

Malta's Second Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Α

ACP African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries

AG Attorney General

AMR Antimicrobial Resistance

AROPE At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion

Al Artificial Intelligence
AML Anti-Money Laundering
ARB Asset Recovery Bureau

AWAS Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers

В

BCRS Beverage Container Refund Scheme BESS Battery Energy Storage Systems

BMI Body Mass Index

С

CAAC Children and Armed Conflict CAP Common Agricultural Policy

CAP SP Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan

CERV EU Program for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme.

CFT Counter-Financing of Terrorism

CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of

Wild Fauna and Flora

COVID-19 2019 novel coronavirus / coronavirus pandemic CRPD Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability

CSA Correctional Services Agency
CSO Civil Society Organisations

D

DHIR Directorate for Health Information and Research
DIER Department for Industrial and Employment Relations

DV domestic violence

Ε

EAFRD European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EC European Commission
EDF European Development Fund
EEZ Exclusive Economic Zone

ERA Environment and Resource Authority
ESG Environmental, Social, and Governance

EU European Union

EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions

EV EWA	electric vehicle Energy and Water Agency
F	
FAIE FAO FEAD FOI FSWS F4YSP	Fair Artificial Intelligence Educator Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived Freedom of Information Foundation for Social Welfare Services Food 4 You Support Project
G	
GBV GDP GEMSAP GES GHO GoF GPP	gender-based violence Gross Domestic Product Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan Good Environmental Status Global Health Observatory Group of Friends Green Public Procurement
H	
HIV HLPF	human immunodeficiency virus High-Level Political Forum
IAF IAS ICAO ICRC IFPA IMF ITS IPM IPU	Impact Assessment Framework invasive alien species International Civil Aviation Organization International Committee of the Red Cross Indicator of Food Price Anomalies International Monetary Fund Institute for Tourism Studies Integrated Pest Management Inter-Parliamentary Union
K	
KNŻ	Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażagħ /National Youth Council
L	
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
M	
MBIL MDB MDIA MEEC MEER	Multiple Beneficiary Intermediated Loan Malta Development Bank Malta Digital Innovation Authority Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration of the Grand Harbour (now the MEEC)

MENA MEYR MFET MGP MHA MHAL MOU MPA MPF MSPC MTA MTIP	Middle East and North Africa Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ministry for Gozo and Planning Ministry for Health and Active Ageing Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government Memorandum of Understanding Marine Protected Area Malta Police Force Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights Malta Tourism Authority Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Public Works
NAO NbS	National Audit Office of Malta Nature-based Solutions
NCPE NEET	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NGOs	Not in education, employment, or training Non-Governmental Organisations
NOIS	National Obstetrics Information System
NSC NSO	National Skills Council
NSO	National Statistics Office of Malta
0	
ODA OECD OHSA OPM	Official Development Assistance Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Occupational Health and Safety Authority Office of the Prime Minister
Р	
PV	Photovoltaic
R	
RDP	Rural Development Programme
R&D	research and development
R&I	Research and Innovation
S	
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDI SFFD	Sustainable Development Indicators Scheme for Food Distribution (previously known as the
<i>-</i> · · - ·	State-Funded Food Distribution Scheme)
SAIs	Supreme Audit Institutions
SIDS SJAF	Small Island Developing States St Jeanne Antide Foundation
SM	Science Malta
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

TSI	Technical Support Instrument
U	
UN UNESCO UNICEF UNHCR UNODC UNRWA	United Nations United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation United Nations Children's Fund United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime' United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East United Nations Security Council Presidency
V	
VNR VR	Voluntary National Review virtual reality
w	
WFP WHO WPS WSC	World Food Programme World Health Organization Women, Peace and Security Water Services Corporation

T



Statement by the Prime Minister of Malta

In 2015, the member states of the United Nations (UN) committed to the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the Implementation of the SDGs unequivocally demonstrates that Malta has made substantial progress. Notably, building on the experiences of the First VNR, Malta has successfully continued and even intensified the engagement of individuals, academia, businesses, social partners, and civil society. The notable achievements and best practice examples featured in the report serve as outstanding representations of the diverse range of initiatives that bring the 2030 Agenda to fruition.

This progress has been made possible not only by the government but by the unwavering commitment of all whose actions have been instrumental in advancing the implementation of the SDGs. Nevertheless, we have not yet reached our goal. Numerous global challenges, including the effects of climate change, demographic shifts, digital transformation, global competition, and geopolitical uncertainty, are significantly impeding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Malta Vision 2050 represents our steadfast commitment to addressing these challenges.

Despite these obstacles, we must persist in our efforts to ensure a better place for ourselves and future generations. This review highlights the essential levers and gaps we must address to achieve our objectives. We recognise the obstacles ahead, but with determination and collaboration, we can make the 2030 Agenda a resounding success for everyone.

Robert Abela Prime Minister of Malta



Statement by Minister for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness

We are pleased to present Malta's Second VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which reflects the substantial progress made towards achieving the SDGs since the presentation of our initial VNR in 2018.

The 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs set out a comprehensive framework that guides us towards resilience, environmental sustainability, and ensures social and economic wellbeing for all. As a small island state, Malta's geographic insularity poses distinct challenges, particularly in light of climate change and the ever-changing dynamics of the world we live in today. It is thus in our best interest to accelerate action on the 2030 Agenda. This report is a testament to the shared efforts of several stakeholders, capturing Malta's status and priorities for sustainable development.

With five years remaining until 2030; the urgency to deliver on the 17 SDGs has never been greater. The choices we make today will influence future outcomes. Malta is dedicated to establishing strong foundations for the implementation of the SDGs. Our commitment is strengthened by a well-established governance mechanism supported by the Sustainable Development Act. Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, developed through the dedication and involvement of all stakeholders, will propel our ambition to achieve a healthy and resilient environment, economy, and society for everyone.

Malta's Second VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development illustrates how the SDGs have been implemented by Malta, and emphasises the critical elements required to further facilitate progress and drive the desired long-term changes.





Highlights

The decision to present Malta's Second VNR on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development reaffirms the country's long-standing commitment towards sustainable development. The review builds on progress from 2018 when Malta presented its First VNR, including a new strategic framework, more extensive stakeholder involvement and reliance on comprehensive data.

Two pivotal strategic documents guide Malta's Sustainable Development agenda: Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050 (published 2018), and Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 (published 2024). The Strategy seeks to strengthen current institutional mechanisms and support structures, while paving the way for the introduction of new processes to allow for more effective, efficient, and coherent efforts. This Strategy focuses on five strategic goals which are considered the most significant for, and pertinent to, Malta, these being transitioning towards a climate-neutral green and blue economy; preserving sustainable urban development and cultural heritage; ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all; accelerating digital transformation, smart mobility and connectivity; and achieving social fairness and prosperity for all.

Malta has built a transparent and participatory multi-stakeholder engagement process that has evolved since the First VNR. The Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness (MEEC) was responsible for the coordination of Malta's Second VNR adopting a whole-of-government approach. A Technical Working Group led by MEEC comprised of representatives from all Ministries and the National Statistics Office of Malta (NSO) was established to ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based review.

Other important stakeholders including civil society representatives, academia, the private sector, and individuals were also mobilised in the process, ensuring a whole-of-society approach. Stakeholder engagement was central, facilitated by an interest-influence mapping exercise, tailored questionnaires, and a Multi-Stakeholder Forum.

Public awareness was enhanced through social media, ensuring inclusivity and the principle of Leaving No One Behind. Malta's Second VNR is therefore the result of a collaborative effort of various stakeholders and outlines their contributions towards the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

Malta acknowledges the critical role of young people in advancing sustainable development. Extensive consultations, including a dedicated SDG Youth Meetup, provided platforms for youth to recognise and discuss progress, challenges, and future directions related to the SDGs. These contributions are highlighted in Malta's Second VNR through a dedicated chapter written by Malta's SDG Youth Champions and the UN Youth Delegate.

Statistics and relevant data are essential for measuring the progress of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Enhanced collaboration with the NSO has strengthened data collection and monitoring systems, supporting evidence-based policymaking and accountability. Malta's Second VNR is now complemented by a comprehensive Statistical Annex highlighting Malta's evolution across all SDGs since 2015. The First VNR highlighted substantial gaps in data availability, especially regarding disaggregated data and long-term sustainability metrics. Since then, a robust database on the Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) was developed by the NSO, allowing for more accurate tracking of progress across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the SDGs.

The Second VNR showcases the Maltese Government's efforts in adopting multiple initiatives that have contributed positively to socio-economic and environmental sustainability. Indeed, the indicators verify the effectiveness of the measures implemented with reduction in poverty particularly among adults aged 18-64, rising employment rates, growth in small-scale industries and greater investment in innovation. Malta has made strong advancements in gender equality, reducing pay gaps, increasing female representation in leadership and politics, and strengthening legal frameworks against gender-based violence. In education, completion rates have risen, and digital skills have improved. In healthcare, significant progress has been made with increasing life expectancy and improving healthcare coverage. Urban greening, heritage preservation, and air pollution reduction have enhanced environmental quality. Measures have also been effective in reducing domestic material consumption and increased municipal waste recycling. Ambitious measures for renewable energy and the expansion and modernisation of electricity infrastructure also led to positive results. Moreover, Malta has nearly universal access to safe drinking water and full wastewater treatment coverage.

Marine protection has made noteworthy progress, with the establishment of 18 Marine Protected Areas, greatly expanding the coverage of protected marine areas over the years.

These positive trends reflect Malta's commitment to sustainable development. However, the indicators also underscore the need for further action, particularly in response to global challenges such as rising geopolitical uncertainty, the climate crisis, social inequalities, and digitalisation.

In conclusion, the Second VNR builds on the lessons learned from the first review, demonstrating considerable progress in Malta's approach to sustainable development. The forthcoming Sustainable Development Action Plan for 2030 will build on the gaps identified in Malta's Second VNR, further consolidating these efforts and ensuring Malta continues to advance towards the SDGs.



Introduction

Malta's Second VNR highlights Malta's efforts to mainstream the SDGs across its national policies, strategies, and development plans, placing a strong focus on balancing economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social cohesion. The Second VNR reflects an updated understanding of Malta's path towards sustainability, addressing both new opportunities and persistent challenges.

As a small island state in the Mediterranean, Malta faces unique sustainability challenges influenced by its geographic and demographic characteristics. The country's limited natural resources, high population density, and substantial dependence on external resources and markets pose complex challenges to sustainable development pathways across multiple but interconnected domains, including infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and social and economic systems.

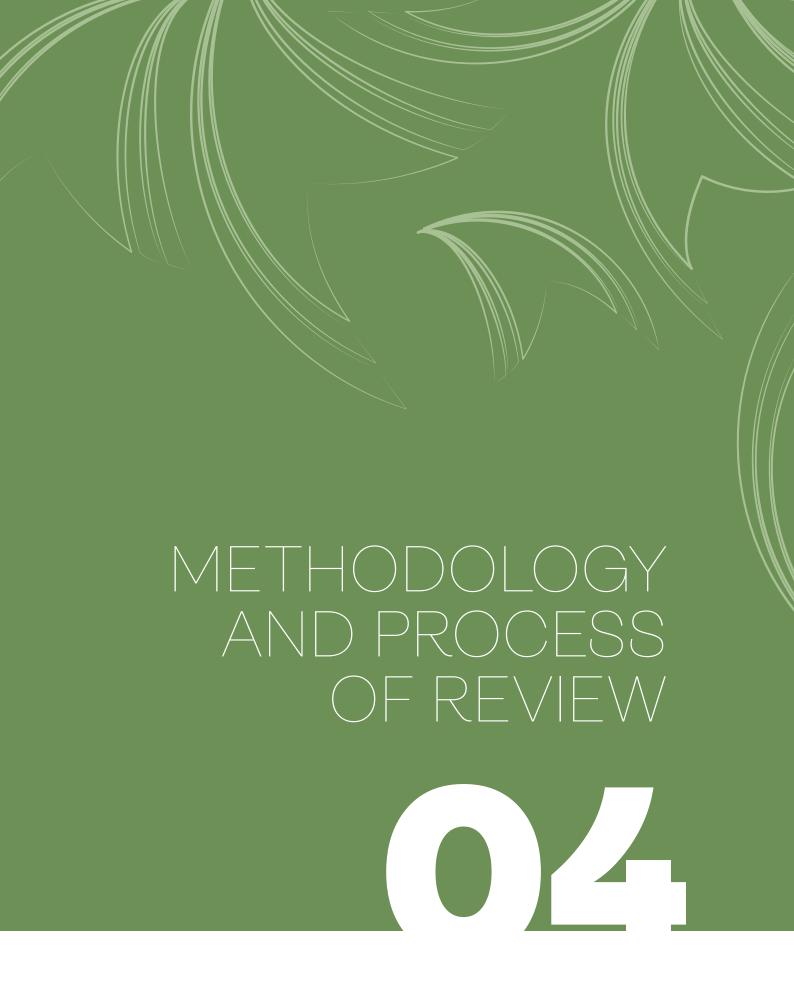
In recent years, Malta's economy has experienced robust growth, bolstered by thriving sectors such as tourism, financial services and digital gaming. While this economic success has supported national development, it also intensifies pressures on the environment and natural resources, with key challenges recorded in areas such as waste management, water scarcity, meeting rising energy demands and mitigating and adapting to climate change. Addressing these interconnected issues remains a priority for Malta as it strives to achieve its SDGs.

Despite these constraints, Malta has embraced sustainable development as a core element of its national policy framework. After the First VNR, two key strategies were developed: Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050 (2018) and the subsequent Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 (2024).

A set of national SDIs and targets were developed to monitor the implementation of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. These efforts were complemented by the work of the National Expert Group on SDIs, established in 2021, presided by the NSO and composed of technical officers from all Ministries and Entities, which facilitated coordination among stakeholders in SDI-related activities to address existing gaps.

Moreover, since 2019 the SDGs have been integrated into the national budget process. Ministries have adopted the 2030 Agenda as a guiding framework to their strategies. These efforts are supported by robust stakeholder engagement, with Malta adopting an inclusive approach to the review process, ensuring that voices from across sectors—government, private, and civil society—are integrated into the national review.

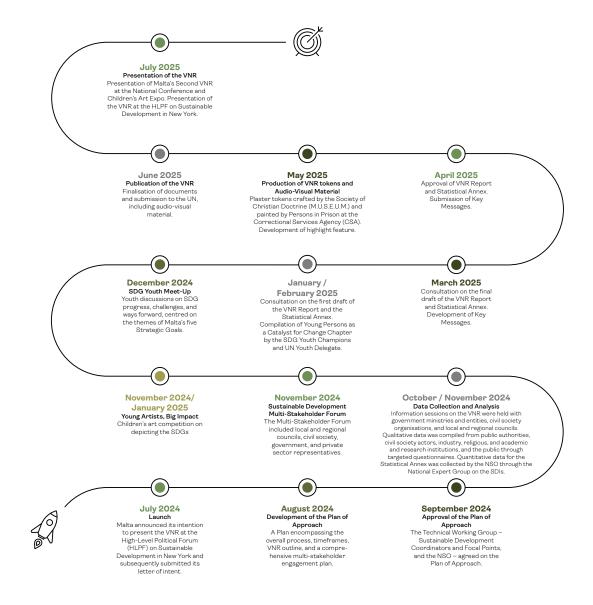
The Second VNR will delve into specific areas of progress and ongoing challenges, reflecting Malta's dedication to ensuring that sustainable development remains at the forefront of national and international policy commitments. It provides a comprehensive overview of Malta's efforts to align national development with global sustainability frameworks, reaffirming Malta's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its readiness to address both current and future challenges through coordinated and inclusive action. By tackling structural inequalities, advancing environmental sustainability, and amplifying its international impact, Malta strives for resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking development.



Methodology and Process of Review

The preparation of Malta's Second VNR adhered to a robust and inclusive methodology designed to ensure comprehensive coverage of the country's progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Building on the first VNR conducted in 2018, this review expanded its scope by adopting a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach, placing a stronger emphasis on stakeholder engagement. The review was structured to provide an in-depth assessment of Malta's progress based on robust data, while also identifying areas for improvement and aligning national efforts with international commitments.

The methodology for the VNR was informed by the principles of follow-up and review outlined in paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda. These principles emphasise accountability, inclusiveness, and the promotion of partnerships, all of which were central to the VNR process in Malta. The review considered both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the implementation of the SDGs across various sectors, drawing from national statistics, policy evaluations, and stakeholder input.



Scope, Depth, and Limitations

The VNR process utilised a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach and involved extensive stakeholder engagement, capturing a comprehensive view of progress and challenges across sectors. Quantitative data from SDIs was complemented by qualitative insights from tailored questionnaires and discussions from the Multi-Stakeholder Forum. This robust approach provided detailed coverage of Malta's progress, enabling the identification of targeted interventions across all SDGs.

While Malta's Second VNR adopted a comprehensive and inclusive approach, certain limitations were encountered during its preparation. Efforts to engage stakeholders, including the general public, achieved varied participation levels while there were also challenges associated with ensuring timely and accurate submissions from all stakeholders. Despite these challenges, the review effectively used the best available data and insights, providing a broad and reflective assessment of Malta's progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

Process and Stakeholder Engagement

The preparation of the VNR was coordinated by the Sustainable Development Directorate within the Office of the Permanent Secretary, MEEC. A whole-of-government approach was central to the process, with input from various ministries and entities. This ensured that the implementation of the SDGs was assessed not only at the national level but also across sectors and institutions. This collaboration was facilitated through the establishment of a technical working group composed of the Sustainable Development Coordinators and Focal Points, and the NSO.

Stakeholder engagement was a central pillar of the VNR process, facilitated by a comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise using an interest-influence matrix. This tool categorised stakeholders based on their level of interest in the SDGs and their capacity to influence outcomes. The engagement process was tailored to reflect the varying levels of influence and interest, ensuring that key contributors were effectively involved while also including marginalised groups.

Three tailored questionnaires were developed to gather input from various stakeholders. In conjunction with these questionnaires, information

sessions were held with stakeholders to provide clarity on the questions and to encourage active participation in the review process. These sessions were essential in ensuring that the feedback received was both detailed and reflective of the diverse perspectives within Malta.

In the preparation of this VNR, Malta also sought to innovate in its engagement with stakeholders. Social platforms enhanced communication and increased public awareness of the SDGs and the VNR, encouraging broader participation from the Maltese population.

After the questionnaires were distributed, responses were reviewed and validated through a multi-layered process. Government ministries and entities provided data that was cross-referenced with national statistics from the NSO using SDIs to ensure accuracy. Public and stakeholder input was analysed to identify key themes and areas of progress or concern. This validated data was then integrated into the VNR to provide a comprehensive view of Malta's progress across sectors.

Technical Working Group

A technical working group was established, comprising of the Sustainable Development Coordinators (Permanent Secretaries within each Ministry), the Sustainable Development Focal Points (Directors responsible for policy and programme implementation within each Ministry), and the NSO. This whole-of-government approach facilitated comprehensive data collection and aligned Malta's efforts across different sectors with the national SDG agenda. The technical working group agreed on the following:

Content: A balanced approach to the various aspects of sustainable development, including both internal and external dimensions. It includes a fair and critical evaluation of progress since 2018, notable achievements and good practices, interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs, as well indicators for monitoring the SDGs.

Structure: The VNR follows the guidelines proposed by the UN and adopts a concise approach, presenting the essential contributions of all stakeholders to the SDGs, including a statistical annex.

Process: Engage all stakeholders from the beginning to contribute to the report.

Questionnaires and Information

Sessions

Three tailored questionnaires were developed to gather input from various stakeholders:

- 1. Ministries and Local and Regional Councils:
 This questionnaire focused on collecting data relevant to each entity's work on the SDGs, including flagship initiatives, challenges, and strategies for improving SDG implementation. It also captured their contributions to national targets.
- 2. General Public: Aimed at the residents of Malta, this questionnaire gauged public awareness of the SDGs and gathered feedback on government actions, as well as suggestions for improving progress towards the goals.
- 3. Civil Society, Industry, Academia, and Religious Institutions: This questionnaire sought detailed information on progress since the First VNR, such as challenges, success stories, and contributions to the SDGs. It also explored partnerships and collaborations that supported the goals.

These questionnaires were accompanied by information sessions held in October 2024, with Government Entities, Local and Regional Councils and Voluntary Organisations to guide them in providing feedback through the questionnaires referred to above.

Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Forum

A central element of stakeholder engagement was the Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Forum, held in November 2024. This forum brought together representatives from the public administration, local councils, civil society, academia, businesses and other sectors to engage in thematic workshops and plenary sessions. Participants discussed progress on the SDGs, shared insights on challenges and ways forward, and provided input on Malta's sustainable development journey. The forum was essential in fostering dialogue and collaboration across sectors, ensuring that the VNR process was truly inclusive and reflective of a wide range of views.

The outcomes of the forum were compiled into a summary report and were integrated into the VNR. This report highlighted the key discussions, contributions, and recommendations from stakeholders, ensuring their input was accurately reflected in Malta's review.



Engagement of Young Persons and Children

The role of young persons and children as catalysts for change was acknowledged and encouraged in the preparation of Malta's Second VNR, with young persons being central to Malta's implementation of the goals.

The SDG Youth Champions initiative was launched in November 2024 by the MEEC, Agenzija Żgħażagħ, and the Kunsill Nazzjonali taż-Żgħażagħ (National Youth Council - KNZ), with the aim of creating more awareness among young persons about sustainable development and the SDGs. Five young persons were given the opportunity to inspire positive change by representing and advocating for one of the five Strategic Goals of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. The SDG Youth Champions took on an active role in Malta's VNR by submitting a chapter integrating the perspectives of youths and children in Malta. The chapter presented is informed by youth-centred discussions and deskbased research, focusing on perceptions of Malta's progress on the SDGs, good practices, challenges and ways forward, as well as incorporating children's vision for a sustainable future.





Central to gathering this feedback was the SDG Youth Meet-Up organised in December 2024, featuring round-table workshops led by the SDG Youth Champions and facilitated by Agenzija Żgħażagħ and KNŻ. It featured discussions on SDG progress, challenges and ways forward, centred on the themes of Malta's five Strategic Goals.



A Children's Art Expo, launched in November 2024, invited Year 4 to 6 students across Malta to illustrate, through the artistic medium of their choice, including drawing, painting, sculpture, literature and videography, their understanding of the SDGs and efforts to achieve them. These submissions culminated in an exhibition, while audio-visual submissions alongside a performance by students from Malta's Visual and Performing Arts were performed during a National Conference on the official presentation of Malta's Second

VNR, embedding the principle of Leaving No One Behind every step of the way and bringing further awareness to the SDGs among all those involved.

Engaging Religious Institutions and Vulnerable Groups

In coordinating Malta's Second VNR on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the SDGs, Malta ensured that the review was open, inclusive and participatory for all people with particular focus on the most vulnerable and furthest behind. To this end, in preparing commemorative tokens, the Sustainable Development Directorate, in collaboration with the



CSA, sought to integrate the efforts of Persons in Prison at the CSA, who were tasked with painting the tokens, further enhancing their skill set and instilling a sense of belonging. These plaster tokens were crafted by the Society of Christian Doctrine (M.U.S.E.U.M.), integrating an element of culture and showcasing the handcrafting skills of locals.

Data Collection and Validation

Quantitative data was collected through the National Expert Group on the SDIs, chaired by the NSO, which provided key metrics on Malta's progress in economic, social, and environmental areas. The data presented in this VNR was extracted at the end of March 2025.

This data was supplemented by reports from Ministries on policy implementation and sector-specific indicators. Qualitative data was gathered through the stakeholder questionnaires and through the Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Forum, validated through a careful review process to ensure accuracy and relevance. This multi-pronged data collection approach allowed for a detailed and evidence-based assessment of Malta's sustainable development progress.



Policy and Enabling Environment

Malta's Second VNR reflects the country's ongoing commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since the First VNR in 2018, Malta has continued to strengthen policy frameworks, institutional mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement processes to accelerate progress on the SDGs. This section outlines the enabling governance framework and policies that support the implementation of the SDGs, focusing on how ownership of the 2030 Agenda has evolved, the integration of the SDGs into national frameworks, and the mechanisms for ensuring inclusive and coordinated implementation.

Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into the National Framework

Since 2018, Malta has progressively integrated the SDGs into its national framework through robust legislation, sectoral strategies and policies (referred to in Chapter 6), the national budget process, and capacity building efforts.

Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050 (published in 2018) and Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 (published in 2024) provide an overarching framework to further enable

the country to reach the SDGs in a more effective, efficient, and coherent way. The aim is to mitigate the silo approach among the Government's various administrative layers to ensure a more harmonised approach. Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 further aligns with the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs, while accounting for other developments and current EU, international and national commitments.

This Strategy focuses on five strategic goals, divided into a number of strategic objectives, which are considered the most significant for, and pertinent to Malta including:





Following the launch of the Strategy, the Sustainable Development Directorate developed a children's version in Maltese and English, in collaboration with the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) as part of the project "Empowering Children's Participation in Malta", co-funded by the European Union (EU) Programme for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV). The child-friendly version of the Strategy was distributed to all Year 3 students across Malta and Gozo, with hands-on sessions delivered by the Sustainable Development Directorate.

To achieve the ambitious goals and targets set in the Vision and Strategy for 2050, Malta is currently developing a Sustainable Development Action Plan for 2030, which will include concrete actions to ensure the attainment of these targets. This Action Plan will serve as a detailed roadmap for the next phase of Malta's sustainable development agenda.

With the aim of strengthening policy coherence for sustainable development, every year the Public Service also undertakes an exercise to align the budget measures with the SDGs, a practice initiated in 2019. This process involves a comprehensive assessment by all ministries to evaluate how their respective measures and initiatives contribute towards attaining the SDGs. Such an approach not only fosters transparency and accountability within

the Government's decision-making but also ensures that the principles of sustainable development are consistently prioritised in all phases of policy and programme implementation.

Building and enhancing capacity across Ministries to ensure effective mainstreaming of sustainable development principles across the workings of Government has been a priority for the past years. In 2020, workshops were held for key Government officials on the mainstreaming of sustainable development principles within the budget process. These workshops, facilitated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as part of a European Commission (EC) Technical Support Instrument (TSI) Project, served as a platform to advance peer learning and exchange of best practices on budget reporting and monitoring amongst senior officials working across all levels of Government. The aim was to assist Government to develop practical, innovative, and collaborative actions to move the sustainable development agenda forward.

Similarly in 2023, training sessions were conducted by the OECD as part of another EC TSI Project with the aim of increasing the capacities of public officers to examine the sustainability impacts of new legislations through the existing Impact Assessment Framework (IAF) that accompanies every new legislation (primary and subsidiary), bills and the transposition of an EU Directive into Maltese Law. Overall, the workshops aimed at:

- Highlighting the benefits of incorporating sustainability in the existing IAF.
- Identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities for improving the current processes, institutions, and tools to reflect Malta's Sustainable Development Strategic Goals and Objectives and enhance IAF's contribution toward coherent and evidence-based policy making.
- Increasing the understanding of the relevant officers involved in the legislation process of the benefits of accounting for sustainability within the IAF process.
- Encouraging and increasing the relevant officers' capacities to adapt the framework to apply the joint approach between sustainable development governance and better regulation.

This integration ensures that the principles of sustainable development guide legislative processes,

05

policy formulation, budgetary allocations, and programme implementation across sectors. Despite these advancements, integrating the SDGs into the national framework presents several challenges:

- Cross-Sectoral Alignment: Ensuring coherence between sectoral policies and the overarching SDG framework requires strong inter-ministerial coordination, which can be complex in practice.
- Data Limitations: Lack of data for certain indicators remains a barrier to effective planning and monitoring of SDG-related initiatives.
- Resource Allocation: Competing priorities and limited financial and human resources challenge the capacity to fully embed SDGs into all areas of governance.
- Stakeholder Inclusion: While frameworks are designed to be inclusive, engaging all relevant stakeholders, particularly underrepresented groups, in the planning an implementation processes requires ongoing effort.

Institutional Mechanisms and Ownership of the SDGs

Sustainable development is mainstreamed across the Public Administration, with a well-established governance mechanism underpinned by the Sustainable Development Act. This legislative framework provides for a system of coordination across the Public Administration to facilitate effective dialogue and cross-sectoral collaboration so that sustainable development is integrated in its day-to-day administration and operations.

Whilst the MEEC is the de facto Competent Authority, the Act designates the highest officials in each Ministry, the Permanent Secretaries, as Sustainable Development Coordinators and also provides for a Sustainable Development Focal Point in every Ministry, these being the Policy Development Directors. This coordination ensures that the SDGs are not just implemented in isolation but integrated across various policy areas and ensures that each Ministry's actions contribute to the national agenda for sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Directorate works closely with these Focal Points to provide guidance, coordinate efforts, and ensure that SDG implementation is consistent across all levels of government. This coordinated approach has

strengthened Malta's capacity to align its national policies with the SDGs while also responding to local needs and conditions.

Furthermore, bodies such as the Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network also aim at fostering exchange of views and national dialogue, as well as overseeing the implementation of sustainable development in Malta.

Furthermore, Article 14 of the same Act requires Parliament to annually hold a discussion without a vote on the Sustainable Development Annual Report, which is tabled by the Minister responsible for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Annual Report is prepared by the Sustainable Development Directorate in consultation with the Sustainable Development Focal Points. It highlights the policies, measures and initiatives taken to address the SDGs by the various government ministries, bodies, departments, and entities.

In 2021, the National Expert Group on Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) was set up. Presided by the NSO and composed of technical officers from all Ministries and Entities, the National Expert Group facilitates coordination among stakeholders in SDI-related activities to facilitate data collation and address existing gaps. Regular monitoring of the SDIs provide data to inform policy adjustments and ensure that Malta stays on track towards achieving the SDGs.

The National Audit Office (NAO) of Malta has conducted a number of performance audits in the areas of environment, climate change and sustainability both independently and in collaboration with other Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs). The sustainability theme ranks very highly in the NAO's strategic objectives, which stems from the understanding of its key importance for nurturing, sustaining, and increasing socio-economic development, which ultimately ensures the betterment in the quality of life of citizens.

Most of the NAO's audits, particularly those performance audits related to the safeguarding of the environment and sustainable development, make reference to the SDGs. Since 2018, the NAO published performance audit reports or follow-up reports dealing with Plastic Waste management, Marine Protected Areas, the safeguarding of Malta's groundwater and the uptake of renewable energy through the appropriateness of feed-in tariffs. Some of these audits listed below served as an input for parallel audit reports involving other Mediterranean and European SAIs, SAIs under the auspices of the EUROSAI Working Group on Environmental AUDITING. These reviews addressed directly or indirectly an array of SDGs.

AGENDA FOR	SUSTAINABLE	DEVELO I	PMENT

Year	Audit	SDG
January 2018	The designation and effective management of protected areas within Maltese waters	14
March 2018	Evaluation of Feed-In Tariff Schemes for Photovoltaics	7, 12, 13
July 2019	Are adequate mechanisms in place for the designation and effective management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the Mediterranean Sea?	14
October 2019	Safeguarding Malta's Groundwater – Follow-up	6, 13, 15
February 2021	The effectiveness of plastic waste management in Malta	3, 12, 14
October 2021	The designation and effective management of protected areas within Maltese Waters – Follow-up	14
May 2022	Joint Report on Management of Plastic Waste in Europe	3, 12, 14
October 2022	An Evaluation Of Feed-In Tariff Schemes for Photovoltaics – Follow-up	7, 12, 13

Additionally, ongoing audits address Malta's efforts in climate change adaptation, New Water, which is the generation of clean water from recovered sources as well as participation in the Climate Scanner Initiative, a global programme involving Supreme Audit Institutions led by SAI Brazil. This initiative provides various information on the progress achieved by governments worldwide in mitigating and adapting to climate change. The NAO also took the opportunity for conducting a joint audit with the Corte dei Conti - Italy on the Interreg Cross-Border programme between Malta and Italy which mainly dealt with common issues related to biodiversity preservation.

Additionally, the NAO has conducted and published full audits in relation to SDGs 1 and 2 through the reports compiled by NAO's Special Audits and Investigations Unit. The reports 'A review of the implementation of SDG 1 Malta's efforts to alleviating poverty' (December 2020) and 'A review of the implementation of SDG 2 – Addressing pre-obesity and obesity' (July 2023) focused specifically on the progress attained by Malta in implementing the SDGs in question by adopting methodologies developed by the INTOSAI Development Initiative

(the training arm of INTOSAI - the global forum for SAIs). These audits identified best practices as well as gaps in the implementation of the targets in conjunction with these SDGs.

The NAO's involvement in the area of environmental sustainability and the SDGs entailed the development of the Office's capacity to undertake such tasks effectively. To this end, the NAO is actively involved in the Environmental Auditing Working Groups of both INTOSAI and EUROSAI as well as IDI, where the NAO's representatives are developing methodologies and guidelines to facilitate the auditing of SDGs by SAIs.

When it comes to ownership of the SDGs, Malta's Sustainable Development Action Days, a nationwide annual initiative, which takes place over a period of ten days as part of the European Sustainable Development Week, puts the commitment for sustainable development in Malta in the limelight. The goal of the initiative is to attract public attention to the topic of sustainability and to motivate more people to act. Private individuals, Non-Governmental





Organisations (NGOs), companies, educational institutions and public authorities can take part through interactive activities promoting the SDGs. Malta's Sustainable Development Action Days take a participatory approach to governance that promotes broad mobilisation to fulfil the SDGs.

Leaving No One Behind

Malta's commitment to the principle of Leaving No One Behind is a cornerstone of its efforts to implement the SDGs. This principle has been embedded in national policies and strategies (referred to in Chapter 6) to ensure inclusivity and tackle inequalities across various sectors. The government has adopted a multi-faceted approach that focuses on creating an enabling environment for all, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The country's well-developed social policy, educational and healthcare systems are instrumental in preventing and tackling poverty and social exclusion. It ensures high-quality free healthcare and education for all, including disadvantaged and highly vulnerable groups. In line with the principle of Leaving No One Behind, targeted measures improve the living conditions of disadvantaged people, such as persons with disabilities, older persons, young people and children, single-parent families, the long-term unemployed and people from migrant backgrounds. The inclusion of young people in the implementation process is vital from Malta's perspective and is therefore encouraged through a wide variety of participatory programmes and projects.

Stakeholder engagement is a critical aspect of Malta's approach to inclusivity. Malta has enhanced its contribution to open government through various initiatives, such as the introduction of e-government to provide better public service, providing a legal framework for access to information, the launch of an open data webpage and an online public consultation platform where stakeholders and the public can participate. Policies are therefore developed through extensive consultations with civil society organisations, academic institutions, and affected communities. This participatory model ensures that the voices of marginalised populations are heard and integrated into policy decisions.

Thus, through targeted policies and strategies, Malta has effectively mainstreamed the principle of Leaving No One Behind in its SDG implementation. This comprehensive approach reflects a deep commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, is empowered to participate in and benefit from national development efforts.





Progress on Goals and Targets and Evaluation of Policies and Measures taken so far

Based on data in the Statistical Annex, this chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of all 17 SDGs. It presents the evolution of key indicators, emphasising Malta's strengths and challenges for each SDG. The overview for each SDG is enriched with a range of notable achievements and good practices across various sub-themes. These examples illustrate how the Maltese Government is actively working at different levels to positively contribute to the SDGs.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Malta faces challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. These challenges, particularly evident in the indicators discussed in the status section of each goal, require ongoing attention and effort to ensure that the country can meet its sustainable development objectives.

Additionally, this chapter highlights the interlinkages between different SDGs,

recognising that progress in one goal can significantly impact others.

Through this balanced approach, this chapter aims to provide a thorough understanding of Malta's current status in relation to the SDGs.

The progress towards the selected SDIs from 2018 (since Malta's First VNR) is assessed using the following visuals:

Assessment	Symbol
Achieved	✓
Progress towards achieving the target	^
Slight progress towards achieving the target	7
No Change	ightleftarrow
Slight movement away from achieving the target	A
Movement away from achieving the target	\downarrow
No Assessment Possible	÷
Proxy Indicator	*



SDG 1 - No Poverty

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
1.1	1.1.1 - Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	ightleftharpoons
1.2	1.2.1 - Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age	\rightleftharpoons
	1.2.2 - Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions	7
1.3	1.3.1 - Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	✓
1.4	1.4.1 - Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services	✓
1.a	1.a.2 - Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)	7

Status of Goal and Targets

Malta has made considerable efforts to address the issues of poverty and social protection in recent years, achieving progress in some areas while facing persistent challenges in others. The proportion of population living below the poverty line in Malta experienced a slight decrease between 2018 and 2023 (16.8% vs. 16.6% in 20231). However, demographic differences during this period become apparent when analysing different age groups. For example, the proportion of the population aged 18-64 years living below the national poverty line steadily declined from 13.3% in 2018 to 12.1% in 2023, respectively. In contrast, vulnerabilities continue to persist among children, with the proportion of the population aged under 18 living below the national poverty line gradually decreasing from 21.4% in 2018 to 19.3% in 2022, but then increasing to 22% in 20232.

Targeted policies led to a reduction in child poverty up to 2022, supported by strategic frameworks such as the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024. The National Strategy for Further Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035 is the renewed Strategy, developed with the primary aim of achieving a 6% reduction in poverty or social exclusion among children and a 3.1% reduction in the at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of the total population by 2030 (from the 2019 baseline).

Universal access to essential services such as sanitation, drinking water and waste collection remains a hallmark, achieving 100% coverage³. More than half of the total government spending is associated with essential services like education, health, and social protection, representing 52% of total expenditure in 2023. Social protection resulted in the largest spending at 26.6% of total government spending in 20234.

lbid.
WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, and NSO

On the international front, Malta has extended its anti-poverty initiatives through contributions to organisations like UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and direct aid to crisis-affected regions. These measures reflect Malta's commitment to combatting poverty both domestically and globally through sustainable and inclusive strategies.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability: The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024 has served as the guiding document for the past decade, addressing, by 2022, 93 out of its 94 strategic policy actions through 701 implemented measures. The National Strategy for Further Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025-2035, which was adopted in 2025, goes beyond income disparities, promoting broader wellbeing through access to education, healthcare, and employment. With a strategic foresight approach, it seeks to anticipate future shocks and opportunities, proposing actions to reach the targets to reduce the At-Risk-of-Poverty rate or Social Exclusion (AROPE) rate by 3.1% and lower child poverty or social exclusion by 6% by 2030. The National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030 is a pivotal initiative aimed at improving the quality of life for children, particularly the most vulnerable, with services in social protection, early childhood education and care, education (including schoolbased activities), healthcare, heath nutrition and adequate housing.

The Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030 will enhance the overall childhood experience through targeted support, enabling all children to reach their full potential. This Policy is built on four national priorities, namely: improving children's well-being; creating a better environment for children; strengthening child participation; and supporting families with children. Financial assistance programmes include the largest-ever increase in children's allowance of €250 per child in 2024, benefiting 42,000 families with 63,000 children, as well as reforms to pension systems, thus supporting low-income families and pensioners. The reform of the Unemployment Benefit (1,437 beneficiaries), whereby the rate of the benefit is now linked to the individual's salary prior to unemployment, not only provides more equitable, realistic, and responsive financial support to those facing unemployment, but also contributes to sustainable development by promoting economic resilience, reducing the at-risk-of-poverty rate, and supporting a smoother transition back into the workforce.

Additionally, mechanisms for adjusting benefits based on inflation, such as the Additional Cost of Living Benefit, extended to 99,000 families in 2023, have provided additional protection against economic shocks.

Social Protection Systems and Measures for All:

As part of Malta's pension strategy, the Pension Action Plan for 2021-2027 was introduced with the aim to ensure adequate and sustainable income for the elderly. Its primary objectives include improving pension adequacy, maintaining sustainability for those retiring post-2027, addressing gender imbalances in pension entitlements, and reducing dependence on a single pension within couples. Additionally, the Plan emphasises extending working careers, discouraging early retirement as the pension age rises to 65 years, and fosters the development of supplementary income sources during retirement. These efforts, alongside reforms in pensions and social assistance, reinforce safety nets for the elderly, enhancing overall resilience and social inclusion.

Article 64B of Malta's Social Security Act (Chapter 318) mandates a review of the pension system every five years. The Pensions Strategy Group, comprising government and external experts, is tasked with preparing each strategic review report. In this regard, the 2025 Pensions Strategy Review Report is slated for public consultation in Q4 2025.

The ĠEMMA Know, Plan, Act initiative focuses on building financial capability among Maltese citizens. Through collaborations with various stakeholders, it offers resources and training for children, adults, older persons and professionals, while also conducting research such as the OECD's international study on financial literacy and inclusion. Following the National Financial Capability Strategy launched in January 2022, work is underway on the third National Financial Capability Strategy (2025–2030).

Community Engagement and Partnerships: The

Maltese Government has entered into a number of Public Social Partnerships Agreements (PSPs) with NGOs who are actively involved within the social welfare services sector. As an example, in 2024, the MSPC entered into thirty-five (35) PSPs with twenty-five (25) NGOs. The NGOs, with whom these PSPs were established, operate in the following sectors: alternative care, residential care for adults and families, addictions, domestic violence, mental health, and outreach and community services. The budget allocated for 2024 was approximately €12 million.

Humanitarian Contributions: Malta's contributions to global poverty alleviation include financial support for international organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR, with annual unearmarked contributions during UNHCR pledging conferences aimed to assist forcibly displaced and stateless populations. Additionally, Malta has provided targeted humanitarian aid to regions in crisis, reflecting a strategic focus on its immediate surroundings, particularly North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Malta has also contributed towards war-torn countries, directly supporting vulnerable communities affected by conflict and instability, which are primary drivers of poverty. For instance, medical equipment, generators and essential items were donated to Ukraine as part of winterisation efforts, ensuring communities have access to critical resources during severe conditions. Recently, Malta has substantially increased its support towards Gaza, mainly through its funding towards UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) due to its critical role in assisting Palestinian refugees.

In support of vulnerable populations globally, Malta has actively contributed to humanitarian initiatives in Afghanistan through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as to demining efforts in conflict-affected areas, which are essential for safe reconstruction and long-term development. Contributions to Action Against Hunger at the Moldova Support Platform Ministerial Meeting in 2023 have also directly supported Ukrainian refugees in Moldova. Further reflecting its commitment to global solidarity, Malta's contributions to UNICEF have addressed the needs of vulnerable children in countries such as Haiti, focusing on health, education, and protective services. These efforts, alongside support for refugee centres and humanitarian responses to disasters in Turkey and Syria, highlight Malta's dedication to reducing poverty and inequality beyond its borders.

These above-mentioned achievements underscore Malta's holistic approach to combatting poverty, balancing immediate relief measures with long-term strategies to foster resilience and inclusion for all segments of society. Internationally, Malta's financial and material contributions have addressed urgent humanitarian needs and supported sustainable development efforts in crisis-affected regions. Initiatives such as donations to UNICEF, UNHCR, and Action Against Hunger have directly improved the living conditions of displaced and marginalised communities, including Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable children in countries like Haiti.

By engaging in demining projects, providing critical winterisation resources, and supporting reconstruction in post-conflict areas, Malta underscores its role as a proactive global partner. These efforts not only enhance Malta's international standing but also demonstrate the interconnected nature of development challenges, affirming the nation's commitment to Leaving No One Behind while fostering sustainable progress on a global scale.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's initiatives for SDG 1 exhibit strong interlinkages with other SDGs. The Children's Policv Framework 2024-2030 and National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030 align with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by improving resources and opportunities for all children, and by implementing additional targeted measures to children experiencing poverty and social exclusion, ensuring long-term developmental benefits for children and society at large.

SDG 1 initiatives also contribute to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing disparities faced by low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is supported by reforms to unemployment benefits and pension systems, which enhance financial stability and promote equitable growth.

However, there are notable trade-offs. Budget constraints may arise as funds are allocated across diverse poverty-reduction initiatives, potentially limiting investments in other areas, such as renewable energy or advanced healthcare systems. In summary, Malta's initiatives reflect a holistic commitment to SDG 1, leveraging interconnections with health, education, equity, economic growth, and sustainable urban development. By addressing trade-offs effectively, these programmes can maximise their impact while supporting the broader sustainable development agenda.



SDG 2 - Zero Hunger

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
2.1	2.1.1 - Prevalence of undernourishment	:
	2.1.2 - Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	\downarrow
2.2	Obesity rate by body mass index*	7
	Percentage of children aged 11, 13 and 15 years who are obese or overweight*	7
2.3	2.3.1 - Volume of production per labour unit by classes of farming/pastoral/forestry enterprise size	7
2.4	Utilised agricultural area*	7
	Area under organic farming*	7
	Total area in hectares of agricultural land in Malta under organic farming*	7
2.5	2.5.1 - Number of (a) plant genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium- or long-term conservation facilities	7
	2.5.1 – Number of (b) animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium- or long-term conservation facilities	:
	2.5.2 - Proportion of local and transboundary breeds classified as being at risk of extinction	:
2.a	2.a.1 - The agriculture orientation index for government expenditures	\downarrow
	Government support to agricultural research and development*	7
2.c	2.c.1 - Indicator of food price anomalies	\downarrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

SDG 2 emphasises the eradication of hunger, achieving food security, improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Globally, food insecurity and malnutrition threaten millions, exacerbated by conflict, climate change, and economic instability. Achieving SDG 2 is vital for breaking the cycle of poverty, improving health outcomes, and fostering sustainable livelihoods, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. By focusing on sustainable agricultural practices, equitable food systems and nutritional support, nations can ensure that everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

In Malta, the prevalence of undernourishment has remained below 2.5% from 2018 to 2022⁵. The prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population was reported to be at 4.4% in 2018 and increased to 8.2% in 2022⁶, almost double the previous figure . However, considering the substantial growth in the Maltese population, the number of individuals experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity per thousands of people has remained relatively stable, with the total population affected consistently less than 100 per thousand people in 2018 and 2022.

The 2019 obesity rate by Body Mass Index (BMI) was 64.8 (overweight), decreasing to 62.5 in 2022⁷. Between 2018 and 2022, the percentage of 13-year-olds considered overweight or obese decreased for both males and females⁸. The largest reductions in the percentage of people considered overweight or obese occurred for 15-year-old males, with 41% in 2018, which decreased to 31% in 2022.

Regarding agriculture, the utilised agricultural area in 2018 was reported to be 11,580 hectares, decreasing to 10,220 hectares by 2023, with 0.41% of the area under organic farming in 2018, rising to 0.62% in 20229. To provide context, agricultural production in Malta is characterised by a constant production throughout the year. There is an ageing farming community, since younger generations tend not to pursue a career in the agricultural sector, due to various factors that make this career path unattractive.

Young farmers face a wide array of barriers to enter agricultural activity, especially in obtaining land, due to the high costs of purchasing or renting agricultural land. In Malta and Gozo, fragmentation of land as a result of succession and inheritance is another factor that makes the sector unattractive. Difficulties in obtaining loans for business investments, problems in accessing markets, and resistance from older farmers to pass on their experience to non-family individuals also pose struggles for a new farmer to enter the industry.

In terms of genetic resources for this sector, 2 local animal breeds were kept in the country in 2018, increasing to 3 in 2024, with the number of transboundary breeds, including extinct ones, rising from 5 to 7 over the same period. Additionally, in 2024, the Maltese honeybee Apis mellifera ruttneri was registered on the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Domestic Animal Diversity Information System (DAD-IS). The number of accessions of plant genetic resources stored ex situ totalled 121 in 2018 but reached 127 in 2022¹⁰. The number of local breeds whose risk of extinction status is unknown has remained at 2 since 2018, whereas the number of local breeds which are not extinct rose from 2 to 3 between 2018 and 2024¹¹.

From 2018 to 2022, the agriculture value added share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from 0.62% to 0.77%, whereas the agriculture orientation index for government expenditures fell from 2.08 to 1.27 over the same period 12. The agricultural share of government expenditure has decreased from 1.29% in 2018 to 0.98% in 2022 13, with government support to agricultural research and development (R&D) increasing from 1,116,000 euro in 2018 to 1,217,000 in 2023 14.

On the topic of food accessibility, the Indicator of Food Price Anomalies (IFPA) stood at 1 for rice and -0.5 for flour in 2020, changing to 4.4 and 0.3 respectively by 2023¹⁵. The IFPA by Consumer Food Price Index increased from 0.21 in 2018 to 1.04 in 2023¹⁶.

⁵ FAO

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Eurostat

Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (2023)

⁹ Eurostat

¹⁰ FAO

¹¹ MAF

¹² NSO13 Ibid.

¹⁴ Eurostat

¹⁵ FAO

¹⁶ Ibid.

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Access to Safe and Nutritious Food: Building on the robust framework of national schemes detailed under SDG 1, Malta has taken meaningful steps to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to essential resources. These include programmes like the Children's Allowance, the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the Food 4 You Support Project (F4YSP) and the Scheme for Food Distribution (previously known as the State-Funded Food Distribution Scheme (SFFD)), which have provided critical food and financial aid to thousands of families across Malta, For instance, the FEAD has distributed more than 75,000 food packages since 2018 and the F4YSP and SFFD have distributed 36,937 food packages since 2023 to households in need, directly addressing food insecurity and ensuring that basic nutritional needs are met.

In order to promote better nutrition in schools, the EU School Scheme has been implemented at the national level since 2017, which involves the regular provision of portions of fresh fruit, vegetables and milk to school children. The scheme also involves educational campaigns to further promote healthy eating choices. During the COVID-19 period due to closure of schools, a temporary voucher system was implemented – this entailed the distribution of vouchers to children, which could be exchanged for fresh milk from any shop selling milk in Malta and Gozo.

To guide public health and nutrition policies, a national study was carried out to identify the associations between different lifestyle patterns and BMI of 4–5-year-old children attending kindergarten 2 (KG2) in Malta and to measure the BMI of 5-16-year-old children attending primary, middle and secondary schools in Malta and Gozo. Furthermore, BMI tests and nutritional assessments for the elderly at St Vincent De Paul Long-Term Care Facility continue to be performed to detect risks of malnourishment. Tests are done twice a year, with more than 15,000 tests conducted since 2018.

Malta actively supports the implementation of SDG 2 through its advocacy, contributions and initiatives targeting food security, malnutrition and sustainable development in the developing world. During its UN Security Council (UNSC) Presidency term, Malta has been active in addressing the link between food security and conflict, especially in regions vulnerable to climate change and instability. Through its UNSC statements, Malta has continuously highlighted the security threats posed by food shortages in conflict zones and stressed the need for resilient food systems.

It called for stronger international cooperation to address the root causes of food insecurity and prevent hunger crises during conflicts. In 2023, Malta participated and pledged in the 3rd Ministerial Meeting of the Moldova Support Platform in Paris, donating to Action Against Hunger to support Ukrainian refugees in Moldova.

Malta has also regularly demonstrated its commitment to supporting vulnerable populations by providing financial contributions to organisations working on issues related to food security, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the FAO. This has included participating in pledging conferences relating to the fight against hunger, ensuring critical food assistance and nutritional support for those also displaced by conflict.

Similarly, Malta also provides annual contributions to international organisations such as UNICEF. These funds address the needs of vulnerable children in wartorn and crisis-affected countries, including Sudan, Haiti, and others. Through this support, Malta helps deliver essential nutrition, healthcare and protective services, enabling children to thrive despite the challenges posed by conflict and instability.

In 2020, amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, Malta made a significant contribution to international development aid by donating 500 tonnes of high-quality Maltese ware potatoes to Namibia, a country severely affected by prolonged drought and widespread food insecurity. These potatoes—typically exported to EU markets for their premium quality—were packed in 25kg sacks and shipped by sea, arriving in Namibia after approximately two months in transit. The aim of this contribution was to support nearly half a million Namibians experiencing food scarcity.

In addition to the Namibia initiative, Malta also contributed financially to other Official Development Assistance (ODA)-eligible countries. Notably, in the latter part of 2020, Malta extended financial assistance to Lebanon in response to the devastating Beirut port explosion in August of that year, which triggered a humanitarian crisis amid the country's ongoing socioeconomic challenges. These contributions demonstrate Malta's proactive engagement in global solidarity efforts and its support for countries most vulnerable to crisis and food insecurity.

Food Security and Agricultural Productivity:

The Agriculture Act (Chapter 639), of the Laws of Malta, came into force in 2024 and provides a comprehensive legal framework for sustainable farming and conservation. It encompasses measures for the protection, conservation and sustainable management of agricultural land, livestock and products. The act also introduces regulations to address land fragmentation and improve the governance of agricultural operations, ensuring the sector's long-term viability. In 2022, the Malta Agricultural Consultative Council (ACC), which was established in 2015 to advise the government on agriculture, livestock, horticulture, floriculture, beekeeping, and sustainable agricultural policies, was strengthened by expanding its stakeholder representation and appointing members with technical expertise across diverse agricultural sectors.

Two key initiatives are the National Action Plan for Organic Food 2023-2030 and the Strategy for Resilient Food Systems 2025-2034. The action plan aims to promote organic farming and offer consumers high quality local organic food from farming and aquaculture whilst driving sustainable income for Maltese and Gozitan producers. This will result in the diversification of local organic production and in greater access to organic produce in retail stores and markets, helping to meet rising domestic demand and strengthening ecosystems associated with the organic food sector in Malta. This plan supports the transition to sustainable farming practices, emphasising the reduction of chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. While organic yields may be lower, the practice enhances biodiversity, soil quality and health, as well as vital ecosystem services such as pollination. The plan fosters resilience in food production and aligns with Malta's commitment to sustainability. The 2025-2034 Strategy for Resilient Food Systems was submitted for public consultation in 2024 and aims to align mindsets and behaviours amongst the various stakeholders across the food ecosystem, including government, producers, consumers and business, in adaptation of EU policy to the local context and in convergence with national priorities set out in various sectoral and thematic strategies.

The Young Farmers Training Scheme aims to mitigate the losses in national agricultural production by facilitating the transfer of knowledge from older farmers. The aim is for young farmers to attain the necessary experience both through hands-on training by experienced farmers, as well as a structured theoretical approach to learning.

The Rural Development Programme (RDP) has been a cornerstone in fostering sustainable agricultural practices in Malta. Between 2014 and 2020, the RDP provided substantial financial support to incentivise farmers to adopt advanced agri-environmental practices. Key measures included mechanical weed control in orchards and vineyards, the introduction of bee boxes, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans, soil management and conservation plans, and the maintenance of plant species such as carob and mulberry. These efforts underscore Malta's dedication to preserving its agricultural heritage while ensuring environmental sustainability.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) complements these efforts by providing a comprehensive framework for agricultural support from 2023 to 2027. The CAP Strategic Plan (CAP SP), formally adopted by the EC in December 2022, allocates €167 million (including local co-financing) to support a wide range of initiatives, including direct payments to farmers, ecological farming practices, and technological advancements. Specific allocations include €15.6 million for basic income support, €15 million for coupled income support, and €8 million for young farmers. Investments in smart irrigation systems (€21.3 million), slurry management (€31 million), and organic farming incentives (€2.3 million) further enhance the sector's resilience and sustainability. Approximately 10% of the total expenditure is dedicated to Gozo, ensuring support for regional development.

In relation to the latest CAP SP programming period (2023-2027), seven Agri-Environmental-Climate Commitments (AECCs) have been established for which financial support is granted to farmers and other beneficiaries who undertake, on a voluntary basis, land-based management commitments which are beneficial to achieving the aims set out in the CAP SP Regulation across the entire territory of Malta. These were all launched in 2023 and focus on specific animal species, animal welfare, apiculture, soil, fruit trees, orchard and vineyard management, and organic farming. In addition, six eco-schemes as direct payments are applicable to small Maltese farmers, as well as investments/interventions for specific activities, such as apiculture.

In the last three years (2022-2024), the total EU and national funding to beneficiaries through the CAP SP amounted to $\bigcirc 96,074,525.85$, while the planned expenditure for 2025 is $\bigcirc 68,795,055.29$. EU funding, primarily through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), accounted for $\bigcirc 84,015,061.15$, whereas national funding amounted to $\bigcirc 12,059,464.70$.

Compensation schemes were implemented to support farmers who suffered damages to their structures caused by the severe storm that struck Malta in February 2019. The Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework - COVID-19 Aid offered financial support to the agricultural sector during the pandemic. Assistance included direct grants for land and livestock farmers affected by market disruptions and aid for Bluefin Tuna fishers. For instance, €4 million was disbursed in 2022 to alleviate income losses and operational challenges. These measures were pivotal in maintaining agricultural stability, focusing on food security, public health, and decent work. Under the Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework, linked to aggression against Ukraine by Russia, the Maltese economy is supported by a number of schemes, including the National Fertiliser Voucher Scheme to farmers. Support to compensate for the increase in the prices of fodder was provided as an exceptional temporary support under the EAFRD.

Financial Aid Schemes for a resilient, growing, and sustainable agricultural sector were implemented. Similarly, the National Pig Welfare Scheme prioritises animal welfare, with an annual budget of €446,400 and specific support for recognised swine cooperatives such as the Koperattiva ta' Min Irabbi I-Majjal (KIM) (Pig Breeders Co-operative Society Ltd). Furthermore, other nationally funded COVID-19 aid schemes, which are still in effect, provide financial support to land and livestock farmers whose activities and income have been negatively impacted. The total financial state aid paid to the various beneficiaries in 2022 and 2023 amounted to €7,106,232.64 and €6,133,553.78, respectively.

Other similar EU funding opportunities for local start-ups and farmers included projects on farm advisory services, supporting investment in the processing, marketing and/or development of agricultural products, business start-ups for young farmers, creation and development of non-agricultural activities, improving the resilience and environmental value of forest ecosystems, and the conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture, with a total budget of €38,712,344.

In order to continue to support the agricultural sector, as well as keep the price of staple foods, such as bread, stable, Malta is committed to reduce the high prices of feed and flour.

Efforts to strengthen the agricultural sector include the Public Abattoir initiative, where €1 million was invested to enhance the resilience of the Maltese livestock sector, including the local meat industry, while improving its operations and economic and environmental sustainability, thus contributing to Malta's broader climate change mitigation and green economy objectives. This investment helped mitigate challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the European feed crisis. The facility is able to minimise energy waste and improve its overall operational efficiency. Additionally, improved efficiencies are leading to water savings. Tonnes of blood sausage (mazzit) and tripe (kirxa) were produced from animal by-products. This initiative is contributing to a reduction of animal-by products and animal waste. Research is conducted for the introduction of new products using mazzit as an ingredient. In addition, the abattoir has added a new animal family in its portfolio - cervids. These mark new important milestones in the drive toward sustainable food production, economic empowerment for local communities and investment in the production of higher value-added products.

Other notable initiatives include the establishment of AgriHub in 2020 as a collaborative space for researchers, innovators and farmers to develop innovative agricultural practices. Through the AgriHub project, IPM guidelines were issued for a number of specific crops. These provide farmers with best practices to minimise pesticide use through physical and biological methods, reducing environmental impacts while maintaining agricultural productivity. AgriConnect, launched in 2020, offers a range of complimentary services designed to assist farmers and livestock breeders in overcoming operational obstacles and technical issues they may encounter.

This is accomplished by assisting farmers and providing advisory services with tailored information and consultative guidance, aimed at fostering diversification within their agricultural practices, enhancing product quality, and stimulating innovation within the sector. Furthermore, AgriConnect seeks to establish a robust collaborative framework connecting farmers with relevant stakeholders in the rural sector.

In 2024, the first National Gene Bank was inaugurated to conserve indigenous and endemic plants and local varieties of plant genera and species of agricultural importance. The National Viticulture and Oenology Centre in Buskett serves as a hub for conserving and valorising local vine varieties and dissemination of information through the interactive museum that has been established there. Since 2021, local vine varieties are being cultivated in the fields of the premises, with research outcomes expected to support increased adoption, particularly in the wine sector. These varieties are under study and may be included in Denominazzjoni ta' Oriģini Kontrollata (D.O.K) (controlled denomination of origin) and Indikazzjoni Ġeografika Tipika (I.Ġ.T) (typical geographic origin) production protocols, supporting Malta's unique viticulture heritage.

A national collection of autochthonous agricultural crop varieties is being established. These varieties, adapted to Malta's pedo-climatic conditions, require fewer inputs such as water and pesticides, making them more sustainable. During 2024, the autochthonous grape varieties Ġellewża and Girgentina and the autochthonous olive variety Bidni were formally included in the national catalogue.

The "Ġbejna tan-nagħaġ" (cheeselets made from sheep's milk) is the first Maltese food to be registered with a Geographical Indication, with the Protected Designation of Origin label.

Projects and programmes aiming at the assessment/ determination of the phytosanitary status of specific plant pests and diseases have been embarked on throughout the years, such as the annual Phytosanitary Programme co-financed by the EU, the annual monitoring surveys for other plant pests and diseases, and specific projects such as those on Phyllosticta citricarpa and Cerambyx nodulosus which attack agricultural trees of economic importance to Malta. These efforts reinforce Malta's strategic commitment to protecting its natural capital, conserving biodiversity, safeguarding the agricultural and ecological balance of Malta, and ensuring food security and long-term ecological resilience and sustainability. In addition, activities related to the propagation of local plant varieties of agricultural and/or environmental importance are contributing to the local populations of pollinators and therefore, contributing to above mentioned national strategic commitment.

The electronic platform My-Pet/My-Farm supports sustainable livestock management by tracking animal health records and vaccination schedules. Additionally, Malta continues to combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) by improving livestock husbandry and reducing dependency on antimicrobials. Updates to existing national legislation, and the establishment of new legislation in relation to the control of veterinary medicinal products, including antimicrobials, aimed at ensuring their responsible use in Malta. The provisions cover wholesale dealing, prescribing, and dispensing. Other activities include educational outreach, awareness campaigns, surveillance and data collection and reporting. As a co-facilitator of the 2024 Political Declaration on AMR, Malta played a pivotal role in advancing global initiatives to combat AMR. This declaration, adopted at the UN General Assembly, established concrete targets to reduce AMR-related deaths by 10% by 2030 and emphasised a One Health approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health.

Other important goals reached are the recent establishment of the agency Riżorsi Agrikoli Malta (Agricultural Resources Malta) and tax exemption to heirs on agricultural land as part of the agricultural land reform. The mentioned agency is responsible for maintaining a comprehensive register of agricultural land ownership and ensuring the sustainable use of arable land. It encourages private land acquisition by active farmers and offers incentives to young farmers, supporting the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector. Individuals who inherit agricultural land that is leased to third parties, as well as professional farmers falling under categories 4 and 5 of the categorisation of farmers, will be exempt from succession tax when the agricultural land in question is declared on the deed causa mortis.

Around €10 million have been earmarked for the development of a new Farmers Market which will act as a platform to promote the value of local food products including fruits, vegetables, and artisanal goods, making them accessible to everyone. Local farmers and producers can showcase their products and consumers can purchase such products directly from the producers.



Public Awareness and Education: Promoting local produce has also been a priority in Malta. The media campaign "Agħżel Frisk, Agħżel Bnin" is aimed at encouraging the local population to choose fresh Maltese agricultural products to boost domestic demand and valorise the work of local farmers. The Malta AgriFair, held in 2022 and 2024, promoted stakeholder engagement within the Public Sector, from small to medium to large enterprises, as well as raised awareness among the general public. It displayed the resilience, diversity, advancements and innovation within the Maltese agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and explored their opportunities.

The Let's Talk Farming Programme, now in its third edition, educates primary school children on agriculture, sustainable food systems, responsible food consumption and healthy food choices and lifestyles. To date, 61 schools have participated in this successful initiative. Furthermore, the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate conducts regular outreach activities with people of different ages, with a special focus on school children and adolescents within post-secondary institutions in order to educate them on healthy nutrition and food choices.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's SDG 2 initiatives, aimed at ensuring food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. reveal strong interlinkages with other SDGs. Programmes like the Young Farmers Training Scheme, Let's Talk Farming, the AgriHub Project, and the National Gene Bank Project not only enhance agricultural sustainability as per SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) but also support climate resilience as per SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting biodiversity and sustainable farming practices. Meanwhile, the Pig Welfare Scheme and AMR measures align with SDG 15 (Life on Land) by advancing responsible animal husbandry and ecosystem health, as well as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Nutrition-focused initiatives, such as the EU School Scheme and BMI testing at St Vincent De Paul Long-Term Care Facility, contribute to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by addressing malnutrition and supporting vulnerable populations like children and the elderly.

Efforts to improve workforce development and education also intersect with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). The Let's Talk Farming Programme integrates agricultural education into schools, fostering awareness about sustainable food systems and future career opportunities.

International initiatives, like contributions to UNICEF and the Moldova Support Platform, demonstrate interlinkages with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by addressing food insecurity in conflict zones and supporting refugees, as well as align with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) in fostering global cooperation. This interconnected approach underscores Malta's commitment to addressing food security challenges holistically by balancing local, global, and cross-sectoral priorities.



SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
3.1	3.1.2 - Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	✓
	Number of maternal deaths (during pregnancy and up to 42 days following delivery)*	✓
3.2	3.2.1 - Under-five mortality rate	\uparrow
	3.2.2 - Neonatal mortality rate	\uparrow
3.3	Prevalence of HIV infection (including new and previously diagnosed cases) per 1,000 uninfected population*	A
	3.3.2 - Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	7
	3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population	\downarrow
	Number of cases of Visceral Leishmania*	7
3.4	3.4.1 - Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease	ightleftharpoons
	Death due to suicide (rate per 100,000 population)*	\nearrow
	Percentage of the Maltese population engaged with some regularity in physical activity*	7
	Percentage time spent on vigorous physical activity by persons who exercise, play sport, or are engaged in other physical activity*	•
3.5	3.5.2 - Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol	7
3.6	Death due to transport accidents per 100,000 population*	\uparrow
3.7	3.7.2 - Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	\uparrow

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
3.8	3.8.1 - Coverage of essential health services	ightleftarrows
	Persons with financial burden of health care*	7
	Life expectancy at birth*	7
	Healthy life years at age 65*	7
3.9	Standardised Mortality Rate due to Accidental Poisoning by and Exposure to noxious substances*	Z
3.a	3.a.1 - Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older	7
3.b	3.b.1 - Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme	\rightleftharpoons
3.c	3.c.1 - Health worker density and distribution	7
3.d	3.d.1 - International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness	:
	3.d.2 - Percentage of bloodstream infections due to selected antimicrobial-resistant organisms	\uparrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta has made progress towards achieving SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, implementing a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes, expanding access to healthcare, and addressing key challenges at home and abroad.

Progress has been recorded in several health-related indicators. In Malta, between 2018 and 2023, there was only one maternal death, which translates to 3.73 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births during the same period 17. Child health indicators have shown improvement, with the under-5 mortality rate declining from 6.53 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 to 4.03 in 2023 18. The neonatal and infant mortality rate also decreased, from 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 to 3.14 in 2023 19, and from 5.63 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 to 3.59 in 2023 20 respectively.

However, challenges remain in combatting some communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis incidence which increased from 10.76 per 100,000 population in 2018 to 12.48 in 2023²¹. Hepatitis B incidence saw a significant rise, from 6.21 per 100,000 population in 2018 to 15.56 in 2023²², necessitating intensified

efforts to combat Hepatitis. Encouragingly, the Hepatitis C-Free Prison Initiative eliminated Hepatitis C within Malta's prison system, setting a benchmark for similar efforts globally. Regarding HIV(human immunodeficiency virus), the number of new and previously diagnosed infections per 1,000 uninfected people in the population has shown that overall, the total rate for all ages and both sexes rose from 0.15 in 2018 to 0.19 in 2023²³, indicating that further efforts are needed to curb the spread of HIV, particularly among males, with a rate of 0.25 in 2018 rising to 0.33 in 2023.

Non-communicable diseases remain a key area of focus, with the probability of dying between the ages of 30-69 from cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory diseases being 9.8% in 2021²⁴. According to Eurostat (2021), the suicide rate stood at 6.59 per 100,000 population in 2021, with males at 9.09 and females at 3.88²⁵. Alcohol consumption per capita among individuals aged 15 and older has decreased from 7.78 litres of pure alcohol in 2018 to 6.2 litres in 2022²⁶.

The death rate due to road traffic injuries has decreased from 3.71 in 2018 to 1.29 in 2021.

National Obstetrics Information System (NOIS), Malta National Mortality Registry – Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA)

Malta National Mortality Registry – Directorate for Health Information and Research (DHIR)

⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit (IDCU) – MHA, and NSO

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.24 World Health Organisation (WHO)

²⁵ Eurosta

²⁶ WHO Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH)

This improvement was observed in both genders, with the male rate dropping from 6.43 to 2.09 and the female rate decreasing from 1.72 to 0.36²⁷.

The adolescent birth rate for the 15-19 age group has decreased from 12.91 per 1,000 women in 2018 to 9.79 per 1,000 women in 2023, reflecting some progress in reducing the adolescent birth rate²⁸.

The coverage of essential health services increased from 83 in 2019 to 85 in 2021²⁹. However, there was a slight increase in the percentage of persons with financial burden of healthcare (with a high level of difficulty), from 14.4% in 2017 to 14.7% in 202230.

A focus on vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and individuals with disabilities, has been central to Malta's approach.

Life expectancy at birth increased from 82.3 years in 2018 to 83.6 years in 2023³¹. However, the healthy life years at age 65 have decreased, from 14.3 years in 2018 to 12.1 years in 2022, indicating a decline in the number of years lived in good health³². The mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning was 2.05 per 100,000 population in 2021, increasing from 0.97 in 2018. In males, the rate was 3.17 in 2021, compared to 1.37 in 2018. In females, the rate was 0.83 in 2021, compared to 0.52 in 2018.

The age-standardized prevalence of tobacco use among individuals aged 15 and older decreased slightly from 25.4% in 2020 to 24.7% in 2022³⁴.

Vaccination coverage has remained high, with the proportion of the target population receiving three doses of the DTP3 vaccine comprising 98% in 2022. The HPV vaccination rate, including both males and females, was 76% in 2022. The vaccination rate for the second dose of the measles-containing-vaccine (MCV2) was 95%, while the rate for the third dose of the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV3) was 99% in 202235.

The density of health workers has shown an increase between 2018 and 2021. The number of dentists per 10,000 population rose from 4.79 to 5.21, nurses and midwives from 82.76 to 84.81, pharmacists from 12.87 to 14.73, and physicians from 39.72 to 43.43³⁶.

The percentage of bloodstream infections due to methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) fell significantly from 36.4% in 2018 to 14.5% in 2023, while the rate for Escherichia coli resistant to thirdgeneration cephalosporins decreased from 16.4% in 2018 to 11.3% in 2023³⁷.

Overall, Malta's strategic focus on accessibility, inclusivity, and innovation has driven progress toward ensuring good health and well-being for all, while its contributions to global health initiatives demonstrate a commitment to addressing broader health inequities. However, some aspects of healthcare still require improvement and initiatives have been established to tackle these challenges.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Health and Healthcare Access: Malta has implemented a comprehensive range of health and healthcare access initiatives to enhance the well-being and quality of life of its residents. Investments in primary healthcare have focused on the dual aims of shifting services from hospital to the community and improving the quality of care provided at this level, for example, through the introduction of a Telemedicine Service in 2020.

The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing (2023-2030) emphasises active lifestyle and equitable healthcare access for the elderly, with a strong focus on mental health support and specialised training for care providers. Initiatives include mental health training for elderly care staff (addressing dementia and delirium), preventative measures for healthy ageing (campaigns on physical fitness, mobility assistance, and specialised equipment leasing), and communityoriented programmes like the Silver T Service for local transportation (67,777 trips: January 2023 - August 2024), Meals on Wheels (535,576 meals: January 2023 - August 2024), and Home Help Services to foster independence and promote healthy living among older adults (13,227 beneficiaries: January 2023 - August 2024).

Additionally, the Home Helper of Your Choice Scheme (687 beneficiaries: January 2023 - August 2024) and the Carer at Home Benefit, raised the annual subsidy for elderly care at home from €6,000 to €8,000 for 1,938 beneficiaries (January 2023 - August 2024), further personalising and improving in-home care options. The Frailty Programme was also launched as a pilot in September 2024, focusing on recognising and reducing the ill effects of frailty in the elderly and free training to unpaid/informal carers of persons with dementia living in the community. So far, 185 informal carers have attended the course since its inception.

²⁸ NOIS – DHIR

²⁹ WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO)

³⁰ NSO

³¹ Eurostat

³⁴ WHO Department of the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases, Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

³⁵ WHO and UNICEF

DHIR - MHA

³⁷ MHA

Healthcare infrastructure has also been significantly upgraded, with projects like the improvements at St Vincent De Paul Long-Term Care Facility, which include capacity expansion, eco-friendly upgrades such as replacing heavy fuel oil systems with LPG-fired calorifiers, and in-house diagnostic tools enabling timely medical interventions.

These enhancements were part of three ERDFfinanced projects, amounting to over €6 million, which also included replacing heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) and lighting systems in 21 wards, as well as upgrading apertures with triple glazing and sun-blocking curtains. These projects have contributed to improved living conditions for residents while substantially reducing the facility's carbon footprint. Additionally, the renovation of St Joseph's Ward introduced accessible bathrooms, new electric beds, lifters, and a therapeutic dementia garden, promoting sensory engagement for dementia patients. Outreach clinics like Dar Padova in Gozo have also been established to ensure community-based services such as vascular care, psychotherapy, and occupational therapy.

Additionally, as protection from heatstroke and related risks, a Heat Preparedness Committee was set up in 2023. This led to the Respite Support Programme at St Vincent De Paul Long-Term Care Facility which provided respite support to senior citizens in response to the extreme heatwaves in Summer 2023.

Efforts to strengthen cancer care in Malta have been expansive, encompassing a variety of innovative and patient-centred initiatives aimed at reducing mortality rates and enhancing the quality of life of those affected by cancer. The National Screening Centre has played a pivotal role in reducing cancerrelated mortality through the continued rollout of three national cancer screening programs for colorectal, breast, and cervical cancer. These programs have been further strengthened by expanding the eligible age groups for screening since 2024, ensuring broader and more inclusive healthcare access. Furthermore, the introduction of the IT electronic Fast-Track services by the Directorate of Cancer Care Pathways (DCCP) at the Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre (SAMOC) is instrumental in developing integrated cancer services in Malta by accelerating referrals for suspected cancer patients. This includes preoperative procedures, diagnostic test follow-ups, and access for GPs and consultants to check patient progress.

Complementary services include survivorship services, which offer Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) Clinics and Survivorship Classes (TRaC) in Malta and Gozo. Additionally, the implementation of the Ambulatory Chemotherapy Service was achieved in 2024. Furthermore, in 2024, training for the implementation of radiotherapy using MR Linac was completed, enhancing the capabilities of cancer treatment in the country.

Improving health outcomes and reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes has also been a priority in Malta addressed through improved chronic disease management. One key development is the establishment of a Primary HealthCare Diabetes Centre, which provides a one-stop-shop service for newly diagnosed diabetic patients, facilitating timely interventions and tailored support to patients. Additionally, the Government Formulary list has also been updated to incorporate new diabetic medications, enabling patients to achieve better blood glucose control. The provision of free capillary blood glucose monitors and strips to all patients with Type 2 diabetes has improved close monitoring of glucose levels by patients, slowing disease progression and reducing the risk of complications.

Combined with initiatives promoting a healthy lifestyle and weight management, these measures are expected to reduce avoidable hospital admissions and mortality associated with the complications of diabetes. Malta has also introduced Opportunistic Cardiovascular Risk Screening in community clinics, utilising tools like HEARTSCORE to identify risks early and implement preventative measures.

Complementing these initiatives is the draft Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Prevention Framework, which outlines a horizontal policy approach to guide national efforts through 2035. By addressing the diverse needs of individuals, families, and communities, the preventative framework promotes a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainably combatting non-communicable diseases.

Furthermore, Malta's commitment to improving public health is also reflected in its Strategy for Health-Enhancing Physical Activity, which encourages active lifestyles as a means to improve overall health and reduce the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases. This goal is also supported by investments in new sport facilities like the Gozo Aquatic Centre and Sports Complex, designed to promote well-being through diverse activities that cater to citizens of all ages.

Developments within the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) include the recruitment and training of medical and scientific personnel to consolidate existing services and prepare for the introduction of new tissue services. An Emergency Plan is also being drafted in collaboration with the Ragusa Blood Centre to ensure an uninterrupted blood supply in the event of service disruptions. Additionally, the construction of the Establishment for Blood, Tissues, and Cells (EBTC) is underway and is expected to become operational by the end of 2025. New services expected to be introduced by the EBTC include the cornea harvest and transplant, followed by bone banking.

Accessibility-focused health initiatives have also been expanded, for example, through the introduction of Orthoptist and Podo-Paediatric Screening within schools. Other specialised initiatives addressing the needs of underserved populations include the Hepatitis C-Free Prison Initiative in collaboration with infectious disease specialists, which has led to a Hepatitis C-Free status in prison, on-site medical clinics for prisoners, and expanded pharmaceutical services.

Statistics show that in Malta, two of the major causes of deaths and injuries in traffic accidents are overspeeding and distractions, the latter being mainly due to smartphone usage. Targeted mitigation measures have been implemented, including the introduction of new fixed speed cameras across the road network over the past three years—four on the Coast Road and one on the Central Link. Furthermore, in the past two years, Maltese authorities have invested in a new mobile speed gun and enforced stricter regulations on mobile phone usage while driving.

Additionally, environmental health monitoring has also improved through the introduction of a new regulatory-grade Air Quality Monitoring Station in St Paul's Bay.

Traffic Accident Trauma Services (TATS)

Through the Sustainable Development Fund, Victims Support Malta provided Traffic Accident Trauma Services (TATS) to individuals and families affected by a traffic accident/injury while raising awareness about traffic accidents on Maltese roads, with the aim of improving road safety. During 2024, a campaign was launched among the general public to further increase awareness about, and promote, road safety.

Mental Health and Wellness: A range of initiatives focused on mental health and wellness have been launched, aiming to improve access to support, raise awareness, and promote mental well-being across different segments of the population.

In school, psychological services ensure a healthy psycho-educational environment that facilitates the learning and overall development of schoolaged children. Additional support is provided by the Super Sibs Groups for siblings of individuals with disabilities, emphasising inclusion and mental health. Approximately 300 young people have directly benefitted from these seminars, fostering a sense of community and shared experience among siblings.

Early detection of hearing issues in infants has been strengthened through the National Neonatal Hearing Screening Programme. Additionally, for children with sensory processing challenges, Sensory Integration Therapy Programmes offer specialised therapeutic interventions.

Malta has expanded mental health services, including training healthcare professionals. Initiatives promoting workplace mental well-being include mindfulness and self-care sessions to encourage work-life balance and resilience taster sessions, helping employees develop mental health skills. Mental Health Awareness Promotional Materials further support awareness efforts.

Psycho-educational group sessions are also offered to residents of the correctional facilities through programmes targeting addiction. Furthermore, to address substance misuse, the Trilateral Agreement for Substance Misuse Discharge Planning initiative ensures effective coordination between the Substance Misuse Outpatient Unit, the Department of Psychiatry, and the CSA for persons in prison with substance use disorders.

To reduce suicide rates, psychiatric specialists are available 24/7 in the Accident and Emergency Department, alongside the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Emergency Services (CAPES), which will be specifically offered for children from 7 AM to 4:30 PM. Additionally, the Crisis Resolution Home Treatment and Crisis Intervention and Home Treatment are offered to the community in order to prevent unnecessary admissions and provide intensive community-based services to those at risk. A helpline and liaison with schools on suicide prevention have also been included in the mental health strategy.

In terms of initiatives to improve child mental health and wellness, psycho-education to educators is provided together with health promotion initiatives, such as the creation of a programme to increase resilience in children. The provision of family therapy for children with mental health difficulties whose families also struggle with mental disorders, as well as an innovative clinic which provides an outreach mental health service to children and adolescents with complex mental health issues who are hard to reach, were also introduced.

The Child, Adolescent, and Youth Services (CAYS) in Gozo have been launched. This project consists of developmental paediatricians collaborating with child psychiatrists and a full multidisciplinary team (MDT). Additionally, Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT) will now be available in Gozo for the first time. Plans are also underway to extend this one-stop service model to children and adolescents to Malta in the near future.

Timely service, as well as home visits for children in residential care due to social reasons or disability, are provided through collaboration between the Ministry for Health and the MSPC. Psycho-social services are also provided on a weekly basis as part of Caritas Tal-Ibwar residential and non-residential therapeutic programmes for adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17, who are affected by the direct negative effects of substance use.

Health Education and Prevention: The Fair with Air at Schools Citizen Science Project engages students in monitoring air quality, highlighting its impact on health, while the MonstAir App educates children about pollution sources and their health consequences. These efforts are complemented by an Education Campaign at Schools, which raises awareness about the effects of air and noise pollution on health.

Additionally, the Say No to Stroke Campaign focuses on detecting early-stage risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity that can lead to strokes, emphasising prevention through early intervention and public education. The Blood Drive Campaigns promote blood donation and raise public awareness.

Workforce Development: The Onboarding Buddy System facilitates the integration of a new healthcare employee into the professional working community, thus enabling new recruits to quickly become a contributing member in any department. This will also considerably increase engagement and retention, reducing turnover.

Ongoing efforts to upskill healthcare professionals include ERC-certified Immediate Life Support Courses for all primary healthcare (PHC) doctors and nurses, ensuring they are prepared for critical medical interventions. Primary Healthcare has introduced an initiative in which GPs can extend their training to areas of special interest based on service exigencies. They are certified accordingly by PHC and the Mater Dei Hospital Speciality involved. The most recent areas introduced include Minor Surgery, Ophthalmology and Obesity.

Global Health and Humanitarian Support: Malta played an active role in addressing global health challenges and promoting humanitarian support, particularly in conflict zones and underserved regions. In Ukraine, Malta contributed financially through the Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) program, enabling the provision of an ambulance for a mine clearance team in Kharkiv Oblast.

Malta has also supported rehabilitation services for disabled children in rural India through a project implemented by SADHANA. Since 2023, this initiative has benefited 55 physically disabled children and adults by establishing an Orthotic Workshop, providing mobility aids, and training professionals. Building on its success, Phase 2 aims to reach an additional 180 individuals, improving their functional abilities and access to essential government services.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Malta made substantial vaccine donations to developing countries, with a particular focus on North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean.

Malta's commitment to global healthcare access is further exemplified by its support of a hospital in Ghana. In 2024, Malta strengthened this collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance digital health capacities, improving efficiency and access to healthcare services.

Domestically, Malta has continued to prioritise biomedical research through initiatives like the study of microorganisms responsible for diabetic ulcers, in collaboration with the International Space Station. This project, led by the University of Malta, is anticipated to improve treatment options for diabetes patients.

AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Malta's international leadership in drug control has also been recognised. As a member of the Commission on Narcotics Drugs for the 2024-2027 term, Malta has championed human rights-based drug policies aimed at reducing harm and promoting public health. Malta's efforts at the Commission have included organising side events to address co-morbidities between mental health disorders and substance misuse, as well as exploring the socioeconomic impact of drug use. Malta remains a key participant in European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD), contributing to international efforts to reduce substance abuse and address its associated mental health challenges.

Malta's comprehensive interventions under SDG 3 have delivered transformative impacts at home and abroad, underscoring the country's commitment to ensuring good health and well-being for all. Domestically, investments in healthcare infrastructure and the implementation of innovative community-focused programmes have improved accessibility and quality of care, particularly for vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with chronic diseases. Internationally, Malta's contributions to global health have been instrumental in addressing pressing challenges. Humanitarian projects demonstrate Malta's dedication to reducing health inequities and fostering global solidarity. These efforts, combined with Malta's active role in promoting public health through international collaborations, highlight the interconnected impact of its interventions, ensuring progress toward health and well-being at both national and global levels.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's progress in achieving SDG 3 reflects the interconnected nature of sustainable development with strong synergies across other goals that amplify the impact of health-related interventions. By improving health outcomes, the country simultaneously enhances social inclusion, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability, fostering a holistic approach to well-being.



Advancements in public health have contributed to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), ensuring equitable access to care, and addressing the needs of marginalised populations. This alignment with broader equity objectives promotes a more inclusive society, demonstrating how improved health systems can bridge social divides and empower vulnerable groups.

Similarly, integrating health education into broader learning frameworks supports lifelong learning as per SDG 4 (Quality Education), fostering an informed and proactive approach to well-being across all segments of the population.

Economic growth and sustainable health systems are inherently linked. By strengthening health infrastructure and services, Malta not only safeguards the well-being of its workforce, but also creates opportunities for economic development as per SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Investments in health technology and service delivery contribute to economic resilience, underscoring the role of robust health systems in fostering sustainable economic growth.

Efforts to address environmental factors influencing health outcomes, such as air pollution, highlight the connection between public health and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Initiatives that promote sustainability within healthcare operations align with broader environmental goals, reducing the ecological footprint of health systems while mitigating risks to public health arising from environmental degradation, as outlined by SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

However, these synergies come with trade-offs that require careful management. Expanding healthcare services and infrastructure demands considerable resources, which must be balanced with other national priorities. Additionally, advancements in health technology, while beneficial for service quality, may raise challenges related to energy consumption as per SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and waste management as per SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), necessitating a continued focus on sustainability.

Malta's integrated approach to health and wellbeing illustrates how progress on SDG 3 serves as a catalyst for broader sustainable development. By leveraging interlinkages and addressing tradeoffs thoughtfully, Malta ensures that its health achievements contribute to a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.



SDG 4 - Quality Education

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
4.1	4.1.1 - Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	ightleftarrow
	4.1.2 - Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)	7
	Number of eligible migrant learners, enrolled in a state school who received induction courses*	\uparrow
	Number of third country nationals that were supported to enrol a migrant child in a state kindergarten (for children who are three years and over but still under five years of age) or in a state school, open to learners between 5 and 16 years of age*	7
	Early leavers from education and training by sex*	7
4.2	4.2.2 - Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	A
	Children (less than 3 years) in formal childcare or education*	7
4.3	Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) by sex and age*	\uparrow
	Tertiary educational attainment for persons aged 25 to 34, by sex*	\uparrow
4.4	Proportion of youth and adults aged 16-74 with digital skills, by individuals' level of digital skills*	7
	Annual total number of graduates and postgraduates with Al-related degrees*	\uparrow
4.5	4.5.1 - Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated	✓
4.6	Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics or science*	ightleftarrows
4.7	4.7.1 - Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment	÷
4.a	4.a.1 - Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service	7

Status of the Goal and Targets

Education is a cornerstone of societal development, personal empowerment, and economic progress. SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, holds considerable importance for Malta as it does for every nation in the world. Additionally, it emphasises addressing disparities in access to education, ensuring that all children, including those from disadvantaged groups, have access to quality learning opportunities. The Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024 was built on the belief that quality education and equal opportunities for all are pivotal to Malta's economic success, concepts which remain crucial in the National Education Strategy 2024-2030. In December 2024, the Digital Education Strategy 2025-2030 was approved, setting out a roadmap to advance 21st century digital skills and achieve the EU digital literacy targets for 2030.

Malta's educational system has shown some degree of progress across several indicators, reflecting its commitment to SDG 4. Upper secondary education completion rates have seen a significant increase, rising from 76.7% in 2018 to 82.2% in 2023, with girls consistently outperforming boys in this area (88.1% for girls compared to 76.8% for boys in 2023)38 . Primary education completion rates remained consistently high, increasing slightly from 98% in 2018 to 98.1% in 2023^{39} . Similarly, the completion rate of lower secondary education experienced a slight increase from 97.8% in 2018 to 98% in 2023⁴⁰, reflecting Malta's commitment to supporting students in the completion of their basic education. Early leavers from education and training decreased from 14% in 2018 to 10.2% in 2023⁴¹.

However, some indicators have remained relatively stable or shown a marginal decline, for which targeted interventions are being planned. In 2018, Malta's education system showed that 69.8% of students achieved the minimum proficiency in mathematics, and 64.1% in reading at the lower secondary level. By 2022, the overall proficiency levels in mathematics and in reading were 67.4% and 63.7% respectively⁴². The percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading and mathematics reflected this trend. In reading, the percentage of low achievers increased slightly from 35.9% in 2018 to 36.3% in 2022, and in mathematics it rose from 30.2% to 32.6%. In contrast, for science, it showed an improvement from 33.5% in 2018 to 30.3% in 2022⁴³.

Participation in organised learning one year before the official primary entry age saw a decrease, with rates dropping from 97.5% in 2018 to 93.5% in 2023⁴⁴. Participation rate in education and training for individuals aged 25-64 increased for all age groups⁴⁵. Meanwhile, tertiary educational attainment showed strong progress, increasing from 40.2% in 2018 to 46.2% in 2023, demonstrating Malta's efforts to expand access to higher education⁴⁶.

Digital skills have also improved. In 2021, 83.91% of youth and adults had basic or above basic information and data literacy skills, rising to 87.5% in 2023⁴⁷. Furthermore, all schools in Malta now have access to computers and the internet, ensuring students and teachers have the tools they need to succeed in an increasingly digital world. Malta has also focused on ensuring that schools provide essential services. By 2022, all schools in Malta offered basic drinking water, electricity, and sanitation facilities. Moreover, 100% of schools had basic hygiene services, such as soap and water for handwashing. The proportion of schools with access to adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities in 2022 accounted for 87% of primary institutions, 96% of lower secondary institutions and 98% of upper secondary institutions 48 .

Key initiatives reveal an important contribution to improving the quality of education in Malta, including the provision of financial support to employers in Malta to upskill their workforce by covering training, wage, and travel costs. A range of free courses improve employability prospects and focus on upskilling, open to both employed and unemployed individuals. Moreover, there are various national strategies to promote active ageing and ensure lifelong learning for older individuals, supporting cognitive health and social inclusion.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Early Leaving from Education and Training: To tackle the issue of early leavers from education and training (ELET), the Early Leaving from Education and Training Strategy 2023-2030 Strategy was launched in 2023. The strategy aims to reduce the percentage rate to 9% or lower by 2030, aligning with the EU2030 pathways to school success and EU ELET aims. The strategy revolves around three main pillars: (i) Prevention, (ii) Intervention during the educational journey, and (iii) Compensation, meaning assistance for those who have completed compulsory education with only an ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education) level 2 or below (lower secondary education).

³⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics (UIS)

^{..} ³⁹ Ibid.

Eurostat

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – OECD

⁴³ Eurostat

⁴⁵ NSO

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. ⁴⁸ MEYR

The strategy adopts a comprehensive whole school approach to tackle the various risk factors identified and to offer targeted support to students throughout their educational journey. It highlights the necessity of collaboration among various stakeholders, including educators, families, communities and policymakers, in addressing ELET.

A flagship initiative of Malta's ELET Strategy for 2023-2030 is the Family, Community, School Link (FCSL) programme which seeks to strengthen the connections between schools, families, and local communities and is crucial in addressing early leaving from education and training. Launched in October 2024 through national funds, the programme is designed to support prevention and intervention efforts by encouraging active family engagement in students' education. Operating initially as a pilot in four colleges and schools, FCSL provides tailored support for educators and facilitates collaborations with community and governmental organisations. The initiative has already shown positive results, including enhanced communication between parents and teachers, reduced absenteeism, and targeted assistance for students with disabilities.

The implementation of the ELET Strategy involves ongoing educational transformations and investments, supported by the National Educational Strategy. For instance, since mid-2024, the ELET Unit has been integrated into the newly established Directorate for Planning and Strategic Foresight. Strategic foresight is crucial in identifying emerging risks by analysing trends and anticipating challenges. This approach enables the ELET strategy to adapt to demographic, socioeconomic, and technological shifts, ensuring continuous monitoring and mitigation of risks like absenteeism, family disadvantage, and gender disparities.

By proactively adjusting interventions through foresight, the strategy remains responsive to the evolving needs of students, families and communities. Furthermore, a prototype for a centralised system for tracking student progress has been developed, enabling better early identification and support for at-risk students. Through this system, a preventive approach is adopted by flagging areas of concern, such as absenteeism patterns.

In addition, the recently established Research and School Internal Review Directorate aspires to empower the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) to employ high quality research practices, which lead to evidence-based policy making. Key projects include the Data Warehouse project, and data collection and analysis, as part of the Ministry's deliverables as the National Unit for the Eurydice network by the EC.

Lifelong Learning and Education for Elders: Launched in 2023, the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2023-2030 is a comprehensive strategy that aims to enhance the lives of adults through education and training, recognising the crucial role of lifelong learning. It aims at (i) empowering low-skilled and low-qualified adults through enhanced educational opportunities; (ii) diversifying learning methods and opportunities via community, work-based and non-formal approaches; and (iii) ensuring quality in lifelong learning course provision through stakeholder collaboration.



The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing highlights lifelong learning as a cornerstone for maintaining cognitive health and supporting social inclusion among older individuals. Programmes like the University of the Third Age and IT courses provide intellectual stimulation and encourage social connections for seniors, while Financial Literacy Programmes for Older Persons ensure they are equipped to make informed financial decisions.

To enhance the quality of education for seniors, facilitators are trained in geragogy, a specialised teaching method tailored to older adults. Initiatives like Digital Literacy and Technology Training keep seniors updated with technological advancements, enabling them to engage with the modern workforce and digital society. ICT Sessions for the elderly at St Vincent De Paul Long-Term Care Facility further enhance digital inclusion by providing accessible technology training. The course is held over a 12-week period, with one session per week and 15 elderly residents (67 to 93 years) regularly attending ICT sessions.

Skills Development and Emerging Technologies: The Scholarships Unit within the MEYR actively promotes a diverse range of scholarship opportunities aligned with Malta's holistic approach to education. Each scholarship scheme is designed to cater to specific niches and subject areas, fostering individual growth and knowledge development.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), Green Skills, Smart Education, and Health have long been recognised as the foundational pillars of a thriving society. Meanwhile, Sports and the Arts play an equally vital role in enhancing overall well-being and cultural enrichment. By supporting these fields, the Scholarships Unit contributes to a well-rounded, progressive and innovative nation. Get Qualified is an initiative that supports the personal development of individuals for the achievement of qualifications and certifications required by industry. The incentive is applicable to individuals following a course of studies leading to a certification, diploma, degree or postgraduate degree courses. Upon successful completion, the student will benefit from a tax credit enabling them to recover part of the costs incurred.

By providing tax credits to individuals pursuing educational qualifications, the initiative not only encourages personal development but also ensures that individuals gain the necessary skills and certifications required by industries. This investment in human capital fosters a more skilled and competitive workforce, supporting job creation and higher productivity.

The Skills Development Scheme supports businesses in providing training focused on developing a knowledge-based workforce. It does this by, (a) developing and updating the skills and knowledge of their workforce, (b) training new employees to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively, (c) addressing skills shortages, and (d) facilitating re-skilling, while addressing skills mismatches. By equipping both new and existing employees with the necessary skills and knowledge, the initiative directly contributes to the creation of a knowledge-based workforce, helping businesses remain competitive and agile in a rapidly evolving global economy. The scheme's emphasis on addressing skills shortages, facilitating re-skilling, and resolving skill mismatches ensures that employees are empowered with relevant, up-to-date expertise.

Additionally, the scheme's inclusiveness—supporting both small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large enterprises—and its financial incentives, such as tax credits and grants covering up to 70% of training costs, make it accessible and effective for a wide range of businesses.

The National Skills Council (NSC) is currently developing Malta's first National Skills Strategy, a key initiative supported by the EU-funded TSI project with technical assistance from the OECD. This strategic document is designed to enhance existing efforts to improve skills policy across Malta and address critical issues such as labour shortages and skills mismatches.

In its development, several government entities, industry, academia and civil society are being engaged in consultations to ensure broad commitment. In parallel, a bottom-up approach is being undertaken as part of this same project, focused on specifically assessing skills gaps in Malta's maritime sector and developing a skills action plan to address those gaps. This sector will serve as a pilot, creating a framework that can be applied to other industries. The NSC is also undertaking a feasibility study to evaluate and rank which sectors of the Maltese economy, aside from hospitality and construction, would benefit from the implementation of skills cards. In relation to this, in early 2024 the NSC collaborated with the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) to propose an amendment to S.L. 607.02: Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Regulations. The suggested amendments will enable the NSC to assume a policy role, which includes the establishment of a Sector Skills Committee (SSC), which will be responsible for advancing Malta's skills validation system. The committee will coordinate the work of various Sector Skills Units (SSUs) to ensure that National Occupational Standards (NOS) remain current, with existing standards updated and new standards developed as needed.

Additionally, Malta has also prioritised initiatives to support jobseekers and young people entering the workforce. The Traineeship Scheme and the Work Exposure Scheme, both administered by Jobsplus, provide jobseekers with pre-employment vocational training and hands-on experience, easing their transition into the labour market. The Youth Guarantee (YG) programme focuses on young individuals not in education, employment, or training (NEETs), offering tailored support to help young people find pathways to employment or further education. From 2021 to 2023, Malta reduced its NEET rate from 10.6% to 8.2%, outperforming the EU average.

Additionally, the NSC is conducting a training gap analysis to assess workforce preparedness for green and digital transitions. This involves mapping existing training opportunities in these areas to determine where current courses can be improved or where new programmes are needed to address emerging industry demands. Following the attribution of a broad definition to training opportunities in both areas of green and digital skills, an analysis of existing training offerings is being carried out in terms of accredited qualifications at European Qualifications Framework (EQF) levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. This desktop evaluation will then be openly discussed with industry by adopting a sectoral approach. Final recommendations will be presented and discussed with academia and VET institutions.

AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The National eSkills Strategy for 2022-2025 focuses on promoting inclusive development and application of digital skills, encouraging collaboration between sectors and aligning education with market needs.

Furthermore, the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform, developed by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) and co-funded by the EU, provides a hub for digital skills and education resources including intelligence reports, training courses, best practices, and webinars. Additionally, since 2019, an Annual Digital Bootcamp aimed at employees, leaders, students, teachers, citizens and ICT professionals was also implemented. From 2019 to 2024, the Bootcamp has trained over 3,200 individuals, attending over 18,500 course/training sessions, with a total investment of €277,000.

As part of the National Employment Policy 2021-2030, Malta aims to address skills gaps through a national skills census and equip its workforce with in-demand skills. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Launchpad Strategy 2030 emphasises investment, start-ups, and innovation, along with education and workforce development.

To support digital transformation, Malta's recovery and resilience plan allocates resources for public administration digitalisation, digital public services, and the digitalisation of SMEs. Moreover, initiatives like the Maltaverians Comics Project and the Women in ICT initiative promote digital literacy, innovation and gender equality in Malta's digital economy.

Programmes such as Blockchain and Al Courses and Al Skills Bootcamps focus on upskilling in Al, blockchain and emerging technologies, while the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Grant financially supports postgraduate students in the fields of Al and/or Digital Trust and/or Knowledge and Data Representation and Analysis and/or Technology for Sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and/or Quantum Computing and Other Emerging Technologies.

In education, initiatives like the Computational Thinking Pilot Project and PAIDEIA (Preparing teachers for the AI Development in Education as an Innovative Asset) Project introduce technology and AI into personalised learning. Coding like Coding Festa and teacher training for sustainability ensure digital literacy and innovative teaching practices.

Workforce upskilling is addressed through the Investing in Skills Scheme, providing financial assistance to employers in Malta to encourage the upskilling of their workforce. This scheme covers part of the training, wage and travel costs for employees, helping employers manage the expenses associated

with providing staff training, particularly in areas that enhance productivity and competitiveness. Nearly 1,200 employers were assisted, with over €7.6 million invested in training more than 22,000 trainees and supporting over 45,000 training interventions. Within Jobsplus, Malta's employment agency, training courses are funded through national funds. Since their introduction, the number of people applying to follow a training course has been on the increase, reaching an 82% course completion success rate in 2023. Jobsplus also offers a variety of free training courses designed to improve employability, upskill workers and meet labour market demands. These courses range from basic skills like literacy and numeracy, to more specialised topics in IT, business, healthcare, and other sectors. They are open to the working age population, including those who are unemployed or seeking to enhance their current skillset

Both the 'Investing in Skills Scheme' and the free training courses are critical for ensuring equal access to affordable and quality training for both women and men. By providing financial support and reducing barriers to education and skills development, training initiatives implemented by Jobsplus encourage both women and men to participate in continuous learning, upskilling, and enhancement of their employability, ensuring that gender is not a limiting factor. By offering diverse courses, including those in traditionally male- or female-dominated sectors, Jobsplus provides equal opportunities for men and women to pursue careers in various fields, including entrepreneurship, STEM, healthcare and more.

Jobsplus offers support for entrepreneurship through training programmes that help individuals acquire the skills necessary to start and run their own businesses. This focus is important as entrepreneurship contributes to job creation and economic growth. Courses related to business management, financial planning, marketing and innovation can foster entrepreneurial skills, which are essential in promoting an inclusive economy where both women and men can thrive as business owners.

The NSC's Emerging Careers Campaign aims to raise awareness of the rapidly evolving job market, and the skills required to thrive in a variety of emerging careers across 13 industry sectors. By promoting transversal skills such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, the campaign aims to foster a parity of esteem between academic and vocational careers, as well as the educational pathways that support them. Vocational training for incarcerated individuals provides practical skills like ICT and woodworking, fostering rehabilitation and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Professional Development: The efficiency of the public administration, including the provision of a cost-effective public service, presents an important objective for the Maltese Government. In an everchanging economic environment, it is imperative that the public administration remains abreast of developments both within local and international fora. Over recent years, changes were affected with a view to ensure that the public administration caters for the needs of an ever-changing economic environment.

The European Social Fund (ESF) 4.0085 – Towards a More Professional Workforce in Public Administration project supports public officers in pursuing management, leadership, and process improvement studies, promoting professional growth in public service (1,914 participants successfully gained a qualification or certification). This project has given the public administration the opportunity for its employees to follow scholarships both locally and abroad, upgrading their skills and competences and thus resulting in a more efficient and effective workforce in the Public Administration and retention of workforce.

To provide practical experience, Clinical Placements for Students offer opportunities for university and vocational school students to gain hands-on experience in health services. Furthermore, Professional Councils and Curriculum Adaptation ensure that allied health professionals and educators collaborate to update curricula, addressing the evolving needs of the population.

Inclusive Education and Support for Vulnerable

Groups: Two steering documents in the field of inclusive education, 'A National Inclusive Education Framework' and 'A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion', were revised and published in 2023. A National Inclusive Education Framework gives a clear direction to schools on their journey towards inclusion, with a view of providing an effective and efficient service to all learners, educators and parents, as well as to the wider community. A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion provides education stakeholders with a guiding plan for a more just and holistic education system. It promotes, among other aspects, a collaborative culture where all stakeholders work hand in hand towards the removal of all barriers to learning.

The 'Way to Work Programme' focuses on maximising employment opportunities and skills development for persons with disabilities. The initiative aims to provide tailored support, career guidance and training, allowing participants to prepare for and secure meaningful employment. With almost 200 beneficiaries, this Programme has enriched the skillsets of persons with disabilities, enabling them to

enter the workforce successfully, which enhances their economic independence and fosters their self-esteem and integration within the community. By focusing on individualised programmes, the initiative reduces the risk of poverty among participants, contributing positively to their overall quality of life.

The 'One-Tablet-Per-Child' (OTPC) scheme provides students with essential digital tools such as tablets, virtual reality sets, exam reader pens, and catch-up classes. Key achievements include the provision of 12,048 tablets to students, 240 Virtual Reality (VR) devices for primary, middle and secondary schools, with training for approximately 400 educators and 1,000 reader pens for students from Year 9 to Year 11 in both state and non-state schools. Additionally, five special educational needs centres received VR sets tailored to support students with special needs, highlighting the project's commitment to inclusive education.

Starting in 2025, building on OTPC, the One Device Per Child (ODPC) initiative will provide laptops to Year 7 students, ensuring seamless digital integration from primary to secondary education. The Strategy and Vision for AI in Malta 2030, launched in 2019, is an initiative advancing Malta's work in AI and supports educators in adopting AI in education.

The Fair Artificial Intelligence Educator (FAIE) Mathematics App provides tailor-made learning paths, meeting accessibility needs by reading questions aloud, using visual cues, and amplifying sounds to support students with low vision or health challenges. The FAIE app has seen significant usage, with 267 teachers and 8,063 students using the system, 47,624 worksheets created, and 952,480 questions generated, demonstrating its impact in creating accessible, customised learning resources.

Apart from national literacy promotion programmes, a balanced literacy approach in the classroom and other literacy intervention programmes, since 2018 literacy is also being addressed through the 'Reading Recovery'' programme. The Programme's primary aim is to assist Year 2 students with the lowest literacy achievement through a school-based one-on-one intervention. The programme focuses on improving their reading and writing strategies, ensuring they can perform within the average classroom range.

Between 2021 and 2024, 1,989 students have participated (of these, 518 students' programmes were ongoing at the end of 2024, while 208 students could not complete the programme for a variety of reasons), with 1,263 completing the programme. Of the 1,263 students who completed the programme, 1,016 (80.4%) were discontinued successfully, having reached the average classroom expectations. The other 247 students were referred for further support.

Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship: The 'Education for Sustainable Development Professional Development Training' provides senior leadership teams in compulsory schools with training focused on 'Embedding Sustainability through School Management'. This initiative, developed in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Education and Research, equips educators with essential tools and insights to champion sustainability within schools and communities. By offering professional development and training opportunities on education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, this initiative promotes knowledge and practices that foster sustainable development.

Following the launch of the Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, the Sustainable Development Directorate developed a children's version in Maltese and English, in collaboration with the MSPC, as part of the project "Empowering Children's Participation in Malta", co-funded by CERV.

The child-friendly version of the Strategy was distributed to all Year 3 students across Malta and Gozo, with hands-on sessions delivered by the Sustainable Development Directorate.

Similarly, the Sustainable Development Directorate collaborated with renowned local author Trevor Żahra on a storybook entitled Sustainable Development, to raise awareness amongst the younger generations. The bilingual book, complete with striking illustrations, takes the form of a dialogue between a mother and her son and aims to guide students on how to live sustainably. The three pillars of sustainable development - social, economic, and environmental - are all given prominence in the book, and the importance of attaining greater synergies between the three pillars to achieve sustainable development is highlighted all throughout.

Furthermore, the UN initiative 'Football for the Goals' was launched in October 2024. This collaboration between the Sustainable Development Directorate, the 'Inħobb il-Futbol Foundation' (IFF) and the MEYR, builds on the strong and influential reach of football to inspire action among kids on the SDGs. A total of 17 classrooms from several schools participated in this initiative, each focusing on one of the 17 SDGs. The initiative included three fun-filled tournament days, with each school presenting projects and initiatives implemented in their respective school relevant to their assigned SDG.



Global Citizenship Education' (GCED) is an overarching principle embedded within the 'National Education Strategy 2024 - 2030' (NES) which aims at encouraging and supporting all formal education centuries to adopt a whole-of-institution approach to GCED. On a yearly basis, schools are given the opportunity for bespoke support and across-theboard training towards the adoption of a whole school approach. This training addresses leadership, school ethos, culture and formal curriculum embedding. This school-based support includes educator training opportunities on a one-to-one and small group basis, to review and evaluate current teaching strategies and address global themes and resources towards reorientation and transformation of learning spaces, also in line with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) 'Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development Priority Action Areas 2 & 3'.

This is also complemented by a holistic national mandatory training programme for all primary educators. Drawing elements from both the 'European Sustainability Competence Framework' and the 'GreenComp', this training will see all local primary educators trained till 2028. Furthermore, the first two GCED training and learning centres to facilitate continuous educator training and support were launched in 2024.

The 'Connecting Classrooms: Malta - Ethiopia' project aims to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. Launched at the Kidane Mehret School in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a school with deep historical ties to Malta established by Maltese missionaries over 50 years ago, the project's main objective is to foster connections between young people from both countries. This initiative encourages them to explore and develop an understanding of their diverse cultures through a series of online classes. Managed by the Embassy of Malta in Addis Ababa in partnership with Kidane Mehret School and Mater Boni Consilii St Joseph School in Paola, the project successfully conducted its first phase in 2023-2024. In its second phase, collaborations with the 'UN Office on Drugs and Crime' (UNODC) have been established. The project leverages the 'Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment' (GRACE) to promote ethics and integrity in a virtual classroom setting.

Teacher training will focus on 'Ethics Education and Global Citizenship Education', addressing the intersections of peace-building and humanitarian sustainability through transformative pedagogies. Educators from Malta and Ethiopia will play a crucial role in designing the project, which aims to be replicated in other regions, thereby contributing to global efforts in advancing the achievement of the SDGs.

Scholarships and Assistance to Developing

Countries: As part of the Government of Malta's commitment towards development through education, scholarships are offered from the University of Malta to students from a vast number of ODA eligible countries, namely Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Djibouti, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Armenia, Vietnam, Georgia, Albania, Tunisia, Fiji, Mauritius and Cape Verde. Since 2021, Malta has expanded educational opportunities for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through a targeted scholarship programme at the University of Malta's Islands and Small States Institute. This programme, offering scholarships for Master's Degree and PhD studies to students from ODA-eligible SIDS, was awarded the SIDS Partnerships Award by the UN in 2023. Malta has further expanded the programme, increasing the number of scholarships available. Additionally, Malta has supported the Diplo Foundation to advance online learning, allocating funds to support scholarships for students from developing countries, including SIDS. These initiatives empower students to gain skills that contribute to the sustainable development of their local communities and home countries.

As part of the Government of Malta's commitment towards development through education, scholarships are offered from the University of Malta, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) and International Maritime Organisation, International Maritime Law Institute (IMO IMLI) to students from a vast number of ODA-eligible countries.

Malta has also organised numerous capacity-building initiatives, adapting to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by transitioning to virtual engagement through 'The Malta Workshops' held annually since 2020. These workshops provide SIDS with capacity-building support in areas such as Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Counter-Financing of Terrorism (CFT), and international sanctions. By bringing together expertise from international bodies like the World Bank, the UN, and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), these workshops have bolstered the institutional resilience of SIDS, helping them align with global compliance standards.

Since 2024, Malta has been funding Turkish military officers for English language courses at the University of Malta. This project aims to enhance the officers' English proficiency.

The ODA project 'Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency: Empowering refugee women in Sultanbeyli' focuses on the empowerment of Syrian refugee women in becoming self-sufficient by helping them boost their culinary production and entrepreneurial targets. The Syrian refugee women, through the establishment of a cooperative, meet up to prepare homemade culinary products which they subsequently sell to earn a living.

Furthermore, Malta's holistic approach to education fosters equity in granting exemption of school/tuition fees for students coming from ODA countries and residing legally in Malta, attending school or following courses from kindergarten to vocational and University level.

Malta's interventions under SDG 4 have yielded substantial impacts both domestically and globally, highlighting its commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable quality education. At home, initiatives like the OTPC Scheme, which has equipped over 12,000 students with digital tools, and the FAIE Mathematics App, offering tailored learning paths for students with accessibility needs, have revolutionised access to modern education. Programmes such as the 'Reading Recovery™' and Education for Sustainable Development Professional Development Training underscore Malta's focus on personalised learning, sustainability, and literacy, addressing gaps in foundational skills while promoting long-term societal resilience.

Internationally, Malta's scholarship programmes for students from SIDS, including the University of Malta's award-winning initiative, have empowered individuals to drive sustainable development in their home countries.

Capacity-building workshops tailored for developing nations and projects like 'Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency: Empowering refugee women in Sultanbeyli' further demonstrate Malta's leadership in leveraging education as a tool for empowerment and self-reliance. These combined efforts highlight Malta's holistic approach to education, ensuring progress not only within its borders but also across global communities, fostering equity, innovation, and sustainable development worldwide.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

The initiatives focused on SDG 4 interlink with several other SDGs, building a more inclusive and sustainable society. One key connection is with SDG 1 (No Poverty), as many of these programmes aim to enhance the financial independence of vulnerable groups. For example, financial literacy programmes for older individuals and incentives for older workers ensure that seniors can manage their finances and remain economically active. Similarly, the 'Way to Work' initiative for individuals with disabilities, as well as technical and vocational training, allow for the integration of marginalised populations into the workforce, reducing poverty by providing opportunities for stable income. These educational programmes also contribute to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by promoting employability and upskilling across various sectors.

Furthermore, several initiatives align with SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Programmes like the 'Investing in Skills Scheme' and 'Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency: Empowering refugee women in Sultanbeyli' target gender inclusivity by ensuring equal access to education and training for both men and women. The provision of skills for refugee women focuses on entrepreneurial empowerment, helping women create sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, the 'Way to Work' project fosters employment for individuals with disabilities, supporting SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), by promoting greater inclusion and reducing barriers to employment. The focus on equitable access to education, such as the One-Tablet-Per-Child Scheme and the FAIE Mathematics App, supports both SDG 4 and SDG 10 by addressing the learning needs of vulnerable groups, including those with special educational needs.

Internationally, these initiatives contribute to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), particularly through collaboration and capacity-building efforts. Programmes like 'Scholarships for Students' and virtual capacity-building initiatives support SIDS and promote international knowledge exchange in critical sectors such as anti-money laundering and counterterrorism, promoting SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). These initiatives foster global partnerships and empower developing countries to address their own educational and professional development challenges.

Additionally, the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship Grant and BCT-Hubs support global sustainability and technological advancements, aligning with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by upskilling individuals in cutting-edge fields like AI and blockchain technologies, thus enhancing global innovation and ensuring inclusive participation in the digital economy. Meanwhile digital training and technology-focused initiatives reduce the digital divide for seniors.

Efforts in emerging technologies, coding and sustainable education are essential for future-proofing skills but may have unintended consequences such as environmental costs from high-energy technologies as outlined in SDG 13 (Climate Action) or a narrowing focus on tech skills over creativity and humanities, coming at the cost of other aspects of education (SDG 4). Vocational training for vulnerable groups is vital for social inclusion (SDG 10), but may face societal stigma or logistical challenges that hinder its impact. Similarly, scholarship and professional development programmes could strain resources needed for local initiatives in underserved areas.

To address these trade-offs, programmes should adopt a holistic approach that balances immediate educational goals with long-term sustainability, inclusivity, and equitable resource allocation. Embedding sustainability practices across initiatives, improving accessibility for marginalised groups, and fostering systemic reforms can minimise trade-offs and ensure alignment with multiple SDGs.





SDG 5 - Gender Equality

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
5.1	5.1.1 - Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex	7
	Gender pay gap in unadjusted form*	\uparrow
	Gender employment gap*	\uparrow
5.2	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 18-74 years subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence (including threats) by a current or former intimate partner by occurrence*	:
	Proportion of women and girls aged 18-74 subjected to sexual/any form of violence by persons other than an intimate partner*	:
5.5	5.5.1 - Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	\uparrow
	5.5.2 - Proportion of women in managerial positions	\uparrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta has made significant strides in advancing gender equality, aligning its efforts with the SDGs. Through a combination of targeted policies and reforms, the country has focused on ensuring equitable participation of women in governance, the workforce, education, and social spheres. This boost in female participation in the workforce is complemented by a narrowing of the gender employment gap, which decreased from 22.3% in 2018 to 14.1% in 2023⁴⁹. Malta's gender pay gap in unadjusted form decreased from 13.0% in 2018 to 5.1% in 2023⁵⁰. This shift reflects Malta's commitment to reducing structural barriers and creating more inclusive labour market opportunities for women.

Alongside these tangible improvements, Malta has worked to strengthen its frameworks for promoting, enforcing, and monitoring gender equality. By 2020, progress in overarching legal frameworks and public life was 80% complete, while efforts to address violence against women achieved an impressive 88.89% completion⁵¹. Frameworks focused on employment and economic benefits, as well as marriage and family laws, both reached approximately 90% implementation⁵². Leading up to 2024, these figures have continued to rise, with the country achieving a perfect score of 100% in the formation of frameworks addressing violence against women, while maintaining strong results in other areas, such as frameworks to monitor gender equality in employment (90%)⁵³.

⁴⁹ NSO

⁵⁰ Eurostat 51 UN Women

⁵³ Ibid.

However, violence against women remains a critical issue. In 2022, data showed that 3.8% of women aged 18-49 had experienced physical, sexual, or psychological violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, while for women aged 50-74, this figure was 3.0%⁵⁴. Extending that timeframe to their entire lifetime, these figures rose significantly, with 28% of women aged 18-49 and 22.8% of women aged 50-74 reporting experiences of such violence⁵⁵. In addition, the proportion of women subjected to violence by non-partners has also been tracked, with 9.3% of women aged 18-49 experiencing sexual violence since the age of 15, and 5.3% reporting any form of violence from a nonpartner in the last five years⁵⁶.

Conversely, women have achieved significant advancements in leadership roles across various sectors. The proportion of women in managerial positions grew from 28.8% in 2018 to 34.9% in 2023⁵⁷. Moreover, the representation of women in senior and middle management positions increased from 27.5% in 2018 to 34.8% in 2023⁵⁸.

Women have achieved considerable progress in political representation, as their share of elected seats in local government grew from 22% in 2018 to 26% in 2023⁵⁹. More notably, the representation of women in the national parliament saw a significant jump, from 11.9% in 2018 to 27.9% in 2023⁶⁰. These figures demonstrate Malta's increasing commitment to gender parity in decision-making roles.

In 2022, Malta launched its first Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan (GEMSAP). The strategy aims to recognise that society cannot reach its full potential without allowing each and every person to thrive equally, free from gender-based obstacles. GEMSAP aims to identify and eradicate these obstacles by strengthening the gender perspective at all levels and stages of policy making. Moreover, the strategy calls for the implementation of intersectionality, to ensure that no one is left behind, and that national actions address the widest range of discriminatory practices possible.

GEMSAP focuses on eight strategic objectives which are aligned with the achievement of SDG 5. These objectives include strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and gender equality, guaranteeing equal access to employment in all sectors, combatting segregation, and ensuring equal pay for work of equal value. GEMSAP also aims to enhance women's economic independence, strengthen the principle of gender equality and mainstreaming in the education system, challenge gender stereotypes, as well as promote coresponsibility and balance of work, private, and family life. Additionally, GEMPSAP strives to achieve gender balance in political and public decisionmaking, promote gender equality in social wellbeing and healthcare policies, and eliminate gender imbalance in the field of justice by addressing gender bias and gender stereotypes.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was fully transposed into national legislation in 2018 with the enactment of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 581) of the Laws of Malta, which led to the widening of the remit of the Commission on Domestic Violence to also include the prevention and combatting of genderbased violence. Thus, the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) was established as a national coordinating body in accordance with Article 10 of the Convention.

Since then, Malta has adopted National Strategies and Action Plans to address gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV) on a national level:

- 1. Society's Concern: Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy and Action Plan (2018-2020);
- 2. Malta's National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2021-2022);
- 3. UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE. National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023-2028).

Furthermore, Malta has launched its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2020-2024).

60 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

⁵⁴ EU survey on gender-based violence against women and other forms of

inter-personal violence (EU-GBV) - NSO 55 Ibid.

Ibid

⁵⁷ NSO

⁵⁹ Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government (MHAL)

These achievements reflect the country's dedication to promoting gender equality, embedding this principle in its national policies and frameworks, and fostering an inclusive environment for all citizens. Through policies that support women's economic participation, strengthened legal protections, and improvement in women's representation in decision-making bodies, Malta is continuing to move closer to achieving SDG 5. Although some challenges persist, efforts are being undertaken by a variety of initiatives to address these.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Promoting Gender Equality in Governance and **Employment:** The Public Service Equality Policy is applicable to all employees of the Public Service to ensure a non-discriminatory working environment within the Public Service. Section 3.4 of the Policy deals with Gender Sensitive Appointment Procedures. In line with the provisions of the Manual on Resourcing Policies and Procedures, Public Service employees who qualify for appointment while availing themselves of maternity or parental leave, will be granted their due appointment even if they are unable to resume duties within the validity period of the appointment. This concession also applies to pregnant external recruits who qualify for Maternity Leave when qualifying for an appointment with the Public Service. These employees will be required to perform their period of probation when they resume duties and will only be confirmed in their appointment on satisfactory completion of the probation period.

Furthermore, every department and entity within the Public Administration is requested to forward an annual report on the measures taken and the progress achieved with respect to the gender mainstreaming of policies and practices to the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). Subsequently, the NCPE reviews said reports and compiles a single evaluation report for the attention of the Permanent Secretary responsible for Equality. The reporting contributes to strengthening gender equality, thus addressing discrimination and strengthening equal opportunities in policies and practices. In this regard, the NCPE also delivers training sessions to public administration employees on the gender mainstreaming strategy and reporting obligations.

In 2025, a new publication titled 'Measuring Gender Equality: A Gender Analysis Based on Sex-Disaggregated Indicators' was released. This publication offers essential insights into gender disparities across various sectors and serves as an invaluable resource for policymakers to develop data-driven, gender-responsive strategies.

A historic achievement, the Gender Corrective Mechanism in Parliament, introduced in 2022, ensures a minimum 40% gender representation, significantly enhancing women's participation in governance.

NCPE has also recognised 151 organisations which employ over 37,300 employees through the Equality Mark Certification, which highlights organisations that prioritise gender equality. The Equal Pay Tool, launched in 2023, helps companies address wage disparities by ensuring equal pay for equal work between women and men. From its launch to date, four companies have been awarded with the Equal Pay Certification. Additionally, the Directory of Professional Women has increased the visibility of women across various sectors to enhance their opportunities to advance in leadership positions. There are currently 278 women registered on the directory.

On the international stage, Malta advocates for gender-sensitive policies at the UN through International Advocacy and Contributions.

Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence: Malta's first National Strategy and Action Plan on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings in Malta (2024-2030) addresses issues related to forced prostitution and exploitation for sexual purposes as a crime. Specific measures include research initiatives, tackling sexual exploitation in highrisk operations, and supporting victims of trafficking of human bodies for sexual exploitation through targeted exit programmes. The All-Equal Project addresses vulnerabilities among migrant and asylum-seeking women, working to prevent trafficking and exploitation through targeted support and services.

Moreover, the UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE.
National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and
Domestic Violence (2023-2028) offers a dedicated
national action plan with measures and actions
addressing gender-based violence and domestic
violence, aligned with the four pillars of the Istanbul
Convention on preventing and combating violence
against women and domestic violence.

With the introduction of the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 581) in 2018, the following forms of violence were criminalised: physical violence, psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, sexual violence including rape, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced abortion and forced sterilization. Thereafter, significant amendments were effected to the Criminal Code (Chapter 9) of the Laws of Malta such as: ACT No. X of 2022 which establishes femicide as an aggravating offence and excludes the use of the defence strategy of the so-called 'crime of sudden passion'; ACT No. X of 2024 which amended Article 251F of the Criminal Code entitled 'Enforced sterilisation to protect women with disability from undergoing forced sterilisation'; and ACT No. XI of 2024 which saw the introduction of Virginity Testing as a criminal offense.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (Chapter 636) through ACT No. XVIII of 2023 was introduced, whereby persons who deem themselves to be at risk of domestic violence have the possibility to make a request for information related to their intimate partner's history of convictions related to GBV and DV. Malta amended the definition of the "family or domestic unit" in accordance with the Istanbul Convention, through ACT No. XXII of 2024, to allow for more specialised focus on cases of GBV and DV and reduce the backlog of such cases in court.

The Malta Police Force (MPF)'s Gender Based and Domestic Violence Unit was established in 2020 and is made up of specially trained officers, working together with other professionals to assist victims of DV or other GBV. The first regional centre for victims of DV and GBV was opened in early 2024. Open 24/7, the centre offers professional support and assistance to victims of domestic violence. Victims of GBV or DV find a supportive environment at the hub, staffed not only by police officers but also by social workers, all committed to providing assistance and care.

Public awareness and educational campaigns, such as the "16 Days of Activism" and the "Safe Dates Programme", raise awareness about healthy relationships and prevent violence. Organised under the auspices of 'Enhancing the visibility of the Council of Europe' the outreach event on 'Combating Violence against Women: the role of Men and Boys' targeted local stakeholders, both governmental bodies as well as civil society organisations, with the main objective to discuss how men and boys can contribute towards the eradication of violence against women.

Apart from promoting the work of the Council of Europe in this field, the conference aimed to further contribute towards having a holistic and comprehensive approach towards the eradication of violence against women, both at a national and international level.

Professional training initiatives have been implemented to educate DV and GBV frontline professionals, including police officers, social workers, risk assessors, doctors, nurses, counsellors, guidance teachers, psychologists, probation officers, lawyers and representatives from other government agencies and NGOs. Additionally, foreign experts were engaged to provide training on elderly abuse, the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour-based violence (DASH) risk assessment, the Danger Assessment (DA) tool, the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) and Child-to-Parent/Carer violence. Training was also conducted for journalists focusing on the ethical and intelligent reporting of DV and GBV in the media, in addition to a seminar for the members of the judiciary on various topics related to domestic violence and the justice sector. Professionals at the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS), including social workers, therapeutic professionals and professionals working in the Migrants Advice Unit, continued to receive training regarding FGM.

Enhancing Work-Life Balance and Shifting Gender Role Perceptions: The Work-Life Balance Directive was transposed into Maltese legislation through the Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers Regulations, 2022 (L.N. 201 of 2022). These new rights aim to increase the quality of life of workers and families. These include paternity leave, parental leave, carers' leave and the right to request flexible working arrangements for caring purposes. These measures include ten (10) working days paid parent leave on the birth/adoption of a child: two (2) months paid parental leave from the total of the twelve (12) months entitlement; as well as the introduction of carer's leave. The latter entitles five (5) working days to public employees to provide personal care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household and who needs care or support for medical reasons.

The Public Service, as the lead employer, is committed to promote the welfare of employees. In this regard, the Public Service is at the forefront in providing a number of measures that foster work-life balance. In this regard, a range of new work practices, including reduced hours, flexi-time, flexi-week and remote working, were introduced within the Public Service to bolster flexibility and promote work-life balance.

Expanding Access to Resources and Combating Stigma: The Free Menstruation Products initiative in schools ensures accessibility to menstrual products. In 2024, a pilot project was launched in three schools across Malta and Gozo, which involved the installation of dispensers to ensure that students have easy access to menstrual products, such as pads and tampons. Alongside this pilot project, a comprehensive nationwide awareness campaign was introduced to educate the public on menstruation-related issues and to challenge the existing taboos surrounding the topic. In 2025, the pilot project will be expanded into a full-scale initiative, with dispensers set to be installed in every school throughout Malta and Gozo. Furthermore, tax on all menstrual products was removed as of January 2025. This includes a complete tax elimination on essential items such as pads, tampons, panty liners, menstrual cups and discs, and menstrual underwear.

Efforts to empower women through education have been made through workshops and resources provided to marginalised groups, such as homeless girls and females in prison, helping them gain essential skills and opportunities. Additionally, digital literacy and ICT training programmes for females in prison enhance their employability and bridge the digital divide, ensuring they have the skills necessary to thrive in the modern workforce.

The ODA project entitled "Empowering HER through education" has been approved and seeks to empower 134 homeless young girls and adolescents that live in a shelter housed run by the Bonati Foundation, an NGO established in 2010. This project includes various actions to empower these young girls and adolescents. To this effect, the delivery of professionally led workshops that will deal with positive youth development have been planned, focusing on interpersonal relations, selfcare, personal hygiene, lifestyle, safety, pornography, as well as how to avoid internet harassment. The workshops are also aimed at the training of trainers. In addition, books relating to the topics discussed during the workshops will be donated.

This ODA project will see the installation of eight new bathrooms. Presently, the girls make use of squat toilets that are in poor condition. Overall, this project seeks to deliver a clear and consistent message to empower the 134 young girls and adolescents living in the shelter. It is important to note that these young girls and adolescents are very vulnerable and are exposed to different forms of exploitation, being mental, physical, and sexual abuse.

Thus, this project contributes to giving these young girls and adolescents another chance in life to grow into women that can positively contribute back to society.

Women, Peace and Security: Between February and May in 2022 and 2023, an extra-curricular course was organised at the University of Malta on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and was sponsored by the Foreign Ministry. The WPS course introduced students to a gender perspective, not only on peace and security but also on international law, conflict resolution, humanitarian action and other related topics.

Throughout Malta's membership in the UNSC and during its term (2023-2024) as Chair-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it has demonstrated political leadership by strengthening WPS elements across geographic and thematic agenda items, while ensuring that women's voices, including among Civil Society Organisations (CSO) briefers, are given a platform to be heard. Malta has continuously called for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, as well as the prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, both in situations of armed conflict and in peace. Malta has also provided funding towards the implementation of the WPS agenda and towards women's leadership.

During Malta's UNSC Presidency, Malta was able to ensure the safe participation of 7 female CSO briefers, reaffirming the critical importance of civil society and women's human rights defenders as central partners in implementing the WPS agenda. In September 2024, Malta organised a high-level side event entitled 'Inclusive Women, Peace and Security in Myanmar: Voices of Local Leaders' at the UN Headquarters in New York, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar and UN Women. The side event aimed to empower local Burmese female leaders from diverse backgrounds and provide them with a platform to articulate their recommendations to the UN and its Member States and ensure that the vital role of women in peacebuilding in Myanmar is recognised and supported by the international community.

In keeping with the practice of WPS Shared Commitment Holders, during Malta's Presidency in February 2023, Malta selected Somalia as the WPS country of focus and invited all Council Members and briefers to consider various aspects of the WPS agenda in their statements.

To limit the risk of reprisals to the invited CSO briefer, Malta circulated the statement by the Somali Gender Equality Movement as Security Council document (S/2023/137), a move commended by E10. Prior to the Council's meeting on Somalia, Malta convened a dedicated WPS press stake-in with the 10 WPS Shared Commitment Holders.

Malta organised a breakfast roundtable meeting with Afghan women on 8 March 2023 (International Women's Day) in New York to provide an informal opportunity for Council members to hear directly from and engage with Afghan women leaders about the challenges they are facing and their perspectives about political pathways forward. This provided a platform for Afghan women to identify policy and engagement options for the Security Council that support the work of Afghan women human rights defenders and identify opportunities for strengthening the UN's role in protecting the full spectrum of women's rights. Furthermore, Malta co-organised a press stake-in together with Albania (which also endorsed the WPS Shared Commitments) prior to the UN Security Council's meeting on Afghanistan on the day. For the first time, an Afghan female civil society representative also participated in the UN press stake-in.

Moreover, in 2023, Malta convened informal briefings for Afghan women peacebuilders to engage directly with other Security Council members. Malta has also hosted and participated in numerous informal expert meetings with other Council members to hear from women peacebuilders, as well as from environmental and human rights defenders from Colombia and Syria. Furthermore, as one of five countries on the Security Council with a female Permanent Representative, Malta convened the '5W' (the five women Permanent Representatives) in an informal meeting with legal experts and civil society representatives to strategise about how the Council can best respond to the women's rights crisis in Afghanistan.

Malta also chaired the annual open debate on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) that focused on reducing CRSV through gender-responsive disarmament. Briefers were Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, UN Goodwill Ambassador Danai Gurira, and Niemat Ahmadi, a Darfur violence survivor, and Founder and President of Darfur Women Action Group.

In June 2023, Malta organised its first Arria formula meeting on "Enhancing the capacities of Member States to ensure a gender-responsive approach to counterterrorism" at the UN Headquarters in New York. The event was co-sponsored by Costa Rica, Jordan, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Spain and the United States. Malta worked with the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) in the organisation of this meeting. The meeting aimed to consider the importance of building the capacity of Member States to ensure gender-responsive, human rights-compliant approaches to preventing and countering terrorism.

Malta's efforts to advance gender equality have significantly impacted both domestic and international spheres, reinforcing its commitment to SDG 5. Domestically, these initiatives have narrowed the gender employment gap, strengthened legal protections, and enhanced support for victims of gender-based violence. Malta has boosted women's representation in governance, while workplace equality measures have improved economic participation and reduced wage disparities.

Internationally, Malta has championed gendersensitive policies, particularly during its 2024 UN Security Council presidency, prioritising Women, Peace, and Security initiatives. Its leadership has advanced global peacebuilding and conflict resolution frameworks with a focus on gender equity. Additionally, interventions such as support centres, public awareness campaigns, and efforts addressing vulnerabilities among migrant and asylum-seeking women underscore Malta's commitment to fostering inclusivity, societal resilience, and equitable development beyond its borders.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Advancing gender equality has fostered synergies across multiple domains, including economic development, education, health, and governance, while navigating trade-offs to promote equitable and sustainable progress.

Efforts to close the gender employment gap and enhance women's participation in the workforce directly align with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). These measures have bolstered economic productivity and resilience, while simultaneously contributing to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing systemic disparities that perpetuate inequality in income and opportunity.

Educational initiatives aimed at empowering women and girls complement SDG 4 (Quality Education) by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed for economic and social empowerment. These efforts foster lifelong learning and enhance access to leadership opportunities, further strengthening the link between education and equity. Similarly, healthfocused interventions supporting women's physical and mental well-being, contributing to SDG 3 by ensuring access to critical resources and improving quality of life.

Addressing gender-based violence and fostering inclusive governance align closely with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). These actions have reinforced institutional accountability, promoted equitable representation, and cultivated societal trust, contributing to the broader goal of inclusive and just societies.

However, progress in some areas presents challenges that require careful navigation. For example, increasing women's participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors must address potential resistance or cultural barriers, requiring continuous public engagement and education to mitigate social pushback. Similarly, the shift in gender roles within households, driven by work-life balance policies, highlights the need for ongoing dialogue and support to ensure equitable distribution of responsibilities.

By integrating gender equality goals within broader national and global development objectives. Malta has amplified the positive impacts of its interventions while proactively managing trade-offs. This comprehensive approach underscores the value of aligning gender equity efforts with a wider sustainable development framework, creating a path toward inclusive and resilient growth.





SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
6.1	6.1.1 - Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	✓
6.2	6.2.1 - Proportion of population using (a) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water	ightleftarrows
6.3	6.3.1 - Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flows safely treated	\downarrow
	Percentage of groundwater bodies exceeding the nitrate quality standard of 50mg/l*	A
	Total number of groundwater bodies having a good chemical status*	:
	Total number of groundwater bodies having quantitative status*	:
6.4	6.4.1 - Change in water-use efficiency over time	7
	6.4.2 - Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	7
6.5	6.5.1 - Degree of integrated water resources management	\uparrow
6.6	6.6.1 - Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time	:

Status of the Goal and Targets

The Maltese Islands experience a typical semi-arid Mediterranean climate with long, hot summers and mild wet winters. Rainfall, the only source of natural freshwater input in the islands, generally occurs between September and April, with the intervening months being characteristically dry. Annual precipitation averages 500 mm, with a high intra-annual variability ranging between 200 and 700 mm. The temperate climatic conditions also result in high evapotranspiration rates, with the mean annual potential evapotranspiration value reaching 1300 mm, significantly exceeding the annual rainfall levels.

Limited freshwater resources due to natural factors, such as the climatic and geomorphological conditions prevailing in the islands, and their high population density, threaten Malta's aquifers, leading to long-term sustainability concerns.

The 3rd River Basin Management Plan highlights the various challenges faced in terms of sustainable water management, indicating that approximately onethird of the public water supply in 2022 originated from groundwater, with the remainder sourced from desalination⁶³. Additionally, the percentage of groundwater bodies exceeding the nitrate quality standard of 50mg/l, which increased from 66.7% in 2018 to 80% in 2023, remains a challenge for Malta⁶¹.

Meanwhile, Malta's wetlands, a limited yet essential component of its aquatic ecosystems, cover 1.31 km², or 0.41% of the total land area, as of 2021⁶².

Despite these challenges, Malta is consistently working towards meeting SDG 6 targets, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation while adopting sustainable water management practices. As of 2022, 99.77% of the population benefits from safely managed drinking water services⁶³. This reflects the country's ongoing commitment to providing reliable, high-quality drinking water for all citizens.

Regarding safely managed sanitation services, the proportion of the population using these services remained stable at 88.18% between 2018 and 2022⁶⁴. The entire Maltese population is connected to wastewater treatment plants (the first country in the EU).

Although the proportion of total wastewater flow treated decreased from 94.47% in 2018 to 71.97% in 2023, the proportion of wastewater flow that is safely treated saw a notable increase, from 0.55% in 2018 to 8.12% in 2023⁶⁵. Malta is committed to reaching EU standards and keeping pace with an expanding population and tourism flows. For instance, in 2023, treated wastewater's average pollutant removal rate for biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and chemical oxygen demand (COD) was 86% and 80%, respectively. This exceeds the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive requirement of 70% for BOD and 75% for COD.

The country's integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach has seen progress. In 2023, Malta reported an 89% degree of implementation, up from 86% in 2020⁶⁶. The enabling environment saw the most significant improvement, increasing from 88% in 2020 to 97% in 2023, while the aspects referring to institutions and participation improved from 82% to 91% over the same period⁶⁷. The implementation of management instruments increased from 88% (2020) to 93% (2023), indicating Malta's growing commitment to a holistic and integrated approach to managing water resources⁶⁸.

The restoration and reuse of water resources have been central to Malta's approach. Rainwater harvesting systems, such as domestic wells and historic cisterns, have enhanced the capacity for sustainable irrigation and reduced reliance on freshwater supplies. Similarly, efforts to restore coastal wetlands have improved water quality and biodiversity, contributing to ecosystem resilience.

Comprehensive water management planning has been another key focus area. Through assessments of groundwater status and the implementation of river basin management strategies, Malta strives to meet EU regulations and promotes evidence-based decision-making for water resource use.

The practices listed below highlight Malta's multifaceted approach to achieving SDG 6, integrating sustainable management with technological innovation and international cooperation.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Water Resources Management: The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), the 3rd and most recent version of which was published in 2024, developed pursuant to the EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC, constitutes the main management tool for the protection of all water resources in Malta. The overall aim of the RBMP is to ensure the sustainable management of Malta's water resources and the protection of aquatic ecosystems associated with our natural waters. This is achieved through the definition of a set of measures (Programme of Measures) addressing the most significant challenges that Malta's water resources are facing. In this regard, the plan describes the status of the water bodies and the pressures affecting water status, whilst also setting environmental objectives to be achieved through the implementation of the Programme of Measures. This status assessment takes into consideration the local hydrogeological setting together with the pressures and impacts which might be altering this status both from a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

⁶² Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)

WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ NSO

⁶⁶ EWA ⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.



In recent years, also in support of an improved approach to the status assessment, the Energy and Water Agency (EWA) has worked on the upgrading of the national hydrological monitoring network. This newly set-up hydrological monitoring network now allows for the monitoring of the whole hydrological cycle and thus looks at, for example, rainwater runoff and its impact on floods. This network also allows for an improved capacity to monitor groundwater at different sites, while providing a deeper understanding of water balances at the national level.

Furthermore, Malta has made significant strides in water management, particularly through its innovative New Water project. This initiative addresses water scarcity by producing high-quality reclaimed water for agricultural use. The project treats and polishes wastewater from the island's three main treatment plants, transforming it to meet stringent irrigation standards. A key operational achievement has been the increased production and distribution of New Water, a vital step in supporting agricultural needs and reducing reliance on groundwater extraction. An annual distribution of between 1.5 and 1.6 million cubic metres of reclaimed water is currently being distributed for agricultural use. A peak daily production capacity of 20,000 m³ is being targeted by 2028.

Distribution of New Water is facilitated through an expanding network of dispensers accessible to farmers via electronic cards. The Water Services Corporation (WSC) is expanding this network across Malta and Gozo, with ongoing works in the North and South of Malta. A refurbishment of various New Water reservoirs was also undertaken to accommodate planned growth and capacity increases. Rigorous treatment and testing ensure New Water meets highquality standards for irrigation.

Part-financed by the EU, the New Water project represents a crucial component of Malta's efforts to combat water scarcity and promote sustainable water management practices. It is a testament to Malta's commitment to water security and its innovative approach to resource management.

Investments in Water Production and Wastewater Treatment Infrastructure: A key part of Malta's long-term sustainability strategy is a €310 million National Investment Plan for Water and Wastewater Sector 2023-2033, being implemented to upgrade the water and wastewater infrastructure. This plan is geared to provide a high-level outlook on the national prevailing and anticipated challenges to providing water and wastewater services, identify gaps in compliance with EU legislation, and prioritise investments necessary to renew and upgrade the existing infrastructure.

An investment exceeding €60 million by 2028 is planned to upgrade the Gozo, Malta North and Malta South wastewater treatment and sludge management facilities. Moreover, a move to disconnect farmyard waste from the urban wastewater collection network is envisaged to restore the full operational capacity of the current wastewater treatment infrastructure, which is the key reason behind the untreated wastewater component resulting from organic overloading. Measures to curb seawater infiltration and stormwater runoff intrusion are also underway. These measures, coupled with the planned wastewater treatment plant capacity upgrades and the decoupling of farmyard waste from the urban sewer collection network, should enable Malta to keep pace with the expanding population and confidently meet future demand.

Research and Technology: Malta's WSC is at the forefront of innovation in water management, pioneering the use of AI to optimise water blending. This cutting-edge approach enhances tap water's taste and quality while ensuring efficient water resource management. The WSC's Al water blending project focuses on achieving the ideal balance between desalinated water and groundwater sources. Al algorithms analyse real-time data, including water quality, flow rates, and other operational parameters, to determine the optimal blend.

This intelligent system offers several key benefits. First, it improves taste by carefully controlling the blending process, minimising salinity and hardness for a more palatable tap water experience.

Second, Al ensures enhanced and consistent water quality by maintaining the optimal balance of minerals and other components. Finally, the Al-powered system increases efficiency by optimising water distribution and reducing operational costs through informed, data-driven decisions about water blending.

Protecting and Restoring Inland Water-Related Ecosystems: The project LIFE IP-RBMP includes the restoration of an important coastal wetland known as Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk. Efforts to protect and restore these ecosystems contribute to sustainable water management and ecosystem health.

The Chadwick Lakes Project has led to the restoration of a 2km stretch of valley, removing invasive species and creating the space for local flora and fauna to thrive. Moreover, the project has created a non-invasive trail to ensure access to the general public as well as developed an educational programme related to the promotion of the valley ecosystem.



Supporting Local Engagement in Water Management and Efficiency: Malta has implemented a range of impactful initiatives to advance sustainable water use and sanitation while fostering community and institutional engagement. These initiatives target households (such as through the water and energy consumption audits), vulnerable households (through the scheme replacing old and inefficient appliances), as well as through various schemes and programmes targeting SMEs.

The Domestic Wells Restoration Grant Scheme encourages rainwater harvesting and reuse by providing financial support for restoring domestic wells. Since 2018, the scheme funded 598 interventions on domestic wells, totalling €488,033.

International Cooperation: Malta's commitment to fostering international collaboration and promoting sustainable water management is exemplified through several innovative initiatives.

The Island for Islands Initiative stands out as a vital platform for sharing expertise in water management among SIDS. This work encompasses capacity-building programs and initiatives focused on addressing specific and ad hoc issues identified on the ground, such as water distribution, consumption metering and leakage detection.

Moreover, extending its expertise beyond its borders, Malta has played a pivotal role in international water management through its collaboration with Antigua and Barbuda.

The Water Demand Management Initiative in this Caribbean nation combines policy development with capacity-building programmes to enhance water efficiency, demonstrating Malta's leadership in tackling global water-related challenges.

Building on this collaborative ethos and its international commitment to SDG partnerships, Malta has also supported the Smart Irrigation Project in the Ghar El Melh wetland, Tunisia. Tunisia has recently been facing severe drought conditions linked to climate change and competition between different water uses. The proposed project, adopting a Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) nexus approach, shall implement an ICT-based smart irrigation system for farming communities, including renewable energy applications, in a sensitive coastal wetland of Tunisia. The expected impact will reduce water use as well as enhance food production through renewable sources, forming more resilient communities and ecosystems. The project will strengthen local approaches to coastal ecosystems with the long-term objective of embedding them in national governance systems and upscaling them.

Malta's efforts to achieve SDG 6 have enhanced domestic water sustainability, contributed to water management, and aided projects abroad. Investments in wastewater infrastructure and wetland restoration have improved water quality, resource efficiency, and ecosystem health while supporting climate resilience. These initiatives highlight Malta's commitment to local sustainability and global collaboration in advancing SDG 6 and climate adaptation.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's progress on SDG 6 is closely interlinked with several other SDGs, showcasing the interconnectedness of clean water and sanitation with broader sustainability objectives. These synergies amplify the impact of water management

initiatives, while the trade-offs highlight the importance of careful resource allocation and integrated planning.

The availability of clean water and sanitation supports SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by reducing risks associated with waterborne diseases and ensuring access to safe drinking water. Comprehensive wastewater treatment systems also contribute to public health by preventing contamination and safeguarding environmental quality, as per SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

These outcomes demonstrate the critical role of water infrastructure in promoting well-being and resilience. Efforts to restore wetlands and improve rainwater harvesting align with SDG 13 (Climate Action) by enhancing resilience to climate change impacts such as droughts and shifting rainfall patterns. Such projects also support SDG 14 (Life below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by protecting biodiversity and maintaining vital ecosystems, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

The emphasis on infrastructure upgrades and sustainable water management practices fosters synergies with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), ensuring that urban and rural areas are equipped to meet current and future water demands. Additionally, these efforts promote the efficient use of resources, aligning with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by reducing wastage and optimising water reuse.

International collaborations, such as sharing expertise with SIDS, demonstrate Malta's contribution to the global community through SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These initiatives foster international solidarity and innovation, advancing shared solutions to water management challenges.

While Malta's progress in meeting SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation is commendable, it potentially creates trade-offs with other SDGs. For instance, the focus on water conservation and infrastructure could require significant financial and institutional resources, possibly diverting funds and attention from other critical areas. Striking a balance between advancing water sustainability and ensuring progress across other SDGs will be key to Malta's holistic development.









SDG 7 - Affordable and **Clean Energy**

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
7.1	7.1.1 - Proportion of population with access to electricity	✓
	7.1.2 - Proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology	✓
7.2	7.2.1 - Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	\uparrow
	Percentage shares of total electricity supply in Malta, by source*	7
7.3	Energy intensity of GDP in chain linked volumes (2015)*	\uparrow
	Energy productivity*	7
7.b	Net Maximum Electrical Capacity, by technology*	\uparrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

Achieving SDG 7, which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, is critical for fostering global economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being. Malta is actively working towards this objective through diverse initiatives that prioritise renewable energy, energy efficiency, modernised infrastructure and education.

As of 2022, the proportion of the population with access to electricity remains at $100\%^{69}$. The renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption increased from 7.91% in 2018 to 15.08% in 2023⁷⁰, and the net imports of electricity stood at 24.5% in 2018 but has since been estimated to have decreased to 21.3% by 202371.

Malta has made significant strides in expanding solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity, which grew from 131.890 MW in 2018 to 225.747MW (AC) and 240.846 MW (DC) in 2023⁷². However, onshore wind energy generation remains limited, with a capacity of just 0.057 MW in 2023, reflecting the country's ongoing reliance on solar energy as the primary source of renewable electricity⁷³. Energy intensity, measured in kilograms of oil equivalent (KGOE) per thousand euros, stood at 237.06 in 2018 but in 2023 was reduced to 195.65, with the energy productivity, measured in euros per kilogram of oil equivalent, was 3.73 and 4.52 in the same years respectively⁷⁴. The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) provides Malta's national energy strategy, developed in line with Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and the Council on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. This document also guides Malta's contribution to achieving the Energy Union's 2030 objectives and targets in the areas of decarbonisation, renewable energy, energy efficiency, security of supply, and research and innovation (R&I).

⁶⁹ World Bank

⁷⁰ NSO 71 Ibid.

⁷² REWS

⁷³ Ibid.

Key efforts include considerable investments in renewable energy, such as offshore wind projects and expanded solar installations, alongside advancements in grid resilience through battery storage systems and a second cable interconnector. Energy efficiency has improved through stricter building standards, renovation programmes, and grants. Tailored support schemes for households, businesses, and voluntary organisations encourage efficient energy use, while educational programmes promote sustainability awareness globally, highlighting Malta's comprehensive approach to achieving SDG 7.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Affordable, Reliable and Modern Energy Services:

Following substantial investment in energy infrastructure over the past decade, Malta's consumers have benefitted from a significant cost reduction in energy bills.

In recent years, Malta has undergone a significant transformation in its electricity generation methods, shifting away from heavy fuel oil and gasoil towards a cleaner energy mix. Malta has diversified its energy sources for electricity generation resulting in an energy mix with the following composition: approximately 70% of the annual energy requirement is locally generated, 20% is imported through a 200MW interconnector that connects the Maltese electrical grid to the Italian grid, and the remaining 10% is generated by renewables, predominantly PV systems. Recognising that natural gas serves as a transition fuel, Malta has now turned its attention to further deploying renewable energy sources, including offshore renewable generation, to foster its energy security.

Additionally, being an island, Malta seeks to create further pathways for interconnections on both shores of the Mediterranean, with the Second Cable Interconnector project with Sicily, Italy, as well as further potential regional cooperation with neighbouring Mediterranean countries. During 2024, several Engineering, Procurement and Commissioning (EPC) tenders for the implementation of the Second Cable Interconnector project were awarded.

Works on the onshore routes in Maghtab (Malta) have also commenced. In January 2024, the Planning Authority issued the Maltese development permit covering the works required to lay and protect the land and subsea cable link in Maltese territory, and in December 2024, the Italian Government issued the Single Authorisation Decree.

Enemalta, as the Distribution System Operator (DSO) responsible for the distribution of electrical energy on the Maltese Islands, has continued to upgrade its distribution network through various investments made in new distribution centres, new substations, remote operation, medium voltage and low voltage reinforcements amongst others. In February 2022, Enemalta launched a six-year action plan for its distribution. Between 2022 and 2024, it commissioned 145 new substations and upgraded another 165 secondary substations, amongst others. An accelerated 11 kV reinforcement project initiated at the end of 2023 had introduced 50 new connections between secondary nodes with the laying of more than 80km cables by mid-2024. This plan is now in phase two which will commission further medium voltage reinforcement projects in 2025. Additionally, distribution centres in Marsascala, Mrieħel, and Tarxien were extended in their capacity. Enemalta is also presently working on other various primary projects which are planned to be implemented by the end of 2026. These include new distribution centres in Siggiewi and Naxxar, an extension in St Andrews distribution centre, the extension and overhaul of Msida distribution centre and a new 132 kV link between Maghtab and Mosta distribution centres. Further to this, the planning of other new distribution centres is ongoing.

In parallel, Enemalta is actively expanding the grid to allow the installation of renewable sources of energy, which in the local context solely consists of PV installations. This has permitted the absorption of all the energy produced by the PV installations without curtailment.

Malta intends to develop two grid-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) to be connected to the Maltese National electric grid network. The first system (BESS 1), rated at 20MWh (8 MW), will be located in the underground tunnels of the former Marsa power station, while the second system (BESS 2) shall have a rating of 64MWh (32 MW) and shall be located within the precincts of the Delimara power station.

It is estimated that the Delimara project will cost €35 million, with that in Marsa costing €12 million. BESS 1 will be 100% funded from the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF), while BESS 2 is being considered for co-financing under the ERDF programme 2021-2027.

Renewable Energy Promotion: Solar PV continues to be the most viable and robust form of indigenous sources of renewable energy leading to various PV schemes and feed-in tariffs to further promote the installation of PV systems. For instance, the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) Scheme, which incentivises PV systems with a capacity of less than 40 kWp, has successfully encouraged installations in both residential and commercial buildings. Since 2018, Malta has achieved an installed PV capacity of 74.24 MWp that benefits exclusively from this tariff system, as recorded up to June 2024. For larger renewable electricity projects exceeding 40 kWp, support is awarded through competitive bidding. This process has resulted in an additional 28.29 MWp of installed PV capacity over the same period.

Further support is provided through the Renewable Energy Sources (RES) Grant Scheme, which has been structured to address diverse user needs. This scheme offers grants for PV systems with standard or hybrid inverters and systems that include battery storage. Financial assistance under this scheme ranges from €2,500 to €3,600 per system, depending on the specific option selected. Since 2018, this scheme has supported 8,170 interventions, with a total expenditure of €23,652,237.

As part of Malta's forward outlook and ambition in increasing the share of renewable energy, the Maltese Government is focusing on the development of its offshore (floating) renewable potential. This is being done with a view of establishing the necessary administrative and regulatory frameworks, which will enable the future deployment of larger-scale projects. In 2022, a Preliminary Market Consultation for economic activities in Malta's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) was issued. Amendments to local legislation in 2023 have extended the regulatory framework to cover Malta's EEZ, ensuring proper governance of offshore renewable energy projects. In 2024, following a public consultation, the National Policy for the Deployment of Offshore Renewable Energy was published. The Policy was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment and outlines a strategic framework to harness offshore wind and solar power, driving Malta toward climate neutrality by 2050.

With a focus on floating technologies suitable for the country's geographic and bathymetric conditions, the policy aims to diversify the energy mix, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and create economic opportunities through green job creation and innovation. In 2024, Malta launched a Preliminary Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) for the country's first offshore floating wind farm, with a planned installed capacity of 300MW. Malta has officially become a member of the Global Offshore Wind Alliance made up of 30 countries and organisations.

Renewable energy in road transport is promoted through a biofuel mandate which requires fuel suppliers to blend a minimum share of biofuel with diesel or petrol placed on that market. This initiative aims to contribute to Malta's compliance with the renewable energy targets, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and promote sustainability.

Energy Efficiency and Sustainability in Buildings:

The Roof Insulation and Double Glazing (RIDG) Grant Scheme provides financial support for retrofitting roof insulation and installing double glazing. Since 2018, the scheme provided 2,039 interventions with a total expenditure of €1,724,023. The Solar Water Heater (SWH) Grant Scheme provides financial support for the purchase and maintenance of solar water heaters. Since 2018, the scheme has supported 2,489 interventions on SWHs, amounting to a total expenditure of €2,823,281. Similarly, the Heat Pump Water Heater (HPWH) Grant Scheme offers grants to encourage the installation of energyefficient heat pump water heaters. Since 2018, this scheme has facilitated 408 interventions on HPWHs, with a total investment of €345,102. These initiatives foster the use of sustainable water heating solutions, contributing to Malta's energy efficiency and sustainability objectives.

As part of Malta's long-term renovation strategy, a scheme has been launched for the renovation of existing residential buildings with an emphasis on renovations in areas of historical value. The scheme, which is being extended regionally, achieves renovations to nearly zero energy levels.

Following the Conclusion of Cost-optimality Studies, new minimum energy performance benchmarks were developed which came into force in July 2024, introducing stricter energy efficiency standards and requiring new buildings to adhere to significantly higher energy performance targets.

Comprehensive requirements have been introduced for buildings undergoing major renovation. The requirements also include provisions for the inclusion of solar renewable energy sources in the buildings.

Education and Awareness: Malta has implemented comprehensive support services and schemes through EWA to enhance energy efficiency and reduce resource consumption for households, including those with vulnerable populations. The Agency offers free energy consultation service to all households, with the service being extended to micro-SMEs.

The Energy and Water Awareness Household Visits consist of assessments on the electricity and water consumption patterns at the individual households. This is followed by technical recommendations on how to lower consumption. During the same visit, informative material is disseminated. Eventually, follow-up visits are made to assess any progress resulting from the implementation of the technical recommendations given. Under the same initiative, informative sessions are conducted on local media (TV and Radio) and in Local Councils.

The same service is provided to vulnerable citizens through the Vulnerable Household Scheme, with the added aim of providing support while implementing sustainable and eco-friendly energy measures in their homes. EWA, in collaboration with a number of social entities, replaces old and inefficient appliances belonging to Maltese and Gozitan citizens classified as socially vulnerable, and shares useful tips on how to save energy and water as a household. Since 2015, over 5,800 visits have been carried out, including visits to vulnerable households, and over 1,200 customers have been eligible for and benefited from appliance replacement.

Economic Sector and Voluntary Organisations:

Voluntary organisations are supported through schemes intended to facilitate investment solutions that reduce overall energy and water consumption, as well as increase the use of renewable energy. Since the launch of these initiatives in 2022, more than 78 organisations have received support, with nearly 90 projects implemented to date.

These projects, backed by 90% funding, have led to the installation of efficient lighting, replacement of old appliances and a switch to heat pumps for water heating. These schemes also supported the installation of 250 kWp in PV panels across various organisations. These installations collectively generate over 400 MWh of renewable energy annually.

To foster sustainability in the business community, Malta has developed tailored support programmes for the industry and commercial sectors. These include energy audits aimed at identifying opportunities for improving operational sustainability. Over the past years, over 80 SMEs have benefited from such audits, gaining insights into energy-saving interventions and becoming more sustainable. Furthermore, knowledge-sharing is a cornerstone of these programmes, with several workshops conducted to promote energy-efficient practices. These workshops have also served as networking platforms, enabling businesses to collaborate on sustainable solutions, thus amplifying the impact of Malta's environmental initiatives.

Research and Technology: In 2020, the National Strategy for Research and Innovation in Energy and Water was published to address R&I needs within the energy and water sectors. That year, the first call for the Research and Innovation Scheme was announced, and the Platform RINEW was established — a one-stop shop for all matters related to R&I in these fields. Over the course of five calls, the total value of grants amounted to €2,046,330, which funded 13 research projects with more projects being added to the list annually. The scheme fostered collaboration across academia, private industry and the public sector, enabling the development of solutions that address both national and European policies.

Outcomes ranged from simulation models to working prototypes. In the energy sector, research areas include offshore renewables, solar performance enhancement, second-life applications for electric vehicle (EV) batteries, and off-grid solutions. These initiatives have delivered impactful results and fostered strong partnerships. The Grant Scheme has provided essential financial support to transform research into tangible outcomes, particularly following the recent structural change requiring each project to achieve Technology Readiness Level 7 (TRL-7) and produce a working prototype by the end of the scheme cycle.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

The initiatives under SDG 7 in Malta present meaningful synergies with other SDGs, particularly those related to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Investments in solar PV systems and offshore renewable energy contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13) by increasing the share of clean, renewable energy in the grid. Furthermore, the energy efficiency and sustainability in buildings initiatives, including the Roof Insulation and double-glazing grants, help create more energy-efficient homes, which supports sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). Additionally, the grid expansion for PV installations and BESS enhances grid resilience, facilitating the integration of renewable energy and making energy systems more reliable, further supporting SDG 11's aim to create a resilient infrastructure.

These energy initiatives also have synergies with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). The development of renewable energy projects, such as the offshore wind farm and solar PV installations, along with the expansion of energy infrastructure, has the potential to generate new jobs, foster innovation, and boost local economies. The competitive bidding for renewable energy and the preliminary market consultation for economic activities in Malta's EEZ promote innovation in the energy sector by attracting private sector investments and encouraging technological advancements. Additionally, technology adoption for energy savings—through schemes for solar water heaters and heat pump water heatersdrives both energy efficiency and technological innovation, contributing to SDG 9 by promoting sustainable industrial practices.



However, these initiatives may also involve trade-offs, particularly in balancing economic, environmental, and social goals. For example, while the development of offshore wind farms and largescale battery storage systems can support SDG 7 and SDG 13, they may have environmental and social impacts, such as potential harm to marine ecosystems as per SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

The rapid expansion of renewable energy infrastructure may also increase the demand for materials, leading to possible negative environmental impacts from resource extraction, which could conflict with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Additionally, while support schemes for vulnerable households help ensure equitable access to sustainable energy, supporting SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), there may be challenges in reaching all vulnerable populations and ensuring that the transition to green technologies is inclusive.





SDG 8 - Decent Work and **Economic Growth**

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
8.1	8.1.1 - Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	\rightleftharpoons
8.2	8.2.1 - Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	7
8.3	8.3.1 - Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex	Ā
8.4	Indicator 8.4.2 - Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	\uparrow
	GDP per unit of Domestic Material Consumption (Resource Productivity—index)*	\uparrow
	Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity per person*	7
8.5	8.5.1 - Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities	\uparrow
	8.5.2 - Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	\uparrow
	Employment rate, by sex*	\uparrow
8.6	8.6.1 - Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training	A
8.8	8.8.1 - Fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status	\downarrow
	8.8.1 - Non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status	\uparrow
	8.8.2 - Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status	7
8.9	Share of Tourist consumption expenditure in GDP (nominal values)*	A
8.10	8.10.1 - (a) Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and (b) number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults	\downarrow
	8.10.2 - Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	A
8.b	8.b.1 - Existence of a developed and operationalised national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy	V

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta is progressing steadily towards achieving SDG 8 by fostering business growth, employment, and sustainable development. However, this progress exhibits nuanced trends. While the annual growth rate of real GDP per capita experienced a slight decline from 3.4% in 2018 to 3.3% in 2023, a more robust performance is observed when considering the annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person, which increased significantly from 0.3% in 2018 to 1.3% in 202375. Moreover, the unemployment rate has decreased since 2018, dropping from 4% in 2018 to 3.5% in 202376.

Efforts to improve gender pay equality and workplace safety have led to measurable progress. Malta's focus on women's employment has seen tangible results, with the percentage of women in employment rising from 63.2% in 2018 to 73.6% in 2023⁷⁷, surpassing the EU average. Male and female hourly earning were nearly equal with males receiving €11.04 and females earning €10.89 in 2023, a slight improvement compared to 2018, when they respectively earned €9.76 and €9.00 per hour⁷⁸.

Regarding health and safety standards at work, the number of fatal occupational injuries for non-migrants stood at 0.53 per 100,000 employees in 2018 and 6.12 for migrants. In 2022, this figure was recorded to be 2.7 per 100,000 employees for non-migrants and 5.1 for migrants⁷⁹. For non-fatal occupational injuries, per 100,000 employees, the number was reported to be at 1,432 for non-migrants and 1,098 for migrants in 2018, falling drastically to 524 and 528 respectively in 202280.

The country has also focused on youth employment, closely monitoring the proportion of young people NEET. While the NEET rate stood at 7.4% in 2018, it rose to 10.6% in 2021, reflecting global and regional challenges. However, through targeted policies and initiatives, this trend was reversed, with the rate declining to 8.2% in 2023, outperforming the EU average81.

Moreover, Malta has consistently supported other sectors to drive innovation and sustainable development. This complements Malta's focus on high-value, labour-intensive industries, aligning with the country's goal to enhance economic productivity through diversification.

Notable Achievements and **Good Practices**

Supporting Job Creation and Growing Enterprises:

The setting up of BusinessFirst in 2018, a joint venture between Malta Enterprise (on behalf of Government) and the Malta Chamber for SMEs. has served as a vital one-stop support centre for business setup and development, simplifying procedures for entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to establish and expand their ventures. This initiative has streamlined access to government services, fostering a more businessfriendly environment.

The launch of the Malta Business Registry's new online platform in 2023 facilitates more efficient business registration and corporate services through digital transformation, thus reducing bureaucratic hurdles, allowing businesses to operate more smoothly and focus on growth. The introduction of tools like the Qualified Digital Signature also enhances operational security and trust, encouraging entrepreneurship and investment.

The Gozo Employment Refund Scheme incentivises job creation by providing financial subsidies to businesses that hire workers in Gozo, directly supporting regional economic growth. Complementing this, the Gozo Back Office Scheme and the Gozo Teleworking Scheme offer financial incentives for businesses to establish operations or hire remote workers in Gozo, leveraging the region's potential for economic diversification and development. Between 2019 and 2023, over 145 businesses benefitted from the Gozo Employment Refund Scheme, showcasing its impact on regional job creation.

Investments in tourism and business infrastructure in Gozo have included the upgrading of venues to host meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE), attracting international investors and boosting the island's economic profile. For example, in 2023, €47,261.81 was allocated for the restoration and improvement of such venues, aligning with Malta's strategy to enhance its niche markets and regional economic development.

In November 2022, the Malta Development Bank (MDB) launched two flagship schemes offering favourable financing to businesses with the potential of facilitating investment of up to €180 million in the Maltese economy.

⁷⁵ NSO

lbid.

Ibid

⁷⁹ Ihid

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The first scheme, the SME Guarantee Scheme (SGS) facilitates small and medium-sized enterprises' access to bank loans of up to €1 million, with the MDB providing a guarantee of 80% on each loan in the portfolio. The second scheme is the Guaranteed Co-Lending Scheme (GCLS), where the MDB provides directly half of the requested loan, with the commercial banks covering the other half. At the same time, the Bank covers 60% of the risk carried by the commercial bank. This scheme is targeted to support larger projects exceeding €1 million.

Projects relating to investment in intangibles, such as technology and digitalisation, may at times be considered by commercial banks to be too large, complex or risky. The MDB's involvement can assist such projects with the appropriate financing solution. Indeed, the MDB sanctioned a total of €12.1 million to two beneficiaries operating in the artificial intelligence and digital economic sectors.

The Malta Film Commission (MFC) has contributed significantly to sector-specific workforce development. Over 2,500 individuals participated in MFC training programmes in 2023, gaining expertise in areas such as sound design, camera operation, and set construction. These efforts enhance the skills of local talent and ensure Malta remains competitive in the global film industry. The Creative Malta Scheme, which allocated €1.5 million to 19 projects in 2022, further supports the growth of the creative sector, fostering innovation and employment opportunities.

As part of their commitment to building a robust film workforce, over 2,500 people participated in workshops in 2023, where they acquired skills in essential areas related to the filming industry. In 2023 the MFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the British Film Commission with the purpose of enhancing collaboration in matters relating to training programmes, support schemes and policy matters for film and TV production in both territories. Creative Malta, Malta's National Film Fund, awards local filmmakers for scriptwriting, development, production, and film festivals.

The Malta Film Awards which took place in 2022 aimed to celebrate and promote Maltese talent in the film and television industry. Launched in 2023, the Mediterranean Film Festival is a key annual cultural event that aims to position Malta as a hub for international film production while celebrating Mediterranean cinema.

Resource Efficiency in Consumption and Production:

The Green Mobility Scheme, a measure administered by Malta Enterprise, supports the transition to more sustainable transportation by accelerating the uptake of EVs used in business for the transportation of goods and people, by supporting investment in recharging infrastructure required for vehicles which are an integral part of a business activity. The scheme shall also support leasing of clean or zero-emission vehicles.

To encourage businesses to adopt sustainable practices, the Single-Use Plastic Reduction Scheme (2020) allocated grants covering up to 50% of the cost—up to a maximum of €20,000—for businesses investing in machinery and systems that reduce single-use plastics. Eligible investments included bulk dispensing systems and container cleaning technologies, enabling businesses to adopt sustainable practices while enhancing resource efficiency.

Promotion of Sustainable Tourism: The Malta

Tourism Strategy for the years 2021-2030 aims to guide the tourism sector's recovery post-COVID-19 by focusing on sustainable practices. In September 2022, the Malta Tourism Observatory was established with the mandate to implement this strategy and initiate the development of Sustainable Tourism Indicators. To support this initiative, EU-funded technical assistance has been secured from the EC's DG REFORM, which has engaged the OECD to collaborate with the Ministry for Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) in formulating a comprehensive set of Sustainable Tourism Indicators and initiating the creation of Tourism Satellite Accounts.

Between 2018 and 2020, the MTA launched an Erasmus+ project titled 'Digital Business and Digital Citizenship in Malta: Enhancing the driving force within the digital skills of the tourism sector'. A total of 48 managers working in the local tourism industry in catering, destination management, visitor attractions and accommodation benefitted from this traineeship in Rome. Between 2020 and 2023, the MTA launched another Erasmus+ project titled 'Improving Quality of Service Standards within the Catering Sector in Malta', wherein a total of 36 restaurant employees holding managerial or supervisory roles participated.



In 2021, 'Destinations SMEs', a project co-financed by the Interreg Europe programme, concluded with the implementation of a pilot action establishing an Association of Artisans called the 'Gozo Artisan Network' as well as the launch of a territorial Quality Label, the 'Gozo Quality Mark', to certify arts, crafts, and artisanal products through the workmanship and experience of Gozo-based artisans.

In 2022 and 2023, MTA participated in an Erasmus+ project titled 'Recover, Rethink, Revitalise', which focused on enhancing the skills of its employees to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector. Finally, in 2024 the MTA launched its latest Erasmus+ project titled 'Digitalisation & Innovation within the Tourism Industry in Malta through EU Funds: Artificial Intelligence and Digital Skills, Inclusiveness and Sustainable Tourism'. This programme shall run until 2025, wherein a total of 30 participants holding managerial or supervisory roles in the accommodation, catering, visitor attraction, destination management and travel and tourism services shall participate.

Through the project 'Towards Net-Zero Carbon in the Tourism Accommodation', Malta aims to study the current energy and water consumption levels in the collective tourist accommodation sector, with the aim of developing long-term plans on how this sector can be driven to reduce its carbon emissions and water usage.

The VINCI (Virtual & Augmented Reality Trainers Toolbox to Foster Low Carbon Tourism & Related Entrepreneurship) project, funded by the EU's Erasmus+ program, was a Strategic Partnership project in Adult Education, which ran from February 2022 to January 2024. It aimed to promote low carbon tourism and entrepreneurship across EU Member States by uniting seven partners with expertise in climate change, sustainability, tourism, entrepreneurship, training, curriculum development and digital technologies.

MTA, along with 7 other countries, is involved in an EU funded COSME project named 'Cross-Re-Tour'. This project is an innovative initiative aimed at facilitating the green and digital transition of SMEs within the tourism sector.

In 2023, First Aid courses were coordinated by the MTA in both Malta and Gozo and offered to employees working in hotels, restaurants, visitor attractions and Destination Management Companies (DMCs).

In the realm of sustainable culinary and hospitality practices, the FoodTuristic project, funded through Erasmus, equips students in culinary schools with training in green technologies. This initiative focuses on reducing food waste, adopting circular economy principles, and utilising sustainable technologies in food production, preparing the next generation of chefs and hospitality professionals for a greener future.

Both Green Key and Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) certifications are now operational in Malta, with several hotels pursuing certification.

The Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) has embarked on a project to construct a new campus for tourism studies. This campus will contribute to increasing the quality of education provided in such institution whilst investing in the future generation of people working in the tourism industry. Furthermore, ITS has partnered with SUNx Malta to develop a Climate Friendly Travel Education Capacity Building programme with the aim of having a Strategy Support System for Malta as a Global Centre of Climate Friendly Travel. The developed training programme is in the form of a Diploma at MQF Level 4. Following the success of the Diploma in Climate Friendly Travel, which saw 28 local and international students graduate with this qualification in December 2022, the collaboration between ITS and SUNx Malta has been taken a step further in the planning and development of a Master of Science in Strategic Management for Climate Friendly Travel.

In 2024, ITS started implementing a 'Skills Pass' system wherein third-country nationals applying for a visa to work within Malta's tourism sector would need to pass an initial skills pass assessment before their visa and work permit applications can be processed. The course leading to a skills pass includes an English language proficiency test and basic courses in customer care, hospitality and what Malta offers tourists. Applicants need to pass a final assessment to get the certification, enabling them to work in hotels, bars, restaurants, kitchen staff, housekeeping and front office posts.

Several cultural tours have been offered to foreign workers occupying positions as front liners working in the tourism industry to learn and discover the highlights of the Maltese tourism product. Hotel inhouse training on Maltese Culture and introduction to the Maltese Tourism industry to foreign employees was also organised.

The diving industry is an important niche in Malta as it attracts high volumes of tourists to the island all year round due to Malta's favourable climate. Divers are always exploring new underwater attractions, and the Hephaestus tanker which ran aground Malta in 2018 was an ideal vessel to be scuttled in Maltese waters. The Hephaestus vessel was cleaned from fuel, lubricants and equipment, and eventually scuttled off ix-Xatt L-Aħmar in Gozo in August 2022. The 855-tonne vessel is now resting at around 40m below sea level, making this an ideal wreck for advanced level divers which can be accessed both from shore and by boat.

Decent Work and Equal Opportunities: The Malta Business Disability Forum, coordinated by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), plays a vital role in addressing employment challenges for individuals with disabilities. The forum brings together employers, government bodies and civil society to promote inclusive workplace practices and remove barriers to employment.

The Access to Employment Scheme (A2E) offers financial assistance to businesses hiring disadvantaged job seekers and inactive individuals. The scheme aims to reduce labour market barriers and enhance the employability of individuals who face difficulties entering or re-entering employment. This scheme creates a win-win situation wherein employers benefit from financial assistance, receiving a subsidy for each new recruit for up to 52 or 104 weeks, depending on the target group. For persons registered with a disability, an enhanced subsidy is available for up to 156 weeks. These rates are reviewed annually to reflect cost-of-living adjustments.

To tackle gender pay disparities, the Equal Pay Tool, launched in 2023 by the NCPE, promotes equal pay for work of equal value between women and men, and has been integrated into the Equality Mark Certification. Four companies have already achieved the Equal Pay Certification, demonstrating a commitment to safeguard equal pay. Complementing this, the Prepare the Ground for Economic Independence (PGEI) project has raised awareness about gender pay and pension gaps through campaigns and research. Awareness campaigns by the NCPE continue to educate the public about the importance of gender pay equality.

Furthermore, the Free Childcare Scheme, introduced in 2014, has significantly encouraged parents—particularly women—to remain in or re-enter the workforce by reducing childcare costs. This initiative has been a driving factor in increasing the female employment rate from 63.2% in 2018 to 73.6% in 2023, surpassing the EU average of 70.2%82.

Malta also supports older adults through incentives for older workers, offering financial benefits to encourage workforce participation beyond pension age. Intergenerational connection initiatives promote meaningful interactions between generations, fostering social inclusion and empowerment for all age groups.

Malta has also prioritised the reintegration of incarcerated individuals into the workforce. The CSA provides vocational training, equipping persons in prison with employable skills to facilitate successful reintegration and reduce recidivism.

In line with the Government of Malta's plea to mitigate precarious working conditions, the Department of Contracts, in liaison with the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER), publishes an annual Contracts Circular, whereby the minimum hourly rates payable to the contractor of a public procurement contract vis-à-vis the provision of services (including precarious services), which tend to be associated with pay discrimination (both from a gender perspective as well as from a generic holistic perspective), are established. In addition, the said Circular also establishes the relevant minimum hourly rates payable by the contractors to their employees. Furthermore, for the past years it was established that the provision of services with high intensity of precarious and low-quality jobs shall be procured through the Best Price Quality Ratio (BPQR) award mechanism instead of price or cost only. It was deemed that the BPQR approach was the best tool to safeguard the contractors' employees.

To protect workers' rights, Malta has introduced various measures to enhance labour standards and workplace safety. The new Health and Safety at Work Act was published and came into force in 2024. This legislation facilitates the engagement of social dialogue to improve health and safety conditions at the place of work through the involvement of the new Governing Board. The new Act assigns specific roles to the new Governing Board such as oversight of the Executive, involvement in strategy formulation, advice and social participation, and dialogue.

The Governing Board is now legally obliged to consult on a regular basis with stakeholders. The new Act also introduced new powers to the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA), such as the publication of Administrative Instruments in order to address urgent matters which require immediate actions, a tool which would further bolster efficiency and effectiveness of OHSA enforcement actions.

Moreover, the new Act also includes a new structure of penalties, which now cover failures of a purely administrative nature, shortcomings for which a special compromise procedure applies with the retention of action through Courts.

The Helpline 138, launched in 2024, together with joint inspections conducted by the OHSA and Building and Construction Authority (BCA) to address issues in construction and health and safety, offer a streamlined process for reporting concerns.

On the issue of labour standards, Malta has introduced a range of initiatives which focus on fair wages, decent work, and economic growth. One key measure is the freephone service - 1575 for employees and 1576 for employers - which helps workers and employers understand their rights and responsibilities on wages, contracts and workplace regulations, ensuring fair and legal employment practices. To improve transparency, the 'Track My Case' initiative allows individuals to monitor the progress of their complaints and legal cases through an online platform, making dispute resolution more efficient. Furthermore, the postedworkersmalta.gov. mt, a one-stop-shop portal, was launched to facilitate the posting of workers to Malta.

This portal helps employers advertise job vacancies and allows job seekers to find and apply for positions more easily, making the recruitment process more accessible.

In 2023, sector-specific employment contract templates to help employers and workers draft agreements that comply with labour laws were published by the DIER. The national minimum wage is regularly updated, with the 2025 rate set at €221.78 per week, ensuring fair compensation. Ongoing inspections have resolved cases where workers were denied wages, bonuses, leave, or payslips. Legislative changes have further improved labour standards, including protections for posted workers, better work-life balance rights, fair conditions for gig economy workers, clearer employment terms, stricter regulations for employment agencies, and strengthened collective bargaining rights.

Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings: The Human Rights Initiatives Unit (HRIU) was set up in 2020 within the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) and has since been responsible for Malta's antihuman trafficking reform with the aim of eradicating forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, including child labour in all its forms. An Anti-Human Trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was set up in 2022 with focal points from each Ministry in order to identify and implement anti-trafficking actions and work on shared challenges.

Additionally, the Human Trafficking Monitoring Committee (HTMC) was also re-convened in 2022 to oversee developments in the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan as well as other related measures, by providing policy direction in relation to human trafficking.

The first National Strategy and Action Plan on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings in Malta (2024 - 2030) will equip Malta with more effective tools for the prevention of human trafficking, the protection of victims of trafficking and the prosecution of offenders.

The national awareness campaign on human trafficking aimed at informing the public on the concept of modern slavery and the red flags of this crime, as well as encouraging the reporting of any suspicious activity. Awareness-raising efforts have also been aimed towards victims and those at risk of human trafficking in order to encourage self-identification and to promote support services.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's SDG 8 initiatives align with several other SDGs, creating synergies across various sectors. For instance, initiatives like BusinessFirst and the Gozo Employment Refund Scheme foster economic growth and job creation, linking closely with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by promoting business development and sustainable infrastructure. The Gozo Teleworking Scheme supports SDG 13 (Climate Action) by encouraging remote work, which helps reduce carbon emissions from commuting, while projects like the Single-Use Plastic Reduction Scheme encourages businesses to contribute to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by promoting environmental sustainability.

The focus on workforce development through initiatives such as the Get Qualified initiative aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by providing

individuals with skills for the future. Similarly, the Malta Business Disability Forum supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by addressing workplace disparities, while the CSA initiatives promote SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for incarcerated individuals. These efforts highlight Malta's comprehensive approach to addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

However, some initiatives present potential tradeoffs. For instance, economic growth-driven projects can contribute to overdevelopment, conflicting with SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) if sustainable practices are not incorporated. Likewise, tourism promotion may inadvertently create more strain on the country's infrastructure, services, resources, and environment at large, creating tradeoffs with SDGs 6-8 and SDGs 11-15 if the sector is not managed sustainably.





AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
9.1	9.1.1 - Proportion of the rural population who live within 2 km of an all-season road	✓
	9.1.2 - Passenger and freight volumes, by mode of transport	\uparrow
9.2	9.2.1 - Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP and per capita	7
9.3	9.3.1 - Proportion of small-scale industries in total industry value added, based on (a) international classification and (b) national classifications	7
	9.3.2 - Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit	A
9.4	9.4.1 - CO ₂ emission per unit of value added	7
9.5	9.5.1 - Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	7
	9.5.2 - Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants	\uparrow
9.b	Proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added*	7
9.c	9.c.1 - Proportion of population covered by a mobile network, by technology	✓

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta has made significant progress toward SDG 9, with key initiatives aiming to modernise infrastructure and adopt environmentally friendly technologies. Digital transformation efforts have streamlined businesses' operations, enhancing efficiency and innovation. These advancements reflect Malta's commitment to sustainable industrialisation, innovation and infrastructure modernisation, aligning with global climate goals.

The proportion of the rural population living within 2 km of an all-season road has remained stable at 100% in 2024, indicating that infrastructure development in rural areas has been effective⁸³.

In terms of transport, data on passenger and freight volumes reveals a shift in trends. Freight volume by aviation increased from 4,815,000 tonne-kilometre (tkm) in 2018 to 8,676,000 tkm in 2022, reflecting an upward trajectory in the freight sector⁸⁴. Passenger volumes by aviation also grew, from 3,336.935 million passenger-kilometre (pkm) in 2018 to 3,836.117 million pkm in 2022⁸⁵. Maritime transport showed contrasting results, with container port traffic slightly decreasing from 3.414 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) in 2018 to 2.994 million TEUs in 2022⁸⁶.

⁸³ NSO and Transport Malta

⁸⁴ International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

In terms of manufacturing, the proportion of manufacturing value added to GDP has seen a slight increase, rising from 6.78% in 2018 to 7.07% in 2022, and manufacturing value added per capita grew from \$1,821.57 in 2018 to \$2,062.35 in 2023⁸⁷.

Small-scale industries have shown some improvement in terms of their contribution to total industry value added, rising from 15.7% in 2018 to 17.5% in 202288. However, the proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit decreased from 14.9% in 2018 to 13.0% in 202289. Carbon emissions from manufacturing industries, measured per unit of value added, decreased from 0.05 kg $\rm CO_2$ in 2018 to 0.03 kg $\rm CO_2$ in 2018 to 0.03 kg $\rm CO_2$ in 202190.

Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP rose slightly from 0.58% in 2018 to 0.64% in 2023, and the number of researchers per million inhabitants also increased from 1,838 in 2018 to 2,272 in 2023, reflecting Malta's growing investment in innovation⁹¹. However, the proportion of medium and high-tech industry value added in total value added declined slightly from 34.18% in 2018 to 32.83% in 2022⁹².

Lastly, Malta has achieved full mobile network coverage, with 100% of the population having access to at least 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G networks as of 2024⁹³. Nationwide 5G mobile network coverage was achieved in 2022. The country has also made considerable strides in Gigabit connectivity, with Gigabit speed connections provided nationwide since 2019.

Overall, while Malta has made substantial progress in improving infrastructure, industrialisation and innovation, challenges such as the environmental impact of industries, the financing of small-scale industries, and the shifting role of manufacturing remain areas to address as the country continues working toward SDG 9.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialisation:

Regeneration and embellishment of Governmentowned industrial estates and related facilities administered by INDIS Malta Ltd, as well as further developments through sustainable and innovative industrial property solutions, are crucial for the islands' sustainable economic development. Projects such as the creation of a green open space in Bulebel Industrial Estate, which is home to circa 70 companies, as well as the regeneration of Ta' Qali Artisan Village with 55 artisans currently operating from such Village, are supporting local artisans and businesses. INDIS Malta Ltd is adopting the "going vertical approach" in a number of major projects it is undertaking, which seeks to generate sustainable growth in Malta's industrial estate facilities whilst also reducing its impact on the environment. One such project is the Business Incubation Centre (BIC) at Ħal Far, which shall be constructed over an industrial warehouse.

The BIC is a new development spread with a capacity of 50 tenants and shall support the growth and establishment of SMEs and enterprises by providing laboratory space as well as incubation facilities for light industry operators. The Mrieħel Industrial Estate project will see the development of industrial/office spaces being constructed over a factory. Similarly, the project involving the development of spaces for light industry in San Gwann will have a footprint of 3,690 m², comprising of 4 underground level spaces and 10 above ground, accommodating circa 40 industries. An overarching approach for these projects is to establish energy-efficient and sustainable infrastructure.

⁸⁷ United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

⁸⁸ NSO

⁸⁹ Central Bank of Malta and NSO

⁹⁰ IEA, UNIDO

⁹¹ NSO

⁹³ Malta Communications Authority (MCA)

The Construction Industry Scheme by Malta Enterprise promotes sustainable industrialisation and fosters innovation in the construction sector. By facilitating the replacement of outdated machinery with modern, eco-friendly alternatives, the scheme not only reduces harmful emissions but also encourages operators to adopt greener practices. The provision of financial assistance in the form of cash grants empowers eligible enterprises to make the necessary investments, enhancing their operational efficiency while simultaneously protecting the environment. Ultimately, this initiative serves as a vital step towards achieving a more sustainable and resilient construction industry, aligning with global efforts to build sustainable infrastructure and combat climate change. €3.5 million were awarded through this Scheme.

Through the 'InMalta' brand and business missions, Tech.mt is promoting Malta both from a foreign direct investment perspective, while providing an opportunity for local tech startups and businesses to internationalise. By actively promoting the adoption of advanced technologies, such as the Internet of Things, Tech.MT not only enhances the operational efficiency of local businesses but also positions Malta as an attractive destination for foreign direct investment. The strategic focus on internationalising local tech startups further strengthens the ecosystem, creating a vibrant landscape for innovation and collaboration.

As a result, this initiative not only contributes to the economic growth of Malta but also aligns with global efforts to build resilient infrastructure and promote sustainable industrialisation, ultimately driving long-term progress towards achieving the broader objectives of sustainable development.

Research and Innovation: The National R&I Strategic Plan 2023-2027 was developed following a EC Peer Review organised in 2019. The key outcomes of this exercise have been pivotal for Science Malta (SM), leading to the introduction of new schemes, the increasing of budget allocation for FUSION (Malta's national R&I funding programme), the creation of an Internationalisation unit, and the formal establishment of SM as an agency in May 2024. These initiatives contribute to strengthening the infrastructure supporting R&I in Malta. The National R&I Strategic Plan 2023-2027 lays out the foundation for building a stronger R&I policy framework in the country, with a particular emphasis on areas such as R&D expenditure and enhancing research careers.

The National Smart Specialisation Strategy for 2021-2027 establishes a sector-specific, targeted approach to innovation investments based on the quadruple helix cooperation. It identifies key sectors with significant economic potential and outlines strategic priorities to promote innovation within these areas. By doing so, it aims to enhance productivity and competitiveness across Malta's economy. The initiatives and frameworks introduced under this strategy are designed to foster a sustainable innovation ecosystem that supports long-term growth.

The FUSION programme, Malta's primary national R&I funding scheme, has seen steady growth in its budget over recent years. Starting from €2.2 million in 2020, it has expanded to €6.3 million in 2025, with a target to reach €8.2 million annually by 2027. This growth is intended to support sustainable industrialisation and innovation by providing a more robust funding framework for research initiatives within Malta. Through FUSION, Malta is actively fostering a culture of R&I that contributes to long-term economic growth and the development of a resilient R&I sector.

In its commitment to advancing Malta's R&I capacity, SM has allocated significant resources to enhance its international R&I collaborations. In 2024, SM committed €1.7 million to support bilateral R&I projects, strengthening ties with international partners, and an additional €2.2 million was allocated to multilateral R&I initiatives. These investments underscore Malta's dedication to building a strong network of international research partnerships, further enriching the national R&I landscape.

Beyond its funding initiatives, SM continues to support the broader R&I ecosystem within Malta. An example is the recently established Community of Practice for Research Funding Organisations (RFO CoP), which facilitates collaboration with key actors in the local R&I ecosystem. Additionally, SM organises networking events and hosts science meets policy events to strengthen links between the public sector and researchers in academia and the private sector. These efforts collectively foster a more innovative and sustainable R&I environment.

In parallel with government and institutional initiatives, the private sector in Malta has made significant strides in R&D investment. Business sector R&D expenditure has grown substantially, from €30.5 million in 2013 to €71 million in 2023, as reported by Eurostat. This complements Malta's national and strategic efforts to foster a more resilient and innovative economy.

The European Digital Innovation Hub (DiHubMT), launched in 2023, provides digital services to SMEs, midcaps and public organisations, promoting innovation and improving digital skills across sectors. Complementing this, schemes offering training and reskilling programmes help the workforce adapt to the demands of the digital economy. By providing assistance and support to find investment, the DiHubMT ensures equitable access to digital tools and knowledge, empowering businesses of all sizes to thrive in the digital economy.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's initiatives under SDG 9 focus on sustainable infrastructure, renewable energy, and innovation, with important interlinkages to other SDGs. For instance, the scheme for eco-friendly machinery in construction align with SDG 13 (Climate Action) by reducing emissions and environmental impact. The embellishment of industrial zones revitalises urban areas, contributing to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by incorporating green spaces and optimising land use.

Renewable energy projects, like the use of factory roofs for PV panels, advance SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) by promoting solar energy adoption in industrial areas. The National Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027 and investment in digital projects intersect with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by encouraging innovation, digitalisation, and sustainable industrial growth. The promotion of technology adoption in industry, including IoT, aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by fostering resource efficiency. Malta's R&I initiatives, such as the National R&I Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and FUSION National R&I Funding Programme, have a cross-cutting impact on SDG 4 (Quality Education) through the development of skills and knowledge that drive technological advancement.

However, there are potential trade-offs to consider. Increasing digitisation requires energy usage, which should be monitored to ensure that this is fuelled by renewable sources as per SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) to avoid increasing the environmental footprint of the industrial sector, in line with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Ensuring inclusive access to these opportunities is crucial to avoid widening digital divides that could undermine the broader goal of sustainability.

MALTA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030
AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT





SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
10.1	Growth rate of the net equivalised income among the bottom 40 per cent of the population*	\uparrow
10.2	10.2.1 - Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	A
	At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate of Maltese and non-Maltese aged 18 and over*	\rightleftharpoons
10.3	10.3.1 - Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law	\downarrow
10.4	10.4.1 - Labour share of GDP	\rightleftharpoons
	Employment rate by citizenship (15 to 64 age bracket)*	7
10.5	10.5.1 - Financial Soundness Indicators	\uparrow
10.7	10.7.2 - Number of countries with migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people	:
	Total asylum decisions pending as at end of year*	7
10.b	10.b.1 - Total resource flows for development (e.g. official development assistance, foreign direct investment and other flows)	\uparrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

SDG 10, focused on reducing inequalities, aims to ensure equal access to opportunities and resources for all individuals. Malta is actively working towards reducing inequalities across society in the face of emerging challenges and societal issues.

The proportion of people living below 50% of the median income increased across all demographic groups. In 2018, the overall rate was 8.7%, with higher rates among women (9.2%) compared to men (8.3%)⁹⁴. By 2023, the overall rate rose to 11.1%, with the percentage of people under 18 years old reaching 15.6%, up from 13.3% in 2018, and the elderly (65+) experiencing a significant increase to 15.7%, up from 8.3% in 201895.

These trends suggest widening income inequality, particularly among vulnerable groups.

The AROPE rate showed improvement for Maltese citizens, dropping from 18% in 2018 to 15.8% in 2023⁹⁶. However, the rate for non-Maltese citizens rose from 24.9% to 27.3% in the same period, indicating a growing divide between Maltese and non-Maltese populations⁹⁷.

In 2019, 8% of men and 7% of women felt discriminated against⁹⁸. By 2023, this increased to 23% for men and 22% for women⁹⁹.

⁹⁴ NSO

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.⁹⁸ EC - Eurobarometer survey

The labour share of GDP, which includes wages and social protection transfers, decreased marginally from 48.9% in 2018 to 48.4% in 2023, indicating that a smaller proportion of national income is going to workers, suggesting increased economic concentration¹⁰⁰. Employment rates for Maltese citizens improved, with the rate rising from 70% in 2018 to 75% in 2023¹⁰¹. Employment rates also increased for EU citizens (81.9% to 83.4%) and non-EU citizens (71.2% to 83.6%)¹⁰².

In terms of financial stability, indicators such as nonperforming loans remained relatively steady at 3.5% in 2022¹⁰³. The return on assets is at 0.66% (2022).

Overall, while Malta has made progress in some areas, such as reducing poverty risk for Maltese citizens and improving employment rates, gaps remain in income equality, social inclusion, and discrimination.

These trends highlight the need for continued efforts to reduce inequality across various groups, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of background or nationality, benefit from economic and social progress.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Social, Economic and Political Inclusion: Malta's National Disability Strategy 2021-2030 aims at providing a roadmap for the Maltese disability sector over the next years. Between 2021-2023, various legislative reforms took place, including changes in national legislation to establish the legal role of the CRPD in Malta as the Equality Body for the disability sector in Malta. In 2022, the Directorate for Disability Issues was established by law as the National Coordination Mechanism in line with the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). On 1 July 2023, the Convention of 13 January 2000 on the International Protection of Adults (2000 Protection of Adults Convention) entered into force following Malta's deposit of its instrument of ratification on 8 March 2023.

Reforms were undertaken in the entire disability benefits application process, which transitioned to a fully digital, end-to-end system with the aim of creating a fairer and equal set-up on the disability assessment and the respective eligibility for social benefits related to disability. The previous medical panel was replaced by an Inter-Professional Board composed of experts from various fields. This board uses the International Classification of Functioning (ICF) developed by the WHO to assess each disability and determine eligibility.

The new system significantly benefited hundreds of individuals who previously had no access to disability-related benefits, while also enhancing the assessment process to better identify cases of disability. Agenzija Sapport has processed 4,624 EU Disability Cards and 5,787 Blue Badges. Annually, there has been a 10% increase in applications and renewals processed up to October 2024 compared to the full year of 2023.

The New Respite Centre in Southern Malta aims to provide accessible and high-quality support for families requiring respite services for individuals with disabilities. The goal is to enhance the availability of services promoting independent living and community integration, thereby improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families. This centre promotes the principle of community-based care, thus fostering an inclusive community where families can thrive. The Independent Supported Living Services promotes independent living for persons with disabilities by providing tailored support services that encourage autonomy. The aim is to empower individuals to live independently while facilitating access to local resources and services. The service has seen a continual increase in participation, demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting independent living. In 2024, 1,839 persons with disabilities benefitted from one or more services related to independent living or community-based services, indicating a steadily increasing demand from the 1,003 recorded in 2022.

Malta has also advanced Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) rights with key legislative reforms and measures reinforcing its position as a leader in this area. The Managing with Pride: Trans-Inclusive Employment for Management Campaign aimed at addressing the stigma and prejudice that transgender and gender-diverse workers and job seekers may encounter. This is also complemented by training and capacity building within various organisations in the public and private sector to address LGBTIQ+ inequality in the workplace. With the aim of addressing the challenges of collecting data on LGBTIQ+ persons and provide insights into their socioeconomic status in Malta, the 2021 National Census included questions related to sexual orientation and gender identity for individuals over 16 years of age. A Queer Dictionary and Media Guidelines were published and circulated in 2023. The MPF has been actively involved in addressing hate crime and hate speech targeting LGBTIQ+ individuals through training to police officers to respond to cases of hate crime and hate speech, as well as drafting a diversity policy for the MPF. With the aim of promoting LGBTIQ+ inclusion in education, training to educators is provided with the aim of addressing LGBTIQ+ inclusivity and diversity in schools.

¹⁰⁰ NSO

¹⁰¹ Ibid. ¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The Gender Well-being Clinic (GWC) has continued to expand its services to address the healthcare needs of transgender and gender-diverse individuals. The GWC has also been actively involved in training healthcare professionals on LGBTIQ+ healthcare needs and promoting an inclusive environment within healthcare services, with 185 informal carers receiving training to improve caregiving skills.

A new LGBTIQ+ well-being service was launched in July 2024 offering psychosocial support for LGBTIQ+ individuals and their family. By end of 2024, the service handled 25 cases. The team carried out outreach activities and collaboration initiatives with NGOs.

The Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act was amended to include legal recognition for non-binary genders, allowing individuals to identify officially as non-binary with the gender marker "X" on all official documents. The amendment allows changes to all relevant acts of civil status (e.g. birth, marriage, civil union) to be done through a single notary procedure.

The Maltese Government has been actively supporting LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations through funding and collaboration. This includes renewing the Public Social Partnership with the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) to ensure the continuation of the Rainbow Support Service and provision of financial support to Malta Pride activities. Malta has been actively promoting LGBTIQ+ equality on an international level through its participation in various international fora and initiatives. This includes advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights at the UN and supporting the EU Strategy for LGBTIQ Equality.

The NCPE carried out an EU co-funded project (2020 – 2022) focusing on equality with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics and gender expression, through a set of initiatives:

A Qualitative Research Study on LGBTIQ+
Discrimination in employment, access to goods and services, relationships with relatives and others, homophobic stereotypes, trans issues, knowledge of legislation, complaints of alleged discrimination and redress; two workshops with the LGBTIQ+ community to discuss pertinent issues faced by the community; capacity-building sessions for the NCPE employees on the relevant laws, underreporting, mainstreaming LGBTIQ+ policies and effective outreach; as well as awareness raising.

The CSA works to ensure the inclusion of all persons in prison by providing equitable access to basic services, education, and training opportunities. This promotes their social and economic inclusion during incarceration and supports their reintegration post-release.



Anti-Racism and Integration: Malta finalised the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy 2021-2023 which is the first national action plan in Malta with the aim of confronting and eliminating racism in all its forms - individual, systemic and societal - whilst also stimulating and supporting intercultural inclusion. The document incorporated 22 measures that made anti-racism and anti-discrimination both individual and collective responsibilities across all sectors of society; the Government and the public sector, democratic and political institutions, the media, but also the private sector, civil society, and the general population. Outreach and awareness-raising activities also took place throughout and across all levels of society, particularly the grassroots. This strategy also supported the creation of an Inter-ministerial committee to ensure a whole-of-government approach to anti-racism, as well as the Anti-Racism Platform which is a civil society-led initiative formed to provide a platform for civil society to monitor the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy, thereby building trust between communities and public authorities.

The 'Towards the implementation of an Anti-Racism Strategy for Malta' (END-RACISM-MT) project, partially funded by the CERV Programme 2021-2027, aimed at improving Maltese public authorities' responses to multiple and intersectional discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and implemented the Anti-Racism Strategy (2021-2023). Training on anti-racism was provided to 450 public officers through the project END-RACISM-MT with the support of the local NGO, Kopin. Through the END-RACISM-MT project, an information sheet for Tenants was published in five languages (Maltese, English, French, Arabic, Serbian and Spanish) and disseminated with the aim of raising awareness about accommodation rights and obligations. An Anti-Racism Policymaking Tool was developed by the NCPE with the aim of providing public officers with a step-by-step guide on how to

mainstream anti-racism in national policies, human resources and service provision. The project also supported the development of the Anti-Rumour Action Plan, written by Diversit.

Furthermore, an awareness raising campaign entitled 'Tkunx Razzist/Don't Be Racist' was held in the summer of 2024 using both traditional and online media. Police training on embracing racial equality was provided to around 400 police officers, sergeants and recruits throughout 2024. This training started in February 2023 and will continue.

Integration = Belonging: Vision 2020 was the first migrant integration strategy ever adopted in Malta. One of the key actions of this strategy was the 'I Belong' programme. The 'I Belong' programme has provided more than 5,000 individuals with language and cultural orientation training, facilitating their integration and access to a more permanent residence status. With an ever-increasing demand, the programme continues to provide this crucial training for all adult migrants living in Malta.

The Second National Integration Strategy and Action Plan (2025-2030) was launched in January 2025. The Strategy charts a course forward, rooted in lessons from past successes and challenges. It embodies Malta's commitment to fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of background, can contribute fully to Maltese society while maintaining the richness of their identities. This Strategy fully intersects with the introduction of the Malta Labour Migration Policy framework, within which integration has taken on a key role to address the challenges of retention and stability, given the social implications. The Strategy is linked to two projects, the AMIF-funded SPRING Project and the Erasmus+ funded ConnACT, both of which commenced in early 2025.

The project 'First Step: Pre-Departure Integration Measures (PDIMs) in Malta', financed by the EC's Technical Support Programme, aims to support the design and development of a national system for measures of pre-departure integration. This system will optimise the integration of migrants into Maltese society by enabling them to start integration pre-departure and obtain important information on rights, obligations and opportunities in Malta.

The project entitled 'Strengthening Knowledge on Integration and Non-discrimination' (SKIN), implemented by the NCPE in collaboration with the Aditus Foundation, focuses on the grounds of race and ethnic origin. The main aim of this project is to identify the needs of, and discrimination faced by, vulnerable groups, namely migrants and Muslims.

The project 'All Equal: Supporting Victims of Human Trafficking' aims at providing support to third country nationals who are victims of human trafficking by promoting and safeguarding their psychological well-being and empowering them to regain control and lead independent lives.

In 2020, the AWAS set up the Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers (UMAS) Protection services, which focus on the support provided to unaccompanied minors in Malta. AWAS also signed a bilateral agreement with the Maltese Child Protection Services. AWAS has updated its Age Assessment Procedure and the Age Assessment Tool with the support of the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), according to the EUAA guideline on Age Assessment. This widely improved the professional standards, operating structures and safeguards for the Agency as well as the service users.

Fiscal Measures to Ensure Equality: The Enhanced Support Services through the Scheme for Exemptions/ Reductions/Grants for Persons with Disabilities provides financial assistance through exemptions and grants to persons with disabilities, allowing them to overcome economic barriers. The aim is to enhance opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate more fully in society through transportation, purchasing assistive technology, or accessing necessary services. The ongoing success of this scheme can be measured by the 4,113 beneficiaries who received financial assistance since January 2023, which has impacted their quality of life and access to services.

Other fiscal measures included tax refunds to persons who were employed during basis year 2022 and did not earn more than €60,000. During 2024, a total of 270,477 persons who were in employment during 2022 and did not earn more than €60,000 received a tax bonus, at a cost of €28 million. Persons with the lowest income received the highest amount of tax bonus, a measure of re-distribution.

The 'Donations to Voluntary Organisations Rules' grants a tax credit of up to €500 to companies that make cash donations on or after 1 January 2024 to voluntary organisations that are enrolled with the competent authority in accordance with the Voluntary Organisations Act and operating directly in the field of social, environmental or animal welfare. This measure is an incentive to companies to make donations to voluntary organisations working to promote the welfare of society, as they receive a reduction in their tax bill of up to €500 when doing so.

ODA and Financial Flows: Malta's ODA Programme aims at supporting communities affected by both natural and human-made crises. Through consistent financial contributions and pledges, Malta reaffirms its commitment to reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive support for vulnerable communities and displaced populations affected by conflicts and instabilities.

Since 2016, Malta has been dedicated to addressing pressing humanitarian concerns in Libya, a country that remains the 11th most underfunded operation for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Malta has also provided funding to the Turkish Red Crescent in response to the devastating earthquake in Turkey, highlighting a rapid response to natural disasters. Regular contributions to UNRWA benefit vulnerable populations in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, reinforcing Malta's ongoing commitment to regions impacted by protracted crises. Each year, Malta contributes to initiatives focused on migration and displacement, as well as targeted support for vulnerable groups in countries going as far as Venezuela. Contributions to NGOs like the FAO and UN WFP further amplify Malta's support, addressing food insecurity and resilience in areas affected by disasters and conflict.

Malta is hosting the Training Institute on Migration Capacity Partnership for the Mediterranean (MCP MED TI), a permanent and accredited vocational migration training centre, established in December 2021. To date, Denmark, Austria and the EU have accepted to participate as MCP MED TI donors (together with Malta), and Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Jordan participate as beneficiaries and partners. Between December 2021 and May 2024, 29 tailored courses were developed by the MCP MED TI, 18 of which achieved European accreditation and engaged over 1000 participants, 437 of whom achieved European accreditation.

Through the voluntary contribution to the Council of Europe for the 'Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the context of Migration and Asylum in Europe' (2021-2025) in March 2024, Malta aims at providing resources to address this issue at a regional level.

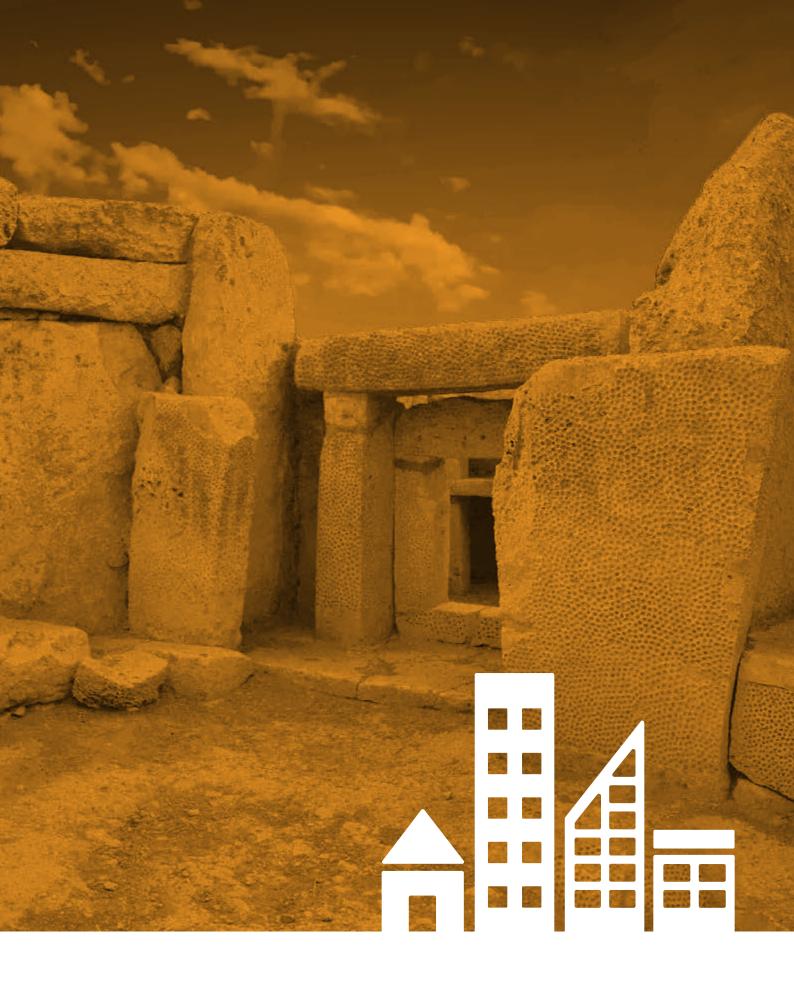
Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

The initiatives under SDG 10 in Malta are deeply interconnected with several other SDGs, emphasising the importance of inclusivity, equity, and social justice. The financial assistance schemes for persons with disabilities, linked to SDG 1 (No Poverty), address economic barriers and enhance access to essential services.

By promoting LGBTIQ+ rights, including workplace equality and anti-discrimination measures, Malta aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality), fostering an environment where LGBTIQ+ individuals can fully participate in society. Similarly, inclusive healthcare services for gender-diverse individuals directly support SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), ensuring accessible healthcare for all.

A strong community approach is clear in various initiatives included in SDG 10, such as the integration of gender-diverse individuals and migrants in society, which signals strong links with the SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Malta's anti-discrimination initiatives—from combatting racism through the Anti-Racism Strategy to supporting migrant integration contribute to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting peace and social inclusion. These programmes aim to break down systemic barriers and ensure equal access to opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, or migrant status, fostering more resilient and inclusive communities. The training and capacity-building initiatives for migration management, as well as vulnerability assessments and pre-departure integration programmes, ensure that migrants are better prepared to thrive in their new communities, having a direct connection with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) through enhancement of social cohesion and the creation of inclusive national policies, in turn having an international impact.

Despite the progress being made, some potential trade-offs may emerge. For instance, the financial resources directed towards supporting marginalised groups, such as through the tax bonuses for low-income earners and donations to voluntary organisations, may divert funds from other areas, potentially impacting the budget for broader economic development or infrastructure projects. Additionally, policies designed to improve access to services and integration for specific groups could face challenges in balancing the needs of all vulnerable communities. Nonetheless, Malta's approach to SDG 10 illustrates its willingness to work toward a comprehensive, inclusive strategy that not only aligns with several other SDGs but also strives to minimise trade-offs by promoting equity across diverse sectors.



SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
11.1	11.1.1 - Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing	\downarrow
	Housing cost overburden rate by poverty status*	\downarrow
	Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise*	7
	Share of persons living in overcrowded households*	7
	Material deprivation for the housing dimension*	7
11.2	Use of public transport*	\uparrow
	Number of passenger cars per 1,000 residents aged 18 and over*	\uparrow
	Death due to transport accidents*	\uparrow
11.3	11.3.1 - Ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate	\uparrow
11.4	11.4.1 - Total per capita expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by source of funding (public, private), type of heritage (cultural, natural) and level of government (national, regional, and local/municipal)	\downarrow
11.6	11.6.1 - Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated, by cities	✓
	11.6.2 - Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted)	7
	Number of annual EVs, including plug-in-hybrid EVs in circulation*	\uparrow
	Annual average of $\mathrm{NO_2}$ concentrations from respective air monitoring stations*	7
	Average CO ₂ emissions per km from new passenger cars*	\uparrow
	Premature deaths due to exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5)*	\uparrow
11.a	11.a.1 - Number of countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans that (a) respond to population dynamics; (b) ensure balanced territorial development; and (c) increase local fiscal space	✓

Status of the Goal and Targets

SDG 11 aims to make urban areas inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. This goal emphasises improving urban planning, ensuring affordable housing, enhancing public transport systems, and preserving cultural and natural heritage while fostering environmental sustainability and social inclusion. Malta's recent efforts reflect a strong alignment with these objectives, demonstrated through targeted initiatives and measurable progress.

Significant advancements have been made in urban mobility, with public transport initiatives, including free services, leading to a notable increase in ridership and accessibility . The number of commuters rose from 53.5 million in 2018 to 67.2 million in 2023, while the number of passenger cars per 1,000 residents declined from 727 to 674 over the same period 104 . The average $\rm CO_2$ emissions per km from new passenger cars decreased substantially from 130.5 g/km in 2018 to 91.3 g/km in 2023 105 .

Additionally, Malta's urban greening initiatives have also contributed to improved environmental quality, focusing on green infrastructure projects and park expansions. The ratio of land consumption rate to population growth in 2020 stood at 0.81, reflecting balanced urban development ¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, efforts to reduce air pollution have led to a decrease in premature deaths due to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), from 196 in 2018 to 173 in 2022 ¹⁰⁷.

Despite these successes, challenges remain in addressing housing affordability and quality. The proportion of urban populations living in inadequate housing increased from 1.7% in 2018 to 11.5% in 2023, and the housing cost overburden rate by poverty status increased from 1.7% to 6% during the same period, highlighting growing affordability concerns¹⁰⁸.

Other housing-related indicators show mixed trends. The proportion of overcrowded households decreased from 3.4% in 2018 to 2.4% in 2023, while material deprivation for the housing dimension dropped slightly from 15.8% to 15.3% (from 2018 to 2023)¹⁰⁹. The proportion of the population who declared that they are affected either by noise from neighbours or from the street rose from 28.2% in 2018 to 31.3% in 2023¹¹⁰.

Waste management remains robust, with 100% municipal solid waste collection coverage consistently achieved in 2023¹¹¹.

These collective efforts underscore Malta's dedication to creating inclusive, sustainable and resilient urban areas. However, persistent challenges such as housing affordability and noise pollution demand continued investment and policy focus to ensure lasting progress.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Housing and Accessibility: Initiatives such as the Housing Benefit Scheme (HBS) and the Pre-1995 Rent Subsidy Scheme have been instrumental in improving housing conditions and easing the financial burden on low-income families and individuals by providing financial assistance for monthly rent payments. In 2024, 4,070 families benefitted from the HBS, while 1,640 households received support through the Pre-1995 Rent Subsidy Scheme. In addition to these initiatives, the Housing Authority offers five schemes aimed at helping buyers or tenants become homeowners: the Social Loan Scheme, the Equity Sharing Scheme (ESS), the 10% Deposit Payment Scheme (DPS), the New Hope Scheme (NHS), and the Sir Sid Darek (SSD) Scheme.

The Social Loan Scheme (beneficiaries Q1-Q4 2024: 177 families) is designed to provide low-income earners with a monthly subsidy to assist with home loan repayments, while the Equity Sharing Scheme (beneficiaries 2019-2024: 383 beneficiaries of which 68 beneficiaries in 2024) and the 10% Deposit Payment Scheme (beneficiaries 2020-2024: 531 beneficiaries of which 116 beneficiaries in 2024) help reduce financial burdens faced by first-time homebuyers. On the other hand, the New Hope Scheme (beneficiaries Q1-Q4 2024: 6 beneficiaries) provides a loan guarantee of up to €250,000 for individuals ineligible for a Life Insurance Policy due to medical conditions. The SSD Scheme with 126 beneficiaries in 2024, encourages tenants residing in eligible social housing properties to purchase their residences and become homeowners. Tenants with assets worth less than €150,000 qualify for a 50% subsidy on the sale price.

The Loan-Up initiative enhances accessibility for first-time homebuyers with limited means. By offering home loans at discounted interest rates, this scheme increases the loan value by approximately 15%, enabling broader access to the property market and providing vulnerable individuals with tailored housing arrangements.

¹⁰⁴ NSO

¹⁰⁵ European Environment Agency (EEA), and EC - Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA)

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

¹⁰⁷ EEA

¹⁰⁸ NSO and Eurostat

¹⁰⁹ NSO

Did. According to Eurostat, the assessment of noise pollution is subjective, meaning that changes in the indicator value might reflect shifts in what people consider acceptable noise levels rather than actual changes in noise pollution. Empirical evidence shows that perceived environmental quality by individuals is not always consistent with the actual environmental quality assessed using objective indicators, particularly for noise, such as data reported under the Environmental Noise Directive for traffic, industry, and aviation noise.

Other schemes include the First-time Buyers Exemption Scheme, aimed at incentivising and assisting first-time buyers that purchase residential properties. This scheme exempts first-time buyers from paying stamp duty on the first €200,000 of the price/value of the property. Similarly, the Second-time Buyers Scheme allows for second-time buyers to be refunded stamp duty paid on the first €86,000 of the price/value of the second property acquired for sole residence. Furthermore, the Gozo Property Scheme allows for a special reduced rate of 2% stamp duty on the purchase of a residential property in Gozo.

Accessibility in social housing units has been further enhanced through the Installation of Lifts Scheme, ensuring equal opportunities for all. The Scheme for persons with a Disability (DIS), with 653 households as beneficiaries in 2024, provides financial assistance for adapting properties to meet the needs of persons with disability or mobility issues.

Of the total DIS scheme beneficiaries, 64 households benefitted directly from the SensAbility Scheme since its inception in 2020 to 2024, which provides financial assistance of up to €6000 to help persons experiencing sensory challenges and/or sensory overload to cover part of the expense of equipping sensory rooms.

Urban Development and Mobility: In 2017, the Government pledged €700 million over a span of seven years to upgrade the road infrastructure, with the goal of tackling congestion and pollution. Residential roads and rural roads were rebuilt or upgraded at a pace of about 200 roads per year, whilst extensive repair and maintenance works were carried out. From 2019 to Q3 2024, about 1,400 residential and rural roads were completed in 54 different localities around Malta. The Marsa Addolorata Junction Multi-Level Upgrade (completed in 2021) alleviated traffic congestion and improved road connectivity on the TEN-T Core Road Network. Further enhancements to the TEN-T Network, including projects like Central Link, the Mrieħel Underpass and Bypass, the Kirkop Tunnel Airport Intersection Project and the Luqa Junction Project have improved accessibility, reduced travel times, and boosted safety across key routes.

Sustainability in transportation is being promoted through the development of Sustainable Multimodal Intelligent Transport Hubs (SMITHs). The main objective of the SMITHs is to provide different intermodal services in conjunction with public transport to complete the last mile of one's journey. Through this project, investment has been carried out to upgrade two ferry landing sites in Bormla and Sliema, while works are ongoing at the new Bugibba ferry

landing site to promote a modal shift from road to sea transport. The Government remains focused on upgrading and enhancing its ferry infrastructure to meet the needs of commuters and tourists alike. Ferry transportation is being prioritised to reduce the circulation of private road vehicles through the provision of accessible maritime routes between coastal towns, thus reducing land-based transport emissions.

A multimodal hub was also introduced in Ta' Xħajma, Gozo, in order to alleviate traffic within the Mgarr Harbour. A shuttle service has been introduced from the multimodal hub to Mgarr, with schedules being in line with the fast ferry and the ferry crossing between Malta and Gozo.

Through this project, the Government also introduced walking and cycling infrastructure as ecofriendly commuting options through the introduction of 4.25km of segregated cycle lanes. Moreover, EV charging infrastructure has been expanded to support greener mobility options.

Public transport has been significantly upgraded, with initiatives like free public transport, which recorded 67.2 million trips in 2023, helping reduce traffic congestion and emissions. This free service is expected to lead to fewer cars on the roads and less traffic congestion. Commuters who use the bus everyday will save over €300 a year. The public transport fleet renewal and public transport upgrades aim to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency. In September 2023, Malta Public Transport (MPT) expanded its sustainable transportation efforts by adding 30 new zero-emission electric buses and launching its first electric bus charging depot. Hence, the frequency on 17 routes increased, which resulted in an additional 420 daily trips.

Public participation in urban planning has been strengthened through increased locality funding. The Locality Funding under the Development Planning Fund provides opportunities for towns and villages to invest in a more sustainable environment and improve the quality of life for residents. This fund promotes improvement and embellishment works in urban areas, such as landscaping, traffic management and other urban projects, which are considered beneficial to the wider community. The fund is made available for all local councils, government agencies, NGOs or private individuals. Funding rose substantially from €4 million in 2018 to €12.9 million in 2024, enabling greater investment in fewer but more impactful initiatives.

The Sustainable Localities Scheme for Local Councils was launched in the third quarter of 2022, with the objective of encouraging Local Councils

to engage in infrastructural projects aimed at safeguarding the environment, social well-being, and economic growth. These projects include the installation of a system of PV panels, as well as the embellishment and regeneration of two main squares and the improvement of their surrounding facilities for the benefit of the community.

During the same period, Local Councils were given the opportunity to apply for the Small Grant Scheme for Urban Localities, which encouraged them to propose initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable development and environmental protection. With a budget of €1,000,000, the Scheme awarded funding to six projects, including the purchase of EVs, the installation of solar-powered smart bins, the refurbishment of civic and training centres using ecofriendly materials, investments in open spaces and their greening, and more.

The Vacant Houses Scheme and Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs) Scheme offer tax reductions to encourage property acquisition, especially in urban conservation areas. The Restoration and Finishing Grant for Residential Properties further supports the refurbishment of older properties, contributing to urban revitalisation and sustainable living spaces.

Inclusive Green Spaces: Efforts to promote green infrastructure are reflected in the information document to support Green Infrastructure Thinking in Malta (2019) and the 2021 Green Paper on greening buildings, both of which emphasise the environmental and health benefits of urban



greenery. Issued in 2021, the 'Better Environment in our Local Urban Spaces (BELLUS)' call aimed to implement more green spaces within public areas by supporting projects and activities aimed at bringing nature back to our cities, towns and villages through green initiatives and the application of nature-based solutions in urban, peri-urban and rural areas.

€500,000 were committed to six environmental projects under this call.

Building on the foundation laid in 2022 under Legal Notice 367, Project Green made significant strides towards advancing sustainable urban planning and creating resilient communities through innovative urban planning, nature-based solutions, and ensuring that green spaces are accessible to all Maltese residents within a 10-minute walk. In 2023, several projects were completed, introducing approximately 40,000m² of green open spaces and the planting of over 4,000 trees across Malta. These efforts have been central to fostering healthier, more sustainable communities. By 2024, Project Green had overseen 118 green space projects, with a €350 million investment covering 1.7 million square metresequivalent to 240 football fields. These initiatives not only enhanced biodiversity and air quality, but also created vibrant spaces for recreation and social interaction. The Agency's approach focused on both restoring and enhancing existing spaces and developing new green infrastructure in line with climate adaptation guidelines and sustainable urban practices. Notable initiatives such as urban reforestation, pollinator-friendly planting and measures to mitigate urban heat islands played a central role in these efforts.

Stakeholder engagement remained a core element of success, with community input guiding the design and development of these spaces to meet local needs. The Community Greening Grant launched in 2023 funded 16 new greening projects across Malta and Gozo. These projects transformed derelict or underutilised sites into vibrant green spaces with educational and recreational features, addressing challenges like flooding, biodiversity loss and urban ecosystem degradation. Beyond their environmental benefits, these green spaces have had a significant social and economic impact. They have created jobs in landscaping and ecological restoration, improved public health, reduced stress, and fostered stronger community connections. Access to green spaces has proven essential in enhancing overall quality of life. Other noteworthy achievements include the restoration of Independence Garden in Birżebbuga, Hospice Garden in Santa Venera, and Pollinator Garden in San Ġwann, as well as the Ġebel San Martin Regeneration in Żejtun, which earned praise for its innovative design. Other major projects launched in 2024, such as the Erba' Mwieżeb Regeneration Garden, the Rainwater Harvesting Park in Ghajnsielem, and the Serenity Garden in Santa Luċija, have addressed both environmental and community needs.

To further strengthen the access to green spaces, Ambjent Malta has inaugurated various open green spaces such as Gnien Belvedere, Vjal il-Ħelsien, Ġnien Abela Scolaro, Ta' Fatima Roof Garden, il-Ġnien tal-Mall fil-Furjana, Ġnien Rnella fil-Kalkara, and the restoration of the upper St Philip Gardens, as well as Wied Incita. Moreover, two calls for projects in 2021 and 2022, under the Urban Greening Scheme for Local Councils, aimed at increasing and improving greenspaces which are found close to communities. In 2021, €300,000 were committed to eleven environmental projects, while in 2022, €700,000 were committed to another eleven projects. In 2024, the Guardian of Future Generations embarked on a community project titled 'The Coproduction of Healthy, Secure and Playful Spaces'. Overall, the project aims to co-create and co-produce meaningful, healthy, playful and secure urban spaces for the benefit of all residents, thereby enhancing the quality of life in three local localities -Żurrieq, Ħal-Safi, and Ħal-Kirkop.

ECO Friendly Sport Environments - Depiro Sports Club

The Sustainable Development Fund has enabled projects targeting the greening of urban spaces and mainstreaming of sustainability practices within the local community. Through this fund, in 2024 the Depiro Sports Club upgraded their sports facilities to solar-powered lighting systems, replacing older, less efficient systems previously installed on the premises. Improved lighting benefits the community in the area by increasing visibility and safety at night, particularly for those who are more vulnerable. Thus, this project is promoting both the adoption of more eco-friendly infrastructure and creating a safer, more sustainable environment for patrons and the surrounding community.

Promoting Sustainability at Our Club: A Healthy and Thriving Community in a Green Enclave in Hamrun - Ghaqda tal-Mużika San Gejtanu

The purpose of this project was to integrate and mainstream sustainability in the operations of the club. To this end, Għaqda tal-Mużika San Gejtanu sought to ensure adequate infrastructure at various points to promote waste separation at source. Additionally, the club created an indigenous/endemic biodiverse green enclave in the club's outdoor areas in an otherwise urban environment to promote biodiversity. This enclave will also serve for educational purposes, including a small library and reading area.

The Local Government Division launched several schemes to support local greening initiatives. Between 2019 and 2024, 63 projects and 105 initiatives were funded, with a total budget of €1,806,332. Additionally, through EU funding sources, primarily the EARDF, the Local Councils were awarded 29 green infrastructure projects, with a budget of €1,178,889, a further 34 projects that improved farm access roads with a budget of €62,001,177, and 161 projects for the building and restoration of dry stone and rubble walls with a budget of €21,220,482.

Environmental Protection and Cleanliness: The National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) (published in 2020) aims to reduce emissions and improve air quality, thus promoting sustainable urban environments through effective management of air quality. This complements the Updated Noise Action Plan (published in 2023), which focuses on mitigating harmful noise pollution and preserving

quiet urban areas.

Environmental protection efforts also include the closure of the Wied Dalam installation and the 31st of March 1979 installation in Birżebbuga. The Wied Dalam installation, consisting of horizontal steel tanks housed in man-made caves along the side of a valley, previously served as an intermediate depot for aviation fuel storage for Malta International Airport. It was located near residential areas in Birżebbuga, presenting risks associated with the transportation of fuel via road tankers and the potential for major accidents. The decommissioning of this facility, along with the closure of the 31st of March installation, has greatly reduced these transportation risks,



contributing to enhanced air quality, and improved the visual amenity of the area by removing large, above-ground fuel tanks. This move has also contributed to a more streamlined fuel management process within the national network. Wied Dalam will be transformed into a family park.

Further improvements have been supported by the opening of the state-of-the-art National Distribution Centre at Has-Saptan, which replaced the outdated 1979 installation. Built with modern environmental considerations, this facility consolidated services, enhancing the efficiency and reliability of fuel delivery operations. In addition, the upgrading of jet fuel storage facilities within Malta International Airport enabled the closure of the Wied Dalam installation. The new depot on airport grounds reduced the need for extensive pumping between installations, further improving operational efficiency and safety.

As from 2023, the regionalisation reform was implemented whereby, collection of waste is organised at regional level with the aim to improve economies of scale and collection standards. Complimenting this, a harmonised collection schedule for all Local Councils in Malta has also been implemented to improve waste separation throughout Malta. These were complemented by the introduction of mandatory waste separation in 2023 as well as awareness-raising campaigns.

When it comes to public cleanliness, an ambitious project carried out by the Cleansing and Maintenance Division replaced fossil fuelled equipment and machinery to clean streets, promenades and public places with fully electric equivalents. Machinery and equipment ranging from scrubber robots to city sweepers, pedestrian sweepers, chariots, street washers and panel vans were procured. In practical terms, by using electrified city sweepers, the carbon footprint decreased by 148,608 tonnes in 2024.

Another project is the Clean and Upkeep mobile app which allows individuals to log complaints or suggestions for action to be taken by the Cleansing and Maintenance Division. In 2024, the mobile app was amalgamated to the Xummiemu Campaign, a national campaign aimed at improving cleansing and maintenance in Malta. Between 2015 (when the mobile app was launched) and 2024, the app was downloaded by 16,944 individuals. In 2024, the Cleansing and Maintenance Division received a total of 10,945 requests or suggestions through the mobile app, of which 95.9% were solved, with the unsolved cases being mainly related to third parties' responsibilities. Furthermore, in 2024, the Cleansing and Maintenance Division together with

the University of Malta successfully carried out a project my means of which a drone was programmed to identify waste in remotely accessible areas.

The initiative 'Islands Clean-up', launched in 2022, has successfully raised awareness about illegal dumping and environmental protection, resulting in the collection of tonnes of waste. This campaign has fostered collaboration with NGOs, individuals and private companies, collectively contributing to a cleaner and more resilient environment.

Protecting Cultural and Natural Heritage: Initiatives such as the Restoration of Forts, Fortifications, and Historical Places received increased funding, increasing from €1.7 million in 2018 to €2.7 million in 2023 . Significant investments have been made in the restoration of key cultural landmarks, such as the Valletta Design Cluster restoration (€10 million in 2018–2023) and the restoration undertaken at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. This project, which was co-financed by the EU, involved the restoration and upgrading of the Mediterranean Conference Centre to enhance the visitor experience and increase tourism attendance at this location, which is one of Malta's foremost historical sites.

The regional strategies for Malta's cultural development emphasise three themes: Talent Development, aiming to build cultural skills, capacity, and inclusion; Audience Engagement, focused on broadening participation across diverse communities; and Heritage Innovation, supporting heritage preservation and adaptive reuse to sustain cultural tourism and creative growth, balancing tradition with contemporary use and sustainable tourism.

The 'Irrestawra Darek' Grant Scheme provides financial assistance to owners of historic buildings to promote and incentivise restoration works. This initiative is aimed at keeping historic buildings in active use and promoting best practices in conservation. Additionally, the incentive aims at making historic areas more affordable and attractive. The preservation and promotion of traditional craftsmanship is also another benefit derived from these schemes. Through this scheme, historic spaces have been repurposed for public benefit. such as the renovation of a dilapidated historic building into a soup kitchen aimed at supporting vulnerable populations, including ex-prisoners and others reintegrating into society. Further renovations included the historic building now being utilised as a teen club in Valletta, and the modernisation of the Salesian Theatre in Sliema, among others.

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MALTA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The scheme has processed 567 requests (out of 1,142) from its 2018 phase, disbursing \bigcirc 4.3 million from a \bigcirc 10 million budget . The 2023 scheme, still in its early stages, has received 51 requests .

The Blue Culture Technology Excellence Hubs (BCT-Hubs) project involves 15 partners from Greece, Bulgaria, Italy and Malta. It aims to build permanent Blue Culture Technology Excellence Hubs in the participating countries, supporting the sustainable protection, restoration, valorisation, management, accessibility and promotion of Under Water Cultural Heritage (UWCH) with new innovative solutions and products. Although the new Hubs will be scoped regionally, they will be interconnected and oriented towards national and international synergies (i.e. beyond regional borders), pursuing cross-border collaborations on common strategic goals and alongside value adding chains.

In 2021, Malta ratified the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. As a result, five additional articles were included in the Cultural Heritage Act (2002), which cover declarations of protected zones surrounding cultural heritage found on the seabed, custody of cultural heritage and actions that can be taken by the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH), reporting requirements on discovery of cultural heritage, and the granting of permits for research purposes. This provides protection for underwater cultural heritage that is 50 years or older and located on the seabed of Maltese territorial waters. As a result, since 2018, 23 sites have been declared as protected zones and are monitored and managed by Heritage Malta. A key Archaeological Zone at Sea covering 67,000m² was declared in 2020 and included the Xlendi Underwater Archaeological Park, opened to divers in 2023.

The SCH has published a register which contains a list of NGOs that are involved in the promotion of cultural heritage, including the conservation, restoration, management, presentation and/or study of cultural property. To date, there are over 30 NGOs listed as working towards the preservation, management and promotion of cultural heritage.

To further support cultural heritage management, the extensive Geographic Information System (GIS) interface was developed to provide a digital portal for spatial data related to heritage sites, aiding in the protection and development planning process. Moreover, the digitisation of archival material has made historical records more accessible.

Additionally, the OCTAI AI-Centric Project studied the possibility of using AI to boost foot traffic at under-valued and not so often visited historic sites, helping raise awareness of Malta's cultural legacy. The scope of the project was to develop a transferable methodology combining the use of AI and audience development techniques in the cultural tourism sector. The results of this project indicated that the methodology led to a successful discernible increase in the visitation rates and proved the viability of advanced technology in the valorisation of cultural heritage.

The Bord tal-Warrant tar-Restawraturi was established to provide advice to the Minister responsible for Cultural Heritage in matters relating to the profession of Conservators-Restorers and to Heritage Skills. To date since 2020, over 50 individuals were listed as warranted conservators in areas including the conservation of paintings, ceramics, stone, wood, metal and paper.

With the Maltese festa being considered as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage for Humanity' by UNESCO, Arts Council Malta manages a public funding scheme meant to strengthen the organisations forming part of the festa ecosystem. Through this scheme, the Council recognises the importance that voluntary Maltese cultural and social organisations have with regards to the dissemination, safeguarding and strengthening of cultural traditions in our country. This is all done on a primarily voluntary basis and, as such, in order to strengthen the work of these organisations, funding is required.

Local Councils have also been highly active in initiatives and projects that promoted the cultural and natural heritage. These included locally funded schemes issued by the Local Government Division and from EU-funded regimes. Through the Local Government Division, between 2018 and 2024, Local Councils were awarded €4,851,519 in projects and a further €3,434.673 from the EAFRD funding strands.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Efforts to preserve Malta's cultural heritage under SDG 11 also have strong interlinkages with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Projects like the restoration of historic sites and initiatives promoting cultural tourism through Al development enhance access to education and cultural awareness. Moreover, aligning with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), international collaborations, such as adherence to the UNESCO 2001 Convention, safeguard underwater heritage while attracting global interest. These cultural initiatives bolster sustainable tourism and foster global cooperation in cultural preservation.

Programmes supporting vulnerable groups, such as housing assistance, reduce disparities and promote social equity, in turn addressing SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 1 (No Poverty). Enhanced urban services also fulfil SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering inclusive, safe and vibrant urban environments. Together, these interconnected efforts demonstrate Malta's integrated approach to sustainability.

The initiatives for SDG 11 in Malta are transformative but may create trade-offs with other SDGs. Urban infrastructure projects, such as the Marsa Addolorata Junction Upgrade and the 7-Year Road Upgrade Plan, contribute to better connectivity and reduced

congestion but may temporarily increase greenhouse gas emissions and disrupt ecosystems, conflicting with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Similarly, the material demands for these large-scale projects can strain efforts to ensure sustainable resource use under SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

The introduction of measures like the National Air Pollution Control Programme and noise reduction strategies further underscores these health benefits, ensuring cleaner air and quieter urban areas for residents, while waste management advancements reduce landfill dependency and promote resource efficiency. Preserving historic sites through initiatives enhances cultural heritage but may limit development while minimising negative impacts on other SDGs.

Community-focused projects, such as new green spaces, promote inclusivity and well-being but can involve significant material and energy use. Similarly, budget allocations for these initiatives may divert resources from other critical priorities like healthcare services, affecting SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Balancing these trade-offs requires integrated planning and innovative approaches to ensure sustainable and equitable urban development while minimising negative impacts on other SDGs





SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
12.2	12.2.2 - Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP	\uparrow
	GDP per unit of DMC (Resource Productivity)*	\uparrow
	Ecological Footprint and Biocapacity per person*	7
12.3	12.3.1 - (b) food waste index	ightleftarrows
12.4	12.4.1 - Number of parties to international multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous waste, and other chemicals that meet their commitments and obligations in transmitting information as required by each relevant agreement	\uparrow
	12.4.2 - (a) Hazardous waste generated per capita; and (b) proportion of hazardous waste treated, by type of treatment	\downarrow
	Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collection rate, measured against the amount of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE) placed on the market (POM)*	ightleftarrows
12.5	12.5.1 - National recycling rate, tons of material recycled	7
12.6	Number of entities reporting on the ESG Platform*	\uparrow
12.7	12.7.1 - Degree of sustainable public procurement policies and action plan implementation	✓
	Annual percentage rate of government procurement compliant with Green Public Procurement*	\uparrow
12.8	12.8.1 - Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment	:
12.a	Net Maximum Electrical Capacity, by technology*	\uparrow
12.b	12.b.1 - Implementation of standard accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability	\rightleftharpoons

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta has made considerable progress in advancing sustainable practices, particularly in the areas of waste management, resource consumption, and renewable energy generation. A key focus has been on reducing waste and increasing recycling rates, with improvements observed over recent years. As part of Malta's waste management efforts, in 2021, the Long-Term Waste Management Plan (WMP) 2021-2030 was published. This plan recognises the need for Malta to move away from the consume-and-throw mentality and strengthen the transition towards a resource-efficient circular economy. It includes a set of over 130 short, medium and long-term measures. The targets cater for waste prevention, improvements to its collection, management and treatment (including waste infrastructure), Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), commercial waste monitoring and compliance, and data management.

Targeting waste generation has been a primary area of focus due to the rapidly growing economy and associated refuse produced. In 2022 Malta's households contributed 46,720 tonnes of food waste, retail and other food distributors generated 4,716 tonnes, and restaurants and food services¹¹² contributed to 26,934 tonnes of food waste. This represents a per capita food waste generation of 162 kg in 2022¹¹³. Malta's efforts to reduce food waste remain critical as it seeks to move towards more responsible consumption.

In contrast, the country saw a decline in domestic material consumption from 13 tonnes per capita in 2018 to 10.14 tonnes per capita in 2022¹¹⁴. Moreover, from 2018 to 2022, Malta improved its municipal waste recycling performance in terms of the proportion of waste recycled. The recycling rate has risen from 10.5% in 2018 to 12.5% in 2022, and the amount of waste recycled has increased by 7,000 tonnes, demonstrating Malta's ongoing efforts to enhance resource efficiency and waste management practices¹¹⁵. Electronic waste recycling saw a decline from 2,336 tonnes in 2018 to 2,285 tonnes in 2022¹¹⁶.

Hazardous waste, an area of continued concern, totalled in 44,777 tonnes in 2022¹¹⁷. These figures indicate that hazardous waste remains a persistent issue and Malta needs to undertake further steps to manage and mitigate its environmental impact.

In conclusion, while Malta has improved its sustainability performance, challenges remain in the areas of material consumption, food waste, electronic waste and hazardous waste management. The country's progress in recycling signals a positive trend toward achieving its sustainability goals, though continued efforts will be needed to address emerging challenges and maintain momentum.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Waste Management and Circular Economy:

Investments in waste management infrastructure included the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) which can process up to 40,000 tonnes of recyclable waste annually and separates different types of metal, cardboard, and plastic in an automated way so that they can be returned to the market as part of a circular economy. Similarly, the Multi-Materials Recovery Facility (MMRF) inaugurated in 2023 was vital to improve Malta's waste management capacity. The processes performed at this facility are directed towards deviating recoverable materials away from landfill such as mattresses, textiles, expanded polystyrene, tyres and WEEE (waste from electrical and electronic equipment).



Each material is treated and processed separately with the aim of increasing the value of the material for export while maximising the use of space and efficiency.

The automated glass sorting line, which started operating in June 2024, has the potential to process 52,000 glass bottles an hour, pushing the annual operational capacity up to a total of 21,000 tonnes of glass (from 8,000 tonnes). It will also produce a higher grade of glass with greater efficiency. With its stateof-the-art technology, the glass sorter can remove certain contaminants that are incorrectly disposed of with glass. This results in higher-quality glass that can then be reused to make new glass packaging.

¹¹² Eurostat

¹¹⁴ Eurostat and NSO

¹¹⁵ Eurostat and ERA

³ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ NSO

Various initiatives have been undertaken to reduce waste generation across Malta and Gozo. As from 2021, the regulations regarding Restrictions on Placing on the Market of Plastic Carrier Bags restrict the importation, intra-community acquisition and manufacturing for the circulation of any lightweight plastic carrier bag, while restricting the supply, distribution, consumption or use on the market in Malta of any lightweight plastic carrier bags as from 2022. These restrictions aim to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags while incentivising the use of alternatives.

In 2021, the ERA published the Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2021-2030. This strategy contains 24 measures aimed at reducing the consumption of certain single-use plastic products and increasing the quality and quantities of plastic waste collected for recycling. The implementation of these measures assists Malta towards achieving a more circular model. Furthermore, in December 2022, the Restrictions on Placing on the Market of Single-Use Plastic Products Regulations (S.L. 549.140) were enacted. These regulations prohibit the importation, production, sale and distribution of certain single-use products, with the aim of reducing the consumption of certain single-use products, thus reducing the generation of waste and incentivising reusable alternatives.

Differentiated gate fees for the deposition of waste at public facilities were updated to incentivise waste separation and move treatment options higher up the waste hierarchy. Furthermore, as from April 2023, waste separation was made mandatory by law for everyone including businesses, governmental and non-governmental entities, as well as private homes. This was accompanied by an educational campaign, carried out for the public to familiarise themselves with this new obligation. Additionally, four reuse centres for items like furniture and books have been opened since 2022. Reuse Centres near civic amenity sites allow for used items to be given a second home, reducing waste and supporting circular economy practices.

Furthermore, investment in waste-to-energy projects help Malta move towards a more sustainable waste management system, reducing reliance on landfills.

The Beverage Container Refund Scheme (BCRS) introduced in 2022 aims to improve recycling and promote the return of single-use beverage containers. The scheme applies a refundable deposit to containers, encouraging consumers to return them for collection, sorting, and export for recycling under Subsidiary Legislation 549.134 - Beverage

Containers Recycling Regulations. This scheme aims to reduce litter, enhance recycling rates, and support Malta's circular economy goals by establishing a structured system that incentivises consumer behaviour and ensures high recovery and processing rates for containers.



The Fifth Schedule Collection Targets, as outlined in S.L.549.134, sets progressive goals for the collection of single-use beverage containers under the scheme. The targets aim to steadily increase collection rates over time by 5-10% each year, starting from 70% in 2022 and peaking at 90% from 2026 onwards. A grand total of 464,458,763 beverage containers have been collected through the BCRS since the initiative was first introduced in 2022 until December 2024.

The collection rates for 2024 included 85.7% for PET containers, 85.6% for aluminium cans and 80% for glass bottles. These results highlight the scheme's success in boosting recycling rates and provide valuable insights for sustaining progress toward Malta's circular economy goals.

The Reverse Osmosis Grant scheme aims at reducing the number of plastic containers that are used for the bottling of water. Since 2024, the scheme provided for 133 interventions, totalling €17,147.

Another priority waste stream is construction and demolition (C&D) waste. In 2021, ERA published the Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy for Malta 2021-2030. This strategy aims to identify options for the management of waste arising from excavation, construction and demolition activities, by primarily addressing the current issues within the sector as well as highlighting the possible short-term and long-term measures to be adopted, with a view to shifting the treatment of such waste from backfilling to re-use and recycling.

In 2024, the Construction and Demolition Waste Framework Regulations (S.L. 549.161) were enacted. These regulations set out 4 waste management targets which will be mandatory for specific types of developments as from 2028. The aim of these targets is to enhance the reuse and recycling of waste from construction activities and boost the demand for secondary raw materials.

Food Waste Reduction: In its efforts to establish resilient food systems, the Pitkali Market within the Malta Food Agency is redistributing unsold food which is still fit for consumption to NGOs to be sold. In addition, fruit and vegetables that are not fit for human consumption are being processed by WasteServ and the generated compost is provided to farmers. In addition, the Żomm! Tarmix: Nevitaw il-Hela Initiative was launched with its primary aim to reduce waste and help those in need. The online platform for this initiative connects businesses (benefactors) with voluntary organisations (beneficiaries) and facilitates food donations while ensuring efficiency and transparency.

Moreover, the placement on the market of new products enabled the Public Abattoir to also achieve new environmental milestones and the achievement of national sustainability goals in terms of reduction of food waste. In total, it is estimated that by the end of 2024, circa 4 tonnes (10%) of animal-by-products a week were being diverted away from incineration in order to produce traditional Maltese foods.

In order to improve food waste management from catering establishments and enable commercial entities to efficiently separate waste at any time, the Smart Waste Depots project in Xaghra and Xlendi was established. The project focuses on implementing smart waste bins equipped with controlled access and continuous surveillance in partnership with Local Councils. These depots facilitate the separate collection of organic and recycling waste fractions and are accessible on a 24/7 basis. The innovative "smart" features include user identification for controlled access, Internet-of-Things (IoT) and AI technology for tracking container locations, monitoring waste levels, optimising collection routes, and encouraging users to dispose of waste in containers with available capacity.

Sustainable Public Procurement Practices: The National Action Plan for Green Public Procurement (GPP) 2022–2027 mandates GPP for contracts exceeding €5,000, targeting 90% compliance by 2027. The plan covers 17 product and service groups, including new areas such as street lighting, healthcare electronics, transport, road maintenance, sanitary tapware, hospitality services, and office

building management. It aligns with the Clean Vehicles Directive and Directive 2012/27/EU to ensure energy-efficient procurement and enhance resource efficiency in government operations.

The Electronic Public Procurement System (ePPS) has digitised procurement processes, incorporating modules to meet GPP and energy efficiency standards. Progress is evident, with Malta achieving an 87.5% GPP compliance rate in 2024, up from 81.5% in 2022, moving closer to the 2027 goal.

Several initiatives are being implemented to enhance GPP implementation. These include enhancement of GPP training courses offered by the Institute of the Public Services and the development of a new GPP platform which was launched in April 2025. The GPP online platform aims at increasing awareness about GPP and provides users with the opportunity to submit questions related to GPP compliance or training sessions. These training sessions are crucial for the success of GPP, as they equip key stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively integrate sustainable practices into procurement processes. These training sessions originally targeted to contracting authorities were extended to economic operators to facilitate bidders understanding when putting forward offers for tenders, which include GPP requirements.

Community and Educational Engagement: Malta has promoted the understanding of sustainable lifestyles through a number of educational initiatives. The 'Sort It Out' Campaign is a national awareness raising campaign which incorporates multiple initiatives, such as bio-waste collection for composting and medicinal waste disposal bins in pharmacies. As part of this campaign, organic waste collection and recycling bins were rolled out nationwide to households as well as government entities to instil behavioural change and foster waste separation practices. This was accompanied by the implementation of educational programmes on waste separation for all government departments. Additionally, mobile waste disposal trucks were introduced to provide convenient waste management. This entails a fleet of roadshow trucks operating daily across the Maltese islands, providing convenient disposal options for challenging waste types, such as clothing, cooking oil, polystyrene, and small electronics.

To further increase awareness amongst families and children, the ECOHIVE Academy serves as an interactive and educational centre, fostering a deep understanding of sustainability and waste management. This centre offers a variety of exhibits and digital experiences on topics such as reducing, reusing, and recycling.



Other programmes, like Bring Your Own Container (BYOC) introduced in 2024, further reduce the consumption of single-use products. The BYOC initiative promotes collaboration between businesses, government, and consumers to reshape consumption habits and encourage circular practices. Through this program, consumers are incentivised to bring their own containers when purchasing food, beverages, cleaning products and personal care items, helping to minimise single-use packaging waste.

Participating businesses offer economic incentives, such as discounts or loyalty rewards to consumers who participate, fostering a culture of reuse. Establishments that join the initiative are recognised with a BYOC logo, which is displayed on storefronts. This logo signifies their commitment to reducing single-use packaging. Participating businesses are also featured on the BYOC Map, making it easy for consumers to identify which local businesses support the initiative. By the end of 2024, 300 establishments including cafes, restaurants, retail shops and personal care stores had adopted BYOC practices. Although participation is voluntary, CEMalta monitors adherence to hygiene, materials and pricing guidelines, ensuring the initiative's integrity and alignment with national waste reduction goals. Notably, reusable containers were used 61,099 times during 2024, showcasing the initiative's tangible impact.

Another project, the Sustainable Baby Box project, provides every newborn with a starter kit which will help guardians shift towards a more sustainable upbringing of their child. By making use of ecofriendly and safe baby products, Malta is aiming to ingrain the concept of sustainability from a very young age, as well as increase awareness of reusable baby products as alternatives to single-use and disposable items. Each box contains a baby blanket, a muslin cloth, a wet bag, a cloth wipe and socks and mittens, all of which are made from eco-friendly materials, together with an eco-friendly reusable nappy and nappy liners. There is also a feeding bib, a dummy, a teether and a cutlery set, all made from Bisphenol A-free material. In addition, a culture of reading is fostered through books in both Maltese and English, which are distributed together with the baby box. Since the start of the project, by the end of 2024, 13,000 sustainable baby boxes were distributed to parents and guardians all over Malta and Gozo.



Promoting Re-use, Re-purposing and Thrifting through a safer space – St Jeanne Antide Foundation

The St Jeanne Antide Foundation, through the Sustainable Development Fund, undertook repair and refurbishment works of its charity shop in the southern part of Malta, thereby providing a healthier and safer environment for both the staff and the community making use of the services being offered. Through this charity shop, the Foundation is promoting the value and practice of re-use, repurposing and thrifting among families in Malta.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's efforts to promote responsible consumption and production are closely intertwined with progress on multiple other SDGs, reflecting the interconnected nature of the 2030 Agenda. These synergies amplify the benefits of sustainable practices while necessitating careful management of trade-offs to ensure balanced and equitable development.

Efforts to reduce waste and promote recycling directly contribute to SDG 13 (Climate Action) by reducing the environmental impacts of excessive consumption and improving resource efficiency. These actions also mitigate greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste management and production processes, fostering climate resilience and sustainability as per SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). Furthermore, these efforts also contribute to SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by reducing the amount of waste that ends up in our terrestrial and marine environments.

Improved waste management systems and the promotion of sustainable practices align with SDG 11 by enhancing urban resilience and reducing environmental pressures. These efforts also contribute to creating cleaner, healthier living environments for communities, supporting a broader vision of sustainable urban development.

Educational initiatives that foster awareness of sustainability and equip individuals with green skills align with SDG 4 (Quality Education). By embedding sustainability into education and training, Malta

supports lifelong learning and builds capacity for individuals and businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices.

The integration of sustainability into economic activities strengthens SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by driving green innovation and creating demand for sustainable products and services. These efforts also support SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) by encouraging the development and adoption of efficient technologies that promote sustainable production and resource use. Diverting unsold food that is fit for consumption from the Pitkali Market to NGOs helps to reduce the amount of food waste generated, thus addressing SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by creating more accessible prices for domestic buyers.

However, the transition to sustainable consumption and production involves trade-offs that must be managed carefully. Significant financial investments and technical resources are required to develop the infrastructure and systems needed to implement sustainable practices at scale, as shown in SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). These investments must be balanced with other competing priorities in national development.

Malta's approach to SDG 12 underscores the potential of integrated planning to maximise synergies across goals while addressing challenges thoughtfully. By aligning consumption and production efforts with broader sustainability objectives, Malta ensures that its initiatives contribute to a more inclusive and resilient development pathway.





SDG 13 - Climate Action

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
13.2	13.2.1 - Number of countries with nationally determined contributions, long-term strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications, as reported to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	✓
	13.2.2 - Total greenhouse gas emissions per year	7
13.3	13.3.1 - Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment	:
13.a	13.a.1 - Amounts provided and mobilized in United States dollars per year in relation to the continued existing collective mobilization goal of the \$100 billion commitment through to 2025	\uparrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

SDG 13 is critical for addressing the global challenge of climate change and its far-reaching impacts on ecosystems, economies, and communities. It calls for urgent actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen climate resilience, and promote sustainable environmental practices. As one of the most pressing issues of our time, climate change demands coordinated efforts at local, national, and international levels. By focusing on climate action, SDG 13 aims to limit global warming and protect vulnerable populations from the adverse effects of climate change, fostering a sustainable and equitable future for all.

Total CO₂ equivalent emissions with land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) increased from 2,021.43 gigagrams in 2018 to 2,263.44 gigagrams in 2022¹¹⁸. The total greenhouse gas emissions without LULUCF rose from 2,019.80 gigagrams in 2018 to 2,262.67 gigagrams in 2022¹¹⁹. The energy sector accounted for the majority of emissions, growing from 1,549.99 gigagrams in 2018 to 1,777.35 gigagrams in 2022¹²⁰. Similarly, emissions from waste increased from 168.56 gigagrams in 2018 to 186.09 gigagrams in 2022, while emissions from agriculture rose slightly from 83.31 gigagrams to 86.09 gigagrams over the same period¹²¹.

To tackle these challenges, Malta has implemented various strategies and initiatives aimed at reducing emissions. Education has also played a critical role in fostering climate action. By 2020, Malta had mainstreamed global citizenship education and education for sustainable development into its curricula, national education policies, teacher education, and student assessment. These initiatives aim to raise awareness and empower future generations to take part in climate action.

Financial contributions to climate-related initiatives on an international level have also increased significantly. In 2018, Malta provided €100,000 through multilateral funding channels, with no bilateral or regional contributions. By 2023, this had risen to a total of €602,309, with €112,309 channelled through bilateral and regional funding and €490,000 through multilateral funding 122.

These initiatives, alongside the broader push for renewable energy and sustainable transportation, reflect Malta's commitment to meeting the targets of SDG 13 and advancing its climate action goals.

¹¹⁸ Malta Resources Authority (MRA)

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²² MRA and MEEC

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Climate Change Governance Framework: The establishment of the Climate Action Authority in 2024 represents a pivotal step in coordinating and overseeing national efforts to combat climate change. In addition, Malta has developed and advanced strategies such as Malta's 2030 National Energy and Climate Plan, which aligns Malta with the EU's Green Deal and Fit-for-55 targets, aiming for climate neutrality by 2050 through measures such as increasing renewable energy use, offshore wind development, energy efficiency in buildings, and transport electrification.

In line with the EU's long-term strategy to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) sets a strategic direction for the next 30 years with a set of measures covering seven sectors (namely energy, transport, buildings, industry, waste, water and agriculture and land-use, land use change and forestry) where economic growth is decoupled from natural resource use and environmental pressures.

Decarbonisation of Key Sectors: Malta is increasing its efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 by decarbonising the energy sector. The Second Cable Interconnector mentioned under SDG 7 is a pivotal component of Malta's energy transition strategy, projected to result in cumulative CO₂ savings of 5.7 million tonnes over a 25-year operational period. These savings include emission reductions achieved through the importation of cleaner electricity from Italy, contributing significantly to climate change mitigation.

Furthermore, the deployment of utility-scale BESS mentioned under SDG 7 further bolsters grid resilience and enhances the integration of renewable energy. Over a 10-year operational period, the BESS project is expected to achieve cumulative CO_2 savings of 281,746 tonnes based on a methodology which also considers the emissions in Italy from electricity imported through the interconnectors. These systems play a crucial role in reducing reliance on carbon-intensive power plants and support Malta's progress towards a low-carbon future.

As part of Malta's forward outlook and ambition in increasing the share of renewable energy, the Maltese Government is focusing on the development of the Offshore Renewable Energy Project mentioned in SDG 7.

This project addresses the limitations of fixed wind structures in Malta's deep waters and drastically expands the country's renewable energy capacity.

Over its 30-year operational period, the project is anticipated to reduce CO_2 emissions by 5.03 million tonnes, contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable energy system.

Efforts to decarbonise transportation include EV grants, zero-emission electric buses, and the introduction of electric street-sweeping vehicles, all of which play a key role in reducing emissions. By the end of 2023, Malta had allocated over €50.3 million to EV incentives, resulting in 4,765 EVs and 4,097 plug-in hybrid vehicles being licensed. Also, the government fleet conversion to EV and ridesharing system focuses on replacing 250 internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles with electric ones, alongside developing a ride-sharing platform to reduce overall emissions.

Additionally, the Grand Harbour Shore Supply project allows docked cruise liners to connect to the national grid, reducing CO_2 emissions by approximately 40% by enabling ships to turn off their engines, demonstrating significant environmental benefits. Malta is also exploring offshore CO_2 geological storage through collaboration with TNO and participation in the EU Geological Storage Project (GSEU). Through this project, an online atlas showing potential sites within Europe for the geological storage of carbon dioxide will be developed.

Within the aviation sector, Malta has taken the necessary steps so that as from January 2025 it will be following the ReFuelEU minimum requirements of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) content in the Jet fuel it places on the market. This is in line with the ReFuelEU (Aviation) initiative by the EU to reduce the aviation sector's carbon footprint by increasing the use of SAF. Airlines operating in Europe will be required to gradually increase the share of SAF in their fuel mix, starting with minimum blending percentages. By promoting SAF usage, the initiative aims to contribute to the EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050.

Resilience and Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change: Malta has developed a National Strategy for Adaptation to the impacts of climate change. The original strategy was adopted in 2012 and laid the foundation for the subsequent adaptation component of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (2021). This touches upon a wide range of economic sectors of priority to Malta, with measures on how to adapt each against the impacts of climate change.

Malta's preparedness and resilience are built through various activities, including risk assessments and other contributions to adaptive capacity. Furthermore, Malta's approach to post-disaster analysis is comprehensive, involving multiple stakeholders and a proactive strategy. Following each major storm or calamity, Maltese authorities conduct detailed assessments, often initiating the analysis during the event in cases of slow-onset disasters. These assessments include governmentwide exercises aimed at evaluating damage to critical infrastructure and quantifying economic and social losses. The insights gained from these evaluations directly inform efforts to strengthen disaster resilience, focusing on improving the safety and sustainability of human settlements.

A key component in Malta's disaster preparedness approach includes full-scale exercises, such as tsunami drills, which not only simulate emergency responses but also help identify and address existing gaps and challenges in disaster preparedness. These exercises are instrumental in fostering a culture of readiness and ensuring coordinated responses among agencies and communities.

In addition to hands-on simulations, Malta emphasises public awareness through targeted information campaigns. Preparedness materials, including leaflets addressing tsunamis, domestic fire hazards and earthquake safety, are distributed by the Civil Protection Department. These educational tools are designed to empower citizens with knowledge, promoting a collective approach to disaster resilience

This multi-faceted approach underscores Malta's commitment to a holistic disaster preparedness framework, blending real-time analysis, practical exercises and community engagement to mitigate risks and enhance resilience against future disasters.

As an island state, Malta is more susceptible to the effects of climate change, especially in coastal areas. The two-year EU-funded Coastal COVER (Coastal-Climate Overall Vulnerability and Exposure Risk) Project sought to ensure economically secure and environmentally sustainable coastal protection

management, whilst considering the effects of climate change. The main output of this project was the formulation of a Coastal Protection and Adaptation (CPA) Strategy for the Maltese Islands, which was completed in 2023. The CPA strategy deliverables included the identification of risk hot spots, based on a comprehensive risk assessment and diagnosis of linked problems, a methodology for the prioritisation and selection of local interventions, and a catalogue of possible solutions for local interventions for the Maltese Islands.

Sustainable Finance and Green Investment: In order to reach its climate action and sustainability goals, Malta has sought to create a number of sustainable finance and green investment initiatives, encouraging practices that pursue financial returns whilst maintaining environmental sustainability. Under the Multiple Beneficiary Intermediated Loan (MBIL) Climate Action Loan, the MDB secured €30 million in Q4 2023 from the European Investment Bank (EIB). This funding is allocated to key areas such as sustainable mobility, renewable energy production, energy efficiency, and recycling. These investments aim to bolster both public and private sector projects that contribute to a low-carbon economy.

In June 2024, the MDB advanced its green agenda through the InvestEU Sustainability Counter-Guarantee. This programme provided a €15 million guarantee to empower SMEs and small mid-caps to undertake green projects, further enabling their transition towards a low-carbon economy. Additionally, a complementary agreement has enabled the MDB to benefit from the EIB's advisory services under the Green Gateway programme. These services assisted the MDB in identifying eligible green projects and in building its environmental sustainability capacity.



The launch of the first multi-million green bond and green market by the Malta Stock Exchange encourages financial instruments with environmental benefits and the updates to the review of green bond bye-laws aim to accommodate additional sustainable bonds, further supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation projects. The green bond launched by the Water Services Corporation is used to finance several green projects that address some of the most pressing water challenges facing Malta, including water scarcity, climate change and pollution.

Malta's ESG Platform was launched in December 2021 by MEEC as a voluntary tool, designed to showcase and instil education and awareness on environmental, social and governance credentials. The investment community is a crucial enabler of the transition towards a sustainable economic model for the Maltese Islands. More than ever, Maltese companies and entities are investing in sustainable business models. This is being done through increased commitment towards projects and initiatives that have a positive impact on the environment, tangibly support the social dynamics of the Maltese community, and ensure a more robust corporate governance framework. The ESG Platform identifies the carbon footprint of these companies and entities as they invest in renewable sources of energy. Efficient use of water and other resources employed in their operations is also measured to quantify their environmental impact. Fair treatment of employees, investment in upskilling the workforce and tangible commitment to equality factors are some of the criteria that showcase the social commitment of these companies and entities, whilst board independence and diversity are key elements that measure their governance structure.

In 2025, this Platform was enhanced by digitalising the reporting introduced in 2021, thus make it more user-friendly and easier for enterprises to register their ESG credentials. By having the facility to compare their ESG performance throughout the years and acting as repository for existing grants, schemes and other useful links relating to ESG, the enhanced Platform, will act as a further incentive for enterprises and entities to improve on their year-on-year performance, thus contributing further to Malta's national, international and EU commitments in relation to sustainability. By 2024, 46 companies are voluntarily reporting their ESG credentials.

International Collaboration to Combat Climate Change: The international interventions undertaken by Malta underline a steadfast commitment to the principles of SDG 13 that resonate far beyond the nation's borders. These efforts have fostered an environment where national policies align with global

frameworks, thereby reinforcing resilience and sustainability on multiple fronts.

Malta's Island for Islands Initiative strengthens climate resilience in SIDS by sharing Malta's expertise in areas such as sustainable development, disaster preparedness, and climate adaptation. This initiative fosters international collaboration to support SIDS in building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

The initiatives outlined in Malta's climate action efforts contribute to a range of interlinked SDGs beyond SDG 13. For instance, the projects aimed at enhancing the energy transition and sustainability, such as the Second Cable Interconnector, offshore wind farm and BESS, directly support SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) by improving renewable energy capacity and grid resilience. The increasing number of EVs and zero-emission buses not only aids SDG 13 but also contributes to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by reducing urban emissions and promoting cleaner transportation options in urban environments.

Furthermore, Malta's focus on climate resilience through the Post-Disaster Analysis and Preparedness approach, as well as its international collaboration initiatives like the Island for Islands programme, have notable interlinkages with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These actions highlight Malta's commitment to sharing knowledge and expertise with SIDS to strengthen their climate resilience.

The MDB's financial initiatives, such as the Green Bond and the MBIL Climate Action Loan, also foster SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by facilitating the financing of green projects that contribute to job creation in sustainable industries. Through these projects, Malta is advancing a holistic approach that not only targets climate action but also promotes broader environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Efforts under SDG 13 have strong synergies with SDG 14 (Life Below Water), particularly in the Maltese context. Malta's Coastal COVER Project, which develops climate adaptation strategies to mitigate risks such as sea-level rise and coastal erosion, aligns closely with national and global objectives to enhance climate resilience. This project addresses the dual threats of climate change and marine ecosystem degradation, illustrating the mutually reinforcing relationship between climate action and ocean sustainability.

MALTA'S SECOND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

While Malta's initiatives for SDG 13 make significant strides in climate action, there are potential tradeoffs with other SDGs. For instance, the expansion of offshore renewable energy through the wind farm project and the Second Cable Interconnector could have potential negative impacts on SDG 14 by disturbing marine ecosystems and biodiversity, potentially threatening aquatic life.

Similarly, large-scale battery storage systems like BESS, while enhancing grid resilience and enabling renewable energy integration, may lead to resource extraction for batteries that could contribute to environmental degradation elsewhere, which might have negative spill-over effects on SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). The demand for raw materials could result in unsustainable mining practices and waste, leading to negative environmental consequences.

Moreover, while the electrification of transport aligns with a number of SDGs, there are also trade-offs. The promotion of EVs and buses, while beneficial for reducing emissions and supporting sustainable cities (SDG 11), could create challenges related to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by requiring investment that could be otherwise utilised for other aspects of national infrastructure. Also, the transition from ICE vehicles to EVs requires substantial investment in charging infrastructure and may strain energy systems, particularly if the electricity needed is not sustainably sourced (SDG 7). Additionally, the growth of EV production and associated industries could have a high environmental cost due to the production and disposal of batteries, potentially creating waste management issues related to SDG 12. These trade-offs highlight the need for careful planning to ensure that climate action measures do not inadvertently undermine other sustainable development priorities.





AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SDG 14 - Life Below Water

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
14.1	Coastal bathing site with excellent water quality (as % of coastal bathing sites)*	7
14.4	14.4.1 - Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels	:
	Marine waters affected by eutrophication*	:
14.5	14.5.1 - Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas	\uparrow
	Marine Protected Areas within Malta's Fisheries Management Zone*	:
	Surface of the marine protected areas*	\rightleftharpoons
14.6	14.6.1 - Degree of implementation of international instruments aiming to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing	✓
14.7	14.7.1 - Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP in small island developing States, least developed countries and all countries	\downarrow
14.b	14.b.1 - Degree of application of a legal/regulatory/ policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries	✓

Status of the Goal and Targets

SDG 14 focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources. Oceans play a critical role in supporting life on Earth, providing essential services such as oxygen production, climate regulation, and food security. Marine ecosystems face increasing threats from pollution, overfishing, habitat destruction, and climate change. Given that Malta is an island nation in the Mediterranean, achieving SDG 14 is essential to maintain biodiversity, support sustainable livelihoods, and mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation on coastal and marine communities.

Malta has made significant strides in marine protection, designating 18 MPAs, covering 35.5% (4,138 km²) of Malta's Fisheries Management Zone. Furthermore, Natura 2000 conservatioan measures have been integrated into national frameworks to protect vital marine habitats and species.

Whilst Malta has maintained excellent water quality for over 90% of its coastal bathing sites over the years, with 92% having excellent water quality in 2023, there has been a decreasing trend since 2018¹²³. Malta has also persisted in its marine conservation efforts through the monitoring and assessment of Good Environmental Status (GES) in Maltese waters and ongoing implementation of management processes as defined for the purpose of MPAs and/or pursuant to the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and Water Framework Directive.

The fishing sector in the Maltese Islands is a diverse one, with several biological, socio-economic, cultural and tourist dimensions. Although this sector is small compared to the European fisheries sector, local fishers play a very important role in the provision of food. As of 2021, 40% of fish stocks in Maltese waters remain within biologically sustainable levels, underscoring the importance of continued sustainable fishing practices¹²⁴. In this regard, since 2022, Malta has achieved the highest degree (Level 5) of application

¹²³ European Environment Agency

²⁴ FAO

of legal and policy frameworks which recognise and protect access rights for small-scale fisheries. Public awareness and community involvement have been pivotal in advancing SDG 14. Initiatives such as the Saving Our Blue Campaign have increased public engagement, promoting marine conservation. Malta is also in the process of developing and implementing an awareness raising strategy as part of the conservation measures for MPAs and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive Programme of Measures, through the use of European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Funds (EMFAF).

Malta's progress demonstrates a comprehensive approach to marine conservation, combining data-driven monitoring, financial investment, legislative support, and public engagement. These initiatives highlight the nation's commitment to safeguarding marine resources while addressing global and local challenges in achieving SDG 14.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Marine and Coastal Conservation: To protect marine life, Malta published conservation objectives and measures for its Marine Natura 2000 sites. These set the management framework for Malta's 18 MPAs, whose sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) forming part of the European Natura 2000 Network. The aim of the policy is to improve or maximise the contribution of these sites for the maintenance or achievement of a Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of the habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, and the protection of seabirds in accordance with the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC. Moreover, in 2023, Malta published a revised Programme of Measures for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This is geared towards the achievement of GES in Malta's marine waters.

Malta participated in the EU Interreg HARMONY Project focusing on seabed integrity and monitoring non-indigenous species in MPAs. The outputs of the project included joint strategy recommendations and the development of common early detection and rapid response tools to address non-indigenous species in Italy and Malta.

Projects such as the Mapping and Monitoring of *Posidonia oceanica* using Remote and Sentinel technology (MAARES) aim to make high spatial resolution maps available, with the scope of providing essential information about the seagrass ecology in order to achieve a better understanding of biodiversity, ecological services and future sustainability of the

seagrass across the Maltese Islands. The project output will ultimately enable a more efficient conservation management of the *Posidonia oceanica*, which is still subject to adverse impacts from the ever-increasing human-based influences, including climate change, which are leading to increasing pressures over these sea meadows.

Moreover, in 2020, Malta launched the Marine Environmental Monitoring project, which aimed to implement monitoring and data collection processes that would enable the assessment and management of Malta's marine waters through sustained environmental monitoring. This project, funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2014-2020, addresses knowledge gaps and supports Malta's commitment to achieving GES. The two-year initiative, with a budget of approximately €2 million, helped to develop better management practices to protect Malta's marine resources.

Launched in 2023 and implemented throughout 2024, the Sea Urchin Restocking Project is a three-year initiative aimed at replenishing the sea urchin population in Maltese waters. By cultivating juvenile sea urchins and releasing them into the wild, the project supports marine biodiversity and the sustainability of the local aquaculture industry. Significant investments have been made to enhance research facilities, equipping them with specialised tanks and laboratories designed to conduct advanced experimentation, pilot projects, and detailed data analysis. These facilities support a wide range of activities aimed at fostering innovation and addressing critical challenges in aquatic resource management.

In addition to in-house research, extensive field studies and surveys are conducted across Maltese waters to complement laboratory findings. This combination of fieldwork and laboratory research facilitates the collection of comprehensive data and insights directly from the marine environment, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of local aquatic ecosystems.

Launched by BirdLife Malta in June 2021, the LIFE PanPuffinus project focused on the conservation of two endangered pelagic seabird species across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of Portugal. By addressing key threats to these species, the project contributes to the protection of marine biodiversity and the preservation of ecosystems that are vital for maintaining healthy oceans.

Malta, through the Life Integrated Project initiative, supporting the implementation of the River Basin

Management Plan, has established a monitoring framework for contaminants of emerging concern in a number of water categories, including coastal and inland surface waters. Furthermore, anchoring and mooring surveys, which aim to reduce damage to seabed habitats have been undertaken to inform the deployment of ecological moorings on a pilot basis. Hydrographic model simulations that assess marine pressures through advanced modelling systems are in progress as part of the same project.

Coastal tourism is one of the sectors on which Malta's economy relies the most. In 2023, the MTA collaborated with Nature Trust Malta to create its first marine park in Cirkewwa and has also collaborated with University Institutes on citizen science to create awareness on jellyfish and alien species.

Sustainable Fishing and Supporting Fisheries:

The Fishing Conservation and Management Act (Chapter 425), initially introduced in 2001, and which provides a framework for regulating the sector and its operations, has been amended to streamline enforcement procedures. Similarly, to better regulate the sectors and totally align its legal framework with all the current EU regulations in force, Malta also enacted Legal Notice - Offences, Proceedings and Sanctioning Regulations, 2022, and Legal Notice - Bluefin Tuna Aquaculture Regulations, 2022 (L.N. 218 of 2022). Additionally, Legal Notice - Aquaculture Development Fund was also introduced in 2023.

Furthermore, to boost the local fisheries and aquaculture sectors through innovative research and investments, the Aquatic Resources Malta (ARM) has been established under Subsidiary Legislation 595.47 on 7 December 2023.

The fisheries sector has been supported by a series of targeted financial measures throughout the years. Between 2021 and 2024, Malta allocated €1.49 million in compensation schemes to support fishers due to the increase of fuel prices caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, including €715,320 in 2021, €584,595 in 2023 and €193,936 in 2024.

The Compensation Scheme for the Temporary Cessation of Fishing Activities offered a compensation with a premium of €3,000 in addition to an amount equivalent to the social contribution paid in March 2018. To be eligible, the owner of the fishing vessel active in the swordfish fishery should have declared €15,000 or more during at least one of the previous 3 years. This scheme allocated €159,606 to 52 fishermen.

The Traditional Boat Maintenance Scheme plays a vital role in promoting maritime sustainability. The scheme provides financial assistance to owners of wooden fishing vessels, helping to offset costs associated with restoration, maintenance, and preservation. Through this support, the scheme will directly benefit 85 fishermen, ensuring the continued use and longevity of traditional boats while preserving cultural heritage and supporting sustainable fishing practices.

The Sustainable Fishing Incentive Scheme, launched in 2024, is designed to promote the adoption of environmentally responsible fishing practices. By encouraging the use of selective fishing techniques and biodegradable fishing gear, the scheme aims to minimise marine pollution and enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity. This initiative not only supports healthier marine ecosystems but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of fisheries, with 103 fishermen set to benefit directly from the programme.

The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and General Pocket Radio System (GPRS) are key components that have been implemented to enhance the monitoring and management of the Maltese fishing fleet:

- 119 VMS devices were installed on commercial fishing vessels in Malta whose Length Overall (LOA) exceeds 10m.
- 742 GPRS devices were installed on commercial fishing vessels with an LOA of less than 10m
- The VMS and GPRS software allow the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) to monitor the vessels in real time for the purpose of ensuring safety, compliance, and enforcement.

Malta also contributed through the Data Collection-Multi-Annual Programme, a key initiative within the EU aimed at harmonising the collection and management of fisheries data across member states. This data is essential for the sustainable management of fish stocks, advising on conservation efforts, and supporting the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The programme collects biological, environmental and socio-economic data, contributing to the protection of marine ecosystems and sustainable fishing practices.

Through the Imrejkba Pilot Project, a traditional fishing practice introduced by local recreational fishermen, Malta aims at promoting sustainable fishing practices while respecting the ecological balance of local marine environments.

By incorporating fishermen's feedback and consultations with relevant authorities, the project also ensures that this heritage practice is adapted to modern conservation standards.

Reducing Marine Pollution: Malta has taken multiple approaches towards increasing awareness about the adverse impacts of marine pollution caused by anthropogenic actions in coastal and marine areas. The Saving Our Blue campaign is an initiative rooted in the broader framework of the Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Strategy. The primary focus of this campaign



is to inform and educate the public on various environmentally friendly alternatives to SUP items. In these past two years, this campaign unveiled a distinctive VR experience aimed at highlighting and fostering awareness about newly designated MPAs. The campaign has also placed a strong emphasis on beach cleanups as one of its central initiatives, with 39,301.26kg of waste collected through 110 clean ups between 2020 and 2024. The establishment of an online marine and beach litter sightings survey has assisted in centralising data collected on marine litter, corroborating the data collected through Malta's national monitoring programme, as reported under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. This process aids in guiding and coordinating clean-ups accordingly.

The removal of marine litter from the seafloor has been a focus for habitat restoration to improve the habitat status in MPAs. In this regard, in 2022, 1.5 tonnes of marine litter were collected from the seafloor, 2.5 tonnes were collected in 2023, and approximately 1 tonne in 2024.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

The implementation of SDG 14 in Malta reveals critical interlinkages, synergies, and trade-offs with other SDGs, highlighting the interconnected nature of global sustainability efforts. By addressing marine conservation and sustainable resource management, Malta has advanced progress in multiple related goals while navigating inherent challenges.

By promoting sustainable practices in aquaculture and reducing marine pollution through clean-up efforts and waste management innovations, Malta addresses unsustainable production methods while fostering sustainable economic activities as per SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). These measures also align with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), as sustainable fisheries and marine tourism initiatives create opportunities for economic development and employment in harmony with environmental stewardship.

The social dimensions of SDG 14 intersect with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). By reducing marine pollution, Malta not only enhances biodiversity but also protects public health by safeguarding water quality and preventing pollution-related diseases.

Malta's emphasis on public engagement through initiatives like Saving Our Blue fosters synergies with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by raising awareness and enhancing knowledge about marine ecosystems. These educational efforts equip communities with the tools to advocate for and participate in sustainable practices, creating more informed and active citizenship.

Trade-offs are inherent in balancing marine conservation with economic development. While these projects provide economic benefits and support SDG 8, they also pose challenges to achieving SDG 14's conservation objectives if not carefully managed. Similarly, the expansion of marine-based economic activities necessitates robust measures to prevent overexploitation of resources and ensure alignment with environmental goals.

Malta's integrated approach to SDG 14 demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the interconnectivity of the SDGs. By leveraging synergies and addressing trade-offs, the nation continues to progress toward holistic sustainability while fostering resilience across economic, social, and environmental dimensions.



SDG 15 - Life on Land

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
15.1	15.1.1 - Forest area as a proportion of total land area	ightleftarrows
	Percentage area of legally protected Maltese land area and inland surface waters*	:
15.2	Percentage of wooded area within legally established protected areas and with a long-term management plan*	:
15.5	15.5.1 - Red List Index	\Longrightarrow
	Percentage of habitats and species of Community interest that show a favourable conservation status, or at least a positive trend*	÷
15.6	15.6.1 - Number of countries that have adopted legislative, administrative and policy frameworks to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits	✓
15.8	15.8.1 - Proportion of countries adopting relevant national legislation and adequately resourcing the prevention or control of invasive alien species	✓
15.9	15.9.1 - (a) Number of countries that have established national targets in accordance with or similar to Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 14 in their national biodiversity strategy and action plans and the progress reported towards these targets; and (b) integration of biodiversity into national accounting and reporting systems, defined as implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting	✓

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta's terrestrial ecosystems are characterised by diverse habitats typical of the Mediterranean region, including garrigue, maquis and steppe, which support unique flora and fauna adapted to the islands' semi-arid climate. Garrigue is usually a low-lying shrubland dominated by hardy, aromatic plants, while maquis features denser vegetation with larger shrubs and small trees, often serving as important refuges and woodlands of importance for biodiversity. Other common habitats include coastal and agricultural ecosystems.

The islands' forest area has remained stable, comprising 1.44% of the total land area (0.46 thousand hectares) from 2018 to 2020¹²⁵. Additionally, the total area covered by trees in Malta in 2018 was 3.8778 km², with Natura 2000 sites overlapping with 0.9041 km² of wooded areas¹²⁶. Furthermore, 23.3% of Malta's wooded areas are currently covered by long-term management plans¹²⁷, reflecting structured efforts toward sustainable forest management. The total percentage area of legally protected Maltese land area and inland surface waters in Malta is 29.22% as of 2024¹²⁸.

Progress in achieving SDG 15 is particularly evident through a focus on ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection, and sustainable land use. Key initiatives include the recent designation of additional SACs of National Importance, including Hondoq ir-Rummien and il-Hnejja, Il-Qortin ta' Isopu, Xrobb I-Għaġin and II-Ġebla tal-Fessej. The terrestrial protected area network in Malta covers about 30% of the land surface, including various Natura 2000 sites. The sites are managed through the implementation of conservation measures aimed at restoring habitats, removing invasive alien species (IAS), and promoting sustainable practices. As of 2019, 53.33% of Species of Community Interest in Malta show a favourable conservation status, or at least a positive trend, highlighting the effectiveness of ongoing biodiversity initiatives¹²⁹.

Wildlife protection has also advanced, with an established permitting system and numerous inspections, particularly those conducted in 2023 to ensure compliance with wildlife trade regulations. Since 2018, a number of funded projects have supported wild bird conservation through centralised governance.

Malta has also actively worked to address IAS through the National IAS Strategy (2020), which combines IAS control and removal projects, border controls, and educational campaigns. Initiatives like the Fighting Alien Species Transborder Project (FAST) safeguard Natura 2000 areas from invasive species. Additionally, the Red List Index, measuring biodiversity health, stands at 0.923 since 2023, reflecting positive species protection efforts¹³⁰.

Malta's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2024–2030) sets out 22 targets and 79 actions for biodiversity protection and restoration, supported by a National Biodiversity Database and Natura 2000 StoryMaps for data transparency. The designation of the Maltese Honeybee (*Apis mellifera ruttneri*) as a national species in 2024 highlights Malta's focus on pollinator protection and ecosystem health. Through these efforts, Malta has prioritised sustainable ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation, ensuring long-term progress towards SDG 15.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Biodiversity Conservation and Restoration: Our natural environment harbours a diverse array of species across the terrestrial areas of the Maltese Islands which require protection from various pressures associated with natural processes and human-related activities. Aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, Malta aims to increase terrestrial protected areas to 30% by 2030. Since 2018, the share of protected land has grown, with the designation of 9 new SACs to safeguard critical ecosystems.

In 2020, the National Strategy for Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of IAS in the Maltese Islands, along with National Codes of Good Practice and an Action Plan Addressing Escape from Confinement of IAS of Union Concern (pets, aquaria, and terrarium species), were published. Mapping of the distribution of IAS is an ongoing process, while IAS control and removal projects are carried out through collaboration between public authorities and environmental NGOs. Educational campaigns and citizen science initiatives, such as an online platform for the reporting of IAS locations, have also enhanced public awareness and understanding of IAS risks and responsibilities.



¹²⁹ ERA

¹³⁰ BirdLife International and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The implementation of Natura 2000 Management Plans supports actions like habitat and rubble wall restoration, ex-situ conservation, tree planting, and invasive species removal, including:

- The habitat restoration in Comino, which included the creation of saline/freshwater ponds, the planting of various trees and shrubs, the extensive removal of IAS, the restoration of rubble walls and vernacular infrastructure, the closing of pathways, the removal of derelict poles, and the adjustment of cordoning and structures;
- Visitor management, removal and control of invasive species, and restoration of rubble walls in Ghain Tuffieha;
- Interventions in Buskett, which included restoration of rubble walls, planting of trees and shrubs, removal and control of invasive species, the establishment of the Buskett Education Hub, the restoration of reservoirs and the installation of irrigation systems; and
 - Interventions in Salini, Hal Saptan, Siggiewi, Hal Ghaxaq and St. Paul's Bayto remove invasive species.

Furthermore, masterplans for valley management were based on ecosystem services mapping and assessment, and aim to promote nature-based solutions for managing water and biodiversity in valleys. These projects focus on enhancing water and ecosystem management in vulnerable valleys like Wied Speranza (Malta) and Wied ta' Grixti (Gozo). It employs Nature-based Solutions (NbS), Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), and stakeholder engagement to restore habitats, protect biodiversity, and build ecosystem resilience. In Gozo, around 30km of soil-retaining rubble walls have been restored or rebuilt through a €10 million EU-funded project. Walls along 40 different roads in various localities were improved to reduce the incidence of soil erosion through run-offs.

Conservation of pollinators has also been given due consideration, with efforts to designate the Maltese Honeybee as a national species. To address the significant declines in pollinator species experienced across the EU, Malta established the Malta Pollinator Monitoring Scheme. This scheme combines citizen scientists, academics and regulators in monitoring bees, butterflies and hoverflies. The valuable data collected will feed directly into the drafting process of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Pollinators (NSAPP) up to 2035 which intends to act as the national framework that drives and promotes the safeguarding of pollinator species and their services through several short and long-term actions.

Malta continues with its efforts to regulate wildlife trade through inspections to ensure compliance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and EU regulations, with 198 inspections conducted in 2023. This helps prevent illegal wildlife trade and promotes sustainable practices. The centralisation of regulatory functions for wild bird conservation coordinates efforts to conserve wild bird populations and govern sustainable hunting practices. Additionally, the Conservation of Wild Bird Fund supported 15 funded projects (2018–2024), focusing on the protection of wild birds and their habitats.

Work is also being done to set up the National Biodiversity Database, which will serve as an inventory of information on local species, particularly flora and fauna, which contribute to the natural and cultural heritage of the Maltese Islands.

Community Engagement and Education:

Environmental education plays a pivotal role in creating awareness and promoting sustainable development practices in society. As the world faces unprecedented environmental challenges, it has become crucial to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to protect and conserve the environment.

Environmental educational outreach sites at Xrobb I-Għagin and the Buskett Education Hub support various educational initiatives aimed to reach different audiences, including school children, the elderly, and the general public.

Furthermore, initiatives such as the Tree4U Campaign aim at increasing the plant biodiversity of Maltese islands through the sponsorship of trees and shrubs by members of the public, organised groups, as well as private and public entities.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's efforts to achieve SDG 15 intersect with multiple SDGs, highlighting both synergies that enhance progress and trade-offs that require careful management. By focusing on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, Malta contributes to the interconnected objectives of environmental sustainability, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being).

Efforts to conserve terrestrial ecosystems under SDG 15 align closely with SDG 13 (Climate Action). Initiatives such as the restoration of degraded habitats and the implementation of Naturebased Solutions (NbS) in valleys enhance carbon

sequestration and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts. These actions contribute to both ecosystem health and climate mitigation, demonstrating the complementary relationship between biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.

The protection of pollinators, including the designation of the Maltese Honeybee as a national species, creates strong synergies with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by safeguarding essential contributors to food security and agricultural productivity. Pollinators are critical for the reproduction of many crops and plants, making their conservation a vital component of sustainable food systems.

Community engagement and education initiatives under SDG 15 support SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). These programmes foster environmental awareness and provide inclusive opportunities for intergenerational learning and social interaction. By engaging communities in conservation, Malta strengthens the social dimensions of sustainability while promoting mental and physical well-being as per SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

The implementation of sustainable land management practices through Natura 2000 management plans and restoration projects ties into SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). These actions encourage sustainable use of natural resources, reduce waste and enhance ecosystem services, contributing to responsible production systems.

Malta's compliance with international regulations such as CITES and its governance of sustainable hunting practices support SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). These measures promote the rule of law, ensure equitable resource governance, and combat illegal wildlife trade, fostering global cooperation for sustainable development.

However, trade-offs exist in balancing land use for development with ecosystem restoration under SDG 15. The expansion of protected areas and the regulation of land-use practices may sometimes conflict with economic development goals under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Malta's approach to SDG 15 exemplifies a commitment to leveraging synergies and managing trade-offs to ensure progress across multiple dimensions of sustainable development. By integrating biodiversity conservation with broader socio-economic goals, Malta contributes to a cohesive and balanced pathway toward achieving the 2030 Agenda.





SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
16.1	16.1.1 - Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	7
	Percentage of households reporting "Crime, violence or vandalism in the area" they live*	\uparrow
16.2	Number of victims of human trafficking, by sex*	A
	Rate of referrals received by the Child Protection Services concerning service users aged <1 to 14 years, per 1,000 population*	\downarrow
16.3	16.3.2 - Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population	\downarrow
	Annual prevalence rate of sexual assault, serious assault, and robbery, by type of offence $\!\!\!^\star$	ightleftharpoons
16.5	16.5.2 - Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months	:
	Corruption Perceptions Index*	A
16.6	16.6.1 - Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)	✓
	Trust in the Maltese institutions*	7
16.7	16.7.1 - Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups	7
	Number of parliamentarians per legislature, by sex*	\uparrow
16.9	16.9.1 - Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age	✓
16.10	16.10.2 - Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information	✓
16.a	16.a.1 - Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles	\rightleftharpoons
16.b	16.b.1 - Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law	\downarrow

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta continues to strengthen efforts toward achieving SDG 16, which focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, ensuring access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions. Considerable progress has been recorded in reducing violence, with the number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population declining from 1.66 in 2018 to 0.54 in 2023¹³¹. This reduction is observed across both genders, with the number for males dropping from 1.63 to 0.34 and for females from 1.69 to 0.77 over the same period¹³². While this positive trend reflects ongoing efforts to enhance public safety, addressing gender-specific violence remains a priority.

The proportion of the population subjected to violence has remained relatively stable. Reports of sexual assault remained at 0.02% in both 2018 and 2023, while serious assault cases were reported at 0.04% in both years¹³³. Robbery showed a slight improvement, declining from 0.04% in 2018 to 0.03% in 2023¹³⁴. Perceptions of public safety have also improved, with the percentage of households reporting concerns about crime, violence, or vandalism in their area falling from 12.5% in 2018 to 7.6% in 2023¹³⁵. Strengthening trust in law enforcement and ensuring access to justice remain key to further improving reporting rates and addressing potential underreporting.

Protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups, particularly children, have been reinforced. The rate of referrals to Child Protection Services concerning children under 14 years has increased from 6.6 per 1,000 in 2018 to 23.2 per 1,000 in 2023¹³⁶. This increase indicates both a rise in reported cases and an improvement in detection, awareness and reporting systems aimed at safeguarding children. Malta remains committed to combatting human trafficking, however the number of reported victims has fluctuated over recent years. While there were 9 reported cases in 2019, this figure peaked at 22 in 2022. By 2023, the number had declined to 6137. Notably, all victims in 2023 were female, and while the reduction in cases is encouraging, targeted interventions continue to be essential in addressing vulnerabilities that contribute to trafficking.

Efforts to enhance judicial efficiency are ongoing, particularly needed in addressing the proportion of unsentenced detainees, which has risen from 29.61% of the overall prison population in 2018 to 40.92% in 2023¹³⁸. Reducing pre-trial detention and improving access to timely legal proceedings remain key areas of focus.

There has been progress in dispute resolution mechanisms, with more individuals accessing formal mediation processes. In 2018, no cases were recorded for voluntary, compulsory, or courtmandated mediation. In 2024, two cases of voluntary mediation and seven cases of court-decreed mediation were recorded¹³⁹.

With regard to perception-based survey indicators, trust in Parliament stood at 33% in 2024, and trust in the Government was recorded at 36% over the same year. Malta's Corruption Perceptions Index stood at 46 in 2024¹⁴⁰. Additionally, bribery incidence among businesses was recorded at 2.38% in 2019¹⁴¹. Strengthening institutional integrity, reinforcing anticorruption measures, and enhancing transparency remain key priorities.

Fiscal efficiency has improved, with primary government expenditures as a proportion of the original approved budget decreasing from 106.4% in 2018 to 98.3% in 2023¹⁴². This suggests better budgetary discipline and improved financial management across governmental institutions.

Malta continues to advance efforts to ensure equitable representation in governance. In the legislature, the ratio of female members of parliament relative to their proportion in the eligible population was 0.58 in 2023¹⁴³, while the ratio of young members in parliament (aged 45 or below) relative to their proportion in the eligible population was 1.00144. In the judiciary, the overall ratio of female judges compared to national distributions was 1.08 in 2023145 Disparities exist across different court levels, with the ratio of female judges in higher courts in 2023 at 1.00 and in lower courts at 1.42146. In 2023, the representation of judges under 45 years old was 0.34 across all courts, with 0.16 in higher courts and 0.6 in lower courts147.



134 Ibid.

¹³¹ NSO 132 Ibid. 133 MPF and NSO

¹³⁵ NSO 136 NSO and FSWS

¹³⁹ EC- Eurobarometer 140 Transparency International

¹⁴³ IPLI 144 Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ihid

¹³⁷ MPF and FSWS 138 CSA

¹⁴¹ World Bank

Within the public sector, gender representation varies by occupational category. The ratio for clerical support workers was 1.45¹⁴⁸. In higher managerial positions, including managing directors and chief executives, the female ratio stood at 0.99 in 2024¹⁴⁹. Across the total national-level public service workforce, which includes police, education, healthcare, and other government roles, female representation in 2024 was recorded at 1.13¹⁵⁰. Total female professionals in the public service stood at a ratio of 1.39 in 2024¹⁵¹.

The representation of women in national legislative bodies has improved. The 13th Legislature (2017–2022) had 67 members, with 57 males and 10 females¹⁵², whereas the 14th Legislature (2022–present) consists of 79 members, with 56 males and 23 females¹⁵³. These developments reflect ongoing efforts to enhance inclusivity and diversity in governance.

Malta maintains strong performance in civil registration, with 100% of children under five having their births registered with a civil authority as of 2024¹⁵⁴. This ensures access to legal identity and fundamental rights from an early age.

Overall, Malta has made progress in enhancing public safety, improving perceptions of security, and strengthening institutional integrity. To address remaining challenges, efforts are underway to enhance judicial efficiency by reducing case backlogs, expanding alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and improving access to legal aid services. Targeted reforms are being implemented to reduce the proportion of unsentenced detainees through streamlined legal procedures and better case management. Anti-corruption measures are being reinforced through the introduction of stricter conflict-of-interest policies, improved whistleblower protections, and enhanced investigative capabilities for corruption-related cases. Public sector transparency is being strengthened through digitalisation initiatives such as the upgraded Freedom of Information (FOI) system and enhanced e-government services. Additionally, stakeholder engagement, capacity-building programmes, and continued legislative updates remain central to Malta's approach in ensuring that governance reforms translate into tangible improvements in institutional accountability and public trust.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Effective, Accountable and Transparent Institutions at All Levels: In line with the EC's eGovernment and Digital Public Services Policy, the Servizz.gov digital platform continues to provide more services to citizens, which are also made more accessible through helplines, an online portal providing over 1,200 digital government services, and a live chat platform, as well as regional and specialised hubs around Malta. The Servizz.gov Customer Satisfaction Survey gathers feedback to continually improve service delivery and responsiveness. In addition, the Mystery Shopper project evaluates service excellence in public administration to increase the overall efficiency of government departments and entities providing direct services to citizens. Such initiatives enhance capacity building and upskilling efforts for public service staff to meet consumer demands, for instance, through soft skills such as customer care, dealing with disability and discrimination issues, gender equality, and technical courses. Since it started in 2016, the Mystery Shopping Project generated over 515 individual reports containing more than 13,300 mystery shopping interactions. This resulted in over 2,900 recommendations for improvement made, which were resolved through interaction with the departments or entities concerned.

In the justice sector, the Constitutional reforms conducted between 2016 and 2020 saw the strengthening of the independence of the judiciary. These Constitutional reforms were carried out following the recommendations of the Venice Commission, which targeted the method by which the judicial appointments are made, including that of the Chief Justice and also judicial discipline, including the removal of judges and retirement age of judges. Additionally, following discussions between the Ministry responsible for Justice and the Judiciary Association, an agreement was reached to allocate additional resources and improve the judiciary's working conditions. This agreement also provides for the establishment of a 'Commissioner for Standards' within the judiciary, aimed at enhancing professional standards among its members. A Constitutional amendment will be required to effectively implement this initiative. This amendment will be introduced alongside amendments concerning the appointment of the Chief Justice, which proposes to involve the Judiciary in the appointment of the Chief Justice. The forthcoming constitutional reform will mandate consultations with the incumbent Chief Justice, prior to the appointment of the new Chief Justice.

¹⁴⁸ OPM and NSO

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. ¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Parliament of Malta

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Identità

The number of judges and magistrates appointed to the bench increased from 43 (22 Judges including the Chief Justice and 21 Magistrates) in 2017 to 57 (28 Judges including the Chief Justice and 29 Magistrates) as at November 2024, leading to a notable 24.5% increase. A call for the appointment of two further magistrates has been published and shall close on 21 February 2025.

Another major milestone in strengthening institutions was reached in 2019 with the historical split of the dual role of the Attorney General (AG), which saw the establishment of the State Advocate taking on the role of Chief Legal Advisor to Government, while the Attorney General was left with the role of Public Prosecutor.

As of 1 October 2024, the AG has now taken over the decisions to prosecute all serious offences from the police. This last taking over of decisions to prosecute by the AG from the Police has concluded the gradual and phased approach that started on 1 October 2020. In this regard, the Office instituted a considerable number of new prosecutions, with a total of 653 new cases between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2024 involving 904 natural persons and 105 companies.

Other Constitutional reforms targeted the method of appointments and removal of the President of Malta and that of the Ombudsman, which now require a qualified two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives. Further reforms targeted the containment of the powers of appointment by the Prime Minister, providing for more involvement of the Cabinet of Ministers in the procedure by which the Principal Permanent Secretary and the Permanent Secretaries are appointed, and also defining the process for Persons of Trusts.

The introduction of the Proceeds of Crime Act, the transposition of the European Criminal Records Information System - Third Country Nationals (ECRIS-TCN) Directive and Regulation into national law and implementation thereon, as well as legislative amendments to allow for the digitisation process, such as the amendments to allow online filing of judicial acts, aimed at strengthening justice institutions.

Furthermore, the continuous development of the Court Services Agency's staffing and management structure reflects a strategic enhancement in organisational capacity. Initially, prior to the Agency's establishment in August 2019, the staff complement comprised 428 members. As of November 2024, the total staff complement has expanded to 558 members, leading to a notable 23.2% increase.

This growth has been complemented by the introduction of rolling calls, demonstrating a dynamic approach to personnel management.

In 2022, with the assistance of the EU and the World Bank, a 5-year Action Plan was developed to improve the operational and administrative excellence of the AG's and State Advocate's Offices. The project, funded by the EU and the Council of Europe, supports Malta to ensure the operational independence of both the AG;s Office and that of the Office of the State Advocate, while strengthening their capabilities for an effective functioning.

Ensuring Public Access to Information and Protecting Fundamental Freedoms: A new FOI System was launched. Through the modernisation of the FOI Act system, citizens will be better equipped for access to public documents. In turn, the new system will assist public authorities in maintaining a direct line of communication with FOI applicants and will be able to see to requests in a more efficient manner. The new system is geared toward added transparency and accountability.

In order to meet the greater demand for copies of archived documents, as well as to keep pace with the needs of an ever-more-digitalised society, an ongoing initiative/project has been launched to digitalise all the deeds and wills housed at the Main Notarial Archives within the Office of the Notary to Government.

Malta has transposed the EU's anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) Directive, becoming the first EU Member State to do so. The SLAPP Order, 2024, aims to prevent abusive lawsuits designed to silence public participation. The order, introduced by means of Legal Notice 177 of 2024, mirrors the EU Directive by introducing key measures, including security for costs, early dismissal of unfounded claims, and penalties for abusive litigation, while also ensuring legal aid for defendants.

Efficiency and Equal Access to Justice: In 2021, the first ever Digital Justice Strategy 2022-2027 was launched. The strategy aims at improving the quality of the national justice system, with specific goals related to the digitalisation of justice with the scope of making the justice system more efficient, accessible to different users and reflective of the developments going on abroad within this sector. In parallel with the launch of the strategy, a €10 million investment from the Recovery and Resilience Plan is being implemented for the digitisation of the justice sector. In line with the implementation of the Digital Justice Strategy, this investment permits the introduction of management information systems

into several justice entities, including the installation of digital equipment to provide automated online services which support justice sector users through collaboration and integration, thereby increasing accessibility to justice and strengthening efficiency. The main beneficiary of this investment is the Court Services Agency, who incessantly continues its efforts to make the Law Courts more digitally friendly. During 2024, all court halls have been equipped with overhead projectors and a new audio system to facilitate court proceedings, whereas a new Wi-Fi system was installed at the Courts Main Building.

Additionally, during 2021, the Court Services Agency embarked on a project to install video-conferencing systems in all thirty court halls in Malta and Gozo. This project involved the procurement, installation and commissioning of monitors and cameras in all court halls to facilitate online sittings. This project was well-received, and several sittings were done online with the video-conferencing system being put to use during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and in situations where parties to the case could not physically be present.

With a view to further strengthen the Law Courts and improve the efficiency of the Justice system, the progress achieved through the revised procedural rules before the Courts of Appeal aimed at reducing the length of proceedings. Additionally, with a view to further reducing the Court's case load and address the issue of space, in 2024 a new Court Hall was finalised and is being used to hold court sittings. Furthermore, the surge in economic activity has demanded the establishment of a specialised Commercial Court capable of addressing disputes related to both commercial and maritime matters in an expedient and efficient manner. Presently the cases which relate to matters regulated by the Companies Act are assigned to the Civil Court (Commercial Section). The proposed measure is intended for this section to be elevated to a specialised Commercial Court, distinct from the Civil Court, with wider competence to include cases with maritime issues. To facilitate this initiative, the plan includes not only an increase in the number of judges appointed to the Commercial Court, but also the development of a new facility dedicated to its operation. In parallel, legislative amendments are being proposed to establish the Commercial Court as an independent entity, rather than as a division of the First Hall Civil Court.

Creating this specialised Court dedicated to hearing cases of a commercial nature, together with the increase in Court Halls, shall facilitate and make the process of these cases more expedient, efficient and effective, thus resulting in the reduction of pending cases and facilitating more access to justice. In order to ensure proper access to justice, the Court Service Agency launched a HelpDesk to assist the public with court services queries.

As part of the measures being undertaken to enhance the efficiency and access to justice, a number of reforms are being undertaken. In this regard, the Family Court Reform, on which a public consultation was launched in October 2024, aims at addressing the civil court procedure, the roles of professionals such as mediators and children's advocates, the establishment of new structures to provide more support, and legislative amendments to enhance the overall experience of justice for its users. In addition, the Child Advocate reform will further enhance the legal rights and services provided to children whose guardians/parents are undergoing court litigation. Furthermore, during 2024, new laws on arrest and detention, and on reforming the procedure related to the proceeds of crime, were approved for effective, proportionate and efficient justice. Moreover, the setting up of a new Magisterial Inquiries Section has also entailed a reform on the way Inquiries are conducted and, in this respect, the Criminal Code (Amendment) Bill was presented in Parliament. As part of this reform process, four magistrates have already been appointed to focus exclusively on magisterial inquiries.

Through the three-year project on strengthening people-centred access to justice with technical assistance from the OECD and funded by the EC, Government will seek to improve the services of mediation, address barriers to justice for persons with disability, carry out the first national legal needs survey, and study the creation of new performance indicators addressing people-centricity and access to justice.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, a new legal aid service for victims of domestic violence was launched. This service provided victims with legal advice they would need to know about their domestic violence cases. This was followed by an awareness campaign regarding legal aid services being offered to domestic violence victims. Information sessions on legal aid services were also given to Regional Councils across the Maltese islands. Furthermore in 2022, an Information Campaign entitled 'Kont taf?' was launched, providing snippets of information about the legal aid services on Billboards, social media, and TV.

In 2022, the legal aid system framework continued to be improved with the introduction of an increased threshold for persons eligible to benefit from legal aid. This threshold was increased from €7,000 to €13,000 for the preceding 12 months. In 2022, the Legal Aid Malta Agency launched an online referral system for clients. In 2024, the Agency created specialised panels for civil litigation, criminal litigation and for victims of crime, thus enabling the Agency's clients to be assisted more professionally.

In 2020, a Whistleblowing Coordinating Office was established in order to coordinate the transposition of the Whistleblower Directive into Maltese law, which will provide potential whistleblowers with broader opportunities for making disclosures. This will assist receiving entities in upholding the rule of law and strengthening their transparency and accountability. In addition, in 2024 an information system was procured to facilitate whistleblower reports and enable authorised internal users to receive, acknowledge, and respond to reports under the Protection of the Whistleblower Act. The development of the Whistleblower IT system tool will provide the possibility for potential whistleblowers to come forward in strict confidence and in various ways, whether in person, over the phone, via voice messages or in written (online) form. Receiving entities will be held accountable through prompts for timeframes emanating from Directive (EU) 1937/2019 in order to provide obligatory feedback and track progress.

With regard to detainees, the CSA contributes by ensuring that persons in prison have access to fair treatment and by upholding policies that respect human rights. The CSA's rehabilitation initiatives further support reintegration efforts, which contribute to broader societal justice and stability.

Support to Victims of Crime: The Victim Support Agency was established in 2020 to provide the necessary support and assistance to victims of crime by, in particular, providing information and follow-up about their cases, as well as guidance about what to expect in court. Moreover, as a best practice, victims are provided with information about the release of offenders from prison. Victims of crime are also provided with information concerning their rights, including legal advice and assistance for recovery of property seized during proceedings.

Preventing Corruption: With a view of raising awareness on integrity and corruption, and in line with recommendations made by GRECO, Government has launched the Integrity Awareness Programme as a means by which to further uphold and promote the highest standards of ethical

behaviour by all public employees - this on the basis of Directive 15, which bears the force of law through Article 4(3) of the Public Administration Act. Furthermore, in order to identify and manage instances of conflicts of interest amongst public employees, Government adopted Directive 16, also bearing the force of law, in order to assist public employees and board members in faithfully discharging their duties by successfully managing situations of conflicts of interest and giving clear guidance through legally binding legislative provisions. A revolving-doors policy was adopted for those employees who occupy posts that involve regulatory and inspectorate functions, as listed in the Annex to Directive 14 titled 'Governing Framework for the Management of the Revolving Door Policy for Public Employees'.

Furthermore, as of 2020, Government has introduced the right to judicially review a *nolle prosequi* or a decision not to prosecute, whereby decisions of the AG not to prosecute can be contested by an injured party. For this reason, the Government has granted, the Permanent Commission Against Corruption (PCAC), the Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the Commissioner for Standards in Public Life the right to appear as an injured party. These individuals may therefore seek judicial review individually in cases which they referred to the AG, since they have been given the right to appear as an injured party.

Furthermore, as part of Malta's Recovery and Resilience programme commitments, action is being taken to strengthen the PCAC with administrative support staff. Furthermore, a digital registry on corruption cases has been developed for the use of the PCAC.

Malta has continued its efforts to expand outreach and strengthen engagement with developing countries in various multilateral fora, including the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of the UNODC. Such inter-regional cooperation is crucial to effectively address collective international challenges of transnational organized crime, corruption-related crime, and the evolving threat of cybercrime. For instance, Malta's support for the UNODC Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment initiative led to the establishment of the Integrity Advisory Board, with the project now being implemented across a number of countries. Similarly, Malta's support for UNODC's 'Women in Justice - Women for Justice' initiative, which provides mentorship for women in anti-corruption roles, fosters leadership and involvement. By supporting their professional growth, the initiative aims to strengthen and advance

gender-responsive justice. Moreover, Malta is also an active member in the UNODC Implementation Review Group for the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption.

Combatting Organised Crime, Illicit Financial and Arms Flows, Violence and Terrorism: Following the enactment of the Proceeds of Crime Act, the Asset Recovery Bureau (ARB) introduced Act VI in 2024 with the main objective of maintaining the legality and effectiveness of the freezing of the property of persons charged or accused with offences (relevant offences under Chapter 621) during the time when criminal proceedings are pending, particularly through the limitation of the Freezing Orders to such specific assets or to property having a value not greater than the assets subject to confiscation in the case of conviction, except in drug cases. It follows that, in particular, the Act made provision for Courts to be enabled to ensure the proportionality of the freezing orders.

In November 2023, the ARB issued an Expression for Legal Experts to provide Legal Services to the ARB. The ARB today has an additional pool of 5 lawyers who act under the direction of the Director of the ARB and/or his/her delegated person in all circumstances to liaise with the Police, the Courts, the State Advocate, the AG and any other body and/or third parties as necessary. This enhances the ARB's efficiency in its aim to tackle crime and prevent that its proceeds are re-invested in the licit economy and used for further criminal activities.

Furthermore, the ARB has also undertaken a restructuring exercise in order to increase the ARB's ability to effectively identify, manage, recover and confiscate assets. In this respect, apart from legislative changes as mentioned above, the ARB has undertaken a capacity building exercise to increase its staff. In fact, the staff in post has increased from 11 in 2019 to 35 by end of 2024. The recruitment of additional staff has also increased the ability to strengthen methods of conservation of assets as well as the ARB's ability to support the Police with on-call duties, apart from assistance during pre-planned raids and the customary on-sites which are especially important in the compilation of the inventory of assets.

The ARB is reaching for new heights in its tracing of assets, with deeper investigations and reaching out with other entities for information. MOUs and SOPs with Police, MTCA, Transport Malta and FIAU have been recently signed to ensure that information on cases can be requested and passed on accordingly, so that a comprehensive tracing of assets is conducted.

Moreover, apart from collaboration with the above entities, the ARB collaborates with correspondent authorities abroad in the fight against organised crime.

The MPF has made considerable progress in tracing the illicit origins of seized, found, or surrendered arms. Leveraging international instruments and in collaboration with relevant authorities, mainly the ARB, efforts are underway to enhance tracing capabilities. To prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime, the MPF engages actively with the relevant international and regional organisations, EU Institutions and EU JHA agencies including Frontex, Europol, eu-LISA, CEPOL and Eurojust to strengthen the capabilities of its personnel in their respective areas. The MPF also supports training for other EU and non-EU countries, through for example, the hosting of Interpol – Euromed Justice training for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries in the area of migrant smuggling/human trafficking, hosting of CEPOL training on police cooperation, Schengen Information System and the interoperability of information systems, with an understanding that no country can fight serious crime on its own and that we can learn from each other. The MPF also does its utmost to participate in projects aimed at building the capabilities of its personnel and those from other countries, as demonstrated in the ATHENA 2 Project, led by Italy and with Malta, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia law enforcement authorities as partners.

The Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU), the national central agency in Malta that is responsible for the collection, collation, processing, analysis and dissemination of information to combat money laundering and the funding of terrorism, has launched the AML/CFT Clinics to provide guidance for financial institutions and operators on the correct implementation of AML/CFT requirements, transactional patterns of interest, as well as red flags, trends and typologies potentially linked to human trafficking and modern slavery. Such initiatives promote better quality of reporting, which translate into more effective leads for investigation.

Responsive, Inclusive and Representative Decision-Making: Between 2018 and 2019, Malta implemented the Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT). The aim of such project was to obtain a snapshot on the state of play of child participation in Malta, and to assess what is working and what, on the other hand, may be done better, as well as potentially measure progress over time. In particular, the project assessed the three measures of protecting the child's right to participate, promoting awareness of this right, and creating spaces for participation.

The CPAT process revealed that, while there is a strong political and professional commitment to child participation, the lack of infrastructure and child-friendly resources pose a major challenge. It emphasized the need for greater investment in two critical areas: (i) training for professionals working with children; and (ii) the provision of child-friendly information on laws and policies. These findings led to the Empowering Children's Participation in Malta Project, introducing a digital application to facilitate safe child participation in policymaking. It offers a safe space for children to obtain child-friendly information on government policies and initiatives, enabling them to engage in policy discussions and receive professional emotional support, particularly for marginalised children. This approach not only fosters trust and openness between young citizens and decision-makers, but also strengthens democratic processes, ensuring that the voices of young people are considered when shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future. Additionally, the project seeks to build the capacity of policymakers to integrate children's voices in decision-making through the development of a Child Policy Evaluation Toolkit.

The Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030 presents Government's strategic vision that underscores our unwavering commitment to serving and safeguarding the well-being of our children. With a strong focus on the happiness, health, and overall well-being of our children, this Policy Framework aims to enhance the quality of life for every child, ensuring their success through dedicated resources and comprehensive support systems.

Protecting Children from Exploitation and Violence at the International Level: Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) is one of Malta's priorities, including during its term on the UN Security Council between 2023-2024. Additionally, Malta is a member of Friends (GoF) of Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) in Geneva and New York, and the EU GoF on CAAC in Brussels. Malta has fully endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, the Paris Commitments and Principles, and the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

Following the success of the pilot 'Virtual Summer School on Child Protection and the Prevention of Grave Violations against Children in Armed Conflict', organised together with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for CAAC in 2022, Malta continued its collaboration with the SRSG in 2024 to launch the CAAC Primer: a free, self-paced, online introductory course on 'Children and Armed Conflict' through the UN System Staff College. The Primer has been very well received with over 600 individuals from across the globe having applied. An 'Advanced Training on Children and Armed Conflict' course, complementary to the Primer, has also been launched in collaboration with the Office of the SRSG.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's initiatives under SDG 16 demonstrate extensive interlinkages with other SDGs, fostering synergies that amplify progress across multiple dimensions of sustainable development. By strengthening justice systems, enhancing public accountability and promoting inclusivity, Malta's efforts contribute to the holistic advancement of the 2030 Agenda. However, these actions also involve trade-offs that require strategic balancing.

Investments in digital technologies, such as video conferencing and online legal resources, promote innovation and infrastructure development, which enhance institutional efficiency and accessibility. The modernisation of Malta's justice system and digitalisation of legal processes align closely with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and also support SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by ensuring ethical and transparent resource management. These advancements also create synergies with SDG 4 (Quality Education) by facilitating digital literacy and improving access to justice-related information for citizens.

Public accountability projects, such as the Mystery Shopper Project and Servizz.gov surveys, reinforce SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) by improving the responsiveness and inclusivity of public services. Transparent and efficient institutions enhance citizen trust and contribute to sustainable urban governance.

Efforts to promote inclusion and address gender-based violence intersect with SDG 5 (Gender Equality). Programmes targeting gender-based violence and advocating for equitable treatment in public services and detention facilities align with global goals for gender equity and social justice.

Similarly, legal aid and child advocacy efforts contribute to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by ensuring that marginalised and vulnerable groups are not left behind.

Malta's commitment to anti-corruption measures, including whistleblower protections and the activities of the ARB, strengthens governance frameworks and aligns SDG 16 with direct synergies to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Transparent and accountable governance fosters a stable economic environment, attracting investment and promoting equitable economic growth.

Malta's leadership on child protection in armed conflicts and collaborations with Europol and Frontex to combat transnational crime further link SDG 16 with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). These international partnerships foster cross-border cooperation and knowledge sharing, amplifying global efforts to promote peace, justice, and strong institutions.

However, trade-offs exist in balancing resource allocation while ensuring comprehensive progress. The modernisation of justice system services requires substantial financial resources, human resources and mitigation practices to narrow the digital divide relevant to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Malta's integrated approach to SDG 16 illustrates how governance reforms and institutional strengthening can drive progress across multiple SDGs. By leveraging synergies and carefully navigating trade-offs, Malta exemplifies a commitment to building a just, inclusive, and resilient society that supports sustainable development





SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

Target	Indicator (Selected)	Trend
17.1	17.1.1 - Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP, by source	7
	17.1.2 - Proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes	7
17.2	17.2.1 - Net official development assistance, total and to least developed countries, as a proportion of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee donors' gross national income (GNI)	\uparrow
17.5	17.5.1 - Number of countries that adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for developing countries, including the least developed countries	\rightleftharpoons
17.6	17.6.1 - Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, by speed	7
17.8	17.8.1 - Proportion of individuals using the Internet	\uparrow
17.10	Tariff rate (applied, weighted mean) across all products*	7
17.12	17.12.1 - Weighted average tariffs faced by developing countries, least developed countries and small island developing States	7
17.14	17.14.1 - Number of countries with mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development	✓
17.18	17.18.1 - Statistical capacity indicators	7
	17.18.2 - Number of countries that have national statistical legislation that complies with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics	✓
	17.18.3 - Number of countries with a national statistical plan that is fully funded and under implementation, by source of funding	✓
17.19	17.19.2 - Proportion of countries that (a) have conducted at least one population and housing census in the last 10 years; and (b) have achieved 100 per cent birth registration and 80 per cent death registration	✓

Status of the Goal and Targets

Malta has made notable progress in advancing SDG 17, emphasising global partnerships for sustainable development through international cooperation, civil society support, and capacity building. Its Official Development and Humanitarian Assistance Policy (2021) facilitates collaboration with various stakeholders to address global challenges, focusing on poverty reduction, social equality, women's and girls' rights, and inclusive quality education. By aligning its efforts with these priorities, Malta actively contributes to the achievement of SDGs on both national and international levels.

Policy coherence for sustainable development is at the heart of Malta's Sustainable Development Governance Framework, and a number of actions are being prioritised in order to progress this objective. As an island nation, Malta's commitment to fostering partnerships has been central to advancing sustainable development in SIDS, with specific projects designed for and with these states. Furthermore, the nation actively supports civil society engagement, helping national and international partners contribute to SDG objectives.

In terms of financial contribution, Malta's total government revenue as a proportion of GDP stood at 31.9% in 2023^{155} , as compared to 36.3% in 2018, while the proportion of domestic budget funded by domestic taxes fell from 70.38% in 2018 to 59.86% in 2022¹⁵⁶. Between 2018 and 2023, a slight increase in Malta's net ODA, both total and to least developed countries, was noted (0.25% of its GDP in 2018, increasing to 0.34% in 2023¹⁵⁷).

Malta's outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) schemes that benefit developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), were evaluated in 2024, with the country implementing investment facilitation services but not direct capital participation, fiscal/financial support, or investment guarantees. Nonetheless, this in turn contributes to creating global partnerships and facilitating international cooperation.

In terms of connectivity, Malta's fixed broadband subscriptions increased from 39.59 per 100 people in 2018 to 44.28 in 2023¹⁵⁸. A significant increase in the proportion of individuals (aged 16-74) using the internet was also noted, with 81.66% of the population using the internet in 2018, increasing to 93.3% in 2024¹⁵⁹.

Regarding trade, Malta's applied tariff rate was 1.83% in 2018 and decreased to 1.33% by 2022160.

The country also applied different tariff rates based on the type of product. In 2022, Malta's tariff rate (under preferential status) was (i) 2.87% on agricultural products, (ii) 1.51% on arms, (iii) 5.11% on clothing, (iv) 0.67% on industrial products, (v) 4.59% on textiles, and (vi) 0.94% on other products¹⁶¹. Compared to data from 2015, clothing had the biggest decrease in applied tariffs.

Malta has mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development, achieving a high percentage of 98.75% in 2022¹⁶². Furthermore, its statistical performance and data infrastructure have improved, with the Data Sources Performance Index rising from 68.6 in 2018 to 74.6 in 2022, and the Data Infrastructure Performance Index increasing from 70 to 75 over the same period 163 .

Malta also fulfils key requirements for national statistical standards, including compliance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, fully funded national statistical plans, and comprehensive birth and death registration data¹⁶⁴.

Through these initiatives and data-driven approaches, Malta continues to advance SDG 17, strengthening national institutions, fostering partnerships, and enhancing capacity-building efforts both at home and abroad.

Notable Achievements and Good Practices

Official Development Assistance: Since 2018, Malta has made considerable progress in its ODA initiatives, focusing on key achievements and best practices. In 2021, Malta updated its ODA policy to align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Consensus on Development, emphasising poverty eradication, good governance, and global challenges like hunger and environmental sustainability.

Malta has steadily increased its ODA contributions, reflecting its strong commitment to global development and humanitarian aid. As at 2023, Malta's ODA has reached 0.34% of its Gross National Income (GNI). A significant portion of these funds has been allocated to scholarships and capacity-building programs, supporting developing countries in strengthening their institutions and human resources.

¹⁵⁵ NSO

¹⁵⁷ OFCD

¹⁵⁸ International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

¹⁵⁹ NSO

Our World in Data

⁶¹ International Trade Centre (ITC), UNCTAD, and World Trade Organisation (WTO)

¹⁶² MEEC

¹⁶³ World Bank 164 NSO and Identità

Malta also prioritises projects in regions where it has diplomatic representation, ensuring effective implementation and long-term impact while fostering strong bilateral relations.

Aligned with the SDGs, Malta's ODA efforts focus on education, health, and environmental protection, reinforcing its role as a proactive development partner. A key initiative is its support for the European Development Fund (EDF), the EU's primary financial instrument for aiding African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries. Through this contribution, Malta enhances international cooperation, mobilising resources and expertise to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development.

Strengthening International Partnerships and Cooperation: As Co-Chair of the UN's Steering Committee on Partnerships for SIDS from January 2020 to December 2022, Malta played a critical role in guiding efforts to establish and promote partnerships with SIDS towards the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs. Malta has spearheaded academic and technical collaborations with international organisations like the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Organisation of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS), and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The work of the Malta-based Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence further emphasises Malta's dedication to knowledgesharing and technical cooperation. The Centre continues to support small states on a range of issues, from climate resilience to economic development, reflecting Malta's role as a hub for expertise.

In line with the 'Malta and Africa: A Strategy for Partnership 2020-2025' project, priority is given to the African region, as a means of promoting stability and prosperity in Malta's and Europe's immediate neighbourhood and beyond, especially where Malta has diplomatic representation, whilst further maximising the effectiveness and impact of Malta's capacity building and capacity partnership efforts.

Furthermore, Malta's support towards the EDF highlights its commitment to supporting sustainable economic development in ACP countries. This funding mechanism focuses on enhancing economic resilience and fostering environmental sustainability in some of the world's most vulnerable regions.

Malta also hosted the Ukraine Peace Forum, which brought together international stakeholders, policymakers, and civil society representatives to discuss and promote collaborative efforts for peace and stability in Ukraine. By facilitating dialogue and cooperation among various actors, the forum aimed to strengthen partnerships and collective actions necessary to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis and support Ukraine's recovery efforts. Malta is committed to aiding developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity, facilitating the move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production through its ongoing support for the operations of the ICRC in Libya. Since 2016, Malta has been involved in addressing critical humanitarian needs in Libya, a country that remains the 11th most underfunded operation for the ICRC. By providing consistent financial contributions, Malta not only reinforces its dedication to humanitarian efforts, but also promotes sustainable practices and resilience in vulnerable communities affected by conflict and instability, ensuring they have access to essential resources and support for recovery and development.

In an effort to foster knowledge exchange and international cooperation in addressing shared security challenges, the MPF engages actively with the relevant international and regional organisations, EU Institutions and EU JHA agencies, including Frontex, Europol, eu-LISA, CEPOL and Eurojust, to strengthen the capabilities of its personnel in their respective areas through, amongst others, study visits for police officers, hosting of foreign officers for study visits, participation in workshops, seminars and conferences.

The MPF also supports training for other EU and non-EU countries, through for example the hosting of Interpol – Euromed Justice training for MENA countries in the area of migrant smuggling/human trafficking, hosting of CEPOL training on police cooperation, Schengen Information System and the interoperability of information systems. Building capabilities is at the forefront of the MPF's projects' aims, as demonstrated in the ATHENA 2 Project, led by Italy and with Malta, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia law enforcement authorities as partners.

Leveraging international instruments and collaboration with relevant authorities, the MPF has made considerable progress in tracing the illicit origins of seized, found, or surrendered arms. Additionally, ongoing investments in training and technology are expected to further improve Malta's tracing capacity and align efforts with international standards.

These partnerships demonstrate the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in achieving the SDGs, showcasing how Malta's collaborative efforts are driving sustainable development across diverse regions.

Promoting Civil Society Engagement: The Sustainable Development Fund is a support scheme for voluntary organisations, through which non-Government, not-for-profit organisations are being offered financial support for them to engage in sustainable activities and initiatives related to the three pillars of sustainable development. This fund is incentivising the development of more projects that promote, and are beneficial to, the concept and principles of sustainable development. Through this fund, organisations are also being given the opportunity to develop their capacity and skills and take the lead in managing a project or initiative that contributes to a cleaner and healthier environment and economy, as well as a fairer and more equal society.

'Pitirross' (the Maltese word for the European Robin), a project undertaken by Write Deal Association through the Sustainable Development Fund, set out the production of thirty-four, five-minute educational children's TV programmes titled Pitirross. The project, which was completed in 2024, sought to educate 8-12 year-olds about all 17 of the SDGs through the combination of educational content with playful entertainment delivered in a manner easily understood by children.

Furthermore, from 2018 to 2024 a total of almost €12 million were provided to voluntary organisations through various schemes and funds administered by the Malta Councils for Voluntary Sector (MCVS). For instance, the Small Initiatives Support Scheme and the Voluntary Organisations Project Scheme fund projects by organisations that make a real difference to their local communities, with the former funding small project-based initiatives that the organisation may sustain on its own initiative for at least two more years.

Furthermore, the Civil Society Fund provides financial assistance for the purpose of facilitating voluntary organisations' affiliation with and participation in European and International groupings, associations, federations, confederations networks, and training related to EU and International Policy/Programmes.

The Youth Voluntary Service (YVS) is a programme which aims to assist young people in becoming active volunteers by facilitating volunteering opportunities to help the community. The youth volunteers in the YVS programme have the opportunity to volunteer with a voluntary organisation of their choice from 2 months up to a maximum of 6 months, whilst benefitting from a monthly stipend. The YVS Overseas programme allows youth volunteers to participate in volunteering projects coordinated by local Voluntary Organisations. The overseas missions can take part in Europe, Asia, Africa, Gulf Countries and South America, and can range between 2 weeks and 3 months.

The Training Initiatives Scheme (TIS) is a scheme by which active members of voluntary organisations can obtain financial support for training related specifically to the work of that organisation or related to volunteering in general.

Additionally, the Maltese Government strongly believes that partnerships between governments, civil society organisations, businesses and communities are essential to achieving the SDGs. For instance, the CSA has fostered partnerships with local NGOs and private sector entities to provide vocational training and educational programmes for persons in prison. These collaborations support the CSA's efforts in skill development and reintegration, demonstrating effective public-private engagement to support sustainable development.

At the international level, Malta is a founding member of the Vienna-based GoF on Civil Society Participation, which is a broad group of likeminded countries working to ensure and maximise civil society organisations' participation within UN-based meetings. The GoF conducts notable outreach in the build-up to major conferences and has organised a number of events to raise awareness on civil society organisations' participation.

Furthermore, a Voluntary Contribution of €30,000 to the Council of Europe North South Centre Programme 'PEACE-YP: Promoting Euro-Africa Cooperation to Enhance Youth Participation for Peace' was provided in December 2022.

The project aimed to strengthen youth civil society in efforts to build peace and achieve SDGs through a more coordinated and inclusive Euro-Africa regional cooperation.

Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development:

Sustainable development is mainstreamed across the Public Administration, with a well-established governance mechanism underpinned by the Sustainable Development Act. This legislative framework provides for a system of coordination across the Public Administration to facilitate effective dialogue and cross-sectoral collaboration so that sustainable development is integrated in its day-to-day administration and operations.

Whilst MEEC is the de facto Competent Authority, the Act designates the highest officials in each Ministry, the Permanent Secretaries, as Sustainable Development Coordinators and also provides for a Sustainable Development Focal Point in every Ministry, these being the Policy Development Directors. Furthermore, the Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network also aim at fostering exchange of views and national dialogue, as well as overseeing the implementation of sustainable development in Malta.

By taking a whole-of-government approach, Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, which was developed through technical assistance from the OECD as part of two EC's TSI projects, serves as an overarching strategic framework that will lead to tangible and concrete action plans to achieve Malta's goals in the coming years. It builds on Malta's Sustainable Development Vision 2050 and further aligns with the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs, while accounting for other developments and current EU, international and national commitments. The Strategy seeks to strengthen current institutional mechanisms and support structures, while paving the way for the introduction of new processes to allow for more effective, efficient, and coherent efforts.

Moreover, with the aim of strengthening further policy coherence for sustainable development, every year the Public Service also undertakes an exercise to align the budget measures with the SDGs, a practice initiated in 2019. This process involves a comprehensive assessment by all ministries to evaluate how their respective measures and initiatives contribute towards attaining the SDGs. Such an approach not only fosters transparency and accountability within Government's decision-making, but also ensures that the principles of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental) are consistently prioritised.

It is evident that in order for public administration officers to engage meaningfully with and take ownership of the SDGs, knowledge and understanding of the 2030 Agenda and how it relates to the work of national and local government must be ensured. An immediate priority within Malta is to increase the capacity of officers within the public administration so that they can situate their work within the framework provided by the 2030 Agenda and be informed by it. Developing training and guidance specifically relevant to the civil servants is a key priority for delivery through a EC TSI project with the support of the OECD.

At the EU level, Malta participated in the EU Council Voluntary Task Force (VTF) on PCSD led by Slovakia, which concluded with a number of recommendations and outcomes being incorporated in the Hungarian Presidency's Council Conclusions 'The EU beyond the half-way point in implementing the 2030 Agenda: Policy coherence for sustainable development to accelerate progress on the SDGs'. The main purpose of the VTF was to support the EU Council Working Party on Agenda 2030 in formulating operational recommendations on enhancing PCSD at the EU-level, as well as prepare contributions to be presented to the Presidency and discussed in formal meetings of the Working Party.

Data and Monitoring: In order to assess progress and ensure the effective realisation of these goals, a set of national Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs) and targets were developed. These efforts are complemented by the work of the National Expert Group on SDIs, presided by the NSO and composed of technical officers from all Ministries and Entities, which facilitates coordination among stakeholders in SDI-related activities. The primary mandate of the Expert Group was to evaluate the data sets used for the SDG indicators, identify data gaps, and manage the data and information flows from national authorities to international organisations responsible for monitoring the SDGs. Following this intensive exercise, the NSO embarked on a project to consolidate all quality-checked and SDG-relevant data onto a single platform. This platform, launched in April 2025 allows users to easily access Maltarelated data for each respective SDG. The website, which will be continuously updated, can be accessed directly from sdgindicators.nso.gov.mt or from the website of the NSO.

Interlinkages, Synergies and Trade-offs with other Goals

Malta's initiatives under SDG 17 demonstrate extensive interlinkages and synergies with other SDGs, leveraging partnerships, capacity building, and international cooperation to drive progress across the 2030 Agenda. These actions also reveal trade-offs that require strategic balancing to ensure equitable and effective outcomes.

Efforts to strengthen international partnerships, such as Malta's contributions to the EDF and collaborations with SIDS, align with SDG 13 (Climate Action). By supporting climate resilience and sustainable economic development in vulnerable regions, Malta reinforces global efforts to address climate change while advancing sustainable economic growth under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). These partnerships demonstrate how targeted international cooperation can amplify the impact of climate and economic policies on a global scale.

Malta's hosting of the Ukraine Peace Forum and its contributions to the PEACE-YP Programme foster synergies with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) by promoting conflict resolution, recovery, and youth-led peacebuilding. These initiatives strengthen institutional capacities and create platforms for inclusive governance and social cohesion, contributing to global stability and peace.

Domestically, vocational training and educational programmes for persons in prison, developed through partnerships with NGOs and private sector entities, contribute to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). These programmes equip individuals with skills for sustainable livelihoods, addressing social inequities and enhancing reintegration efforts, which also link to SDG 1 (No Poverty).

However, trade-offs emerge in balancing resource allocation between domestic and international initiatives. Investments in global partnerships, such as the EDF and SIDS collaborations, may limit resources available for addressing local development challenges under SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) or SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Malta's advocacy for civil society engagement through the GoF on Civil Society Participation underscores the synergies between SDG 17 and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). By promoting inclusive decision-making and removing geopolitical barriers, these efforts strengthen global governance, while fostering equity and representation.

Overall, Malta's integrated approach to SDG 17 highlights the interconnectedness of global partnerships, with progress across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. By leveraging synergies and managing trade-offs, Malta continues to advance a balanced and inclusive pathway toward achieving the SDGs.



Stakeholders' Views and Initiatives

In this section, we present feedback received from the general public, civil society, industry, academia and religious institutions on SDG implementation, alongside their contributions to achieving them.

The inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives underscores Malta's dedication to leaving No One Behind. The feedback collected reflects a transparent and participatory approach, ensuring that Malta's sustainable development strategy is both inclusive and responsive to the needs of its people. By continuing to integrate stakeholder insights, Malta is fostering a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

Public Opinion

General public feedback revealed SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) as the most recognised areas of improvement, with significant progress noted in education quality and healthcare access. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) also garnered recognition for advancing inclusivity and equity, reflecting ongoing efforts to promote gender parity and reduce discrimination. Among recommended future priorities, the general public emphasised SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions), highlighting concerns about urban planning, community well-being, and governance structures. Additionally, SDG 15 (Life on Land) was noted as a significant priority, focusing on preserving natural habitats amidst increasing urbanisation.

Recognised good practices included free public transport initiatives, grants for renewable energy installations such as solar panels, and investments in green infrastructure. Programmes like the BCRS scheme for recycling, electromobility grants and sustainable baby box incentives also stood out as impactful efforts that align with the SDGs. Public engagement efforts, such as awareness campaigns and family park openings, further highlighted Malta's efforts to create an inclusive and sustainable environment. These initiatives demonstrate how practical, community-focused solutions can effectively address sustainability challenges.

Civil Society, Industry, Academia, and Religious Institutions

Feedback from civil society, industry, academia, and religious institutions revealed several flagship initiatives and success stories. Challenges faced included resource constraints, such as lack of financial and human resources, and bureaucratic barriers that hinder project implementation. Stakeholders identified gaps in engagement, policy coherence, and the need for greater awareness across institutions regarding SDG responsibilities. These challenges were often compounded by the limited capacity of NGOs and community groups to scale their initiatives.

Despite these barriers, stakeholders reported successful partnerships as a driving force behind SDG progress. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of fostering inclusive networks and shared learning opportunities to overcome existing challenges.

Academic institutions

Academic institutions highlighted several endeavours, addressing themes including gender equality within the academic environment, enabling students to reach their professional potential, enhancing experiential learning through community engagement, connecting theoretical knowledge with real-world applications, and aspiring further R&I.

Academic institutions in Malta aim at continued enhancement of educational programmes and advocacy to foster a more inclusive and progressive learning environment. To equip them with the right skills to join the workforce, students are provided with opportunities such as conferences, sponsors and training initiatives, establishing a bridge with industry. Ensuring that education evolves and is aligned with the needs of the current and future workforce, a prominent theme among academic institutions featured the consistent review and updating of educational programmes, which also allows for integrating innovation, new methods and equipment, in tandem with contemporary advancements.

One such example, with a focus on health, includes the development of an educational framework for radiography education, applicable across Europe by the Department of Radiography, within the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta. This framework culminated into the development of free online learning resources for radiography professionals worldwide, fostering accessibility to information and shared knowledge.

The Faculty of Dental Surgery within the University of Malta runs three community-based projects – St Vincent De Paul Long-term Care Facility, the Gozo Dental Teaching Clinic and the Mobile Dental Unit – exposing students to the future workforce, to the geriatric population, and the community within its own setting. The mobile unit facilitates the collection of data and on-service uptake, with a focus on scientific indices recognised in the international community which allow for monitoring progress within the community. In addition to these clinics, cooperation agreements were established to expose students to community members who are disadvantaged though several agencies, such as FSWS.

Academic institutions play an important role in advancing R&I, capacity building and human resource development, not only locally but also beyond the Maltese borders. This is exemplified through efforts by the Department of Public Health within the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Malta, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade (MFET), and the Maltese NGO HopeXchange operating in Ghana. In 2021, this partnership led to exploring educational opportunities for health professionals in Ghana, whereby two modules of the Department's M.Sc. in Public Health served as a pilot study, with the support of ODA funding from the MFET. The result of the pilot was the provision of online lectures to three Ghanaian health professionals. This partnership will see these individuals qualified with an M.Sc. in Public Health from the University of Malta, aiding them with their career progression.

Advocating for gender equality, Malta formed part of an international consortium of higher education institutions as part of the Gender Equality Programme in Academia (GEPARD) project. This project aims to create equal opportunities for all in academic environments through a system of actions functioning as part of organisational policy, with established actions addressing gender-based discrimination among both employees and students, and increasing diversity. Issues of gender discrimination are further addressed at the University of Malta through a Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity Committee, safeguarding staff and student well-being.

Non-profit Organisations

NGOs can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs through their role in advocacy and awareness, ensuring accountability amongst government and other entities, encouraging partnerships, and capacity building. The feedback received highlights their impact on multiple aspects of the SDGs.

Victim Support Malta have provided thousands of interventions focused on prevention and postvention support within the community, with one of their aims being to raise awareness of available prevention strategies and support services. Notably, the NGO has established a system where clients receive optimal support through Suicide Prevention Outreach and Therapeutic Services (SPOT), CVSA (Care for Victims of Sexual Assault), and TATS services. These services offer practical and psychiatric assistance during the early stages of treatment, allowing for a better transition to therapeutic care at a later stage. Through the POW-R Initiative, the organisation equipped facilitators with the means to teach their communities on how to recover from domestic violence. Additionally, through the HATE NO MORE project, hate crime training was provided to police officers, advocating for hate crime to be classified as a distinct category in police reporting. Projects like START, centred on mental well-being and accessibility to care, offer dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT) sessions to individuals struggling with suicidal thoughts.

Further on social support, since 2018, the St Jeanne Antide Foundation (SJAF) has introduced several initiatives addressing poverty, food insecurity, and promoting well-being. Initiatives addressing violence include the 2019 SOAR Hub Project, developed with the aim of establishing a safe, dedicated space for survivors of domestic violence, and offering peer support, resources and opportunities for community involvement. In 2020, the 'Stitch-in-Time' Project aimed to serve as a therapeutic programme for women survivors of domestic violence, using sewing and crafting as creative tools for healing and recovery. Addressing violence among youths, IVY (Interrupting Violence Towards Youth), an online platform to prevent violence among youth through education, support, and awareness-raising was launched. Meanwhile in 2022, in order to empower individuals to express their experiences and trauma, an Art Therapy Initiative was introduced and the "Unsilenced" Exhibition was held with the aim of using art therapy as a tool for healing trauma survivors.

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Tackling issues of food insecurity and poverty, the "Nourishing Young Minds" Campaign was launched in 2023 which provided lunch ingredients to over 60 vulnerable children. Further to this in 2024, the St Jeanne Antide Food Drive was organised to gather food and essential consumables for SJAF's food bank, strengthening food security for at-risk families. Addressing those who are vulnerable, 2020 saw the launch of the Debt Relief Fund and Child Acute Needs Fund, aiming to provide financial assistance for individuals and families facing poverty, helping them address immediate needs to become more stable. Following this, in 2023 the Foundation promoted the establishment of Debt Advisory Services, supporting those in financial distress, with ongoing efforts aimed at providing academic support to children from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their educational outcomes.

The NGO Networking for World Awareness of Multicultural Integration (NWAMI) International Malta has championed initiatives fostering inclusion, social justice, and sustainability. Through intercultural dialogue initiatives, such as cultural exchange programmes, community workshops, and advocating for policies for equal opportunities and rights, the organisation has strived to break down social barriers and promote understanding between cultural communities, especially those who are underrepresented in Malta. Peace-building has also been at their forefront, facilitated through collaborations with local institutions and civil society groups, contributing to discussions on reforming justice systems. Education is another cornerstone of the organisation's mission, using means such as workshops, cultural competency training and educational booklets to empower individuals and local schools with a better understanding of diversity and social justice. Other prominent efforts such as advocating against gender-based violence and discrimination, promoting women's leadership in social justice initiatives, and the creation of inclusive and sustainable communities through engagement with local governments have ensured that diverse voices are represented in urban development plans and in policy. Climate action has also been added to this organisation's mission, shedding light on the social impact of climate change and its disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations.

In addition to advocacy, NGOs such as NWAMI have utilised surveys and indicators to monitor their progress across different SDGs, with notable indicators such as 'participant feedback on increased understanding and tolerance post-events', 'reduction in reported instances of discrimination or exclusion in partner communities', 'number of peace-building initiatives and human rights workshops conducted', and 'Gender balance in leadership positions within the organisation and in community initiatives', among others. This showcases awareness of the SDGs and their application in measuring social impacts.

The 'Mission of Love' NGO has similarly addressed social issues, particularly aimed at improving accessibility to education and work for those who live in poverty outside of our borders, particularly the 'Ati' tribal people of the Philippines. Since 2018, the organisation has achieved sponsorship for all the children of the tribe, meaning that each one receives education, health care and food. They have also obtained sponsors for college students. These efforts have contributed to a better quality of life and future prospects for the Ati community, demonstrating the profound impact of targeted humanitarian initiatives.

Voluntary Organisations such as Din L-Art Helwa and the Astronomical Society of Malta advocate for environmental sustainability through various initiatives and efforts. The Astronomical Society of Malta has been active in promoting scientific literacy and addressing issues such as light pollution, engaging with local councils and government to adjust street lighting in key areas of light pollution, preserving dark skies for ecological balance and astronomical observation. A key initiative raising awareness on such issues was the 'Dark Skies Awareness Campaign', aimed at reducing light pollution and promoting sustainable lighting solutions through workshops, campaigns, community events and lobbying. Taking this a step further, their Science for Schools Programme, in partnership with educational institutions, provided interactive workshops, astronomy classes and star-gazing events for students across Malta, encouraging careers in STEM and cultivating a stronger sense of environmental stewardship within local communities. Similarly, NGOs like Din L-Art Helwa are important environmental advocates, undertaking restoration efforts of buildings and maintaining parks.

The Malta Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energies Association (MEEREA) actively promotes discussion, knowledge and awareness regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy within the built environment.

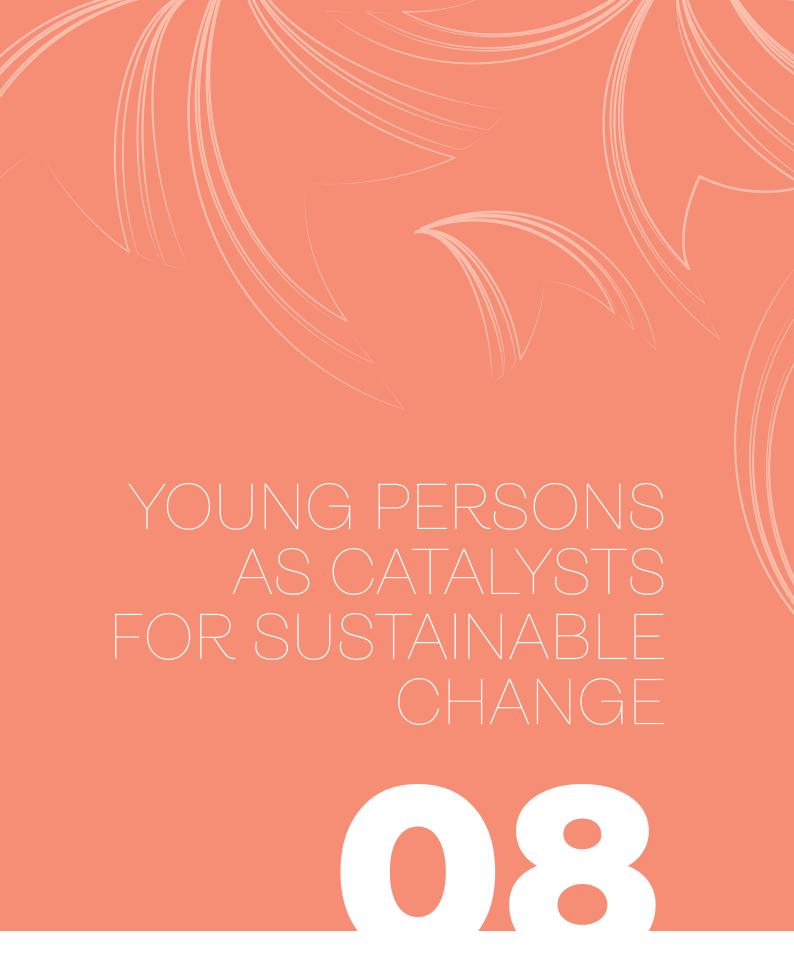
For instance, MEEREA's conference 'Towards 2050: the Decarbonisation Process' held in July 2024 attracted almost 200 professionals. MEEREA is also implementing a community outreach programme to inform the public about ways to reduce energy consumption at home, as well as carrying out technical sessions for professionals to encourage upskilling within the built environment sector.

Industry

Industry representatives can likewise be considered key actors in advancing the SDGs through innovation, economic growth and partnerships, and particularly through integrating Corporate Social Responsibility, contributing not only to economic development but also to broader social and environmental objectives. The Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) plays a pivotal role in supporting the tourism industry, which is a vital aspect of Malta's economy. By promoting sustainable initiatives and practices within the hospitality sector, the MHRA not only enhances the attractiveness of Malta as a tourist destination, but also contributes to the acceleration of SDGs

relating to economic growth, sustainable cities, and responsible consumption and production. The Green Hotels Initiative launched in 2024 encourages hotels to adopt energy-efficient systems, such as renewable energy, water-saving technologies, and waste reduction strategies.

Programmes like STAR Journey enhance service quality, operational efficiency, and sustainability in hospitality, while the MaQuaM training programme for Marina Managers equips individuals with the expertise to manage Malta's marinas, tackling both operational and environmental challenges. Efforts have also included research on carrying capacity to assess the impact of tourism on Malta's infrastructure, focusing on stress points like sewage, traffic, and urban infrastructure. This research has led to strategic discussions on balancing tourism growth with the sustainability of Malta's cities. Efforts aimed at fostering partnerships for sustainable development include the Mediterranean Tourism Forum, organised by the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation together with the MHRA, which brings together international stakeholders to address regional challenges and promote sustainable tourism practices.



Young Persons as Catalysts for Sustainable Change

Children and youth were at the forefront of Malta's Second VNR. The following are the thoughts and priorities presented by Malta's SDG Youth Champions and UN Youth Delegate.

The SDGs represent a shared vision for a fairer, more equitable, and more sustainable future. With an ambitious framework of 17 interconnected goals, they address critical global challenges ranging from poverty and inequality to climate action and peace. Yet, as comprehensive and transformative as these goals are, their success hinges on a crucial factor: the ability of people to understand, engage with, and take ownership of them. Demystifying and educating communities, particularly young persons, about the SDGs is not merely a supportive or ancillary endeavour, but the foundation for meaningful progress. Without clear and accessible knowledge about what the SDGs entail and how they can be applied in everyday life, the goals risk being perceived as distant ideals rather than actionable realities. Bridging this gap requires ongoing efforts to simplify complex concepts, illustrate connections between the goals, and demonstrate their resonance with both local communities and individual experiences.

From a youth perspective, education serves as the catalyst for this process, allowing young people to see themselves as agents of change. Whether through formal or informal learning, public campaigns, or grassroots advocacy, fostering widespread SDG understanding transforms abstract aspirations into relatable and tangible objectives.

Clarifying the SDGs enables both young and older generations, communities and institutions to take deliberate action—transforming the goals from a global framework into a lived reality, while strengthening intergenerational solidarity through mutual understanding.

This chapter underscores the necessity of continuous education and awareness as an integral strategy for SDG achievement. Promoting critical thinking and informed participation is key to transforming awareness into practical outcomes. By removing barriers to understanding and engaging diverse stakeholders, we can create a shared sense of purpose and responsibility.

Only when the SDGs are truly understood and embraced by all can their full potential be realised, enabling progress that is inclusive, equitable, and sustainable for generations to come.

Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 can be advanced through multi-stakeholder effort, including the cross-sector collaboration of five SDG Youth Champions, who play a vital role in driving progress by engaging with communities, businesses, and government. Each Champion focuses on an area of sustainable development emanating from Malta's Strategic Goals: (1) the Champion for Green and Blue Growth addresses conservation, biodiversity protection, and climate change; (2) the Champion for Cultural Heritage and Urban Development balances the preservation of Malta's historical and cultural legacy with contemporary urban growth; (3) the Champion for Health and Well-being promotes access to highquality healthcare, disease prevention, mental health awareness and proper nutrition; (4) the Champion for Digitalisation and Smart Innovation enhances digital literacy, bridges the digital divide and fosters innovation across industries; and (5) the Champion for Social Justice and Prosperity advances social equity by promoting inclusive access to opportunities, employment and education while supporting policies that uplift marginalised communities.

Together with the contributions of other young people and stakeholders, these Champions support Malta's sustainability goals, ensuring the strategy reflects diverse perspectives and addresses the multifaceted challenges of sustainable development.

Youth representation through the SDG Youth Champion initiative, as well as through the UN Youth Delegate Programme, Malta's National Youth Council and other youth-led organisations, plays a critical role in fostering awareness and engagement. The participation of Maltese young persons at sustainability-focused UN conferences, including the HLPF and Conference of the Parties (COP), facilitates demystification, bridging the gap between global policies and local youth perspectives. This chapter's "by youth, for youth" approach empowers young people to become informed advocates, ensuring that sustainability education is both relatable and transformative.

Strategic Goal 1: Transitioning Towards a Climate-Neutral Green and Blue Economy

Green and Blue Growth are essential pillars of sustainable development, particularly for small island states like Malta. With its rich marine and terrestrial ecosystems, Malta faces mounting pressures due to human activity and the escalating impacts of climate change. Safeguarding biodiversity while promoting resilient economic growth requires the integration of sustainable, climate-responsive strategies into national policies and development frameworks.

1.1 Advancing Green and Blue Growth: Progress in Sustainability

Malta has made significant strides in the realm of sustainability, with notable advancements in energy efficiency, mobility, and environmental protection. The government aims to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix, with offshore wind energy identified as an operable contributor to this goal. Institutional efforts, grants and incentives encourage energy efficiency among individuals and businesses.

Alongside energy reforms, Malta has embraced sustainable mobility through government-led initiatives aimed at reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Incentive schemes for EVs and e-bikes have been introduced to promote the adoption of low-emission transport options. Free public transport further encourages shifts towards sustainable commuting.

Environmental stewardship remains a key priority of Malta's sustainability agenda. NGOs play a vital role in environmental protection. Public engagement has further bolstered conservation efforts, with campaigns such as "Spot the Alien" and "Spot the Jellyfish" encouraging civic participation in ecological preservation.

Protecting the natural environment remains imperative, with conservation efforts encompassing reforestation projects and wetland restoration. Biodiversity is safeguarded through invasive species management, while continued investments in water infrastructure ensures safely managed drinking water. Sustainable agricultural practices are promoted to optimise water efficiency and support climate-resilient food systems.

1.2 Navigating the Challenges of Green and Blue Growth

Despite these achievements, Malta faces several challenges that hinder its progress towards environmental sustainability. Administrative and financial constraints often delay or restrict the implementation of important initiatives. Insufficient coordination among stakeholders has further reduced the long-term impact of sustainability projects.

Public transport represents another challenge, with perceptions of unreliability concerns discouraging its use and reinforcing car dependency. Limited EV infrastructure may hinder the transition away from traditional vehicles. Additionally, low public awareness of sustainable practices slows adoption rates and reduces engagement across communities and businesses.

Malta's marine habitats also face threats from rapid coastal developments and activities and overfishing. These practices not only harm fragile ecosystems but also contribute to biodiversity loss. Climate change exacerbates these concerns, with rising sea levels and increasing temperatures causing ecosystem shifts, species migration, and habitat degradation.

1.3 Strengthening Green and Blue Growth for a Sustainable Future

To overcome these obstacles and secure a more sustainable future, Malta must adopt bold, crosscutting and coordinated action. Improving the reliability and efficiency of public transport through expanded routes, enhancement of real-time tracking and carpooling incentives is essential for promoting sustainable mobility. Enhancing EV infrastructure and expanding cycling and pedestrian-friendly zones will also reduce emissions and support low-carbon transport solutions.

Urban development must prioritise biodiversity conservation, with strong attention on sustainable planning. Integrating green infrastructure (such as green roofs) and repurposing existing buildings can minimise the environmental impact of new construction. Strengthening spatial planning regulations is essential to protect Malta's remaining green spaces. Further management of invasive species is crucial for maintaining ecological balance, with native species prioritised in landscaping and conservation efforts.

The protection of marine ecosystems is another critical priority. Improving waste management in coastal areas, enforcing robust anti-littering regulations, and further strengthening fisheries governance are indispensable to marine biodiversity preservation. Increasing investments in sustainable fishing practices and alternative marine technologies will further mitigate environmental degradation in this sector.

The transition to clean energy requires decisive action, with streamlined administrative processes to facilitate the expansion of renewable energy projects. Reducing bureaucratic barriers and enhancing financial incentives will encourage greater investment in sustainable energy solutions by individuals and businesses.

Education and public awareness campaigns should be intensified to foster a deeper understanding of sustainability and its benefits. Further embedding sustainability education into school curricula will equip future generations with the knowledge and skills needed to support a green economy. Collaborating with NGOs and community groups can further enhance outreach efforts, ensuring sustainability messages reach diverse audiences and foster inclusive engagement.

Good governance and strong coordination are vital to achieving sustainability goals. Improved collaboration among government agencies, NGOs and the private sector helps prevent duplication of efforts, while promoting efficient use of resources. Transparent budgeting and accountability mechanisms are needed for building public trust and ensuring the equitable allocation of funds. Finally, long-term monitoring and maintenance of completed projects must be leveraged to maximise effective and lasting outcomes.

Strategic Goal 2: Towards the Preservation of Sustainable Urban Development and Cultural Heritage

Malta, with its rich cultural heritage and history, faces unique opportunities and challenges in advancing Strategic Goal 2. Insights from youth consultations detail success stories, current challenges, and potential pathways forward. These perspectives underscore the undeniable interplay between sustainability, cultural preservation and innovative urban planning in shaping Malta's future.

2.1 Advancing Sustainable Urban Development and Cultural Heritage

Malta has made notable progress in fostering sustainable urban development and cultural heritage preservation. The promotion of sustainable housing policies, including social and affordable housing initiatives, support the development of cohesive and inclusive communities, balancing urban growth with equitable living standards. The co-creation of inclusive, dynamic, and meaningful public spaces strengthens community ties, promotes active participation, and ensures that urban development reflects the needs and well-being of both present and future generations.

The conservation of historic sites for adaptive reuse, such as the repurposing of Birkirkara's Old Railway Station, exemplifies sustainable urban development. These initiatives revitalise heritage sites while safeguarding their historical and cultural significance. Malta's commitment to preserving museums and heritage landmarks, alongside efforts to promote them as cultural attractions, reflects a strong dedication to cultural sustainability. Equally important are initiatives aimed at environmental sustainability, such as the redevelopment of public green spaces and the promotion of shared transportation options like rentable bicycles. Subsidies for renewable energy and sustainable transport complement these efforts, encouraging a shift toward low-carbon, environmentally conscious lifestyles.

2.2 Barriers to Sustainable Urban Development and Heritage Preservation

Despite these successes, Malta faces challenges in reaching related SDG targets. The adaptation of existing infrastructure to accommodate new and alternative modes of transport remains a pressing issue. Overcoming the prevailing car-centric mindset is essential for fostering sustainable urban mobility, alongside the need for integrated, multi-stakeholder approaches to urban planning and development.

Population inertia and resistance to change further complicate efforts to implement sustainable practices. This is compounded by siloed approaches within institutions, where limited information sharing hinders collaboration and innovation. Addressing these barriers requires a unified, long-term vision for sustainability that fosters cross-sectoral cooperation.

inheritance disputes, represent another substantial obstacle. These structures remain unused despite their potential for adaptive reuse. Similarly, the limited availability of comprehensive cycling infrastructure and green spaces undermine efforts to create a sustainable urban environment.

Striking a balance between preserving historic buildings and meeting the demands of modern development remains a critical challenge. Malta's limited resources, constrained land area, and population pressures exacerbate issues such as overconsumption and inefficient waste management. Without effective solutions, these challenges risk compromising both urban development and cultural heritage preservation.

2.3 Building Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

Expanding bus fleets, enhancing ferry services, and exploring the feasibility of other public transport systems could significantly reduce reliance on private vehicles. Such measures should be complemented by the installation of potable water fountains across localities, encouraging active mobility and reducing plastic consumption.

Expanding community spaces, such as public libraries and gardens, could foster greater social cohesion and cultural engagement. A national carpool incentive scheme for businesses and individuals could further alleviate traffic congestion and reduce carbon emissions.

Education and workforce development must also be prioritised. Comprehensive training programmes and rigorous on-site inspections could improve construction quality and ensure sustainable practices across sectors. Strengthening the enforcement of environmental and public order regulations, through increased police oversight or community-led town watch programmes, can further enhance urban living conditions.

Young persons in Malta emphasise the importance of enhancing heritage preservation education and practices. Repurposing existing unused structures for adaptive reuse could address the dual challenges of property abandonment and resource scarcity. Simultaneously, public awareness campaigns promoting sustainable consumption and responsible resource use can further mitigate overconsumption and support effective waste management.

Strategic Goal 3: Ensuring Healthy Lives and Well-being for All

Health and well-being are fundamental pillars of sustainable development, shaping both individual quality of life and the resilience of society as a whole. In line with the SDGs, Malta has strengthened public health systems, advanced sustainable mobility, and mitigated certain environmental risks. Nevertheless, global pressing issues such as climate-related vulnerabilities continue to demand innovative and adaptive solutions.

3.1 Progress in Public Health, Mobility, and Environmental Sustainability

Efforts to encourage active and accessible transport have resulted in the expansion of public transport networks, the development of dedicated cycling lanes, and the introduction of the Walking School Bus programme, cultivating healthier and more sustainable commuting habits. Mental health awareness has also gained momentum through the celebration of international awareness days, such as Mental Health Day, and the organisation of NGO-led well-being hikes, helping reduce stigma and improve community support. Additionally, nationwide cleanup campaigns and enhanced air quality monitoring have reinforced commitments to environmental health, contributing to a cleaner and more resilient urban landscape.

3.2 Persistent Barriers to Health and Well-being

Despite advancements, drawbacks exist in ensuring health and well-being for all. Urban overcrowding, traffic congestion, and over-construction exert considerable pressure on infrastructure, contributing to declining air quality and increased health risks, particularly in densely populated areas. Stigmatisation on mental health related issues continue to prevent individuals from seeking help. Social inequalities further exacerbate these challenges. Climaterelated risks, such as heatwaves, heighten health vulnerabilities, especially for older adults, children and individuals with pre-existing conditions.

3.3 Youth-Led Solutions for a Healthier and More Inclusive Future

Young persons are actively contributing innovative ideas to properly ensure health and well-being for all. Sustainable mobility recurs as a main focus, with proposals to expand public transport networks, develop cycling infrastructure, and create pedestrian-friendly spaces that encourage active lifestyles while reducing pollution. These measures aim to promote healthier, more sustainable and

liveable urban environments.

Youth-driven mental health recommendations include improved access to counselling services, awareness campaigns to reduce stigma, and peer support programmes to strengthen mental health education. Young persons also stress the importance of community engagement, proposing support for youth-led initiatives, integrating sustainability education into school curricula, and combatting cyberbullying through enhanced social media regulations. These ideas reflect a holistic approach to building healthier, more inclusive communities that empower individuals and foster collective well-being.

Strategic Goal 4: Accelerating Digital Transformation, Smart Mobility, and Connectivity

In an increasingly digitalised world, adapting to rapid technological advancements is essential for propelling sustainable growth and upholding competitiveness. Accelerating digital transformation, promoting smart mobility solutions, and enhancing connectivity are paramount to unlocking new opportunities, improving efficiency, and building resilient systems that meet the demands of an evolving, interconnected tomorrow.

4.1 Progress and Challenges in Digital Transformation and Sustainability

Young persons in Malta recognise the country's progress towards its 2050 vision, marked by advancements in digital transformation, sustainability, and citizen empowerment. Renewable energy initiatives, including solar energy programmes and grants for hybrid and battery inverter systems, are fuelling the shift towards a greener future. In parallel, the digitalisation of public services has improved the accessibility and efficiency of key administrative processes. Equitable access to education, supported by stipends and postsecondary grants, equips young people with the tools to succeed in a growingly competitive, digital landscape. Initiatives such as Business First and the Digital Malta Conference empower emerging entrepreneurs through skills-focused training. These efforts also foster meaningful collaboration by gathering stakeholders to stimulate conversations on digital transformation and its role in Malta's sustainable development. The introduction of free public transport, subsidies for electric scooters, and the distribution of free school tablets to children reflect Malta's commitment to inclusive, sustainable mobility and education. The integration of government services into a unified digital platform demonstrates Malta's innovative approach to

streamlining public administration, enhancing accessibility, and reinforcing its vision for a smarter, greener future.

Whilst recognising progress, young persons call for enhanced opportunities at the national level for personal and professional growth, as well as a stronger voice in the decisions that impact their future. A widening generational gap in adapting to the digital age creates friction, as youth advocate for modernisation, while older generations often prioritise traditional systems, slowing progress.

4.2 Pathways for Progress: Advancing Mobility, Digitalisation, and Innovation

To advance sustainable mobility, Malta must prioritise the expansion of electric public transport by increasing bus frequency and extending routes to underserved areas. Designated lanes for electric scooters, bicycles and pedestrians would further encourage eco-friendly commuting. Modernising public spaces with digital tools can enhance accessibility for individuals with reduced mobility, ensuring inclusivity. Awareness campaigns can also play a pivotal role in educating youths and the wider public about green mobility benefits, fostering a shift towards environmentally conscious transportation.

Advancing a digital economy requires targeted efforts to bridge the generational divide. Tailored digital education programmes can equip older generations with essential skills while empowering young persons to take on teaching roles, supported by interactive tools such as gamification and educational videos. Accessible digital platforms, designed to simplify online services including payment systems, will help ensure digital inclusion across all demographics. By integrating innovative technologies into public spaces, Malta can improve service efficiency while cultivating a digitally empowered society. To support the development of high-skilled, value-added jobs, Malta must invest in research, innovation, and sustainable industries. Expanding services such as Business First can provide skills-focused training for emerging entrepreneurs. Additionally, sustainability awareness campaigns can inspire innovative thinking, encouraging young persons to develop creative solutions to Malta's challenges and driving growth in high-value sectors.

Strategic Goal 5: Achieving Social Fairness and Prosperity for All

Erik Fernholm, founder of the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), stated that "we are not facing a sustainability crisis, but a behavioural crisis." This compels rethinking of the way we approach change. The challenges of social fairness and prosperity are not only systemic but deeply rooted in the way we think, collaborate and act. Sustainability efforts often generate reactive solutions—such as recycling or minor policy reforms—rather than tackling the systemic structures that perpetuate injustice, economic disparity, and environmental degradation. Youth advocacy calls for proactive, upstream solutions to economic disparity, migration, and access to education and employment, but resistance to structural change remains a core limitation.

5.1 The Small Country with the Big Heart: Malta's Best Practices

In Malta, primary education completion rates remained consistently high, at 98.1% in 2023. Similarly, the completion rate of lower secondary education remained steady, at 98% in 2023. When it comes to tertiary education, institutions like the University of Malta (UoM) and Malta College of Arts, Science, and Technology (MCAST) are offering diverse academic and vocational programmes. Government-led initiatives have expanded equitable employment opportunities, driven by a thriving economy. Malta is also a global leader in LGBTIQ+ rights, with anti-discrimination laws and the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027. Policies supporting transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) students further ensure safe, inclusive learning environments for all. These efforts reflect Malta's commitment to an inclusive, fair and prosperous society where education, employment and social equity are priorities.

5.2 Addressing Intergenerational and Intercultural Challenges within Malta's Society

Intergenerational and intercultural challenges in Malta stem from social, economic and cultural gaps between age groups and diverse communities. Malta's growing multiculturalism has intensified these challenges, requiring not just policy reforms but cultural shifts in attitudes and behaviours. Emotional skills such as empathy, active listening and trust are essential for fostering meaningful relationships across generations and cultures, promoting solidary, social cohesion and mutual learning.

Young persons may leverage education, advocacy and direct engagement to bridge the divide by facilitating

knowledge exchange, offering digital literacy support to older generations, and creating inclusive spaces for dialogue. SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) in particular provide frameworks for advancing intergenerational and intercultural fairness. This is not just about closing gaps but creating a society that values and integrates contributions by all. By fostering empathy, investing in cross-generational education, and ensuring intergenerational participation, Malta can build an inclusive, resilient and fair society, with youth leading this transformation for both present and future generations.

5.3 Pathways for Progress: Challenging the Tick-Box Mentality.

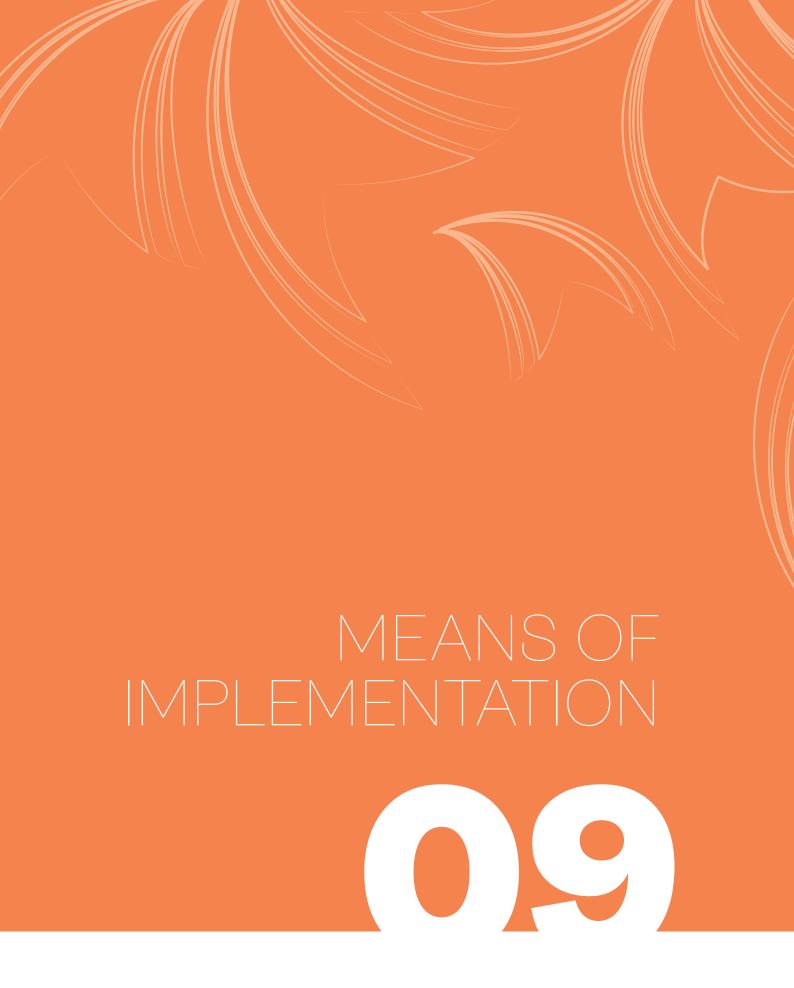
Without knowledge, misinformation and exclusionary narratives thrive, fostering a tick-box mentality where commitments to fairness, sustainability and inclusion are often performative rather than impactful. Fostering empathy through education is integral to eliminate discrimination against vulnerable groups. To advance, we should invest in comprehensive civic and policy literacy by improving existing platforms to amplify public participation and foster a sense of ownership.

An informed public drives tangible reforms, including quality education and reduced inequalities. Moving from strategic direction to data-driven, accountable actions, Malta can cultivate a culture of fairness, transparency and inclusion, ensuring no one is left behind.

Concluding Remarks

Malta's dedication to sustainability materialises through its strategic goals, policies and initiatives. However, real progress depends on an engaged society, with its youth as catalysts for change, bringing fresh perspectives to challenges like climate change, digital transformation and social justice. Young persons are not merely beneficiaries of sustainable development—they are active agents of change, shaping the present and influencing the future. The success of Malta's sustainability efforts hinges on education, collaboration and systemic reform. By breaking down barriers, fostering digital literacy and strengthening environmental protection, Malta can overcome obstacles and forge a more just and prosperous future.

Achieving the SDGs requires more than policies—it demands action, innovation, and shared responsibility. With young people at the forefront, Malta is not just preparing for the future but actively shaping it, ensuring a greener, more inclusive and resilient society for generations to come.



Means of Implementation

Malta's pursuit of the SDGs has been marked by notable achievements, yet challenges persist that require targeted interventions to ensure effective implementation. Remaining data gaps are impeding the ability to track and measure progress effectively. Fragmented policies and regulatory inefficiencies often hinder the seamless implementation of sustainable initiatives. Lengthy administrative processes and inconsistent inter-institutional coordination further delay progress. Additionally, cultural resistance to sustainable practices and inclusivity presents a societal barrier, slowing the adoption of progressive changes.

Despite these challenges, Malta's commitment to the 2030 Agenda opens pathways for transformative progress.

Financing Instruments

Several public funding instruments and investments mentioned in Chapter 6 are contributing to the pursuit of the SDGs in a direct, indirect and cross-cutting manner. Additionally, efforts to promote private investment through schemes and collaborations with international partners demonstrate Malta's proactive approach to sustainable development.

Furthermore, EU funding programmes and instruments are supporting advancements across all SDGs, simplifying the challenges faced in Malta and making the SDGs more achievable. These funds facilitate investments across all SDGs, thus contributing to Malta's enhanced competitiveness and sustainability.

Innovation and Digital Transformation

Fostering investment in R&I, facilitating the digital transition, and attracting private investment serve as a multi-faceted approach to advancing various SDGs. Digital transformation initiatives are driving innovation, inclusivity and efficiency, while increasing investments in advanced data analytic tools and centralised digital platforms are enhancing evidence-based decision-making. Public-private partnerships will be pivotal in leveraging investments and scaling innovations.

Data and Reporting

Achieving the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs must be measurable and transparent. Malta is putting fundamental elements in place to achieve this objective, including through annual sustainable development reporting and the comprehensive data on SDIs developed by the NSO. Malta will continue to encourage sub-national reporting to highlight new and existing actions locally that are making progress on the SDGs and Malta's Sustainable Development Strategic Goals. These actions, along with drawing on more data sources to reduce the data gaps in reporting on the SDGs, will provide more information for better assessments of progress in Malta and globally.

Capacity Development

Malta has been actively collaborating with the OECD in issues related to the 2030 Agenda implementation and monitoring, from as early as 2019. This cooperation has been greatly beneficial for building national capacities on SDIs, budgeting for SDGs, strategic planning and strategic foresight. Another cooperation project is currently in the pipeline, focusing on increasing the capacity of officers within the public administration so that they can situate their work within the framework provided by the 2030 Agenda and be informed by it.

Raising Awareness, Engagement and Partnerships

The Maltese Government will continue to conduct outreach and maintain an ongoing whole-of-government approach to the 2030 Agenda. The government will continue supporting the work of partners and stakeholders to undertake innovative initiatives to advance the SDGs. All levels of government have an important role to play in advancing the 17 SDGs in Malta, given their distinct responsibilities in areas such as improving health outcomes, reducing poverty, addressing food insecurity, enhancing access to education, and fostering a sustainable and healthy environment.

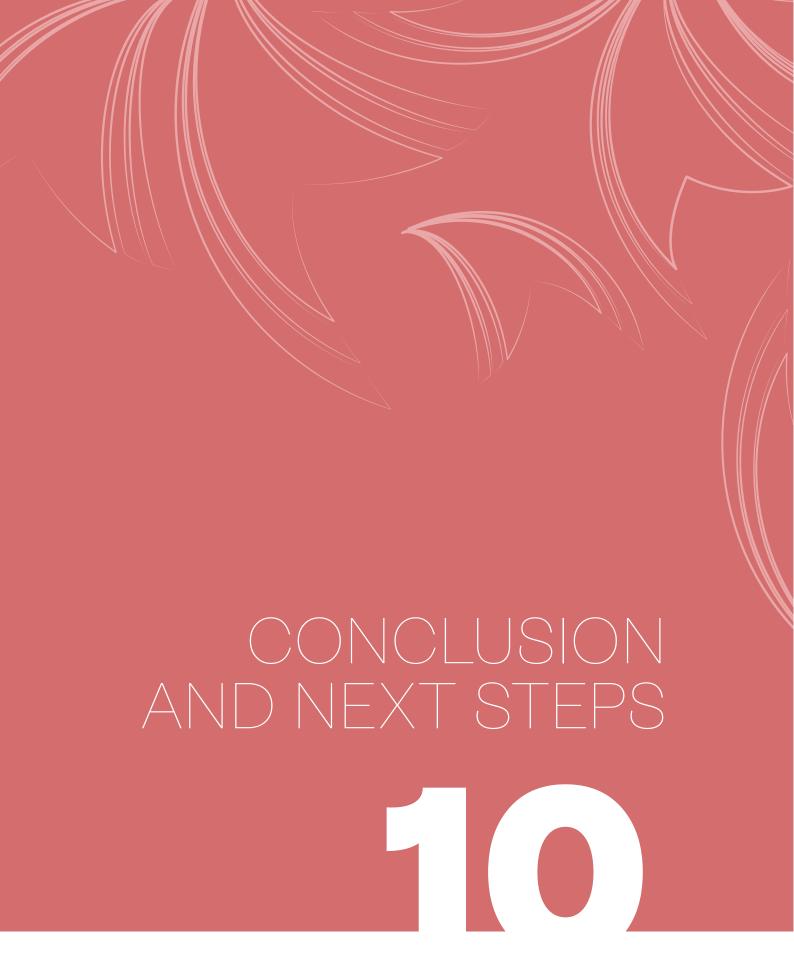
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Additionally, the Maltese Government aims to prioritise a whole-of-society approach, while building momentum, raising awareness, and sharing good practices and lessons learned to enable all partners to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Community engagement initiatives, such as educational campaigns and participatory governance, can continue to foster widespread ownership of sustainability objectives.

By focusing on these implementation priorities, Malta is poised to achieve transformative progress, fostering resilience, inclusivity and sustainability for its society and environment.



Conclusion and Next Steps

Malta's Second VNR has mapped out the country's efforts to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs.

Since its last VNR in 2018, Malta has made a significant step forward through the adoption of Malta's Sustainable Development Vision and Strategy for 2050. Policy coherence is a strong positive feature of these documents, which also further solidifies the existing institutional framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda based on multi-stakeholder participation.

The alignment of the national budget with the SDGs ensures that budgetary allocations support sustainable development across various sectors, whilst also promoting policy coherence for sustainable development.

Through these advances, Malta aspires to add its share to global efforts leading towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This VNR and its chapters detailing the progress made testify that Malta is well aware not only of its successes but also of its shortcomings. In several cases, indicators remind us of gaps and the need to accelerate implementation.

At the national level, Malta is currently working on the development of Malta's Sustainable Development Action Plan for 2030, which will include a set of new measures and recommendations for fulfilling national goals focusing on policy gaps identified in Malta's Second VNR. This is further complemented by the ongoing efforts to integrate the sustainable development perspective to its full extent into the workings of the public administration system. SDG tagging will be further developed so that the effects of the national budget on the SDGs can be monitored.

Globally, the situation remains complex, as gaps have been exacerbated by multiple crises, notably the impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity, the impact of digitalisation, rising geopolitical uncertainty, and social inequalities, the results of which are already felt today. These challenges are amplified in small island states and SIDS. Their small size, geographical remoteness, high population densities, the limited scale and diversity of their economies, and extreme exposure to disasters and natural hazards are all factors hindering sustainable development. As a small island state, Malta remains committed to SIDS, with projects and initiatives

being designed for and with SIDS. We must ensure that the vulnerabilities of these countries are acknowledged, and that sufficient international funding is available to support SIDS on their path to achieving sustainable development.

A more responsible, fairer and environmentally sensitive approach is the key to accelerating progress on the SDGs. We can only face these challenges together by finding common ground. It is therefore essential to further enhance the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach by strengthening participation and deliberation.

Externally and in terms of cooperation, Malta remains steadfast in its commitment to the various international fora, with initiatives contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and mutually reinforcing frameworks including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement, and the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework.

Speeding up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is also promoted in the EU context. Through the EU Council Working Party on Agenda 2030 and other fora, Malta intends to continue working to promote and optimise the integration of the 2030 Agenda into Union strategies and other initiatives. It will also continue to advocate better coordination and policy coherence internally within the EU area, as well as with its partners, in order to minimise spillover effects and trade-offs by developing effective measures.

Recognising the importance of cooperation, as demonstrated in this VNR, Malta emphasises the necessity of ongoing dialogue among policy levels and with civil society groups. Building on the work undertaken to date, Malta will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to address the challenges that are unique to each SDG, accelerate progress, and Leave No One Behind by 2030.



