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## The electric scooter quandary

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In the transport and infrastructure sector, Malta has an abundance of challenges, ranging from overdependence on private cars to inaccessible pavements. In turn, these have various environmental, social and economic impacts. For example, various pavements, apart from being open to construction works, signs and sundry objects, are also highly inaccessible in view of poor design and maintenance.

them dangerously, both on roads, including driving in the opposite direction of one-way streets, as well as on pavements and promenades, sometimes racing at full speed, where people would be walking. In the meantime, the authorities are conspicuous by their absence, and recent published figures on enforcement do not inspire much confidence.

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Many pedestrians, including elderly persons, parents with small kids and persons with disability, are terrified of being hit by a scooter driven haphazardly. Incidents, often involving drivers of such scooters are becoming quite common.

Some people are so angry at this free-for-all situation, that they ask if they can “do a Graffiti” and just remove e-scooters blocking public access.

Let’s put things into perspective: The introduction of such scooters, and alternative forms of transport, is in itself a good idea in terms of the required modal shift towards cleaner and more sustainable transport. But when one sees that we don’t even manage to get pavements right, where the most basic form of transport – walking – is supposed to take place, it is no surprise that our transport policy leaves much to be desired in terms of sustainability.

Even other countries are experiencing difficulties in dealing with e-scooters. For example, just a few days ago, Euronews reported that on an EU level, the European Commission is considering the introduction of guidelines and technical standards.

The same news report shows what type of action is being taken in various cities and countries.

open capped the speed limit of rental e-scooters in various places, and geo-location technology

helmets and even capped the number of scooters permitted.

In the UK, electronic scooter use is only legal for rentals on public roads - privately-owned e-scooters are banned on public roads and pavements. In the meantime a reform is in place, and trials in specified areas will test out reforms such as maximum speed limits, the need to have a driving licence for use of such scooters, and the recommendation of wearing a helmet.

Hence, Malta is not alone in facing challenges from e-scooters. Perhaps we can look into good practices elsewhere and see if they can be transferred here. This should be accompanied by proper consultation, planning and impact assessments. Given the lack of planning to begin with, Malta could have an organic policy formation which develops as we go along.

We can, and we should tackle the e-scooter quandary. Let's say yes to sustainable transport and mobility but let us say no to policies which imperil health and safety.

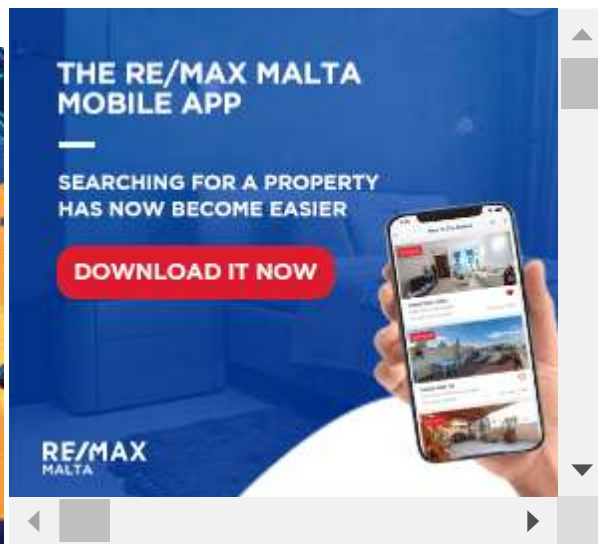
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