

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL REPORT



NOVEMBER 2020

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER



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MINISTER'S FOREWORD

Sustainable development is a dynamic long-term process. We can and indeed we have made significant strides forward across the board yet we can never stop and consider the task of moving towards sustainability as complete.

We are proud of what we have achieved so far. Yet we all know that there is much more we can do and in some areas more than others.

It is imperative we strive harder and faster to tackle the most pressing challenges which Malta as with other countries around the world are facing. Climate change, biodiversity loss, energy and water security, infectious and non-communicable diseases, poverty eradication, social inclusion and equality of opportunity are all issues that we must look at in a comprehensive and integrated way.

Indeed, we are committed to continue working endlessly on the same path to achieve a more sustainable future which respects the needs of both current and future generations.

And by 'we' I mean every sector of society. Sustainable development depends on us all, not just the Government. Everyone has an important role to play, including the political parties, private sector, academia, civil society and all Maltese citizens.

Sustainable development can only be attained through integrated efforts at various levels encompassing social, environmental and economic characteristics. Everyone must be aware that our survival and that of future generations very much depends on responsible behaviour which truly reflects the principles of sustainability.

The Sustainable Development Annual Report 2019 gives an account of the policies and initiatives embracing sustainable development principles which were taken by the Government during 2019, including, economic growth, social development, environmental protection, energy and climate mitigation, research and innovation.

The Government's commitment to continue building on what has been achieved till now is unwavering. With a proactive approach and everyone's cooperation, our performance will be more effective for the achievement of better results.

Hon. Carmelo Abela

Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister

(Responsible for Sustainable Development, Social Dialogue and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto)



It is imperative we strive harder and faster to tackle the most pressing challenges



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTS	Agency Community and Therapeutic Services
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ARPA	Agricultural and Rural Payments Agency
CDDA	Common Database on Designated Areas
CECs	Chemicals of emerging concern
DC-MAP	Data Collection Multi Annual Programme
DECC	Directorate for Environment and Climate Change
DFA	Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
DLAP	Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes
EESSI	European Exchange of Social Security Information
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ePPS	Electronic Public Procurement System
ERA	Environmental and Resources Authority
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESDW	European Sustainable Development Week
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EWA	Energy and Water Agency
FEAD	Fund for the European Aid to the Most Deprived
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
GB-VSO	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GENE	Global Education Network Europe
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
GLOBE	Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment
GPP	Green Public Procurement
HLPF	High-level Political Forum

HRID	Human Rights and Integration Directorate
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
LNG	Liquefied natural gas
MANTIS	Marine Protected Areas Network Towards Sustainable Fisheries in the Central Mediterranean
MBB	Malta Business Bureau
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MCST	Malta Council for Science and Technology
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MESDC	Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change
MFCS	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity
MFIN	Ministry for Finance
MIAU	Medicines Intelligence and Access Unit
MPAs	Marine Protected Areas
MQF	Malta Qualifications Framework
MTA	Malta Tourism Authority
NAP	National Agricultural Policy
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NO₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NSC	National Skills Council
NSE	National Strategy for the Environment
NSO	National Statistics Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PRIMA	Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area
PVs	Photovoltaic systems
R&I	Research and Innovation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SRIA	Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda
STEM	Science, Technology and Mathematics
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
UN	United Nations
UNEA	United Nations Environmental Assembly
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
VET	Vocational Education Training
WSC	Water Services Corporation



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Report is being prepared by the Sustainable Development Directorate falling under the Ministry within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). During the period under review, the Sustainable Development Directorate was part of the then Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC). This annual report fulfils the purpose of compliance with Part VI, Article 14 of the Sustainable Development Act (Chapter 521)¹. This requires the Competent Authority to produce a Report to be submitted to the Minister responsible for sustainable development, delineating the activities carried out by the Competent Authority during the previous financial year. In terms of the Act, the Minister shall provide a copy of this Report to be presented to the House of Representatives for debate.

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

All data in this document was sourced from Eurostat and NSO as at 9 November 2020.

This report is centred on the three dimensions of social development – economic development, social well-being and environment protection. It also aligns the measures being taken by Government with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by the United Nations (UN) in September 2015.

MALTA'S COMMITMENTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MALTA'S PROGRESS

Data published in the 2019 SDG Index and Dashboards Report, tracking progress in achieving the SDGs across the UN Member States, placed Malta in 28th place out of 162 countries, up from 30th in the previous year².

Despite the change in the country's placing, comparatives with previous years is not possible. In fact part of the methodological statement of the Report clearly states that "Due to changes in the indicators and some refinements in the methodology, SDG Index rankings and scores cannot be compared across the 2016, 2017 and 2018 editions of the report". However the Index does give a gauging of Malta's performance when compared with other countries.

Malta's score for 2019 compared with the European Union (EU) average in relation to EU SDG Indicator set is available in Annex 1.

A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Amongst the responsibilities emanating from the Sustainable Development Act, the Sustainable Development Directorate as the Competent Authority for sustainable development is entrusted with the development and implementation of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy.

¹ Sustainable Development Act, available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.gov.mt/en/Documents/Sustainable-Development/Sustainable-Development-Act.pdf>

² SDG Index available at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2019/2019_sustainable_development_report.pdf

Given that several national, EU and international developments have taken place in various policy sectors during the last years, a new framework is being developed which will supersede the existing one. Following the launching of the Vision 2050 document in 2018³, during the period under review the Directorate continued with its work on the process towards the development of a new Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan with short-, medium- and long-term goals.

More specifically, after the Ministry's successful application to acquire technical assistance under the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP), the Directorate finalised the Grant Agreement and a kick-off visit by experts from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was held between 20 and 21 November 2019. During OECD's kick-off visit various meetings were held, including with the National Statistics Office (NSO), Economic Policy Department, Budget Directorate, Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and Planning Authority (PA). The Sustainable Development Focal Points forum was also convened to discuss with OECD the roles of the various Ministries within the sustainable development framework and future collaboration in the formulation of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050.

Between January and June 2019 the Directorate adopted a bottom-up approach exercise for the development of the new Strategy. This exercise included a series of thematic conferences targeted for different sectors of the Maltese society, with several critical topics related to sustainable development being addressed during these conferences. There was a good response for these conferences both in terms of attendance and feedback received. The outcome of these conferences will be taken into consideration during the drafting of the Strategy. Attendees for these conferences included non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Representatives, Constituted Bodies, Academia, representatives from Ministries, Departments and other Government organisations and bodies.

Details related to the conferences are included in the following table:

NAME OF CONFERENCE	ABOUT THE CONFERENCE	DATE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Paving the way towards a Sustainable Maltese Economy: Looking Ahead to 2050	Discussions focused on key policy areas for the sustainability transition including circular, low-carbon economy, social economy, sustainable finance, digital economy as well as research and innovation.	4 February 2019	30	101
Ensuring and safeguarding a healthy environment: Looking Ahead to 2050	Discussions focused on key policy areas for the sustainability transition including green economy, green jobs, the urban built environment, planning criteria, the natural environment, as well as biodiversity.	28 March 2019	14	77
Ensuring social cohesion and well-being of people: Looking Ahead to 2050	Discussions focused on key policy areas for the sustainability transition including social cohesion, education, employment, health and well-being, inclusion and safety in our communities.	3 April 2019	20	85
Investing in Sustainable Infrastructure: Looking Ahead to 2050	Throughout this event participants had the opportunity to discuss key policy areas for the sustainability transition including green infrastructure; infrastructure for industry; infrastructure for societal well-being; as well as artificial intelligence and innovation in sustainable infrastructure.	3 June 2019	6	83
This event was organised as part of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW) 2019, a European-wide initiative to stimulate and make visible activities, projects and events that promote sustainable development and the SDGs.				

3 Malta's Sustainable Development Vision 2050 available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.gov.mt/en/Documents/Sustainable-Development/Malta-Sustainable-Development-Vision-2050.pdf>

The Role of NGOs in Advancing Sustainable Development: Looking Ahead to 2050

This event was organised as part of the ESDW 2019.

The role of NGOs in pushing forward the sustainable development agenda is critical. NGOs through their activities are contributing in the planning of economic, social and environmental policies. Such input is essential to move forward and change challenges into opportunities for further social cohesion while ensuring a higher and more dignified standard of living for all members of society.

3 June 2019 4

40

The Sustainable Development Directorate has a leading role however, ownership by the various Ministries is essential if the Strategy is to be truly holistic, effective and contributing to the SDGs. During 2019, the Sustainable Development Focal Points Network, consisting of representatives from all Ministries, met three times, one of which was held with the OECD experts to discuss the way forward and the approaches which will be adopted for the formulation of the new Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands.

NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

Following the presentation of the initial segment of the grant to the NGOs in May 2018 the benefitting NGOs were bound to deliver results within one year, thus until May 2019 as per agreed Terms and Conditions.

During the first half of 2019 the Sustainable Development Directorate continued to track progress on the selected projects to ensure that the beneficiaries respect their obligations and timeframes as stipulated in the Grant Agreement. In January 2019 the NGO Flimkien għal Ambjent Aħjar with the project 'An Action Plan for Sustainable Communities' withdrew from the agreement, reason being that it would not be able to respect its obligations as stipulated in the agreement. The funds given to this NGO were given back to the then MESDC as the benefactor. Following the end of the agreement in May 2019 the remaining two beneficiaries, namely the Emergency Response and Rescue Corps with the project 'Ghost Fishing' and the Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability with the project 'Social Inclusion by means of Dedicated Mentoring', sent their respective final reports including photos and other relevant material to showcase the work done and eventual results they committed to deliver. The remaining payments to these two beneficiaries were subsequently given.

INTEGRATING THE SDGS INTO THE NATIONAL BUDGET PROCESS

The commitment of Malta to align its budget measures with SDGs was announced by the Prime Minister in September 2019, whereby the Maltese Government expressed its commitment to ensure that, as of Budget 2020, the measures therein will be aligned to SDGs.

The Sustainability Proofing of the national budget process improves overall policy coherence, which reinforces the very nature of the SDGs as being overarching and intertwined. A coherent budget avoids conflicts between different resource allocations, and sees that budgets are in line with other EU and international commitments. During the alignment process it was noticed that there were a number of gaps to reach the relevant targets. It was agreed that 9 supplementary measures addressing these gaps and addressing specifically sustainable development in the workings of Government will be created. The issues addressed in these measures include:

- Children obesity
- Alternative and sustainable means of transport
- Early school leavers
- Circular economy in the tourism sector
- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the effect on air quality
- Waste



The aims behind the SDGs alignment which will be conducted annually are to:

- i. Strengthen and consolidate the planning process by Ministries through the integration of the SDGs in the planning phases of a policy, programme, project or initiative;
- ii. Establish milestones in Action Plans, through which Ministries will be expected to contribute towards mainstreaming sustainable development practices whilst also addressing SDGs Indicators.

MALTA'S OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AID

During the period under review a number of scholarships and courses were offered to officials from different Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible countries. These scholarships and courses were offered in various areas including, tertiary and postgraduate education, capacity building and civil protection training, central bank courses, English language courses, courses on trade and investment promotion, amongst others. This course of action supports the achievement of both SDG 4 and SDG 17.

Furthermore, during 2019, the then Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (MFTP) co-financed 8 projects being carried out by Maltese NGOs in various countries in Africa which address and aim to achieve the SDGs in areas of education, health and gender inclusion. In addition to this, Malta has also contributed towards humanitarian assistance in various crises in a number of countries around the world including Yemen, Syria, Mozambique and Libya, amongst others. Malta also contributes towards UN Agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This assistance ensures Malta's participation and inclusion, leaving no one behind and ensuring human rights for all.

EU FUNDS AND SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

EU funds invest substantial amounts on actions directed to the attainment of sustainable development and the SDGs. In Malta the European Structural and Investment Funds support 12 out of the 17 SDGs and up to 94% of the expenditure is contributing to those SDGs.

The Operational Programme I contributes to different dimensions of sustainable development with some of the Priority Axes contributing to a particular dimension more than others. The following is a short explanation related to some projects under their respective priority axis which commenced or were continued throughout 2019.

- Projects being implemented under Priority Axis 1 contribute towards economic growth through the development of public infrastructure to support Research, Technological Development and Innovation. Hence it contributes to high value-added areas/sectors by providing job opportunities and by incentivising in people to upgrade their skills.
- Under Priority Axis 11, the main thrust is to step up Malta's productivity to improve competitiveness and develop new areas of competitive advantage. This is being achieved through a number of projects whose primary objective is that of eliminating traffic bottlenecks and reducing port waiting time.
- Priority Axis 6 projects being implemented under the Sustainable Urban Development Strategy will contribute towards the upgrade and preservation of cultural assets, also within the public domain, to attract tourists to lower Valletta and hence to lead to investments in businesses in a dilapidated area.
- With regard to the environmental dimension, the Sustainable Living Complex being implemented under Priority Axis 1 is a direct contribution to research in the built environment – for better and energy-efficient buildings in Malta. The project also

includes research on water efficiency and conservation, rainwater harvesting and sustainable urban drainage systems.

- Other projects under Priority Axis 10 also aim to preserve and protect the environment through investments to reduce waste and better use of water resources.
- With regard to social cohesion, one of the projects which is being implemented under Priority Axis 10 aims to bring the required societal change in waste management through a publicity campaign on how to separate waste at source.

MALTA'S PARTICIPATION AT EU AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

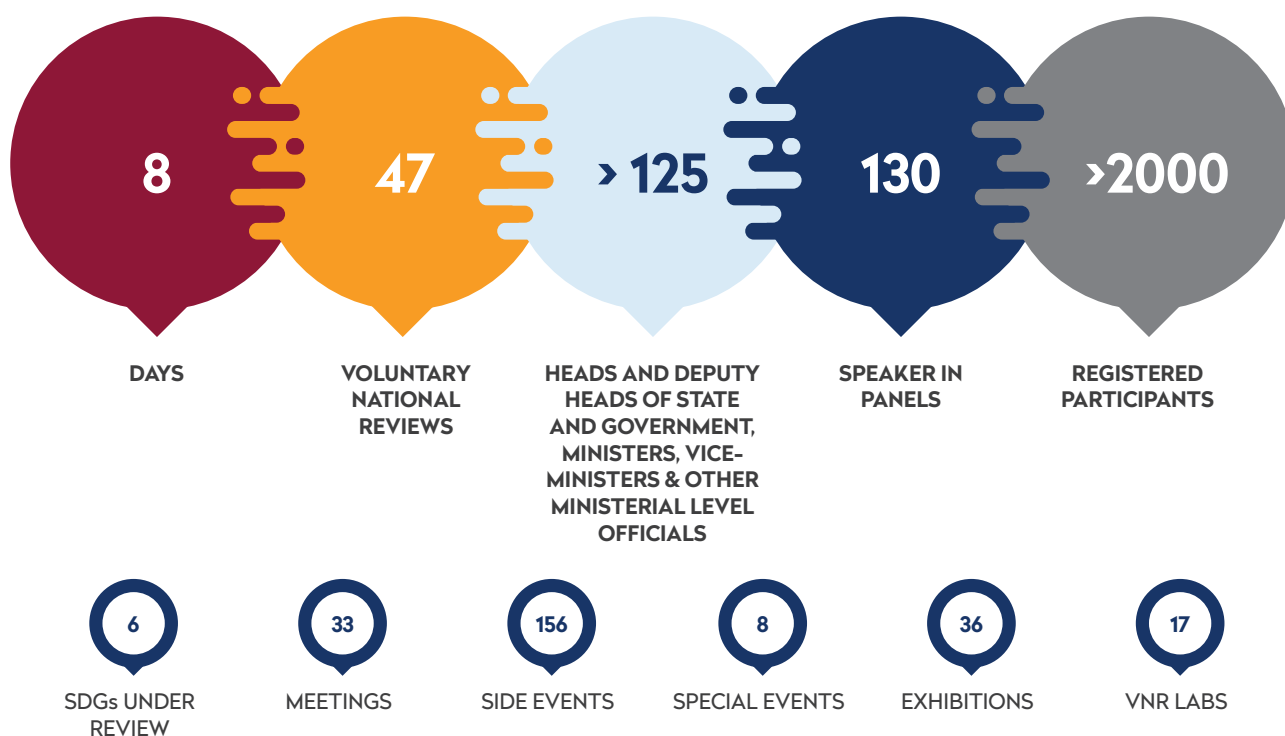
During 2019 Malta continued to follow international developments in relation to sustainable development. In fact during 2019 Maltese delegates attended a series of EU Council meetings in Brussels in preparation for the UN Environmental Assembly (UNEA-4)⁴ held in Kenya (11-15 March 2019) and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)⁵ held in New York (9-18 July 2019).

UNEA-4 focused on the theme of “Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production”, through the #SolveDifferent campaign. UNEA-4 resulted in the adoption of 26 thematic resolutions and a Ministerial Declaration.

Malta delivered its national statement during the High-level Segment, highlighting national actions to address environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production.

The HLPF on sustainable development in 2019 convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, focused on the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

#HLPF 2019



⁴ UNEA is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. The main outcomes of the UNEA provide the key environmental perspective of sustainable development during the meetings of the HLPF.

⁵ The HLPF is the main UN platform on sustainable development and it has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the SDGs at the global level.

1

ENABLING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH



Malta's economic performance continued to flourish over the last year. The Maltese Government is committed to ensure continuity and that economic growth and employment are always sustained within the context of sustainable development.

The Maltese Government is committed to ensure that wealth distribution reaches all cohorts of society without putting any undue pressure on the natural resource base. Malta's goal is that of applying a sustainable economic model which focuses on:

- significant fiscal policy and structural reforms which allow for providing innovative financing tools that enable sustainable investments;
- increased human capital investment particularly in education, skills and good health;
- creation of more high-skilled and value-added jobs;
- ample investments to ensure sustainable mobility;
- greening of the economy with measures such as green bonds and investments;
- digitalisation of the economy and market;
- applying the circular economy model by promoting circular production and consumption patterns;
- initiatives to reduce GHG emissions and related environmental impacts for a low-carbon economy

This approach supports efforts to achieve internationally agreed SDGs 4, 6-9, 11, 12 and 14.

2030 AGENDA RELATED GOALS



ECONOMIC GROWTH

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

Malta's economy in volume terms has maintained its positive momentum, registering a 4.9% increase. Provisional estimates indicate that the GDP in 2019 amounted to Euro 13,208.5 million, an increase of Euro 842.2 million when compared to 2018.

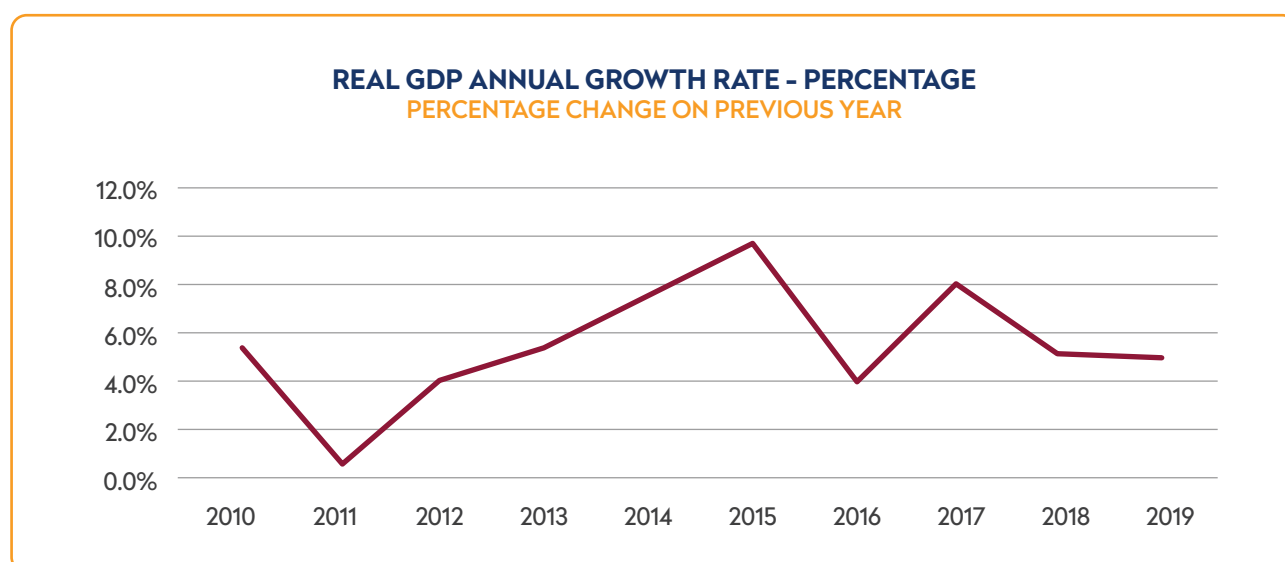


Figure 1: Real GDP Growth Rate⁶

FISCAL CONSOLIDATION

During the last four years, Government managed to successfully consolidate public finances, turning a deficit of 3.4% of GDP in 2012 to a surplus of 0.5% of GDP in 2019⁷. The budget surplus allows more room for manoeuvre to address structural challenges including infrastructural bottlenecks such as roads and waste management and further investments in human capital and technology, thus further strengthening potential growth and supporting the process of convergence to higher living standards, including the protection and valorisation of our natural resource base including biodiversity and cultural heritage.

SUSTAINABLE DEBT

At the end of 2019, the General Government debt amounted to Euro 5,695.6 million, or 43.1% of GDP, an increase of Euro 51.5 million over 2018⁸. It is Government's fiscal policy to ensure that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, Government's borrowing is used for productive purposes and the accumulation of capital assets, and not to finance recurrent expenditure.

⁶ GDP Growth Rate data available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/tec00115&lang=en>

⁷ General government deficit (-) and surplus (+) - annual data available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/teina200/default/table?lang=en>

⁸ Data available at: https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/06/News2020_092.pdf

SUPPORTING AND REWARDING BUSINESSES

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROMOTING AND REWARDING BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS

During 2019, the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses (MEIB) launched the fifth edition of the Sustainable Enterprise Award⁹. This Award is endorsed by the Cleaner Technology Centre within the University of Malta as well.

A sustainable enterprise can be defined as a company that applies sustainable practices in its entire base of activity: products, services, workforce, workplace, processes and management. Undoubtedly this is at times a challenge but ultimately yields benefits.

The Award distinguishes Maltese enterprises, particularly micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), or foreign enterprises operating in Malta, for their efforts to improve their practices with the aim of increasing economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The guidelines, specifically designed for this award, highlight the three pillars of sustainability and outline many indicators for each pillar that help to define what leads to sustainability in the area. When filling in the application form, the applicants must identify one measure that they are carrying out and state their;

- i. Proof of commitment that is, how sustainability is ingrained in the business operations;
- ii. Extent of the organisational effort dedicated towards the implementation of the measure, including any investment and operating costs, staff allocation/involvement and any training requirements;
- iii. Results achieved from the implemented measure through for example, the reduction in costs incurred, energy consumption, amount of waste or emissions generated or improvement of working conditions;
- iv. Direct and/or indirect impact of the measure on the sustainability pillars; and
- v. Long-term viability and the replication potential, that is the ability of the applicant organisation to take the initiative in sharing its experiences with other organisations, for example through involvement in business networks and dissemination at conferences amongst others.

The top three enterprises are awarded a monetary prize together with a trophy and a certificate during an Award-Giving Ceremony. The 2019 edition was given to GreenPak Cooperative Society Ltd.

The Sustainable Enterprise Award initiative supports the efforts towards achieving internationally agreed SDGs namely 6-9 and 11-13.

During the period under review, the following initiatives aiming for the creation of the right environment for businesses to operate and flourish in Gozo were undertaken:

- 'Supporting Business Entities to Attend International Internet Technology Events' scheme. The responsible entity is the Directorate for Tourism and Economic Development within the Ministry for Gozo. This is an incentive scheme aimed for SMEs to encourage their adoption of modern Internet related technologies and e-commerce practices, contributing towards increasing competitiveness while overcoming the Island's geographic constraints. The uptake to this scheme in 2019 was 6;
- Job Creation in Gozo through the 'Gozo Employment Refund Scheme' which is an incentive scheme for Gozo-based companies to employ Gozitan employees full-time. The uptake for this scheme in 2019 was 65;
- Setting up of the Gozo Business Expo and Gozo Business Awards to promote business-to-business and business-to-consumer networking opportunities and promote sustainable, innovative and inclusive investment through recognition of those business entities adopting these principles.

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT WITHIN THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

Maintenance and cleaning work continued in all the industrial areas under the management of Malta Industrial Parks. Intensive work has been done on design and proposals of roads, services, signage and road illumination in all areas. Green Infrastructure is being introduced within several Industrial estates with tenders awarded for the construction of green walls in Mosta Technopark, Kordin, and Marsa.

A pro-Photo Voltaic policy has resulted in around 10,000 square meters of PV panels being installed on factory roofs by tenants. Circularity in industrial parks has become a major priority for Malta Industrial Parks and co-operation agreements have been signed with various entities to promote innovation and clustering in the area of recycling of waste, with a special emphasis on the recycling of construction and demolition waste. In this regard, Malta Industrial Parks is currently undergoing an innovation partnership procurement process which will lead to the rehabilitation of around 80,000 square meters of former dump in Luqa to be converted into prime industrial space, a sports facility and landscaped areas. Maintenance work has begun on fire hydrants and close collaboration with the Civil Protection Department is ongoing for the provision of health and safety training to employees within industrial estates. Several substations in the various industrial areas are being constructed. Proposals have also been drawn up for the construction of ancillary facilities to industry in the areas of Hal Far, Mriehel, Ta' Qali Artisan Village and Marsa, with the first DNO issued for a mixed use facility incorporating an underground car park, a childcare centre, a gym and an overlying landscaped public space in Mriehel.

New facilities incorporating green infrastructure embedded in the design of such facilities, are planned to be developed to house the ever growing knowledge intensive sector and it is hoped that by the end of the year, after the successful completion of the Gozo Innovation Hub, the development permits will be in hand for construction to start on the extension of the Life Sciences Park.

The implementation of the above initiative is contributing towards Sustainable Development Goal 8 and 9.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT PRACTICES

The potential of Green Public Procurement (GPP) and Sustainable Public Procurement as a policy instrument has been increasingly recognised at national, EU and international levels.

GPP and Sustainable Public Procurement are pivotal in terms of contribution towards the achievement of SDG 12. GPP is a market-based mechanism, which serves as a stimulus to drive the economy in an environmentally friendly direction with Government leading by example. The Government, as a whole entity, is the largest consumer of goods and services from the private sector and in this regard GPP is the right tool to increase the supply of green goods.



During 2019, the Department of Contracts, in liaison with the Directorate for Environment and Climate Change (DECC) within the then MESDC, integrated a comprehensive GPP Monitoring Module as part of Government's e-Procurement Platform (ePPS) so as to attain a more structured, reliable and comparable GPP data for procurement having an estimated value beyond Euro 5,000 excluding Value Added Tax (VAT). It is envisaged that the said module shall start being operated in 2020 in tandem with the official launch of the GPP 2nd National Action Plan. Through this monitoring system, the contribution to sustainable production and consumption patterns was tracked by keeping tabs on the Government's procurement of products and services.

In addition, in collaboration with the Energy and Water Agency (EWA), the requirements emanating from Article 6 of Directive 2012/27/EU on Energy Efficiency were deployed on the ePPS. Thus, the system shall encourage the procurement of products and services that offer the most energy efficient performance, as well as capture data in relation to the energy efficiency benchmark.

The Department of Contracts has digitalised a number of procurement processes so as to enhance sustainability in a dynamic yet bureaucratic field. In fact, the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) has been integrated within the ePPS, thus, reducing administrative and environmental burden. The ESPD was a Government pilot project with regards to the 'once only principle'.

Furthermore, the Department of Contracts held consultative discussions with competent authorities so as to initialise the development of an integrated system for the submission of the Compliance Certificates through the ePPS, including direct links to e-Certis where further information can be obtained as well as aiding in the verification of these documents.

The then MESDC has sought to adopt an open channel of communication with economic operators, in order to facilitate the implementation of the GPP criteria and achieve a steady compliance rate in tender offers. The first National Action Plan on GPP introduced a framework, which included a GPP helpdesk (gpp@gov.mt), as well as, a dedicated website (www.gpp.gov.mt). Through these two platforms, queries continued to be channelled, both from economic operators and Contracting Authorities alike. These instruments have proved to be pivotal for the successful and effective implementation of GPP as an instrument to instil change. To further improve both GPP compliance and incorporate digital intelligent systems, the then MESDC has also been developing a mobile application. The GPP app will be able to provide real time GPP information on electronic devices bridging a number of gaps in the application of GPP criteria. Features such as GPP criteria, GPP resources, publications and getting your items GPP certified will all be available on the application in 2020.

The below tables contain relevant statistical data on GPP collected in 2019. This is generic information which reflects how many tenders were greened during 2019.

TABLE 1: GPP COMPLIANCE BY NUMBER OF TENDERS – 2019

Total number of tenders published	Total number of tenders screened by GPP Coordinators	Total number of tenders under the scope of GPP	Total number of tenders compliant with GPP
2194	1636	598	384

Table 1 above shows the GPP compliance by number during 2019. It is important to note that the total number of tenders screened by GPP coordinators excludes tenders issued by the Medicines and Medical Devices team within Central Procurement and Supplies Unit (CPSU). This also applies to the below tables.

TABLE 2: GPP COMPLIANCE BY VALUE OF TENDERS – 2019

Total value of tenders published (Euro)	Total value of tenders under the scope of GPP (Euro)	Total value of tenders compliant with GPP (Euro)
793,856,498.43	330,858,106.55	227,491,664.13

Table 2 above shows that for the data collected during 2019, Government expenditure amounted to Euro 793,856,498.43 of which Euro 227,491,664.13 were 'greened'.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE COMPLIANCE (%) – 2019

Number of tenders under the scope of GPP	% compliance by value of tenders under the scope of GPP
64.21	68.76

In terms of reaching the 50% target¹⁰, this transpires that Malta has exceeded the target for tenders including GPP by value (68.76%). Expressed as a function of tenders by value Malta is broadly in line with the 50% target, having achieved compliance of 64.21% of tenders under the scope of GPP.

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE COMPLIANCE FOR MANDATORY GPP PRODUCT GROUPS – 2019

Copying and Graphic Paper	Office IT Equipment	Textiles	Gardening Products and Services	Cleaning Products and Services
76.5	95.7	90.3	79.1	93.1

At sectoral level, as per results in Table 4, the 100% mandatory target was narrowly missed by the product groups of mandatory criteria. The best performance was within the 'Office IT equipment' (95.7%), closely followed by 'Cleaning Products and Services' (93.1%), and 'Textiles' (90.3%).

TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE COMPLIANCE FOR NON-MANDATORY GPP PRODUCT GROUPS – 2019

Transport	Furniture	Food and Catering Services	Construction	Hard floor Coverings	Windows, Glazed Doors and Skylights	Street Lighting and Traffic Signals	Road Construction and Traffic Signs
93.0	44.3	10.7	45.2	9.2	15.0	41.2	5.6

As for the non-mandatory criteria, the national target for 30% was achieved for the following product groups: 'Transport', 'Furniture', 'Construction' and 'Street Lighting and Traffic Signals'. As was the case in 2018, no tenders fell under the scope of the criteria of 'Mobile phones', 'Combined Heat and Power' and 'Electricity' in 2019.

In addition to the above GPP training session continued to be delivered to both Contracting Authority officials and economic operators. In 2019, 12 training sessions were held encompassing 200 participants working within ministerial procurement units and related areas. A number of consultation meetings with economic operators were also held. These consultation sessions were well attended as they were organised for specific sectors to discuss the introduction of new criteria in line with the updated EU guidelines. These new criteria will feature in the 2nd GPP National Action to be adopted in 2020.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

Malta maintained its commitment towards addressing the shortage of digital skills in the country and improvements have continued to be made as a result of the endless work in this regard. The key challenge in digital skills is the low number of science, technology and mathematics (STEM) graduates and open data. The improvement of digital skills is vital to enhance the integration of digital technologies at enterprises and digital public services. OPM, through its departments and entities which fall under it, embarked on various initiatives to support the digital economy sectoral skills.

10

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

During the period under review, the OPM continued with the implementation of several EU co-funded projects falling under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) as indicated in the table hereunder:

- ERDF 02.035 - Connected eGovernment (CONvErGE) - (Strategy and Implementation - OPM) ESF.PA4.0078 - Mystery Shopper- Enhanced performance in the Public Administration leading to Service of Excellence - (People and Standards Division - OPM)
- ESF.PA4.0085 - Towards a More Professional Workforce in the Public Administration - (Institute for Public Services (IPS))
- ESF.PA4.0072 - Mobile Public Services Take-up - (Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)) ESF.02.061- Take Action: Against Problem Gambling in Malta - (Responsible Gaming Foundation (RGF))
- ESF.03.004 - eCommerce Training Programme - (Malta Communication Authority (MCA))

These projects, through their various measures, contribute towards economic growth, the protection of the environment (including disaster resilience and risk prevention) and social cohesion, therefore, to the maximisation of the three pillars of sustainable development. The benefits sustained by these measures mainly aim to:

- Increase online services for the general public providing more accessibility to services from all places to everyone hence reducing the need to go physically to a government office while reducing GHG emissions and paper usage;
- Improve efficiency in the Public Sector;
- Increase productivity and income and reduce excessive bureaucracy;
- Reduce poverty and social inequality with a view to enhance social inclusion of the most vulnerable in society;
- Secure the professionalisation of public employees by increasing their academic qualifications;
- Strengthen the labour market with skills which are currently lacking;
- Increase the competitiveness of enterprises through eCommerce; and
- Increase GDP and employment levels.

Furthermore, during 2019 the one stop shop Servizz.gov extended its services with the opening of three technical one stops. These are:

- Edu servizz.gov – providing services related to education, particularly school uniforms, Klabb 3-16 registrations, Skola Sajf, Lifelong Learning courses and Scholarships
- Taxpayer service servizz.gov – catering for services related to tax, specifically Income Tax Returns and Provisional Tax, and
- Centru Servizz Family servizz.gov – providing services related to the family in general with particular focus on social security and social accommodation.

Each of these technical hubs cater for the needs of the general public regarding specific government services. Along with the extension of these services there was a continuation of the consolidation of a centralised contact centre that offers information and services to customers, including the facilities to send a compliant, suggestion, compliment or report on bureaucracy on any of the Governmental services. There was an increase in public awareness on the objectives of servizz.gov and services offered towards the achievement of the Government's goal of being closer to the public. Furthermore, the servizz.gov portal was awarded the Quality Label from the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary during the first Quality Label Awards event. The amelioration of these services by the Maltese Government contributes significantly towards the achievement of SDG target 16.6.

The Freephone number 153 is synonymous with all those who wish to enquire about any Government service or need any help in this regard. Throughout 2019, 153 handled 642K calls on existent services, with further additions and upgrades were carried out on this infrastructure to ensure an excellent service for everyone and improve where possible. The additions and upgrades carried in 2019 consisted of:

- The addition of answering queries and providing specific services related to educational services;
- The addition of answering queries related to BREXIT for a definite period of time; and
- Upgrading Freephone 153 infrastructure in terms of redundancy and future expansion.

Complementing face to face communication and that by phone, servizz.gov also increased its number of mServices in 2019. These additional mServices were launched in 2020 reaching a total of 1,300 mServices through mother application 'maltapps'. New services which were incorporated included services relating to energy efficiency, businesses and justice.

In June 2019, Mapping Tomorrow – A Strategic Plan for the Digital Transformation of the Public Administration for the period 2019 to 2021 was launched. Mapping Tomorrow is a strategic plan for the Public Administration. The Public Administration will enter a new era of further simplification of public services to reduce the administrative burden on its clients and to have client-centred public services through digital transformation. The document sets a clear vision with well-articulated goals and an ambitious implementation plan.

Government's vision is to take public services to the next level of improvement through the adoption of digital technologies. The goals of the Strategic Plan do not exist in isolation but build on previous achievements such as the drive to provide services which are available 24 hours a day, every day. Based on past achievements, this Strategic Plan sets 3 goals which build upon each other and form a continuum of improvement in service delivery namely Take-up, Once-Only and Service of Excellence.

Throughout 2019, the Identity Malta Agency Expatriates Unit has worked on a new online system for single permits with the main aim to improve the service efficiency and reduce the amount of paper being used. It is the intention of the Unit to always improve efficiency and go paperless as far as possible in the future.

The digitisation of education is one of the priorities of the Government. Through various initiatives, gaps in educators' digital competences are identified in order to support them accordingly. Heads of Departments and Education Officers coordinate support for educators to make use of various technologies that are available in schools and include them in their lessons in order to engage the students and to facilitate learning. Students are supported to foster their critical and confident use of technologies as well as their digital competence development. A number of initiatives in education have been taken to promote digital literacy, coding and computational thinking like family coding sessions and Code Week, internet safety, eTwinning, SELFIE and DigComp. Moreover, the Government has been investing in digital skills in compulsory education learning programmes through an investment in ICT infrastructure in classrooms. The EU's digital competence framework, DigComp, is used to target teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers, mainly by focusing on digital literacies and 21st century skills. In this regard, the Institute for Education offers a whole range of continuous professional development courses, including courses related to digital competences.

The Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (DLAP) within MEDE has developed a range of new STEM initiatives targeting both primary and secondary sectors to nurture scientific and digital skills and to encourage students to pursue STEM studies and careers. DLAP also organises internship opportunities for students and teachers through the GO4Research and GO4Industry internship programmes respectively. Furthermore, DLAP organised a Teen Science Café Girls Festival on 6 and 7 November 2019. The aim of the two-day event Festival was to inspire and empower young female students to pursue STEM studies and careers. Such an initiative reflects the Government's commitment towards ensuring gender equality across all sectors, including education.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

For the Government of Malta technology is a key factor for the transformation in Public Service Administration and for our contribution towards a better Digital Economy. Through the Modern Workplace Initiative, a project driven by MITA together with key stakeholders from the Public Service Administration helped Government introduce new modern work practices i.e. that of working from anywhere, anytime and from any device in a secure manner.

The main key components of the Modern Workplace Initiative are Technology and Licensing. In terms of core desktop software licenses, the Government changed its licensing landscape. From a licensing model of perpetual per device to a type of subscription base model and per user. Regarding technology, each Government employee is being empowered with a digital workspace based on a Microsoft Technology platform of Microsoft 365 complement with the enablement of online services. The enablement of online services further enhanced the level of service delivered, by creating a work environment that allows flexibility and a process of continuous improvement for a better end user experience when it comes to using latest modern technology. With the introduction of this modern technology, the way we work is being changed. Each employee is becoming more connected, while using multi devices (such as laptops, tablets, smartphones etc) with one single user identity.

During 2019 Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), through the National Research and Innovation (R&I) Action Plan¹¹, continued with its work towards the implementation of Malta's National R&I Strategy 2014-2020¹². This Strategy aims to support high value-added economic activity that includes knowledge driven growth. It is based on eight thematic areas that were selected through the smart specialisation strategy. These actions contribute towards the achievement of SDG targets 8.2 and 9.5.

There are a number of other projects under the National R&I Programme FUSION which are administered by MCST that also contribute towards sustainable development. These are:

- the FUSION Technology Development Programme (TDP) (More information on projects under this programme can be accessed on <http://mcst.gov.mt/funded-projects-2017-till-date/>), and
- the FUSION Commercialisation Voucher Programme (CVP) projects (More information on projects under this programme can be accessed on <http://mcst.gov.mt/ri-programmes/fusion/commercialisation-vouchers-programme/funded-projects/funded-projects-2018-2019/>).

11 The R&I Action Plan available at: <http://mcst.gov.mt/policy-strategy/national-research-innovation-strategy/#1486123274527-d1cedef1-6ad0>
 12 The National R&I Strategy available at: <http://mcst.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/National-RI-Strategy-2020-June-2014.pdf>

Moreover, MCST is also the National Contact Organisation for Horizon 2020, under which programme a number of projects which contribute to the three pillars of sustainable development have secured funding. More details on these projects can be accessed on: <http://mcst.gov.mt/horizon-2020/projects/>.

Malta, through its participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) initiative and the BLUEMED Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), is also addressing a number of SDGs, namely 9, 12, 14 and 17. The PRIMA initiative focuses on research and innovation actions in the Euro-Mediterranean region (including non-EU Mediterranean countries), in the following thematic areas:

- i. Innovative solutions in water management;
- ii. Innovations in sustainable agricultural techniques; and
- iii. Novel agro-food value systems.

The national contribution towards the PRIMA initiative is of Euro 5 million spread over a ten-year period. Through national funding, Malta also participates in the ERANETMED initiative where three-Maltese partners are participating in a project in the development of a future-proof active smart micro-grid system. The project started in 2016 and is envisaged to last three-years. In the same period, another ERANETMED related project was also undertaken and this addressed the aspect of energy and water systems integration and management.

The BLUEMED SRIA contains a number of goals and actions targeting technology transfer in marine and maritime areas. MCST, as a partner in this Horizon 2020 project, is tasked with launching start-up actions that will strive to include countries from the Southern bank of the Mediterranean.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Tourism is an important economic sector which is integrated with various sectors across the Maltese economy. It is a sector which gives primary importance to delivering a satisfactory and attractive product for its visitors. In order to improve the product across the board, the then Ministry for Tourism embarked on several infrastructural projects related to sustainable development and the safeguarding and improvement of our social, cultural and natural environment.

Foremost among these projects, the then Ministry for Tourism, through various entities, launched a number of projects to regenerate coastal areas. Malta depends heavily on coastal and maritime tourism and it is marketed as an island destination with relatively warm weather for most of the year. The increase in tourism numbers registered in 2019 led to additional pressures on the coastal tourism zones.

During the period under review, maintenance and improvements have been carried out in several coastal towns and beaches, including:

- Beaches which have been carefully restored and replenished due to natural erosion. These projects were undertaken to improve the Maltese product and increase the number of sandy beaches in Malta, since tourists tend to favour sandy beaches; and
- The installation of showers, arrangements for accessibility and increase in frequency of beach cleansing and general maintenance.

There was also a sustained effort to protect our marine environment by the relevant authorities. Key measures related to coastal areas included:

- the certification of Blue Flag beaches, including improved beach management efforts by Malta Tourism Authority (MTA);
- support offered towards management plans for Marine Protection Areas (MPAs), Special Areas of Conservation and Natura 2000 sites;
- two EU-funded projects managed by MTA together with two NGOs, Din l-Art Helwa and Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, to restore five coastal towers which were built by the Knights of St John. These coastal towers will provide interesting attractions for tourists in off-the-beaten track locations.



KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

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

The management of cultural attractions is crucial for improving the tourism product and supporting sustainable tourism development.

In 2019 the Restoration Directorate completed 25 projects and started or continued work on another 50 projects, ranging from small scale to large scale projects. It is responsible for implementing the Malta International Contemporary Art Space (MICAS), the Rehabilitation of the Old Abattoir into the Valletta Design Cluster and the rehabilitation of the Notarial Archives also in Valletta, all three under the ERDF 2014-2020 funding Programme. Another notable project is the regeneration of Lower Valletta – a project which is co-funded by the EU Structural Funds (ERDF) and for which Euro 25 million are currently committed. This project is intended to give a new lease of life to this area to the benefit of communities living in these areas whilst also embellishing and restoring historical attractions and expanding Valletta's areas of interest. Other large-scale interventions which the Restoration Directorate also started working on in 2019 are Fort Ricasoli, the Cottonera Lines and the Victoria Lines.

Another important restoration project is the one undertaken by the Mediterranean Conference Centre. This project involved the restoration and upgrading of the Mediterranean Conference Centre with the aim of enhancing the visitor experience and increase tourism flows in one of Malta's foremost historical sites.

Initiatives were aimed also to localities which are not traditionally related to tourism activities in order to offload pressure from more frequently visited areas, while at the same time improving and regenerating areas and attractions to provide an interesting and authentic tourism product. Regeneration projects are being undertaken in Marsaxlokk and in Birzebbugia.

In Gozo, work started on the restoration and preservation of Tal-Ġordan lighthouse to preserve one of Gozo's best known landmarks, and turn it into a tourist attraction.

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

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

SDG 12.b Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In March 2019, the Valletta Cultural Agency took over the legacy of the V18 Foundation. The Agency, through the soon to open Valletta Design Cluster, provides dedicated spaces, networking and capacity building opportunities for the cultural and creative sector. The emphasis here is on the more vulnerable players in the cultural and creative sphere, particularly students, individuals, freelancers, micro-enterprises and micro-organisations. The Cluster shall function as a platform for empowerments as well as a set of publicly accessible resources that can be shared, used, developed and maximised by the community of users, thus reducing initial barriers for entry into the sector as well as opportunities for addressing waste/redundant investment that can be redirected towards more productive and sustainable development by these same operators. The Agency is also focusing on creating opportunities for dialogue and debate in its yearly cultural programme through projects which bring together different communities using various art forms as a catalyst for increased interaction.

The issue of access to culture is a very important means to the social inclusion process. In this respect, Arts Council Malta is implementing the Create 2020 Strategy, a Strategy that is intended to increase equality of access and remove barriers to participation in cultural activities. Moreover, Heritage Malta is also promoting wider access to national heritage sites and buildings and to cultural services. In fact, in 2019 the heritage passport which provides access for persons to visit heritage sites was extended to senior citizens (60+).

Gozo continued its participation in the Destination SMEs Interreg Europe Project. This project focuses on improving the competitiveness of tourist SMEs by encouraging territories to organise themselves as a tourist destination. It aims at:

- i. Strengthening the identity of the territory;
- ii. Establishing a territorial tourist development strategy;
- iii. Ensuring cohesion between the various tourist offers in the area; and
- iv. Allowing cooperation among stakeholders as well as an effective governance system.

The project's first phase was concluded in March 2019 with the development of an Action Plan and the approval of a Pilot Plan. The second phase has commenced and will involve the implementation of this Pilot Plan.

Tourism can also contribute towards a green economic transition. Measures and initiatives aimed at increasing operational efficiency, reduction of GHG emissions, waste and resource management practices are instrumental for the achievement of SDGs. Investing in sustainable production and consumption models in relevant economic sectors, not only addresses environmental issues but also enhances social cohesion and social responsibility, thus reinforcing the link between the three sustainable development pillars.

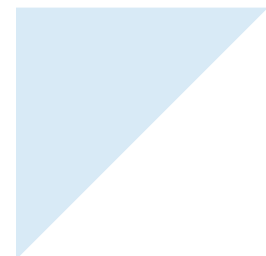
The Consume-less Interreg Med Project in Gozo was concluded successfully in 2019. With an investment of over Euro 600,000 throughout its implementation period, the project contributed towards sustainable water, energy and waste management, through the reduction in water and energy consumption as well as waste generation in the tourism sector. Along with the participation in a number of related meetings the last action which was taken in this project was the purchasing of a number of additional "smart bins" which were subsequently installed in prominent locations around Gozo. The final results of the project were presented by the project owners at the final conference held in Barcelona, Spain during November.

In 2019, MTA continued to operate the Eco-certification scheme, a national voluntary award scheme which focuses on best practices covering environmental, socio-economic and cultural sustainability of hotels and farmhouses on the Maltese Islands. This Scheme is currently being assessed with the aim of identifying those criteria which need to be improved in order to bring the accommodation (hotels only) in line with its environmental priorities post 2020, when the new Waste Management Plan is unveiled to the public at the end of 2020. In this context, the aim of such exercise is to have an upgraded list of waste criteria embedded in the Eco-Certification scheme which would allow hotel businesses to lower their overall waste footprint through the enhancement of internal practices which would be a necessary move for them to be able to keep up with the Eco-Certification standards. Currently there are 19 Hotels across Malta and Gozo, which hold the Eco-Certification title, mostly are 5 and 4 star Hotels.

Projects coordinated by MTA aimed at encouraging the private sector to invest in staff development and to reward the efforts of those employees who excel also continued in 2019. Public recognition of quality services is provided through schemes such as the Quality Assured Scheme currently available to Restaurants, Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and Visitor Attractions.

Actions undertaken to address investment in human resources relate to the STAR Awards and the Erasmus+ 'Improving the Digital Skills and Quality Performance' within the catering sector in Malta. The latter has been selected for a second time and has also been extended to Destination Management Companies and Visitor Attractions, while the STAR Awards Scheme which recognises persons who contribute to the hospitality industry has grown to boast 12,000 nominations. In addition, two other projects are in place: the Apprezza Campaign and the Choice Programme. The aim is to entice the younger generation to take up careers in the hospitality industry. The former is for primary school students and the latter for secondary school students.

Smart innovation is another important step towards giving Malta's tourism product an improved competitive edge. In this regard, in 2019 the then Ministry for Tourism continued its work on the development of a Digital Tourist Platform. This aims to provide tourists with information about localities of interest such as museums and other visitor attractions. It will also study the preferences of tourists and will aim to guide tourists to lesser known localities in order to distribute tourists from congested areas. The project also includes an app utilising augmented reality and virtual reality to improve the visitor experience. This aims to improve the services provided to tourists. Augmented reality and virtual reality are also being employed in the projects concerning the Mediterranean Conference Centre and the Regeneration of Lower Valletta referred to above. These projects include the use of cutting-edge technology in the development of apps to provide a unique visitor experience.



2

**EMPOWERING
PEOPLE**



Throughout 2019, the Government continued to develop and implement a number of measures and initiatives which relate to the social dimension of sustainable development. The key areas of well-being addressed through these measures and initiatives include health services, child and elderly well-being, equal rights and opportunities, income, poverty reduction and social inclusion, integration, education and training.

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

2030 AGENDA RELATED GOALS



GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

According to Eurostat, large part of the Maltese population (74%) reports to be in good health, above the EU-28 average (69%).

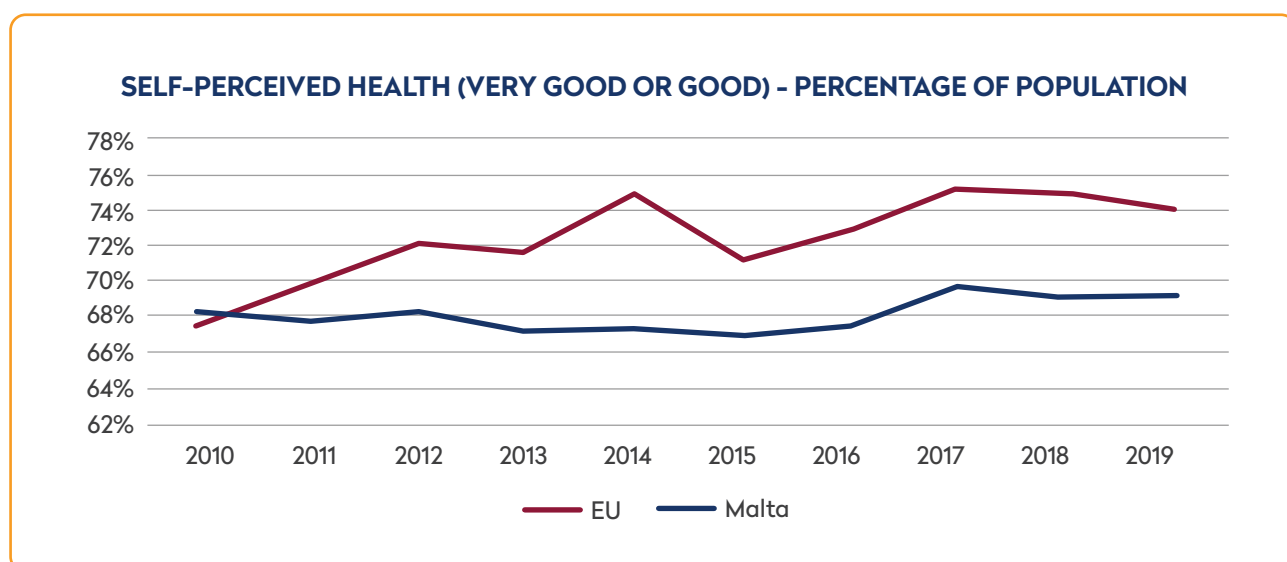


Figure 2: Self-perceived health (Very good or good)¹³

ADDRESSING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

During 2019, the Government continued to work on the implementation of several measures included in the National Cancer Plan for the Maltese Islands 2017–2021¹⁴. The overarching objective of this Plan is to provide good quality and accessible cancer control services to all the patients that require these services. Its implementation reflects the Government's commitment to ensure a reduction in premature mortality from non-communicable diseases and promotion of mental health and well-being in this regard.

The Health Department is participating in the Joint Action for Innovative Partnership for Action against Cancer. This EU project is active from 2018–2021 and aims at developing pan-EU innovative approaches to advances in cancer control. Participation by Malta as an associated partner will ensure that these developments support national cancer policy development and implementation. Maltese participants are active in a number of work packages of this project.

In July 2019, the EU Commission launched 5 Missions as an integral part of the Horizon Europe framework programme beginning in 2021. One of these Missions is the Mission on Cancer. This Mission aims at boosting the importance and implementation of more coordinated and strategic cancer research across the EU so that more people would live without cancer, more cancer patients would be diagnosed earlier, suffer less and have a better quality of life after treatment. Malta is participating as a Member State on the Mission's Shadow Programming Committee.

Moreover, in July 2019, the national mental health strategy titled, 'A Mental Health Strategy for Malta 2020–2030'¹⁵, was finalised and officially published. This Strategy promotes the well-being of the population and its actions address and prevent self-harm and suicide. The Emergency Crisis Services which address the needs of individuals at risk of suicide are also being strengthened.

The vision of this Strategy will be implemented through,

- promoting mental health and well-being by addressing the wider determinants of health;
- transforming the framework within which mental health services are delivered;
- supporting all persons with mental disorders and their families; and
- building capacity and fostering innovation to improve performance of the Maltese mental health services

These initiatives contribute significantly to the achievement of SDG 3, especially 3.4.

During the period under review, the Government continued working on the implementation of measures relating to the National Strategy for Diabetes (2016–2020)¹⁶. Work is being carried out on a Remote Patient Monitoring System for various conditions. The first Remote Patient Monitoring System will be addressing children and adolescents diagnosed with type 1 diabetes mellitus. This system will enable patients and their healthcare professionals to manage their condition in the community with better patients' outcomes. More medicines for the treatment of diabetes were introduced on the Government Formulary List.

Obesity is a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases and diabetes and its prevention is a priority for the Government. Dar Kenn għall-Saħħtek manages patients with eating disorders and weight behavioural problems. Patients can attend the facility as a residential, day or out-patient case. It also provides healthy lifestyle information for the patient's relatives and the general public. In addition, a supplementary measure targeting obesity problems in children was created with the aim of addressing further the problem of obesity from earlier stages.

14 National Cancer Plan for the Maltese Islands 2017–2021 available at: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/CMO/Documents/NationalCancerPlan2017.pdf>

15 Strategy available at: https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/Mental_Health_Strategy_EN.pdf

16 Strategy available at: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/Documents/National-Health-Strategies/NDS-EN.pdf>

This year Mater Dei Hospital was designated as a National Coordination Hub for the European Reference Networks. As part of this union Mater Dei Hospital can benefit from twenty-four existing European Reference Networks. This opens access to the entire European Reference Networks and will allow our healthcare professionals to discuss cases of rare diseases with foreign experts.

ADDRESSING COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

During 2019 the Health Department initiated the procurement of new vaccines to better control infectious diseases. These vaccines are:

- Meningococcal ACWY conjugate vaccine,
- Meningococcal B vaccine, and
- The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine.

The Health Department has continued treating patients known to be infected with hepatitis C. The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate has prepared promotional material to provide information on how to prevent and manage hepatitis C.

During the period under review, the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit continued to carry out effective surveillance and control of all notifiable communicable diseases. Once a case is reported the unit will conduct a detailed medical history of the case and carries out contact tracing to reduce the incidence of these communicable diseases amongst which there are Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis, tuberculosis and water-borne diseases.

In 2019 Malta received a large number of irregular migrants. All migrants disembarking in Malta were screened for tuberculosis. Detecting and treating tuberculosis will contribute to decrease the incidence of tuberculosis in the population.

ACHIEVEMENTS RELATING TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES AND MEDICINES

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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



Through the established Medicines Intelligence and Access Unit (MIAU), the Medicines Authority engages with pharmaceutical stakeholders and other entities to ensure the availability of medicinal products on the local market which are fairly priced. This promotes patient access to medicinal products in an equitable manner. The MIAU intervenes in cases related to pharmacoeconomic, safety and registration issues as well as shortages.

In 2019, new medicines were introduced on the Government Formulary List to treat benign prostate enlargement, cancer, and diabetes amongst others. The Exceptional Medicinal Treatment Committee also approved numerous exceptional medicines to treat rare conditions.

The Cancer Care Pathways Directorate has introduced the following initiatives to coordinate special services for patients suffering from cancer. These include:

- fast tracking of patients;
- electronic ticket of referral for suspected breast and lung cancer patients;
- recruitment of more nurse navigators;
- introduction of databases and IT systems to monitor the patient and to identify any existing gaps in the system; and
- issue of information leaflets for the public

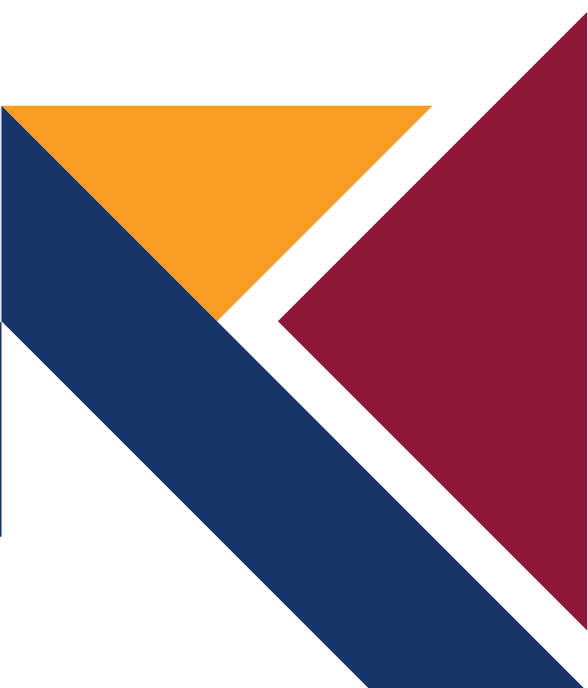
During 2019 Mater Dei Hospital introduced robotic surgery for the Maltese patients. The Treatment Abroad office coordinated 795 visits to foreign specialised centres for patients that could not be treated locally, and 120 foreign specialists visited Malta to manage our patients locally.

During the period under review Government continued in its efforts to ensure continuous improvement in the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce. The Malta Postgraduate Medical Training Centre (MPMTC) continued to evolve and provide more services to the medical postgraduate trainees in the various specialities. Numerous courses and training sessions both locally and abroad were attended by medical doctors, nurses, midwives and allied healthcare professionals. A postgraduate specialised training programme for nurses and allied healthcare professionals is currently under development.

In 2019, 66% of the Medicines Authority employees attained an academic qualification at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) level 7 or higher, with 17% obtaining a Doctoral degree (MQF level 8). The Authority encourages research, thought, analysis, knowledge dissemination, innovation and horizon scanning in collaboration with other entities, such as working groups of the EU Heads of Medicines Agencies, the Network Training Centre (EU-NTC) and the Innovation Network (EU-IN). These activities are conducive to innovative growth and promote job-creating opportunities.

Established in 2019, the Academy for Patient Centred Excellence and Innovation in Regulatory Sciences merges research, training and education into the regulatory environment, strengthening the commitment of the Malta Medicines Authority towards sustainable development and innovation. The Academy serves as a key platform within the Authority's portfolio, through which educational planning and academic development unfold.

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



ELDERLY COMMUNITY CARE AND SERVICES

A pilot phlebotomy service in the community was launched in 2019. This service entails blood tests being offered free of charge to those elderly living in their homes but cannot commute due to health issues. This pilot project will be evaluated after which the service will be extended nationwide.

Another service introduced in the same year was the Psychogeriatric Community service to provide psychiatric evaluation to senior citizens confined to their homes due to physical or mental health issues.

The period under review was also marked by the launch of a reform on the administration of the Home Help service. Elderly persons were given the option of engaging a helper of their choice to help out with chores in their home. Eligible applicants are being reimbursed for the number of hours clocked in by helpers as approved by the administrative board.

CHILD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

SDG 3.1 By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births

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

SDG 3.5 Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol

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

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

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

The Government continued with its efforts to improve both maternal and child health. During 2019 along with the recruitment of a number of midwives, the Nursing Department organised various technical and non-technical training sessions throughout the year. Both initiatives are targeted to reduce maternal mortality and end preventable deaths of new-borns.

Many pregnant migrant patients attend hospital late in pregnancy without having ever been seen by a Healthcare Professional throughout their pregnancy. In order to enhance antenatal care for migrant patients, an antenatal clinic specialising in the management of migrant patients has been set up. This consists of a medical team, assisted by a nurse, midwife and cultural mediator who can assist the patient throughout the process.

In the last 25 years the number and variety of specialised oral and enteral (tube feeding) formulas available for use have increased dramatically with the aim to decrease preventable deaths of children under 5 years of age. Children with rare disease where Malta lacks experience are referred to specialised centres abroad where they are investigated and treated. Throughout 2019 the Exceptional Medicinal Treatment Committee evaluated requests for exceptional medicines needed by these patients.

The Government is committed to systematically reach as many people as possible through the prevention services offered. During 2019, the Tfal Favur Ambjent Liberu (T.F.A.L.) program that is delivered to every child in formal schooling in Malta was continued and extended to reach more students. The main objective is to reach children from grade 3 onwards to see a drop in experimentation and abuse of drugs and alcohol by children under the age of 15 years.

Prevention sessions are also given to vulnerable groups such as youths in out of home care, youths who drop-out of mainstream education and ex-prison inmates. These groups might have already experienced substance abuse through

their own experience or that of family members. Therefore, it is crucial to ward off such groups away from substance abuse and prevent them from the risk of developing an addiction.

The 'Looked After Children Service' within APPOGG was continued throughout 2019. This service supports all children who are placed in out of home care in Malta to ensure that their needs are met while trying to reintegrate them to their birth family. It also supports children to achieve stability and independent living. Other solutions to achieve stability including fostering and adoption are taken into consideration when it is not possible to reintegrate children with their birth family. It is the policy of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services' (FSWS) to continue to watch over young people when they leave care and support them in accessing all services that they need to improve their life.

BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL

The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2019, which is awarded to all citizens, including pensioners and social beneficiaries, amounted to a weekly increment of Euro 2.33. This increment was based on the adjustment reflecting the increase in the Retail Price Index is annually computed on the basis of a mechanism agreed upon by the social partners within the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD).

In 2019, the paid annual leave for every employee was increased by an additional 8 hours, bringing total entitlement of paid leave to 208 hours.

In accordance with the National Agreement on Minimum Wage reached with social partners, employees on the minimum wage benefitted from an improvement in their earnings. The employee is entitled to an increase of Euro 3 a week during the second year of employment and an additional Euro 3 per week in the third year of employment. Therefore, all employees that in 2017 were on minimum wage were given a raise of Euro 3 per week in both 2018 and 2019, a total of Euro 6 per week over two years.

Employees earning a salary exceeding the basic minimum wage also gained a partial salary increment in 2019 which followed that of the previous year. Moreover, for the second year running, the weekly cost of living allowance was supplemented by an additional Euro 1 increase each year. Therefore between 2018 and 2019, the minimum wage was increased by Euro 8.

Paid leave was further extended for prospective parents seeking medically assisted procreation.

Apart from the COLA, more than 92,000 social security contributory and non-contributory pensioners, in retirement, widowhood or invalid and in receipt of old age pension were awarded a weekly increase of €2.17. Thus, each pensioner received an increase of €4.50 per week.

Elderly persons aged 75 years and over, still living in the community, were awarded the Senior Citizens' Grant of €300 in 2019.

For the first time in 11 years (and in certain cases in 23 years), the Government increased Children's Allowances to families with a gross income of less than €20,000 per year. The highest rate of Children's Allowance was raised to reach a maximum of €96 per year for each child. Around 24,600 children of 16,500 families benefitted from the improved rates.

The non-contributory Medical Assistance increased by €5.14 per week for married couples who are both suffering from chronic illness and receiving this Assistance. The highest number of beneficiaries of this measure were chronically ill elderly couples.

In 2014, the Government introduced a grant for persons, mostly women, who did not pay enough contributions to qualify for a minimum pension. Through an increase of €50 in 2019 the grant awarded to persons who paid more than a year's contributions, but fewer than 5 years' contributions, was increased to €200. Beneficiaries with more than five years' contributions became entitled to a grant of €300. Around 12,500 people benefitted from this measure.



One of the key sustainability-related measures introduced as part of the pensions reform in 2016 was the pension deferral system aimed at augmenting the pension payable to employees who choose to postpone their retirement (and the pension claim) in lieu of remaining in the labour market. As a first step, Government reserved this initiative to private sector employees and self-employed persons. During 2019, the same incentive was extended to public officers and employees in the public sector, subject to approval by employer.

The right to contributory unemployment benefits as from 2019 was extended to self-employed persons on registering for work with JobsPlus, provided they satisfy the contribution conditions laid down in the Social Security Act. This was the first time in social security history that self-employed persons were granted this right.

Extending assistance to persons with a disability has been a key plank in the Government's social policy. Throughout the previous and current legislature, various measures have been enacted, including the promotion of the right of persons with a disability to work, substantial improvements in disability benefits, the building of homes for independent living and the establishment of a Disability Trust Fund.

The Disability Assistance reform included the introduction of the Increased Severe Disability Assistance in 2017 for persons who absolutely cannot be gainfully occupied. When the reform reaches its final stage the assistance will be pegged to the net national minimum wage. Until that stage is reached, the rate of the weekly assistance in 2019 was increased from €140 to €150.

The children's allowance paid to out to parents whose children suffer from some form of physical or mental disability was increased by another €5 to €25 per week. Around 1,400 children with disabilities and their families benefitted from this increase.

Government continued with the reform of the allowances payable to persons taking care on a full-time basis of relatives living in the same household. Besides the introduction of the Increased Carers' Allowance, the reform provided for new eligibility conditions and payment rates.

As from 2019 applicants for the Carers' Allowance were exempted from the means test, in the same away as applicants to the Increased Carers Allowance. The change was designed to further encourage elderly people to continue living in their homes and in the community. Furthermore, applications from carers taking care of relatives aged 85 years and over were exempted from scrutiny by the multi-disciplinary board.

POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

At 20% the 'at risk of poverty or social exclusion' rate in 2019 was below the EU's average of 21%.

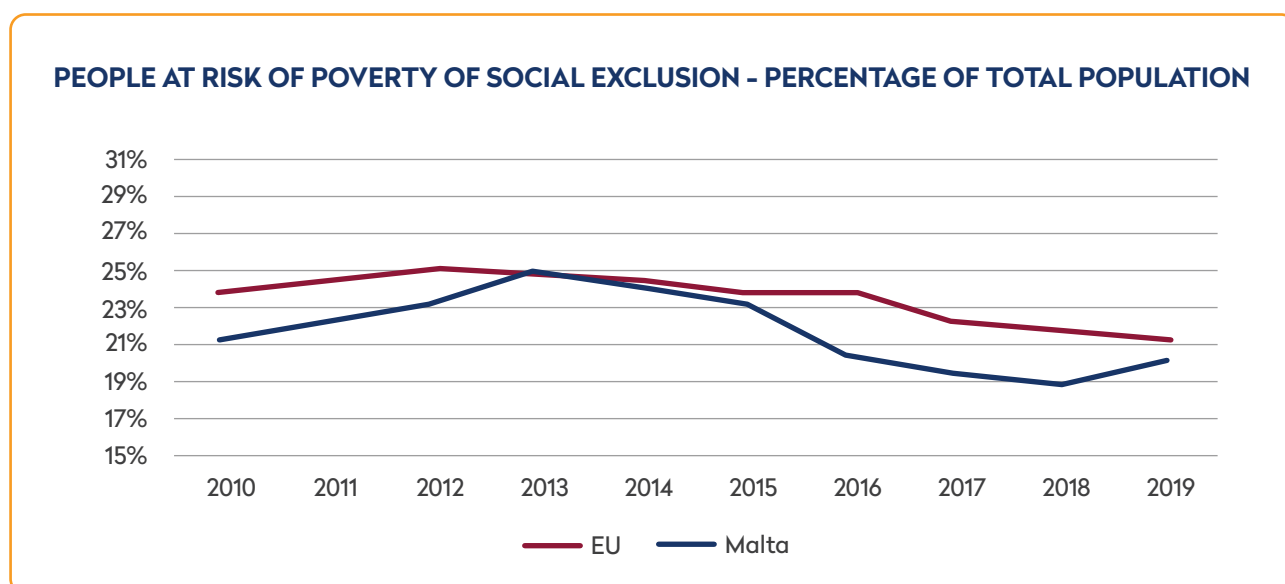


Figure 4: People at Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion¹⁷

During 2019, the Inter-ministerial Committee (IMC) responsible to monitor the implementation of the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024¹⁸, continued to convene regularly. Updated reports were

¹⁷ Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_01_10&plugin=1
¹⁸ Strategy available at: <https://family.gov.mt/en/Documents/Poverty%20Strategy%202014%20English%20Version.pdf>

provided with regards to the progress achieved in the implementation of measures feeding into the 94 policy actions emanating from the six dimensions underpinning the said national strategic policy.

During 2019, several initiatives were carried out to eradicate the stigma against those experiencing poverty and social exclusion. These included the merger of the Community Social Work services and mentoring services of LEAP in one agency to bring more consistency and uniformity across all of the community services of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). Such a move was pivotal to the delivery of a more holistic service to service users.

Community projects and initiatives were initiated during 2019 to strengthen the FSWS's presence in communities and support service users to reach their goals. There were joint collaborations with entities such as local and regional councils to support service users in overcoming poverty and social exclusion. These included:

- A childcare course organised jointly with Regjun Tramuntana that supported 30 service users to acquire skills and enter or advance in the labour market
- A loneliness support group for adults was set up in Qormi in collaboration with Occupational Therapists
- A budgeting course in Cottonera to enhance the financial literacy of service users
- A workshop for youths in Vittoriosa aimed at the acquisition of skills necessary for employment or further studies at Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

The Agency Community and Therapeutic Services (ACTS), was set up in 2019 to support vulnerable individuals and communities. These services actively support the concept of achieving a sustainable balance between development and socio-economic needs of present and future communities is actively supported. Apart from one to one service delivery, ACTS offers project based services such as youth groups, skills workshops, financial literacy projects and support groups. It is in the process of developing three core programmes focusing on Employment and Education Readiness, Housing and Household Stability, Financial Literacy and Income Stability. These programmes are designed to develop vulnerable families' skills towards achieving their potential to move out of the risk of poverty and will complement current programmes already in place. These services are aimed to facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable persons into the Maltese society and support Malta's endeavours to achieve SDG 11.

The setting up of a FSWS Directorate in Gozo in 2018 was followed by the opening of two Community Family Centres in Victoria and Marsalforn in 2019. This measure is another statement of the aim to move the service closer to the clients and therefore ensure that these services to vulnerable persons are extended to Gozo without any compromise in quality. This step is a cornerstone of the Gozo Branch's efforts to extend all FSWS services beyond the mainland island, thus it addresses not only efforts to achieve SDG 11, but also SDG 16 for a better and more accessible provision of state services to the public.

FSWS distributes food packages to families at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Part financed by the Fund for the European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) over 4,000 families were selected from the updated database hosted by the Department of Social Security. Three distributions were held in 2019. On the other hand, through a similar scheme funded by the State (SFFD) 19,500 families and 33,000 persons benefitted from two distributions were held in 2019.

The Make Work Pay packages continued during 2019 to enable low-income families to participate in the tapering programme and on expiry of the programme to benefit from the In-work Benefit Scheme along with other social benefits such as rent subsidies. The packages are designed to reduce benefit dependency and achieve a higher rate of employment in Malta. Moreover, support was also given to other vulnerable sections of society, notably persons with disability who are impeded from finding employment. Such measures led to a significant decrease in poverty, as the percentage of families suffering from material deprivation stood at 8.7% in 2018, down from 20% in 2012. These measures contributed to the achievement of SDGs 1, 8, 10 and 11.

Rental issues are at the top of the Government's agenda and the White Paper¹⁹ addressing renting as a housing alternative which was issued for consultation in 2018 is testament to this. Following a process of consultation, The Private Residential Leases Act (Cap. 604 of the Laws of Malta)²⁰ was approved during a Plenary Session of the Maltese House of Representatives held on the 05 November 2019. The Act aims to promote the development of the private rented sector by ensuring standards of fairness, clarity and predictability in contractual relations between lessors and lessees and to safeguard and protect the right to adequate accommodation.

FSWS collaborates closely with the Housing Authority to enable families currently leasing a property or requiring shelter to obtain a bank loan without having to pay the 10% down payment. An agreement with two local banks to facilitate such referrals and follow-up was extended in 2019.

During 2019, the Housing Authority continued to work on the regeneration of Social Housing Areas through the funding programme ERDF.08.043. Once this project is ready the baseline for accessibility will increase and the state of living in over 650 social housing blocks and estates will improve. The holistic aim of the project shall be achieved through the

¹⁹ White Paper available at: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MFSS/Documents/White%20Paper%20Booklet.pdf

²⁰ Private Residential Leases Act available at: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=13057&l=1>

urban improvement of open spaces between estates which will contribute to the community regeneration of deprived families. The project makes use of energy efficient technologies thus reducing carbon emissions, promoting a cleaner air quality, and a healthier lifestyle.

'The Meeting Place', a modern-day hub which was refurbished through the Marigold Place Project, was officially inaugurated on 21 May 2019. The hub aims to support the integration of vulnerable persons within the community. It provides adequate infrastructure for NGOs to provide therapeutic and mentoring interventions, as well as other informational and advice services to bring target groups closer to labour market. MEDE supported the project for the setting up of a white room where it would serve to combine a range of stimuli to help individuals develop and engage their senses.

The 'INK: Person-focused inclusion project' being implemented by Aġenzija Sappart is aimed at maximising the abilities of persons with disability, supporting their chances of inclusion in the labour market and strengthening their social engagement. It is estimated this project will assist around 300 people with special needs along with 450 members of their family as well as to a number of employers.²¹

As part of the 'Proġett Soċjetà ġusta' during 2019 the Government inaugurated the 12th residence for persons with disability in the community.

In order to assist persons with disability that need to purchase special equipment in order for them to live an independent life, MFIN has issued a scheme, whereby eligible applicants may apply for a grant on the purchase price of the special equipment.

The Local Government Division through its Strategy and Policy Implementation Directorate has launched a scheme for local councils to employ persons with disability (the Community Inclusive Employment Scheme). This scheme is in line with the National Disability Strategy at the local level by providing employment opportunity to people with special needs.

Furthermore, during 2019, the then Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, through the Corradino Correctional Agency started the implementation of ESF.02.064, a project under the European Social Fund. This project entails the drawing up of policies, training and teaching of both inmates and staff. Its aim is to aid both inmates and staff with skills for the betterment of their life and thus at the reduction of poverty, at the point of leaving prison and starting a new life, hence facilitating their inclusion within the labour market and society in general. It also aims to educate the prisoner to cope psychologically and improve his education and equality of life in prison and the aftermath. In so doing, a unit has been set up at the Corradino Correctional Agency for life-long learning education in basic academic skills and also skills for future employment. This project will contribute in particular towards the achievement of SDGs 1, 4 and 10.

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

SDG 1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMBATING PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT

During 2019, the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations decided to focus on two specific sectors- boutique hotels and the construction sectors-to tackle the issue of precarious work. The Department performed investigations in each and every boutique hotel in Malta and initiated inspections and requests for information according to the need. Several breaches were found and corrected accordingly. For the construction sector, the Department performed random inspections on a number of companies in the sector. The Department also continued to deal with the numerous complaints in relation to sub-contracting, especially with regard to security and cleaning personnel.

VIOLENCE FREE SOCIETY

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

SDG 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

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

SDG 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

SDG 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

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

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

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

The Malta Police Force (MPF) is actively working towards the enhancement of their capability to ensure that the citizens of its country have the utmost safety. The MPF owns projects which are directly funded by the European Commission, namely the UMF3+, I2, and other projects that directly aim at the reduction of all violence. The projects mentioned pertain to the area of interoperability (UMF3+ and I2) between Member States to ensure that the information is shared for security purposes. In 2019, MPF were awarded the funds to start implementation of these projects which contribute directly for the achievement of SDG 16.

Furthermore, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) have a number of projects that enable them to protect Malta, its territorial waters and all the vulnerable under the rule of international Law. A major project commenced in 2019 entails the commission of the new Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV). The project was kicked off with an international call for experts, followed by a call for tenders and the procurement process which led to the awarding of the contract. There were other projects pertaining to the training of the officers, as well as other projects to ensure that AFM are up to date with their European Counterparts.



Government is committed to further prevent or curb domestic violence and gender-based violence. During 2019, work continued to strengthen the fights against domestic violence in a concrete way mainly through the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act²².

Indeed, the process to strengthen the legal framework on domestic violence and gender-based violence continued. Following an extensive consultation with all relevant stakeholders, an update which amends the Criminal Code in a number of aspects was drafted. These aspects include:

- Prescription of crimes relating to minors
- Abandonment of minors
- Harassment crimes; and
- Temporary protection orders.

On 4 February 2019, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in collaboration with the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence organised the launch of a study aimed at estimating how many girls are at risk of female genital mutilation in Malta amongst other countries. The results indicated that female genital mutilation is a reality in Malta with women from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia particularly vulnerable to this violent practice, mainly due to cultural, religious and traditional customs which are still prevalent in their countries of origin.

The Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence in collaboration with the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies, UK held a Professional Certificate Training in Tackling Human Trafficking between 28 January and 1 February 2019. Entities invited and which attended for the training included Identity Malta, Police, Department for Industrial and Employment Relations, Genitourinary Clinic, Migrant Health Unit, Human Rights and Integration Directorate and NGOs. The course content focused on a comprehensive analysis of the tools to counter human trafficking as follows:

- The economics of human trafficking
- The crux of the trafficking issue and policy impacts
- The immigration/asylum debate and impact on policy
- Gender and human trafficking
- Public awareness campaigns
- Supporting victims of human trafficking

During the period under review, work continued on an EU co-funded project 'Breaking the Cycle of Violence' which was launched in the previous year. This project is aimed to raise awareness with young adults, involve men and boys in ending violence as well as raise awareness among vulnerable groups such as migrant women, women with a disability and LGBTI women. During 2019, seven information sessions were held. Five of them were with human resources personnel, one of which catered for the Gozo cohort. Another one was conducted with public service employees in senior positions, and the last of which was conducted with advocates in collaboration with the Chamber of Advocates. The project timeline spans till June 2020.

Another project is 'Violet Support Online - Improving Support Structures for Victims of Gender Based Violence (GB-VSO)' being implemented in partnership with 5 partners from the public, private and civil society sector and will run until October 2020. As a project, GB-VSO aims to improve support structures and provide protection to Victims of Gender-Based Violence. It follows the premise that providing comprehensive support structures, increasing the capacity to respond, together with awareness raising contributes to ensuring that victims understand their situation, feel empowered and supported to speak out. This project specifically looks at the workplace as a place where support structures could be strengthened.

In 2019, Malta once again participated in the 16 Days of Activism Campaign. The 16 Days of Activism is an international awareness-raising campaign aimed at inspiring action to stop violence against women and young girls. The campaign takes place between 25 November and 10 December 2019. The theme chosen for the 16 Days of Activism 2019 campaign was 'No Excuse for Abuse – M'hemmx Skuża Għall-Abbuż'. The campaign was based on various training sessions, activities and a social media campaign. In order to raise greater awareness with the public, the Commission produced three video clips and six radio clips which were disseminated on several television and radio stations as well as on the Commission's social media platforms throughout the campaign. The aim of these clips was to create a sense of social conscience amongst the public with regards to domestic violence. Thus, the bystander effect was addressed to convey that domestic violence is not a private matter and that it is everybody's business to report.

As a means of raising awareness amongst the community the set of posters which were launched during the 16 Days of Activism 2018 continued to be disseminated, which were designed to be displayed in public places such as shops, clinics and public conveniences.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTEGRATION

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

SDG 10.7 Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies

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

In 2019, Malta retained its top ranking position, with a 90% score, on the 'rainbow map' of rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people (LGBTI), unveiled during the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index showcases the current state of play of the laws, policies and practices that affect LGBTI people in Europe today.

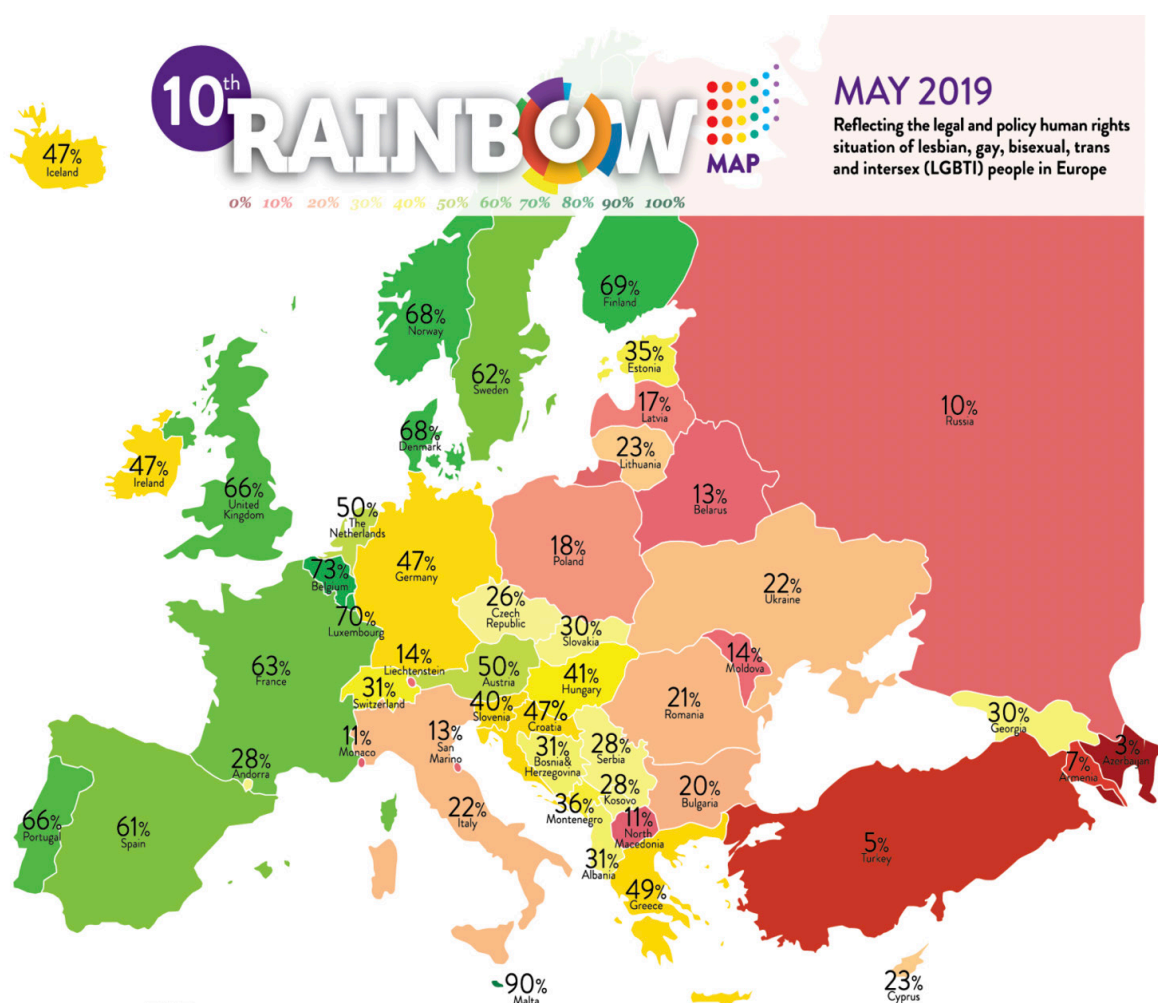


Diagram x: ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index²³

During 2019, the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) drafted the Equality Act and the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act²⁴. The aim of these Acts is to strengthen the legal framework on human rights and equality in Malta. Through the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) has been given more authority as it has been converted to an independent Commission, in conformity with the UN Paris Principles.

Furthermore, a number of policies are in the process of being finalised namely:

- Policy on the police's treatment of transgender, intersex and genderqueer persons
- Gender Integration Strategy and Action Plan
- Gender pay-gap policy

During the period under review, HRID continued with the implementation of Malta's Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan 'Integration = Belonging'²⁵. The successful implementation of this Strategy is important for our country as Malta is a receiving country in terms of migration flows, and in turn it is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically, culturally and linguistically. This Strategy creates a framework for understanding successful integration through the level of the migrants' own sense of belonging to Maltese society and the space Maltese society allows for such integration in its different sectors and strata. Moreover, in April 2019 the Integration Unit changed its name and became the Integration and Anti-Racism Unit in order to better incorporate the Anti-Racism element.

Throughout 2019, the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Unit (SOGIGESC) within HRID continued to manage the implementation of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) Equality Strategy and Action plan which was launched in the previous year. The main measures and initiatives taken during 2019 were:

- Two training sessions for a number of employees addressing awareness on how LGBTIQ persons are spread in all spheres of society and how one should deal with them

23 ILGA-Europe Rainbow Index available at: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/>

24 Act available at: <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=29682&l=1>

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

- Training for a number of Personal, Career and Social Development (PCSD) primary school teachers
- Identification of existing barriers which LGBTIQ athletes may face and the launch of a national campaign, 'Everyone's Game' (il-Loghba ta' Kulhadd'), addressing increased awareness on the inclusion of LGBTIQ in football
- Discussions between the Victim Support Services and the Rainbow Support Services for the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding which regulates victims' referrals
- Financial incentives by the Government for the organisation of activities related to the Pride Week 2019 and the EuroPride held in Vienna. Moreover, for the first time the Maltese Government joined a number of European countries in subsidising the work of European organisations in the field of LGBTIQ.

In January 2019, the Gender Mainstreaming Unit within HRID was established with the aim of developing and implementing the first national strategy and action plan in relation to gender equality mainstreaming, and the introduction of corresponding legislation. It was agreed that the Action Plan should focus on the eight pillars based on the domains included in the Gender Equality Index²⁶ of EIGE. Subsequently a public consultation was launched to provide governmental entities, social partners, civil society organisations and the general public with an opportunity to provide specific proposals to Government with regard to the development of the Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan as well as the Gender Equality Mainstreaming Bill. The Strategy and Action Plan are expected to be finalised and launched in 2020.

Throughout 2019, work continued on two EU-Funded projects namely, the 'TRANSFORM' project and the 'Equality4allMT' project. The 'TRANSFORM' project deals with capacity building of health practitioners to address in a sensitive manner the various health needs of LGBTIQ patients by recognising the daily challenges and related impacts on the health and well-being of LGBTIQ persons. The 'Equality4allMT' project has the aim to raise awareness on minorities with different religious beliefs and to address the lack of reporting on cases of discrimination against race and ethnic/religious beliefs minorities.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE: EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Responsible citizenship, critical thinking, digital literacy, lifelong learning and the pursuit for knowledge are buttressed by an inclination towards education for sustainable development and global education. The latter is delivered via a cross-curricular theme and a learning outcome framework across the different subjects taught at school. MEDE supports educators in developing student-centred learning strategies for effective teaching and in fostering a globalised world view and healthy and responsible lifestyles. Inclusive and quality education can thus be an effective channel to address socio-economic and cultural gaps such as the gender participation gap, wealth disparities and, ultimately, social justice; hence making education an effective social equaliser. The National Curriculum Framework (2012), Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 (2014), and My Journey: achieving through different paths (2016) promote such an approach, thereby aiming for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Education as a form of reaching SDG 4. At a micro-level, frequent initiatives to promote environmental and social responsibility and sports, amongst others, are the main drivers for the Government's approach across schooling.

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

SDG 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

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

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

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

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

SDG 8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Malta provides free education, which is compulsory from ages 5 to 16, from early childhood to undergraduate tertiary education in state institutions. During the scholastic year 2019/2020, a total of 56,854 students were enrolled in primary and secondary education in Malta and Gozo, an increase of more than 4000 over the previous scholastic year.

SCHOOLS 2019/2020	PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
Non-State	23,743
State	33,111
Total	56,854

The Government's declared objective is to further enhance, restore and rehabilitate the state-run educational stock as a means of making education in general and the learning process a more attractive and pleasant experience for Maltese youth. There are currently various projects ongoing in order to improve the state educational infrastructure with an overall estimated cost of Euro 40 million.

Malta has put in place a number of measures to increase the rates of literacy and numeracy. The Reading Recovery Programme, developed by the National Literacy Agency, is a literacy programme aimed at increasing literacy amongst the most vulnerable students aged 5-6. Syllabi have been revised to make them more relevant to the students. In the scholastic year 2018-2019, the University College London, working with the National Literacy Agency, started training educators from the College Literacy Teams as Reading Recovery teachers and Reading Recovery teacher leaders in Malta.

The introduction of five Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) vocational subjects in all state and non-state secondary schools, namely Agribusiness, Hospitality, Health and Social Care, Information Technology and Engineering Technology, was surely a successful measure as evidenced by the yearly increasing rates of students opting for these subjects. For instance, during scholastic year 2019/20, 60% of Year 9 (Form 3) students have chosen at least one vocational or applied subject. This success rate has prompted four new vocational subjects, namely Media Literacy, Hairdressing and Beauty, Retail, Fashion and Textiles, as well as nine new applied subjects in secondary schools as from September 2019. These new subjects are based on the Learning Outcomes Framework with specific objectives. The principal aim of the Learning Outcomes Framework is to free schools and learners from centrally-imposed knowledge-centric syllabi, and to give them the freedom to develop programmes that fulfil the framework of knowledge, attitudes and skills-based outcomes.

The following are recent figures showing substantial Vocational Education Training (VET) uptake at International Standard Classification of Education level 3. The following figures are broken down per educational institution:

- Compulsory education: 2019/2020
 - o 55.0% of students at compulsory education are reading for at least one VET subject
- MCAST: 2018/2019
 - o 66.8% of students were reading for a VET subject
- Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS): 2019/2020
 - o 60.0% of students are reading for a VET subject

MEDE has embarked in a Partnership program with various organisations within the vocational sector. Through this partnership, students who are studying one or two vocational subjects at secondary school participate in a number of controlled, hands-on visits in these organisations, according to the subject. At the moment (scholastic year 2019-2020) three sectors are contributing to this initiative, and 1622 students following the courses of Agribusiness, Health and Social Care and Hospitality are participating.

In 2019, MEDE organised the 'I Choose - Nagħżel il-Karriera Tiegħi' event for the fifth consecutive year, where it was also held in Gozo for the fourth time. The March 'I Choose' Fair in Malta was held between 27 and 29 March 2019 whilst in Gozo held on 22 March 2019. The 'I Choose' Fair in July was held on 19 and 20 July 2019. This initiative was once again a success as evidenced by the wide-ranging guidance given from several employment sectors practitioners and it was well attended across all the events. This event is another opportunity whereby students can explore further career options as they leave compulsory education.

The Government's efforts for a more pertinent education system have yielded a steady decline in early school leavers as evidenced by Eurostat, with 16.7% in 2019, down from 53.2% in 2002. These figures are complemented by a high rate for children in early childhood education, which is now at 96.5% (Eurostat 2017). This promotes a positive cycle whereby educated citizens will be more mindful of their economic, environmental and social responsibility.

The share of 30 to 34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment in Malta continued to increase in 2019 (38.1%).

TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED 30 TO 34

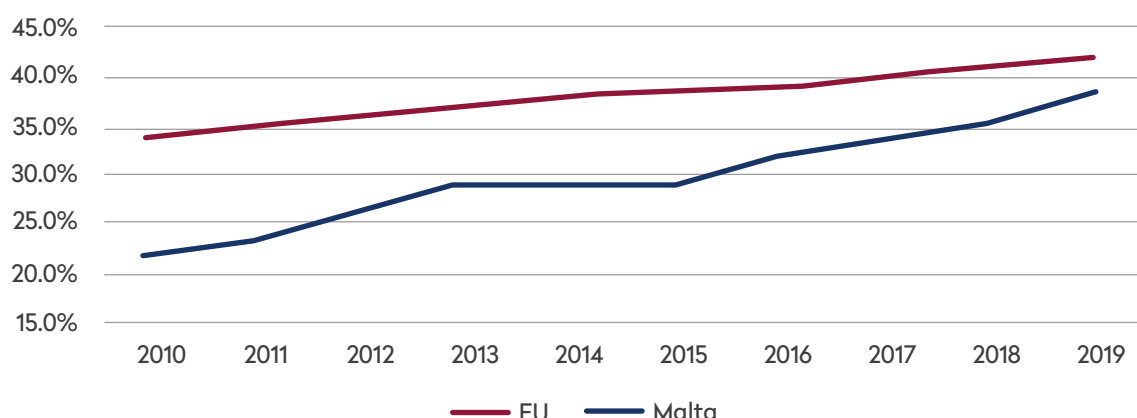


Figure 5: Tertiary Educational Attainment²⁷

Adult participation in learning stood at 11.9% in 2019. This rate is up from 10.9% the previous year. In 2003, this percentage was trailing far behind other Member States at 4.2%.

TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT - PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION AGED 30 TO 34

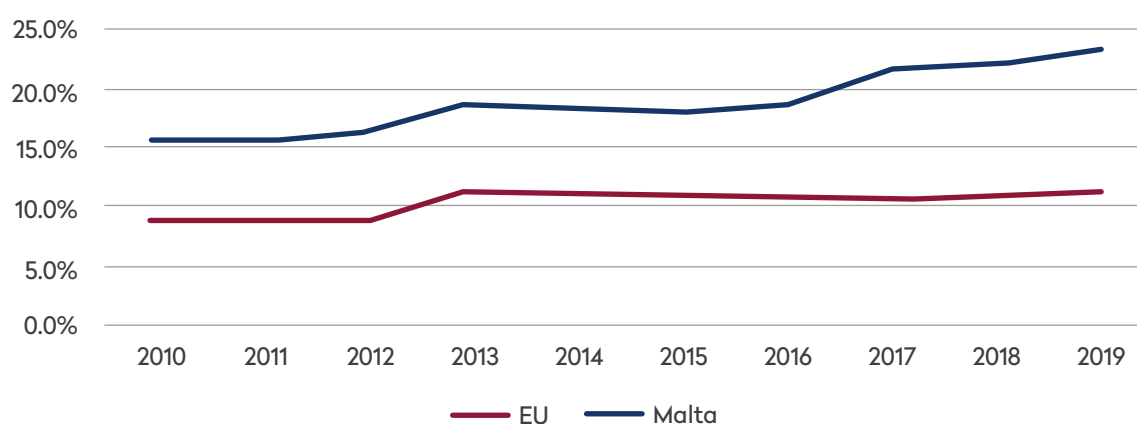


Figure 6: Adult Learning²⁸

Malta's employment rate of recent graduates in 2019 stood at 93.4%²⁹, while young people aged 15-24 neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) was at 7.9% in 2019, below the EU's average of 12.5%³⁰.

Lifelong learning is also a core objective for the Government in compounding a holistic approach fit to reach the nation's objectives in education. An increase in adult learning initiatives was ushered in as a result of Malta's Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020.³¹ As a means to incentivise widespread lifelong learning, subsidised courses are offered, ranging from the provision of basic skills to continuous professional development by way of heralding inclusion. One case in point is the Training Pays Scheme, which aims to encourage individuals to participate in lifelong learning by offering assistance in the form of a training grant to aid participants with costs relating to training. To this end, low skilled workers can attain the basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills necessary to become more competitive individuals.

27 Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_04_20&plugin=1

28 Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_04_60&plugin=1

29 Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_04_50&plugin=1

30 Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=sdg_08_20&plugin=1

31 Strategy available at: <https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf>

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability within MEDE, is the largest provider of adult learning programmes, with courses carried out across 7 adult learning centres, 35 Local Councils and in 17 NGOs. 7687 learners have enrolled for Lifelong Learning Courses offered by the adult learning centres in 2018/2019. These actions are instrumental for the achievement of SDGs 4, 8 and 10.

Further to this and in line with Government policies and educational frameworks, the Institute for Education ensures that the current supply and prospective educators have access to flexible academic and practical training. Since 2017, the Institute has been offering several accredited stand-alone courses and short programmes to support the continuous professional development of educators. A number of Bachelor and Master of Education programmes adopting a blended-learning approach which were launched in 2018 were further taken up in 2019. Subject areas offered included: Primary Education, Agribusiness, Hospitality, Humanities and Physical Education. Since then, the Institute has developed additional subjects for specialisation including: Engineering Technology, Fashion and Textiles, English, Sciences, Social Studies, European Studies and Religious Education.

In recent years Malta has invested in educators for inclusive education and training frameworks enhancing their capacity building to cater for students with special needs. Both the FSWS and the National School Support Services (NSSS) carry out specific training for their employees to improve services in areas related to disability. Moreover, the Institute for Education provides training modules on Disability in general, and also on specific themes such as Autism.

DLAP has for the last few years promoted among local schools a broad vision of Global Education that supports students and educators gain deeper understanding of current and future global issues and engage in initiatives that also promote social sustainability towards a more inclusive, equitable, harmonious and just society. Efforts in this regard are taken through a number of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) programmes and projects in collaboration with NGOs such as Global Education Network Europe (GENE), Eco-Schools, Dinja Wahda (One World), Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE), and Learning about Forests.

DLAP in collaboration with GENE coordinated a 16-hour training course across a number of sessions between February and April in relation to GE. The course, 'Introduction to GE', was organised for educators across all cycles and sections and school Senior Management Teams. A second GENE-funded training module entitled: Global Education for Social Justice was commenced in November 2019.

The first phase of the GENE school-based projects initiative was completed by the end of the 2018/2019 scholastic year, with participating schools presenting their project outputs in June 2019. During these projects initiative schools took an active role in GENE by planning and implementing school-based projects addressing one or more of the following themes to strengthen Global and Development Education: Human Rights, Global Citizenship, Multiculturalism and Interculturality and Peace and Conflict Prevention. Phase 2 of the project will be launched soon and project implementation shall take place over two scholastic years, specifically 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. Like in Phase 1, each project will be allocated GENE funding for its implementation.

ENHANCING SKILLS

During 2019 the National Skills Council (NSC) continued with its efforts to establish a qualitative base in the process of understanding the skills mismatch being perceived by industry. In 2018, NSC proposed a development in its organisational structure to include a Skills Assessment unit that will focus on trying to establish a national framework for this important issue. Subsequently NSC announced that it was drafting a National Skills Strategy that will be aligned to the Digital and Artificial Skills Strategy and in 2019 the National eSkills Strategy³² was launched by the eSkills Malta Foundation. This strategy identifies individual transversal skills that need to be integrated into education and training.

Apprenticeship initiatives also feature heavily in the endeavours of MEDE. Linking

32

Strategy available at: https://eskills.org.mt/en/nationaleskillsstrategy/Documents/National_eSkills_strategy.pdf

education to industry has been a well-established practice in providing high quality training and streamlining education to make it as relevant to the industry as possible; thereby reducing skills mismatches. In general, all industry partners on work-based learning are active as they provide numerous work-based learning opportunities to MCAST students. Nevertheless, the sector of engineering is the most active because of labour market requirements. MCAST is also ensuring that apprenticeships are provided in the growing sectors. In fact, in 2019, MCAST launched a new suite of MQF Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships in Biomedical Engineering, Construction Engineering, Software Development, Multimedia Software Development, Computer Systems and Networks and Fashion. These are sectors in need of skilled people. NSC has also analysed the market's needs, its citizens' general collective skills and conducted regular business encounters by way of targeting better education.

'My Journey' constitutes a new direction also including vocational and applied subjects as a tangible measure to reduce early school leavers and, potentially, increase tertiary education attainment. 'My Journey' is being heralded as a driver for inclusion and equitable education for all students which makes it relevant to SDG 4 by way of economically involving individuals who previously would have potentially left school. As of September 2019, through the My Journey - achieving through different paths reform, secondary school students can choose from blended learning streams of academic, vocational and applied subjects in addition to the core curriculum. The reform involves moving away from a 'one size fits all' education system to a more inclusive and equitable one. The aim is to respond to different education needs and give parity of esteem to general, vocational and applied qualifications. My Journey seeks to promote increased links between education and industry. Close cooperation between schools and workplaces assures the currency of subject learning outcomes, provides real-life work environments thus warranting the assimilation of the aims of work life, establishes fruitful relationships with companies and facilitates the learning of entrepreneurship competencies.

Addressing the skills of the influx of migrants in Malta is also in line with this approach and is an important milestone for the Government and indeed the economy. Lifelong learning accredited courses are available to both Maltese and non-Maltese nationals and the Maltese and English languages are taught as foreign languages. It is the objective of MEDE, in its provision of courses, to provide quality education aimed at upskilling the workforce, cultural integration, and fostering an inquisitive and critical outlook towards learning new skills. Moreover, the Jobsplus training centre offers training courses pegged to the National Qualification Framework to all jobseekers, inactive persons and employed individuals residing in Malta including migrants and asylum seekers. Contribution through such measures is instrumental for the achievement of SDGs 4, 8 and 10.

JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

SDG 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

SDG 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

SDG 16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

SDG 16.B Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

JUSTICE REFORM

In line with the Venice Commission recommendations of 2018 as well as of 2019 and in order to improve the quality, efficiency and independence of the national Justice system, the Government of Malta has embarked upon a very ambitious project intended to reform the national Justice system.

In order to create more administrative autonomy from the Government in the provision of court services, Government has in 2019 established the Court Services Agency through Legal Notice 197 of 2019³³, in order to enable the building of a stronger structure which permits certain decisions to be taken without any bureaucracy thereby ensuring efficiency in the national Court system. Each Judge in the Civil Courts has been assigned an experienced full-time lawyer chosen by the judiciary itself, with the duty of assisting the Judge in the drafting of judgments (an average of 3 different judgements per week); writing memoranda on pending lawsuits and assisting the Judge in the drafting of court orders.

As a horizontal approach, persons with low-income are assisted and given the necessary contribution through the Legal Aid Malta Agency. The Agency ensures the provision of assistance to low-income people who are unable to

afford legal representation and access to the court system. Legal aid is important in providing access to justice by ensuring equality before the law, the right to counsel and the right to a fair trial to indigent people. It is central in giving equality before the law in a democratic society.

Following the establishment of the Office of the State Advocate on the 18 December 2019 the Office of the Attorney General became exclusively an independent Public Prosecution Service. The Office of the Attorney General prosecutes cases before the Superior Courts, namely the Criminal Court and the Court of Criminal Appeal and supervises cases before the Court of Magistrates as a Court of Criminal Inquiry. The Attorney General is the country's Public Prosecutor before the Criminal Court and the Court of Criminal Appeal.

The Office of the State Advocate was set up on 18 December 2019 and took the advisory functions that used to be performed by the Attorney General. The State Advocate is the advisor to Government and acts as Agent before the European Court of Human Rights. The Office of the State Advocate appears for Government in the Superior Courts in its civil and constitutional criminal jurisdiction, as a Court of Appeal or Constitutional Court, and before the Court of Magistrates in Malta and Gozo.

THE LAW COURTS

Court User Satisfaction Surveys continue to be undertaken on an annual basis, using the Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) methodology whilst addressing the main themes outlined by the EU Justice Scoreboard. In 2019, the judiciary and the court assistants were the selected population. Such an analysis enables the Ministry for Justice, the Judiciary and the Court Services Agency, to adopt a more strategic approach to enhancing the efficiency and quality of the justice system, as well as to inform policy.

Apart from this, a legislative amendment amending the Constitution of Malta is currently being discussed at Cabinet of Ministers level whereby judges and magistrates will be appointed by the President of the Republic of Malta, acting in accordance with the recommendation made by the Judicial Appointments Committee – who's composition will also be amended. Through this same legislative amendment, in line with the Venice Commission recommendations, the selection of the judiciary would be subject to the discretion of a committee composed of a majority of the judiciary's own peers. The Chief Justice will also be appointed in the same manner as Judges and Magistrates. This system will eliminate the possibility of having candidates appointed directly by the Government or the Government vetoing a candidate.

The removal of members of the judiciary is currently also being discussed at Cabinet of Ministers level. Through a possible legislative amendment amending the Constitution of Malta, this procedure will be undertaken by the President of the Republic, acting on the advice of the Commission for the Administration of Justice.

COMBATING FRAUD AND CYBERCRIME

The Critical Infrastructure Protection Directorate (CIP) is the agency responsible for mitigating cybercrime. It works directly with the Malta Police Force and other agencies like banks to ensure that potential threats are mitigated. The Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) Malta within CIP was established to set up systems to mitigate cybercrime for all critical infrastructure in Malta and Gozo. It also involved training for major government entities in risk and incident response. During 2019, the implementation of 2017 and 2018 work related to CSIRT laid the groundwork for the establishment of this unit.

During 2019, the Malta Police Force has been awarded a project, which was also commenced, of €250,000 (through the SRSS fund) directly by the European Commission for the auditing of its own entity in order to effect change, enforce human resources and develop policies. The project focuses on the following criteria:

- Central and local administration
- e-Government systems
- Management of human resources
- Better regulation
- Anti-corruption and anti-fraud strategies
- Anti-money-laundering strategies

The project is being implemented with the support of European Union experts. It will contribute directly towards Malta's efforts to achieve SDG 16.

3

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT



The concept of sustainable development has made society conscious and aware of the role and importance of environmental factors. Through its various measures and initiatives the Maltese Government is committed to continue the transition towards a green economy, sustainable use of natural resources and energy efficiency.

During 2019 work on the development of a National Strategy for the Environment (NSE), led by ERA, continued. A Scenario Panel was established by ERA for representatives from all Ministries to contribute to the development of the Strategy. The work of the Panel involved forward looking discussions to oversee scenario building exercises that will ultimately lead to the NSE's Vision.

Participation in UN level meetings continued especially in those addressing key horizontal environmental issues with attendance at the Committee on Environmental Policy under the auspice of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). This meeting covered topics, such as:

- sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs;
- environmental performance in UNECE region countries including topics on circular economy, waste management and biodiversity related issues; and
- mainstreaming gender equality across environmental policy sector

In 2019 Malta has seen a surge in awareness related to environmental themes and sustainability. This has led to a positive chain reaction with the public being more receptive to policy action in favour of a transition towards a better and more sustainable future for all. The Government continued to invest in incentives for the production and promotion of high quality local agricultural produce as well as measures to protect biological diversity and marine life. These policies and measures are linked to a number of SDGs namely SDGs 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

2030 AGENDA RELATED GOALS



CLIMATE CHANGE

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Climate change governance is about the level of decarbonisation to be achieved by whom, and by when, and the entire set of systems and mechanisms that will control decision making. The adoption of the Climate Action Act³⁴ in 2015 was an important milestone in climate policy in Malta, providing a solid legislative basis for action by all concerned. This Act ensures horizontalisation of climate action across the Government policy making functions. It is worth noting that a number of Ministries are also represented at the Climate Action Board, which Board is formed under the auspices of the Climate Action Act.

Lately, the Government's line of action was characterised by a movement towards more climate action in the wake of international events culminating in the Conference of Parties (COP25) in Madrid in December 2019. This has led for the adoption of a Climate Emergency Declaration by the Maltese Parliament which re-emphasised the need to mainstream climate action in all strategies and policies and to take necessary mitigation action whilst increasing adaptive capacity. The latter will take place within the framework of a national decarbonisation strategy: The Low Carbon Development Strategy with a time horizon till 2050. In fact, 2019 saw the elaboration of tools that will enable the finalisation of this strategy in 2020. This will include measures to mitigate and adapt horizontally across sectors of the economy, not least the energy, transport and the building sectors which are amongst those contributing mostly to Malta's GHG emissions. To achieve its scope, the Strategy aims to create the appropriate governance framework through which Malta is able to react to the anticipated climate change scenarios that are likely to test its resilience at least up to 2050. This is in line with achieving SDG 13.

Throughout 2019, the Government also continued to provide support to vulnerable countries through the provision of scholarships, to promote the building of human capacity in climate action. Annual contributions to the Green Climate Fund were also made.

In 2019, the ERA within the then MESDC participated in a Citizen Science Project, where diffusion tubes were installed in 25 schools in Malta and Gozo, monitoring Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). The aim of this project was to raise awareness and have a better understanding of the NO₂ levels (mostly affected by traffic) in the schools and their surroundings.

When it comes to education, the end of scholastic year 2018/2019 saw eight pilot schools completing a pilot project related to the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Programme implementation in the local context. GLOBE is a worldwide community of students, teachers, scientists, and citizens working collaboratively in data collection to facilitate, sustain, and improve the Earth system and global environment. Students within these schools participated in atmospheric data collection, readings from which were inputted in the GLOBE database. Additionally, year 6 classes involved in the pilot project also completed a GLOBE field campaign addressing the Urban Heat Island Effect. The participating students also compiled related project posters covering various aspects pertaining to their investigation, including method, results, interpretation and conclusions. These project posters will be showcased during future GLOBE events in the local context.

CLEAN ENERGY

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

During the period under review, the Ministry for Energy and Water Management and EWA in cooperation with relevant stakeholders and Ministries, continued to work on the finalisation of the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)³⁵ covering the period 2021-2030, whilst taking into account the European Commission recommendations, in line with the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union proposal. The Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee set up in

34 Act available at: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=12336&l=1>

35 Final National Energy and Climate Plan available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11nQdlwQghCXKjrKl-G9V6xSlvOfDZz0q/view>

2017 to oversee the drafting process continued to meet regularly during 2018 and 2019. Malta's Final National Energy and Climate Plan was submitted to the Commission by the deadline established by the Governance Regulation of 31 December 2019.

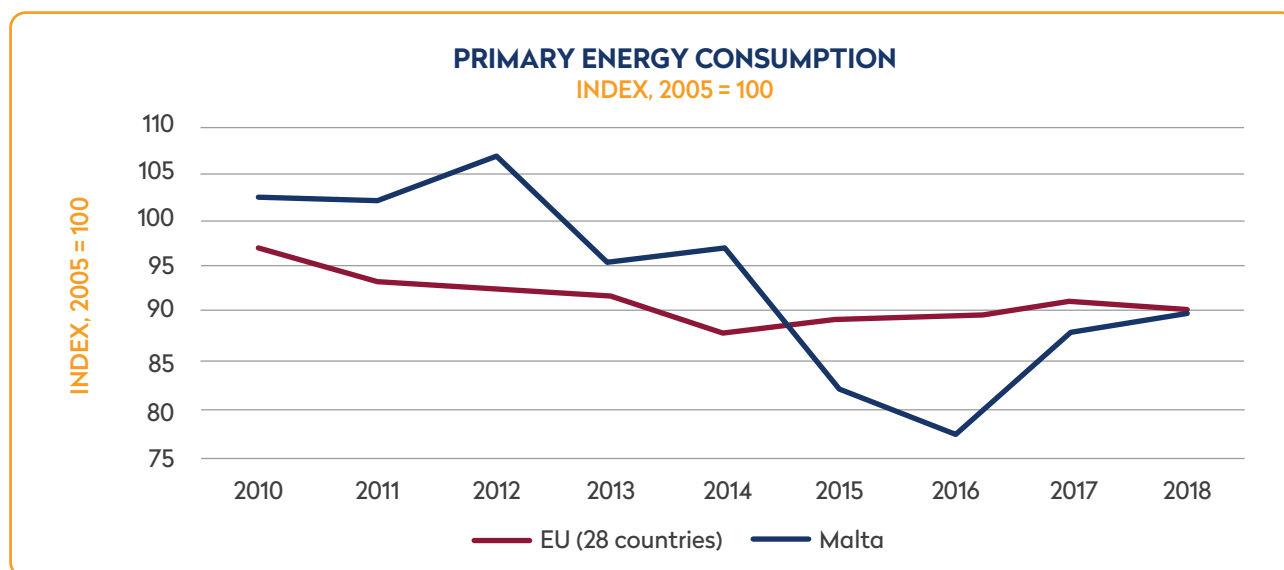


Figure 7: Primary Energy Consumption³⁶

Moreover, during 2019, as part of the 5th Dimension of the Energy Union Strategy, required to be covered by the NECP, EWA started developing a sector specific R&I strategy in the fields of both energy and water. This will guide the direction of Government support for R&I activities in these two sectors over the upcoming decade.

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

SDG 7.1 By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services. SDG 7.2 By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. SDG 7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.

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

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

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND OTHER SCHEMES

Malta has a target to increase its share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by 2020 to 10%. The highest contribution towards Malta's renewable energy target for 2020 is expected to come from solar photovoltaics systems (PVs), followed by solar water heaters, heat pumps and biofuels.

During 2019, as part of Malta's revised National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) published in May 2017, which incorporates new priorities, projects and initiatives put forward for the energy sector, the Government continued to implement a number of initiatives to further exploit renewable energy sources. To start with, the Government extended grant schemes on the purchase of solar water heaters (SWHs) (grant of 50% of the eligible costs up to Euro 700) and roof insulation and double glazing (maximum Euro 1,000 per dwelling) and extended the Feed-in Tariffs to promote the purchase of PVs. Moreover, a heat pump water heater scheme has been included (maximum Euro 700 per applicant). This scheme is now further extended to 31 December 2020 or until funds are exhausted. The roof insulation and double-glazing scheme was also extended.³⁷ These initiatives are contributing significantly in the progress towards the achievement of SDGs 7, 9 and 13.

³⁶ Data available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=sdg_07_10&language=en
³⁷ Detailed information on these schemes available at: <https://www.rews.org.mt/#/en/pal/69>

Moreover, in February 2019, a new scheme for PVs was launched (similar to the old scheme) and this was governed by Government Notice 193 of 2019. This scheme terminated at the end of the year. For this new PV scheme, there were a total of 314 beneficiaries till January 2020.

In 2019, the PA published the Solar Farms Policy, to support the implementation of Government policy for the EU2020 targets by providing spatial planning parameters for their development.

Malta's contribution to the EU's 2030 renewable energy target will require the extension of current policies and measures and the development of new initiatives tailored to local developments. These are outlined in Malta's Final NECP. The Government intends to extend its current policy framework to cover the period from 2021-2030 and adopt new measures, where appropriate, and with consideration to the national specificities, with the goal of increasing the share of renewable energy sources.

PROVISION OF ELECTRICITY

For the past years, Malta's electricity generation mix has shifted towards gas, in order to reduce the carbon footprint whilst ensuring secure, sustainable and affordable energy supply. In fact, Malta transformed this sector through an energy mix which has at its core two gas-fired power plants, an electricity interconnector linking Malta to the European grid, a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility, gasoil-fired backup generation capacity and around 150 MWp of PV installations.

The Government remained committed to work actively on the development and implementation of the Melita TransGas Pipeline (MTGP) which will connect Malta to the European Gas Network in Sicily. The MTGP gas pipeline project, which can be designed to be hydrogen ready, is expected to increase Malta's competitiveness by promoting the further integration of the internal energy market. The project also contributes to have a more reliable and more secure energy supply and contributes to the reduction of emissions from the shipping sector. Following kick-off work towards the end of 2018, the Investment Request was submitted to the Maltese and Italian Regulatory Authorities in April 2019. The coordinated Cross-Border Cost Allocation Decision was issued in June 2019. The incremental capacity procedure, aiming to the long-term commitment of the potential shippers, has been launched jointly with the Italian Transmission System Operator (TSO) in 2 July 2019 as per EU Regulation 2017/459. The non-binding demand indications were published on 21 October 2019. The work on its development remained ongoing throughout 2019.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Malta submitted its National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP 2017), in line with Directive 2012/27/EU to the European Commission in April 2017. This plan takes note of the various actions taken at national level and reviews the indicative 2020 national target notified to the EU Commission, and the actions necessary to achieve the mandatory cumulative end-use energy savings target. Malta's indicative national efficiency target for 2020 was submitted in terms of primary energy consumption. Notwithstanding this, in view of the current economic situation whereby there is an increased net migration, increased tourist arrivals and increased labour force, Malta's ambition is best presented in terms of energy intensity levels.

During the year under review, the Energy and Water Agency has carried on with policy implementation targeting energy efficiency. The scheme launched in 2016 between EWA and the Malta Business Bureau (MBB), where enterprises are encouraged to enter into a voluntary agreement to implement various energy efficient measures, was continued during 2019. The aim of this project is to bring about an improvement in energy efficiency, promote energy awareness within SMEs and non-SMEs and to generate needed data and information to inform policy decisions and actions. Such actions contribute towards the achievement of Malta's energy efficiency target. By September 2019, 25 enterprises signed the Voluntary Agreement. This is approximately 35% of the enterprises that are obliged to perform an energy audit under Article 8 (4) of the Energy Efficiency Directive. Also, MBB's cooperation continued in the final quarter of 2019 with a number of detailed interviews executed in 30 manufacturing enterprises to assess the relevance of 'energy consumption' within these enterprises.



In order to ensure that enterprises are equipped with the necessary expertise which can guide them to identify areas of improvement, the set up for the energy auditor certification, guidance for the implementation of energy audits by non-SMEs and a quality verification system for energy audits by non-SMEs was sustained throughout the year under review. To date, as a result of the energy auditor and energy manager courses, there are 93 registered energy auditors and 11 registered energy managers. In parallel, EWA launched a scheme to address energy audits in SMEs. Through this scheme SMEs were encouraged to carry out an energy audit, which identifies energy efficiency improvement areas within the enterprise's operation, whilst benefitting from a grant of up to Euro 5,000.

On the commercial end, the Government has been carrying out regular energy efficiency audits for a good number of large companies in order to propose remedial action for the companies to save on their electricity and water consumption which in turn results in lower company bills. All of these measures were designed in conjunction with Malta's commitment towards introducing Nearly Zero Emission (NZE) Buildings. The aim is to maximise the consumption of resources, such as electricity and water, in an era of ever-increasing demand for development.

The Energy and Water Agency also focused on the household sector. A publicity campaign was launched to promote the scheme which identifies vulnerable households to carry out free of charge energy audits and, if merited, replace their most inefficient appliances with new models. This scheme allows families to reduce consumption costs and generate savings which count towards Malta's energy efficiency targets. From its inception till end of 2019, a total of 2,782 household visits have been carried out. Furthermore, during 2019, new appliances continued to be distributed. The target is to distribute all 375 appliances by end of March 2020. Additionally, an exercise to compare consumption before and after the change of appliances is currently being carried out.

The Government of Malta is committed to lead by example in order to promote energy efficiency and achieve energy savings. During 2019, Government continued with the implementation of the partially EU-funded project "Retrofitting of Street Lighting in Arterial and Distributor Roads in Malta with Energy Efficient LED Luminaries". This project is nearing completion and is expected to reduce energy consumption by approximately 1,600MWh annual primary energy and GHG emissions by about 640 tonnes.

Throughout 2019, the Ministry for Gozo (MGOZ) has commenced works related to the upgrading and retrofitting of the Administration Centre in Victoria, Gozo, after having successfully obtained the necessary EU funds in the previous year. The works being carried out include replacement of single-glazed apertures to double glazed, waterproofing membrane for roof insulation and the application of acrylic paint to all areas. In order to ensure the safety of the employees and service continuity while works were being undertaken, a detailed employee relocation plan was devised. Works are expected to be continued throughout 2020. Once the relevant works are completed it is envisaged that an estimated 123.59 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) equivalent shall be displaced annually as a result of the corresponding decrease in power consumption.

A number of premises pertaining to the MFIN commenced a refurbishment process whilst some others have recently been completed. In these refurbishment projects energy efficient methods are being applied as much as possible in line with the stipulated guidelines and regulations.

In the recent years, Enemalta plc embarked on an extensive program to ensure an efficient distribution system that minimises losses operating the system in an efficient manner. This included the upgrade and expansion of major nodes of the national electricity network to improve the quality of service. Enemalta plc has also installed 99% of its consumers with smart meters and has adopted a tariff system that favours prudent energy use and energy efficiency, with the aim of fostering such behaviour in its final consumers.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Solid waste management is interlinked to a number of SDGs in particular SDG 11, and SDG 12 amongst others. The Waste Management Plan for the Maltese Islands 2014 – 2020, which is now approaching expiration, represents the Government's vision in this sector through a resource efficiency approach, with its main aim being that of moving waste management up the hierarchy. In 2019, the then MESDC started the development process of the upcoming Waste Management Plan 2021 – 2030, which focuses on the transition to a more circular economy. It places a large focus on waste prevention by Government, industry, citizens and tourists, aligning with SDG 12, as well as the development of new infrastructure and schemes for the sustainable management of waste, supporting SDG 11.

Through the effective use of the EU Cohesion Funds (2014–2020), Malta is currently implementing different projects, such as the set-up of a Waste-to-Energy facility to help accelerate the process of turning waste into a resource and a Mechanical Biological Treatment Facility to treat organic waste. Additionally, Malta is in the process of developing a Multi-Material Recovery Facility, which will enable the gathering of different waste streams for preparation and storage for eventual reutilisation and export of waste, reducing the amounts channelled towards landfilling, while further funds will be addressed for the rehabilitation of a former landfill.

In 2019, the then MESDC led Malta's replication of an EU-LIFE project on sustainable food and food waste called 'TRiFOCAL,' supporting SDG target 12.3 to halve per capita global food waste by 2030. The project involved awareness-raising via social media and public outreach at events to promote healthy and sustainable eating, food waste prevention and food waste recycling. TRiFOCAL also included a pilot project of separation and collection of food waste from selected catering establishments which saw almost 3 tonnes of food waste diverted from landfill and processed by Wasteserv into renewable energy.

2019 also saw the finalisation and evaluation of the Don't Waste Waste awareness-raising campaign by the then MESDC, Wasteserv and ERA which aimed to encourage the general public to contribute in reducing the generation of waste; to reuse resources beyond their primary use and to recycle waste.

The first full year of the nationwide separate kerbside collection of organic waste was completed in October 2019, with 27,358 tonnes of food waste collected from households, diverted from landfill and converted into renewable energy. The ongoing development of commercial waste separation legislation will further improve Malta's sustainable waste management.

2019 also saw the launch of the Sort it out campaign aimed at achieving a behavioural change in the Maltese community, resulting in household waste being separated correctly at source, whilst besides the distributed organic container, four additional bins were distributed for free, coloured differently to indicate different types of waste.

Moreover, the Maltese Government issued the Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2020–2030³⁸ in May 2019, just before the Directive 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment was brought into force. This Strategy aims at providing a holistic approach to tackle the issue in a local context. Such Strategy includes both soft and non-soft measures on each of the ten most polluting plastic items, including plastic bottles, cigarettes filters, cotton bud stick, amongst others. These measures will aim at reducing single use plastic products, as well as, increase the quality and quantity of such waste collected for recycling.

In order to reduce the use of plastic containers utilised for bottling water, MFIN and Financial Services has also launched a grant, whereby applicants can benefit from a grant on purchasing and installation of water purify equipment.

In summer 2019, there was also the launch of the 'Saving our Blue' campaign, which included numerous stakeholders from the private sector and NGOs. This campaign raised awareness on the benefits of re-usable bottles at beach; the need to avoid single use plastic cups, bags and plastic straws, as well as, packaging products and encouraged the consumption of re-usable or more environmentally friendly material such as organic material. Malta also encouraged the appropriate disposal of products, such as cigarette butts, as well as, stimulated alternative consumption patterns by inspiring consumers to choose alternative products. Given the success of the campaign, Malta is further working for continuing such activity, while expanding its scope to supermarkets and beaches.

WATER CONSERVATION

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

SDG 6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

One of the most essential resources for our country, as in all other countries, is water. With an ever growing population, water demand in the Maltese Islands can only remain on the rise. In 2015 it was estimated that local water demand was around two times the volume that could be sustainably sourced from Malta's natural water resources. Moreover, Malta's geographical position gives rise to a chronic unavailability of water resources, mainly due to the semi-arid climatic conditions, which prevail in the southern Mediterranean region, and these natural conditions will be exacerbated due to climate change. The combination of all these factors further strengthens the need for water resources to be used effectively and efficiently in all water using sectors to ensure that we can meet such demand.

In view of these natural and socio-economic conditions, sustainable water management is of utmost importance and management of this sector under conditions of water scarcity calls for the development of innovative approaches. In this respect, Malta's 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan advocates the broadening of the national water resource base, including through the development of non-conventional water resources such as water reuse, thus ensuring security of supply achieved through the conjunctive use of different water resources.

In this context, during the period under review, work continued on the development of Malta's non-conventional water resources "New Water" programme. Infrastructural works were undertaken to rehabilitate the reservoirs in the South of Malta and on the extension of the distribution network in the North and South of the island. Currently New Water is being produced by three polishing plants and provides an alternative resource for agricultural irrigation, thus contributing to achieving sustainable water use outcomes, in good part by reducing abstraction of groundwater. These plants treat wastewater at a tertiary level with a potential production capacity of around 7 million m³ of highly polished reclaimed water.

Monitoring for selected chemical substances in water was also already carried out as required under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Moreover, monitoring processes are currently being developed in relation to chemicals of emerging concern (CECs) as part of the actions of LIFE 16 IPE MT 008. As part of this action, Malta is identifying the CECs which are relevant to our waters and will be monitoring their presence in the environment in order to better inform their regulation. Furthermore, through the process of environmental permitting, air and water quality is ensured through the stipulation of conditions aimed at controlling emissions to air and water and hence ensuring minimal impacts on the environment.



During 2019, work also continued on the National Campaign for Water Conservation. In the beginning of September, the campaign, 'Water – Be the Change', was officially launched. This campaign addresses all consumers and delivers an effective educational and awareness raising campaign on the optimised and efficient use of water resources. The campaign will run for a period of three years targeting the domestic, commercial and agricultural sectors.

During this year, work also continued on another project undertaken by EWA, which deals with the optimisation of the monitoring capacity and the development of the structure necessary to enable a reliable assessment of the quantitative and qualitative status of all water resources in Malta. The information acquired from this monitoring network will amongst other, provide the information necessary to enable the optimised implementation of future water management measures as well as a campaign to get the public to be sensitive to the challenges related to water resources.

When it comes to public awareness, in April the GHAJN Centre hosted an informative and educational week on how water conservation can be improved at the national level. Furthermore, the Chadwick Lakes regeneration project, of which EWA is also responsible, progressed significantly. Once completed, this project will reinstate storage capacity of existing dams while restoring the valley's ecology. The storage areas, which will be refilled by rainwater, will eventually provide the agricultural sector in the Chadwick Lakes area with an alternative source to groundwater. Also, the upper area will be rehabilitated into an educational area and trekking trail, providing visitors with an educational experience on the important hydro-ecological role of valley systems in the Maltese islands.

EWA in collaboration with the HSBC Water Programme, continued the corporate social responsibility initiative, which provides training to employees in the corporate sector on how they can improve sustainability in their workplace, with a specific focus on water as well as energy use. In addition, Government once again extended the scheme with regard to the restoration of domestic cisterns, to further encourage the harvesting and use of rainwater in the domestic sector.

The Water Services Corporation (WSC), continued with the implementation of the Euro 130 Million major project titled 'Towards a Net Zero-Impact Utility' which is partly funded by the EU. This consists of a number of large separate projects each contributing to substantially increasing the quality of tap water, reduce carbon emissions, increase efficiencies and safeguard Malta's groundwater resources. This project is crucial for the improvement in both the quality of drinking water for Maltese citizens and the quality of second-class water to be used by the agricultural sector in Malta. Works carried out in 2019 in relation to this major project include:

- Restructuring works to improve the performance in terms of energy efficiency and production capacity, of Malta's Reverse Osmosis Plants in Pembroke, Ċirkewwa and Lapsi. Some of these works were initiated in 2018.
- The construction of a new Reverse Osmosis Plant at an already committed site at Hondoq Ir-Rummien, Gozo was commenced. Once ready this Plant will produce up to 9,000 cubic metres per day and ensure self-sufficiency in water production for the island.
- Excavations works started on the boring of a 9.5km 3m wide underground tunnel to convey water from the Reverse Osmosis Plant in Pembroke to the Ta' Qali Reservoirs. Through this component, WSC will refine its water-blending and provide drinking water of a uniform quality across Malta, as well as increasing energy efficiency by reducing pumping frictional losses.
- Works on the extension of the New Water distribution network to reach more farmers. The works were carried out to extend the network both to the North and South of Malta.
- In terms of sustainability, the WSC also continued with its work to commission two new solar farms on the roof of unused reservoirs in Qrendi and Ta' Ċenċ, Gozo, which are expected to guarantee a total supply of 1,920,000 kWh of annual alternative energy each for a period of 25 years.
- The Corporation has embarked on a project to implement a wider spatial distribution of groundwater extraction which will permit the reactivation of boreholes and reduce the exploitation of others, improving the quality and blending potential of this naturally occurring resource. Furthermore, a project to optimise in real-time the blending of seawater RO and groundwater is also in the pipeline. This project is intended to improve drinking water quality and minimise production and distribution costs.
- MGOZ continued with its participation in the LIFE IPE 16 MT 008 Project. Throughout 2019 there was the planning for the implementation of Concrete Action C.6 "Demonstration Site for the Application of New Water Resources – Gozo". This action will be implemented in three stages:

- the construction of a bi-partisan reservoir for the storage of New Water and groundwater;
- the necessary infrastructure and pumping equipment for efficient irrigation of different sections of the farm; and
- trials to demonstrate the safe use of New Water relative to groundwater and rainwater for crop irrigation.

Furthermore, as part of the refurbishment and embellishment of the outdoor landscaped area pertaining MFIN an underground water reservoir for the collection of rainwater was included, which will eventually be utilised to irrigate the plants and trees.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

The National Agricultural Policy³⁹ (NAP) for the Maltese Islands 2018–2028 is a 10 year plan which was earmarked to steer the agricultural sector into a more sustainable direction by providing the means along which it can develop and flourish, whilst remaining within the parameters of the Common Agricultural Policy and other pertinent regulations. It aims at providing a clear direction to all relevant stakeholders ranging from public entities involved with certification, permitting and decision making to private entities directly involved in the agricultural scenario who intend to invest or diversify their business.

In order to achieve the vision, the following six strategic objectives have been identified:

- Food presentation, labelling and traceability
- Consolidation of land holdings
- Sustaining water and key resources
- Competitiveness and diversification
- Adaptation to and mitigation of geo-climatic conditions
- Research and development

Seventy policy measures have been developed from a set of four operational objectives, based on economic, social regeneration, resources, and governance aspects. These measures, aiming towards increased sustainability in agriculture, are to be implemented throughout the 10-year timeline. During 2019 work on the implementation of the NAP was continued, focusing primarily on:

- Improving food presentation, labelling and traceability across all farming sectors;
- Competitiveness and diversification;
- Research and development.

As part of the promotion of quality food products, efforts are being made in promoting sustainable farming practices, in particular organic production. This promotion is aimed at the farming community to encourage the shift to sustainable agricultural practices through decreased farming inputs such as chemical pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. While yields from organic production tend to be lower, this sustainable practice plays a significant role in food security, enhancing biodiversity, and promoting ecosystem services in general, such as improving soil quality and organic matter. This measure will directly and indirectly support efforts to achieve SDGs 2, 3, 6, 13 and 15.

Work has also continued in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders on the establishment of a national gene bank for the ex-situ conservation of indigenous and endemic plants species (plant genetic resources) which are of importance to Malta.

Malta's Rural Development Programme 2014–2020⁴⁰, jointly implemented by the Managing Authority and the Agriculture and Rural Payments Agency (ARPA) sets out priority approaches and actions to achieve Malta's set agri-environmental-climate objectives. In order to achieve such objectives, financial support for farmers is provided through this programme to incentivise them to apply agricultural and farming practices which go over and above the

39 National Agricultural Policy available at: https://agriculture.gov.mt/en/agricultural_directorate/Documents/nationalAgriculturalPolicy/napFinal.pdf

40 Further information available at: <https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Pages/Rural%20Development%20Programme%20for%20Malta%202007-2013/The-Rural-Development-Programme-for-Malta-2014-2020.aspx>

mandatory baseline requirements. During the period under review, the following agri-environmental-climate measures committing farmers to apply these practices were undertaken:

- Control weeds in orchards and vineyards by mechanical, instead of chemical means
- Maintain recommended tree species planted on slopes and terraces, and those planted to replace invasive alien species
- Introduce bee boxes on holdings
- Implement an Integrated Pest Management Plan targeting vineyards and orchards
- Implement a Soil Management and Conservation Plan
- Integrate and maintain autochthonous Maltese plant species (carob and mulberry)

Furthermore, ARPA has also worked on the drafting and adoption of Legal Notice 99 of 2019⁴¹, which sets out the legal framework required for the setting up, recognition and registration of Farm Advisory Services. Such services provide technical advisory support to farmers, assisting them to satisfy their legal obligations pertaining to applicable legislation in the agricultural sector.

LAND ECOSYSTEMS AND THEIR SERVICES

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

SDG 15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species.

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

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

SDG 2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

Malta is implementing management measures within the terrestrial Natura 2000 sites, in line with the Conservation Orders and Management Plans. Management agreements are also in place for some Natura 2000 sites, with the aim to address conservation actions related to the control/removal of alien species, habitat restoration and to improve the conservation status of species within the sites. Furthermore, work has been ongoing in the identification and designation of new protected areas, including Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, which host important natural habitat types and species, to expand further the Natura 2000 network in the Maltese Islands.

In line with the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)⁴² and the requirements of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Malta drew up a National Action Plan on Desertification and Land Degradation in the Maltese Islands that covers the period 2019 – 2030⁴³. The main objectives of the proposed National Action Plan are:

- to develop long-term strategies to combat desertification, land degradation and the mitigation of the effects of drought, emphasising implementation;

41 Legal Notice available at: <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=29584&l=1>

42 Further information available at: <https://era.org.mt/en/Pages/NBSAP.aspx>

43 Further information available at: https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MSDEC/Pages/Consultations/MaltasProposedNationalActionPlanonDesertificationandLandDegradation.aspx

- to streamline and integrate the strategy with other policies, linked with biodiversity, climate change, soil, agriculture and land use, sustainable development and other relevant environmental policies;
- to identify the factors contributing to desertification and practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought;
- to specify the respective roles of government, local communities and land users and related resource needs

The National Strategy for Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in the Maltese Islands⁴⁴ consists of 25 recommendations intended for implementation between 2020 and 2025. Control or eradication of IAS (including IAS of EU concern) will remain priority, as part of the Malta's commitment towards the implementation of the terrestrial Natura 2000 Management Plans and Conservation Orders, and taking into consideration the EU Regulation on IAS.

Additionally, ERA embarked on both targeted ("hotspot") and "ad hoc" surveillance to detect new IAS of EU concern, as well as, to monitor present populations, verify reports submitted by citizens and assess success of control actions undertaken. A number of locations considered as the most likely introduction points (or sites already hosting some of the recorded IAS of the EU concern) were identified for periodical (seasonal, annual or following removal actions as relevant) surveys, to allow an early detection or monitor success of control actions.

ERA has also undertaken various communication, education and public awareness activities aimed at educating the general public on the risk and impacts caused by IAS. In this regard, various information material was produced and distributed to the general public and various stakeholders such included videos on TV and Facebook, presentations, media interviews, webpages, stand at festivals, lectures, amongst others. Additionally, official letters and IAS brochures were also sent to various pet shops and garden centres informing them on the restrictions and transitional provisions emanating from the EU IAS Regulations.

During 2019, joint work between the EcoGozo Directorate within MGOZ and ERA was carried out on the removal of invasive alien species *Pennisetum setaceum* from Gozo. Thirty inspections were held, resulting in the removal of this species from around forty different areas in Gozo, particularly around Ghajnsielem, Qala and Xaghra. Another twenty sites are currently being monitored to ensure these populations do not spread again.

SiMaSeed an Interreg project currently being carried out in Gozo involves the setting up of seed banks for the conservation of native plant species in Malta and Sicily. The tender for the Lab equipment was published in the end of 2019. The project will focus on the identification of priority species for conservation in Natura 2000 sites, the collection of seeds for seed bank storage, the development of germination protocols for selected species, the mass propagation of these species using in vitro and conventional methods and the reintroduction of the propagated species in selected intervention sites.

Throughout 2019 a series of projects to conserve and enhance Gozo's landscape commenced or continued to be undertaken. These projects consist of:

- The restoration of rubble walls along Marsalforn Road which aims to restore around 4,000 metres of rubble walls and to conserve approximately 24,000m³ of soil annually due to the reduction in the occurrence of run-off and field flooding. Where applicable, the retaining walls of this road will be built in a dry-wall manner to ensure an ideal habitat for insects and reptiles.
- The rehabilitation of Gozo's Valleys to enhance their rain capturing and soil retention capabilities. This project is an investment of over Euro10 million under the European Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014-2020.



During 2019 there was the publication of two tenders, one for project management and another for the building of rubble walls.

- Augmenting the rainwater capturing and soil retention of Gozo's valleys project. The aim of this project is to improve the soil retention capacity and the rainwater harvesting potential of the targeted areas at Ramla Valley, Marsalforn Valley and outside the limits of Santa Luċija. This proposed project falls under the European Rural Development Programme for Malta 2014–2020 and during the period under review the main tender for the execution of works was awarded.
- Establishment of a Walking, Jogging and Cycling Trail in Ulysses Grove, Xewkija, Gozo. Once completed this partially EU co-funded ERDF project shall contribute towards an increase in open and green spaces in Gozo.

Projects of upgrading and embellishment of public areas including the planting of more trees and flowering plants along with other landscaping works continued across the Maltese Islands. For instant, during the period under review there was the planting of 4500 new indigenous trees in Gozo notably għargħar (Sandarac Gum tree) and Harrub (Carob tree). In addition to this, a number of trees had to be relocated after being uprooted due to infrastructural projects being undertaken by MGOZ. One case in point was the relocation of palm trees from the Xlendi parking area to the Ulysses Grove in Xewkija.

These projects are crucial for the attainment of SDGs 2, 6 and 15.

THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT, FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

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

SDG 14.b Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

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

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

THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Throughout 2019 work at national level was continued on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive policy. The implementation of the marine monitoring programme enables information gathering which is used to address gaps and enable the updating of such policies and the initial assessment of environmental status throughout Malta's marine waters. The development of relevant Programme of Measures has ensured links with the MPAs designated to date whilst contributing to connectivity across MPAs.

Datasets on designated areas were further updated throughout 2019, and all data incorporated into the Common Database on Designated Areas (CDDA)⁴⁵ and the new environment Geoserver being developed by ERA during the same period. The Geoserver provides the backbone for the support of environmental assessment and information processes in relation to development and environmental permitting applications.

During the period under review there was the adoption of a legislation which gives additional regulatory functions to ERA. These regulatory functions include designation of areas for natural features, additional powers to issue Protection Notices, regulations pertaining to atmospheric pollutants, the control of invasive alien species and the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms. These regulatory functions all relate to the marine environment.

Monitoring of marine non-indigenous species including Invasive Alien Species in MPAs and “hotspot” areas was completed in 2019 through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund project being led by ERA. Actions will be taken to control the invasion of marine alien species (in particular their pathways). In fact, the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (2004) came into force on 8 September 2017. Further actions will be necessary to target the various pathways identified. Currently, Malta has participated in an exercise with the Joint Research Centre in quantifying pathways and such information will be used to inform future actions.

During 2019, a number of coastal and marine clean-ups were also organised in a bid to raise further awareness on the importance of marine protection.

The Interreg Med Project ‘BESS’ commenced its implementation during the period under review. The Project’s target is the monitoring of the small ‘pocket’ beaches in Malta and Sicily and the relative monitoring of the coastal erosions with respect to the particularities of these beaches. Partners include MGOZ, University of Malta, Università degli studi di Messina, Università degli studi di Palermo and Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia. MGOZ is responsible for the communication aspect and the scientific responsibility of the programme. To this end, throughout 2019 a series of communication and media related tasks were carried out by the project owners. In addition, the team also continued discussions with ERA regarding the permits for the installation of Cameras and costal monitoring equipment to be placed in Ramla, Gozo to monitor the impact of the waves on the sand line and the general movement of the sand.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

During 2019, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA) within the then MESDC worked on a number of projects targeting the achievement of sustainable development and the SDGs, in particular SDGs 14 and 15, within the fisheries sector.

The Data Collection Multi Annual Programme (DC-MAP) is instrumental to achieve sustainable development within fisheries. The fisheries data provided by the DC-MAP database is used to assess the health of fish stocks and the marine environment and meet EU’s objective of ensuring sustainable fisheries by 2020 at the latest. During the period under review work in this regard initiated in previous years was continued by DFA.

During 2019, DFA and ERA within the then MESDC continued their joint work on a number of ongoing projects from previous years. These projects were:

- LIFE BaħAR for Natura 2000
- MPAs Network Towards Sustainable Fisheries in the Central Mediterranean (MANTIS)
- MedSudMed “Assessment and Monitoring of the Fishery Resources and the Ecosystems in the Straits of Sicily”, a UN regional project with four participating countries (Italy, Libya, Malta and Tunisia)

LIFE BaħAR for Natura 2000 was an EU Life Project aimed at designating new Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) for the Maltese marine Natura 2000 network. Following its conclusion in 2018 the project continued to be monitored with an After-life conservation plan. This plan sets out targets and a strategy to be followed by ERA and the relevant stakeholders following project completion.

The MANTIS project was finalised in 2019. It is a review of the knowledge produced in previous national and EU funded projects on space-time dynamics of exploited living resources and on ecosystem approach to fisheries in the central Mediterranean. The project also investigated how networks of MPAs contribute towards sustainable fisheries in the Strait of Sicily.

The MedSudMed project supports various research activities related to the interaction between demersal and small pelagic fishery resources, and biotic and abiotic environmental factors. Amongst other activities, in 2019 Malta has contributed towards the assessment of the *Merluccius merluccius*, *Parapenaeus longirostris* and *Mullus barbatus* stocks.

A ‘Fishing for Litter Scheme’, aimed to collect plastic waste gathered by Trawling Vessels, was concluded in 2019. The scheme provided bottom trawl fishers with financial compensation for retrieving plastic from the sea whilst conducting their routine bottom trawl operations. The data collected from this project is currently being analysed and all results will be published in a scientific report.

Work on a project named Biotechnologies for Human Health and Blue Growth (BYTHOS) was also continued. The BYHTOS lab is a joint space set up in Sicily and Malta where researchers and experts in biotechnology, business and

industry meet together with local enterprises with the aim of increasing investment in innovation and research in biotechnology for human health and blue growth.

'HARMONY', is a joint Interreg Italia-Malta project between a number of Maltese and Sicilian partners. It focuses on seafloor integrity and the impacts of non-indigenous species on local marine ecosystem functioning in a cross-border context. The aim is to create a common framework between the two islands for the monitoring and control of invasive species, and joint strategies for the management of Natura 2000 sites and habitats. The project is expected to be concluded later in 2020.

The Aquaculture Directorate within the then MESDC is the main responsible body for setting and implementing national aquaculture policies, the Aquaculture Strategy for Malta 2014-2025⁴⁶ and conducting research to increase the sector's competitiveness. The Aquaculture Directorate, through its research activities, has continued its efforts to diversify the aquaculture sector. Amongst other initiatives which were already ongoing from previous years trials in the culture potential of an amphipod species as a live feed species were continued.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

KEY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS

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

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

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

SDG 3.6 By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents.

UPGRADING ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Malta's small size and high urban density pose significant challenges to the transport sector. A way of addressing such challenges is to further develop the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) core and comprehensive network, by supporting investment to address traffic bottlenecks and road congestion in road infrastructure whilst ensuring the optimisation of routes, better journey planning and reduction in journey time and the inclusion of infrastructure to support cycling and walking.

In the roads sector, in 2019, works on the Multi-level Junction in Marsa have continued, resulting in the opening of two flyovers. This project is on track and should be completed on time. The estimated cost is Euro 70 million for all phases of the project.

Moreover, a major upgrade of Regional Road and seven of its junctions, to continue improving efficiency and road safety along the principal north-south route of Malta, was also completed. This investment comprised the rebuilding of Regional Road between the Tal-Qroqq Tunnels and the Santa Venera Tunnels, the addition of two new lanes along part of this four-lane road and the re-alignment of seven of its junctions. The 1970s Msida Valley Road Bridge halfway through this route was reconstructed, thereby introducing a safer system of central reservation crash barriers to reduce risks of cross median collisions and other accident consequences.

The Euro 2 million reconstruction of Luqa Road, between Santa Lucija and Luqa, introducing a cycling and walking track and other improvements for increased road safety, was also completed. Besides the new infrastructure for alternative modes of travel, this project also included the rebuilding of the road's dual carriageway and the upgrading of its junctions, with new roundabout approach lanes and improved access to and from Santa Lucija. The Santa Lucija Underpass Project, which will see the roundabout at the southern end of Luqa Road upgraded to a multi-level intersection with a twin tube underpass connecting Santa Lucija Avenue with Tal-Barrani Road, was also initiated in 2019.

Furthermore, 2019 marked the first year of the 7-year plan, with an annual investment of Euro100 million to rebuild and upgrade Malta's roads. In 2019, 130 residential roads were rebuilt, whilst extensive repair and maintenance works were

carried out in another 85 roads. These upgrades include new footpaths, storm water catchments and pipelines and resurfacing works. Works in another 50 residential roads are in progress or nearing completion.

Finally, in 2019 Infrastructure Malta planted 8,719 indigenous trees in different localities in Malta, maintaining its long-term commitment for a sustainable road network and a greener environment for future generations. Through this Euro1 million investment, the agency collaborated with non-governmental organisations, local councils and other entities to plant trees in over 40 different locations.

ALTERNATIVE AND GREENER WAYS OF TRANSPORT

During 2019, the Maltese Government continued with its efforts towards a greener transport system through various investments including new and ongoing incentives aimed at reducing traffic congestion during peak hours by encouraging a modality shift to other forms of transport such as ferryboats and public buses.

During 2019 the Government continued to promote the upgrade of more environmentally friendly vehicles through various schemes in order to reduce emissions generated from road traffic and thus improving air quality. For instance, the grant scheme to incentivise vehicle owners to convert their vehicle to autogas was further extended with another allocation of Euro 50,000 in 2019, as a result of which 203 vehicles benefitted from this scheme, thus bringing the total of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) conversions to 1064 since 2015. The scheme is expected to be extended for 2020 as well with a grant of Euro 200 for every vehicle which is converted.

The promotion of environment friendly vehicles remains an important priority for Government. In 2019 Euro1.5 million were allocated to the promotion of electro mobility to encourage the purchase of electric vehicles. This has resulted in the increase of 299 electric vehicles to our national electric vehicle fleet and 280 pedelecs. The vehicle scrappage scheme was also extended in 2019. This allowed vehicle owners to scrap an old vehicle and replace it with a new more environmentally friendly vehicle. This scheme had a successful outcome with a total of 1,637 beneficiaries in 2019.

In order to encourage people to buy environmentally friendly cars, the Government has exempted all those who buy electric cars or hybrid cars (plug-in) from paying Registration Tax. They will also be exempted from paying the Annual Circulation Licence for the first five years.

The Grant Scheme on the Purchase of New Environment Friendly Vehicles was further extended for 2019. A Euro 7,000 grant for individuals registering a new M1 or N1 electric vehicle while deregistering/scrapping another M1 or N1 internal combustion engine vehicle at least 10 years old from the year of manufacture was given. Moreover, the scrappage scheme that provides a grant of Euro 800 to Euro 2,000 when scrapping a vehicle and purchasing a new vehicle was also extended.

During the period under review, the Government renewed the scheme launched in the previous year for companies which purchased bicycles or pedelec bicycles and offered such bicycles for hire. Through this scheme the companies may apply for a grant on the purchase price of bicycles.

Free school transportation to all students in both public and private schools was also offered for the third year running. A considerable number of students are benefiting from the incentive, while also making a positive contribution to the environment by reducing the number of cars and congestion on the road in particular during peak hours.

The scheme which was set up by the Government to cover the expenditure incurred by local councils and enterprises to install bicycle racks and ancillary facilities was renewed for 2019. This scheme is aimed to incentivise the use of alternative green means of transport while, at the same time, encouraging physical exercise and a healthier lifestyle.

During 2019, the following studies on the use of alternative fuels were completed: The Alternative Fuels in Road Transport Study; Study on shore side electricity in TEN-T core ports; Technical study and cost benefit analysis for the development of LNG as marine fuel in Malta.

The 'Multi-modal Hub' (Park and Ride) part of the Sustainable Multimodal Intelligent Transport Hubs across Malta and Gozo (SMITHS project) aims to encourage a modal shift from private car use to collective, sustainable and alternative low-carbon transport modes in order to reduce traffic congestion. During 2019 there was the continuation of the Decarbonising Gozo project, where preliminary excavations of the Park and Ride site to enable geotechnical studies were carried out and the continuation of the process of acquiring six electric buses was also continued.

Other measures related to transport which were implemented in 2019 aimed at reducing pollution and improving the quality of air include:

- Free transport for youths, students and the elderly
- Review of Malta's national Electro mobility Plan;
- Car sharing scheme, a pay per use service consisting of electric vehicles;
- Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for Valletta;

- Pilot cycling corridors from Valletta to St Julians, and Mosta to Mater Dei;
- Increase use of intelligent transport management systems;
- Reform of Public Service Garage, including introducing a maximum age limit for the date of registration of leased vehicles to 10 years and 15 years for taxi/chauffeur-driven passenger vehicles.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

During the year 2019 public transport carried 57.4 million passengers, an increase of 7.4% on the previous year, mainly attributed to a large take-up of the 'tallinja card' during the same year. Furthermore, 40,424 different persons have benefitted from the free public transport measure between January and December 2019.

In an effort to encourage more people to use public transport instead of their own private vehicle, in 2019 the provision of free public transport to young people was expanded from previous measures to include students aged over 20. In December 2019, the measure was further extended to include persons with disability.

Furthermore, a pilot project offering public transport on-demand service started in 2019 (TD plus). This innovative service offers customers the possibility to book their bus seat on one of the new premium buses through Tallinja App. It provides a rapid form of public transport between Valletta and Pembroke and the cities in between. In addition, public transport corridors from Sliema to Valletta, and Tarxien to Valletta were also introduced.

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

Apart from the ongoing harbour ferry operations, the Government is working on a number of measures and initiatives to bring about a modal shift from private car use to collective maritime transport. Such measures have been in planning stage during 2019, and implementation will start during 2020. These include the construction of new landing places in Sliema, Marsamxett and Cospicua, the upgrading of the existing maritime ferry service landing sites by introducing proper passenger waiting facilities, each equipped with real-time scheduling information.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report shows that 2019 has been another year of continuous efforts to ensure that the measures being designed and adopted are based on the principles of sustainable development.

Sustainable Governance is a mandatory task which the Maltese Government is committed to lead by example in ensuring its implementation. The challenges being faced as a result of a world which is rapidly changing, be it natural resources depletion, economic uncertainties, conflicts, indifference surrounding the integration and strengthening of social structures and others, do not make it any easier to implement that task. To this end all institutions need to be proactive in their thinking and acting in order to be able to bring together any current and future challenges with opportunities.

Coherence and consistency is therefore crucial to the fulfilment of sustainable development between the various policy sectors which include: economic development and trade, employment and education, research and innovation, social affairs, healthcare, foreign affairs, national security, environment, ecosystems and biodiversity, agriculture, fisheries, energy and climate change.

Sustainable development cannot be seen in isolation as it is overarching and touches upon every matter. It is a process which cannot be addressed from a short-term perspective but a dynamic and long-term one which requires the right follow-up, review and development mechanism.

The Sustainable Development Annual Reports and ensuing debate in Parliament reflects the Government's duty to self-assess itself with regards to sustainable development commitments and to ensure policy coherence across all sectors.

The Government believes in the involvement of stakeholders at different levels in policy formulation. Effective stakeholder participation and communication are therefore fundamental for the successful implementation of sustainable development policies and initiatives.

All stakeholders, including Government, Private Sector, Civil Society and the general public, need to take the same line to achieve sustainable development and the related milestones. Through this consistency, Malta would be able to achieve the necessary sustained shift towards better socio-economic development while respecting and utilising the natural and human resources responsibly and efficiently.

NEXT STEPS

2019 was a year which saw the commencement as well as continuation of a number of measures and initiatives which will not stop here. The alignment of the 2020 budget measures with the SDGs in particular was a step in the right direction for the Government's commitment in implementing Sustainable Governance. This process which was done for the first time will continue to be repeated in the coming years.

The Sustainable Development Directorate under the Ministry within the OPM is currently liaising with the relevant Ministries and the NSO on the collection of data in relation to this process, so as to ensure that this process is fully compliant and all necessary data is collected. Moreover, the Directorate will continue with its work on the development of a new National Sustainable Development Strategy. Following the kick-off mission by OECD late last year, in the coming year the focus will be that of bringing everyone together in the formulation of the Strategy and ensuing Action Plan to ensure effectiveness and ownership by the whole of Government.

ANNEX I

**EU INDICATORS
(2018-2019 DATA)**



SDG	CODE	INDICATOR	EU-MS (28) 2018	MALTA 2018	EU-MS (28) 2019	MALTA 2019	PROGRESS
	SDG_01_10	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (%)	21.8	19.0	21.4	20.1	↓
	SDG_01_10a	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by degree of urbanisation (%)	22.0	19.5	22.0	20.3	↓
	SDG_01_20	People at risk of income poverty after social transfers (%)	17.1	16.8	16.8	17.1	→
	SDG_01_20a	People at risk of income poverty after social transfers, by citizenship (%)	15.5	15.6	15.3	15.9	→
	SDG_01_30	Severely materially deprived people (%)	5.9	3.0	5.5	3.6	↓
	SDG_01_40	People living in households with very low work intensity (%)	8.8	5.5	8.5	4.9	↑
	SDG_01_41	In work at-risk-of-poverty rate (%)	9.4	6.4	9.2	6.5	→
	SDG_01_60	Population living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation or rot in window frames of floor by poverty status (%)	13.9	7.1	13.1	7.6	→
	SDG_02_10	Obesity rate by body mass index (BMI) (% of population aged 18 or over)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_02_20	Agricultural factor income per annual work unit (AWU)	120.89	80.86	124.26	74.65	↓
	SDG_02_30	Government support to agricultural research and development (Million euro)	3245.323	1.116	3232.519	1.303	↑
	SDG_02_40	Area under organic farming (% of utilised agricultural area (UAA))	7.50	0.41	:	0.47	●●
	SDG_02_51	Harmonised risk indicator for pesticides (HRI1), by groups of active substances	83	81	:	:	●●
	SDG_02_60	Ammonia emissions from agriculture (Tonne)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_03_10	Life expectancy at birth by sex (years)	81.0	82.5	:	:	●●
	SDG_03_20	Share of people with good or very good perceived health by sex (% of population aged 16 or over)	69.2	75	69.3	74.2	→
	SDG_03_30	Smoking prevalence by sex (% of population aged 15 or over)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_03_41	Death rate due to tuberculosis, HIV and hepatitis by sex	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_03_42	Standardised preventable and treatable mortality	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_03_60	Self-reported unmet need for medical examination and care by sex (% of population aged 16 and over)	2.0	0.2	2.0	0	↑

4 QUALITY EDUCATION 	SDG_04_10	Early leavers from education and training by sex (% of population aged 18 to 24)	10.5	17.4	10.3	17.2	↗
	SDG_04_10a	Early leavers from education and training, by citizenship (% of population aged 18 to 24)	9.4	16.1	9.1	15.2	↑
	SDG_04_20	Tertiary educational attainment by sex (% of population aged 30 to 34)	40.7	34.7	41.6	38.1	↑
	SDG_04_30	Participation in early childhood education by sex (% of the age group between 4-years-old and the starting age of compulsory education)	95.3	95.3	:	:	●●
	SDG_04_40	Underachievement in reading, maths or science (% of 15-year-old students)	21.7	35.9	:	:	●●
	SDG_04_50	Employment rates of recent graduates by sex (% of population aged 20 to 34 with at least upper-secondary education)	81.6	94.8	81.5	93.4	↓
	SDG_04_60	Adult participation in learning by sex (% of population aged 25 to 64)	11.1	10.9	11.3	11.9	↑
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	SDG_05_10	Physical and sexual violence to women experienced within 12 months prior to the interview by age group (% of women)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_05_20	Gender pay gap in unadjusted form (% of average gross hourly earnings of men)	15	13.0	:	:	●●
	SDG_05_30	Gender employment gap (%)	11.6	21.9	11.4	20.7	↗
	SDG_05_40	Inactive population due to caring responsibilities by sex (% of inactive population aged 20 to 64)	21.9	38.0	22.7	37.7	↗
	SDG_05_50	Seats held by women in national parliaments and governments (% of seats)	30.6	14.5	31.7	14.9	↗
	SDG_05_60	Positions held by women in senior management positions (% of positions)	26.7	9.6	28.8	10.0	↗
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	SDG_06_10	Population having neither a bath, nor a shower, nor indoor flushing toilet in their household by poverty status (% of population)	2.0	:	1.5	:	●●
	SDG_06_20	Population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment (% of population)	:	0	:	:	●●
	SDG_06_30	Biochemical oxygen demand in rivers (mg O2 per litre)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_06_40	Nitrate in groundwater (mg NO3 per litre)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_06_50	Phosphate in rivers (mg PO4 per litre)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_06_60	Water exploitation index by type of water source (% of long term average available water (LTAA))	:	:	:	:	●●

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	SDG_07_10	Primary energy consumption	1,551.9	0.8	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_11	Final energy consumption	1,124.1	0.7	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_20	Final energy consumption in households per capita (kg of oil equivalent)	552	193	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_30	Energy productivity	8.49	3.46	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_40	Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption by sector (%)	17.980	7.978	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_50	Energy import dependency by products	55.68	97.828	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_60	Population unable to keep home adequately warm by poverty status (% of population)	7.3	7.6	7.8	7.8	→
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	SDG_08_10	Real GDP per capita	27,610	21,580	27,980	21,770	↑
	SDG_08_11	Investment share of GDP by institutional sectors (% of GDP)	21.09	18.88	21.87	:	●●
	SDG_08_20	Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex (% of population aged 15 to 29)	12.9	7.3	12.5	7.9	→
	SDG_08_20a	Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET), by citizenship (% of population aged 15 to 29)	12.2	7.0	11.8	6.7	↗
	SDG_08_30	Employment rate by sex (% of population aged 20 to 64)	73.2	75.5	73.9	76.8	↑
	SDG_08_30a	Employment rate, by citizenship (% of population aged 20 to 64)	73.7	74.4	74.5	76.1	↑
	SDG_08_40	Long-term unemployment rate by sex (% of active population)	2.9	1.8	2.5	0.9	↑
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	SDG_08_60	People killed in accidents at work (number per 100 000 employees)	:	1.68	:	:	●●
	SDG_09_10	Gross domestic expenditure on R&D by sector (% of GDP)	2.12	0.57	:	:	●●
	SDG_09_21	Human resources in science and technology (% of active population aged 25 to 64)	47.5	46.0	48.5	47.0	↑
	SDG_09_30	R&D personnel by sector (% of active population)	1.37	0.63	:	:	●●
	SDG_09_30	R&D personnel by sector (% of active population)	1.37	0.63	:	:	↑
	SDG_09_50	Share of busses and trains in total passenger transport (% of total inland passenger-km)	16.7	17.5	:	:	●●
	SDG_09_60	Share of rail and inland waterways in total freight transport (% of total inland freight tonne-km)	23.5	N/A	:	N/A	●●

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	SDG_10_10	Purchasing power adjusted GDP per capita	30,400	29,800	31,300	30,800	↑
	SDG_10_20	Adjusted gross disposable income of households per capita	22,857	:	23,567	:	●●
	SDG_10_30	Relative median at-risk-of-poverty gap	24.1	17.5	24.6	17	→
	SDG_10_41	Income distribution (Quintile share ratio)	5.12	4.28	5.09	4.18	↑
	SDG_10_50	Income share of the bottom 40 % of the population (% of income)	21.0	22.1	21.1	22.3	↗
	SDG_10_60	Asylum applications by state of procedure (number per million inhabitants)	1,279	3,440	1,145	4,199	↗
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	SDG_11_10	Overcrowding rate by poverty status (% of population)	15.5	3.4	15.6	3.7	→
	SDG_11_20	Population living in households considering that they suffer from noise, by poverty status (% of population)	18.3	28.2	17.5	28.3	→
	SDG_11_31	Settlement area per capita (m2 per capita)	667.6	201.4	:	:	●●
	SDG_11_40	People killed in road accidents	4.9	3.7	:	:	●●
	SDG_11_50	Exposure to air pollution by particulate matter	13.8	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_11_60	Recycling rate of municipal waste (% of total waste generated)	47.0	6.5	:	:	●●
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 	SDG_12_10	Consumption of chemicals by hazardousness - EU aggregate	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_12_20	Resource productivity and domestic material consumption	2.10	1.62	1.98	1.73	↓
	SDG_12_30	Average CO2 emissions per km from new passenger cars (g CO2 per km)	120.4	105.9	:	:	●●
	SDG_12_41	Circular material use rate (% of material input for domestic use)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_12_50	Generation of waste excluding major mineral wastes by hazardousness (kg per capita)	1,826	1,090	:	:	●●
	SDG_12_61	Gross value added in environmental goods and services sector	:	:	:	:	●●

	SDG_13_10	GHG emissions	76.8	96.1	:	:	●●
	SDG_13_20	GHG emissions intensity of energy consumption (index (2000 = 100))	84.9	57.6	:	:	●●
	SDG_13_30	Mean near surface temperature deviation (degree Celsius)	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_13_40	Climate related economic losses by type of event (million EUR (current prices))	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_13_50	Contribution to the international 100bn USD commitment on climate related expending	14,924.63	0.16	:	:	●●
	SDG_07_10	Population covered by the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy signatories (source: Covenant of Mayors)	198.04	0.135	:	0.135	→
	SDG_14_10	Surface of marine sites designated under NATURA 2000 (km2)	551,899	4,142	573,131	4,142	→
	SDG_14_21	Estimated trends in fish stock biomass in North East Atlantic	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_14_30	Assessed fish stocks exceeding fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY) in North East Atlantic	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_14_40	Bathing sites with excellent water quality by locality	15,009	87	:	:	●●
	SDG_14_50	Mean ocean acidity	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_15_10	Share of forest area (% of total land area)	42.2	10.5	:	:	●●
	SDG_15_20	Surface of terrestrial sites designated under NATURA 2000 (km2)	784,252	42	784,994	42	→
	SDG_15_41	Soil sealing index	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_15_50	Estimated soil erosion by water - area affected by severe erosion rate	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_15_60	Common bird index by type of species - EU aggregate	:	:	:	:	●●
	SDG_15_61	Grassland butterfly index - EU aggregate	:	:	:	:	●●

	SDG_16_10	Death rate due to homicide by sex (number par 100 000 persons)	:	:	:	:	••
	SDG_16_20	Population reporting occurrence of crime, violence or vandalism in their area by poverty status (% of population)	12.7	12.5	12.5	13.6	↓
	SDG_16_30	General government total expenditure on law courts (Million Euro)	52,479	36	:	:	••
	SDG_16_40	Perceived independence of the justice system (% of population)	56	45	56	56	↑
	SDG_16_50	Corruption Perceptions Index (source: Transparency International) – score scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)	:	54	:	54	→
	SDG_16_60	Population with confidence in EU institutions by institution (% of population)	48	55	51	59	↑
	SDG_17_10	Official development assistance as share of gross national income (GNI)	0.47	0.25	0.46	0.29	↗
	SDG_17_20	EU financing to developing countries by financing source (million EUR (current prices))	120,116	:	:	:	••
	SDG_17_30	EU imports from developing countries by country income groups (million EUR)	1,018,102	787	1,048,634	865	••
	SDG_17_40	General government gross debt	80.3	45.2	79.2	42.6	↑
	SDG_17_50	Shares of environmental and labour taxes in total tax revenues (% of total taxes)	6.12	8.2	:	:	••

- No comparison possible due to unavailability of data
- Stagnating progress
- ↗ Slightly to moderately improving
- ↑ On track or improving progress towards SDG achievement
- ↓ Declining progress

NOTES

