**MALTA**

**Midterm Self-Assessment Report**

**National Action Plan**

**2015-2017**

**1. Introduction and Background**

The government of Malta is committed to the Open Government Partnership (OGP) as the principles of promoting transparency, empowering citizens, fighting corruption and harnessing new technologies are all in line with government’s views and policies. This commitment was formalised by the signing of the OGP in July 2011.

Furthermore, Malta submitted its first National Action Plan (NAP) in June 2012 for the period 2012-2014. The first NAP focused on two grand challenges, namely: ‘Creating Safer Communities’ and ‘Increasing Corporate Accountability’. The second section of this action plan provides an update regarding the implementation of the first action plan.

The second NAP was launched in June 2015, covering the period 2015-2017. It focuses on the following grand challenges, ‘Improving Public Services’ and ‘Increasing Public Integrity’. The two grand challenges were chosen in collaboration with civil society. More information on how it was drafted and how it will be monitored can be found in the following sections.

***Improving Public Services***

1. **Participation of Women in the Public Service**

Over the past years, labour market participation of women in Malta, has improved but still remains below EU average. The female participation rate in the labour market is one of the key challenges listed by the European Union (EU) in Malta’s Country-Specific Recommendations for 2015. The EU noted that although significant progress has been made, Malta still has the highest gender employment gap in the EU. The National Council of Women feel that the participation of women is indispensable when addressing citizens services and improving public services. Women are able to increase public trust in political systems and engage with government in settings where ideas can be discussed, creating a collaborative atmosphere characterised by mutual respect, integrity and forthrightness.

1. **Training and knowledge sharing amongst Public Service Employees**

In order to improve public services Malta must ensure that top management positions are filled by the best qualified candidates, while, public services personnel should be more highly qualified and with experience in their respective sectors. It is essential to have competent personnel who are knowledgeable about their department / organisation and who are able to be an effective driving force. There should be continuous training and knowledge sharing amongst all public service employees to ensure constant improvements in the services provided. Ongoing training should be provided at all work levels, however, there should be a specific focus on middle management as they are the link between the top management and the team of personnel and the general staff who very often have to face the general public. Training and knowledge sharing amongst all Ministries, departments and entities would ensure a higher level of communication amongst all levels of management and employees which will result in more efficient public services.

1. **eServices**

The Government aims to reduce the existing bureaucratic procedures by 25% especially through better use of ICT systems. The aim is to continue to improve current services, ensure more accessibility to all citizens, reduce waiting time, bureaucracy and increase efficiency in government operations. The Digital Malta Strategy was launched by the Prime Minister on the 24th of March 2014. The strategy will guide the country towards attaining the Europe 2020 Vision that, ‘Malta will prosper as a digitally-enabled nation in all sectors of society’. Digital Malta provides policy direction for three main strategic themes, namely: Digital Citizen; Digital Business; and Digital Government.

***Increasing Public Integrity***

1. **Social Dialogue**

Malta has in place Institutional and Advisory structures to engage civil society in the decision-making process. We value public participation of all people, equally and without discrimination, in the decision and policy making. Our belief in this process is manifested by having a Minister and a Ministry responsible for Social Dialogue, thereby demonstrating that the Maltese Government is an avid promoter of social dialogue. The Malta Council of Economic and Social Development (Cap.431) was also established symbolizing the recognition by the State of an institution whose mission is to promote social dialogue and bring about consensus amongst the Social Partners and members of Civil Society on a number of national economic and social issues related to Malta’s development. The aim is to continue strengthening the consultation structures (especially MCESD) and process with civil society by involving a wide range of civil partners where organisations are invited to submit their expertise, ideas, proposals and opinions.

1. **Public access to information**

On the 1st of September 2012, Legal Notice 156 of 2012 brought the Freedom of Information Act (Chapter 496 of the Laws of Malta) fully into force, allowing the public (resident citizens of Malta, the EU and the EEA) to submit requests for documents/information held by the Government. If for any reason, the requested access to documents is refused, the Freedom of Information Act provides for a complaint and appeal mechanism that can be ultimately resolved through the Courts of Appeal. The law ensured more openness in Maltese politics which renders the public administration more accountable and transparent in its workings. This commitment will focus on making mechanism for public access to information more data-seeker friendly in order to increase citizens’ involvement with Government and Institutions and public trust in political transparent systems.

**2. Second National Action Plan Process**

1. ***Consultation during NAP development:***

The lead Ministry being the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) carried out a public consultation session with MCESD (Malta Council for Economic and Social Development) subcommittee representing the civil society and the deadline for all stakeholders to submit their views was 15 April 2015.

Three main questions were asked to civil society representatives within MCESD Civil Society Committee (representing the interest of Consumer, Health, Elderly, Pensioners, Professions, Youth, Students, Sport, Agriculture, Rural, Fisheries, Environmenatal, and Persons with Disability voluntary organisations) as follows:

**Question 1** – From your organisation’s point of view, how would you rank the OGP grand challengesin order of importance?

**Question 2** – From your organisation’s point of view, what could be done to realise the aspirations ofthe grand challenge or improve their respective outcomes in Malta?

**Question 3** - Are there any approaches taken up by other governments which your organisationbelieves the Government of Malta could or should adapt locally?

Thanks to the feedback provided by the civil society, the lead Ministry was in a position to identify those grand challenges and commitments to be included within the second national action plan. Soon after a second exercise was carried out to validate and reassess the suggested grand challenges and commitments as proposed by the civil society. Thus, additional consultation was carried out with Government Ministries based on the civil society proposals.

In the meantime, the OGP Malta team had also the opportunity to share experiences with Croatia represented by First Secretary Ms Sonya Lovrek Velkov following the video conference held between the representatives from the Government of Malta and the OGP Criteria and Standards subcommittee on 10 March 2015 and through another face to face meeting held on 23rd April 2015 in Malta.

**3. IRM Recommendations**

A report under the Independent Reporting Mechanism was not submitted under the timeframe of the First National Action Plan. The report within the timeframe for the Second National Action is still to be submitted.

**4. Implementation of National Action Plan commitments**

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| COMMITMENT 1 - PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE | |
| Lead implementing agency | Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity |
| Name of responsible person  from implementing agency, Title | Mr Mark Musu, Permanent Secretary |
| Email | mark.musu@gov.mt |
| Phone | 00356 2590 3243 |
| Other  Actors  Involved | Office of the Prime Minister  Ministry for Education and Employment  Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties |
| Status quo or problem/issue  to be addressed | Low rate of employment against women |
| Main Objective | Increasing the overall rate of employment amongst women in both the private and public sector, with a special focus on public service. |
| Brief Description of  Commitment | The overall objective is to increase the participation of women in the public service by focusing on more family friendly measures and work life balance initiatives. |
| OGP challenge addressed  by the commitment | Improving Public Services |
| Relevance | Malta believes that the participation of women in the public service will ensure a higher presence of women on government boards and committees, thus ensuring a more equal representation of women in decision-making processes and providing women with a stronger voice in political decisions. Women’s participation in politics is a key indicator of the quality of democratic culture. A gender-sensitive public sector, whose structures, operations, methods and work respond to the needs and interest of both men and women, is thus central to good governance. |
| Ambition | By empowering women to take up challenging and decision-making positions within the public service /public sector, the government can benefit from a higher level of trust amongst all citizens and may encourage more women to participate in public consultation processes. |

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| VERIFIABLE AND MEASURABLE MILESTONES TO FULFIL THE COMMITMENT | | | | |
| 1. Wider availability of family-friendly measures (such as Tele-working, Reduced Hours, Job Sharing, Compressed Working Week and Flexible Work Schedules) | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | The take-up of family friendly measures within the Public service and sector in 2015 was of 7455, an increase from 4508 in 2014 (an increase of 65%). | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| 1. Set up child care centre/s in those area/s where there is a high concentration of Public Service and Public Sector offices thus facilitating access between working mothers and their children example, in Valletta | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** | |
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| Description of the results | The free childcare scheme was implemented in an effort to increase female employment by totally subsidising childcare, hence increasing the disposable income of women with children and the economic costs of economic inactivity. As of April 2014, a service of free childcare was made available to all mothers on condition that they are either in for children aged up 2 years and 9 months. The childcare scheme caters for employees working within the public and private sectors and were opened in various localities, including in Floriana, which is near Valletta where a number of public services are located.  Results showed an evident upward trend in the number of mothers who returned to employment within the same year of giving birth. In 2015, a spike was observed in the number of mothers joining the labour market within the same year of giving birth. This kink is a clear indication of a behavioural response motivated by the provision of free childcare. Although it may be premature to draw conclusions, the introduction of free childcare seems to be effective in facilitating a more rapid return to the labour market for mothers within the first three years of birth of the child. Such results were further confirmed as the number of mothers returning to employment within 2 years of giving birth as a percentage of the total number of mothers who gave birth during those 2 year period and had not been employed, also increased in 2014.  Currently, in Malta there are 95 childcare centres (including private centres) registered with the Ministry for Education and Employment. The Foundation for Educational Services is responsible for 13 other childcare centres.  These 13 childcare centres cater for all types of children and families but most especially for:   * Children who due to specific family circumstances, would benefit from spending periods of time away from home. * Children whose parents require respite. * Children whose parents are attending family workshops offered by the centre. (These workshops are aimed at enhancing personality development and at delivering certain basic skills which might be in part or totally missing in a particular individual). * Children of single parents, especially if these parents opt to join in family workshops, opt to take up some form of academic development; or opt to work to improve the financial situation. * Children whose mothers need to go out to work. * Children with developmental delay (e.g speech delays etc), who need some more time and more personalised attention before being amalgamated into mainstream kindergarten. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| 1. Intensify/redesign training in strategic leadership skills to empower women to take up challenging and decision-making positions within the public service /public sector but also helps them devise better balance between their work demands and family responsibilities | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** | |
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| Description of the results | Management training has been designed for all the senior managers as well as middle managers eligible to apply for headship positions in the public sector. This management training includes both modular courses in various subjects including strategic management and leadership skills, as well as intensive specialised courses in executive leadership and strategic change management.  As at the time of writing, 599 applications were received from senior managers and middle managers enrolled in a specialised programme called 'Management Toolkit', 260 of which were from female applicants (43% of the total applicants).  In 2015, the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) launched a mentoring programme funded from the European Social Fund. The programme’s aim is to address the gender distortion in the labour market, but more specifically in decision-making positions. It sought to provide women aspiring to hold leadership positions with the opportunity to be mentored by professionals who occupy high-level jobs to further empower mentees to participate in decision-making positions.  This theme is one of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by global leaders at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.  The programme spanned over 9 months: March – November 2015. 30 mentors were matched with 30 mentees. The total number of hours of mentoring eligible from the NCPE Mentoring Programme is of 96 hours per mentee. Out of the Maximum 96 hours, the average number of hours completed by the mentors and mentees was 89. Journals were submitted by the mentee documenting their experience, lessons learnt and challenges.  The Mentoring Programme for women who aspire to hold decision-making positions was designed with the aim of improving the skills and further empower women to participate in decision-making positions and thus make use of their skills and their full potential. A 5-day training was held for mentees covering: 1.) Communication Skills for leaders; 2.) Self-Confidence and Assertiveness; 3.) Critical Thinking for Decision-Making Skills; 4.) Emotionally Intelligent Leadership; 5.) Meeting local leaders; Assessment and Evaluation.  The Mentoring Programme, which is a rather innovative activity for Malta in the field of empowering women in taking up decision-making positions, sought to facilitate the development of a foundation to address the gender imbalance in these roles. An increase in the female participation rate is possible through the long-term effect of comprehensively addressing the current labour market distortion in relation to women in decision-making positions. The wider the spectrum of female representation within the different sectors and levels of business, the more role models will be available. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| COMMITMENT 2- TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING AMONGST PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES | |
| Lead implementing agency | Office of the Prime Minister - Centre for Development Research and Training |
| Name of responsible person  from implementing agency, Title | Ms Joyce Dimech, Permanent Secretary |
| Email | joyce.dimech@gov.mt |
| Phone | 00356 2200 ​1330 |
| Other  Actors  Involved | N/A |
| Status quo or problem/issue  to be addressed | Further specialised training and development among public service management and employees. |
| Main Objective | The main objective is to improve public services, strengthen the level of accountability and process of implementing governmental decisions through training and development of public service employees. |
| Brief Description of  Commitment | Specialised training can motivate employees, create a sense of commitment, loyalty and accountability thus ensuring that they are an effective driving force for the government and general public. |
| OGP challenge addressed  by the commitment | Improving Public Services |
| Relevance | Malta believes that training provides employees with a sense of ownership for their actions and more in depth knowledge on their work which in turn creates a higher level of loyalty, accountability and team work thus creating more efficient and professional public services which are more aimed at reaching the government objectives. |
| Ambition | The expected results should be a more specialised, competent and up to date public sector and more effective management which will create stronger teams that are able to effectively deliver economically, efficiently and effectively, policies and programmes which meet the requirements of the government and the citizens of Malta. |

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| VERIFIABLE AND MEASURABLE MILESTONES TO FULFIL THE COMMITMENT | | | | |
| 1. Continue to strengthen the role of the Centre for Development Research and Training (CDRT) | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | The Centre for Development Research and Training (CDRT) is carrying out various academic courses in collaboration with the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) including; BA (Hons) Public Administration, MBA Public Management *(UOM)* and BA (Hons) Public Projects (*MCAST).*Public officers are also being sponsored to attend various other courses in both institutions.  There have been 9563 participants in 2015 and 6410 participants in 2016 (as at the time of writing) in the dedicated arm of training and development for employees of the public service/ sector, the Centre for Development Research and Training. The Research arm is also being further developed and given a stronger role | | | |
| End date | Ongoing | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| 1. Ensuring that a wider range of middle and top managers receive ongoing training | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | Management training for all the senior managers as well as middle managers eligible to apply for headship positions. This management training includes both modular courses in various subjects including strategic management and leadership skills, as well as intensive specialised courses in executive leadership and strategic change management. Various circulars have been issued to ensure that middle managers attend specialised training before applying for headship positions. Top managers have also been informed that they must complete training (‘Management Toolkit’) or at least start the training prior to appearing before the senior management selection committee. Accreditation has also been sought for these courses. At the time of writing, 599 applications were received from senior managers and middle managers. | | | |
| End date | Ongoing | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| COMMITMENT 3 – E-SERVICES ONLINE | | | | |
| Lead implementing agency | Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) | | | | |
| Name of responsible person  from implementing agency, Title | Mr Tony Sultana, Executive Chairman | | | |
| Email | tony.sultana@gov.mt | | | |
| Phone | 000356 2599 2254 | | | |
| Other  Actors  Involved | Office of the Prime Minister – Department of Information | | | |
| Status quo or problem/issue  to be addressed | The Digital Malta Strategy identifies a number of aims and objectives related to the provision and take-up of e-Government services which include the simplification of existing digital public services, the promotion of higher take-up of e-Government services, and accessibility of Government services through mobile devices. The aim is to improve the efficiency of the public service and provide citizens with a more user friendly and convenient service. | | | |
| Main Objective | The main objective is to improve current eGovernment services provided to citizens and businesses, create new eGovernment services which address clients’ needs, are user-friendly and accessible and increase the number of users. | | | |
| Brief Description of  Commitment | MITA and various other Ministries, in charge of eServices, are currently working on the "Public Services Online" project. The aim of the project is to research the reasons which are negatively impacting the current take-up of eGovernment services; and to raise awareness with the general public on government’s drive towards simplification of public administration through the availability of eServices, and on the convenience that these eGovernment services provide to citizens. This commitment will enhance the accessibility of such services extending to citizens and businesses from other EU member states and implement initiatives to increase the up-take of online services and engage citizens and businesses to interact with Government. | | | |
| OGP challenge addressed  by the commitment | Improving Public Services | | | |
| Relevance | Malta believes that eGovernment services which are designed in a user friendly way and based on the needs of citizens and businesses can increase citizen engagement, participation and collaboration. For example, mobile government services will be organised around customers’ needs and businesses, local councils, community learning centres, agents and the public will have a role in designing and implementing new or enhanced services. This will ensure a higher level of civic engagement and more transparency and efficiency in the public sector. | | | |
| Ambition | Malta expects that the improvement of eGovernment services will ensure a more simplified, efficient and transparent public service where citizens can easily be consulted and engaged. | | | |
| VERIFIABLE AND MEASURABLE MILESTONES TO FULFIL THE COMMITMENT | | | | |
| 1. Deliver transformational eGovernment services to citizens and businesses through active use of mobile technologies. | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | Malta has fully implemented a Digital Malta Strategy App, an ARMS Utility Savings Mobile App (relating to the calculation of water and electricity bill) and a Park Majjistral Mobile App (relating to the services on offer at this particular Nature and History Park), a Heritage Malta app and a Custom Services Mobile App.  The following apps are near completion as at the time of writing:   * Malta Environment and Planning Authority / ERA App (for applications relating to environment and planning permits) (99%) * Gov.mt Mobile App (for general services) (96%)   The following apps are at over 80% development as at the time of writing:   * Enterprise CMS Responsive Design App (88%) * Taxation App (85%) * Justice Services App (80%)   The following apps are in the stages of development as at the time of writing:   * SMS Gateway Upgrade App (35%) * Health App (14%)   Converting all current forms within government services to the Control Management System Design is, at the time of writing, at 35% progress stage. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | New Projects related to Mobile Apps for Police Services.  Malta is also studying the possibility of setting up an Enterprise Mobile App Provision Platform for Government. It is also currently working on the drafting of a Strategy for mobile Government which is due to be published by the end of 2016. The Government of Malta has signed an MOU agreement with United Arab Emirates which includes Smart Government as one of the areas for collaboration. | | | |

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| 1. Improve the existing online authentication mechanism, re-engineer to reflect industry trends, and adopt a federated approach. | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | In relation to this commitment, the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) has implemented the following:   * A Technology Upgrade of the oId platform. * A Single Sign On screen that will facilitate the use of eID access. * An Authentication Restructuring exercise. This exercise was conducted with all Ministries and a number of eServices were identified for the removal of authentication. MITA worked on the removal of eID for these services and the exercise was completed in 2015.   Other Simplification Initiatives were also carried out, including;   * eID is issued with physical idCard * eID can be ordered over the phone * Password Expiry is extended to 1 year | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | * ‘Second wave of Simplification’ for 2016, principally Quick Activation for eID (with email link activation only), and Chip+PIN only for ID Card * Participating in the implementation of the Connecting Europe Facility Programme | | | |

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| 1. Implement initiatives to increase the up-take of online services and engage citizens and businesses to interact with Government. | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | This project consisted of three main components: (i) research services, (ii) a capacity building programme for public officials and local government officials, and (iii) an educational and awareness raising campaign aimed at the general public.   Malta delivered training to public officials and promoted eGovernment through various media addressing the public and businesses. MITAResearch was concluded with help from the public and businesses. Two seminars were held for senior public officials and Local Government officials to discuss how eGovernment can be more citizen-centric. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | A circular was issued with a number of policy statements to encourage further take-up of online services. The implementation of these policies is currently under way with the various stakeholders. | | | |

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| COMMITMENT 4 - PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION | |
| Lead implementing agency | Office of the Prime Minister – Department of Information |
| Name of responsible person  from implementing agency, Title | Ms Joyce Dimech, Permanent Secretary |
| Email | joyce.dimech@gov.mt |
| Phone | 00356 2200 ​1330 |
| Other  Actors  Involved | N/A |
| Status quo or problem/issue  to be addressed | Dissemination of up to date and comprehensive information on issues of public interest. |
| Main Objective | The main objective is to increase public access to information in order to increase public trust in the government and to ensure a higher level of civic engagement. |
| Brief Description of  Commitment | The commitment will increase public access to information, by providing the public with up-to-date, comprehensive and meaningful information on Government policies, services and activities as well as on matters of public interest on a constant basis by ensuring government portals are updated periodically. |
| OGP challenge addressed  by the commitment | Increasing public integrity |
| Relevance | The commitment will aim to improve services of public access to information, draft legislations, policies and strategies in order to ensure a higher level of transparency, increase civic participation, engagement and trust. |
| Ambition | Promote awareness and citizens involvement with Government and Institutions to increase public trust in political transparent systems. |

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| VERIFIABLE AND MEASURABLE MILESTONES TO FULFIL THE COMMITMENT | | | | |
| 1. Information available on websites will be updated periodically | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | Monthly meetings are held between all Chief Information Officer within all Ministries. Client Relations Managers liaise with the different Ministries and departments for the implementation of ICT projects. The Digital Malta Governance Board meets on a monthly basis. The Department of Information regularly contacts individual departments re content update. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing | | | |

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| 1. Ensuring more cooperation between different government departments by nominating a contact point from each department | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | Malta implemented a Sharepoint platform on which the Ministry and departmental websites are hosted. The content management of these websites is managed by the respective Ministry Office of the Chief Information Officer. Training and support relating to this platform is provided. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Ongoing process since information is constantly being updated. | | | |

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| 1. Creating easier access to information from a central platform | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | The Enterprise Collaboration Platform within the Public Service has been operational since October 2015 and, to date, there have been 20 collaboration / document archiving sites hosted on the platform. As part of the Public Sector Information Re-use (PSI) and the Open Data Initiative within Government, a portal will be established for the sharing of open data. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | * Keeping the platform operational and current whilst providing support to clients. * Design, development and implementation of the Open-Data Platform. | | | |
| COMMITMENT 5 – SOCIAL DIALOGUE | | | | |
| Lead implementing agency | Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties | | | |
| Name of responsible person  from implementing agency, Title | Mr Joseph Camilleri, Permanent Secretary | | | |
| Email | [joseph.b.camilleri@gov.mt](mailto:joseph.b.camilleri@gov.mt) | | | |
| Phone | 00356 2090 8313 | | | |
| Other  Actors  Involved | Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) | | | |
| Status quo or problem/issue  to be addressed | Improving methods of public consultation with the civil society. | | | |
| Main Objective | The main objective is to improve current public consultation methods in order to encourage more citizens to engage with the government by providing them with a stronger platform where they can voice their opinions and contribute their ideas and opinions. Furthermore, the commitment aims to improve the relationship between civil society and government by ensuring that MCESD is an effective catalyst between the various social partners and the government. | | | |
| Brief Description of  Commitment | The commitment will aim to widen the participation of civil society at the drafting and planning stages of national policies and strategies by strengthening current consultation structures such as MCESD and researching whether new structures are required to facilitate social dialogue. | | | |
| OGP challenge addressed  by the commitment | Increasing public integrity | | | |
| Relevance | The involvement of different stakeholders in planning and decision-making encourages government accountability and transparency. Furthermore, the commitment builds on the previous commitment to strengthen public access to information as it aims to increase civic engagement by improving public consultation methods.  MCESD is composed of key members from the Civil Service from several Ministries, the Presidents of the five main employers’ organisations and the Secretaries General of the largest Unions and representatives from the Civil Society Committee and the Gozo Regional Committee.  The Civil Society Committee is made up of representatives from 12 sectors namely, consumer affairs; health, elderly and pensioners; gender equality; professions; youth and students; sports; agriculture, rural and fisheries, environmental protection and improvement, including the protection of animals, culture, arts and national heritage; persons with disability; education, social and community advancement; local councils; and other voluntary organisations have been working on formulating joint recommendations and opinions. The scope of this committee is an inclusive one with much emphasis on active representation from all the respective sectors discussing issues of relevance to society, social wellbeing and the Voluntary Sectors which they represent.  The Gozo Regional Committee incorporates representatives from local councils, tourism associations, vocational organisations, student representatives and NGO associations among others. The main objective of the Gozo Regional Committee shall be to bring together regional constituted bodies, the Ministry for Gozo, local government and civil and non-governmental organizations operating from Gozo to promote the advancement, sustainability and enhancement of all aspects of the island of Gozo and its community. | | | |
| Ambition | The aim of this commitment is to ensure that after extensive public consultation, MCESD would be able to derive sound and concrete recommendations about socioeconomic matters based on what civil society and the general public wants and needs, which are then provided to the Government prior to any reforms or measures of relevance. | | | |

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| VERIFIABLE AND MEASURABLE MILESTONES TO FULFIL THE COMMITMENT | | | | |
| 1. Organise workshops with Civil Society organisations across Malta to discuss and develop National issues | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
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| Description of the results | In October 2015, a series of Seminars were organised both in Malta and Gozo primarily to discuss issues of interest to the various sectors namely (i) the Role of Civil Society to Economic and Social Wellbeing; (ii) Gozo in Europe & Job Opportunities and; (iii) the role of volunteering in the Gozo Identity.  As part of these seminars reports were compiled and published. The reports detailed the issues which both the Civil Society Committee and the Gozo Regional Committee deemed were of utmost importance and which deserved to be further discussed. These were presented to MCESD as well as the Gozo Regional Committee and the Civil Society Committee.  In 2015, the Social Partners within MCESD had the opportunity to visit the University of Malta Research facilities namely the Centre for Bio-medical Cybernetics (Faculty of Engineering), Laboratory of Molecular Genetics (Faculty of Medicine) and the Take-Off Incubation Centre. Social Partners present praised the researchers for their work and reiterated that more should be done to provide further funding for the research facilities. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | Future projects based on recommendations as compiled in the reports. | | | |
| 13. Further collaboration with NGOs working in the different sectors | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
|  |  |  | 🗹 |
| Description of the results | The MCESD is an observatory of the economic, social, environmental and cultural situation in Malta. MCESD frequently reacts to what is being discussed in Parliament. It is a source of proposals on social issues and the right forum for social and civil dialogue. MCESD also facilitates convergence between stakeholders with sometimes conflicting interests, on changes and reforms the country embarks on.  In 2015, MCESD met twenty-two times, an average of two meetings per month. Attendance at these meetings was very good and the contributions of all the Social Partners were, as always, of a very high standard. Among the topics discussed in 2015 were the issues of public transport, competitiveness, fuel prices, pensions strategy, tourism policy and the new Maternity Leave Fund Scheme.  In 2015 the Civil Society Committee met twelve times. Issues discussed included the simplification and reduction of Bureaucracy, Open Government Partnership, Malta’s EU Council 2017 Presidency and others. During the meeting on Open Government Partnership, the Civil Society Committee met with individuals responsible for implementing the Open Government Partnership initiative. Members were informed of the work that had already been carried out in the past. Members were asked for feedback on issues to be discussed so as to ensure that the Committee was actively involved in the process.  In 2015, the Gozo Regional Committee held nine meetings. During the five meetings, issues of relevance to the sister island were discussed namely connectivity and transport issues. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) is undergoing restructuring and this may result in further inclusion of civil society within MCESD. | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Promoting awareness of government portals which encourage citizens to submit their ideas / opinion | | | | |
| Completion level | **Not started** | **Limited** | **Substantial** | **Completed** |
|  |  |  | 🗹 |
| Description of the results | A consultation page for citizens / businesses was implemented. This is accessible from <http://socialdialogue.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/Pages/Home.aspx>.  Another webpage (Servizz.gov.mt) was also developed for citizens to submit ideas, complaints, etc. | | | |
| End date | 2017 | | | |
| Next steps | The implementation of a proper eParticipation platform is being considered. During 2016, a business analysis will be carried out. | | | |

1. **Consultation for NAP (2015-2017) Mid-Term Self-Assessment Report**

The lead Ministry being the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) carried out a public consultation between 12th and 26th December 2016 on the Mid-term Self-Assessment Report on the NAP (2015-2017). Two questions were mainly posed:

**Question 1** – From your point of view, what could be done to further realise the aspirations ofthe grand challenges or improve their respective commitment/outcomes in Malta?

**Question 2** - Are there any other approaches you believe the Government of Malta could or should adapt?

However, participants were free to give any feedback they deemed relevant. Thanks to the feedback provided, the lead Ministry is better able to address the requisite follow-up for the next National Action Plan.

The following set of submissions were received from the following entities:

1. **Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)**

*On Commitment 4 (Public Access to Information):* The use of the E-ID to access certain government websites can work as a barrier as it may make them less user-friendly and may also exclude certain groups that are not familiar with electronic tools. This is particularly relevant when considering the right of public access to environmental information under the Aarhus Convention.

*On Commitment 5 (Social Dialogue):* It is recommended to improve awareness of the general public regarding their rights to public participation. This can be achieved through social media. Further clarity is needed on the rights of the public to make submissions during decision-making meetings of public authorities. ERA recommends standardisation across government of the period for public consultations on regulations, to at least 4 weeks.

1. **MCESD Civil Society Committee**

***On Commitment 1 - Participation Of Women In The Public Service:* Family friendly measures like the child care system was well accepted.** A number of initiatives have proven to be conducive to the increase of women in the labour market which have undoubtedly impacted on the overall growth in Maltese economy. The Free Childcare Scheme as well as initiatives like Klabb 3-16 after School hours service, and the Breakfast Club are also supporting mothers and fathers to reconcile better their work life balance. The Maternity Leave fund out of which employers will be refunded for payment of paid maternity leave will eliminate the main disincentive for employers to employ women of child-bearing age due to the cost of maternity leave. These initiatives and the government’s commitment to put in place measures that support female employment are also slowly changing the rigid traditional expectations that have for a long number of years resisted a shift in culture and gender stereotypical roles. One can still note that the number of women working part-time as their main occupation is twice as many as that of men. This in turn, affects the at-risk-of-poverty rate of women and the gender pay gap.

The following suggestions related to the labour market, to improve the reconciliation of work and family leave for both parents and to support women who are undergoing particular difficult situations in their lives, including those suffering from violence and abuse.

* + 1. *Paternity leave:* A quota for parental leave for fathers which is fully paid to encourage more fathers to share the burden of care of least two weeks paid paternity leave on a ‘use or lose’ principle.
    2. *Parental leave:* An extension of the current 4 month (unpaid) in the private sector to 6 months.
    3. *Women in Decision Making*: The low female representation in government appointed Boards and Committees is also having a negative effect. Malta still holds one of the lowest representation in female representation compared with EU counterparts. Concrete measures should ensure at least 30% participation of women in all areas of decision making to strengthen our country’s democracy and to capitalise on the potential of all citizens.
    4. *Training:***Specific care must be taken when informing women to be further trained especially IT-related**

***On Commitment 2 - Training And Knowledge Sharing Amongst Public Service Employees:***

**In regard to courses offered to public service employees, at the end of each Module, participants were asked to undergo an exam or assignment. The organisation is a bit unprofessional even when receiving the results of each session, but all courses were very interesting and fruitful, not to mention that thanks to these courses one manages to make new contacts.**

***On Commitment 3 - E-Services Online:***

**This service is increasing and giving fairly good results for persons who are conversant with a computer. In fact the elderly are the most persons not being affected by this service since most of them are not computer literate and do not own a computer. It was suggested to use phone services for elderly persons especially those still living in their homes (e.g. for such services as electricity faults, heating problems especially in winter).**

*On Commitment 5 – Social Dialogue:*

**There are three main Government lead organisations in Malta dealing with civil society organisations. Representatives are only elected in the Civil Society Committee and MEUSAC. In the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS), representatives are chosen not elected. What this submission did not note is that the proposed amendments to the Voluntary Organisations Act (which are currently being tabled in Parliament) will, in fact, introduce the election of representatives in MCVS.**

**Furthermore, there are several organisations set up to answer the same objective. This dilution is not helping the particular sector to move forward. A unified federation should be introduced to gather all the various players in this field.**

1. **Conclusion**

The Government of Malta wishes to reiterate its commitment to the Open Governance Partnership in the spirit of promoting transparency, empowering citizens, fighting corruption and harnessing new technologies. In fact besides the commitments mentioned above, other initiatives were undertaken by Malta, that fall within the grand challenges of ‘Improving Public Services’ and ‘Increasing Public Integrity’ and reflect the Open Government Partnership values. These initiatives are described below:

* **Grand Challenge: ‘Improving Public Services’**

Malta is currently designing and implementing a number of measures to increase the participation of women in the labour market, in particular, through the promotion of flexible working arrangements, including:

* Free early- and after-school care services to bridge the gap between day school and regular working hours of parents in employment;
* The provision of free childcare and out-of-school centres (service is also extended to parents who are in education or part-time work, thus increasing the likelihood of mothers actually getting into sustainable employment.);
* Income tax deductions for the use of private childcare centres;
* Tax exemption for females joining the labour market;
* Extending parental income tax computation for parents with children under the age of 23 who are still in tertiary education, as well as;
* Encouraging increased use of family-friendly measures in the public and private sector, for example through the set-up of a special fund to finance maternity leave in the private sector which aims to make recruitment gender-neutral.

On the other hand, there were also other policy efforts to address the labour-market relevance of education and training, for example through the scholarship scheme **‘Master It!’** which started in 2013. The key objectives of the ‘Master It!’ Scheme are:

* To assist people to pursue further levels of academic research;
* Improve the quality and relevance of the education system;
* Reduce skills mismatches particularly within the priority economic sectors;
* Support further research in science and technology;
* Increase the capacity and level of research, innovation and development activity in Malta.
* **Grand Challenge: ‘Increasing Public Integrity’**

Malta aims at establishing a strong institutional framework for promoting integrity across the Public Sector while increasing public trust in the government and ensuring a higher level of social dialogue. This is one of the prime reasons why the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties was established in 2013, with a Minister responsible for Social Dialogue.

All decisions taken by Government effect the way of life of the citizens. Hence, it is a moral obligation that Government consults with those same individuals that will eventually be affected by such policies. The commitment to involve the widest possible consultation process is also manifested during the publication of white papers on new important legislation that Parliament would eventually legislate. Depending on the complexity of the legislation, this consultation process is spread on a number of months, sometimes even years. In this way, Government makes sure that all the interested stakeholders’ views are noted and evaluated. This same consultation process is carried out even on legislation and directives deriving from the European Union.

Moreover, the Maltese Government is committed towards a consultation process, which is well structured and of high standards. This vision will be implemented through Directive 6 -“Parameters for Consultation Exercises with Stakeholders” as outlined under the Public Administration Act. This Directive outlines the preparatory phase for consultation, such as, when one should consult; the level of stakeholders’ involvement; the type of communication and its clarity, timeframes, the consultation mechanisms and follow-up. This Directive binds all Ministries and Entities within the entire Public Sector to adhere to. Moreover following the issue of this Directive, Government formulated an Impact Assessment Framework which is a checklist that needs to be adhered to when new Legislation is to be forwarded to Cabinet for evaluation and approval. The Checklist is there to reaffirm the commitment that prior to the introduction of any new Legal Notice, the promoters would have consulted stakeholders and looked at its impact on Businesses, Gozo, Citizens and the Public Administration.

Malta has strengthened access to information by the implementation of E-Government Services and the re-enforcement of the Customer Care System (Servizz.gov). The focus of the eGov unit is to bring all the Government of Malta online services together in one simple, seamless framework. Malta’s vision for e-Government is to make it an essential component of public service transformation identified by a transparent, lean, well connected administration. Malta’s public administration will conduct continuous refinement of its processes, resulting in simpler, streamlined services designed to enhance the economic competitiveness and the quality of life in Malta. The goal is to seize the opportunity of technology to enable these outcomes.