

**Report on the follow-up to the Regional Implementation Strategy of the
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.**

Third review and appraisal of national actions (2012 - 2017)

MALTA

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the National Progress in fulfilling the commitments of MIPAA/RIS, in includes areas where Malta needs to strive more, as well as recommendations for future action. This report was compiled using several sources of information both available online as well as through consultation with different Ministries. Consultation with older adults themselves was considered important and therefore consultation was carried out with several associations for older adults to gather their views and perceptions and their expectations for the future.

The Maltese Government has worked considerably in implementing the recommendations of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy. A Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing was set up within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity to better address issues related to ageing. The following table represents the major achievements since 2012 in implementing the MIPAA/RIS and aspects to be improved in the future:

| Major achievements since 2012 |
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| Malta has launched a National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing with a period of implementation between 2014 and 2020. An Active Ageing Unit has been set up to coordinate its implementation. |
| Participation in society has been improved through the provision of lifelong learning opportunities to persons who would not generally be motivated to participate in traditional education. Lifelong learning opportunities have also been introduced in care homes for older persons. Digital competence amongst older adults has been improved through the introduction of training programmes that are tailor made to the common needs, difficulties and insecurities faced by older adults. |
| Community care services for older persons living in their own home have been expanded and improved. Key policies included a tax-rebate programme that enables older persons to employ a carer at home, introduction of domiciliary respite care, subsidised assistive technology services, and a National Dementia Helpline 1771 was set up to provide telephonic assistance around the clock on any issues related to dementia. New Dementia Day Care Centres have been set up to provide a stimulating environment for persons with dementia while ensuring day respite for their informal carers. |

A National Dementia Strategy was launched. Moreover, a Dementia Intervention Team consisting of multidisciplinary professionals, was set up to assess persons newly diagnosed with dementia in their own homes and educate them and refer them to existent services as necessary. This team is also responsible for education of the community about dementia. Talks about dementia were held in all Active Ageing Centres and within the community. The team is working towards a dementia friendly village through education of all members of the community.

Legislations to safeguard vulnerable older persons from elder abuse was introduced.

A new post for a Commissioner for Older Persons was issued which will be ratifying the former post which included two Commissioner posts, one for Mental Health and another for Older Persons, held by the same person.

Important aspects to be improved in the future

Further promotion of active participation and engagement in the labour market at all ages. This includes continuous vocational education and training, ensuring healthy working conditions, proper age management, and employing friendly tax benefits systems to encourage ageing workers to remain or/and re-enter employment.

Continue raising recognition about elder abuse while also developing and implementing a nationwide strategy that empowers the public and older adults themselves to report abuse, and provides the necessary procedures and resources for a comprehensive response.

Strengthening policies in favour of better enabling and supportive environments so as to facilitate ageing-in-place.

Addressing further the issues of ageism and age discrimination, whilst expanding the legal definition of age to address both direct and indirect forms of discrimination.

Concentrating on the specific concerns of older lesbians and gay men, and the implications of their sexual identities on compromised citizenship in later life.

In view of the increasing population ageing the Maltese government needs to continue working on improving community services to enable ageing in place. The Maltese Government is committed to continue working towards the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy so as to ensure not only longer life expectancy but also longer healthy years and better quality of life even throughout old age.

General Information

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An ageing population represents one of the most significant demographic and socioeconomic developments that Maltese society will be facing in the coming decades. In October 2013 Malta has launched a National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020. This strategic policy aims to steer local policy toward novel directions, away from the traditional outlook associating older adults with dependency towards a view of older adults as active individuals with skills and resources which are valuable for societal development.

The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing is based on three major pillars: active participation in the labour market, participation in society and independent living. This strategic policy seeks to increase the number of older workers in the labour market, whilst enabling persons above statutory retirement age to remain in or re-enter employment. Older adults should be enabled to fully participate in society. The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing provides recommendations to overcome potential barriers for social participation, including recommendations to ensure an adequate and sustainable income for older person including the most vulnerable, recognising the social benefits arising from older volunteering and grandparenthood, strengthening opportunities for learning, digital literacy, active citizenship and intergenerational solidarity; and providing further support to informal carers of older people. Society must not content itself with extended life expectancy but it should strive towards extending healthy life years and providing opportunities for engagement in physical and mental activities adapted to the capacities of older persons that encourage independent living. The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing offers several policy recommendations to improve independent living in later life, including: improving services in health promotion and disease prevention; acute and geriatric rehabilitation; mental health and well-being and community care services targeting older and ageing adults; supporting initiatives that facilitate the creation of age-friendly and dementia-friendly communities and services;

maximising autonomy in long-term care; raising awareness of elderly abuse and neglect; and investing further in end-of-life care.

Furthermore the Maltese government has set up an Active Ageing Unit within the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate with the aim to coordinate the implementation of the National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing.

National Ageing Situation

Demographic Indicators

In Malta we have an ageing population (Annex, figure 1). At the end of the year 2013 Malta had an estimated total population of 425,384. 17.8% of the population were children under 18 years of age, while a quarter of the population were aged 60 years and over (National Statistics Office, 2015). In 1901, 34.1% and 5.4% of Malta's population were in the 0-14 and 65-plus age groups respectively. By 1957, 37.4 % of the population were aged between the age of 0-14 compared to 6.8% who were 65 years and over. However, in the second half of the 20th century these figures changed drastically and by 2011 these figures reached 14.8 % and 68.9% for the 0-14 age bracket and 65+ age cohort respectively. Moreover, population projections worked out by the National Statistics Office, reveal a continuously ageing population. In fact, by 2060, the population of persons aged 65 years and over is projected to increase by 72 per cent when compared to this segment of the population during 2010. By 2060, children and youths under 20 will decrease by 35 per cent (National Statistics Office, 2011). Maltese population is evolving from a traditional pyramid shape to an even block distribution of equal numbers at each cohort with the exception of a large proportion at the top (Annex, figure 2).

Population ageing in Malta is mainly a result of increased life expectancy and decreased birth rate (National Statistics Office, 2015). During the past century the life expectancy in Malta has been on the increase. The life expectancy at birth was calculated to be 79 years for males and 83 years for females (National Statistics Office, 2011). During the first half of the 20th century the crude birth rate in Malta was 38 annual births per 1,000 population. This declined considerably to 9.6 births per 1,000 population in 2010 (National Statistics Office, 2011).

Social and economic indicators

Adults are amongst the main vulnerable groups for poverty (National Strategic Policy for poverty reduction and social inclusion 2014 – 2020)

In 2013, 38.3% of the total population were at risk of poverty (before all social transfers), whereas this rate stood at 15.7% after all social transfers. The Maltese Government has launched a National Strategic Policy for poverty reduction and social inclusion to address this issue. In 2014, the scenario remained similar, with 37.8% of the total population who were at risk of poverty (before all social transfers), whereas this rate stood at 15.9% after all social transfers. It is pertinent to note that these social

transfers do not include the several in-kind benefits such as free healthcare, medicines and education made available under Malta's social protection network. Nevertheless, the number of persons at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion has exhibited an incremental increase of 26.9% in the last seven year, from 78,000 in 2006 to 99,038 in 2014, representing 23.8% of persons living in Maltese households (National Strategic Policy for poverty reduction and social inclusion 2014 – 2024; Eurostat, 2015).

In Malta, there are strong community and family ties which promote protection and social inclusion of older adults. Malta has a welfare state, it has a social protection system which includes: social insurance, and social and health care services. The social insurance aims to safeguard the citizens' income by providing a comprehensive system of basic security and income benefits which guarantee an acceptable standard of living, this includes a retirement pension.

Health services in Malta are highly developed. The Government provides a comprehensive health service to all Maltese residents that is delivered free of charge, which includes preventative, investigative, curative and rehabilitative services in health centres and hospitals. This service is funded from general taxes.

Social, Economic and Political Situation

The Maltese Government recognises the importance of addressing issues related to older persons. Over the past years various initiatives, including policies, programmes and services, have been undertaken both by the government and also by several non-governmental organisations.

Malta's Economic performance has been robust over the recent years. The economy has remained stable despite a challenging macroeconomic environment over the past several years. According to Europe 2020 indicators, the country lagged behind the EU average in renewable energy and in research and experimental development. Malta has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe, and the country has experienced a steady increase in its employment rate since 2008. The risk of poverty has increased from 2008 to 2013, however a National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social inclusion 2014 – 2024 has been launched by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity to counteract these trends. Malta has seen a drop in the share of early leavers from education, however it needs to work harder towards its target of percentage of the population who complete tertiary education (Eurostat, 2014).

2. Method

Method

A quantitative and qualitative approach was used in carrying out this evaluation of the actions taken in the Maltese islands towards the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the subsequent UNECE Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS).

This report is based in the context of the local culture, traditions, and economic, political, religious and social situations. The Maltese changing society is a mixture of ingrained customs and traditions which are strongly affected by modernisation in technology and constantly influenced by events and the way of life in Europe and neighbouring countries. It is against this background that this report is compiled.

The **quantitative information** in this report is based on the research carried out by the National Statistics Office, on reports published by the same office, together with statistical information published or made available by different organisations and entities, including the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate, National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, and different Ministries. The National Statistics Office has contributed to the formulation of this report by providing the statistical information for the list of suggested statistical indicators on active ageing which is included in the annex.

The various policies, legislations, programmes and services were taken in consideration, paying attention to the effects of their implementation on the country's population, especially the older persons. Valuable information was retrieved electronically through government websites and websites of different organisations.

The **qualitative information** was obtained through networking with different stakeholders. Different Ministries were asked to contribute to this report by providing information about any action taken and the impact of these actions in relation to the four main goals of the Vienna declaration and the ten commitment of the Regional Implementation Strategy of MIPAA. A draft report was sent to the different Ministries, areas of the report which fall under their remit were highlighted for them to amend and add to the report, and feedback gathered was then compiled into a single report. Heads of Department of the different Ministries were also contacted.

To ensure as far as possible a bottom-up approach, considering that older adults are the main stakeholder, they were involved in gathering their views and perspectives about the situation of ageing in Malta and of the aspirations and needs of Malta's older adults. Consultation was held with a number of associations of older people and self-help groups. These include: the Association of Pensioners of the Nationalist Party, the Association for the members of the University of the Third Age, the Association for pensioners of the Bank of Valletta, the Caritas Malta Elderly section, Floriana Senior Citizens, the National Association for Pensioners, the Association for pensioners of the General Workers Union, The Association for Pensioners of the Malta Labour Party, the pensions section of the Malta Union of Teachers, the pensioners section of the United Workers Union. Consultation was also carried out with the National Council of Women and the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

Part 2

The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing and the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate are the main entities responsible for the follow-up to MIPAA/RIS.

National actions and progress in implementation of MIPAA/RIS

Goal 1: Longer working life is encouraged and ability to work is maintained.

Commitment 1: To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages.

The Policy of the Maltese government is one of social inclusion of its older citizens in all spheres of society. The country's social policy is based on the principles of active ageing and ageing in place, as well as the perspective of a society for all ages.

In 1998 an Occupational Health and Safety Authority was set up to ensure safety and well-being on the place of work throughout the working life. This authority is responsible for ensuring safe and healthy working conditions. In 2014 a conference was held in collaboration with the Active Ageing Unit promoting occupational health and safety principles that foster the employability of older and ageing workers up to and even subsequent to statutory retirement age. Different stakeholders, including representative of associations of older persons and employers, attended for this conference.

Commitment 2: To ensure full integration and participation of older people in society

Malta has a low level of employment amongst persons aged over 55 years of age when compared to other EU countries (UNECE & EU Commission, 2014). The Maltese Government is implementing financial incentives that benefit older employees to return or stay in the labour force for as long as possible. A new incentive was launched in the budget 2016, people who on a voluntary basis and in agreement with their employer, choose to remain in employment and do not apply for a pension when they are entitled to it, the rate of their pension will be increased by a percentage for every additional year they stay in employment, which result in higher rate of pension received upon retirement for the rest of their lives. The Maltese Government in the coming years shall continue working also on introducing financial incentives targeting employers to retain older and ageing workers employed in their organisations, including also financial inducements for employers to encourage re-entry of ageing workers back into the workforce.

The Maltese Government recognises that training and up-skilling of the labour force remains important and should be on the forefront of any agenda that expects to deal with the consequences of an ageing population. Training coupled with inherent experience remains the key to keeping the older cohorts relevant economically capable of flexibly matching the changes within the labour market. Furthermore,

it is pertinent to keep in mind that further synergy between the labour market and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is crucial to enhance labour market participation. Efforts to curb the skills mismatch and up-skill the current labour force need to take place in a context which reflects current and forthcoming industry needs in a bid to ensure a dynamic workforce which can integrate within the labour market and thus contribute towards further economic growth. Indeed continuous vocational education and training is also critical for ageing workers. Therefore in the coming years the government will be working on improving these educational and vocational opportunities according to the needs and requirements of the individual, the employer and the workplace. As part of this move it is important to support facilitators and instructors to become more sensitive to the unique learning and teaching styles preferred by ageing workers.

Furthermore, other measures that target the unemployed, inactive and adults in employment, in order to ensure that adults are given the opportunity to improve both transversal and specific skills needed included in a dynamic labour market are represented by multiple initiatives. The following measures implemented by Malta's Public Employment Service include; Training Courses, Work Exposure, Traineeships and the Average Wage Earners Scheme. Through such initiatives, participants are given the opportunity to improve both transversal and specific skills needed in a dynamic labour market; hence facilitating their entry or move in the labour market.

Over the past years, Malta also targeted particular groups which were detached from the labour market in a variety of ways. This would consequently ensure a social security system which positively spurs work effort, strengthens cohesion and reduces poverty. A number of *Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs)* have been enacted by the Maltese Government, designed to facilitate the transition towards integration within the labour market, whilst at the same time focusing on up-skilling the current workforce and thereby reduce the skills mismatch. These initiatives include:

- **Incentivizing Industry to integrate older workers.** The 2014 Budget saw the introduction of a tax deduction of €5,800 given to employers within the first two years of hiring workers aged between 45 and 65 who had been previously unemployed for three years.
- **Access to Employment Scheme:** This initiative provides employment aid to enterprises in a bid to promote the recruitment of the more challenged amongst jobseekers and inactive people.

Following the 2008 Budget in which the Maltese Government announced an initiative where a person who has retired will be able to keep on working and earn any amount of income without any reduction in his/her pension.

The Maltese government also plans to promote other healthy working conditions such as increased job rotation and flexibility, and supporting employers in adopting practices that decrease potential health risks. Age management is also important and it is being planned to conduct a public campaign to inspire work organisations to implement a positive attitude towards ageing employees and to offer physical and mental work environment and suitable working hours to support them.

Commitment 3: To promote equitable and sustainable economic growth in response to population ageing

Since the late 1970's Malta has a pensions system, based on ongoing contributions by the employer and

the employee during the working life of the individual. The rate of Retirement Pension depends on the average of contributions paid and on the pensionable income earned from gainful occupation in the last eleven years prior to retirement (Department of Social Security, 2013). This form of pension system is becoming economically challenging for the country considering the increasing ageing population.

The age of statutory retirement age is being gradually increased from presently 62 years for males and females to reach 65 years of age by 2027. A Pensions Strategy Group has been set up to address the adequacy and sustainability of the pensions system, which proposed 27 recommendations. This group recommended that by 2027 the National Minimum Pension should be equivalent to 60% of the average wage in the country. For this purpose the pensions rate is being increased gradually. The value of the pension is adjusted according to the cost of living. The number of years of valid contributions have been extended from 40 to 41 years for persons born after 1968. This aims to better balance the number of years one spends paying contributions and the number of years one is expected to be on a pension. This principle should help in guaranteeing the sustainability of the pensions system. As part of this reform National Insurance contributions will be credited to parents who had to leave work to care for their offspring or whoever could not work for reasons of study and/or specialisation (Ministry for Finance, 2015).

Commitment 5: To enable labour markets to respond to the economic and social consequences of population ageing

The Maltese Government acknowledges that increasing active engagement in the labour market is an asset for the National Economy. Labour Force Survey estimates indicate that 65 per cent of persons aged between 15 and 64 were employed in the third quarter of the year 2015. Unemployed persons stood at 2.9 per cent while inactive persons totalled 44.6 per cent. The highest employment rate was recorded amongst persons aged between 25 and 54 years. The male employment rate for this age bracket was 92.2 per cent while that for females stood at 64.4 per cent (National Statistics Office, 2015). This shows a positive change in employment rate in Malta when compared to the figures of the labour force survey of the year 2001, where 46.2 per cent of the population aged over 15 years were employed, 3 per cent were unemployed, and 50.8 per cent were inactive. Amongst those employed, 76 per cent were males and 34 per cent were females. The unemployment rate in Malta is amongst the lowest amongst EU countries with 5.1% as recorded in January 2016 (Eurostat, 2016a). However, in spite of the gains over the past years, activity rates continue to be among the lowest in the EU, particularly among women.

Several initiatives have been carried out in order to increase participation in paid employment across all age groups. The Ministry for education and employment coordinates the Jobs+ initiative, through which social partners and representatives of the political parties provide advice and collaborate with the government in addressing issues relating to the labour market. Such initiatives are discussed within the Active Labour Market Counselling and Action Committee.

Promoting entry or re-entry into the labour market amongst females is very important locally considering the low activity rates amongst this sex. The government has launched a scheme for free childcare for those parents who work or study. This aims to encourage females who had stopped working to care for their children to resume working. Flexible hours, reduced working hours, maternity leave, parental leave and telework opportunities are all family friendly measures offered to employees which help to balance work and family responsibilities. These measures encourage parents, females in

particular, to retain work or begin working.

The Ministry for the education and employment has launched The Youth Guarantee program. This program offers an opportunity to those who are not in employment, education or training to either access the labour market or education. The Youth Guarantee targets young people of less than 25 years and supports them with training, job exposure and personalised assistance.

In fact, the Youth Guarantee has implemented the *NEET Activation Scheme I* – to reintegrate people disengaged from education or labour market through interventions and empowerment. This consists of 3 phases being a) profiling, behavioural and employability courses, b) continued education/ work exposure, c) traineeship. A NEET Activation Scheme II will follow up on the first programme and will place more focus on personalized psychosocial services provided to young people.

Jobsplus, formally known as the Employment and Training Corporation, was set up by the Maltese Government to enhance the employability by recommending policies and implementing initiatives aimed at empowering, assisting and training job seekers to facilitate their entry or re-entry into the labour market, promoting skills and competency development of the workforce, and assisting employers in their recruitment and training needs. However, the government aims to enforce this unit to recognise the diversity of older workers and the unique features which age brings to career trajectories, particularly targeting the 50-plus age group. This includes, amongst others, training of guidance workers on employment services for older workers and preventative guidance that minimise premature labour exit.

The Government has set up the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations which aims "To protect the interests of parties in employment contracts while actively promoting a healthy employment relationship in a spirit of social partnership, and to contribute towards stable industrial relations." (Department for Industrial and Employment Relations, 2012). Several trade unions also have a strong voice in protecting the workers' rights.

The Maltese government acknowledges the difficulties faced by workers who also have caring responsibilities to balance their work and caring duties. The government provides several opportunities for public officers, including teleworking, working on reduced hours, job-sharing and flexible working arrangements. However, the state is committed that in the coming years these opportunities will be improved to include also specific types of leave that allows older workers time-off from employment to care for their dependents irrespective of the latter's age. Retirement brings about a huge change in the daily life of persons, resulting in significant psychological impact. Pre-retirement programs are organised by the Centre for Development, Research and Training department to Public Service employees. Pre-retirement programs are also organised by the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate in collaboration with different entities, including private companies.

Commitment 8: To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society

The Intergenerational Learning Partnership over 55 is an Erasmus + project amongst several countries, including Malta. The Project aims to increase the employability, motivation and entrepreneurial behaviour of Financial Services Sector employees' who are over 55 years. By the end of the project a

framework with curricula, training programs and educational qualifications will be developed for training of employees. The project encourages mentoring of younger employees by workers aged over 55 years of age. This increases the productiveness and efficiency of employees of all age, through better use of the competences and experience of those over 55 years of age. It also helps to reduce rate of unemployment amongst those over 55 within FSS, by promoting cooperation between employers, trade unions, HEI and VET providers.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) addressed the topic of gender mainstreaming through an annual report on the topic, through training opportunities to public sector employees in line with Government's Gender Mainstreaming Policy, including employees of the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing. The NCPE has also published a publication of gender mainstreaming tools and training sessions on the use of these tools through the PROGRESS co-funded project Gender Mainstreaming – in Practice. NCPE deliver training to a wide range of audiences within the public and private sector during which the issues of non-discrimination on the grounds of age are often highlighted as well as the importance of combating stereotypes and promoting reasonable diversity accommodation.

The National Council of Women lobbies for female's rights with the government. Proposals are sent to the Minister for Finance in preparations for the budget, and the reform of pension has been on the agenda for the last few years. They have proposed several resolutions in relation to work and pensions, including:

- Addressing the gender gap in pensions
- Creating sustainable pensions for men and women
- Cooperation in Preventing and deterring undeclared work

The Maltese Government is planning to further promote awareness of ageism and age discrimination, including also legal amendments to address both direct and indirect discrimination.

Goal 2: Participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons are promoted

Commitment 1: To mainstream ageing in all policy fields with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages.

Considering the experienced population ageing in Malta and the resultant challenges this brings about, a parliamentary secretary for the rights of persons with disability and active ageing has been appointed within the Ministry for the family and social solidarity, to be directly responsible for the country's older individuals.

The National Council for the Elderly was set up in 1992 and it has a role in increasing the opportunities for the involvement and participation of older adults in all facets of life. This council is also responsible for protecting the rights of older citizens, ensuring their social and economic security and planning a

national response to the challenges of population ageing.

The Maltese government ensures a safe, adequate and sustainable income for all older persons, since this is indispensable for guarding against poverty and material deprivation. The Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity ensures a sustainable pension system for all older adults. Unemployed persons who are residents in Malta, over 60 and do not qualify for a contributory retirement pension because they do not have the minimum number of contributions paid or credited, may be entitled to a non-contributory age pension if they satisfy the capital and income means test. Retirement pensions are adjusted according to the cost of living to maintain an equitable value, for instance in the budget for 2017 the rate of pension has been increased by €4 per week for those with the minimum rate of pension and slightly higher. As also stated in the Budget for 2017, pensioners older than 61 years of age will be exempt from paying income-tax on pensions up to a maximum of €13,000, equivalent to the highest rate of Government pension. It is calculated that around 22,000 pensioners will be benefitting from this initiative. Moreover supplementary financial aid will be provided to older adults on minimum income. It is estimated that this budget reform will significantly affect the financial income of around 9,500 older pensioners who are married and live on one pension. Moreover the government has extended the donation of €300 per year to older adults who are 75 years and over, and who live in their own home.

The Maltese Government believes also in educating the community on the benefits of building one's financial resources through savings, investment and other options to support a favourable standard of living following retirement. Providing adequate financial resources as well as social resources enables older persons to live in dignity and participate in society, particularly those who experience social inclusion.

Widows, whose spouse had paid not less than 156 contributions and widows whose spouse died as a result of a personal injury on the place of work, are awarded a contributory widow's pension. The full widow's pension is paid even if the widow is engaged in full-time employment. This helps to reduce material deprivation and risk of poverty particularly in older females who were never engaged in paid employment or who don't have enough contributions paid. It is important to note that historically females were forced to give up employment upon getting married.

In 2004 the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality was set up. It is an independent, government funded body, which works to ensure that Maltese society is a society free from any form of discrimination based on sex/gender and family responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, and gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in employment.

Commitment 2: To ensure full integration and participation of older persons in society

The Maltese Government supports initiatives which strengthen the voice of vulnerable groups. Various associations provide a means for older adults to express their views and opinions. Local councils are encouraged to set up a subcommittee for older adults with the role of organising activities for older adults within the locality as well as voicing issues related to their well-being within the community. Associations for members of Active Ageing Centres and associations for residents within residential homes were set up to empower older adults to voice their opinion and put forward their recommendations. These recommendations are dealt with by the management of the home or active ageing centre respectively. If the recommendations proposed fall beyond their remit of competence, these are forwarded to the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate to be dealt with by higher

authorities.

The National Council for the Elderly is a National advisory board on ageing which ensures a contribution of older persons to national policy responses to ageing by evaluating policies, programs and services for the older persons. The Council is an excellent platform to ensure that the contribution of older persons to decision-making processes and their participation in advisory bodies are not only respected but implemented.

There are several associations for older persons, including a section for retirees in unions and employment associations, social groups, the association of members of the University of the Third Age, and others. All of these organise outings and social events for their members, some of them also organise informative talks and educational opportunities. This enables a means for their members to remain active and socially engaged.

The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing has launched the BeActive as a pilot project. This involves a program of physical activities, held in collaboration with a sports club, aimed at older adults to encourage them to remain physically active. This pilot project was very successful and as from January 2016 this was implemented as a permanent program. Moreover a sports day for older adults is organised on a yearly basis. As from 2016 this has been doubled and a sports day is organised for residents in long-term care and another one for members of Active Ageing Centres. This has significantly increased attendance with around 300 participants from residential homes and over 400 participants from the community.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is a valuable tool in today's society. The impact of digitalization on the world of work can in the future play a central role in the context of Social Europe. With technology development moving ever faster, the policies and regulations are required to be flexible and future proof, including in the area of employment and social affairs. Malta has undertaken a number of measures aimed at addressing the challenges brought about by the integration and application of different digital technologies and innovations across economic and social domains, through fostering education and training, whilst developing and assessing skills, in an effort to encourage people to acquire a set of core skills. Furthermore, the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate collaborates closely with the Malta Communications Authority to supporting digital inclusion programmes that ensure that people in later life have the ability to engage with computers and the internet, and to progress their learning to other types of digital technologies. Focus groups with older adults are regularly held so as to provide a channel for discussion and debate on digital inclusion issues concerning older persons. These issues are addressed through regular training programs offered in all active ageing centres and also in residential homes for the elderly. These programs are also offered within local councils for all interested persons over 60 years of age. All these programs are offered free of charge for older adults. Best practice models are opted for when promoting digital competence in later life. These programs are complemented by education about safe internet browsing amongst which talks by the local police cybercrime unit. Wireless internet access has been installed in all residential homes for the elderly to encourage the use of internet by residents. Moreover the program EM Citizen (Electronic Mobile Citizen), an innovative community-training project aimed at adults and elderly people, aged 50+ years was launched. In a modern digital society where Smart Phones and Tablets, are practically taking over PC's and Laptops, this innovative and informal type of education was evolved for this age cohort.

Older volunteering was specifically mentioned in the National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020 (Parliamentary Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, 2013). The strategic policy emphasises that older volunteerism is beneficial for the individual as it positively affects mortality rates, improves psychological well-being, as well as expands the social networks following retirement. Two key policy recommendations were put forward, namely: (i) developing and implementing national programmes to involve older adults as volunteers, particularly targeting those at risk of social exclusion, and (ii) managing an online platform that matches retirees with volunteer opportunities.

The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Right of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing (PSDAA) has launched the, “*NaħsebFik*” project (*Thinking of you*). Through this project the wishes of elderly people who are lonely and face various social difficulties and possibly have health issues are published. The general public has the opportunity to send out a special thought to them for Christmas. This initiative is held in collaboration with a number of responsible social workers and to which a lot of generous people have contributed.

The role of grandparents is very important locally considering the close family ties as well as since a number of older adults care for their grandchildren while the parents work. The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing advocates for a wider remit for ‘responsibility leave’ and work on reduced hours’ to allow grandparents to take care of their grandchildren when parents are unable to do so due to work commitments or illness.

Public transport is important for older adults to participate in social activities. The local public transport system has experienced a whole revolution, all buses have been changed to low floor buses, these are wheelchair accessible and priority seating is available for older adults. Public transport is provided at a very reasonable price, moreover persons over 60 years of age benefit from a discounted rate.

A seminar was held by PSDAA in collaboration with the University of Malta to increase awareness on assistive technology. The government of Malta is aware that keeping abreast of new technology development is fundamental to enable independent living for many older adults and persons with disability. In fact the telecare service which is an emergency call system has been upgraded to telecare plus, which includes several assistive technology devices integrated with the call system.

Commitment 4: To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences

The Maltese Government strongly believes in the concept of ageing in place. Towards the last quarter of 2017 the government will start an EU funded project involving installation of lifts and environmental upgrading of social housing. It is estimated that 1,200 older adults and 200 persons with disability will benefit from this initiative. To support ageing in place community services are being strengthened to better support older persons to live in their own home. In Malta family ties are still relatively strong and many relatives support their dependent older adults to continue living in their own home. This level of care varies considerably from running errands to providing care around the clock to fully dependent older adults. Informal carers face several challenges including physical, psychological, emotional, social and practical challenges. The Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate has provided a training program for informal carers of older persons involving five consecutive workshops which covered a variety of topics addressed by different professionals. Caritas Malta was also collaborating in this

program. A total of 63 participants participated in these informative programs. Seminars for informal carers of persons with dementia were also delivered in five different localities around the Maltese Islands. A total of 211 participants participated in these programs. These informative programs for informal carers aimed to deliver practical information about how to provide better care to the dependent older adults while preserving their own physical and psychological wellbeing. Moreover information about where to access more information and support was provided.

The Carer at home pilot project was launched on the 4th January, 2016. Through this scheme, an elderly person may employ a full or part time qualified carer; with the government reimbursing up to €5,200 per year of the paid wage. The Maltese Government is strengthening community based respite services. The number of available beds has been increased and this service has also been extended to the island of Gozo. As from 2017 the Government will introduce the service of domiciliary respite care, whereby informal carers of dependent carers will be allocated respite care within the person's own home. The Government is also investing in night shelters. Some older adults are afraid to stay alone at night and resort to long term residential care for security. By providing night shelters these elderly get the reassurance needed while continuing to live in the community. Despite this, some older adults still need to resort to long term care facilities. The Maltese Government offers this service in different facilities around the islands. The older person contributes 60% of any pension, social assistance and bonus receivable, net of income tax, and 60% of any other income received when he/she is admitted to a long term facility. A number of private long term care facilities are also available. It is estimated that in 2015 1.5% of the population had dementia and this estimate is expected to increase in the coming years as a result of population ageing. To counteract this fact, in 2015, the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing has launched a National Dementia Strategy. The main aim of this strategy is to enhance quality of life for persons with dementia, their caregivers and family members. The key objectives presented in this strategy include: increasing awareness and understanding on dementia, timely diagnosis and appropriate pharmacological and psychosocial intervention, workforce development through education and training of staff working with persons with dementia, including education of persons taking care of family members with dementia, promoting an ethical approach to dementia management and care and providing individuals with dementia and their caregivers with the necessary psychological support needed in making important decisions regarding their health and welfare. This strategy also aims to improve dementia management and care through a holistic approach in service provision for persons with dementia, their carers and family members (Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of persons with Disability and Active Ageing, 2015). A dementia helpline was launched to ensure immediate support around the clock. A dementia intervention team consisting of multidisciplinary professionals has also been set up to enable a more holistic intervention for the management of dementia. Persons receiving a diagnosis of dementia have care plans developed by a multidisciplinary team specialised in dementia management and care. These address activities that maximise independent living, adapt and develop skills, and minimise the need for support. This team educates families facing a new diagnosis about the condition and services available and plays an important role in interlinking of services available to enable better support of persons with dementia. The Dementia Intervention Team also have a key role in educating the community at large. This team has started an initiative in building a dementia friendly community through informing and educating all sectors within an identified community about the condition. Two dementia day care centres are available. These centres enable persons with dementia to engage in meaningful activities during the day but are also indispensable as respite for informal carers, especially those carers who are engaged in gainful employment. Several dementia specific wards are available in long term care facilities to offer better quality of care for persons with dementia, especially those with challenging behaviour.

It is acknowledged that there are several stereotypes regarding older adults, which are further reinforced through media. Intergenerational programs are considered important so as to increase awareness amongst different age cohorts of the abilities and potentials of persons regardless of their age. Moreover intergenerational programs are important in passing on cultural heritage which would otherwise be lost. Several programs are organised by different entities. The Active Ageing Unit within the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate coordinates sessions by school organisations within residential homes and active ageing centres. A program has been carried out with the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology, where the topic of Active Ageing was introduced within the module of studies for students reading for the program of media studies. The students had to prepare a 30 second promotional video related to Active Ageing following briefing and guidance by the Active Ageing Unit regarding the topic and placement during lifelong learning sessions held in Active Ageing Centres. The Active Ageing Unit is also working with Eko Skola in coordinating several programs between students and older adults in the community and in residential homes.

Commitment 6: To promote lifelong learning and adapt the educational system in order to meet the changing economic, social and demographic conditions.

When compared to other EU countries, in Malta we have low level of adults participating in adult learning. Eurostat data for 2012 states that 7% of the Maltese population aged 25 to 64 is participating in education and training compared to an average of 9% in the EU-27. However, the EU 2020 target is 15%. The *National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020* envisages personalised and supportive learning systems for all adults in Malta and Gozo through Lifelong Learning. As a result of this strategy it is aimed to ensure that adult education delivers economic development, social and civic participation, personal fulfilment and well-being. This strategic plan has 10 strategies supporting the 5 Lifelong Learning objectives which are inter-related and inter-dependent. These objectives include:

- Stimulate participation in lifelong learning by Maltese adults by creating a desire for learning, including both persons who are low-skilled and at risk of poverty, as well as people in employment who wish to further their skills and job opportunities.
- Ensuring person centred learning through innovative learning methods and environments to make learning flexible, personal, accessible and relevant.
- Improve skills that contribute to professional development, employment mobility and active citizenship.
- Develop support structure for adult learning.
- Improve governance in the Lifelong Learning sector, exploring structural, institutional, fiscal, legal, political and administrative measures available

The following table from the Maltese National Lifelong learning Strategy 2020 depicts the lifelong learning opportunities available in Malta (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2014):

| PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ENGAGED IN ADULT LEARNING | OTHER ORGANISATIONS ENGAGED IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL ADULT LEARNING |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Malta (self-accrediting, post secondary and tertiary level courses) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign Universities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCAST (self-accrediting, post secondary and tertiary level courses up to MQF Level 6) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Training Organisations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Education Institutions, mainly representing foreign universities (post secondary and tertiary level courses, accredited by NCFHE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs and NVOs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Directorate for Lifelong Learning (courses up to MQF Level 5, accredited by NCFHE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prison Education Association at Corradino Correctional Facility |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Employment and Training Corporation | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Tourism Studies (self-accrediting, courses up to MQF Level 5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Catholic Church Trade Unions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation for Education Services ¹⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Parties |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aġenzja Żgħazagħ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports and Cultural organisations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Councils | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Museums and Libraries |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museums and Public Libraries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correction Institutions |

In Malta there is also the University for the Third Age. Lectures are held in different centres around the Maltese islands to encourage older adults to attend. The government has extended this service by opening two other branches, one in the south of Malta and another in the central region so as to further facilitate access to older adults.

The Maltese Government is committed to employing a 'wide participation agenda' in older adult learning through outreach strategies that attract older adults who would not generally be motivated to participate in traditional educational provision. To reach this aim the Government is working on transforming Day Centres for the elderly from social centres and day respite service into lifelong learning hubs. Lifelong learning opportunities have been introduced in all day centres for the elderly, these have now been rebranded as Active Ageing Centres. The Maltese Government believes that all older persons, irrespective of health status, should have an opportunity to engage in learning activities. For this reason lifelong learning sessions have also been introduced in residential homes for the elderly. The topics chosen are based on the feedback received from members themselves. All sessions are geared to encourage active engagement either physically, creatively or through discussion and reminiscence. The Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate is collaborating with local councils to set up Active Ageing Centres in more localities with the aim to enhance accessibility to active ageing opportunities.

The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing (PSDAA) facilitates access to cultural activities through funding opportunities for disadvantaged groups to attend these events. Moreover PSDAA has teamed up with the Council for Science and Technology in ensuring access for all at ESPLORA and providing opportunities for older adults and persons with disability to fully

participate in this newly establish interactive science museum.

Commitment 8: To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society

Malta has made significant strides during the past years in overcoming issues of discrimination and to promote women's full social participation. A gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and at all stages.

The principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are protected by the Maltese Constitution. This includes also discrimination on the place of work. The subject of discrimination in employment is treated in Articles 26-32 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (chapter 452 of the laws of Malta) and in the Equality for Men and Women Act (Chapter 456 of the laws of Malta).

Recently the parliament has approved amendment to the Social Security Act which eliminated any form of discrimination based on gender which had been present for many years. Thanks to these amendments differences in the minimum or fixed rates of pensions will be abolished. Pension rates of these women are being revised to eliminate any form of discrimination based on gender.

Until the end of last year, Malta included two Commissioner posts, one for Mental Health and another for Older Persons, held by the same person. In January 2016, Parliament decreed that whilst the former Commissioner post continues to fall within the remit of the Ministry for Health, a new act – Commissioner for Older Persons Act – will now be ratifying the former post. This Act was passed in Parliament early 2016, and a new Post for Commissioner for Older Persons, autonomous from the Government and with new terms of reference as decreed by this Act, has been subsequently launched. The post of Commissioner for Older Persons will be filled by the end of 2016.

The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) safeguards equality on the grounds of gender and family responsibilities, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, racial or ethnic origin, and gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics in employment, education as well as in banks and financial institutions. NCPE works towards the elimination of discrimination on these grounds by raising awareness; monitoring national laws and EU Directives; implementing policies; networking with different stakeholders; investigating complaints and providing assistance to the general public (National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, 2015) .

The NCPE have launched a Gender Balance in Decision Making program. This programme aimed to address the gender distortion in the labour market, but more specifically in decision-making positions. This program consisted of a research study which focused on gender-balanced representation in boardrooms of both the public and private sectors in Malta and Gozo. Another aspect of this program consisted of a Mentoring Programme which sought to provide women aspiring to hold leadership positions with the opportunity to be mentored by professionals who occupy high-level jobs to further empower mentees to participate in decision-making positions. Moreover, in 2015 The Directory of Professional Women was launched. This is an online database with profiles of professional women which aims to serve as a positive initiative to address the significant under-representation of women in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, 2015). It envisages that NCPE's remit will be widened and strengthened through the enactment of a revised Equality Act and a Human Rights and Equality Commission Act. This would

expand the responsibility of the commission to include promotion and protection of human rights, including the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination in Malta.

The National Council of women (NCW) promotes and supports healthy lifestyles, intergenerational activities and life-long learning. The council works toward full integration and participation of older persons in society. The NCW organise several talks, conferences and seminars. Some recent talks held include talks about non-contributory pensions, about women and pensions, and towards a sustainable social economy for Malta.

Amongst the strategies outlined in the Malta National Lifelong learning strategy, one of the strategies focuses on facilitating Women's participation in workplace through Lifelong Learning. This strategy proposes to ensure equal opportunities to lifelong learning for females, including females who have young children, so as to ensure equal opportunities on the place of work (Malta National Lifelong learning strategy, 2020).

Goal 3: Dignity, health and independence in older age are promoted and safeguarded

Commitment 7: To strive to ensure quality of life at all ages and maintain independent living including health and well-being.

Health promotion and disease prevention in Malta takes a lifelong perspective. Primary Health Care services are available to provide a personalised and seamless continuity of care so as to ensure the best state of health with special emphasis on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention rather than cure.

In Malta, prevention falls within the remit of the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate within the Ministry for Health. Various initiatives and services are offered for promoting wellbeing and prevention of diseases. These included the Non Communicable Disease Strategy (2010), the Sexual Health Policy (2010) and Strategy (2011), TB strategy (2012), Obesity strategy (2012), Communicable Disease Strategy (2013), Food and Nutrition Action Plan (2014), Whole of school approach to healthy lifestyle (2015), Breastfeeding policy and action plan (2015). Currently work is ongoing on a Health Enhancing Physical Activity Strategy and an HIV strategy. Various programmes are offered including campaigns in various settings including the community, schools and workplaces on nutrition, physical activity, oral health and tobacco. Weight management programmes, programmes for people with chronic diseases, programmes for people with diabetes and tobacco cessation programmes are offered to the public free of charge. The Directorate is also responsible for the prevention and control of infectious diseases whereby cases are investigated and control actions taken. These include foodborne illness, meningitis, chicken pox, scarlet fever, scabies amongst others. Falls in the elderly could result in permanent disability and limitations in mobility. This is a serious deterrent for independent living. There is a falls clinic which carries out specific assessment and intervention of clients referred who are at risk of falling. The Active Ageing Unit in collaboration with Allied Health Services within the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate are implementing a falls awareness program for older adults with the aim to remain active and independent. These sessions include educational talks as well as an exercise program to build strength and endurance.

Medication safety is essential both in the community, residential homes and hospitals. The Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate has invested on medication safety within residential homes. Twenty four hour nursing has been extended where this was not available, policy and standard operating

procedures were drafted; and audits are being carried out in regards to medication safety. This was complemented by education of the staff on the importance of medication safety and regarding the new procedures.

The Government of Malta is aware that strong community services are key to enable older adults to age in place. Discharge liaison nurses are available at the acute hospital to ensure that clients are coping well following discharge and for continuation of service following discharge from the acute hospital. Outpatient and inpatient rehabilitation services are available for persons of all ages. Domiciliary rehabilitation services are also offered to those individuals who are unable to attend outpatient rehabilitation services, especially frail older people. Interdisciplinary teams are available in all sectors of rehabilitation services. The service of the Meals on Wheels is available to provide a meal to those persons who are unable to cook for themselves. This service is provided following assessment by the CommCare Team to ensure that it is provided to those who really need it and to exclude rehabilitation potential. This service has been reformed and strengthened to enhance its efficiency. The government has set up one-stop-shops in different regions, to make services more accessible to citizens and service users. The one-stop-shop assists with downloading and filling forms for services, paying bills, providing feedback, providing information about different services, reporting a problem, and scheduling an appointment with a government or department entity. A wealth of information about health care services is provided through media to enable older adults to become informed consumers of health care.

Despite the drive to enforce community services many older adults still resolve to residential homes for the elderly. The Maltese Government wants to ensure that residential homes for the elderly offer a good quality of care to residents. For this reason National Minimum Standards were issued to regulate all residential homes. Audits in residential homes are frequently carried out both by the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate as well as by independent audit companies. A public consultation was carried out regarding the establishment of an Authority that will enforce these standards. In the coming years the government will be working on enforcing that all residential homes for the elderly abide to the National Minimum Standards. Additionally, annual inspections and licensing is carried out by the Healthcare Standards Directorate which is one of the regulatory bodies within the Superintendence of Public Health. The Directorate's objective in this regard is to ensure that safe and high quality standards of care is provided to the elderly residents. All recommendations put forward by the inspection team is categorized and entered into a system which is regularly monitored to ensure that all recommendations/shortcomings are addressed within the set target date. Moreover the HCSD embarked on an initiative to communicate correct expert information to Home Managers and staff working within residential Homes for the Elderly. The topics addressed till now are: fire safety and prevention in homes for the elderly, prevention of falls among the elderly, infection control in Homes for the Elderly, transport policies when a patient needs to attend for a consultation at the rehabilitation hospital, management and actions to be taken during a heat wave alert, and the nutritional needs for the older person.

The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing recommends integrating acute geriatric care and rehabilitation within the acute public hospital system. It also recommends integrating mental health services within our acute public hospital. This integration of services would be more efficient and effective in addressing the more complex needs of older adults and would contribute to decrease the stigma associated with mental illness.

There is still stigma associated with mental health issues in Malta. Education about mental health is ongoing. Talks to increase awareness about different mental health issues are being held within the

community and specifically also with older adults. These include also talks on Dementia. A program to educate older adults about the condition and to encourage social support of persons with dementia by individuals from the community is being carried out in Active Ageing Centres. The Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate is working on strengthening the current geriatric mental health services to meet the needs of older persons in the community and in residential homes. A consultation workshop was held with all heads of sections within the directorate. Service development based on identified needs will be carried out gradually through involvement of a psychiatric intervention team, development of policies, standard operating procedures and clear reference points. This will be followed by education of staff in residential homes and in the community.

Elder abuse can take many forms and it is often difficult to identify. Education of older adults themselves, the general public and staff working with older adults about elder abuse is a continuous process and it is carried out through seminars, media, public talks, and leaflets. This issue is tackled by state organisations as well as non-governmental organisations. The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) in 2015 has conducted a qualitative research study on violence and abuse of older women and men that analysed the factors and consequences of violence suffered by older person, highlighting the gender perspective (NCPE, 2015 a). The NCPE has completed a guide for professional people working with older person on the prevention and intervention in cases of violence or abuse on older women and men (NCPE, 2015 b). A poster on violence on older women and men was disseminated to local councils and active ageing centres for older persons. Moreover a radio campaign on violence on older women and men was carried out to empower older victims of violence to combat such violence as well as encouraging carers of older persons to engage in non-violent relationships with older adults. This campaign was further promoted on NCPE's Facebook page through which 8,666 people were reached. A support line and online support are available.

In recent months, Malta witnessed a number of developments as far as legislation on elder abuse is concerned. In its drive to enact legislation that protects older persons from elder abuse, the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing introduced new forms of deterrent measures that will be incorporated in the Maltese Criminal Code, specifically dealing with abuse, which so far had been defined in a very broad manner, in order to encapsulate all forms of abuse but with special focus on maltreatment of older persons. This new legislation included innovative concepts to ensure maximum protection for older persons, even from relatives, so as to safeguard their best interests. From a purely academic perspective, the Parliamentary Secretariat combined civil and criminal concepts to achieve higher levels of protection in more expeditious and effective terms, without the need to resort to either criminal or civil proceedings, which are generally very time-consuming, expensive and disheartening. The government's vision is also encouraging. To cite the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Active Ageing,

...government's efforts to deter elder abuse is only the beginning...we are in the process of drafting the second batch of amendments...[which] will make a substantial difference by enhancing professional and public awareness of elder abuse and establishing a range of legal remedies that protect older people (Caruana, 2014 : 20)

Another noteworthy legislation in the pipeline concerns the possibility whereby persons convicted of crimes where older persons are victims will be automatically liable for damages upon sentencing. Hence

eliminating the need for the older person to pursue the perpetrator for damages through a civil case (Caruana, 2014).

The Maltese Government is to further work towards developing and implementing a strategy that empowers older adults to report abuse, and provides the necessary procedures and resources for a comprehensive response.

End-of-life care is an area which carries considerable ethical issues and dilemmas. The Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing organised a seminar regarding end-of-life care for health professionals. A seminar on the topic was organised for informal carers of older persons. Malta, through the University, is involved in an Erasmus+ program which involves research about End-of-life care. A summer school and a conference about the topic were organised for health practitioners. The next step is to support clinicians in end-of-life care through legislation to introduce advance directives for health care. There is the need to develop and implement policies and procedures in health care facilities concerning end-of-life issues, including resuscitation, on admission to the facility by a suitably qualified practitioner.

Commitment 8: To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society

A section of the National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing is dedicated to age-friendly communities. It is recommended to promote age-friendly communities to meet the needs of older adults, including the formulation of inter-sectorial guidelines to enable appropriate development of accessible public spaces, housing, and methods of transportation sensitive to the needs and responsive to the input of older adults. Several initiatives are held in this area however more coordinated work is needed to achieve age-friendly communities.

Goal 4: Intergenerational solidarity is maintained and enhanced

Commitment 1: To mainstream ageing in all policy field with the aim of bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change to achieve a society for all ages.

Ageing is a complex phenomenon which affects different sectors. Networking between different stakeholders including the elderly themselves, non-government organisations, local government organisations, and community organisations is fundamental to ensure that older adults are fully integrated within society. Intergenerational dialogue is important so as to pass on cultural knowledge as well as for different generations to learn from each other and better accept each other.

The Parliamentary Secretary for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing holds a yearly award for older adults who are active within the community and which through their work they help others in need and are an example of Active Ageing to others.

Several intergenerational programs are organised, amongst which programs which engage students with artists in programs with older adults. The Active Ageing Unit within the Active Ageing and Community Care Directorate is in liaison with EkoSkola organisers to encourage students to work towards environment sustainable programs with older adults. Several youth organisations and schools are encouraged to carry out voluntary work with older adults through structured programs. The Active

Ageing Unit is currently working with a post-secondary school, a voluntary organisation and the National Library to involve students in reading for elderly in residential homes for the elderly.

The Fora Team members of the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society have led an innovative intergenerational activity, hosted by The Drama Unit. The activity focused on the participation of both generations through drama, by creating a theatrical performance that features both children and older persons.

Commitment 4: To adjust social protection systems in response to demographic changes and their social and economic consequences

Malta has always been a front-runner in implementing public policies that seek to safeguard social protection systems in response to demographic changes and economic consequences. However present and future policy measures on income security cannot overlook two key issues. First, that recent statistics document that in 2011 some 18% of persons aged 65-plus were at risk of poverty, and exposed to risks of material deprivation. And secondly, that future pension policy will operate in the context of increased life expectancy, implying that persons will spend longer periods of time spent in retirement than presently. One therefore welcomes the recent establishment of a Pensions Strategy Group, auguring that this working group provides recommendations for systems that provide adequate incomes in old age preserving the financial autonomy of older people and enabling them to live in dignity.

The Ministry for Family and Social Solidarity is currently working on three policy directions relating to the safeguarding of social protection systems in response to demographic changes and economic consequences – namely, (i) ensuring a safe, adequate and sustainable income for all older persons, since this is indispensable for guarding against poverty and material deprivation; (ii) educating the community on the benefits of building one's personal financial resources through savings, investment and other options to support a favourable standard of living following retirement; and (iii), maintaining the equitable value of retirement pensions, with adjustments being made in line with movements in cost of living. It is promising to note that recent figures published by Eurostat confirmed that the proportion of people who are severely materially deprived in Malta decreased in 2015. According to Eurostat (2016b) figures, the share of severely materially deprived people in Malta fell by 2.1 percentage points in 2015, from 10.2 percent in 2014 to 8.1 percent. This means that, the number of persons whose living conditions are constrained by a lack of resources such as not being able to afford to pay their bills, keep their home adequately warm, or take a one week holiday away from home, decreased by 9,000 in 2015. These recent results also come in the aftermath of a number of the budgetary measures implemented by the Government which were aimed at both increasing and distributing wealth, and thus reduce poverty. These included the reduction in utility tariffs, the in-work benefit scheme for low income earning households, the tapering of benefits, child supplement, and free childcare centres.

Commitment 8: To mainstream a gender approach in an ageing society

In recent years, the Government of Malta was very earnest in mainstreaming a gender approach in the country's ageing society. Indeed, Malta has one health statistic to be proud of as it has one of the highest number of life expectancies and healthy life years at 65 for women: 21.1 and 11.9 years respectively (2010 figures) (Eurostat, 2012). In other words, in 2010, a Maltese woman surpassing the 65-year

barrier could expect to live until 86.1 years and should be 'illness-free' till the age of 76 years and ten months.

Commitment 9: To support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational solidarity among their members.

In Malta families are still rather close and many family members take care of their older family members. The government recognises the importance of this role and offers community services to support them as well as a Carers Pension to those individuals who care for persons with medium level of dependency in their own home. As stated in the budget speech for 2017, the rate of this pension has increased by €14 per week, however it is means tested. In the budget for 2017 the Maltese Government has reformed the Increased Carers Pension. The criteria for benefitting from this pension have been expanded to include married individuals as well as single or widowed, who are taking care of a sick relative on a full time basis. The cared for person must be a wheelchair user or is bed bound. This pension is no longer means tested. Claimants and patients are to give proof that they are residing in the same residence (PSDAA, 2016; Department for Social Security, 2013).

The Carer at home pilot project was launched on the 4th January, 2016. Through this scheme, an elderly person might employ a full time or part time qualified carer; with the government reimbursing up to half of the national minimum wage. While benefitting from this scheme, if there was an application for long term care this is placed on hold. This project has been extended and in the Budget for 2017 the financial support for each applicant has been increased from €4,500 to €5,200 per year. The major challenge for this scheme is availability of care workers and therefore the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing is organising courses which lead to a certification as care assistants.

In Malta there are several opportunities for respite service in long term care facilities for a defined period of time. The number of beds has been increased to facilitate access of this service to more people. In the budget for 2017 the Government has allocated funds to introduce the service of respite at home. This service will enable rest for informal carers of older persons in the older person's own home. This service is aimed to start in 2017 and will be completely financed by the government.

Regional Cooperation

Goal 10: To promote the implementation and follow-up of the regional implementation strategy through regional co-operation.

Ageing is a multi-dimensional context and therefore networking between different Ministries is fundamental for the implementation of the regional implementation strategy. This is carried out locally both at Ministerial level as well as through cooperation with different entities and organisations so that active ageing is a lifelong process, and to support inclusion of older adults within all aspects of society. Local councils are encouraged to set up sub-committees for older adults. Through these sub-committees older adults themselves are enabled to have an active role in their locality as well as contribute with their ideas and experience for the improvement of the locality.

Malta also actively contributes to cooperation among UNECE member states in the field of ageing by

participating in international meetings, including participation on the UNECE working group on ageing. Malta also actively contributes by exchanging information with member states and with the UNECE, such as by providing practical examples of implemented projects for policy briefs.

Conclusion

This report was compiled using several sources of information both available online as well as through consultation with different Ministries. Consultation with older adults themselves was considered important and therefore consultation was carried out with several associations for older adults to gather their views and perceptions and their expectations for the future. Consultation was also carried out with the National Council of Women and with the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality.

The Maltese Government has worked considerably in implementing the recommendations of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy. Older adults have been given a much higher priority represented also through a Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing which was set up within the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity to better address issues related to ageing. Malta has made older adults active participants in the decision processes related to their health and well-being. Older adults are being encouraged to voluntarily engage in the labour market beyond statutory retirement age, this is achieved through education about the benefits of remaining in employment, increasing awareness about the potential of ageing workers, as well as through employment-friendly tax systems. Several services have been promoted to enable older adults to remain actively engaged in society, ensuring income security and targeting poverty, while providing a variety of opportunities to be active within society through volunteering, grand-parenthood, older adult learning, digital competence, civic engagement and intergenerational solidarity. In Malta health status is given high priority from birth to end-of life care. Health promotion and disease prevention is a lifelong process. Health services are provided free of charge and these are supplemented by community services. In the last few years dementia has also been given priority considering the increased prevalence of this condition and several services have been introduced while others have been strengthened to support persons with dementia and their relatives.

In the coming years Malta is expected to continue experiencing population ageing. This brings about further challenges in ensuring a good quality of life well through old age as well as providing care for the dependent older adults. Future generations of Maltese older adults will hold different expectations for their old age and therefore assessment of their needs and wishes needs to be an ongoing process.

In the coming years Malta needs to work more towards further promotion of active participation and engagement in the labour market at all ages. This includes continuous vocational education and training, ensuring healthy working conditions, proper age management, and employing friendly tax benefits systems to encourage ageing workers to remain or/and re-enter employment. This should be better supported with opportunities to reconcile work and caring responsibilities, including caring for dependent older adults. Some qualified employees are already being offered flexible working arrangements to remain in employment beyond retirement age and offer their services and / or consultation. However further incentives are necessary to further promote this initiative both in the public and private sector.

The Maltese Government needs to continue working on ensuring adequate income security throughout life to ensure that older adults don't fall in the risk of poverty. Particular attention must be given to

older females. Continuous attention to promoting social inclusion at all ages is a must, as well as promotion of life-long learning opportunities, including promotion of digital competence. Issues of ageism and age discrimination need to be further addressed and legal definition expanded to address both direct and indirect forms of discrimination.

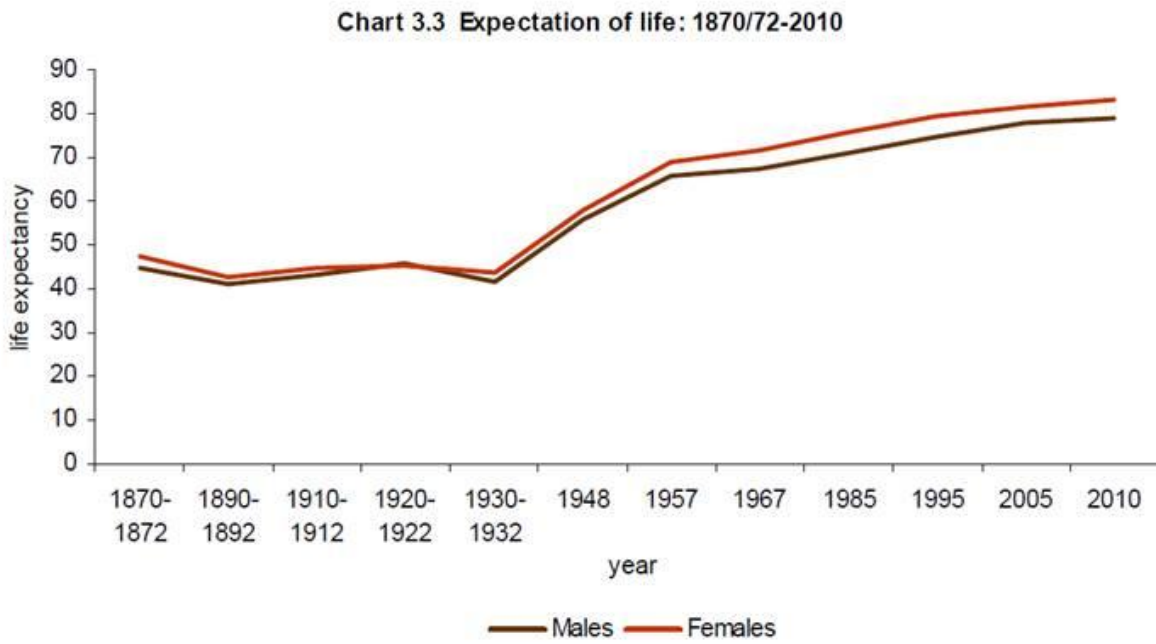
The Maltese Government has already expanded and strengthened community services to better support older adults and their informal carers, however these need to be further strengthened to facilitate independent living in the community and to better enable ageing in place. Further promotion of mental-health and well being is important, including addressing stigma and misinformation, strengthening current geriatric mental health services and expanding them to meet the needs of older persons in the community, and integrating mental health services within our acute public hospital system.

Moreover Malta needs to continue raising recognition about elder abuse while also developing and implementing a strategy that empowers older adults to report abuse, and provides the necessary procedures and resources for a comprehensive response. End-of-life care needs to be better addressed through legislation to introduce advanced directives for health care, development and implementation of policies and procedures in health-care facilities concerning end-of-life care, and training of persons in the social and health care sectors.

The Maltese Government is committed to continue working towards the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy so as to ensure not only longer life expectancy but also longer healthy years and better quality of life even throughout old age.

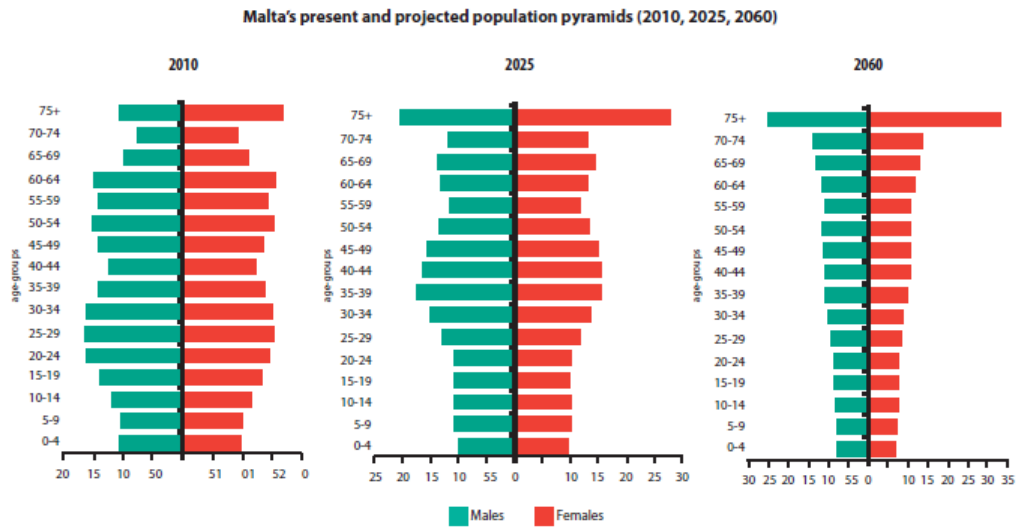
Annex

Figure 1: Graph of average life expectancy along the years



Source: National Statistics Office (2010).

Figure 2: Malta's Present and Projected Population pyramids



Source: National Statistics Office (2011)

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Active Ageing Indicators – Malta

| INDICATOR | SUGGESTED VARIABLE | POSSIBLE SOURCE | Year 1 (2005 or close) | | | Year 2 (2010 or close) | | | Year 3 (2015 or close) | | | DATA SOURCE | VARIABLE AND METADATA |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|--------|------------------------|------|--------|------------------------|------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL | MALE | FEMALE | | |
| 1. Labour market (older people's contribution through paid activities) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1. Employment rate for the age group 55–59 | Same as indicator | Labour Force Survey | 43.2 | 68.2 | 18.8 | 49.7 | 76.3 | 23.2 | 56.0 | 82.9 | 29.2 | Eurostat | |
| 1.2. Employment rate for the age group 60–64 | Same as indicator | Labour Force Survey | 14.7 | 26.6 | – | 15.0 | 24.6 | 5.7 | 23.6 | 33.1 | 14.1 | Eurostat | |
| 1.3. Employment rate for the age group 65–69 | Same as indicator | Labour Force Survey | 4.3 | 7.8 | – | 6.2 | 10.4 | – | 8.6 | 14.2 | 3.3 | Eurostat | |
| 1.4. Employment rate for the age group 70–74 | Same as indicator | Labour Force Survey | – | – | – | 3.7 | 7.1 | – | 4.5 | 7.2 | – | Eurostat | |
| 2. Participation in society (older people's contribution through unpaid activities) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1. Voluntary work by older adults (aged 55+) | Percentage of older population (aged 55+) providing unpaid voluntary work through the organizations (at least once a week) | Relevant survey | – | – | – | 7.2 | 6.0 | 8.2 | 9.6 | 11.1 | 8.6 | EQLS | For the year 2010, data for 2007 are used; for 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 2.2. Care to children, grandchildren by older population (aged 55+) | Percentage of older population (aged 55+) who provide care to their children and grandchildren (at least once a week) | Relevant survey | – | – | – | 24.1 | 26.3 | 22.4 | 31.7 | 31.4 | 31.9 | EQLS | For the year 2010, data for 2007 are used; for 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 2.3. Care to older adults by older population (aged 55+) | Percentage of older population (aged 55+) providing personal care to elderly or disabled relatives (at least once a week) | Relevant survey | – | – | – | 13.2 | 8.0 | 17.6 | 15.0 | 12.5 | 17.0 | EQLS | For the year 2010, data for 2007 are used; for 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 2.4. Political participation of older population (aged 55+) | Percentage of older population (aged 55+) taking part in the activities or meetings of a trade union, political party or political action group, or signing petitions, including email and online petitions | Relevant survey | – | – | – | 12.9 | 17.7 | 8.8 | 12.1 | 17.4 | 7.7 | EQLS | For the year 2010, data for 2007 are used; for 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 3. Independent, healthy and secure living | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.1. Physical exercise for older adults (aged 55+) | Percentage of people aged 55 years and older undertaking physical exercise or sport almost every day | Relevant survey | – | – | – | – | – | – | 17.0 | 19.3 | 15.0 | EQLS | For the year 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 3.2. Access to health and dental care (for those aged 55+) | Percentage of people aged 55 years and older who report no unmet need for medical and dental examination or treatment during the last 12 months preceding the survey | Relevant survey | 96.9 | 97.3 | 96.5 | 91.9 | 91.8 | 91.9 | 95.5 | 95.3 | 95.6 | SILC | For the year 2005, data for 2008 are used; for the year 2015, data for 2012 are used |
| 3.3. Independent living arrangements (for those aged 75+) | Percentage of people aged 75 years and older who live in a single household alone or in a couple household | Relevant survey | 83.5 | 79.9 | 85.9 | 77.5 | 75.6 | 78.7 | 78.0 | 74.4 | 80.5 | SILC | For the year 2005, data for 2008 are used; for the year 2015, data for 2012 are used |
| 3.4. Relative median income (for those aged 65+) | Ratio of the median equivalised disposable income of people aged 65 and above to the median equivalised disposable income of those aged below 65 | Income and living conditions statistics / relevant survey | 75.4 | 79.1 | 72.6 | 81.2 | 82.2 | 80.9 | 77.5 | 80.9 | 75.6 | Eurostat, SILC | For the year 2015, data for 2014 are used |
| 3.5. No poverty risk (for those aged 65+) | 100 – Percentage of people aged 65 years and older who are at risk of poverty (using the 50 per cent of median income threshold) | Income and living conditions statistics / relevant survey | 88.5 | 87.4 | 89.3 | 90.5 | 89.4 | 91.4 | 94.0 | 93.8 | 94.2 | Eurostat, SILC | For the year 2015, data for 2014 are used |
| 3.6. No severe material deprivation (for those aged 65+) | 100 – Percentage of people aged 65 years and older who are severely materially deprived (having an enforced inability to afford at least 4 out of the 9 selected items*) | Income and living conditions statistics / relevant survey | 93.7 | 94.8 | 92.8 | 95.0 | 95.4 | 94.7 | 95.3 | 95.3 | 95.3 | Eurostat, SILC | |
| 3.7. Physical safety (for those aged 55+) | Percentage of people aged 55 years and older who are feeling very safe or safe to walk after dark in their local area | Relevant survey | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | ESS | |
| 3.8. Lifelong learning (for those aged 55–74) | Percentage of people aged 55 to 74 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey | Labour Force Survey | 1.9 | 2.4 | 1.5 | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.7 | Eurostat | |
| 4. Capacity and enabling environment for active ageing | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4.1. Life expectancy at age 55 | Same as indicator | Demographic statistics: Life Expectancy estimates | 26.5 | 24.6 | 28.2 | 28.6 | 26.9 | 30.1 | 29.0 | 27.2 | 30.6 | Eurostat | For the year 2015, data from 2014 are used |
| 4.2. Healthy life expectancy at age 55 | Same as indicator | Healthy life expectancy estimates | 18.2 | 17.8 | 18.6 | 19.5 | 19.4 | 19.5 | 21.3 | 20.8 | 21.8 | Eurostat, life tables and a question on Self-perceived long-standing limitations in usual activities due to health problem by sex, age and labour status [hlth_silc_06] | For the year 2015, data from 2014 are used |
| 4.3. Mental well-being (for those aged 55+) | An index that measures self-reported feelings of positive happy moods and spirits | Based on WHO ICD-10 measurement | – | – | – | 44.8 | 49.5 | 40.3 | 62.3 | 63.4 | 61.5 | EQLS | For the year 2010, data for 2007 are used; for 2015, data for 2011/12 are used |
| 4.4. Use of ICT by older adults (aged 55–74) | Share of people aged 55 to 74 using the Internet at least once a week | ICT Survey or any other relevant survey | 11.0 | 16.0 | 7.0 | 23.0 | 29.0 | 18.0 | 48.0 | 53.0 | 43.0 | Eurostat | |
| 4.5. Social connectedness of older people (aged 55+) | Share of people aged 55 or more that meet socially with friends, relatives or colleagues at least once a week | Relevant survey | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | ESS | |
| 4.6. Educational attainment of older people (aged 55+) | Percentage of older persons aged 55 to 74 with upper secondary or tertiary educational attainment | Labour Force Survey / general statistics on educational attainment by age groups | 11.6 | 15.7 | 7.9 | 16.5 | 21.1 | 12.2 | 22.3 | 25.4 | 19.2 | Eurostat | |
| 5. Other indicators (if applicable) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

* 1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills; 2) to keep their home adequately warm; 3) to face unexpected expenses; 4) to eat meat or proteins regularly; 5) to go on holiday; 6) a television set; 7) a washing machine; 8) a car; 9) a telephone