

# Open Government Partnership 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan MALTA 2015-2017

## 1. Introduction

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The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a global effort to make governments better and more accountable. It aims to make governments more transparent, effective and accountable – with citizens that are empowered and institutions that are responsive to their demands and dreams. To further these initiatives is not easy and requires political leadership and political will in conjunction with technical knowledge. To implement these policies requires investment and sustained effort, and a dialogue of collaboration between governments and civil society.

The government of Malta is committed to 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 will focus on the following grand challenges, 'Improving Public Services' and 'Increasing Public Integrity'. The two grand challenges were chosen in collaboration with civil society.

### *Improving Public Services*

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

Over the past years, labour market participation of women in Malta, has improved but still remains considerably 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.

#### 2. 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.

### **3. 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***

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### **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. In fact way back in 1989, by an Act of Parliament, the Malta Council of Economic and Social Development (Cap.431) was established. This was primarily 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.

### **2. 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. Open Government Efforts to Date

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Malta submitted its' first National Action Plan (NAP) in June 2012 for the period 2012-2014, which focused on two 'grand challenges', namely: 'Safer Communities' and 'Increasing Corporate Accountability'. Since the submission of the First Action Plan in 2012, Malta has had a change in the administration with the prime commitment to implement, amongst others, better regulation principles and making better use of available information within Government. Malta has also strived during the years to create safer communities and improve corporate accountability. The following are a number of OGP thematic salient measures taken by Malta since 2013;

### **Improving Public Services:**

- Soliciting explicit input into simplification from businesses, the general public and Public Administration employees
- Simplification measures
- Improvements in social and healthcare sectors
- Confirmation of the Common Assessment Framework and revamp of quality service charters along with the stipulated service delivery dates
- Strengthening of the customer care function in line Ministries
- Design and work in progress on development of a one stop shop service including customer relationship management software tools to support its' operations

### **Increasing Public Integrity:**

- A Minister responsible for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties
- Public consultation meetings with Ministries every six months
- Online consultation during legal drafting
- Various email addresses and websites to solicit input into policy or better regulation
- Holding Cabinet meetings in different localities to hear local views / issues
- Consultation Directive and Guidelines under the Public Administration Act accompanied by capacity building / training
- Strengthening of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development
- Whistleblower Act
- Law on financing of political parties
- Improving efficiency of the judicial system

### **More Effective Public Resource Utilisation:**

- HR and skills strategy implementation, including equality work-life balances initiatives
- Energy policy and major energy reforms / projects
- Reform in the public procurement to reduce timelines and get better value for money
- Public private partnerships
- Sustaining investment in ICT and eGovernment
- All the above, and others, keeping in parameters of the EU Stability and Growth Pact (Deficit Reduction target; balanced fiscal consolidation with growth measures)

### **Creating Safer Communities:**

- Reform in the local enforcement
- Transparency in the leadership of Local Councils and in public procurement at this level

- Increasing role of Local Councils in security, sports, family, culture, environmental and inter-generational and social cohesion
- Street lighting

**Increasing Corporate Accountability:**

- The Public Administration Act
- Grievances Unit
- Strengthening Internal Audit and Investigations Department
- Introduction of a Fiscal Responsibility Act
- Increased fines for corruption cases

**Initiatives Accomplished and Progress on the First National Action Plan:**

- **Grand Challenge: ‘Safer Communities’**

**Commitment 1: ‘Cleaner Beaches’**

*It was recommended that a system is adopted whereby all beaches are daily maintained for an extensive number of hours, (example for 12-hours), from mid-June to September. Another recommendation was a waste separation process on Malta’s beaches during the summer months, whereby the public will be encouraged to participate in keeping the beaches in a clean and safe state.*

**Progress Achieved:**

On beaches which are managed by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), supervisors and lifeguards are aware of the importance of keeping the beaches clean and safe, and where possible to indicate and educate beach goers in properly using the waste separation bins for more effective waste management and recycling possibilities. Certified lifeguards and on-site beach cleaners are placed on these beaches during ‘Blueflag’ season, mid-June to September between 10.00 and 18.00.

All beaches are furnished with the following; shaded lifeguard platform with lifeguard emergency equipment, clinic room, various walkways, bridges and ladders to ensure easier accessibility, flag pole and safety flag system, swim zone perimeters (managed by Transport Malta), beach ashtrays and portable hand ashtrays for “Butts Off Sand’ campaign.

Beach cleaning is done by the Cleansing Services Directorate, daily tasks include, the removal of dead plants and other debris on a daily basis; raking of the sand early in the morning; hand picking of litter from sand, rocky areas and sand dunes; emptying of waste bins, emptying of separated waste and the general upkeep of the coast. Furthermore, MTA continued to promote the ‘Help Us Keep the Beaches Clean’ campaign.

## **Commitment 2: 'Construction of Safe Roads'**

*The continuation of the construction of safer roads, which should include zebra crossings, pavements, accessibility to reduced mobility persons, traffic lights, good water clearance and water capture areas. The roads were to be well lit with energy efficient lighting and a better traffic management.*

### **Progress Achieved:**

Arterial and Distributor Roads, for which Transport Malta is responsible, have continued to be built to higher and safer standards. The roads that have been upgraded since 2011 include where appropriate improved access for Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM) and water clearance and catchment. The reconstructions completed so far include the following;

- Hal Far Road, Hal Far
- Civil Aviation Avenue, Luqa
- St. Paul's Bay Bypass, St Paul's Bay
- Manuel Dimech Bridge, St Julians
- Council of Europe and Garibaldi, Luqa
- Xatt I-Ghassara tal-Gheneb, Marsa
- Marfa Road, Malta (Cirkewwa to Red Tower, Mellieha)
- Mgarr Road, Gozo (Tal Hneina, Xewkija to Victoria)
- December 13th Road, Marsa

Furthermore, the reconstruction of the Coast Road, Salina is in progress and the estimated completion date is by end of 2015.

These road improvements are in line with the TEN-T network which is a key element in the Lisbon strategy in terms of competitiveness, whilst playing a crucial role in securing the free movement of goods and passenger within the European Union. Transport Malta proposed the reconstruction and upgrading of 5 sections of the TEN-T road network in Malta which comprises of 51km of highway forming the main north-south transport corridor. The 5 sections are as follows;

- 1) Reconstruction and upgrading of Council of Europe and Garibaldi Avenue in Luqa;
- 2) Construction and upgrading of the Sea Passenger Terminal access road in Floriana/Marsa;
- 3) Reconstruction and widening of Marfa Road in Mellieha;
- 4) Reconstruction and upgrading of the road from Ghajnsielem to Victoria in Gozo;
- 5) Reconstruction of part of the Mellieha By-pass in Mellieha.

Through the upgrading of the 5 sections of roads indicated above, the Government aims to upgrade the road network by increasing the connectivity of Malta and improving the backbone transport infrastructure with a view to enhancing competitiveness and improving the quality of life of citizens and visitors. Strategic connectivity between the main towns and the road links leading to the island of Gozo, is vital in creating a knowledge-based economy whereby transport connectivity is an essential asset in successful areas. Reduced journey time enhances productivity and competitiveness particularly in an economy that is highly dependent on service sectors such as tourism. The selected projects are all located on the strategic route that links the airport and the cruise liner terminal with the tourist centres in Malta and Gozo and will facilitate the movement of tourists around the islands.

In 2011 Transport Malta embarked on establishing a major component of future Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) in the form of a control centre (incorporating an Intelligent Traffic Management System or ITMS) that over time will link to all the fragmented ITS deployments to be able to receive and control these centrally. This will allow Transport Malta to view and therefore manage traffic in an integrated way across wider areas of Malta and Gozo. The ITMS will also allow Transport Malta to relay near real-time information back to the road users via on-road signs, via the

media and online. In January 2013 Transport Malta submitted another report to the Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure (formerly as the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications) on the implementation of Intelligent Transport Systems - The National ITS Action Plan for Malta (2013 - 2017). The Action Plan is a synthesis of how Transport Malta intends to roll out Malta's first major ITS deployment which is split in two phases and spanning over an eight year time frame. The first phase will take place between 2013 and 2017 while the second phase will be carried out in the following three years, from 2018 to 2020.

A key component of this deployment is the ERDF funded project called "MODUS - Encouraging a modal shift in land transportation" which brings together a number of key ITS components being active Bus Interchanges, Bus Priority Measures, a Park and Ride facility, and the Intelligent Traffic Management System.

### **Commitment 3: 'Environment'**

*To keep the environment where we live cleaner and more attractive and have a place where citizens can relax, the following were being proposed:*

- *Continuation of the program to have more open spaces for recreation*
- *Installation of safer playing fields and continuous monitoring of such sites, including CCTV cameras for the safety of such sites.*
- *Installation of more bring-in sites for at source segregation of recyclables; the introduction of door-to-door collection of dry recyclables and the establishment of civic amenity sites for the separate collection of bulky household waste and household hazardous wastes*
- *Establishment of modern facilities for the management of wastes including a materials recovery facility for the further sorting of recyclables and a mechanical biological treatment plant aimed at the treatment of the organic fraction of municipal solid waste to generate biogas to be utilized for energy generation and compost*

### **Progress Achieved:**

In February 2013, the government inaugurated the Sant'Antnin Family Park which is open daily to the public. The rehabilitation of the closed landfill in Marsascula, used as a dumpsite in the 1970s, is one of the projects part financed by EU Funding for the rehabilitation of closed landfills in Malta & Gozo. The Sant'Antnin Family Park is intended as a leisure area for both local and foreign visitors. The project is spread over 80 tumoli of land. In addition to the recreational park, works have also included the restoration of St. Anthony's Chapel and the construction of a visitor centre, which serves as an education centre on waste management. Other parks were also opened in Bugibba and Pembroke

New public gardens were inaugurated in Gozo, (Villa Rundle and Gnien it-Tliet Gholjiet) providing for the best environment for children to play and grow in. Besides this in 2014, the embellishment coastal project known as the Zewwieqa Waterfront in the port town of Mgarr, Gozo was completed. Moreover through the ECO-Gozo Action Plan for 2010-2012, around 900 trees and plants were planted in these public gardens and watered by means of an irrigation system taking water from specific built reservoirs.

More than 150 playgrounds were inspected to ensure fencing is in place and the area is safe for children. Experts from several Government entities were appointed, including representatives of the Environmental Health Directorate, Malta Environment and Planning Authority, Occupational Health & Safety Authority, Local Council's Association and Malta Playing Fields Association to set

standards on the minimum requirements for the safe planning and management of play facilities and associated playground equipment. This will also ensure greater safety awareness among users and those who procure, install and maintain playgrounds equipment.

A waste management plan was launched in January 2014, focusing a resource management approach. A plan for 2014-2020, providing for better waste management practices, including minimizing our waste, and forseeing waste as a resource from which we do not only derive recycled materials, that lengthen the life cycle of virgin resources, or embedded energy but also a greener economy and the creation of more green jobs in line with the architecture of modern economies.

Civic Amenity sites have been established around the island. These are facilities where the public can bring and discard various types of bulky household waste, domestic hazardous waste as well as recyclable materials.

Engineered Landfills have also been introduced whereby the area used as a landfill is lined with different layers, including geo-synthetic and geo-textile membranes. This prevented leachate from the waste infiltrating the surrounding soil and water table. Also, the gases produced, such as Methane, has been be extracted and tests were carried out in order to process it to produce energy and reduce emissions.

Other facilities in operation include the Sant'Antnin Waste Treatment Plant in Marsaskala providing for better waste separation, recovery of recyclable materials for export, reduction in the use of the landfill sites, production of compost/stabilised digestate and electricity from waste, and provides green jobs in Malta.

– **Grand Challenge: 'Corporate Accountability'**

**Commitment 1: 'Transparency in Public Spending'**

*More transparency on how public funds are being spent which would be monitored through the setting up of different boards to ensure internal accountability and transparency and the amalgamation of the revenue earning departments that includes legislative amendments, HR, systems, and logistical arrangements to ensure a smooth transition process. This merger was a process through which Government was aiming at strengthening its capabilities in ensuring a fuller, fairer collection of tax and other dues due to it, to further strengthen its efforts against abuse while at the same time reducing bureaucracy for businesses and individuals.*

**Progress Achieved:**

The Fiscal Responsibility Act, which was enacted by Parliament on the 8th of August 2014, outlines the main principles of fiscal responsibility and the objectives of fiscal policy. The Fiscal Council which has been established through the Fiscal Responsibility Act will carry out fiscal oversight and monitoring to ensure that Government budgetary operations comply with the fiscal rules, assess and endorse the macro and fiscal projections, and assess whether the fiscal stance is conducive towards prudent economic and budgetary management.

With regard to the amalgamation of the revenue departments, during 2014 Legal Notice 273 and Government Notice 802 were published on 8th August 2014. These, together with the amendments to the Commissioner for Revenue Act which were issued recently, revert all previously delegated authority back to the Commissioner for Revenue. In December 2014, the Commissioner for Revenue

has delegated duties to each Director General. The organisational set up across the core functions of the Revenue Departments is as follows:

#### Top Management Structure

- Director General Operations: All Taxpayer Services and Interfaces, Data Processing, Accounting and Debt Collection (Including Cash Office) of VAT and Inland Revenue Department.
- Director General Support Services: All corporate services such as HR, procurement, information systems support across all Revenue Departments.
- Director General Legal and International: Legal and international relations of all Revenue Departments
- Director General Compliance & Investigations: Audits and Investigations to cover Income Tax, VAT and Duty on Documents. Inspectorate Unit for field audits and inspections for all Revenue Departments.
- Director General Legal and International: Legal and international relations of all Revenue Departments.
- Director General Customs.

The implementation of IT systems to support the integration and change management process is critical. Thus the IT aspect in the merger concept was given a major role and the implementation of the IT projects is on track.

The following is an update on all changes/processes affected in respect of the merger:

**Value Added Tax (VAT) and Inland Revenue Department (IRD) Accounting:** Currently remission of interests is being applied at Inland Revenue Department, whereas due to the complexity that the appropriation method had at VAT this has not yet been applied. A number of changes were effected mainly the appropriation system and the short payment penalty related to VAT. Changes to rationalise business processes and harmonisation between the legal acts are in progress. A number of changes were effected mainly the appropriation system and the short payment penalty related to VAT.

**Taxpayer Registration:** The Department has completed a data matching exercise between IRD and VAT registration processes. Ultimately this would lead to one common registration process.

**Cash Office:** The procurement process has been initiated to consolidate all cash office applications of the taxation departments. Work started in November, 2014 and is planned to be completed by April 2015.

**Taxpayer Services:** During January 2014, work started to implement document imaging within business processes at VAT Office. These were completed by August 2014. Subsequently, workflow management system was implemented in December 2014. VAT has started to implement the process of document imaging and work management processes using the system similar to IRD.

**Online systems:** The department has started to consolidate registration forms for the use of online services, delegations and assignments into one common process. This required revision of Inland Revenue Electronic Communications to be re-published under the Commissioner for Revenue. The redesign of the forms will eliminate duplications. A legal committee has been set up in order to draw up necessary changes.

**Compliance and Investigation:** The plan is in progress to have the Tax Compliance Unit/Tax Audits/Vat Inspectorate merged to the benefit of all functions within the different units. This will facilitate the investigation on high profile cases in respect of direct and indirect taxation.

With the integration of the Investigative units under the Commissioner for Revenue, tax evasion will be more professionally handled, resulting in the timely collection of dues by the Government. VAT Investigation Officers have joined forces with Tax Compliance Unit officials and plans are in place to relocate VAT Inspectors to the Compliance Investigations General Directorate.

### **Commitment 2: 'Taxation and Benefits abuses'**

*The aim was to minimise tax evasion as much as possible. It was recommended that this should be done through the increase in offsite income tax inspections and the enhancement of enforcement of tax collection; investment in more human resources in the investigation/compliance functions; introduction of measures to encourage moves from informal or undeclared work to regular employment; audit exercises through liaison between various government department and entities to curb abuse.*

#### **Progress Achieved:**

- Off-site VAT inspections were carried out on a daily routine basis
- A Call for the recruitment of Accountants/Senior Accountants is currently being processed Discussions are also underway to expedite the process for new HR posts.
- An exercise to curb tax on undeclared commercial rent had been carried out through information gathered from the Government Property Department and other sources. Audits on commercial rent tax evasion has been completed on an average of 40% of all cases.
- Limited scope audits on VAT Register B taxpayers (exempt from collecting VAT) is underway
- An exercise for the collection of tax arrears is underway
- On-site inspections being carried out by VAT Inspectors have given tangible results - this will be enhanced with risk based inspections, complemented by Tax Compliance Unit personnel
- The exercise on VAT register taxpayers is currently in full swing - clearer results should start coming out by mid-2015.
- Tax collection - Setting up of work processes for Remission of Interest Agreements (in terms of Legal Notice 361/2013). Over 450 Agreements finalised during 2014
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### **Commitment 3: 'Procurement'**

*It was recommended that procurement procedures should incorporate a balance between simplification, transparency and accountability through better use of electronic means and more openness in tender evaluation.*

#### **Progress Achieved:**

- The use of e-procurement for the publication of public tenders with an estimated value of €120,000 or above has become mandatory since January 2013 which has simplified the tendering process
- Continuous training and the setting up of a customer care support unit within the Department of Contracts is providing contracting authorities and economic operators the necessary support on public procurement issues and on the use of ePPS

- During 2014 nine Procurement Managers (PMs), two Directors and seven Senior Managers were recruited in order to strengthen the Supervisory function of the Department
- Rectifications during Evaluation Stage are now being allowed for Tenderer's Technical Capacity submission
- Improvements in the public procurement communication across the Public Administration through the issue of Procurement Policy Notes
- The reduction in the advertising period was implemented in December 2013
- The reduction of the tender validity period was implemented since 1st February 2015
- The award lead time has been reduced from 185 days to 115 days
- Since 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 a Diploma in Procurement and Supply has been offered to public employees as an initiative to make public procurement a profession of choice which will ensure a higher level of commitment and accountability
- Moreover, the tendering process will be simplified further in 2016 when a new EU directive on public procurement will come into force. New procedures will also make it easier for small to medium sized enterprises to apply for tenders, as the new rules are intended to increase competitiveness. The new rules also require that all tenders above the value of €10,000 can be subject to appeals. Training and a reorganisation of the Contracts department has already been done.

#### **Commitment 4: 'One-stop shop for Citizens'**

*Citizens wanted to see a reduction in bureaucracy when getting any public service and as much as possible by going to one entity. In this regards, the further use of Local Councils to act as one shop stop was encouraged, for example, citizens are offered social security services from the office of the local council once a week. This was supposed to form part of the reform which involved the extension of social security services on a regular basis within the heart of communities. As a result of this extension, the customer care facilities will be available to the residents of the localities at the office of the local council. The residents will not need to go to other villages of district offices for information and applications since their local council will offer this one-stop-shop facility. Among other facilities available to the residents, they will be able to apply for any social security benefits which do not need any notarial declaration, apply for the pink card and submit their sickness certificate.*

#### **Progress Achieved:**

While making customer care facilities available to the residents within localities at the Local Council Offices, Malta was also aware of the need for a "fundamental transformation" in the way government services are constructed, now that the digital society is a reality.

According to the eGovernment Benchmark 2012 report, Maltese e-government services support the government's openness and accessibility to standards well above the EU Average. In certain areas, these services stand out as good practice. In effect, Malta ranked among the top three in terms of user satisfaction, the availability of the services and the integration of key enablers of e-government (such as e-ID, e-documents and e-safety). Services for searching for a job were found to be among the most user-centric in Europe.

Notwithstanding these achievements, and according to this report, the Maltese interviewees for not using e-government services are that personal contact is preferred and that the service requires personal contact or the submission of papers anyway. Few mentioned security and data protection risks, difficulties in using the service or technical problems.

To this extent, Government introduced a set of simplification processes within the Public Service in 2014, mainly focusing on Accountability and the establishment of a one-stop shop mechanism. A Commissioner for Simplification and Reduction of Bureaucracy within the Office of the Prime Minister was also appointed to oversee the implementation of these measures.

## **Open Government Efforts Related to the Second National Action Plan**

The Government of Malta wish to reiterate its commitment to the Open Governance Partnership in the spirit of promoting transparency, empowering citizens, fighting corruption and harnessing new technologies.

In this Second National Action Plan, Malta shall be focusing in addressing the following Grand Challenges.

– **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,
- income tax deductions for the use of private childcare centres,
- tax exemption for females joining the labour market.

Furthermore, free childcare centres are also provided to parents who are in education or part-time work, hence increasing the likelihood of mothers actually getting into sustainable employment.

Other initiatives included,

- 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;
- and increase the capacity and level of research, innovation and development activity in Malta.

In regard to eServices, 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.

In this regard and as part of the Digital Malta strategy, a number of Digital Government initiatives are currently in progress. In particular, the simplification of existing digital public services introduced a number of new online services in the justice sector, with the aim of providing the legal profession with comprehensive court case information on multiple devices. Furthermore, in order to improve the accessibility of Government services, a number of mobile apps and services were launched in the

energy, environment and justice sectors. Together with the Digital Malta Strategy, a Programme of Initiatives was launched for 2014. Similarly, a Programme of Initiatives will be published on a yearly basis. Moreover, in October 2014, the Digital Malta Governing Body was set-up in order to provide leadership and support to stakeholders for successful implementation of the strategy

Malta has also increased its investment in School infrastructure, with new schools being built and old ones refurbished. New ICT technology plays also a very important and central role in the educational process of our citizens. In 2011, the Government started a programme of €2.6 million investment spread over five years to install 1800 Interactive Whiteboards in all state, church and independent schools. These Interactive White boards will enable teachers to deliver lessons in which students take a more participative role in the classroom, making learning more engaging and enriched with the ICT tools which the digitally aware generation interact with naturally. Such investment is not an investment in technology but an investment in students' education and in the professional development of all teachers and will introduce access to technology to an entire generation and disseminate a culture of innovation and innovative approach for mastering new technologies. This commitment should not be taken in isolation but one should mention also the Euro 8.6 million investments in eLearning Solution. Through this investment, learners in primary and secondary schools will have access to high quality interactive learning content and will be able to benefit from a personal online learning space that offers opportunities to collaborate with other learners, as well as learn more independently anywhere, anytime even outside school. The eLearning Solution will also provide educators with the means to create and maintain their learning materials online, and will enable the uploading, distribution, grading and storing of students' assignments in a purposely-designed online class space. This new technology will also provide educators with the facility to assess and monitor their learners' progress online and will facilitate the transfer of knowledge with other educators in different schools and teaching communities.

Parents, on the other hand, will be able to actively participate in their child's learning process whilst benefiting from the advantages that an online environment provides, including facilitated means of communication with their children's educators. The new technology will give parents easy access to their children's learning materials and school work whilst enabling them to monitor their child's educational progress. These policies are resulting in a higher student's intake in tertiary and vocational education.

#### – **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 has been 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.

Government is committed to improve and introduce new technologies for an open dialogue and accountability. In fact, throughout 2015 -17 we will see the implementation of an aggressive eGov programme geared at transforming public services into catalysts of more competitive economy for Malta. We are currently engaged in:

- Implementing a Government-wide eProcurement system;
- An eForms platform which enables Ministries to deploy services online rapidly;
- An eGovernment operation targeted at having all public services online and concentrating primarily on simplification and on making services ever more accessible and transparent to drive efficiency and competitiveness;
- myBills - an integrated system which allows all public sector bills to be paid online from one portal.

Our vision for e-Government is to make it an essential component of public service transformation identified by a transparent, lean, well connected administration. This administration will deliver a guaranteed quality of service for all. 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. Our goal is to seize the opportunity of technology to enable these outcomes.

### 3. NAP Development Process

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The lead Ministry being the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties 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, Environmental, and Persons with Disability voluntary organisations)<sup>1</sup> as follows:

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

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

**Question 3** - Are there any approaches taken up by other governments which your organisation believes 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.

The Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs & Civil Liberties will be monitoring and reporting the progress of the Gran Challenges in consultation with all stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mcesd.org.mt/content.aspx?id=101764>

## 4. Commitments

| 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<br>Ministry for Education and Employment<br>Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties  |             |           |
| Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed  | Low rate of employment amongst 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 board 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.  |             |           |
| Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment  | New or ongoing commitment  | Start Date: | End Date: |
| 1.Wider availability of family-friendly measures (such as Tele-working, Reduced Hours, Job Sharing, Compressed Working Week and Flexible Work Schedules)   | Ongoing  | 2015        | 2017      |
| 2.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  | New  |             |           |
| 3.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 | Ongoing  |             |           |

## Commitment 2- Training and Knowledge Sharing Amongst Public Service Employees

|   |   |                    |                  |
|---|---|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>Lead implementing agency</b>   | Office of the Prime Minister - Centre for Development Research and Training   |                    |                  |
| <b>Name of responsible person from implementing agency, Title</b>                                   | Ms Joyce Dimech, Permanent Secretary  |                    |                  |
| <b>Email</b>  | joyce.dimech@gov.mt   |                    |                  |
| <b>Phone</b>  | 00356 2200 1330   |                    |                  |
| <b>Other actors involved</b>  | N/A   |                    |                  |
| <b>Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed</b>  | Further specialised training and development amongst public service management and employees  |                    |                  |
| <b>Main Objective</b>   | 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.   |                    |                  |
| <b>Brief Description of Commitment</b>  | 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.   |                    |                  |
| <b>OGP challenge addressed by the commitment</b>  | Improving Public Services   |                    |                  |
| <b>Relevance</b>  | 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. |                    |                  |
| <b>Ambition</b>   | 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.     |                    |                  |
| <b>Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment</b>                                | <b>New or ongoing commitment</b>  | <b>Start Date:</b> | <b>End Date:</b> |
| <b>4.Continue to strengthen the role of the Centre for Development Research and Training (CDRT)</b> | Ongoing   | 2015               | 2017             |
| <b>5.Ensuring that a wider range of middle and top managers receive ongoing training</b>            | Ongoing   |                    |                  |

### Commitment 3 - E-Services Online

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Lead implementing agency</b>                                   | Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)  |
| <b>Name of responsible person from implementing agency, Title</b> | Mr Tony Sultana, Executive Chairman   |
| <b>Email</b>  | tony.sultana@gov.mt   |
| <b>Phone</b>  | 00356 2599 2254   |
| <b>Other actors involved</b>                                      | Office of the Prime Minister – Department of Information  |
| <b>Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed</b>                | 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.  |
| <b>Main Objective</b>   | 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.   |
| <b>Brief Description of Commitment</b>                            | 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. |
| <b>OGP challenge addressed by the commitment</b>                  | Improving Public Services   |
| <b>Relevance</b>  | 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.  |
| <b>Ambition</b>   | Malta expects that the improvement of eGovernment services will ensure a more simplified, efficient and transparent public service where citizens can be easily consulted and engaged.  |

| Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment   | New or ongoing commitment | Start Date: | End Date: |
|---|---------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 6. Deliver transformational eGovernment services to citizens and businesses through active use of mobile technologies.              | Ongoing                   | 2015        | 2017      |
| 7. Improve the existing online authentication mechanism, re-engineer to reflect industry trends, and adopt a federated approach.    | Ongoing                   |             |           |
| 8. Implement initiatives to increase the up-take of online services and engage citizens and businesses to interact with Government. | Ongoing                   |             |           |

| <b>Commitment 4 - Public access to information</b>   |  |                    |                  |
|--|--|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>Lead implementing agency</b>  | Office of the Prime Minister – Department of Information   |                    |                  |
| <b>Name of responsible person from implementing agency, Title</b>  | Ms Joyce Dimech, Permanent Secretary   |                    |                  |
| <b>Email</b>   | joyce.dimech@gov.mt  |                    |                  |
| <b>Phone</b>   | 00356 2200 1330  |                    |                  |
| <b>Other actors involved</b>   | N/A  |                    |                  |
| <b>Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed</b>   | Dissemination of up to date and comprehensive information on issues of public interest   |                    |                  |
| <b>Main Objective</b>  | 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.   |                    |                  |
| <b>Brief Description of Commitment</b>   | 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. |                    |                  |
| <b>OGP challenge addressed by the commitment</b>   | Increasing public integrity  |                    |                  |
| <b>Relevance</b>   | 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.  |                    |                  |
| <b>Ambition</b>  | Promote awareness and citizens involvement with Government and Institutions to increase public trust in political transparent systems  |                    |                  |
| <b>Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment</b>   | <b>New or ongoing commitment</b>   | <b>Start Date:</b> | <b>End Date:</b> |
| <b>9. Information available on websites will be updated periodically</b>   | ongoing  | 2015               | 2017             |
| <b>10. Ensuring more cooperation between different government departments by nominating a contact point from each department</b> | ongoing  |                    |                  |
| <b>11. Creating easier access to information from a central platform</b>   | Ongoing  |                    |                  |

## Commitment 5 – Social Dialogue

|  |  |                    |                  |
|--|--|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>Lead implementing agency</b>  | Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties   |                    |                  |
| <b>Name of responsible person from implementing agency, Title</b>  | Mr Joseph Camilleri, Permanent Secretary   |                    |                  |
| <b>Email</b>   | <a href="mailto:joseph.b.camilleri@gov.mt">joseph.b.camilleri@gov.mt</a>   |                    |                  |
| <b>Phone</b>   | 00356 2090 8313  |                    |                  |
| <b>Other actors involved</b>   | Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD)  |                    |                  |
| <b>Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed</b>   | Improving methods of public consultation with the civil society  |                    |                  |
| <b>Main Objective</b>  | 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. |                    |                  |
| <b>Brief Description of Commitment</b>   | 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.  |                    |                  |
| <b>OGP challenge addressed by the commitment</b>   | Increasing public integrity  |                    |                  |
| <b>Relevance</b>   | 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.  |                    |                  |
| <b>Ambition</b>  | 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.  |                    |                  |
| <b>Verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfil the commitment</b>   | <b>New or ongoing commitment</b>   | <b>Start Date:</b> | <b>End Date:</b> |
| <b>12. Organise workshops with Civil Society organisations across Malta to discuss and develop National issues</b> | Ongoing  | 2015               | 2017             |
| <b>13. Further collaboration with NGOs working in the different sectors</b>  | Ongoing  |                    |                  |
| <b>14. Promoting awareness of government portals which encourage citizens to submit their ideas / opinion</b>      | Ongoing  |                    |                  |