Public Service offers an extensive number of services to diverse clients, be they citizens, residents, internal clients or businesses. This strategy will focus on the improving of the quality of service provided. To this end, the Public Service will be guided by the following **vision**:

A seamless Public Service that is accountable, sustainable and that constantly strives to provide a service of excellence

It is of utmost importance for the Public Service to consistently meet and occasionally exceed its clients' expectations. Furthermore, it is imperative that service delivery is uninterrupted and as smooth as possible. It is precisely for this reason that the vision is supported by the following **mission statement**:

We deliver reliable quality services to individuals and society at large based on their needs in a flexible manner which are both financially and ecologically sustainable. We will achieve this through highly trained, motivated, and empowered employees who will support our efforts towards continuous improvement in all that we do.

Our mission is supported by the following shared values and guiding principles that will shape and influence the way decisions are taken at every level as well as the way in which we seek to fulfil our mission.

2.1 Shared Values

The Public Administration Act establishes 8 shared values which bring our employees together, regardless of their role or their designation, in the way they provide services to both our internal and external clients. These values are intended to inspire respect, promote ethical conduct, acknowledge the highest standards of integrity, safeguard clients' rights, and promote a culture that embraces honesty, correctness and professionalism.

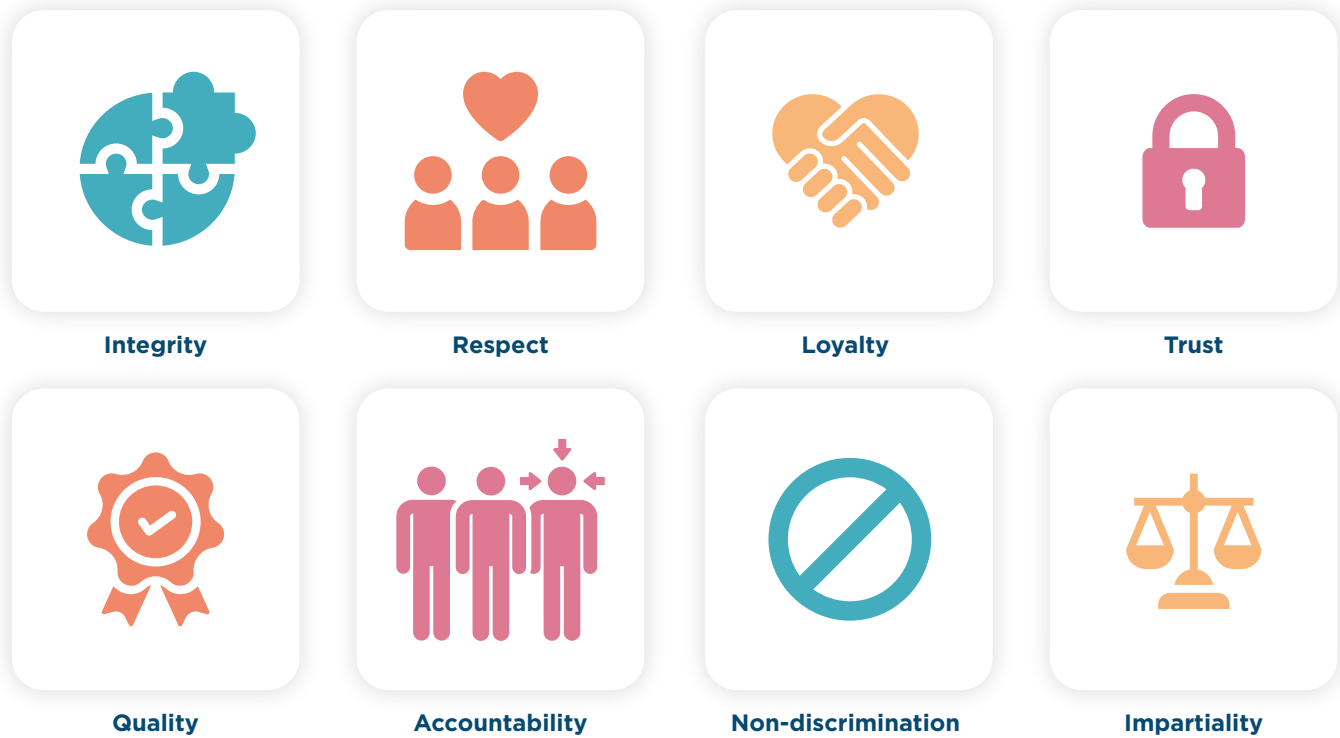


Figure 1: Shared values

2.2 Guiding Principles

To complement these shared values, the below guiding principles have been established. These actionable principles will support our work as we make progress towards achieving our vision, namely:

1. **Effective Leadership**

Inspirational leadership is necessary for supporting, empowering, and inspiring our employees throughout their careers. Effective leaders are expected to spearhead new initiatives, including digital transformation, and manage the necessary culture changes which emerge as a result of our work towards achieving a service of excellence. Our managers will also be given the necessary development and coaching to ensure that they become successful leaders who are able to implement our guiding principles effectively and continuously.

2. Holistic People Management & Employee Empowerment

Through the way in which we attract and retain employees, the Public Service seeks to always be a model employer. Our employees must be supported and encouraged to pursue continuous professional development through regular training to safeguard organisational stability. Additional training will be provided to ensure that employees are familiar with the necessary tools and practices to be more effective in their daily work. Such training will also empower employees to put forward further ideas which may not be related to their daily work. Our leaders will be responsible for effectively recognising, implementing and encouraging the proposal of such initiatives which will help us in our efforts towards continuous improvement.

3. Ongoing Measurement

We can only ascertain our degree of progress through effective planning and ongoing measurement against set strategic KPIs. The work towards achieving our vision needs to be based on outcomes that can be measured regularly, enabling us to reconfigure aspects of our work programme to ensure maximum effectiveness as necessary. The principle of ongoing measurement must also be extended to every aspect of our work beyond the strategy.

4. Continuous Improvement

The principle of continuous improvement must be applied to all the elements that collectively make up the Public Service, from our image to external clients to our internal processes and the technology that supports them. It is only through continuous improvement of our processes and capabilities that we can make genuine progress towards achieving a service of excellence.

5. Decision Making & Policymaking: Ethical, evidence-based & Empathic

Our efforts to rigorously measure our performance against internal and external standards will not only help us to improve our services but will also provide the necessary tools for us to make decisions effectively based on data. Whilst effective decision-making must be supported by reliable data, our policies must also be sensitive towards the people they will affect most. This requires our data to include client feedback and consultation where necessary to ensure that our decisions and policies are ethical, sound and sufficiently comprehensive.

6. Client-centricity

Whether internal or external, our clients' preferences and expectations are continuously evolving. The Public Service is committed to learning from best practice across the private and public sectors as well as listening to its clients' opinions and feedback through various tools and structures, such as the IDEA Scheme. Focus groups, complaints, real-time service follow-up surveys, as well as sentiment analysis carried out throughout the year will provide valuable information which will also contribute towards our decision-making process.

2.3 Themes

The last few years have seen several shifts within the Public Service, as shown in *Table 5*, which resulted in significant achievements. Such initiatives need to be reviewed on an ongoing basis and shortly upon completion, as otherwise any late reviews would be rendered irrelevant. 2020 was a year of consolidation in which we took the time to reflect on our initiatives towards the regeneration of the Public Service. To this end we commissioned a study to assess our work along the years to determine the efficacy of our initiatives as well as the approach most suited to supporting our journey towards improvement. The Renewal Study (2020)⁷, followed by a report, showed that we need to focus our efforts on improving the quality of our services, our accountability towards our clients, as well as our sustainability as a large organisation.

This section shows how these themes will influence our work towards making progress in these areas. Each theme will include a set number of high-level targets which will ensure that we make progress within the context of each theme. The targets are intended to inspire our employees to reach our goals as well as inform our clients on what those goals are and how we are achieving them.

1. Quality

To consistently deliver a seamless and excellent service, the concept of quality as defined in the 4-pillar quality model⁸ adopted by the Public Service since 2016, is an essential and intrinsic feature designed into our services and in all that we do. The 4-pillar quality model – voice, design, package, and accountability – informs our decisions. In an evolving environment where digital means of transacting business continue to disrupt standard ways of working, maintaining high quality levels across public services is a challenge.

Delivering a service of excellence necessitates that robust systems, tools, and structures must be in place to support the design and provision of high-quality services in a consistent manner. A formal and comprehensive compliance process should guide the service design process for both new and current services.

The consistent provision of high-quality services is in turn reliant on measurement and continuous improvement. The need for such analysis is twofold: firstly, to understand our clients' needs and expectations, and secondly to gauge the extent to which they are being met and exceeded.

Communication must flow both ways between the Public Service and its clients; beyond understanding our clients' needs to improve service provision, communication is pivotal during the process of service delivery. Timely, clear, and secure communication between our employees and internal systems ensure that service delivery is as smooth as possible for our clients.

7 The Renewal Study (2020) and its results were included in a publication entitled Public Service Reforms in a Small Island State: The Case of Malta by Prof. Frank Bezzina, Dr Emanuel Camilleri & Dr Vincent Marmarà

8 The 4-pillar quality model, <https://publicservice.gov.mt/en/Pages/4-Pillars.aspx>

To ensure accessibility, it is crucial that services are designed to be easy to use. A good user experience requires process optimisation, uniformity and minimum client touchpoints. All the above is finally dependent on the definition of a clear quality vision, quality standards and procedures.

Quality Strategic objectives	Targets				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Attaining the Quality Label					
Front-facing departments	40%	50%	60%	80%	90%
Internal departments	10%	20%	35%	50%	75%
Customer Satisfaction Score⁹					
Front-facing clients	55%	60%	65%	70%	80%
Internal clients	-	55%	60%	65%	75%
Service Performance					
Services offered online ¹⁰	60%	75%	85%	90%	95%
Year-on-year reduction in lead-time (front-end & back-end) based on 2021 figures	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
First contact resolution (FCR) ¹¹ (Email, telephone, face-to-face, online applications)	See foot note ¹²	70%	75%	80%	>80%

Table 1: High-level quality targets

⁹ Customer Satisfaction Score will be a composite score based on each Sector (e.g., health, education, etc.). The 2021 Sagalytics survey determined that 50.1% of the Maltese population was highly satisfied with the way in which the Government operates in providing services to the citizens.

¹⁰ Excluding physical services such as borrowing a book or bulky refuse services.

¹¹ The percentage of contacts not requiring the customer to initiate a second contact for clarifications or more information.

¹² In 2022 an exercise will be carried out to establish the way in which FCR can be measured to ensure achievement of set target.



2. Accountability

The Public Service must be transparent and open in every aspect of its work. The concept of good governance requires us to be transparent in the way we take decisions, whether these relate to our services, our employees, or the technology supporting our operations.

Structures, such as annual publications showing the number of budgetary measures and recommendations proposed by the National Auditor's Office and the Parliamentary Ombudsman which were implemented, are in place across our organisation to ensure that transparency, responsibility, and openness are embedded within our work.

Non-compliance with the relevant processes and procedures will be monitored through such structures and enforced where necessary. Whether collectively or individually we are dutybound to be accountable to our clients and society at large. Last but not least, we will strive to be accountable and transparent in the way we collect, store, process and manage our clients' data.

Taken together, the above will contribute to creating and maintaining a strong relationship with our clients based on trust.

Accountability Strategic objectives	Targets				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Integrity Index					
Employee integrity testing (Success rate) ¹³	80%				
Compliance					
Non-compliance arising from client complaints concluded within 30 days	80%	85%	90%	95%	100%
Non-compliance arising from any other audits/sources, for which recommendations are accepted, are concluded within 90 days	80%	83%	86%	90%	>90%
Reduction of instances of non-compliance based on 2021 figures	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%

Table 2: High-level accountability targets

13 Employees as per Schedule 6 of the Public Administration Act are subject to integrity testing

3. Sustainability

In line with the Public Service’s ethical commitments to the principles of fairness and prevention of harm and to the broader commitments related to the United Nation’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the Public Service is to consider as stakeholders all broader society – that is all sentient beings, all future generations and the environment in general.

To reduce its organisational impact on ecology, the various resources required for service provision, that is the human, technological and organisational, are to be sourced and applied sustainably. All services are to be delivered in the most environmentally friendly way possible, with the necessary provisions to be made at design stage, at development stage, whilst being deployed and eventually being offered to the client.

The Public Service’s sustainability efforts must extend to its employment policies and procurement regulations. One way of doing this is through continuously striving to be an adaptable, lean and agile organisation keen on creating and preserving intellectual capital and where knowledge transfer is enabled and managed appropriately.

By ensuring the quality of the service and optimising the efficiency of its processes, the Public Service is to also ensure its financial sustainability by providing all required services with the best possible value for money.

Sustainability	Targets				
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Strategic objectives					
Service Provision					
YoY reduction in cost of service provision	See footnote ¹⁴	3%	3%	3%	3%
Carbon Footprint					
YoY reduction in carbon footprint based on 2021 figures	See footnote ¹⁵	5%	5%	5%	5%
Employee Attitude Survey¹⁶					
Annual satisfaction rate	65%	70%	75%	80%	>80%

Table 3: High-level sustainability targets

¹⁴ In 2022 an exercise will be carried out to establish the way in which cost of service provision will be measured. This will entail looking at processes in every department, with each service having a minimum aim of a 3% reduction.

¹⁵ In 2022 an exercise will be carried out to establish the way in which the carbon footprint can be measured to ensure a minimum of a 5% reduction.

¹⁶ The Survey will be carried out among all Public Employees at least every 2 years

2.4 Pillars

In order to implement the improvements required as a result of the identified themes, 3 pillars have been chosen as enablers to support such work: People, Services and Technology.

Technology

Technology and its application are required to support service delivery as well as the people providing it. Whether it takes the complex shape of Artificial Intelligence which can anticipate clients' needs or a simple tool such as a tablet which enables customer care agents to apply for services on clients' behalf, technology is the fundamental backbone which brings employees, clients and services together.

Efficiency and quality are also an expected benefit of technology in terms of becoming and remaining relevant to clients, managing and measuring quality, gauging client satisfaction and sentiment, identifying superfluous costs and efforts, and promoting accessible and transparent services amongst others.

Many of our clients are increasingly being accustomed to services which are heavily reliant on technology for providing a smooth customer experience. The last few years have seen our services change drastically to respond to such client expectations. We believe that, applied appropriately, technology can help us solve a number of problems within our society by acting as a tool which will help us to be flexible in meeting future challenges posed by an evolving world.

People

Beginning with people, the Public Service believes that its employees are its greatest asset and the engine behind service delivery, either through face-to-face interactions with clients or application processing at the back end. Service of excellence can only be achieved if people are genuinely valued and empowered by means of a cohesive approach that provides attention, direction and drive to address their needs. This requires a continuous focus on identifying and developing public officers to their full potential.

Our people also need to be supported by structures which ensure that there are the necessary resources, both human and otherwise, to carry out their job. This includes the setting up of new structures to spearhead new initiatives across the Public Service.

The establishment of a boundary-less collaboration with all strategic partners is also necessary, to implement holistic people policies and management systems, in parallel with continuous improvement of people's performance, accountability, support and well-being.

Services

Together with the people that provide them, services are what brings the Public Service and its clients together. Clients should be involved in every aspect of services, starting with their design.

Service of excellence is only possible if client needs, expectations, and pain points are understood. Clients' expectations can then be incorporated into the service design process itself to ensure that services are aligned with clients' needs. It is imperative that service design standards are adhered to ensure uniformity across any and all services, whether offered via Departments of Government or entities within the wider Public Sector.

Services must meet defined service quality standards; manuals, processes and supporting systems need to be maintained to reflect new trends and technologies. These standards should be measurable by means of quantitative or qualitative criteria and supported by processes and systems to monitor the measurement of these criteria. The benefits of monitoring services currently being offered are twofold: the results can help to improve any instances where service provision falls short of client expectations, as well as identify any gaps which may indicate the need for the development of new services to address such gaps.

Finally, the client voice should not only be heard during the service design phase, but also throughout the service journey. Client feedback should not only be encouraged but should be actively sought to ensure that services truly meet and exceed client expectations.

Where are we today?



The purpose of this chapter is to set this strategy’s point of departure. This will be done by using 5 international indicators (DESI, EU eGovernment Benchmarking, UN eGovernment Survey, World Bank Ease of Doing Business and the UN Sustainable Development Goals) as well as surveys to build a comprehensive picture of where Malta stands within the context of the 3 Pillars upon which this Strategy is based. In addition, we also assessed the Public Service’s digital readiness based on toolkits and benchmarks issued by the World Bank and the OECD respectively to highlight any shortcomings which need to be addressed.

Indicators	Year
Digital Economy & Society Index (DESI)	2020
World Bank Ease of Doing Business	
EU Barometer Trust Rating in the Public Administration	2021
EU Barometer Satisfaction with the Provision of Public Administration Services	
European Quality of Government Index (EQI)	
Surveys	
Renewal Study	2020
Public Service focus group	2021
Self-assessment	
World Bank Digital Readiness Assessment Toolkit	2021
OECD Digital Government Index	

Table 4: List of indicators

3.1 Technology

3.1.1 Infrastructure & Connectivity

Infrastructure plays an important role in digital transformation; internet connectivity and accessibility are essential for facilitating service delivery. Boasting full fast broadband coverage as well as fixed very high-capacity network coverage, Malta ranks 10th with a score of 58.7 among European Union Member States in the Digital Economy & Society Index (DESI) 2020, which compares various indicators related to digital competitiveness.

3.1.2 Data Infrastructure

By virtue of its operation, the Public Service necessarily holds a considerable amount of data. Malta scores 42% (DESI 2020) in the context of open data. The recently launched National Data Portal, currently in beta version, will eventually provide access to government data through base and administrative registers. Where possible the principle of open data will be embraced to ensure transparency, a concept promoted by the updated National Data Strategy itself (expected later this year) and the forthcoming EU Data Governance Act.

While data-driven public services may be desirable, it is important to keep in mind that the data behind such services must be handled in an ethically correct manner. This entails being transparent about clients' data in terms of what data is held, who has access to it and how it is used based on clients' consent. According to the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2020, Malta scores 98% when it comes to transparency of personal data. We will endeavour to ensure that the principle of transparency is upheld to empower clients as well as foster and maintain their trust.

3.1.3 Technological Enablers

Launched in 2019 and running until 2021, Mapping Tomorrow was the strategic plan for the digital transformation of the Public Administration. Mapping Tomorrow primarily sought to improve take-up of digital public services and begin the journey towards the implementation of the Once Only Principle. Together these goals would support our ability to provide a service of excellence. Any pending projects will be implemented under the stewardship of the Core Group Digitalisation¹⁷ assisted by the Implementation Division within OPM.

Over the past few years, Malta has been considered a front-runner in the context of digital public services as ranked by the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2020. The Benchmark assesses Member States' adoption of the following key technological enablers: eID, eDocuments and Digital Post (digital communication solutions to link government and clients).

Malta scores 90% for eID, meaning that eID users can access digital public services which require online authentication.

Although Malta scores well in terms of eDocuments – Malta has the highest European level of digitisation of the back- and front-offices – the Maltese Public Service is still transitioning from paper-based processes and systems to paperless solutions.

When it comes to communication, clients are increasingly contacted via email according to their preferences. We will ensure that communication continues to be facilitated in both directions, whether from public service to clients or vice versa.

3.1.3.1 **Once Only Principle**

The Once Only Principle (OOP) is a concept through which clients are not requested to submit data already held by the Public Service. Whilst 'Mapping Tomorrow' laid the foundations, a significant amount of work is still required for the comprehensive adoption of OOP. A robust eID infrastructure which enables authentication, together with a technological data sharing infrastructure that allows different government platforms to share data between them without manual intervention in compliance with GDPR and other legal obligations, are two important components of achieving OOP.

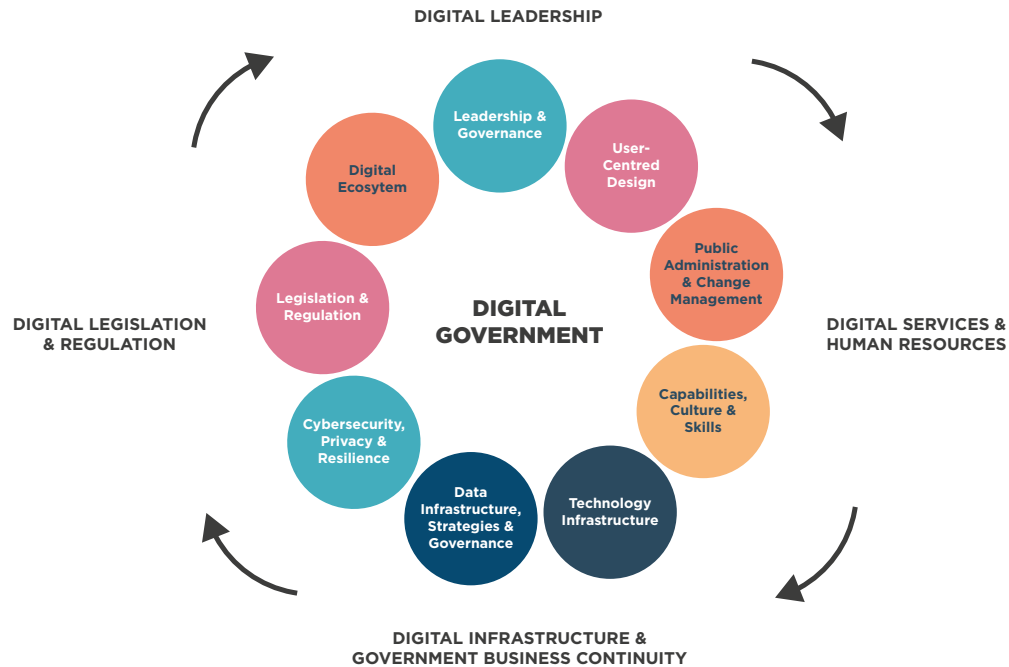
3.1.4 **Digital Readiness**

3.1.4.1 **Human Capital**

Compared to other European Member States, Malta ranks 6th within the context of human capital; according to the DESI, 7% of graduates in 2017 were ICT graduates. We will continue working with educational institutions through strategic partnership through the Institute for the Public Services; the University of Malta and MCAST, and other educational institutions. We will also collaborate closely with stakeholders including the eSkills Malta Foundation to ensure that curricula reflect the necessary ICT skills.

3.1.4.2 **Public Service: World Bank Digital Government Readiness Assessment**

In 2021 we engaged a team of experts, supported by the Core Group Digitalisation and the Digitalisation Unit within servizz.gov, to assess our digital readiness using the self-assessment toolkit provided by the World Bank. **Figure 2** provides a brief explanation of the assessment and the 9 pillars upon which it is based.



Leadership & Governance

A clear vision, leadership, governance of digital strategy encourages the stakeholders to link the Government-wide digital transformation.

User-Centred Design

Basing high-quality of agile and accessible public services around the users needs - **the public** - increase engagements and open participation of the citizens.

Public Administration & Change Management

Public administration process has to be optimised for digital delivery. Digital technologies can rapidly improve administrative operations and capabilities.

Capabilities, Culture & Skills

Technology cannot substitute all the Government's operations. Hiring and training individuals for digital skills by creating a culture of innovation and creativity across the administration is crucial.

Technology Infrastructure

Rather than investing specific applications, leaders in today's digital Government increasingly look to use whole-of-government standardised technology infrastructure.

Data Infrastructure, Strategies & Governance

For better decision-making, public spending, and services, digital governments are improving their ability to collect, analyse and share data using new technologies.

Cybersecurity, Privacy & Resilience

A specific protocol, scenarios should be prepared to ensure security and recovery, and minimise risks from any undefined cyber threats, disasters, etc.

Legislation & Regulation

Legislation and regulation brings transparency to many decision-makings on public spending or any e-services that is driven by data.

Digital Ecosystem

Public digital ecosystem not only boosts innovation, education and entrepreneurship, but also contributes to the modern digital economy.

Figure 2: Pillars of Digital Government Readiness Assessment via World Bank

Malta's best performance is in the Cyber Security, Privacy and Resilience pillars, followed by Digital Ecosystem. While Malta's weakest performance has been noted in terms of Data Infrastructure, Strategies and Governance, our work on OOP will now include the legal requirement for government entities and departments to connect to base registers. The lack of use of AI, Big Data and Analytics for better decision making was also highlighted, indicating the areas on which our efforts should focus. The next poorest performance is recorded in the User-Centred Design and Capabilities, Culture and Skills Section. Whereas the former is due to lack of engagement of users in the design and test of new digital services, the latter results from the lack of targeted internal digital education at all levels of government, as well as lack of a culture of collaboration around projects.

Figure 3 shows our score for each respective pillar.

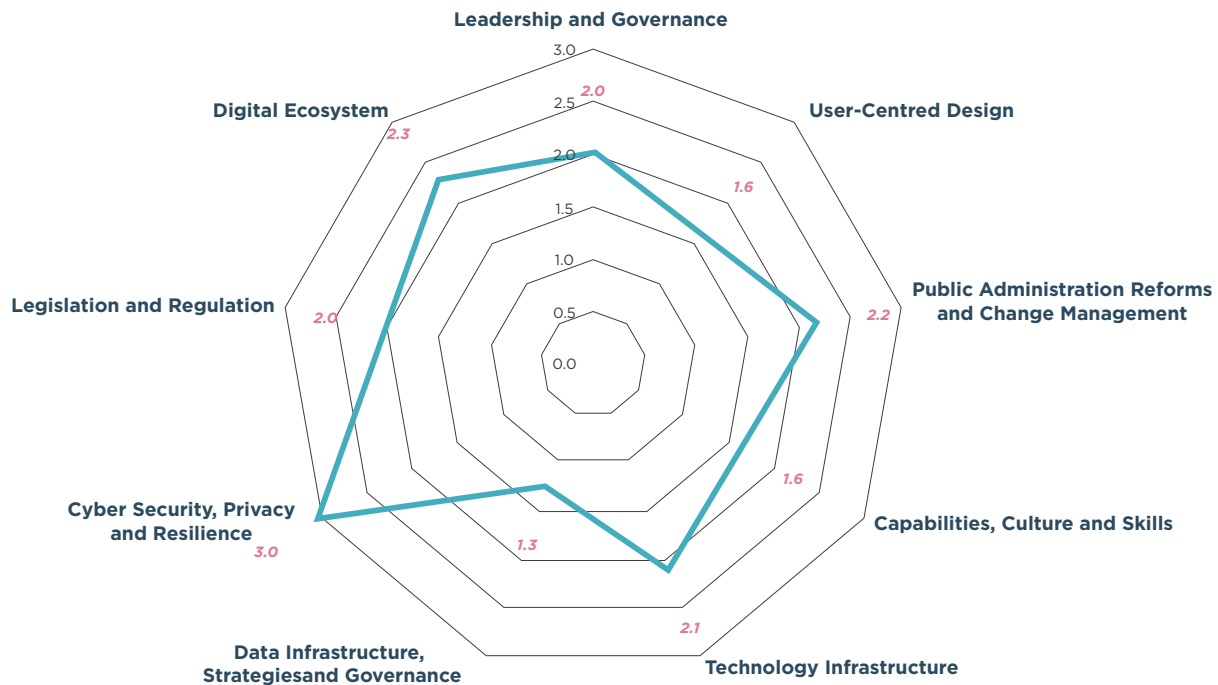


Figure 3: Digital Government Readiness Assessment score per pillar

Source: Malta University Consulting Ltd (2021)



3.1.4.3 Public Service: OECD Digital Government Index

Despite Malta not forming part of the OECD, the team also carried out a self-assessment of Malta's scenario within the context of the OECD Digital Government Index. The Index is based on 6 dimensions: Digital by design; Data-driven public sector; Government as a platform; Open by default; User-driven; and Proactiveness. **Figure 4** shows our score for each respective dimension, whilst **Figure 5** shows Malta's ranking compared to the OECD average.

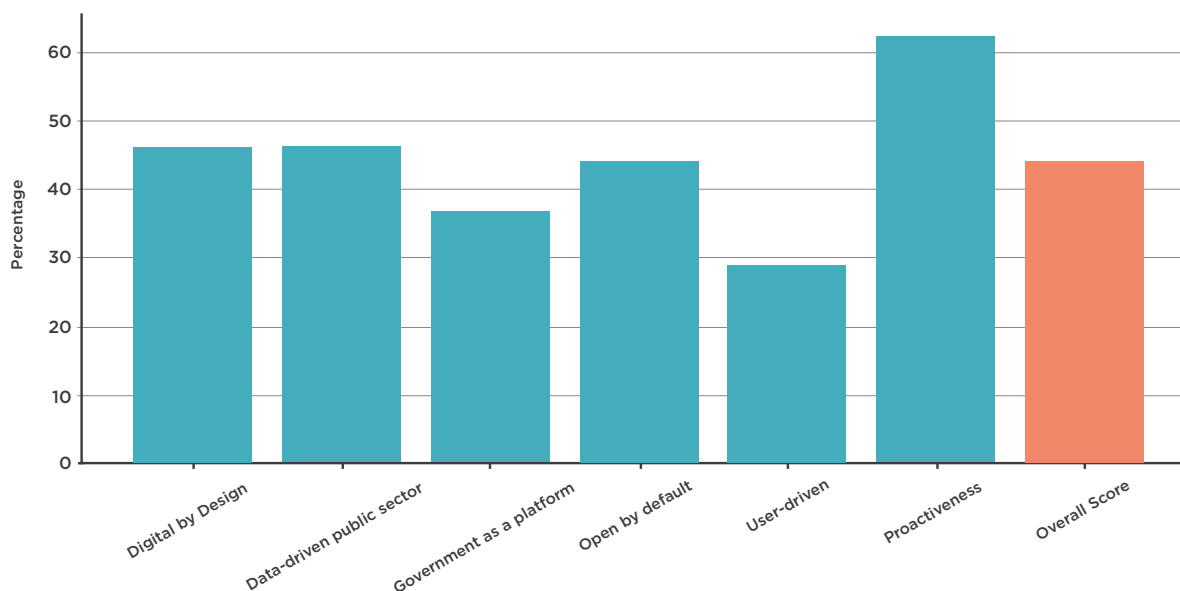


Figure 4: Malta's score by dimension

Source: Malta University Consulting Ltd (2021)

Strengths

As evidenced by the World Bank self-assessment, we have a number of enabling frameworks in place for common interoperability, base registers and shared ICT infrastructure and services. Malta has an effective communication strategy in place to inform citizens about digital government services and has a program in place to increase the digital skills of citizens, including vulnerable population groups. Furthermore, we have already implemented key legislation related to re-use of public sector information, data protection, freedom of information and digital identification, paving the way for the uptake of emerging digital technologies, including blockchain, AI and digital analytics.

Malta already offers a wide range of digital services to its citizens and businesses, including health, taxation, digital identity, transport, social services, and others, through servizz.gov.

Weaknesses

A key, recurring issue is the lack of measurement and self-assessment regarding several parameters that measure progress towards achieving the set visions set out in the various strategies across the Public Service. These range from measuring the transaction cost of delivering public services to measuring the direct benefits and/or costs of ICT projects, assessing the national economic impact on businesses of the implementation of digital government services, assessing the implications of new legislation on government's digital needs, assessing the barriers for co-designing of services between businesses and government, assessment to reduce the digital divide and indicators to measure user satisfaction with digital government services.

In line with our DESI 2020 score on open data, the OECD assessment highlighted that while a National Data Portal has been set up, so far very few public sector data is available.

The OECD assessment further indicated the need for greater involvement of stakeholders, such as businesses, civil society and the public in the co-designing of services. While focus groups are organized and feedback is sought, the level of involvement could be improved. Coordination between the National Digital Government Strategies and other national strategies could also be improved.

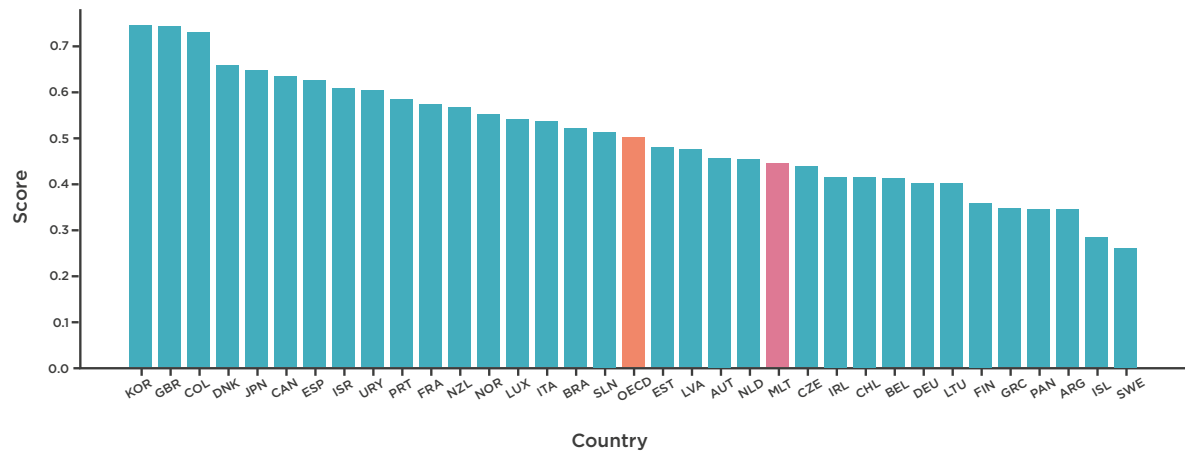


Figure 5: Overall ranking of countries based on the composite score (average of the scores for all 6 dimensions)

Source: Malta University Consulting Ltd (2021)

3.2 People

3.2.1 Training & Development

Technology does not exist in a vacuum. Its application is intended to facilitate service provision, whilst supporting the people who are the engine of our operations, providing the services themselves. It is essential that our employees, current and future, are confident when using different types of technology. Furthermore, in order to retain and harness institutional knowledge, it is crucial for knowledge and experience gained through the years to be systematically recognised. During 2020 more than 800 training courses were organised by IPS with approximately 9000 employees actively participating.

3.2.2 Leadership & Governance

The latest Standard Eurobarometer 94 shows that while Malta is among countries who tend to trust their respective public administration, trust in the Maltese public administration has declined from 64% in 2020 to 57% in 2021, higher than the EU27 average of 49%.

The Quality of Government Index, compiled by the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, is based on a survey carried out among 500 respondents in Malta who were asked questions on the control of corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law, and voice and accountability. In 2021 Malta ranked 17th out of 27 European countries, slightly below the average for the European region, whereas in 2017 Malta ranked 14th.

There were 93 reforms carried out since 2013. **Table 5** below shows the number of reforms per year and by type. The Renewal Study (2020) also included a survey amongst government employees and members of the public on the impact of the Public Service reforms, as well as work-related perceptions among the former.

Reform Classification	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Other	Total
Transparency and Accountability	4			3	3	4		1	15
Public Service Systems and HRM Public Service Reforms		2		4	3	1	1	4	15
Service Delivery and Digitalisation Reforms		1		3	5	2	1	2	14
Organisation and Management of Government Reforms		2	3	6	3	2			16
Policy Making, Coordination and Implementation Reforms	2	13	7	1	3	3	4		33
Total	6	18	10	17	17	12	6	7	93

Table 5: List of reforms by type and year

Source: Renewal Study (2020)

According to the Public Service Renewal Study (2020), the Maltese population's awareness of the reforms conducted between 2013 and 2020, ranged from 96 % to 14.9% of the respondents. The top rating reforms in terms of awareness, were Free Childcare and the Whistle-blower Act. 50% of the Maltese population believe a lot of effort was put into these reforms. 55.1% of the Maltese population feel that the level and quality of their life has improved since 2013. The lowest improvement felt was regarding bureaucracy, despite over 1070 simplification measures being implemented over the last 7 years.

The Renewal Study (2020) showed the Maltese population believe that various aspects of the Public Service have improved, including the levels of bureaucracy within the Public Service (39.6%) and the Public Service's efficiency (64.2%).

64.5% of government employees feel that their quality of life has improved since 2013. The Public Service is perceived as a fair and reliable workplace, however the importance of leadership development, and of providing the necessary resources were highlighted.



3.3 Services

3.3.1 Our Clients

3.3.1.1 Our Services to Businesses

When it comes to Business clients, use of digital technologies, namely big data analysis, social media and cloud computing is above EU average according to the DESI 2020. On the other hand, electronic information sharing is still slightly below EU average in 2019 despite its increased use.

Furthermore, according to the Malta's Digital Intensity Index, 41% of enterprises in Malta have relatively high levels of digitisation.

With a score of 66.1, Malta ranks 88th out of 190 countries worldwide in the *World Bank Ease of Doing Business* report for 2020.

Malta's ranking for each category is shown in the infographic below:



Figure 6: Ease of Doing Business 2020

Between May 2018 to May 2019, starting a business was made easier by implementing an online one-stop-shop for the registration of employers, employees, and value added tax. Whereas starting a business previously took 3 months, it now takes just 3 days should appropriate due diligence criteria be satisfied. Malta also increased the reliability of power supply by upgrading its power grid infrastructure and launching a network planning and operations control centre; and changed regulations pertaining to paid annual leave.

3.3.1.2 Our Services to the General Public

In line with the EU average according to the DESI, 56% of the Maltese population have at least basic digital skills and 38% of individuals have above basic digital skills. Although higher than the EU average, the percentage of individuals who have never used the internet is consistently decreasing, from 18% in 2018 to 13% in 2020.

Those who do make use of the internet do so for various reasons – such as learning, shopping and internet banking. This is also reflected in the high rates of mobile broadband take-up.

According to the *Study About the Government Services November 2020* commissioned by servizz.gov only around 8% of the respondents used the mobile services provided by the Government. 51.6% of those who used a government mobile service said that it was very easy to use it, and almost two-thirds of the respondents were very happy with the service.

EU eGovernment Benchmarking 2020 found that 82% of Maltese internet users engage in social networks, compared to the EU average of 65%, and Facebook is the preferred social media platform.

The *Study About the Government Services November 2020*, carried out in the last quarter of 2020, found that 59.5% of respondents are aware of Freephone 153, with 54.6% of them having used the service. Almost all the respondents who used Freephone 153 said they would use this service again and the majority of them found the service to be very efficient.

The *Study About the Government Services November 2020*, found that just over half of the respondents used the online government services. Almost half of the respondents found these services easy to use, and 51.3% of those who used these services were very happy with the service received. The Renewal Study (2020) found that the majority of the Maltese population feel that government online services have improved, with 61% being very satisfied with these services. This is also reflected in the latest Eurobarometer Survey which shows that 72% of Maltese people believe that the provision of public administration services is good, up from 58% in 2020 and 26% higher than the EU27 average.

In February 2021 a focus group was held with 15 members of the general public corroborated the results obtained from the survey regarding the popularity of services. The focus group's participants believed that the best aspects of our service provision include efficiency, customer care, online availability, good communication and good organisation. Whilst participants believe that some of our online services not being sufficiently user-friendly, long queues and complex processes, they believe that government services have improved over the past few years.

As per the EU eGovernment Benchmark 2020 report, cross-Border eID is clearly one of the key areas for growth for both Europe and Malta. To unleash the full potential of cross-border services, it is important to ensure that national eID schemes are mutually recognised by all European countries, including for Businesses.

3.4 Our Environment

The landscape in which our services are provided must necessarily take into consideration the environment in which they are provided. Although significant challenges remain, Malta is making steady progress with respect to reaching the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) related to greenhouse gas emissions per capita, scoring 5.5 in this regard.

To this end, as of 2019 every project and budget measure must be directly aligned with the SDGs to ensure that our endeavours do not negatively affect our progress towards achieving the set targets for each SDG.

3.5 Our future

Over the last 8 years, significant progress and investments have been made towards the improvement of the Public Service. This chapter has shown how both international and local indicators prove this. Our work must continue to shape the future of the Public Service using the best technology available in order to ease access to our services, support our employees in providing a service of excellence, and increase uptake in the process.

The coming years will see more investments being made in the latest technology such as AI and Blockchain. These components are intended to facilitate our employees' work whilst making it more meaningful, allowing them to apply their skills to work which cannot be carried out by technology alone.

Beyond reinforcing service delivery, technology will also be used to support employees in achieving and maintaining adequate work-life balance. The concept of remote working, which has steadily become more widely accepted, will become an integral part of the Public Service's culture. Disruptive technology is also expected to influence our approach towards flexible working in line with our employees' changing expectations.

Service provision will also be supported by enhanced data management which will in turn enable personalised services to be delivered to our clients in an efficient and responsible manner. Our clients will likely have higher levels of digital literacy, enabling them to access digital public services through mobile devices.

Our aim is to improve the overall client experience, from the way that our services are designed around their needs to the provision of an ethically sound service of excellence. Throughout we must be mindful that our clients are as diverse in their needs as in their abilities.

The above indicators show not only how far we have come, but also which aspects of our operation can be improved. The last 8 years laid the foundations for further investment and improvement which will help us achieve our goal, that of a seamless Public Service.

Organisation and
measuring progress



4.1 Importance of Measuring Progress

A Public Service that offers a seamless service of excellence requires constant improvement on all fronts, ranging from the human resources and technology employed, to the service design and delivery process. Improvement, however, is only possible if progress is measurable.

We need to ensure not only that the initiatives are being carried out in an effective and timely manner, but also understand whether they are accomplishing what they were designed to do in the first place.

The measurement process ensures that timely corrective action can be taken if required - either through enforcing the plan or by adjusting it - to ensure that the original objectives are met. Besides helping us to stay on track towards reaching our goals, measurement enables accountability and transparency towards our employees, our clients and society at large.

4.2 What Will Be Measured

The vision statement we set out is intangible, and we have therefore specified strategic targets that support the measurement of progress towards achieving it. In addition to the strategic targets, we have defined outcomes, which will also be measured, to describe in greater detail how we will achieve the vision.

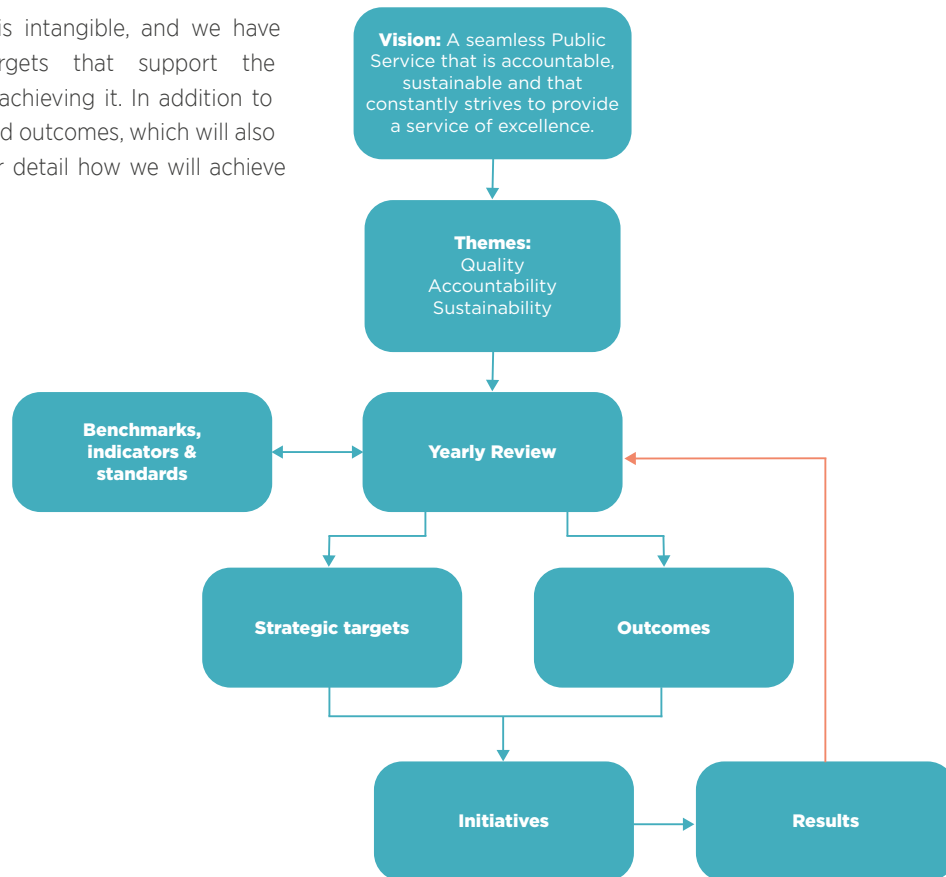


Figure 7: Measurement cycle

In order for the strategic cycle to be an iterative process on an ongoing basis, the specific targets and outcomes should be measured and reported on a yearly basis to ensure that they are effective in helping us to achieve our goals. Should yearly results show that our targets and outcomes are insufficient, they will be revisited.

4.3 Data Collection and Supporting Structures

A policy document, including a business case and an action plan, will be drawn up for our initiatives as deemed necessary. Following the strategy's launch, the policy documents will be circulated for internal consultation prior to their issuance and embarking on our work programme in 2022.

The Implementation Division within the Office of the Prime Minister will be responsible for measuring the strategy's effectiveness and progress, both in terms of high-level targets as well as at the initiatives put forward, including the achievement of the desired outcomes. Reporting on progress for each initiative should be at least bimonthly, and the results should be distributed to the business owner as well as top management. The Division will also prepare a detailed analysis of the relevant data in the form of a report and present it to the Strategy Steering Committee on a yearly basis to review the strategy's effectiveness, allowing the Committee to revise the Strategy's targets and initiatives as necessary.

Measuring can take place through various tools, such as surveys, mystery shopping exercises, public reports, external audits, internal quality monitoring, etc. Measurement can be carried out by the Public Service itself or by independent third parties.

Our path for the
next five years

5





This chapter will provide a brief overview of our programme of work based on a defined set of outcomes for each Theme. It should be noted that these outcomes are not exhaustive and will need to be revised on a regular basis. Our work programme is intended to contribute towards the attainment of our vision.

The initiatives in the programme will also be supported by additional vertical initiatives and strategies spearheaded by the various ministries and entities,

5.1 Quality

Within the theme of **Quality**, we aim to achieve 4 outcomes:

1. Ensuring that the appropriate systems, tools, and structures are in place for providing high quality services consistently
2. Embedding the concept of continuous improvement within our organisation
3. Offering enhanced services supported by communication which is fast and secure
4. Designing and offering services which are accessible from anywhere and at any time

5.1.1 **Quality Outcome 1:** Ensuring that the appropriate systems, tools, and structures are in place for providing high quality services consistently

1) **Initiative: Updating Directives and Boosting Adoption of the Quality Label**

We are committed to providing a service of excellence and therefore existing quality standards and processes will be realigned with technological developments. A five-year plan for the roll-out of the quality award covering a wide range of areas and encompassing most of the front-facing services offered by the Public Service, has already been established (see **Table 1**). Increasing awareness of both the standards and the guidelines, amongst all public officers will contribute to providing clients with quality services presented in an intuitive predictable manner across the Public Service.

Owner: Quality of Service Directorate (QSD) (P&SD)

2) Initiative: ISO9001 Certification

In addition to the setting of quality measures, servizz.gov will seek to obtain ISO9001 2015 certification by 2024. ISO certification, used by numerous companies and public administrations, the world over, sets out the requirements for a quality management system based on the principles of customer focus and continuous improvement, with the aim of ensuring that customer expectations are consistently met.

Owner: Digitalisation & Quality Unit (servizz.gov) supported by QSD (P&SD)

3) Initiative: Digital Transformation Hub (Centre of Excellence)

With quality standards and manuals in place, the next step is to ensure that these are applied to the way we design services with our clients in mind. To this end, a Digital Transformation Hub has been set up which will see to the business process re-engineering of existing services, as well as the smart design of new services, such that they become more user centric. The Hub has already commenced operations and plans are in place to expand the Hub's capabilities and operations to additionally offer facilitation for problem solving and Lean Six Sigma improvement projects. Work will soon begin on new premises for the Hub, the completion of which is envisaged by early 2023.

Owner: Digitalisation & Quality Unit (servizz.gov) in collaboration with QSD (P&SD)

4) Initiative: Single Point of Entry

We aim to provide services which are easy to use and intuitive to navigate. Beyond increasing the number of digital public services, offering services on a single platform will also help clients find the services they need faster without having to search across different entities and websites. To make this possible, servizz.gov will act as a single point of entry when clients seek our services to ensure that there is accuracy and uniformity in the way information is shown. Services must meet the necessary standards defined by servizz.gov prior to being available via servizz.gov. Business owners of services which do not meet such standards will be supported by QSD in order to become eligible.

Owner: ICT & Branding Unit (servizz.gov) supported by QSD (P&SD)

5) **Initiative: Branding Guidelines**

A strong identity is integral to any organisation, especially one as large and diverse as the Public Service. Part of making our services easy to navigate, is the way we present them visually, whether online or in person. Branding guidelines will be developed to guide both the way we present our services as well as the way the information flows between government entities and the public. This will ensure consistency in the way we interact with our clients whilst also serving as a reflection of our values and establishing a memorable brand, with a high recall. Success will be determined not only by the number of successful flows of information, but also by the extent to which technology is used to provide clients with the information they need wherever they are, sometimes before they are aware that they might require it.

Owner: QSD (P&SD) supported by ICT & Branding Unit (servizz.gov)

5.1.2 **Quality Outcome 2:** Embedding the concept of continuous improvement within our organisation

6) **Initiative: Central Electronic Quality Management System (CEQMS)**

A Central Electronic Quality Management System is essential if we are to embrace the concept of continuous improvement. The CEQMS will constitute a centralised repository for all quality-related documents, such as procedures and forms, as well as all quality assurance measures. It will also contain all outcomes from internal quality control processes, together with customer feedback received or gathered, including reminders and escalations for any corrective required, and provide for management dashboards. The system will be structured on our definition of quality, quality standards, and branding guidelines and certification, where applicable.

Owner: QSD (P&SD)

7) **Initiative: Decentralisation of Quality Monitoring**

Quality needs to be considered in budgets and capital investments, while resources for the monitoring of quality (including HR) need to be specifically allocated. The Quality of Service Directorate will support and monitor quality in all ministries with the engagement of quality officers reporting to Quality of Service Directorate and an internal mechanism by which quality standards can be monitored and controlled.

Owner: QSD (P&SD)

8) **Initiative: Engagement of Service Owners**

Having a one-stop-shop for customer services has many advantages but may keep the service owners at arm's length from the end client. Engaging the business owners with the front line ensures that changes and new services are done with the client in mind, and that there is a continuous loop of feedback and corrective action between the two. We will actively explore methods to engage service owners, including through sharing client contact information, distributing costs, assessing client interactions. Reviews will also be carried out between servizz.gov and business owners by sector at least every 2 months.

Owner: servizz.gov supported by QSD (P&SD)

9) **Initiative: Integrating Customer Voice**

For each service, whether it is provided through a Ministry, servizz.gov or other entities, business owners must ensure there is a client feedback mechanism in place. Feedback must be gathered at varying levels and in actionable format. For feedback to be actionable, it should cover each channel, and criteria valued by our clients, separately. Feedback should be monitored over time and appropriate dashboards and/or drill down reports, should be available to the respective Permanent Secretary and business owner. These can be made available through the aforementioned CEQMS which will help ensure that the feedback is used and integrated in our continuous improvement efforts.

Owner: QSD (P&SD)

10) **Initiative: Artificial Intelligence**

Malta has been forward-looking when it comes to the adoption and deployment of emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence. In October 2019, it was one of the few European jurisdictions with a National AI strategy. The Public Service seems to be well placed to adopt such innovations and is aiming to use AI to support re-design of internal service delivery processes and policy-making mechanisms to improve quality and engagement with citizens. Through IPS it will seek collaborative agreements with educational institutions to ensure that our workforce has the necessary AI-related skills. The transformation process faced by the various Public Service departments will be centrally facilitated to ensure that best use of the data is made in an ethical manner to optimise the operations and service provision. A number of initiatives based on AI technology spanning various crucial horizontal and domain specific areas, particularly in the economic and social welfare sectors, have been defined and their feasibility is currently being explored. For more information about the horizontal initiatives see **Appendix**.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

11) Initiative: Real-time Measurement & Monitoring

Providing a service of excellence means that we need to act on performance metrics and customer feedback, immediately and not periodically. Live measuring and monitoring of the various parameters of service provision (such as our service levels or real-time customer feedback) will help us to ensure that our resources, human or otherwise, are applied in a timely manner to take corrective action to meet and exceed our clients' expectations. The visibility of such parameters via personalised dashboards will ensure the right information is presented to the employees that can take action and therefore enable us to provide high-quality services in a consistent manner whilst also minimising costs and increasing clients' trust in our services. This initiative will commence in the form of a pilot project to determine a suitable solution which can then be expanded across the Public Service.

Owner: Digitalisation & Quality unit (servizz.gov) supported by QSD (P&SD)

5.1.3 Quality Outcome 3: Offering enhanced services supported by communication which is fast and secure

12) Initiative: Digital Post

Given the Public Service's vast number of clients and services, clear, secure, and timely communication is essential. We are already using modern channels such as, email, and social media, and are currently pilot testing chat, to communicate with its clients. However, we are still sometimes relying on surface mail, and when using email, we are dependent on the third party' systems, as well as the client keeping us updated with their latest email address. To mitigate this, an official communication channel in the form of an email address and inbox will be provided to citizens and residents over 16 years old. This inbox will be provided and managed by the Public Service, with clients having the ability to opt out of using this service and being able to receive official communication from the Public Service via surface mail. This will not only facilitate and expedite communication but also provide a more robust and secure service through an official channel. Users who do not have the necessary skills or tools to access this service can visit any of the servizz.gov hubs for assistance.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

13) Initiative: Once Only Principle (OOP)

Through open data sharing and re-use, within the limits of GDPR, the Public Service aims to provide a service of excellence without requesting its clients to provide personal information repeatedly. To achieve this, a rigorous, diligent and standardised process has been put in place to ensure that public-facing services are simplified, consolidated and integrated with back-end systems. The building blocks for attaining OOP shall be the setting up of 3 base registers – Person, Address and Business – supported by the National Data Portal with over 1,200 administrative registers and a national data strategy. An enterprise service bus will also be introduced to break data silos and provide an architecture which can be exploited for data sharing and reuse purposes, to provide high-quality services.

Owner: Implementation Division (OPM) supported by the Data Governance Council

5.1.4 **Quality Outcome 4:** Designing and offering services which are accessible from anywhere and at any time

14) Initiative: Adopting and Promoting Inclusive Service Design Standards

We are committed to making our services as inclusive and accessible as possible by accommodating a wide range of individual preferences and abilities, universal design principles and full stakeholder participation. In recent years unprecedented investment has been made in technology to allow clients to apply for public services online. The primary focus was to permit application and provision of services on a 24/7 basis while looking into opening more servizz.gov regional hubs where needed to allow for walk-ins for those who still prefer or need physical access. Service delivery channels should be accessible by default to all segments of society. In this regard, all services will be reviewed at Service Design Stage (including reviewing current services) to ensure that all aspects of accessibility are considered throughout the service delivery chain.

Owner: QSD (P&SD) supported by ICT & Branding Unit (servizz.gov)

15) Initiative: Omnichannel Services

Our clients should be able to move across channels to ensure that their request is resolved in the most efficient way. Through an omnichannel service delivery strategy, we shall strive to offer our clients a seamless experience. The Public Service will meet clients wherever they are, through channels they are most accustomed to and which are most convenient for their needs. This means that apart from making all our services available on all current channels, we will also expand our channels to new digital channels used by our clients. We will also use nudging techniques to ensure our clients are aware of channels that may be new, or which may be more appropriate for their needs.

Owner: servizz.gov

16) Initiative: Digital Signatures

Beyond modernising and securing the way in which we communicate with our clients, we are in the process of transitioning away from paper-based processes. Clients need a secure and efficient way in which they can endorse applications when applying for services; at present this can be done through a laptop/desktop computer in combination with a Maltese ID card. A formal framework will be created to boost usage of the ID card for creating digital signatures as a secure alternative to wet signatures and/or clients having to be physically present to authenticate their identity when signing documents, correspondence, online applications and contracts. In the coming months a study will be carried out to determine how this initiative will be taken forward as well as who will be most suitable to spearhead the initiative.

Owner: Identity Malta Agency supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

17) **Initiative: Digital Wallet**

Many of the official documents we offer our clients, such as ID cards, driving licenses, vouchers etc., are paper-based. Such systems are costly and cumbersome to maintain, and present significant risks in cases of loss or theft. To match the pace of modernization within the Public Service, we will provide our clients with a digital wallet which can hold the electronic version of all official documents. Clients will be able to store important documents securely on a device/platform of their choice and will be able to use them just as they would with the physical counterpart, including for authenticating their identity. In the coming months a study will be carried out to determine how this initiative will be taken forward as well as who will be most suitable to spearhead the initiative.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by MITA

18) **Fostering a Digitally Enabled and Confident Nation**

Whilst we are increasingly transitioning towards digital ways of working, we are also mindful that not all our clients may be able to enjoy the benefits arising from the digital services and tools we offer. To this end, we will be working closely with the eSkills Malta Foundation to ensure that help and guidance are provided to those clients who may not have the necessary skills to access digital public services and tools.

Owner: servizz.gov supported by eSkills Malta Foundation

5.2 Accountability

Within the theme of **Accountability**, we aim to achieve the following 4 outcomes:

1. Optimising the use of our data
2. Meeting good governance obligations
3. Promoting and safeguarding compliance
4. Increasing transparency



Accountability Outcome 1: Optimising Use of Data

19) **Initiative: Performance Appraisal 2.0**

We will explore how the present electronic performance appraisal system can include an employee satisfaction dimension and be simplified further whilst retaining the required appraising functions. It will retain the possibility for managers to collaborate with their employees and develop objectives, training and development plans which address employee needs and build on their strengths. Additionally, the system will also be extended to other employees in a gradual manner. The Institute for the Public Services (IPS) Training Management System will be linked to the appraisal performance system so that all training data and requirements can be managed to ensure that training and skills gap are addressed.

Owner: P&SD supported by IPS

20) **Initiative: Improving Visibility of Personnel Data Systems to Enhance Compliance**

It is apparent that P&SD lacks some of the necessary tools to perform all the required compliance checks. The current method of compliance checks is very time-consuming and is dependent on the accuracy of the data provided by the different entities. Currently data regarding the Public Service and a few other entities are already on a common platform, but this will need to be extended to cover not only payroll but also other personnel systems and processes. The Directorate will be improving its visibility to include all Human Resources data and processes across all departments and public entities. This initiative will enhance planning, decision-making and compliance checks related to the human resources in all the Public Service.

The outcome, optimising use of data, will also be supported by other initiatives mentioned earlier, namely the Once Only Principle (OOP), real-time measurement and monitoring, and the application of Artificial Intelligence.

Owner: Directorate for Compliance and Resourcing within P&SD supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

Accountability Outcome 2: Meeting Good Governance Obligations

21) **Initiative: Capacity Reviews**

Further to keeping in sight data regarding our employees as part of regular compliance checks, we will also seek to ensure that staff complements match the requirements and approved organisational structures. This means that we will continue to promote good governance through the periodical reviews and assessments, to ensure that resources and structures are designed and filled to meet the workload requirements effectively. P&SD will ensure that corrective measures are implemented in a sustainable manner. This initiative will form part of the development of the Integrated Human Resources Development System mentioned in 5.3.3 **Initiative 44** below.

Owner: P&SD

22) Initiative: Strengthening the Data Governance Council

The Data Governance Council was established by Art 25 of the S.L. 546.01 to serve as the focal point for co-ordination and mediation as may be necessary in relation to the management and oversight of the official registers and official records within the public administration functions. Further to the Council's existing members who hail from various backgrounds, an additional member whose area of expertise is ethics will be appointed to ensure that all of the Council's decisions have a sound ethical basis. The Council will also appoint ad hoc working groups where necessary to support the establishment of guidelines and best practice.

Owner: Data Governance Council

Accountability Outcome 3: Promoting and safeguarding compliance

23) Initiative: Enhanced Training Programmes for Public Officers

All training programmes currently offered to public officers across all grades, including management, will be enhanced to reflect our strategy, vision, mission and targets, and how the latter will be achieved. Apart from being acquainted with our principles of good governance as well as the established regulations in force, training will also be provided to support employee advancement. The training will ensure that officers are prepared for the next level of their career path and which will become part of the eligibility criteria for career progression and promotions. The knowledge, skills and competence offered by the training programmes will enable participants to understand the values and ethics enshrined by the Public Service, and how these can be applied in the various aspects of their work.

Owner: IPS supported by P&SD

Accountability Outcome 4: Increasing transparency & trust

24) Initiative: Data Consent and Exchange Management

Our work on the OOP will be supported not only by the creation of the base registers but also by an important mechanism which will govern the way our clients' data is shared within our internal systems. Whilst we make every effort to provide our clients with a seamless experience, we must also be mindful of their privacy and preferences when it comes to their data. A data consent and exchange platform will be set up to give clients visibility of the instances where they have given or withdrawn permission for their data to be shared, as well as the facility to manage such permissions.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

25) Initiative: Who Accessed My Data?

The Public Service processes data about individuals and organisations for the purpose of providing varied services and is planning to migrate more and more services online in the coming months. When it comes to the privacy of our clients' data, all decisions must be strongly supported by sound ethics. We believe that clients should have full visibility of their data; transparency generates trust in our systems which is in turn essential if our investment in technology is to continue to be successful. In addition to being able to manage consent for their data to be shared, clients will also have visibility of what data we hold about them, when their data has been accessed and by which department, and why their data was accessed and how it was used.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by the Implementation Division (OPM)

26) Initiative: Clear Status of Applications

Beyond giving our clients control over their data, we also want them to be informed and actively involved when requesting services. We will engage with both our internal and external clients further by being open and transparent about our services and enabling clients to instantly query the status of their service requests. This visibility will allow clients to follow their applications electronically throughout the service request process in real-time via suitable channels.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by the Implementation Division (OPM)

27) Initiative: Use of Smart Contracts

Smart contracts, based on distributed ledger technology (DLT) which supports trustworthy information and transactions based on good governance, are already in use by the Public Service. Such technology is currently used to store third party rental agreements within the Housing Authority, as well as educational certificates within the Ministry for Education. We intend to take the concept of smart contracts to the next level by expanding their use across the Public Service.

Owner: Implementation Division (OPM) supported by servizz.gov

28) Initiative: Tracking Progress & Delivering Results

A mechanism will be put in place to ensure that the progress of all the initiatives within this Strategy is measured. This will involve the development of a structure expressly for this purpose within the Implementation Division (OPM), together with processes and procedures to guide progress measurement and any action required as a result. This mechanism will eventually expand to cover various initiatives within the Public Service to ensure that we remain accountable to our clients and society at large.

Owner: Implementation Division (OPM) supported by the Strategy Steering Committee

5.3 Sustainability

We aim to achieve the following sustainability outcomes:

1. Creating and preserving intellectual capital
2. Reducing the Public Service's impact on ecology
3. Becoming an adaptable, agile, and lean organisation
4. Retaining the perceived status of model employer

Sustainability Outcome 1: Creating and preserving intellectual capital.

29) Initiative: Evolution of the Public Service through Research Opportunities

IPS has embarked on a project to strengthen and focus the efforts of its Research Unit in a number of ways. Firstly, by carrying out its own research including a training needs analysis, and processing data collated from the central personnel systems to identify the needs of the Public Service. Secondly the research unit will identify research areas to be taken up by students, sponsored or otherwise, for their thesis and assignments. A system will be designed to make it possible for students to be given the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the recommendations and outcomes that as a result of their dissertations and assignments.

Owner: IPS

30) Initiative: IPS Student Scheme

Public Service Week 2021 saw the launch of two degree courses offered by IPS, BA (Hons) in Procurement and Finance and BA (Hons) in Public Policy and Management. IPS students will have the opportunity of consolidating the academic with a work placement and will have the opportunity to form part of a scheme which provides a generous paid work-placement, in addition to the stipend, and mentoring whilst being a full-time IPS Student. On successful completion of the course the students will be taking up full-time employment with the Public Service. It is part of the IPS plan that it will expand the IPS Students Scheme to other areas and levels of study in the coming five years to meet the Public Service's requirements.

Owner: IPS

31) Initiative: Extension of the IPS Apprenticeship Scheme

The IPS is a registered sponsor, acting on behalf of the Public Service, within the MCAST Apprenticeship Scheme and engages apprentices on joint programmes of school-based and work-based learning leading to a recognised Vocational Qualification or Award from MQF Levels 3 to 6. Apprenticeships allow the students to combine work and study by mixing on-the-job training under the coaching and support of seasoned public officers. At the end of each level of the apprenticeship students would either have gained the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their chosen career or progressed onto the next apprenticeship level. This scheme will be extended to other disciplines as identified by IPS across the various ministries to address the needs of the Public Service. Ultimately all this is intended to attract and foster a more skilled and holistic workforce that can ensure sustainable structures.

Owner: IPS

32) Initiative: Recognised Prior Learning (RPL)

The wealth and strength of the Public Service is also enhanced, through the management and retention of existing institutional knowledge and experience. Using professional and scientific assessment methods, the project of Recognised Prior Learning is aimed at identifying on-the-job skills and knowledge not currently addressed or supported by academic qualifications, providing recognition, and rewarding experience. Whilst RPL has started on the procurement stream, a new pilot project will cover the career paths of various trades whereby the Public Service boasts a strong cohort of employees who have significant experience but may not always be complemented by academic qualifications.

Following the pilot project on trades, other important career paths of the Public Services will be addressed to ensure that experience is recognised and awarded with a system that evaluates experience. This initiative will allow for improved career progression and employee recognition and retention and therefore enhance sustainability.

Owner: IPS

33) Initiative: Central Registry

Throughout its existence, the Public Service has necessarily accumulated a significant amount of documents and data. More than 70 registries have accumulated, with more than 6700sqm of storage space used to house and organise such documents, resulting in a fragmented system which slows down their retrieval and complicates transfer of document ownership. The consolidation of all registries under a single roof supported by adequate security and storage, fast retrieval and digitising solutions will ensure swift and secure access to documents when required. A central registry will also enable smooth transfer of ownership of physical documents and ensure that the Public Service's collective knowledge is safeguarded and preserved. This initiative will also facilitate a quicker transition and preservation of selected documents to the National Archives.

Owner: Project team (identified and active)

34) Initiative: Electronic Document Management System

Further to the storage of Public Service's collective knowledge, it is imperative that the way in which we create, process and store documents is modernised. We are actively seeking to move away from inefficient paper and file-based systems to a system which is more collaborative and secure. Following a successful pilot project, work is already underway to introduce an electronic document management system across the rest of the Public Service. This will result in an updated system and processes which encompass all forms of communication (email, surface mail, etc), in particular the entire process covering the lifetime of a document, beginning with its creation within official government communication channels and ending with its transfer to the national archives in accordance with relevant retention policies. The successful implementation of the new system will rely on documented and automated procedures rather than tacit organisational knowledge.

Owner: Project team (identified and active), supported by the Implementation Division (OPM)

35) Initiative: Sustainable Structures

In order to design, implement and maintain the IT infrastructure and to ensure the legal and ethical compliance required is met to achieve the intrinsic and highly elaborate initiatives mentioned above in relation to the AI initiatives, data consent and exchange platform and the enterprise service bus mentioned for OOP, the Public Service needs to widen and strengthen the current structures to sustain the Core Group Digitalisation and the Digitalisation Unit under servizz.gov to ensure the full aims of these initiatives are fulfilled and all the attached benefits are realised.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

Sustainability Outcome 2: Reducing the Public Service impact on the Environment

Remote working, teleworking, service hubs have also contributed towards reducing the carbon footprint. Beyond existing initiatives, the strategy will look at what other incentives can address Public Service's needs sustainably.

36) Initiative: Eco Mobility

Apart from its clients' wellbeing, the Public Service must also be conscious of its employees' wellbeing as well as that of society. To this end, we will be focusing on a shift towards alternative means of mobility to make sure our employees can safely get to where their work requires them to be in a sustainable manner. We will explore the possibility of offering our employees benefits when using shared transport and greener alternatives to and from their workplace. We will also be investing in a smaller and greener central fleet of government vehicles and promoting measures for remote-working and online communications to reduce the need to travel. Where possible, our work will be undertaken in conjunction with the private sector to avoid duplication of services and ensure controlled costs.

Owner: Project team (identified and active)

37) Initiative: Green Public Procurement Plans

We will actively seek to make sustainable investments through the creation of additional guidelines for green public procurement, green budgeting tools, and green investment strategies for the Public Service. Green Public Procurement (GPP) is based on the strength of public spending, as GPP promotes more environmentally friendly choices. Malta's Second National Action Plan for Green Public Procurement, being finalised following public consultation, introduces the concept of circular public procurement, widening the concept of Green Public Procurement, to also promote the use of recovered materials, repairability and recycling. The plan intends to progressively increase the share of government's procurement of greener products to 90% of tenders which fall within the scope of Green Public Procurement.

Owner: Project team (identified and active)

38) Initiative: Green Building Management and Renovation Strategy

Guidelines will be created for the consideration of energy and water saving measures for the renovation, retrofitting and construction of government buildings. These will include renewable energy installation, potential for green roofs and other nature-based solutions, as well as measures that can be implemented to reduce energy and water use within and around the buildings. The guidelines should also include nature-based solutions to aid both mitigation and adaptation to climate change, such as an increase in tree coverage where possible to sequester carbon, increase in green infrastructure to provide shading and an improved micro-climate to combat the urban heat island effect, and to increase the capacity for water retention and storage, including the restoration or provision of wells or water reservoirs.

Owner: Project team (identified and active)

Sustainability Outcome 3: Become an adaptable, agile and lean organisation

The aim of the Public Service is to reaffirm its perceived outlook as model employer as well as to be more attractive to prospective applicants. These initiatives will seek to increase employee motivation, foster a sense of belonging, and make employees feel more valued. Together these components will enable our employees to provide a service of excellence.

39) Initiative: Remote Working

Over the last few years, we have become more conscious of the increased need for adequate work-life balance. The Public Service has been the model employer when it comes to family-friendly measures such as telework. Due to our employees' changing expectations, together with the lack of continuity in service provision due to possible disruptions, have been the driving forces behind the push towards remote working departing completely from the conventional telework arrangements. A formal framework has been set up to ensure that all eligible employees and identified

sections/departments can benefit from remote working opportunities with no negative effects on service provision. Depending on the type of work, our employees will be given all the necessary tools and training to provide high-quality services to our clients whilst maintaining a work-life balance which is suited to their needs.

Owner: P&SD supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

40) Initiative: Application of Robotic Process Automation

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is a form of digitalisation capable of reducing the burden associated with low-level repetitive tasks. Guidelines and training outlining how RPA will be applied to procedures and daily routines within the Public Service will be issued, to free up resources from repetitive tasks while at the same time improving the customer service experience and improving efficiency and accuracy by providing a solid basis for evidence-based decision-making.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM) and MITA

41) Initiative: Unified Communications, Cloud Printing and Scanning

Regardless of their location, we need to ensure that our employees have the tools necessary for them to carry out their duties, particularly for communication purposes. We will actively seek to provide printing and telephony facilities via the cloud, allowing our employees to be connected whenever and wherever they need to be.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

42) Initiative: Smart Service Design

The service design process will ensure that each service is built around a digital workflow platform, with a clear set of steps, of which a subset will be made visible to the client through the Citizen Portal. All the information about the service will be made available online through a single portal prior to the service being advertised. This will improve interoperability between our services and the entities providing them, minimise rework and ensure a seamless service for our clients.

Owner: QSD (P&SD) supported by ICT & Branding Unit (servizz.gov)

43) Initiative: Leadership Upskilling Programme

Inspirational and skilled leadership is pivotal for a Public Service which is seeking to consolidate its achievements, as well as prepare for future challenges. An enhanced Leadership Programme will address the current skills gaps as well

as the identification of succession planning and preparation for future leaders. The Programme, which will replace the existing Management Toolkit, will include Integrity Assessment, Psychometric testing, and additional leadership modules followed by the necessary coaching and support to address the identified gaps, including refresher courses in subsequent years. The Programme will become mandatory for all positions appointed through Senior Advisory Appointments Committee (SAAC) and will be open to all prospective leadership candidates.

Owner: IPS supported by Employee Support Programme (ESP) (P&SD)

44) Initiative: Integrated Human Resources Development System

The Public Service of the future needs adequate tools to perform its Human Resources-related functions. The Integrated Human Resources Development System will transform the current system, which is mainly based on the payroll system, into a more holistic system where the point of entry will be the Personnel Module. The new system will incorporate the initiatives mentioned earlier, namely the Performance Appraisal v 2.0, Capacity Reviews and the Full Visibility of Resourcing and Payroll Compliance for the Public Sector, supporting more efficient human resources planning, people management and decision-making based on real-time data, for all the Public Service.

Owner: P&SD

Sustainability Outcome 4: Reaffirming the Public Service's status as a Model Employer

45) Initiative: Expansion of Employee Support Programme (ESP)

The Public Service continuously endeavours to support and safeguard its employees' wellbeing, through initiatives such as the Employee Support Programme, the One-Stop-Shop for Public Officers, the Grievances Board, and the Medical Board, which has become a support service for the public officers in need of support and care plans. However, support which is not only immediate but also closer to the employee, has been identified as a need. New initiatives will include the expansion of the People 360 across the Public Service; exit interviews will provide data for managing talent retention and employee satisfaction; a Career Guidance programme in conjunction with IPS will seek to improve employee advancement and skills matching; and the expansion of ESP outreach to increase the physical and on the ground presence especially in the most sensitive, high risk and vulnerable areas. These initiatives are intended to increase employee retention, satisfaction, wellbeing, identification with the Public Service brand, and a healthier workforce, leading to increased motivation, productivity and an improved sense of belonging supported by a will to constantly improve.

Owner: P&SD

Conclusion





Our commitment to improve every aspect of our services and operations makes the future of the Public Service a bright one.

Having a precise vision in mind, built on the three crucial themes of accountability, sustainability and the provision of a service of excellence, this strategy outlines how the Public Service has committed itself to continuously improve on the myriad services being offered.

Guided by shared core values and guiding principles, the strategy has outlined how the Public Service banks on effective leadership, a holistic people management approach for enhanced employee empowerment, ongoing measurement for continuous improvement, evidence-based decision making, empathic policymaking, and a client-centric approach without any exceptions.

International indicators together with a variety of surveys, toolkits and benchmarks were closely analysed and a comprehensive picture of where we stand today was established. The identified shortcomings as established by this analysis were tied to the 3 pillars identified as enablers to the implementation of improvements, namely People, Services and Technology.

Measurement processes were also established, and initiatives within each theme were defined, all aimed at satisfying the twelve outcomes, four for each theme.



Internally, this strategy is promising a re-think in work practices, increased upskilling opportunities and the creation of more meaningful work. Further to the initiatives outlined in this strategy, ancillary projects are in the pipeline to complement a positive workplace culture that aligns with Public Service values.

Externally, this strategy is promising added value. Basing itself on emerging principles, the harnessing of best practices, better collaboration and co-ordination across the entire Public Service and increased efficiency, it is promising greater agility in service provision aided by an increased use of next-generation technology.

This strategy therefore calls for a broad value-based ethical culture within the Public Service. It calls for a Public Service employee that has a highly ethical mindset upholding sound ethical values. To uphold sound ethical values is to behave ethically, to be conscientious, courteous and competent in one's duties. More than ever before, decisions must be taken in a timely manner, fairly and impartially. Public funds are to be spent wisely and public property and equipment is to be used and cared for responsibly.

All of the above call for a higher degree of accountability. Together with the Public Service values of integrity, respect, loyalty, quality, non-discrimination and impartiality, higher degrees of accountability will lead to increased trust. Increased trust will lead to increased engagement and feedback. This Strategy is meant to be a living document testament to a truly seamless Public Service keen on providing a true service of excellence.

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Annex - AI Cross Cutting Projects

The below is an initial list of cross-cutting projects in line with **Initiative 10** spanning the Public Service.

1 Personalised services through an online service app for life events – general public

Citizens will have, via the Citizen Portal, access to information they require about public services based on their life events (such as information about vaccination following the birth of a child or grants for a solar water heater upon the purchase of a property). This will result in better service provision for our clients through the provision of information in a timely manner based on their needs. The initiative will also increase the automation of service application process where applicable.

Owner: servizz.gov supported by Implementation Division (OPM)

2 Predictive analysis and data driven decisions (Citizen Twin) – general public

Provide a platform for predictive analytics using existing data which has been anonymised to meet citizens' future needs. Moreover, it will give decision makers the opportunity to take more accurate data driven decisions which will result in forward-looking policies.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by MITA

3 Understanding Citizen Sentiments – general public

The ever increasing need to understand the feelings of the citizens from their reaction on websites and particularly on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, generates the need for automating the analysis process using anonymised data based on specific key words.

Owner: QSD within P&SD

4 Matching CV with Public Service jobs' eligibility criteria – public service

This project seeks to aggregate all data related to the eligibility criteria and wage brackets of all Public Service posts and grades. This will be stored in a database and linked to the enhanced 'Join the Public Service' app to enable citizens looking for a job with the Public Service by giving them the option to browse open roles in line with their qualifications and experience. Users can also express interest in roles which are not open and will be notified accordingly when the opportunity arises.

Owner: P&SD supported by Core Group Digitalisation

5 Empowering people management in the Public Service – Public Service

Transforming the role of People Management from a record-keeping to a proactive, data-driven approach towards training, motivating, and directing employees to optimise workplace productivity and promote professional growth. A process has begun whereby HR data is being consolidated and, with the help of AI, will support P&SD and the People Management Directorate to make better evidence-based decisions.

Owner: P&SD

6 Language technologies for Maltese – general public

This project will explore the effectiveness of language tools which can enable citizens to communicate with the Public Service in Maltese via the use of chatbots, voice assistants, etc. This will also help to expand text processing services in Maltese across the entire Public Service.

Owner: Core Group Digitalisation supported by MITA

7 Unified system for matching information across systems – general public

AI will be used to clean the information in the various databases by automating the matching and disambiguation of personal information across departments. This project will support the implementation of the Once Only Principle (OOP) and will also provide best practice guidelines for ensuring that data is maintained according to appropriate standards.

Owner: MFE supported by Core Group Digitalisation

8 Door numbering process – general public

The door numbering (address points) process is today carried out manually by the Address Management Unit (AMU) of the Electoral Office. Through this project the AMU will have the geo-positioning location of each address point. This will enable accurate and updated information of door numbers for every property in Malta and Gozo.

Owner: Address Management Unit within Electoral Office

9 Chatbot for business - businesses

Through this project clients will be provided with continuous support while also allowing them to apply for selected services immediately. This chatbot will not only facilitate the entire process but it will also reduce errors when applying for services.

Owner: Business 1st supported by MEI

10 Virtual citizen for tourism – general public

Malta shall be one of the very first countries to introduce a 3D Virtual Citizen, offering visitors a unique personalised experience when visiting our Islands. Based on their experiences and feedback, tourists will receive customised information such as places of interest they can visit.

Owner: Malta Tourism Authority supported by MTCP

