

D16 – Evaluation Report Malta: Governance for MSP

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Introduction

The overall objective of MSP-MED is to favour the Maritime Spatial Planning process in the Mediterranean Sea, by supporting the establishment of coherent and coordinated plans across the Mediterranean marine regions and between Member States, in line with the MSP Directive objectives. One specific objective is to support the work of the MSP Competent Authority in the establishment and adoption of maritime spatial plans.

The Planning Authority (PA) is the Competent Authority for the MSP Directive in Malta and as partner to the MSP-MED project is focused on specific aspects concerning governance in support of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Environment and development (SPED), as Malta's first MSP plan. As part of Work Package 2 - Setting-up of maritime spatial plans, the PA is seeking to identify basic procedures that can support the plan making/review process of MSP plans, in particular to ensure that the revised SPED is informed with the most relevant information, to deliver an MSP plan that is based on ecosystem management and can deliver blue growth for all of Malta's marine waters.

Through Task 2.5 the PA is expected to deliver:

- an Evaluation Report (D16) that identifies linkages between different national plans (and their respective SEA processes where relevant) addressing Malta's marine waters; issues and gaps within the current SPED policy framework and existing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. The study is expected to be based on an assessment of existing sectoral plans including the marine strategy under the MSFD, focusing mainly on procedures that ensure synergies in the formulation of objectives and detailed policies and
- a document with recommendations (D17) to formalise procedures at a national level in support of MSP plan making and review.

A separate task was added during the MSPMED project which focused on the user survey to gauge public awareness on MSP. A separate report (D49) has been submitted by the Planning Authority.

Scope of the Report

The scope of this Task as intended in the design of the MSPMED project was intended to support MSP governance and was to identify:

- (a) linkages between different national plans addressing Malta's marine waters;
- (b) issues and gaps within the current SPED policy framework in relation to the national plans, particularly those issues after 2015 and
- (c) existing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement for these plans.

Since the start of the MSPMED project, a government decision was taken to commence the review of the current plan. Given that the SPED integrates both land and sea, the focus of the MSPMED tasks were aligned with the national process of the SPED review to maximise the potential benefits from participation within the MSPMED project.

This current document constitutes the first deliverable for Task 2.5. This Evaluation Report has been prepared by the Planning Authority. The MSP Technical Committee was invited to review and a discussion held in a purposely designed MSPTC meeting on 27th May 2022.

Governance for MSP plan making

The UNESCO-IOC MSPglobal Policy Brief on Ocean Governance and Marine Spatial Planning, published in 2021 discusses the inter-relationship between ocean governance and MSP. It highlights the complexities associated with MSP as an instrument to manage socio-ecological processes that work at multiple temporal and spatial scales where the issues to be addressed do not match the spatial and temporal patterns, perspectives and processes of institutional frameworks.

Factors that can be considered to strengthen ocean governance and MSP include:

- Integration and collaboration across sectors and scales to address problems across socio-ecological systems and capitalise on coexistence and synergies.
- Institutional development to strengthen linkages and establish a long-lasting framework for ocean management.
- Establishing mandates and responsibilities to provide credibility for the planning process and the institutions and individuals with authority for planning

According to the same document, MSP has been increasingly recognised as an important framework for integrated ocean governance, where it is generally used as an approach to deal with complex, emerging and strategic issues in the marine realm, and can function as an overarching coordination mechanism for marine and coastal policies established in a country.

In essence, therefore the stronger the framework to implement MSP at national level the stronger the contribution to ocean governance. Consequently, this requires MSP Competent Authorities to have a sound understanding of national processes that identify the government entities involved in policy making concerning marine waters and the stakeholder engagement processes adopted in support of national efforts at ocean governance.

Relevant Policies for the implementation of the MSP Directive

Directive 2014/85/EU establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning (Maritime Spatial Planning Directive) provides a legal basis for the uptake and implementation of MSP at national level. The Directive defines maritime spatial planning as a process by which the relevant Member States' authorities analyse and organise human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives (Art 3 (2)). The scope of MSP is to promote the 'sustainable growth of maritime economies, the sustainable development of marine areas and the sustainable use of marine resources.'

The MSP Directive states very clearly that MSP plans need to contribute to defined objectives as per Article 5 which include:

- Consideration of economic, social and environmental aspects to support sustainable development and growth in the maritime sector, applying an ecosystems-based approach, and promote the co-existence of relevant activities and uses;
- Contribution to the sustainable development of energy sectors at sea, of maritime transport, and of fisheries and aquaculture sectors, and to the preservation, protection and improvement of the environment, including resilience to climate change impacts.
- Consideration of the promotion of sustainable tourism and sustainable extraction of raw materials.

According to the Directive (Art 8) MSP Plans are to identify the spatial and temporal distribution of relevant existing and future activities and uses in their marine waters. In doing so, Member States are to take into consideration relevant interactions of activities and uses which may include:

- Aquaculture areas
- Fishing area
- Installations and infrastructures for the exploration, exploitation, and extraction of oil, of gas and other energy resources, of minerals and aggregates, and for the production of energy from renewable sources
- Maritime transport routes and traffic flows
- Military training areas
- Nature and species conservation sites and protected areas
- Raw material extraction areas
- Scientific research
- Submarine cable and pipeline routes,
- Tourism
- Underwater cultural heritage

Through MSP Member States are expected to provide more certainty for investment in Blue Growth whilst the formulation of maritime spatial plans can reduce the administrative burden and

costs in support of action to implement other relevant Union legislation. The MSP Directive refers specifically to:

- Directive 2009/28/EC (on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources) which requires the share of energy from renewable sources in gross final consumption of energy in 2020 to be at least 20% and which identifies coordination of authorisation, certification and planning procedures, including spatial planning, as an important contribution to the achievement of the Union's targets for energy from renewable sources;
- Directive 2008/56/EC (Marine Strategy Framework Directive) and point 6 of Part A of the Annex to Decision 2010/477/EU, which require Member States to take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status in the marine environment by 2020 and which identify maritime spatial planning as a tool to support the ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities in order to achieve good environmental status;
- Decision No 884/2004/EC, which requires that the trans-European transport network be established by 2020 by means of the integration of Europe's land, sea and air transport infrastructure networks.

In addition, MSP Plans that are likely to have significant effects on the environment would be subject to Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The ongoing work to implement and improve action in these other regulations and Directive have and will continue to lead to relevant policy changes. The adaptive approach to MSP needs to keep abreast with them. In effect, the recent report by the European Commission outlining the progress made in the implementation of the MSP Directive, sees the second round of plan making as a step change in the role of MSP for the sustainable development of seas as Member States will need to continue to reflect the ambitions of the European Green Deal in their maritime spatial plans, and to align their plans with these ambitions. The report also refers to other European ambitions related to climate change mitigation and/or adaptation, biodiversity, pollution, food, mobility, energy transition, alongside established activities and interests, such as aquaculture, fisheries, shipping and defence which will be expected to be addressed in revised MSP plans.

The breadth of government policies that are to inform the preparation and review of MSP Plans is consequently significant. This implies that the scale of detail of any MSP Plan is directly influenced by the level of detail articulated in separate national policy documents and the degree of coherence between them.

Governance for MSP in Malta

The 1st MSP Plan

The process for the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development of 2015 was outlined in the planning legislation which called for the plan to take into account the national economic, social and environmental policies at the time. Having one plan addressing both land and sea territory meant that there was no separate approach for intra-government collaboration, engagement of stakeholders and public consultation for matters relating to sea use.

The same approach is being adopted in the current review process. The main difference this time round is that a specific consultation forum, the MSP Technical Committee has been established to support the Planning Authority since 2016 for the implementation of the MSP Directive. The PA invested considerable effort in the past years to increase awareness and knowledge on MSP with the scope of developing national capacity between the different institutions involved. Direct involvement of the MSPTC within the actions of the MSPMED project since March 2020 has provided greater opportunity for capacity building through the project workshops within Work Package 2. The MSP Technical Committee is expected to provide focused contribution at key stages in the SPED review process.

The MSP Technical Committee

The Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive was transposed into Maltese legislation in October 2016, through the MSP regulations (S.L.552.27) which assigns the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development (SPED), or any subsequent plan, as Malta's Maritime Spatial Plan and delegates the Competent Authority for MSP within the Planning Authority.

Through the transposition process, a governance framework was put in place to enable coordination and cooperation amongst different regulators and government entities. Through the provisions of the Development Planning Act of 2016 (Cap. 552), the Executive Council of the Planning Authority which includes representatives from the Environmental Resources Authority, can call in representatives from the Continental Shelf Department, the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage, Transport Malta, the Department for Fisheries and Aquaculture, and any other entity for meetings concerning the implementation of MSP. Opportunity exists through the same legal provisions to invite any other government entity to meetings.

In support of this function Terms of Reference were prepared for the establishment of an MSP Technical Committee (MSPTC) which was appointed to provide a forum for co-operation on matters related to policy development, plan making, licensing and permitting procedures, data management, stakeholder engagement and international cooperation. Chaired by the Planning Authority this Technical Committee has representatives from the Environment and Resources Authority, the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage, the Continental Shelf Department, Transport

Malta and the Department for Fisheries and Aquaculture. This Technical Committee is to meet at least four times a year.

In 2019 the MSPTC carried out a series of four workshops in support of raising awareness and capacity building for MSP. These workshops provided insight on technical as well as governance related issues influencing the performance of MSP. The main findings which influenced the design of the task for work package 2 in the MSPMED were the following:

- The effectiveness of the MSP TC as the technical arm to support the PA's role as Competent Authority at the Executive Council is dependent on the level of understanding on MSP as a discipline and the requirements of the MSPD both at the entity level and at the individual officer level. Increased awareness on the scope of MSP, the MSPD and how MSP is implemented is required at both the MSPTC level and the operational level within the Planning Authority and with stakeholders.
- Whilst the regulatory framework to address maritime use in Malta's marine waters is largely in place, there is the need for greater clarity on the interlinkages between the existing regulations, especially beyond the 12nm, in terms of how these relate to the delivery of maritime spatial planning as required by the Directive.
- Continuous effort is needed to ensure implementation of supporting processes, particularly relating to data management and permitting/licencing, compliance and enforcement. Procedures that support inter-agency co-ordination can be improved.
- Although Malta is a small island state with a maritime territory significantly larger than the terrestrial one, the administrative effort for maritime related matters is disproportionately low across the different entities. This places additional burden on the entities and available human resources as they seek to deliver and implement all of the required work.

In the following years, MSP work within the PA was aligned with the implementation of the MSPMED project tasks focusing on governance for plan making and data management which coincided with the start of the review of the SPED, where the PA MSPMED team was also tasked with supporting the technical team working on the plan review.

The review of 1st MSP Plan: SPED Review

The initial phase of the Plan review, spanning between 2020 and 2022, is expected to deliver a set of individual studies (Figure 1) that will contribute to the formulation of strategic options for Government's consideration; the preferred option selected by Government will guide the preparation of the New Spatial Strategy (NSS) that will replace the SPED.

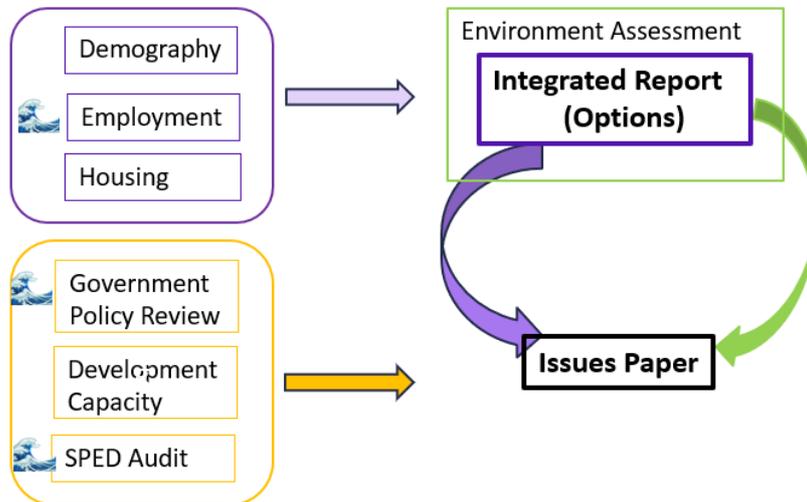


Figure 1: SPED Review Phase 1

The first set of studies consist of a review of past trends and possible scenarios for the main drivers of spatial demand: demography, employment, and housing. The maritime component in relation to employment is expected to be addressed, which will be informed also by the findings of the Economic and Social Assessment from the implementation Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The latter is the most recent comprehensive evaluation of the role of the marine environment on the national economy. These three studies are expected to generate a set of realistic future options where three likely development options will be presented in one Integrated Report. These three options will be subjected to an initial environment assessment to identify from an early stage the likely environmental impacts expected for each option, enabling an informed decision for Government when choosing the preferred growth option.

Three other studies are also being carried out in parallel. The Development Capacity study is aimed to determine the remaining available space for development on land, whilst the SPED Audit seeks to assess the degree of success or otherwise in the implementation of the SPED policy framework through a set of purposely designed indicators. The third study comprises a review of approved Government policy documents and advanced policy drafts that have been published for public consultation has been undertaken by the SPED review team, to determine their spatial implications, degree of alignment with the existing SPED and any issues that the new NSS needs to address. This study covered over 90 policy documents and is the main source of information for the preparation of the first deliverable by the Planning Authority in the MSPMED Task 2.5.

A set of issues emerging from all studies is to be compiled in an Issues Paper, which is expected to inform the way forward for the drafting of the NSS.

Government Policies relevant for MSP in Malta

For the purpose of this MSPMED task, a filtering exercise was carried out to extract the policy documents reviewed for the Government Policy Review study, that are directly related or are expected to have policy direction that will influence the national planning process for the allocation of maritime space for specific uses and activities. From over 90 documents, the list of national policies relevant for this report was brought down to twenty-one (21) and includes both approved and draft policy documents issued for public consultation (refer to Table 1). Most of the documents have been published between 2019 and 2021 (24 documents), whilst the earliest dates from 2014.

For the purpose of this report the selected documents were categorised in a hierarchy, where:

- Tier 1 policy documents are considered overarching and reflect government direction for socio-economic and/or sustainable development of the Maltese Islands;
- Tier 2 policy documents are mainly thematic however are likely to influence a broad variety of uses; and
- Tier 3 policy documents are also of a thematic nature but are more focused on specific sectors.

The Tier 1 documents can be considered as framework policy documents, setting the trajectory for the future of the Maltese Islands. Given the physical extent of the Maltese marine territory compared to the small land area, marine uses were expected to feature significantly in these four (4) policy documents.

The eight (8) policy documents considered as Tier 2 for the purpose of this report cover various themes which either address specific geographic areas such as the Integrated Maritime Policy and the Regional Development Strategy for Gozo 2021-2030, and address a wide variety of uses, or otherwise the policy documents consider a theme that affects multiple sectors and is applicable to all the territory, both land and sea. These include Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy – Consultation Draft, The National Employment Policy 2021-2030 and the National Culture Policy. These policy documents are expected to influence future demand for and use of maritime space.

The third category, Tier 3, includes a list of nine (9) policy documents addressing specific themes, the majority of which relate to either the environmental status or marine waters or the future plans for specific sectors that depend on the sea, such as tourism, aquaculture and fisheries and transport.

LEVEL	POLICY DOCUMENT	Year	Ministry	MSPTC member Y/N	Expected Relevance to MSP
TIER 1	Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan	2021	OPM	N	Considering the economic role shipping, fisheries and aquaculture and tourism in Malta, including intra-island transport, these sectors were expected to be addressed in the plan.
	National Post Pandemic Strategy	2021	MFER	N	Considering the economic role shipping, fisheries and aquaculture and tourism in Malta, including intra-island transport, these sectors were expected to be addressed in the plan.
	Malta National Reform Program	2020	MFE	N	This report is aimed to address economic and employment policy to promote economic governance across the EU in response to the financial and economic crisis of 2008. To determine whether measures concerning msp are identified in the report which reflects national economic and employment policy.
	Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050	2018	MESD	N	Setting the future trajectory for sustainable development for the Maltese Islands, this is a document which is best suited to address the role of marine waters for future sustainable development.
TIER 2	Integrated Maritime Policy: Making Malta a Centre of Maritime Excellence	2015	MTIP	Y	This is the main document specifically intended to direct the framework for maritime use.
	Malta's 2030 National Energy and Climate Plan	2019	MESD	N	This plan provides the policy direction for energy development and management including the role of renewable energy technology, translating the EU Energy and Climate policy and setting the framework for action related to implementation of the European Green Deal. National energy infrastructure is already located in coastal and transboundary underwater routes. The plan is expected to provide direction concerning the deployment of offshore renewable technologies and alternative fuels.
	Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy – Consultation Draft	2021	MECP	N	This Strategy translates the national action for Climate Action within the Maltese Islands in line with EU and international commitments, addressing both climate mitigation and adaptation. This strategy is expected to lay the foundation for the implementation of relevant actions from the EU Green Deal concerning the marine environment.
	The National Employment Policy 2021- 2030	2021	MFE	N	This policy document is expected to provide insight on the role of coastal and marine employment sectors within national policy, enabling the identification of priority sectors that could require additional marine space.
	Malta's Economic Vision. 2021-2031 - A Future-Proof Malta	2021	MEI	N	This Vision is expected to provide insight on the trajectory of economic sectors expected to continue to operate, potentially diversify as well as any new sectors that need to be accommodated in the coastal zone and marine area.
	Regional Development Strategy for Gozo	2021	MGOZ	N	A targeted strategy focused on the island of Gozo is expected to provide direction on the future of socio-economic development and its

	2021-2030: Consultation Document				reliance on the coastal zone and marine area (e.g. intra island transport links; tourism; infrastructure).
	A Wellbeing Vision for Malta's Environment: National Strategy for the Environment – Consultation document	2020	MECP	Y	This vision document is expected to provide the direction for environment protection concerning the marine environment.
	National Culture Policy	2021	MHAL	Y	This national policy is expected to provide direction concerning the protection, management of and future role for coastal and underwater cultural heritage.
TIER 3	European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 - Consultation Draft	2021	OPM MAFA	N	This document is expected to provide clarity on the priority areas of action concerning fisheries and aquaculture.
	Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands: Towards Sustainability 2014-2024	2014	MAFA	Y	This policy document sets direction for the continued development of the aquaculture industry
	National Transport Strategy, 2050 National Transport Master Plan 2025	2016 2016	MTIP	Y	These two documents are expected to provide the overarching strategy and actions, possibly identifying specific locations) concerning the role of maritime transport (international and intranational) for cargo and passengers.
	Malta's Tourism Strategy 2021-2030	2021	MTCP	N	With tourism having an important role in the national economy, this strategy is expected to outline the direction for this sector within the coastal and marine space, potentially providing future direction for existing established tourism sites.
	The 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District – 2015-2021	2016	MECP MESD	Y	This Plan should provide information on the status of coastal water bodies, the pressures affecting water quality and the list of measures that the government adopted in pursuit of achieving and maintaining good ecological and environment status of coastal water bodies and good chemical status of the marine space up to 12nm.
	Significant Water Management Issues in the Malta River Basin District (2020)	2020	MECP MESD	Y	This document is expected to identify the key issues that need to be addressed by Malta in pursuit of its implementation of the Water Framework Directive, concerning coastal and marine waters.
	Update of Articles 8, 9 and 10 of the Marine Strategy Framework	2020 2017	MECP	Y	These documents are expected to provide information on the status of marine waters, the pressures affecting such status and the list of measures that the government adopted in pursuit

	Directive (2008/56/EC) in Malta's Marine Waters. Second Assessment Report The MSFD – Programme of Measures				of achieving good environmental status of marine waters.
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Table 1: Categories of national policy documents relevant to MSP

The next section presents a very brief overview of each policy document and the direction provided related to marine waters and the economic sectors therein. This task also entails a reflection on the extent to which the expected role of each document as identified in Table 1 has been met.

TIER 1 Plans

Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan

The EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) established by virtue of Regulation EU 2021/41, is a temporary instrument forming part of a wide-ranging response to mitigate the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic. It supports the transformation of European economies and societies to become more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.

Malta's plan outlines the strategic approach underpinning the investments to be supported through grants under the Facility for a total budget of circa €345 million. The plan takes account of the need to address the challenges identified in the relevant Country Specific Recommendations (linked to the European Semester¹); a minimum climate contribution of 37% of expenditure and 20% on digital investments; and the importance of and alignment with national economic and investment plans as well as funding under other EU Cohesion Policy programmes 2021-27.

Malta's plan identifies the following 6 main themes for reforms and investments that will be supported through grants under the plan:

- Addressing climate neutrality through enhanced energy efficiency, clean energy and a circular economy.
- Addressing Carbon-Neutrality by decarbonising transport.
- Fostering a digital, smart and resilient economy.

¹ The European Semester is the framework for integrated surveillance and co-ordination of economic and employment policies across the European Union.

- Strengthening the resilience of the health system.
- Enhancing quality education and fostering socio-economic sustainability.
- Strengthening the institutional framework.

The proposed reforms or investments considered to be somewhat related to MSP are linked with two of the above listed themes. For the theme on carbon neutrality by decarbonising transport, Malta proposed the construction of a ferry landing sites at St. Paul's Bay as a means to encourage modal shift from road to maritime transport. The proposed measure linked with the theme on fostering a digital, smart and resilient economy concerns investments in the digitalisation of the Merchant Shipping Directorate in Transport Malta to provide a more efficient regulatory service to operators. Whilst the measure is an operational one, it underlines the continued importance of the maritime transport sector for the Maltese islands.

These two measures within this strategic policy document underline the importance of maritime transport to the Maltese Islands, both in terms of the sector's role to the national economy through international trade, but also through its rediscovered role in the management of intra-island transport particularly to contribute towards carbon neutrality. This implies that the revised MSP plan will need to safeguard the specific location and corresponding route of the ferry terminal from incompatible or conflicting activities as well as existing maritime transport related functions in the main Ports.

National Post Pandemic Strategy

This is a national initiative which aims to reflect on both challenges as well as opportunities emanating or exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategy aims to help shape a new normal, sustain the momentum achieved by Malta before the pandemic, and focus on building back better. The resulting strategy outlines 12 themes, each linked to UN sustainable development goals, and three critical and interconnected areas of focus: society, economy and environment.

Although the thematic areas are horizontal and aim to provide a holistic national focus, the NPPS takes into account the regional context of the second island of Gozo. The themes can be summarised as follows:

- Maintaining a focus on health prioritising mental, physical and emotional wellness (13 proposed measures)
- Addressing societal challenges through a bottom-up evidence-based approach (9 measures)
- Enhance social cohesion and equity (8 measures)
- Adopting a more cohesive approach to planning and development in the urban environment (9 measures)
- Facilitate business investment including support openness to international business and new niches (9 measures)
- refocus and integrate education, labour and economic policy in support of socio-economic revival and transformation (10 measures)

- accelerate green economic transition and investment for Malta's plan towards carbon neutrality by 2050 (9 measures)
- channel government resources and mainstream policy to drive innovation (8 measures)
- strengthen and prioritise a compliance and enforcement culture (10 measures)
- support investment in digital infrastructure, skills and services (9 measures)
- foster the safeguarding of natural assets (9 measures)
- reinforce disaster recovery preparedness, critical capabilities and ecosystems to enhance resilience. Ensure the availability of critical physical and social infrastructure such as food, water, energy and health as well as digital, air and sea connectivity. (11 measures)

From a total of 114 measures, 14 measures refer, or can be related, to marine related issues or are likely to influence the policy review and implementation of the national maritime spatial plan, and these are:

- Champion 'Health in All Policies' as an approach to improving the health of all people by factoring health implications across key policy decisions.
- Prioritise forward planning to ensure planning regulation is fit for purpose in protecting Malta's cultural identity as well as the natural and built heritage. Measure calls for spatial planning to address the specific needs of Gozo, coastal areas, UNESCO sites, Natura 2000 sites, entertainment hubs, high-rise developments, public spaces and tourism zones;
- Ensure that the revision of the Strategic Plan for Environment and Development provides a nationwide, multi-stakeholder blueprint to guide future development;
- Integrate the mobility shift into planning in a more coherent manner and continue to maximise maritime transport options
- Safeguard the retention of current growth industries while cultivating the development of new niches, clusters and sectors and leverage international trade opportunities.
- Keep up the pace on decarbonisation by 2050 across all sectors, through investment in more renewable sources of energy, particularly offshore
- Expand investments in energy infrastructure to help reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution from our roads and ports. Provide incentives for people to use public transport and install electric vehicle charging infrastructure and ship-to-shore energy supply
- Support investment in digital infrastructure. Prioritise connectivity resilience through additional submarine cables linking the Maltese Islands to different parts of the world.
- Safeguard and harness Malta's heritage assets as a sustainable economic driver. Make eco-tourism and heritage key elements of Malta's tourism offering.
- Develop a clear strategy for the use and protection of core tourism infrastructure including beaches, cultural sites, parks.
- Regulate and enforce noise, soil, air and marine pollution parameters to improve wellbeing, quality of life, and individuals' mental and physical health
- Reinforce disaster recovery preparedness, critical capabilities and ecosystems to enhance resilience. Ensure the availability of critical physical and social infrastructure such as food, water, energy and health as well as digital air, digital and sea connectivity.

- Establish long term plans for Malta's connectivity in terms of sea, land, air, energy and digital needs to ensure critical resources and infrastructure are safeguarded.
- Establish targets and enablers to transition towards a circular economy in line with broader waste management strategy for Malta and the implementation of national and EU strategies

The main measures cover human health, natural and cultural heritage protection, reduction of environmental pollution from various sectors, tourism, waste management, digitalisation and connectivity with the outside world in terms of digitalisation, transport and energy. Some of the measures are providing clear direction, whereas others require further analysis to see how a revised MSP plan addresses them. One example to illustrate this point is related to mainstream human health in national policy. For MSP it implies safeguarding bathing water quality, dive sites and swimming zones primarily from activities that are likely to generate pollution or are likely to increase risk to human life, preventing incompatible uses in proximity to desalination plants, aquaculture production sites.

The initiatives set out in the Strategy are expected to be initiated or undertaken over a 3-year working period, depending on each case. A co-ordination and implementation framework is proposed, which if undertaken could enhance the governance framework at national level within which MSP itself can be implemented.

Malta National Reform Program

This document is prepared in response to the European Semester, with the 2020 report having a focus on the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on economic development. The National Reform Program identifies those activities related to tourism activity, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services sectors as being most severely hit by the partial lock down measures. The scope of the document is to present key policy responses to major socio-economic challenges, aligned with three Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs). One of the CSR that could be linked with MSP is CSR 3: *Focus investment related economic policy on research and innovation, natural resources management, resource and energy efficiency, sustainable transport, reducing traffic congestion and inclusive education and training.*

Actions linked to this CSR of particular relevance to MSP include:

- Government's commitment to work actively on the implementation of the Melita TransGas Pipeline (MTGP) which will connect Malta to the European Gas Network and the formulation of the Low Carbon Development Strategy
- Implementation of the National Transport Strategy 2050 and Transport Master Plan 2025 to incentivise alternatives modes of transport such as maritime transport and the deployment of infrastructure to support digitalisation and decarbonisation of road and maritime transport through incentives and infrastructure.

This report identifies the role of research and innovation to support the core functions of energy connectivity, the need to enhance intra island maritime transport in support of modal shift and decarbonisation of transport to bring about a shift towards a greener economy. The deployment of a transboundary gas pipeline and passenger ferry services along the national coast will influence the update of the strategic policy framework of the National Spatial Strategy.

Malta's Sustainable Development Vision for 2050

The Vision is centred on three strategic pillars, mirroring the traditional pillars of sustainable development:

- Enhancing economic growth: where government envisages the future of Malta's economy based on the principles of a circular green and blue economy, enhanced increased competitiveness and innovation.
- Safeguarding our environment: the vision is to increase sustainability and resilience through green infrastructure, nature protection and secure and sufficient low carbon-energy and water supplies.
- Social cohesion and wellbeing: to strengthen the social fabric by building up human potential reducing socio-economic inequalities, develop inclusive labour and education policies and eliminate labour exploitation.

The vision does not include specific actions, which are expected to be developed separately. Yet, strategic statements in the vision document that are relevant to MSP include the support to deploy a transboundary gas pipeline which is expected to be hydrogen ready, where a potential route has been identified. Another strategic statement is the pursuit to reverse trends in biodiversity loss, whilst another strategic statement identifies ICT as having a key role in the increase in energy efficiency and sustainable growth. These three statements suggest that the NSS as an MSP plan, needs to secure a safe corridor for the propose gas pipeline and the existing underwater transboundary communication cables from potential conflicting uses. At the same time, proposals for rehabilitation of biodiversity loss implies the need to identify marine locations that will benefit from such measures and the potential implications to existing or planned marine uses within the vicinity of these sites. The Vision document does not identify specific locations for the implementation of the three strategic policy statements, making it difficult for the NSS to determine suitable locations in respect to other existing and planned marine uses.

The TIER 1 policy documents illustrate a strong level of policy co-ordination at this tier and even with some policy documents in another tier (transport) which enhances clarity for implementation at a government level. This is likely due to most of the plans being prepared at the same time. This approach is likely to support coherence for the preparation and implementation of the revised MSP plan.

TIER 2 Plans

Integrated Maritime Policy: Making Malta a Centre of Maritime Excellence

This policy document was prepared in response to the European framework to strengthen blue growth as supported through Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund which provides the legal framework for its implementation.

The 2015 national document states that to manage the surrounding marine resources effectively, Malta needs to determine and declare an Exclusive Economic Zone. This action would put Malta in position to determine growth opportunities in four main areas: Food, Energy, Logistics and Services. Simultaneously it would provide an opportunity to assess the cost and benefits on managing such a zone from safety, security and environmental perspectives. When considering the key areas for Blue Growth, the document looks beyond the existing sectors of tourism, yachting, fisheries and ship building and their role in Malta's maritime economy. The policy framework for these new key areas identifies niches and projects at a very strategic level without specific targets nor specific spatial allocations. This places the challenge of implementation primarily on MSP. Table 2 summarises the policy direction for the four areas.

The maritime sector in Malta is identified as being predominantly comprised of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and micro enterprises. The policy proposes a Maritime Academy in collaboration with Malta Enterprise, the Malta Council for Science and Technology and other institutions to cooperate with the private sector to create a research and innovation platform as a means for effective transfer technology across the four areas of interests identified by government for Blue Growth.

The national IMP recommends the establishment of a Single Maritime Crisis Response and Contingency Planning Force to address maritime safety, security and surveillance. It also calls for a more proactive policy approach for ports infrastructure to ensure appropriate preparedness for economic growth and developments.

This policy document confirms that a legislative framework is necessary to provide a foundation for the management of all marine resources, and that existing spatial plans are to be incorporated in the Integrated Maritime Policy to ascertain a coordinated effort and achieve this goal. This is an important statement in the IMP which supports the role of MSP plans as a key instrument to bring together the much sought-after co-ordination for Blue Growth.

Blue Growth Area	Policy Direction
<i>Services</i>	<p>Setting up of a seafarers' register Create financial incentives for Maltese registered shipping lines to provide training Strengthen e-maritime concept and identify market opportunities to the future use of IT systems on board ships Establish a Maritime Hub aimed to develop existing infrastructure to offer repair services to ships, oil rigs and yachts</p> <p>Continue to identify dive sites and seek innovative ways to manage these sites with private stakeholders, for nautical tourism</p> <p>Create complimentary conditions for cruise ship tourism and yachting to flourish, improving infrastructure particularly on Gozo; explore cruise ship multiple buoy moorings near Comino and managed moorings or yachts at critical bays whilst promoting environmental friendly pleasure cruises, explore possibility of enhancing yacht berthing facilities</p> <p>Consider revision of current legislation to enable and promote recreational fishing that could be development in conjunction with MPA management</p>
<i>Logistics</i>	<p>Government to consider revising current framework to allow ship to ship operations within territorial waters. The transfer of cargo such as petroleum, chemicals and gases mainly occurs at Hurds Bank outside the 12nm. Such operations generate ancillary services such as fendering, provision of supplies, launch services etc.</p> <p>Calls for studies on the establishment of onshore/offshore LNG terminals.</p> <p>Calls for an international market research study to explore and determine emerging market opportunities and trends in an effort to reinvent the Kordin Grain Terminal at Grand Harbour which is involved in the logistics of wheat, barley, maize and similar grains and also stores grains for local consumption. Such study should also look at improving efficiency in use of current berthing facilities linked with the Terminal as these are shared by different operators.</p>
<i>Food</i>	<p>Improve standards and safety of fishing fleet. Strengthen enforcement to guarantee security of territorial waters Protect marine environment and biodiversity through international fishing quotas to promote sustainable fishing practices.</p> <p>Encourage the development of fish processing industry. Seek to explore possibility of diversification of fisheries into the tourism sector</p> <p>Recognise the need to promote R&I in new environmentally sustainable technologies in aquaculture including Integrated Multi Trophic Aquaculture</p> <p>Target further investment and research in biotechnology and blue pharma markets.</p>
<i>Energy</i>	<p>Renew commitment for oil and gas exploration Explore blue renewable energy opportunities particularly: offshore wind, floating photovoltaic islands, tidal wave energy conservation and blue geothermal energy. Invest in research and aid towards development of new energy efficient technologies within the blue sector.</p>

Table 2: Policy direction for Blue Growth in Malta

The IMP identifies four key areas for Blue Growth where the priority action is focused on research to determine the potential and extent of growth in each one, implying that at the time of writing, local knowledge for Blue Growth was still in its infancy. The call for a legislative framework to provide a foundation for the management of all marine resources, the need for the IMP to incorporate other plans in a co-ordinated manner illustrates the significance of this policy document to improve ocean governance in Malta, even if it is indicating the need for further effort on intra-government policy co-ordination.

Malta's 2030 National Energy and Climate Plan

This document follows the scope of the Energy Union Strategy (COM/2015/080) and covers its five dimensions: decarbonisation; energy efficiency; energy security; internal energy market; and research innovation and competitiveness.

This national plan aims to support the economic and employment trends experienced at the time of writing. In 2017 real economic growth stood at 6.6% and employment registered a 3.7% increase. Combined with a significant increase in population the total final energy consumption grew by 7%. The Plan acknowledges that Malta's geographical context coupled with limited options for cost-effective indigenous sources makes it extremely challenging to reduce energy import dependency in general including from third countries. Malta's reliance on energy imports persists and is expected to remain high.

Malta is actively working on the development of the Melita TransGas Pipeline from Delimara (Malta) to Gela in Sicily, which is expected to end its isolation from the trans-European Natural Gas Network. The implementation of the pipeline will eliminate the GHG emissions from current liquefaction, shipping and regasification activities necessary for LNG supply, including the removal of current infrastructure's susceptibility to adverse weather conditions. The design of the pipeline is expected to include the potential to carry green fuels (biogas; hydrogen).

The NECP states that the Government will continue to promote petroleum exploration opportunities to intensify exploration around Malta. In doing so, Malta's Government will continue to negotiate with neighbouring countries to arrive at mutually acceptable solutions that would enable oil exploration to take place.

Whilst the 2020 Renewable energy target for Malta was 10%, the plan projected that Malta would reach a 9.3% share of Renewable energy by that year. The document clarifies that Malta's potential for renewable energy sources (RES) deployment is mainly affected by physical and spatial limitations, technological advancement and resource potential, with resource availability and cost of land being the predominant barriers for further deployment (on land). Furthermore, the NECP states that wind energy projects on land and offshore cannot be successfully implemented using mature technologies due to significant technical, social and environmental constraints. The environmental significance and presence of competing uses in nearshore coastal areas make conventional offshore wind energy not viable. In addition, since deep offshore wind

energy is considered still in its infancy it is not considered as a viable option for Malta to meet its 2030 target. Neither is wave energy expected to make any significant contribution in the same time frame.

With regards to R&I whilst Malta has an Innovation friendly environment and strong employment impacts to knowledge-intensive activities and fast-growing enterprises, in 2016 the expenditure on low-carbon technologies R&I stood at 0.002% of GDP compared to the EU average of 0.027%.

The MSP relevance of this document is significant on three aspects:

- (i) it is affirming the role of oil exploration and exploitation in the continental shelf,*
- (ii) the development of transboundary infrastructure to ensure energy security that will also assist Malta to meet its climate targets and potentially release coastal and marine space currently dedicated for energy infrastructure (LNG storage vessel)*
- (iii) the challenge of providing space for offshore RES infrastructure through spatial limitations (due to environmental value and intensity of existing uses) and technological limitations (deep water technology).*

From a governance perspective, the NECP illustrates a sound understanding of the various existing and potential users within Malta's maritime space. This reflects a significant degree of knowledge of key factors influencing MSP policy.

Malta's Low Carbon Development Strategy – Consultation Draft

The Strategy aims to move towards climate neutrality by 2050 in line with Malta's contribution to EU-wide goals. The measures for climate mitigation and adaption are built on existing sectoral strategies and also reflect the need to address issues encountered during its preparation, namely, data was not always available for the specificities of the Maltese context and information on the performance of potential future technologies was incomplete. The Strategy will be updated on a four-year cycle in line with national Climate legislation, thus allowing future revisions to consider technological evolutions.

Climate mitigation measures are categorised into seven sectors:

- Transport
- Buildings
- Agriculture
- Industry
- Water
- Waste
- Energy

Of relevance to MSP are the measures relating to energy. The LCDS builds on the NECP with regards to future energy policy direction including on RES. Different from the NECP this document considers a scenario where two additional transboundary interconnectors are installed as an

alternative source of energy supply and refers to the potential future role of Hydrogen as a fuel source. The LCDS reflects the same position as the NECP with regards to offshore floating technologies, stating further that one of the main challenges for offshore renewable power generation is the need to safeguard the marine environment.

On the adaptation side, the LCDS identified the risk factors that need attention which include reduced rainfall, disruption to air and sea transport and maritime activities including damage to infrastructure, sea level changes leading to loss of the limited sandy beaches and coastal erosion that may lead to hazards. The adaptation proposed measures are also split into 7 categories targeting the areas considered to be most at risk or likely to be exacerbated through predicted climate impacts, with current knowledge. These are:

- Water resources
- Infrastructure and transport
- Land use and buildings
- Ecosystems, fisheries and agriculture
- Health, civil protection and immigration
- Tourism
- Cross sectoral policy co-ordination

Most of the proposed measures pertain to enhancement of knowledge on climate trends as well as feasibility of potential solutions. Some of the proposed measures are already being undertaken and fall under relevant sectoral plans and strategies. Measures of direct relevance to MSP are mainly addressing coastal areas and relate to:

- reviewing plans (storm water master plan, land use management, beach replenishment)
- improving infrastructure (flood relief, safety to navigation in ports)
- undertake studies to identify new areas for water catchment infrastructure; vulnerability assessments.

In terms of MSP this document provides limited direction for the management of marine space. It builds on and is linked with existing policy documents although the slight divergence in energy policy merits attention. Of particular contribution to MSP are the climate adaptation measures that are linked with the need for the MSP plan to consider land-sea interactions (e.g. attention to coastal erosion and coastal flooding).

The National Employment Policy 2021- 2030

This policy document delivers the direction for Malta’s employment strategy for the post pandemic decade. The emphasis is on delivering a work force and regulatory environment to support a transitioning economy centred on services and increased digitalisation. Constant adaptation to change is perceived to be the key for further economic success. According to this policy document, from an economic structure perspective, the Maltese economy is expected to remain diversified with certain economic sectors, particularly those that are service-oriented and driven by digital sectors, projected to grow faster than other key sectors and assuming a larger share of the Maltese economy, in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA), by 2030. Figure 1 below provides the projected sectoral GVA shares for each sector from 2020 up to 2030. The policy document does not go into further sectoral analysis and therefore it is difficult to extract additional insight with regards to the role of coastal and marine employment. Nonetheless the projected trends seem to suggest an expected decline in employment within the primary sector industries such as Fisheries.

Baseline GVA shares (%)	2010	2016	2019	2030
Agriculture and Fishing	1.7	1.2	1.1	0.9
Mining and quarrying	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
Manufacturing	11.7	9.8	9.0	7.3
Machinery and transport equipment	0.7	1.1	1.9	2.3
Repair and installation	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6
Electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning, Water, Sewerage and Waste	2.4	1.4	1.3	1.1
Construction	4.7	5.8	6.1	6.3
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	10.7	12.4	11.9	9.8
Transport	6.0	6.2	6.5	7.2
Accommodation	2.8	3.5	4.2	4.7
Food service activities	1.9	2.0	2.6	3.2
Information and Communication	5.5	6.4	7.1	7.9
Financial and Insurance Services (excl. SPEs)	7.5	8.3	7.3	5.2
Real Estate	6.0	5.4	4.9	4.2
Professional and Administrative Support Services	9.3	7.8	7.2	6.0
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	6.1	5.7	5.1	6.2
Education	5.8	6.3	6.1	5.2
Human health and social work activities	6.4	7.4	7.8	8.6
Arts and sports (excl. Gaming)	2.0	2.6	2.7	3.0
Gambling and betting	7.9	10.0	10.9	13.4

Figure 1: Projected sectoral GVA shares Source: Economic Policy Department

The National Employment Policy does not provide clarity on the respective share of employment within traditional and emerging maritime sectors. The projected growth is in sectors dependent on communication and energy suggesting that marine related infrastructure is likely to increase. The most significant message for MSP is that the role of fisheries within Maltese waters is expected to decline. Cross-reference with the economic policy and the fisheries policy documents may shed more insight into the implications of decline in this sector which is the topmost user of marine space in Malta, covering the entire space of the spatial plan (25nmile Fisheries Conservation Management Zone).

Malta's Economic Vision. 2021-2031 · A Future-Proof Malta

This national policy document seeks to pave the way to rapid economic recovery following the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. The consultation document is centred on the following 5 key pillars:

- Sustainable Economic Growth geared towards quality-of-life improvements and increased resilience
- High Quality Infrastructure and Investment
- Education and Employment
- Environment
- High Standards of Accountability, Governance and Rule of Law

Each pillar is complemented with a set of proposed measures. Only those measures of direct relevance to MSP are presented here.

Pillar 1 indicates that efforts will be made to strengthen economic sectors such as marine servicing and logistics as well as tourism and hospitality. This Pillar also calls for the development of new clusters and niches where the document identifies a niche for autonomous marine vessels. This pillar also seeks to raise the ambition for research, development and innovation mainly through increased private sector investment, supported by more investment by government, academia and policy levers involving both supply-side and demand-side measures. In this regard the economic vision cross refers to the identified priority areas in the Draft Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021 – 2027 which include marine and maritime technologies. Proposed fields of research include marine biotech and aquaculture, marine renewable energy, maritime engineering, smart maritime transportation and logistics.

Pillar 2 is aimed to develop sustainable infrastructure for transportation including marine. In this regard the economic vision refers to projects that are already underway such as the €50 million Grand Harbour Clean Air project, to provide ship to shore energy facilities. The economic vision also refers to ongoing studies on significant projects that will influence marine transport such as the development of a tunnel to Gozo, and the maritime role of the Grand Harbour related to the regeneration of the Grand Harbour area including industrial zones related to the maritime sector, the regeneration of Marsa and the regeneration and conservation of Fort Ricasoli.

Other measures linked with pillar 2 include:

- a call for enhanced maritime connectivity with new ferry services and routes to support actions aimed at reducing congestion on land transport;
- the development of a new internet submarine cable linking Malta to Marseille and Egypt by one of Malta's telecommunications companies, to complement the four submarine cables connecting Malta to Italy;
- continued investment in local port infrastructure will help lower the cost of transferring cargo to manufacturing plants, improving operational efficiency and competitiveness for Malta to strengthen its role as a multi-modal logistics hub within the Mediterranean.

Pillar 4 is specifically focused on the environment with a very strong statement aimed at decoupling environmental degradation from economic success. The document calls for the protection of the seas and harnessing of the blue economy, referring particularly to the adoption of new ways of generating energy through renewable sources, such as by investing in solar and wind energy. It also recognises that Malta's seas are a key driver for tourism and central to the happiness of Malta's citizens. Whilst calling for a need to address opposing pressures (user conflicts) there is no specific detail on how this is to be taken forward. It refers to Malta's Integrated Maritime Policy recommendation for Blue Biotechnology as a potential area that can attract talent, research and investment in areas that leverage Malta's natural assets. The economic vision document once again cross refers to the Draft Malta Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027 (MCST, 2020) which identified strong innovation potential at the interface between aquaculture research and marine biotechnology. In this regard it identifies a specific measure aimed to harness opportunities such as using fish waste as a resource for commercial products. Apart from the innovation potential in this area, this approach seeks to drive a reduction in the volume of fish waste disposed at sea. The economic vision also refers to ongoing work on marine-derived enzymes for cosmetics.

On the preservation and restoration of natural habitats the vision refers to the revision of the management plans of the terrestrial Natura 2000 sites and will identify opportunities to preserve and restore habitats to increase economic engagement and balance as much as possible external pressures.

The Economic Vision proposed for 2021-2031 puts forward a complex picture for the future of a number of sectors within the coastal zone and marine area as identified in the SPED where it is expected that marine conservation will be a priority in parallel with efforts to support growth in maritime transport (if Malta is to become a maritime-logistics hub) including the diversification of intra-island transport whilst maintaining the existing activities including tourism, growth in aquaculture and biotechnology as well as introduction of renewable energy infrastructure. The role of research for the marine sector entails the need to identify suitable marine space to facilitate such actions. Key locations mentioned pertain to areas very close to the shore with no further detail on future use of marine waters further out. This implies that efforts will be needed to determine how and where such uses can be accommodated.

Regional Development Strategy for Gozo 2021-2030: Consultation Document

The draft strategy for the second largest island in the Maltese archipelago is aimed at addressing the challenges that arise from double insularity, environmental vulnerability population density, lack of economies of scale and limited resources that influence the socio-economic growth of this region. The document specifically states that economic growth should not be prioritised at the unnecessarily high expense of the island's natural and cultural resources. Whilst it calls for more cost-effective transport connectivity options with the main island of Malta (and refers to the studies on a potential under sea tunnel) it also envisions the island's distinctiveness to be strengthened.

The strategy revolves around eight priority areas with a respective set of goals and measures. The priority areas are:

- Spatial planning and sustainable urban development
- Infrastructure and accessibility
- Economic and talent development
- New economy
- Sustainable tourism
- Social development
- Rural develop

From the list of proposed goals and measures, six have been identified to be relevant to MSP as follows:

Priority 2	Upgrading of the ferry connectivity service between Malta and Gozo; Continue monitoring and modernising ferry service; exploration of use of hybrid ferries Mgarr Harbour expansion with new berths, widening of quay area, sea reclamation, new breakwater Comino Conservation – to direct efforts towards development of measures to conserve and safeguard natural habitats, native plants and animals on the island while practicing sustainable tourism Marsalforn Breakwater – to reconstruct the breakwater within this natural embayment with possibility for berthing facilities
Priority 4	Potential second fibre optic cable with Malta
Priority 7	Upgrading of Gozo’s beaches through the introduction of Blue Flag Certification in at least 3 beaches. Target the introduction of Green Coast Award for Gozitan beaches to retain natural context.

The key strategic measures identified revolve around the upgrading and provision of new maritime infrastructure for improved connectivity; support to digitalisation and the protection of the island of Comino (a Natura 2000 site) and promotion of beach quality certification in view of their asset value to tourism.

The strategy puts focus on the role of the sea as a link to Malta and the outside world, as a means to reduce insularity for transport and communication infrastructure. Coastal and marine tourism is specifically seen as the primary users. There is no reference to the introduction of new maritime activities such as aquaculture or offshore energy, or even R& I is included in the document.

A Wellbeing Vision for Malta's Environment: National Strategy for the Environment – Consultation

This consultation document seeks to deliver a strategic direction for improved governance towards environment protection on land and sea. The Vision is based on the following objectives:

- ensure a better and sustainable quality of life
- provide clear and long-term direction for the environment
- set out national environmental targets
- address the main environmental challenges Malta is facing
- integrate and synergise efforts of all policies and stakeholders who directly or indirectly influence the state of the environment

The vision is based on a preferred future scenario labelled as 'Wellbeing First'. This scenario shifts direction away from the traditional economically driven tendency prioritising GDP growth.

As a high-level consultation document, it does not provide any specific direction even for thematic sectors and therefore it is quite difficult to extract any significant relevance for MSP.

The expected outcomes for the 2050 Vision are the following:

- The environment will be recognised as essential to overall wellbeing
- A strong political commitment will be in place to achieve wellbeing
- Wellbeing will be prioritised, and measured by means other than GDP
- Public and private domains are working in synergy
- An economic model that valorises environmental, social and governance aspects will be in place
- Strong public institutions will be in place, that guarantee effective policy implementation
- The public sector will enjoy consistent growth and investment
- Checks and balances will be in place, ensuring institutions are up to standard
- Public faith in the operation of the government and public institutions will be restored
- Behavioural changes will shift society towards carbon neutrality and a circular economy.
- Research and innovation will be at the heart of the Maltese economy
- Holistic transport policies will be implemented, in harmony with environmental and planning policies.
- Diverse and affordable transport alternatives to the private car will be available
- The government will lead the transition towards alternative travel, reducing congestion and improving air quality
- The country will be better adapted at countering the inevitable effects of climate change
- Urban and infrastructure planning decisions will internalise costs related to reductions in emissions and improved air quality
- A sustainable and equitable tourism sector will be achieved by attracting higher-quality visitors, while respecting the islands' carrying capacity.
- A collective effort will be made towards zero waste to landfill, including the government's internalising of the environmental costs of virgin raw material

- The real estate and construction industry will be operating within clear legal frameworks, implementing sustainability criteria including land take-up limitations
- An ecosystems approach will be applied to our modes of living, including integrating nature into the urban fabric
- Maltese seas will contain a rich and resilient biodiversity, clean waters and sustain a thriving maritime sector.
- All inhabitants of the islands will experience the long-term benefits and improvements that a healthy environment lends to overall wellbeing

From the above list, the key messages linked to MSP plan making (for the Coastal Zone and Marine Area) focus on the need for:

- holistic transport planning and the identification of alternative modes of transport, suggesting greater emphasis on intra-island ferries;
- a tourism sector that respects the carrying capacity of the islands, implying greater attention to the allocation of space for coastal and marine uses to reduce environmental degradation and user conflicts;
- a shift towards carbon neutrality and a circular economy, which will influence different activities and economic sectors;
- climate adaptation action, implying greater attention to coastal and inshore development
- an economy with greater activity in research and development, which could potentially introduce a new activity at sea in relation to different sectors (e.g. Offshore RES; Aquaculture)
- stronger uptake of the ecosystems approach
- action to secure good environmental quality of marine waters to support biodiversity and a thriving maritime sector.
- Greater effort to mainstream environment protection in policy making in view of the direct benefit to overall wellbeing

In essence, this Vision document seeks to highlight the intrinsic relationship between the three pillars of sustainability and the role played by the environment within the national context. The direction being provided through this Vision document although at a very high level is congruent with the requirements of the MSP Directive itself. Furthermore, the focus on improved governance for environmental protection and management is expected to support coherence towards policy formulation and particularly in adopting an ecosystems-based approach and address climate change. Once the NSE itself is published more detail on implementation may provide additional input to the MSP process.

The TIER 2 policy documents also illustrate a strong level of policy co-ordination although there may be some divergences that require further clarification (e.g. energy infrastructure needs). The policies affirm the importance of transport and tourism, indicate a decline in fisheries, support more emphasis on R&I and imply a need for communication infrastructure. None of the policy documents put forward an implementation program. The revision of the MSP Plan needs to

evaluate the implication of this policy direction particularly in view of the already intensified use in the immediate inshore waters.

TIER 3 Plans

National Culture Policy

The National Culture Policy published in 2021 incorporates a vision where culture is embraced for the wellbeing of all. The document provides a set of horizontal principles to be incorporated in regional cultural strategies. Implementation is envisaged to be multistakeholder responsibility between public entities and non-state actors. This national policy foresees the following tools to assist implementation: funding, legislation and regulation, capacity building, infrastructure, strategy, governance and research. Eight policy priority areas are identified, each accompanied by a set of policy outcomes.

Two key priorities are considered to support any future action for cultural heritage related to the coast and the marine area. The first priority 'strengthening cultural governance' is expected to strengthen cross-sectoral policies, enhance capacity building and support participatory cultural governance. The sixth priority 'protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage' seeks the promotion and prioritisation of action to safeguard cultural heritage and cultural landscapes and promotion sustainable and creative engagement of cultural heritage resources in support of education, tourism, health and wellbeing, social inclusion, intercultural understanding, and scientific research.

The approach adopted by this policy addresses all aspects of cultural heritage including maritime cultural landscapes, however as a high-level strategic document it does not provide any specific direction with regards to underwater cultural heritage. An important element is the call for improved governance, which is expected to support greater coherence with MSP related work.

European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 - Consultation Draft

The consultation document outlines three national priority areas to support national policy in relation to aquaculture and fisheries:

Priority 1: Fostering sustainable fisheries and the restoration and conservation of aquatic biological resources

Priority 2: Fostering sustainable aquaculture activities, processing and marketing of fisheries and aquaculture products, to contribute to food security

Priority 3: Technical assistance

The main initiatives include the promotion of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors; modernisation through support for new technology and equipment; a strong focus on data collection and control addressing marine litter, climate change and aquatic biodiversity impacts.

The report points to a declining trend since 2008 in the overall capacity of the Maltese fishing fleet, where the number of vessels in 2019 is 14% less than the average capacity between 2008 and 2016. The large-scale fishing vessels active in 2019 amounted to 64. In addition, the 2019 total fish landings decreased by 11.2% from 2018, to a total of 2.4million kg, with a wholesale value of €12.26million, a 9% decrease from 2018.

Challenges associated with Malta's artisanal fisheries sector is that it is mainly composed of an ageing small scale fishing fleet; registered female participation is limited and only five main species are mainly targeted due to market driven preferences.

The aquaculture sector also registered a drop in output between 2018 and 2019 by 29%. The sector is based on a limited number of species that are cultured, with few farms specialised in closed cycle species with limited research and innovation targeting sustainability of the sector particularly on climate change, environment impact and disease.

The document acknowledges the direct link between environment quality and the health of the sectors. It refers to key environmental pressures linked with:

- Physical restructuring of the coastline or seabed through land reclamation
- Deposition of dredged material
- Disposal of inert waste at sea

Predicted climate change impacts linked to sea level rise, coastal erosion and extreme weather events are considered as potential threat for ecosystem disruption and impacts on facilities in low lying coastal areas.

One of the proposed actions is linked to the diversification of fishing activities where complementary activities may include angling tourism, environmental services and education activities related to fishing, investment in the food and catering sectors. Another action is the improvement and expansion of key port and landing infrastructure such as fully serviced docking areas and moorings. It also proposes investment aimed at climate action such as the adoption of coastal observation systems. With regards to aquaculture the plan is calling for the assessment, identification and mapping of most suitable areas for aquaculture development.

As the EMFF Program seeks synergy with environment protection and seeks to support the sectors, there is more emphasis to support growth in aquaculture whilst the drive for fisheries is not linked to growth but for diversification primarily into tourism and education. This may require a rethink of policy direction for the existing space used for fisheries.

Aquaculture Strategy for the Maltese Islands: Towards Sustainability 2014-2024

The document sets out the policy direction for the Maltese Aquaculture industry which is entirely dependent on marine resources and two types of productions: (a) capture based – based on fattening of wild caught tuna (4 farms) and (b) closed cycle species with sea bass, sea bream and meagre as the main species (1 farm). One farm produces both closed cycle and capture based species.

There is one farm producing only closed cycle species that started operations prior to the establishment of the planning system, in the late 1980s. The rest of the farms have been permitted through the development planning process which assessed potential impacts with other land and maritime uses to reduce conflicts and required the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Such farms are also subject to regular environmental monitoring. The eventual establishment of an Aquaculture Zone in the Southeast of Malta saw the transformation of the operations management model from that of individual farms to one involving the potential of grouping a number of different operators. The existing cage sites are in approved maritime spaces that cater for the minimisation of user conflicts and thereby acknowledged as sites suitable for aquaculture development.

The Aquaculture Strategy promotes the sector as an important economic player and therefore user of the national the marine space. It seeks further growth for the closed cycle species to 5,000 tonnes a year; maintain current level of capture bases species (which are dependent on blue fin tuna quotas); the establishment of a hatchery and foresees more investment in research. An emphasis on enhancement of the administrative and regulatory capacity of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture was a key objective as well as a review of regulatory procedures.

The Government strategy adopted a spatial approach by stating that all operations are to take place in designated Aquaculture Zones and identified all existing sites for capture-based species and closed cycle species, including the nurseries, are to be designated as Aquaculture Zones, subject to adherence with the carrying capacity limits established through regulatory and environmental monitoring measures. The strategy directs capture-based species to waters deeper than 50m or more within Aquaculture Zones. Furthermore, it directed future economic development only for sea-based installations through the expansion of designated Aquaculture Zones; marine based research installations preferably located off-shore; land based ancillary installations requiring a costal location towards designated fishing ports and food processing and administrative operations towards areas zone for similar activities.

The approach adopted by this strategy sought to link the spatial allocation and organisation of existing marine spaces used by the industry with the proposed targets, placing a significant reliance on both improved regulations and assessments of environmental capacity of these sites, without seeking new additional space.

National Transport Strategy, 2050

This document sets the strategic framework for the sector on 6 strategic goals, 8 guiding principles and 13 long term targets as well as monitoring measures up to 2050. The scope of the strategy is to set out the framework for the development of medium-term Transport Master Plans which will in turn provide the planning framework for implementing measures which could take the form of policies, action plans or measures that are shorter term in nature. The National Transport Strategy and its associated National Transport Master Plan covers all transport modes in Malta: road (including public transport), maritime, and air for both internal and external transport.

The preparation of the strategy was aligned with the SPED and with regards to the Coastal Zone and Marine Area as identified in the SPED and seeks to support the SPED policy framework through two strategic actions:

- Explore the potential to develop an access hierarchy to the different types of coastal areas defined which ensures accessibility while at the same time supporting the objectives and proposed characteristics of the various coastal areas.
- Ensuring development of the transport system to provide accessibility to the areas outlined in the objective while retaining the principles defined in the objective.

To elicit the relevance of the transport strategy for MSP purposes, it is important to note the three roles of maritime transport in the Maltese Islands:

- (1) International: transport of passengers and transshipment of freight
- (2) National: inter-island transport of passengers and transshipment of material
- (3) National: intra-island transport as an alternative to road transport.

The first two roles have been long established. The Port of Valletta (Grand Harbour) is one of the two TEN-T Core ports and is the main multi-purpose port handling general cargo, dry bulk cargo and scrap metal exports as well as wet bulk cargo. Ro-Ro facilities and handling of container vessels also takes place there. The Grand Harbour also has three passenger maritime routes including international cruises, sea links to Sicily and domestic ferries serving the Three Cities and Sliema. Within the same harbour, the national energy service provider and other operators have liquid bulk terminals with some offering storage and blending services as freight or bunkers.

The other TEN-T Core port is in Marsaxlokk which hosts freight terminals, primarily the Malta Freeport Terminals Ltd which handles more than 95% of the container traffic. The port also has industrial storage facilities and other entities have liquid bulk terminals. The port of Marsaxlokk hosts also Malta's largest fishing harbour and is the location of the sole energy generating plant and its ancillary LNG storage facilities. The National Transport Strategy forecasts that container transshipment in Malta is expected to grow at a slower pace than in the Mediterranean due to the competition with other ports and assumes Malta's share to be 8% equivalent to a container transshipment at Malta Freeport Terminals of 9,800,000 TEUs in 2050.

Inter-island marine transport is through ferry services with a dedicated route in the secondary port of Marsamxett for cargo to the port of Mgarr in Gozo, operating twice a week. The main route between the northern port of Cirkewwa on Malta to Mgarr in Gozo services both passengers and goods. Passenger ferry services across the Grand Harbour and with Marsamxett Harbour were operational by 2012.

Intra-island transport, an activity that was prolific last century before the emergence of car use, is regaining attention. The NTS considers that the continued high dependency on private cars as the main mode of travel, without any change in transport policy is expected to cost the economy over €1.28 billion per year in 2050, equating to a loss of 8.2% of Malta's GDP. This factor is likely to see an increased effort towards growth of intra-island maritime transport facilities and services.

The integration of the NTS with the SPED policy direction indicates a positive influence for continued policy co-ordination within the revised MSP Plan. Multiple port functions in Grand Harbour that evolved through centuries and have intensified within a port area that is surrounded by a world heritage site, making the port a gem in the tourism attraction arsenal of the islands. Port functions and tourism are still operating side by side, providing a significant backdrop to the residents of the surrounding localities however, the limited amount of space on land and sea is likely to become the greatest challenge in the near future. Transferring part of the land transport to ferry services within the islands is likely to introduce new challenges linked to demand for space only land and sea not only in the main ports but the other harbours currently used for boat mooring and also support tourism and recreation. One significant observation is the lack of attention given by the strategy to the current and projected use of marine space, potentially reflecting a sectoral approach whereby maritime transport is inherently significant to an archipelagic State like Malta, particularly at the international level. For MSP purposes, the NTS is highlighting the continuation and possible growth of maritime transport at both national and international level. The accommodation of projected needs has to factor in other players at sea and within the adjacent harbours and ports.

National Transport Master Plan 2025

This plan translates the strategic goals and guiding principles of the National Transport Strategy of 2050 into SMART Operational Objectives for each of the transport exercise. Each goal objective is assigned a time frame: Short to be implemented within 5 years (by 2020), Medium to be completed between 5-10 years (by 2025) and Long-term, which is beyond the time frame of the master plan (2026 onwards). The objectives relevant for MSP relate to internal and external maritime transport.

The plan's objective for internal transport seek to improve meteorological and hydrographic data to support planning and design of operations through the introduction of maritime weather stations in ports; assess financial sustainability of Malta-Gozo link and the potential for underutilised areas for internal transport, through a master plan for Marsaxlokk Harbour. Another set of objectives is aimed to improve operations and enforcement of internal maritime transport including those linked

to user access and safety. The third set of objectives is focused on the removal of bottlenecks and Ten-T comprehensive ports and earmarks specific sites as follows:

- Cirkewwa harbour south quay improvement of visual information
- Mgarr Harbour quay improvement and potential expansion, subject to a detailed assessment of use of space
- Alternative location from Sa Maison to port of Valletta to improve internal sea freight
- Re-introduction of an express ferry link between Malta and Gozo

The objectives for external transport address different aspects aiming for improvement in management of operational conditions with contracted parties and the development of a 10-year master plan designated future land uses for the TEN-T core port of Valletta and another one for the TEN-T core port of Marsaxlokk. A series of infrastructural upgrading to support existing operations within both these TEN-T core ports including ancillary IT systems intended for monitoring and enforcement of maritime areas. Another set of operational objectives seek to provide alternative fuel infrastructure calling first for an action plan for LNG deployment for the TEN-T Core ports and the replacement of obsolete bunker discharge infrastructure. The plan also includes a set of objectives aimed at reducing the environmental impact of ports on the nearby urban area, primarily through the use of less polluting equipment and ensuring compliance.

The emphasis of this plan which seeks to translate the strategic direction of the National Transport Strategy is on improving port infrastructure and operations on the landward side with very little attention given to the marine space utilised for transport whether inshore or further out even beyond the 12nm. There seems to be an unwritten assumption that such uses will continue. If this is the case, to ensure their continuation and safeguard them from incompatible and conflicting uses these spaces need to be identified and included in the revised MSP Plan.

Malta's Tourism Strategy 2021-2030

The document 'Recover, Rethink, Revitalise – Malta Tourism Strategy 2021-2030' promotes a three pronged strategy for the sector:

- A recovery effort from the chaos wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, focused on protecting and preserving the vital components of Malta's Visitor Economy in the background of the challenges posed by the pandemic.
- A longer-term re-evaluation and repositioning to reflect evolutionary forces as well as new post pandemic realities – both negative and positive.
- A detailed and committed programme of deliverables covering the various strategic challenges addressed by this strategy with a view to being able to deliver a stronger, more sustainable and competitive tourism industry by 2030.

Between 2010 - 2019, Malta experienced ten years of record growth (2.75 million tourists, Euro 2 billion of expenditure, 18.5 million overnight stays). The strategy sees best scenario forecasts with

3 to 3.2 million tourists generating an average of 21 million overnight stays although it then suggests that lower estimates 'will probably prevail'. The effects of Covid-19 pandemic were significant on this sector and the aim is to reverse trends and overcome them. The overall strategy sees the management and formulation of the future development of tourism to Malta in line with sustainability principles through the best use of the country's natural and cultural attractions in a manner that works in balance between the welfare and well-being of the country's residents and the maximization of visitor economic value and satisfaction.

None of the 12 key strategic targets, specifically highlights the coast or the sea. However, the document identifies that one of the emerging and development tourism segments is linked to the cruise market, with the aim to have a higher ratio of home porting to port-of-call business.

Of particular interest is the approach that strategy is seeking to branding the Maltese Islands as a tourism destination where the aim is to promote the whole national territory as a combination of product and emotional attributes found in different areas with the aim to guide product development. The new tourism strategy proposes the subdivision of the national territory comprising the major Islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino by identifying zones, each possessing distinct competitive advantage and differentiation from the other zones and to adopt a product development, branding and marketing strategy for each of these zones based on such competitive advantages. The intention is also to build a strong case for the preservation of natural and man-made tangible and intangible heritage in recognition of their growing relevance and importance to the discerning tourists of today and tomorrow and to promote such heritage as an integral component of the Malta brand.

The focus on tourism volumes without addressing the direct and indirect infrastructural improvements required to accommodate them is of concern to MSP particularly since the majority of the critical infrastructure is located on the coast: sewage treatment plants; desalination plants; waste management facilities. Any further utility infrastructure will likely require similar locations unless investment is focused on more efficient technology that is less dependent on space. The capacity for ports and harbours to support the additional number of visitors also merits further thought both in terms of marine space to accommodate ships waiting to enter harbours, and on the land-sea interface to accommodate ancillary services (infrastructure and transport). The whole island marketing approach is likely to raise challenges particularly for growth of existing marine activities (aquaculture) or introduction of new marine uses (renewable energy installations).

The 2nd Water Catchment Management Plan for the Malta Water Catchment District

Malta's Second Water Catchment Management Plan (WCMP) covers the period 2015 – 2021 and is a direct requirement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), which calls for River Basin Management Plans. This document continues to set out ways how to protect, improve and restore the water environment of Malta and Gozo, incorporating the new challenges that have been identified through the implementation of the First WCMP.

Due to its size Malta was defined as having one water catchment district with one dedicated plan covering the whole territory and the different water bodies within it. These water bodies include groundwater, freshwater streams, transitional coastal waters and freshwater pools. The wider aim of the WFD is the achievement of good status for all water bodies which entails the achievement of good ecological status for surface waters up to one nautical mile from the coast; good chemical status for all territorial waters, good chemical and good qualitative status for groundwaters; and good ecological potential for heavily modified water bodies.

As a result of the first WMCP a number of improvements in water resource management were recorded, including:

- (a) updating the descriptions of the Water Catchment District characterisation
- (b) a review of the monitoring networks
- (c) a revised set of measures required to achieve the objectives for 2016-2021
- (d) a review of the economic analysis of water use
- (e) an update of the economic assessment to select the most environmentally appropriate options which do not entail unrealistic costs
- (f) an assessment of patterns of extreme climatic events (droughts and floods)

Consequently, the Plan incorporates new challenges identified through the implementation of the first WCMP. The main revisions include the reduction and progressive removal of hazardous pollutants and priority substances into the aquatic environment within a 20-year time frame for the date of adoption of the WFD; the progressive reduction in pollution of groundwater and the prevention of further pollution; and the mitigation of the effects of floods and droughts.

The 2nd WCMP provides a detailed account of the coastal and water related management units considered by the plan, and the multiple sources of pressures arising from conflicting uses within these coastal activities. In effect this analysis provides insight on the environmental implications of existing coastal and marine uses that can inform the MSP process, that can facilitate synergy between the MSPD and WFD. It is also to be noted that the monitoring program for the WFD is addressed through a national marine monitoring program that also addresses the requirements for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, implying an integrated and synergistic approach towards the management of marine resources.

A small number of measures are of direct relevance to spatial planning, addressing primarily the coastal waters within 1 nautical mile of the baseline. Two measures taken forward from the first WCMP call for the need to study the impact of the National Spoil ground off Xghajra (measure KNO 2-2) and to monitor the dumping operations at the spoil ground (measure COAST 3-1). The spoil ground is utilised for the deposition of inert waste, mainly resulting from construction operations on land. Another measure (COAST 1-1) seeks to develop and implement guidance for the disposal or reuse of dredged material from harbours, as part of the regulatory process when environmental impacts of development projects that involve capital dredging are evaluated by the Environment Resources Authority. These guidelines are to be used as a tool to integrate construction management conditions into planning permits.

The development permitting process itself is covered by two specific measures, measure REG 1-3 which seeks to strengthen the existing environment and planning regulatory processes to cater for the objectives of the WFD and measure COAST 2-1 which calls for the development and implementation of planning and environmental guidance on major coastal engineering works. These measures build on the work piloted in the implementation of the 1st WCMP.

Implementation is facilitated by an ad hoc inter-ministerial committee which monitors the progress of work on the individual measures.

The impacts of marine uses on coastal hydromorphology and bathymetry arising from the choice of location and type of construction applied are key factors that need to be duly considered in the MSP process. Construction on land is also a source of the greatest solid waste fraction, construction and demolition waste some of which has been disposed of at sea. The management approach adopted for the WCMP as a result of the WFD approach to inter link other main regulatory instruments concerning water quality (from urban wastewater treatment to the protection of coastal and marine species and habitats) and the streamlining of measures with the work related to the MSFD is expected to support the adoption of the ecosystem-based approach required for the MSP process. It is also expected to support mainstreaming of environmental objectives within the MSP policy framework. The inter-ministerial committee adopted to oversee the implementation of the plan is likely to support policy co-ordination with MSP further.

Significant Water Management Issues in the Malta River Basin District

This consultation document is informed by the outcome of the implementation of the 2nd WCMP and outlines the main issues to be considered in the upcoming third Plan within the WFD reporting cycle. A number of 'change drivers' to water demand are identified:

- Climate change
- Increasing population
- Rising numbers of incoming tourists
- Increased economic growth

The result of these drivers is expected to lead to a

- Potential increase in diffuse pollution, and
- Potential increased used of inland surface freshwater and coastal marine water bodies.

The significant water management issues are identified as follows:

- (i) Energy efficiency in water services: in view of increased demand, the use of non-conventional water resources (such as reclaimed water) and desalinated water will increase in importance. The national water reclamation programme (New Water) is expected to expand in the coming years and will require strengthening of the wastewater discharge capacity
- (ii) Wastewater treatment and conveyance infrastructure: the increase in local population and incoming tourists will increase pressures on the current wastewater systems.

- Investment in new and improved wastewater systems will be required to ensure that sufficient collection and treatment capacity is available to cater for peak flows, which can vary in temporal and spatial distribution.
- (iii) **Water Management in the Urban Environment:** Greater emphasis on green infrastructure (GI) within the urban area is required. The document suggests integrating GI into mainstream planning policies and implementing such initiatives with the aim of reusing the saved water in the locality itself (ex. in urban embellishment) or diverting runoff towards aquifer recharge.
 - (iv) **Groundwater Management:** Increased groundwater monitoring is required to improve local understanding of the status of aquifers at regional level. Hotspots may be identified which will require targeted action to reverse any observed negative trends.
 - (v) **Contaminants of Emerging Concern:** The report recommends defining source-receptor pathways for such contaminants to enable the addressing of any concerning discharges at source. These issues will be addressed through experimental research and/or awareness raising, supported by the publication of standard management practices where appropriate.
 - (vi) **Water's Contribution to the Economy:** A detailed economic assessment is required to accurately determine the value of water in the national economic context. Following this exercise, targeted incentives or enforcement practices will ensue.
 - (vii) **Alignment of National Policies:** Water management falls within the competence of multiple Ministries and entities in the public service. Inter-ministerial collaboration will be encouraged through the setting up of a committee on water.
 - (viii) **Extreme Events:** Climate change is expected to cause more frequent extreme weather events, particularly longer drought periods and urban flooding. National resilience to such occurrences needs to be developed. Increased water pressure due to droughts requires increased management measures and efficient use of the water resource base in anticipation for periods of low or no precipitation. Flooding typically occurs more frequently in low-lying valley areas and natural runoff accumulation zones, which require increased consideration in national planning policies. The current Management Plan for Extreme Events is in the process of being updated and will serve to guide the location and type of flood management infrastructure.

The cyclical approach of the WFD supports implementation of actions focused on achieving good status. The approach taken in the consultation document to build emphasis on climate change and its predicted impacts on water resources and related ecosystems and the impacts from increased demands due to demographic changes, increased tourists and economic growth are expected to influence and guide the formulation of the next set of program of measures. The identification of these drivers and likely direction for the 3rd WCMP puts a spotlight on the potential improvement and increase of water related infrastructure within the coast, placing attention for the need for greater awareness of existing and likely future user conflicts within an already intensely used coastline. This could prove a challenge also to identify suitable onshore facilities in support of future marine infrastructure.

The MSFD – Programme of Measures (2017)

This report presents the Program of Measures (required by Article 13 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive) linked to the first cycle of reporting by Malta. The first Initial assessment was submitted by Malta in 2013 and therefore, these measures were designed to address the targets for Good Environment Status (GES) as defined in the first initial assessment. The measures were subject to a cost-effectiveness and cost benefit analysis.

The Programme lists existing processes emanating from other EU Directives and international and regional instruments already in place, which address the most relevant pressures on the marine environment and contributing to the achievement of MSFD environmental targets and GES. This comprehensive set of regulation is considered as already providing sufficient basis that could help to achieve GES. The policy instruments include:

- Birds Directive 2009/147/EC
- Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 91/271/EC
- Nitrates Directive 91/676/EEC
- Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC
- Port Reception Facilities Directive 2002/59/EC
- Common Fisheries Policy (EC regulation 1380/2013)
- Regulation (EC) 1967 of 2006 (amended by Regulation 1343/2011) concerning management measures for the sustainable exploitation of fishery resources in the Mediterranean Sea
- EIA Directive 2011/92/EU
- SEA Directive 2001/42/EC
- EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020
- Barcelona Convention (and associated protocols)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships

New measures were proposed following a gap analysis which identified the need or otherwise for additional action beyond the existing processes. The new measures relate to:

- Biodiversity
- Commercially exploited fish and shellfish
- Contaminants
- Marine litter
- Underwater noise

The set of measures of relevance to MSP address synergies with the WFD related work, the designation and management of marine protected areas; the spatial management of fisheries particularly trawling; streamlining of management efforts relating to swimming zones and bathing water quality monitoring area; management of offshore spoil ground for inert material; and the management of dredged material. A number of measures are linked to knowledge enhancement

to support improved implementation of the MSFD, while a specific measure identifies the need for guidance documents addressing noise and light pollution from land and sea-based activities is also relevant. Some measures are aimed at improved streamlining of licencing and permitting regimes. The implementation of the measures is co-ordinated by an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Ministry responsible for the environment.

The measures directly linked to MSP are those emanating from the WFD Program of Measures linked to the impacts of marine uses on coastal hydromorphology and bathymetry arising from the choice of location and type of construction, guidance on light and noise pollution and improved permitting procedures. The quality of the MSP plan is influenced by the level of available knowledge and degree of implementation of the MSFD Program of Measures.

Update of Articles 8, 9 and 10 of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) in Malta's Marine Waters. Second Assessment Report (2021)

The EU Marine Strategy Framework (MSFD) requires the development and implementation of marine strategies aimed at achieving Good Environmental Status (GES) in EU marine waters. The marine strategies should include:

- an assessment of the environmental status of the waters concerned and the environmental impact of human activities thereon;
- a determination of good environmental status for the water concerned; and
- establishment of a series of environmental targets and associated indicators, in preparation for the development and implementation of a 'Monitoring Programme' for ongoing assessment of environmental status and a 'Programme of Measures' designed to achieve or maintain GES.

Article 17(2) of the MSFD requires Member States (MS) to review their marine strategies every six years. This report provides the updates to Malta's initial deliverables pursuant to Articles 8, 9 (concerning status) and 10 (concerning environmental targets) of the MSFD. Following the deployment of a national marine monitoring program, new data was available to enable relevant updates concerning the qualitative nature of the GES definitions and targets.

This report constitutes Malta's second cycle contribution on the Initial Assessment. It identifies four Marine Reporting Units delineated by Malta as four ecologically relevant geographical scales within Maltese waters. These are:

- MIC-MT-CW-01: WFD Coastal Water Bodies
- MIC-MT-TW-01: Territorial Waters
- MIC-MT-MS-01: Fisheries Management Zone
- MIC-MT-MS-02: Area designated for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation

The report presents a description of the status of GES for different MSFD descriptors. This is followed by an economic and social analysis of uses and human activities, the cost of degradation

and presents the environmental targets associated with the descriptors. The outcome of this report has significance on MSP on a number of elements:

- (i) Species and habitat protection: *Posidonia oceanica* meadows achieved a good status, however there is an ongoing need to manage pressures on the benthic environment. Malta also achieved the MSFD target concerning the legal protection of vulnerable marine areas particularly through the designation of 18 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) within the Fisheries Management Zone (25 nautical miles surrounding the islands). The focus will now need to be on defining and implementing the associated management plans.
- (ii) The pressures from large-scale development on hydrographical conditions persist.
- (iii) Need for more knowledge concerning underwater noise and its impacts on marine life.

A new set of measures linked with this updated report on status and environmental targets will need to be formulated.

The direct input from the state of implementation of the MSFD at a national level has a direct bearing on the level of guidance that MSP plans can provide to direct use of marine space, particularly to safeguard environmental quality. The four MRUs are complementary to MSP SPED zones (which constitute the different regulatory areas administered by national law under the UNCLOS framework), providing an opportunity to support the ecosystem-based approach required by MSP.

As expected, the TIER 3 plans provide specific policy direction, with varying degrees depending on the degree of detail required by the respective plan. This tier of plans exhibits some degree of policy co-ordination particularly between environmental measures and fisheries management. There is a distinct divergence in policies seeking to invest in coastal infrastructure for transport and the environmental measures highlighting the need for greater attention from pressures that alter hydrography. Another aspect that emerges is the great intensity of uses that already exist on the shore and immediate waters, leaving limited space for planned improvements from legitimate coastal uses. The lack of focus on the use of the marine space away from the shore is of concern to MSP as it may suggest either an assumption that existing uses will continue, or a lack of policy direction for its use. This latter point will require attention in the SPED review process.

Main findings

The focus of national policy remains predominantly landward, reflecting the dominance and intensity of land-based socio-economic activities on the islands and therefore the difficulty that still exists, even on a small island state, to consider the sea in a seamless manner as part of a country's socio-economic long-term vision and strategy. Connectivity with surrounding continents particularly for maritime transport, energy and digital communication yet emerge as the new challenges for the island, and these are the sectors most likely to either seek to secure existing sea space allocated for them or demand new marine space.

With the exception of the Integrated Maritime Policy and the policy documents required by the Water Framework Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, no other policy document from those reviewed address Malta's marine waters as a geographical management unit. Whilst there is a different degree of reference to certain maritime or maritime related economic sectors (aquaculture, transport, tourism), the approach adopted prioritises the thematic policy area and considers marine space from a sectoral perspective.

The approach adopted by the National Integrated Maritime Policy is very strategic, calling for integration of existing plans but failing to clarify how this is to be achieved. On the other hand, the synergistic approach adopted for environment protection within marine waters is supporting an adaptive approach to the management of marine space, although there is a time lag between the published reports and reporting cycles that can hinder effective mainstreaming with the review of the MSP plan.

The fact that the TIER 1 policy documents were published roughly at the same time provides a degree of consistency ranging from very strategic statements such as the need to rehabilitate natural habitats, to commitments on detailed project proposals such as the development of passenger ferry terminals in specific localities.

Only one plan from the TIER 1 policy documents identifies the implementation mechanism, through the setting up of a co-ordinating body, whilst the Tier 3 policy documents linked with the WFD and MSFD Program of Measures are supported by an Inter-Ministerial Committee to ensure implementation and thus inform the policy review cycle. This approach is also being proposed in the Low Carbon Development Strategy whilst it is assumed that the lead ministry for each respective policy document in the other instances, will have the responsibility for implementation. Co-ordination is likely to involve ad hoc discussions with relevant government entities. In the absence of an overarching policy integration framework, there is the risk of a silo approach in implementation, where the focus is solely on the delivery of each respective plan with no attention given on the actual effectiveness on the ground. This is further highlighted by the fact that a number of the policy documents were prepared for a timeline which is not the same as that expected by the replacement MSP plan which is expected to address the period up to 2040.

This divergence in policy detail and approach for implementation can be illustrated by referring to some examples:

- (a) the direction provided by the Tourism Strategy which is seeking to promote the whole of the territory as a destination. Considering the topography of the islands where the entire territory is visible from the higher locations, the existing tourism attraction areas, the significance of the sea for coastal tourism, the fact that yachting and cruises utilise the Grand Harbour (a Ten-T Core Harbour) and the secondary harbour of Marsamxett which is used by local recreational fishers, this approach is likely to raise concerns particularly for maritime activities considered to be more industrial in nature (e.g. port uses, aquaculture and RES);
- (b) the policy direction for offshore renewable energy which seems to be limited by technology (deep water) and space availability (intensity of uses in shallower waters). The need to deliver on climate commitments is a reality that is being also driven by the European Green Deal. Technical limitations may push for specific investment in R&I to overcome the challenges in the future but trying to find space within the much sought after and intensely used shallower waters highly visible from almost any coastal location is likely to introduce friction with the tourism sector in particular.
- (c) the Transport Strategy and Master Plan both calling for greater investment in port infrastructure particularly ferry landings and harbour defences yet identifying the limited coastal space available for necessary improvements. Maritime transport is critical for an archipelagic state, and the future of any coastal or maritime related sector needs to ensure that such use is not compromised particularly by lack of space in ports and approaching areas at sea.
- (d) the need to address climate impacts on coastal areas through the LCDS and the need to safeguard coastal and benthic hydromorphology from significant changes to maintain Good Environment Status and Good Ecological Status. Both policy documents would benefit from policy options that promote soft engineering options or better, adopting nature-based solutions to enhance coastal resilience to predicted climate impacts. However these options are not included in the documents, rather there is reference to further studies and for the adoption of coastal engineering guidance to assist the permitting process probably on a case by case basis. Noting the specific projects for harbour defence mentioned in the transport policy documents, challenges are likely to arise. Similarly with the potential deployment of offshore renewables or increase aquaculture when moorings would need to be placed for anchorage purpose.

With the exception of the national reform programme which in itself is a monitoring document pertaining to economic performance, it is only the policy documents linked with reporting to EU directives that provide some information on performance of and improvement from previous policy documents. The outcome from implementation of the different policy documents is difficult to determine.

Stakeholder engagement and public consultation for each plan is governed by the regulatory and administrative procedures of the respective entity, which can vary. A common approach for all

government policy documents is a common portal for public consultation where all policy documents are accessible during the consultation period. This is over and above the uploading of the individual policy document on the respective entity's website. As very little information was available on this aspect, this report could not go into further detail.

Conclusions

The scope of this report was to identify issues pertaining to governance to assist the review of the MSP Plan in Malta. The set of plans and policies reviewed for this task illustrate a good degree of inter-linkages between certain policy documents and sectors. There is however a need to strengthen the policy links between the three tiers of policies to ensure that the overarching strategic framework for the geographical space that constitutes Malta's marine waters subject to an MSP plan is aligned with the detailed thematic policy documents that are linked with targets and measures specifically addressing key sectors at sea or the status of the environment.

Convergence is needed to develop a common vision, and coherence in respective policy areas to support sustainable marine resource management. Whilst there is a good degree of coherence between the three tiers as reflected in this report, there is a need to focus on how this coherence needs to be improved, without duplicating or overlapping existing efforts, in support of a comprehensive plan for Malta's marine waters. In its absence, the lack of prioritisation that exists is likely to exacerbate the already intensive use of the coast and inshore waters and the impacts this will bring in terms of user conflict and environmental quality.

It is not the scope for the MSPMED task to look at overall ocean governance in Malta, but to focus on facilitating and improving governance for the MSP plan review. In this regard, MSPMED deliverable D 17 will evaluate the main findings from this report and identify recommendations to strengthen existing mechanisms, both at national level (primarily the role of the national Integrated Maritime Policy) and at the level of the MSP Competent Authority.

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