



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR ENERGY,
THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE
REGENERATION OF THE GRAND HARBOUR



**Sustainable
Development**
Environment • Society • Economy

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Foreword

As we enter the final phase of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, 2025 marks a pivotal moment for Malta's sustainable development journey. The global community is accelerating efforts to deliver on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Malta remains firmly committed to aligning national policies, investments, and reforms with this shared vision. To this end, Malta presented its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2025, reaffirming its dedication to transparency, accountability, and inclusive progress in implementing the SDGs. Our work continues to be guided by the principle of Leaving No One Behind, ensuring that every person, regardless of background or circumstance, benefits from the country's progress.

Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, provides a long-term, holistic roadmap for transitioning towards a climate-neutral green and blue economy, strengthening sustainable urban development and cultural heritage, promoting healthy lives and wellbeing, accelerating digital transformation, enhancing smart mobility and connectivity, and ensuring social fairness and prosperity for all. Throughout 2025, government has continued to work alongside private organisations, civil society, and local communities to translate the strategic goals into concrete action.

Sustainable development requires a delicate balance between environmental protection, economic resilience, and social wellbeing. Achieving this balance is challenging, particularly in a rapidly changing global landscape. Yet, the work highlighted in this report demonstrates that meaningful transformation is possible when we work collectively. The initiatives presented here reflect the dedication of numerous stakeholders who are driving innovation, strengthening partnerships, and championing sustainability across all sectors of society.

Looking ahead, Malta will continue to prioritise policies and investments that foster resilience,



inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. The challenges we face both globally and even more so as an island nation are complex, but they also present opportunities to rethink how we grow, innovate, and support our communities. By embracing innovative solutions and strengthening cross-sector cooperation, we can ensure that Malta's development remains sustainable, equitable, and future-proof.

Our collective commitment is the driving force behind this transformation. Together, we can continue to build a Malta that thrives economically, protects its natural and cultural heritage, and ensures the wellbeing of present and future generations.

Miriam Dalli

Minister for Energy, the Environment and the Regeneration of the Grand Harbour

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Acronyms

A

AAA	Abdominal aortic aneurysm
A2P	Access2Partnerships
AACC	Active Ageing and Community Care
ARIS	Address Register Information System
ACHCB	Advisory Committee on Healthcare Benefits
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
AM	Ambjent Malta
ARIC	Applied Research and Innovation Centre
ARM	Aquatic Resources Malta
AFM	Armed Forces of Malta
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ARB	Asset Recovery Bureau
ART	Assisted Reproductive Technology
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AROE	At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion
AVM	Automatic vehicle monitoring

B

BESS	Battery Energy Storage Systems
BCRS	Beverage Container Refund Scheme
BFT	Biofloc technology
BMM	BlueMissionMed
BYOC	Bring Your Own Container
BCA	Building and Construction Authority

C

CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CMR	Carcinogenic, mutagenic, or reprotoxic
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
C-Net	Child and Youth Mental Health Network

CEMalta	Circular Economy Malta
CPD	Civil Protection Department
CAA	Climate Action Authority
CMS	Collection Management System
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
CGBVDV	Commission of Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence
CEDCHE	Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
3CL	Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning Foundation
CSAMP	Connections for Safer Active Mobility Project
CNR	Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche
CFD	Contract for difference
CEDMS	Corporate Electronic Document Management System
CSA	Court Services Agency
CQMS	Customer/Clinic Queue Management System

D

DKGHS	Dar Kenn Għal Saħħtek
DC-MAP	Data Collection Multi-Annual Programme
DGU	Data Governance Unit
DLFT	Data literacy for teaching
DaLiS	Data Literacy Survey in Schools
DFA	Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
DIER	Department of Industrial and Employment Relations
DoJ	Department of Justice
DRI	Digital road infrastructure
DAHS	Directorate for Allied Health Services
DDI	Directorate for Disability Issues
DELH	Directorate for Early Years, Languages and Humanities
DHIR	Directorate for Health Information & Research

E

ELET	Early Leaving from Education and Training
EGD	EcoGozo Directorate
ESD	Education for sustainable development
EVs	Electric vehicles
ECDMS	Electronic Clinical Data Management System
EPA	Embryo Protection Authority
EmpowerME	Empowering a Mentally Healthy Generation
EWA	Energy and Water Agency
EHD	Environmental Health Directorate
EIA	Environmental impact assessment
ESG	Environmental, Social & Governance
EBTC	Establishment of Blood, Tissue & Cell Centre
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EASIN	European Alien Species Information Network
EBA	European Banking Authority
ECRIS-TCN	European Criminal Records Information System — Third Country Nationals
EuroHPC JU	European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EMFAF	European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERC	European Resuscitation Council
ESMA	European Securities and Markets Authority
ESF	European Social Fund
ESDW	European Sustainable Development Week
EU	European Union
EVIDALI	Evidence-Informed Data Literacy for Policy and Practice

F

FCSL	Family-Community-School Link
FATTA	Federated Association of Travel & Tourism Agents Malta
FIIS	Fisheries information integration system

FES	Foundation for Educational Services
FHRD	Foundation for Human Resources Development
FSWS ACTS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services' Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services
FOI	Freedom of Information

G

GWC	Gender Wellbeing Clinic
GIS	Geographic information system
GCED	Global citizenship education
GWP	Global Water Partnership
GES	Good environmental status
GMPs	Good manufacturing practices
GMICT	Government ICT
GGH	Gozo General Hospital
GISAP	Gozo Indoor Sports and Aquatic Pavilion
GRDA	Gozo Regional Development Authority
GHRC	Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation
GPP	Green Public Procurement
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GTI	Greening the Islands Foundation
GNI	Gross national income
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

H

HSF	Hard Standing Facility
HAZMAT	Hazardous materials
HIS	Health inspectorate system
HLPF	High-Level Political Forum
HNA	Holistic Needs Assessment
HRD	Human Rights Directorate

I

IAF	Impact Assessment Form
IC3	Third electricity interconnector
ICL	Independent community living
IDPC	Information and Data Protection Commissioner
IMU	Information Management Unit

IFE	Institute for Education
INRAP	Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research
IPS	Institute for the Public Services
IICT	Institute of ICT
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
ICM	InterConnect Malta
ILD	International Learners' Directorate
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ISPRA	Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale

J

JPI Oceans	Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans
JIRD	Justice Initiatives and Reforms Directorate

K

KA	Key Action
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L

LTD	Land Transport Directorate
LAMS	Legal Aid Management System
LIFE IP	LIFE Integrated Project

M

MCVS	Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector
MDB	Malta Development Bank
MDIA	Malta Digital Innovation Authority
MELP	Malta Embellishment Landscaping Projects
MFSA	Malta Financial Services Authority
MHRA	Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association
MITA	Malta Information Technology Agency
MMC	Malta Mediation Centre
MMA	Malta Medicines Authority
MNBG	Malta National Botanic Gardens
MPF	Malta Police Force
MTCA	Malta Tax and Customs Administration
MTA	Malta Tourism Authority

MPAs	Marine protected areas
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MOOC	Massive open online course
MDH	Mater Dei Hospital
MAFA	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
MCLG	Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government
MEYR	Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation
MFT	Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism
MGP	Ministry for Gozo and Planning
MHA	Ministry for Health and Active Ageing
MIV	Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
MJR	Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector
MSPC	Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights
MEEP	Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects
MEEC	Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness
MTIP	Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Public Works

N

NAP	National Action Plan
NAPAR	National Action Plan Against Racism
NAPCORE	National Access Point Coordination Organisation for Europe project
NAPCP	National Air Pollution Control Programme
NBTS	National Blood Transfusion Service
NCGN	National Career Guidance Network
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NHRI	National human rights institution
NLA	National Literacy Agency
NSC	National Skills Council
NSDI	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSAPP	National Strategy and Action Plan for Pollinators
NTCC	National Traffic Control Centre
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
NCD	Non-communicable diseases
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NECA	NO _x Emissions Control Area
NTG	Office of the Notary to Government

NET2PRIMA PRIMA Networking Support Scheme

O

OHSA Occupational Health and Safety Authority
OPM Office of the Prime Minister
OSRSG-CAAC Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
OSA Office of the State Advocate
ODA Official development assistance
OPSA Older Persons Standards Authority
OPS Onshore power supply
OPP Organic processing plant
ODIHR Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

P

PRIMA Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area
P&SD People and Standard Division
PV Photovoltaic
PA Planning Authority
PLLab Policy Learning Lab
PRID Poverty Reduction and Inclusion Dashboard
PGTM Pre-implantation genetic testing for monogenic
PQQ Pre-qualification questionnaire
PTCY Prevention toolkit for children and youth
PAGES Process-Based Approach for Good Environmental Status
PDSA Professional Diving Schools Association of Malta, Gozo & Comino
PDSs Project description statements
PWD Public Works Department

R

RRF Recovery and Resilience Facility
RACE Recycling Abattoir By-Products for Construction Materials Engineering
RDS Regional Development Strategy
REMPEC Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre

REWS
RES
R&D
R&I
RSIRD

REP
RO
RVMs
RSAs
RBMP

S

S4GES
STEM
SCR
SOC
SPIRE

SZPM
SAMOC
SMF
SMEs
SIDS
SCSA
SML
SUP
SHP
SVP
SEA
SPED

SKIN

SCH
SPH
SIL
SPRING
SDD
SDGs
SD SGs

T

TRaC
TCE

Regulator for Energy & Water Services
Renewable Energy Sources
Research and development
Research and innovation
Research and School Internal Review Directorate
Research Excellence Programme
Reverse osmosis
Reverse vending machines
Retirement Scheme Administrators
River Basin Management Plan

Science for Good Environmental Status
Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
Security Council Report
Security Operations Centre
Seed Grants for International Research Programme
Sezzjoni Żgħażaġh Pawlini Munxarin
Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre
Skip Management Facility
Small and medium-sized enterprises
Small Island Developing States
Social Care Standards Authority
Soil Monitoring Law
Space Upstream Programme
Specialised Housing Programme
St Vincent de Paul
Strategic environmental assessment
Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development
Strengthening of Knowledge on Integration and Non-Discrimination
Superintendence of Cultural Heritage
Superintendence of Public Health
Supported independent living
Supporting Pre-Integration Governance
Sustainable Development Directorate
Sustainable Development Goals
Sustainable development strategic goals

TSI	Technical Support Instrument
TDP Lite	Technology Development Programme LITE
TM	Transport Malta
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
TMACS	Total Management Advanced Control System
TÜBİTAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey

U

UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UCC	University College Cork
UM	University of Malta
UIB	University of the Balearic Islands
UTC	Urban traffic control
UAT	User Acceptance Testing

V

VMS	Variable message signs
VSA	Victim Support Agency
VCS	Video conferencing system
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VO	Voluntary organisations

W

WSM	WasteServ Malta
WSC	Water Services Corporation
WIDERA	Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area
WPs	Work packages
WHO	World Health Organisation



INTRODUCT

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, grey jeans, and a straw hat with a black band, is sitting on a rocky shore. She is looking out over a body of water towards a city built on a hillside. The city features numerous buildings, including a prominent tall, thin tower. The sky is bright and blue with some clouds. The image is framed by a dark blue border on the right and bottom, and a teal border on the top left.

TION

INTRODUCTION



About the Report

This Annual Report has been prepared by the Sustainable Development Directorate (SDD) within the then Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Public Cleanliness (MEEC), under the mandate of Part VI, Article 14 of the Sustainable Development Act (Chapter 521), which requires the Competent Authority to produce a report where all the activities carried out by the Competent Authority during the previous financial year are outlined. It is then submitted to the Minister responsible for sustainable development and a copy of this report

is to be presented by the Minister to the House of Representatives for debate.

Tasked with formulating and implementing national sustainable development policies, raising awareness, as well as building and enhancing capacity across Ministries to ensure effective mainstreaming of sustainable development principles, the SDD reports on the achievement and progress pertaining to each of the SDGs at both local and national strata, while simultaneously identifying areas and gaps necessitating further intervention.

This report presents a detailed overview of the policies, actions, and initiatives implemented by various governmental ministries, agencies, departments, and entities in 2025 that integrate sustainable development principles and address the SDGs, whilst highlighting those areas that require further effort, commitment, and improvements.

The report adheres to the structure set forth in Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050, which establishes a comprehensive strategic framework guiding Malta's efforts toward transformative change, both domestically and internationally. This approach aims to safeguard the environment while promoting the socio-economic advancement of the Maltese Islands through 2050. The Strategy sets out five strategic goals:



Monitoring Progress towards the SDGs

Malta's progress in relation to the SDGs is reported through international platforms, these being the Sustainable Development Report, which is prepared by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and the monitoring report of the European Union (EU), which is presented by Eurostat. The data provided by the 2025 Sustainable Development Report placed Malta 24th out of 167 countries, an improvement of 12 places from the previous

year, with an SDG Index overall score of 79.29 and a spillover score of 71.11 out of a maximum of 100.

At the national level, the NSO embarked on a project to consolidate all quality-checked and SDG-relevant data onto a single platform which was launched in April 2025. This platform allows users to easily access Malta-related data for each respective SDG. The website, which is continuously updated, can be accessed directly from sdgindicators.nso.gov.mt.



Malta's Second VNR on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

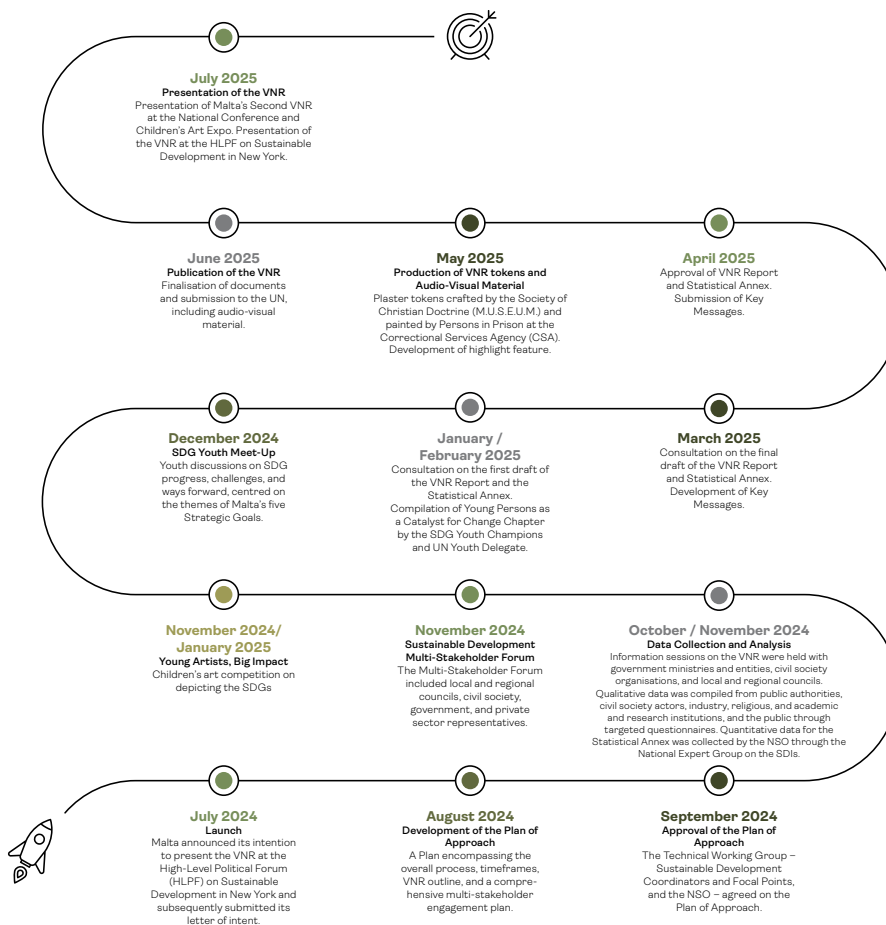
Following collaborative efforts initiated in 2024, Malta presented its second VNR on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs at the 2025 UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.

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

The methodology for the VNR was informed by the principles of follow-up and review outlined in paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda. These principles emphasise accountability, inclusiveness,



and the promotion of partnerships, all of which were central to the VNR process in Malta. The review considered both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the implementation of the SDGs across various sectors, drawing from national statistics, policy evaluations, and stakeholder input. Enhanced collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO) of Malta has strengthened data collection and monitoring systems. In fact, Malta's Second VNR was complemented by a comprehensive Statistical Annex highlighting Malta's evolution across all SDGs since 2015.



Illustrating young minds' understanding of the 17 SDGs



The Children's Art Expo: Young Artists, Big Impact held on 3 June showcased drawings, paintings, sculptures, literature, and audiovisual material of Year 4 to Year 6 students across Malta, illustrating young minds' understanding of the 17 SDGs. The exhibition featured the work of over 200 children and 15 schools at Spazju Kreattiv from 3 to 6 June. Meanwhile, a national conference on the official presentation of Malta's Second VNR held on 2 June featured performances by students from The Malta Visual and Performing Arts school and from Senglea Primary School, embedding the principle of Leaving No One Behind every step of the way and bringing further awareness to the SDGs among all those involved. This national conference outlined the methodology, highlights, and challenges emerging from the VNR report, alongside the presentation of the Statistical Annex, presented by the NSO, and the perspectives from civil society representatives delivered by KOPIN. The conference also provided a platform for Malta's SDG Youth Champions to present key points from the youth chapter "Younger Persons as a Catalyst

for Sustainable Change". Commemorative plaster tokens were given out at the national conference as well as during the HLPF in New York, crafted by the Society of Christian Doctrine (M.U.S.E.U.M) and painted by persons in prison, in collaboration with the Correctional Services Agency.

The SDD alongside other members of the Maltese delegation presented the second VNR at the HLPF in July 2025, whereby they also engaged in a series of meetings that provided opportunities to showcase Malta's efforts, exchange good practices, and discuss shared challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, Malta co-hosted together with OECD a side event on innovative pathways to accelerate SDG progress, emphasising the importance of data-driven policy coherence and transboundary collaboration. In addition, Malta also co-organised a side event in partnership with the African Peer Review Mechanism and the OECD, focusing on policy coherence for sustainable ocean governance.

Integration of the SDGs in the Budget Process

Since 2019, the Maltese Government has systematically integrated the SDGs into its annual budget process. This initiative aims to enhance policy coherence in SDG implementation and ensure that decision-makers are well-equipped to meet the objectives outlined in the United Nations' (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, the Maltese Government undertook a long and intensive process involving all the ministries, which required them to analyse and assess the contributions of the measures and initiatives towards the implementation of the SDGs. While this shows the government's commitment towards sustainable development, it is also necessary as it leads to better transparency and accountability of the government's decision-making processes, and ensures that all the pillars of sustainable development are always considered.

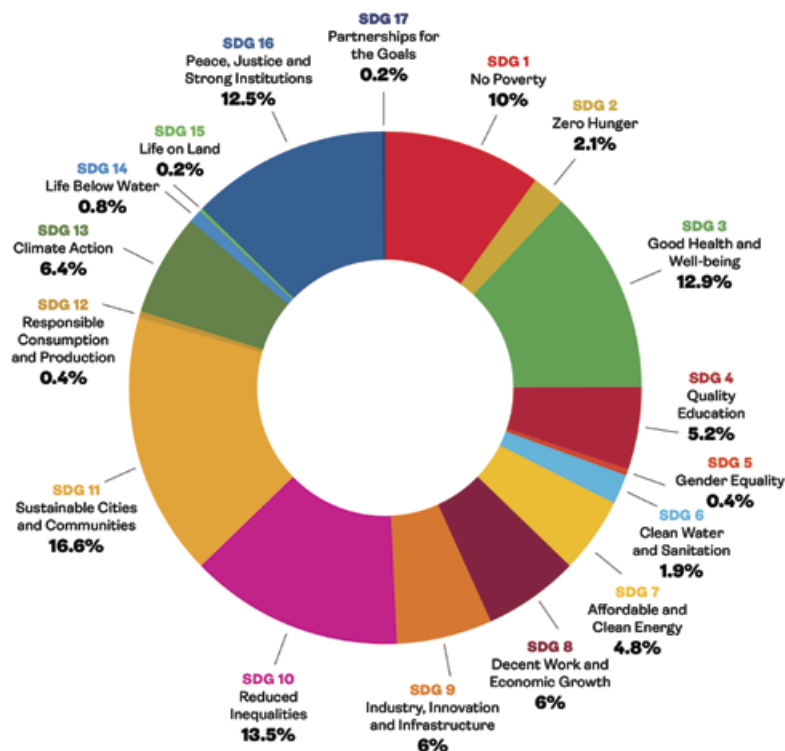
The 2026 budget was directed towards sustaining Malta's strong economic performance. It continued to support families, workers, and businesses through tax reductions, particularly

for families with children; an increase in social expenditure; and targeted incentives to help enterprises innovate, grow, and remain competitive. The budget strengthened social protection through increases in pensions, children's allowances, disability assistance, and targeted grants, while continuing to invest in high-quality health, education, tourism, and public services.

Keeping in line with its vision of achieving a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, the Maltese Government, through the 2026 budget, places strong emphasis on environmental resilience. Major investments are being directed toward strengthening energy security and renewable energy generation. The budget also advances national water and waste management. At the same time, the government is implementing an extensive programme of green and open-space regeneration, alongside improvements in transport infrastructure, and in sustainable agriculture and fisheries through reforms, infrastructure investment, and schemes.

Over 400 measures of the 2026 budget, spreading across various sectors, were aligned with the SDGs.

2026 Budget Measures and the SDGs



Communicating Sustainable Development and the SDGs

During 2025, the SDD continued to ensure that, through its work, activities, events, and initiatives, sustainable development is promoted and embedded by all actors throughout all workings of the government as well as across all the different sectors in the Maltese Islands.

Malta's Sustainable Development Action Days 2025

Malta's Sustainable Development Action Days 2025, a nationwide annual initiative, which takes place as part of the European Sustainable Development Week (ESDW), was held from 18 September to 8 October. With the theme



'Your Actions, Our Future', the SDD organised a number of activities related to sustainable development, and a total of 31 sustainable initiatives were organised by government entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local councils, and businesses, which were all showcased on both local and European platforms.

Lejla Sajfija fil-Park



The fourth edition of Lejla fil-Park, was held at San Klement Park in Żabbar on 1 August. The purpose of the event was to create a safe environment for



all where, through sport, activities, and educational initiatives, everyone could learn how to live a healthier and more sustainable life.

The programme was varied and those present had the opportunity to meet a variety of sports organisations, including the Malta Football Association, UM Wolves, and Hibernians Basketball Club. There were also representatives from the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate, Armed Forces, Civil Protection Department (CPD), and Malta Police Force (MPF), as well as representatives from several environmental and social entities within the government.

In addition to exhibitions of sporting skills, there was also a science show, games for children, crafts, sports activities, and a performance by the Żabbar Scout Group.

Empowering Future Leaders

School Sessions

In 2025, the SDD continued to deliver sessions to Year 3 students across Malta and Gozo in relation to the children's version of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy 2050. Following the completion and success of the sessions for the scholastic year 2024-2025, the SDD commenced the sessions for the scholastic year 2025-2026, which will see a total number of 30 school visits.

These 60-minute sessions, directly in line with set learning outcomes in a variety of subjects such as social studies, science, and PSD, were designed to help students understand their role as responsible and engaged citizens who contribute to the ongoing environmental, social,



and economic transformation outlined in Malta's 5 sustainable development strategic goals (SD SGs) in the National Strategy.

The Football for the Goals Initiative

In October 2025, the second edition of Football for the Goals initiative was launched through a collaboration between the MEEC, the then Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR), and Inġobb il-Futbol Foundation. This UN initiative, which engages the football communities to promote the SDGs, brought together 17 classes from 15 schools, each representing one of the 17 SDGs.

Running from November 2025 to March 2026, the programme officially kicked off on 24 October, followed by a fun-filled tournament held at the Centenary Stadium on 21 November. Throughout the initiative, the Directorate worked closely with each school by providing resources and guidance to help them explore their SDG and develop practical, meaningful projects within their school community. On 18 March 2026, students will present their SDG-focused initiatives, with the final football tournament taking place on 23 March 2026.

Football's widespread influence within the local communities makes it an ideal platform to inspire younger generation to engage with the SDGs. Through this initiative, students and schools take the lead as sustainability ambassadors, applying the principles of sustainable development, and driving forward practical initiatives that foster meaningful, lasting impact.





*The Awards
celebrate a
diverse group of
changemakers*



SDG Youth Champions

In 2025, the SDG Youth Champions played a pivotal role in representing the voices of young people across Malta by drafting a dedicated chapter for Malta's second VNR entitled "Young Persons as Catalysts for Sustainable Change." This chapter captured the opinions and aspirations of Maltese youths regarding sustainable development and was formally presented to stakeholders at the National Conference in July, ensuring that youth perspectives were integrated into national policy discussions. Earlier in May, the SDD, in collaboration with the SDG Youth Champions, organised the SDG Valletta Challenge, a dynamic youth scavenger hunt throughout Valletta designed to raise awareness and engagement with the SDGs in an interactive format. The Champions continued their advocacy in October at the annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum, where they organised and implemented a workshop specifically aimed at providing stakeholders with a youth perspective on policy issues related to sustainable development. Through these initiatives, the SDG Youth Champions not only amplified youth voices but also fostered meaningful participation and dialogue, positioning young people as active agents of change in Malta's sustainable development journey.

The Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Forum

Following the first edition of the Sustainable Development Multi-Stakeholder Forum in 2024, as part of the process of preparing Malta's second VNR, a second edition was held on 1 October 2025 at the Mediterranean Conference Centre. The Forum aims to create a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas, share progress, and coordinate efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. The Forum welcomed various stakeholders, with 148 registrants, including government ministries and entities, local councils, civil society organisations, NGOs, academics and research institutions, private sector/industry representatives, and youth representatives. The programme comprised

a total of nine workshops with a variety of formats, including panel discussions, informative presentations, and hands-on discussions, distributed across three separate sessions. The aim of these sessions was to discuss concrete measures and actions needed to address existing gaps and challenges in SDG implementation towards the achievement of Malta's SD SGs.

The Sustainable Development Action Awards

In 2025, the SDD organised the first Sustainable Development Action Awards, recognising outstanding contributions to sustainability across Malta. The Awards celebrate a diverse group of changemakers, including individuals, VOs, public entities, journalists, youths, schools, academics, and private businesses, who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and innovation in advancing sustainable development

The following eight awards were presented:

- Research and Innovation Award — to recognise groundbreaking sustainability projects or technologies that significantly contribute to sustainable development;
- Community Impact Award — to recognise initiatives that have made a substantial positive social impact on local communities;
- Youth Leadership Award — to celebrate young individuals who have shown exceptional leadership in promoting sustainability;
- ESG Positive Impact Award — to recognise initiatives or innovation implemented by private companies to contribute to their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, creating meaningful and measurable positive change in their communities and beyond;
- Environment Award — to highlight efforts focused on protecting and preserving the natural environment;
- Sustainable School Award — to highlight efforts made by schools in order to increase the sustainability of their premises and operations;
- Sustainability in Journalism Award — to

recognise and celebrate innovative and impactful journalism and reporting related to sustainable development; and

- Public Service Sustainability Award — to highlight initiatives and progress made by the Public Service to help push the sustainable development agenda.

Applications for these awards were open from 4 July 2025 till 24 August 2025 and a total of 106 applications were received. The 2025 awards were supported by the then Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government, the then MEYR, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Research and Innovation, and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA).

The winners of the 2025 Sustainable Development Action Awards were: Professor Ruben Paul Borg for the Research and Innovation Award; NWAMI International Malta for the Community Impact Award; Erica Micallef Filletti for the Youth Leadership Award; HSBC Malta p.l.c. for the Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) Positive Impact Award; 1st Sliema Scout Group (Bernard's Own) for the Environment Award; Agius de Soldanis, Rabat Middle School, Gozo College for the Sustainable School Award; Marc Galdes for the Sustainability in Journalism Award; and Circular Economy Malta for the Public Service Sustainability Award.

The Sustainable Baby Box Project

The Sustainable Baby Box project, launched in November 2021, is an ongoing initiative coordinated by the then MEEC through the SDD. This programme provides each newborn with a starter kit designed to encourage guardians to

adopt a more sustainable approach to childcare. By supplying eco-friendly and safe baby products, the Ministry seeks to instil the principles of sustainability from infancy and promote the adoption of reusable items over single-use and



disposable alternatives. Each baby box includes a blanket, muslin cloth, wet bag, cloth wipe, socks, and mittens, all crafted from environmentally responsible materials, alongside a reusable nappy and nappy liners. Additionally, a feeding bib, dummy, teether, and cutlery set made from Bisphenol A-free material are provided. To further support early development, books in both Maltese and English are included to foster a reading culture from a young age. Since the start of the project, by the end of 2025, more than 17,000 sustainable baby boxes were distributed to parents and guardians all over Malta and Gozo.

The Sustainable Localities Scheme

Launched in the third quarter of 2022, the Sustainable Localities Scheme aims to support local councils in Malta and Gozo in implementing infrastructural projects that promote environmental sustainability, social wellbeing, and economic growth. Through this scheme, financial assistance was provided to recognise and support local community efforts while encouraging active participation in sustainable initiatives.

Three projects were selected under this scheme, focusing on enhancing both the



natural and urban environment while fostering socio-economic development. These include the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels, as well as the regeneration and embellishment of two main squares, along with improvements to surrounding facilities for the benefit of the community. The final two projects were completed in 2025.

The Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund is a support scheme for voluntary organisations (VOs), through which non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations are being offered financial support for them to engage in sustainable activities and initiatives related to the three pillars of sustainable development. This fund is incentivising the development of more projects that promote, and are beneficial to, the concept and principles of sustainable development. Through this fund, organisations are also being given the opportunity to develop their capacity and skills, and take the lead in managing a project or initiative that contributes to a cleaner and healthier environment and economy, as well as a fairer and more equal society. By 2025, the final two projects supported through the second call of the fund, implemented by Għaqda Muzikali San Gejtanu and the St Jeanne Antide Foundation, were successfully completed, marking a significant milestone in the Fund's ongoing contribution to community-driven sustainable development.

Our Spaces, Our Communities — Healthy, Secure and Playful Together Project

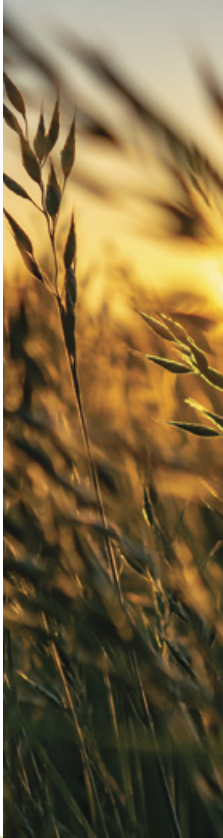
Our Spaces, Our Communities — Healthy, Secure and Playful Together, launched by the Guardian of Future Generations in 2024 in collaboration with the then MEEC and Gabriel Caruana Foundation, continued its core implementation throughout 2025 with a strong focus on co-creating vibrant, healthy, playful, and secure urban spaces in Żurrieq, Safi, and Kirkop. Throughout the year, the project engaged residents through an art-based, community-led research approach to understand how different groups, especially children and young

people, perceive their urban and natural surroundings, and how these spaces can better support wellbeing, health equity, and community connection. In 2025, local councils and key stakeholders actively participated in planning and dialogue sessions, culminating in the completion of the research phase and the launch of a touring exhibition featuring modular structures, illustrations, photographs, posters, and clay works created with local communities.



Transitioning Towards a Climate-Neutral Green and Blue Economy

1.



CHAPTER 1.

Transitioning Towards a Climate-Neutral Green and Blue Economy

Malta continues to advance its transition toward a climate-neutral green and blue economy, recognising the interconnected challenges posed by climate change, resource pressures, and the country's unique island vulnerabilities. In 2025, the government strengthened its commitment to a resilient green and blue economy by intensifying efforts in renewable energy deployment, sustainable mobility, circular economy practices, and the protection of natural capital. Recent years have also seen continued national progress in strengthening energy security, enhancing air and water quality, and accelerating the shift to low-carbon mobility. Complementary initiatives in waste management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable food systems have aimed to safeguard natural resources while supporting long-term socio-economic resilience. These developments are supported by an evolving strategic framework, including infrastructure investments, the implementation of national environmental and sectoral strategies, and deeper collaboration across ministries, public entities, the private sector, and civil society. Education, research, community engagement, and regional cooperation continue to play a vital role in driving behavioural change and supporting Malta's wider sustainability transition.

As government continues to implement Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050 and align with global sustainability goals, the progress made today will lay the foundation for a resilient, thriving, and climate-neutral future. Within the framework of the government's efforts, in line with the 2030 Agenda, this chapter will highlight measures, projects, and initiatives related to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 6-9, 11-15, and 17.

1.1 Towards a Resilient and Climate-Neutral Economy

1.1.1 Green Public Procurement

In line with the Green Public Procurement (GPP) National Action Plan 2022-2027, Malta's target is to progressively increase by 2027 the share of the government's procurement in greener products and services to 90% of tenders which fall under the scope of GPP. In 2025, Malta achieved an 87.9% compliance rate in relation to calls for procurement that fall under the scope of GPP. This is calculated through weekly compliance checks held by the GPP Office within the then MEEC and through a cross-reference with GPP quarterly reports, which every respective ministerial GPP coordinator must submit by the end of every quarter.

In 2025, the GPP online platform was launched. The GPP online platform aims at increasing awareness about GPP and provides users with the opportunity to submit questions related to GPP compliance or training sessions. These training sessions are crucial for the success of GPP, as they equip key stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively integrate sustainable practices into procurement processes. These training sessions, originally targeted at contracting authorities, were extended to economic operators to facilitate bidders' understanding when putting forward offers for tenders, which include GPP requirements aimed at promoting sustainable investments and encouraging both public and private sectors to contribute to a greener economy.

2030 AGENDA
RELATED GOALS



1.1.2 Climate Action and Adaptation

In 2025, Malta consolidated its position as a proactive small island state on climate action and adaptation. The Climate Action Authority (CAA) led the submission of an updated National Energy and Climate Plan and its accompanying progress report, as well as Malta's first Biennial Transparency Report under the Paris Agreement, strengthening compliance, transparency, and long-term planning across mitigation and resilience. These submissions reinforce Malta's commitment to EU 2030 targets and long-term climate neutrality, while strengthening national monitoring, reporting, and accountability structures.

Malta also deepened its climate governance through international collaboration. The CAA and the Climate Council joined the Global Alliance of Climate Councils, expanding access to global expertise. Work progressed on the development of a new National Climate Adaptation Plan, supported by a call for expert input. Malta further positioned itself as a regional leader by hosting the first Mediterranean conference on rising sea levels. Senior representatives from countries around the Mediterranean convened in Malta for their first technical meeting on rising sea levels in the region. With keynote speakers from the Water Services Corporation (WSC), IRENA, and the European Investment Bank, the hybrid conference served as a catalyst to discuss the challenge of rising sea levels and how actions can be taken together to address it. The conference tackled water and food security, energy, critical infrastructure, sustainability, and the Blue Economy, serving as a foundation for further collaboration. Furthermore, the National Audit Office recognised “strong progress” in national climate action within the report “A Review of Malta's Climate Action Using the ClimateScanner Framework”, reflecting the impact of recent reforms and investments.

A major milestone in 2025 was the formal integration of climate action and sustainability into Malta's education system. A new agreement between the then MEYR, the then MEEC, and the CAA establishes a long-term framework to embed climate literacy, educator training, youth engagement, research, and school-based

sustainability initiatives across all levels of education. This initiative ensures that children and young people, who are central to long-term climate resilience, gain both the knowledge and the practical experience needed to become active contributors to Malta's transition.

Community-level action also gained traction. The “Renewable Energy from School Rooftops” project, resulting from a Memorandum of Understanding with the then MEYR, is expanding PV installations across schools, following the success of Malta's first carbon-neutral school in Imsida. The first four schools in this project are Gharghur Primary School, St Benedict College in Kirkop, St Clare Primary School in San Ġwann, and St Nicholas College Wardija Primary. The PV systems in these schools will provide a total capacity of 228 kWp, enough to supply energy to around 83 households per year. This project will contribute to a reduction of around 139 metric tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually. Youth participation was further strengthened through the EcoSchools Young People's Summit, an initiative held in collaboration with Nature Trust FEE Malta, which empowered over 130 students to lead climate initiatives within their communities. Works began on publishing a book, an initiative between the CAA and Eco-Schools (Nature Trust — FEE) aimed at Year 3 to Year 6 students, inspired by the ideas put forward by the children during the Summit. The aim of this publication is not only to serve as an educational tool but also to send a clear message that, with determination, one can bring about positive change. The digital book “L-Istejjer Meraviġġi u Ribellużi ta' Guża Hanfusa”, written by Clare Azzopardi and illustrated by Alfie Gatt, was launched in December during a visit to students at Sacred Heart School.

Together, these developments demonstrate Malta's integrated approach to climate mitigation and adaptation, combining strategic planning, international cooperation, educational transformation, and tangible local projects, to build a more resilient and sustainable future.

Complementing these national efforts, the Malta Stock Exchange has initiated the compilation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data for the period 2024-2026. This audit aims to provide

a detailed analysis of the organisation's energy consumption and environmental impact, covering Scope 1 (direct emissions), Scope 2 (indirect emissions from purchased energy), and Scope 3 (all other indirect emissions across the value chain). Data collection began in late August and remains ongoing. The comprehensive assessment will offer valuable insights into the Exchange's carbon footprint, supporting the development of future sustainability strategies and reinforcing its commitment to environmental responsibility.

Beyond organisational efforts, in 2025, the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) was awarded a tender for the development of a climate-neutral plan for Gozo, as part of the EU Mission "100 climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030", a fund under Horizon Europe. This plan aims to:

- establish a viable target date for achieving climate neutrality and develop two alternative scenarios based on a detailed energy baseline. This will be informed by a comprehensive gap analysis and extensive consultation with both state and non-state-actors;
- identify the actions and measures required to reach the climate neutrality target, accompanied by an implementation and financing plan. The plan will also recommend any necessary institutional reforms, estimate the resources needed for each action, and provide an indicative timeline for execution; and
- ensure broad stakeholder involvement, including government ministries and entities, the private sector, NGOs, and the public.

Furthermore, the project Climate Funding 4 Cities, involving the cities of Klagenfurt, Vilnius, and Gozo through the GRDA, is being funded through a Pilot Call under Horizon Europe. It aims to raise climate awareness and call for action in the different cities. During October 2025, the GRDA launched its climate awareness campaign on its Facebook page, followed by the launch of an idea competition, aimed at tackling climate

change. Moreover, as part of its pilot project, the GRDA held climate awareness sessions in all Gozo government primary schools throughout the period from March to May 2025. These sessions targeted students ranging from Year 3 to Year 6. The GRDA revisited Gozitan primary schools during October and November 2025 to encourage students to walk to and from school, in an effort to reduce GHG emissions from vehicles, ease traffic, and encourage an active lifestyle. Students who confirm participation in this initiative of walking to and from school will be provided with a tracking device (fitness watch) to further encourage walking.

Backed by the Malta Tourism Authority, SUNx Malta is a climate-friendly travel initiative to help the global tourism sector reach zero GHG emissions by 2050 on a Paris 1.5 °C pathway. SUNx has a core partnership with the then Ministry for Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority to advance climate-friendly travel, create a climate-friendly travel registry, and promote climate-friendly travel education.

The Institute of Tourism Studies have partnered, with SUNx Malta to develop a Climate Friendly Travel Education Capacity Building Programme, which is part of an EU-led programme for 100,000 STRONG Climate Champions in all UN States by 2030. The developed training programme is in the form of an MQF Level 4 Diploma, with a total of 120 ECVET. The programme is being taught over a 12-month period in two semesters, followed by a one-year international internship trade practice.

Following the success of the Diploma in Climate-Friendly Travel, which has seen a total of 98 graduates up to 2024 and another 26 graduates in December 2025, the collaboration between the Institute of Tourism Studies and SUNx Malta has been taken a step further through the planning and development of a Master of Science in Strategic Management for Climate-Friendly Travel. Both institutions are currently undertaking curricular and market research with the aim of concluding the study programme's development and initiating the accreditation process. The target date for the commencement of this programme is October 2028.

Additionally, in 2025, SUNx Malta expanded its Education2Action Framework to reach young learners through its unique Dodo4Kids programme. The initiative introduced children to tourism icons, and the climate and sustainability challenges they face. At the heart of this initiative is a quirky Dodo, re-imagined from DNA in Malta, who travels around the world meeting local children and discovering the joys of being a tourist, while exploring how to be clean and green. The character features across online books, cartoons, and games. The programme is now being rolled out globally, with partners across the tourism sector helping prepare the next generation of travellers for the extreme weather challenges ahead.

1.1.3 Air Quality

In 2025, ERA finalised work on the Air Quality Plan, incorporating feedback from the public consultation throughout September and October 2023 and additional stakeholder consultations in 2024. In parallel, work continued on the draft National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP), which requires synergy with other relevant sectors, such as the transport, energy, and climate sectors. The emissions included within the NAPCP were taken from the historical and projected emissions reported under the National Emission Ceilings Directive. These emissions are recalculated and submitted annually following the principle of continuous improvement. Following the publication of the recast Ambient Air Quality Directive in November 2024, the process of transposing the new requirements over the next 2 years was initiated and work in this regard also progressed throughout 2025.

Furthermore, since the establishment of a Technical Committee of Experts (TCE) at Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre (REMPEC) level in 2024, with the aim of developing a regional study on the possible introduction of a Mediterranean Nitrogen Emissions Control Area (NECA) and its socio-economic and health impacts, ERA chaired the national working group for the study on the socio-economic and health impacts on the Maltese Islands (NECA WG) throughout 2025. A number of working group members from the

working group were nominated for the TCE. The members actively participated and provided detailed feedback on the methodology and the assumptions taken within the regional study. Furthermore, the working group reviewed and provided feedback on the national study on the socio-economic and health impacts on the Maltese Islands following the possible designation of a Mediterranean NECA. The socio-economic impacts section of the study was finalised, and it was shared with REMPEC to ensure coherence between the national and regional studies.

ERA concluded its participation in the 2024-2025 Globe Air Quality Campaign, an educational citizen science project, aimed at raising awareness about air pollution, carried out in collaboration with Globe Malta and the STEM & VET Curriculum Hub. ERA has now commenced its involvement in the 2025-2026 campaign, which has expanded from 9 to 15 schools across Malta and Gozo. The project included a launch event and training session for educators from the participating schools. The session focused on the importance of air quality monitoring, provided an overview of ERA's air quality monitoring network, and introduced the main sources of air pollution in Malta, particularly traffic-related emissions. Educators were also trained in the installation, use, and data collection procedures for diffusion tubes used to measure nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Each school received a passive diffusion tube for one-month observation period, during which the students collected data by installing tubes to measure NO₂ levels and analyse the influence of traffic patterns outside their schools. Additionally, real-time data on particulate matter and meteorological parameters was gathered using environmental sensor kits, enabling students to assess the contributions from both anthropogenic and natural sources, such as road transport and Saharan dust events.

From an infrastructure perspective, through Infrastructure Malta, Malta has been undertaking multiple onshore power supply (OPS) projects to provide electrical power to large ships, such as cruise liners, when they shut down their engines and connect to the national grid. These OPS projects aim to reduce air, sea, and noise

pollution, particularly in densely populated areas like the Valletta Grand Harbour. The South Grand Harbour Shore Supply Project, started in 2025, shall extend the provision of OPS to quays in the Southern part of the Grand Harbour that are also used by ro-ros and cargo ships. This project aims to extend the supply of shore-side electricity to ships berthing in this area, including Ras Hanzir, Laboratory and Magazine Wharves, Parlatorio Wharf, Dock 6 within the Palumbo Shipyard (also known as Red China Dock), and the Mediterranean Maritime Hub. This project follows the investment made through the North Grand Harbour and Boiler Wharf Shore Supply project, completed in 2024, that introduced an OPS system in the Northern Part of the Grand Harbour, namely at the quays at Pinto Wharf, Deep Water Quay, and Boiler Wharf. This project has allowed docked cruise liners to switch off their engines and connect to Malta's electricity grid through shore-to-ship technology, with current capacity of up to five cruise liners powered simultaneously. The completion of this project marked a milestone as the first passenger ships connected to the national grid upon berthing. Although the use of shore-side electricity is not yet mandatory, the results in the first year of operation are encouraging, with a total of 94 vessels having connected with a total of 3,352,846.6 kWh (3,352.8 MWh) of power being supplied to vessels through OPS. This has led to substantial reductions in emissions when compared to the baseline scenario during the first year of operations, leading to percentage reductions of 36.3% Ton CO₂, 96.7% Kg NO_x, 96.1% KgPM and 85.7% KgSO₂. These reductions in air pollution improve the quality of life of residents in the South of Malta and around the Grand Harbour. It is anticipated that these OPS projects will lead to a significant reduction by more than 90% in emissions from fuel consumption by these vessels, thereby improving air quality for approximately 17,000 families residing in this part of the country.

Meanwhile, Enemalta is aligning its infrastructure upgrades with European climate goals by phasing out SF₆ gas through the implementation of policy on purchasing switchgear that does not contain SF₆ gas. This gas is known to be harmful to the environment as it is a potent GHG and contributor to global

warming. To this end, it is expected that by 2026 Enemalta will receive its first delivery of SF₆-free switchgear.

Furthermore, in line with commitments towards clean energy, the Malta Freeport Corporation continued to advance the High Voltage Shore Connection project at Malta Freeport (Phase 1) throughout 2025. Specifically, major electrical equipment was delivered on-site and the project progressed to the execution phase of the snag list related to the trenching works.

1.1.4 Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency, and Energy Security

Throughout 2025, major works continued on the implementation of the second Malta-Sicily cable interconnector to ensure more robust and secure connectivity for the country. A crucial regulatory milestone was reached in December 2024, when Italy's Ministry for the Environment and Energy Security granted its final approval for the project. In April 2025, following a public call for tenders, the largest contract for this project was signed, valued at EUR 185 million, with the Norwegian company Nexans AS for the manufacturing and installation of the subsea cable. Work is currently underway on the manufacturing of the cable in the United States and Norway, including the fibre optic cable. In September 2025, a specialised vessel was deployed to begin the detailed seabed mapping for the final route laying of the 99 km subsea cable. It is envisaged that the manufacturing and testing of the 99 km long cable will be complete in 2026, allowing it to be loaded later in the year onto the specialised vessel that will lay it on the seabed.

Work is also underway on the manufacturing and installation of two 220 kV reactors and a transformer at the terminal stations in Malta and Ragusa, following the award of a public contract valued at EUR 20.3 million. The manufacture of the equipment is expected to start in February 2026, with delivery planned between July and August 2026. Another contract for a 132 kV variable shunt reactor at Magħtab was awarded in September 2025 following a public call, and



civil works are set to commence by the first quarter of 2026.

The second interconnector project also encompasses the manufacturing and installation of underground high-voltage and fibre optic land cables along the onshore route in Ragusa and Malta. The EUR 34 million public tender was awarded to the Italian company SELT SpA. Works will encompass the laying of cables along the almost 21 km-route in Ragusa, and work will begin on the route of about 2 km in Magħtab. As of September 2025, 15% of the onshore cable works in Ragusa were complete, and the construction of the walk-in culvert at the Magħtab terminal station was also completed. Additionally, new high-voltage switchgear and a fire protection system will be installed in Ragusa. The equipment control system will also be updated in both Ragusa and Magħtab. The contract, valued at EUR 10 million, was awarded to Terna Rete Italia SpA following a public call.

By the end of 2025, total government investment in this capital project was estimated to amount to approximately EUR 90 million. The funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allocated to the project amounts to EUR 165 million and will cover more than half of the total investment cost, which is estimated at around EUR 300 million.

The Government of Malta, through InterConnect Malta (ICM), is actively pursuing the development of the nation's first offshore floating wind farm, a crucial project aimed at diversifying the local energy mix and achieving carbon neutrality targets. With a planned installed capacity of between 280 MW and 320 MW, the Offshore RES Project is designed to generate nearly one third of Malta's current electricity consumption, significantly reducing reliance on fossil fuels and imported energy. The location for the project is situated within Malta's potential exclusive economic zone, with two specific sites having been identified for development. The procurement process is moving through a multi-stage competitive dialogue. Following the international public call issued in late 2024, the initial Preliminary Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) submission stage was concluded in mid- 2025. This phase successfully attracted interest from three separate

companies and consortia, demonstrating confidence from international developers in the Maltese market and the floating wind technology itself. A detailed evaluation of these submissions is currently being carried out to ensure that candidates possess the necessary technical and financial capability for such a large-scale infrastructure project.

Looking ahead, the next key milestone involves advancing the qualifying candidates to the second stage, the Invitation to Participate in Dialogue. The winning developer will be granted a 35-year concession to design, construct, operate, and eventually decommission the wind farm. Furthermore, the project's commercial viability is planned to be secured through state support for the 25-year operational period, facilitated by a two-way contract for difference (CFD), which provides long-term revenue predictability essential for major energy investments. A state aid notification for aid clearance to the CFD and investment in the grid connection system has been prepared and is currently under review by the State Aid Monitoring Board.

In addition to owning and operating the floating offshore wind farm, the developer is also responsible for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a grid connection system, which will be owned by the government and includes an offshore substation and export cables system. The Offshore Grid Connection System Project has been included in the EU's 10-Year Network Development Plan of 2026 in November 2025, making it eligible as a Project of Common Interest candidate for the Project of Common Interest list of 2027. The project is expected to substantially increase the indigenous renewable energy sources (RES) production, strengthen the island's energy resilience, reduce reliance on non-renewable sources, and enhance sustainability, making a significant impact on Malta's journey towards carbon neutrality by 2050.

To complement the second cable interconnector, strengthen the electricity distribution network, enhance the resilience of the grid, reduce grid bottlenecks, and provide flexibility in terms of the ability of the system to accommodate additional renewable energy, Malta is exploring

the implementation of utility scale battery energy storage systems (BESS).

ICM continued works throughout 2025 on its two BESS projects. The initiative is split between two strategically located installations: the 8 MW/20 MWh BESS 1 at the former Marsa A-Station with a budget of approximately EUR 12 million, and the larger 32 MW/64 MWh BESS 2 at the Delimara Power Station, which was approved for funding on February 2025 under the ERDF. Collectively, these projects will provide 40 MW/84 MWh of storage capacity, crucial for integrating intermittent RES and enhancing grid stability and resilience.

The most salient achievement in the first half of 2025 was the culmination of the procurement process. The Engineering, Procurement, and Construction tender (CT3026/24), launched in late 2024, concluded its submission period in early Q1 2025, attracting international confidence with 16 separate offers from various consortia. The tender was recommended for award in June following a technical and financial evaluation of these bids by ICM, a critical phase necessary to ensure the chosen contractor possesses the expertise required to deliver large-scale, utility-grade battery storage systems in these complex, environmentally sensitive locations. In parallel with the procurement evaluation, ICM secured several vital regulatory and commercial milestones. Applications permitting development for both the Marsa and Delimara sites were actively processed and progressed through the Planning Authority (PA). These achievements position the BESS projects as key enablers for Malta to meet its 2030 climate goals.

In line with Malta Vision 2050, the government has initiated the development of the third electricity interconnector (IC3) with Italy. This large-scale infrastructure project is strategically designed to bolster the nation's electricity supply security and ensure sufficient capacity to meet the projected increase in demand over the medium to long-term. The IC3 project is intrinsically linked to Malta's commitment to energy transition, aligning directly with government plans to invest in offshore renewable energy generation and facilitate the country's trajectory towards a carbon-neutral economy.

This development represents a significant technological innovation for Malta, as the IC3 will be the first interconnector to transmit energy using a high-voltage direct current connection. The IC3 Project was included in the EU's 10-Year Network Development Plan of 2026 in November 2025, making it eligible as a Project of Common Interest candidate for the Project of Common Interest list of 2027. The core activities for the upcoming period involve the issuance of two major public calls for tenders for studies. The first will be for the preliminary design of the project, with a mandate to identify the most suitable method and location to ensure geographical and operational diversification from the first two existing interconnectors. The second public call will be for the crucial financial and economic studies required for the project. These studies are essential deliverables that will be utilised directly in the official applications for securing co-financing from EU funds. Similar to IC2, the project, once implemented, will reduce GHG emissions from the local fossil-fuelled power-generating plant and enable increased importation of electricity sourced from renewables.

In tandem with the abovementioned efforts aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuels, the then Ministry for Gozo and Planning (MGP), through the EcoGozo Directorate (EGD), completed the installation of 15 smart PV flowers at the Ta' Xhajma multi-modal hub in 2025, following a contract awarded in 2024. These solar systems track the movement of the sun, generating up to 40% more energy than traditional rooftop systems, and are expected to produce approximately 60,000 kWh annually. The clean energy generated by these solar flowers will directly offset energy consumption at the multi-modal hub, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and lowering carbon emissions, in line with Malta's renewable energy targets and the broader transition to a low-carbon economy.

In order to promote sustainability and to further encourage the use of renewable energy within public buildings, the Energy and Water Agency (EWA), through a pilot project which kicked off in 2022, installed PV panels and batteries within local councils. The main aim of this pilot project is to ensure that these buildings, which are frequented by the general public throughout the day, operate

on renewable energy. This is achieved by storing in the batteries the surplus electricity generated by the PV panels in the morning and afternoon. The stored energy can then be used later, when the PV panels are not generating electricity. As a result, the local councils will meet the majority of their electricity needs through renewable energy.

The first two local councils to receive these installations were the Paola and Mellieħa Local Councils. Following positive feedback from these local councils, work commenced in 2024 with Siggiewi and Pembroke Local Councils to replicate the project. These tenders are currently in the adjudication stage. In 2025, Hal Safi began collaborating with the Agency to install PVs and batteries. This tender is also currently in the adjudication stage.

Further promoting renewable energy across various sectors, the REEValue Project is an EU-funded initiative under the LIFE Programme that supports businesses in the food, beverage, and transport sectors in improving energy efficiency and adopting renewable energy solutions. It focuses on the entire value chain, from production and processing to logistics, distribution, and retail. REEValue provides tailored tools, technical guidance, and capacity-building support to help companies reduce energy use, cut operational costs, and contribute to the EU's climate goals. A key achievement in 2025 was the launch of the REEValue Online Platform, which provides multilingual access to Energy Efficiency/RES recommendations, financing guidance, and collaboration tools across value chains. Through outreach activities, including workshops, in-depth mentoring sessions, site visits, energy helpdesk services, and one-to-one meetings, the project reached over 2,079 businesses and directly involved 72 companies. These included 16 one-to-one meetings in Malta, as well as focus groups and additional mentoring sessions, dissemination activities, stakeholder meetings, and targeted communication campaigns. The project continues to support companies along the value chains, not only to adopt audit-based measures but also to implement energy savings even if they have not previously had an audit.

Additionally, the EWA carries out a number of studies to inform policy development whilst

addressing several SDGs. During 2025, the EWA continued its cooperation with the University of Malta (UM) whereby it concluded a wind resource measuring campaign spanning over 2 years of data. Work also continued on two parallel studies to identify challenges to decarbonise the various sectors of the economy. These will feed into a decarbonisation strategy for industry/services to be drawn in 2026. Work is also underway on plans for the expansion and decarbonisation of the power sector, as well as to strengthen support schemes for renewable energy administered by the Regulator for Energy & Water Services (REWS).

In 2023, a call was published to install PV panels on existing WSC assets, covering a roof area of 19,000 m². These solar farms, with a 2.7 MW peak capacity, are expected to deliver a renewable energy output of approximately 4.3 GWh per annum by the second quarter of 2026. Installation of the PVs commenced during the fourth quarter of 2024, with installations at the Luqa Reservoir and Pembroke Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant. By 2025, PV installations were completed on the following WSC-owned assets:

- Ġirkewwa RO plant
- Pembroke RO plant
- Lapsi RO plant
- Luqa reservoir
- Net-zero carbon warehouse in Bulebel

Over 50% of the installations at Ta' Barkat Sewage Treatment Plant have been completed. Installations at the Ta' Qali and Naxxar reservoirs are scheduled to commence in early 2026, with completion expected by the third quarter of the same year. In 2025, the installation of energy-efficient turbo blowers replaced the current wastewater treatment plant aeration system at Ta' Barkat. The project was completed in late 2025 and is expected to yield significant energy savings starting in 2026.

Building on these wider national efforts to improve energy efficiency within buildings and accelerate the shift toward cleaner energy, the Housing Authority is also advancing its own energy efficiency initiatives. In line with Directive (EU) 2018/844 on the Energy Performance of Buildings, which prioritises the renovation

of public buildings, the Housing Authority has partnered with the UM's Institute for Sustainable Energy to enhance the sustainability and energy performance of its social housing stock. As part of this initiative, the Authority has launched a pilot project on a social housing block in Haż-Żabbar. Through deep energy renovations, the project aims to achieve buildings with nearly-zero energy performance. In 2025, three tenders were issued. The first tender, covering civil works, has been awarded and work has commenced. These works include roof insulation, replacement of apertures, installation of air conditioners, façade works, and other related tasks. The second tender relates to appliances, while the third tender concerns PV panels and is currently undergoing the evaluation process before being awarded.

In line with the above efforts, MCAST have implemented a campus-wide programme aimed at improving energy performance, digital building monitoring, and user comfort through smart building technologies. In 2025, energy-efficient lighting systems were installed in selected institutes and the use of building management systems was expanded to monitor air quality, temperature, and occupancy. Automated lighting was piloted in high-use corridors and preparatory work began to integrate new sensors into refurbished buildings. At the same time, the smart building design at the Vincent Moran Regional Healthcare Hub has also been fully implemented, incorporating energy-efficient systems and modern infrastructure that reduce environmental impact while improving operational efficiency and user comfort.

1.1.4.1 Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Schemes

The EWA has strengthened its investment and commitment to assisting different sectors transition toward greater energy efficiency and water conservation. Since 2022, the EWA has supported over 123 projects within facilities managed by VOs, and each VO is supported with a grant of up to EUR 27,000.

Through the Energy and Water Efficiency Scheme for Voluntary Organisations, such

organisations can implement projects to reduce their energy and water consumption in their facilities and reinvest the costs saved back into the community. As of November 2025, a total of 123 applicants have benefited and received funds amounting to approximately EUR 2.23 million. The 2025 call received a total of 65 applications for interventions, totalling over EUR 1.2 million. The projects within the VOs are wide-ranging, including the installation of efficient water heaters and LED lighting; the replacement of inefficient AC systems; and the upgrading of appliances, and kitchen and cleaning equipment.

Meanwhile, the Promotion of Energy Audits for SMEs Scheme supports small and medium-sized enterprises in conducting energy audits within their premises by reimbursing the audit costs up to a capped amount. The scheme is periodically extended, and the 2022 scheme has been updated to include an optional model for an additional grant of EUR 500, which supports an enterprise applying with any funding scheme. In 2025, the scheme was further amended to revise the maximum grant limit and expand NACE codes to higher grant limits. Since 2021, a total of 102 enterprises have applied, with a total of EUR 384,000 in distributed funding. 2025 recorded the highest number of applications to date, amounting to 23.

During 2025, the REWS administered the following schemes:

a. 2025 RES Scheme:

This scheme provided a grant based on the following options:

- Option A (PV system with standard solar inverter): 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of EUR 2,500 per system and EUR 625/kWp.
- Option B (PV system with hybrid inverter): 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of EUR 3,000 per system and EUR 750/kWp.
- Option C (hybrid/battery inverter and battery): 80% of eligible costs of the battery storage up to a maximum of EUR 7,200 per system and EUR 720/kWh, plus

80% of eligible costs of the hybrid inverter up to a maximum of EUR 1,800 per system and EUR 450/kWp.

- Option D (battery storage only): 80% of eligible costs of the battery storage up to a maximum of EUR 7,200 per system and EUR 720/kWh.

When applying for option B, one may also apply for option D.

For options C and D, when the installation is located in Gozo, the battery grant component will increase to 95% of eligible costs of the battery storage up to a maximum of EUR 8,550 per system and EUR 855/kWh.

b. 2025 Water Heater Scheme:

This scheme provided a grant based on the following options:

- Option A: 50% of the costs of the boiler plus panels themselves, including VAT, capped at EUR 700.
- Option B: 75% of the costs of the solar water heater itself, including VAT, capped at EUR 1,400. An additional grant of EUR 500 will be provided after 5 years to cover the maintenance costs against a receipt issued by the supplier.
- Option C: 50% of the costs of the heat pump water heater itself, including VAT, capped at EUR 1,400.

c. 2023 RIDG Scheme:

This scheme provided a grant based on the following: 50% of the total eligible, including VAT, capped at EUR 1,000 for retrofitted roof insulation; and 50% of the total eligible, including VAT, capped at EUR 1,000 for retrofitted double glazing.

Furthermore, in 2025 the BCA issued two financial schemes relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy, strengthening the implementation of the Long-Term Renovation Strategy and its four pillars. A renovation

scheme for dwellings, Irrinova Darek, was issued regionally to increase the renovation rates, particularly deep renovations. The scheme promotes the use of passive measures, increased energy efficiency in building systems, and the integration of renewable energy systems in existing buildings. This scheme was issued following a pilot scheme in 2022 in a specific area which was successfully completed over the period between 2022 and 2025. The second scheme, Ixtri Proprietà Sostenibbli, offers financial grants for the purchase of energy-efficient and zero-energy dwellings, creating market forces for the renovation of buildings and demand for buildings with very high energy performance.

The schemes aim to increase the shift towards increased compliance with the energy performance regulations, which came into force in July 2024. These regulations are based on an increased ambition towards energy efficiency and the integration of RES sources in buildings, also taking into consideration the increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change in the building sector, with an emphasis on controlling solar overheating and other climatic factors.

1.1.5 Advancing Towards Infrastructure with Reduced Environmental Impacts

During 2025, the Institute for Education (IfE) continued implementing its long-term plan to transition towards low-carbon, energy-efficient premises. A specialist study was commissioned to identify measures to reduce the building's carbon footprint, leading to several initiatives. These include the installation of energy-saving lighting with motion sensors, solar water heaters, and timers on geysers to minimise energy consumption. A reservoir has also been constructed to collect rainwater, which is reused for garden irrigation, thus contributing to sustainable water management. Additionally, tree planting initiatives and the creation of a small herb garden further enhance biodiversity within the premises. IfE also promotes the use of shared transport and solar-powered vehicles for staff mobility.

Infrastructure improvements were undertaken to enhance energy performance across major

facilities. At Mater Dei Hospital (MDH), upgrades to chillers and heat pumps at the Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre (SAMOC) reduced both energy consumption and carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Further enhancements included the installation of 23 EC fans to replace outdated belt-driven models, saving approximately 141,809 kWh in 2025 at a cost of EUR 182,801.72. Additional projects involved fitting new motors in lifts and replacing 3,188 compact fluorescent lamps with LED fittings, achieving an estimated energy saving of 390,261 kWh in 2025 at a cost of EUR 505,000. These investments reflect government's commitment to modern, energy-efficient infrastructure.

Government's commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship is reflected in the transition to electric transport across its entities. By 2025, the official transport fleet of the Environmental Health Directorate (EHD) had been fully converted to electric vehicles and was shared across different units. The fleet included two eight-seater electric vans, one large electric van, and additional electric vehicles, with no petrol or diesel vehicles remaining in operation. To support this transition, wall-mounted charging stations were installed in the basement garage of the premises, reinforcing the Ministry's commitment to sustainable, environmentally-responsible operations.

Meanwhile, the St Vincent De Paul Residence completed the ERDF project titled "Investing in an Energy Efficient System for St Vincent De Paul Residence". The project amounted to EUR 500,000. Moreover, wards SF1 and SF2 received new installations of energy-efficient systems and blackout drapes. This supports efforts towards lower GHG emissions and energy-efficient measures, including better energy performance certificates.

1.2 Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns which Safeguard Environmental and Socio-Economic Wellbeing

1.2.1 Waste Prevention and Management

Further progress was made on the implementation of various measures outlined in

the Long-Term Waste Management Plan 2021–2030. Several initiatives were completed in 2025, addressing areas such as awareness-raising, capacity-building, access to funding, industry engagement, enforcement efforts, improved infrastructure, and new monitoring tools. Additional advancements were achieved in areas related to compliance oversight and the introduction of digital mechanisms to support reporting within the sector. It should be noted that although these actions have been formally completed, work related to each of them will continue to ensure their ongoing contribution to, and enhancement of, the overall legislative framework.

In addition to the above, further progress was made on the following measures:

- audits of end-of-life vehicle facilities;
- the establishment of an online reporting platform for waste operators; and
- a study to identify alternatives to single-use plastic cups and food containers.

Several measures from the Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2021–2030 have already been implemented or are currently underway. Specifically, Malta has restricted the placing on the market and further distribution of additional SUP products, in line with the national strategy and recently enacted legislation that will restrict smoking on two Maltese beaches.

Progress was also made on implementing other measures within the strategy, including the establishment of an extended producer scheme for fishing gear containing plastic placed on the market and an extended producer scheme for tobacco filters containing plastic. These were introduced through the enactment of two separate legal notices (S.L. 549.175 and S.L. 549.176). The latter regulations also transpose requirements emanating from the EU SUP Directive. Furthermore, guidelines assisting catering establishments with identifying different alternatives to food containers and cups for beverages are also being finalised for publication. Meanwhile, a new subsidiary legislation (S.L. 549.178) has been enacted in order to implement Chapter VIII on the

management of waste batteries of the Battery Regulation (EU) 2023/1542.

Considering the unique characteristics of the island of Gozo, as well as its different socio-economic reality when compared to Malta, as highlighted in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis included in the recently published Gozo Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2023–2033 by the GRDA, the Regional Impact Assessment screening process identified specific policies and measures from the Waste Management Plan 2021–2030 that affect Gozo in a materially different manner than mainland Malta. In light of this outcome, it was determined that a Regional Impact Assessment study is required, in order to achieve improved waste management plans and policies that are in line with the strategic objectives of the RDS for Gozo. The Regional Impact Assessment study, which started in 2025, consisted of surveys and focus groups targeting different cohorts. The final Regional Impact Assessment was published in late 2025.

The EcoMedIslands Project, followed by the EGD, commenced on 28 October 2025 in Gozo, marking the start of a 45-month initiative focused on designing and testing innovative, circular solutions for sustainable waste management across the Mediterranean islands. The project is funded by the Euro-MED Programme and coordinated by the University of Western Macedonia. It brings together an international consortium of academic institutions, local authorities, private organisations, and networks, including the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development, the municipality of Mykonos, the town of Cres (Grad Cres), the municipality of Berchidda, the Greening the Islands Foundation (GTI), the municipality of Paralimni–Deryneia, the Circular Economy Alliance Ltd, the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, and the EGD.

The overall objective of EcoMedIslands is to develop and demonstrate circular, resource-efficient waste management models tailored to the specific challenges of island territories,



and to support their wider uptake in the Mediterranean region.

The project is structured into three main work packages (WPs):

- WP1 (study, led by the UIB): This WP focuses on the development of a data-driven analytical framework and sustainability assessment for all pilot islands. Activities include surveys, a baseline analysis of current waste management practices, and the preparation of circularity strategies to guide subsequent interventions;
- WP2 (testing): Under this WP, smart waste management systems will be piloted in five selected sites. These pilot sites will employ Internet of Things sensors, AI-driven monitoring tools, and other digital solutions to optimise waste collection, segregation, and treatment. The package also includes the assessment of environmental, economic, and social impacts arising from the tested solutions; and
- WP3 (transfer, led by GTI): This WP is dedicated to communication, capacity building, and the transferability of project results. It aims to support the replication

and scaling-up of successful models across other Mediterranean islands through training, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge-sharing activities.

The five pilot sites presenting their local waste management contexts included Mykonos (Greece), Cres-Lošinj (Croatia), Berchidda (Italy), Paralimni-Deryneia (Cyprus), and Gozo (Malta).

A key development in Malta's waste management infrastructure is the planned establishment of a new skip management facility (SMF) by WasteServ Malta (WSM). With an investment of around EUR 17 million, the SMF will be accepting bulky waste from open-topped skips. By separating the bulky waste into different waste streams, this facility will be recovering valuable materials, effectively reducing waste directed to the landfill. This facility is expected to receive around 47,000 tonnes of mixed bulky waste that is delivered in open-topped skips every year, thereby improving Malta's recycling rate and diverting waste from landfills. In 2025, WSM issued the tender for the design and build of a SMF.

Following a feasibility study conducted in 2025, an online platform was identified as the most suitable solution to connect consumers with registered repair service providers for

electronics, furniture, textiles, and more. Circular Economy Malta (CEMalta) is actively working on the development of the Digital Repair Centre Platform. The platform is designed to support the EU Right to Repair Directive and Malta's Waste Management Plan 2021–2030.

1.2.1.1 Construction and Demolition Waste

Additional progress was achieved in implementing the measures outlined in the Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy, including efforts to align the criteria in the Green Public Procurement Action Plan with the relevant waste regulations, including the Construction and Demolition Waste Framework Regulations. Furthermore, guidelines are currently being drafted to support stakeholders in the construction and demolition industry in meeting their obligations under the Construction and Demolition Waste Framework Regulations (S.L. 549:161).

1.2.1.2 Food and Organic Waste

ERA has focused its efforts on establishing the Malta Food Waste Prevention Programme through the launch of a public consultation on its intent and objectives. The intent of the programme is primarily to establish effective measures to be implemented across the entire food supply chain, which will help Malta fulfil the new requirements emanating from the recently revised Waste Framework Directive, including the attainment of the food waste reduction targets.

Meanwhile, WasteServ has been working on a new organic processing plant (OPP), announced in March 2025 as part of the ECOHIVE project. This facility will target the organic waste stream. The OPP will convert organic waste into soil improvers and will also generate biogas which will be transformed into electrical energy. Moreover, this project will divert organic material from landfills, thus preventing the generation of harmful GHG. During the year 2025, WasteServ obtained the PA permit and issued the design, build and trial operation tender of this new facility. EU funding was also secured for this project.

In addition, the FoodTuristic Project, which is being implemented by the ITS, addresses the

lack of green technology curriculum in European culinary and hospitality schools, which have traditionally focused more on gastronomy and hospitality management skills. The FoodTuristic Project, funded via the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 framework, kicked off in November 2023 and was concluded in October 2025. This project developed digital resources for educators and students in hotel and culinary schools across four partner countries (Ireland, France, Malta, and Slovenia) to reduce food waste, develop circular economy skills, and localise food production. During the project, the consortium developed a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course delivered as a digital badge, the official project's website, a mobile application available on Android, and a good practice guide to address the green skills gap in European culinary and hospitality schools. Additional resources included awareness videos and a technical report from site visits the project partners conducted. All these resources will remain available to the public, educators, and students for free. These project resources aim to continue raising awareness in reducing food waste, enhancing knowledge in adopting new technologies to grow appropriate foods onsite, and utilising food waste novel technology composting systems. The skills developed by project output users will therefore have a strong legacy potential and benefit the reduced carbon impact of schools and industry.

The then Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights (MAFA) has formally initiated the Biogas Plant Project with the issuance of a PQQ, which constitutes the first stage of the procurement process and serves to assess the suitability, technical competence, and relevant experience of prospective economic operators prior to their participation in the tendering phase. The project is designed to promote the sustainable management of agricultural waste through its conversion into renewable energy, thereby contributing to the reduction of GHG emissions, minimising air pollutants associated with conventional waste disposal practices, and improving overall air quality. Furthermore, the efficient recovery of energy from organic waste enhances energy efficiency and reduces reliance on fossil fuels. By embedding circular economy and green economic principles, the initiative transforms

agricultural by-products into valuable resources, strengthens environmental resilience, and supports the transition towards a more sustainable and climate-conscious agricultural sector.

During 2025, the then MAFA launched the scheme called Żomm! Tarmix: Nevitaw il-Ħela. The purpose of this scheme was to create a platform that connects businesses operating in the food industry such as importers, wholesalers, supermarkets, restaurants, and food distributors with VOs that provide food assistance to the community. Since its launch in March 2025, there have been numerous transactions of food nearing its end of life but that is still fit for consumption. Through this scheme, the donors can benefit by including the donated goods as part of their expenses in their yearly tax declarations. In addition to this, it is part of the Pitkali Market's weekly operation to donate fruit and vegetables to VOs that are not sold and that are still fit for consumption on Tuesdays and Fridays. A proportion of the surplus fruit and vegetables that are not sold or donated are sent for recovery to the Ta' Qali composter. The resulting compost is then distributed free of charge to farmers upon request.

1.2.1.3 Single-Use Plastic Waste

The Beverage Container Refund Scheme (BCRS) is a nationwide initiative designed to promote the recycling of single-use beverage containers and reduce environmental waste. Launched in November 2022 and governed by Subsidiary Legislation 549.134, the scheme is managed by BCRS Malta Ltd under the oversight of CEMalta. The scheme operates on the principle of extended producer responsibility, requiring producers, importers, and retailers to participate in achieving a progressive increase in collection and recycling targets, with a 90% recovery rate set for 2026. Key 2025 developments included:

- an ongoing expansion of the redemption infrastructure to improve accessibility and convenience for the public;
- enhanced IT systems for product placement reporting and barcode registration;
- continued public awareness campaigns and stakeholder engagement;

- enhanced collaboration with local councils and private sector partners;
- vigilant monitoring of reverse vending machines (RVMs) and regular performance alerts to the licensed operator; and
- transparent management of the deposit refund account, subject to independent audits.

Indicator	Value	Notes/Description
Number of new RVMs installed	24	RVMs in 2025
Total operational RVMs (cumulative)	354	Total as at Q3 2025
Beverage containers collected (tons)	8,520.13	Total collected (tons) as at Q3 2025
Beverage containers collected (units)	186,407,919	Total collected (units) as at Q3 2025
Collection rate (%)	84.36%	% of containers recovered as at Q3 2025

The Bring Your Own Container (BYOC) Initiative encourages consumers to use their own reusable containers when purchasing food, beverages, and other goods, aiming to reduce single-use packaging waste. Officially launched in April 2024, the initiative continued to expand in 2025 with the following key actions:

- direct outreach and registration visits to businesses (cafés, takeaways, grocers, etc.);
- maintenance of a central BYOC database to track engagement and avoid duplicate visits;
- routine inspections and follow-ups to ensure compliance with initiative guidelines; and
- ongoing public awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of reuse and responsible consumption.

Indicator	Value	Notes/Description
Number of new businesses (cumulative)	60	Businesses newly registered in 2025
Total participating businesses (cumulative)	329	Total as at end of Q3 2025
Number of outreach/registration visits	204	Visits conducted in 2025
Compliance inspections conducted	55	Routine checks in 2025
Public awareness campaigns held	31	Number of campaigns

During 2025, the REWS administered the following schemes:

a. 2024 Reverse Osmosis Scheme

Grant percentage and maximum:

- RO Wave (RO system): 15.25% on the purchase price and installation of RO equipment, subject to a maximum grant of EUR 100.
- RO Recycle (RO system with reject water return): 40% on the purchase price and installation of RO with reject water return, subject to a maximum grant of EUR 300.

b. 2025 Tap Water Scheme

Grant percentage and maximum: 60% on the purchase price and installation of water filtration system equipment, subject to a maximum grant of EUR 100.

c. 2025 Vulnerable Household Scheme

Grant percentage and maximum: 100% on the purchase price and installation of water filtration system equipment, subject to a maximum grant of EUR 100.

1.3 Protecting, Conserving, and Enhancing Natural Capital and Resources to Improve Ecological Resilience and Sustainability

1.3.1 Terrestrial Ecosystems and Biodiversity

1.3.1.1 Biodiversity Conservation

In 2025, Malta kick-started the implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2030, with the following vision: “Malta’s biodiversity is valued, conserved, restored and sustainably used for the benefit of nature, people and climate”. This strategy is prompted by 22 targets and 79 actions which address multiple direct and indirect drivers of biodiversity loss. The implementation of this strategy is carried out in collaboration with various governmental entities, the private sector, the public and other stakeholders.

Following the confirmation of the presence of breeding sites for the Yelkouan Shearwater through the LIFE PanPuffinus Project carried out by BirdLife Malta, a new site was designated as a special protection area (il-Gzejjer ta’ San Pawl), and an existing site was extended (l-Irdumijiet ta’ Malta: l-Inhawi taċ-Ċumnija sax-Xaqqa). These efforts support Malta’s commitment to expanding terrestrial protected areas to 30% by 2030, in line with international frameworks such as the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which is implemented nationally through the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to 2030. This approach ensures the long-term protection and conservation of species and habitats for which these sites were designated, safeguarding biodiversity and strengthening environmental resilience.

In 2025, progress was made on the development of Malta’s National Strategy and Action Plan for Pollinators, aimed at safeguarding pollinator species and their habitats, while supporting sustainable agricultural and urban ecosystems. As part of the process, consultations were held with a wide range of stakeholders including farmers, beekeepers, NGOs, private sector and relevant governmental entities.

The Conservation of Wild Birds Funding Scheme, managed by the Wild Birds Regulation Unit, launched its fifth call for proposals in 2025. This fund offers financial grants to registered VOs whose primary aims include the promotion of wild bird conservation and sustainable hunting governance. The fund is designed to finance activities, projects, programmes, and schemes that directly contribute to the conservation of wild birds, in line with the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (S.L.549.42). Priority areas for funding include habitat restoration, species conservation measures, actions supporting enforcement against illegal practices (e.g., illegal killing/trapping), scientific monitoring, and awareness-raising initiatives. The projects selected for funding under this scheme are currently in the pre-implementation phase following the 2025 call for applications, with their operational start and key milestones scheduled for 2026.

Furthermore, the then MGP is implementing a honeybee breeding programme to conserve the Maltese honeybee (*Apis mellifera rutneri*). A specialised apiary has been established, equipped with a breeding laboratory and storage cabins, and manages several colonies. This project has also benefitted from international collaborations, alongside specialised training on queen breeding and instrumental insemination. Funding for this initiative was secured through the Fields of Diversity project under “Measure 10.2 — Support for conservation and sustainable use and development of genetic resources in agriculture”. This initiative contributes towards enhancing pollination and biodiversity.

The Gozo Rural Directorate is also collaborating with the UM’s Institute of Earth Systems on peanut cultivation trials at the Government Experimental Farm. Approximately 500 rows were prepared to sow 500 peanut varieties, involving land preparation, irrigation setup, pest control, and ongoing performance monitoring. This research may introduce peanuts as a viable crop for the Maltese Islands, contributing to improved food security and more sustainable agricultural production.

1.3.1.2 Maintaining Natural Habitats, Land Restoration, and Afforestation Efforts

The process for updating the conservation objectives and measures for Malta’s Terrestrial Natura 2000 sites progressed further in 2025, with the first set of conservation objectives and measures for 13 of Malta’s Terrestrial Natura 2000 sites published and adopted. The second set of conservation objectives and measures for sites in Gozo was published for public consultation. The revised conservation objectives and measures build upon Malta’s first “Management Plans and Conservation Orders for Terrestrial Natura 2000 Sites in Malta & Gozo”, adopted in 2016, and form part of the government’s long-term commitment to effective Natura 2000 site management and biodiversity conservation.

In terms of combatting desertification and land degradation, the EU Soil Monitoring Law (SML) was formally adopted in 2025 as Directive (EU) 2025/2360 following intensive negotiations at

Council level. This Directive introduces binding obligations for Member States, including the establishment of a harmonised soil monitoring framework, regular soil health assessments, identification and management of contaminated sites, and reporting to the European Commission every 6 years. These measures aim to strengthen sustainable land management, prevent soil degradation, and contribute to land degradation neutrality, as well as to take action for healthier soils, improved water quality, and enhanced climate resilience.

ERA is now preparing for transposition and implementation of the SML in Malta. Work includes designing the national soil-monitoring framework and aligning Malta’s National Action Plan on Soil under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and new EU requirements. This alignment ensures coherence between Malta’s international commitments and EU obligations, leveraging synergies to prevent soil degradation, restore degraded areas, and promote sustainable land use across the islands.

Moreover, in 2025 Malta ratified the Council of Europe Landscape Convention, committing to the protection, management, and planning of all landscapes. This step directly supports and aligns with the progress made under SDG 15 (Targets 15.3 and 15.5), reinforcing the coherence between Malta’s national, EU, and UN commitments to sustainable land and ecosystem management.

Further on habitat conservation, in 2025 the then MGP commenced the implementation of a project at Ta’ Għammar Hill. The project entails the ecological restoration and rehabilitation of an identified area at Ta’ Għammar Hill, near the Ta’ Pinu Sanctuary in Għarb, to foster local biodiversity and welcome visitors. Key interventions include soil re-engineering to enhance organic content, planting endemic trees and shrubs, installing a water supply system with irrigation infrastructure, and reconstructing traditional rubble and boundary walls using coralline limestone in compliance with regulatory requirements.

Through targeted interventions, the EGD is working to reduce flood risks during intense rainfall events, stabilise banks and retain

fertile topsoil, and nurture healthy riparian habitats that support native flora and fauna. These measures contribute to improved water retention, reduced soil erosion, and enhanced ecological connectivity across the countryside. The interventions form part of a wider valley restoration programme in Gozo that focuses on clearing natural watercourses of debris and illegal dumping, reinstating rubble walls, and introducing or upgrading rain-harvesting infrastructure to increase rainwater retention potential. At site-level, works typically include the complete removal of invasive alien vegetation, particularly species that obstruct flow and reduce ecological value, while safeguarding sensitive or protected native vegetation and avoiding any removal of protected species without the necessary authorisations. The methodology generally involves desilting and cleaning valley beds by removing accumulated silt, rubble, and debris using appropriately controlled machinery, while retaining a thin residual layer over bedrock in selected areas to preserve a seed reserve that supports natural regeneration. To facilitate ecological recovery, the upper seed-rich layer (where free from invasive species to prevent recolonisation) may be salvaged and stockpiled during works and then re-spread at completion to form a thin layer that encourages natural revegetation. Structural interventions can also include restoring or repairing small-scale water-retention and channel-control features such as masonry dams or similar structures, through repointing open joints and replacing excessively weathered stones where required. All removed material is to be transported to approved disposal facilities, with invasive plant material handled under strict biosecurity precautions.

As part of these ongoing efforts, substantial works have been carried out in Wied tal-Grazzja, Wied ta' Marsalforn, and Wied ta' Xhajma. Interventions in these valleys are now nearing completion, with restoration activities focusing on the reinstatement of natural water flow patterns, habitat enhancement, and the removal of accumulated debris and invasive species. Collectively, these actions are helping to reinforce the resilience of Gozo's rural environment while preserving its ecological and landscape value.

In 2025, Ambjent Malta carried out a series of ecological and maintenance interventions at Buskett Woodlands, focusing on habitat restoration, the enhancement of native biodiversity, and improved landscape stability. New plantings included a selection of indigenous and ecologically appropriate species, such as *Pistacia lentiscus*, *Punica granatum*, *Pinus halepensis*, *Olea europaea*, and a *Ceratonia siliqua*, contributing to the long-term resilience and structural diversity of the woodlands.

In parallel, significant work was undertaken to remove alien and invasive species, namely wild vines, tree of heaven, castor oil trees, and thorn acacia, in order to reduce ecological pressures on native flora. Hazardous and dead trees were also addressed, including the removal of one live Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*) that had repeatedly been struck by vehicles and eventually collapsed across Buskett Road, as well as seven dead Aleppo pines and a small dead walnut. Structural restoration works were completed on rubble walls, amounting to 138.75 cubic metres, aiding soil retention and landscape conservation across the site. Maintenance works were also carried out across the Santa Marija and Blue Lagoon areas, as well as the Tal-Ful campsite, to remove invasive species such as Acacia. Further interventions included the restoration of rubble wall breaches, with most efforts concentrated at Santa Marija.

As part of its afforestation efforts, in 2025 the Ambjent Malta nursery in Ta' Qali cultivated around 20,000 native and endemic trees and shrubs across 45 species, many of which are rare or difficult to propagate. The team supplies these plants to numerous environmental restoration projects across Malta, including Natura 2000 sites, public gardens, and collaborations with local councils, the UM, and various government entities. Seeds and cuttings were collected with official permits from 45 protected species across Malta, Gozo, and Comino, resulting in tens of thousands of viable plants. Maintenance included watering, fertilisation, and growth support throughout the year. Species propagated include Malta's national tree (Għargħar) and national plant (Widnet il-Baħar), along with a broad range of indigenous trees and shrubs. This work strengthens biodiversity,

supports ecological restoration, protects rare species, and reduces the need to import plants.

Ambjent Malta has also undertaken a series of restoration and planting initiatives at Wied Inċita, further enhancing the ecological value and landscape quality of this important natural area. During 2025, Ambjent Malta announced the extension of the park, equivalent to 7,000 square metres (0.7 Ha). A key component of the initiative involved the planting of 15 large, mature *Quercus ilex* (Holm Oak) specimens. Introducing mature native trees provides immediate canopy cover, strengthens habitat structure, and contributes to long-term biodiversity enhancement within the valley system. In addition, Ambjent Malta planted 1,000 seasonal plants to enrich the landscape and improve visual appeal throughout the year. These species help stabilise soil, reduce erosion, and support pollinators across the different seasons.

As part of the ongoing Wied Inċita extension, Ambjent Malta prepared and submitted a new planting scheme in line with PA requirements. This plan aims to strengthen the ecological connectivity of the area through the introduction of appropriate native vegetation suited to local conditions. To support the long-term sustainability of the site, a new irrigation system was also installed. This system ensures the healthy establishment of newly planted species and contributes to efficient water management, particularly during the dry season. Other afforestation efforts by Ambjent Malta include the planting of 70 oleander plants, 50 Texas sage plants, 12 bay laurels, 50 olive-leaved germanders, 12 *Metrosideros* plants, 50 rosemary plants, and 70 lavender plants at the Hamrun Housing Estate.

Further on valleys and habitat conservation, Project Green carried out multiple maintenance interventions across several valleys to address persistent environmental pressures, including illegal dumping. These actions were undertaken to prevent contamination, improve habitat quality across catchments, and safeguard ecosystem integrity. Collectively, the interventions contributed to improved water conservation, strengthened valley management practices, and enhanced biodiversity by restoring natural



Wied Inċita



Wied Speranza

habitats and supporting healthier ecosystems. A key milestone achieved in 2025 was the completion of the Wied Speranza Project, co-financed through the LIFE Integrated Project (LIFE IP) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The project was implemented in line with the actions outlined in the Valley Management Masterplans and supported by baseline environmental assessments. Approximately 300 native trees and shrubs were planted, contributing directly to the restoration of the riparian habitat within this ecologically sensitive area. Due to the site's vulnerability, works were carried out with a high level of caution and environmental consideration. Interventions included the planting of riparian species, removal of clusters of invasive alien species (IAS) along the watercourse, segregation and removal of collected waste, installation of barriers to deter off-roading, and repair or reconstruction of 1.4 km of traditional rubble walls to prevent soil erosion and create microhabitats. Additional stabilisation measures, such as the use of coir logs and biodegradable fabric, were introduced to reinforce valley banks.

In parallel, Project Green launched a tree-planting incentive scheme targeting third-party landowners and tenants, aimed at expanding

tree cover beyond public land. The scheme is expected to engage over 2,000 applicants and support the planting of more than 150,000 trees nationwide. Beneficiaries are required to select a minimum of five and up to ten different tree species, ensuring that biodiversity considerations remain central to the initiative. This approach contributes simultaneously to canopy expansion and biodiversity objectives, while fostering environmental stewardship and active participation by private stakeholders.

1.3.1.3 Management of Invasive Alien Species

Progress was also made in controlling the spread of IAS through targeted management and eradication actions. Various IAS removal projects were carried out by public authorities in collaboration with environmental NGOs and other government entities. These efforts have been complemented by broader ecological restoration initiatives within protected areas, including habitat management, native planting programmes, and the restoration of degraded sites, to support local biodiversity. Educational campaigns and citizen-science initiatives have also been organised to increase public awareness and improve the identification and reporting of potential IAS that the public may encounter or own, thereby strengthening prevention and early detection across the islands. In this regard, ERA has joined forces with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in the European battle against IAS as part of the European Alien Species Information Network (EASIN). Within the framework of EASIN's work, the "Invasive Alien Species Europe" app has been developed. This app will enable the public and researchers to report IAS species in Malta and the EU.

EcoGozo is also implementing an ongoing initiative to tackle IAS, with a particular focus on *Pennisetum setaceum*. This ornamental grass, widely recognised for its aggressive spread, poses a significant threat to native vegetation, landscape character, and ecological balance. Targeted removal campaigns are being carried out across Gozo followed by monitoring and, where appropriate, restoration with indigenous plant species. Through these efforts, EcoGozo is working to curb the spread of *Pennisetum*

setaceum, protect local biodiversity, and maintain the integrity of Gozo's natural habitats.

1.3.2 Marine Ecosystems

Malta continued to work on the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems by seeking the implementation of management processes identified in EU policy processes, including the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), and the EU Water Framework Directive. Additional conservation efforts beyond these policy processes include the below.

- A total of six turtle nests were confirmed, yielding 319 hatchlings. To safeguard these nests, ERA implemented an Emergency Conservation Order for each one. In collaboration with Nature Trust Malta, ERA actively protected the nests while engaging the public in conservation efforts.
- In July 2025, the two-year moratorium on the exploitation of sea urchins (that had come into effect in 2023), was extended for another 2 years until July 2027. While monitoring at coastal sites indicated that there has been an increase in sea urchin populations in about 60% of the surveyed locations over the course of the moratorium, the population growth was not uniform and additional time was deemed necessary to support the regeneration of this species and allow recovery in other areas.

The process to update Malta's marine strategies in the third cycle of the MSFD was initiated in August 2025 with the public consultation on the intent and objectives of the second update to said strategies, which encompass the assessment of the environmental status of marine waters; the determination of a good environmental status (GES), and establishment of environmental targets and associated indicators; the updating and implementation of a monitoring programme; and the development of a programme of measures designed to achieve a GES.

Various actions under the LIFE IP for the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) progressed

in 2025. This project seeks to ensure the optimised management of all water resources on the Maltese Islands. These actions would lead to improved management processes for the achievement of good water and marine environmental status, thus contributing to improved quality of life. Various actions under the LIFE IP RBMP project progressed in 2025, including the restoration of an important coastal wetland in Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk through LIFE IP RBMP Action C13. Work also progressed on the preparations to implement a pilot project on ecological moorings through LIFE IP RBMP Action C14. Experience gained through this action can inform the improved management of pressures arising from anchoring and mooring, in particular physical damage to seabed habitats, including in marine protected areas (MPAs), helping Malta enhance its marine protection measures. In addition, progress was made on LIFE IP RBMP Action C16, which included the setting up of the modelling and observation systems required to develop the baseline hydrographic knowledge for Malta's nearshore and offshore waters, and the use of this baseline data to characterise pressures and impacts on the marine environment. Additionally, Malta also launched its first ocean observatory system, a floating collection of instruments designed to monitor Maltese waters continuously. Through such increased scientific knowledge, Malta is becoming better equipped to enhance its marine protection measures. This initiative contributes to Targets 14.1 and 14.2. LIFE IP RBMP Action C18, which includes the monitoring framework for contaminants of emerging concern in a number of water categories (surface waters, groundwater, rainwater runoff, and new water), also progressed, providing relevant monitoring data on contaminants and enhancing knowledge on potential sources of pollution.

In 2025, Malta initiated the development process of the fourth RBMP, due by December 2027. This plan will provide a status assessment of our water resources and identify the measures necessary to enable the progressive achievement of good status conditions in the water bodies which have been identified as part of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. The natural water bodies which are targeted by this management plan include

groundwaters, and surface, transitional, and coastal waters. Following the publication of the timetable and work programme for the development of the fourth RBMP in February 2025, the EWA and ERA commenced the review of the significant water management issues which are contributing to the current state of our water resources. The identification of these significant water management issues is being done in consultation with the various government entities involved in the differing aspects of water resources management in the Maltese islands and shall also take into consideration the feedback provided by the public.

In terms of strengthening data collection efforts, the Data Collection Multi-Annual Programme (DC-MAP) is a core initiative of the EU designed to harmonise fisheries and marine data collection across EU Member States. Through the systematic gathering of biological, environmental, and socio-economic information, the DC-MAP supports evidence-based management of fish stocks and strengthens the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). Reliable data enables informed decisions on stock conservation, fishing effort, ecosystem protection, and long-term sustainability. In 2025, the then MAFA was approved for DC-MAP II, that will run from 2025–2027. Two specific activities under the DC-MAP commenced in 2025, as outlined below.

a) Determination of the impact of marine habitats on different seabed types

This study, implemented under both DC-MAP I and II, aims to assess how different types of fishing gear interact with various seabed habitats, including sandy bottoms, rocky substrates, and seagrass beds. Understanding gear-seabed interactions is crucial to quantify the environmental footprint of fishing practices and to guide the development of less harmful alternatives. Procurement of research tools began in 2025, with data collection and analysis scheduled for 2026–2027.

b) Quantification of recreational fishing in Malta

This study seeks to quantify the scale and

ecological impact of recreational fishing, which remains one of the least understood components of fishing pressure. A public screening survey took place in December 2025 to estimate the number of recreational fishers. Those identified will be invited to participate in a 2026 recall survey to quantify fishing effort, catch volumes, and species targeted. The results will support more accurate stock assessments, quota setting, and conflict resolution between recreational and commercial sectors.

Posidonia oceanica is designated as a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) due to the ecosystem service they provide to the marine environment and their role to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration. The total area of *Posidonia oceanica* meadows in Maltese waters is estimated at 60 km². Although this is a protected species, it suffers from a number of pressures such as rich sediment (eutrophication/erosion), coastline modifications, trawling, dredging, an increase in salinity in the vicinity of desalination facilities, and invasive algae. The upcoming EU Nature Restoration Law stemming from the Biodiversity Strategy and the published conservation objectives on MPAs by ERA support initiatives to restore this priority habitat. An expression of interest published by Ambjent Malta was awarded to the Malta National Aquarium to seek expertise, service, training, and the use of the premises (including the water tanks and labs) to reach the desired objectives of increasing the *Posidonia* habitat through the collection of detached vegetative shoots collected by Ambjent Malta and acclimatized in a controlled environment for transplantation in selected areas on the basis of advice from ERA. The loan agreement was signed in August 2025, and all equipment (including chillers, LED lights, filters, air pumps) have been purchased. Once all the equipment is delivered and the tanks are set up, Ambjent Malta shall commence the collection of *Posidonia* shoots. In this regard, a Standard of Procedure titled “*Posidonia oceanica* shoot collection for ex-situ conservation in collaboration with the National Aquarium” was prepared (MPA 001).

Brachidontes pharaonis is a species of mussel from the family *Mytilidae*. It is native to the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea and has colonised the Mediterranean Sea, where it is regarded as an invasive species. This invasive bivalve was listed as a species which can be controlled and will also provide a baseline study for restoration activities in line with the Nature Restoration Law and targets. The locations for identification were divided into eight. A 2025 field survey confirmed the consistent presence of *Brachidontes pharaonis* across all eight monitored coastal sites. The species was recorded in the upper mediolittoral, lower mediolittoral, and upper infralittoral zones, with the majority of sites exhibiting large clusters particularly within the lower mediolittoral and upper infralittoral zones, where dense aggregations were widespread. Overall, the distribution pattern reflects a robust and expanding population, with the species demonstrating strong adaptability across intertidal and shallow subtidal habitats within the survey area. It is expected that the results will shed light on the effectiveness of manual removal for *B. pharaonis* and will provide the basis of a larger scale removal of this invasive species.

With the aim of restoring marine and coastal habitats, Ambjent Malta is developing a masterplan for the Ahrax Region, including the dunes at Marfa Ridge. One of the key sites within this area is the degraded dune at Little Armier. Ambjent Malta has removed the invasive species *Carpobrotus edulis* in order to revive the dune and aid its natural regeneration. Planting of dune species has been carried out by ERA. Ambjent Malta has cordoned the area for protection. Moreover, a number of trees and shrubs have been planted at the Armier car park, in collaboration with Infrastructure Malta. Additionally, conservation measures are being implemented at the dunes at Ramlet il-Qortin and Ġnejna. These new measures are in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Nature Restoration Law since these measures aim to improve degraded areas.

The Interreg Italia-Malta REVIVE Project, which was awarded in May 2025, aims to implement a cross-border collaboration for a shared environmental goal. The name of the project,



REVIVE, shall bring together five Maltese and Italian partners, uniting their expertise to restore and protect Mediterranean ecosystems. The partners include the UM, University of Palermo, Ambjent Malta, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche – Istituto per lo Studio degli Impatti Antropici e Sostenibilità in Ambiente Marino, and Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA). The total cost of the project is EUR 1,274,469.55, with 80% of it being co-financed. The allocation for Ambjent Malta is EUR 205,078, 64.

The main aim of this project is to:

- boost biodiversity through the deployment of artificial reefs that restore marine habitats;
- protect native species by studying and managing IAS to protect priority marine habitats; and
- assess pollution impacts by investigating the role of marine litter on ecosystem status.

The actions within the project objectives shall provide baseline information for the implementation of future nature restoration plans in line with the EU Nature Restoration Law (2022). Within the framework of the Nature Restoration Law, active and passive restoring interventions are proposed as possible solutions to conserve marine coastal ecosystems.

Ambjent Malta shall be focusing on marine litter and invasive species in Comino through monitoring in selected areas by boat towards the mapping and monitoring of litter (coastal,

seabed, and floating) in line with the MSFD.

In conjunction with the monitoring of floating marine litter, the presence of invasive species on floating marine litter shall be assessed by UM and ISPRA using polymerase chain reaction/minute DNA fragments (PCR/eDNA). All the data collected from this activity will be put at the service of WP2 for the dissemination of the results. Moreover, four SOPs, inspection forms, as well as related Excel sheets are being developed for data management and related methodologies in line with the MSFD. The majority of the expenditure shall focus on seabed/monitoring clean-ups in Comino, the control of *Oculina patagonica* scouting, and a tender for removal as well as the purchase of a remotely-operated vehicle. The first investigation of beach macro-litter took place at Santa Marija Bay in summer and in accordance with the MSFD, a 100 m transect has been sampled in summer. The baseline assessment, i.e., the total abundance was calculated as 777 N-items/100m and a density of 0.67 N-items. These results show that the abundance of beach macro-litter is exceeding EU threshold of 20 litter items per 100m as well as baseline data from UN of 65 litter items. The density is aligning with global trends of 1 N-item/1m² and comparable with other Mediterranean results. The composition of beach macrolitter considered the composition of the main materials, sources, use, top ten litter items, as well as SUP composition in line with the Single-Use Plastics Directive (EU) 2019/904. The preliminary results show that the composition aligns with European trends. One of the main highlights is that although there are no business

operators at Santa Marija Bay, the presence of SUP is also quite high (35.52%), with the highest litter item being cigarettes, calculated at 19.56% despite the presence of specific cigarette bins. In 2025, Ambjent Malta carried out two surveys (on 10/06/2025 and 10/10/2025), in line with routine clean-ups, to identify accumulation zones. The identification of such zones will guide future seabed clean-ups as well as the monitoring of seabed litter in line with the MSFD.

1.3.2.1 Clean-Ups and Educational Campaigns

Dissemination of information plays a key role in building public understanding of marine and coastal ecosystems, encouraging their protection. By increasing awareness of the threats these habitats face, and the actions needed to conserve them, education directly supports long-term ecosystem stewardship. Ambjent Malta is therefore implementing several initiatives to inform and engage the public.

One such initiative is the installation of information boards in MPAs for educational purposes. These highlight the important species present in each area and aim to educate the public about their ecological importance. A total of five boards have already been installed, with the installation of an additional five boards planned (three at Armier and two at Marsalforn).



The removal of marine litter from the seabed has been the main focus for habitat restoration in order to improve the habitat status in MPAs. In this regard, three seabed clean-ups were carried out in 2025 in collaboration with the Professional Diving Schools Association of Malta, Gozo &

Comino through an agreement signed in 2022. This agreement was capped at EUR 10,000 and has been terminated. The clean-up locations included Ċirkewwa, Qawra, and Sliema Exiles. In total, 42 kg of litter were collected, totalling up to 165 litter items. The composition of marine litter was circa 35% of plastic and other polystyrene materials, 16% consisted of metals, 16% consisted of glass, and the rest of the materials collected consisted of rubber, sanitary waste, wood, clothing, and fishing/boating materials. The main sources of waste were land-based sources, equivalent to 82%, while ocean-based sources were equivalent to 12%. Effort-based data was recorded in the form of litter items collected per diver and per hour. The methodology for the collection of seabed litter has been carried out in line with the SOP "MPA 003: Collection of seabed litter (Ambjent Malta Routine Methodology)".

A total of five clean-ups were carried out in 2025 by boat whereby a total of 23.3 kg, equivalent to 618 N-litter items, were collected.

In 2025, 10 clean-ups were carried out and the litter collected was equivalent to 575 kg. The locations included Ramlet il-Qortin, Xemxija Bay, Simar, Selmunett, Mistra Bay, Marsaxlokk, Birżebbuġa, Little Armier, and Ġnejna Bay. The beach litter data also shows that the composition of beach litter is more varied than the floating and seabed ones. The data related to composition was carried out through seven surveys with a total abundance of 5,431 items. Certain locations such as Ġnejna and Ramlet il-Qortin show elevated levels of litter, indicating that these areas are hot-spots for marine litter.

In conjunction with the floating marine litter surveys, Ambjent Malta is gathering information on any sightings or encounters with protected species on which the designation of MPAs has been based. A total of five surveys were carried out in 2025.

In collaboration with ERA and Nature Trust Malta, Ambjent Malta launched a project establishing two snorkelling trails at Għajn Tuffieħa and Golden Bay. The initiative aims to raise public awareness about marine ecology through the installation of signage and the

availability of an online booklet. These resources provide insights into the diverse marine habitats found along the trails, encouraging the appreciation and conservation of Malta's natural marine environment. In connection with these snorkelling trails, Ambjent Malta organised eight snorkelling tours in summer 2025. The tours were led by Ambjent Malta representatives who guided the participants along the established snorkelling trails to note the different marine habitats. A total of two tours took place per day for a total of 4 days between June and August. To compliment these tours, Ambjent Malta in collaboration with the Saving Our Blue campaign carried out a beach clean-up whilst disseminated information to the public with the aim to increase awareness about the need to safeguard our environment and reduce littering. This initiative consists of a series of boat trips organised in MPAs to highlight the characteristics of coastal habitats around the Maltese Islands and to increase interest in knowledge on Mediterranean marine flora and fauna. A total of four boat trips were carried out at Filfla, Comino, and Saint Paul's Island, covering over 200 participants.

Alongside boat trips, Ambjent Malta also organised a series of educational walks in various Natura 2000 sites around the Maltese Islands and coastal areas that have been designated as MPAs. A total of five walks were carried out along the coastline around Dingli, Mistra/Selmun, Ras id-Dawwara, Comino, and Buskett.

In 2025, the Saving Our Blue campaign continued to strengthen national efforts to protect marine and coastal environments through a combination of clean-up initiatives, education, and innovative engagement tools. The year began with the launch of the Islands Clean-up Initiative, followed by activities marking World Environment Day, aimed at raising public awareness of environmental protection and responsible waste disposal. The Saving Our Blue (Summer Edition) was subsequently launched, intensifying clean-up efforts during the peak summer period, with dedicated clean-up events held in both Malta and Gozo. These activities concluded on World Clean-Up Day, which also marked the closing of Saving Our Blue (Summer Edition). Throughout 2025, a total of 2,501.95 kg of waste were collected through Saving Our Blue clean-

up activities. In parallel, targeted interventions such as ballot bins resulted in the collection of 2,135.15 grams of cigarette butts in Gozo and Comino and 2,809.65 grams in Malta, addressing a significant source of microplastic pollution. Educational outreach remained a key pillar of the campaign, with the continued use of the virtual reality experience showcasing Malta's MPAs, and the launch of a marine-themed activity book distributed to Year 4 students across Malta and Gozo to foster environmental awareness from an early age.

Meanwhile, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) continues to engage with local underwater and coastal clean-up crews and NGOs, to ensure cultural heritage remains in situ when detected and to provide guidance when any cultural heritage assets are discovered or inadvertently retrieved during their activities. Workshops were held in 2025 with clean-up crews and diving centres, and SCH staff joined respective events to guide divers accordingly on-site. This encourages awareness, public engagement, and compliance in terms of legislation.

1.3.3 Water Resources Management

The EWA recognises the pressing issues that arise with water leakage and has launched an initiative which enables VOs to install a water-leak detection system. The primary aim is to reduce resource loss and operational costs, thus enabling VOs to operate more sustainably while avoiding unnecessary expenses. This scheme was launched in December 2024 and there were 20 beneficiaries. The systems will be fully installed by the end of 2025.

As part of the LIFE 16 IPE MT008 Integrated Project, the EWA undertook a number of educational activities within schools to improve schools' and students' awareness on water conservation. One of these activities included the annual call for water conservation projects, which are funded as part of the LIFE IP, to be undertaken in schools to promote the better use of our water resources. The aim of these school projects is to ensure the active participation of students in the development of the project proposal itself and also its subsequent implementation.

1.4 Developing Sustainable Food Systems to Achieve Food Security and Ensure Environmental and Socio-Economic Welfare

1.4.1 Sustainable Agriculture

In line with its mandate to promote the sustainable use of agricultural land and to strengthen the long-term resilience and productivity of the agricultural sector, in 2025 the then MAFA continued to implement targeted land management schemes aimed at supporting active farmers, encouraging generational renewal, and improving food production outcomes. These initiatives contribute directly to national policy objectives and to the achievement of the UN SDGs, particularly those relating to food security, economic sustainability, and responsible land use.

During 2025, the then MAFA continued the implementation of a structured scheme facilitating the temporary transfer of agricultural land for the cultivation of food crops from Category 1 farmers to Category 3, 4, and 5 farmers, as well as eligible young farmers. The scheme incentivises the temporary release of underutilised land and reallocates it through a transparent, merit-based evaluation process that prioritises productivity, technical feasibility, and sustainable farming practices. By optimising land use and supporting higher agricultural output, the scheme contributes to strengthened food production systems, enhances farm viability, and promotes efficient and sustainable land management.

In collaboration with the Lands Authority, the Ministry advanced a pilot project in 2025 aimed at improving access to agricultural land for young farmers and new entrants through the allocation of vacant, government-owned land under long-term lease agreements. The scheme provides ten-year leases, subject to robust business planning, investment commitments, and ongoing compliance monitoring, thereby enabling beneficiaries to make sustainable, long-term investments in agricultural operations. By addressing barriers to entry and supporting generational renewal, this initiative fosters

a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural sector.

Furthermore, the new Protection of Agricultural Land Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 639.13) were published in 2025 under the Agriculture Act (Chapter 639 of the Laws of Malta), establishing regulations to prevent the loss of valuable farmland and ensuring its cultivation. This legislation ensures that agricultural land remains both productive and resilient in the face of environmental pressures.

A new unit, namely the Research and Advisory Services Directorate, has recently been established within MAFA to work on building various collections of indigenous varieties and landraces of grapevines, citrus, olives, figs, pomegranates, and others as dedicated ex situ conservation sites. These plant species are being studied and propagated with the aim of valorising the indigenous varieties that are more sustainable for local cultivation. This project promotes sustainable agricultural practices and the preservation of biodiversity.

The year 2025 served as a consolidation period for the Public Abattoir, particularly in its ongoing research on the use of underutilised or previously discarded meat cuts. The focus remained on integrating these cuts into sustainable practices aimed at reducing food waste. A three-pronged approach was adopted:

- i) further investments in new processing equipment;
- ii) product development and awareness-raising activities; and
- iii) training of employees and market players to facilitate the market.

In 2025, the Public Abattoir undertook a series of strategic investments aimed at enhancing processing capacity, improved by-produce utilisation, and strengthening overall product quality:

- investment in machinery to enable the processing of pigs up to 250 kg, thus avoiding the need for the deskinning of larger pigs and the use of previously discarded offal such as lungs;

- investment in tools and equipment to facilitate the collection and packaging of sundry by-products, ranging from sweetbread (animelli), horns, bovine kidney fat, among others, or their processing, such as ovens for the processing of pigskin into crackling (qriemeċ) and lardo;
- investment in cutting and deboning facilities to increase the centralisation of carcass processing into prime (or other) cuts, thus centralising (to a certain extent) by-product generation (e.g. skin, fats, and bones) and consequently improving economies of scale for further processing; and
- investments in a new packaging area to upgrade the quality of the product from the Abattoir, to enable wider market penetration, including for the export market, as well as to extend shelf-life.
- RACE Project (Recycling Abattoir By-Products for Construction Materials Engineering) — which seeks to develop biomaterial, high-performance construction products based on abattoir waste, primarily bristle and bone waste. Desk-based research shows that pig bristles can be exploited as fibre reinforcement in cement-based materials to control cracks and improve early-stage and long-term crack behaviour in concrete. Pulverised bone waste can be exploited as a filler in concrete.

In terms of product development, the range of products using either previously discarded by-products or underutilised cuts (such as pork shoulder) was extended and now includes different meat preparations with tripe (kirxa), tripe pies (qassatat tal-kirxa), kieves (sferi) with Maltese sausage/pork shoulder and cheeselets (gbejniet), pork nuggets, Maltese black pudding (mazzit), black pudding croquettes, black pudding pâté, black pudding muffins, and black pudding ice cream (trials), as well as lardo and crackling. These were promoted locally during 22 different activities across Malta and Gozo, as well as abroad, targeting different market segments. Overall, approximately 65 tonnes of by-products were processed.

Furthermore, two new projects were launched to facilitate the uptake and usage of by-products in areas beyond food for human consumption as indicated below.

- Gilduza — which will see the treatment of hides of lambs, kids, or calves into parchment and/or similar products which may be used for traditional musical instruments. Approximately 50 hides were collected for the initial trials, averaging 1.5 kg each.

The EU-funded (EAFRD) Project “Biċċerija Train” provided training to 335 participants across a wide range of training initiatives, covering topics such as organic pork, the valorisation of the Maltese goat, cutting and deboning of mutton and chevon for the Hotel, Restaurant, and Café/Catering sector, quality management in meat production, parchment making, and crackling production. The aim of this training was to build on the product research and development (R&D) undertaken within the Public Abattoir and to transfer this knowledge to the market, fostering a bottom-up approach to food waste reduction and supporting the long-term economic sustainability of the Public Abattoir’s ongoing initiatives.

Meanwhile, the then MGP recognises that rural road infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting sustainable agricultural and aquaculture practices, strengthening food security, and enabling the effective implementation of projects and schemes targeting farmers. By improving safe and reliable access to fields, farmsteads and related services, upgraded rural roads help reduce transport costs, minimise produce losses, and facilitate the uptake of organic farming and other sustainable practices. In 2025, works commenced on a number of priority rural roads, including Triq Wied Juno, Triq Ghajn Abdul, Triq ta’ Spiteri, and Triq Klula, with the aim of enhancing connectivity, improving drainage, and supporting the long-term viability of Gozo’s primary production sectors.

1.4.2 Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture

In 2025, the then MAFA finalised the drafting of the National Fisheries Strategy for Malta for 2025–2035. The strategy sets out a long-

term plan to safeguard Malta's fisheries sector while enhancing its economic, social, and environmental resilience. Recognising pressures such as climate change, declining fish stocks, rising operational costs, and the ageing fishing workforce, the strategy offers a unified national direction that promotes sustainability, competitiveness, and innovation. Rooted in extensive stakeholder consultation and scientific data, it aims to protect marine ecosystems while strengthening the livelihoods and wellbeing of Malta's fishing communities.

Governance and international alignment are central to the strategy's success. Malta's commitments to EU policies, the CFP, International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas regulations, and global frameworks, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Code of Conduct and SDG 14, ensure the responsible management of shared marine resources. Funding from the EU's European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) further strengthens sustainability, innovation, biodiversity protection, and the modernisation of fleets and infrastructure. Community-led initiatives, such as the Marine Conservation Project (2025), support stewardship and reinforce the link between local knowledge and environmental responsibility.

Overall, the National Fisheries Strategy for Malta 2025–2035 presents a transformative and future-ready roadmap. By integrating sustainability with economic and social development, the sector's role is affirmed in Malta's blue economy. Through coordinated action, strong governance, and continuous investment in people and infrastructure, the strategy aims to secure a resilient, competitive, and culturally rich fisheries sector by 2035.

Furthermore, through Act No. XIII of 2025, the Ministry amended the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (Chapter 425 of the Laws of Malta) to revise the composition of the Fisheries Board. The objective of this amendment is to ensure fairer representation of the various local fisheries categories (Article 5 of the Act) and to give effect to other amendments related to the same board, including minimum representation of young

fishers and female fishers. As amended, the Fisheries Board is composed of eight members who are active operators. At least one of them must be of the female gender and at least another one must be 40 years of age or younger.

The Malta Aquaculture Strategy is an EU-funded initiative under the Technical Support Instrument. Work is under way for project management, discussions on regulatory reforms, and stakeholder engagement. The Malta Aquaculture Strategy will be based on four interconnected pillars that together aim to transform the sector into a model of sustainability and innovation.

- The first pillar, Diversification and Innovation, focuses on the introduction of new species; expansion into coastal, offshore, and land-based areas; and investment in R&D to create long-term value and resilience.
- The second pillar, Resilience and Competitiveness, aims to reform governance, simplify permitting, and improve access to financing, while strengthening skills through training and job opportunities.
- The third pillar, Social Acceptance, prioritises public trust through awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and improvements in labelling and fish welfare, to ensure the sector is valued by society.
- The fourth pillar, Ecological Transition, is dedicated to strengthening environmental monitoring, reducing the carbon footprint, and promoting the circular economy, in alignment with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy.

Together, these pillars support a balanced approach that integrates economic growth, environmental protection, and social responsibility, positioning Malta's aquaculture sector for a sustainable and competitive future. By the end of 2025, the inter-Ministerial consultation was held. The new Aquaculture Strategy for Malta 2025–2030 was presented to the government entities involved in the drafting process.

the then MAFA is in the process of completing the construction of the new Fisheries Hub in Marsa. This hub is expected to enhance workflow efficiency, employee morale, and retention, while also attracting new talent. Located strategically, the hub will improve accessibility for fishermen and the public as well as accessibility to individuals with a disability. The new building is planned to be in line with the cost optimum primary energy demand for a public office building expressed in kWh/m², as calculated according to the methodology in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No. 244/2012. Rainwater harvesting has been considered. These measures will render the offices of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture more sustainable and energy efficient.

The building will be equipped with systems for vessel monitoring (GPS), logbook management, communications, and more, to enhance fisheries governance and support fishers. The hub aims to centralise departmental operations and improve service efficiency for both the public and for the administration. It is part of a broader strategy to modernise Malta's marine and fisheries sector, promote sustainability, better handle fresh fish, and bring infrastructure and regulation under one coordinated facility.

Through the pilot project launched in 2022, the Mrejkba fishing practice, a traditional method introduced by local recreational fishers, was revitalised. The project sought to promote sustainable fishing practices while respecting the ecological balance of local marine environments. By incorporating fisher feedback and consultations with relevant authorities, the project ensured that this heritage practice is adapted to modern conservation standards. Following the digitalisation of the licencing and logbook system in 2024, 2025 saw upgrades to the web-based system, making the application process easier for applicants. Authorisation applications were open from January to February 2025, with an additional extension offered in March 2025.

Meanwhile, initiatives such as the Palm Frond Harvesting and Distribution Initiative (29 July – 8 August 2025) supported Malta's traditional dolphinfish (lampuki) fishery, a practice with

deep cultural and economic significance. Palm fronds from *Phoenix canariensis* were harvested, treated, and distributed free of charge to registered fishers for the construction of Fish Aggregating Devices, known as kannizzati. The operation involved close collaboration with public institutions, private entities, and landscaping contractors, with Għammieri Government Farm serving as the central site for treatment, storage, and distribution. Health and safety protocols and pest-management procedures ensured that all fronds were suitable for safe use at sea. A total of 6,805 palm fronds were harvested, of which 6,610 were distributed, while 195 were set aside due to unsuitable quality. All fronds underwent treatment to prevent the spread of the red palm weevil, helping safeguard Malta's palm tree population and contributing to long-term environmental protection.

The purple sea urchin (*Paracentrotus lividus*) is a vital component of Mediterranean marine ecosystems. Despite its importance, a 2023 report from Malta's ERA revealed a troubling decline in sea urchin populations, mirrored across the Mediterranean, driven by overfishing and environmental pollution. As a result, a moratorium on the sea urchin fishery was imposed across the Mediterranean and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean to promote restorative aquaculture as a means of replenishing depleted stocks.

To this end, Malta launched a three-year Sea Urchin Restocking Project, aimed at replenishing the sea urchin population in Maltese waters. As a pilot project, progress was made in the husbandry and nutrition of the animals, culminating in their successful reproduction in 2025. Nevertheless, it became clear that there are areas for development, which has prompted a new venture. A collaboration agreement was hence established in 2025 with Stella Mare – University of Corsica. It is planned that through a staff exchange and knowledge sharing programme, substantial production will be achieved in 2026.

The Species Diversification for Maltese Aquaculture Project funded by EMFAF, launched

in 2024, seeks to diversify Maltese aquaculture by establishing farming protocols for emerging species, specifically greater amberjack (*aċċiola/Seriola dumerili*) and red porgy (*pagru/Pagrus pagrus*). Through the use of SMART technologies and an interdisciplinary R&D approach, the work focuses on overcoming major production bottlenecks by conducting trials on reproduction, husbandry, nutrition, health, and welfare.

The project is expected to deliver standardised, scalable hatchery protocols that can be replicated across European coastal regions, enabling commercial-scale production and supporting integrated multitrophic aquaculture systems. In addition to enhancing sustainability and food security, the initiative aims to ease fishing pressure on key species, align with the CFP, and improve public perception of aquaculture through industry engagement, consumer outreach, and student training opportunities. In 2025, broodstock were acquired in a range of sizes and maturity stages. Based on initial outcomes and in order to accelerate progress, a second expression of interest is being issued imminently to acquire older, more mature individuals to hasten spawning efforts.

The high demand of shrimp for human consumption has led to a rapid expansion of production all over the world. This has widely been associated with unsustainable practices. During the last decade, an increasing interest in shrimp culture has arisen also in Europe, due to the increasing demand for freshly harvested, sustainably-produced shrimps and the application of highly intensive, closed recirculating aquaculture systems and biofloc technology (BFT). The Bioras Shrimp project, conducted in 2025, contributed to the development of more efficient and sustainable shrimp production by improving and innovating a bio-secure land-based shrimp culture model to minimise waste, enhance productivity, and recover energy and nutrients for additional biomass production in the view of a circular economy process. A fully functional production system was developed at the Għammieri site of Aquatic Resources Malta (ARM), where shrimps (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) were stocked at different densities under various husbandry regimes and

their growth was monitored. The project ended in November, and the data is currently under analysis to identify the best way forward and apply the lessons learned to developing Maltese capacity.

The HIGHGEL (High-tech solutions for the marine sector value chain in the Mediterranean) Project, funded by the Interreg VI-A Italy-Malta Programme and launched in February 2025, investigates the use of sustainable, locally-derived products, and waste streams as an alternative food source. ARM's role is to conduct feeding trials on two locally important species, namely sea bass (*spnott/Dicentrarchus labrax*) and gilt-head seabream (*awrat/Sparus aurata*). During 2025, tenders were issued and processed for the development of the necessary infrastructure for the food trials, which will be conducted in 2026.

To support the sustainable development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector, the government continued to introduce targeted schemes. The EMFAF-funded Investments Onboard Fishing Vessels scheme launched in 2025 offers support to fishers to upgrade, modernise, and improve their vessels without increasing fishing capacity. The scheme provides financial assistance for energy-efficient equipment, improved refrigeration and catch-handling systems, safer and more comfortable working conditions, and other upgrades onboard that enhance efficiency and product quality. Eligible applicants include owners of MFA and MFB-licensed vessels, with aid reaching up to 80% for small-scale coastal fishers and around 50% for larger vessels. Structured as a rolling call open until 2026, the scheme aims to reduce operational costs, improve safety, support sustainable fishing practices, and strengthen the long-term economic viability of Malta's fishing sector. It forms part of a wider national push to modernise the fleet, safeguard traditional livelihoods, and reinforce Malta's overall food-security strategy through better-equipped, more resilient fishing operations.

The Bait Fish Price Increase Compensation scheme is specifically designed to provide targeted financial compensation to registered full-time and part-time fishers who are duly licensed to fish for albacore, bluefin tuna, and swordfish, in response to the recent

and sustained increases in the price of bait fish. By offsetting a portion of the additional operational costs incurred by fishers as a result of market volatility, the scheme aims to protect the economic stability of fishing enterprises, safeguard incomes within the sector, and ensure the continued viability of these key fisheries. In this way, the initiative sustains employment and economic activity within coastal communities, while also contributing to the protection of local seafood supply chains.

In terms of public awareness, during 2025 the then MAFA launched a campaign aimed at promoting the consumption of underutilised fish species. This EU-funded scheme (EMFAF) is a nationwide awareness campaign which focuses on promoting responsible seafood consumption and reinforcing Malta's commitment to environmental sustainability. The initiative forms part of a broader strategic effort to align consumer behaviour with sustainable fisheries management and long-term marine conservation objectives at both national and European levels.

Through this scheme, the local consumers will be educated about buying fish which is equally nutritious, but which comes at a lower cost, thus making healthy food more accessible. This campaign will also promote sustainable fishing through its focus on diversifying the types of fish being consumed. This three-year campaign will educate the public on cooking these lesser-known types of fish. This campaign will focus on five species of fish: little tunny, bullet tuna, horse mackerel, greater amberjack, and scabbardfish. the then MAFA also participated in public events to promote the consumption of local fish:

- Festa Tonn, held in Marsaskala in June 2025;
- Festa Hut, held on two different days in September 2025 in Mellieħa and Marsaxlokk;
- Hajjin! Il-Hut u l-Baħar ta' Madwarna, held in Gozo in November 2025.

The Let's Fish programme is an educational initiative designed to introduce students to Malta's fishing sector, marine environment, and cultural heritage. Although the official launch is planned for 2026, extensive planning and preparatory work began in 2025 to ensure a smooth and well-structured roll-out. Developed

by the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DFA), the programme aims to strengthen the connection between young people and Malta's maritime identity. Through hands-on activities, interactive learning, and community engagement, the programme promotes a deeper appreciation for marine biodiversity and sustainable fishing practices. At the heart of Let's Fish are four core activity areas: harbour cruise tours, traditional fishing practice demonstrations, in-school educational talks and cooking sessions, and the Fishing for Recipes competition. Together, these activities offer students a blend of real-world experiences and classroom-based learning, giving them insight into the realities of fishing, the importance of marine conservation, and the role of fishers in Maltese society.

1.5 Investing in Sustainable Finance for a Greener and Climate-Neutral Economy

In 2025, Malta continued to strengthen its framework for sustainable finance, advancing initiatives that promote transparency, responsible investment, and the integration of environmental, social, and governance considerations across the financial sector.

As part of these wider efforts, in July 2025, the Malta Development Bank (MDB) introduced new schemes to enhance its support for Maltese enterprises, with a particular focus on environmental issues. Backed by the InvestEU programme through the European Investment Fund, these initiatives represent a key expansion of the Bank's financial instruments to foster greener growth. The launch of these schemes follows the successful renewal of the MDB's two flagship programmes, including the Guaranteed Co-Lending Scheme and the SME Guarantee Scheme. Their objective is to improve access to bank finance for business investments related to climate action and environmental sustainability, including projects in agriculture, forestry, and social accessibility. Eligible beneficiaries may also access financing for investments classified as green, based on an eco-label, a sustainable or green business model, or an environmental certification. Under these schemes, Malta's two largest commercial banks will offer loans linked to the MDB's sustainability products. Furthermore, in line with its commitment to



The MFSA is deepening its insight into consumers' understanding of sustainable-finance concepts

support the goals of the Paris Agreement and the EU's climate neutrality objectives, the Central Bank of Malta has continued to increase its equity exposures predominantly in funds that track Paris-Aligned Benchmark indices. The Bank has also expanded its holdings in green, social, and sustainable bonds, which now comprise more than 13% of its assets under management. These instruments are issued in accordance with the International Capital Markets Association principles, which establish voluntary best-practice frameworks promoting transparency, accountability, and rigorous reporting in sustainable finance. This ensures investors that proceeds are directed responsibly toward projects that deliver measurable environmental and social benefits. The Bank has set a target to invest €500 million in thematic bonds by 2026, reflecting its strong commitment to sustainable finance.

Complementing these investment measures, the Central Bank of Malta continues to enhance its sustainability reporting to meet evolving market standards and regulatory requirements in line with the Eurosystem common disclosure principles. To this effect, the Bank has published its third climate-related financial disclosures report in June 2025, detailing its governance, strategy, risk management and metrics for its

non-monetary policy portfolios.

In parallel with these developments, the MFSA continued to strengthen its oversight of investment service providers to ensure high regulatory standards. Following the conclusion of the TSI project on capacity building in sustainable finance, the MFSA carried out enhancements to the risk-scoring model for fund managers to take into account ESG metrics. In the field of asset management, fund managers were requested to conduct a gap analysis on their disclosure around Principal Adverse Impacts and the use of sustainability terms in the name of fund products, promoting good practices in line with the expectations of the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA).

Building on its supervisory work, the MFSA also remains committed to increasing awareness on sustainable finance among the general public by strengthening knowledge across stakeholders and society at large. In this regard, in June 2025 the MFSA published the consumer survey titled "Assessing Retail Consumers' Understanding of and Behaviour towards Sustainable Finance". This research assists the MFSA in deepening its insight into consumers' understanding of sustainable-finance concepts. Overall, the

findings reveal relatively low knowledge and awareness, yet rather forward-looking interest in sustainable finance. Despite increased public concern about environmental issues, the take-up of sustainable products and services remains limited, with respondents citing lack of product knowledge and existing financial commitments as the main barriers to adopting green financial products. In the pensions sector, desk-based reviews included examination of website disclosures and Scheme Particulars to assess regulatory compliance, detailed gap analyses comparing disclosures against applicable regulations, and review of audited financial statements to confirm implementation of required disclosures. Supervisory meetings and compliance inspections involved interviews with directors and senior officials, review of board minutes to evaluate preparedness and action plans, and engagement with company officials to explore specific areas in greater depth. These activities provided numerous examples of how Retirement Scheme Administrators (RSAs) are transitioning to greener practices, embedding sustainable finance principles, and integrating ESG considerations into their operations.

In parallel, the MFSA integrated the Risk-Based Selection Tool developed under the TSI Project on Sustainable Finance into its 2025 workplan to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of supervision under the Sustainable Disclosure and Reporting framework. Implemented through an incremental approach, the tool enables the prioritisation of supervisory resources towards life insurers offering Investment-Based Insurance Products and RSAs. By combining tailored Key Risk Indicators and Impact Factors, including solvency, governance, operational resilience, and pension fund size, the tool supports data-driven decision-making, enhances cross-team collaboration, and promotes the identification and sharing of good practices in managing climate risks and applying climate scenario analysis.

Building on this approach, Less Significant Institutions continue to advance their management of climate-related and environmental risks in line with supervisory expectations. The MFSA reiterated these priorities in its 'Dear CEO' Letter, emphasising

governance, risk identification, and integration of ESG factors. Throughout 2025, institutions focused on enhancing their internal frameworks and conducting gap analyses to strengthen alignment with regulatory standards.

The MFSA is also progressing work on the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1619 (CRD VI), which will introduce a range of ESG-related requirements into national legislation, including obligations for institutions to develop proportionate and resilient ESG strategies and policies across different time horizons. This will also encompass strengthened governance arrangements, regular strategic reviews, and the setting of quantifiable ESG targets. In parallel, the policy team is actively engaged at EU level through its participation in the European Banking Authority's (EBA) Sustainable Finance Sub-Group, contributing to ongoing workstreams such as the Supervisory Handbook for ESG, the ESG Risk Dashboard, the treatment of ESG risks under Pillar 1, joint stress-testing guidelines, and enhanced ESG disclosures under Pillar 3. At national level, work is underway to implement the EBA Guidelines on ESG Risk Management, which set expectations for the identification, management, and monitoring of ESG risks and for transition planning, as well as the forthcoming EBA guidance on ESG scenario analysis, which will introduce forward-looking stress-testing expectations over the short, medium and long-term horizons.

In 2025, the ESG Platform was enhanced by digitalising the reporting introduced in 2021, thus making it more user-friendly and easier for enterprises to voluntarily register their ESG credentials. By having the facility to compare their ESG performance throughout the years and acting as repository for existing grants, schemes and other useful links relating to ESG, the enhanced Platform, will act as a further incentive for enterprises and entities to improve on their year-on-year performance, thus contributing further to Malta's national, international and EU commitments in relation to sustainability. Since its launch, the initiative has seen growing engagement, with the number of enterprises and entities registering their ESG credentials increasing from 16 to 50 by the end of 2025.

**Towards the
Preservation of
Sustainable Urban
Development
and Cultural
Heritage**

2.





CHAPTER 2.

Towards the Preservation of Sustainable Urban Development and Cultural Heritage



In response to shifting population dynamics and the concentration of human activity in urban areas, Malta continued its efforts throughout 2025 to promote sustainable urban development, expand green infrastructure, and encourage greener mobility options. These initiatives were undertaken alongside ongoing commitments to preserve cultural heritage, safeguard the natural environment, and enhance residents' wellbeing.

Tourism remains a key pillar of Malta's economy, making a substantial contribution to national growth and development. Addressing off-peak seasonality and shifting away from mass, seasonal tourism towards more sustainable patterns has remained a national priority. Efforts have included strengthened marketing campaigns aimed at travellers seeking authentic experiences related to history, culture, and conferences. Additional initiatives have focused on recognising excellence within the tourism sector, supporting quality service and raising industry standards.

Malta's cultural heritage continues to play an essential role in shaping identity, inclusion, and unity, and is widely regarded as a cornerstone of social cohesion and stability. As such, cultural traditions and legacy are central to the social, environmental, and economic development of the Maltese Islands. In 2025, Malta continued promoting cultural events and supporting Maltese and Gozitan artists through various schemes and opportunities aimed at professional growth within the cultural and creative sectors. Additional initiatives focused on safeguarding traditional and sustainable practices, supporting livelihoods, and strengthening Maltese cultural identity. Restoration works on historical sites across Malta and Gozo also continued, preserving the islands' architectural heritage.

The Government of Malta has also maintained its commitment to creating spaces and infrastructure that promote active lifestyles and accessibility. Urban greening and embellishment projects were carried out to improve community spaces, including the restoration of several gardens and the introduction of nature-based solutions in multiple localities.

Within the framework of the government's efforts in line with the 2030 Agenda, this chapter will focus on actions related to SDGs 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 11–15.

2.1 Placing Culture and Heritage at the Heart of Our Local Communities' Development

2.1.1 Tourism and Hospitality

Tourism in Malta relies almost entirely on air connectivity, with more than 98% of tourists arriving by air. Overseas digital advertising plays a crucial role in generating tourism demand, which in turn is channelled into floated aircraft capacity, thus ensuring that airline routes remain feasible due to high utilisation. Tourism influxes into the Maltese Islands are recognised for their positive economic impact arising from a high level of expenditure. Between January and October 2025, tourism expenditure reached EUR 3.5 billion. The sector provides extensive, full-time, and part-time employment across all levels of society, and its expansion contributes strongly to economic growth and development.

The abovementioned influxes and activity result in direct benefits for economic sectors, therefore, enabling sustainable and responsible tourism through monitoring is key to maintaining this growth. To this end, in collaboration with the OECD, the MTA has developed tourism sustainability indicators that provide a practical, policy-oriented framework to monitor tourism pressures, assess current conditions, and evaluate responses across five key thematic areas, including the economy, valued visitors, heritage, community wellbeing, and workforce. These indicators are firmly grounded in the three core dimensions of sustainable tourism, these being the environmental, economic, and social dimensions. Importantly, these indicators reflect the intrinsic link between these dimensions, acknowledging that changes in one often have direct or indirect effects on the others. By recognising and addressing these interdependencies, the framework supports the development of tourism strategies that are not only balanced but also resilient and sustainable in the long-term.

In 2025, the Marketing Directorate of the MTA continued its sustained efforts to promote Malta across a broad range of international markets. This work relied on both digital and

traditional channels to maintain strong visibility and ensure that Malta remained top of mind among travellers. The approach remained comprehensive, tailoring campaigns and partnerships to the needs and expectations of each region.

The Authority focused on its core established markets while also reinforcing its presence in long-haul destinations, including North America, South America, Australia, China, and Japan. To better support growth in these regions, the MTA has opened its own office in New York. These offices are intended to build closer relationships with partners and improve on-the-ground marketing activity.

Throughout the year, the MTA took part in major international fairs and trade events, engaging directly with industry stakeholders and presenting Malta to the travel trade. The Authority also continued to host press and influencer visits, offering key storytellers first-hand experience of the islands. In parallel, close collaboration continued with tour operators, airlines, and brand partners throughout promotional efforts.

Campaigns were designed to appeal to travellers seeking unique and meaningful experiences. These focused on segments such as history and culture, gastronomy, faith tourism, active tourism, LGBTIQ+ travel, military heritage, screen tourism, conferences and incentives, English language teaching, and weddings and honeymoons. Work is also underway to introduce the dark tourism segment. This targeted approach supports Malta as a destination rich in character, depth, and variety. Encouraging higher-quality travel and distributing visitor numbers more evenly across the year remained key objectives. This strategy reduces pressure during peak periods while also sustaining flight routes, ensuring strong year-round connectivity for the islands.

As part of its commitment to promoting excellence within the sector, the MTA launched the Malta Tourism Awards, previously known as the Star Awards. This flagship initiative recognises and promotes excellence across the tourism industry, serving as a national

platform to highlight best practices, reward outstanding performance, and encourage innovation, sustainability, and service quality. It also enhances Malta's visibility as a leading tourism destination while supporting the National Tourism Strategy 2021–2030 through responsible growth, digitalisation, workforce development, and collaboration among key stakeholders including the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA), Federated Association of Travel & Tourism Agents Malta (FATTA), and Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS).

The first awards edition, held on 29 April 2025, recognised 18 winners across sectors such as accommodation, catering, travel and tourism services, visitor attractions, English language teaching, and diving centres. Following its success, a second edition was launched in September 2025, introducing additional categories and a new structure comprising three main pillars: the Responsible Tourism Development Award, recognising businesses that demonstrate leadership and sustainable investment; the Tourism Worker of the Year Award, celebrating individual excellence and dedication; and the Special Theme Recognition, focusing annually on a specific niche shaping the future of tourism.

In 2025, two new pillars were introduced under the Responsible Tourism Development Award — Innovation and Future Readiness, and Digital Presence — to better reflect the evolving landscape of the tourism sector. The scope of eligible sectors was expanded to include English Language schools, diving centres, and domestic transport (by land and sea). Additionally, the accommodation sector was divided into two subsectors — properties with fewer than 75 bedrooms and those with more than 75 bedrooms — to better distinguish between larger and smaller accommodation properties. Under the Tourism Worker for the Year Award, a distinct category was created for tourist guides and domestic transport (by land and sea).

For this current edition, the Special Theme Recognition highlights LGBTIQ+ tourism initiatives undertaken over a period of 3 years between 2023 and 2025. Through this initiative, the MTA continues to promote quality, inclusivity, and responsible



innovation across the sector, reinforcing Malta's reputation as a sustainable and forward-looking tourism destination.

2.1.2 Culture, Traditions, and Arts

In 2025, Malta continued strengthening its cultural, artistic, and traditional sectors through diverse initiatives that promoted heritage preservation, creative expression, youth engagement, and community participation across the islands.

MTA advanced its military tourism segment through a series of commemorative events held at the Commonwealth Military Cemetery in Imtarfa from 8 to 10 May. Organised through Visit Malta, the events featured speeches by representatives of MTA, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and Heritage Malta, along with night tours exploring Malta's military history. The events underlined the importance of storytelling and remembrance as essential tools for preserving cultural identity, while promoting year-round tourism rooted in Malta's military heritage. By presenting the island as a "living museum", the MTA reaffirmed its commitment to safeguard Malta's history. In addition, Visit Malta hosted 22 influential international journalists, offering them a unique opportunity to explore Malta's military heritage. This initiative forms part of Visit Malta's ongoing effort to promote the island's military history while targeting high-end visitors, further reinforcing Malta as a premier destination for heritage tourism.

From a youth perspective, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ continued to strengthen its Empowerment

Programme, by developing a range of initiatives that enable young people to nurture their artistic and cultural talents. In 2025, the agency implemented several projects including *Songcraft*, a collaboration with Spazju Kreattiv, that offers a creative songwriting initiative empowering young people to express their voices through music. Another collaboration with Spazju Kreattiv, *Artivisti*, supported young artists who use art as a form of activism, empowering them to address social and cultural issues creatively, while promoting civic engagement and positive social change.

The agency also introduced *Chiasmus*, aimed at young people interested in English literature and creative writing, helping them develop their writing skills and explore their literacy potential. Its Maltese language counterpart, *Kjażmu*, offered similar opportunities to youths passionate about Maltese literature. Meanwhile the *Konkors ta' Kitba — Letteratura għaž-Żgħażaġħ* continued to select and publish Maltese novels for readers aged 13 and 18 years old in collaboration with the National Book Council.

The initiative *ideARTI*, developed in partnership with the Malta School of Arts, provided a project-based programme through which young creatives could produce a final artwork that reflects their personal artistic identity. In the field of film, *The Malta Youth Film Festival*, run jointly with the Malta Film Foundation, offered a platform for emerging film-makers to showcase their work. Complimenting this, the Jumpstart Film Festival organised with the STEM & VET Programmes Directorate within the then Ministry

for Education encouraged secondary school students to develop their creative and technical film-making skills by producing short films for public recognition.

Building on these efforts to nurture cultural expression, the then Ministry for Culture, Lands and Local Government (MCLG) launched an expression of interest to support inclusive and sustainable carnival activities that strengthen cultural vitality and deliver socio-economic benefits for communities.

In addition to carnival-related activities, further support is provided for festive programmes that promote community cohesion, encourage inclusion, assist vulnerable groups and showcase local talent. A total of EUR 764,911.76 was allocated to 56 local councils. Further assistance is offered to local councils to carry out annual cultural initiatives that contribute to socio-economic development and environmental responsibility. A total of EUR 1,112,252.60 was allocated to 60 local councils.

2.1.3 Restoring and Preserving Malta's Heritage

The SCH maintained regular updates to the National Inventory of Cultural Heritage (a register of movable and immovable heritage) through ongoing data collection and research. In 2025, 214 new listings were published, with 207 formally recognised for their cultural heritage value on aesthetic, historical, architectural, and social significance. Most relate to British-era defensive architecture from the 20th century, while seven listings are derived from the Register of Scheduled Property, reinforcing their cultural significance and granting them an additional layer of protection.

The SCH also continued its collaboration with the UM, the Restoration Directorate, the PA, Heritage Malta, and the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority within the European Committee for Standardisation. This work contributes to the development of European standards for conservation practices, helping to promote science-based approaches and effective planning. Standards issued in

2025 focused on materials characterisation, deterioration processes, environmental conditions for storage and display, and the technologies used in conservation, restoration, repair, and maintenance.

Guardianship deeds remained an important tool for supporting long-term stewardship of immovable cultural heritage; 19 guardianship deeds are currently in place with local NGOs, several of which are due for renewal in 2026. The intention is to continue these collaborations. These sites have also been added to the geographic information system (GIS) portal on the SCH website, supporting public engagement and transparency.

Promotion of underrepresented aspects of cultural heritage continued through local television programmes and social media. The SCH's outreach encouraged visits to lesser-known sites to raise awareness, while reducing pressure on heavily visited locations. In 2025, this included programmes such as *Malta u Lil Hinn Minnha* and the new culture-focused programme *IMXEJNA*.

Malta also hosted 48 heritage heads and delegates from 25 European countries for the 19th European Heritage Heads Forum held at the Mediterranean Conference Centre in September 2025. The event marked the 30th anniversary of the revised Valletta Convention, formally known as the European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage. Considered as a key instrument in guiding archaeological heritage protection in relation to planning processes, this anniversary provided an opportunity to assess the convention's impact, ongoing relevance, and future in a rapidly evolving world and also to reflect on challenges such as urban development, climate change, and illicit trafficking.

European Heritage Days 2025 were held from 3 to 12 October, coinciding with Malta's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. As a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the EU, European Heritage Days continue to be the most widely celebrated participatory cultural event across Europe.

The SCH, as the National Coordinator, also organised European Archaeology Days on 13–15 June, which is now in its fourth year in Malta and part of a continent-wide initiative led by the French Ministry of Culture and the Institute for Preventive Archaeological Research (INRAP). This initiative encourages public engagement through innovative and interactive activities that highlight national archaeological heritage.

A new publication, *The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage: 20 Years of Discoveries 2003*

– 2022 was launched in December 2025. It presents significant discoveries made through both development-led and research-led archaeology, reflecting Malta's rich history and the efforts to conserve and protect its national heritage.

Additional cultural, historical, and architectural sites were also scheduled in 2025, further strengthening the national heritage protection framework.

SCHEDULING				
Project	Item	Address	Locality	Grade
Hydraulic Engineering	L-Akwadott tal-Fawwara	Triq Lapsi	Is-Sigġiewi	2
Hydraulic Engineering	L-Akwadott tar-Rabat (Għawdex)	Triq il-Papa Ġwanni Pawlu II	Victoria	1
Hydraulic Engineering	L-Akwadott tax-Xemxija u ġibjun	Triq Għajn Tuffieħa	San Pawl il-Baħar	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont tal-Għemmieri	Is-Salib	Ir-Rabat	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont tas-Salib	Is-Salib	Ir-Rabat	3
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont tal-Isperanza	Triq l-Isperanza	Il-Mosta	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont ta' Triq il-Kostituzzjoni	Triq il-Kostituzzjoni	Il-Mosta	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont ta' Triq id-Difiza Ċivili	Triq id-Difiza Ċivili	Il-Mosta	3
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont ta' Wied id-Dies	Triq il-Ġnien	Hal-Għargħur	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont il-Ġdid tad-Dwejra	Triq id-Dwejra	San Lawrenz	3
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pont l-Antik tad-Dwejra	Triq id-Dwejra	San Lawrenz	2
Hydraulic Engineering	Il-Pontijiet ta' Wied il-Qlejjha	Triq San Pawl tal-Qlejjha	Il-Mosta	2

Restoration efforts continued with the completion of works on the Smoking Shed at the former Royal Navy Hospital in Bighi, Kalkara, alongside the commencement of restorations at Villa Guardamangia in Pietà and the Surgical Block at Bighi. Within the Romeo Romano Gardens at Casa Leoni in Santa Venera, restoration and rehabilitation works continued on an abandoned historic building known as ir-Razzett. As part of its ongoing second phase, the house of character is being conserved and adapted for use as an educational centre for children and adults. Works include structural and architectural restoration of masonry walls, timber beams, apertures, floors; conservation of vernacular features; and the repair of deteriorated elements.

Complementing these conservation efforts, the Central Bank of Malta is supporting the restoration and conversion of a British military building located in the Majjistral Nature and History Park, Għajn Tuffieħa, on Malta's north-west coast. Originally built in June 1949 as a cinema for military personnel and later repurposed as a chapel, the building has become dilapidated over time.

The project aims to transform the site into a multi-purpose exhibition hall, providing an important venue for community events and exhibitions. Adjacent open spaces will be used for educational workshops in photography, ceramics, and art, while a multifunctional sports area will accommodate activities such as



basketball, football, and volleyball. With a built footprint of approximately 85 square metres, the restored building is set to become a hub for both cultural and recreational activities. This initiative is part of a broader effort by the Heritage Parks Federation to enhance the Majjistral Park area, with the objective of increasing public engagement and promoting the site as a key destination for arts and culture.

Reflecting this wider national commitment to safeguarding and celebrating built heritage, the theme for the 2025 edition of European Heritage Days, *Built Limestone and Beyond 7,000 Years of Architectural History*, highlighted the diversity of buildings and structures that shape the Maltese landscape spanning various styles, functions, and historical periods.

Within the broader cultural landscape, the Gozo Museum Project represents a flagship cultural investment that places heritage at the heart of local community development. By transforming a large-scale site in Victoria into a modern interpretive museum, the project celebrates the island's rich identity and integrates unexpected archaeological discoveries, such as the Roman-era quarry, into the museum's architecture and narrative, ensuring a tangible connection between ancient heritage and contemporary Gozo.

In parallel, the regeneration of significant buildings within urban areas forms part of the ERDF project Improving the *Living Standards of the Urban Areas in Gozo* under Priority 4,

Policy Objective 5. This initiative consists of several restoration interventions targeting key structures in Victoria and other urban zones.

One of these projects involves the restoration of the roofs and facades of the former Sir Arturo Mercieca Primary School in Triq Vajringa in Victoria, Gozo. The objective is to return the building to its original architectural splendour.

Another intervention focuses on the restoration of the facades of St Augustine Church and Priory including its Bell Tower, an iconic landmark dominating the skyline of Victoria.

The restoration of the external walls of Santa Marija (Rabat) Cemetery in Victoria also forms part of this programme. The project aims to restore the facades and corner elevations of the cemetery while undertaking structural wall strengthening to address bowed and weakened sections caused by long-term movement and cracking.

A similar intervention concerns the restoration of the external wall of the Tal-Għonq Cemetery in Victoria. The project targets both the facade and the structural stability of the bowed walls which have deteriorated over time.

The PA has also allocated funds for the restoration of heritage and historical features across Malta and Gozo, recognising that these elements form an integral part of the character of the traditional towns and villages. The following project has now commenced:

Project Ref	Proposal	Applicants	Amount
GS/50022/2024	Joint (ringfencing) application between Knisja tan-Natività and Fondazzjoni il-Hajja f'Għawdex to carry out facade restoration works	Knisja tan-Natività & Fondazzjoni il-Hajja f'Għawdex	EUR 310,000.00

The IfE has also contributed to cultural and heritage sustainability by investing in the preservation and upkeep of its historical premises, dating back to the British period. Restoration works on the facade and internal restructuring, including painting and plastering, have revitalised the building and enhanced its role as a learning space for course participants. This contributes both to the safeguarding of cultural heritage and the enhancement of educational environment.

Throughout 2025, the Public Abattoir continued to advance its research, development, and dissemination initiatives aimed at the rediscovery of Malta's culinary heritage. These efforts

focused on adapting traditional methods to contemporary approaches and a growing modern market. *Mazzit* and mazzit-based products remained central to this work, with national production estimated at around 30 tonnes for the second consecutive year. New products incorporating mazzit, such as *mazzit* muffins and *mazzit* ice-cream, were trialled successfully. Meanwhile, the application for its recognition as a Protected Geographical Indication (under the EU geographical indication protection mechanism) progressed steadily. A similar application was also submitted for the recognition of the Maltese sausage (*zazzett tal-Malti*). This product received further visibility through the Festa Zazzett Malti hosted at the Public Abattoir, which also attracted widespread media coverage due to the achievement of a national record of the longest Maltese sausage ever produced.

Several other traditional products including crackling (*qriemeċ*), lardo, and pre-prepared tripe (*kirxa*) recipes were also launched on the market following successful trials in 2024. These developments marked another key milestone in revitalising Malta's culinary heritage. Among the outcomes were the successful placement on the market of approximately 500 kg of pre-prepared tripe and a similar volume of lardo.

2.2 Sustainable Urban Planning and Development for Liveable and Resilient Towns and Villages

Malta continued strengthening its approach to sustainable urban planning, focusing on effective regulation, improved permitting processes, and policies that support resilient, liveable communities and responsible development across towns and villages.

In 2025, ERA vetted 7,291 planning applications, of which 2,941 were further reviewed due to their environment implications. The Authority also assessed 2,208 Transport Malta road works applications, reviewed 33 project description statements (PDSs), and requested four environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies. In addition, ERA processed seven strategic environmental assessment (SEA)

consultations on draft plans and programmes in view of their potential environmental impacts.

Through the mechanism of environmental permits, ERA is managing to mitigate or prevent a number of impacts and environmental risks of activities, interventions, and operations that fall within its regulatory scope, by making sustainable decisions and integrating a number of environmental considerations in permits through conditions and approved technical specifications. To further ensure this, the Authority is launching systems so that environmental permit processes are more effective, as well as more transparent, inclusive, simple, and efficient. Until the end of October 2025, ERA received 15,349 permit applications and processed 13,250 of them.

A significant development during the year was the publication and entry into force of the Environmental Permitting (Procedure for Applications and their Determination) Regulations, on 11 May 2025. The regulations establish a consolidated and clearer permitting framework, streamlining previously fragmented permitting regimes and specifying which applications require public decision-making. They introduce uniform procedures for application processes and fees, expanding regulatory scope into areas that were unregulated.

The draft regulations underwent public consultation between 21 February 2024 and 17 April 2024. Transitory provisions allow operators carrying out activities in Schedule II to apply for clearance by 11 November 2025. To maintain a level playing field, operators conducting activities listed in the schedule who already had a valid permit, had the permit extended for another 4 years or until 2029, whichever comes first. Targeted stakeholder meetings were also organised by ERA during the same period to ensure effective engagement. With these changes in the Environmental Protection Act, the Authority will be improving transparency and encouraging public participation and scrutiny during the processing of applications.

The Authority also operates a digital system for application submission. With the promulgation

of Environmental Permitting (Procedure for Applications and their Determination) Regulations and amendments in the Environmental Protection Act, which entered into force through Act XXX of 2023, the Authority has also improved transparency and encouraged public participation and scrutiny during the processing of applications. Through these amendments, broader access to justice is provided, as any person may register their interest in an environmental permit application before the authority, thereby acquiring the right to appeal if they feel aggrieved by the Authority's decision.

Work continued on the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development (SPED), to ensure that national spatial planning is aligned with sustainable development. This is an intergovernmental plan intended for a horizontal and vertical application throughout government agencies and bodies. SPED makes proposals for the future spatial distribution of development and the protection of the environment in a manner that is consistent with national policies, and integrates government's social, economic, and environmental objectives. SPED is thus an enabling plan to increase the competitiveness of the Maltese Islands in a manner where socio-economic development assists the achievement of national environment objectives. As a national strategic document, SPED guides the spatial aspect of government sectoral policies, plans, and programmes. It also forms the primary basis for decisions on development, transport, and

environmental permit applications.

Beyond environmental and spatial planning and regulations, efforts in 2025 also focused on supporting sustainable home ownership. The Housing Authority published a Step-by-Step First-Time Buyers Guide to assist individuals purchasing their first property in the local market. The guide walks first-time buyers through every stage, from the initial inquiry about a home loan to moving in and settling into their new home. Key stages covered include viewing properties, signing the promise of sale, applying for a home loan, obtaining life and building insurance, and finalising the deed. An online portal was launched to ensure the guide remains updated with procedural changes and new schemes.

During the same year, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) initiated work to develop an indicator enabling the assessment of buildings' capacity to integrate smart technologies. This indicator will form part of a wider set of measures aimed at promoting the shift towards smarter buildings in support of national decarbonisation objectives for 2050.

2.2.1 Urban Green and Embellishment Projects

The PA continued supporting several local councils and organisations through aid schemes aimed at promoting energy-efficient and greening projects. In 2025, the following entities benefitted from this support.

Project Ref	Proposal	Applicants	Amount
GS/50008/2021	Vertical garden installations are required for three specific area uses: 1. as a subdivision between outdoor area for inpatients; 2. as a backdrop to a number of tranquillity gardens; and 3. internal partitioning.	Hospice Malta, Santa Venera	EUR 79,667.70
GS/50006/2023	Upgrading of existing public garden, including paving changes, energy saving lighting, urban furniture (from recycled materials), child play area, and soft landscaping, including a jogging and cycling track.	Attard Local Council	EUR 49,996.60

A major national greening initiative underway is the Malta National Botanic Gardens Project led by Ambjent Malta in collaboration with multiple entities. The project will transform a number of existing historic gardens in Floriana into an interconnected network of botanic gardens.

Building upon previous progress, several further interventions are planned including the restoration of the lower part of St Philip's Garden and the construction of butterfly houses; the rehabilitation of the Saint Philip railway tunnel to connect the lower part of St Philip's Garden to the Notre Dame Ditch; the restoration and development of the Malta Botanic Garden Visitor and Interpretation Centre and the research labs; the restoration of Sa Maison and Tal-Milorda Gardens with upgraded access, reservoir renovation, irrigation and lighting installation, the preservation of its historical features, and the upgrading of Jubilee Garden (*Pinetum*). Given the scale of the project, a combination of national and EU funding will be tapped and an ERDF application was submitted in April 2025 to secure EU support.

Enhancements to the Argotti Garden also continued during 2025. Two planters were refurbished and fitted with new steel railings to replace temporary fencing with plans to update the remaining four planters. Nine new information boards were installed, offering details about evolutionary groups in English and Maltese accompanied by a QR code linking a virtual map of the garden with online resources about the individual species found in the area. Updated botanic labels were added to plants across the gardens, providing species information in English and Latin, family names, and the country of origin. These labels will be updated regularly to reflect changes in species classifications and nomenclature, which is quite common in the botanic field. Over 260 new drought-tolerant plants were introduced across the Floriana gardens, including shrubs (56.49%), perennial plants (21.37%), cacti and succulents (17.94%), and trees (4.2%), which are all suited to the Mediterranean climate.

A new drought-tolerant area was developed at the lower part of St Philip's Garden, with

additional embellishment works carried out across San Filippu, the Mall, and Argotti gardens. Dedicated signage was installed throughout the gardens, indicating opening hours and highlighting undergoing works, aligned with the project's visual identity.

Significant progress was also made on the Green Park project in Marsaskala. Phase one was officially launched in June 2025, focusing on transforming the 23,000 m² site of the former Sant Antnin Wasteserv Treatment Plant into a major urban park. Initial works include site clearance and excavation work, structure demolition, reprofiling, and the construction of retaining walls. Excavation materials are being reused on site where possible to support sustainable objectives. Phase two of the Green Park project will introduce extensive vegetation and tree planting to enhance biodiversity and environmental health; a central lake, complemented by a wetland filtration system, which will support a thriving microecosystem, improve water quality, and provide opportunities for educational and recreational activities; an underground parking facility; a greenhouse showcasing eco-friendly practices such as hydroponics; and a multipurpose entrance hub designed for community events and learning.

In parallel, the Malta Embellishment Landscaping Projects (MELP) monitors a contractual agreement in the maintenance of circa 1,900 parcels of land adjacent to some arterial and distributor road networks, including roundabouts across the islands of Malta and Gozo. All landscape embellishment projects adhered to ERA's *Guidelines on trees, shrubs and plants for planting and landscaping in the Maltese Islands*.

Several notable embellishment initiatives were completed in localities such as Birgu, Xgħajra, and Żabbar. An annual replacement programme was implemented to address dead or diseased roadside vegetation, with extensive planting across multiple localities, including Imqabba, Kirkop, Qormi, Żebbuġ, Balzan, Attard, Floriana, Valetta, and several Gozitan localities.

Urban greening efforts extended to additional regeneration projects, including large-scale

planting at the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) Safi Barracks, where a total of 4,040 trees and shrubs were planted and supported through new irrigation systems. The Pietà Marina Gardens Project involved the introduction of more than 2,200 trees and shrubs, contributing to the regeneration of this area. Further plantings took place at the CPD Headquarters (28 *Chamaerops humilis* (gummar), 2 *Olea europaea* (żebbuġ), and *Anthyllis hermanniae subsp. melitensis* (il-ħatba s-sewda)), the Ġnien Palma in Attard (1,000 trees and shrubs), and areas in Hamrun (750 shrubs and other seasonals) and Rabat.

Several funding schemes also supported local councils through *Inizjattiva Finanzjarja — Lokaltajiet Aktar Nodfa*. EUR 76,555.40 was allocated to 47 local councils to promote waste reduction, cleanliness, and environmental health. A further EUR 224,537.42 was distributed to nine local councils through the maintenance fund for major public infrastructure projects.

Complimenting national greening efforts, the SensorNet Action, under the ERDF project *Improving the Living Standards of the Urban Areas in Gozo*, introduces an AI-driven system to collect real-time sensor data and guide sustainable management of green and open spaces. This data-driven approach will support evidence-based regeneration strategies and ensure spaces remain safe, accessible, and environmentally responsive. Within this framework, the establishment of the Victoria Park will transform the central parking area into a green open space — connecting this new open space with the Villa Rundle Garden —together with the development of the Leli Farrugia ground — which is currently serving as a parking area — into a multi-level car park accommodating around 280 vehicles, and a synthetic football ground on top with upgrades to the Victoria playing field and bus terminus. The processing of planning applications, tender publication, and evaluations for works and project management continued throughout 2025.

Three gardens in Gozo, Ġnien Ġensu Sciberras in Kerċem, Ġnien il-Ħaddiem in Xewkija, and Ġnien Magistrat Salvu Attard in Qala, were selected for restoration as part of the same



ERDF project. These projects aim to improve accessibility, introduce dementia-friendly features, enhance landscaping, upgrade lighting and furniture, and restore public conveniences. The Ulysses Grove project represents another flagship greening initiative designed to transform an underutilised area into a multifunctional green space that enhances ecological value, climate resilience, and community wellbeing. Through the introduction of extensive tree planting, shaded walking routes, biodiversity-friendly landscaping and recreational pockets, the project aims to create a high-quality natural environment that mitigates urban heat, improves air quality, and offers residents and visitors a welcoming outdoor space. The tender for the execution of works was published in 2025, and the evaluation process is currently underway, with completion anticipated by early 2026, after which implementation on-site is expected to commence.

In 2025, Project Green continued to support sustainable urban planning and development by delivering and advancing greening initiatives that enhance the liveability, resilience, and environmental quality of towns and villages across Malta and Gozo. Building on previous years' progress, the agency's work in 2025 further integrated green infrastructure and nature-based solutions into urban and peri-urban environments, in line with national spatial, environmental, and climate objectives.

Throughout the year, Project Green progressed a portfolio of urban greening projects aimed at regenerating underutilised and degraded spaces into accessible, multifunctional green areas, completing a total of 13 projects covering a total of approximately 80,000 m². These projects focused on increasing public access to quality open spaces, strengthening urban biodiversity, improving ecological connectivity, and contributing to climate change adaptation through varied landscaping and shading to improve microclimatic conditions. Several projects reached completion or advanced through key implementation stages in 2025, incorporating pedestrian-friendly designs, native (and therefore climate-resilient) planting, and amenities that support recreation, social interaction, and wellbeing amongst different members of the public.

At the research and innovation level, Project Green remained engaged in the EU-funded GoGreenNext project. During 2025, planning took place to study the correlation between access to green spaces and human and mental health at the pilot site in Żejtun. Site-specific interventions are to follow in 2026. This project is set to contribute towards a better understanding of the links between urban greening, biodiversity, climate adaptation, and human health (the planetary health nexus).

Nationwide initiatives such as Tree by Tree were created and local greening programmes remained active during 2025, further expanding the country's urban canopy cover and supporting habitat protection and regeneration in both urban and peri-urban areas. These initiatives continued to engage local councils, private landowners, and community stakeholders, promoting shared stewardship while delivering environmental benefits such as improved air quality, reduced urban heat, and enhanced resilience to climate impacts. Emphasis continued to be placed on the use of native species and long-term maintenance to ensure the long-term sustainability of interventions. In addition, the Green Schools Initiative was also introduced in 2025, with further progress on bringing green infrastructure and access in schools across Malta and Gozo. These projects are set

to enhance outdoor learning environments, encourage environmental awareness from an early age, and contribute towards a healthier, more inclusive school environment.

Project Green also seeks to transform key outdoor areas across the MCAST Main Campus by enhancing landscaping, shaded zones, and dedicated outdoor learning spaces. The initiative aims to strengthen environmental sustainability, support student wellbeing, and contribute to a more climate-resilient campus. In 2025, the proposal was formally selected under the national Green School Initiative, marking an important milestone in securing potential financial support.

Design work progressed to the pre-implementation stage with a focus on low-water native plants, expanded tree canopy, biodiversity-friendly spaces, and outdoor seating to facilitate learning activities. Priority greening zones were mapped in collaboration with internal technical teams, and alignment with MCAST's accessibility targets was reinforced through the integration step-free pathways and shaded rest points.

During 2025, the Grand Harbour Regeneration Corporation (GHRC) continued working on several projects across different localities. Following the inauguration of the Kalkara Square project in 2024, work on the regeneration of the entrance to Isla was completed, and the project was officially inaugurated last May. This initiative not only involved the restoration of St Michael's Bastions but also the complete regeneration of the entrance area through new paving, an upgraded lighting system, new services, tree planting, irrigation systems, surveillance installations, and most importantly full accessibility through a lift leading to the belvedere on St Michael's bastion, which had previously been closed to the public. Additionally, a centre was established on-site, which is now being used by the Isla Local Council as a day centre for senior citizens.

Work also progressed in Pietà, where the second phase of the regeneration project along the Pietà waterfront was completed. After the infrastructural works on the waterfront were finalised in 2024, this year's focus shifted to



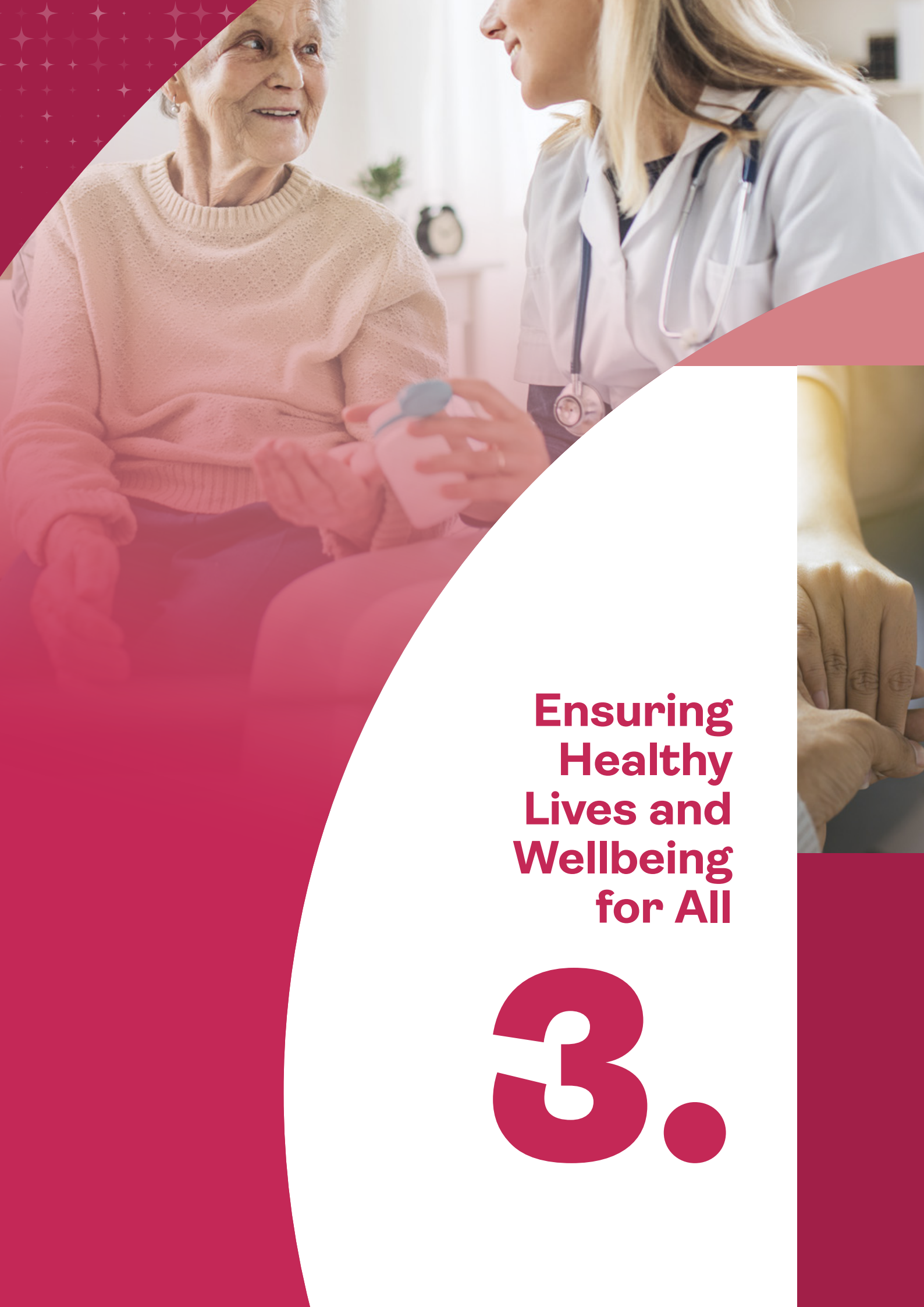
the regeneration of the Marina Garden. The works delivered a recreational zone, facilities for physical activity, leisure spaces, and a new lighting system that significantly improved safety in the area during evening hours. This rehabilitation was carried out with respect for the natural environment that surrounds the garden and the marina. With this area now completed, and with the Msida waterfront regenerated by GHRC around 3 years ago, the upcoming completion of the Msida Creek project will result in a continuous waterfront promenade stretching from Sa Maison to Sliema for everyone's enjoyment.

In Birgu, this project will see the creation of a public garden and open space on the site where oil storage tanks once stood. Works are progressing well, and once completed with the planting of trees, shrubs, and the introduction of recreational facilities, the area, previously misused, will be transformed into an attractive, open recreational space for the local community and visitors.

Work has also begun on the project for the regeneration of the Ta' Xbiex seafront. This project will not only enhance the beauty of the waterfront but will also create larger open spaces for public use, while introducing new facilities such as a greenway for bicycles and other similar means of transport. All existing services along the waterfront will be replaced, and the number of trees planted in the area will increase significantly.

In Marsa, work has also started on the regeneration of the town centre. Beyond service upgrades, infrastructural works will be carried out to give a new appearance to the main square, the street leading to it, and the surrounding areas. These will include new trees and shrubs, a new lighting system, and enhanced security installations, all contributing to bringing the square, back to life.





**Ensuring
Healthy
Lives and
Wellbeing
for All**

3.

CHAPTER 3.

Ensuring Healthy Lives and Wellbeing for All



In 2025, Malta continued to advance a comprehensive and people-centred approach to health and wellbeing, underpinned by strengthened governance, service integration, and sustained investment in public health systems. National efforts focused on prevention, early detection, service quality, and equitable access to healthcare across the life course, while reinforcing system resilience and responsiveness to emerging health needs. Policy development, infrastructure planning, and regulatory oversight progressed in parallel, supported by cross-sectoral coordination and stakeholder engagement.

During the year, significant emphasis was placed on modernising healthcare delivery and expanding preventive and community-based

services. Strategic frameworks addressing non-communicable diseases (NCD), mental health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition, physical activity, and active ageing were developed or implemented to guide long-term population health improvements. Investments in acute, primary, and community care infrastructure, alongside digital health tools and outreach models, aimed to enhance continuity of care, improve early diagnosis, and reduce avoidable hospital admissions.

Regulatory and institutional capacity was further strengthened through initiatives enhancing patient safety, health technology assessment, medicines management, and medical device surveillance, ensuring timely access to safe, effective, and evidence-based

treatments. Targeted measures supported vulnerable population groups, including older persons, children and adolescents, persons with disabilities, migrants, and individuals living with chronic or rare conditions, reinforcing equity and inclusivity within service provision.

Complementary actions promoted healthier lifestyles and supportive environments through national and local initiatives addressing nutrition, physical activity, and active ageing. Programmes implemented across schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, and communities encouraged sustained behavioural change and social participation, while investments in sports, recreational, and age-friendly infrastructure strengthened wellbeing at community level. Collectively, these measures demonstrate Malta's continued commitment to strengthening its health system, improving population health outcomes, and supporting quality of life for all residents through coordinated, sustainable, and evidence-informed action.

This chapter will outline the various initiatives and projects that contribute to these overarching goals, focusing on the alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDGs 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9.

3.1 Fostering Good Health for All by Strengthening our Public Health System

In 2025, health authorities focused on prevention, early detection, equitable access, and service quality through coordinated policy, governance, and infrastructure. The Superintendence of Public Health (SPH) advanced patient safety and leadership competencies through consultation on the National Patient Safety Strategy, and issued the Policy Framework for the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases and the Promotion of Wellbeing 2025–2035 with the aim of reducing morbidity and mortality through measurable population-health improvements. Work progressed on the National Sexual Health Strategy 2025–2030 following broad engagement with NGOs, civil society, and the public. At EU-level, Malta joined the

ENACT HTAR (European Network for Health Technology Assessment Regulation) project to implement the new EU Health Technology Assessment Regulation from January 2025 and strengthen capacity for joint EU assessments. The Malta Medicines Authority (MMA) led EU4Health Programme actions on medical-device surveillance and vigilance, hosting the IncreaseNET summit and dedicated workshops to bolster regulatory preparedness. Reproductive and genetic policy modernisation advanced through Embryo Protection Authority (EPA) major reforms, including inclusive assisted reproductive technology (ART) services irrespective of gender or sexual orientation, pre-implantation genetic testing for monogenic (PGTM) disorders, embryo sharing for same-sex female couples, and a refund scheme for ART medication, supporting approximately 785 treatment cycles through significant public investment.

Systems and infrastructure planning progressed in parallel across major health services at MDH through the advanced expansion of the Emergency Department and intensive care and the development of a psychiatric centre. The National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) has invested in donor and tissue management capacity and strengthened contingency planning through a technical agreement with Ragusa Blood Centre in Italy. The EHD maintained robust quality systems through updated SOPs, guidelines, and audits, while the SPH contributed to World Health Organisation (WHO) and UN health policy processes, reinforcing Malta's international leadership, while securing the European Social Fund (ESF) for initiatives addressing health-related social needs among older adults.

Within oncology, the then Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA) continued strengthening the Cancer Care Pathways and SAMOC framework, supported by the expansion of nurse navigator services across haematology and acute oncology. Since their full implementation in November 2025, more than 11,000 patients have benefitted, with over 68,000 calls and 82,000 interventions. In addition, the Oncology Outreach Services

project is preparing to extend cancer support into communities through newly trained nurses and upgraded outreach vans capable of safely delivering medicines to patients with limited mobility. The fast-tracking of GP referrals has also been prioritised through a new online referral system, with eight pathways operational, 5,571 referrals processed, and nearly 600 cancers detected early, while survivorship programmes and holistic needs assessments have expanded in Malta and Gozo through Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA) clinics and Tailoring Recovery after Cancer (TRaC) survivorship classes.

Mental health support widened with the launch of the Mental Health Community Outreach Service by Gozo General Hospital (GGH) in April 2025, providing home-based support to reduce reliance on outpatients services and hospitalisations. Dar Kenn Għal Saħhtek (DKGHS) expanded its therapeutic environment with a multisensory room supporting around 250 new residents annually in eating disorder and obesity programmes.

In sexual and gender health, the Gender Well-being Clinic (GWC) continued expanding transgender health services to increase inclusivity and access. In collaboration with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), new public health campaigns focused on HIV prevention by promoting increased testing among medical professionals and private GPs, targeting undiagnosed individuals, and the chemsex training initiative for healthcare workers and NGOs aims to strengthen professional capacity.

Primary and community services continued to be modernised. Primary healthcare has reinforced emergency readiness with immediate life-support training certified by the European Resuscitation Council (ERC) for all doctors and nurses. Structural upgrades across community clinics have been supported by the introduction of digital and clinical tools such as SpeakTX software. Community-based cancer survivorship reviews have expanded to new tumour groups, while new services—including migrant health GP clinics, infection control and antibiotic stewardship initiatives, and telemedicine—have broadened access and strengthened resilience across the

health system. The centralisation of national screening progressed, with the completion and endorsement of the medical brief to relocate the National Screening Centre to Boffa Hospital was completed. Preliminary works commenced, including the clearance of debris, scrap materials, and assets deemed beyond economic repair following the hospital's closure. A national screening programme for children aged 18 months and older experiencing communication difficulties was designed and piloted, while abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening continued to widen its reach.

The then MHA further supported holistic and equitable healthcare delivery through enhanced diabetes services under the Office of the CMO. Continuous glucose monitors were extended to all Type 1 patients, benefitting over 1,400 individuals, while free monitors and strips access widened to Type 2. Work advanced on updating the Government Formulary List, implementing the National Diabetes Strategy 2025–2030, widening insulin pump access for youth, improving complication screening, and establishing a national diabetes register with the Directorate for Health Information & Research (DHIR). Additional Primary Healthcare initiatives progressed in long COVID management, NCD prevention, frailty assessments, glaucoma and orthoptist screening, obesity management, and new pathways were introduced such as the chronic kidney disease clinic, with vaccination paediatric screening expanding coverage.

Access to medicine and treatment options improved through resourcing and governance, with 23 new medicines, 62 protocol changes, 439 technical amendments, 63 new specifications, one new Schedule V condition, and three pending conditions. 45 medicines were assessed and recommended, and 16 were approved through the Advisory Committee on Healthcare Benefits (ACHCB), broadening evidence-based treatment options and reducing therapeutic gaps. The MHA's Exceptional Medicinal Treatment Committee approved 869 new cases, renewed 882 non-formulary approvals, and granted 723 non-formulary requests, 27% of which related to rare diseases, thus strengthening equitable access to treatments particularly for rare conditions.

Inclusive developmental and rehabilitation services were also broadened. Through the Directorate for Allied Health Services (DAHS), the Child Development and Assessment Unit was restructured to integrate a sensory-integration programme and extend services from birth to 25 years of age, while eligibility for occupational therapy services were extended to include adolescents from 14 years and adults up to 60, strengthening domiciliary and youth focused care without additional costs. Mental health and physiotherapy services maintained continuity with prior provision, emphasising early intervention, comprehensive care, and equitable access for individuals with diverse needs. Investment in the Vincent Moran Regional Hub continued to build specialised services within the regional capacity and alleviate pressure on MDH.

Emergency medical services were modernised in Gozo with six new Euro 6 vehicles replacing older Euro 4 ambulances. This transition enhanced reliability and reduced emissions, aligning with national sustainability objectives and improving the quality of urgent patient care. At MDH, diabetes care was upgraded with the introduction of insulin pump services through the Dietetics Unit. A major investment was directed towards advancing healthcare services through the construction of the Establishment of Blood, Tissue & Cell Centre (EBTC) led by the NBTS. This EUR 30 million project will introduce specialised cleanroom environments to support bone banking, cornea storage, and stem cell processing, transforming the scope and quality of medical service delivery and strengthening national capacity in advanced therapeutic services.

Initiatives aimed at fostering holistic health, with a focus on protection and prevention, were strengthened through increased accessibility and education. At St Vincent de Paul (SVP), care for older persons was reinforced through immunisation campaigns, ophthalmic screening, and the frailty clinics. Mental health first aid training was delivered in partnership with Richmond Foundation, earning a Gold Standard designation. In addition, Aġenzija Sapport delivered health-related training, including education on disability and sexuality for service users and families. Public engagement and

regulatory literacy were reinforced through #MedSafetyWeek, World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, and a European initiative on the safe use of over-the-counter medicines.

3.2 Promoting Good Nutrition and Active Lifestyles for a Healthy Society

In 2025, Malta continued to strive to promote healthy nutrition and strengthen efforts by creating an enabling environment and infrastructure. Through the SPH, complementary strategies were progressed, including the Tobacco Control Strategy 2026–2030, the Weight Management and Obesity Care Strategy 2026–2030, and the Healthy Eating and Nutrition Strategy 2025–2030. The Strategy for Health-Enhancing Physical Activity, finalised in October 2025, sets out a national vision to create an environment across Malta where every resident, regardless of age, background, or life circumstances, is equipped with the knowledge, opportunities, and encouragement needed to engage in daily physical activity across multiple settings including communities, schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods, thereby maximising health benefits and proactively reducing the risk of non-communicable diseases through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort, and engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders to secure optimal health outcomes for all residents.

To underpin policy with evidence and public information, the DHIR launched nationwide fieldwork for the European Health Interview Survey, generating valuable insights into population health trends and risk factors. It also continued publishing statistics to WHO, Eurostat, and the OECD, and contributed to an SPH-led initiative aimed at addressing gaps in information related to health-care workers. In parallel, the EHD strengthened public engagement by upgrading bathing water information systems.

In addition to policy efforts, initiatives promoting good nutrition, physical activity, and overall wellbeing were strengthened. At GGH, a range of wellness programmes were introduced, including yoga sessions, educational talks, smoking cessation support, charity walks,

and tailored exercise activities for long-term residents, to foster healthier habits among staff and the wider community. In parallel, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh strengthened youth wellbeing through the Resilience Toolbox for youth organisations, the Mindful Mosaic programme on mindfulness and coping skills in schools, and *[IN]VIŻIBBLI*, a month-long wellbeing festival co-delivered with NGOs to create safe, creative spaces for dialogue and expression through workshops, theatre, music, dance, activism, and sport.

Participation in sport and improved infrastructure in Gozo were actively promoted. Gozitan athletes participated in the International Island Games held in Orkney in 2025, encouraging physical activity among youths and adults. The Services Gozo Directorate launched the Voluntary Organisation Scheme to provide financial assistance to various

VOs whose main aim was to improve their sports facilities or organise sports-related activities. The Gozo Indoor Sports and Aquatic Pavilion (GISAP) was inaugurated as a 5,000m² state-of-the-art centre of excellence to inspire healthy lifestyles, and nurture sporting talent and a vibrant social hub for Gozo and the wider Maltese Islands. It provides world-class facilities, programmes, and customer service while championing sustainability, accessibility, and lifelong wellbeing for every visitor. The centre hosts various activities, ranging from school PE sessions and family fitness classes to international tournaments.

The above efforts were complemented by initiatives at community level, with three local councils undertaking a wellbeing project funded under the LEADER programme. The projects are the following:

Local Council	Amount	Name of Project	Details
Munxar	EUR 119,428.60	Enhancing Gozo's Lifestyle Through Sports, Technology And Community Engagement	This project, led by the Munxar Local Council with partners Sezzjoni Żgħażaġh Pawlini Munxarin (SZPM) and Munxar Falcons F.C., was successfully implemented to enhance community life in Munxar and Gozo through recreation, culture, and sports. The project aimed at improving public spaces for family enjoyment and invested in sportswear and accessories for its residents fostering participation in physical activity, and reinforcing community engagement through sport.
Nadur	EUR 30,895.90	NextGen Nadur: Rejuvenating Nadur for Young Generations	The project, spearheaded by the Nadur Local Council, the Nadur Youth and Training Centre and the Soċjetà Filarmonika Mnarja, was a collaborative initiative aimed at enhancing the living conditions of young people and young families in Gozo. The project focused on providing lifestyle attractions that catered to the needs and aspirations of the younger generations. The main outputs of the project included the renovations of Ġnien il-Kunsill to make it a more inclusive and safe area for families, designed to ensure that children with different abilities could equally participate and play, and the upgrading of health and safety features amongst others.
Għarb	EUR 90,271.90	Arb Health And Recreation Complex	The ARB complex is an innovative project set up by the Għarb Local Council with its main aim being to improve residents' quality of life. The project promotes security and accessibility through technology, with the goal of creating a space that encourages activities, creativity, and public recreation for children, adults, the elderly, and families in general. In terms of health-related benefits, the complex boasts a heated, therapeutic indoor pool.



Workplace and education settings also embraced wellbeing. The IfE supported staff and learners through access to a councillor, a wellness day and a self-care seminar, fresh fruit every two weeks, yoga sessions once every two weeks, a monthly step-up challenge, and a multifaith room.

Good nutrition and physical activities were also encouraged among older persons. At SVP regular nutritional assessments aimed to prevent malnutrition among elderly clients. Such assessments include BMI tests and comprehensive nutrition evaluations twice a year conducted by clinical nutrition nurses and nutritionists to detect risks early and ensure appropriate interventions. To maintain rigorous food safety standards, SVP provides free food handling courses to all staff involved in meal preparation. Meanwhile, healthy and active lifestyles were encouraged through a dedicated EUR 10,000 budget for staff athletes, training employees in health promotion, and a new bocci pitch for residents, encouraging physical activity and social engagement. Training programmes designed by the SVP Physiotherapy Unit offer pilates and circuit training so that residents can engage in more physical activities and improve their overall wellbeing. SVP continued with services related to the osteoarthritis

programme by promoting targeted exercises for people suffering from osteoarthritis on an outpatients basis. The programme runs over a course of 3 months, with two 1-hour long sessions per week; one on land and one in a therapeutic pool. Weekly exercise classes are held in two dementia closed wards to promote physical activity, while exercise is carried out in the form of circuit training. In terms of mental health, SVP continued the provision of training on social isolation amongst charge nurses, nurses, and carers.

Major national sport infrastructure progressed through Project Plus, which advanced improvements on the new rugby and football ground. The substation was completed with the necessary machinery installed to provide its services. In 2025, the subgrade level of the pitch was also completed, while on-site poles offering a modern floodlight system were installed. The ground is now also equipped with a strong security fence and fencing around the pitch, and the imported turf will give the country a pitch of international quality.

In 2025, the EWA, in collaboration with the WSC and with the support of the Malta Football Association, installed potable-water dispensers in all local football nurseries. A total of 16



nurseries applied for this scheme, supported by an investment of EUR 116,614, ensuring that young athletes have access to clean and fresh water at their sports facilities whilst allowing savings to be reinvested in the training of young athletes.

3.2.1 Active Ageing

The Active Ageing and Community Care (AACC) Department increased the Carer at Home Scheme from EUR 8,000 to EUR 8,500 as of January 2025, whilst raising the Home Helper of Your Choice rate to EUR 9 per approved hour under the Home Help service. By October 2025, there were 1,182 Carer at Home beneficiaries, 621 using the Home Helper of Your Choice Scheme, and 8,272 receiving Home Help services. CommCare domiciliary nursing and caring services were extended later into the evening to better match client needs, with 1,207,727 interventions completed by October 2025. Community ophthalmology screening began at Active Ageing Centres to prevent potential permanent vision loss. By the end of October 2025, 244 elderly individuals were screened. A new Active Ageing Centre was also inaugurated in Tarxien following an agreement with the local council. These centres provide elderly individuals with safe spaces where they can meet, socialise, and share experiences. With this addition, the number of Active Ageing Centres now stands at 35. By the end of October 2025, 83 elderly individuals were attending the Tarxien Day Centre, while the Qormi Centre underwent major refurbishment. Furthermore, an agreement was signed between AACC and the Archdiocese of Malta to convert a building in Sliema into an activity centre for people with dementia, providing daily services for 15 to 20 people in a safe, supported setting.

The Residential Respite service was extended to allow eligible clients to book a respite bed themselves at any care home licensed by the Older Persons Standards Authority (OPSA), with refunds up to EUR 72 per approved night for up to 63 nights per year. By October 2025, 44 beneficiaries used the extended service and 242 beneficiaries used the general respite service. Meanwhile, full renovation and enhancement of the Mosta and Imtarfa elderly

homes progressed to improve accessibility, safety, comfort, and person-centred care, aligned with long-term sustainability in residential provision.

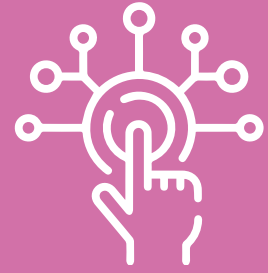
To create safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces for older persons and individuals with disabilities, SVP restored and reopened St Francis Wards 1 and 2, thus ensuring full accessibility for all clients. Furthermore, in early 2025, SVP launched a Therapeutic Farm open to residents and the general public. This initiative provides opportunities for interaction with friendly animals commonly found in traditional Maltese farms while promoting wellbeing and social inclusion. In terms of improved infrastructure in 2025, a new CT scan machine became operational in July 2025 (with 1,000 scans by October 2025), while outpatient services were increased to cater to the growing elderly population. Additionally, SVP escalated the hospital-based intermediate person-centred care to older adults living in the community who require care for acute/subacute health challenges that cannot be dealt with by means of services in the community. Moreover, a new palliative care ward has been introduced.

In line with the promotion of active ageing, the Services Gozo Directorate organised a series of events to celebrate senior citizens in Gozo, together with activities centred on healthy eating and regular exercise. Be Active and line dancing sessions were delivered across Active Ageing Centres throughout 2025 to sustain participation and community interaction.



**Accelerating
Digital
Transformation,
Smart Mobility,
and Connectivity**

4.



CHAPTER 4.

Accelerating Digital Transformation, Smart Mobility, and Connectivity



The government continued to advance its vision of accelerating digital transformation, smart mobility, and connectivity to strengthen the foundations of a modern and resilient society. Across public administration and key sectors, digitalisation remained central to improving service quality, operational efficiency, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Significant progress was made in modernising government systems, expanding digital public services, and enhancing national data infrastructure. Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools began supporting day-to-day administrative work, supported by updated governance frameworks and ongoing digital skills development. Public services became more accessible through upgraded digital platforms, improved interoperability, and the continued shift toward paperless, streamlined processes. Digitalisation also advanced across health, education, agriculture, and business regulation, with new systems, upgraded infrastructure, and enhanced digital tools supporting better service delivery and more efficient operations.

In parallel, work progressed on digital transport solutions, improved mobility systems, and initiatives that encourage cleaner and more efficient travel. Digital tools were introduced to support transport management, regulatory processes, and greener mobility choices, contributing to reduced congestion, improved connectivity, and healthier communities. These efforts supported the broader national transition toward climate neutrality and resource efficiency.

Complementing these developments, the government continued investing in Research and Innovation (R&I), supporting projects and collaborations that advance environmental sustainability, tourism and cultural heritage, and the agricultural and food sectors. New funding schemes, international partnerships, and thematic R&I initiatives strengthened Malta's research ecosystem and encouraged innovation aligned with national priorities. These investments supported the development of sustainable practices, digital solutions, and new knowledge that contribute to long-term economic and

societal resilience. Within the framework of the government's efforts, in line with the 2030 Agenda, this chapter will highlight measures, projects, and initiatives related to SDGs 3–5 and 8–11.

4.1 Towards a Digitally Empowered Economy and Society

4.1.1 Digital Transformation of the Public Administration and the Public Service

2025 saw significant strides in the incorporation of AI tools within the work of the Public Administration and Public Service. The Copilot Initiative, led by the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), is a strategic programme aimed at integrating AI-powered assistants, such as Microsoft 365 Copilot, into Public Administration workflows to boost productivity, collaboration, and service delivery. By leveraging large language models and secure organisational data, it automates tasks, such as drafting documents, summarising communications, analysing data, and generating reports, that may enable Public Administration employees to focus on higher-value, citizen-centric work. MITA drives this initiative through governance frameworks and an AI Centre of Excellence to ensure compliance, security, and ethical standards. Early adoption has demonstrated significant efficiency gains, improved decision-making, and strong user satisfaction, positioning AI as a cornerstone of Malta's digital transformation in government. In line with this, a new version of the Government ICT (GMICT) Policy on Generative AI Tools Usage was published in August 2025. The GMICT Policy aims to ensure trustworthy and responsible use of generative AI tools within the Malta Public Administration, especially if for justifiable reasons, such tools are not procured by government through MITA.

This complements the Cybersecurity Skilling Programme that MITA had launched in 2023 whereby the first course was aimed at security operations centre (SOC) analysts. The course was compiled in such a way to make it accessible to anyone having an interest in cybersecurity or wanting to make a career change. The course ran

till 2025, covering seven rounds of the SOC training programme, whereby more than 100 participants had the opportunity to receive this training. Certification opportunities were also made available to the public administration cohort.

Furthermore, throughout 2025, a variety of minor quality-of-life enhancements and system changes were introduced to enrich the user experience on the Government's e-Procurement Platform, ePPS. During the same year, several new features were deployed, including the Annual Procurement Plan, the digitisation of the appeals process, the Compliance and Monitoring Modus Operandi, the introduction of Open Business Intelligence for analytical reporting, and increased compliance with the Web Accessibility Directive 2016/2102 in collaboration with the Malta Communications Authority.

In addition to the above, the Data Governance Unit (DGU) within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) continued to advance Malta's digital transformational agenda throughout 2025 by implementing key initiatives aimed at improving data governance, interoperability, and accessibility across government. During 2025, the DGU finalised the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Framework, the NSDI Data Sharing Agreement, and the accompanying Data Sharing Policy, establishing a robust mechanism for the interministerial exchange of geospatial data. The Malta GeoHub Portal was further enhanced and populated with additional authoritative geospatial datasets, improving the availability and reliability of spatial information for government use. In parallel, significant work was undertaken to continue to populate the National Data Portal with diverse datasets, engaging multiple government entities to ensure comprehensive and transparent data accessibility.

The DGU is also working on an upgrade to the Malta GeoHub Portal to introduce advanced security features and expand the range of datasets accessible to both public and government entities. These developments provide policymakers with centralised, verified,

and up-to-date geospatial information, fostering consistency in decision-making and enhancing transparency across government.

To complement this work, MITA contributed to the evolution of the portal by implementing an authentication layer in 2025, enabling authorised government employees to securely access specific authoritative spatial datasets supplied by various ministries and entities. This one-stop portal for geospatial information is designed to support consistent decision-making across government and keep stakeholders updated on important geospatial parameters. Additionally, the government's GIS Committee also approved data sharing agreements and a Spatial Data Policy, establishing a clear governance framework for managing and sharing spatial data on the portal. The Spatial Data Policy ensures data integrity, security, and legal compliance, while promoting accessibility and interoperability. By setting standards for quality and metadata, the policy supports evidence-based decision-making and responsible data sharing for national planning and innovation. The data sharing agreements define the scope of data use, compliance, ownership, confidentiality, and accountability, fostering trust and collaboration whilst reducing risks of data misuse.

Building on this strengthened governance framework, the configuration of the Corporate Electronic Document Management System (CEDMS) was finalised in the first quarter of 2025 and started being deployed in the second quarter of 2025. The initial pilot sites were the OPM and the then Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Public Works (MTIP). The already existing data on paper files from the legacy systems on about 400,000 files and over 700 users were migrated onto the CEDMS, whilst an in-house training campaign was conducted for all the users. The CEDMS handles general files, parliamentary questions, and personal files.

The pilot sites were put into a soft launch in five phases and started working on the digital files as of each cut-off date. Once each phase went live, the movements of the paper files were then tracked on the CEDMS instead of

the legacy system to provide a unified working environment for employees. All new insertions into files were then done digitally on the CEDMS. The CEDMS implementation is currently being reviewed to maximise the advantages gained from working in a fully digital environment and in the new paradigm of having electronic document management. This is being further enhanced by organising the storage of files and documents by sectors and super sectors. Preparations are also underway to roll out the CEDMS in the next tranche of ministries and beyond. This will be further supplemented by an exercise to digitise all personal files across all ministries with the aim of having all personal files fully digitised by early 2026.

In parallel, Legal Notice L.N. 205 of 2025, titled “Address Register and Related Location (Geospatial) Registers Regulations 2025”, was published on 23 September 2025. Among other provisions, this Legal Notice established the Office of the Address Registrar, which has taken over the responsibilities previously assigned to the Address Management Unit within the Electoral Office. All components of this initiative support the launch of a new national address register, which falls in line with the Once-Only Principle outlined in the Strategy for the Public Service — Achieving a Service of Excellence. Moreover, the creation of its legal framework is identified as a key action within the Public Administration Data Strategy 2023–2027.

In 2025, the Electoral Office completed the address-based geolocated image capture of Maltese building units using zero-emission vehicles, as part of its address management solution. Furthermore, the Interoperability Portal was also recently launched, this falling in line with Malta’s Public Administration Data Strategy and co-financed by the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). It is a cloud-native solution enabling secure, real-time data exchange across government systems. It aligns with the European Interoperability Framework and the Interoperable Europe Act, supporting technical, semantic, organisational, and legal interoperability. Key features include real-time notifications, a single source of truth, strict authentication and auditing, and scalability to meet evolving digital and legal requirements. By reducing duplication and

promoting the Once-Only Principle, the platform strengthens trust, transparency, and efficiency in delivering next-generation digital public services.

Building on this broader drive for smarter, more efficient government operations, 2025 also saw work being carried out on a ride-sharing platform to enable government employees to share trips, increase vehicle occupancy, and reduce the number of passenger journeys. The platform is designed to optimise costs, including electric vehicle charging, reduce traffic congestion, and minimise the number of vehicles required for government operations. It also supports delivery bookings using ride-sharing principles and includes backend reporting with real-time statistics for administrators and supervisors. The solution is being developed for use with electric vehicles (EVs), supporting emission reduction goals.

In addition, the Land Transport Directorate (LTD) within Transport Malta (TM) further developed the eForm used for grant applications for new EVs and is developing a new one that is intended to be applied for all grant schemes managed by the LTD in 2026. The new form is undergoing the 3rd set of user acceptance testing (UAT) training. Once this new form is deployed, it can be replicated for all other grant schemes and replace the paper forms and the manual processing required currently.

Other notable developments throughout 2025 include a new web service set up by TM in conjunction with the MPF to carry out background checks on vehicles imported from other countries, and the start of works to introduce a mobile-based driving licence as stipulated in the new Driving Licence Directive enacted at EU-level in November 2025.

4.1.1.1 *Servizz.gov*

During 2025, Malta further increased its efforts to advance the efficiency and broaden the accessibility of government services. Servizz.gov continued its mission to deliver citizen-focused services through digital innovation, operational efficiency, and sustainability. Throughout the year, the agency achieved significant milestones that enhanced service delivery, improved accessibility, and reinforced Malta’s commitment to digital transformation.

In this regard, the Queue Management System, first deployed across 25 hubs in 2024, continued to serve as a vital component of service delivery throughout 2025. Beyond maintaining its role in reducing waiting times and improving the citizen experience, the system is undergoing significant enhancements. Work is currently underway to integrate an online appointment booking platform, which will enable citizens to schedule visits in advance and plan more effectively. This integration is expected to further minimise queues and optimise resource allocation. In addition, real-time analytics dashboards and reporting have been upgraded to provide deeper insights into peak service periods, operational performance, and staffing requirements, supporting data-driven decision-making across the network. The online booking functionality is in development and scheduled to be fully operational by Q1 2026, marking a major step towards a more streamlined and convenient service experience.

Another key initiative from 2024, the Single Point of Entry project, advanced from its proof-of-concept stage to full implementation in 2025. Originally launched as a collaboration between the then Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) and Servizz.gov, the project has now been extended to the education sector through the MyChild Portal and is set to expand further across additional ministries. Using Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management Service Catalogue, Servizz.gov has enabled real-time synchronisation of service data across multiple government portals. This ensures that citizens consistently receive accurate and up-to-date information, regardless of the platform they access, thereby reinforcing transparency, efficiency, and trust in public services.

Furthermore, the EU-funded Servizz.gov portal redevelopment project made significant progress in 2025. Following the tendering phase in late 2024, the project moved into execution in the third quarter of 2025 and is currently in the development phase. The redesigned portal is envisioned as a dynamic platform that transforms how citizens interact with government services. Key features under development include AI-driven personalisation to deliver tailored experiences, smart service

recommendations based on life events and previous interactions, and an enhanced user interface designed to meet international accessibility standards. The portal is scheduled to go live by the first quarter of 2026, marking a major milestone in Malta's digital transformation journey.

To complement the new portal and replace the current chatbot, Servizz.gov also launched a next-generation AI chatbot powered by Microsoft Copilot, alongside a live chat feature for real-time assistance. The AI chatbot offers advanced capabilities such as natural language understanding, multilingual support, and context-aware responses based on citizens' previous interactions. Unlike the previous chatbot, this solution will provide personalised guidance, predictive service suggestions, and integrated knowledge from multiple government systems, ensuring faster and more accurate responses. Combined with the live chat, this upgrade will significantly improve accessibility and responsiveness, delivering a superior user experience for citizens seeking immediate support.

In line with the above, sustainability remained a priority throughout 2025. Servizz.gov introduced paperless workflows for service requests, reducing reliance on physical documentation and contributing to environmental conservation. Furthermore, the agency implemented energy-efficient server infrastructure to host the new portal, aligning with broader government objectives for sustainable digital transformation. In addition to the positive environmental impact, these initiatives have benefitted its users considerably. Citizens have experienced reduced waiting times and greater convenience through digital booking and queue management. Moreover, data integrity and transparency have improved significantly, ensuring consistency across government services.

Accessibility was further improved through the expansion of services at Servizz.gov hubs in Birgu, Żejtun, Birkirkara, and St Paul's Bay as of the second quarter of 2025. This expansion brought legal aid support closer to citizens in different regions, making it easier



for individuals to seek assistance without visiting central offices.

4.1.1.2 Accounting and Banking

The Malta Business Registry is working on developing a business wallet for all companies and investors, which aims to streamline the process of identifying applicants engaged in business activities in Malta, particularly during “Know Your Customer” checks. By promoting the Once-Only Principle, standardisation, risk mitigation, and compliance, the repository will eliminate duplicative efforts, leading to significant time and cost efficiencies for both business and government agencies. Once operational, the Malta Business Wallet will facilitate seamless information sharing among government entities, enabling efficient due diligence checks on clients based on the nature of their business. Additionally, private entities such as banks, lawyers, and accountants will have authorised access to certified documentation, subject to the individual’s consent. Work on the system is currently underway, with plans for the wallet to be made accessible through mobile devices.

Complementing this initiative is the Malta Business Portal, through which all businesses, including self-employed individuals, will be listed. Relevant information will be shared with other government entities to ensure the continuous accuracy of data and to promote greater efficiency within the business community.

4.1.1.3 Digitalisation in the Agricultural and Food Sectors

During 2025, the then MAFA concluded a competitive dialogue for the implementation of a new fisheries information integration system (FIIS). The estimated cost of this system is EUR 8 million, which will be partly funded through EU funds. The FIIS will allow for all of the process and current IT systems and programmes used by the ministry to be consolidated in one programme, thus eliminating the manual processing of data and information. This will ensure the ministry is in line with EU regulations whilst allowing fishers to have access to all of their data and the data about their catches in real time.

Moreover, around 500 smart, waterproof tablets were distributed to local registered fishers. These tablets enable fishers to log their catches, renew vessel licenses, and apply for necessary fishing authorisations remotely, improving efficiency and accessibility. Additionally, during 2025, the then MAFA expanded the use of the mobile app, with over 3,000 license renewals being processed through the app.

4.1.1.4 Digitalisation in the Health Sector

Digitalisation is reshaping healthcare by improving efficiency and elevating the quality of patient services. Throughout 2025, the then MHA pursued a series of projects and initiatives aimed at accelerating digital progress across a



range of healthcare environments. In line with this strategic direction, by 2025 the then MHA had made substantial progress in modernising its HR processes through the introduction of new eForms and remote working measures designed to streamline processing, enhance transparency, and standardise submissions, thereby reducing administrative workload and supporting the Ministry's transition toward a fully paperless HR system.

Furthermore, the EHD implemented a wide-ranging upgrade of its IT systems. Staff received new laptops, the server room was enhanced, and a redesigned EHD website was launched. A modern

IT portal was introduced to streamline both internal and external communication. Work also progressed on the Health Inspectorate System (HIS), marking a shift toward more sophisticated digital management. The transition from traditional phone lines to digital telephony improved efficiency and connectivity, while the installation of a cutting-edge video conferencing system (VCS) in the boardroom strengthened hybrid and remote working capacities. Collectively, these upgrades enhanced employee wellbeing, supported talent attraction and retention, and reinforced compliance and reputation management.

Plans for a new Public Health Laboratory

Information Management System also advanced, with implementation aligned to the opening of the new Public Health Laboratory. This system will be integrated into the upcoming web-based platform that will replace the HIS, ensuring streamlined and effective laboratory data management in line with ministerial digitalisation priorities.

The Ministry's commitment to digital transformation was further reflected in the initiatives undertaken at the GGH throughout 2025, in collaboration with the Ministry's Information Management Unit (IMU) with the aim of strengthening the resilience and reliability of the hospital's digital infrastructure. A mandatory online absence management system was introduced, eliminating paper-based processes for booking, approving, and tracking absences. This transition reduced paper use and improved departmental workflows.

Additional systems were developed for fleet maintenance tracking, ensuring timely preventive servicing to support safety and emissions standards. The GGH also advanced the digitalisation of processes for medicinal gas cylinder distribution and pharmaceutical restocking in wards, improving inventory control and reducing administrative burden.

Further to this, in 2025 the DAHS advanced two key initiatives that underscore the Ministry's commitment to sustainability, innovation, and efficiency. The Allied Health Services Annual Conference transitioned into a fully paperless event, supported by a digital wellbeing information pack that reduced resource use, minimised waste, and enhanced participant experience. Simultaneously, physiotherapy departments adopted online referral and scheduling procedures, supported by a comprehensive policy framework. This digital shift improved accessibility, reduced waiting times, streamlined service delivery, and ensured equitable, patient-centred care. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how digital solutions can lower costs, optimise processes, and advance environmental and social responsibility across the health system.

Complementing the above, a major digital transformation at Vincent Moran Regional Hub is underway, with the Electronic Clinical

Data Management System (ECDMS) nearing implementation and outpatient clinics adopting patient dashboards, while the Customer/Clinic Queue Management System (CQMS) is already in use. These initiatives collectively reduce paper consumption, enhance data accessibility, and improve patient experience through streamlined digital services. Work is also ongoing on advanced digital systems at this hub, including a digital twin and a virtual reality walkthrough platform.

4.1.1.5 *Digitalisation in the Education Sector*

The IfE enhanced its digital infrastructure through the expansion of its digital library and the introduction of more online systems for administrative and procurement processes. This transition has significantly reduced paper usage and promoted sustainable digital practices. The institute is also in the process of upgrading its learning management system to include AI tools and enhance the educational experience received by its course participants.

Moreover, in collaboration with the Digital Literacy Centre, the IfE developed and accredited a Postgraduate Certificate in Digital Competences for Education (MQF Level 7, 30 ECTS) to enhance the digital competences of educators. The IfE also offers the Award Integrating AI in the Classroom (MQF Level 7, 5 ECTS), which also counts for continuous professional development, for educators wishing to upgrade their skills in this specific area.

Additionally, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) has an online portal through which parents and guardians can apply for any of the services provided by the Foundation. For several years, parents whose children attend Klabb 3–16 and Skolasajf have successfully made use of this digital platform to submit their applications efficiently and securely. As from 2025, the FES has further expanded this system to include the childcare service. Parents who wish to benefit from this service are now invited to submit their application through the online portal. This enhancement reflects the FES's ongoing commitment to improving accessibility, convenience, and efficiency for families seeking these educational and support services.

Through this initiative, parents are also able to submit their registration and pay admission fees directly through the online platform, thereby significantly reducing the handling of cash within childcare centres. In addition, the system provides the foundation with real-time data on current service users and up-to-date information on the waiting lists at each centre. This enables more efficient monitoring, planning, and allocation of resources across all FES childcare centres.

Furthermore, in 2025 the HR Department at the FES embarked on a significant digital transformation journey aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and modernising internal processes. One of the key initiatives implemented was the digitalisation of employment contract signing through DocuSign. This transition has greatly improved efficiency, organisation, and accessibility, while supporting the Department's commitment to a paperless working environment. The new system allows contracts to be securely signed, stored, and retrieved with ease, streamlining the onboarding process and reducing administrative delays.

Furthermore, the same HR Department has also successfully introduced a comprehensive human resources database, *bitkode*, which serves as a centralised platform containing detailed employee profiles. Each employee is assigned a unique code, with their records encompassing information such as allowances, leave entitlements, qualifications, and participation in in-house training programmes. This integrated database has become a vital link connecting recruitment, employee engagement, and payroll management, ensuring greater accuracy, transparency, and cohesion across all HR functions. Together, these digital advancements mark an important milestone in FES's ongoing commitment to innovation and service excellence.

In addition to the digitalisation efforts carried out by the FES, during 2025 MCAST also made significant investment in its digital infrastructure through the new Institute of ICT (IICT) building, which was officially inaugurated in December 2025. The building offers state-of-the-art labs, enhanced digital connectivity, modern teaching spaces and

flexible collaborative areas to support ICT, software development, cybersecurity and digital innovation disciplines, with courses commencing in the facility at the start of the 2024–2025 academic year.

MCAST has also deployed Freshdesk across IT-related support services. This serves as a centralised digital helpdesk platform to streamline staff and student technical support, improve response times, and enhance ticket tracking and reporting. As a result of Freshdesk, ticket categories and workflows have been standardised, performance dashboards for resolution times and service quality have been introduced, while user communication has improved through automated updates and knowledge-base articles.

Furthermore, in 2025 MCAST established a new senior leadership role dedicated to digital transformation, IT systems, cybersecurity, and institutional data management. The Deputy Principal for IT Systems and Data Security leads the strategic modernisation of digital infrastructure, resilience, compliance, and user experience across all campuses. This will facilitate the coordination of digital infrastructure upgrades and cloud migration processes, whilst reinforcing cybersecurity governance and risk-monitoring procedures, thereby aligning with national digitalisation policies and emerging compliance requirements.

In line with the above, MCAST is transitioning from locally hosted systems to a more resilient and scalable cloud environment to support high-quality connectivity, robustness, and modern digital services through the migration of core services to Microsoft Azure, which is, in turn, contributing towards the gradual winding down of legacy on-premise infrastructure and the improvement of system uptime, remote accessibility, and disaster-recovery readiness.

Moreover, MCAST initiated a structured user lifecycle management system to ensure secure and efficient digital access for new employees, existing staff, and departing users. This is being done through updated onboarding workflows for new employees, granting timely access to digital

systems, streamlined offboarding procedures for departing staff to reinforce data protection, periodic security access reviews carried out in coordination with HR, and the consolidation of user accounts to improve system cleanliness and security oversight.

4.1.1.6 Other Digitisation Initiatives by Various Ministries and Entities

In 2025, Project Green, in collaboration with the then MEEC and supported by the then Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects (MEEP), the Public Works Department (PWD), Wasteserv, Servizz Pubbliku, Ambjent Malta (AM), the GHRC, and ERA, developed a digital platform (parksinmalta.mt) providing a comprehensive guide to local parks, open spaces, and recreational areas across Malta and Gozo.

The platform enables users to view and interact with open spaces based on their amenities, accessibility, and geographic location, facilitating easier planning of visits and engagement with the natural environment. By centralising information on over 200 spaces, the platform promotes better access to green and open areas, supports community engagement with nature, raises awareness of inclusive and accessible facilities, and encourages active lifestyles and outdoor recreation.

In the cultural sector, Heritage Malta launched eMuseum on 21 November 2025. As a core pillar of the Agency's Long-term Digital Transformation Strategy, this platform significantly strengthens public access to thousands of digitised cultural assets. A defining feature of the eMuseum is its seamless integration with Heritage Malta's Collection Management System (CMS), ensuring that all digitised artefacts, together with their metadata, paradata, and documentation standards, are preserved within a unified, authoritative system of record. Supported by a newly launched state-of-the-art data centre, the platform benefits from advanced computational capacity, secure infrastructure, and the substantial storage required to sustain Malta's rapidly expanding digitisation output. This infrastructure also supports Heritage Malta's role as Malta's national aggregator for Europeana, enabling a direct publication

pipeline from CMS to eMuseum and onward to Europeana's pan-European data space, which aggregates more than 60 million cultural objects. This guarantees that Malta's cultural heritage is accessible both nationally and internationally, fostering research visibility and cultural exchange at a European scale.

The eMuseum continues to evolve through new capabilities, including high-resolution object viewing, personalised curatorship, forthcoming 3D object navigation, and virtual exhibitions, including legacy temporary exhibitions that remain accessible after deinstallation. These developments extend the museum experience into a sustained, immersive digital environment. In parallel, Heritage Malta's work within the Commission Expert Group on the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage (CEDCHE), where it served as penholder for Pillar 3 of the Common European data space for cultural heritage - Strategy 2025-2030, positions Malta at the forefront of European digital heritage policy. Complementing this, ongoing collaboration with the UNESCO Chair for Digital Cultural Heritage is supporting the development of internationally aligned standards for 3D digitisation, embodied in the innovative Memory Twin Framework, which advances sustainable and context-rich digital documentation practices.

Beyond the cultural sector, digitalisation efforts and related investments were likewise implemented in other areas, as seen with Malta's European Digital Innovation Hub, DiHubMT, which launched a high-performance computing service in October 2025 to support modern R&D. This advanced computer is capable of processing large datasets rapidly, making it a crucial tool for AI research, industry, and academia. During the same period, Malta was officially selected by the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC JU) to host one of Europe's 13 newly established AI factory antennas. This initiative further strengthens Malta's position in the European AI and high-performance computing network.

The Central Bank of Malta also undertook significant digital transformation efforts aimed at strengthening the resilience, security,

and efficiency of its internal systems and financial infrastructures. Throughout 2025, the Central Bank of Malta advanced a wide range of digital and infrastructural initiatives aimed at strengthening security, resilience, and operational efficiency across its systems. Endpoint Security Baseline Alignment standardised endpoint configurations, in line with international security guidelines and internal policies, thus introducing centralised configuration management and compliance monitoring to ensure secure and resilient end-user computing environments. This was complemented by Hybrid Security Monitoring, which established a 24x7 continuous monitoring capability to provide real-time detection, analysis, and response to cyber threats across critical systems, thereby enhancing resilience and operational continuity. Secure connectivity was further reinforced through Enhanced Remote Access Protection, which modernised remote access by introducing advanced identity management, secure authentication mechanisms, and zero trust principles. Organisational communication also improved through the Integration of Voice Services with Collaboration Platforms, reducing reliance on physical telephony and supporting more flexible, technology driven communication. In parallel, the Infrastructure Upgrade for Critical Systems replaced networking and server components with modern technologies to eliminate single points of failure and strengthen the reliability of digital services, while the Accounting System Upgrade introduced scalable and secure capabilities that support the digitalisation of financial processes.

Further enhancements were made to core financial and regulatory systems. The redevelopment of the Central Credit Register System introduced advanced data handling, integration with external credit agencies, and enhanced security measures, supporting digital innovation within the financial ecosystem. Verification of Payee added an additional layer of protection for electronic transactions by validating payee details, reducing fraud risk, and enhancing trust in digital payments. The Bank also progressed its modernisation of payment infrastructures through the Migration to ISO 20022 Standards for Cross-Border Payments, improving interoperability and efficiency in

payment processing. Finally, the Instant Payments Infrastructure advanced the implementation of real-time payment capabilities and connections to pan-European settlement systems, supporting the wider adoption of advanced payment technologies and improving user experience across financial services.

4.1.1.7 The Use of Digital Technologies for Compliance and Monitoring Purposes

In 2023, the MTA had embarked on a project to develop an AI tourism platform with the objective of modernising tourism data analysis through AI technology, combining traditional statistical sources with big data to enhance decision-making in the tourism sector. The development of this infrastructure was completed in June 2025. This project was financed by the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) and implemented within the sandbox framework.

The platform collects both traditional information sources such as official statistics from the Statistics Office and MTA data, as well as new “big data” sources related to various aspects of tourism such as short-term rental and hotel performance, tourist footfall, and tourist expenditure. This project also enabled the MTA to digitise data collection methods and automate repetitive processes to improve efficiency and speed in data collection and evaluation. The platform is currently available for internal use, with the intention of having selected access provided to the public.

Meanwhile, within the energy sector, Enemalta is striving to improve the current smart metering system that will permit innovative solutions like flexibility and energy sharing solutions to be introduced in Malta in the coming years. Moreover, in order to improve visibility to customers, Enemalta has introduced on its website information indicating the available spare capacity at substation level as well as customer consumption levels.

4.1.2 Enhancing Digital skills

As digital technologies continue to drive economic growth and job creation, nurturing digitally empowered citizens equipped with both basic and

specialised digital skills remains a national priority. In line with these efforts, MCAST introduced “Let’s Talk Digital Skills!”, a new series of interactive talks and workshops launched in 2025 aimed at improving digital literacy and e-skills across the student and staff community. The sessions cover AI, data literacy, digital safety, workplace technologies, and emerging digital trends, while integrating practical demonstrations and hands-on digital exercises.



Additionally, the Training Gap Analysis, launched in 2024 to assess Malta’s preparedness for the twin transition, progressed further in 2025. Following the review of accredited programmes for green skills in 2024, the 2025 focus shifted to digital and ICT-related training. All accredited programmes were mapped and classified according to the extent that they embed digital competences and prepare learners for ICT-related occupations. The policy recommendations have been drafted and are currently being discussed with stakeholders to inform potential actions such as the revision of existing training provision or the development of new training courses.

Digital transformation relies on a digitally knowledgeable and skilled workforce. In 2025, the MDIA delivered online, physical, and hybrid awareness sessions, courses, and workshops, together with summer schools and bootcamps. Generative AI featured prominently in upskilling content. These included RoboTech Summer School, which was launched in 2025 and is a hands-on programme for teens aged 13–17 years covering robotics, electronics, and technology, enabling participants to design,

assemble, and programme functional robots; and the Boost Your Coding Scheme, which was introduced in the fourth quarter of 2025 to empower individuals aged 16+ to pursue basic or introductory coding courses, strengthening digital literacy and supporting foundational coding skills. Additionally, in collaboration with Tech.mt, the MDIA and DiHubMT launched a pre-accelerator programme called Start-up Launchpad to help future tech founders validate early-stage ideas and acquire skills for evidence-based decision-making.

In line with this broader consolidation of national digital capabilities, from January 2025, the eSkills Malta Foundation was integrated into the MDIA. This transition enabled the MDIA to continue the Foundation’s successful initiatives within a unified strategic framework, including the work of DiHubMT. The integration has strengthened Malta’s capacity to address industry needs for digital skills and further supported the country’s digital transformation.

Further to this, in 2025 Tech.mt actively fostered innovation and promoted the adoption of digital technologies through initiatives such as the inMalta Programme, which enables Maltese businesses to showcase and adopt new solutions at major technology events in the United Arab Emirates, Portugal, Germany, and the United Kingdom, supporting over 100 companies over the past year. Tech.mt also hosted a Jordan-Malta webinar to highlight Malta’s digital capabilities in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, and fintech, while outlining incentives and upcoming missions to encourage cross-border collaboration. In parallel, Tech.mt also worked on the Malta Tech Education & Workforce Analysis 2023–2025 report which aims to address ICT and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) pipeline challenges, and recommend curriculum modernisation and lifelong learning, complemented by outreach in schools to connect students with technology careers.

Alongside these initiatives, GamingMalta continued to support Malta’s broader digital-skills agenda by expanding its Unity Training Programme. Between 2022 and 2024, the Programme trained 400 students across the

UM and MCAST. In August 2025, GamingMalta signed a renewed the agreement to train an additional 250 students through a customised Unity Learning Platform. This programme equips learners with recognised qualifications in the Unity engine, directly supporting national objectives related to digital upskilling, workforce readiness, and the development of a knowledge-based economy.

In addition to this, GamingMalta is also launching a dedicated Unreal Engine educational pathway to complement the Unity Initiative and expand Malta's capabilities in real-time 3D development. Unreal Engine is widely used in gaming, film production, virtual production, architecture, automotive design, simulation, and immersive marketing. The pathway will provide structured training in real-time rendering, interactive design, and worldbuilding; strengthen Malta's talent pool in line with global industry standards; facilitate cross-sector innovation by enabling skills applicable to entertainment, engineering, and creative industries; and support collaboration between industry and education providers, including the UM and MCAST.

Furthermore, GamingMalta has signed a three-year agreement with SpielFabrique to administer a game development accelerator programme for Malta-based studios and independent developers. The programme provides one-to-one mentorship; training in business administration, financial management, and project structuring; direct access to industry professionals; and pitching opportunities at European Game Night. During 2025, five studios were supported with the aim of increasing the number of supported studios to 10 in 2026 and 15 in 2027. This initiative supports early-stage studios in navigating the commercial, creative, and operational requirements necessary for scaling.

Further to this, during 2025, GamingMalta entered a three-year strategic partnership with BLAST, one of the world's leading esports entertainment organisations. This partnership plays a significant role in Malta's long-term digital innovation and esports sustainability agenda. Key achievements for 2025 include

the establishment of BLAST's operational base in Malta; the inauguration of a 1,000 m² studio arena in Ta' Qali; the hosting of major esports tournaments, with the inaugural broadcast reaching approximately 60 million viewers; increased mobility of international esports teams into Malta; the development of local esports pathways and skills; and investment in efficient digital infrastructure and sustainable studio operations. This partnership positions Malta as a credible, sustainable, and globally recognised hub for esports.

Furthermore, the IfE has also played a substantial role in strengthening digital skills, having been awarded the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education in 2024 and an Erasmus+ Key Action (KA) 1 project in 2025, which will run from June 2026 to July 2027. This KA1 project is foreseen to foster international collaboration for course participants and staff. The IfE was also awarded an Erasmus+ KA2 cooperation partnership project in 2025. This project will be implemented with partners from Greece and Catalonia and will co-create, test, and scale an inclusive whole-school democratic participation framework and digital toolkit with partner schools across Malta, Greece, and Catalonia.

Another project aimed at addressing digital skills is the Evidence-Informed Data Literacy for Policy and Practice (EVIDALI) project, which is a three-year Erasmus+ initiative launched on 13 March 2025. This project will run until 2028 and is being coordinated by European Schoolnet in collaboration with ministries, regional authorities, and research institutes across Europe, including the Research and School Internal Review Directorate (RSIRD) within the then MEYR.

Designed to address the growing gap between the availability of educational data and educators' ability to use it effectively, the project seeks to strengthen the capacity of policy makers to design evidence-informed data literacy strategies while fostering a collaborative community of researchers and policy actors. As digitalisation accelerates the production and use of educational data, EVIDALI responds to the fragmented nature of data literacy practices across Europe and the need for coherent

strategies that support teaching, learning, school improvement, ethical data use, and the emerging role of AI in education.

To meet these objectives, the project operates through two interlinked strands focusing on policy and practice. The policy strand maps data literacy strategies across all EU Member States and engages policy makers in a three-year Policy Learning Lab (PLLab) to co-design evidence-based strategies supporting data literacy for teaching (DLFT). The practice strand investigates real-world data use and training needs in schools through the Data Literacy Survey in Schools (DaLiS) implemented across four territorial entities — Malta, Castile and León (Spain), Madeira (Portugal), and Trento (Italy) — while also collecting and validating good practices with advanced data-user teachers to be later disseminated through a massive open online course (MOOC) and open resources. EVIDALI will also generate several important outputs, including a mapping report based on surveys and interviews with policy makers, case studies of schools implementing data literacy initiatives, a targeted literature review, an analytical report on teachers' data use and training needs, 10 validated good-practice scenarios, and practical guidelines developed through the PLLabs.

Throughout 2025, substantial progress was achieved as the first phase of project activities commenced. A comprehensive mapping analysis of national data literacy strategies, training provision, and support measures across the 27 EU Member States was undertaken to identify patterns, differences, and commonalities in how education systems conceptualise and implement data literacy. This European-level overview provides a foundation for deeper cooperation by enabling partners to understand their respective contexts before engaging in collaborative action. Two PLLabs were conducted, bringing together policy makers and researchers to discuss existing digital and data literacy policies, compare national approaches, and examine accompanying measures such as teacher training. In parallel, the DaLiS questionnaire was developed and scheduled for finalisation by the end of November 2025.

The sampling strategy for DaLiS ensures representative data for each territorial entity, allowing reliable comparisons across regions. These developments mark a strong foundation for the project's subsequent phases, laying the groundwork for evidence-informed strategies and practical resources that will enrich and enhance the use of data for educational improvement across Europe.

4.2 Building Sustainable Communities Through Smart Mobility and Connectivity

Throughout 2025 the Government of Malta, through its various ministries and entities, increased its efforts to strengthen the long-term development of sustainable communities, with a deliberate emphasis on smart mobility solutions and enhanced digital connectivity. These measures formed part of a broader strategic agenda aimed at improving environmental performance, optimising transport networks, and enabling more resilient, technology-driven community infrastructure.

One notable example of this is SVP's investment in an in-house van shuttle service for persons with limited mobility in order to decrease the frequency of small cars accessing the roads within SVP. Moreover, the AACC provides free local transport for older persons to conduct their daily errands within the community without having to depend on their families and friends. Four new electric vans were purchased to continue providing free transport services to elderly individuals, helping them participate in community life independently. By the end of October 2025, 57,405 trips were made with 1,085 elderly individuals benefitting from the service.

Building on this commitment to safer and more accessible mobility, the Connections for Safer Active Mobility Project (CSAMP) aims to establish continuous pedestrian and cycling routes within urban centres. It also aims to promote sustainable urban mobility through the development of active mobility infrastructure and an intelligent transport solution that promotes an integrated multimodal approach and increased efficiency in the national transport

system. The project focuses on developing safe, direct, and continuous active mobility routes within the Northern Harbour and Southern Harbour regions, making it easier and more attractive for people to travel by bicycle or on foot. The envisioned investment consists of the construction of safe pedestrian paths, cycle lanes, and bridges which seek to connect urban areas as well as new public open spaces.

The project also includes the deployment of intelligent transport assets and intelligent transport systems infrastructure, such as CCTVs and variable message signs (VMS), aimed at promoting multimodality, providing real-time information and enhancing road safety for all users. The planned works, which shall be undertaken in two phases, are estimated to cost approximately EUR 38.6 million and would be carried out in Floriana, Pietà, Hamrun, Blata l-Bajda, Marsa, and Paola. This project shall be co-financed by the ERDF and Cohesion Fund (2021–2027) and national funds.

Commencing in 2025, the CSAMP formally entered its first procurement phase, marking a key milestone in the implementation of its intelligent transport systems component. Phase 1 focuses on the deployment of intelligent transport systems assets along Routes 1 and 2 within the Northern Harbour and Southern Harbour regions, providing the digital backbone required to support the project's multimodal and active mobility objectives.

This initial phase of procurement covers a strategic package of equipment and systems, namely a data acquisition van, which will be used to collect high-quality traffic, safety, and infrastructure condition data to inform planning, optimisation of traffic flows, and performance monitoring of the new active mobility network; digital road infrastructure (DRI), including servers and associated hardware to host, process, and integrate real-time data from field devices, enabling centralised management, data analytics, and interface with wider national transport platforms; cycling warning signs, designed to enhance the visibility and safety of cyclists, particularly at conflict points and junctions, and to alert motorists to the presence of active mobility corridors; and bicycle TOTEMs, which will serve both as real-time

information and monitoring stations, displaying data such as cyclist counts and potentially other user information, thereby increasing user awareness, promoting cycling, and providing valuable datasets for policy and planning.

The expansion of pedestrian and cycling networks under the CSAMP reinforces the commitment to active and sustainable transport solutions. The aim is to continue encouraging the use of active mobility infrastructure by introducing routes that are more connected, safer, more attractive, and better integrated with public transport nodes. The improved connections will aim to better connect places and different modes of transport. Additionally, the active mobility connections will seek to enhance the user's experience in using alternative modes of transport primarily through walking and cycling. This will be done by adopting infrastructure that is appropriate and safe for the intended user and by making connections direct and continuous. The routes will also aim to connect green spaces and busy nodes so that the enhanced experience will be an efficient way to travel by walking and cycling.

To further improve the transport networks, Infrastructure Malta progressed with the Msida Creek Project, launched in November 2024. The project involves the construction of a new flyover intended to replace the existing traffic light junctions and incorporate facilities for alternative modes of travel, namely cycling and walking. The road design is set to reduce travel times and accident risks along this arterial route. By replacing the traffic lights with a grade-separated intersection, this project will increase the efficiency and capacity of this node, whilst reducing the existing high levels of air and noise pollution caused by long waiting times. It will also ease traffic congestion, create a 2,200 m² piazza, and a new 300 m water canal. Around 60% of the project will be dedicated to public spaces and the creation of an attractive open space environment in the heart of this locality. The project integrates features that promote walking and cycling, while incorporating long-term maintenance and flood prevention features.

In parallel with these efforts, the Vjal Kulhadd Scheme is similarly focused on creating

safer, more accessible, and environmentally friendly public spaces. This Scheme has allocated EUR 10 million over 14 projects in various localities that shall transform various roads and public spaces into safer, more accessible, and environmentally friendly areas, enhance mobility, and increase access without conventional modes of transportation.

These 14 projects across Malta aim to transform streets and squares into greener, pedestrian friendly, and sustainable public spaces by redesigning roads to prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport, while reducing reliance on private vehicles. They introduce wider footpaths, traffic calming measures, safer crossings, and improved accessibility through ramps and inclusive designs. Squares are revitalised with greenery, seating, and community areas. Landscaped promenades, indigenous tree planting, and underground reservoirs support stormwater management and biodiversity. Collectively, these initiatives reconfigure urban infrastructure to integrate sustainable mobility and green systems, creating resilient networks that enhance community use.

To further complement the above, the government has introduced other schemes and incentives aimed at encouraging the uptake of smart mobility and connectivity practices. In this regard, the LTD within TM renewed its set of incentive schemes to promote the purchase of new and used electric vehicles, the purchase of motorcycles, and the purchase of wheelchair-accessible vehicles to be used for transport services. Moreover, the LTD within TM also took over the scheme for the purchase of bicycles from Malta Tax and Customs Administration (MTCA) and introduced a new scheme for the installation of bicycle racks. By the end of September 2025, the LTD within TM processed almost 4,000 applications concerning new electric vehicles and approved grants for a value of EUR 27.6 million. These incentives have led to an increase in the market share of battery EVs amongst the newly registered vehicles, rising to 17%, in the first 6 months of 2025, and is expected to approach 20% by the end of 2025.

Complementing this shift toward cleaner and more sustainable mobility, Malta continued to

enhance maritime transport connectivity and integrate it with other public transport modes through a new ferry landing site in Buġibba, which was inaugurated in 2025 following significant infrastructural upgrades. This investment of approximately EUR 14 million involved replacing the existing deteriorated infrastructure with a modern facility featuring a breakwater, slipway, jetty, sheltered waiting areas, gangways, and fenders. This new ferry landing site will support the Mġarr (Gozo)-Buġibba-Sliema fast ferry route. Regeneration works also commenced in Marsaskala, which include enhancements to the promenade, upgrades to slipways, and the development of a fast ferry terminal. This maritime infrastructure will support a new fast ferry route between Marsaskala and Valletta. These multimodal projects enhance connectivity and contribute to greener, more accessible urban environments. New ferry links work together with buses and other land transport options by making travel easier, reducing reliance on private cars, and promoting sustainable mobility. These initiatives will expand sea transport uptake beyond Malta's main ports to key coastal communities, by making sea transport convenient and more accessible.

In Marsamxett, works are currently underway on the creation of a vertical access route linking the Marsamxett terminal to Peacock Garden, facilitating the connection between the seafront and the heart of the Marsamxett area. This project will further improve accessibility to Valletta from the Marsamxett ferry area, encouraging more people to leave their cars behind and enter the city from Sliema by using sea transport.

Another project focusing on improving transport and mobility in the Maltese Islands is the National Traffic Control Centre (NTCC) Sa Maison Project, financed through MODUS EU funds and national funds, which focuses on the establishment and progressive enhancement of Malta's NTCC located at Sa Maison as the central hub for real-time traffic management across the national road network.

At the core of the project is the physical and digital set-up of the control centre itself. This includes the installation of a large video wall for

real-time visual monitoring of the network and nine traffic controller consoles, each equipped with high-performance workstations. These consoles provide traffic operators with the tools needed to monitor conditions, respond to incidents, optimise traffic signal timings, and coordinate with relevant stakeholders in a timely and efficient manner.

From a systems perspective, the project has delivered and deployed key intelligent transport systems platforms. An urban traffic control (UTC) system called Total Management Advanced Control System (TMACS) has been installed to manage and optimise traffic signal operations, while a Milestone CCTV management system supports the monitoring of critical junctions and corridors through an integrated camera network. These core systems were procured through the MODUS project and now provide the backbone for data-driven, proactive traffic management at national level. During the year, work has advanced on integrating and streamlining VMS with the TMACS. This integration will allow traffic conditions, incidents, and planned works detected or managed through TMACS to be translated more seamlessly into targeted, real-time messages to road users via the VMS network. The integration effort is expected to reach its peak in the second quarter of 2026, enabling more coordinated and responsive traveller information, and improving both network efficiency and road safety.

In parallel, significant progress has been made on the preparatory work for the National Access Point, in line with the requirements of the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive. This will serve as a central interface for publishing and sharing transport-related data, supporting interoperability, transparency, and the development of value-added mobility services by public and private stakeholders. This work strengthens the NTCC's role not only as an operational centre but also as a national data hub for intelligent transport.

The TMACS platform is also evolving into a more integrated traffic management environment. During 2025, the integration of several subsystems into the TMACS started so that it can act as a single platform for

traffic signal control, enabling coordinated and adaptive management of junctions; VMS management, allowing consistent, data-driven dissemination of messages to road users; and automatic vehicle monitoring (AVM) for buses, providing real-time monitoring of public transport vehicles.

By the second quarter of 2026, this integration will enable the implementation of bus priority at traffic signal junctions. Using AVM data, the TMACS will be able to detect approaching buses and adjust signal timings where appropriate to reduce delays and improve reliability. This will enhance the attractiveness of public transport, support modal shift away from private cars, and contribute to reduced congestion and emissions.

Therefore, the NTCC Sa Maison Project is transforming traffic management from a fragmented, reactive setup into a centralised, data-driven, and integrated system, combining modern control room infrastructure, advanced UTC and CCTV platforms, VMS and AVM integration, and alignment with the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive through the National Access Point. These developments enable more efficient use of road capacity, improved incident response, enhanced road safety, better public transport performance, and stronger governance through accessible, interoperable data. Together, they lay the foundation for a smarter, safer, and more sustainable national transport system while preparing the country to adopt further Intelligent Transport Systems services and multimodal management capabilities in the years ahead.

This direction is already taking shape at the new Vincent Moran Regional Hub, where a dedicated traffic management system has been introduced to manage the increased vehicle flows generated by the facility. Complementing this, structured parking solutions for staff and visitors further support safer, more orderly, and more efficient mobility within and around the hub.

Building on this broader shift toward more coordinated and technology-enabled transport management, work on the transposition of



the amended Intelligent Transport Systems Directive (Directive 2010/40/EU, as amended) commenced in the first quarter of 2025. The first step was the preparation of a structured work plan, to systematically go through the provisions of the amended Directive, identify the required legal and institutional changes, and define the sequence of actions needed prior to the actual drafting of the transposing legislation. A dedicated stakeholder meeting was organised under the framework of the National Access Point Coordination Organisation for Europe project (NAPCORE), a project funded by DG MOVE, which provided an appropriate platform to present and discuss the new amendments introduced by the revised Directive. Building on the feedback gathered through this process, the drafting of the transposed legal instruments was subsequently initiated, completed, and submitted for internal clearance.

Complementing these regulatory and governance efforts, the concept of sustainable mobility and connectivity was promoted through a range of awareness and educational initiatives organised and offered by Esplora. These activities engaged diverse audiences, including school groups, families, and tourists, and addressed themes such as water conservation, the impacts of climate change on natural habitats, the value of repair and repurposing skills, and the importance of recycling.

In 2025, Esplora also set up the new initiative Sail to Science where a passenger boat transport service is now available directly between Esplora Interactive Science Centre and two locations, namely, Sliema and Valletta. This initiative means that visitors coming to Esplora from the North can opt to avoid travelling on land to skirt the Grand Harbour and instead travel directly across the harbour. This initiative helps to reduce petrol consumption, traffic, and the carbon footprint of visitor travel.

Similarly, throughout 2025, Transport Malta devised and managed a nation-wide campaign conveying to all age cohorts the message that active mobility is safe, active, and inclusive. The age cohorts included children

of compulsory school age, post-secondary (16–24 years old), 25–64 years old, senior citizens, and businesses. Videos, photos, social media channels, school magazines, newspaper articles, business magazines, radio and television interviews formed part of the campaigns. The initiatives highlighted are a result of Malta's increased participation in the European Mobility Week and Mobility Actions. These initiatives empower all Member States to implement active, safe, and inclusive mobility behavioural patterns at the regional and local council levels. The 2025 theme for the European Mobility Week was Mobility for Everyone.

Smart mobility measures extended beyond Malta and were also actively pursued in Gozo. Under the action Improving Public Transport in Gozo, work is underway to develop a comprehensive mobility plan for Victoria. This involves analysing the current transport situation, identifying key challenges and opportunities, and assessing a range of initiatives aimed at promoting a shift towards multimodal transport. The overarching objectives include reducing traffic congestion, expanding pedestrian-friendly areas, and improving air quality where necessary. Throughout 2025, consultations and discussions with relevant stakeholders were carried out, culminating in the publication of a tender for the collection of traffic data from various locations in Victoria, Gozo. Further efforts to support sustainable mobility are reflected in the action "Enhancing a Modal Shift in Gozo", which focuses on the creation of a dedicated "walking corridor". This new pedestrian infrastructure will introduce upgraded footpaths and additional pedestrian crossings along the route linking Victoria to the Multimodal Hub in Ta' Xhajma.

4.3 Investing in Research and Innovation for Sustainable Growth

The National R&I Strategic Plan 2023–2027, formally launched in March 2024, serves as the central framework guiding the development of Malta's research and innovation ecosystem. It provides a clearer strategic direction

for addressing long-standing social and economic challenges through targeted R&I efforts. Throughout 2025, implementation has continued to advance steadily in close collaboration with key stakeholders.

There has been significant progress in advancing several recommendations, particularly in relation to strengthening engagement with Maltese diaspora researchers and enhancing collaboration with government ministries and entities. During 2025, Xjenza Malta hosted a series of science-meets-policy events to gather insights from researchers and innovators as part of national public consultations. Cooperation between Xjenza Malta and the then MHA also continued, including joint participation in the capacity-building strand of the Joint Research Centre's call on innovation for place-based transformation, as well as the co-design and launch of a joint thematic call.

Malta also continued its participation in the Policy Support Facility Mutual Learning Exercise on research careers, culminating in the dissemination event held in June 2025, while maintaining observer status in the EU-OECD RelCO project. Similarly in 2025, Malta confirmed its participation in a select number of structural policies and actions under the European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025–2027. The selected areas directly reflect the priorities outlined in Malta's National R&I Strategic Plan 2023–2027, ensuring strong alignment between national objectives and European-level engagement. Through this participation, Malta seeks to leverage the expertise, tools, and collaborative opportunities offered by these European Research Area initiatives to directly support and accelerate the implementation of the National R&I Strategic Plan. In terms of monitoring, two core indicators will be tracked throughout the duration of the strategic plan, including the number of Maltese publications focused on green, digital, health, and energy innovation, and the Eco-Innovation Index. These measures will help assess progress in strengthening Malta's research and innovation performance over time.

In line with this, Malta is currently realigning its national AI Strategy to address evolving societal needs, regulatory developments, and trends in emerging technologies. The updated strategy document has been launched for public consultation and is expected to be published in early 2026. The document, which focuses on AI for wellbeing and sustainability, introduces guiding principles such as fairness, transparency, accountability, and privacy. The aim is to ensure that AI systems are inclusive, trustworthy, and human-centric.

Building on this foundation, the work carried out during 2025 reflects a consolidated effort to strengthen Malta's digital, scientific, and sustainability-driven ecosystem. The Digital Technologies Programme, reintroduced in 2025, placed renewed emphasis on research that advances societal wellbeing and sustainability through digital innovation. It prioritised projects aligned with the EU's Digital Decade targets, compliance with emerging digital legislation, and adherence to OECD and UNESCO AI principles. The programme also encouraged the development of safer and more trustworthy digital technologies, while offering an additional subgrant for applicants engaging with the MDIA's technology sandbox or seeking recognition through its technology assessment framework. Similarly, the Technology Development Programme is a national funding initiative supporting innovative research and knowledge transfer, and establishing collaborations between public entities and private entities with the intention of commercialising the technology developed. Projects must fall under Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) 4–7. In 2024, a total of five projects were awarded, which all commenced during 2025. All five projects included an element of sustainability, with two projects addressing sustainable healthcare. One of the projects aimed to minimise material waste, another one was related to lowering energy and material use, and the last one aimed at supporting industrial automation.

Additionally, the Technology Development Programme LITE (TDP LITE) is a national funding initiative supporting expedited, applied research driven by innovation. The programme aims to accelerate development in multiple

sectors from mid-TRL concepts to market-ready solutions. In 2025, the programme deployed up to EUR 200,000 per project, pushing applicants to deliver tangible, investor-ready outcomes aligned with Malta's smart specialisation priorities, from digital and aerospace to health, maritime, sustainability, and advanced manufacturing.

The TDP LITE call issued in 2025 supported the awarding of 19 projects. These projects, which span across multiple sectors, started in November 2025 and have a duration of either 12 or 18 months. They include four projects focusing on driving a climate-neutral and resilient economy, one project promoting sustainable consumption, and one project focused on preserving natural capital and ecological resilience. Urban development is supported through one project advancing sustainable and liveable towns and villages. Health and wellbeing remain a strong priority, with four projects strengthening public health systems and one project promoting good nutrition and active lifestyles. Digital transformation is being driven by four initiatives focused on building a digitally empowered economy and society, while two additional projects strengthen community connectivity and mobility within smart, sustainable communities. Collectively, these efforts reflect a deliberate and diversified strategy aimed at advancing sustainability in a meaningful and impactful way.

Another initiative is the Research Excellence Programme (REP), which is a national funding initiative supporting early-stage research projects boasting a high level of scientific excellence with a bottom-up approach. Targeting proof of concept research between TRLs 1–4, it enhances Malta's R&I system, builds multidisciplinary capacity, strengthens collaborations, and funds research with potential economic impact across diverse scientific fields. A total of 39 projects were awarded in 2024, which remained ongoing throughout 2025. Furthermore, the fifth edition of the REP was launched in April 2025, through which 24 projects commencing in 2026 were awarded. The funding has exponentially increased from EUR 80,000 per project in

2024 to EUR 100,000 in 2025. The projects funded in 2024 that continued into 2025 include seven initiatives that have a strong focus on sustainability, while an additional 10 projects address sustainability indirectly. In 2025, five projects were awarded under the sustainability theme, two of which specifically aim to develop innovative solutions for sustainable packaging within the food industry.

Within this broader research landscape, the Obesity Research Programme forms part of Xjenza Malta's thematic portfolio, providing dedicated national support for research addressing obesity. Thematic initiatives are designed to strengthen the R&I landscape in Malta through collaboration between Xjenza Malta and other Maltese public entities, authorities, and agencies possessing in-depth technical expertise in their respective sectors. These collaborative frameworks enable Maltese researchers to benefit from the synergy between the technical knowledge of public entities and the R&I experience and networking capabilities of Xjenza Malta. This Programme, implemented in collaboration with the then MHA, aims to support research investigating the impact of the local food environment on obesity and focuses on three primary subareas, including food labelling, food provision, and food promotion.

In 2025, Malta further expanded its R&I ecosystem through a diverse portfolio of funding instruments, including a call for proposals launched in May 2025 that awarded three projects of up to EUR 100,000 each, two addressing food labelling and one focusing on food provision, all commencing in November 2025 and scheduled for completion in November 2027.

Alongside these thematic investments, Malta continued to strengthen its capabilities in frontier research domains. The Space Upstream Programme (SUP), launched in 2023 to initiate upstream space activities previously unsupported by a dedicated national funding strand, remained a key driver of capacity building in the space sector. This programme reached an important milestone in 2025 as the two projects funded by it were fully completed by June, successfully delivering their intended outcomes and demonstrating strong potential

for further development within Malta's emerging space ecosystem.

Further broadening Malta's participation in European research frameworks, Xjenza Malta launched the Access2Partnerships (A2P) Scheme in 2025. This initiative enables Malta-based researchers to join transnational R&I projects arising from co-funded Horizon Europe partnerships in which Malta is not an official partner. These partnerships address global challenges and promote sustainable development across Horizon Europe's thematic clusters, ensuring that Maltese researchers can contribute to and benefit from high-impact European collaborations.

Complementing these efforts, 2025 also saw the launch of the Seed Grants for International Research Programme (SPIRE), an umbrella initiative designed to support the transition of early-stage research ideas into full proposals and collaborative projects. The first SPIRE call was issued jointly with the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), targeting Malta-based researchers working with CNR counterparts in areas including maritime technologies, digital innovation, health, resource sustainability, smart manufacturing, aerospace, and cultural heritage. Five projects are currently under evaluation for award, reflecting strong interest in strengthening bilateral scientific cooperation. Together, these initiatives illustrate Malta's continued commitment to fostering a dynamic, internationally connected, and sustainability-driven research ecosystem, while expanding national capabilities across both established and emerging fields.

In addition to the above, MCAST also contributed significantly to the national research landscape through a series of initiatives. The Applied Research and Innovation Centre (ARIC)'s EXPO 2025 showcased applied research in sustainability, robotics, AI, digital learning, and industry-driven innovation, bringing together students, academics, and industry partners. The 2025 edition saw expanded participation, new AI-in-education workshops, stronger industry engagement, and increased visibility of sustainability-focused prototypes and materials research. MCAST also launched

its Annual Qualitative Research Conference, aimed at strengthening methodological literacy and promoting evidence-based inquiry. The event attracted national and international speakers and stimulated greater interest among staff in integrating qualitative approaches into teaching and applied projects. Complementing these efforts, the Research Fellowship Scheme continued to grow, allocating EUR 265,000 to nine projects across diverse disciplines, supported by enhanced mentorship and supervision from ARIC.

National funding programmes also expanded their reach. The National STEM Community Fund supports communities across Malta by providing grants that enable them to develop and implement participatory STEM initiatives. These projects bring together citizens, ranging from schools and NGOs to local councils, who collaborate with STEM professionals to design and deliver solutions that address real challenges within their communities. In 2025, the fund's budget was significantly expanded from EUR 24,000 to EUR 100,000. This increase made it possible to offer higher levels of support per project while also funding a larger number of initiatives throughout the year.

Building on this strengthened national framework, the government continued to invest in institutional capacity and European collaboration. In partnership with Xjenza Malta, Malta Enterprise, and the UM, national capacity in clinical research is being enhanced through ongoing developments at MDH. As part of this strategic direction, MDH is advancing the establishment of a clinical research institute. In 2025, approval was secured from the Information and Data Protection Commissioner (IDPC) for the creation of the MDH Research Ethics Committee, with final authorisations currently pending.

To support these developments, a dedicated space has been acquired within the Malta Life Sciences Park to house offices and a boardroom, with the agreement now awaiting conclusion. This investment is being supported through the Horizon HIVE project, ensuring the necessary resources for successful implementation. Complementing these efforts, MDH is actively participating in EU-

funded initiatives, particularly under the Horizon WIDERA (Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area) framework. In 2025, the Malta Health Authority was awarded a grant as part of the Horizon HIVE consortium, with funds directed toward establishing and maintaining the new premises, further reinforcing the ministry's commitment to expanding national research capacity and strengthening international collaboration.

Contributions from SVP further enriched the national research landscape. In 2025, SVP hosted over 20 undergraduate and postgraduate research projects from higher education institutions. The facility also supported a virtual reality initiative led by the Occupational Therapy Unit and published the second volume documenting the living history of SVP residents, an important contribution to social and gerontological research.

4.3.1 R&I Projects in the Field of Environmental Sustainability

In 2025, Malta continued to advance its research and innovation landscape through a combination of national funding instruments, international partnerships, and targeted support for strategic sectors. These efforts collectively reinforced the country's commitment to sustainable development, scientific excellence, and global collaboration.

The Go To Market Accelerator Programme remained a key national instrument supporting the final stages of TRL advancements. The programme enables innovators to deploy their products or services into operational environments by funding optimisation, verification, and validation activities that ensure prototype-stage solutions are ready for real-world application. In 2025, 12 projects were awarded funding, eight of which contribute directly or indirectly to sustainability. These include initiatives focused on efficient commuting and routing, multimodal transportation options, reducing waste and overproduction in business inventories to support more sustainable supply chains, and recycling of concrete. Additional projects addressed environmental sustainability through

alternative energy-efficient lighting solutions, digital health platforms designed to reduce CO₂ emissions, and the integration of AI and automation to enhance overall sustainability performance.

Xjenza Malta also continued to play an active role in the Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans), with Malta participating in four joint actions during 2025. Furthermore, Malta co-leads the Joint Action Science for Good Environmental Status (S4GES) alongside Italy and Belgium. As part of the second phase of S4GES, a joint call was launched in 2025 to address critical knowledge gaps and strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the MSFD. This call resulted in the Process-Based Approach for Good Environmental Status (PAGES) project, which includes a Malta-based participating entity supported by Xjenza Malta.



Malta also participates in the Blue Carbon Joint Action, which focuses on advancing research on blue carbon as a nature-based climate mitigation ecosystem service within the broader context of negative emissions technologies. A joint call launched in November 2025 aims to generate new knowledge and

address key research gaps across participating countries. In addition, the JPI Oceans Management Board agreed in 2024 to launch a joint action on offshore freshened groundwater to address water scarcity and expand scientific understanding of this underexplored resource. Co-led by Malta and Italy, this action will take the form of a joint transnational call, launched in December 2025. The call is co-branded with the UN Ocean Decade, ensuring that funded projects are recognised as endorsed Decade Actions.

In addition to the above, during 2025 Xjenza Malta continued to strengthen Malta's international research engagement by supporting access to global scientific infrastructure and expanding opportunities for collaboration. Funding was awarded to two Malta-based entities to enable their participation in an expedition on the R/V Gaia Blu of the CNR, providing additional financial assistance to complement the CNR's support and facilitating collaboration between Maltese researchers and international partners on board the vessel. In parallel, Xjenza Malta intensified efforts to promote funding schemes and cooperation opportunities offered by counterpart organisations abroad, ensuring that international programmes remain accessible to researchers based in Malta. This included active collaboration with entities such as the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the Alliance of International Science Organisations, contributing to the continued internationalisation of Malta's research and innovation landscape.

These initiatives were further reinforced by Malta's active involvement in BlueMissionMed (BMM), an EU-funded coordination and support action under Horizon Europe's mission "Restore Our Ocean and Waters by 2030". Focused on reducing pollution in the Mediterranean Sea basin, BMM aims to build a basin-wide innovation ecosystem that integrates technological, social, business-model, and governance solutions to address pressing environmental challenges. Operating through seven national and regional hubs, including one in Malta, the initiative fosters multistakeholder communities that bring together policymakers,

researchers, industry, civil society, and citizens. Over the past year, the Malta hub facilitated the endorsement of the Ocean Mission Charter by more than 15 organisations, signalling strong national commitment to shared Mediterranean restoration goals. It also organised the main BMM hub event in May, which convened over 65 participants from diverse sectors for dialogue, capacity-building, and collaborative problem-solving. By the end of its 2023–2025 implementation period, BMM had delivered a strengthened Mediterranean innovation ecosystem, improved governance coherence, and provided a suite of scalable solutions that contributed to pollution reduction and a more sustainable blue economy.

Parallel to these international efforts, the EWA's Research and Innovation Scheme continued to address national challenges in the fields of energy and water by providing multiyear grants to support applied research. Since its launch in 2020, the Scheme has supported 15 projects with a total investment of around EUR 2.5 million, while increasing the maximum funding available per beneficiary from EUR 120,000 to EUR 200,000 to better reflect project needs. In 2025, several projects remained ongoing, and the Agency launched its sixth call for projects, committing an additional EUR 400,000 to further strengthen research capacity in these critical sectors.

Further complementing these national and international initiatives, Xjenza Malta also joined as an ad hoc funder of the M-ERA.NET Joint Transnational Call 2025. M-ERA.NET, an EU-funded network that enhances coordination of European research programmes in materials science and engineering, supports ambitious transnational projects aligned with the European Green Deal and the UN SDGs. The 2025 call focuses on sustainable materials for energy applications, innovative surfaces and coatings, advanced composites, functional materials, materials addressing environmental challenges, and next-generation electronics. Results from this call are expected in early 2026, marking another step in Malta's growing contribution to European research collaboration.

4.3.2 R&I Projects in the Field of Tourism and Cultural Heritage

To accelerate private sector investment in green and digital technologies, the MTA continued its participation in the EU-funded Cross-Re-Tour Project, which began in September 2023 and will run until September 2026. The project aims to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector to become more sustainable and more digitally enabled, with a focus on key operational areas including water, energy, plastics, food, equipment and furniture, mobility, and behavioural nudging for both customers and employees. Implemented through a partnership of eight countries, the three-year initiative is structured into three phases.

The first phase focused on identifying the challenges SMEs face when investing in green and digital technologies and assessing their readiness through a tailored self-assessment tool. The second phase delivered direct support through consultancy services in digitalisation, green technologies, and nudging techniques, with 22 Maltese SMEs participating and additional webinars helping to build wider sectoral awareness.

The third phase is currently underway. A dedicated grants scheme for SMEs was launched in November 2024, and in Malta 10 projects are being implemented with a total investment of EUR 300,000. As the project approaches its conclusion, the MTA will host a “Show and Share” event in April 2026, during which all projects implemented across the participating countries will be showcased.

Throughout 2025, several key milestones were achieved. In February, SMEs responsible for the 87 selected projects were formally notified of their eligibility for funding and received the first 30% of their grant allocation. On 2 June 2025, the MTA organised a webinar titled “Green and Digital Innovation in Tourism”, which highlighted sector-specific solutions and promoted funding opportunities available through the EWA. Earlier in the year on 7 May, a workshop was held in Riga, Latvia,

bringing together all 87 SMEs to participate in a sustainability-focused nudging session aimed at encouraging environmentally responsible practices.

4.3.3 R&I Projects in the Agricultural and Food Sectors

In 2025, Malta continued to strengthen its participation in Mediterranean and international research networks through a range of initiatives led by Xjenza Malta. The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) remained a central platform for collaboration in water management, farming systems, and the agro-food value chain. PRIMA operates through two main funding streams, which include Section 1, financed by the European Commission, and Section 2, funded directly by participating countries. Under the 2025 PRIMA Section 2 call, eight proposals involving Malta-based applicants were submitted, demonstrating strong potential for success, with results expected towards the end of the year.

Complementing this, PRIMA Section 3 continued to support international collaboration through the PRIMA Training and Mobility Award, administered by Xjenza Malta's Internationalisation Unit. This scheme enables Maltese entities to establish partnerships with counterparts in PRIMA participating States, with the latest call for participants launched in 2025. To further enhance engagement, Xjenza Malta introduced a new support measure, the PRIMA Networking Support Scheme (NET2PRIMA), designed to strengthen networking opportunities and encourage wider participation in PRIMA calls.

Malta's international research cooperation was further expanded through a bilateral agreement between Xjenza Malta and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). This collaboration aims to advance joint work in science, technology, and innovation, and led to the launch of five joint calls for research proposals involving Maltese and Turkish researchers. The 2025 call was structured around two pillars, with one addressing shared national priorities in



aviation, health, and smart manufacturing; and the other aligned with PRIMA thematic areas, making it a PRIMA Section 3 activity. Digital technologies served as a cross-cutting theme across both pillars, and evaluations for projects to be awarded in 2026 are currently underway.

In parallel with these collaborative efforts, the National Gene Bank Project was concluded successfully, this being a major national investment in the conservation of Malta's

botanical heritage. The project established a dedicated ex situ conservation facility for indigenous agricultural crops, trees, and wild plant species, supported by a seed laboratory, herbarium, and secure seed storage vaults. It also incorporated a research dimension through the creation of a molecular laboratory and cryopreservation facilities. Beyond its scientific role, the gene bank includes an educational component through a public museum and library designed to engage individuals interested in botany.



**Achieving
Social
Fairness and
Prosperity
for All**

5.



CHAPTER 5.

Achieving Social Fairness and Prosperity for All

Malta's social agenda placed people and fairness at the centre of public policy, pairing long-term strategies with practical delivery to make daily life more secure, more inclusive, and more hopeful. Government focused on reducing poverty and social exclusion; widening timely access to essential services; and strengthening supports for children and families, older persons, people with disabilities, migrants, and low-and middle-income households. This approach combined clear national direction with robust governance and monitoring, ensuring that reforms translate into visible improvements for communities across the country.

Progress was system-wide and mutually reinforcing. Equality efforts advanced through stronger mainstreaming and outreach; human rights and integration were embedded more deeply in policy and practice; and community safety benefitted from modernised justice processes, better infrastructure, and prevention-oriented services. At the same time, education and skills actions continued aligning learning with labour-market needs, while accessibility improvements in housing, health, and community settings helped remove everyday barriers. Civil society capacity and international cooperation complemented these efforts, supporting resilience at home and contributing to stability abroad.

Together, these measures form a coherent policy-to-practice pipeline from national strategies and regulatory alignment to frontline delivery that strengthens social resilience, widens opportunity, and invests in people at every stage of life. The following chapter summarises how these priorities were put into effect during 2025 and the difference they are making to households and communities across Malta.

Within the framework of the government's efforts, in line with the 2030 Agenda, this chapter will highlight measures, projects, and initiatives related to SDGs 1–5, 8–13, 16, and 17.

5.1 Empowering Individuals and Communities Through Policy Instruments and Measures for the Benefit of All

5.1.1 Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion

In 2025, Malta advanced a comprehensive set of policies to strengthen social inclusion, reduce poverty, and expand equitable to essential services. The government intensified their collaborative effort to ensure that vulnerable individuals, low-income households, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities receive adequate support and opportunities.

At policy level, the National Strategy for Further Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion 2025–2035 was published following extensive consultation. Building on the 2014–2024 framework, it sets ambitious national targets, including a 3.1% reduction in the At Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion (AROPE) rate and a 6% reduction in child poverty by 2030. The Strategy takes a holistic focus beyond income measures, with five guiding principles: thriving together, empowerment, opportunity, solidarity, and dignified quality of life, supported by 165 recommendations and a governance model comprising a high-level committee chaired by the Strategy and Implementation Division at the then MSPC, a Poverty Reduction and Inclusion Dashboard (PRID) to monitor key performance indicators, and a learning hub by



the Strategy and Implementation Division to evaluate policy impacts, support longitudinal research, and promote evidence-based policymaking. Complementing this, the Social Plan for the Family 2025–2030 was launched to strengthen family wellbeing and resilience around four themes: social justice for families, healthy relationships, empowerment through knowledge and skills, and enhancing Malta's fertility rate.

Regulatory alignment progressed to remove structural barriers. Work commenced on amending Subsidiary Legislation 552.15 — the Development Planning (Use Classes) Order — so that the definition of “care” explicitly includes children, ensuring that small community-based children's homes can be recognised under Class 1 (dwellings). A Cabinet Memo proposing the amendment was prepared by the then MSPC in collaboration with the PA and the Social Care Standards Authority (SCSA), with policy consultations in mid-2025 to ensure alignment with child protection and social inclusion priorities. In parallel, a temporary authorisation pilot was launched to assess small-scale children's residential care facilities operating within community dwellings. Between June and October 2025, the SCSA received five applications, collectively serving 28 minors, with four of these new services directly benefitting from the proposed planning change. The pilot demonstrated reduced placement waiting times and improved access to housing for children in care.

In terms of social benefits, the Government introduced a comprehensive package of measures aimed at strengthening support to low and middle-income families and protecting vulnerable groups from the rising living costs. The additional cost of living support provided annual payments ranging from EUR 100 to EUR 1,500 based on household income and size, reaching 97,000 beneficiaries. Capital asset limits for non-contributory benefits were raised to EUR 26,000 for couples and EUR 16,000 for single individuals. This adjustment benefitted 4,935 recipients of social and supplementary assistance; 3,700 age pension beneficiaries; and 15,000 pink card holders. A new medical social assistance measure established support

for individuals unable to work due to illness, providing the full cost-of-living increase plus EUR 5 per week per family member, while those able to work are directed towards training and employment programmes through Jobsplus, with a total of 63 individuals benefitting from this measure in 2025. The medical assistance income threshold increased by EUR 416, enabling 530 families to qualify. Disability and carer allowances were aligned with the national minimum wage, with improved provisions for carers supporting two dependents. The carers grant increased by EUR 193 to EUR 5,190 annually, extending eligibility to non-working parents caring for children with very severe disabilities. A total of 554 carers, including 137 new beneficiaries, benefitted from this measure in 2025. Access to free medicines was further expanded, granting automatic eligibility to persons over the age of 75 who receive supplementary assistance. The in-work benefit was improved by applying the same income and tax exemptions as those introduced for the Children's Allowance Scheme resulting in 24,735 beneficiaries, and the supplementary allowance was increased to EUR 1,289 annually for couples and EUR 667 for singles, while the income ceiling for couples was raised to EUR 18,000, extending support to an additional 1,500 families.

Disability and child-focused supports were expanded and streamlined. The Therapy Refund Scheme was launched which replaced the Therapy Tax Credit Scheme and is administered by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability to refund parents for private therapies for children with disabilities up to the age of 16. The Scheme was expanded to all parents of disabled children so that those in most financial need would still be able to pay for private therapies with the reassurance that on a quarterly basis they would receive a cheque refund which would enable them to pay for additional therapies if required. In addition to this, the limit of the refund permitted per child was increased from EUR 200 to EUR 500 per child. Agenzija Sappport also restructured its Independent Community Living Monitoring Team to be in line with the personal assistance reform, introducing support to children under the age of 16 and their families.

Social inclusion in correctional settings progressed through education and rehabilitation. A new learning hub was inaugurated at the Corradino Correctional Facility, equipped with modern classrooms and equipment necessary for education and training. The Hub offers a wide range of subjects, including English, Maltese, mathematics, ICT, and digital skills, delivered by 10 educators. This project also includes an art room that provides opportunities for creative expression, allowing facility residents to develop artistic skills and benefit from the therapeutic value of art. The hub supports rehabilitation by improving employability and helping residents reintegrate into society, which in turn reduces the likelihood of reoffending after release.

Labour-market activation for vulnerable groups is being expanded through EU investment. EUR 18 million from the European Social Fund were allocated for the second VASTE Programme, managed by Jobsplus for over 6 years, following stakeholder consultations. The first programme provided support and training to 2,400 people, of whom 45% found employment 6 months after its completion or continued training for specific jobs. This represents the continuous effort in strengthening the labour market with Malta having one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU. VASTE II aims to reach more than 3,000 people from various vulnerable groups to increase their chance of finding employment. This service is also aimed at those who have abused drugs, disadvantaged youths, or prisoners on pre-release leave to acquire skills and competences in a real work environment. This integrated approach not only addresses unemployment among the most vulnerable individuals, but also brings concrete change, with social justice, personal autonomy, and an economic impact that creates value for everyone.

When it comes to financial literacy and capability, the then MSPC has been working on the drafting of the Financial Capability Strategy 2026–2030 and the Pensions Strategy Directorate has been working on the creation of an app which will allow citizens to better understand their retirement prospects and the relevance of the third pillar pension. Two accredited courses will be offered through MCAST for psycho-professionals in the areas

of financial literacy coaching and debt advisory. The financial literacy coaching course is aimed at professionals working in state entities and NGOs who offer services to vulnerable persons whereas, the debt advisory course is aimed at selected professionals who will be working with a debt advice national service. ĠEMMA finalised the work on a book which will be used by PSCD teachers during their lessons, and a workbook which will be distributed to all Year 6 students during their PSCD sessions in the scholastic year 2025/2026 to promote interactive discussions on financial preparedness at school and home. ĠEMMA also collaborated in the MCAST Teens Summer Camp 2025, delivering sessions tailored to teenagers' needs.

Complementing these efforts on financial capability and long-term planning, in 2025, work relating to the Pensions Strategic Review Report was carried out. This included an exercise projecting pension expenditure based on recommendations under consideration by the Pensions Strategy Group, in which a number of scenarios were individually modelled and analysed, supported by extensive sensitivity analysis. In addition, work was carried out on the pension projections model, PROST, namely the review and updating of the underlying parameters and assumptions.

5.1.1.1 Community Outreach and Services

Community outreach emphasised prevention and early support, linking neighbourhood spaces and family learning. ACTS continued to implement community-building initiatives across Malta, focusing on reducing isolation, strengthening social capital, and promoting inclusion. In Qawra, *Is-Salott* (Public Living Room) and *Café des Langues* created welcoming social spaces that brought residents together, improved social skills, and encouraged multicultural interaction. In Valletta/Floriana, *Kelma u Kafè mal-Ġirien* and *Tisjir bil-Għaqal* offered opportunities for neighbours to connect and learn through shared activities.

In 2025, ĠEMMA also started reaching out to specific cohorts with tailor-made sessions which had already been held at Dar Kenn Għal Saħhtek and with the Scouts. Sessions have also

been agreed to with the Family-Community-School Link (FCSL), which is a programme lead by the then MEYR. These sessions will be aimed at parents and intended to bridge the gap between the financial knowledge being imparted to children and the knowledge within their household, offering guidance and foresight to the parents.

The FCSL Programme under the Early Leaving from Education and Training (ELET) Strategy aims to strengthen collaboration between families, schools, and local communities by supporting students at risk of ELET. It promotes enhanced parental engagement, home-school partnerships, and early intervention measures to prevent disengagement. In 2025, the programme expanded beyond its 2024 pilot phase, reaching additional schools and extending its network of family-support interventions.

5.1.2 Gender Equality

In 2025, national efforts to strengthen gender equality continued to be led by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE), which remained central to safeguarding equality and combatting discrimination across various grounds. Between January and November, the NCPE received 17 complaints, nine of which were related to access to goods and services. The Commission also continued consolidating an annual report on developments based on submissions from government departments regarding their implementation of gender mainstreaming, receiving 137 gender mainstreaming reports from government departments and entities. To support this work, two online training sessions were delivered to 54 public officers, ensuring that public sector personnel remained informed on gender mainstreaming strategies and their reporting obligations.

Throughout the year, five conferences were organised to promote equality and stimulate public discussion on gender-related issues. In parallel, ongoing training was provided to public officials, private companies, and the general public, including regular training

sessions to the front lines at MDH as part of an induction programme, focusing on equality principles at the workplace and in the provision of services. Education remained a priority area, with 151 sessions delivered to educators at different levels, including a training session for 31 career guidance teachers and career advisors on gender roles and stereotypes, for 90 kindergarten educators on preventing gender stereotypes from an early age, and for 30 secondary school history teachers on incorporating gender and feminist perspectives in teaching. Leaflets and posters were distributed during these sessions to further raise awareness on equality and sexual harassment.

Within the education sector, MCAST approved the Preferred Name and Email Alias Policy & Procedure in September 2025. The policy applies to all staff and registered students and promotes an inclusive and respectful environment by allowing members of the MCAST community to be known by a preferred name within official MCAST systems. Where requested, individuals may use an email alias that reflects this preferred name, thus eliminating discrimination and stereotypes, promoting equality and social inclusion, and ensuring equal access to services, particularly for individuals whose lived identity differs from their legal name.

National measures under the Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan also continued to progress. A key development in 2025 was the full-scale launch of free menstrual products in schools, following an independent study and a pilot project implemented in previous years. The EUR 500,000 investment is expected to benefit approximately 11,000 students across 54 schools by providing pads and tampons at no cost. Complementing this, an awareness campaign “End the Stigma. Period.” was launched to challenge menstrual taboos and promote open discussion about menstruation through social media, television, radio, and online platforms. To further support menstrual equity, tax on all menstrual products, including pads, tampons, panty liners, menstrual cups and discs, and menstrual underwear was eliminated.



5.1.3 LGBTQ+ Equality

The implementation of the LGBTQ+ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027 continued to guide national action, with over 90 measures to mainstream LGBTQ+ equality across all spheres of life underpinned by a robust legal framework. To strengthen delivery capacity, the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) continued to invest in capacity building throughout 2025 to strengthen equality competence across sectors. Regular training sessions were delivered for the public administration, the private sector, and different professionals, while a new course OG8825 Equality and Human Rights in the Public Service was introduced to provide public officers with a foundational understanding of equality and human rights. In May 2025, the HRD also supported the National Diversity & Inclusion Charter Conference, which brought together over 100 stakeholders from various sectors to discuss the role of the public sector in sustaining diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Alongside policy and training, the strengthening of direct support services

remained an important component of equality implementation. The LGBTQ+ Wellbeing Service in Paola increased psychosocial support to LGBTQ+ individuals and their families, delivering almost 500 individual, group, and family support sessions while expanding staffing and introducing systems to manage high demand and complex needs. In parallel, support for Malta Pride and financing of LGBTQ+ civil society continued, alongside structured funding programmes aimed at strengthening NGO capacity and outreach. The HRD also supported the hosting of international events such as the European IDAHOT+ Forum and the May session of the ADI-SOGIESC of the Council of Europe, which reinforced Malta's leadership in the field. Under the Council of Europe presidency, Malta also financially supported the participation of international intersex civil society to the launch of the Recommendation in Strasbourg.

Healthcare services were also expanded, with a business case completed for gender-affirming

surgeries abroad, the approval of new treatments, and the scale-up of community sexual health clinics. Interpreter access in healthcare was improved through a pilot telephone interpretation service, and measures for self-testing and free condom provision were integrated into the National Sexual Health Strategy.

At service level, SVP also contributed to inclusion efforts by strengthening professional understanding of realities faced by LGBTIQ+ older persons. In collaboration with the HRD and Institute for the Public Services (IPS), SVP launched a programme to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, address unique needs, and promote inclusive practices, covering key concepts and terminology, common misconceptions, barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ older persons, and the legal, policy, and practical strategy tools. Since its launch in February 2025, 102 healthcare professionals participated, reinforcing SVP's commitment to equality and respect for all.

5.1.4 Anti-Racism, Human Rights, and Integration

Policy direction on anti-racism was consolidated with the launch of the National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) 2025–2030 to combat racism and promote inclusion. NAPAR recognises that true societal progress requires not only reducing race-based inequality but also fostering a sense of belonging and opportunity for all residents of the Maltese Islands. Developed through extensive consultation with ministries, public entities, civil society, and international stakeholders, the plan adopts a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach that prioritises research, monitoring, and accountability. It sets 10 strategic actions, including legislative reform, governance, hate speech and crime prevention, training, representation, tackling structural and intersectional racism, research, and robust monitoring, thus building on Malta's first Anti-Racism Strategy which is the work of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Anti-Racism Platform. NAPAR includes targeted measures addressing anti-Muslim hatred, antisemitism, racism against people of African descent, anti-Roma, and intersectional discrimination affecting LGBTIQ+ persons, women, youth,

and people with disabilities, with provisions for ongoing research, regular reviews, and annual reporting to ensure progress.

The HRD has also been awarded funds for a partnership initiative project from the European Commission's High-Level Group on Hate Speech and Hate Crime in collaboration with the Council of Europe to create a manual on criminalised hate speech. Complementing national efforts, the EU co-funded project titled "Strengthening of Knowledge on Integration and Non-Discrimination" (SKIN), which was implemented by the NCPE and Aditus Foundation to counter racism and xenophobia, was presented during the NCPE SKIN Project Final Conference 2025 together with the project's results, while the NCPE Annual Conference addressed stereotypes in the context of masculinities.

In the human rights sphere, 2025 marked substantive preparation for establishing a national human rights institution (NHRI), compliant with the UN Paris Principles. The HRD has advanced a draft bill establishing a dual-mandate body, with consultations across government to ensure compliance with the Paris principles and alignment with EU Directives 2024/1499 and 2024/1500. The envisaged NHRI would be given a primary law and a broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, and ensure pluralism. It would enjoy a formal and functional independence, be given adequate resources and financial autonomy, and would have to report annually on the national human rights situation. From this position, it can monitor, advise, and hold authorities to account, identify at-risk groups through regular monitoring and complaints data, cooperate with national and international actors, and provide authoritative recommendations on request or on its own initiative covering civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including emerging issues such as AI and business and human rights. This institutional reform is intended to strengthen rule-of-law ecosystems to improve scrutiny, policy advice, and public engagement.

Underpinning governance for integration, the HRD launched the Integration Strategy

and Action Plan (2025–2030) building on the 2017 strategy while embedding structures, resources, and the national “I Belong” Programme. To mainstream human rights and integration principles across the state, an Interministerial Committee for the Mainstreaming of Human Rights was convened in October 2025, bringing together representatives from all ministries and relevant entities to coordinate implementation. Policy alignment and partnership were further advanced through the first annual Migration and Integration Conference, “Pathways to Belonging: Policy, Partnership, and Practice in Migration and Integration”, which provided a platform for policy development, partnership building, and practical implementation. The conference also marked the launch of the Integration and Anti-Racism Consultative Council.

Integration efforts are being actively supported through strategic projects and funding initiatives, for example through the project Supporting Pre-Integration Governance (SPRING). SPRING is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and provides resources for the implementation of around half of the measures found within the strategy. At the same time, through the Erasmus+ ConnACT project and study visits to Italy and Finland, Malta has identified best practices in integration. These insights will inform a new toolkit tailored to diverse local contexts. In line with Malta’s Labour Migration Policy, I Belong pre-departure integration measures are also being developed. These will help inform migrants of their rights, responsibilities, and cultural norms before arrival. A new digital I Belong operating system is being developed to simplify registration, learning, and certification for applicants. In 2025, over 500 Stage 1 and 400 Stage 2 migrant learners graduated. The programme is currently being restructured to make it more inclusive, accessible, and in line with the diverse needs of migrant communities.

5.1.5 Empowering Children and Youths

In 2025, the then MSPC continued to implement the measures outlined in the Children’s Policy Framework 2024–2030 across

the different ministries and sectors, involving collaboration among various government entities responsible for children’s welfare, education, health, and social services. The then MSPC consolidated participatory mechanisms, started new and innovative initiatives to address children’s mental health, and translated research into actionable policy. The initiatives highlighted below showcase the then MSPC’s multifaceted approach by engaging children directly in national policy consultations, promoting mental health and wellbeing, and leveraging evidence-based research to inform sustainable interventions.

The EU co-funded project titled Empowering Children’s Participation in Malta, concluded in early 2025, successfully delivered two practical tools:

- the “Empowering Children” web-app platform, enabling children to be informed in a child-friendly manner about the frameworks that affect them, submit ideas and feedback to government, and access support; and
- the VUČI Toolkit, a child participation impact assessment toolkit for policymakers and professionals engaging with children.

This project enabled public officials to strengthen their ability to integrate children’s participation into policymaking through targeted capacity-building initiatives. Awareness-raising efforts were also carried out across various online platforms to educate stakeholders and the public on children’s rights, particularly the right to participate. These efforts were complemented by in-person outreach in schools, reaching a total of 400 seldom-heard students. By February 2025, the project had published 17 child-friendly policy documents and received 458 online submissions from children, in addition to in-person outreach. The platform attracted 4,750 unique visitors and achieved broad awareness. The web app is regularly updated with new child-friendly documents and resources relevant to children.

The then MSPC launched “Empowering a Mentally Healthy Generation” (EmpowerME), to address the rising mental health challenges among children and youths. The project aims

to research the factors behind children's mental health issues, co-produce methods and guidelines with experts and children to improve support services, as well as deliver innovative, child-friendly awareness on mental health and access to care through digital and AI technologies. During the first months since inception, the project:

- established the national Child and Youth Mental Health Network (C-Net);
- set up a Child Advisory Group on Mental Health Wellbeing through the Office of the Commissioner for Children, to co-design and co-facilitate the deliverables of the project;
- initiated the process of undertaking two nationwide studies to gather data on children's mental health needs, in collaboration with the MEYR and the University College Cork (UCC); and
- started developing a prevention toolkit for children and youth (PTCY) in collaboration with the then MHA — aimed at providing age-appropriate information about mental health and improving access to support sources for children and adolescents — and an AI-equipped social robot which was designed to serve as a facilitator in connecting children with support systems.

All these efforts fall under the umbrella of A Social Vision for Malta 2035: Shaping the Future of Our Society.

From a youth rights perspective, Agenzija Żgħażaġh organised Rights Reloaded, a three-day bootcamp with interactive workshops and dialogue. Participants reflected on discrimination, democracy, equality, peace, and non-violence in safe and inclusive spaces, strengthening empathy and active citizenship. By promoting awareness of rights and responsibilities, the initiative helped cultivate respectful, engaged young citizens with the values of a democratic society. Furthermore, Agenzija Żgħażaġh advanced the Life Skills Programme for youths aged 11–16 vis-à-vis critical thinking, leadership, communication, and personal development, and the Youth.Inc programme for individuals aged 16–21 combining applied learning,

certification, and youth-worker mentorship. These programmes support re-engagement in education and smoother pathways to training and work for young people.

For independent living, Agenzija Support completed the Path2Independence pilot in 2025 for young adults living at home who need structured opportunities to develop independent living skills. Unlike traditional residential programmes, this initiative focuses on individuals living at home, particularly those experiencing overprotectiveness from family or limited chances to explore independence. The service will continue in 2026 with the aim of providing another two opportunities throughout the year.

To strengthen legal literacy, Legal Aid Malta, in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Children, launched the Children's Rights Awareness Project to promote awareness of children's rights among professionals who work directly with minors, and included the publication of an informative leaflet designed specifically for this purpose and child-friendly infographics as well as accompanying lesson plans to support educators in teaching students about justice and the rights of the child.



On academic attainment, Jobsplus offered free SEC revision classes in Maltese, English, mathematics, physics, and biology to students aged between 15 to 29. Held three times weekly over 5 weeks, the scheme has supported more than 6,000 students since inception and aligns with the goals of the Youth Guarantee Scheme, aiming to help young people acquire the necessary tools for the labour market.

As part of the initiative Stop the Hate between the then Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, and Employment and the Malta Football Association, a discussion was organised between the Players' Council of Fgura United FC and Jamie Carragher, former Liverpool and England player. The Players' Council is made up of 13 players aged between 10 and 13, whose role is to serve as a think tank for social initiatives that strengthen their communities. One initiative led by the council is the donation of EUR 5 to the Association for Abandoned Animals and Frame Football Malta for every goal scored by the club.

5.1.6 Combatting Human Trafficking

In 2025, Malta intensified its coordinated response to combat human trafficking by prioritising prevention, awareness, and system readiness at key points of entry and service delivery. The HRD reached an agreement with the International Airport Advertising Corporation that enabled the “Human trafficking hides in plain sight” awareness video on airport screens during July and August, while a Memorandum of Understanding with the Valletta Cruise Port was signed in October

to enhance security, capacity building of port workers, and inter-agency collaboration at seaports. Survivors of human trafficking were also asked to provide their input on the HRD's awareness raising material and to assess the effectiveness of these campaigns.

Public mobilisation continued through the Blue Heart Campaign, commemorating the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons under the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) theme “Human Trafficking is Organised Crime — End the Exploitation”. Approximately 50 buildings and landmarks were illuminated in blue, involving government and private buildings. The HRD complemented this with the launch of a social media campaign, including two videos aimed at young audiences focusing on scams, AI, and trafficking. Capacity building for law enforcement and justice actors advanced in parallel to prevention and protection aims. Induction on racial equality was provided to the MPF, LESA, the Armed Forces, and the Academy for Disciplined Forces Malta, while the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)'s train-the-trainer Training Against



Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TACHLE) supported officers from the MPF, victim support professionals, and the representatives from the Office of the Attorney General. Legal and policy alignment progressed through HRD-led meetings to coordinate the transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/1712 which amends Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combatting human trafficking and protecting its victims.

5.1.7 Gender-Based and Domestic Violence

Malta strengthened its response to gender-based and domestic violence by expanding victim protection, improving frontline coordination, and investing in specialist training. The Commission of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) hosted GREVIO's (the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) first thematic evaluation round "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice", whereby a group of independent experts from the Council of Europe came to Malta to evaluate the work of Maltese entities in relation to the obligations tied to the Istanbul Convention, and the Council of Europe Presidency's 3rd Meeting of Coordinating Bodies, during which discussions focused on the importance of judicial training.

The CGBVDV has organised awareness-raising campaigns, including "Let's Talk About Consent" which involved the distribution of informative leaflets on consent to households across Malta and Gozo. CGBVDV also participated in the dissemination of Valentine's Day-themed cards in the Maltese Parliament, through which Members of Parliament pledged their support for the prevention of gender-based and domestic violence. An informative discussion was also held for students in the UM to foster a discussion on the importance of consent in different contexts.

System capacity was reinforced through targeted training for frontline and specialist professionals held across 18 multiagency sessions including the police force, educators, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, lawyers, probation officers, risk assessors, doctors, and nurses. The three-day programme

covered the Istanbul Convention, Malta's legal framework, psychological violence and trauma, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, and work with both victims and perpetrators. It also focused on the intersectionality of GBV and DV experienced by persons with disability, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and migrants. Furthermore, CGBVDV developed the content for the training of the Judiciary in consultation with the then Ministry for Justice and Reform, to implement this specialised training in protection measures and emerging trends. CGBVDV also initiated a research study to conduct an analysis of court decisions in domestic violence cases, and the findings will continue to inform further research and training in the justice system.

Through EEA grants, the CGBVDV implemented the project titled Enhancing Cross-Border-Cooperation to Combat Gender-Based Violence, comprising an international conference with Norway and Iceland to gain insights on best practices already achieved through this fund, a study visit in Oslo coordinated by KUN, and a comparative report on similarities and differences between the two countries. A follow-up conference in Malta brought together Maltese committees and professionals with Norwegian and Icelandic speakers to discuss the findings.

The then MSPC project REVIVE, a youth wellbeing centre project under the ERDF, would entail the establishment of a therapeutic and secure centre for youths with serious behavioural difficulties, to provide them with therapy, education, and rehabilitation in a safe, enabling environment. The aim is to protect and improve wellbeing, build resilience, and support integration, and add value to child protection and education systems for young people who require therapy, assistance, and education prior to their return and re-integration within society. For the development of the necessary infrastructure of the centre, an existing building situated at Tal-Ferħa in Għargħur will be restored through excavations, construction, and finishings alongside the landscaping of the entire site.

In respect to domestic violence, one of the measures was the roll-out of panic alarms for victims assessed at "extreme danger",

by providing them with a discreet device to alert authorities when calling 112 is not viable. Implemented by the Victim Support Agency with the Police, FSWS, and co-financed by LESA, the service is available once the victim files an official police report and a risk assessment has occurred, followed by a briefing on safe use. The device is equipped with GPS tracking and once pressed, the victim's personal information and live location will be transmitted to the police, and victims may opt in or discontinue at any time.

These protective tools sit within a broader shift toward integrated support hubs. At the Domestic Violence Hub in Santa Luċija, the police had begun assisting victims of domestic violence together with various other professionals, while a new Domestic Violence Hub in Victoria, Gozo opened to extend access. In its first year, Gozo's hub assisted 150 people. Almost 75% of all cases were brought before the courts and the individuals accused faced various charges.

5.1.8 Support for Victims of Crime

Support systems for victims of crime continued, with a particular focus on ensuring that vulnerable groups, especially the elderly, receive accessible and coordinated assistance. A renewed agreement between the Victim Support Agency (VSA) and the AACC extended an existing three-year collaboration aimed at raising awareness about victims' rights and improving service quality for older persons. By combining victim support with community care structures, the agreement helps prevent abuse, promotes safety, and ensures isolated or home-bound older adults are not excluded from support networks. Given that elderly victims experience more severe physical, emotional, and financial loss, the renewed partnership prioritises prevention and early recognition.

The VSA expanded its service with a new measure supporting victims who must appear in Court to testify. Free childcare is provided in four centres across Malta and Gozo, while caregiver victims who care for the elderly, disabled, or vulnerable individuals can request a certified carer to remain with them at home while they testify. These

services are provided at no cost. The new services are tangible and aimed at victims of crime to help alleviate the negative experience they have gone through. A coherent testimony of crime in Court is perceived as essential for proper justice to be served and to help the victims recover for a better quality of life.

5.1.9 Empowering Persons with Disabilities

A comprehensive approach to empower persons with disabilities continued through reforms, new services, and strengthened community-based support. A central achievement was the ongoing reform of personal assistance services by Aġenzija Sapport. Investments in new personal support services enable individuals with disabilities to live within the community. This reform progressed to a public consultation leading to the creation of a set of documents to be used by the beneficiaries of the related scheme. Drafts of independent community living (ICL) contracts were reviewed, a proposal for reconfiguring the ICL and Appeals Boards was prepared, and discussions on registering personal assistants began. Stakeholder discussions involving the Directorate for Disability Issues (DDI) within the then Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV) are ongoing to draft a Personal Assistance Act.

Aġenzija Sapport strengthened independent community living and the right to live independently in the community, and helps people with disabilities acquire necessary skills through community hubs by providing tools and teaching self-sufficiency. Complementary services include assistive devices and personal assistants. It introduced further interprofessional panels, thus extending the earlier reform to the disabled child allowance, while fine-tuning earlier amendments in response to the first year of operation of the reformed system.

During the year, Aġenzija Sapport expanded its specialised services, including the introduction of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service which provides communication and accessibility support across education, employment, and social settings. Youth workers are also doing one-to-one sessions with service users to promote the importance of independent living. The agency also continued restructuring work-

readiness programmes under the new SkillUp Unit, which now oversees three key services: Way to Work, a six-month programme on employment which also includes a stipend; the Skills4Life, a three-month programme providing training on independent living; and the Self-Skill Programme, an individualised programme supporting persons with a disability in acquiring specific needed skills.

Aġenzija Sapport also collaborated with Richmond Foundation to launch a pioneering project for individuals with dual diagnoses, those with both disabilities and mental health conditions. The partners developed a unified assessment process to build confidence and strengthen community readiness. Aġenzija Sapport is providing the infrastructure and ensuring accessibility, by hosting six individuals who would otherwise be institutionalised due to their complex needs and offering them the opportunity to live independently within the community. In parallel, Aġenzija Sapport supported families through its Family Support Unit, by offering a group that created a safe space to share experiences, build meaningful connections, develop a strong support network, and promote wellbeing.

5.1.10 The Voluntary Sector

The voluntary sector remains a vital pillar of Maltese society, bringing people together to support communities, drive social initiatives, and strengthen national solidarity. To continue empowering this sector, the support structures for NGOs were expanded by providing accessible spaces, practical assistance, and stronger links to services through the MCVS. In 2025, the Jake Vella Volunteer Centre in Paola became the newest addition to the national network of volunteer centres, which enhanced resources, space, and support for VOs. The centre also honours Jake Vella's enduring legacy as a role model for volunteering. All volunteer centres operate through a 24/7 online booking system.

5.1.11 Supporting Developing Countries

In 2025, Malta advanced its ODA to support the partner countries' progress toward the SDGs, with a focus on education, water management, digital health, local resilience, and strengthened

partnerships with international organisations and NGOs. The priority was the second phase of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) initiative in Tunisia, launched as a three-year project to enhance irrigation efficiency, strengthen water governance practices, and support farmers in adopting sustainable water-use methods essential for climate adaptation. In parallel, Malta continued its digital health strategy, following the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the then Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism (MFT) and HopeXchange, co-funding solutions that improve access to diagnostics, monitoring, and digital care pathways in ODA-eligible countries.

Malta deepened its support for Ukraine's recovery through an ODA partnership with Project HOPE. On 5 September 2025, a newly renovated outpatient clinic was inaugurated in Mikulichi, a village in the Kyiv region. Works included structural repairs, energy-efficient glazing, renewed utility systems, interior finishing, and the addition of a solar power station to guarantee energy autonomy. The facility was also equipped with new medical devices, furniture, and an inclusive restroom, ensuring improved accessibility and quality of primary health care for more than 2,500 residents, including internally displaced persons. The project has restored essential health services while providing medical staff with safe and modern working conditions.

To strengthen civil society's role in development cooperation, the NGO Call for ODA projects awarded funding in 2025 to four Maltese NGOs to implement development or humanitarian projects across a range of thematic areas in partner countries. Malta's ODA continued to deliver tangible impact across education, inclusion, and empowerment through some of Malta's embassies. The Malta–Ethiopia Connecting Classrooms Initiative facilitated virtual exchanges between students and, through the UNODC's GRACE Programme, strengthened ethics and anti-corruption education. In Egypt, the Empowering HER through Education Project provided quality education and confidence-building support to 134 vulnerable girls residing in a Cairo shelter. In Turkey, the second phase of the Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency Project



enhanced the livelihoods of refugee women through strengthened business skills and expanded cooperative outreach. Meanwhile in India, the Strengthening Rehabilitation Services Project improved access to orthotic support and physiotherapy for children and adolescents with disabilities, promoting social inclusion.

In the field of capacity building, Malta continued to invest significantly in education opportunities for students from developing countries. In 2025, the then MFT once again funded a substantial number of scholarships and specialised training programmes for students originating from Small Island Developing States (SIDS), North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and various other ODA-eligible countries. In partnership with Samoa, Malta undertook its first SIDS country profiling exercise based on its Climate Vulnerability and Resilience Index, aimed at identifying and addressing the partner country's main climate-related vulnerabilities and strengthening its resilience vis-à-vis these vulnerabilities.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the then MFT have partnered with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG-CAAC) to strengthen training on the Children and Armed Conflict Mandate. Malta also financed a CAAC advanced online training. Malta co-financed the first-ever capacity building retreat, organised by the UN's Security Council Report (SCR) and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in February 2025, for Security Council experts who cover the CAAC file and participate in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to equip Council experts with key tools and knowledge to advance the CAAC agenda. Moreover, Malta co-funded together with Luxembourg the SCR's research report

titled "Children and Armed Conflict: Progression, Regression or Maintenance of the Agenda?", which analyses the UN Security Council's dynamics and engagement on CAAC from 2020 to 2025, including the performance of the Security Council Working Group on CAAC.

In December 2025, Malta launched its second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (2025–2030) following broad consultation with various stakeholders. The plan prioritises promotion of the agenda, prevention of gender-based violence and gender inequality, participation at all levels of decision-making, and relief and recovery as its four core pillars.

Malta also showed operational solidarity through international deployments under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and related frameworks. 40 civil protection officers were deployed to Portugal to support efforts against wildfires, as part of Malta's fifth international operation carried out by Maltese firefighters in just 2 years which was enabled by recent investments in equipment, training, and working conditions. In April 2025, the CPD partook in a five-day mission to assist the Libyan people in the municipality of Al-Asabaa, following a series of fires that destroyed dozens of homes.

Malta's commitment to peace and security also continued through UN peacekeeping. In August 2025, the AFM deployed the latest contingent embedded with the Irish Defence Forces operating within the Irish Battalion in southern Lebanon, contributing to civilian protection and stability. This long-standing collaboration underscores Malta's commitment to regional stability and effective burden-sharing within multinational peacekeeping and practical burden-sharing in fragile settings.

5.2 Ensuring Accessible Products, Services, and Environments which Address the Needs of a Diverse and Changing Population

In 2025, government authorities strengthened accessibility across housing, infrastructure, water quality, and health services to ensure that essential systems remain inclusive to the needs of a diverse and changing population. Within housing support, the Housing Benefit Scheme continued supporting tenants renting from the private sector by providing monthly subsidies tailored to household income and rent levels. To extend access, revised income thresholds were introduced in January 2025 as follows:

Household Type	2024 (EUR)	2025 (EUR)	Increase (EUR)
Single person	20,362.92	21,635.40	+1,272.48
Single parent with one child	20,594.40	21,866.88	+1,272.48
Single parent with two+ children	24,944.40	26,216.88	+1,272.48
Two adults without children	20,544.40	21,816.88	+1,272.48
Couple with one child	25,344.40	26,616.88	+1,272.48
Couple with two+ children	33,362.92	34,635.40	+1,272.48
Three or more adults living together	29,444.40	30,716.88	+1,272.48

For applicants with a disability, or households including a person with a disability, the annual income threshold increased from EUR 30,000 to EUR 35,000.

Residential accessibility improved further through the Lifts Installation Scheme, which enables tenants in government-owned blocks to apply for lift installation and remain safely in their homes. In 2025, a substantial investment was allocated to this scheme, with a target of handing over 34 lifts across various localities in Malta. This target was successfully reached by the end of October.

To support accessibility standards in public services, the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability has been designated as the Market Surveillance Authority for the European Accessibility Act. In collaboration with the DDI, a meeting was held with different sectors of the Maltese business community to explain their obligations and offer guidance on compliance. A national seminar organised with

AccessibleEU further informed stakeholders and the public about the Act’s requirements. To strengthen the Access to Communication and Technology Unit, the assessment process for service delivery was restructured and streamlined for better use of human and technological resources.

Further reinforcing national accessibility obligations, the Department of Contracts published Contracts Circular 12-205, entitled ‘Accessibility Measures Regulations in Public Contracts’. The Circular supports the then MIV by raising awareness among Contracting Authorities and Entities regarding their responsibilities under the Accessibility Measures (European Accessibility Act) Regulations, Subsidiary Legislation 627.03. It also makes specific reference to Part X, which outlines instances where other legislation, namely procurement and concession regulations, contains accessibility requirements that complement those stipulated in the Subsidiary Legislation.

Building on these accessibility-focused measures, the Housing Authority has introduced a Specialised Housing Programme (SHP) shifting away from a one-size-fits-all model towards targeted solutions coordinated with partner entities. In 2025, two residences were scheduled to open: Dar Tereža supporting mothers experiencing mental health challenges and Dar Qawsalla supporting LGBTQ+ individuals, thus bringing long-vacant properties back into safe, supported use.

Further efforts were made towards ensuring high-quality water services. The WSC introduced a more controlled blending process of RO and groundwater at Ta' Qali, aiming to lower salinity and chlorine levels, which subsequently improved the taste and quality of tap water across all designated water quality zones. Chlorine dosing was reduced to approximately 0.8 mg/L, in line with international best practice, and new disinfection technologies were trialled at the Ċirkewwa plant and the Mżieb pumping station. A complementary scheme encouraging households to install activated charcoal filters was also widely promoted. Through extensive online communication and Q&A sessions, the WSC strengthened public understanding and trust in tap water improvements while promoting sustainability through reduced plastic use.

To strengthen operational transparency, the EHD increased public access to its guidelines, thus supporting consistent and accountable decision-making. At MDH, the telephone interpretation service entered the second phase of the project, piloting a new provider to reduce language barriers and improve communication with patients. This initiative enhances inclusivity and ensures that individuals with limited proficiency in the local language receive clear, accurate, and respectful care. The Vincent Moran Hub introduced disability-friendly technologies, including a hearing loop system, ensuring inclusive access to care.

The GGH expanded services, increased staffing, and adopted the interpretation system to enhance the patient experience for individuals who may not speak the local

language fluently. This measure strengthens service accessibility and reinforces the ministry's commitment to equitable, culturally responsive healthcare delivery. The then MHA supported the NBTS by allocating funds for specialised external training to scientific staff to carry out clean room operations and regulatory inspections following good manufacturing practices (GMPs).

To address development needs across communities, the then MHA expanded school-based occupational therapy services with the support of the DAHS, while new community-based occupational therapy for individuals aged 16 and above were introduced under the care philosophy of the new Child, Adolescent, and Assessment Unit. This expansion broadens support to young adults up to 25 years of age, whilst enhancing continuity of care, fostering independence, and strengthening overall wellbeing.

Sectoral modernisation also reflected demographic realities in traditional industries. Targeted measures under Pillar 2 (generational renewal) of the National Fisheries Strategy for Malta include tackling an ageing workforce through grants and quota allocations for young fishers, incentives to pass on fishing traditional knowledge. This in turn incentivises and simplifies processes for the transfer of vessels and licences, creating pathways for young fishers, improving access to credit, and strengthening public awareness about fisheries and career opportunities in the blue economy.

Throughout 2025, the MAFA has installed a total of 27 service pillars in the Maltese territory and two hoists in Mellieħa and St Paul's Bay, constructed two new winch rooms in Marsaskala and Ġnejna, provided a free service of winch room attendants, and installed an automated weighing labelling machine at Marfa. Together with Transport Malta, road markings were improved in areas used by fishers. A report was also compiled assessing the slipways, quays, and wooden sleepers all over the island. An agreement was signed with Infrastructure Malta to complete the works where necessary in order to upgrade these areas used by fishers.



5.3 Building Safer Communities and Ensuring a Timely and Effective Justice System

5.3.1 Reforms in the Justice and Construction Sectors

The Office of the State Advocate (OSA) concluded its business reorganisation in October 2025 with a five-year strategic and operational plan and with tangible outputs, including the code of ethics for lawyers and administrative staff, a communication policy, and a training needs analysis. Building on the legislative separation of the Attorney General and State Advocate roles, a comprehensive reorganisation reached key milestones. The Strategy and Coordination Units have been established, new collective agreements improved working conditions, and a new case management system began rolling out. The offices have grown in size, capacity, and institutional maturity, underpinned by a new code of ethics and a culture of continuous learning and excellence. As highlighted in the project's concluding conference, this transformation is not merely administrative but a decisive shift towards specialisation, professionalism, and public service. This momentum was sustained by embedding digital tools and strengthening inter-institutional collaboration, while ensuring that public trust continues to grow through transparency and accountability. To sustain growth, premises adjacent to Casa Scaglia in Valletta are being renovated to host corporate services and a full repository, with a long-term refurbishment plan to support efficiency and a decent working environment.

Institutional capacity was further strengthened with the inauguration in September 2025 of a dedicated building for the Inquiring Magistrates in Valletta, thus decongesting the main Courts of Justice, improving organisation, and increasing the efficiency of magisterial inquiries. In parallel, government secured premises that are still being renovated, with an aim for these premises to host the new Family Court set-up. Collectively, these reforms aim to reduce delays whilst enhancing competitiveness at large. Infrastructural upgrades at the Law

Court's main building include the construction of an additional hall, fully equipped for trials by jury, enabling two concurrent trials by jury to be conducted at the same time. In addition, construction works on the building in Strait Street commenced in 2025, which will eventually house three additional halls and offices. In Gozo, a promise of sale agreement for the former Downtown Hotel in Victoria was signed to pave the way for a new, modern, and accessible courthouse that meets the needs of the Gozitan community.

Legislative reform progressed to align processes with case complexity and victims' rights. A stand-alone Commercial Court is being revived through Bill 133 (2025). Two judges have already been assigned by the Chief Justice to preside the Commercial Court, and its jurisdiction would cover a broad range of commercial matters, with a building in Melita Street acquired by the Courts Service Agency from the Lands Authority to host two court rooms equipped with advanced technology, registry, mediation space, judges' chambers, and administrative offices. Through this reform, commercial litigation will be handled more efficiently and professionally.

Significant changes to the magisterial inquiry framework have been enacted by Act VIII of 2025, amending the Criminal Code. Time limits for inquiries have been adjusted — the new framework allows up to 6 months for initial inquiry, extendable up to 2 years. There are new safeguards and accountability mechanisms:

- experts appointed must be natural persons and for expensive expert costs (exceeding EUR 50,000), approval from the Chief Justice is required;
- victims and their families gain statutory rights: being informed every 6 months about the inquiry's progress, receiving access to a free copy of the acts, and being notified when a decision is made about prosecution.

To widen access and capability, Legal Aid Malta continued raising public awareness on rights and invested in practitioner development through specialised training courses and seminars

organised by the European Law Academy. These programmes covered a range of emerging and complex legal areas, including AI systems and human rights, migrant law, and family law. Through these initiatives, the agency ensured that its legal professionals remained up to date with evolving legal challenges, thus enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to the public. In parallel, justice stakeholders advanced a deeper integration of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) such as mediation and arbitration, recognising that they are effective tools to resolve conflicts faster, more affordably, and amicably, thereby relieving pressure on courts and improving citizen experience with the justice system. In 2025, significant steps were taken to integrate ADR more deeply into the justice framework.

The Malta Mediation Centre (MMC) is currently working on introducing mandatory mediation in civil or commercial disputes involving claims made by local councils, government departments, or any other legal entity engaged to provide works, supplies, or services. This initiative has progressed through the drafting, discussion, and agreement of amendments to the Local Government Act and the Mediation Act between this ministry and the then MCLG. In parallel, discussions are ongoing with the UM and the Family Business Office to finalise a specialised professional course for mediators who wish to focus on resolving family business disputes. This programme is intended to enhance expertise in this specific area, supporting the development of higher-quality mediation services.

Additionally, a call for tenders for a new IT system has been completed, and the contract has been awarded to the successful bidder. Discussions are now underway with the selected supplier to begin the implementation phase, which will support improved administration and operational efficiency in mediation services.

The then Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector (MJR) is also working to achieve more people-centred justice and has undertaken a project spearheaded by the Justice Initiatives and Reforms Directorate (JIRD). The project titled “Enhancing Access to

Justice through People-Centred Justice” is a multi-country project with the OECD launched in 2025. Malta’s partnership with the OECD is driving a comprehensive transformation of the justice system, placing the needs and experiences of individuals at its core. The three-year multinational project is structured on expanding mediation beyond family cases, identifying and removing barriers faced by persons with disabilities, conducting Malta’s first comprehensive legal needs survey, and developing a set of indicators to measure both access to justice and the degree to which the justice survey system is people-centred.

Workplace safety saw significant advances by the Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA), namely:

- new construction sites (LN 52/2025);
- a sector-specific administrative instrument on project-supervisor registration and safe working in extreme temperatures; and
- updated asbestos regulations to transpose EU Directive 2023/2669 and fresh chemical and carcinogenic, mutagenic, or reprotoxic (CMR) limit values.

These were complemented by a forthcoming instrument on workplace health and safety representatives. Additionally, these were paired with research and engagement such as roundtable discussions with social partners and stakeholders, collaboration with the UM on psychosocial risks and presenteeism, a dedicated conference, and a school survey that assesses psychosocial wellbeing among educators and staff.

Following the success of the refurbishment initiative carried out at the secondary archives, a decision was taken to initiate refurbishment of the main archives as well as the remaining areas housing the administrative section of the Notary to Government (NTG). This long-term outlook, although expected to take a number of years to implement, is anticipated to have a positive impact on the office, enhancing both workforce efficiency and morale.

Malta’s Family Court reform is one of the most ambitious justice initiatives in recent

years, aiming to modernise a system that had remained largely unchanged for over two decades. The reform seeks to establish a more efficient, child-focused, and supportive legal framework for families navigating separation, custody, and related disputes. Central to the reform is the creation of a stand-alone Family Court, supported by a consolidated legal procedural code and a re-drafted subsidiary legislation that reorganises procedure whilst introducing new elements established by the reform. New processes will be introduced to reduce procedural complexity and shorten the overall duration of family cases, ensuring swifter and more accessible justice. A new Court Support Office will be set up within the Court Services Agency (CSA) to offer holistic assistance to the courts and coordinate court experts, psychological care, and social services. The reform also introduces the new role of child advocates, who will represent children's best interests in proceedings, and persons of support, who will assist vulnerable individuals throughout the legal process. Maintenance payments will be automatically deducted from income sources to reduce disputes and delays, and courts will be bound by time limits for decisions on separation, custody, access, and maintenance. Legal safeguards will ensure equal parental rights and protect children from parental alienation, while the role and responsibility of mediators will be given greater recognition, reinforcing their importance in resolving family disputes amicably.

The Asset Recovery Bureau (ARB) continued to strengthen its efforts. The bureau's operational capacity was significantly enhanced during the year through strategic recruitment aimed at expanding expertise and improving the ongoing and emerging asset recovery work. Analytical, operational, and managerial resources enabled a more efficient case handling, broader investigative coverage, and strengthened oversight of recovery processes. The expansion of the workforce also supported continuous improvement initiatives, including the refinement of investigative methodologies, improved coordination with national and international stakeholders, and enhanced responsiveness to complex asset recovery cases, thus ensuring that criminal gains are systematically removed from circulation

and redirected to lawful and socially beneficial purposes.

In addition, the Investigation Unit within the bureau started to operate. This unit is dedicated to supporting and enhancing asset recovery activities both locally and internationally. The unit was created to provide specialised investigative capacity, enabling more coordinated and comprehensive efforts in tracing criminal assets across jurisdictions. Its operations leverage both formal and informal networks worldwide, strengthening the bureau's ability to pursue complex cases, expedite information exchange, and achieve timely enforcement actions. This development has significantly reinforced the bureau's capability to meet its mandate and deliver effective asset recovery outcomes.

5.3.2 Digitalisation and Technological Advancements in the Justice System

Parliament approved a law which introduces an electronic monitoring system, enabling technology-assisted supervision as an alternative to short custodial sentences, where appropriate, with safeguards for victims and provisions that support tagging for parole and prison leave, a controlled environment, and flexible measures adapted to individual circumstances.

Frontend access improved with the one-stop Court Services Helpdesk for procedures, case statuses, and e-filing support. By early 2025, this helpdesk was handling an expanding array of services including scheduling inquiries. In parallel, several justice agencies introduced internal management information systems and began offering online services.

In May 2025, Legal Aid Malta launched the Legal Aid Management System (LAMS), a centralised digital platform that streamlines the application and administration of legal aid services. The system allows citizens to apply online using their e-ID and track the status of their application in real time. The system also improves communication by enabling clients to receive updates from legal aid lawyers and procurators through email and SMS notifications. A

redesigned website made eligibility and services clearer and easier to navigate, improving reach for vulnerable and low-income users and supporting the principle of leaving no one behind.

On media reform, the government advanced a media reform package with a public consultation. Encouraging people to report corruption and misconduct is crucial for accountability and the rule of law. In parallel, the then MJR is in the process of amending the Protection of the Whistleblower Act (Act XX of 2013, Cap. 527) to fully align it with the EU Whistleblowing Directive (2019/1937) and broaden its scope. Draft amendments aim to bring national legislation in closer alignment with EU rules.

To ensure public access to information, a modernised IT system that receives Freedom of Information (FOI) requests form was launched in August 2025, allowing citizens to file requests online, follow the progress of their requests, and make further submissions if so required. In turn, the new system assists public authorities through a modernised backend interface, ensuring timely replies and the possibility of maintaining a direct line of communication with FOI applicants.

Operational digitalisation within the Department of Justice (DoJ) advanced through the implementation of the Swiped-On System to efficiently manage and record all incoming official daily visitors, including those from competent authorities and relevant stakeholders. This digital system enhances security, transparency, and operational efficiency within the department's premises.

Other principal digitalisation initiatives included the commencement of hands-on-work, accompanied by ongoing discussions on the new Kondotti online application. This encompasses the development of both the backend and frontend components. The then MJR and the DoJ successfully procured biometric equipment in relation to the due implementation of the ECRIS- TCN Directive and Regulation (concerning the European criminal records information system for third-country nationals). This equipment enables the secure and efficient taking of biometrics of the respective

TCNs in line with EU requirements. This was accompanied by comprehensive staff training. This measure strengthens the department's capacity for digital justice, enhances data security, and supports compliance with European standards.

In 2025, the NTG's office's strategy for IT services was revamped and a policy decision was adopted to pursue a more holistic and comprehensive experience for clients using NTG services, leading to the migration of all facilities to a new platform. It was also resolved to convert the mandate revocation service offered by NTG into a fully web-enabled process. To this end, a new Legal Notice was issued to amend the original regulations enabling the revocation of mandates to cater for this new development and enshrine it within the legal framework of notarial legislation. The office has taken the initiative of moving the revocation service from its previous web location and bringing it under one platform together with all the other services offered to clients by NTG. Users can log in with their e-ID and proceed with payment online, thereby eliminating the need to attend the office in person.

5.3.3 Enhancing Community Safety

Throughout 2025, the MPF continued to focus its efforts on making society safer. Collaboration between the MPF and INTERPOL has been welcomed and maintained, particularly on matters such as cybercrime, human trafficking, child abuse, and smuggling of counterfeit items. This was done through INTERPOL-led exercises and projects amongst other national efforts aimed at improving security and safety in Maltese communities and increasing international collaboration.

Furthermore, the Safer Communities, Smarter Policing — Malta Police Corporate Strategy (2025–2030) has been implemented, aiming to direct police efforts over the next 5 years built on public security, police legitimacy, and workforce evolution. The previous strategy over the past 5 years had achieved a number of results, including better communications between the community and the police through means such as community policing.

Government advanced road-safety reforms through a package of deterrent measures,

namely, police drug testing and random roadside testing, where drug or alcohol testing may be conducted without reasonable suspicion; effective prison sentences for individuals found guilty of killing a person, even involuntarily; stronger penalties and fines for individuals found guilty of driving recklessly and impaired driving; and prosecution power to request for the suspension of a driving licence when proceedings are pending. Enforcement intensified with over 2,000 road-checks, complementing other work carried out by LESA and Transport Malta. Furthermore, the government has also held a meeting with the organisation Doctors for Road Safety for enhanced collaboration, with the aim of ensuring the successful implementation of the new reform and contributing to an overall improvement in road safety.

Traffic enforcement and investigation shifted to a new standard with the modernised Roads Policing Unit within the MPF. A specialised division that, in addition to being dedicated to the enforcement of traffic regulations, will now also be equipped

to investigate major traffic accidents involving fatalities or serious injuries with increased efficiency. New equipment and accredited training have been provided for the new investigative unit so that the police can gather and analyse evidence efficiently to present them in court in due course. This process also facilitates efficiently reopening major roads closed due to traffic accidents, thus alleviating traffic. This investment will substantially help improve traffic incident investigations as the modern tools allow the Police Force to move towards a more digitalised form of investigation, analysing evidence accurately in the office. The new police unit received accredited training in photography, drone operations, 3D scanning, and first aid. The Traffic Regulation Enforcement Division has also been equipped with modern motorcycles and vehicles to operate their duties efficiently. This will further aid to alleviate traffic and prevent major traffic collisions on Maltese roads.

To deter crime and enable rapid intervention, a 24/7 CCTV programme was rolled out as an intelligence-led policing tool, with an investment of over EUR 2 million and covering four localities: Marsa, Paceville, Paola, and St Paul's Bay, with a total of more than 160 CCTV cameras. These zones were selected following an analysis by a criminologist. This project will adopt intelligence systems and allocate resources aimed to deter crime. It focuses on prevention rather than reaction and will complement the ongoing efforts of the police force, which are already yielding positive results. In addition to continuous patrols and increased police presence, these cameras will provide real-time information of any illegal activity occurring. This will allow for immediate and well-informed action, and foster greater cooperation with local councils, business communities, and residents.

The CPD has completed a EUR 1.2 million modernisation of the Xemxija Fire Station, adding space for new emergency vehicles and equipment, and creating dedicated decontamination areas for firefighters returning from operations. Recent improvements include new protective gear, such as lighter and safer fire suits and immersion suits, and the extension of the maritime fire station. Additionally, work is underway on new fire stations in Floriana and Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq. The CPD has also expanded



its fleet with specialised vehicles designed for industrial, domestic, and hazardous material (HAZMAT) fires. To further enhance response times, the government has developed a nationwide infrastructure allowing firefighters to access water supply points without returning to their stations. A CCTV system is being installed on fire engines, enabling real-time monitoring of incidents to improve decision-making and emergency coordination.

With regard to workforce conditions, ongoing negotiations for a new sectoral agreement with workers' unions have reached an advanced stage. These negotiations concern the official recognition of the CPD as a disciplined force, the introduction of a 25-year service tenure, full payment for all hours worked, allowances, career progression incentives, and expanded training opportunities.

Targeted wildfires readiness was boosted with a EUR 1 million investment in 10 specialised grass-fire vehicles tailored to Malta's terrain to tackle grassfires which arise in the countryside during the summer drought. The small size and shape of the vehicles will allow them to easily pass through the narrow country roads and old villages. This permits the vehicles to reach and extinguish the fires more efficiently. Professional training together with new modern equipment were also provided to the department, improving its service delivered to the community and environment.

Event safety was reinforced through the introduction of professional security stewards during sporting events to complement the work of the Police Force officials. Trained and licensed security personnel can provide their service through a regulatory framework which tasks the Police Force to license both security steward agencies and the stewards themselves. The role of these stewards will be to control access to the sporting venues, scan the spectators for dangerous or prohibited items, and monitor for any security risks or threats whilst assisting the Police when necessary. The introduction of the stewards is also aimed at assisting in matters of order and security, and having stronger measures in place to discourage and penalise individuals engaging in violence, hate speech, or bad

behaviour. Those who violate the laws of public order, in addition to charges found in the criminal code, will also face consequences, including fines ranging from EUR 500 to EUR 5,000 and a mandatory ban from attending sporting events lasting from 6 months to 5 years. This reform modernises security systems of sporting events and facilitates changes, allowing the Police Force to focus on other expected duties such as crime prevention, law enforcement, and maintaining order. These stewards ensure that spectators and athletes can both enjoy the event in a professional environment.

The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index has ranked Malta as the 12th safest country in the world. This result reflects the efforts and achievements within this sector, with the lowest crime rates in recent years. The annual academic report, known as CrimeMalta Observatory, holds that Malta remains a safe and stable country with a criminal rate of around 30 crimes per 1,000 people living in the country as of 2024. This reflects a decrease compared to 2023 and a substantial reduction compared to the 46 cases reported per 1,000 people that Malta experienced in 2004. In an international report on law, order, and safety in the country, Malta was also ranked top 10 in 2023, out of 143 countries in the Global Rule of Law index.

5.4 Achieving High-Quality Education Responsive to Labour Market Needs

Education policy continued shifting towards quality, equity, and workforce relevance, guided by the National Education Strategy 2024–2030. To support the strategy's commitment to green and digital skills, the Directorate for Early Years, Languages and Humanities (DELH) within the then MEYR initiated and advanced several initiatives. A national cross-sectoral and multistakeholder research exercise in partnership with academia, aimed to probe, among other aspects, participants' contributions and perceptions on holistic education for sustainable development (ESD). Professional development continued for educators between Kindergarten Year 1 and Year 2, with training focused on citizenship and

practical green skills. Schools also received tailored support to embed ESD and global citizenship education (GCED) within the informal and formal curriculum. A second GCED and ESD training and learning centre was established at St Margaret College to serve educators in the port region, while NGOs such as KOPIN, Nature Trust FEE Malta, and Birdlife Malta were supported to strengthen school-based programmes focusing on green initiatives and skills.

The updated induction programme for Maltese and English was introduced by the International Learners' Directorate (ILD) for eligible, newly arrived international learners who enrol in state education. The two new programmes in the languages of schooling are centred around the specific educational needs of newly arrived international learners and are being implemented as part of the curricular framework for international learners in induction classes. A new accredited Maltese programme has also been designed for newly arrived international learners joining compulsory school in Year 10 and Year 11.

From a national literacy point of view, empirical research demonstrates that a rich home literacy environment, including the presence of books, is positively associated with children's academic achievement and long-term career prospects. By the end of 2025, all primary school children in Malta have received a set of four books (two in Maltese and two in English) to encourage them to start their own little home libraries. The National Literacy Agency (NLA) complemented this with a budget measure providing EUR 150 worth of age-appropriate books to children from families benefitting from Scheme 9. This initiative ensures that vulnerable children have access to quality reading materials at home. The NLA is also increasing the public availability of children's digital books in Maltese. In addition to making around 300 *Qari għal Qalbi* digital books available on its website, the agency has now released a further 130 digital books for the public to access. These efforts are complemented by regular reading sessions held in schools and community settings. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to participate, gaining greater

awareness of their role in supporting their children's literacy development. Notably in 2025, the Read with Me / *Aqra Miegħi* programme for children aged 0 to 3 expanded to 75 weekly sessions across various localities.

Malta's ongoing efforts to reduce early leaving from education and training continued to yield results. Data published in 2025 confirmed that Malta's ELET rate decreased to 9.6% in 2024, marking a substantial milestone toward achieving the EU 2030 target. The Medium-Term Fiscal Structural Plan (2025–2028) highlighted that education and skills development are essential to Malta's economic resilience, explicitly linking ELET to labour market participation and productivity challenges. The then MEYR continued to strengthen collaboration with industry and education stakeholders to ensure education and training systems remain responsive to evolving labour market needs. In October 2025, the Directorate for Planning & Strategic Foresight launched the EduVoices conference that focused on ELET prevention through person-centred voices and integrated strategic foresight for transformation.

Work to better align education with labour market needs intensified through the National Skills Council (NSC). In 2025, the council advanced the development of Malta's first National Skills Strategy, engaging government, educators, employers, and social partners through workshops and consultations. Draft recommendations are currently being finalised with the technical expertise of the OECD Centre for Skills, and the draft of the strategy is expected in early 2026. These aim towards more effective skills systems promoting upskilling and reskilling opportunities in response to the green and digital transitions. The NSC also organised the second edition of CareerScape to foster meaningful dialogue among education and industry professionals, practitioners, and policymakers with a series of workshops focused on the education, health, and social care sectors. Discussions centred on the issue of misalignment between the skills acquired through education, training, or upskilling and those required in the workplace. The Emerging Careers Campaign, showcasing 40 emerging careers, was launched to encourage parity of esteem between academic and vocational careers, as well as to

raise awareness on emerging careers and the skills needed to thrive in the world of work. A flagship annual conference in November 2025 themed “State of Flux” explored global megatrends shaping work, learning, and essential human skills such as creativity, adaptability, and resilience.

The NSC continued to offer non-formal education sessions aimed at highlighting the need to integrate further innovative pedagogies which promote the activation of transversal skills. Sessions included training for educators on creative thinking and emotional intelligence, as well as continuous professional development sessions for PSCD educators in primary, middle, and secondary schools on the NSC’s work and career management skills. Additional sessions were delivered to mathematics educators and to educators from the ILD on critical and creative Thinking, and to Junior College lecturers on megatrends and career management skills, reinforcing the link between transversal skills, future employability, and evolving labour market demands. To enhance skills intelligence, the NSC is actively collaborating with key industry stakeholders to assess the local skills landscape and address skill shortages and mismatches. Partnerships have already been established with Jobsplus and the Malta Chamber, which aim to improve data-driven insights and facilitate a deeper understanding of workforce dynamics.

The council also continues bridging the industry with education in applied VET subjects. Since 2024, it has collaborated with Education Officers for applied subjects to ensure that vocational education aligns with industry needs, particularly in sectors facing skills shortages. This measure is intended to remain a cyclical exercise, keeping VET provision responsive to labour market evolution. In collaboration with the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of SMEs, the NSC is introducing the opportunity for educators delivering applied VET subjects in secondary schools to have short micro-placements in relevant industries. Through short-term placements hosted by Maltese enterprises across sectors such as health and social care, agribusiness, hospitality, engineering, information technology, fashion and textiles,

retail, creative media, and hairdressing and beauty, educators gain first-hand exposure to workplace environments and emerging technologies. This experience enables them to integrate current industry practices into their teaching, ensuring that VET curricula remain practical, up to date, and aligned with modern economic needs.

Career guidance capacity expanded through ongoing work by the National Career Guidance Network (NCGN) established in late 2024, with the aim of creating a unified and comprehensive network of career guidance service providers, employers, and HR professionals. In 2025, quarterly committee meetings took place on professional development opportunities for PSCD educators, career guidance practitioners, and human resource professionals. A research study on adult career choices and progression was carried out. Committee members are also contributing to the mapping of existing studies and ongoing initiatives to identify gaps, increase impact, and avoid duplication. These insights will inform the State of Play report with the findings from this report which will, in turn, be used to inform the National Career Guidance Policy. Initial discussions with NCGN committee members have also started on the development of a digital platform to centralise and improve access to career guidance services.

Investment in advanced digital competences and research talent was reinforced through the Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship, re-introduced in 2025 with increased support for PhD candidates, who may receive as much as EUR 20,000 in emerging technologies such as AI, cybersecurity and technology for ESG, equipping individuals to compete internationally and strengthening Malta’s human-capital base.

Access and retention for adult learners was supported through learner-centred institutional practices. The IfE reduced financial barriers, while their part-time and blended delivery allowed adult learners with diverse backgrounds and commitments to balance work, family, and study. Their supportive and mature approach to absenteeism focuses on retention, offering deadline extensions or module postponement

when justified, alongside increased flexibility for learners residing and working in Gozo, who can follow most lectures online without compromising quality. Through learner-centred and student-friendly policies such as the Leave of Absence Policy and consideration for extenuating circumstances, the IfE promotes sustainable educational practices. Such practices reflect the principles of education for sustainable development by fostering inclusion, wellbeing, and long-term learner engagement.

Schools also benefitted from environmental health training delivered by the EHD, which expanded programmes in secondary schools and MCAST. These included talks, structured placements, and media engagement to raise interest in environmental health careers and promote understanding of health risks and sustainable practices.

In parallel, the NSC continued building on a pilot initiative that was launched in 2024 to embed sustainability into school leadership, by means of a workshop for senior leadership team members, delivered in collaboration with lecturers from the UM. The objective of this series of workshops was to equip participants with skills and tools to champion sustainability in schools and communities, encouraging long-term impact. Building on this four workshops were held for senior leadership team members from state, church, and independent schools. The workshop focused on strengthening whole-school sustainability practices. A total of 54 educators in leadership roles participated, from eight church schools, 42 government schools, and four private schools.

In the broader skills ecosystem, sectoral planning also emphasised training and public awareness. Within fisheries, under the 4th pillar of the National Fisheries Strategy for Malta, actions focused on enhancing safety, sustainability, and competitiveness, with vocational pathways for students and community outreach to promote informed food choices and draw young entrants into the blue economy.

5.5 Equal Opportunities and Access to Fair, Safe, and Secure Working Environments

In 2025, national efforts focused on fair pay,

safe, and more secure workplaces and a labour market that balances economic needs with social protections. The Department of Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) strengthened pay equity protections with the transposition of new pay transparency obligations. On 27 August 2025 Legal Notice 112 of 2025 came into effect, amending the Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Regulations. This amendment introduced rights relevant to both the pre-employment stage and the ongoing employment stage. Primarily, applicants for employment have the right to receive from the prospective employer information about the initial pay or its range, to be attributed to the position concerned before their actual engagement. Where the employer is governed by a collective agreement, the applicant for employment shall also have a right to receive the relevant pay provisions of the collective agreement which are applicable to the role being filled. Secondly, the law introduced the right of all workers to request from their employer, at any time during employment, their individual pay level and the pay levels for categories of workers performing the same work as them. When employees exercise their right to request information about their own pay level and the pay levels of categories of workers performing the same work, the employer is required to provide the information within a reasonable timeframe. In line with the Pay Transparency Directive, a “reasonable” timeframe is defined as a period not exceeding 2 months from the date of the request. Temporary and outsourced workers must receive the same basic working and employment conditions. The rules allow all workers to access information about their colleagues’ average pay for equivalent work, which is a critical tool for identifying and addressing the gender pay gap. Ensuring equal pay and conditions for temporary and outsourced workers from day one closes a loophole that could be exploited, often disproportionately affecting women in flexible work arrangements.

Complementing regulatory reforms, the NCPE continued promoting equality in workplaces through its Equality Mark for the 15th consecutive year, now awarded to 155 organisations employing over 37,000 people.

This certification is awarded to workplaces that make gender equality one of their values and whose management is based on the recognition and promotion of the potential of all employees irrespective of their gender and caring responsibilities. The second anniversary of the NCPE's Equal Pay Tool marked growing interest from employers, with four organisations achieving the Equal Pay Certification. The tool provides a structured, confidential method to analyse equal pay for work of equal value, offering risk assessments and guidance. The commission also continued updating the Directory of Professional Women and strengthened efforts to support gender balance on boards following new responsibilities granted in December 2024. As of November 2025, the directory included 278 profilers. Throughout 2025, the NCPE organised five conferences addressing work-life balance, women's leadership positions, working conditions, and future-of-work trends under the TRANSFORM project.

Further strengthening fair pay and equal treatment across public procurement, the Department of Contracts published the applicable Contracts Circulars on the 'Minimum Hourly Rates Payable to Contractor'. These Circulars address precarious work conditions and pay discrimination, including gender-based disparities, in services provided to Contracting Authorities and Entities. They also set out the 'Minimum Basic Rates' payable to contractors' employees, as outlined in Contracts Circular 2-2025 and Contracts Circular 9-2025, which apply to signed service contracts currently under implementation as well as procurement procedures issued prior to the publication of Circular 2-2025.

The Pegged Rates measure is anchored in the principle of equal pay for male and female workers performing equal work or work of equal value. This principle is further reinforced by Directive 2006/54/EC, which aims to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation. Article 1(b) of the Directive explicitly requires Member States to uphold equal treatment in working conditions, including pay.

Complementing these measures, the Department of Contracts also published Contracts Circular 14-2025, entitled 'Project

Supervisor for Health and Safety Matters in Public Contracts - Construction Sites'. This Circular supports the OHSa, within the then MJR, by raising awareness among Contracting Authorities and Entities regarding their obligations under the 'Health and Safety at Work Regulations', Subsidiary Legislation 646.27. It clarifies that Contracting Authorities and Entities are responsible for complying with the Health and Safety at Work Act (Chapter 646 of the Laws of Malta) and its subsidiary legislation, particularly the requirements governing work at construction sites. The Circular also outlines the obligations related to appointing a 'Project Supervisor for Health and Safety Matters' within the context of public procurement and concession procedures.

In parallel, a major structural reform of 2025 was the launch of Malta's new Labour Migration Policy which came into effect in August. It gradually implemented 20 measures aimed at reflecting stability, workers' rights, labour mobilisation, and investment in skills. It modernises and strengthens the labour migration system by balancing economic needs with social priorities and safeguards secure work environments. Four guiding principles have been outlined to shape the policy direction: retention and stability, the protection of employee rights and improvement of working conditions, the alignment of labour migration with labour market needs, and having a skills-based approach to migration. Excessive redundancies of workers are a detriment to sustainability. Hence, if an employer is monitored to have made any worker redundant due to business closure or lack of work for the same job position during the previous 12 months, their application will be rejected. Jobsplus will also monitor the recruitment pattern of employers, those who exceed the termination rates will eventually not be able to apply for new employees from third countries. Grace periods for TCNs following the termination of their employment have been extended, presenting them with a greater chance of finding work within the country. To ensure that locals are not excluded from the competitive work market, employers must advertise vacancies on Jobsplus and the EURES portal for at least 3 weeks before

advertising to third countries. Employers are also required to comply with the provisions of the Persons with Disability (Employment) Act (CAP 210). For further enhanced transparency of the policy, a dedicated helpline under 153 has been established, enabling employers to inquire about and schedule appointments regarding their preliminary labour market testing status for enhanced transparency. Furthermore, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the General Workers Union and the Malta Delivery Fleet Operators Association. This memorandum establishes a clear framework for the working conditions of food couriers.

Improving work conditions remained a key focus for public service and education entities. The IFE implemented its first collective agreement, introducing provisions for promotions, flexible working arrangements, reduced hours, and teleworking. A new MCAST Collective Agreement concluded in 2025 represents a major institutional development aimed at improving staff wellbeing, professional stability, and work-life balance. The agreement introduces clearer career pathways, updated workload norms, improved support measures for academic and administrative staff, and stronger provisions relating to flexible working arrangements and enhanced professional development. The Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) held a workshop for HR professionals, senior managers, and employers to give practical advice on supporting people with psychosocial impairments in the workplace and on ways to foster a safe environment for them.

Public service workplaces also prioritised mental health. The People and Standard Division (P&SD) at the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has reached an agreement with Richmond Foundation to provide training to a minimum of one employee from each government department. Employees will have the possibility to receive initial support at the place of work prior to referral for professional support.

Across the health workforce, the DAHS progressed a comprehensive development strategy to reinforce lifelong learning, promote gender equality, and empower women across

the workforce. Interministerial coordination between the then MHA and then MEYR improved the provision of psychology services, ensuring clarity of roles, operational efficiency, and a stronger integration within school systems. Complementary measures included maintaining onboarding support for allied health professions, dedicating training funds to service priorities, and continuing the development of allied assistants. Public engagement was strengthened through patient satisfaction surveys, while operational standards were upheld through the uniform policy.

Targeted investment supported safer, more sustainable infrastructure in a key maritime facility. In 2025, the then MAFA invested heavily in the Hard Standing Facility (HSF) in Marsaxlokk. A long-term concession project advanced through a full administrative process, including site evaluation, financial and technical studies, and the drafting of a detailed concession agreement. The main aim of the initiative is to regenerate and modernise the facility through private investment, ensuring continuous service to fishing vessel owners and providing social, educational, and environmental benefits to the community. The service for fishers is expected to be improved while the towing fees will remain competitive. The concession, set for 30 years, requires the operator to finance all works and operations, pay annual concession fees, and comply with strict regulatory and reporting obligations. The plan is to grant the concession, oversee the development phase (which should be completed within 30 months from the permit's issuance), and monitor ongoing operations and reinvestment, to ensure the long-term sustainability and value of the facility for both public and private stakeholders. The investments included the procurement of four electric scissors lifts to limit the use of scaffolding by fishers while conducting maintenance on their vessels inside the HSF. A new service has also been introduced for the hoisting of tuna through the use of a crawling crane funded by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

5.5.1 Upskilling the Workforce

A significant step forward was the approval of the Tourism Excellence Malta Project, co-financed through the ESF+ with an



approximately EUR 2 million investment to implement a large-scale training programme reaching over 2,000 workers over a three-year period. The programme will upskill foreign supervisors, managers, and public-sector officials who interact with the tourism industry.

Complementing this, during the 2024/2025 scholastic year, the MTA, in collaboration with the National Students Wellbeing Services Section within the then MEYR, organised a series of educational workshops for the first time. A total of five workshops were held, aimed at nine-year-old students attending Year 5 in primary schools. 8 MHRA member hotels actively supported this initiative by assigning employees from various departments to provide hands-on experiences for the students at their respective schools. Through these career exploration workshops, around 170

students gained practical skills applicable to everyday life, developed an appreciation for the work carried out within hotels, and were even inspired to consider future careers in the tourism industry.

In addition, around 200 secondary school students aged 14 years old and attending Year 9 were invited to participate in educational career orientation visits to a selection of 4-star and 5-star hotels, organised in collaboration with MHRA. 12 hotels took part in this initiative, offering students valuable insight into the daily operations of different departments and introducing them to the wide range of career opportunities available within the tourism and hospitality sector. These visits will be organised again in 2025/2026, thereby continuing to provide exposure to various hotel departments and career paths within the tourism and

hospitality industry. Moreover, during the scholastic year 2024/2025, two seminars were organised targeting approximately 70 guidance teachers, career advisors, PSOD and hospitality teachers across Malta and Gozo.

To maintain skill standards in tourism employment, ITS progressed with the roll-out of the Skills Pass System, which requires mandatory training and assessments for prospective hospitality workers as part of the Identità single permit application process. From January 2026, there will be a pre-departure integration course, ensuring that new arrivals meet required competence levels before entering the workforce.

Across the disability and social sectors, the Agenzija Support SIL Directorate embarked on training initiatives to support teams' service delivery. Training included medication management, leadership development, and specialised sessions on domestic violence, neglect, addictions, trauma, and vulnerability. Additional



workshops took place on ADHD and autism to raise awareness and foster inclusion at the workplace. Training was also given to police and public service managers as requested. Personnel also received training in active support, a practice aimed at empowering individuals with intellectual or cognitive disabilities to engage meaningfully in daily activities.

A national research initiative between the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning Foundation (3CL) and the NSC, titled "The Multigenerational Workplace: Digital Skills to Adapt and Thrive in the Age of Gen-AI", is being implemented to examine intergenerational dynamics in the workplace, with particular emphasis on digital literacy, lifelong learning, and the essential skills required in the era of generative AI. Data collection methods included focus groups, surveys, and in-depth interviews with representatives from different generations to explore their perceptions of skills and values. Focus groups have already been completed, and by the first quarter of 2026, the remaining data collection and evaluation will be finalised, leading to the publication of the findings.



Concluding Remarks

The 2025 Sustainable Development Annual Report reflects Malta's strengthened resolve to embed sustainability at the core of national governance, ensuring that both domestic priorities and global commitments continue to guide policy direction and implementation. This year's report highlights the tangible advancements made across ministries and entities, demonstrating how coordinated action is translating long-term strategies into measurable progress, such as Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050 and the Strategic Goals of Malta's Sustainable Development Strategy for 2050. These efforts continue to support Malta's contribution to the Global Agenda 2030 and its 17 SDGs, while fostering a resilient socio-economic and environmental landscape that champions innovation, cultural preservation, wellbeing, and sustainable economic growth.

Building on the momentum of previous years, 2025 marks a period of consolidation and forward planning following the submission of Malta's second VNR. The VNR process strengthened national capacity for monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development indicators, and deepened the culture of evidence-based policymaking. It also broadened national dialogue, bringing together government institutions, the private sector, academia, civil society, vulnerable communities, and young people in a shared commitment to accelerate sustainable development across all sectors.

As Malta continues to advance its sustainability agenda, nurturing collaboration and fostering a culture of shared responsibility remain essential. Sustained engagement, transparent governance, and integrated planning will ensure that sustainable development principles are embedded across all areas of national progress. With these foundations in place, Malta can continue advancing towards a future that is environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically forward-looking, ensuring that progress achieved today contributes meaningfully to the wellbeing of generations to come.



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