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Open Source Software Country Intelligence Report

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MALTA

Executive summary

The Maltese government has been active in the development and promotion of the use of open source software (OSS) solutions in public administrations in the past ten years. The principle of giving equal consideration to OSS solutions and proprietary software solutions when procuring new software, as outlined in the Digital Malta Strategy¹ (2014-2020), has helped to raise awareness and normalise the use of OSS solutions and increase their uptake in recent years. The adoption of the Open Source Software Policy² in 2019 broadened the scope of the Digital Malta Strategy, with the government agreeing to publish their OSS solutions under the EUPL license in order to encourage the distribution and reuse of such solutions.

Within the Maltese government, there is a clearly defined government body in charge of OSS-related policies. The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) is the driving force of the government's ICT policy, programmes, and initiatives.³ Notably, MITA is tasked with delivering and implementing the Digital Malta Strategy.

With regards to OSS initiatives, there have been a wide variety of initiatives developed by universities, government ministries, and OSS enthusiasts to increase the use of OSS throughout the country. From training programmes and university workshops to open source cloud services, the diversity of Maltese initiatives signals a strong willingness among citizens and government staff to move away from proprietary software towards OSS solutions in public administrations.

Actors

This section presents the key governmental bodies that are responsible for setting OSS policies and the main strategic players that work together with the government at all levels to raise awareness on OSS.

Policy makers

- The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)⁴ is the central driver of the government's ICT policy, programmes, and initiatives.⁵ Notably, MITA is tasked with delivering and implementing the Digital Malta Strategy 2014 – 2020 which promotes the use of OSS solutions in the Maltese public administration. Additionally, the MITA manages the implementation of IT

¹ <https://digitalmalta.org.mt/en/Pages/Strategy/Digital-Malta-Download.aspx>

² https://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/GMICT%20Policies/GMICT_P_0097_Open_Source_Software.pdf

³ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/en/Pages/The-Agency.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/>

⁵ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/en/Pages/The-Agency.aspx>

programmes in government to enhance the delivery of public services and it supplies the government with the necessary IT infrastructure for these services.

- The Office of the Prime Minister is largely responsible for policies pertaining to the public administration, the digital economy and the simplification of administrative processes through eGovernment initiatives. While open source policies are largely driven by the MITA, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Simplification of Administrative Processes lead the process of policy initiation.⁶

Strategic players

- Open Source Society Malta (OSSMalta)⁷ is an independent, non-profit organisation that aims to promote the use of OSS solutions in Malta, acting as a forum for discussion and experience-sharing on OSS solutions. Additionally, they design and develop OSS systems and applications in-house and in collaboration with community developers in Malta.⁸

Policy and legal framework

This section recapitulates the main open source software related policies and legal acts of the last ten years. The list is presented in a chronological order, starting from the most recent milestone.

- The Open Source Software Policy⁹ of July 2019, published by the MITA, was implemented to encourage the adoption of cost-effective OSS solutions throughout the Maltese public administration. According to the policy, public administrations shall actively consider and pursue the adoption of OSS solutions that are cost-effective and non-disruptive. Furthermore, the government agreed to publish their OSS solutions under the EUPL license in order to encourage the distribution and reuse of such solutions.
- The MITA Strategy¹⁰ for the period 2015-2017 was published in January 2015. Action 33 of the Strategy highlighted the government's plans to develop a repository that is intended to host a collection of information systems used by public administrations in Malta. Additionally, OSS solutions and information on reusable tools and systems across the EU has been made available.
- The National IT Strategy for the period 2014-2020, called Digital Malta¹¹, published by the Office of the Prime Minister, instructs public administrations to adopt open standards to encourage

⁶ <https://digitalmalta.org.mt/en/PublishingImages/Content/STAKEHOLDERS.png>

⁷ <https://ossmalta.eu/>

⁸ <https://ossmalta.eu/about-us/>

⁹ https://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/GMICT%20Policies/GMICT_P_0097_Open_Source_Software.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.mita.gov.mt/mediacenter/PDFs/1_MITA%20STRATEGY%202015-2017-vFINAL.pdf

¹¹ <https://economy.gov.mt/en/ministry/The-Parliamentary-Secretary/Pages/Malta-Digital-Economy-Vision.aspx>

the exchange of information between administrations, lower costs and encourage competition. Furthermore, equal consideration must be given to OSS solutions and proprietary solutions.¹²

- The Open Source Software Directive¹³ of April 2012, published by the MITA, guides the implementation of OSS in public administrations. The Directive states that the government must consider OSS solutions on an equal, if not preferential, footing with proprietary solutions and capitalise on OSS investments from the European Commission and other EU Member States in order to maximise the reuse of solutions and services. Furthermore, public administrations that want to develop and share their own OSS software applications should use the Maltese government's development website.
- The Open Source Software Policy¹⁴ of April 2012, published by the MITA, was implemented to encourage the use of OSS solutions in public administrations and maximise the reuse of procured software by enabling the distribution of in-house solutions in open source format. It formed the basis of the 2019 policy of the same name.
- In 2010, the Ministry for Infrastructure, Transport and Communications and MITA published a White Paper on Open Source Software.¹⁵ The Paper, 'Open Source Vision: Nurturing the Proliferation of Open Source Software' proposes introducing OSS solutions in schools, libraries and other public administrations, along with providing training sessions for civil servants.¹⁶ The White Paper also seeks to foster innovation with regards to the procurement of IT solutions within government and base procurement processes on the principles of openness and reusability.¹⁷
- In 2010, MITA launched a Public Consultation on 'Open source vision; nurturing the proliferation of Open Source Software'. The Public Consultation was open for approximately one month and resulted in a set of principles to help increase the uptake of OSS solutions in public administrations in Malta.¹⁸

Open source software initiatives

This section presents an overview of the main open source software related initiatives in Malta. The list is presented in a chronological order, starting from the most recent initiative.

¹² <https://digitalmalta.org.mt/en/Documents/Digital%20Malta%202014%20-%202020.pdf>

¹³ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/mt-directive-boost-uptake>

¹⁴ https://www.mita.gov.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_GMICT_P_0097_Open_Source_Software_v2.0.pdf

¹⁵ [https://www.mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/OpenSource/Documents/Open%20Source%20Vision%20-%20White%20Paper%20\(NISCO\).pdf](https://www.mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/OpenSource/Documents/Open%20Source%20Vision%20-%20White%20Paper%20(NISCO).pdf)

¹⁶ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/open-source-software-in-government-a-question-of-where-and-to-what.332422>

¹⁷ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/open-source-software-in-government-a-question-of-where-and-to-what.332422>

¹⁸ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/malta-government-starts-consu>

- University of Malta, 2019¹⁹: In 2019, the University of Malta organised a workshop for doctoral students with an interest in using OSS for data analyses, processes, and visualisation. Students were versed in Python, a free and OSS programming language. In addition to this workshop exclusively focused on the use of one OSS solution, OSS solutions are incorporated into undergraduate modules on Geo-spatial mapping²⁰, statistical time series²¹, software test automation²², geoscience²³, and emerging technologies.²⁴
- SUNFISH, 2018²⁵: The SUNFISH project was developed by Malta's Ministry of Finance, Italy's Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the UK South East Regional Organised Crime Unit with the aim of developing software to enable the establishment of a secure cloud federation for the secure sharing of data and services.²⁶ CentOS Linux and RedHat Linux were used to extend existing tools and develop new solutions for the platform, all of which are available on the GitHub page of the project.²⁷
- Open Data Malta, 2014²⁸: In February 2014, the Open Data Malta²⁹ platform was launched by the Local Government Association.³⁰ Aside from promoting open data, the platform itself was built using OSS solutions such as CentOS Linux, MySQL, Nginx, and WordPress. The platform aims to keep citizens better informed and encourage participation in the decision-making process.
- Open Source Survey, 2012³¹: In December 2012, MITA organised a survey to measure the popularity of OSS in Malta with the aim of promoting the use of free and OSS solutions and helping citizens to broaden their understanding of OSS.
- The Malta Open Source End User Group (Moseug), 2010:³² Moseug was created by the MITA in 2010 with the aim of promoting the use of OSS solutions in public administrations. The Group was established as part of MITA's mission to drive the adoption of cost-effective OSS solutions and the evolution of other OSS initiatives in Malta.³³ The Moseug consists of representative

¹⁹ <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/DOC1024>

²⁰ <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/EMP1025>

²¹ <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/SOR3231>

²² <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/las3007>

²³ <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/GSC1400>

²⁴ <https://www.um.edu.mt/courses/studyunit/CIS3106>

²⁵ <http://www.sunfishproject.eu/sunfish/objectives/>

²⁶ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/blockchain-service>

²⁷ <https://github.com/sunfish-prj/>

²⁸ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/maltas-new-open-data-site-ru>

²⁹ <http://www.opendatamalta.com/wp/>

³⁰ <http://www.opendatamalta.com/wp/contact>

³¹ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/maltas-it-agency-polled-popu>

³² <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/mt-government-starts-open-so>

³³ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/government-of-malta-open-source-end-user-group-to-be-launched.303960>

members from government ministries, training providers, academic professionals and vendors of OSS solutions.

- World Plone Day, 2009³⁴: In April 2009, a conference on Plone, an open source content management system, was organised by 2i Ltd at the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise. 2i Ltd is an IT services company that helps to develop and support the use of Plone in Malta, and the aim of this specific conference was introduce citizens to the software and to encourage the uptake in public administrations.³⁵
- GNU/Linux Training Programme, 2007³⁶: In March 2007, the Maltese Ministry of Investment, Industry and IT launched a free training programme for IT employees in the public and private sector. The programme was sponsored by IBM, who provided company trainers for the four-week programme. Participants were trained in the Linux Power User, Linux System Administration, Linux TCP/IP Administration, and other topics, to generate interest in Linux and other OSS solutions.

³⁴ <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/world-plone-day.255310.amp>

³⁵ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/mt-government-agency-support>

³⁶ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/open-source-observatory-osor/news/mt-government-and-ibm-provid>

