GOVERNMENT OF MALTA

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Cohesion Policy 2021-2027

**ESF+ Programme (2021-2027)
Fostering the socioeconomic wellbeing of society
through the creation of opportunities for all and
investment in human resources and skills**

**Guidance Notes on Indicators
Call 13 for Project Proposals**

Priority 2: Fostering Active Inclusion for All
ESO4.11: *Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote
the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection,
with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of
healthcare systems and long-term care services (ESF+)*

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Indicators Overview, Definition and Guidance Document

1. Overview

In line with monitoring and evaluation obligations established by Regulations (EU) 2021/1060 (CPR) and 2021/1057 (ESF+ programme specific regulation), the Programme for Malta for the period 2021-2027, *Fostering the socioeconomic wellbeing of society through the creation of opportunities for all and investment in human resources and skills,* is based on a number of output and result indicators which are to be reached by 2024 (milestone) and the year 2029 (target year).

2. What are indicators and why are they needed?

Simply put, indicators are a tool to measure:

- the progress experienced by a project (henceforth referred to as 'operation') during the course of its implementation;
- the final achievements and deliverables produced by an operation following its full implementation.

Indicators are an integral part of the Managing Authority's (MA) monitoring process and reflect the evolving implementation that is taking place vis-à-vis the respective operations. Monitoring of outputs and direct results allows the MA to observe whether the intended effects of the Programme are being delivered, whether outcomes are being achieved and whether implementation is on track.

Within the context of EU funds, there are both output and result indicators. Output and result indicators are set at the level of the Specific Objective (SO), for each and every Priority listed in the Programme. Output and result indicators are defined as follows:

- Output indicators relate to operations supported. An output is what is directly produced/supplied through the implementation of an operation. Outputs are measured at the level of supported people, supported entities, provided goods or services delivered. On the basis of Article 2(13) of the CPR, an output indicator refers to an indicator which **measures the specific deliverables of the intervention.**

- Result indicators capture the expected effects on participants or entities brought about by an operation. Result indicators go beyond output indicators in so far as they capture a change in the situation, in most cases related to supported entities or participants, e.g. in their employment situation. Result indicators aim to track progress relevant to the objectives of the programme. In line with Article 2(14) of the CPR, a result indicator refers to an indicator which **measures the effects of the interventions supported, with particular reference to the direct addressees, population targeted or users of infrastructure.**

In line with the approved project eligibility and selection criteria, every project proposal requires to contribute to the linked output and result indicators. In this context, Applicants must ensure that the project has clearly identifiable and measurable targets that contribute to a <u>minimum</u> of **one output indicator and one result indicator.** The indicators are set in the Programme under the respective Priority and Specific Objective (SO) as specified to the Call for Project Proposals. In the case of projects financed under the ESF+, reporting on common indicators beyond those presented in the Operational Programme is also required as per Art 17(1) and Art 23(1) as applicable to the ESF+ specific regulation.

Project Proposals that fail to contribute to output and result indicators will not be considered eligible for funding.

3. Output Indicators

Steps to be considered by Applicants when choosing the output indicator/s for their operations during the project planning stage:

1. **Choose the output indicator/s that best matches the operation's expected outcome and deliverables**. The indicator/s to be assigned to the operation will depend on the aims and objectives of the respective operation, and how such aims fit into the Programme. Each indicator has a code, a name, a measurement unit, a milestone and a target. If the operation does not fit with any of the output indicators under the SO being targeted by this Call, the operation is probably not suitable for EU funding since it does not fit the objectives that the Programme wishes to achieve.

2. Take time to **establish realistic targets** that can be achieved as part of the milestone targets (end 2024) and upon full project implementation **and/or** by the end of year 2029. It is advisable that applicants neither 'over' nor 'under' set their indicator targets. Over-setting may create a situation where an operation does not reach its committed targets. On the other hand, under-setting will give a poor indication of the actual added value to be created by the operation, which may in certain cases affect the scores achieved by the operation during the Project Selection Committee (PSC). When setting milestone (2024) targets, consider a timeline to map out the expected stage of implementation of the operation by the end of the year 2024, creating a contingency for potential delays that may be experienced by then. Based on the expected stage of implementation by the end of 2024, the operation should commit to a partial indicator value, achievable by the end of 2024. This value will be a fraction of the overall value to be achieved by the end of the operation/end of 2029.The target value to be achieved at the end of the year 2029 will therefore include in cumulative form the milestone already achieved in 2024. **Documenting the methodology used to calculate the target setting will prove useful** during the operation's implementation. Applicants are encouraged to include this information in the Application Form, under the relevant Indicator section and the quality and reliability of such methodology is also assessed at PSC stage.

3. Ensure that the output indicators being chosen are calculated using the **measurement unit** established within the Programme. The indicator code and indicator name cannot be modified.

4. Elaborate a **clear and detailed methodology** which will be adopted during the course of the operation's implementation **to calculate the progress of the output indicator**. Indeed, whilst the project will commit towards a target to be reached by 2024 and later, by the end of the operation and/or by the end of the year 2029, data on the progress of the output indicator/s will be reported to the MA in a staggered approach during the course of the operation's implementation. Beneficiaries will be expected to report at least **bi-annually progress on indicators,** this in view of the Programme reporting obligations. It is important that the methodology chosen to calculate and/or source the indicator/s is readily available or can be made available, as and whenever requested by the MA or other entities involved in the implementation or auditing of EU funds.

5. Lastly, identify the **supporting documentation** that will be provided to the MA and other entities working on monitoring and evaluation of EU funds during the course of implementation, as applicable, depending on the nature of the indicator. Any indicator that is reported to the MA needs to be backed up by supporting documentation. Such documentation provides **evidence** of the indicator value reached (whether partially or in whole).

Applicants are to note that Steps 1 to 5 are to be followed for EACH indicator chosen. A general methodology covering several indicators is therefore not acceptable. EACH indicator needs to have a clear and separate methodology explaining its target setting; methodology detailing its achievement during the course of implementation; and the supporting documentation to be provided as proof of the indicator value being reported, as applicable. Applicants should keep in mind coherence with other sections of the application in terms of implementation status of the respective work packages and their activities.

4. Result Indicators

Result indicators measure the direct **impact/change** resulting from the interventions being funded through the Programme vis-à-vis the national context. Whilst output indicators are a measure of what was 'created' as a direct result of the intervention, result indicators focus more on the overall effects of the operations. Result indicators therefore tend to measure broader and more macro issues, such as a change in air quality levels, or a change in unemployment levels as a direct result of an operation. Similar to output indicators, result indicators may either be common or programme-specific.

Result indicators are therefore similarly linked to the implementation of operations and are to be achieved by the end of the operation and/or by the end of the year 2029. Each applicant needs to include a minimum of one result indicator as part of the project Application Form. To this end, Steps 1 to 5 that have been presented in the section 'output indicators' apply equally to the result indicators, with the following exception:

- Unlike output indicators, **result indicators do not include milestone (2024) targets**. Step 2 therefore is only applicable for the 2029 target setting.

Depending on the indicator and its methodology, the achieved values for result indicators will be collected either: 1) during implementation; 2) upon completion of the operation; or 3) within specific timeframes linked directly to the completion/termination of a participant's participation in an ESF-supported project, such as the participant's status at 4 weeks, 6 months or 12 months after, as an example.

5. Understanding the Indicator Targets Set in the Programme

Whilst each respective operation will be expected to contribute to an output and a result indicator/s on an individual basis, the Programme indicator targets reflect the **cumulative target to be achieved by the various operations** financed under a particular SO. For both output and result indicators, the MA thus aggregates the indicator values achieved by each operation in order to then achieve the Programme's targets.

In this regard, Beneficiaries have a collective responsibility in ensuring that the committed targets for their respective operations are achieved, for Malta to successfully reach the Programme's indicator targets.

6. Indicators Definition

As previously indicated, every project funded through the ESF+ programme should contribute towards at least one output and one result indicator from those listed in Malta's ESF+ Programme under the relevant Priority and SO. Applicants should provide information on the selected indicators in terms of their quantification and verification planned mechanisms in the application form. When setting indicator targets to be reached by the operation, beneficiaries are to base themselves on a unique number of participants per operation. On the other hand, given that certain operations may allow for a participant to participate more than once in the same operation or its sub-activities, (hereinafter referred to as 'repeat participants'), the number of repeat participants per operation should be presented under the 'Indicator Quantification' section of the Application Form, if and as applicable. The total number of participants inclusive of repeat participants would therefore represent a higher number than the actual indicator target and would be an important means of demonstrating the intensity of the activity and the linked budget item. When inserting indicator target figures for these indicators in the application form, the applicant is reminded that these are binding, and failure to meet these commitments upon project completion may result in funds being withdrawn.

The list of indicators tied to Priority 2, SO 4.11: *Enhancing the equal and timely access to quality, sustainable and affordable services, including services that promote the access to housing and person-centred care including healthcare ; modernising social protection systems, including promoting access to social protection, with a particular focus on children and disadvantaged groups; improving accessibility including for persons with disabilities, effectiveness and resilience of healthcare systems and long-term care services (ESF+),* are as follows:

Output indicators (Priority 2, SO: ESO4.11)

- **EECO01[1]: Total number of participants (measurement unit: persons) -** This indicator measures the number of persons benefitting directly from an ESF+ operation, who can be identified, asked their personal data (data on participants) and for whom specific expenditure is earmarked. Other persons shall not be reported as participants.

- **PSO03: Number of non-governmental organisations supported** (measurement unit: number) – This indicator measures the number of NGOs supported through ESF+.

Applicable to output indicator EECO01:

- Output indicators represent a participant's status at entry into an ESF+ operation. The date of entry should be considered on the start date of the participant in the operation. In each case the MA data on participant form would need to be filled in at the start of such entry in the project activities by the participant; such data would be held by the beneficiary for onward transmission and further processing by the MA.

- A participant should be counted only once per project even if the same individual participates in more than one activity/sub-activity within the same operation. If a participant leaves an operation but returns at a later date to the same operation, there is still only one participation record. In this case, the participation record in relation to the participant's original start date and output indicators should always refer to the first participation and therefore should not be changed/updated upon re-entry.

- If a participant is engaged in more than one operation, then a separate participation record is needed for each operation, where the participant is to be counted as many times as the different operations he/she is participating in.

- Reporting is required by gender.

Result indicators (Priority 2, SO: ESO4.11)

- **EECR03: Participants gaining a qualification upon leaving (measurement unit: percentage)** This indicator measures the number of persons who have received ESF+ support and who gained a qualification upon leaving the ESF+ operation. Qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. Certificates of attendance/ completion should therefore not contribute to this indicator (but are to be recorded

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[1] This indicator is an overarching one thus, other indicators are all sub-sets as applicable to this indicator.

under result indicator PSR01). Where an operation has both a formal qualification and a certification, the qualification takes precedence and the record should be captured by this indicator only.

When reporting on participants who gained a qualification: - if the assessment is held within 4 weeks from completion of the operation, and the participant is successful in obtaining the qualification, then the result is to be counted towards the indicator even if it is published after the 4-week period. In case the assessment is known after the 4-week period, it is recommended to set the indicator at '0' and then update the participant's record once the result is known. In cases where the intervention has more than one module, the indicator will be recorded as at the last exit.

The results must manifest themselves and be recorded in the time span between the day the persons leave the supported operation (exit date) and the four weeks which follow this event. In terms of recording results, no difference should be made between participants who complete the intervention or leave early.

N.B.: When submitting the Application Form, aapplicants are requested to provide the target **percentage** expected to be successfully reached by their project. The target percentage is to be calculated on the total number of expected participants relevant to this result indicator which is estimated to be contributing to this indicator. On the other hand, upon project approval and implementation, any reporting to the Managing Authority regarding the **achieved values for this indicator** is to be made in terms of **absolute number of persons**. This value will then be used by the Managing Authority to calculate the **percentage achieved**.

- **PSR01: Participants gaining a certification upon leaving (measurement unit: percentage)** This indicator measures the number of persons who have received ESF+ support and who gained an assessment / certification (including certificates of attendance) upon leaving the ESF+ operation in relation to non-accredited courses (i.e. courses that are not necessarily recognised by an education and training licensing body).
  The results must manifest themselves and be recorded in the time span between the day the persons leave the supported operation (exit date) and the four weeks which follow this event. In terms of recording results, no difference should be made between participants who complete the intervention or leave early.When setting the target for this indicator, the applicant is expected to include the method of quantification used to arrive to the target value included in the application.
  A certification is obtained when an individual participates in ESF+ support measures which is not accredited or part of an industry-recognised qualification. Beneficiaries should ensure that for those courses which lead to a formal qualification and include also a certificate of attendance, the participant result is ONLY captured under ONE of these two result indicators as applicable.

- **PSR03: Improved/Introduced new systems/services** (measurement unit: number) – This indicator measures the number of systems/services which are either new or were improved and contribute towards strengthened systems and structures. Each improved / introduced system / service should count as 1.

Applicable to all the above result indicators, except PSR03:

- If a participant leaves an operation but returns at a later date to the same operation there is still one participation record. In this case, the existing participation record should be updated in relation to the result indicators. The participation record relating to the start date and the output indicators should always refer to the first participation and therefore should not be changed/updated upon re-entry.

- If a participant is engaged in more than one operation, then a separate participation record is

needed for each operation, where the participant is to be counted as many times as the different operations he/she is participating in.

▪ Reporting is required by gender.

Beyond the above listed indicators which are included in Malta's ESF+ Operational Programme and are specific to this Call's Priority and Specific Objective, additional data needs to be collected for a number of common output and result indicators. For the Managing Authority to be able to report on these common indicators, specific data needs to be collected by each ESF+ project beneficiary. The list of 'additional' common indicators is provided in Annex I of the ESF+ Regulation (EU) No 2021/1057, which is being reproduced for ease of reference, as follows:

It is to be noted that the following list of common indicators is being shared for information purposes, so that applicants are aware of the data reporting obligations linked to project implementation. The guidance and information that has been provided under sections 3, 4 and 5 of this document apply exclusively to the output and result indicators presented under section 6 (i.e.; the output and result indicators contained in Malta's ESF+ Programme), and do not apply to the following indicators (such as in terms of target setting).

COMMON INDICATORS FOR GENERAL SUPPORT FROM THE ESF+ STRAND UNDER SHARED MANAGEMENT

1. Common output indicators related to operations targeting people
    1.1. Common output indicators for participants are:
        — unemployed, including long-term unemployed
        — long-term unemployed,
        — inactive
        — employed, including self-employed
        — number of children below 18 years of age
        — young people between 18 and 29 years of age
        — number of participants of 55 years of age and above
        — with lower secondary education or less (ISCED 0-2)
        — with upper secondary (ISCED 3) or post-secondary education (ISCED 4)
        — with tertiary education (ISCED 5 to 8)
        — total number of participants

    1.2. Other common output indicators for participants are:
        — participants with disabilities
        — third-country nationals
        — participants with a foreign background
        — minorities (including marginalised communities, such as Roma people)
        — homeless or affected by housing exclusion
        — participants from rural areas

For indicators listed under 1.2, data collection is necessary only where applicable and relevant. Values of the indicators listed under point 1.2 can be determined based on informed estimates provided by the beneficiary. For indicators listed under point 1.2 Member States may apply national definitions, except for the following indicators: 'third-country nationals' and 'participants from rural areas'.

2. Common output indicators for entities are:

    — number of supported public administrations or public services at national, regional or local level,
    — number of supported micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (including cooperative enterprises and social enterprises).

3. The common immediate result indicators for participants are:

— participants engaged in job searching upon leaving
— participants in education or training upon leaving
— participants gaining a qualification upon leaving
— participants in employment, including self-employment, upon leaving

4. Common longer-term result indicators for participants
   Common longer-term result indicators for participants are:
   — participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving,
   — participants with an improved labour market situation six months after leaving.

As a minimum requirement, common longer-term indicators for participants shall be based on a representative sample of participants.

Within the context of monitoring, evaluation and financial control, applicants are reminded that all projects are subject to **audits and evaluations** by both local and EC auditors and programme evaluators. Officials from the MA and other horizontal stakeholders will also have rights of access to the project, to all relevant documentation and to the organisation implementing the project (known as the Beneficiary) and will carry out "Checks" (administrative, physical and documentary) as enshrined in Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 and Regulation (EU) 2021/1057, with specific reference to CHAPTER III ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation to establish that sufficient progress is being made in line with the EU Funds grant and that the Beneficiary has put in place systems of management and control that ensure the efficient implementation of the project in line with the relevant Rules and Regulations. In line with the provisions of Regulation(EU) 2021/1060 and Regulation 2021/1057, with specific reference to CHAPTER III ESF+ support for addressing material deprivation access to all relevant documentation shall also be required by the MA, or the EC, in order to carry out Programme or Project evaluations, as required by the Regulation, monitoring obligations, and as determined by the MA's Evaluation Plan.

The applicant organisation should note that if the project is accepted, the Applicant will be automatically giving his/her consent to have all the documents and data related to the project, (including invoices, receipts and documents related to contracts and linked processes etc.) made available to all the relevant stakeholders including third party evaluators and auditors involved in the structural fund system (in line with the functions and responsibilities outlined in the Manual of Procedures for Structural Funds). The Managing Authority reminds the Applicant that it is the responsibility of the Applicant to inform any third parties that all data and information relating to the project will be shared, processed and stored in accordance with the relevant regulations and in adherence to **Data Protection regulations**.

7. Other Notes

When compiling and gathering data for the indicators, the necessary audit trail should always be in place. **Applicants should note that failure to deliver on the agreed indicators could result in EU Funds being withdrawn and/or reimbursed in part or in whole by the Beneficiary.**