



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

NATIONAL REPORT ON BEIJING +25

MALTA May 2019

**Twenty-fifth anniversary of the
Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

List of Abbreviations

ALP	Alternative Learning Programme
ART	Artificial Reproductive Technology
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
Bstart	Business START
CCWR	Consultative Council for Women’s Rights
CDV	Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMS	Career Management Skills
CPS	Child Protection Services
CRPD	Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
DDLTS	Directorate for Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills
DIER	Department of Employment and Industrial Relations
DLAP	Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes
DV	Domestic Violence
DVS	Domestic Violence Services
EDC	Education for Democratic Citizenship
EEA	European Economic Area
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FIA	Forum on Integration Affairs
FSWS	Foundation for Social Welfare Services
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBV&DV	Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence

GEI	Gender Equality Index
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project
GMU	Gender Mainstreaming Unit
HPB	High Performance Buildings
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
Hre	Human Rights Education
HRID	Human Rights and Integration Directorate
ICT	Information and communication technology
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IEN	Individual Educational Needs
IEPs	Individual Educational Plans Meetings
IEU	Inclusive Education Unit
IfE	Institute for Education
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IoT	Internet of Things
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRM	Integration Request Meeting
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
IU	Integration Unit
IVF	In Vitro Fertilisation
LAM	Legal Aid Malta
LBTI[Q]	Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex [and Genderqueer]
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Genderqueer
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LSE	Learning Support Educator
MAB	Managing Abusive Behaviour
MCA	Malta Communications Authority
MAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MEAE	Ministry for European Affairs and Equality

MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MESDC	Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change
MFCS	Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity
MFH	Ministry for Health
MHAS	Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security
MITA	Malta Information Technology Agency
MPs	Members of Parliament
MPF	Malta Police Force
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCPE	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
NCS	National Skills Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSSS	National School Support Service
OTPC	One Tablet per Child
PSCD	Personal, Social and Career Development
PSCD	Personal, Social and Career Development
REC	Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme
SD	Sustainable Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOGIGESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SVPR	St Vincent de Paul Long Term Care Facility
TEP	Training for Employment Project

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational and Educational Training
WPI	Work Programme Initiative
WPS	Women Peace and Security

Contents

List of Abbreviations	2
Section One: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks	9
1. The most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women over the past 5 years.	9
2. The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls over the past five years through laws, policies and/or programmes:	14
3. Specific measures that were taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination	19
4. Impact on the implementation of the BPfA as a result of increasing number of humanitarian crises - caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events	22
5. The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls for the coming five years through laws, policies and programmes.....	23
Section Two: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern	28
5. Actions taken to advance gender equality in relation to women’s role in paid work and employment.....	28
6. Actions taken in the last five years to recognise, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation	31
8. Introduction of austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing.....	34
9. Actions taken in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls.....	34
10. Actions taken in the last five years to improve access to social protection for women and girls. 37	
11. Actions taken in the last five years to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country.	38
12. Actions taken in the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls 40	
13. The forms of violence against women and girls, their specific context/settings prioritised in the last five years.	43
14. Actions prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls	46
15. Strategies in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls	49

16. Actions taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology.....	52
17. Actions taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media	54
18. Has your country taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination?.....	56
19. Actions and measures taken in the last five years to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making.....	58
20. Actions taken in the last five years to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (“ICT”).....	61
21. Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?.....	64
22. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?	65
23. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?	65
24. Does your country have an action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women?	66
25. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?.....	68
26. Actions taken in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda	69
27. Actions taken in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings .	70
28. Actions taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response	71
29. Actions taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child.....	74

30.	Actions taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies	76
31.	Actions taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation.....	76
Section Three: National Institutions And Processes		78
32.	Malta’s current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women..	78
33.	Is the head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation (e.g. inter-ministerial coordinating office, commission or committees)?	78
34.	Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?.....	79
35.	Is gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation?.....	81
36.	The top three areas in which Malta made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level	82
37.	Malta’s top three priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years.....	82
38.	Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?	83
39.	Has data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs begun?	83
40.	Which of the following disaggregation is routinely provided by major surveys in your country?	84
Annex 1: Entities Consulted.....		85

Section One: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

1. The most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women over the past 5 years.

The Maltese Government took a number of initiatives aimed at addressing gender inequalities in legislation and policy in order to safeguard equal opportunities for all. Women empowerment has come a long way, and society has become more conscious of the importance of gender equality, and how central this is for a better functioning society.

An important step towards the institutionalisation of gender equality and the empowerment of women was taken with the setting up of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit (“GMU”) in January 2019. This Unit sits within the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (“HRID”), which is Government’s human rights and equality mainstreaming arm, and is responsible to the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (“MEAE”).

The purpose of the GMU is to take responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan, which is currently under formulation. It will serve as the main governmental coordinating body that liaises with various entities, imparts information, and feeds the gender perspective to ongoing processes. The Unit will also draw attention to patterns of issues and concerns raised by women and gender minorities and their respective organisations, with the aim of drawing durable solutions as well as assisting government policy development in this field. Furthermore, the Unit will make the best use of existing sources of funding for the enhancement of services, provision of training, awareness raising and community building.

Another important structure for the enhancement of dialogue between Government and civil society is the Consultative Council for Women’s Rights (“CCWR”), an advisory body that was set up by the MEAE Minister during the current legislature. The aims of the Council are to advise government on issues which are pertinent to women’s emancipation and equality and to put forward legislative proposals, policies and other measures to advance the rights of women, in consultation with the Minister. The members of the CCWR are nominated by the Minister from among those persons active in organisations that work in the field of women’s rights, and the CCWR works in close relationship with the GMU.

One of the most serious gender issues, affecting Maltese women is domestic violence. According to the Annual Crime Review, domestic violence reports continue to be ranked as the third most reported crime in Malta¹. In this regard, Malta ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in 2014, and implemented it through the adoption of the *Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act*² (“Act”) and a corresponding strategy entitled *Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy and Action plan (Vision 2020)*³ (“Strategy and Action Plan”).

The Act was formulated with the aim of providing a more robust system of protecting victims, prosecuting perpetrators of violence and included systematic actions involving agencies and institutions ranging from the police, to social services, to educational and health professionals to fight gender-based violence. In line with this, the Strategy and Action Plan, ensure that legislation, policies and services address victims’ needs as a societal concern.

In order to eliminate the patriarchal model and discrepancies between husband and wife in the choice of surname, the *Marriage Equality Act*⁴ was amended, and a new gender equal regime was introduced. Different-sex and same-sex couples are now able to enter into a marriage, civil union or legal cohabitation as they please, and all regimes are formulated in a gender-neutral manner.

One of the priorities set by the Maltese Government for its 2017 European Union (“EU”) Presidency was the advancement of gender equality and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. A High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming was held, with a particular focus on the advancing of equal economic independence of women and men, combating gender-based violence and promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

In March 2019, Malta ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (“CEDAW”) during the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women. This ratification follows previous ones intended to bring about substantive equality for men and women in Malta, such as for instance the Istanbul Convention. Malta’s accession to this Protocol indicates further Government’s intention to be

¹ Saviour Formosa (2018), Crime Malta Observatory Annual Crime Review

² See <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=12830&l=1>

³ See https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/GBV_DV%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%20publication.pdf

⁴ See <http://justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=28585&l=1>

bound by the highest international and regional law guaranteeing the rights of all citizens, including those concerning men, women or any other gender.

Experiences of multiple identities and related forms of discrimination are also addressed. In order to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, HRID developed and is implementing two other strategies and action plans, namely: *The Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan (Vision 2020)*⁵ within the Integration Unit and the *LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Genderqueer) Equality Strategy & Action Plan (2018-2022)*⁶ within the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (“SOGIGESC”) Unit. The Government launched the second LGBTIQ Equality Strategy & Action Plan following significant advances during the term of the first Action Plan (2015-2017), especially in Malta’s legislative framework. An Equality Bill addressing discrimination in all spheres of life is expected to be presented in Parliament shortly.

Malta has witnessed a significant increase in the participation of women in the labour market in recent years. A clear example of this is the female employment rate amongst 15-64 year-olds which has increased by 14.6%⁷.

Despite the fact that statistics show that the participation of women in employment has increased, Malta continues to consider this area to be a challenge for the country’s gender inclusion. The Maltese Government has therefore adopted various measures to empower women to enter or re-enter the labour market, to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life as well as to address gender discrimination in employment. These measures also aim to ensure their economic independence, to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion and to further contribute in the labour market and the national economy.

In 2017, Malta broadened a free childcare scheme for children whose parents work or are in education. The scheme provides an incentive for mothers to return to work or to remain in formal employment and aims ‘to make work pay, especially for mothers with lower levels of education and skills and a lower earning bracket’⁸.

⁵ See <https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/migrant%20integration-EN.pdf>

⁶ See https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/LGBTIQ%20Action%20Plan/LGBTIQActionPlan_20182022.pdf

⁷ National Statistics Office, Labour Force Survey. The female employment rate stood at 61.5% in Q4/2018 compared to 46.9% in Q4/2013

⁸ European Commission (2018): Report on equality between women and men in the EU

Furthermore, the Government has implemented additional initiatives as part of a concerted strategy to further facilitate work-life balance:

- The Breakfast Club scheme enables working parents to take their children one hour prior to commencement of school time. Children are provided with a healthy breakfast.
- The Klabb 3-16 scheme provides working parents with the possibility of engaging in gainful employment on a full-time basis by providing after-school hours' care. Thus parents are not required to pick up their children from school or take them to other child-minding places. Klabb 3-16 does not only provide a child-minding service but an environment of informal learning.
- Income tax deductions for parents, who wish to enter or re-enter the labour market and would like to send their children to private childcare centres and introduced tax credit of €2,000 for women over 35 years who are entering the labour market for first time.
- Flexitime, job sharing, compressed week, reduces hours and telework schemes among other schemes, which contributed to the participation of women in the labour market.

The Government also introduced the Maternity Leave Fund to address concerns related to discrimination based on gender at hiring stage. The Maternity Leave Contribution that came into effect as of 1st July 2015, is to be paid by employers for all their employees in the private sector. Under this scheme, employers will pay the maternity/adoption leave to their employees for the first 14 weeks, and then apply for a refund from the Department of Social Security when the employee returns to work. Also, there was the introduction of paid leave for parents of an adopted child and paid leave to employees who undergo the process of medically assisted procreation. The paid paternity leave of five working days for fathers working in the public administration was also extended.

According to the Gender Equality Index (“GEI”) 2017⁹, Malta has progressed in gender equality in the domain of work. Nonetheless, there is more room for improvement in the sub-domain of participation, for which Malta ranks 27th in the EU-28. Conversely, Malta’s score for the sub-domain of segregation is the 2nd highest in the European Union. Despite the significant increase of the participation of women in the labour market, it is still evident that women are more likely to be victims of the gender pay gap, hence, one of the pillars identified

⁹ Gender Equality Index (2017): Malta

in the Gender Mainstreaming Framework aims to guarantee equal access and opportunity to employment in all sectors and combat gender segregation and the gender pay gap.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (“NCPE”) has developed measures which help in the promotion and implementation of gender equality at the workplace, including the Equality Mark that is awarded to companies that foster gender equality in their policies and practices; the Directory of Professional Women that enhances their visibility and opportunities of being appointed in decision-making positions; continuous training on rights and responsibilities on equality; awareness raising campaigns and the investigation of complaints of alleged discrimination.

The lowest score in the GEI for Malta is in the domain of power. Women continue to be underrepresented in decision making positions in politics and progress has been slow and uneven. Malta has the lowest level of women’s political representation in the EU and Malta has slipped down on the Inter-Parliamentary Union (“IPU”) rankings. It now ranks in the 147th place out of 189 nations. This discrepancy in representation means that women’s voices are severely undermined in decision-making, including on topics such as women’s health and reproductive rights. Indeed, until the last general elections of 2017, parties still struggled to encourage female candidates to run for elections.

As observed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (“EIGE”), the share of women’s participation in decision-making positions in Malta remained unchanged and Malta lags far behind reaching a gender-balanced parliament. In order to address this, the Government of Malta has launched a consultation document on 26th March 2019 with the aim to increase the number of female members of parliament by up to 12 under a government proposal aimed at achieving gender equality. The measure will come into play if the number of Members of Parliament (“MPs”) from the under-represented sex amounts to less than 40% of the total. The reform will also include other measures aimed at mainstreaming gender issues in parliament as well as making the institution more family friendly.

Gender equality remains a complex issue in health and development. According to the GEI, the domain of health is the highest in Malta. It ranks third in the EU, gaining two positions since 2005. Malta is among the best-performing EU Member States in all sub-domains, which includes status, behaviour and access. Over the past five years, Malta introduced measures to ensure that gender equality is present in health issues as well, such as the legalisation of

emergency contraception over the counter and the introduction of In Vitro Fertilisation (“IVF”) treatment offered at Mater Dei Hospital for individuals and couples alike.

The Ministry for Health (“MFH”) has also registered considerable progress regarding the development of health care services for transgender persons. These comprise a set of gender affirmative services that include the psychosocial support, medical care, hormonal treatment, voice training and some surgeries that are necessary for transgender persons to better align their physical appearance with their self-determined gender identity. This clinic started to operate in November 2018 and is run by a multidisciplinary team of trained specialists.

Another critical area of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action is gender stereotyping as this inhibits gender equality and the empowerment of women. The presence of stereotypical mentalities continues to be detrimental to the advancement of gender equality in Malta. Gender stereotypes impact the roles and behaviours of women and men from a young age; impinge on the horizontal and vertical segregation in education and the labour market; affect the sharing of unpaid care work of women and men and their uptake of family friendly measures and flexible working arrangements at the workplace, resulting in gender gaps and inequalities. Campaigns aimed at raising awareness challenge the traditional gender stereotypes among employers and society at large by highlighting the benefits of sharing family and domestic responsibilities through the uptake of various incentives by both men and women.

2. The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls over the past five years through laws, policies and/or programmes:
 - I. Eliminating violence against women and girls
 - II. Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
 - III. Political participation and representation
 - IV. Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)
 - V. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

The principle of gender equality is reinforced through laws, policies and programmes to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment for men and women, and to combat any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender. Below, the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in Malta over the past five years are elaborated further:

I. Eliminating violence against women and girls

In 2018, Malta gave full legal effect to the Istanbul Convention by transposing the Convention in various laws (barring the State's reservations to the Convention). This resulted in a complete overhaul of Maltese law with regard to domestic violence and gender-based violence, primarily by:

- Recasting the Domestic Violence Act into the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act, extending further the remit of the newly renamed Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Commission as the national watchdog in the sector;
- A complete overhaul of Maltese criminal law with regard to all sexual offences, by defining crimes in greater detail to ensure legal clarity, increasing related punishments, increasing protection mechanisms to prevent further harm to victims, and further promoting rehabilitation for perpetrators. All of the above marked crimes were amended as a result of this overhaul;
- Lowering of the age of sexual consent from 18 years to 16 years;
- In parallel, the Strategy & Action Plan were launched. These form the first national framework to ensure that legislation, policies and services address victims' needs holistically and as a societal concern. This Strategy is also in line with the policy recommendations included in the Council of Europe Convention.

II. Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Malta recognises that sexual and reproductive health and rights ("SRHR") include a wide range of rights which ensure a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. In practical, measurable terms, Malta has provided the access and availability of these rights high priority through a number of legislative and political changes.

These changes include the Constitutional recognition of all sexes, all forms of gender identities, sexual orientations, and their expression, free from discrimination. Malta also spearheaded the recognition of all forms of families through its stance on marriage equality. Malta also ensures the widespread access and availability of healthcare services in this regard, as well as full information on sexual and reproductive health. These services include, but are not limited to, access to in vitro fertilisation and related treatment.

Malta is committed to the promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights in their totality, as long as these rights do not impinge upon the rights of anyone else. In this regard, Malta fully embraces the important principles established by the International Conference on Population and Development (“ICPD”) and its Plan of Action. The promotion of sexual and reproductive health includes the protection of the right of women to have control over their body, decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality. This also includes other decisions such as the timing, number of children, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. In that respect, the Government is also committed to ensuring access to information on effective methods of family planning. In line with this, Malta's interpretation of SRHR within the context of the right to health does not include the right to abortion as this goes against the right to life, which is paramount¹⁰. Abortion is illegal in Malta and is not provided as part of the SRHR available at national level¹¹.

Other sexual and reproductive health-care services are freely available within the national public healthcare system. These include family planning, safe motherhood, infertility treatment, assisted reproduction, prevention, confidential testing, diagnosis and treatment of reproductive tract infections, STIs and HIV/AIDS, prevention and treatment of reproductive cancers and maternal morbidities. Rapid testing for HIV was introduced at the Genito-Urinary Clinic in 2017. In 2017, Malta also licensed the sale of the morning after pill, as an over-the-counter preparation.

In January 2019, a gender clinic was launched, and serves as a focal point for health services for trans, intersex and genderqueer people. In 2016, the *Affirmation of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Gender Expression Act* was adopted, with the aim of protecting individuals from conversion practices and the affirmation of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions without exception.

Amendments to the *Embryo Protection Act* were approved by Parliament in June 2018 and came into force on 1st October 2018, which allow access to same sex couples and single women as well as offering gamete donation, embryo freezing and adoption to all. This revision also aims to improve women's access to Artificial Reproductive Technology (“ART”) Services. In 2015, an Inter-Ministerial working group was set up to address the required changes to the

¹⁰ Statement by H.E. Ambassador Carmelo Inguanez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Malta to the United Nations at the 52nd Session of the Commission for Population and Development, 1-5 April 2019, New York

¹¹ In accordance with in accordance with the ICPD

Embryo Protection Act, which only allowed heterosexual couples who are married or in a stable relationship to access ART Services, restriction was limited to only attempt to fertilise two oocytes. Embryo freezing and embryo adoption were only allowed in exceptional cases as approved by the Embryo Protection Authority and surrogacy, gamete donation, Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis, experiments on embryos and research on embryos are not allowed. A public consultation was held in which 34 proposals were received.

The objectives of the *Embryo Protection Act* are principally to provide the national law with a mechanism whereby couples can benefit from medically assisted procreation without the need to use the services available in other jurisdictions. It provides for the number of eggs that can be fertilized and transferred, authorizations by the Embryo Protection Authority for the freezing of embryos to preserve life amongst other protections. Its amendment has the same objectives, however, given the advancement and development within the field, it is aimed to extend the mechanism already provided in the original Act to reflect the medical advancement in medically assisted procreation including gamete donation and cryo-preservation of embryos. It aimed to create the necessary balance between the rights of all those involved and this in accordance with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. When drafting the amendments, Government took into consideration the human rights provisions guaranteed by the Constitution of Malta and the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as the case-law of the ECHR on reproductive rights.

III. Political participation and representation

In 2015, in a study which was conducted by the NCPE, as part of an ESF-funded project on gender quotas, it transpired that representation of women in national parliaments is not only below the EU's average which presently stands at 27%, but also below the global average which stands at 22%.

In both the public and private spheres in Malta, women's thoughts, opinions, concerns and voices continue to be under-represented. Public debates on the topic have become more widespread in recent years, however, there has not been a formal public consultation, nor a campaign to dispel myths and inform citizens about the merits of positive measures for equal participation of men and women in public life.

A public consultation document with proposals with the aim of achieving a gender-balanced parliament was published on 26th March 2019. Positive measures have long been deemed as a

possible remedy to the traditional under-representation of women, which afflicts the Maltese political system. Four main pillars are being suggested and the document is currently being evaluated and discussed in the public realm. This consultation deals with:

- Constitutional and legal amendments to permit additional seats for the under-represented sex that obtains less than 40% of the Parliamentary seats;
- Gender mainstreaming in Parliament and family-friendly measures;
- Incentives in the form of state funding to political parties in order to recruit, train and support candidates from the under-represented sex to contest the Maltese general elections;
- Extended remits for the Electoral Commission.

IV. Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)

As of 1st January 2019, The Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (“DIER”) introduced the Annual Leave National Standard Order (SL 452.115) which states that in the case of employees on maternity leave, annual leave shall continue to accrue in the employee's favour. Any balance of annual leave which has not been availed of by the end of the calendar year shall be automatically transferred to the next calendar year when it has not been possible for the employee to avail herself of such leave during the year when maternity leave commenced. Another important principle of this new law is that if a public or national holiday falls on a day of work or on a weekly day of rest not being Saturday or Sunday, the employee on maternity leave shall be entitled to the equivalent in hours of an additional day of annual leave.

V. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

One of the key purposes to achieve substantive equality between men and women is to abolish discriminatory laws and modify discriminatory social norms. The project Equality Beyond Gender Roles, co-financed by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (“REC”), implemented by the NCPE, aimed to increase awareness on the importance of men’s role in gender equality, increase knowledge through various training and outreach initiatives, and inform the target groups and society at large about the significance of men’s role in gender

equality, breaking down stereotypes tied to traditional gender roles, highlighting the benefits of sharing family and domestic responsibilities through the uptake of various incentives by both men and women. This project also increased the awareness of various types of family-friendly measures and the benefits and responsibilities of making use of such initiatives. Engaging men as change agents for gender equality can be challenging, however working with men is essential to make gender equality a reality in society.

Gender stereotypes are also challenged in the education sector. Career Guidance Services currently holds a number of initiatives in order to promote equality among genders and enhance female participation towards further studying after finishing compulsory schooling and within the labour market. Such initiatives are provided to all genders alike and challenge the existing gender stereotyping within various sectors through career guidance programmes and one to one sessions.

3. Specific measures that were taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination
 - I. Migrant women
 - II. Women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
 - III. Women living with disabilities

Facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination creates intricate webs of deprivation, which most often is experienced by women and girls. Over the past five years, Malta has mainly addressed migrant women through the setting up of the Integration Unit; and matters related to SOGICESC through the setting up of the SOGIGESC Unit within HRID. Furthermore, Malta also addresses women with disabilities through the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (“CRPD”).

- I. Migrant women

In order to embrace the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, the Government set up an Integration Unit (“IU”), which is Malta’s entry point for integration. The process within the IU commences with the so-called

‘integration request’ lodged during an ‘Integration Request Meeting’ (“IRM”), which then leads to participation in the I Belong Programme. Occasionally, (male) partners assume that they should attend the IRM; the IU, however, has put in place procedures to ensure that IRMs are private and attended by the client alone (except in the case where translators are required), in order to support the client’s individual and personal path to the full and successful integration, which is found to be a robust response to that discrimination which is rooted in dependence. Furthermore, the IU is availing of all training opportunities in the field of human trafficking to spot potential dangers in this regard.

The HRID also convenes a Forum on Integration Affairs (“FIA”) composed of migrant community leaders. The scope of this structure is for migrant communities to bring to Government’s attention new legislative and policy proposals that favour integration, as well as to listen to the views of migrant communities themselves regarding migrant issues. The terms of reference of the FIA are designed to support female representation, by requiring a percentage of female representatives. In 2019, the FIA has expanded, and the female representation, including from women’s migrant organisations, has proven to be extremely fruitful. The FIA is particularly useful at identifying and tackling the multiple forms of discrimination which migrant women experience.

II. Women with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities

Government has also taken a number of initiatives aimed at addressing existing inequalities and injustices through concrete actions that lead to the enjoyment of all human rights and civil liberties regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The adoption of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (CAP 540) aimed at providing for the recognition and registration of the gender of a person and to regulate the effects of such a change, as well as the recognition and protection of the sex characteristics of a person. The legislation introduced a pathway to legal gender recognition through the enrolment of a public deed following a declaration before a notary. The law did away with any medical or surgical requirement and depathologised trans identities.

Between April 2015 and April of 2019, just over 105 persons had accessed legal gender recognition procedures over the four-year period. Of these 59 were assigned male at birth and

identify as female and 46 were assigned female at birth and identify as male. This compares favourably to the 21 who accessed legal gender recognition under previous legal gender recognition provisions requiring irreversible gender reassignment between 2004 and 2015.

The legislation was followed by the introduction of two policies, one aimed at the education sector and the other at the correctional facility. The policies aimed at establishing clear principles and guidelines in the treatment of trans, gender variant and intersex persons in these settings.

In 2018, the MFH also introduced legal provisions that allowed for transgender healthcare to become eligible for free treatment under the National Health Services as well as setting up a Gender Wellbeing Clinic which started providing its services in November 2018. To date around 100 persons have been referred to this specialised service that is run by a multi-disciplinary team.

In 2014 Malta adopted the Civil Unions Act (CAP 540) which granted equal recognition to all couples with the same rights and obligations as marriage, including parenting rights. This was followed by marriage equality in July of 2017 with the possibility of converting Civil Unions into Marriage for those who so chose. There were 217 civil unions celebrated or registered in Malta between April 2014 and April 2019 of which 68 were between female couples and 14 were between heterosexual couples. Four children were adopted by female couples since 2014.

In June 2018 Malta effected changes to the Embryo Protection Act which removed discriminatory provisions in access to IVF treatment. The provisions revised the definition of prospective parent to be inclusive of same-sex couples as well as single persons and also decriminalised gametes donation. Given that the provisions only came into force in October of 2018 it is yet too soon to assess the impact of the legislation.

III. Women living with disabilities

CRPD has taken a number of measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls living with disabilities. During a Conference in October 2019 organised by CRPD and the Malta Confederation of Women's Associations, it emerged that people with disability face a double dose of discrimination especially disabled women, since it is more

likely that women with disability face more obstacles in the work sphere as well as in their own personal lives when compared to men. The aim of the Conference titled ‘Invisible Women: Tackling a Double Challenge’ was to bring to light the various difficulties and barriers encountered by women and girls with disability. Various issues were discussed mainly barriers in education, employment, entrepreneurship and sexuality. This conference was successful in bringing together different professionals that deal with a variety of issues related to women and girls with disability. It was pointed out by various speakers that women and girls with disabilities experience multiple discrimination in various areas of their life and are more prone to experience various forms of abuse and domestic violence. In this regard such conferences assist in placing such discourse on the social agenda.

Over the last two years, CRPD has participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (“GBV”) Campaign organised by the Commission for Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence. CRPD used different material to raise awareness on women with disability and domestic violence, which includes a video clip which was aired on TV and on social media and an art work exhibition on domestic violence accompanied by the painter’s message in both Maltese, English and in Maltese braille so that the exhibition would be as accessible for all as possible. Such campaigns are essential to raise awareness about different challenges faced by women and girls with disability such as domestic violence. It is crucial that different entities come together as a forefront to raise awareness on particular issues. This helps to put out the message that domestic violence is everyone’s responsibility.

In 2018, CRPD have also partnered with HRID on the EU project ‘Breaking the Cycle of Violence’. The main aim was to empower and to raise awareness on domestic violence and disabled women through a number of training sessions with women with disability, group and individual tutorials and a seminar with various Non-Governmental Organisations (“NGOs”) working in the disability sector. It was crucial that during these sessions, a safe space was created for all women present.

4. Impact on the implementation of the BPfA as a result of increasing number of humanitarian crises - caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events

No, the implementation of the BPfA in Malta was not affected by any humanitarian crises caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events.

5. The top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls for the coming five years through laws, policies and programmes

- I. Political participation and representation
- II. Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)
- III. Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)
- IV. Gender-responsive budgeting
- V. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

Great progress was achieved during past years with regard to gender equality. Despite this, further work effort needs to be invested in legislative reviews, the promotion of gender mainstreaming across the board and the introduction of gender budgeting amongst others. On the policy front, continued work is necessary to ensure that the laws that are adopted are fully translated into practice, whether through the issuance of guidelines, provision of training or any other means. Work towards gender equality mainstreaming needs to spill over to all sectors, to ensure that all spaces are inclusive and welcoming, and that all genders are free and able to realise their full potential.

Gender equality is not only a women's issue, but that of the entire society. This is why in the coming five years, the Government will continue to work to empower women, so they can make their own choices when it comes to their careers and their families and to guarantee that women are truly equal to men at law. Hence, Government will honour its responsibility to continue to implement and strengthen laws, policies and programmes aimed at achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.

To achieve these objectives, the Government has prioritised the following measures:

- I. Political participation and representation

Female representation in the highest levels of Maltese politics has always been a struggle. In the General Election of 2017, out of the 67 elected Members of Parliament, 10 were women and 57 were men. This is evidence that despite global leaps forward in the fight for equality, Malta's gender imbalance in parliament is still strong.

Therefore, it is very imperative to introduce a mechanism to ensure that women are better represented in parliament. Just recently, the Government has launched a consultation document that strives to address women as being the ‘under-represented sex’ and ensures that in the future none of the two sexes is under-represented. This is also addressed in the Council of Europe’s Strategy for Gender Equality 2018-2023, where it is underlined that balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making is essential for a well-functioning democracy.

The Consultation Document ‘Gender Balance in Parliament Reform’¹² has identified the following four positive measures to address this unbalanced representation:

1. Incentives in the form of state funding to political parties in order to support the underrepresented sex to contest Maltese general elections;
2. Extended remits for the electoral commission;
3. Constitutional and legal amendments to permit additional seats for the under-represented sex; and
4. Gender mainstreaming in parliament and family-friendly measures.

These measures also tie in with the recommendation of the Technical Committee, that the Speaker of the House sets up a commission to prepare a strategic plan that paves a path for gender mainstreaming in Parliament. The strategic plan will require a dedicated budget.

The Commission will need to ensure that:

- MPs are sensitised to the need to mainstream gender in all policy areas and legislations.
- Women are fairly represented in Parliamentary Committees as members and as Chairs.
- Parliament adopts antidiscrimination and anti-harassment policies.
- Parliament employs an institutional policy against sexual harassment and that there is a formal procedure for investigating complaints.
- Parliament should have nursing, childcare and family rooms.
- Family-friendly working hours that may include a review of the schedule of parliamentary sittings and the possibility that backbenchers may opt for a full-time position on a voluntary basis.¹³
- Parliament’s website will include a section that addresses gender equality.

¹² See https://reforms.gov.mt/en/Documents/Public-Consultations/Gender_Balance_In_Parliament_Reform.pdf

¹³ The issue of full-time parliamentarians was strongly underlined in the opinion of the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission on Malta (2018)

- Establishing a cross-party network for MPs interested in gender equality to promote gender mainstreaming.

The Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy that shall come into effect later this year also aims to balance the participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, by having better representation of women in parliament and government appointed boards. Furthermore, this Strategy shall also focus on raising awareness campaigns with special attention on the need to attain equality of representation and the sharing of power between women and men.

With such measures, Malta will start approaching both national and international obligations as it aims to reach a 50-50 participation by the year 2030, as indicated by ‘Strategic Objective 4’, in the Council of Europe’s Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2023 and commitments towards ‘Planet 50-50 by 2030’ that was launched by the United Nations on the occasion of International Women’s Day of 2015.

II. Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)

Government introduced free childcare centres and subsidies on childcare. Additional measures were introduced to help working parents juggle with work and family responsibilities and these include the Breakfast Club, which enables parents to drop children off an hour before school starts, as well as Klabb 3-16, a subsidized after-school care service. The fourteen weeks of Maternity leave were also extended by an additional 4 weeks.

While these measures have contributed to the increase in the female employment rate, there is still the need to protect women in paid employment, especially women in non-standard forms of employment, and/or those employed in the informal sector. The Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy aims to guarantee equal access and opportunity to employment in all sectors and combat gender segregation and the gender pay gap. This strategy also aims to address the gender imbalance, and to propose solutions for the information, computer and technology (ICT) sector.

III. Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity or parental leave, care services)

Gender equality is related to work and family issues because the traditional expectation that women will be responsible for their children can be a significant barrier to women's employment opportunities, contributing to the perpetuation of the gendered division of labour, power and roles. The Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy also addresses the reconciliation of work, private and family life as a key gender equality principle, which can be attained when women and men share care responsibilities and other duties.

Through care services and other existent measures, the Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan will focus on the achievement of women's economic independence through activity in the formal labour market, and the review of unequal taxation and refund practices.

IV. Gender-responsive budgeting

The introduction of gender budgeting is essential to achieve gender equality since budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government's social and economic plans and priorities. Implementing commitments towards gender equality requires intentional measures to incorporate a gender perspective in planning and budgeting frameworks and concrete investment in addressing gender gaps. For this reason, the Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy will aim to address Governmental gender budgeting approach as a right to equal treatment and to improve the anti-discrimination and gender equality framework with a view of guaranteeing equality in practice. Gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out effectively and contributes to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women's rights. It provides tools to assess the different needs and contributions of men and women, and boys and girls within the existing revenues, expenditures and allocations and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups.

V. Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

Gender stereotyping presents a serious obstacle to the achievement of real gender equality and feeds into gender discrimination. Some of the strongest forces behind persistent gender gaps are harmful social norms and stereotypes that limit expectations of what women can or should do. These outdated norms that discriminate against women are all around us. We all have a role to play in challenging these adverse social norms and reshaping stereotypes. We are accelerating progress to address stereotypes and harmful behaviour by ‘unstereotyping’ our value chain.

Through formal and informal education, the Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy will aim to mainstream gender equality throughout the educational system, and focus on gender sensitisation education so as to help identify and tackle gender stereotyping. It also aims to promote co-responsibility and tackle gender role stereotypes in families to instil cultural change in working time arrangements and care responsibilities.

Section Two: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

5. Actions taken to advance gender equality in relation to women’s role in paid work and employment

- I. Introduced / strengthened gender-responsive active labour market policies (e.g. education and training, skills, subsidies)
- II. Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace
- III. Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women

In the last five years, Government has embarked on a series of measures aimed at incentivising women to engage in the labour market. This has been done by improving the financial access, and enriching workplace policies as well as practices. The particular measures include the following:

- I. Introduced / strengthened gender-responsive active labour market policies

Malta is experiencing a significant increase in the global employment rate and the female employment rate in particular¹⁴:

Year	Global employment rate	Employment rate for women (20-64 years)	Employment rate for young women (30-34 years)	Employment rate for older women (55-64)
2013	66.2%	51.7%	68%	18.9%
2014	67.9%	54.3%	69.5%	22.1%
2015	69%	55.3%	71%	25.1%
2016	71.1%	58%	72.9%	28.9%
2017	73%	60.6%	73.6%	29.9%

¹⁴ Total Employment (resident population concept –LFS)

The Free Childcare Scheme¹⁵, the Breakfast club and the after school services are provided to parents/guardians who are in employment or who are pursuing their education and need additional help. Since the start-up of the Free Childcare scheme in April 2014 until March 2019, 16,700 children have benefitted from this service, and the budget used for this scheme amounted to €72million. The Childcare Subsidy Scheme targets parents who wish to participate in work/education related training, by receiving subsidies, to cover childcare costs. The Investing in Skills¹⁶ Scheme aims to increasing productivity and enhance adaptability. This scheme is available to partnerships, companies, family businesses, associations, individual self-employed, NGOs and social partners with a total budget of €8 million until 2020. The Work Exposure Scheme¹⁷ is intended to facilitate transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands on training. It is offered to all registered unemployed persons and inactive job seekers. From January 2016 till December 2018, Jobsplus paid the amount of €624,900 in training allowances. Further to this, the Traineeship Scheme¹⁸, provides jobseekers with initial vocational training (pre-employment training) that would help individuals obtain the knowledge, skills and competences required to find and retain employment. From January 2016 till December 2018, Jobsplus paid the amount of €1,028,000 in training allowances. Since the introduction of the scheme in 2014, female beneficiaries have amounted to a 3,672 out of a total of 5,135.

The Access to Employment Scheme provides employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers and inactive persons. Until the end of December 2018, Jobsplus received 1,505 applications for 1,623 participants of which a total of 1,026 unique participants were still on the scheme, which means that a participant is either in the subsidy period or in the retention period as established by the Access to Employment Guidelines¹⁹: The funds spent for this scheme amounted to €1,822,000 in 2018. Since the beginning of the scheme €3,916,100 have been disbursed. Participation of women in the Access to Employment Scheme represents 48% of all participants.

¹⁵ See <https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Childcare-Leaflet-2015-EN.pdf>

¹⁶ See <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/investing-in-skills>

¹⁷ See <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/work-schemes>

¹⁸ See <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/traineeships>

¹⁹ See <https://jobsplus.gov.mt/schemes-jobseekers/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=3678>

Duration of Subsidy	Retention Period
26 weeks	2 months
52 weeks	4 months
104 weeks	8 months
156 weeks	12 months

II. Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace.

In 2018, Malta gave full legal effect to the Istanbul Convention by fully transposing the Convention in various laws (barring the State's reservations to the Convention). This resulted in a complete overhaul of Maltese law with regards to domestic violence and gender-based violence. One such amendment included the inclusion of sexual harassment in the Criminal Code, which crime had, until then, been criminalised solely in relation to the workplace. By means of this amendment, Maltese law has now extended the application of the law on sexual harassment in all spheres of life.

The Equality for Men and Women Act prohibits sexual harassment. Employees alleging sexual harassment can file a complaint with the NCPE for investigation. The NCPE carries out training for both employers and employees on gender equality, informs participants of their rights and responsibilities, enabling them to prevent or curb discrimination. The NCPE awards organisations, that make gender equality one of their values and whose management is based on the recognition and promotion of the potential of all employees irrespective of their gender and caring responsibilities, with the Equality Mark. One of the assessment criteria requires companies to have a sexual harassment policy in place. The NCPE is often consulted by private and public entities for assistance in drafting equality and sexual harassment policies.

III. Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women

The Microinvest scheme²⁰ and the Bstart Scheme²¹ aim at improving the financial inclusion of, and access for, women. The former scheme encourages undertakings to invest in their business, so as to innovate, expand and develop their operations, by being supported through a tax credit calculated as a percentage of eligible expenditure and wage costs. The latter scheme offers a seed funding for small start-ups having a viable business concept and are in the early stage of its development. Initiatives shall be supported through an initial grant of up to €10,000 and quarterly funding of up to €10,000 per quarter during their start-up period, up to a maximum of €25,000 per beneficiary.

6. Actions taken in the last five years to recognise, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation

- I. Expanded support for frail elderly persons and others needing intense forms of care.
- II. Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave.
- III. Introduced legal changes regarding the division of marital assets or pension entitlements after divorce that acknowledge women's unpaid contribution to the family during marriage.

The Maltese Government took a number of initiatives in the last five years aimed at addressing unpaid and domestic work in order to promote work-family conciliation. These include the following:

- I. Expanded support for frail elderly persons and others needing intense forms of care.

The Department for Active Ageing and Community Care provide services to frail older persons and others needing intense forms of care. The services include: Telecare+, Meals on Wheels, the provision of clinical services within the community such as domiciliary inter-professional services, respite services and ultimately, residential care to those older persons who can no

²⁰ See <https://www.maltaenterprise.com/support/micro-invest>

²¹ See <https://www.maltaenterprise.com/support/business-start-bstart>

longer live within the community. For frail older persons who require intensive care, government offers two levels of care; residential homes and St Vincent de Paul Long Term Care Facility (“SVPR”). Residential Homes are aimed for those older persons who due to very limited ADLs or cognitive status require a specific level of assistance. SVPR is a high dependency long-term facility which caters to older persons with severe high dependency and who require complex medical care. It also provides Day Services for persons in the community who are suffering from Dementia. To date, 51 clients are benefitting from the Dementia Day Centre Services on a daily basis.

Residents pay a contribution in line with the existing legal framework and according to the level of care received. Services provided in the homes are in line with the National Minimum Standards for Care Homes issued in 2015. These services include nursing and caring, allied health input, medical input including the services of a geriatrician and other basic services such as the provision of meals, daily cleaning and laundry, security, reception services, organisation of daily activities, hairdressing service and provision of pastoral care services.

Carer courses accredited by the University of Malta are also provided. It encourages more people to pursue a career as a carer within this sector. To date, 321 people benefitted from this course. An informal online carer course was introduced and targeted the general public. To date, 117 people undertook this informal care course. In addition, the care sector employs 85 foreign care workers.

The year 2016 saw the introduction of the Carer’s Reform whereby the Increased Carer’s Allowance for those who cared for a medium or highly dependent patient was no longer means tested and no longer available to only single persons.

- II. Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave.

The Annual Leave National Standard Order (SL 452.115), which came into force on 1st January 2019, states that the annual leave of employees on maternity leave, shall continue to accrue in the employee's favour. Any balance of annual leave which has not been availed of by the end of the calendar year, shall be automatically transferred to the next calendar year. If a public or national holiday falls on a day of work or week day, the employee on maternity leave shall be entitled to the equivalent in hours of an additional day of annual leave.

There will soon be the enactment of the new work-life balance proposal aiming to enhance the various leaves, which will bring about work-family conciliation, including parental leave, paternity leave and carers' leave. The directive is currently going through formal approval at EU level and therefore there are no concrete timeframes to its implementation. This directive will be applicable to all Member States.

- III. Introduced legal changes regarding the division of marital assets or pension entitlements after divorce that acknowledge women's unpaid contribution to the family during marriage.

According to the Social Security Act, divorced persons have the same rights for a widow's pension as those persons who were still married on the demise of their spouses. If there are more than one widow, widow's pension entitlement will be paid on a pro-rata basis.

Employees may opt to work on reduced hours, i.e. work less than 40 hours per week to take care of an elderly parent, child, a chronic sick spouse or for other personal matters. They have the option to work 35 hours, 30 hours, 25 hours or 20 hour per week. *Telework* is another option, allowing employees to perform specific tasks from home or at any other location, at an agreed and specified time. This measure allow employees to work on full-time basis, 40 hours while meeting demands from their personal life. Employees also have the facility of applying for a *Career Break* to try alternative employment, which may be extended to a total period of 5 years. Parental Leave is available for Mothers, Fathers and Legal Guardians. Employees can apply for 4 months, 6 months, 9 months or 12 months period, up to a total of 1 year. This is applicable for every child below the age of 10 years.

Employees can individually make arrangements with their head of section to *work from home* in emergency cases. Mainly this is agreed to on a day-to-day basis and is used when employees encounter an emergency at home that will require them to stay at home but still able to perform some work-related tasks such as: reading and answering e-mails, reading and preparing reports, taking and making telephone calls, Video conferencing amongst others.

By the end of 2018 from a work force of 604 staff, 172 staff members (26.5 % of the total staff) were making use of one of the above-mentioned work-life balance measures.

8. Introduction of austerity/fiscal consolidation measures, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing.

Given Malta's growth in employment rate, austerity/fiscal consolidation measures were not required.

9. Actions taken in the last five years to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls.

- I. Support women's entrepreneurship and business development activities
- II. The introduction and strengthening of social protection programmes for women and girls
- III. Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty

Malta's National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion, which was launched on the 19th December 2014 by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity is a ten-year plan that maps the country's strategic direction to address poverty and social exclusion up to the year 2024. This strategic policy is based on six dimensions that are considered to be vital for promoting well-being and combating poverty and social exclusion. Income and social benefits, employment, education, health and environment, social services and culture are considered to be key contributors for promoting the prospects of people who are already experiencing poverty or social exclusion or are at risk thereof.

The rate of women at risk of poverty has steadily decreased, with figures indicating that in the last five years Malta has seen a decrease of about 5 percentage points. This data shows that the impact of the policies put in place is giving the desired results, a figure which is below the European average.

Female at risk of poverty or social exclusion %:

Geo/Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU - 28 countries	25.5	25.2	24.5	24.4	23.3
Malta	25.5	24.7	23.8	20.4	20.2

Source: Eurostat, 2019

Specific measures targeted to specific groups of women, are explained below.

I. Support women's entrepreneurship and business development activities.

The Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses organises the Malta SME Week which promotes entrepreneurship to potential entrepreneurs and offers workshops for those who are already in business. The activities organised during the SME Week focus on entrepreneurship with one specific focus being female entrepreneurship. For this reason, an event entitled 'Women Mean Business' is organised on a yearly basis and to date has been organised for three consecutive years. The event involves a panel discussion made up of established and successful female entrepreneurs to share their experiences, challenges, success stories and best practices. This is followed by parallel breakout sessions that focus on access to finance, soft-skills, internationalisation and marketing among others. Furthermore, at the end of the workshops, the participants can visit the different entities that set-up shop in the plenary to address queries that participants might have. The entities present at the event vary from Government entities that service enterprises to commercial banks and crowd-funding platforms. What is also significant is that this event is held in collaboration with various female business organisations such as the Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs, Malta Association of Women in Business, the Business & Professional Women Malta and the National Council of Women.

The 3rd Edition of Women Mean Business was held on the 6 November 2018 and was attended by almost 100 participants, 40% of the attendees were students of the Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School. Through a collaboration between the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses and the school, the female students actively participated in the conference and breakout sessions with the aim of further encouraging them to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option and providing them with facilitated networking opportunities to ease set-up.

II. The introduction and strengthening of social protection programmes for women and girls.

Those beneficiaries who receive social benefits, once they start working, will not see their benefits stopped immediately upon employment but will have the benefits tapered to 65% for the first year, 45% for the second year and 25% for the third year. The employer will be paid 25% for the whole 3 years in employment. It can be stated that almost 90% of persons receiving the tapering of benefits, continued in employment after the lapse of 3 years.

The in-work benefit was also introduced for low income earners and rates are applicable as per income declared from gainful occupation and the number of children under the age of 23 years. A single person will be entitled to in-work benefit as long as income from gainful occupation is between €6,600 and not more than €17,130, if both parents are in employment, then income should be between €10,000 and €24,630 and in the case where only one parent is in a gainful occupation, the income should be between €6,600 and €17,130 but the applicable rates for the latter is much less than the other 2 categories.

III. Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty.

Through the establishment of the Legal Aid Agency in 2014, all indigent people – especially vulnerable women and underage girls – started resorting to the Agency or else being referred to the Agency by various stakeholders in order to be given advice concerning their rights according to law. Through the establishment of the Victims of Crime Act in 2015 – subsequently amended in 2018 (Act XIII of 2018 and Act XLII of 2018) – Article 4 (d) of the Act gives right to any victim and vulnerable person (art. 12) to have access to legal aid. As the current law stands, legal aid assistance is given to beneficiaries whose maximum threshold income does not exceed the amount of €6,988.12 (Article 912 of Chapter 12 of the Laws of Malta) for civil lawsuits where the Advocate for Legal Aid decides that there is a *causa probabilis litigandi*. Legal Aid Malta (“LAM”) developed brochures in the Maltese and English languages regarding the services offered by the Agency, which are distributed through local councils and police stations in order to reach persons that may require such services.

In March 2019, LAM organised training sessions to legal aid lawyers on Human Trafficking. These sessions were held in collaboration with Identity Malta and were delivered by a specialised lawyer in this area. To enhance greater awareness about human trafficking amongst Legal Aid Lawyers, the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification together with the Legal Aid Agency organised training on human trafficking to all legal aid lawyers in March 2019. The training was delivered by a lawyer who has extensive experience in the field.

LAM is also committed to the Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan, whereby agencies are committed to ensure that staff is trained to inform migrants accurately of their rights and responsibilities. With this in mind, LAM is organising a seminar for lawyers on the rights and procedures regarding migrants and third country nationals, including women and their children in May and June 2019.

10. Actions taken in the last five years to improve access to social protection for women and girls.

- I. Introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programmes, social assistance).

In order to improve access to social protection for women and girls, the Maltese Government aims to strengthen social protection for women who are not in paid employment. Such measures include the following:

The maternity benefit for self-occupied women was increased up to the National Minimum Wage from a fixed rate which is still applicable for unemployed women while sickness benefit is payable to self-occupied persons who are certified sick and cannot perform gainful activity while previously such persons were only awarded credits instead of paying social security contributions. Sickness benefit can be paid up to a maximum 468 days in a period of 2 calendar years.

Persons on social assistance who decide to continue their studies at university to improve their abilities to enter the labour force are still being considered as eligible for social assistance so as to encourage more people to re-start formal education, with the possibility of having better conditions of work and pay.

11. Actions taken in the last five years to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country.

- I. Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services.
- II. Provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers.
- III. Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes.

The Government took a number of initiatives in this regards. In January 2014, through an amendment to the Maltese Criminal Code, Malta implemented specific legislation to include a specific article on Female Genital Mutilation, making it illegal and punishable by imprisonment, Laws of Malta. Criminal Code. Cap 9. Article 251E. More specifically, the measures implemented by the government aiming to improve the health outcome of women and girls are as follows:

- I. Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services.

There are a number of national specific screening services provided for women. The national screening programme has an approximate recurrent budget of €1.5 million annually.

The national formal cervical screening programme that aims to decrease the burden of cervical cancer was launched at a national level in 2016. This was associated with health promotion campaigns aimed at the public to attract women to the screening services. All women aged between 27- 39 years of age (about 33,000 women in 2017) are invited to the national cervical screening programme every 3 years. The screening test consists of a cervical smear test and women are invited to participate every 3 years. There is the intention to continue to expand and roll out this programme in the coming years to include a wider target population. Since 2012, HPV vaccination has been included on the National Immunisation Schedule and the vaccine is offered to all girls as they reach the age of 12.

The national breast cancer screening programme which includes digital mammography has been expanded further over the past 5 years. Since 2014, when only women aged 50-64 years

of age were invited for screening every 3 years, there has been a gradual increase in the target groups of women screened to include all women aged 50-69 years of age, and a decrease in the screening interval to once every 2 years. A fast track referral system has been set up for women with lesions detected on mammography, including review by a multidisciplinary team and immediate referral to the breast care surgeon on the team. Over the past few years an annual public awareness and health promotion campaign has been held every year in October focusing on breast cancer screening in women. This is done by the health ministry (Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, National Screening Unit) in collaboration with NGOs and encourages women to live a healthy lifestyle and accept the invitation for free screening provided by the National Screening Unit to high-risk populations.

Colon screening is offered to both men and women. Over the last 5 years, the programme was expanded exponentially to include a wider target population. Currently all women aged 65-69 years are invited to take the Faecal Immunochemical Test every 2 years in contrast to when in 2014 only 60-65year olds used to be invited. Follow up colonoscopy is performed for cases that have screened positive for colon cancer.

Efforts have been made to continue to expand and gradually develop the perinatal mental health services. These plans include capacity building for the implementation of screening of others in the antenatal and perinatal period, multi-disciplinary care and strengthened community care by a dedicated community team, and further training of healthcare professionals.

Every year on Women's Day, the Health Promotion Directorate within the MFH takes the opportunity to promote women's health and a healthy lifestyle for the prevention of diseases more prevalent in females.

Medical checks are systematically carried out for every irregular migrant and asylum seeker on arrival. EU migrants, refugee and migrant women and girls with subsidiary protection status and non-EU migrants contributing to national insurance are entitled to the same free healthcare as Maltese nationals (Laws of Malta. Subsidiary Legislation 35.28 Healthcare (Fees) Regulations (5). A migrant health liaison office within the MFH coordinates the training and provision of cultural mediators who assist where necessary within the health system.

II. Provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers.

The setting up of standard operating procedures for the management of suspected alleged cases of domestic violence took place. A train the trainer programme was also held for the health care professionals. Until the first quarter of 2018, at least 112 primary healthcare nurses and doctors had attended Stage 1 Training Programme, with 59 of these having also completed Stage 2 training. The trainings and standard operating procedures are in line with the national Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Strategy & Action Plan Vision 2020 and the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act.

- III. Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programs.

Education on Human Sexuality, Strengthening of Gender Equality and Wise Choices in the Field of Health are three of the Educational Objectives listed in the Maltese ‘National Minimal Curriculum’. These objectives cover the knowledge students and young persons needed to acquire and the skills and attitudes they needed to develop. The legal basis for the Maltese ‘National Minimum Curriculum’ can be found in the Education Act (Chap. 327.). The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention directorate within the MFH continues to collaborate with the Education Department and to continue to raise awareness about sexual health among youth and adolescents. Sexual health campaigns promoting sexual health are run by the Health Promotion Directorate using various media.

12. Actions taken in the last five years to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls

- I. Taken measures to increase girls’ access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training (“TVET”) and skills development programmes.
- II. Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls.
- III. Strengthened measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and/or motherhood.

Malta considers the promotion of human rights and values as an integral part of its current and long-term strategy to provide high quality and value-based education for all. Children's rights education, HRE (Human rights education) and EDC (Education for democratic

citizenship) are given due importance mostly in Social Studies, the teaching of Ethics and Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) which start from primary education all the way through middle and secondary education. There were various outcomes within the last five years, in terms of the education outcomes and skills for women and girls. The measures and improvements are elaborated below:

- I. Taken measures to increase girls' access to, retention in and completion of education, technical and vocational education and training ("TVET") and skills development programmes.

Having a number of early school leavers, is a reality. The government created the Alternative Learning Programme ("ALP") to cater for year 11 students who were not sitting for any Secondary Education Certificate ("SEC") examinations at the end of compulsory schooling. Students are offered lessons in two vocational areas of their choice as well as academic subjects (English, Maltese and Maths), PSCD, Physical Education ("PE"), Information and Communication Technology ("ICT"), Home Economics, Religion/Ethics and Art/Drama/Music. In the near future the ALP will be strengthened as a compensatory reintegration route into general and applied training.

The two institutions offering post-secondary vocational education and training are the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology ("MCAST") and the Institute of Tourism Studies ("ITS"). Both institutions offer a wide range of full-time courses such as Foundation, Certificate and Diploma courses leading to Higher National Diploma level, Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree level.

In March 2018, the Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship Act came into force, providing regulations and governance and administration of accredited training programmes for work-placements, apprenticeships and internships for VET purposes.

As Malta's leading vocational college, MCAST is the VET institution responsible for governing and managing the Apprenticeship system at national level in Malta, and has been working to raise the quality of apprenticeships so as to strike a balance between theoretical and on-the-job training and hence enable the apprentice to obtain long-term employability.

Apprentices Intake at MCAST:

Year	Apprentices
2016/2017	750 Apprentices
2017/2018	880 Apprentices
2017/2018	3200 students on work-based learning including apprenticeship, internship and placements

Tertiary education in Malta is also provided by the University of Malta which is an autonomous and self-governing body funded by the Government.

- II. Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls.

For the promotion of an inclusive educational environment, psychosocial teams consisting of counsellors, youth workers, social workers, career advisors, and prefects of discipline are present in local schools. They work in constant collaboration with administrative staff of the schools, anti-bullying teams, psychologists and other professionals to address any existing issues from inception. In this regard, the Safe Schools Programme within the Ministry for Education and Employment, which includes the Child Safety Service and the Anti-Bullying Unit, provides services through intervention, prevention and training support in developing whole-school responses for the promotion of pro-social behaviour.

- III. Strengthened measures to prevent adolescent pregnancies and to enable adolescent girls to continue their education in the case of pregnancy and/or motherhood

Nifhmu 'l Uliedna fil-Bidliet is a prevention programme that is delivered to parents of students attending Year 5, 6 & 7 of Primary Schools. This programme is aimed at equipping parents with the skills they need to teach sexuality education to their children. Its aim is to empower

them to talk with their children about how to deal with pressures that they encounter as they are growing up.

Unit *Ghozza* provides a support service and an educational programme to unmarried pregnant minors, with the intention of leading them to adopt a positive attitude towards motherhood while empowering them to pursue their career paths. The programme includes sessions on self-development, motherhood and legal, social, emotional and medical issues connected with pregnancy, birth and parenting for early years. Personnel from various agencies are invited to contribute during these sessions. This is intended to give the young mothers the opportunity to take part in group discussions as well as to engage in activities with their children. This unit also provides counselling services to pregnant mothers, their partners and parents.

FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE, STIGMA AND STEREOTYPES

13. The forms of violence against women and girls, their specific context/settings prioritised in the last five years.

- I. Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape.
- II. Female genital mutilation.
- III. Trafficking of women and girls.

The government is addressing various forms of violence against women and girls, within specific settings, outlined below:

- I. Intimate partner violence/domestic violence.

The Government is addressing Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (“GBV&DV”) by ensuring that the legislation is robust in safeguarding victims and potential victims against perpetrators, while coordinated services are put in place to prevent violence and provide assistance when violence occurs. The GBV&DV Act and Strategy addresses all form of violence against women.

Appogg Agency, within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (“FSWS”) is mainly concerned with three of the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention, namely Protection, Prevention and Coordinated Policies to GBV&DV. On the other hand, the 4th Pillar, which covers Prosecution, is tackled by the Malta Police Force (“MPF”) and the Judiciary of Malta.

Although the MPF does not prioritise specific categories of crime for action and its objective is to address any infringement of national legislation, irrespective of the nature of the offence or the status of the victim, in view of crime patterns in Malta certain categories, such as domestic violence, receive more attention. In fact, over the course of 2018 up to 1,341 (see table 1) cases of domestic violence have been reported to the authorities. This also applies to the reported cases of sexual offences, which in 2018 amounted to 120 cases. The MPF does not only investigate, but it also prosecutes offenders as necessary.

REPORTED CASES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE - Year 2018													
SUB-CATEGORY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
GBH WITH ARMS IMPROPER	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	7
GBH WITH ARMS PROPER	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
GBH WITH PHYSICAL FORCE	4	1	0	4	3	2	1	2	4	4	0	0	25
PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM	53	40	37	56	62	38	78	58	65	61	49	67	664
SBH BY ARMS IMPROPER	4	2	3	2	0	2	3	2	4	3	2	2	29
SBH BY ARMS PROPER	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	6
SBH WITH PHYSICAL FORCE	59	42	40	50	43	46	59	68	56	55	33	38	589
STALKING	0	3	0	1	1	1	4	1	0	4	3	0	18
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE Total	121	88	81	114	111	90	149	132	129	129	88	109	1341

Table 1 - Source: National Police System (NPS)

REPORTED CASES OF SEXUAL OFFENCES - Year 2018													
SUB-CATEGORY	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
DEFILEMENT OF MINORS	1	2	1	4	2	3	1	2	3	0	1	4	24
GROOMING OF MINORS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
INDECENT EXPOSURE	1	1	2	3	2	1	5	9	0	1	1	1	27
RAPE	0	1	1	0	3	3	0	2	0	4	3	1	18
SEXUAL ACTIVITY WITH MINORS	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	7
VIOLENT INDECENT ASSAULT	6	5	5	4	2	1	5	3	2	3	5	0	41
Sexual Offence Total	8	10	9	12	11	9	11	17	6	9	11	7	120

Table 2 - Source: National Police System (NPS)

Case Classification	2016	2017	2018	Total
Adult Pornography	3	4	10	17
Child Pornography	31	28	29	88
Computer Misuse	224	189	218	631
Counterfeit Currency	0	0	1	1
Fraud, Forgery and Misappropriation	276	290	384	950
Trafficking in Human Beings	0	2	3	5
Illegal Gambling	0	3	0	3
Incitement of Racial Hatred	5	8	6	19
Information Gathering re: Other Police Reports	55	60	80	195
Information Gathering re: Missing Persons	10	7	8	25
Insults, Threats and Private Violence	232	232	280	744
Intellectual Property Rights	2	2	15	19
Other Serious Crimes	22	31	30	83
Prostitution	4	5	2	11
Sexual Offences (incl. Defilement of Minor)	5	7	13	25
Terrorism	8	8	8	24
Total	877	876	1087	2840

Table 3 - Source: Cyber Crime Unit (Malta Police)

EQUIPMENT DELIVERED TO THE CYBER CRIME UNIT FOR ANALYSIS	2016	2017	2018	Total
Computer Systems	25	156	31	212
Hard Disk (Internal / External)	41	67	35	143
Compact Discs / DVDs	15	347	7	369
3.5" Floppy Diskettes	0	2	0	2
Other Media	22	130	30	182
Mobile Devices	-	-	5	5
Forensic Image Files	-	-	15	15
Documents / Logs / Paper Evidence etc.	0	0	0	0
Total	103	702	123	928

Table 4 – Source: Cyber Crime Unit (Malta Police)

Appogg Agency, as the National Agency for children, families and the community, safeguards and promotes the well-being of these persons through the development and provision of psycho-social welfare services. Cases of intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape are supported through this agency via a Supportline 179, the Domestic Violence Services (“DVS”) and the Care for Sexual Assault Team. The work of the DVS is mainly concerned with the prevention of femicide through its extensive protection services.

II. Female genital mutilation

Appoġġ Agency, addresses children who are at risk of female genital mutilation (“FGM”). In cases of adult victims of FGM, the current legal mechanism, that is, Act 1 of 2014 will come into being. So far, no cases of FGM conducted in Maltese territory have transpired, although the possibility of such procedures being performed is not to be ruled out, given the presence in Malta of third country nationals, including beneficiaries of international protection, from countries or territories where this procedure is known to be performed.

III. Trafficking of women and girls

The number of cases of human trafficking, which have involved women among the victims are numerically less significant and even less when it comes to minors which is nearly negligible. Traditionally, women have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, most recent cases have involved labour exploitation, or a combination of both forms of human trafficking. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the MPF and the then Ministry for Social Policy for the provision of social support services in cases of potential victims of human trafficking. In line with this, the MPF will inform the Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity about each case of human trafficking which potentially will require social assistance. In such cases, the Ministry will provide social support through the professional social work intervention of professionals at Appoġġ Agency, in which social workers will interview, assess, counsel and provide support to the potential victims.

14. Actions prioritized in the last five years to address violence against women and girls

- I. Introduced national action plans on ending violence against women and girls.
- II. Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women’s access to justice.
- III. Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence.

The prioritised actions to address violence against women and girls are as follows:

I. Introduced national action plans on ending violence against women and girls.

The GBV&DV Strategy and Action Plan, launched on 25 November 2017, is the first national framework to ensure that legislation, policies and services address victims' needs holistically and as a societal concern. This strategy and its corresponding action plan also seek to change the hearts and minds of individuals by calling on all members of society (in particular men and boys) to change attitudes. In essence, it is a renewed call for greater equality between women and men and freedom from gender stereotypes. This is because GBV&DV are deeply rooted in the inequality between women and men as well as imbalanced gender expectations, which are further perpetuated by a culture of tolerance and denial of the prevalence of such violence.

The action plan follows four key areas, namely, legal measures and integrated policies; data collection, research and training; raising awareness; and protection and support for victims. The action plan includes the measures which need to be taken; the action needed for these measures; and the responsible bodies for these measures and actions. This Strategy will also be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation and shall be reviewed every three years.

One of the measures of the Action Plan was the need to adopt appropriate legislative measures. The GBV&DV Act is another stepping stone in this field. The main objective of this Act is to fully integrate and implement the provisions of the Istanbul Convention in national law, repeal and replace the Domestic Violence Act with a stronger and wider-reaching legislation, and amend various other important laws in order to ensure that adequate, sufficient protection is available to victims of violence, and ensure that justice is made with regard to perpetrators of such violence. Overall, this legislation has introduced various new elements aimed at providing better protection for victims of violence. The Act came into effect on 14 May 2018. The main changes brought about by this new legislation include the establishment of the new Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, which replaced the Commission on Domestic Violence by giving the Commission additional responsibilities and a wider mandate; a coordinated Action Plan for the relevant bodies and service providers; the full enforcement of the Istanbul Convention in Maltese Law, and a considerable number of amendments to various laws to broaden the protection provided to victims of GBV&DV.

II. Introduced or strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice.

While this Strategy addresses the need for provision of training in line with national legislation, emerging needs and research outcomes for professionals working in the field, through the EU

project ‘Full Cooperation: Zero Violence’, which was divided into three stages of training, a total of 716 professionals concluded Stage 1, 600 concluded Stage 2 and 98 professionals concluded Stage 3. Professionals included doctors and nurses, midwives and gynaecologists, Social Workers, Psycho-social professionals, PSCD and guidance teachers, Legal Aid Lawyers, professionals from the department of Justice, and probation officers among others. Training was also delivered to Police Officers, Judges and Magistrates. The MPF also delivers in-house training to approximately 240 officers from different sections of the Force each year. This training covers subjects such as communication with traumatized crime victims; key indicators of domestic violence and gender-based violence; as well as internal Police Standard Operating Procedures relating to Temporary Protection Orders. Training for new recruits within the MPF also includes information concerning Police legal obligations vis-à-vis the rights of the accused; the provision of support and protection to victims, including vulnerable victims and gender-based violence.

III. Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence.

So as to ensure that the right set of services are available to victims of violence, in 2018, the MPF concluded an Inter-Agency Protocol on Adult Victims of Domestic Violence with Apogg Agency. This Protocol is intended to strengthen cooperation between the two entities, defining roles and responsibilities when investigating and dealing with domestic violence cases. Similarly, an Inter-Agency Protocol regarding Adult Victims of Domestic Violence between the Domestic Violence Services, Ghabex Shelter, Out of Hours Emergency Services, Care for Victims of Sexual Assault Team and Supportline 179 within the FSWS and Primary Health Care was created to ensure collaborative working relationships and full cooperation between services. This collaboration is envisaged to offer an effective and efficient service as well as protection to adult victims of domestic violence. This protocol also clarifies the respective roles of workers within these respective organisations and enhances the coordination between the two entities involved.

Over the past years, the strengthening of services for survivors of violence was crucial as to ensure that the right services are available to all. The FSWS has invested in the 179 helpline by employing full time employees in parallel with the volunteers who throughout the years where handling the helpline. The Service is fully funded by the State. The Service costs about a quarter of a million euro (€204,000) annually and most of the cost goes on salaries and the

running of the service. To this extent in December 2018, the FSWS employed 7 full time employees to strengthen the helpline. By March 2019, this service operates on 7 full time operators and 15 volunteers on Supportline 179. Both the full time operators and volunteers work under the guidance and supervision of a team of 6 social workers and a psychology officer. This national helpline offers support, information about local social welfare services and other agencies, and a referral service to callers who require support. It is also a national service to people who are in times of difficulty or crisis. The primary mission of the Supportline 179 service is to provide immediate and unbiased help to those seeking information, support and/or require a referral to social service agencies. The employees on the helpline receive regular training on aspects of domestic violence as to ensure that the practice remains consistent.

In order to assess the risks on victims of domestic violence, the Domestic Violence Hub has been set up. This is a 24 hour services which assesses the risks of the victims concerned many times in collaboration with the MPF. Also, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women of 2018, the FSWS announced that a new shelter with the capacity to accommodate 7 families in need to seek refuge from domestic violence will be opened as current premises have become too small for the demand. The new premises shall also be located close to a Police station to ensure the safety of its residents.

15. Strategies in the last five years to prevent violence against women and girls

- I. Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours.
- II. Work in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education.
- III. Perpetrator programmes.

While the Government invests in safeguarding victims and potential victims against perpetrators, our goal is to stop GBV&DV before it begins. The following paragraphs explain the strategies the government invested in:

- I. Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours.

The GBV&DV Strategy and Action Plan is based on the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention, one of them being prevention whereby preventing GBV&DV requires far-reaching changes in

attitude of the public at large, overcoming gender stereotypes and raising awareness. One of the areas of this Action Plan is raising awareness, including public awareness-raising campaigns/ programmes to be held on a regular basis, raise awareness on GBV&DV in particular through the media and educational curricula to challenge prevailing acceptance of such violence, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory cultural norms and develop specific awareness-raising initiatives aimed at men in order to mobilise them in taking an active part in eliminating all forms of GBV&DV.

Since awareness-raising campaigns are recognised as the most efficient and effective means of communicating information especially to the general public, the EU projects Full Cooperation: Zero Violence (implementation date 2017-2018) and Breaking the Cycle of Violence (implementation date 2018-2020) both include different campaigns to raise awareness on this subject. Both projects are co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme.

Full Cooperation: Zero Violence aimed to raise awareness and encourage victims and potential victims, witnesses and bystanders to report violence and seek help through the upgraded services. Throughout these campaigns, the aim was for society in general to become more aware of GBV&DV and existing responses and to strengthen the prevention and reduction of re-victimisation as perpetrators and potential perpetrators are made aware of Malta's legislation and commitment to stamp out GBV&DV via public awareness campaigns and actions by trained professionals. This campaign included Social Media Clips, bus shelter posters, online newspaper ads, radio clips and the use of posters in public entertainment spaces.

Similarly, the project *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* included an awareness raising campaign, which was organised between the months of October and December 2018, also during the 16-days of activism against gender-based violence. This campaign aimed to raise awareness among vulnerable groups of women with a focus on women with disabilities, migrant women, and lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex ("LBTT") women, and for them to be informed about support services and protection measures. In order to ensure that the video used for this campaign is accessible for all, it includes captions, and sign language interpretation. This project also included online newspaper banners and features on the social media presenting a message to break the culture of silence which is strongly embedded in the Maltese scenario that violence against women is a private and/or family matter.

During 2018 and 2019, the Malta Girl Guides Association (one of the project partners) are using the 'train the trainer' model with their leaders to train guides and scouts about gender-

based violence, different forms of violence and also how to detect this in their immediate surroundings. This activity also aims to raise awareness among children and youth, and actively engage boys and men in the fight against violence against women. Around 400 children will receive this training while 26 girl guides and 25 scout members have already received training.

II. Work in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education.

Malta also developed the Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy (2015)²². This policy aims to foster a school environment that is inclusive, safe and free from harassment and discrimination for all members of the school community, students and adults, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics. It promotes the learning of human diversity that is inclusive of trans, gender variant and intersex students, thus promoting social awareness, acceptance and respect. It also ensures a school climate that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all students to further their successful learning development and well-being, including that of trans, gender variant and intersex persons. A one day training programme was developed and delivered to the psycho-social staff of the National Student Support Services working within State school provision over a three year period on the implementation of this policy.

III. Perpetrator programmes.

Among the various services aiming at combating GBV&DV, the DVS provide services for perpetrators. The services for perpetrators fall under the Managing Abusive Behaviour (“MAB”) Services which include:

- The Domestic Abuse Intervention Programme and the Support Group for male perpetrators (interventions for male perpetrators);
- Women who Use Force (interventions for women who use force); and
- Child to Parent violence (intervention for those minors who engage in abusive behaviours towards their parents and their parents), launched in October 2017.

²²

<https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/Trans,%20Gender%20Variant%20and%20Intersex%20Students%20in%20Schools%20Policy.pdf>

The main aims of the MAB Services are to assist perpetrators to learn to stop the abuse, learn to identify the danger signs, learn to break out of isolation, learn safer ways of expressing strong feelings, learn to build healthy relationships and take responsibility for their behaviour. MAB Services are committed to developing and contributing to services for the safety of women and children, contributing to public education on domestic violence and working towards developing a society with zero tolerance to violence. The DVS collaborates with services working with young people, namely the Youth in Focus and Embark for Life in order to enhance the aspects of prevention. In fact, DVS provide talks on domestic violence with young people who are receiving these services.

16. Actions taken in the last five years to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology

- I. Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions
- II. Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings
- III. Worked with technology providers to set and adhere to good business practices

Since a vast number of people can easily access the internet and social media, cyber violence against women and girls is an increasing concern. Despite the lack of data, EU estimates show that one in ten women have experienced some form of cyber violence since the age of 15²³. The actions the Maltese government is taking in this regards, are found below:

- I. Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions.

The Government did not introduce any new legislations specifically related to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology in the last five years; however, legislative provisions relating to such offences were already in place. The Criminal Code Act was amended in 2018 in line with the GBV&DV Act, which also addresses stalking and sexual harassment. On the implementation side, the MPF cooperates with technology providers as necessary in the investigation of any form of abuse over the internet, including online sexual harassment and

²³ EIGE (2017): Cyber violence is a growing threat, especially for women and girls

online stalking. Over the course of 2018, a total of 120 cases involving sexual harassment have been reported.

II. Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings.

Appoġġ Agency provide support and assistance to victims who experience stalking and other forms of online violence through the Domestic Violence Service. Cyber violence is also covered by the EU co-funded project ‘BeSmartOnline!’ through the Connecting Europe Facility and forms part of INSAFE and INHOPE. The project is implemented through a consortium coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority (“MCA”) and brings together FSWS, Appoġġ Agency, the Office of the Commissioner for Children and the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (“DLAP”) particularly the PSCD Department with the aim to work towards the establishment of a Safer Internet Centre in Malta. The consortium is supported by the expertise and experience of a number of strategic partners who contribute through a purposely set up Advisory Board.

BeSmartOnline! is a national initiative that concertes the efforts of various national stakeholders working towards the establishment of a Safer Internet Centre in Malta, which aims at empowering and protecting children as well as teens online from risks associated with online activity, through numerous awareness raising initiatives and by fighting illegal and harmful content (particularly online child abuse) and behaviour online. The Safer Internet Day activities are organised in Malta under the BeSmartOnline! project and include activities in various schools, exchanging knowledge on the various uses of the Internet.

III. Worked with technology providers to set and adhere to good business practices.

A number of educational events are organised to raise awareness of cyber security. For example in January 2019 the Malta Information Technology Agency in collaboration with the DDLTS and Drama Unit organised Theatre in Education at Esplora where 2,400 students from Year 4 participated and learned about different aspects of cyber security.

The National Cyber Security strategy was launched in 2016 to address five dimensions:

1. Policy - Devising cyber security policy and strategy that sets the direction on a national level

2. Legislation - Creating effective legal and regulatory frameworks to support all aspects of the strategy
3. Risk Management - Controlling risks through organisation, standards and technology
4. Culture - Fostering awareness to encourage a responsible cyber culture throughout society
5. Education - Building cyber skills into the workforce and leadership through effective education

17. Actions taken in the last five years to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media

- I. Supported the media industry to develop voluntary codes of conduct.
- II. Training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media.
- III. Consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination/bias in the media

Media content shapes opinions, attitudes and ideas. The media highly impacts gender equality given the growing role it plays in our everyday life. Integrating a gender equality perspective in this area is therefore a powerful tool to induce social changes. The following paragraphs shall elaborate, on the ways the government is addressing the portrayal of women and girls on the media.

- I. Supported the media industry to develop voluntary codes of conduct.

There are Guidelines on Gender Equality and Gender Portrayal in the Broadcasting Media which can guide the broadcasting stations when portraying gender issues and deal with the representation of women in the media. However, these guidelines date back to 2007 and are due to be renewed. To this effect, between June and September 2019, the Broadcasting Authority is embarking on a project to analyse the local broadcasting media in particular current affairs and discussion programmes. The analysis process shall take place in October

2019 and will focus on the state of play of such programme genre and start addressing the specific issues pertaining to such programmes. Following this, it is envisaged that guidelines or codes of conduct would need to be drafted to address a better and fair balance of the representation of women and a good portrayal of women in such programmes.

The broadcasting stations are allowed to have self-regulation or internal policies which would address the portrayal of women and girls or address other gender issues on the whole spectrum of the broadcasting media, however, the Broadcasting Authority has not as yet developed any codes of conduct apart from the Gender Guidelines already referred to above.

II. Training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media.

The media can be considered as the lens through which the general public views domestic violence and it often distorts domestic violence. In view of this, in 2017, the Commission on Domestic Violence (“CDV”) launched a consultation document on Reporting Domestic Violence - Guidelines for Journalists and Media Content Producers. These guidelines are for journalists across all formats, which includes broadcast, print and digital media. This document explains what domestic violence is, facts and figures and results of international research. These guidelines include tips for reporting domestic violence incidents, murders and court cases as well as includes useful contacts and resources for journalists. In 2018, journalists’ reporting guidelines were officially launched among all journalists and training was delivered in this respect. The GBV&DV Strategy and Action Plan address a particular measure to raise awareness on GBV&DV, using all available means, in particular through the media and educational curricula to challenge prevailing acceptance of such violence, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory cultural norms. The CDV in collaboration with various Ministries aims to strengthen these reporting guidelines for journalists and the media on issues of GBV&DV.

Malta also participated in the Global Media Monitoring Project (“GMMP”), the last project being held in 2015. The GMMP is the largest research and advocacy initiative in the world on gender equality in news and journalism. It is organized by the World Association for Christian Communication (“WACC”) in cooperation with regional and national coordinators. GMMP 2015 will help maintain the spotlight on gender inequalities perpetuated in and through the news media and the growing demand for change. It will also update the data to be used for

sensitizing new generations of journalists, creating awareness in media consumers, and for media policy and practice change advocacy.

III. Consumer protection services to receive and review complaints about media content or gender-based discrimination/bias in the media.

In order to monitor gender equality in the media, NCPE screens adverts of vacant posts in employment, more so in newspapers, as per the *Equality for Men and Women Act* which prohibits the publication of advertisements that discriminate among job seekers. When NCPE comes across adverts which discriminate against a specific group, the discriminatory text or graphic is flagged and communicated to the respective company. NCPE also recommends the company to take the necessary action to safeguard equal treatment.

NCPE also raise awareness on the importance of gender equality on different broadcasting platforms, both television as well as on the radio. NCPE gives this platform an extensive value since it reaches out to a large audience. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are also utilised on a large scale to pass on targeted messages to audiences of different ages and from different backgrounds.

18. Has your country taken any action in the last five years specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination?

Yes.

The EU project *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* organised mentoring workshops for women who experienced domestic violence and information sessions for women who might be at a higher risk of violence because of their vulnerable background. These include women with disabilities, migrant women, and LGBTI women.

The information sessions, focusing on three vulnerable groups of women provided targeted information and education activities aiming towards preventing gender-based violence and empowering participants. These sessions addressed the definition of gender-based violence, violence prevention, recognising the signs of violence and the support services available. These

sessions also aimed to empower women on different aspects of life skills – whether at home, with their partners, at the office, in the street or their immediate environment. Following these information sessions, seminars were held for women to exchange information and good practices based on their participation in the training and information activities.

All sessions were tailor made according to the needs of the group, as this was not a one size fits all training. A clear example of this is that women with disability were also provided with a training session on self-defence techniques.

Information sessions were not only provided to the target groups mentioned, but a total of 6 groups of women received training as per below table:

Number of participants	Number of sessions (2.5 hrs / 3 hrs each)	Other details
4	8	women receiving psycho-social support at Foundation for Social Welfare Services; these were women living in the community
8	8	women residing in a second stage shelter
7	4	LBTI women
3	4	women in prison
10	4	migrant women
17	4	women with disabilities

Table 5: Information sessions of the project Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Furthermore, trainees were offered a 2-hour one-to-one session with their trainers to take on further any personal or confidential issues and/or experiences they might have had. Certificates were also awarded to all the participants.

A similar study, ‘Stronger Together’ is a women’s empowerment and advocacy project implemented by the Jesuit Refugee Service Malta in partnership with the Women’s Rights Foundation and funded by the Commonwealth Foundation. The DVS within Appoġġ Agency also collaborated with this project.

The overall goal of the project is to enhance the quality of life of women living in institutional settings (Open Centres and homeless/Domestic Violence (“DV”) shelters) by working with them to improve the policies, structures and services which impact their lives.

As part of this project, project staff will work with a group of 10-15 women from different backgrounds, to train and empower them to raise awareness of their needs and the challenges

they face and to advocate directly on issues of concern to them, thus increasing their sense of agency and control over their future and combating disempowerment and helplessness.

Through the partnership with the Women's Rights Foundation, this project broadens the scope of previous advocacy projects by focusing on the challenges and obstacles to self-sufficiency faced by all women residing in institutional settings, rather than exclusively on the challenges faced by one particular category, for example, migrants and asylum seekers or victims of DV in isolation.

These information sessions were supported with raising awareness campaigns that have been discussed earlier on in this report.

PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

19. Actions and measures taken in the last five years to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making

- I. Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics
- II. Encouraged the participation of minority and young women
- III. Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, political campaigning

There are different actions taken by the Maltese government in order to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making, including within the political sphere and through opportunities of training and learning, as elaborated below:

- I. Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics

A public consultation document with proposals aimed to introduce a gender-balanced parliament has been published on March 26th 2019. Four main pillars that were also evaluated and discussed in the public realm are as follows:

1. Constitutional and Legal Amendments to permit additional seats for the under-represented sex that obtains less than 40% of the Parliamentary seats.

The amendments proposed do not impinge on the existing electoral process and are not quotas. Instead, they aim to integrate a 'Gender Corrective Mechanism' to the present system. The proposed legal provisions will be activated to give an opportunity to candidates from the under-represented sex to gain experience, exposure and influence in decision-making in order to garner a critical mass of 33% that will eventually render corrective measures unnecessary.

It is being proposed that additional seats (or top-up seats) be allocated in the eventuality that the under-represented sex obtains a percentage of less than 40%. While the proposed mechanism aims to boost the percentage of candidates from the under-represented sex to approach 40%, in each election, the maximum number of additional seats proposed is 12. In the eventuality that both sexes obtain 40%, the proposed mechanism will not be necessary. This proposal would require Constitutional amendments.

Additional seats imply that incumbents who do not belong to the under-represented sex are not put at a disadvantage and they will have an equal opportunity to be elected through the existent process. The proposed Gender Corrective Mechanism utilises three types of wasted votes and this is applicable to both parties.

2. Gender Mainstreaming in Parliament and family-friendly measures.

It is recommended that the Speaker of the House sets up a Commission to prepare a strategic plan that opens the way for gender mainstreaming and family-friendly measures in Parliament. This plan will require a dedicated budget and it will ensure that:

- a) Members of Parliament are sensitised to the need to mainstream gender in all policy areas and legislations.
- b) Family-friendly working hours that may include a review of the schedule of parliamentary sittings.
- c) To discuss the possibility that back-benchers may opt for a full-time position on a voluntary basis as recommended by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission on Malta.
- d) Women are fairly represented in Parliamentary Committees as members and as Chairs.

- e) Parliament adopts anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies and it implements an institutional policy against sexual harassment together with a formal procedure for investigating complaints.
- f) Parliament should have nursing, childcare facilities and family rooms

3. Incentives in the form of state funding to political parties in order to recruit, train and support candidates from the under-represented sex to contest the Maltese General Elections.

This document acknowledges the need to aspire to a balanced candidature of at least 40% of both sexes in order to increase the probability of an equitable result. As a result, legal amendments are being proposed for the Financing of Political Parties Act to open the way for State funds that can be used to recruit, promote and train candidates pertaining to the under-represented sex. The political parties will be obliged to give a financial account pertaining to the utilisation of these funds in order to promote equality between the sexes in politics in an annual report addressed to the Electoral Commission.

4. Extended remits for the Electoral Commission.

The Electoral Commission itself needs to be representative of both sexes. It will need extra resources so that it carries out an annual gender audit of political parties which opt to apply for State funding. The annual audit will produce an evaluation of initiatives and measures taken by the parties receiving such funds and it may also make recommendations for improvement.

II. Encouraged the participation of minority and young women

The NCPE encourages and promotes women by means of a Directory of Maltese Professional Women²⁴. It gives further visibility to professional women and their competences, qualifications and experiences in various fields. The Directory is aimed to enhance their opportunities of being appointed to decision-making positions. NCPE also implemented a number of initiatives to raise awareness on this Directory through NCPE's social media and

²⁴ <https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Pages/Directory/Search.aspx>

newsletter as well as through a circulation in the government's internal mail. Until April 2019, 261 professional women were registered.

- III. Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, political campaigning

In 2015, 30 women aspiring to hold decision-making positions participated in a mentoring programme by professionals who occupy high-level jobs to acquire relevant knowledge and skills related to leadership. Training was also provided to the mentees on topics such as leadership and supervisory skills, decision-making, assertiveness and communication skills. In addition, measures by other stakeholders include the LEAD initiative, by the Malta Labour Party, aiming to have half of the 2027 General Elections²⁵ candidates being women by means of training and mentoring on political campaigning, leadership, decision-making as well as public speaking.

NCPE wrote various articles on the topic in local newspapers, developed an online campaign and gave interviews in television and radio programmes. The short awareness-raising campaign: *'Gender Balance in Politics: What now?'* was carried out in September 2018 to raise awareness on current democratic deficits due to the persistent gender imbalances.

20. Actions taken in the last five years to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies ("ICT").

- I. Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training ("TVET") in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership
- II. Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls
- III. Other – Focus on digital skills

²⁵ <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2017-07-13/local-news/Prime-Minister-Joseph-Muscat-announces-new-initiative-for-PL-to-have-more-female-candidates-6736176562>

In recent years, the government is increasingly giving more attention to women's access to the media particularly through ICT, as outlined below:

- I. Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership

Women in ICT has been set up and is made up of like-minded individuals coming from the ICT industry or organisations that make use of ICT. Funded by the ERASMUS+ funding instrument. The aim of the project was to equip staff members with the necessary skill-sets to lead projects that encourage more women graduates to take up careers in ICT industry as well as to stimulate interest among those taking their first career decisions while still attending obligatory schooling. The objective behind the dissemination of information about this project will be the portrayal of ICT careers as challenging and rewarding working life-paths as well as to correct the negative perceptions and stereotypes about ICT careers, particularly to eradicate the misconception that ICT careers are a male-only domain. This is especially pertinent considering that, only one woman for every five men enters the ICT industry in Malta. The project included job shadowing experiences for some staff members in Ireland and Norway, which were project partners.

Another ERASMUS+ project, *Smart Women*, aimed at empowering women taking up personal business ventures or to improve their employment prospects by providing them with free specialised training in entrepreneurship and eCommerce. The project has been successfully implemented between seven transnational partner organisations namely: LIKTA (Lithuania), Fundacion Dedaldo (Spain), EOS (Romania), The Cyprus Computer Society (Cyprus), LANGAS ATEITI (Lithuania), All Digital Organisation (Belgium) and MCA (Malta).

The *Smart Women* training programme, provided aspiring female entrepreneurs with the necessary toolkit to transform a business idea into a successful enterprise, with the ultimate aim of improving the employment prospects or business opportunities of the participants. This initiative has attracted women, who were either already in a brick and mortar business and wished to establish an online presence or had a business idea which they wanted to concretise by bringing it to the market. The programme, consisted of online training via an innovative

eLearning Platform²⁶ together with 40 hours of face-to-face training about: Business Planning; Digital Marketing; Creating Digital Content; ICT and Online Security; and eCommerce. Following this programme, a Project Closure Event was organised featuring the sharing of experiences on the knowledge gained and testimonials.

II. Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls

The project *Woman 4IT*²⁷, funded by the EEA and Norway Grants fund for youth employment, aims at developing and rolling out practical innovative solutions to boost the digital competences of young women who are at risk of exclusion from the labour market. The overarching scope of this project is to improve the employability potential of the participating women. The project will also make a small contribution towards the endemic skills shortage in the ICT industry, which is a prevalent factor in all member states. The project was launched in quarter 3 of 2018 and will run through up to quarter 3 of 2021. This project is led by LIKTA and will be implemented in six other member states (Malta, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Romania and Spain). Partners from Norway (ECWT) and Belgium (Digital Europe) will use their expertise in the area of women and ICT jobs to support the programme.

By providing formal educational opportunities the project will directly benefit 700 young women, across all partner countries. The curricula that shall be used for these training programmes will be customised by experts in the areas and the employers after conducting a skills gap analysis that will establish the baseline competences and readiness for specific jobs – a training tool kit will then be developed and made available in seven languages (pertaining to the partner countries). An expected key output of this training is that at least 50 young women will be engaged in an ICT job or a job that needs to be supported by ICT.

The project covers: the identification of unfilled categories of digital jobs, awareness campaigns aimed at improving the digital competences and ICT careers amongst young women, conducting a skills gap-analysis, placement of young women in digital jobs, liaison with employers to develop and design individualised learning plans for young women,

²⁶ <http://smartwomenproject.eu/>

²⁷ <https://women4it.eu/>

dissemination of the projects activities and outputs and planning for the long-term sustainability of the outputs produced.

III. Other – Focus on digital skills

The government took the initiative to establish a specific entity that focuses on digital skills. The eSkills Malta Foundation was launched in 2014. The Foundation brings together Government representatives from Education and the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) together with key entities in investment employment and Industry, including Malta Enterprise, the Malta Communications Authority, The Malta Gaming Authority and The Chamber of Commerce.

Within the Foundation, there has been a Women in ICT Focus Group launched in March 2017. Through this group the Foundation creates initiatives revolving around: increasing the participation in the digital industry or digital related industry by girls and women, having access to equal opportunities in taking advantage of the digital opportunities; increase on the Quality of Resources for the ICT Industry, discussing gender issues at the place of work in the digital environment and propose possible solutions, contribution to policy to stakeholder, as well as specific projects. In the near future, The Women in ICT Focus Group aims to organise school visits by Women in ICT industry, organise a conference on Women in ICT, and have a gender balance Award for ICT Employers.

21. Do you track the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

No.

The national budget as a whole, does not track gender-responsive budgeting, however, it is the sole responsibility of other Ministries and Departments for the management of their budgets to allocate funds for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women.

The allocation on annual budgets to each line Ministry by the Ministry for Finance reflects the priorities presented by the same line Ministries each year, as part of the annual budget process.

Considerations by the Ministry for Finance at budget preparatory stage would include the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women, as may be requested by the line Ministries, amongst other various functions of government. The same applies for budget measures that are proposed by the line Ministries each year.

22. As a donor country, does your country track the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)?

No.

The country does not track the proportion of official development assistance which is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

23. Does your country have a valid national strategy or action plan for gender equality?

Yes.

Following the setup of the Gender Mainstreaming Unit within HRID in January 2019, the Minister for European Affairs and Equality launched a public consultation *towards a Gender Equality Mainstreaming Framework* on 8th March 2019. The Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan aims to provide a vision for the enactment of gender equality and establishes a framework for the advancement and empowerment of women. It also aims to promote an integrated approach to gender equality and provides policy direction for Governmental entities and other stakeholders to guarantee standards in this area.

This publication focuses on eight main pillars, based on the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index. The eight pillars are: right to equal treatment; equal access to opportunity and combatting the gender pay gap; financial independence; equal access and opportunity to knowledge and education; co-responsibility and balance of work, private and family life; equal opportunities for positions of authority, as well as health and general wellbeing; and intersectionality (taking into consideration nationality, disability, social class

and other dimensions when it comes to ensuring gender equality). Thus, as currently structured, this Strategy is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aiming to achieve the targets under SDG 5.

The Gender Mainstreaming Unit has received feedback from Government entities, civil society organizations and the general public as to ensure that this strategy targets the needs of society. Since this strategy is still within the consultation process, there is no set cover period or budget indicated. This Strategy will work in line with the gender mainstreaming law which will aim at amending legislation that currently retains differential treatment for women and men, introduce provisions for the elimination of the gender pay gap and set up a structure to mainstream gender equality in society as a whole.

24. Does your country have an action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women?

Yes.

Malta had been strongly committed to the universal periodic review mechanism and made huge strides forward in enacting legislation guaranteeing women's rights in various areas since the Universal Periodic Review ("UPR") of 2013. Following the 2018 UPR, it remains committed to meet its commitments. In particular, recommendations made to Malta targeted the elimination of gender inequality and all forms of discrimination and violence against women, and the promotion and acceleration of women's full and equal participation in all spheres of life; private, public and political, as well as in decision-making.

A consultation process started in 2014 aimed at an institutional and legislative reform in equality and non-discrimination laws in Malta, resulting in an Equality Bill and a Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill, both being at a very advanced drafting stage. The Equality Bill covers all spheres of life and various grounds of non-discrimination, and will replace the current Equality for Men and Women Act. This bill also introduces an array of equality duties that would address structural discrimination and introduce an obligation to

promote equality for all in all spheres of life. The list of grounds of anti-discrimination has been extended and multiple discrimination is directly addressed by this Bill. Furthermore, Government would be bound to adopt an Equality Strategy & Action Plan to prevent discrimination and promote equality. The Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill establishes a Human Rights and Equality Commission as a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles, replacing the current equality body. The forthcoming Commission will hold strengthened powers to ensure the protection and upholding of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in all spheres of life as laid down in the Equality Bill.

In 2017, Malta set up a Council for the Rights of Women with the aim of strengthening the dialogue between the government and civil society in gender equality and mainstreaming equality in all aspects of government's processes. In 2014, Malta had ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention), which was transposed into domestic legislation, particularly by adopting the GBV&DV Act. This Act strengthened legal provisions, criminalising trafficking, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation. The budget allocations to combat human trafficking and assist victims of exploitation had been increased. One of the new financed projects focuses on raising public awareness to prevent human trafficking and a second project aims at providing support to victims of human trafficking and reduce chances for re-trafficking of the victims.

Simultaneously, the Government also launched the GBV&DV Strategy & Action Plan with the aim of ensuring that legislation, policies and services addressed the needs of victims comprehensively. These were also a renewed call to members of society, particularly men and boys, to change attitudes towards greater equality between genders and freedom from gender stereotypes. This Strategy seeks to address the four main pillars under the Convention by implementing two main projects – *Full Cooperation: Zero Violence* (2017-2018) and *Breaking the Cycle of Violence* (2018-2020). These two projects aim to strengthen multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary cooperation in dealing with violence against women and gender-based violence and to introduce training programmes and a manual of procedures for those in contact with potential victims as well as to address violence against migrant women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer/questioning women and women with disabilities.

Furthermore, as a result of various Government initiatives to empower women and combat gender stereotypes, the female employment rate in Malta increased by 14.5% in five years (from 50.8% in Q3 2013 to 65.3% in Q3 2018) and more women are employed in full-time jobs. The Government had also introduced greater transparency into employment contracts to address the gender-pay gap and free childcare services to parents or guardians who were in employment or pursuing their education to help them achieve a better work-life balance. These efforts will increase once the Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy & Action Plan – for which there is an ongoing consultation – is adopted.

Malta openly supported recommendations to provide greater attention to the need to reduce the gender pay gap, which currently stands at 11%. This will be tackled through direct addressing of horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market. Measures intended to increase the number of women in elected office are currently also being formulated and, once published, a public consultation will follow suit. Targets for a minimum of 40% of the underrepresented gender on governing bodies of public entities and government boards will also be enacted as part of the forthcoming Equality Bill.

Further highlighting Malta's efforts in this field and commitment to its international obligations and its trust in international law and mechanisms, Malta has just signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. By ratifying it, Malta acknowledged the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to provide views and recommendations on any of the complaints received alleging violations of rights set out in the Convention. Furthermore, Malta continues to explore a possible withdrawal of the reservations to the Convention.

25. Is there a national human rights institution in your country?

No.

While at present, Malta does not have a national human rights institution, work is underway to establish a Human Rights and Equality Commission in accordance with the UN Paris Principles, and with a very broad mandate on the sector. It is envisaged that this Commission will be fully independent and answerable only to Parliament. Over and above its functions as a national human rights institution, it will also encompass a quasi-judicial board with the mandate to investigate and decide upon cases of alleged breaches to the right of equality and non-discrimination.

26. Actions taken in the last five years to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda

- I. Adopted National Action Plan on women, peace and security
- II. Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks

Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda has to be one of the main overarching principles for all UN Member States in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. Malta welcomed the Secretary General's plan to enhance women participation at all levels. The following paragraphs outline the progress in this regards:

- I. Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security

In 2017, \$63.5 million were spent by Malta on its military; subsequently, the National Action Plan on the Implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000) has not been adopted yet. However, Malta is also currently in the process of drafting its first Women Peace and Security ("WPS") National Action Plan, which is planned to be launched by 2020. In this regard, inter-ministerial policy planning and coordination will be crucial in order to fulfil our commitments on WPS.

Malta has made commendable strides in the areas of gender discrimination, for example by promoting active inclusion and enhancing equality of opportunity, Malta is enhancing the advancement of women and empowering them to participate in the labour market. In recognising the importance of women's participation in politics and high-level decision-making, Malta has emphasised inclusion of women in governance. This is best demonstrated by the appointment of Marie Louise Coleiro Preca as President of the Republic.

- II. Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks

In October 2018, during an open debate of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the promotion of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining

peace through women's political and economic empowerment, apart from aligning itself with the EU's message, Malta also made a statement in its national capacity.

In a speech delivered by H.E. Ambassador Carmelo Inguanez, Malta expressed its satisfaction that the issues of women's empowerment, gender equality and women's participation in public and political life are increasingly taking center stage in the work of the Security Council. Malta stated that in achieving peace and security, one could not ignore half of the population and made reference to the United Nations Secretary General's report which stated that women have an equal right to participate in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict.

27. Actions taken in the last five years to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings

- I. Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict.
- II. Protected civil society spaces and women's human rights defenders

While the Government of Malta has no experience of women and children involved in armed conflict, it condemns all forms of violations of women and girls' human rights including any situation of armed conflict where sexual violence is used as a strategic and tactical weapon of war. The points below, highlights the governmental progress in this regards:

- I. Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict

The Government calls for more effective programmes to decrease the negative impact of armed conflict while highlighting the importance of the contribution of women and girls in all stages of conflict resolution, peace-making, peacekeeping, peace building and the reconstruction process. In particular, Malta gives importance to efforts and programmes that combat gender based violence, including sexual violence, sex trafficking, female genital mutilation and forced prostitution.

In 2014, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs launched the 'Official Development Assistance Policy and a Framework for Humanitarian Assistance (2014–2020)'. Gender equality, democratisation and good governance are central to this policy. In addition, gender

mainstreaming guides Malta's development of activities of assistance and cooperation. Hence, gender considerations feature in a cross cutting manner in all areas of assistance carried out by Malta in the framework of the development policy.

II. Protected civil society spaces and women's human rights defenders

During the 40th session of the Human Rights Council, Malta delivered a national statement in support of women Human Rights Defenders ("HRDs") during an exchange with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs. In Malta's view, Women HRDs face additional risks and obstacles, particularly when calling for gender equality, fighting for land and environmental rights, social and health care issues amongst others. They are also at a much greater risk of being targeted with violence and harassment.

28. Actions taken in the last five years to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response

- I. Increased access of-conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse
- II. Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs
- III. Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children

The Maltese authorities have not taken any actions intended specifically to address the situation of women and girls in situations of armed conflicts; however, the Government takes measures that may, indirectly, mitigate such abuses, as explained below:

- I. Increased access of-conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

As to ensure the increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services, in December 2018, Malta also launched a Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan which includes a list of 16 integration measures. Measure 7 is to create a pool of trained cultural mediators to be deployed as required in public services. Through this measure, the aim is to have trained cultural mediators, both of local as well as of

migrant origin, assist professionals and clients to overcome language, cultural and other barriers, and thereby facilitate integration.

Malta regularly contributes to various United Nations agencies as well as international organisations in order to support people afflicted by natural or man-made humanitarian crises. However, Malta does not partake in overseas humanitarian missions, meaning that it has no representation in conflict scenarios. In this regard, Malta is unable to implement any actions that would promote participation of women in conflict settings.

II. Taken measures to combat the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs

In this regard, Malta implements all UN Security Council Resolutions prohibiting the sale or re-sale of firearms to certain countries or regions. Moreover, a system is in place to monitor and authorise the sale or re-sale of firearms from or through Malta. No authorisations are ever issued to sell or re-sell firearms in conflict regions. Similarly, efforts by the Customs Department and the MPF are directed not only against the importation, but also the exportation or re-export of drugs from Malta. Trade in hubs such as the Malta Freeport is monitored to prevent abuses.

III. Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children

Trafficking in persons is a fundamental and crucially important challenge in the areas of human rights and law enforcement. For these reasons, the Government launched its fourth Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons covering the period between January 2017 and December 2019 contemplating measures addressing all forms of exploitation but prioritising effective responses to trafficking of women and children within vulnerable groups. Hence, action to create awareness about the phenomenon, build capability amongst actors working in the field with a view to enhance identification of cases of human trafficking as well as play a role in the prevention of people being exploited at their place of work. Henceforth, action by the Government to increase its commitment to fight human trafficking, remained mainly through greater collaboration between institutions on the identification of cases of human trafficking and training to public officers.

During 2018, the Government launched an awareness campaign through a series of TV adverts about Human Trafficking. The adverts gave telephone numbers where one may report cases involving labour or sexual exploitation. The Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security (“MHAS”) commissioned two University researchers to conduct a national research on the vulnerability to human trafficking amongst women and minors in migrant open centres. The

study concluded that although no cases of human trafficking could be identified, some of these people were potentially vulnerable to human trafficking.

In addition, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Citizenship, Reforms and Simplification has been allocated €120,000 to launch a national education campaign on human trafficking. The campaign is planned to be launched later on during 2019. Another €32,000 were also allocated to set up the first exit programme for prostitutes. The Government of Malta is making these funds available to a non-government organisation with the aim of lessening the chances of re-exploitation for these victims. Government also removed the fees related to the issuing of first-time residence and work permits to victims of human trafficking in order that victims of human trafficking would be able to rapidly seek regular employment and to encourage their prompt integration into Maltese society.

Apart from the training delivered to Legal Aid Lawyers, training was also organised for labour inspectors and employment officers employed by the DIER and Jobsplus respectively. The training was delivered by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (UK) in March 2019. In January 2019, the CDV also organised a five-day intensive training on human trafficking provided by the London-based International Centre for Parliamentary Studies. It brought together a vast range of stakeholders representing government departments and non-government organisations. The list of participants included representatives of the Police Vice Squad, the Police Immigration Office, Appoġġ Agency, DIER, Identity Malta, Jobsplus, the Office of the Attorney General, officials of the primary health service and the Genitourinary Clinic. Representatives of non-government organisations Dar Merhba Bik, Women's Rights Foundation and Victim Support Malta also attended this training. The total cost of this training amounts to €36,500.

The current administration has pledged to implement a reform on human trafficking and prostitution, with the ultimate aim being the protection of victims. In this regard, the government has two objectives: (i) updating current laws on human trafficking to make them victim-centred, and (ii) develop a national anti-trafficking strategy to come into force following the implementation of the current action plan. The National Action Plan on Combating Trafficking in Person is set to start being implemented by the end of 2019.

In order to carry out such reform, the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification has engaged in discussions with all the relevant government ministries, responsible of the provision of support services, investigation and prosecution, justice,

employment, health and education. External consultation is currently being held with non-government organisations, trade unions and employers’ representatives, NCPE, organisations representing the migrants’ communities and sports associations. The Government of Malta is set to present its plans later on in 2019. Meanwhile, the announcement of Budget 2019 made specific references to the allocation of additional funds in order to implement the forthcoming new strategy.

29. Actions taken in the last five years to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child

- I. Strengthened girls’ access to quality education, skills development and training
- II. Implemented policies and programmes to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced marriage
- III. Implemented policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children

I. Strengthened girls’ access to quality education, skills development and training

Malta views education as a fundamental human right. In 2016, the percentage in Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education), stood at 98%.²⁸ In 2018-19, there was a 16% increase in the uptake of VET in compulsory education, since 2017-18. In 2017/18, in the field of post-secondary education (MCAST, Malta’s leading VET institution), there were approximately 3200 students on work-based learning including apprenticeship, internship and placements.

In recent years, Malta has identified the need to continue developing VET within secondary schools and this is being done by the introduction and increasing of new VET and applied subjects.

Tables: Intake of Vocational Subjects within secondary schools

	2014/2015	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019
Uptake of VET over 5 years of implementation 16% increase on 2017-18	327	794	1,550	2,388	2,759

²⁸ Education and Training Monitor 2018

Malta wants to move towards making teaching more student-centred and all the activities set in class help to achieve the learning outcomes for that particular year programme. Hence, as from scholastic year 2018/2019, new learning outcome programmes and syllabi were introduced for Kinder 1, Year 3 and Year 7. Children will be assessed continually since mid-year exams will be removed. New learning programmes and syllabi based on learning outcomes will continue to be introduced in other year groups during subsequent scholastic years on a year by year basis.

In addition, the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity ("MFCS") launched the National Children's Policy in November 2017, which promotes the values of respect, dignity and equal treatment of every child, irrespective of their gender. In this policy there are four policy actions that can be considered to contribute to the elimination of "discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child", although these have a broader aim, namely:

- Continue to promote the gender balanced uptake in the choice of subjects so as to counter gender stereotyping in career prospects.
- Strengthen the provision of support to families whose children require special attention due to certain conditions (e.g. mental health, addiction, disability, etc.) and/or situations (e.g. poverty, teenage pregnancy, etc.).
- Enhance pre-natal and post-natal support to parents, primarily mothers (in cases where the mother is still under 18 years of age)
- Strengthen the promotion of healthy lifestyle patterns primarily among expectant mothers as well as children, primary caregivers and educators (in cases where the mother is still under 18 years of age)

In addition to the mentioned policy, the Office of the Commissioner for Children advocates for the rights of all children without making any gender differences.

II. Policies and programmes to reduce and eradicate child, early and forced marriage

In 2018, the Maltese criminal law with regard to sexual offences was completely overhauled. As part of this exercise, forced marriage is now criminalised. In fact, any person who by force, bribery, deceit, deprivation of liberty, improper pressure or any other unlawful conduct or by threats of such conduct, forces anyone to enter into a marriage shall be guilty of causing a forced marriage and shall, unless the fact constitutes a more serious offence under any other

provision of this Code, be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term from three to five years. The luring of victims to other states for the purpose of forcing them into marriage is also illegal under Maltese law. The amendments also repealed a legal provision which allowed perpetrators to go unpunished if they marry the victim after abducting them.

III. Policies and programmes to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work undertaken by girl children

In order to eradicate child labour and excessive levels of unpaid care and domestic work by girls, the Ministry for Education and Employment (“MEDE”) has undertaken numerous measures in connection with the implementation of Malta’s Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan - Vision 2020 “INTEGRATION = BELONGING” (2017). With regard to compulsory education, MEDE continued and will continue to have in place the Migrant Learners’ Unit (MLU) which is set up within the MEDE and is present to equip itself with the knowledge and tools to best support schools, newcomer learner parents and their children in order to promote the inclusion of newly arrived learners into the education system. Integrating migrant children within the educational system, contributes to having more girl children in equal education rather than in unparid work, domestic work or child labour.

30. Actions taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies

No specific measures were taken to integrate gender perspectives into environmental policies and programmes as all measures are gender neutral. Neither positive nor negative gender discrimination was adopted as environmental policies make no distinction based on gender.

31. Actions taken in the last five years to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation

No specific measures were taken to integrate gender perspectives into environmental policies and programmes as all measures are gender neutral. Neither positive nor negative gender discrimination was adopted as environmental policies make no distinction based on gender.

Section Three: National Institutions and Processes

32. Malta's current national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women

As of January 2019, Malta's national machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women is the Gender Mainstreaming Unit. The Unit is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan that shall come into effect later on this year. It will serve as the main governmental coordinating body that liaises with various entities, imparts information, and feeds the gender perspective to ongoing processes. The Unit will also draw attention to patterns of issues and concerns raised by women and gender minorities and their respective organisations, with the aim of drawing durable solutions as well as assisting government policy development in this field. Furthermore, the Unit will make best use of existing sources of funding for the enhancement of services, provision of training, awareness raising and community building.

33. Is the head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation (e.g. inter-ministerial coordinating office, commission or committees)?

Yes. There is no national process for SDG implementation

If YES, please provide further information

Yes. Malta is one of the few countries, which have a specific Sustainable Development (SD) Governance model enshrined in its legislation within the *Sustainable Development Act*. This legislative framework mandates the Government to mainstream sustainable development in its operations as well as raising awareness on the subject across all sectors of Government and society.

To reinforce this, the Act designates the Permanent Secretary in each Ministry as the Ministry SD Coordinator whilst designating directors responsible for policy development and heads of entities as SD Focal Points. Furthermore, the Act establishes two other structures:

- the Guardian of Future Generations, a regulatory structure empowered to safeguard inter-generational and intra-generational sustainable development; and
- the Sustainable Development Network, a stakeholder driven structure with the aim of promoting sustainable development.

This legislative framework promotes vertical integration, which means the integration of all political-administrative levels, such as local, regional, national and supranational levels. The Act also emphasises the importance of a horizontal integration as well. It refers to coordination between different ministries and administrative bodies together with stakeholders and civil society.

34. Are there formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Yes.

Malta considers that it has a good sustainable development governance model in place, which is underpinned by the Sustainable Development Act. This legislative framework mandates government to mainstream sustainable development in its workings. To reinforce this, the Act designates the Permanent Secretary in each Ministry and the Ministry SD Coordinator whilst designating directors responsible for policy development and heads of entities as SD Focal Points. The main objective of this focal point network is to mainstream sustainable development workings across all levels of government.

If YES,

a) *Which of the following stakeholders participate formally in national coordination mechanisms established to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?*

Beijing Declaration and PfA

- Civil society organizations
- Women's rights organizations
- Academia and think tanks
- Faith-based organizations
- Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- Private sector
- United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- Civil society organizations
- Women's rights organizations
- Academia and think tanks
- Faith-based organizations
- Parliaments/parliamentary committees
- Private sector
- United Nations system
- Other actors, please specify.....

Malta does not participate to the Beijing Declaration Platform but to the UN Meetings in relation to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

b) *Do you have mechanisms in place to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups can participate and that their concerns are reflected in these processes?*

YES

Yes, this is mainly done by monitoring its effective implementation through gender equality policies as outlined in the Equality Policy for the Public service document. Additional policies, which are published by the relevant Ministry, are also taken on board. The most common policy which is being put in place at present are the various family friendly measures which have been integrated into our daily work schedule.

c) Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

This report was compiled by the Gender Mainstreaming Unit within the Human Rights and Integration Directorate at the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality. Various Ministries and other Stakeholders were consulted in the preparation of this report.

35. Is gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls included as a key priority in the national plan/strategy for SDG implementation?

There is no national plan/strategy for SDG implementation

The current Sustainable Development Strategy, which was drafted in 2006 and had a time line from 2007 to 2016 did not specifically include this area. At present, we are drafting a new SD Strategy with a time line until 2050. The new strategy will be focusing on such issues as has been outlined in the Vision document, which was published in November 2018.

Our vision is to strengthen the social economy by stimulating the development of human potential, reducing social and wealth distribution inequalities, promote inclusive labour and education policies, as well as eradicate labour exploitation. Efficient and accessible healthcare and basic services must also be ensured in order to achieve a higher quality of life.

36. The top three areas in which Malta made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level.

- 1) Promulgated laws, regulations, or statistical programme/strategy setting out the development of gender statistics
- 2) Produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)
- 3) Developed a centralised web-based database and/or dashboard on gender statistics

At the end of 2017, the National Statistics Office (NSO) signed an agreement with the Commission for Domestic Violence (CDV) to provide technical assistance for the compilation of annual statistics related to domestic violence. The first round of statistics for reference year 2017 were presented in the annual report published by CDV in 2018, which is available online²⁹. The agreement will be extended so that NSO can continue to assist CDV in relation to any local and international statistical requirements related to gender-based violence.

Moreover, the NSO participated in a Eurostat grant funded project, which tested and piloted an EU survey on gender-based violence. The aim of the pilot project was to test the questionnaire and assess the feasibility of implementing the proposed tool. The project ran from October 2017 to January 2019.

Furthermore, information on poverty and perceived health is collected from the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions survey, which is an annual enquiry, conducted by NSO among persons residing in private households in Malta and Gozo. Income statistics refer to calendar year 2016, while non-income components (such as material deprivation) refer to 2017, which is the data collection year³⁰.

37. Malta's top three priorities for strengthening national gender statistics over the next five years

²⁹https://meae.gov.mt/en/Commission%20on%20Domestic%20Violence/Documents/Publications/CDV_Annual_Report2017.pdf

³⁰https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C1/Living_Conditions_and_Culture_Statistics/Documents/2018/News2018_120.pdf

No surveys on gender statistics are foreseen. Nevertheless, the Census of Population and Housing will be conducted in 2021 and will provide disaggregated gender statistics on the population. Furthermore, NSO will gradually continue to gather all Eurostat Statistics and the Labour Force Survey.

38. Have you defined a national set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

No, but Malta regularly transmitted data to Eurostat databases and these directly contribute to the compilation of the SDG indicators.

If YES, how many indicators does it include and how many of those are gender-specific?

If YES, how many of the gender-specific indicators are additional country indicators (i.e., not part of the global SDG monitoring and indicator framework)?

Please provide the indicators in an annex

If NO, how many global gender-specific SDG indicators (list provided in Annex 1) are available in your country?

Please provide the indicators in an annex

Global gender-specific SDG indicators

- No Poverty (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)
- Reduced inequalities (10.2)
- Zero hunger (2.3)
- Good health and wellbeing (3.7, 3.8)
- Quality education (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5, 4.6)
- Peace, justice and strong institutions (16.2)
- Decent work (8.3, 8.5)

39. Has data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs begun?

If YES, please describe which indicators have been prioritized

If NO, explain the main challenges for collecting and compiling data on these indicators

Yes. NSO regularly compiles gender specific indicators and the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC) utilises the outcome to monitor the respective SDG targets through the SD focal point network. So far the following SDG's are being compiled and monitored:

- SDG 5_20 Gender pay gap in unadjusted form
- SDG 5_30 Gender employment gap
- SDG 5_40 Inactive population due to caring responsibilities by sex
- SDG 5_50 Seats held by women in national parliaments and governments

40. Which of the following disaggregation is routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

- Geographic location
- Income
- Sex
- Age
- Education
- Marital status
- Race/ethnicity
- Migratory status
- Disability
- Other characteristics relevant in national contexts

Annex 1: Entities Consulted

This report was compiled by the Gender Mainstreaming Unit within the Human Rights and Integration Directorate at the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality. Its compilation ensued a consultative process with various departments and Ministries. The participating entities include:

1. Aġenzija Appoġġ
2. Broadcasting Authority
3. Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability
4. Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence
5. Legal Aid Malta
6. Malta Communications Authority
7. Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Business
8. Ministry for Education and Employment
9. Ministry for European Affairs and Equality
10. Ministry for Finance
11. Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion
12. Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security
13. Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government
14. Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change
15. Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity
16. National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
17. National Statistics Office
18. Office of The Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health
19. Office of the Prime Minister

20. Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation
21. Parliamentary Secretary for Persons with Disability and Active Ageing
22. Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification of Administrative Processes