

Malta

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Revisions

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How to cite:

Formosa, S., Gauci, J. (2023): [Malta](#). (date of access).

/ Overview

Geography: location (in Europe), bordering countries and waters

The Maltese islands consist of an archipelago of three Mediterranean islands: Malta, Gozo and Comino and a number of minor islets including the protected islet of Filfla. The main island of Malta has an area of 316.10 km². Malta is located in the Mediterranean Sea 93 km south of the Italian Island of Sicily and 300 km north of Libya.

Climate-wise, Malta is typically Mediterranean with hot dry summers and short cool winters with temperatures averaging 18°C and ranging from 12° to 42°C.

The population, as published by the National Statistics Office (NSO), stands at 514,564 as of 2019 (NSO 2019a). The largest locality, Birkirkara, has a population of 25,463. In 2019 home ownership was around 79% (NSO 2019b), although the rental property market is increasing its share mainly to cater for the influx of foreign workers which has significantly increased the population. It is to be noted that the component of the population comprising native Maltese is fairly stable with a low birth rate coupled with a relatively high life expectancy where around 19% of population are in the 65+ cohort. This statement needs to be seen within a context of a high population density of 1628 persons per km². The population also increases substantially during the summer months due to the influx of tourists (Malta Tourism Authority 2019). More information is in the **Planning System** section.

The island is also defined by higher ground that includes a number of hills in the north west of the island and the island of Gozo, the highest of which is Ta' Dmejrek, Dingli at 253 metres above sea level, and relatively low flat land within the centre and south of the island (Planning Authority 2020).

Malta has been a democratic republic since 1974 and has a GDP of about EUR 7 billion with an annual per capita income of EUR 17,000.

Social: ethnic groups, languages spoken

The Maltese social context is that of a typical Mediterranean culture consisting of a predominantly Maltese population that has formed over time from a diverse mix of races that includes a Semitic background evident in the roots of the Maltese language (but which is still written in the Latin alphabet) and European cultural influences including Italian, British, French and Spanish. Today's culture is highly diverse and multi-ethnic owing to the influx of foreign workers and migrants that now includes British, Italians (Sicilian), Eastern Europeans (Serbians, Russians, and other Europeans), Africans (Nigerians, Somalians, Libyans and other Africans), Indians and Filipinos. The local religion is still mostly influenced by Catholicism.

Malta has two national languages identified in the constitution: Maltese and English.

Political, legal and governance: form of government, EU policy status

Politically, Malta is a relative newcomer among independent nations, having been colonised for thousands of years. Gaining independence in 1964 and becoming a republic in 1974, Malta has been a member state of the EU since 2004 and part of the Eurozone since 2008 (Government of Malta 2020).

Malta is a parliamentary democracy, with the president serving as a symbolic head of state. The introduction of political, social and civil rights and the resultant reduction of social inequality in Malta can be said to have occurred over the last two centuries. The 1921 constitution saw voting rights being introduced for the male population voting for the Lower Senate. Following periods of unrest (the 1933 and 1939 legislatures saw the suspension of the constitution), the 1947 and 1964 constitution introduced more political rights. Pre-2005, Malta focused on the alignment of the relevant laws with EU legislation. The 1987 Human Rights Act incorporated the European Convention of Fundamental Human Rights.

At a lower level, local councils were established on 30 June 1993 through the Local Councils Act, 1993 (Act No. XV of 1993) (Local Government 2020). There are 68 councils of which 54 are in Malta and 14 in Gozo, with Comino delineated as part of Ghajnsielem in Gozo. There are also regional aggregates that enable inter-council decision making. Such have their own tribunals for local offences such as littering and traffic infringements.

The judiciary

Malta enjoys a separation of powers, based on the British system, each related but governing its own domain: the legislative (parliament), the executive (cabinet of ministers), and the judiciary. The latter is served by both judges and magistrates who are

Appeal and hears appeals from the Civil Court, Court of Magistrates, special tribunals and the Criminal Court. A further court concentrates on constitutional remedies: the Constitutional Court that has jurisdiction on human rights violations and electoral fraud. The introduction of local tribunals helped ease the pressure on the law courts by dealing with minor infringements of the law such as traffic offences and school truancy. These courts may be presided over by a Commissioner of Justice who may be a lawyer. The law courts still offer a final remedy on a point of law and deal with any miscarriages of justice or otherwise from such local courts as the local councils and regional tribunals, the planning decisions system and other sentencing issues.

/ General information

Name of country	Malta
Capital, population of the capital (2019)	Valletta, 5,891 (NSO)
Surface area	320 km ² (World Bank)
Total population (2020)	515,332 (World Bank)
Population growth rate (2010–2020)	24.32% (World Bank)
Population density (2020)	1610.4 inhabitants/km ² (World Bank)
Degree of urbanisation (2015)	66.74% densely populated areas (European Commission)
Human development index (2021)	0.918 (Human Development Reports)
GDP (2019)	EUR 11,780 million (World Bank)
GDP per capita (2019)	EUR 23,371 (World Bank)
GDP growth (2014-2019)	41.34% (World Bank)
Unemployment rate (2019)	3.35% (World Bank)
Land use (2018)	29.9% built-up land 51.7% agricultural land 0.65% forests and shrubland 17.67% nature 0.09% inland waters (European Environment Agency)
Sectoral structure (2017)	88.7% services and administration 10.2% industry and construction 1.1% agriculture and forestry (Central Intelligence Agency)

To ensure comparability between all Country Profiles, the tables were prepared by the ARL.

/ Administrative structure and system of governance

Political, legal and governance: form of government, EU policy status.

The president, the prime minister, and the cabinet

Malta as an island state is a republic that embraces democracy wherein the rule of law is safeguarded through the separation of powers: legislative (parliament); executive (cabinet of ministers); and a judicial branch (the courts). The three institutions of the state are autonomous but inevitably interdependent (Government of Malta 2020).

...not every five years in view of ensuring the rule of law, every person has the right to a fair trial, the presumption of innocence holds and legal aid is provided if a person cannot afford the services of lawyers.

Parliament is the legislative branch of the state. Each law obtains legitimate power as it is approved and signed off by the president of Malta.

The executive is composed of the government machinery that is the various government departments and entities, from the prime minister to the 68 local councils. The executive branch is responsible for the implementation of the laws approved by parliament. The police and the armed forces are also part of the executive branch.

The judiciary could be considered the most important pillar; it is composed of the Civil Court, Criminal Court and the Constitutional Court. It is noted that in view of the recent changes related to the nominations to serve as a judge or magistrate, the process is scrutinised by a committee that is composed of representatives from the judiciary itself, among others. This safeguards the rule of law as the process ensures transparency and meritocracy.

The president is the head of state whilst the prime minister is the head of government. The president must consent to and sign every law in order for it to come into effect. The prime minister is responsible for running the country through parliamentary sittings and cabinet meetings. The cabinet meetings are attended by the prime minister, ministers and parliamentary secretaries as junior ministers. Parliamentary sittings are aired on the various local media. The president of Malta is appointed through a parliamentary resolution every five years. However, a recent legal change will see the president appointed by a 2/3 parliamentary majority. The president serves one term of office. The prime minister is sworn in by the president, and is deemed by the president as being the one who enjoys the support of the majority of members of parliament.

Ministers are appointed and sworn in by the president following the advice provided by the prime minister. The president can also appoint parliamentary secretaries to help ministers carry out their duties following advice given by the prime minister. All ministers, parliamentary secretaries and the prime minister are to be members of parliament.

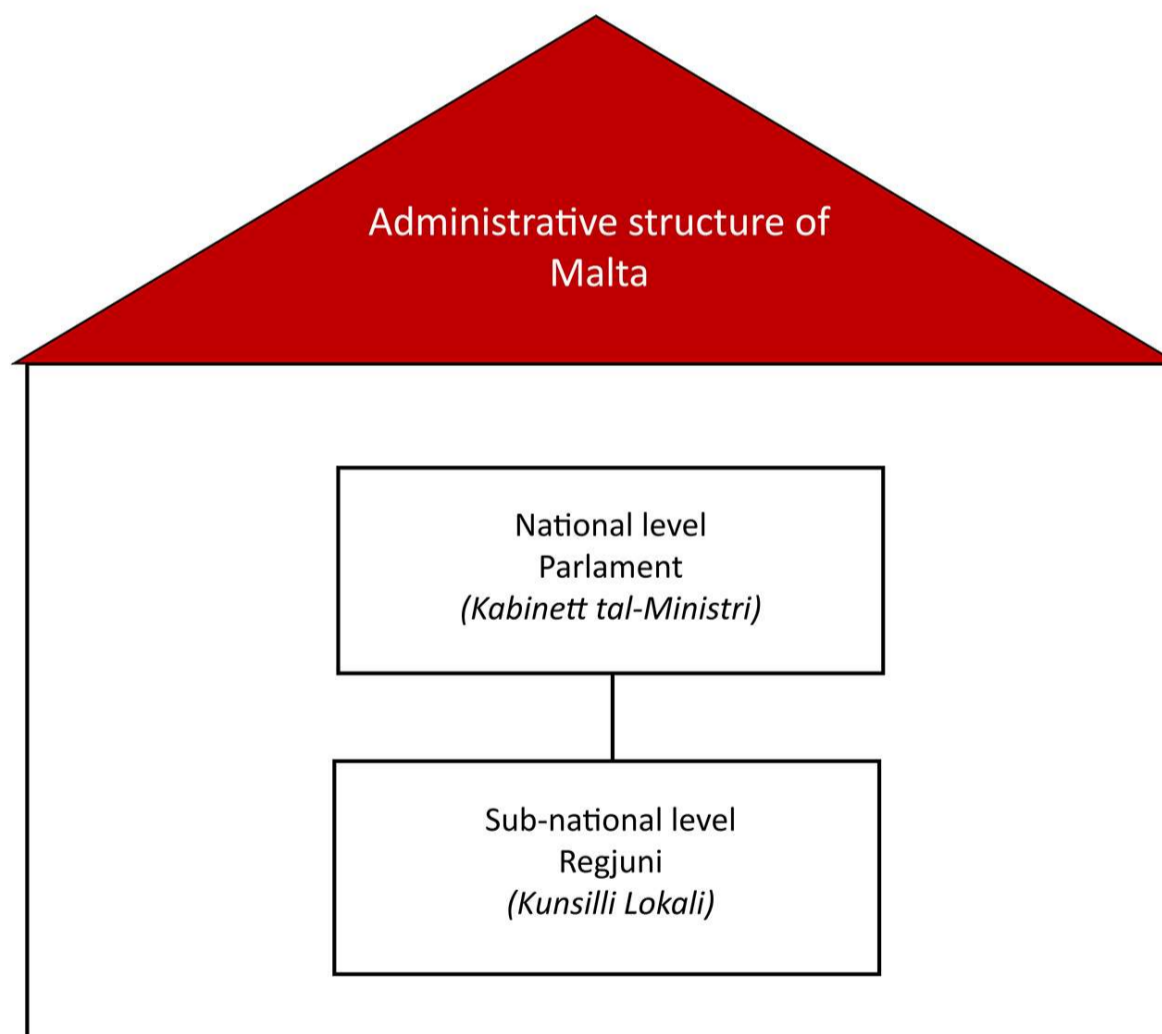


Figure 1: Administrative structure of Malta

Parliament and elections

In contrast to many large countries the parliament in Malta consists of one chamber known as the House of Representatives. Parliament may meet for a maximum of five years before it is dissolved so that a general election can take place (Government of Malta 2020).

Members of parliament are elected from the 13 districts that cover the Maltese islands. Every district elects a total of five deputies. Along with the 65 members directly elected in this manner, more members may be added according to the provisions of the constitution; this is in order to safeguard a policy of proportional representation in accordance with the votes received by every political party. A recent law will see more women elected to parliament, such that the House of Representatives could have up to 12 more seats hailing from the underrepresented gender.

for them elected in the event of resignations, and vote may be influenced by numerous candidates across the political spectrum in accordance with the voters' preference. This system leads to an electoral result which is more representative than a system where every voter votes for a single candidate. A candidate may be elected from two districts, choosing the preferred district and allowing the vacant seat to be contested by other candidates. This system is based on the preferred candidate rather than the preferred party/movement/independent spheres. Elections in Malta are highly contested with a significant number of candidates vying for each electoral seat.

The judiciary and other independent state institutions

Maltese democracy is also dependent on a number of autonomous institutions which safeguard the people's rights. The constitution provides a number of legal provisions which safeguard the fundamental rights of the individual. Any individual who feels their rights have been infringed or threatened may seek recourse in the courts. The same constitution safeguards the autonomy of the law courts. As per the constitution a judge or magistrate may only be removed from their office by a vote which is not less than two-thirds of the members of parliament. Such removal from office relates to proven incapacity or unethical behaviour on the part of the judge or magistrate (Government of Malta 2020).

There are other institutions that ensure the rule of law and safeguard the human rights of people living and working in the Maltese islands. These include:

- the Public Service Commission, which ensures that the principle of merit is exercised within the civil service,
- the National Audit Office, which examines the use of public resources and
- the Ombudsman, who hears and investigates complaints about maladministration and provides recommendations.

The Ombudsman, Auditor General, and Deputy Auditor General are also considered to be parliamentary officials. They are appointed by a parliamentary resolution which must be supported by at least two-thirds of members of parliament.

Public administration

Malta, similar to other countries, has its own public administration. Depending on its functioning and efficiency, every public administration has a direct impact on the development of a country, and on the well-being of its citizens. An efficient public administration allows for set goals and targets to materialise whilst at the same time enhancing the people's trust in the public administration.

Public administration is composed of ministries, departments, agencies, and a number of other government entities (Government of Malta 2020). These public organisations give advice to ministers in the fields falling within their competence, implement government decisions and advise on policy. Some of these organisations have an independent role, in the form of regulatory authorities overseeing particular sectors. Such authorities include the Malta Tourism Authority, Maritime Authority and Communications Authority, to name just a few.

Government ministries and departments make up what is referred to as the public service, which is considered to be the administrative branch of government. Within the public service's remit there are also the authorities, agencies, foundations, and commercial companies which were set up by or are controlled by the government. The highest tier of the public service is occupied by the Principal Permanent Secretary or the Head of the Civil Service, after which come the permanent secretaries pertaining to each ministry, director generals, and directors.

All ministries have a minister's secretariat and, if there is a permanent secretary, their secretariat as well. The ministry also includes the office of the permanent secretary, who is a career official within the public service, and functions as the principal executive official of the ministry under the direction of the minister. A ministry may also include a number of permanent officials who provide services to the public, or who serve other established functions.

Besides ministries, there are also government departments. These are permanent organisations which form part of government's administrative mechanism that is the executive branch. The head of each department takes directions from the permanent secretary of the ministry of which they form part.

The employees of each ministry and department (apart from those employees who are engaged by the ministry on a trust basis as political appointees) are part of the public service, and are called public officers or civil servants. As part of the public service, these officials do not lose their jobs if there is a change in government, but at the same time they are obliged to serve loyally under whichever government is elected.

The public service has within its ranks approximately two-thirds of all public administration employees. The remainder of the public administration consists of the following entities:

- government companies.

These entities co-exist in both administrative and functional matters as they collaborate on decision making, such that policy-making and decision-taking are exercised through both technical and professional officers to reach common agreements on progressive outcomes. This can relate, for example, to the exchange of fundamental data and information for knowledge purposes and implementing actions. A specific example is the SIntegraM (Spatial Data Integration for the Maltese Islands) project and its Cloudisle and Portal outputs (European Commission 2020; Formosa 2017; Planning Authority 2019), where all entities came together to share spatial data layers that eliminated duplication, redundancy and data hoarding. Another collaborative aspect emanating from the project covers the 3D spatial component of the collaboration. This is complemented by another ERDF project entitled CONvErGE (Dimech 2021) that brings together a connected e-government whereby the decision-making process has been enhanced through shared datasets.

Local government

Malta has a system of local government which was introduced via the Local Councils Act in 1993 (Local Government 2020). This law established 67 local councils, although one further council has since been added, such that today there are 68 local councils – 54 in Malta, and 14 in Gozo.

Local councils are composed of five to 13 elected members, depending on the size of the locality, the population and the nationally important functions or areas such as tourism zones. Elected members that serve on the council include the mayor and deputy mayor. Every council is supported by an administration consisting of an executive secretary and a number of other employees, which varies according to size. Initially, every local council was elected for a period of three years, but following reforms which were enacted in 2015, this period has now been extended to five years and coincides with national elections. The council's role includes the general upkeep of the locality, as well as public gardens and other local facilities, while also being responsible for the collection of domestic waste. Councils also organise a number of activities for local residents. They also have a consultative role with regard to development permits, planning schemes, and traffic arrangements in the locality. In the service of their functions, councils have the power to enact bye-laws or regulations.

The local government system in Malta also includes five regional committees. Each regional committee is composed of local council representatives hailing from that region, and serves as a collaborative mechanism between councils. The regional committees also play a role in the enforcement of laws and bye-laws.

System of powers of Malta				
		Legislature	Executive	Judiciary
Sub-state level	Local	Local Councils Chapter 363 Local Councils Act there are 68 local councils	Local Council chaired by the Mayor	Local Tribunal (Article 35 of Local Councils Act)
	Regional	Regions – 6 regional Councils	Regional Council	Administrative Tribunal
State level	National	Parliament (House of Representatives). Members of Parliament are elected from 13 districts with every district electing five deputies.	Cabinet of Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries (junior minister) and all public sector/public entities (Administration)	Superior Courts (Judges sit on these courts) include Constitutional Court, Court of Appeal, Court of Criminal Appeal, Criminal Court, Civil Court Inferior Courts (Court of Magistrates for Malta and Court of Magistrates for Gozo with the latter Court also having superior jurisdiction) There are three independent institutions which are the Public Service Commission, the National Audit Office and the Ombudsman

Figure 2: System of powers of Malta

/ Spatial planning system

Being an island state with particular geographical features, limited natural resources and a small economy, Malta's economic growth and development depends on its ability to turn its natural, demographic and geographical characteristics into strengths. This process is, however, dependent on Malta's strategic approach towards addressing its main challenges with regard to energy generation and consumption, transport sustainability, and the challenges within the water and waste sectors whilst ensuring environmental preservation and sustainable development (Environment and Resources Authority 2018). In an era of economic challenges, Malta has taken stock of its needs and challenges and has identified actions which will contribute to securing economic stability and sustainable development. The country requires strong spatial management to ensure that the limited space is utilised efficiently and effectively. The government's current economic policy is to shift from a traditional economy to the forefront of a digital, knowledge-based and innovative economy. This is supported through legislative mechanisms coupled with educational reform intended to provide the necessary skilled workforce for these ventures. This is a shift which needs to be complemented by a greener and more resource efficient environment as well as an inclusive society which is more services oriented.

Land is a finite resource and in such a small country as Malta, the rational use of land is possibly the most difficult responsibility. The type and quality of the land affects its use and while some land can only be used for a limited range of activities, other land can accommodate a wide range of potentially conflicting uses as evidenced through the European Environment Agency (EEA) State and Impacts Report (EEA 2010). The conflicting requirements of various activities on such a small landmass as that of the Maltese islands can be considerable. This needs to be supported by an appropriate management structure that ensures that these conflicts do not lead to huge environmental problems.

with an increased awareness of environmental protection.

Urbanisation in the Maltese islands has been increasing for the past half century. The rapid urbanisation that occurred between the 1960s and 1980s led to massive urban sprawl, which in some cases resulted in the coalescence of adjacent villages and towns. The development of new roads leading to the various villages, especially on Gozo, resulted in development along these main thoroughfares and a predominantly ribbon-type development that has greatly extended previously compact villages. The impact of this can be seen in the take-up of virgin land as well as the need to provide services and infrastructure away from the central areas, as well as in the character and social cohesion of the villages (Planning Authority 2020).

Of the 315.4 km² making up the Maltese islands, 71.4 km² are classified as urban. Urban areas are defined as those locations within areas schemed for development in the Temporary Provisions Schemes of 1988. This includes areas zoned for housing, retail, industry, community uses, etc., and also includes areas located within the coastal zone. This does not mean that urban-type uses and structures are not found outside these areas. In fact, a not insignificant percentage of the rural areas has been built up over the years to accommodate uses and activities that cannot be accommodated within urban areas due to their specific neighbour-unfriendly character (e.g. farms, landfills, quarries, etc.), as well as a number of developments that required appreciable land areas that could not be provided within the development zone.

Of the 61.9 km² of land within the coastal zone, 56.9 km² are designated as being outside the development zone. However, some uses are legitimate on the coast since they involve activities that require a coastal location (e.g. thermal power stations, ports, desalination plants).

The Development Planning Act of 2016 regulates land-use planning on the Maltese islands, and lists the legal plans and policies in effect which are to be considered when assessing development proposals (Planning Authority 2020).

The most important strategic policy framework in force is the Strategic Plan for Environment & Development (SPED), which provides a long-term spatial strategy for the Maltese islands in line with the government's policy aims and objectives (Planning Authority, 2015a). The SPED sets out proposals for the future distribution of development and the protection of the environment on land and sea. It is consistent with national policies, integrates the government's social, economic and environmental objectives and guides the spatial aspect of the government's sectoral policies, plans and programmes. The SPED is an enabling plan aimed at securing a more integrated approach to the management of development and environmental protection at a national level. In line with government policy, the plan seeks to enable economic growth, strengthen employment opportunities, increase competitiveness and innovation whilst ensuring a healthy environment for future generations.

For rural areas, the plan calls for the rehabilitation of the natural environment and the protection and enhancement of the Maltese landscape and its rural recreational resources. Sustainable and diversified rural development will be encouraged together with development that is considered to be incompatible with urban uses. The plan provides for the protection and enhancement of coastal and marine recreational resources and proposes that uses that necessitate a location on the coastal zone and marine area need to be prioritised. Fishing and aquaculture practices need to be sustainable and diversified.

In terms of land-use management, local plans covering the whole land base of the Maltese islands have been in effect since August 2006 (Planning Authority 2007). Land-use zoning and policy parameters are provided for each of the 68 localities against which development requests are assessed. Currently there are seven local plan areas in the Maltese islands. The local plan areas do not conform to the administrative regions identified in the Local Councils legislation. It is the intention to update the local plans so as to reflect the current strategic spatial policy and to rationalise their number by having a General Local Plan and two Area Local Plans – one for Malta and another for Gozo. The Local Plan provides the framework for development within the plan area for up to 10 years, following its adoption by the government. The primary thrust of the Local Plan is to protect and secure the enhancement of all the assets in the area, to achieve a more sustainable quality of life and efficient use of land for all sectors. A Local Plan deals mainly with land-use planning and development issues, and indicates where development can take place, the type of development and the criteria against which development proposals are to be assessed by the Planning Authority. Its main function is to guide development by seeking a sustainable balance between the economic and social needs of the public (e.g. requirements for homes, shops, employment, transport, recreation and community facilities) and the need to protect and improve the existing urban and natural environment and to meet future demand in a sustainable manner. This is a complex task as requirements are diverse and very often conflicting and the various individual interests have to be balanced against the needs and interests of the general public.

The functions of the Local Plan are:

proposing allocations for particular land uses, defining areas in which particular development control policies will apply, safeguarding areas for specific future land uses and defining standards and other criteria to which development must conform;

- To designate any specific areas within the Local Plan boundaries where outline proposals will be developed further through more detailed planning briefs and to provide a basis for promoting and coordinating public and private development opportunities;
- To put forward proposals for the improvement of the quality of the living environment, particularly transport-related proposals for the improvement of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic as well as parking;
- To bring local and detailed planning issues before the public, and to offer solutions to these issues;
- To highlight all areas that require protection from development for social and environmental and other planning reasons.

The overall strategy of Local Plans is to improve the quality of the environment for the population living within the respective local plan areas and to ensure that sufficient provision of land has been made to meet demands not only with regard to housing and employment, but also to accommodate facilities such as social and community and recreational facilities. The strategy seeks to make efficient use of the land designated for development through various policies, including a policy of containment of existing settlements. The Local Plans aim to secure an improvement to the quality of the environment of urban areas through various measures including ensuring the provision of appropriate sites outside residential areas for the relocation of neighbourhood-unfriendly activities, the introduction of traffic management schemes in all localities, and facilitating the provision of support facilities like social and community facilities, etc. With regard to the rural and coastal environment, the respective Local Plans seek to facilitate the rehabilitation of degraded rural landscapes and to protect and safeguard the limited coastal stretch for the provision of recreational facilities.

Supplementary Guidance policies also provide vital support in assessing urban development proposals through the widely used Development Control Design Policy, Guidance and Standards 2015 policy document which came into force in November 2015 (Planning Authority 2015a). This policy document sets out a context-driven approach which guides the design of urban development.

Urban planning is one of the cornerstones of the Maltese spatial planning system. The Maltese islands embrace a variety of building forms, from the vernacular and rural building types to the gridiron patterns of major cities and towns. Each has its own character and distinctiveness, which has unfortunately often been negatively affected by modern developments or inappropriate interventions in the existing, older fabric. The planning of urban areas is therefore an important aspect of national policy, which serves to preserve and foster local culture and identity while providing modern amenities and infrastructure.

Development Control Design, Policy Guidance and Standards (DC15) – Since the coming into force of the DC15, development permission applications have increased steadily. The design guidance addressed several anomalies in the previous design guidance policies, including the introduction of a new context-driven approach. This approach allows for flexibility in decision-making so that the development results in a positive contribution to the visual context of an area. The increase in interest for development may also be a result of the flexible approach, which also allows for higher densities in urban development, hence making projects more attractive and profitable to developers. Development proposals are assessed on a case by case basis by taking cognisance of the context and the capacity of the area to accommodate their proposed use (Planning Authority 2015b).

The Malta Planning Authority (PA)

There is only one level of decision-making in terms of planning, that of the national level, where the Planning Authority is the only entity and there are no sub-levels at the regional and local levels. The current Planning Authority was established in 2016 following the demerger of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority. It is a parastatal agency that falls under the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. The Planning Authority is responsible for spatial planning and the management of the development planning application process (Planning Authority 2020).

The Planning Authority is composed of the following structures:

- Executive Council – chaired by the Executive Chair and responsible for plan- and policy-making as well as determining planning control applications (which establish zoning, building heights and road alignments); it is the overall administrative decision-making body of the Authority.
- Planning Board – responsible for determining major development planning applications
- Planning Commission – responsible for determining development planning applications

- Development Management Directorate – responsible for processing development planning applications
- ICT, Mapping and Digital Services Directorate – responsible for geomatics (including the function of the Maltese Mapping Agency), land surveying and information technology
- Enforcement Directorate – responsible for monitoring development and compliance
- Corporate Services Directorate – responsible for human resources, finance and support

Other stakeholders in the planning system include: Transport Malta (TM), Superintendence for Cultural Heritage (SCH), Heritage Malta (HM), Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), Ambient Malta (AM), Infrastructure Malta (IM), Water Services Corporation (WSC), Energy and Water Agency (EWA), Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS), EneMalta, National Statistics Office (NSO), Regjuni, local councils, and all public sector and public service entities.

Planning system of Malta						
Planning level	Planning instrument	Content of plan	Legal basis	Policy maker	Legal impact	Scale
National	Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (Act VII of 2016 renames this plan as the Spatial Strategy)	Strategic spatial direction reflecting national economic, social and environmental plans and policies	Chapter 552 Development Planning Act (Act VII of 2016)	Malta Planning Authority (as approved by Parliament)	Binding for lower tier spatial plans and policies	Nationwide (up to 25 nautical miles from the baseline coast)
National	Subject Plans	Deals with specific planning matter eg. Waste management and sets out policies in relation to development management	Chapter 552 DPA sub-article 47	Malta Planning Authority	Plan applies to all relevant areas of the Spatial Strategy such that it supersedes any other plan or policy	Nationwide
Regional (not conformant to NUTS aggregation)	Local Plans (currently there are seven in place. To be revised to 2 – one for Malta and one for Gozo)	Deals with specific development planning matters of an area by setting out zoning and building height parameters that are not taken solely into account by the SPED	Chapter 552 DPA sub-article 48	Malta Planning Authority	Binding localities falling within the region	Regional
Sub-regional / Sub-Local	Action Plan/ Management Plan	Deals with a specific zone in local plan/s that requires thematically focussed action (e.g. Qawra Action Plan)	Chapter 552 DPA sub-article 49	Malta Planning Authority	Binding for lower tier spatial plans	Sub-regional/sub-local
National spatial thematic	Other policies e.g. Planning Guidance	Deals with a specific matter on a national scale e.g. Retail Planning Guidance	Chapter 552 DPA sub-article 50	Malta Planning Authority	Takes forward strategic policy in greater detail as based on a specific thematic requirement	National in a thematic context
Site specific	Development brief	Deals with a specific site or specific small area	Chapter 552 DPA sub-article 51	Malta Planning Authority	Sets detailed environmental and development planning parameters a specific site	Site specific

Figure 3: Planning system of Malta

Urban Regeneration through the SPED & the Valletta Strategy – The spatial strategy set out in the SPED designates the Grand Harbour Area as a strategic node for integrated regeneration, and specifically singles out Valletta as one of the localities demanding special attention to lift persons out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion. The SPED further designates Valletta as one of the island's leading business hubs and a core commercial node for retail, office, culture, tourism, and leisure services. The government is determined to enhance Malta's capital city by committing itself to implementing a holistic and wide-ranging plan for the Grand Harbour Area. Past experience shows that a number of segregated projects which were executed within this area did not attain their full potential, although it has to be recognised that these projects nevertheless each have their particular importance (Planning Authority 2015a).

In this context, the government has identified the following aspects as the main objectives of the Valletta Strategy:

- Improve the quality of urban living in Valletta with a wide mix of quality residential units and quality open spaces. This should be supported with more social and community services such as schools, health services, facilities for the elderly, family hubs etc.
- Fulfil the role of a centre of excellence for urban heritage management and conservation and safeguard for future generations the cultural assets of the world-heritage city;
- Attract more high-end retail outlets to Valletta and also facilitate the setting up of more offices coupled by auxiliary services such as food and drink for employees, users, visitors and tourists;
- Update the Valletta Transport Strategy of 2004 and prepare a SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan) for Valletta;

accommodation within Valletta;

vii. Consolidate further the administrative aspect of the capital city by better prioritising the use of the government-owned buildings in Valletta;

viii. Improve the quality of the urban environment and its upkeep;

ix. Ensure better coordination among all stakeholders

The approach for Valletta is to identify key strategic nodes which will have a multiplier effect on their surroundings and at the same time create links between them. These strategic nodes will undergo interventions which will not be stand-alone projects but will also permeate the surrounding areas. The creation of successful urban places is not only about buildings; it is just as much about the quality of the streets, squares, piazzas and other open spaces that comprise the public realm of the place. These are the 'living spaces' of Valletta, and their design, management and use are just as important to their success as every other aspect of their planning, design and development. A well-designed, well-managed and well-used public realm is essential to the vitality and vibrancy of urban places. A Valletta with high quality streets, piazzas and gardens can become a more attractive place to live, work and visit, and a destination for residential, commercial, industrial and cultural investment, including tourism. The strategy was elaborated in conjunction with key stakeholders including the Valletta Local Council, NGOs operating within Valletta and the community. Several consultation sessions with residents were organised to ensure that the strategy was built on a bottom up approach. The EU Territorial Agenda, the EU Urban Agenda and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities influenced the formulation of the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development and the subsequent plans and policies that emerged from it. The importance of the place-based approach, social-led regeneration processes, community-based planning and the importance of a high quality public realm are perceived to be the correct ingredients to achieve an increase in the wellbeing of the urban populations and also play an important role as 'soft locational factors' in attracting knowledge-based industries, creative workforces, and tourism to particular places.

Given Malta's high population density and the relative increase in population over the last years the key urban challenges are:

- i. Environmental and infrastructure capacity and renewal
- ii. Regeneration of the urban fabric
- iii. Development density
- iv. Management of activities within the coastal zone and marine area
- v. Reducing the need to travel

/ Important stakeholders

Institution/ stakeholder/ authorities	Special interest/ competences/ administrative area
Transport Malta	Transport regulator: land, sea, air
Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Guardian of national cultural heritage
Heritage Malta	Natural and cultural heritage protection and accessibility
Environment and Resources Authority	Environmental management and protection
Ambjent Malta	Ministerial entity responsible for national parks
Infrastructure Malta	Road infrastructure
Water Services Corporation	Water utility
Energy and Water Energy	Energy and water policy formulation
Regulator for Energy and Water	Energy and water regulator

[EneMalta](#)

Electricity services provider

[National Statistics Office](#)

Statistics provider

[Regjuni, Local Councils](#)

Regional and local government

/ Fact sheets

[Local - Strategy for Valletta_1.pdf](#)(873.73 KB)[National - SPED_0.pdf](#)(968.23 KB)[Regional - Local Plan_0.pdf](#)(924.53 KB)

/ Attachments



Attachment 1: Medit - Mediterranean Location (Formosa 2017)



Attachment 2: Medit location - Maltese Island Location - Detailed View (Formosa 2017)



Attachment 3: Malta NUTS 3 Islands Map (Formosa 2017)



Attachment 4: Malta NUTS 4 Districts (Formosa 2017)



Attachment 5: Malta NUTS 5 Localities (Formosa 2017)



Attachment 6: Malta Regjuni (Formosa 2017)

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