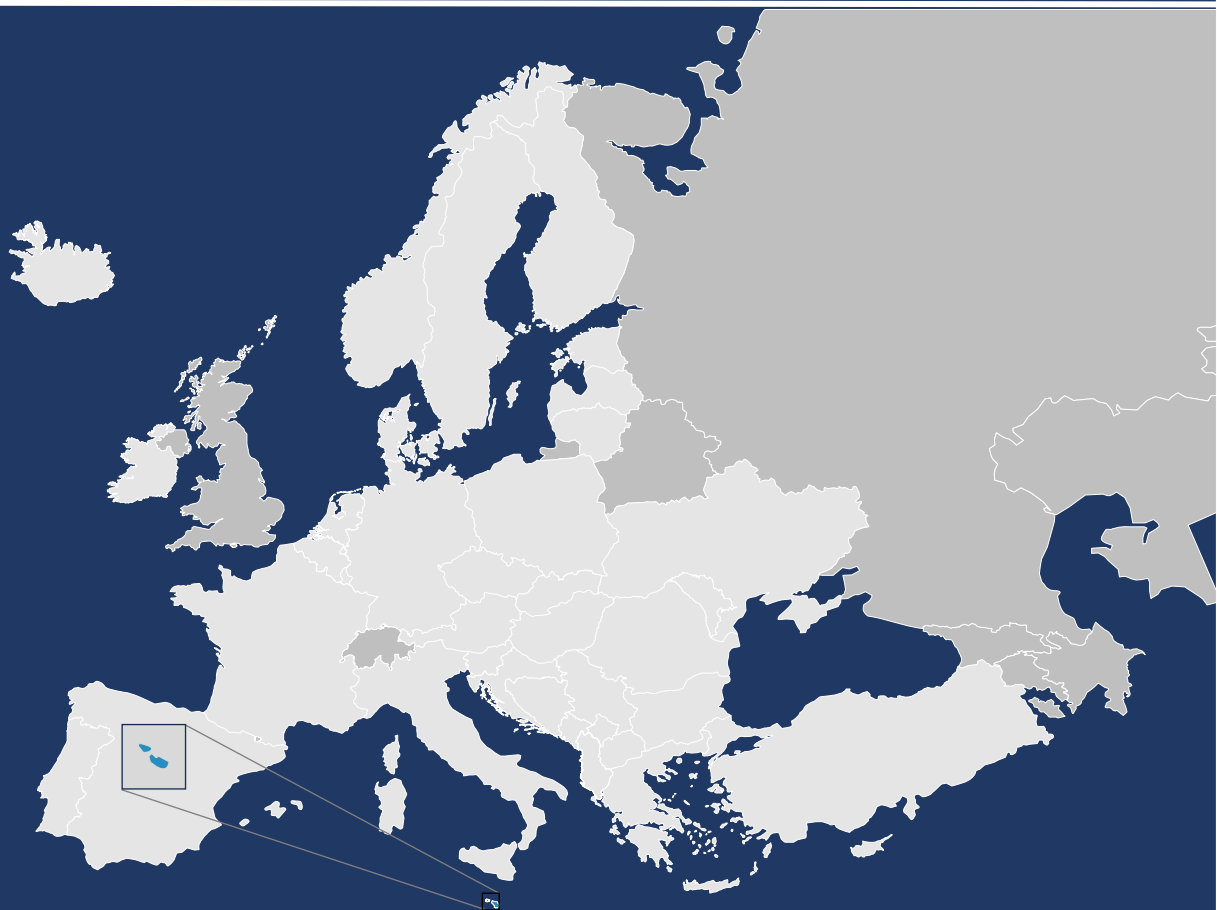# MALTA

2024 Digital Public Administration Factsheet

Supporting document

Main developments in digital public administrations and interoperability

JULY 2024

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Political Communication	*Legislation*	*Infrastructure*

2030 DIGITAL DECADE

The **Digital Decade policy programme 2030** sets out digital ambitions for the next decade in the form of clear, concrete targets. The main goals can be summarised in 4 points:

1) a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals;
2) secure and sustainable digital infrastructures;
3) digital transformation of businesses;
4) digitalisation of public services.

Skills
20 million employed **ICT specialists**, more
graduates + gender balance
80% of adults can **use tech** for everyday tasks

Government
Key Public Services – 100% online
Everyone can **access health records online**
Everyone can use **eID**

Infrastructure
Gigabit connectivity for everyone, **high-speed mobile coverage** (at least 5G) everywhere
EU produces 20% of world's **semiconductors**
10 000 **cloud edge nodes** = fast data access
EU **quantum computing** by 2025

Business
75% of companies using **Cloud, AI or Big Data**
Double the number of **unicorn startups**
90% of **SMEs taking up tech**

The production of the **Digital Public Administration factsheets and their supportive documents** support the objectives and targets of the Digital Decade programme. By referencing national initiatives on the digital transformation of public administrations and public services, as well as interoperability, they complement existing data and indicators included in the Digital Decade reports and related resources. They also highlight and promote key initiatives put in place or planned by EU countries to reach the Digital Decade's targets.

1. Interoperability State-of-Play

In 2017, the European Commission published the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) to give specific guidance on how to set up interoperable digital public services through a set of 47 recommendations divided in three pillars. The EIF Monitoring Mechanism (MM) was built on these pillars to evaluate the level of implementation of the framework within the Member States. The mechanism is based on a set of 91 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) clustered within the three scoreboards (Principles, Layers, Conceptual model and Cross-border interoperability), outlined below.

Starting from the 2022 edition, an additional scoreboard, Scoreboard 4, focusing on cross-border interoperability, has been incorporated. This scoreboard assesses the adherence to 35 Recommendations outlined in the EIF framework. Specifically, it encompasses Interoperability Principles 2, and 6 through 18 from Scoreboard 1, all recommendations pertaining to Interoperability Layers from Scoreboard 2, as well as Conceptual Model recommendations 36 to 43 and 46 to 47 from Scoreboard 3, outlined below.

Scoreboard 1 Interoperability Principles	Recommendation(s) n°
Principle 1 - Subsidiarity and Proportionality	1
Principle 2 - Openness	2-4
Principle 3 - Transparency	5
Principle 4 - Reusability	6-7
Principle 5 - Technological neutrality and data portability	8-9
Principle 6 - User-centricity	10-13
Principle 7 - Inclusion and accessibility	14
Principle 8 - Security and privacy	15
Principle 9 - Multilingualism	16
Principle 10 - Administrative simplification	17
Principle 11 - Preservation of information	18
Principle 12 - Assessment of Effectiveness and Efficiency	19

Scoreboard 2 Interoperability Layers	Recommendation(s) n°
Interoperability Governance	20-24
Integrated Public Service Governance	25-26
Legal Interoperability	27
Organisational Interoperability	28-29
Semantic Interoperability	30-32
Technical Interoperability	33

Scoreboard 3 Conceptual Model	Recommendation(s) n°
Conceptual Model	34-35
Internal information sources and services	36
Basic Registries	37-40
Open Data	41-43
Catalogues	44
External information sources and services	45
Security and Privacy	46-47

Scoreboard 4 Cross-border Interoperability

Source: European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism 2023

Each scoreboard breaks down the results into thematic areas (i.e. principles). The thematic areas are evaluated on a scale from one to four, where one means a lower level of implementation and four means a higher level of implementation. The graphs below show the result of the EIF MM data collection exercise for Malta in 2023, comparing it with the EU average as well as the performance of the country in 2022.

**SCOREBOARD 1 - TWELVE PRINCIPLES**

2022 2023 EU Average 2023
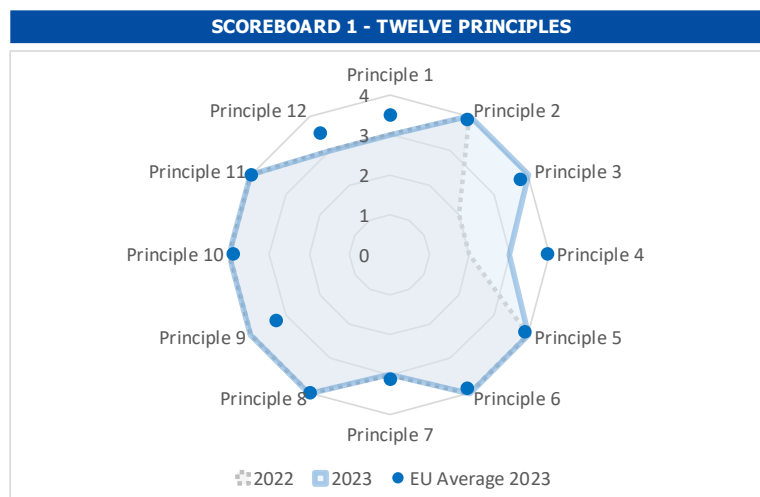
Source: European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism 2023

The performance of Malta in Scoreboard 1 indicates a generally strong adherence to the EIF Principles. Compared to 2022, Malta exhibited improved performance under Principle 3 (Transparency), aligning with the European average. However, potential areas for improvement pertain to the implementation of Principles 1 (Subsidiarity and Proportionality) and 12 (Assessment of Effectiveness and Efficiency), where the current score of 3 could be further

enhanced. Furthermore, despite the increase from the previous year, Malta has room to boost its score on Principle 4 (Reusability), with a focus on the reuse and share of information and data when implementing European public services.
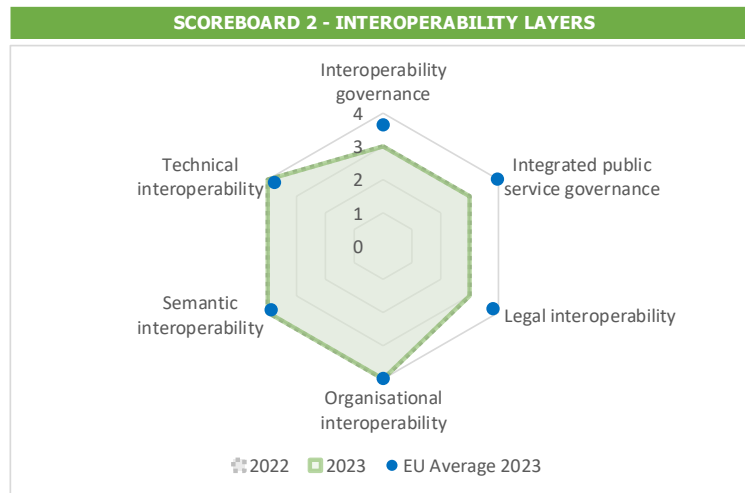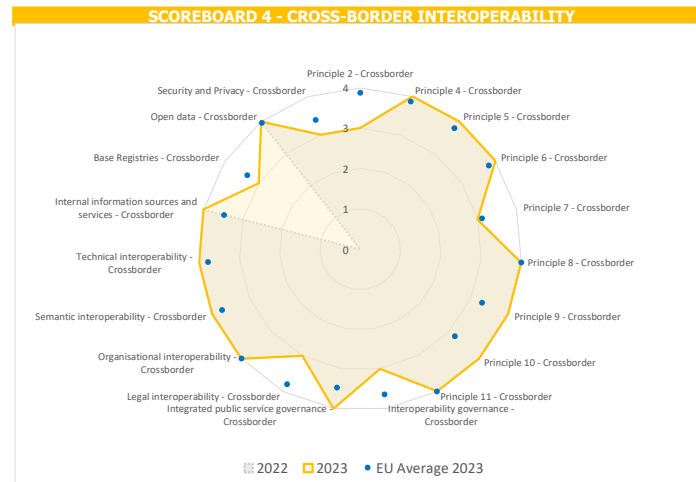

Source: European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism 2023

Malta's scores in Scoreboard 2 demonstrate an overall strong performance, with ratings of 3 and 4 across all interoperability layers. Areas for improvement to enhance the country's implementation of the recommendations under Scoreboard 2 relate to interoperability governance, integrated public service governance, and legal interoperability. Specifically, concerning interoperability governance, Malta exhibits a moderate performance in participating in standardisation works (Recommendation 24). Moreover, to align with the European average on legal interoperability, Malta could focus on ensuring that legislation undergoes 'interoperability checks' to identify any barriers to interoperability (Recommendation 27).
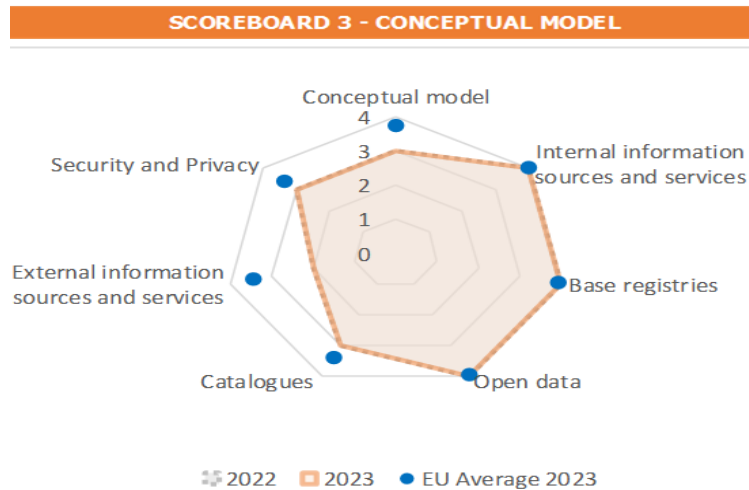
Source: European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism 2023

In 2023, Malta's scores assessing the Conceptual Model in Scoreboard 3 indicate a strong performance in implementing recommendations associated with internal information sources and services, base registries, and open data. However, there are areas for improvement in implementing recommendations related to the conceptual model itself, as well as concerning external information sources and services. Specifically, the absence of a common scheme for interconnecting loosely coupled service components and establishing the necessary infrastructure for maintaining public services (Conceptual Model - Recommendation 35) hampers Malta's overall score on the conceptual model. Additionally, utilising external information sources and services during the development of public services could enhance the score in the external information sources and services category (External information sources and services – Recommendation 45).

Source: European Interoperability Framework Monitoring Mechanism 2023

The results of Malta on Cross-Border Interoperability, as reflected in Scoreboard 4, demonstrate a commendable level of achievement for the country. Specifically, Malta has achieved the maximum score of 4 for 14 out of 19 indicators, highlighting a slight increase compared to the previous year, with the improvement on the country's Base registries. However, there still is room for further improvement in relation to five indicators where the country exhibits lower performance, notably in Principle 7 (Inclusion and Accessibility). For instance, efforts could be directed towards enhancing compliance with the European accessibility standards outlined in the Directive on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public-sector bodies (Recommendation 14).

Additional information on Malta's results on the EIF Monitoring Mechanism is available online through interactive dashboards.

Curious about the state-of-play on digital public administrations in this country?

Please find here some relevant indicators and resources on this topic:
- Eurostat Information Society Indicators
- Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)
- eGovernment Benchmark
- Repository of good practices on the EIF implementation

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2. Digital transformation of public administrations

Main digital strategies, action plans and legislations

National Digital Strategy

The Malta Digitali 2022–2027 (National Digital Strategy), launched in November 2022, sets out the Maltese government's vision on how it intends to maintain its momentum as a global digital leader and a champion of emerging technologies. The strategy lays the foundations for Malta's transition towards a more digitalised society and economy leading to better public services, more productive businesses and citizens that are able to harness the immense opportunities brought about by digitalisation. The National Digital Strategy thus sets out how the government shall act not only in its traditional role as promoter and regulator, but also as the enabler, incubator and accelerator for change towards digitalisation. In order to achieve this vision, several goals have been identified. Malta is committed to work towards them while the strategy is being implemented. These goals are supported by six guiding principles that encompass how digitalisation should be applied and focused. Consequently, one of the strategy's focal points addresses the diverse needs, requirements, and expectations of various cohorts of Malta's society and economy. In particular, the way digitalisation can make a real difference in daily life, the digital opportunities that arise, and the related challenges that will need to be addressed from a three-pillar perspective - society, business and government will be analysed. Another focal point of the strategy looks at how digitalisation can shape and strengthen Malta's economy. More specifically, this is being addressed through a strategic course of action that investigates growth through innovation and further digital strategic focus on various sectors of social and economic importance. Government plays a leading role by further investing in emerging technologies, such as by setting up a digital innovation hub (DIH), providing access to government open datasets, expanding funding for research and innovation (R&I), and cultivating an ecosystem that is conducive to and supportive of digitalisation. Undoubtedly, attention must also be paid to a number of key enablers, among which there are those related to regulation and legislation, digital infrastructure and funding, as well as cybersecurity, data and eSkills (Digital Skills).

Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government

In December 2020, the Maltese government signed the Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government, thus re-affirming its commitment – together with other EU Member States – to foster digital transformation in order to allow citizens and businesses to harness the benefits and opportunities offered by modern digital technologies. The Declaration aims to contribute to a value-based digital transformation by addressing and strengthening digital participation and digital inclusion in European societies.

New Strategy for the Public Service – Achieving a Service of Excellence

In December 2021, the public service launched a new strategy for the next five years, called Achieving a Service of Excellence. The strategy is currently monitored at a high level by the Digitalisation Committee spearheaded by the Principal Permanent Secretary and followed up by the Implementation Division within the Office of the Prime Minister. In 2023 a strategy realignment exercise took place in collaboration with the persons entrusted to drive the three main pillars of this strategy, namely (i) people, (ii) technology and (iii) services, and the respective initiatives' stakeholders. This involved the revision and consolidation of some of the initiatives. The vision, the strategic objectives, the values and guiding principles are still the same.

Centralised Digital Enabling Services Policy

The policy published in December 2019 aims to encourage the use of centralised digital services, which will enable the use of digital services within the public administration and guide the adoption of alternative services in order to ensure data security. The policy recommends that all government bodies and agencies should, unless they have specific needs, give priority to the following centralised digital-enabling services provided by the government:

- Cloud services, especially for storing, processing, transmitting or sharing classified information;
- Electronic payment service (government payment gateway);
- Notifications service, and
- Video streaming service.

Public Administration Data Strategy

The Public Administration Data Strategy 2023–2027, published in July 2023 aims to build upon the exponential growth of data and the various technologies used for its collection, processing, storage, preservation and transmission, whilst also addressing the challenges met on a national scale over the past years. It aims to engender the general principles of fairness and transparency so that individuals, and public and private sector organisations can process data to the maximum extent possible, as permitted by the law, for the benefit of natural or legal persons owning that data. It is designed to encourage and empower the various data owners to share and re-use data included in the relevant and applicable legislation and to publish as open data all the data which are not sensitive or personal in nature.

Digitalisation of internal processes

Electronic Filing of Official Documentation

The electronic filing of official documentation is necessary for the purposes of processing by the public administration and judicial authorities.

From a judicial process point of view, the possibility to submit judicial acts by electronic means commenced in 2013 in the Small Claims Tribunal. This was followed, in 2015, by acts filed with the Administrative Review Tribunal and, in 2016, by judicial letters filed with the Courts of Malta and Gozo. Since 2015, summons issued by the Commissioners for Justice could be served through electronic mail. In August 2017, the necessary regulations were issued for the electronic filing of applications in the Court of Magistrates:

- S.L.490.05: Filing of Acts before the Administrative Review Tribunal by Electronic Means Regulations;
- S.L.380.04: Small Claims Tribunal (Filing of Acts by Electronic Means) Rules;
- S.L.12.30: Filing of Applications by Electronic Means in the Court of Magistrates (Malta) and the Court of Magistrates (Gozo) in its inferior jurisdiction Regulations and
- S.L. 12.29: Filing of Judicial Letters by Electronic Means in the Courts of Malta and Gozo Regulations were repealed by Legal Notice 93 of 2018 and amalgamated with S.L. 12.21 entitled Civil Procedure (Regulation of Registries, Archives and Functions of Director Courts (Gozo) and other Court Executive Officers) Regulations; and
- S.L.291.07: Service of Summons by Electronic Mail Regulations.

The electronic filing of official documentation necessary for processing by the public administration has progressed steadily. An early example of filing by electronic means was Article 239 of the Civil Code which followed on the electronic signature reforms introduced through the Electronic Commerce Act. Sub-article 2 was included in the Code in 2012 and provided that the copy of an Act registered in accordance with sub-article 1, and transmitted to the Director by any electronic means, or any true copy thereof, shall be deemed a true and authentic copy for all purposes of law provided this copy was signed by the Director receiving it.

Government Intranet for the Public Service

The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) offers a collaborative platform which is also based on Microsoft SharePoint, for document management, collaboration and intranets. This platform is widely used within the government, but most notably it is used for the government Intranet for the Public Service – intra.gov.mt. The Intranet for the Public Service is available to all government departments/entities and their employees. Through a collaboration site, intra.gov.mt provides any participating government department/entity the facility to share activities such as document management and workflows that address the internal business requirements of the specific department or entity. The platform holds information in the form of circulars, news, events, directives, newsletters, vacancies, management resources, courses and scholarships and is restricted to public service officials.

The Corporate Electronic Document Management System (CEDMS)

The Corporate Electronic Document Management System (CEDMS) is aimed at bringing about a quantum leap in the way the Malta Public Service will work. There will be a concerted move towards an 'as paperless as possible' approach to eliminate the paper files and the way the public service works and move towards a digital environment.

This platform will allow for unprecedented levels of collaboration and information sharing across Ministries and other governmental entities. The system will move the way of working towards the production of electronic documents as well as their electronic signature and versioning.

The implementation of a CEDMS will offer the following benefits to government:

- Improved document organisation: centralised storage and organisation of electronic documents, making it easier to locate and retrieve information;
- Enhanced document security: access controls which can be implemented to restrict document access to authorised personnel, ensuring confidentiality;
- Efficient document retrieval: eliminating the time-consuming process of manually searching through physical files and folders, resulting in improved productivity and reduced frustration;
- Version control and document tracking: maintaining a record of document versions and changes, allowing users to track revisions, collaborate effectively, and maintain document integrity;
- Streamlined collaboration: enabling real-time collaboration on documents, allowing multiple users to access and edit files simultaneously;
- Interoperability, standardisation and increased agility: implementing a single solution across different government departments promoting interoperability, standardisation of processes, procedures, and systems;
- Data analysis and reporting: corporate solution which can provide a centralised repository of data, enabling easier data analysis, reporting, and performance monitoring;
- Disaster recovery and business continuity: electronic documents can be backed up regularly, ensuring their availability even in the event of hardware failures or other unforeseen events;
- Cost savings and space efficiency: by transitioning to electronic documents, government can save on paper, printing, filing cabinets, and storage space costs;
- Compliance and regulatory requirements: allowing for the implementation of access controls, document retention policies, and audit trails, which help demonstrate compliance during audits and investigations;
- Workflow automation: allowing government to streamline and automate document-centric processes and track whereabouts and monitor cycle times; and
- Environmental sustainability: reducing reliance on paper and printing and contributing to environmental sustainability efforts.

The deployment in the pilot sites is scheduled to begin towards the end of 2024 or early 2025.

Maltese Government Common Database

The Maltese Government Common Database (CdB) will be replaced by the Person Register, once fully implemented, which shall establish core person details record and authorise links between the said record and other records held in other official registers. This register will be integrated with the Interoperability Platform that shall serve as the main platform for data sharing across government.

MAGNET (Malta Government NETwork)

MAGNET was implemented in 1995 as the Malta Government NETwork that connects all government Ministries, departments and agencies, as well as local councils, police stations, libraries, hospitals, health centres, social services offices and embassies. This network enabled the government to disseminate IT and information society applications such as email, the internet, and corporate applications like the Common Database (CdB) and the Departmental Accounting System (DAS) to help facilitate and improve the efficiency of the public service. The availability of this network enabled the government to launch its eGovernment services. A new network, MAGNET II, was launched in July 2005 and partly replaced MAGNET. This new state-of-the-art network presented a number of benefits for users compared to its predecessor. In particular, MAGNET II provided enhanced bandwidth per site, offered better reliability through strict service

level agreements (SLAs), guaranteed 99.8% minimum site availability and was fully secure through extensive encryption.

In 2015, MAGNET III was launched to provide cost-effective connectivity services to the government. By the end of 2016, all MAGNET II sites migrated to the MAGNET III infrastructure. Whilst retaining the strong features of MAGNET II, the MAGNET III infrastructure offered flexible bandwidth in accordance with client business needs. Another major benefit of MAGNET III was the network's ability to enable video calls efficiently and effectively between all connected organisations. A government-wide intranet became available to all entities connected to the network. The Malta Public Service Intranet allowed document exchange and sharing across ministries and departments. By the end of 2020 around 250 sites were connected to MAGNET through this fibre-based network, with an additional 400 sites ca. connected to the broadband-based portion of this network. By 2023, the number of sites having fibre connectivity increased to 400.

Government Core Network Upgrade

The MITA core network infrastructure located at the Agency's two Data Centres and interlinking them together, is the junction through which all network traffic originating from any government site is transported through MAGNET, to its intended recipient. The core network infrastructure is a fundamental building block on which the MITA can provide a wide variety of government services, thanks to its robustness, high availability, high speed, high capacity and security measures.

Digitalisation supporting the EU Green Deal

No particular initiatives in this field have been reported to date.

3. Interoperability and data

Interoperability Framework

National ICT Interoperability Framework

Malta acknowledges the importance of interoperability and is working decisively towards making its public services interoperable. The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) is in the process of revising the current National ICT Interoperability Framework (NIF), to ensure its alignment with the European Interoperability Framework (EIF). Its primary goal is of encompassing and substantiating the most recent EIF, providing an action plan tailored to the national context. The NIF therefore uses the EIF interoperability principles and recommendations as a basis to direct national efforts towards a connected government and public administrations through legal, organisational, semantic, and technical interoperability. The end goal is to modernise the public sector using the latest technology, whilst maximising the benefits and innovation and reducing the burdens of the immense data of the domain.

Enterprise Architecture Policy

Amongst the Government of Malta ICT (GMICT) policies, the Enterprise Architecture Policy for Interoperability and Reuse regulates architecture building blocks and complements the NIF. GMICT policies have recently undergone a rationalisation exercise to ensure their currency.

Enterprise Architecture Framework

Since 2021, the Enterprise Architecture Framework has been undergoing a revision to make it more aligned with the public administration's overall ecosystem. This will enable MITA to improve the governance of the government enterprise architecture and set up the required processes to efficiently carry out interoperability assessments as envisaged in the Interoperable Europe Act.

Data access, management and reuse

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (Cap. 496) in Malta came fully into force in September 2012. This legislation provides for access to documents held by the government, including the public service and the public sector (entities, authorities and agencies).

Through its provisions, applicants may submit requests for documents and all public authorities are obliged to assist applicants in making their requests, processing and replying to requests within specific timeframes. A document in the context of this law is defined as any article on which information is recorded in whatever form, therefore this may refer to various types of material, including manual and electronic files, audio visual material, as well as scale models. The FOIA defines processing as the search, retrieval, examination and disclosure of a document.

The submission system includes a notification of submission and a reply within 20 working days. Either the document will be disclosed, partially disclosed or not disclosed. In the latter case the public authority has to provide the reason for refusing access. Such reasons are only possible through the restrictions listed in the FOIA. Restrictions are mainly tied to matters relating to law enforcement, public safety, international relations, protection of personal data, and commercial interests. All requests submitted are free of charge, but public authorities may request payment that covers the processing aspect. Applicants that are dissatisfied with the outcome of their request may submit a complaint to the public authority, which can overturn the original decision. Further to this, the applicant can also lodge an appeal with the Information and Data Protection Commissioner. Following the decision by the Commissioner, the applicant may seek further redress through the Information and Data Protection Tribunal. The possibility of appeal is also possible for the public authority in this case. Decisions by the Tribunal may be further moved on to the Court of Appeals by any of the parties.

Reuse of Public Sector Information Act

Legal Notice 429 was published in 2020, together with the Organisational Structures for Data Sharing and Reuse Regulations, under the Reuse of Public Sector Information Act (Cap. 546). This law amended Cap. 546 to establish the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner as the regulatory authority in Malta, and the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) as the implementing entity, serving as the main co-ordinator and first line of call for any obligations arising out of the Act. The MITA was also entrusted to publish a standard and format for management of communications between the public administration and natural persons and/or organisations and establish the national data portal through which data discovery and data consumption services shall be provided, as may be applicable and authorised by the data owner. Furthermore, Legal Notice 430 of 2020 brought into force the Business Register and Information Sharing Regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 546.02). These regulations established a Business Register and Registrar for Business responsible for the administration of the Business Register, as well as a Business Portal to facilitate sharing of business information between public sector bodies.

Cap. 546 of the Laws of Malta, which transposed into Maltese law the general principles governing the reuse of public sector information (Directive 2013/37/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013), was amended through Act XI of 2020 which widened the scope of the legislation applicable to data sharing for public administration beyond solely open data. Cap. 546 of the Laws of Malta was then further amended to transpose the provisions of Directive 2019/1024 on Open Data and the Re-Use of Public Sector Information. Although this Directive replaces the PSI Directive, it is also being referred to as a 'recast directive', wherein principles from the PSI Directive are retained and expanded on. The provisions of the recast directive were transposed into Maltese legislation on 2 July 2021 through an Amending Act to Cap. 546 of the Laws of Malta.

Freedom of Information Portal

The Freedom of Information Portal provides online facilities to make Freedom of Information Requests.

Open data

The National Data Portal (data.gov.mt) is expected to be renovated during 2024.

Base registries

The following table lists the Maltese base registries:

National	
Business and Tax	These regulations (Subsidiary Legislation 546.02) provide for the establishment and maintenance of a business profile within which businesses shall store information relative to their activities and share them with public sector bodies as may be necessary from time to time.
	The Business Register went live in Q4 of 2023. This business register contains a profile on each business entity (such as address, genre, NACE Code, VAT number, licenses issued by government agencies etc.). This data is mostly updated by government entities in real time, however some fields, such as the business address and NACE code, are updated by the business entities themselves. This information is shared across all government entities on a needs-only basis. Rather than businesses being asked for the same information by different entities, most of which would have been issued by another government entity anyway, government entities now have direct access to this information through the register. This therefore implements the Once-Only principle, as requested by the EU, and reduces bureaucracy for businesses.
Transportation / vehicles	The Vehicle Registry was established by the Motor Vehicles Registration and Licensing Act, Cap. 368 of the Laws of Malta.

Land	The concept of a Land Registry was created with the Land Registration Act and was enacted by Act XXXV of 1981, (Cap. 296 of the Laws of Malta). Furthermore, by virtue of the Land Registration Agency (Establishment) Order, under Legal Notice 4 of 2019, the Land Registration Agency was created. The agency seeks to maintain a reliable and effective land registration system, while providing replies to official searches regarding property. It also issues Certificates of Title related to registered property. In this way Chapter 296 of the Laws of Malta proves to be a vital component in the simplification and standardisation efforts of the public administration.
Population	A Legal Notice for the implementation of a Person Register has been enacted. With effect from 1 February 2024, the Legal Notice establishing the Person Register shall provide measures to facilitate sharing and re-using personal data between public sector bodies and enable the link between the core person details record and other records held in other official registers containing equivalent personal data in relation to the same person. The implementation of this base register also aims to enable the Once-Only principle within government. In addition to modernising the existing solutions, improving user experience, harmonising the approach for system-to-system integration, eliminating dependency on legacy systems and taking advantage of the benefits brought by with the introduction of new technology, another objective of the Person Register is to extend the scope of the existing functionalities. These include accepting personal details updates from different life events across government as detailed within the Legal Notice. The implementation of the Person Register started in 2022, and it is well under way with the first phase of the project being deployed on the live environment in the first months of 2024.
Other	▪ During 2020, the Maltese government has implemented a Post Contract Management Tool to increase transparency even after the award of the procurement call whereby contracting authorities/entities complete tasks related to the post-contract phase of procurement procedures. Currently the system also has an Open Data structure based on the World Bank's Open Contracting Data Standard. To continue automating processes and advancing the concept of the Once-Only principle, the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) and eCERTIS will soon be connected to the eForms. In addition, Malta shall be exploring the Public Procurement Data Space (PPDS) implementation. ▪ The Register of Commercial Partnerships holds basic information on every commercial partnership in terms of the Companies Act (Cap. 386 of the Laws of Malta) registered in Malta, whereby commercial partnerships include limited liability companies. The agency in charge of the mentioned register is the Malta Business Registry (MBR) which is represented by the Registrar of commercial partnerships. Such register contains the information on the ultimate beneficial owners of such commercial partnerships, as applicable under subsidiary legislation 386.19 of the Laws of Malta. The MBR has launched a new system based on the blockchain using a private hyperledger. These developments will help ensure that information contained in the register is up to date, accurate and more secure when compared to traditional ledger systems, and that is due to the immutability characteristics of the blockchain system. Having a suitable portal allowing individuals and CSPs to fulfil company law processes electronically ensures also that the latest EU initiatives in relation to company law are incorporated in Maltese company law processes, emanating from the transposition of Directive 2019/1151 of 20 June 2019 as regards the use of digital tools and processes in company law and Directive 2019/2121 of 27 November 2019 amending Directive (EU) 2017/1132 as regards cross-border conversions, mergers and divisions. ▪ The Public Registry is regulated by the Public Registry Act (Chapter 56 of the Laws of Malta), as well as the Civil Code (Chapter 16 of the Laws

	of Malta), the Marriage Act (Chapter 255 of the Laws of Malta), the Civil Unions Act (Chapter 530 of the Laws of Malta), the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (Chapter 540 of the Laws of Malta) and the Cohabitation Act (Chapter 614 of the Laws of Malta). Article 238 (1) of the Civil Code (Chapter 16 of the Laws of Malta), obliges the Public Registry Office in Malta and Gozo to keep five register books: one for the registration of acts of birth, one for the registration of acts of marriage, another for the registration of civil unions, another for the registration of acts of death, and the fifth for the registration of the deeds of cohabitation.
Sub-national	
Base Registries	

Registry of Base Registers

The Registry of Base Registers is a comprehensive list of legally-based official lists and registers. This includes all the national registers, including the main Base Registers for Persons, Locations (Addresses) and Organisations, a set of administrative registers which reflect the public organisations and the organisational structures of the Government of Malta, as well as the list of public services. These registers will form the basis to the Once-Only Principle Initiative within the Public Service Strategy, which seeks to ensure that public-facing services are simplified, consolidated, and integrated with back-end systems.

The quality and governance aspects of the master data is first and foremost regulated through a new set of specific legal instruments and new subsidiary legislation under Cap. 546 of the Laws of Malta (PSI Directive transposition) with the intention to give legal basis to data sharing and re-use both within and beyond public administration.

Data platforms and portals

The following table lists the Maltese data platforms and portals infrastructures:

Open.data.gov.mt Website	Open.data.gov.mt is the National Data Portal. It is scheduled to be renovated during 2024. It acts as the main entry point to data discovery and consumption for all official registers. It is designed to be the one-stop-shop for all data discovery and meta-data management matters, thus requiring that all meta-data for all registers be made available through the Register of Registers and other data governance registers. It has three main sections, namely (i) the Open Data Portal; (ii) the Internal Data Sharing services; and (iii) Manage Data Requests.
	The National Data Portal is also expected to serve as a link with the European Data Portal for harvesting of local datasets, including those related to open data for publication on a European scale. Any data generated through taxpayer's contribution and classified as Open Data should be made available for re-use by any person or organisation without any barriers or other obstacles, following the 5-star deployment scheme for open data. Indeed, where possible, the portal displays the contents of official registers which are classified as open data. However, when such data are not readily available, a facility within the portal is needed to submit online formal requests. Such requests for open data would need to follow a legally determined process, having various stages of redress in cases of refusal.
	On the other hand, the National Data Portal also caters for the official registers which contain certain sensitive or personal information, and therefore cannot be published as open data. These data are therefore only available to predefined specific roles where the appropriate authentication and authorisation is required in order to gain access. Consequently, the portal also facilitates sharing and re-using such public administration data across authorised entities, as required by their functions.

National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI)	Malta is in the process of establishing a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). The aim of the NSDI is to allow for interoperability and sharing of spatial data across various government entities. The platform to be used for onboarding is *ArcGIS Online.* Initial onboarding activities are expected during 2024.
Judiciary of Malta Portal	The portal of the Judiciary of Malta provides the public with extensive information resources on the Maltese judicial system, the judiciary, judges and magistrates, as well as the courts they sit in. It offers a latest news section and an insight on the history of the Maltese judiciary and the important judgements that have been pronounced.
Legislation Portal	The Legislation Portal is the main portal where all Maltese legislation is available online, including the consolidated chapters of the laws of Malta and primary and secondary legislation, amongst others. Legislation.mt currently conforms to Pillars 1 and 2 of the European Legislation Identifier (ELI). Work is ongoing on Pillar 3.
Local Government Portal	The Local Government Portal aims to provide holistic information about the local government in Malta. With a view to empower the role of local councils and assist citizens in easily accessing council services, a dedicated sub-portal provides information specific to individual local councils and regional councils. The main objectives for the creation of this web portal were to encourage local councils to effectively interact with the community in general and to provide international users with a valuable tool, allowing them to better understand the geo-cultural composition of the Maltese Islands and the relevant specificities. The portal also promotes the advantages of standardisation, opening the channels of locality-based prioritisation and differentiation.
Data Exchange between Critical and Relevant Entities in Malta	Critical Information Infrastructures (CIIs) and Digital Service Providers (DSPs) within Malta are required to implement security measures in line with the direction provided by the NIS National Competent Authority, namely the CIIP unit, within the MaltaCIP Directorate, MHSE. To facilitate collaboration between the different stakeholders, CSIRTMalta introduced several innovative tools including MISP (Malware Information Sharing Platform) as Data Exchange Mechanisms for OSPs and DSPs, as well as CIs and CIIs to exchange information online in real-time and in automated format. As a result, stakeholders are now in a better position to share information about cyber incidents and threats more effectively.
Interoperability Platform	The Interoperability Platform is currently being implemented, and shall serve as the main data sharing platform within the public administration. It is intended to facilitate data sharing between government systems in a standard, secure, and transparent process. Implemented on MITA's hybrid cloud, it provides a hybrid platform allowing data sharing for systems hosted both in the cloud or on-premises. The platform is designed around a governance model that provides federated authentication and standard authorisation model for both data providers and data consumers.

Cross-border infrastructures

The following table lists the European cross-border infrastructures of which Malta is part of:

European Business Registry	Malta is a member of the European Business Registry Association (EBRA), formed in January 2019 through the coalition of the European Business Register (EBR) and the European Commerce Registers' Forum (ECRF).

EUCARIS	Malta is a participant of EUCARIS and makes use of the EUCARIS technology for information exchange based on: ▪ EU Prüm Council Decisions (2008/615/JHA and 2008/616/JHA); ▪ 3rd Driving Licence Directive (2006/126/EU, RESPER); ▪ Road Safety Directive (2015/413/EU, CBE); ▪ Legislation concerning the European Register of Road Transport Undertakings (ERRU), the regulations (EU) No 1071/2009, 1072/2009, 1073/2009 and 1213/2010; ▪ European electronic toll service Directive (2004/52/EC, EETS); and ▪ VAT service (2010/24/EU and 2011/16/EU, Council Regulation (EU) No 904/2010).
TESTA	The Trans European Services for Telematics between Administrations (TESTA) network is used for a number of cross-border use cases. Malta uses the Trans European Services for Telematics between Administrations (TESTA) network as the main cross border infrastructure to communicate digitally among EU agencies, institutions and Member States.
European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI)	Each member of the European Blockchain Partnership (EBP) – the 27 EU countries, Norway, Liechtenstein and the European Commission – will run at least one node. The infrastructure is made up of different layers including: ▪ A base layer containing the basic infrastructure, connectivity, the blockchain and necessary storage; ▪ A core services layer that will enable all EBSI-based use cases and applications; and ▪ Additional layers dedicated to use cases and specific applications. It will allow public organisations to develop applications that connect to and make use of the EBSI infrastructure. Eventually, it will be extended to private organisations. MITA is supporting the Malta Digital Innovation Authority to implement an EBSI node in Malta. The target is to implement the pilot environment in 2024.
MyHealth@EU – eHealth Digital Service Infrastructure (eHDSI)	Since 2019, Malta has been live with cross-border eHealth services. Between 2017 and 2020, the deployment of these services was supported by CEF funding for the implementation of eHealth Digital Service Infrastructure (eHDSI) generic services. CEF funds helped Malta set up the necessary infrastructure for structured exchange of health data between Malta and other EU Member States by means of interoperable cross-border eHealth services. Malta forms part of the secure peer-to-peer eHDSI network, through which patient summaries can be exchanged between EU Member States. These services were thoroughly tested and audited before going live in 2019. The systems developed during the implementation of these services are connected to the national eHealth infrastructure. Since December 2019, Malta has offered live services for the exchange of patient summaries through its National Contact Point for eHealth (NCPeH) in the Ministry for Health and Active Ageing the first services deployed have been with other 'first wave' countries, i.e., Luxembourg, Portugal, and Croatia. Malta has now completed a second follow-up compliance check in 2022 and expanded the service further to include Spain, Netherlands and Estonia. As of November 2023, the NCPeH has kicked off an EU-funded project called MHEME (MyHealth@EU Malta Enhancement) which will focus on the maintenance and enhancement of existing operations and expansion of services to include the ePrescription-B and eDispensation-A use cases across all pharmacies in Malta.
Single Digital Gateway (SDG)	Over the past few years, MITA has been supporting the Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects to implement the Single Digital Gateway Regulation in Malta. Following months of diligent pursuit, in 2023 Malta celebrated the third place achieved in the gamification of the third Single Digital Gateway Projectathon event held in Brussels in October. A Projectathon is a marathon of peer-to-

peer interoperability and compliance tests in a structured environment. The gamification of the third type of this event was intended to generate a friendly competition to do well among Member States in a spirit of collaboration and to infuse the event with a positive vibe and energy, something which indeed worked very well. The tests were built in such a manner as to encourage the widest possible coverage of the technical design specifications and the collaboration with as many Member States as possible during the three-day event.

In its essence, the game simulated the real-life communications that will be happening between Member States to exchange data. To illustrate the process, if an Italian citizen wished to access a cross-border procedure portal to register for a second degree offered by an education institute in Malta, he/she would first authenticate to the portal with his/her Italian credentials using the eIDAS Node infrastructure. The procedure would then use the Common Services to determine what evidence type is required to fulfil its requirements, and to determine the location of the required evidence in the other Member State. Subject to an explicit request from the user, the procedure would then use the eDelivery system to submit a request for evidence. Upon receiving the information, the procedure must then allow the user to preview the evidence and provide confirmation for use of the data.

The SDG Once-Only Technical System demonstrates European innovation. Beyond that, it removes obstacles while imposing no obligations on citizens or businesses. The core principle of the OOTS is to link administrations across Europe, with the projected vision where European citizens can easily move, work, and live in other Member States with the consequent strengthening of the bloc.

With this project, MITA is once again at the leading edge of enabling digital transformation in the public service. The excellent results achieved in the Projectathon demonstrate the exceptional quality and talent of the Agency's software engineers, and its commitment to nurture young technologists by providing opportunities to gain exposure to some of the most enterprising ICT projects being carried out in Malta.

Next Generation Access

Malta is the European leader in Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband access as confirmed in European DESI reports. The Malta Communications Authority plays an important role in facilitating and nurturing a healthy and competitive business environment and infrastructure-based competition.

4. Digital transformation of public services

Digital public services for citizens

Malta Information Technology Agency Strategy (2024–2026)

The MITA Strategy 2024-2026 is based upon 'leveraging the power of digital'. This is the strategic pursuit that MITA intends to follow in line with the accompanying mission of 'facilitating the modernisation of the public administration through technology direction and digital solutions'. The Vision and Mission build upon MITA's core competencies and expertise in digital services and in public administration. In doing so, MITA keeps in view major regulatory digital developments being enacted by the European Union in areas including Artificial Intelligence, information and cyber security, data and data governance, and in the realm of cross-border interoperability of public services.

Three domains of focus enable the attainment of such Vision and Mission. Two of the domains 'Strengthening the Agency', and 'Enhancing the digital infrastructure' are largely Agency focused. However, both domains are essential in ensuring that MITA may effectively and successfully perform in its third domain as 'Partner to Government in the Digitalisation Process'. Therefore, MITA shall need to ensure that its people, its processes, its technology investments and its underlying data are in line with its overall strategic pursuit. The actions covering the domain 'Strengthening the Agency' are specifically geared towards this objective. They involve further focus on the professional and personal well-being of its employees as well as developments in its processes covering its operations, administration, procurement, communication and the further utilisation of EU funds. In turn, the actions pertaining to the domain 'Enhancing the Digital infrastructure' focus on the government's digital backbone, with further investments for scalability of the government's digital network along with the Agency's Data Centre, platforms and enabling services. Through the engagement of academic and practitioner expertise locally and overseas, as well as through experimental and pilot projects, in the process MITA shall, seek to test for and apply innovation as necessary. Above all, MITA shall be focusing its efforts through a number of actions covering the third domain 'Partner to Government in the Digitalisation Process'. Primarily, the Agency shall be implementing EU, national and/or public administration strategic and legal digital requirements falling under its responsibility. Furthermore, MITA shall be providing the technical direction and consultation in areas of governance including the public administration's digital policy framework, the prioritisation and maximisation of government digital investment and the government enterprise architecture, among others. The Agency shall also support the public administration in the implementation of the latter's digital transformation initiatives and modernisation of its business solutions. Apart from reviewing its service portfolio, MITA shall also seek to consolidate its focus on stakeholder engagement and client-centricity, in line with its overall strategic direction for service delivery.

Government Portal

A Microsoft SharePoint 2016-based platform is currently offering hosting for the gov.mt and servizz.gov portals serving as an electronic interface between the government and the public. The gov.mt portal is an information gateway about the government of Malta, whereas the servizz.gov portal is a listing of all the government eServices, that are available to citizens in a standard manner, thus ensuring consistent and standardised information across all eServices.

During 2022, a shared WordPress-based hosting platform, centrally managed by the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), was purposely built and launched to host the public administration's public-facing information websites. MITA operates and manages the technical layer, while government service owners concentrate on portal creation and content development through a Business as a Service (BaaS) model. This platform hosts the public information pages for Ministries, parliamentary secretaries, departments as well as other agencies and entities within the public sector.

Servizz Website

Servizz.gov is the agency which acts as the Government's one-stop-shop for the general public, and www.servizz.gov.mt is now the central website for public administration services. Through this website, the public can look up services categorised by sector. The purpose of establishing such sectors was to simplify the categorisation of services, since now they are linked to a sector which is not bound to change, rather than to a specific ministry which is highly subject to change. The website also offers the possibility for the public to report complaints and excessive bureaucracy, make suggestions and request information. A customer relationship management solution is the infrastructure behind the IT system where all cases are processed against service level agreements and investigated in the most efficient manner. Services that were previously provided on www.mygov.mt now feature on www.servizz.gov.mt.

The servizz.gov website has implemented a universal chatbot, accessible in both Maltese and English, as well as a live chat agent on its portal servizz.gov.mt. This enhancement aims to provide more effective assistance to citizens, enabling them to instantly inquire about any government service.

The agency is in the process of developing a new portal utilising Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) Funds, incorporating user experience design principles. The portal will integrate the latest advancements in AI to provide a personalised service, significantly elevating user experience through the delivery of customised content, recommendations, and services tailored to individual users according to their preferences, behaviour, and needs.

Notifications Service

As part of the eGovernment strategy to enhance citizen communication, the Government of Malta invested in an eGovernment Shared Service (eGSS), the Notifications Service, to enable a one-way communication channel from government to citizens and businesses. The Notifications Service provides a gateway for messaging both by SMS and emails, allowing citizens and businesses to be notified of various government services instantly.

Public entities and Ministries may send notifications to those citizens and businesses that make use of their services either directly, through a purposely built web-based portal, or by integrating their systems to the Notifications Service via APIs. Messages can be sent either individually or in bulk, using SMS or email as delivery channels.

eInvoicing

eInvoicing

The Maltese government promoted the adoption of eInvoicing in its Digital Malta National Strategy 2014–2020. The Treasury Department within the Ministry for Finance (MFIN), worked on implementing a new Corporate Financial Management Solution (CFMS) across the central government, alongside an eInvoicing PEPPOL-compliant platform linking suppliers to the solution. All central government departments went live on the CFMS as from April 2021. Through the help of a contractor, MFIN is also in the process of building an e-invoicing platform for the Central Government, Government Entities and local councils and regional authorities.

Electronic Invoicing in Public Procurement Regulation

The Electronic Invoicing in Public Procurement Regulation was adopted by Malta in 2018 (LN 403 and 404 of 2018).

eHealth and social security

myHealth Portal

The national myHealth Portal is an online service that provides citizens with direct access to their health records and supports the sharing of patient information between public and private healthcare providers, thus guaranteeing that there are no gaps in patient care. Through this portal, citizens can control their health records and can give their private physician access to their patient health records. These records include, among other information: laboratory test results, medical imaging reports, hospital case summaries, Pharmacy of your Choice entitlement, prescription and dispensing records, vaccination records, historical episodes of care, future outpatient/clinic appointments at government hospitals and health centres, and copies of

notifiable infectious disease and vaccination forms sent by doctors through myHealth. Through this portal, private physicians are also able to order blood tests and radiology investigations for their patients.

New online services are being made available through myHealth on an on-going basis as a result of the myHealth product roadmap developed to continue advancing myHealth and its use. In 2023, work was carried out for both patients and doctors to be able to view the medical images besides the medical imaging report. In addition, parents and guardians now also have access to the health data of their minors. Another feature that was launched in 2023 is the immediate access for doctors to patient health data upon consent. Whereas in the past the patient to doctor link used to take approximately 24 to 48 hours to be processed, through this new functionality, the access is provided immediately upon patient consent. In addition, access to ECG results taken within the general acute hospital, Mater Dei, are now also available through myHealth. A new feature that was launched in 2024 is the live chat function whereby patients can chat with the Primary Healthcare client support centre for general queries related to health services. By the end of January 2024 myHealth registered more than 195 500 patients who used the platform using the e-ID. In addition, 969 doctors accepted to link up to 201 406 patients. During January 2024, there were 80 583 accesses to the myHealth portal, of which 27 423 were unique users. On average in January 2024, myHealth was accessed 2 599 times daily.

Other key initiatives

Digital Justice Strategy (2022–2027)

On 3 December 2021, the Maltese Ministry for Justice (now the Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector) launched its new Digital Justice Strategy for the years 2022-2027. The strategy seeks to adopt a strategic framework to make further use of the available technologies, respect the rule of law and the substantive and procedural rights of all citizens. This strategy envisages that a more unified and coordinated approach amongst all justice entities will be achieved by the establishment of a set of guiding fundamental principles, which all digital initiatives within the justice sector shall adhere to. The strategy rests on 3 key strategy enablers, namely people, ICTs and processes for the alignment of strategic priorities in order to reach the strategic vision of 'Improving the quality and the efficiency of justice through innovation, digitalisation and new technology whilst fully respecting the rule of law and guaranteeing the substantial and procedural rights of all citizens.' The strategic goals based on Fundamental Justice Principles and strategic principles are: Digital by default; Access to justice; Analytical capabilities; and Building digital skills and competencies.

The strategy will be implemented in the period of 2022–2027 and will make use of technological building blocks available nationally and at EU level, amongst others. The action plans for the first 2 years have been designed and are being implemented. Considering the evolving nature of ICTs, action plans will be revised to take stock of the digital landscape at the time. Governance structures and the project management approach have also been setup to oversee the strategy implementation process. A dedicated website is available with information about the strategy and implementation progress.

Digital Tourism Roadmap

The aim of the Digital Strategic Roadmap is to set the course for meeting the goals of one of the 13 strategic challenges of the Malta Tourism Strategy 2021–2030: specifically, the one titled 'Fostering cross collaboration across various digital tourism initiatives through the consolidation and better use of data' (page 42). The goals are:

- Consolidate and use quality data to improve access to digital information and valuable knowledge that will advance the local product;
- Invest in new technologies to enhance tourist experience through the offer of more customer centric services;
- Nurture digital cross collaboration initiatives across public, private and non-profit organisations to strengthen the tourism sector and provide a holistic experience to visitors;
- Facilitate the smart use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, supercomputing, 5G network and augmented / virtual realities amongst others, to increase the value of digital tourism products;
- Incentivise innovation to attain a competitive advantage over slower reacting competing destinations; and

- Facilitate the industry to invest in upskilling its staff to address today's demands and technologies.

Aligned with the goals outlined in the Digital Tourism Roadmap, the AI in Tourism Platform is a pivotal initiative. It is led by the Malta Tourism Authority with the assistance of the Ministry for Tourism and Public Cleanliness. Employing Artificial Intelligence methodologies, this project analyses a range of tourist-related data collected from diverse data sources. The main aim of this project is to deepen the understanding of the tourism landscape and facilitate more informed decision-making based on authentic data. This collaborative digital platform will also have the potential to offer real-time recommendations to tourists.

Data from various sources, including the National Statistic Office and the Malta Tourism Authority surveys, is being integrated. In addition, big data from entities such as Malta International Airport, Heritage Malta, Mobile Service Providers and credit card companies is also being considered for integration. Furthermore, tourist reviews from online platforms such as TripAdvisor are in the process of being added. Currently, a Content Management System (CMS) application featuring administration dashboards, reporting capabilities, and digitised survey forms is under development. Ongoing efforts will focus on refining tourist recommendations and generating intelligent insights to support decision-making and policy development.

Ultimately, APIs will be established to provide third parties with access to data through the platform. One of the overarching objectives is to establish an open data platform to enhance data accessibility and promote transparency.

Legal Notice on Justice

Through a legal notice which came into force in December 2018, the Government of Malta continued to implement further reforms related to information in the justice sector. Furthermore, online services are offered by the Department of Justice, through its website.

Filing of Acts by Electronic Means in the Land Arbitration Board Regulations

The Filing of Acts by Electronic Means in the Land Arbitration Board Regulations were implemented in 2018.

Electronic Commerce Act (Chapter 426 of the Laws of Malta)

The Electronic Commerce Act provides for the application of legal requirements to electronic communications and transactions, including electronic contracts. The Act, as originally enacted, transposed into Maltese law EU Directive 1999/93/EC on a community framework for electronic signatures, plus the EU Directive 2000/31/EC on certain legal aspects of information society services, in particular electronic commerce, in the internal market. The competent regulator appointed to enforce the Electronic Commerce Act is the Malta Communications Authority (MCA).

In 2016, this Act was amended and consequently the national provisions implementing Directive 1999/93/EC were deleted or amended, and new provisions were introduced empowering the Malta Communications Authority, as the competent regulator, to act as the supervisory body for the purposes of Regulation (EU) No. 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC (hereafter eIDAS Regulation). The eIDAS Regulation harmonised the norms governing secure electronic interactions between citizens, businesses and public authorities in order to ensure that secure electronic identification and authentication was possible for access to cross-border online services offered by EU Member States. This created a common regime for the regulation of electronic trust services such as electronic signatures, electronic seals, time stamps, electronic delivery services and website authentication.

eCourts Portal

The eCourts portal is divided into three categories, namely facing the public, citizens and legal practitioners. The advantage to the public is that they have access to all eServices related to the courts of justice from one website that is mobile responsive. The advantage to legal practitioners and citizens is that they can access additional services through their eID that are not available to the general public without having to go physically to the courts. Services that are available to the public include civil cases, judgements, the insolvency register, judicial sales, hall usage, mobile notifications, payment of court fines and court registry fees. Other services that are available to the citizen are: Archive of Acts, My Cases and My Acts and those available to legal practitioners include: online submission of acts, searching of acts, warrants, civil forms and the interdiction and incapacitation register.

Arbitration Portal

The Arbitration Portal is meant to allow citizens to file and follow arbitration cases through this portal. Arbitration payments may also be made online through the portal. The portal is currently available online.

Recruitment Portal

In 2018 a new Recruitment Portal, featuring the Public Service website design, was launched. This new responsive website replaced the previous legacy recruitment portal, which was later decommissioned following an extensive backup process. A mobile app titled Join the Public Service, which is connected to the new recruitment portal, was launched in mid-2018. Its aim was to alert the general public about new job opportunities related to areas of their interest within the public administration. In 2022, following an intensive requirements analysis, the implementation of the digitalisation of the backend function commenced. This includes further enhancement to the app with a new post-matching facility, where persons can enter their qualification and the system will define to which grade this person would be eligible to apply within the different classes of the public service. The digitalisation of the backend function is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. This will lead to a full end-to-end digitalised recruitment process.

Business Portal

The Business Portal is earmarked to change the current one-stop-shop concept, whereby businesses will get to access multiple services from a single online interface. Thus, all the requirements associated with starting, running and closing a business would be addressed through a single interactive intelligent portal that would automatically and seamlessly submit data to the various stakeholders and deliver services online in a timely manner.
By following the Once-Only principle, the Portal will ensure that data and information provided to government entities are consistent and accurate and the duplication of data is avoided. In addition, through the use of modern technologies, the portal will enhance user experience whilst utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) practices such as the clustering business behaviour and predictive analytics, identify future business and functional requirements, and request and provide targeted information on the regulatory framework or recommend services and incentives relevant to the particular end-user.

myPortal

myPortal is the eAdministration service launched in 2018 (originally as My Personal Kiosk) to provide public service employees with the opportunity to access their personal details, salaries, allowances and absences for the past 3 years. Additionally, employees can apply online for vacation leave, send sick leave notifications, notify if they are presently on full-time or part-time remote working and check their basic HR details as currently available at the People & Standards Division. The service is sourcing real time information from the back-end HR and payroll systems. This responsive website continued to be enhanced with a number of online e-forms and helpful videos on how to use this site. More enhancements are planned for 2024.

ePayment Gateway

The eGovernment electronic payment gateway, referred to as the Government Payment Gateway, is part of the horizontal infrastructure supporting the Maltese eGovernment. The service can be used by web portals or mobile applications that directly integrate to the gateway, or provided through other standard platforms, such as the Workflow Automation Solutions (WAS). Over the years, the government of Malta has strengthened this vital setup through the following initiatives:
- 3D secure enabling for all merchants;
- REST API stack provision to widen the services for mobile payments including continued eWallet support for merchants;
- Introduction of merchant-initiated transactions;
- Continued strengthening of the infrastructure; and
- Facilitating integration through revised and refreshed documentation.

This was done to continue to instil trust in the payment gateway with the aim of increasing uptake and use.

Prospectus Website

The Institute for the Public Services provides a portal for the online application of training courses from their prospectus. The prospectus website portal is the public facing portal linked to a training management module in the backend and provides real time data for prospective applicants to choose seats in line with their availability.

Notarial Acts Portal

The Notarial Acts Portal provides the ability for the general public and notaries to procure public deeds online from the comfort of their home. The portal was launched in June 2020 and is currently available online. It also features a register of active notaries together with their notary identification number so that the general public is able to query whether a notary has an active warrant to practice the profession.

Open Government Website

The Open Government Website is available online to promote transparency, accountability and participation through the Open Government Partnership (OGP), an international initiative supporting collaboration between governments and civil society organisations with specific objectives and on concrete projects to render governments more open.

Digital public services for businesses

Public procurement

eProcurement System

The Digital Transition of Public Procurement in Malta has started gradually during these past years. In fact, Malta has implemented its eProcurement System since 2011. It was initially only utilised by the Department of Contracts.

The transition from traditional to digital procurement took place ahead of the EU set deadline. Since January 2016, through the publication and dissemination of a Contracts Circular across the public administration, mainstream use of digital procurement became highly encouraged. However, the new revamped Public Procurement, Utilities Procurement and Concession Contracts Regulations published in October 2016 established a mandatory obligation for contracting authorities/entities to publish all procurement calls above EUR 5 000 (excluding VAT) on the government's e-procurement platform (better known as the Electronic Public Procurement System: ePPS) hosted on www.etenders.gov.mt.

In 2020 the implementation of a Contracts Register was launched with the aim of increasing transparency whereby contracting authorities complete tasks related to the post-contract phase of procurement procedures.

Public Procurement Regulations

The new set of National Public Procurement Regulations, namely Subsidiary Legislations 601.03[1] (Original L.N. 352-2016), 601.05[2] (Original L.N. 351-2016) and 601.09[3] (Original L.N. 353-2016) were published on 28 October 2016, transposing Directive 2014/24/EU, Directive 2014/25/EU, and Directive 2014/23/EU respectively on Public Procurement, Utilities Sector Procurement and Concession Contracts.

Besides the substantive provisions related to Public Procurement, and the provisions related to purely electronic tools such as Dynamic Purchasing Systems and Electronic Auctions, the regulations, and specifically Subsidiary Legislation 601.03 (L.N. 352 of 2016), provide that Calls for Quotations and Calls for Tenders are published using the Government eProcurement Platform, unless otherwise provided in the relevant regulations and provisions.

Subject to specific conditions, all communication and information exchange, including electronic submission, must be performed via electronic means of communication. The authority responsible

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[1] Public Procurement Regulations S.L. 601.03
[2] Utilities Procurement refers to Public Procurement of Entities operating in the Water, Energy, Transport and Postal Services Sectors Regulations S.L. 601.05
[3] Concession Contracts Regulations S.L. 601.09

for the tendering process shall, by electronic means, offer unrestricted and full direct access free of charge to the procurement documents from the date of publication of the notice or the date on which an invitation to confirm interest is sent.

Electronic Public Procurement System Platform

The eProcurement System developed by the government of Malta is the Electronic Public Procurement System (ePPS) platform, which is supplied by European Dynamics S.A. The platform was launched in July 2011 to facilitate the Maltese government's transition to online procurement, covering the full life cycle of public procurement. In fact, the ePPS supports the provisions (including the procurement procedures and tools) emanating from the EU Directives and relevant Local Public Procurement Regulations. The solution consisted in an eProcurement platform that comprised a core and a number of eProcurement-specific services, offering several parameterisation capabilities for meeting the exact needs of a contracting authority/entity requiring to procure works, services or supplies.

The Electronic Public Procurement System covers the whole procurement procedure, starting from the notification of a Procurement Call at Publication Stage, through to the Evaluation Process, right up to the Recommendation and Acceptance of Award Stage. It also stretches to the Post-Contract Stage, wherein contract implementation information may be recorded.

The eProcurement solution enables actual quotation/tender bids to be submitted securely online because it utilises an end-to-end encryption system providing maximum security, confidentiality and accountability. The ePPS accommodates all procurement procedures including both the most common procedures (such as the open procedure and framework agreements) as well as other more specific procedures (such as the negotiated procedure, the competitive dialogue and the restricted procedure). In addition, a concession call may also take place on the ePPS. The system also caters for new and unique aggregation tools such as e-Auctions and the Dynamic Purchasing System. The system may be used for all thresholds and award mechanisms, namely: the lowest price, cost or best price-quality ratio.

The ePPS also includes an alert notification system, so as to ascertain that communication to the economic operators is received and noted in real time. It also includes features such as role-based access control, encryption and decryption of offers, offer-signature through a hash algorithm, audit trail of user activity and time-stamping.

The Department of Contracts continuously strives to deploy new enhancements to the e-procurement system, through the integration of additional modules such as the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD), Green Public Procurement (GPP), compliance with the Energy Efficiency Directive, compliance certificates and TED Interconnection amongst others. This creates an efficient and effective system that offers an enriched user experience. Moreover, it also harmonises the government endeavours towards the Once-Only principle.

Recently, the Department of Contracts has introduced new features in the ePPS system, such as the eForms and the Annual Procurement Plan. In addition, the ePPS is now compatible with all digital devices.

The government's e-procurement platform is currently mostly used by the Department of Contracts (Malta's Central Government Authority) through its Operations Directorate and its Sectoral Procurement Directorate, when publishing and administering procurement calls on behalf of Contracting Authorities/Entities across Ministries, Departments and Entities. In addition, the ePPS is also used by contracting authorities themselves, as long as they form part of the public administration.

Department of Contracts Portal

Since the launch of the eProcurement platform for Malta, the Department of Contracts Portal has taken a different role. Rather than being an interactive site for economic operators to learn about and participate in tender opportunities, for the past years it has started serving as a window for public procurement information. In fact, it houses an array of documents, such as the Procurement Regulations and Procurement Policies applicable across Government. Essentially, all Public Procurement Regulations (including the classic, utilities, concessions, emergency and property), Contracts Circulars and Procurement Policy Notes (PPNs) are publicly available. In addition, there are also other resources and information, such as: EU Procurement Publications, Fact Sheets, Common Procurement Vocabulary (CPV), the Single Digital Gateway Information Resources (SDG) and FAQs. In addition, the portal provides the Monthly Awards for Procurement Calls published by the Department of Contracts on behalf of Contracting Authorities/Entities and past General Contracts Committee's (GCC) Recommendations as well as the annual reports on past workings of the GCC, the Public Contracts Appeals Board and the Public Contracts Review

Board. Furthermore, there are also links to ec.europa.eu, eCertis, Freedom of Information, Servizz Pubbliku, eTenders, Servizz.gov and Rate the Public Service.

The Department's portal also offers a search facility for tenders published between October 2008 and December 2013.

MITA Procurement Website

MITA, the other Central Purchasing Body besides the DoC, maintains a procurement-dedicated website that allows greater interaction on its public calls for tenders (issued on the ePPS Platform) through a mobile responsive design. The website also provides an outlook forecast on upcoming calls for tenders scheduled to be issued by the agency, and provides procurement-related resources, including those related to the dynamic purchasing systems established by the agency.

Digital inclusion and digital skills

National eSkills Strategy

In 2022, the eSkills Malta Foundation launched the new National eSkills Strategy for the period 2023-2025. The objective of the strategy continued on the path set by the previous strategy, i.e. developing a coordinated approach to improve the digital skills, knowledge and attitudes of actors within the education, industry, society and ICT sectors. The strategy puts forward a three-dimensional approach to tackle the development of basic and advanced digital skills in the four strategic pillars of education, society, the workforce, and the ICT professionals. The dimensions (i.e. goals, outcomes and governance enablers) are detailed in the National eSkills Strategy.

Development of Digital Skills in Compulsory Schooling

The Directorate for Digital Literacy and Transversal Skills (DDLTS), within the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, identifies gaps in the digital skills of educators and supports them accordingly. The DDLTS coordinates support for educators to make use of various technologies that are available in schools and include them in their lessons in order to engage the students and facilitate learning. The DDLTS organises many initiatives in education to promote digital literacy, coding and computational thinking, and the implementation of DigComp:

- In primary schools, digital skills have been strengthened through the One Tablet per Child (OTPC) scheme, where tablets were distributed to all students and educators in year 4, 5 and 6 in all schools. The OTPC project aims to increase the skills and competences of students and future graduates and to ensure that all children will be given a fair and equal opportunity to become familiar with technology;
- In middle schools, the ICT C3 programme ensures that students learn about safety on the net, robotics, coding and other new technologies. This is a compulsory subject in lower and upper secondary education. Computing, VET IT and applied IT are optional subjects which students can study at secondary level;
- With regard to transforming teaching and learning of digital skills in a lifelong learning perspective, including the training of teachers, the DDLTS is mainstreaming the EU's digital competence framework DIGCOMP (JRC, 2017) focusing on digital literacy and 21st century skills. The Institute for Education offers a whole range of CDP courses, including courses related to digital skills, in collaboration with the DDLTS. In the framework of the national project One Tablet per Child (OTPC), all educators in year 4, 5 and 6 have to follow the mandatory course 'Award in the use of tablets in primary classrooms'. Professional development is also provided to all teachers involved in the ICT C3 programme, in computing, VET IT and applied IT; and
- The Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation has also started the implementation of the SELFIE (Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Educational Technologies) Tool, to help schools carry out a self-assessment when it comes to their digital footprint. This assessment is essential for the digital development of schools in terms of operational, teaching and student skills. The free tool is available online and was developed by the European Commission with a panel of European education experts.

Digital Education at Further and Higher Education Level

The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the University of Malta teach digital and media literacy classes. At the University of Malta, the AI department gives talks and organises interactive sessions to more than 5 000 students in secondary schools; a summer bootcamp has been launched whereby 60 students will be trained during the summer months on AI concepts. The Faculty of ICT at the University of Malta constantly reviews its programmes to maintain them relevant. Two new undergraduate programmes, one in Language Technology and AI and the other in Accountancy and Information Systems, have been submitted for approval and are expected to have the first intake in October 2024. A postgraduate programme in Cybersecurity is also expected to start in October 2024.

Similarly, the MCAST has launched its AI strategy that includes nine initiatives with the aim of: (i) preparing better MCAST students for an industry that includes AI; (ii) assist and manage MCAST students, with the support of AI, throughout their learning experience, and (iii) support lecturers in understanding and applying AI in teaching, research and industry solutions. Moreover at MCAST, all the I.T. key skills units are currently undergoing a comprehensive review. Any changes will result in a modification of secondary school curricula and in further support of vocational programmes at college.

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) has also launched an IT Sector Skills Unit to create national occupational standards for the digital sector. The Institute for Education, on the other hand, is currently offering awards in the digital skills area. Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements can attend these courses, which aim to upskill or help educators develop new competences. Finally, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (3CL) operates as a knowledge hub for a global network of groups, agencies, institutions, educators and activists interested in the rapid deployment of programmes for connected learning in the Commonwealth and the EU. The Centre is an international foundation set up by the Government of Malta in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, and is conducting research on the impact of blockchain, AI, augmented reality and big data on digital education.

5. Trust and Cybersecurity

eID and trust services

National Identity Management System

The National Identity Management System (NIDMS) serves as the national identity management system used for core identity management processes, including the issuance of eID cards, eRP and electronic passports. The solution provides access management tools to determine the access level to be granted to administrators/operators strictly on a role-based administration. The NIDMS system consists of a number of distinct identity management systems operating together to deliver eID cards, eResidence cards, and ePassports to applicants. Electronic cards contain qualified electronic signatures compliant to EU Regulation No. 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation).

eID Regulation

Malta was one of the first Member States to legislate in eCommerce by transposing the eSignatures Directive into national law in 2001. The eCommerce Act was subsequently updated over the years to maintain its applicability to the digital market context, and most importantly was overhauled in 2016 to align with Regulation No. 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (the EIDAS Regulation). Today the national legislation on eID and trust services is in line with the eIDAS Regulation and permits Malta to benefit from cross-border authentication and digital signing in eGovernment services. With eIDAS now finally approved, Malta will be amplifying the scope of the eIDAS accordingly.

eIDAS Node

In 2018, Malta was one of only four Member States that successfully met the regulatory deadline for the recognition of other Member States' eID schemes under the eIDAS Regulation. As the operator of Malta's eIDAS Node, the MITA was successfully certified following a TickITplus ISO9001 and ISO27001 audit, and the node was set in full production mode in July. The German middleware was successfully integrated in the environment in September, enabling the mandatory recognition of the notified German electronic identity scheme. This placed Malta as one of the top-running Member States in the adoption of the eIDAS Regulation and facilitated the early development of cross-border services. In 2019, Malta succeeded in integrating with its eIDAS Node Infrastructure all those notified Member States for which the deadline for recognition by Malta was October 2019, namely Belgium, Luxembourg, Estonia, Croatia, Spain and Portugal. In 2020, Malta actively participated in the working groups set up to define the technical specifications of the Once-Only exchange mechanism to be implemented for the Single Digital Gateway Regulation. In 2022, following a successful notification process of the Maltese eID and e-RP scheme at an EU level in terms of the e-IDAS Regulation, the eIDAS Node infrastructure has been completed by attaching the national electronic identity card and the national electronic residence document to the eIDAS Node. This allows Maltese citizens and residents to use their electronic identity or residence permit card to access eGovernment services in other Member States, and the services offered by the European Commission through its authentication portal. MITA has now shifted gears in the implementation of the Once-only Technical System for the Single Digital Gateway Regulation. This will build upon the eIDAS Node infrastructure to additionally provide for the authenticity of data that is exchanged across borders for the fulfilment of online procedures.

Electronic Identity

In 2019, an optional two-factor authentication mechanism for eID based on a time-based one-time password (TOTP) mechanism was introduced, intended for specific eGovernment services which require a substantial level of assurance. Support for the OpenID Connect Protocol to facilitate better access from native mobile applications was also introduced.

In 2020, Identità (formerly Identity Malta), together with MITA, upgraded the eID Account Management functionality to further align eID with the GDPR and to provide users with additional visibility and control over their eID account. The new Account Management screen includes an updated user profile with activity tracking and an overhauled help facility. It allows users to change their password, email address and mobile number, including the corresponding

verification. The two-factor authentication consists in identifying citizens using either their email address, a mobile phone number or an app, to which the TOTP will be sent. As an increased security measure, the two-factor authentication has been enforced on all eID accounts in a mandatory approach and in a gradual manner, depending on the age group.

The achievements reached and the on-going work on the eID system mean that the government has a stable and reliable platform for electronic authentication to enable eGovernment services at a local level, with different levels of assurance, providing the required choice between usability and security. The Maltese eID scheme/s has been formally notified. Consequently, the Maltese scheme underwent a peer review carried out by experts from other EU countries, as established under the eIDAS Regulation, to facilitate cross-border authentication with other Member States and ensure the schemes interoperability and security.

In 2022, Malta successfully migrated the eID system to the Cloud. This will ensure the performance, reliability and resilience of the platform as we prepare to meet the demands for eGovernment take-up for the coming 5 years, and it will facilitate the use of the eID Card for authentication in the cross-border services that will be established via the Single Digital Gateway. Considering the criticality of the system, Malta is now embarking on further strengthening and adding resilience to the system, with the aim of having in place secondary cloud infrastructures, by the end of 2024, to refer to and use in the event of any major issue on the main infrastructure.

Electronic Identity Cards (eID Card)

The eID Card is an identity card which, in addition to the traditional identification features, also includes an electronic component which allows citizens to access an array of electronic services provided by the government and other third parties.

Maltese nationals who are 14 years of age and older are entitled to an eID Card. The card's electronic features are available to all card holders with one exception: the signature certificate is only available to citizens aged 18 years and older.

Residents who are not Maltese nationals, yet who are eligible for a residence document or a residence permit, will have, through electronic documents, the same eID features as the eID Card. Specifically, EU nationals, spouses of EU nationals and regular third country nationals residing in Malta have the same eID features and accesses as Maltese nationals.

The electronic chip of the eID card holds the same biographic data that are visible on the face of the card, including a digital image of the citizen. The chip includes two digital certificates for authentication and signatures, and applications for ticketing and electronic purse.

The digital certificate for authentication enables the citizen to log in securely to eGovernment services. The digital certificate for signatures is an enabler for electronic signatures. These are qualified certificates under the eCommerce Act and the electronic signature will be equivalent to a hand-written signature. Both certificates are protected by different Personal Identification Numbers (PINs).

The eID Card can be used by citizens to securely access several governmental services which are integrated into the eID platform. eID cards are issued in full conformity with applicable legislation at the EU level.

ePassports

Passports issued as from the 1 October 2008 are all ePassports. These first generations of electronic passports had a BAC (Basic Access Control) chip. The biometrics captured were a photo image and a signature. As from 1 July 2010, the ePassports' chip was upgraded to EAC (Extended Access Control). Fingerprints were added to the biometrics captured.

On 30 March 2015, the ePassports' chip was upgraded to SAC (Supplemental Access Control). However, the same biometrics were captured as the chip is the latest third generation to date.

The main reasons that led to the introduction of an ePassport were to:

- Prevent/fight passport fraud;
- Reduce passport forgery;
- Facilitate more robust border controls; and
- Establish a link with the lawful owner.

The new passport, incorporating additional security features such as laser engraving facial image and personal data, was launched into circulation in 2019.

Cybersecurity

Malta Cybersecurity Strategy 2023-2026

In November 2022, Malta launched a new National Cyber Security Strategy. The strategy covers the years 2023 to 2026, and aims to:
- Strengthen protection of digital infrastructure and its dependencies on a national scale, not only from a technological point of view but also from strategic, operational, legal and regulatory perspectives;
- Ensure a cyber-risk-assessment approach across the business and economic sector;
- Ensure national cybersecurity consciousness and increased capabilities in cybersecurity, and
- Foster cooperation in cybersecurity on a national, European and international scale.

Operation of the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre

In October 2022, MITA officially launched the National Cybersecurity Coordination Centre (NCC) in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2021/87. The NCC organised a National Cybersecurity Conference and started building the Maltese cybersecurity community through the organisation of bi-monthly cyber breakfast events, where the cybersecurity community have a chance to discuss the most current cybersecurity issues. The NCC also embarked on a cybersecurity capacity building initiative, organising a nation-wide cybersecurity skilling programme including courses to train interested IT personnel to launch their careers in cybersecurity and upskill the existent workforce. This is amplified by awareness-raising initiatives on current cybersecurity challenges and issues. The NCC also manages EU funds directed towards cybersecurity and research projects, together with the implementation of schemes ensuring the uptake and dissemination of state-of-the-art cybersecurity solutions. This is complemented with offerings of free cybersecurity expertise and services to enhance security and resilience.

Security Governance and Operations

With regard to cybersecurity within the public sector, MITA articulated, released and communicated an Information Security Policy, aligned with recognised international standard for Information Security Management System ISO27001. This policy is applicable to everyone within the public sector. MITA's Security Governance conducts regular vulnerability assessments on all government web applications using MITA's infrastructure to detect vulnerabilities and promptly inform the respective owners for necessary mitigations. These assessments are conducted continuously throughout the year. MITA invested heavily in cutting-edge technology to identify and respond to vulnerabilities and obtain real-time visibility on the operational health and security profile of environments hosted on its infrastructure. Information security included three main dimensions: confidentiality, availability and integrity, and involved the application and management of appropriate security measures for a wide range of threats, with the aim of ensuring sustained business success and continuity, and minimising impacts of information security incidents (reference ISO/IEC 27000).

Additionally, MITA invested in tools to aid in the detection and prevention of cybersecurity incidents, including adequate training of its employees throughout the organisation, and collaboration with other governmental departments to ensure a centralised and cohesive approach in this domain. Messages to the public pertaining to cybersecurity are channelled through Malta's cybersecurity page. Advisories to the public are also published by CSIRTMalta, through its page.

The National Cybersecurity Awareness and Education Campaign

The National Cyber Security Awareness and Education Campaign is running for the seventh consecutive year, following its successful launch in 2018. A number of awareness-raising campaigns and educational activities are being organised to ensure that users are aware of cyber security risks.

CSIRTMalta Constituent Programme

CSIRTMalta, forming part of the MaltaCIP Directorate, is the national Computer Security Incidence Response Team (national CSIRT) with responsibility for the public and private sectors. The CSIRTMalta Constituent Programme was established for the purpose of collaborating and sharing of malware information and intelligence. CSIRTMalta is also the national entity responsible for the coordination of incident response for cyber-related incidents. In terms of legislation CIs, CIIs, OESs and DSPs are obliged to establish their own CSIRT services or receive them to help

protect their infrastructures and their clients from cyber-related incidents. CSIRTMalta promotes the development of sector specific CSIRTs in Malta and created what is better known as the Maltese CSIRT Community. CSIRTMalta operates a state-of-the-art national security monitoring centre at its main offices in Valletta, where it provides a number of ex-ante and ex-post services related to cyber incident response which includes the reporting of vulnerabilities. CSIRTMalta also acts as a secure information exchange channel for cyber incident response.

Public Administration Cybersecurity Training

MITA delivers specific cybersecurity training to the public administration with the aim of enhancing their understanding of cyber threats such as social engineering and make them more aware of the content of the GMICT Information Security policy (based on ISO27001). In addition to this, specialised training courses are being made available to interested officials within the public administration. Some of these courses prepare attendees to recognised certifications.

Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (NIS 1 Directive)

The NIS 1 Directive was transposed into Maltese legislation through Legal Notice 216 of 2018 entitled Measures for High Common Level of Security of Network and Information Systems Order, 2018. This legislation aims to improve the national security capability of the country, enhances cross-border collaboration between EU NIS national competent authorities and upgrades national supervision of critical sectors. This is achieved through both ex-ante and ex-post supervisory measures within the Legal Notice.

The CIIP Unit, forming part of the MaltaCIP Directorate, is the national competent authority (NCA) overseeing the implementation of this order, which regulates critical information infrastructures, operators of essential services and digital service providers. It also oversees the implementation of national measures to address the requirements of the Legal Notice. The CIP Unit also requests information from operators of essential services about significant disruptions, on a regular basis. These are subsequently reported to the Commission.

Directive (EU) 2022/2555 on measures for a high common level of cybersecurity across the Union, amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (NIS 2 Directive)

The NIS 2 Directive, which entered into force on 16 January 2023, is being transposed into Maltese law by 17 October 2024. The MaltaCIP Directorate is overseeing the transposition, in consultation with relevant ministries and entities. The transposition is expected to repeal Legal Notice 216 of 2018 and 335 of 2018.

The CIIP Unit, i.e. the single point of contact, and CSIRTMalta, i.e. the national CSIRT, will continue to be designated as such and will supervise the implementation of the required measures and compliance of the obligations under the NIS 2 Directive. In particular, they will oversee the implementation of Malta's second National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023-2026, establish a national vulnerability disclosure mechanism, and conduct a national cyber risk assessment and compliance monitoring of essential and important entities in Malta.

In accordance with the Legal Notice, compliance of operator security plans of such entities that, before 16 January 2023, have been identified as operators of essential services, will continue to be monitored by the CIIP Unit. Furthermore, the CIIP Unit will continue to conduct simulation exercises testing the technical maturity of the entities in the scope of the Directive. CSIRTMalta will continue to retain a registry of CSIRTs in Malta and implement a number of actions, such as workshops and meetings, with the local CSIRT community.

Data Protection Act

The GDPR became applicable EU-wide on 26 May 2018, and concurrently the new Data Protection Act (Cap. 586) was passed through Parliament.

The Data Protection Act passed through Parliament on 14 December 2001 and came fully into force in July 2003. It was introduced in order to render Maltese law compatible with the EU Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC), even though Malta was not yet an EU Member State. It outlined principles of good information/data handling to guarantee the protection of personal information. Data controllers, such as educational institutions, employers and banks, were obliged to inform individuals of the reasons for collecting information about them. Furthermore, individuals were

assured that the data collected would not be used for any other reason than the purpose for which it was collected and were granted rights of access to the personal information held by the data controller. The Act provided grounds for processing personal data but made special provisions for processing sensitive personal data, a sub-set of personal data, in very specific circumstances.

Under the revised Data Protection Act (Cap. 586), subsidiary legislation related to specific processes in varying sectors was also enacted or reviewed for alignment with the GDPR, including the Law Enforcement Directive (EU) 2016/280 and the Processing of Children's Personal Data in relation to the Offer of Information Society Services Regulations.

EU Regulation 2021/887 on the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the Network of National Coordination Centres

Regulation (EU) 2021/887 establishing the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the Network of National Coordination Centres came into force on 28 June 2021. The Regulation provides for the set-up of the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre (the Competence Centre) and the National Coordination Centres (NCC) within each Member State that shall form part of the Network. It also provides for the establishment of the Cybersecurity Competence Community that will include private entities from the various Member States. Following its adoption, Member States had six months to appoint a public entity to fulfil the role of a National Coordination Centre. MITA has been officially appointed and recognised as Malta's National Coordination Centre. Such role is being committed to its entirety, following the tasks mandated to the NCCs as listed in the above-mentioned EU regulation.

Data Protection Portal

Apart from the portal of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner, an intra web presence accessible through the government intranet came into operation in February 2006, and enabled data protection officers to have access to guidelines and templates to ensure that government processes are compliant with the GDPR. As of May 2018, the Data Protection Unit, now within the Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector (MJR) revamped this web presence and took the decision to open up this portal to all officers with access to the intranet, so that all guidelines were available to all and not limited to data protection officers.

Cybersecurity Digital Service Infrastructure

The European Commission saw the need to enhance the cyber security capabilities of Member States, specifically the requirement to create an open platform incorporating the necessary tools to facilitate collaboration among National Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs) at European level.

Through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Cybersecurity Digital Service Infrastructure Maintenance and Evolution of Core Service Platform Cooperation Mechanism for CSIRTs, the European Commission developed the MeliCERTes platform facility, now in its second upgraded and improved version.

The MaltaCIP Directorate (CIPD), within the MHSE, together with other local authorities and agencies, participated in the Cybersecurity Digital Service Infrastructure (DSI) programme, which is part of the European Strategy for Cybersecurity. The MeliCERTes platform provides an information sharing opportunity for operational cooperation among CSIRTs. Local stakeholders provided action points aimed to:

- Establish a direct access point between CSIRTMalta and MeliCERTes. The other beneficiaries – govmtCSIRT – will share information through CSIRTMalta via a connected MISP instance and other MISP instances hosted for different constituents at CSIRTMalta;
- Increase the preparedness of CSIRTMalta, govmt-CSIRT and other CSIRTs for the requirements and tasks arising from the NIS Directive, including training of beneficiaries' personnel; and
- Provide review reports to the EU Commission to improve MeliCERTes functionality and security features.

These actions remain in line with Malta's second National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023–2026.

MaltaCIP Directorate FOCU-99-T31

CSIRTMalta, in coordination with ENISA and as part of FOCU-99-T31 contract funds, provides framework service contracts for all operators of essential services within Malta. This

framework provides cybersecurity services and comprehensive cybersecurity services to support ENISA in enhancing cybersecurity.

CSIRTMalta assists ENISA in delivering cybersecurity services tailored for Malta. This includes a range of services such as intra-muros and extra-muros expertise, on-demand services, subscription services, and incident response retainers.

The services to be provided encompass two main areas:

i) Cybersecurity services for increased preparedness and resilience: these services are designed to enhance the preparedness and resilience of essential and important entities within Malta. This may involve activities such as technical capabilities assessment (ex-ante services) to identify vulnerabilities and strengths in cybersecurity measures; and

ii) Cybersecurity services for incident response: These services are focused on assisting organisations in responding effectively to cybersecurity incidents. This includes supporting the technical response to actual incidents (ex-post services), ensuring swift and efficient mitigation of threats.

MaltaCIP Directorate ATHENA

MaltaCIP Directorate received approval on a call entitled DIGITAL-ECCC-2022-CYBER-03, part (a) Capacity building of SOCs and part (b) Developing and running cross border SOCs. The Project proposal is projected to span a period of three years, 2024-2026.

Within part (b), MaltaCIP Directorate envisages participation within a consortium that includes four member states, namely Malta (MT), Cyprus (CY), Bulgaria (BG) and Greece (EL). The Cypriot Digital Security Authority is the main coordinator of this consortium entitled European Thread Intelligence Response And Preparedness (ATHENA). The consortium will be utilised for SOC/CSIRT operations in order to simulate vulnerabilities and/or newly identified malwares. CTI feeds will be shared within the ATHENA platform and will be used for cross-border cooperation and collaboration within the other members of the consortium. These CTI feeds will consist of Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) utilised by threat actors; & Indicators of Compromise (IoCs).

6. Innovative technologies

Increasing the Amount of Postgraduates in Technology

The Pathfinder MDIA Digital Scholarship is intended to support postgraduate education – i.e., Master's (MQF Level 7) and PhD Level (MQF Level 8) – in the field of Artificial Intelligence, information security, quantum computing/machine learning/neural networks and robotics and to ensure that the Maltese labour market is supplied with the right individuals in order to be better suited to compete at an international level. The scheme is aimed to support those pursuing this path to succeed both at the level of education as well as contributing effectively towards the economy.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Malta.ai Strategy

The Strategy and Vision for Artificial Intelligence in Malta 2030 is the national AI strategy which was developed by the Maltese government to focus on investment and resources aimed to maximise the benefits which AI can bring to Malta and, more in general, to the global economy. The national AI strategy aims to map the path for Malta to gain a strategic competitive advantage in the global economy as a leader in the AI field through a holistic approach. It also aims to give due focus to the needs of various groups of stakeholders as the country looks forward to achieving its vision. This strategy is built on three strategic pillars which focus on boosting investment, innovation, and adoption. Moreover, the strategy contains three strategic enablers – Education & Workforce, Legal & Ethical Framework and Ecosystem Infrastructure - that cut across the three aforementioned areas. Hence, the strategy's wide-reaching nature ensures that it is inclusive and does not leave any segment of society unduly burdened or left behind. The Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) is entrusted with overseeing the implementation of the strategy, which sets a vision for Malta to become the Ultimate AI Launchpad by 2030. It contains a total of 72 different AI action points which include six AI-related pilot projects from six key public sectors domains, i.e., tourism, education, customer care, water and energy, health and transport. Such projects facilitate the path for more intake from the private sector. Apart from these six pilot projects, the national AI strategy is funding other initiatives encompassing applied research projects, scholarship funds and educational and awareness campaigns.

The MDIA is currently engaged in the process of realigning the Strategy and Vision for AI in Malta 2030 to ensure it remains at the forefront of digital innovation.

Sustaining Applied Research in AI

The MDIA Applied Research Grant (MARG) aims to support capacity-building efforts related to Artificial Intelligence; and/or Digital Trust; and/or Knowledge, Data Representation and Analysis; and/or Technology for Sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG); and/or Quantum Computing; and Other Emerging Technologies. . Specifically, this Grant aims to encourage:

- Increased capacity for innovative technology-related research in Malta;
- Increased investment in innovative technology-related R&D activities;
- Increased adoption of innovative technologies by the public and private sectors; and
- Increased collaboration between academia and commercial entities.

This grant also aligns and supports several objectives of the Malta AI Strategy to stimulate R&D through innovative technology-related activities, build awareness of innovative technology and its potential benefits and nurture a collaborative culture between research institutions and the industry.

AI Act and Framework Convention on AI, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law

Since 2021, Malta has been actively engaged in discussions at European level regarding the drafting of the AI Act. A political deal has been reached. Malta is also participating in the drafting of the draft Framework Convention on AI, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law during the plenary meetings of the Committee of Artificial Intelligence established by the Council of Europe.

Technology Sandbox

Malta has introduced a technology sandbox. A technology sandbox is an innovative concept which provides a safe environment for individuals or companies developing solutions based on innovative technologies (e.g. blockchain and AI) or solutions deployed in critical environments. The sandbox is intended to guide solution owners throughout a maximum residency of four years, as they align their solution with established control objectives based on international standards, in a phased and gradual approach. It also serves as a competitive edge to competing solutions, providing certainty in the functional correctness and dependability of such technologies and the underlying operational processes, thus making the solution even more attractive.

Technology Assessment Recognition Framework

Through the MDIA, Malta launched the Technology Assessment Recognition Framework (TARF) in 2023, which is a tiered framework designed to provide varying degrees of recognition to a wide range of technologies, from emerging to traditional, aligning with international standards and industry best practices.

Distributed Ledger Technologies

Scholarships on Blockchain and DLTs

On 28 August 2018, a scholarship, forming part of an agreement between the University of Malta and the MITA, was launched in the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation. The scholarship covers a EUR 300,000 fund launched by the government over a three-year period, and which shall enable interested students to pursue their studies in blockchain and distributed ledger technologies (DLTs). This initiative is seen as a pillar in education to build upon the amount of skilled workforce that will be required to sustain the large number of DLT companies which have shown their interest in investing in Malta and which are willing to base their companies in Malta, following the country's legislative developments on DLT. During the first two years of the scheme, 19 students have been granted the scholarship. Students granted the scholarship span multiple disciplines including law, business and ICT.

Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) and Innovative Technology Regulation

In July 2018, three new DLT Acts were unanimously approved by Parliament to regulate the industry of distributed ledger technologies. They included the: Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) Act; and the Innovative Technology Arrangements and Services (ITAS) Act.

The MDIA Act provided for the establishment of the Authority (MDIA) to certify innovative technologies and introduce a new level of communication between national competent authorities. The MDIA plays a vital role in promoting government policies that favour the development of Malta as a centre of excellence for technological innovation by implementing the best standards in the sector to position Malta at the forefront of technological innovation and create a cutting-edge hub for the digital economy. The MDIA acts as a focal point for the development of new economic sectors, whilst working in tandem to support other national competent authorities from a technological perspective.

The MDIA is working with MITA to establish an EBSI (European Blockchain Services Infrastructure) Node for Malta. The EBSI is a cross-border blockchain infrastructure where each Member State hosts a node, and where the nodes collaborate using the Proof of Authority algorithm. The EBSI can support various use cases for cross-border systems.

In 2021, following an inter-ministerial call, the Industrial Property Registration Directorate within the Commerce Department, the Ministry for Gozo and Planning and the Planning Authority each put forward proposals to use blockchain to reinforce their work. A public call was then launched requesting proposals for the implementation of these projects and systems. For the most part, the work involves: (i) digitalising official documents on industrial property rights, including trademarks and patents; (ii) digital labelling and documenting the process of product manufacturing in Gozo, and (iii) bolstering the security of sensitive documents found within the Planning Authority's existing blockchain system. Progress is ongoing on these initiatives.

The Digital Technologies Programme

Following a Memorandum of Understanding between MCST and the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA), several avenues for collaboration were identified, including a dedicated thematic programme for the digital domain.

The Digital Technologies Programme aims to support capacity-building efforts related to: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Trust, Knowledge and Data Representation and Analysis, Technology for Sustainability and ESG and Quantum Computing and Other Emerging Technologies. This programme aims to move towards a safer and more trustworthy development, adoption, and use of digital technologies. The Digital Technologies Programme is intended to fund projects which are either early stage or applied research, hence targeting research between TRL 1 and TRL 7.

Big data

Data Science Research Platform

The Data Science Research Platform (DSRP) at the University of Malta was formed in May 2018 to conduct research in the interdisciplinary field of data science. The scope is to use signal processing, machine learning and statistics to develop innovative techniques and to extract useful knowledge from various data sources in an effective manner, to the benefit of the wider public.

European Digital Innovation Hub

The MDIA, in 2023, has secured funding under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) to establish a European Digital Innovation Hub for three years. The EDIH's main aim is to support the digital transformation and uptake of digital technologies with special focus on Artificial Intelligence, high performance computing, cybersecurity, IoT, 3D printing, robotics, AR/VR and other innovative emerging technologies, to start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and scale-ups.

The EDIH shall serve as one-stop shops to help companies respond to digital challenges and become more competitive. Tasked with covering these needs, the following services shall be provided:

- Advanced Digital Skills & Training
  - Short-term Advanced Digital Skills Training
  - Malta-EDIH Apprenticeship Programme
  - Train-the-Trainer Program for ICT Specialists
- Entrepreneurship Program
  - Rental of Office Space at EDIH Malta
  - Access: EDIH-Malta Digital Entrepreneurship Pilot Programme (Incubator. Pre-Accelerator and Accelerator)
- Innovation Ecosystem & Networking
  - Matchmaking Services
- Mentorship & Advisory
  - Digital Entrepreneurship Mentorship & Advisory
  - Finance Mentorship & Advisory
  - Digital Skills Education Mentorship & Advisory
- Test Before Invest
  - Access: Technical Support Services
  - Use of High-Tech Space: Workstations
  - Use of High-Tech Space for identified technologies
  - Use of High-Tech Space: HPC
  - Use of IoT / Electronics Lab

Some of the services under the HPC scheme can offer and facilitate analysis of big data.

The EDIH is currently operational and will facilitate access to HPC in the coming years. It is poised to significantly enhance technology access and adoption for these businesses.

Cloud & edge computing

European Blockchain Services Infrastructure

Malta is actively collaborating with the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI) to host a node in Malta, with a view to further support the infrastructure development.

Hybrid Cloud Platform (HCP)

MITA operates a Hybrid Cloud Platform (HCP), a hosting solution entirely developed and maintained in Malta for all government entities. It is based upon an on-premises stack, which is hosted within the MITA Tier3 datacentre for Malta-based operations, and an off-premises cloud linked with Cloud Service Provider's data centres within the EU. The two parts of the hybrid cloud are connected to provide a single enterprise environment, therefore allowing services offered from the on-premise cloud to integrate with public cloud services (and vice-versa), and be scalable across clouds. The HCP is also connected to the secure and high-speed Malta Government Network, allowing integration with other government systems hosted on traditional virtual hosting platforms.

Internet-of-Things (IoT)

Investments in IoT applications

The EDIH, powered by the MDIA, has committed resources to establish an IoT Lab designed to support startups, SMEs, and scale-ups in the creation of their minimum viable products and to test products that require testing and experimentation.
This initiative provides access to IoT tools and equipment, facilitating the development and innovation process for emerging businesses in the tech sector. Advantages of this initiative include but are not limited to:

- Collaborative Environment: the lab fosters a collaborative environment where individuals and teams can exchange ideas, share knowledge, and potentially form partnerships, fostering a thriving innovation ecosystem coupled with the EDIH Community;
- Validation and testing facilities: the lab provides facilities for thorough validation and testing of IoT solutions, ensuring that products meet industry standards and regulatory requirements: and
- Ecosystem integration: the lab aims to integrate participating businesses into the broader IoT ecosystem, facilitating partnerships with established industry players and promoting a holistic approach to innovation.

The EDIH also aims to support the digital transformation and uptake of other digital technologies with special focus on Artificial Intelligence, high performance computing, cybersecurity, 3D printing, robotics, AR/VR and other innovative emerging technologies.
The EDIH shall serve as a one-stop shop to help companies respond to digital challenges and become more competitive.

High-performance computing

Compute Capacity

The Malta.AI Strategy also provides direction on the use of cost-effective access to computing capacity and includes a number of actions in this regard (actions 67 to 70).
The MDIA has secured funding under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) to establish a European Digital Innovation Hub. One of the primary objectives of this initiative is to offer access to a high-performance computer to start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The EDIH is scheduled to become operational within the next three years and is poised to significantly enhance technology access and adoption for these businesses.

MaltaCIP Directorate PRISM

MaltaCIP Directorate embarked with other entities to develop one of the first quantum communication networks in Malta. This is the Physical Security for Public Infrastructure in Malta project which aims to build a quantum-secured network in Malta in the spirit of the EuroQCI initiative, signed in June 2019 aiming to build a Europe-wide quantum-secured network by 2030. The project outlines how a quantum communication infrastructure (QCI) can be implemented in Malta, including the location of QCI nodes - technologies that must be deployed and use cases. The Network would be the first of its kind in Europe, bringing Malta into the quantum age. The first quantum technologies SME in Malta is working with the University of Malta, private entities

and public authorities to focus on the last mile integration needed to bring quantum key distribution to end users in a convenient, secure and standards-compliant way.

This project is deploying a large-scale quantum network spanning Malta. The project's conclusion will see quantum key distribution systems that are self-contained, trustworthy, and ideally poised to be rolled out throughout the European and international markets.

Gigabit and wireless high-speed networks

5G network

Malta has already successfully achieved the Digital Decade targets for connectivity, marking a significant milestone in the island-State's progress. Nationwide 5G coverage was achieved by one of the three operators in 2022, while the other two mobile operators have reached this target in 2023. The country has also made considerable strides in gigabit connectivity, with Gigabit speed connections provided nationwide since 2019 by one of the network operators. Currently connections beyond 1Gbps are also provided by the operators. The network operators are continuously investing and upgrading their networks in line with the latest technologies.

GovTech

No particular initiatives in this field have been reported to date.

7. Digital Public Administration Governance

For more details on Malta's responsible bodies for digital policy and interoperability, its main actors, as well as relevant digital initiatives, please visit the NIFO collection on Joinup.

National

Office of the Prime Minister

eGovernment in Malta forms part of the remit of the Office of the Prime Minister. The development and implementation of the eGovernment policy is coordinated centrally by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary. The strategy is developed with broad stakeholder involvement; services are delivered through a mix of in-house and trusted third parties serving as service-delivery agents. Implementation is done in both a matrix and in a decentralised manner through Ministerial Chief Information Officers (CIOs). The CIO Forum is chaired by the CIO OPM and serves to ensure interoperability across Ministries, scalability of initiatives and a 'one government' approach.

Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)

The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), which falls under the remit of the OPM (formerly Malta Information Technology and Training Services (MITTS) Ltd., and Management Systems Unit (MSU) Ltd.) was established in 1990. MITA is the central driver of the government's ICT policy and strategy. MITA's role is to deliver and manage information systems and services across the government to enable reform and innovation in the delivery of public services.
MITA also provides efficient, effective and secure ICT infrastructure and services to the government and was recently given the role of National Coordination Centre, in line with the EU Regulation No. 0328/2018.

eGovernment Services Department, MITA

The eGovernment Services Department (EGSD) within MITA provides horizontal services and solutions that enable a whole-of-government approach to public service delivery. The EGSD creates, operates and promotes the good use of shared platforms and reusable components to modernise the way government provides public services. Furthermore, the department provides government with back-office solutions that standardise activities and procedures to improve its efficiency and effectiveness, while providing a holistic and integrated view of operations to senior public officials and maximising economies of scale.

Programme Management Department, MITA

The Programme Management Department (PMD), within the MITA, is committed to delivering first-rate digital services by implementing a sound architecture, driven by real business transformation and software development excellence, and resulting into digital services and mission-critical systems having a more modern technological footing.

Digital Enabling Services Department, MITA

The Digital Enabling Services Department (DESD) is responsible for building those shared services that will enable the digital transformation of government. The DESD's portfolio includes the electronic identity system, the eIDAS Node, the Single Digital Gateway, the EBSI Node, the Person Register and the Address Register. The Department is simultaneously performing service management with the highest level of discipline, and leading projects with cutting edge methods and technology to achieve transformation.

Malta Digitali Governance Board

The Malta Digitali Governance Board was set up by the Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands (now the Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects) to govern and oversee the implementation of the Malta Digitali Strategy. The Board will adopt a collaborative and consultative approach with other stakeholders, from different business areas and digital domains, to provide leadership, coordination, mentorship and support in implementing the Malta Digitali Strategy.

Data Governance Council

The Data Governance Council was re-established in October 2020. A Chief Data Officer, appointed by Government in 2024 shall be chairing the Council. The Council is also made up of the OPM CIO as vice-chair, MITA, and other relevant bodies within Government. The Council is taking various horizontal initiatives relating to the sharing of data across the public administration. One important initiative that the Council is spearheading is the implementation of the Once-Only principle.

Digitalisation Committee

In 2022 the previous Core Group Digitalisation has been replaced by a Digitalisation Committee headed by the Principal Permanent Secretary. The aim of this Committee is to provide high-level policy and strategic direction for digitalisation of the public administration, as aligned to the pertinent national, public service and domain specific digital strategies. The Committee sees through the necessary prioritisation, the budgeting and resourcing, as well as provides the necessary governance. It works towards achieving cost effectiveness and maximising investment, leveraging economies of scale as appropriate. The Committee also works in close liaison with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Forum and the Technology Forum, and appoints working groups from time to time to focus on specific and specialised key areas and activities.

Malta Communications Authority

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) is the statutory body responsible for the regulation of the electronic communications sector, eCommerce, Trust Services, Accessibility of public sector websites and mobile apps, the postal sector and is the designated Digital Services Coordinator in terms of the Digital Services Act. The MCA's mission, mandate and functions stem from the Malta Communications Authority Act (Cap. 418). The MCA is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for these sectors in accordance with EU law as transposed into Maltese legislation.

Malta Digital Innovation Authority

The Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) is the national focal point which directs and facilitates the secure and optimal uptake of digital innovation. The Authority has a dual role, acting both as a regulator for innovative technology within the ecosystem and as a proactive promoter of such technologies. One of the MDIA's objective is to advance, promote, and facilitate the safe and effective use of innovative technologies in accordance with emerging national, European, and global standards. As part of its mission, the MDIA supports governmental initiatives concerning regulatory compliance using innovative technology and aims to expand its research capacity in innovative technologies to reflect societal needs. A technology assurance programme was put in place to provide better assurance (and therefore trust) to users by ascertaining that the software is doing what it is meant to do. The MDIA plays a vital role in promoting government policies that favour the development of Malta as a centre of excellence for technological innovation by implementing standards to position Malta at the forefront of technological innovation and by creating a cutting-edge hub for the digital economy. The MDIA supports the development of new economic sectors, whilst working in tandem to support other national competent authorities and Ministries from a technological perspective.

eSkills Malta Foundation

The eSkills Malta Foundation, launched by the government in April 2014, is a digital skills national coalition made up of various representatives from the government, industry and education, to contribute to the increase in digital skills and the development of the ICT profession. It is also in charge of implementing the following mandates:

- To advise the government and relevant stakeholders on matters related to eSkills policies;
- To contribute to the expansion of ICT educational programmes and related training initiatives;
- To lead an ICT professionalism development programme;
- To instigate further reform in the ICT educational offer and contribute to capacity-building of the ICT education community; and
- To champion campaigns and promote the Maltese eSkills potential locally and internationally.

The eSkills Malta Foundation is at the forefront in the development of further digital skills, competences and talent in Malta. Over the past years it has geared up to take on many initiatives in the area and has been recognised as a coalition best practice in Europe. The Founding members of the Foundation are the Malta Information Technology Agency, the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, Malta Communications Authority, Malta Enterprise, the Malta Gaming Authority and the Malta Chamber of Commerce Enterprise and Industry, and the Ministry for the Economy, Enterprise and Strategic Projects.

Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary

A cohesive effort spearheaded by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary through the Data Governance Council brought together several significant stakeholders to establish the operational and legal requirements for setting up the first base registries, the person register, the business register and the address register. These are important steps towards the aim to instil the much-sought Once-Only principle within the public administration.

The Better Regulation Agenda of the Government of Malta has also recently been incorporated under the direction of the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary within the Office of the Prime Minister. This ties in with the whole-of-government approach to the reform and further digitalisation of the Maltese public administration.

Through the central leadership, the focus and momentum converge on streamlining the public administration processes to the benefit of citizens, businesses, and the public administration management and staff, without affecting policy objectives and public interests such as health, workers' rights, and the environment.

Work has been progressing steadily in a number of areas such as governance and policy, simplification and administrative burden reduction, business inspections and enforcement, better policy-making/development, and stakeholder consultation. Other supporting initiatives include the 'SME Test', 'digital by default', 'Once-Only principle', and increasing the use of open data. At an operational level, strong one-stop shops have been established for citizens, businesses and niche domains.

Other authorities within the Maltese public administration, such as the Malta Financial Services Authority, the Malta Gaming Authority, and the Malta Digital Innovation Authority, are carrying out regulatory sandboxes.

Cabinet Office within the Office of the Prime Minister

The Cabinet Office within the Office of the Prime Minister has, amongst others, strengthened its impact assessment capacity and reach to cover, on the basis of the Small Business Act amendments brought into force, impact assessment on both primary laws and subordinate regulations that significantly impact Maltese society, the economy, and the environment.

National Audit Office of Malta

The National Audit Office (NAO)'s mandate is to provide assurance to Parliament that public funds have been used in the best manner possible and in line with prevailing financial rules and regulations. Thus, the NAO is enhancing good governance across the public service. For this purpose, the NAO carries out financial and compliance audits, performance audits and IT audits. Moreover, the Special Audits and Investigations Section carries out, amongst other assignments, audits mandated to the Office by the Public Accounts Committee or the Minister for Finance. The NAO is empowered to carry out any of these audit categories in all departments, public entities

and companies where the government is a majority shareholder. The NAO has conducted several IT audits over the past five years, which can be categorised into three main types:

- Horizontal IT audits across a number of Ministries, departments or entities;
- Joint audits focusing on the IT component of financial and performance audits; and
- Vertical IT audits of selected auditee sites

Business First

Business First is a joint venture between Malta Enterprise and the Malta Chamber of SMEs. It is a single central contact point through which entrepreneurs are able to carry out the required procedures for the setting up, running and further expansion of their business in Malta. It also acts as an information point for business-related government services. This entity is currently working on creating a Business Portal, on behalf of Malta Enterprise, which, when implemented, will support the national strategy in transforming Malta into a digitally-enabled economy across all sectors of society, especially by empowering the public administration's contribution in strengthening the digital economy in the business sector.

Subnational (Federal, Regional and Local)

No specific public administration body has been identified to date.

8. Cross border Digital Public Administration Services for Citizens and Businesses

Further to the information on national digital public services provided in the previous chapters, this final chapter presents an overview of the basic cross-border public services provided to citizens and businesses in other European countries. Your Europe is taken as reference, as it is the EU one-stop shop which aims to simplify the life of both citizens and businesses by avoiding unnecessary inconvenience and red tape in regard to 'life and travel', as well as 'doing business' abroad. In order to do so, Your Europe offers information on basic rights under EU law, but also on how these rights are implemented in each individual country (where information has been provided by the national authorities). Free email or telephone contact with EU assistance services, to get more personalised or detailed help and advice is also available.

Please note that, in most cases, the EU rights described in Your Europe apply to all EU member countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, and sometimes to Switzerland. Information on Your Europe is provided by the relevant departments of the European Commission and complemented by content provided by the authorities of every country it covers. As the website consists of two sections - one for citizens and one for businesses, both managed by DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) - below the main groups of services for each section are listed.

Life and Travel

For citizens, the following groups of services can be found on the website:
- Travel (e.g. Documents needed for travelling in Europe);
- Work and retirement (e.g. Unemployment and Benefits);
- Vehicles (e.g. Registration);
- Residence formalities (e.g. Elections abroad);
- Education and youth (e.g. Researchers);
- Health (e.g. Medical Treatment abroad);
- Family (e.g. Couples);
- Consumers (e.g. Shopping).

Doing Business

Regarding businesses, the groups of services on the website concern:
- Running a business (e.g. Developing a business);
- Taxation (e.g. Business tax);
- Selling in the EU (e.g. Public contracts);
- Human Resources (e.g. Employment contracts);
- Product requirements (e.g. Standards);
- Financing and Funding (e.g. Accounting);
- Dealing with Customers (e.g. Data protection).

The Digital Public Administration Factsheets

The factsheets present an overview of the state and progress of Digital Public Administration and Interoperability within European countries.

The factsheets are published on the Joinup platform, which is a joint initiative by the Directorate General for Digital Services (DG DIGIT) and the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content & Technology (DG CONNECT). This factsheet was consolidated by the Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate, Office of the Prime Minister,

The Digital Public Administration Factsheets are prepared for the European Commission by Wavestone.

An action supported by Interoperable Europe

The ISA² Programme has evolved into Interoperable Europe - the initiative of the European Commission for a reinforced interoperability policy.

The work of the European Commission and its partners in public administrations across Europe to enhance interoperability continues at full speed despite the end of the ISA² programme. Indeed, enhanced interoperability will be necessary to unlock the potential of data use and reuse for improved public services, to enable cross-border collaboration, and to support the sector-specific policy goals set by the Commission for the future.

Interoperable Europe will lead the process of achieving these goals and creating a reinforced interoperability policy that will work for everyone. The initiative is supported by the *Digital Europe Programme*.

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