

# REFORMING WITH RESOLVE: 5 YEARS TO FAST-TRACK A TWO-CENTURY OLD MALTA POLICE FORCE

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## ABSTRACT

The Malta Police Force posits a dilemma: a 200+ year old agency, one of the first in Europe harbouring a legacy spanning colonialism, independence, European and international membership, enough to sit on one's laurels. But, and a crucial But, it lives in a rapidly internationalised world that has moved from the physical to the virtual realities: however retaining its archaic modus operandi, resulting in evolution stalling, resistance to change, a top-heavy structure and stagnation in its thought processes. A situation that was affecting its administrative, strategic, operational and tactical approach to crime mitigation, both proactive and reactive.

Time to change, time to overhaul. This paper reviews the processes undergone since 2015 to identify, discuss and mitigate the challenges required to revitalise this long-standing institution. This necessitated an endearing strive by agents external to the force to seek change, many a time employing shock tactics through the publication of crime statistics, the

political will to change the legislation, the inclusion of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and eventually a new Commissioner of Police (CoP), the input from international agencies to seek funding away from national funds and the eventual launching of a five-year Transformation Strategy in 2020. The paper posits an analysis of the change effects on the Malta Police Force emanating from the new vision and mission, the main transformative elements, the three desired outcomes, the 11 strategic objectives and the 49 strategic initiatives. It identifies the problems, challenges, pain points and innovative methods employed to steer the battered ironclad into the uncharted waters posited by new realities. This, without losing focus of the main elements that triggered this transformation: the Force's strive to seek trust from its main client: the citizen. The processes employed in the implementation of the 2020-2025 Transformation Strategy, the governance processes, the management changes, the tactical approach based on new forms of financial and organised crime, the change steering team and the methods sought to mitigate the challenges wrought by each change, which served as a fulcrum for organisational evolution. The process highlights the elements required to focus upon in affecting the next steps required to fulfil the strategic targets all geared towards the realisation of the Malta Police's vision, 'for the community to trust us in ensuring a safe and secure society for everyone' (Malta Police Force, 2020, p. 11).

## INTRODUCTION

The Police are a central element within a democracy. EU Member States are responsible for national security supported in turn by supra-national institutions such as Europol and Interpol. In the Maltese context, the exclusive ownership of this responsibility is placed on the Malta Police Force (MPF) which has had this responsibility ever since its inception in 1814, making it one of the oldest police organisations in Europe (Malta Police Force, 2021). Decades-worth of local, national and international legal, organisation and societal change wrought pressure on the MPF to rethink its strategic, operational and tactical imperatives. Initially ingrained in a centuries-old colonial structure steeped in a police culture difficult to morph (Azzopardi, 2004, Demirkol, 2019), the MPF risked being overtaken by events and rapid real and virtual world societal upheaval (Holdaway, 2013). Hufnagel's (2015) argument that the Police Force only remains relevant in society only because it affects and is affected

by changes in the societal fabric within which it is immersed was pivotal to the MPF's strive to reform.

Over the past years the MPF was facing acute pressure to modernize and become more customer-centric while, at the same time, demonstrate a greater value for money and commitment to efficiency and effectiveness, all within a context of heightened public scrutiny.

Thus, a time to change, a morphing from a culture-dominant entity to one that targets the reduction of crime through the rebuilding of trust and respect garnered from the society it serves, having registered a low 49% trust factor in the police (Martin, 2020), which trust ratings were ironically published on the first day in office of the incumbent Police Commissioner, one of the two co-authors This could only occur if the entity revisited its 'underlying values, beliefs, and attitudes of the organization's members' (Fyfe et al., 1997, p. 160).

The Malta Police Force's efforts to change is conceptually guided by Sir Robert Peel's nine policing principles (Law Enforcement Action Partnership, 2021) that are based on a social contract theoretical approach, a contract that sees the entity changing from a one-sided enforcement function to one that serves the society it operates in. Gafa's (2008) argumentation that the MPF cannot exist without its presence in the community, both as a security provider and as a safety guarantee made it an imperative pivot for the change to occur. This was paralleled by Formosa's (2016) hi-level strategy aimed at initiating change: wrought from without through legislative amendments and from within through the CEO's and CoP's drive to overhaul the entity. Change effected during the 2015-2023 period pivot around the MPF seeking the betterment of society guided by its mission statement and values as integrated in a new Transformation Strategy launched on Friday, 25 September 2020.

#### FUNCTIONS OF THE MPF

In context, the MPF is a large entity covering the entire Maltese Islands. The organisation employs 2,350 members 228 of whom comprise civilian staff (8.8% of the entire workforce).

In terms of structure, the MPF falls within the remit of the Minister for Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality (MHSE) and its regulations, discipline and duties are principally regulated by the Police Act, Chapter 164 of the Laws of Malta. Article 4 of the Act stipulates the main objectives of the MPF as follows:

- i. to preserve public order and peace, to prevent the commission of offences, to promote and enforce the observance of the laws, as a first guarantee of the rights of all persons in Malta, even before action is needed through the judicial system to repress, sanction or remedy any breach;
- ii. to respond immediately to any request for the protection and intervention of the law;
- iii. to apply the law without discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, language, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status;
- iv. to promote the orderly and peaceful coexistence of all persons in Malta, paying due attention not only to private property rights but also to public property;
- v. to seek to protect the environment;
- vi. to assist, within reasonable limits, any person seeking the help of a police or other public officer even though the ultimate responsibility to provide such help may not lie with the Force; and
- vii. to perform honestly and effectively all those duties assigned to it by this Act or by any other law.

In addition, Article 346 of the Criminal Code implies that it is also the duty of the Malta Police to 'detect and investigate offences, to collect evidence and to bring the offenders, whether principals or accomplices, before the judicial authorities.' Until 2020, when the Attorney General's office was tasked with prosecution functions, it fell upon the CoP to decide on what charges the offender was to be brought to Court unless such charges were made upon request by certain competent authorities, such as the CFR, VAT, Housing and Health Authorities. In case the Commissioner of Police upon being presented with any information, report or complaint in relation to a crime, the said Commissioner refuses to initiate proceedings, the

victim in accordance to article 541(1) of the Criminal Code, may challenge the Commissioner through a request made to the duty Magistrate.

Thus, within such a complex scenario, complicated by a rapidly changing society, both in real space and virtual spaces, it was deemed imperative that the MPF evolves into a society-centric service, whilst retaining its safety and security imperatives.

#### LEGACIES AND CHANGE SHELIVING

The need for change was already deemed vital decades ago and various reviews and studies were commissioned, notably the 1997 review of the organisational and management structure of the MPF by the then Management Systems Unit (MSU) within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)<sup>1</sup>. That report had identified four key areas which were deemed to influence the MPF's performance and effectiveness and these revolved around (i) the need for legislation providing a clear definition of the MPF's mission and responsibilities, (ii) major restructuring of the organisation's top management tier, (iii) establishment of control and accountability mechanisms, and (iv) clear functional separation of duties (MSU, 1997).

Notwithstanding the several recommendations submitted by the MSU, following an abrupt change in government in September 1998, only a de-scoped change programme was continued under a new legislature. Whilst focusing on implementation aspects, the resultant recommendations were never taken up resulting in stalled and shelved outputs. Thus, it was imperative that the current process ensured that it rendered tangible results, kickstarted through internal and international surveys and missions that were held in conjunction with the University of Malta and the then Ministry MHAS, as at 2023 MHSR (Formosa, 2015, 2016).

This was followed by an effort to change the legislative tools, where as part of the process, the initial pre-transformation efforts focused on changes to Chapter 164 (Laws of Malta, 2017), the setting up of a Board of Governance, revisiting the roles of Policing and Corporate Functions as well as initiating the Strategic Change process.

The initial objective of this project was to contribute to the modernisation of the MPF which entailed the engagement of international consultants through EU funding, sourced through the efforts of the then CEO office, which initiative ensured that the process had an international backing. The MPF was successful in its submission for EU funding in 2019 which result entailed the drafting by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) of a Police Transformation Strategy within the framework of the Structural Reform Support Programme

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<sup>1</sup> MSU Ltd, (January 1997), Organisational and Management Review of the Malta Police Force, Kalkara

(SRSP). The process and the resultant strategy targeted an increased strategic orientation of the MPF, better management of external dynamics and stakeholders, increased operational efficiency and effectiveness as well as the optimisation of internal structure and human resources management, including selection, career development and retention. Said Strategy was subsequently drafted and launched on the 25th September 2020 (Malta Police Force, 2020).

## THE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

Walking past the General Police Headquarters in Floriana, one could notice the renovated façade which has been brought back to life as part of ongoing restoration works being undertaken within this 18<sup>th</sup> Century majestic place that the Malta Police has been calling home since 1954. But the MPF's renovation extends beyond its HQ façade or the introduction of a modern and more practical uniform earlier this year.

Critically important, the MPF which in 2024 turns 210 years, has since 2020 been undergoing a revamp so as to ensure that whilst the dynamic environment within which it operate evolves, so too the organisation adapts accordingly in order to remain a relevant institution within a dynamic functioning and rapidly changing democracy.

The Malta Police Transformation Strategy launched in September 2020, is now in its third year of its implementation. Central to this revamping process are members of the MPF who have throughout this period been adjusting to an ongoing cultural change process which is key to a transformation programme let alone one taking place within a long-standing conservative institution.

Whilst the principles of policing have remained a constant, the ways the police are today expected to deliver this function within such a pluralistic and dynamic society have changed, at times in dramatic ways. Key to this process is the MPF's emphasis on novel trainings and processes, including the constant introduction of digital technology, contributing to not only a culture that embraces change but also one that aligns with community expectations.

In fact, the Malta Police Force Transformation Strategy was drafted with the target to go beyond a Reform Strategy but one that is implemented through a radical transformation in both the culture and the modus operandi of the entity. Transformation as set goes beyond the operational, structural and tactical rethinking within the internal structures but expands itself towards a holistic approach in the transformation of the social, natural and physical environments. The drive was and is one that the Police Force exists in the society it operates in thus its transformation directly affects and is affected by societal change. This was not an easy task, particularly since the MPF was steeped in ingrained routine, in reactivity and was steadily approaching a gridlocked dysfunctionality. Old entities are reluctant to change and

MPF is not an exception: however, change overcomes those that lag. The target to understand what did not work in previous attempts, to understand the political will or lack of it to drive change over the past decades and the understanding of bottom-up approaches to ensure ownership by all of any change, was undertaken. The first-level bottom-up approach was coupled with the executive's and legislative's approval at second-level.

The approach adopted enabled the transformation to become a seeking target, a drive that was embraced by change champions that brought on board most. These included legislative changes, internal work by the previously-established CEO Office that sought the acquisition of the third level approval that took the form of the EU backing of such a transformation, such that the funds sought were actuated and the current product posits such a deliverable.

Within such a turbulent world where the only thing constant is change, it was fundamental that the MPF adopts a strategy to guide the organisation in executing the necessary changes and transformation for the following five years. The Strategy, which is publicly available in line with the MPF's commitment for greater transparency and accountability, sets a clear vision: 'for the community to trust us in ensuring a safe and secure society for everyone' (Malta Police Force, 2020, p. 11).

Trust is considered as key in law enforcement for the simple reason that the organisation's effectiveness depends entirely on the public's participation in policing, both in preventing crime and in solving offences, especially the most serious ones. It is for that reason that the MPF has aligned its mission statement in line with the vision statement such that the MPF is today committed 'to provide a professional and trusted policing service to ensure safety and security in partnership with the community' (ibid, p. 10). Ultimately, as emphasised by the European Union Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN):

'The management of public confidence has become almost as important as the management of crime itself. If citizens do not have confidence in the police, they are less likely to defer to police authority, to report crimes, to provide witness information or to obey the law themselves' (EUCPN, 2019, p. 49).

The MPF's mission and vision are translated into three strategic outcomes, 11 strategic objectives and 49 strategic initiatives to be implemented between 2020 and 2025. It was crucial at this stage to ensure that the strategy be driven by oversight governance which would be paralleled by a flexible, efficient and data-intelligence driven operational approach as driven by the MPF's mission and vision.

The Transformation Strategy sets three desired outcomes:

- Increased trust, confidence, legitimacy, and responsiveness externally from the perspective of the community, and internally from that of Malta Police officers and staff;

- Transformation of the police organisation into a flexible, efficient, data-driven, community-centric, outcome-focused, and modern Police Force; and
- Innovation and sustainment of positive changes resulting from reform through leadership and management practices that are both effective and efficient.

#### THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Whilst lots of energy had been placed in the drafting of the Strategy, needless to say the most challenging part of the entire process is the Strategy's implementation. Fully aware of this, the Malta Police had since the early stages of the process set up a Transformation and Change Management team intended to facilitate the execution of the change management strategy.

The past three years have been no walk in the park for the MPF to not only continue executing its duties at law as a result of which Malta remains one of the safest countries worldwide, but to also embark on a change management process which "is the process of guiding organizational change to fruition, from the earliest stages of conception and preparation, through implementation and, finally, to resolution." (Harvard Business School, 2023).

The Change Management process initiated in the first days of the Strategy implementation was built around four key differentiators, namely:

- i. Leadership – counter to past practices, throughout this period the MPF has been striving to introduce the concept of distributed leadership seeking to develop leadership skills across the board where every officer from top to bottom is expected to be a leader. This has been possible through the provision of leadership training through external experts with more targeted and in-depth sessions for senior staff whose managerial role shall certainly be complemented with adequate leadership traits;
- ii. Engagement – enhanced engagement has been established with the various stakeholders impacted by change, principally the police workforce, to ensure they have a positive experience to embrace change. This involved adopting various engagement initiatives, including regular visits to the various sections by the Commissioner himself, as well as running change readiness surveys aimed at



shedding light on the perceptions of the Transformation Strategy across the MPF. Two such studies have been conducted to date with the most recent one held in January 2023 which has produced highly encouraging results as shall be demonstrated further on in this paper;

- iii. Skills and behaviours – given that change entails the transition from a current to a desired future state, the MPF workforce needs to be adequately skilled to effectively make this transition. Consequently, the MPF has during this period engaged with various partners, including the University of Malta and the UK College of Policing, to identify skill gaps and provide the necessary training to align with ongoing changes;
- iv. Insight – for many years the MPF had been sitting on a goldmine of data which was not supported by an adequate analytical function, hence losing the opportunity to provide context to such an invaluable resource. Over recent years, in line with its endeavours to transition towards an intelligence-led policing organization, the MPF has been recruiting and training analysts such that the entity is now in a position to draw insight which will enable it to remain agile and make evidence-based decisions.

As expected, initial changes were met by resistance at varying levels but ownership was gradually taken up by the different levels and operations within the MPF. Change is a hard pill to swallow, but over the months the realization that the Transformation will not go away seeped in and the benefits gradually overcame the hardships. A two hundred plus year old entity was expected to react with caution and reluctance to change, however, as the results were observed, the efforts were taken up.

The Transformation coincided just after the changes in the law to allow for unionization of officer, a phenomenon that saw the testing of collective strength against changes deemed necessary in the strategy, however such was stabilized when the outputs were realised.

The following section briefly outlines the salient initiatives taken in the execution of each of the 11 strategic objectives that played a major role to date in the transformation, at the time of writing, halfway through the 2020-2025 period.

- **Strategic Objective 1: *Communication*.** This objective is being achieved through the enhancement of reporting systems, good governance procedures, internal feedback cycles, public feedback cycles, surveys and other transparency and accountability processes. It was deemed imperative that communication with the public is ensured in a clear, consistent, and transparent manner using various platforms, including social media. This also includes ongoing dialogue with stakeholders essentially, including government agencies and commissions, the private sector, foreign missions and NGOs which effort has resulted in enhanced cooperation. Communication is deemed integral to building trust both within the organisation and externally with stakeholders and the general public. The aim to strengthen internal communications was garnered through the achievements in radically improving how information flows through the enhancement of the communications function, structured senior management meetings, and a communication strategy framework. Such a framework will support engagement and accountability, and will strengthen the timeliness of information sharing. It was established that communication was enhanced and implemented through top-down and vice versa through regular and consistent Senior Executive Meetings and further enhancement of recently introduced measures, including the organisation of Think-Tank sessions for members of the Force to voice their thoughts and participate in decision-making, quarterly magazines, monthly digital newsletters, an Intranet to share information accessible from any place 24/7 to officers and civilians alike and a closed Facebook group to further facilitate communication.
  
- **Strategic Objective 2: *Accountability*.** Accountability measures were also achieved through the setting up and eventual strengthening of an Internal Audit function which internally reports directly to the Commissioner of Police but also to an external Internal Audit Committee chaired by the Ministry's Permanent Secretary for adequate governance. During this period the MPF conducted a number of internal audits and quality control measures through the Internal Audit Office and the enhancement of the Professional Standards Office with particular emphasis on educating officers to be more professional in their duties as opposed to oppressing them for erring.

- **Strategic Objective 3: *Anti-Corruption***. Several anti-corruption measures and safeguards were implemented during this period, including an Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy, a new Code of Ethics, security clearance of police officers, as well as drugs and alcohol testing of police officers. These were complemented by targeted training programmes and awareness raising measures on integrity and professional ethics. Measures that were set up as identified in the 2019 GRECO report saw the setting up of structures to continuously monitor officers, a Break the Silence channel was launched for officers to report unbecoming action from colleagues even in an anonymous format, as well as a gifts and gratuities register. An anti-drug amendment was affected in the legal framework to ensure a zero-tolerance within the members of the MPF.
  
- **Strategic Objective 4: *Technology-centric***. Efforts were made to place data and technology at the centre of police operations, including with the digitalization of the MPF's various internal functions. Since 2020 the MPF has embraced new technologies, including the introduction of body-worn cameras as a measure to not only increase accountability but as a fundamental tool in its operations. The public's response was well received as were the diminished reports of alleged misconduct by officers due to such technologies whilst violence against the police has in the first year of body-cams launch gone down by 35% (TMI, 2022). In addition, the introduction of hand-held devices has contributed towards more timely access to information whilst tickets were issued electronically hence minimising the risk of abuse. MPF also introduced a vehicle tracking system ensuring better fleet management, use and monitoring. At the time of writing the MPF is in the process of procuring a new integrated records management system which shall revolutionise police processes from traditional paper-based solutions to a fully-fledged digital solution entailing business process reengineering.
  
- **Strategic Objective 5: *Operational Focus***. The target to pushing the MPF towards a service-oriented process ensuring the focusing on the security and safety elements, social and structural change as well as a rapidly morphing crime scenario. During this

period specific focus was made to enhance strategic police departments, including the Financial Crime Investigations Department (FCID), the Cyber Crime Unit (CCU), community policing teams and the setting up and further enhancement of a Gender-Based & Domestic Violence Unit ensuring a more consistent and empathetic service to such vulnerable victims. Moreover, the percentage of civilians within the MPF has doubled from 4% in 2020 to almost 9% in 2023, not only ensuring that police officers engage more in core policing duties but contributing also to a more professional police force through the recruitment of various university graduates taking up important roles within the Forensic Science Laboratory, Central Intelligence & Analysis Unit, FCID and CCU, amongst others.

- **Strategic Objective 6: *MPF Complement and Form.*** This objective saw drastic restructuring in its various levels inclusive of a leaner senior management structure through a Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioner Investigation and Technical Support, Deputy Commissioner Field and Operational Support and a Strategy & Support Director General who is a civilian. The MPF is constantly developing into an organization better aligned with the needs of the public it serves, and one which is in a better position to meet current and emerging threats. It is no coincidence therefore that certain units have been restructured whilst new ones established, including an Online Fraud Unit and a Blockchain Analysis Unit, both within the FCID.
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- **Strategic Objective 7: *Organisational Capacity and Function.*** Fully aware that the service provided is highly reliant on the quality of its workforce, the MPF has during this period been investing heavily in its people. Works are ongoing to upgrade the human capacity functionality, including review and enhancement of the level of academic courses given to new recruits, in-service training, and officer cadets. To this affect, MOUs were signed with the University of Malta and the British High Commission with an aim of establishing a competency framework whilst developing a skills gap analysis and training needs analysis. This also reflects the trust and confidence that such entities have in the Malta Police Force and shall contribute towards a more professional entity with officers exposed to accredited training, both

locally and overseas. In turn, the constables' recruitment course was strengthened so that it is now delivered over a six-month period followed by two years mentorship by seasoned sergeants or senior constables. Notwithstanding, this training programme is currently being reviewed with the assistance of the UK College of Policing with an aim to ensure better preparedness of new officers joining the Malta Police.

- **Strategic Objective 8: *Employees' Quality of Life*.** Policing is one of the most stressful professions (Territo and Vetter, 1981; Queirós et al, 2020) and requires officers to have a good level of mental and physical health. Consequently we have been prioritizing the wellbeing of our employees as we believe that healthy staff contribute towards a more effective service, hence a more positive customer experience. Despite our profession's peculiarities and the challenges they pose to ensure an uninterrupted 24/7 policing service, a number of family-friendly measures have been introduced, including the granting of hourly vacation leave, strengthening of reduced hours policies and where appropriate, the allocation of remote working. Special emphasis is being given to the upkeep of the police work environment paramount amongst which are the offices, vehicles and police stations. The wellbeing of police officers was taken further through weight management and physical fitness programmes as well as tobacco cessation programmes in partnership with the Health Promotion Directorate. Simultaneously, through an agreement reached with the Employee Support Programme (ESP) at the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the MPF have started providing a more proactive counselling and psychological service to officers who would have been subjected to traumatic events, amongst others.
- **Strategic Objective 9: *MPF as an employee attractor*.** Police forces worldwide are these days struggling to attract officers in the first place whilst policing is no longer seen a career for life, hence creating retention challenges. This challenge is further compounded in a country which, at 2.9% enjoys a historical lowest unemployment rate and the third lowest in the EU (Eurostat, 2023). The MPF has during this period moved along the lines of its international counterparts, revamping recruitment criteria in terms of height and age, whilst allowing for facial hair and tattoos. An "On Target

Campaign” was launched in conjunction with Employee Engagement surveys with the most recent one registering an 89% level of pride by the MPF workforce, up by 13% from the previous survey. Similarly, 74% of the workforce feel motivated to perform their policing duties (+16 compared to 2021) whilst 81% trust the MPF leadership, a significant increase of 18% compared with the first such survey carried out in 2021.

- **Strategic Objective 10:** *Creation of a Leadership and Management Framework that sustains the Transformation Strategy.* MPF created a leadership and management framework to implement and sustain the transformation strategy plan with the establishment of a Strategy & Transformation Unit which is taking a central role in ensuring ongoing implementation of the Transformation Strategy, whilst senior executive meetings are held at regular intervals to enhance dialogue, ownership and engagement of all the changes needed that should cascade to all level of the organisation. The ongoing change is being owned through a change network of individuals who sponsor, own and champion the change. The transformation is being facilitated through the establishment of change agents who, being so close to the grassroots, provide an effective link between program implementation and their team, communicate with and support colleagues, cascade communications and encourage participation, understand the needs and concerns of their target groups, provide feedback to the Change Management Team, identify risks and problems and address rumours, and provide insights, engage and co-create activities with Change Management Team.
  
- **Strategic Objective 11:** *A Human resource system that awards actions and qualities conformant with Policing.* Values, being fundamental to policing have been strengthened due with the launch of a revamped Code of Ethics, the setting up of a Professional Standards Office instead replacing the traditional Internal Affairs Unit, and the rolling out of policies and Standard Operating Procedures providing for a more uniform execution of policing duties across the board. These elements are deemed as fundamental to the conceptual, operational and ethos spheres within which the MPF operates and the jumps that the MPF experienced during the past years is testament

to the drive to radically change the Force, deemed unthinkable some years back, which are incrementally morphing the MPF into an unrecognisable entity as compared to the initiation of the change exercise as depicted in 2015.

#### RESULTING OUTCOMES MID-WAY THROUGH THE PROCESS

Recalling the three strategic outcomes and primarily the first two focusing on public trust and police effectiveness respectively, the results on the ground are testament to a successful Strategy implementation which is mid-way through its execution. Amongst the resultant outcomes, the project analysis shows that:

- The Malta Police workforce is today a highly motivated workforce (74% compared with 58 in 2021) who instils a great sense of pride such that 89% feel proud to be Malta Police members (up from 76% in 2021);
- The increased sense of pride and motivation by the MPF workforce is translating into a significant increase in public trust and confidence such that the Malta Police Force today enjoys the best Eurobarometer trust rating since 2008. Trust increased as depicted through the Eurobarometer jump of 18% between 2021 and 2023 (European Union, 2023) and the NSO Survey (NSO, 2023) that registered a 90% trust rate. The MPF, also true to its commitment depicted in the Transformation Strategy and the Commissioner's ongoing push to increase the citizen's Trust factor, has managed to achieve a veritable jump from a level of trust that stood at 49% in 2020, to one of 70% public trust rating at par with the EU average;
- Besides the consistent increase in trust, the strategies adopted by the Malta Police, particularly the intelligence-led policing philosophy, are proving their operational effectiveness so much so that despite forecasts to the contrary, given the increase in population, the rapid economic growth, the increase in multiculturalism and the increase in tourism, crime reports have in 2022 continued to drop by over 5%;
- Moreover, the 2022 crime rate per capita represents the lowest figure registered in the past 25 years, bar the anomalous COVID-19 year 2020. Hence, whilst in 2005 this figure stood at 46 crime reports per 1000 inhabitants, in 2022 Malta experienced 28 crime reports per 1000 inhabitants, a drop of 64%.

## CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Driving an entity to change never posits an easily-shunted pathway, driving a 200+ year old entity, whilst at the same time managing the same entity and ensuring the reduction of crime is on another functional level. The Malta Police Transformation Strategy and its implementation are at mid-way and should be concluded in 2025, however such has been the rate of change that change itself has become the means not an end, thus a new strategy that revisits the first one, the resultant crime dynamics, the new societal changes, all requires a rethink in terms of measures gained. In turn, foresight is the fulcrum of what can be implemented over the next years to ensure that the Transformation consistently gathers pace and becomes the proactive collective enterprise. The passive past mode was closed during the initial months of the launching of such a strategy and will only be revisited to gauge how far the transition was made and to assess the successes, pitfalls, lacunae and struggles in terms of each of the objectives. The MPF has become a live entity but only a continuous Resolve to Reform can sustain its survival.

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