

MULTI-ANNUAL PROGRAMME 2007-13
EXTERNAL BORDERS FUND

MEMBER STATE Republic of Malta

This document represents Malta's Multi Annual Programme 2007 - 2013 for the External Borders Fund, intended for implementation between the programming period commencing the 1st January 2007.

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1. SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATE

Introduction

The Republic of Malta (Maltese: *Repubblika ta' Malta*), is a small and densely populated island nation comprising an archipelago of seven islands, the largest three (Malta, Gozo, Comino) of which are inhabited. It is located in the Mediterranean Sea in Southern Europe, just 93 km (58 mi) south of the Italian island of Sicily and 288 km (179 mi) from the North African coast. The area of the islands amounts to 316 squared kilometers, with a population density of 1,282 inhabitants per squared kilometer. The 196.8km long coastline (does not include the coastline of Gozo, which is 56.01km) is highly indented and characterized by numerous bays. The south-west of Malta's coastline is however made up of steep cliffs and rocky inshores.

Malta's geographic position in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea has over the years attributed to it strategic importance for the security of the region and Europe. Following Malta's accession to the European Union its importance has resurfaced as a prospective guardian of the EU's Southern border, along with other Mediterranean EU States, particularly in relation to the persistent illegal immigration phenomenon pushed by the situation in East Africa and other regions. External border management, and the availability of sufficient resources for Maltese authorities to effectively control the borders, is therefore of particular importance not only to Malta but also to Europe as a whole.

A central element of European Union membership is the free circulation of persons and goods between member states, and the dismantling of the internal borders. However, the EU also needs "to prevent illegal migration, counter human trafficking and protect its external borders". In view of this, any border strategy devised by Member States implies national responsibility towards the Community, and in this respect, there are shared benefits in enabling the free mobility and circulation of persons and goods. Yet, maintaining efficient border controls and management systems in order to prevent trans-border crime, and protect human rights and freedoms is also a burden. In this scenario, despite its small size, position and limited resources, Malta is expected to ensure that border control and security remains effective at all times. However, practical support by the EU institutions through the appropriate instruments, as well as by the Member States, is considered a key factor towards success.

1.1. National Situation and migratory flows affecting it.

In Malta, a number of entities are involved to various degrees in the checks and surveillance that are carried out at border crossing points. These entities include the Police Immigration Section, the Armed Forces of Malta and the Customs Department. It should be noted that the role of the Armed Forces of Malta in border control is in no way of a military nature. Details of the role and legal status of the AFM in relation to border control are given below.

Border Control

Malta has a single air border entry point and two main sea ports, including one terminal complex for seaborne and cruise liner passengers and the Malta Freeport for cargo shipping. Additionally, two yacht marinas (including a seasonal marina at the sister island of Gozo) are also present

The border control points are therefore the following:

Seaports (2) – Valletta International Sea Terminals (VISET), the Malta Freeport (cargo),

- Yacht marinas

Airport (1)– Malta International Airport (MIA)

In Malta, responsibility for border control lies with the Immigration Section within the Malta Police Force, whereas offshore sea and air border surveillance is carried out by the Air Wing and Maritime Squadron of the Armed Forces of Malta.

The tasks and activities of the *Police Immigration Section*, which falls within the remit of the Assistant Commissioner for the Special Branch, include:

- Checks at entry points (airport / seaport / yacht marinas);
- Immigration Investigations and Field Operations;
- Surveillance and immigration checks;
- Risk Analysis;
- Administration of the alien-related duties in coordination with Citizenship and Expatriates Affairs Department and the Employment and Training Corporation;
- Repatriation of third country nationals;
- Co-ordination with Frontex;
- EURODAC administration;
- Consular liaison; and
- Other Immigration related duties;

Border Control activities are carried out at the Airport, the Seaport and Yacht Marinas. Moreover, Immigration field duties are undertaken as necessary. The Immigration section at Malta International Airport (MIA) is composed of both police and civilian employees¹ while the Seaport (sea passenger terminal) and the Yacht Marinas are manned solely by police Immigration officers who are specifically trained to carry out border control activities.

¹ Civilian Immigration Officers support Police Immigration Officers, and generally carry out all duties as their police counterparts, without however having executive powers.

Schengen-trained Immigration Officers ascertain that the main principles of border checks and controls are accurately carried out in respect of the relative provisions of the Agreement implementing the Schengen Convention.

Maltese Immigration authorities control and enforce immigration regulations and investigate violations relating to civil (e.g., the conditions of admission) or criminal provisions (e.g., trafficking). Immigration officers carry out admission, exit or refusal procedures such as checking visas and travel documents, conduct stay control, and clearance checks in relation to nationality, work and residence permits and on transit and tranship visas for seamen. Immigration authorities combat document fraud, and initiate judicial proceedings.

A Police Investigative Section has been set up to investigate and prosecute immigration related offences; collate immigration-related information and collaborate with EU counterparts; assist with repatriation efforts and related escorts; conduct patrols, inspections and border surveillance as necessary; and assist foreign visiting investigative officers on immigration matters.

Mobile patrols reinforce border control capacity on land and from land and complement border surveillance of the coast. The Administrative Law Enforcement Unit, a police specialised branch, carries out inshore patrol by sea craft in port areas.

The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) is the sole entity involved in maritime border control and operations are conducted in close cooperation with the Police Immigration Department who are responsible for any eventual legal action. It has to be stressed that the Armed Forces of Malta carries out these tasks due to the limited resources available and in no way do they derive from the military nature of the entity.

The AFM has been assigned legal powers of Police and Customs officers by Subsidiary Legislation 220.06² and has been recognized by the European Commission as fulfilling the role of Border Police or Coastguard through the Council Conclusions of June 2007. Furthermore, the role of AFM in border control was approved by the Schengen Evaluation Team (February 2007). AFM are also the Competent Authority in terms of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Convention of 1979 and is responsible to provide search and rescue services in aid of all persons in distress at sea in the Malta Search and Rescue Region, in line with Article 98 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1979 SAR Convention.

Coast Guard duties related to maritime border surveillance, search and rescue, protection and security of all coastal, territorial waters and internal waters are assigned to the Maritime Squadron and Air Wing. The Maritime Squadron provides inshore, coastal and offshore surface assets, while the Air Wing provides both rotary wing and fixed wing air assets. Both maritime and air wing equipment is utilized for operational taskings by the Head Quarters of AFM.

The main challenges of maritime border control are the major flow of illegal migrants from North Africa to Europe in small to medium, overloaded crafts which are very often un-seaworthy resulting in a Migrant Rescue Operations (MRO).

² Vide Annex 1 for extract of legislation.

Visas

The entity responsible for the issuing of Schengen visas and for the implementation of VIS is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA). Two units within this Ministry are specifically responsible for carrying out the related tasks. A Central Visa Unit was approved by Cabinet in 2004 and was set up in 2007. The terms of reference of this Unit are in accordance with Article 17 of the Schengen Convention and is responsible for the Visa policy implementation and Visa Management System. Furthermore, the Information Management Unit (IMU) within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is responsible for all IT- and network related matters as well as training and technical support of consular/visa officials at Malta's missions abroad. The IMU is also responsible for information security implementation within Malta's missions abroad.

Malta's missions abroad have technically been prepared and their IT systems upgraded in preparation for the connection to VIS. Indeed they have been connected to centrally managed N-VIS, located within the remit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which also have the general authority to enter and retrieve information from the system. The Ministry for Justice & Home Affairs (MJHA), through the Police Authorities have access to N-VIS at the border control points. Malta's Visa Management System (N-VIS) is a web-browser driven application and is accessed via intranet by all of Malta's diplomatic missions and consular posts. These are connected to the Malta Government Network (MAGNET) via a VPN connection. However, the IT-systems currently in place are not capable of capturing biometric data. All consulates are equipped with the Visa Management System and the visa issuing process is as stipulated in the Schengen recommendations (vide Section Visa Issuing Procedures). As far as the system is concerned, the Visa Management System is used in the VISION consultation process where other member states are consulted prior visa issuing (as per Annex 5 of the Common Consular Instructions). The N-VIS is currently being adopted in order to enable it to interface with the C-VIS.

In May 2004, Malta introduced visa stickers with security features in full conformity with EU specifications laid down by the Council Regulation (EC) No 1683/95 of the 29th May 1995 and as amended by Council Regulation (EC) No 334/2002 of the 18th February 2002. The new visa stickers not only have the possibility of integrating a photograph but, they also conform to the supplementary secret technical specifications intended to prevent visa counterfeiting and falsification. The uniform Visa Application Form was introduced in May 2004, and is in full conformity with the specifications laid down by Council Regulation (EC) 354/2002 of 25th April 2002. Visa application forms are available in four (4) languages, these being: English/French, English/Arabic, English/Russian and English/Chinese, complying with the specifications laid down by Council Regulation (EC) 354/2002. Since Schengen membership in 2007/8, Malta has been able to issue Schengen Visas from its embassies.

To date Malta has 27 missions distributed in EU MS and in third countries. Representation in the latter is limited and consular agreements are made, as indicated below, in order to increase Malta's consular representation. Indeed, in line with the need to align Malta's visa policy with that of the European Union, efforts have also been made in order to strengthen Malta's network of diplomatic missions and consular posts. This serves also to maximize representation, especially in light of Article 1.2 of the Common Consular Instructions, which facilitates the issuance of visas by another Member State in third countries, where Malta has no representation. Since 2004, Malta successfully concluded two bilateral agreements³. The first, signed with Austria in May 2004, brought about the possibility for third-country nationals residing in 28 countries, to apply for a

³ In addition, in the first months of 2008 another consular agreement has been signed with Spain..

Malta visa from the Austrian Consulates. The second, signed with Italy in October 2005, brought about the possibility for third-country nationals residing in a further 47 countries to apply for a Malta visa from the Italian Consulates.⁴ Malta's existing scenario, therefore, is that in addition to its 7 diplomatic missions⁵ and consular posts, in those states listed in Regulation 539, Malta has to-date expanded its consular coverage from 5% to 43% with the addition of 57 third countries.

Missions in Tripoli, Tunis, Cairo, Beijing, Moscow and Riyadh are considered high-risk, also due to the high volume of applications they are required to process. Such missions are consequently characterized by an elevated level of security. Security equipment in these missions include secure counters, CCTV systems, safe, access control, alarms etc. Indeed a sample of Malta's high risk consulates⁶ have successfully passed the Schengen Evaluations, and were considered secure and up to the required standards to issue Schengen visas. In other missions, which receive a much smaller level of visa applications and where the risks of illegal immigration are much lower, (these constitute roughly two-thirds of all the consulates), a varying degree of security features are present. All are however equipped with basic security equipment.

Visa Issuing Procedure

The Visa issuing procedure is in line with EC regulations and Schengen recommendations. Visa applications are received at the consular offices, where interviews are also carried out. The information and supporting documents are entered in the N-VIS and are verified. Police authorities then check the application against SIS+ and other national databases⁷. The embassy where the application had been lodged is informed of the findings and the consul accepts/refuses the application according to their recommendations. In cases where the applicant of the visa is a citizen of a country listed in Annex 5 of the CCI, and in case no objections are raised by the Police Authorities at their level of control, VISION consultation is carried out with the EU MS as indicated in the Annex. A decision is taken by the mission based on the recommendation of the Police authorities and VISION consultation.

In cases of applications for visas submitted at Malta's representation (through Italy, Austria and from 2008, Spain as described in more detail above) the first level verification of information and documentation is carried out by the representing country. VISION consultation follows through the CVU, together with counterchecking by Police authorities. On the recommendation of the findings of these consultations the CVU advises the representing country whether to issue or otherwise the visa.

⁴ In the opening months of 2008 Malta has also concluded another consular agreement with Spain.

⁵ . In July 2005, Malta had declared 5 missions on the basis that these were the top visa-issuing missions, as per provisions of Article 3 of Council document ST 10209 05REV1. These missions were based in Libya, Tunisia, China, Russia and Egypt. In addition to these, the Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs have indicated the consulates based in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (as per information provided in the statistics for the External Borders Fund.)

⁶ Schengen Evaluations have been carried out in Tunis, Tripoli and Moscow during 2007.

⁷ It should be noted that Police (Immigration Section) have access to search VIS for immigration control purposes.

Statistics on Visas

YEAR	TOTAL A, B, C VISAS APPLIED FOR	TOTAL A,B,C VISAS ISSUED	TOTAL A,B,C VISAS NOT ISSUED	D VISAS ISSUED	TOTAL LTV ISSUED	'D+C' VISAS ISSUED	GRAND TOTAL A,B,C, LTV, 'D+C' VISAS ISSUED
2005	19914	18265	1524	-	-	-	18265
2006	14779	14120	746	134	-	-	14120
2007	15355	14507	848	255	53	0	14507

Consular officials which issue visas at Malta's missions abroad are trained in various skills, which enable them to efficiently and effectively carry out their tasks. Maltese officials deployed abroad are given the necessary training before placement while local staff is trained by visiting technical persons from the Information Management Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The training programme, of an average duration of one week, includes training on visa procedures, use of VIS, capture and processing of biometric data, identification of false documents and interviewing skills. Training on the latter and in the detection of falsified documents is carried out in conjunction with the Malta police Force (National Document Examination centre)

Illegal Immigration

Malta's location amid maritime illegal immigration routes is characterized by incessant flows of irregular migrants crossing to Europe from North Africa. Migrants of different nationalities therefore find their way into Malta without visas or other identification documents in search of a better life or protection.

Insofar as Malta is concerned, the illegal immigration phenomenon increased significantly in prominence since 2002. Since then Malta has faced a steady increase in irregular migrants by boat, which phenomenon presents a challenge for the control and management of the border. At the same time the detection of persons illegally present or attempting to cross illegally the different Border Control Points (BCPs) and related repatriation efforts further add to the strain on the infrastructure, human resources and finances. Malta therefore carries a considerable burden, particularly when considering that a significant proportion of the illegal immigrants who end up in Malta are rescued at sea within the country's Search and Rescue Region (SAR) (Figure 1).

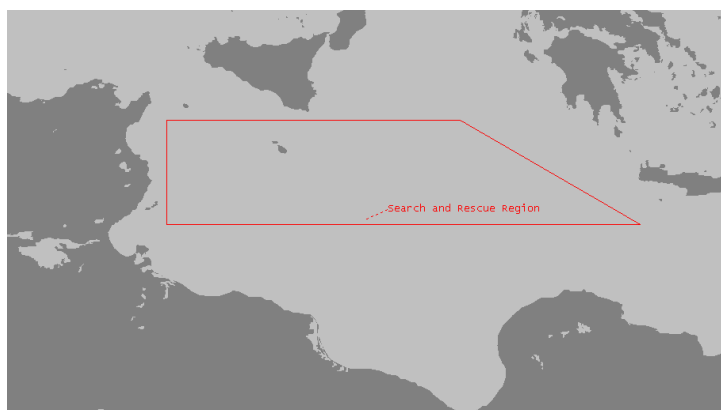
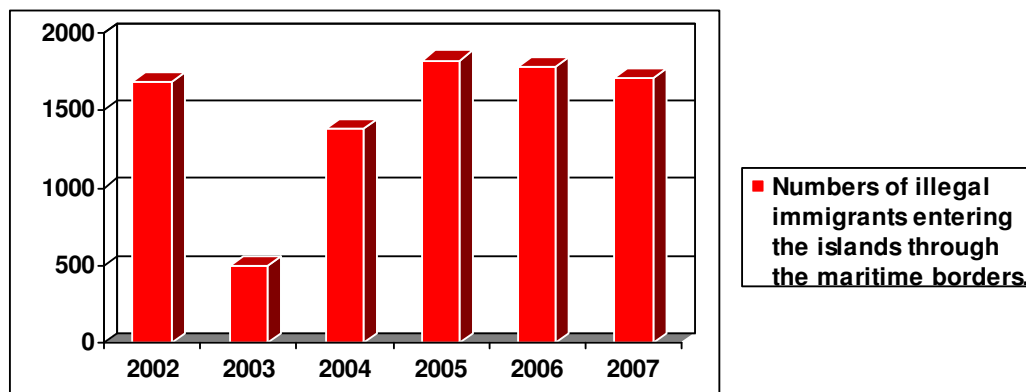


Figure 1 – Maltese Search and Rescue Region

In the last years, the operational and financial pressure in relation to SAR activities has put Malta's resources to severe strain to cope continuously with the exponential growth of distress calls coming from illegal migrants in dangerously small sea craft in the SAR zone (see Figure 1)

Since the year 2002 a total of 8872 seafaring illegal immigrants mostly from Africa ended in Malta on their way to Italy from the North African coast. Most of the immigrants are rescued in international waters and escorted to Malta in response to distress calls as they attempt to cross the Mediterranean on overcrowded boats. The yearly figures for the last six years are as follows: 2002 (1686); 2003 (502); 2004 (1388); 2005 (1822); 2006 (1780); 2007 (1702).



Legal Flows of persons

Border crossings via the national border crossing points indicate a sustained flow across the air borders, through the Malta International Airport. In view of Malta's insularity as an island, the air border remains the most important gate for flow of persons from/to other Member States and third countries. Meanwhile, sea passenger movements have steadily increased as Malta has, and, continues to experience a particular boost in its cruise liner tourism. The Sea Passenger Terminal in Valletta is the official sea border crossing point, with facilities catering for receiving flows of persons from both cruise liners and ferry boats. The Valletta International Sea Terminals (VISET), a public liability company, has been granted an operational license by the government and is thus the entity authorized to operate the passenger handling facilities at this terminal. VISET works in close liaison with the Police Immigration Section in order to fulfill structural and operational requirements linked to border control. Border control tasks as such, however, remain the responsibility of the Police Immigration Section.

The below data gives an indication of the legal flow of persons crossing via the sea and air border crossing points.

Air Passenger Movements (excl. transit and domestic)			
Year	From & to EU, EEA, CH	From & to Other countries	Totals
2004	2,529,168	221,891	2,751,059
2005	2,528,078	225,494	2,753,572
2006	2,480,091	215,503	2,696,034
Source : MIA Annual Reports			

Sea Passenger Movements (excl. transit and domestic)		
Year	Cruise Liners	Ferry Boats
2004	291,821	185,290
2005	320,263	164,574
2006	408,264	195,346

The removal of Malta's internal borders with other EU Member States in view of its entry into the Schengen zone has meant that it has become a more important hub and entry point into the EU from third countries. This it is envisaged to result in a surge in the flow of persons crossing the external air and sea border crossing points.

1.2 The measures undertaken by the Member State so far

The patrolling and management of the maritime borders against entry of illegal immigrants by sea has had to be prioritized in the last years, as a result of the exponential growth in illegal immigration through this border. A number of policy and operational measures have been adopted in order to ensure a response which, while ensuring that the safety of human life remains of paramount concern, adequately allows Malta to address the security and border-control concerns as well. Policy-wise Malta has taken the position that any incident at sea where human life is at risk will initially be treated as a pure Search and Rescue case, regardless of the provenance and legal status of the individuals involved. This position is fully in line with all international obligations generated by international legal instruments to which Malta is a signatory. Only when the individuals involved have been brought to a place of safety will their legal status be taken into consideration.

A number of operational measures have been implemented in support of this policy. The operational profile of maritime and air-assets has been elevated in order to provide the best situational awareness of the maritime domain. In the year 2006 maritime assets spent in excess of 12,000 hours in operation while air assets flew a total of 1,380 missions. Attaining these levels has partly been the product of better management of existing resources, but has also required substantial procurement activities of new resources as well as enhancements to existing platforms. In fact procurement in the period 2002-2006 directed at enhancing air and maritime capabilities has exceeded Euro 25 million. A further step taken to enhance Malta's maritime domain awareness has been the implementation of shore-based surveillance measures designed at ensuring that migrant craft are intercepted prior to making landfall. This ensures a more controlled entry of the persons into Maltese territory as well as avoiding incidents where attempted disembarkation over rough coastlines results in fatalities.

Another point of major significance are the co-operative measures being implemented by the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) in partnership with the authorities from other Member States, generally with the involvement of the FRONTEX Agency. Participation in the European Patrol Network as well as various other joint operations have been undertaken during the current year (2007), including NAUTILUS II, which took place in the waters south of Malta, and POSEIDON, which will see Maltese air assets being offered in support of Hellenic Coastguard operations in the Aegean. These cooperative measures are considered to be a critical form of solidarity between those states most affected by the issue of irregular migration at sea. Participation has, however, put the already limited resources under even more strain and has highlighted the operational limitations of some platforms when required to deploy over long ranges for extended periods.

All these activities have been underpinned by an extensive training effort. Primarily this is to ensure that personnel involved in the surveillance of blue borders are fully aware of the legislative backdrop against which such operations take place. Furthermore this training ensures that appropriate operational techniques, which are in line with those outlined in the Schengen Catalogue are implemented and that all technical means being used in the control of these

borders have the appropriate technical support thus ensuring the sustainability of such measures. The AFM has indeed availed itself of training activities on surveillance and maritime border control, as well as several training programmes through FRONTEX (a full list is provided in Annex 2).

On the level of the control of legal flows of persons, massive activities were undertaken prior to accession in 2004, to align the procedures and practices followed with those of the European Union. However, the workload on the national immigration authorities has increased during the last years. Preparations for joining and implementing the Schengen Acquis have put additional strain on the authorities managing the official air and sea Border Crossing Points. Activities are ongoing for the continuous organisation of better border management of the external borders in line with the Schengen Border Code, the Practical Handbook for Border Guards and other community legislation. In particular, immigration and border control officers have been trained on the activities connected to these and actions expected of them. Training of personnel took place under a Twinning light programme which focused on the provision of assistance for the effective implementation of the Schengen Acquis. Further training was undertaken by SIRENE officers, who participated in three study visits in Italy, Sweden and Austria. These study visits, which aimed at fulfilling the recommendations following the Schengen Evaluation Committee included hands on training in order for staff to familiarise themselves with the SIS1+ system. Moreover, during February 2008, other SIRENE officers participated in two study visits held in Italy and Luxembourg.

With regards to the management of flows of persons at the border crossing points, works have been undertaken at the airport and seaport facilities, in order to have the necessary infrastructure in line with Schengen requirements. The layout of the existing arrival and departure lounges at Malta International Airport was modified, in order to separately manage the flow of passengers arriving from Schengen and non-Schengen countries. The sea passenger terminal, Valetta International Sea Terminal (VISET) has similarly upgraded its infrastructure and work flow, in line with the Schengen acquis.

Another very important aspect of Malta's preparation to lift the internal borders with the rest of the Schengen zone by the end of 2007 was the putting in operation the 'SIS one 4 all' system. This refers to the Portuguese system that had to be adopted by all new member states as a temporary replacement of the second generation Schengen Information System, as was agreed in December 2006 by the JHA Council of Ministers. Malta has successfully passed all testing and evaluations and was able to join the system in time.

These actions are strengthened by the continuous cooperation between the different authorities that are involved in border control particularly the Police Immigration Section, the Customs Department, the Armed Forces of Malta, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the authorities in charge of the Airport and the Seaport. There is continuous exchange of information between all parties concerned thus ensuring enhanced planning and coordination during the execution required for effective border management, in order to maximize the effectiveness of operations. The development of an integrated border management system, upon which work is ongoing, should assist in further bolstering cooperation between these entities.

1.3 The total National resources allocated.

Understandably, for Europe's smallest nation, human, financial and material resources are very limited and the Government seeks to derive best benefit from the available assets at its disposal. In a scenario where the demands created by the massive immigration activities have increased steeply, the sharing of responsibilities is the optimum response to adequately address all the needs arising in this context.

Malta Police Force (Immigration Section)

The Commissioner of Police is appointed by the Prime Minister of Malta as the Principal Immigration Officer. The Special Branch, within the Malta Police Force (the only police force in Malta) comprises the Immigration Department, which deals with visa issues, work permits, border control as well as other related administrative and field duties. Police Immigration inspectors assist the Principal Immigration Officer and are duly authorized by him to exercise or perform on his behalf any powers or duties under the Immigration Act (Cap.217)⁸. The Police Immigration Officers are supported by Civilian Immigration Officers, who generally carry out all duties as their police counterparts, but do not have executive powers.

The complement of Police and Civilian Immigration Officers employed at the border entry points are explained in the table below. They are further backed by other supporting services within the Police Force who are periodically deployed according to arising needs.

Immigration Officers	Police	Civilian
Malta International Airport	23	66
Seaport / Yacht Marina	24	Nil

Currently, all officers at border crossing-points at airport and harbours have access to the national stop list database (PISCES) from check point desks. Passport scanning facilities are also available. With regard to terminals for consulting SIS (fixed or mobile), all border crossing-point desks will be fully equipped to access the SIS I+ and national databases and will eventually be able to consult SISII.

With regard to equipment for checking documents, at first line checking-points, each check point desk at border crossing-points is equipped with retro check viewers (U.V. light and transmitted light source incorporated). Second line offices at the airport and seaport are equipped with a Video Spectral Comparator (VSC) 4 and a Leica microscope. As a third line checking-point, there is the National Document Unit, equipped with a VSC 2000, high power microscope, ESDA, Raman Spectral Comparator, Photo-phone, Scanners as well as Retro Check viewers.

Apart from this equipment, the Immigration Section (Special Branch) of the Malta Police Force does not own extensive resources. Indeed, as indicated above, it shares some resources with the Administrative Law Enforcement Unit and other police units. With the aim of enhancing its operations it is intended that the Immigration Section (Special Branch) strongly beefs up its limited resources.

⁸ The Immigration Act (Cap 217) aims to restrict, control and regulate immigration into Malta and to make provision for matters ancillary thereto.

The Armed Forces of Malta

The Sea Border is controlled by officers from the Maritime Unit of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM). Officers from the Maritime Unit of the AFM enjoy very close co-operation with the Police Immigration Section in relation to illegal immigration. The Maritime Unit is composed of 220 officers. The air-wing is manned by a total of 97 officers.

Operations are carried out using a combination of air and maritime assets which are: 2 offshore fixed-wing aircrafts, 4 light fixed-wing aircrafts, 3 helicopters, coastal, medium and offshore patrol vessels and coastal radar and CCTV network. The Maritime Operational Means are:

- Modified Diciotti Class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV)
- Protector Class Coastal Patrol Boats (CPB)
- Inshore Patrol Boats (IPB)
- SAR Launches; and
- Interception craft.

The Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) are based on the ITCG Diciotti class as well as the two Protector Class Coastal Patrol Boats (CPB), which are identical to those of the United States Coast Guard and allow the maritime squadron to operate anywhere within the Search and Rescue region up to a Sea State 5. While further inshore, Inshore Patrol Boats (IPB), conduct operations both in the surveillance and rescue roles. Dedicated SAR launches allow the squadron to react rapidly to smaller incidents anywhere within 40-50NM of the coast.

The Air operational means are:

- ALIII Helicopters
- Bulldog Light Patrol Aircraft
- Islander Maritime Patrol Aircraft

The three Alouette ALIII helicopters have repeatedly been successful in conducting rescues in excess of 60NM from the coast, however these are hampered by the fact that they are single-engine aircrafts and thus have little safety margin in cases of technical malfunction.

The Bulldog T.Mk.1 light patrol aircraft is used in effecting coastal surveillance and searches, while for longer range operations the 2 Islander Maritime Patrol Aircraft are used. These aircrafts are capable of tasking in excess of 5 hours and have been considerably enhanced with regard to their avionics and communication systems. However, given their age they are becoming more difficult and expensive to support

An AFM watch and coordination control centre carries out maritime Search and Rescue Operations within the Maltese Search and Rescue Region by receiving incoming distress calls at sea, alerting the rescue assets, and co-ordinating rescue efforts. 50 officers man the operational centre.

Capital expenditure undertaken or committed in the period 2002-2006 to support the policing of the blue borders is as follows:

ITEM	EXPENDITURE (EURO)
Patrol Craft Offshore	17,000,000
Patrol Craft Medium	8,500,000
Patrol Craft Inshore	223,000
Helicopter Light Medium	4,700,000
Other Equipment	800,000
TOTAL	€31,223,000

Operational expenditure (not including personnel costs) for the year 2006 is as follows:

ITEM	EXPENDITURE (EURO)
Operating Costs (Maritime Assets)	800,000
Operating Costs (Air Assets)	344,000
Maintenance & Repair (Maritime Assets)	246,000
Maintenance & Repair (Air Assets)	449,000
TOTAL	€1,839,000

Visa Implementation Policy

As indicated above, visa implementation policy is primarily the responsibility of the Central Visa Unit, which falls within the remit of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This Unit has a budget of €154,000 per annum⁹ and a human resources complement of 9 persons¹⁰. In addition, as indicated above, provision of technical expertise and training of personnel is provided by the Information Management Unit (IMU) within the same Ministry. This specialized Unit is composed of 4 IT technical staff and 2 supporting administrative staff.

⁹This amount covers staff costs and operational costs.

¹⁰ The personnel is made up of a Head of Unit; Deputy Head of Unit; two visa monitoring officers; a procurement archives and information officer; and 4 supporting clerical and security staff.

2. ANALYSIS OF REQUIREMENTS IN THE MEMBER STATE

2.1. The requirements in the Member State in relation to the baseline situation

When assessing the nature of the probable migration flows for the period 2007- 2013, and in view of the sensitive geographical position of Malta, the responsibilities and obligations that come with the membership of the EU, and the adoption of the Schengen acquis, a number of requirements can be identified for the enhanced monitoring and securing of external borders.

The strongest challenge is envisaged to remain that of illegal migration by sea from the Southern Mediterranean. The impending necessity to be able to better face this challenge effectively and efficiently requires enhanced capabilities to both monitor and intervene within the substantial geographical area under the responsibility of Malta. The authority responsible for border control at sea (the Armed Forces of Malta) needs to be able to perform in a more timely and cost-effective manner. Current available air assets available to the Armed Forces of Malta offer relatively slow response times and restricted operational radii, with limited detection capabilities and meteorological envelope within which they can operate. When deployed, these assets incur a relatively high operating cost, given the dated technology they represent, a point which was even pointed out by the Schengen Evaluation Working Group for Air & Sea Borders who visited Malta in February 2007. In view of this, the AFM require more capable air assets which allow for faster, more effective response in detection, identification and coordination operations.

The enhanced abilities must address not only near-coast operations in areas of national jurisdiction, but also high seas operations both in an early warning role as well as part of cooperative measures implemented together with other EU Member States under the coordination of FRONTEX. Operationally, this requires a more deployable, cost-efficient and technology-based capability at sea and in the air; a consolidation of the underlying communications infrastructure supporting the various operational functionalities and capability of operational functionality over extended timeframes and geographical areas.

Furthermore, operational capability will be enhanced by the strengthening of the ability to conduct constant, in-depth surveillance of the coastal waters and jurisdictional areas. Currently, surveillance capabilities at sea are restricted to radar surveillance by an existing chain of radars primarily designed to fill the requirement of a Vessel Traffic System (VTS). These provide a general picture of what maritime traffic is presently in the surrounding waters but do not support detailed classification and risk assessment of the detected targets. Suspect targets detected by this system must be identified by operational assets such as aircraft and patrol vessels, which is a time consuming and expensive process. An investment in the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment for detection, identification and intervention in the case of unauthorized crossing of the southern maritime border is needed, as also clearly identified at the European level. The installation of thermal imaging cameras in selected coastal outposts would allow definitive classification of detected targets, allow for the remote monitoring of these systems from a central location and thus enable information gathered to be integrated with the general intelligence and the operational picture.

On other fronts of external border control, improvement of surveillance activities and border checks at the other official entry points (airport, sea passenger terminals and ports) are deemed necessary to be able to abide fully and effectively to the relevant Community laws. Special attention needs to be given to the strengthening of resources of the Immigration Section (Special Branch) of the Malta Police Force, in order to enhance their capability to efficiently and effectively patrol and counter illegal crossing of external borders at sea/air terminals. Human resources need to be equipped with adequate technical equipment to enhance their operational capabilities in surveillance and patrol and

ameliorate the level of border security. The limited resources indicated in the previous section are making it difficult for the Immigration Section and its personnel to perform their duties to the highest standards possible. The Immigration Section (Malta Police Force) has identified the need for acquisition of means of transport to enhance surveillance at and around border crossing points. In particular, small inshore crafts will enhance the surveillance and patrol of the areas surrounding the border crossing point at the sea terminal and for better management of inshore locations. Furthermore, the acquisition of vehicles to be used as mobile units equipped with relative border surveillance tools (such as infra-red goggles; binoculars, portable computers that can access SIS and other national databases for on-site checks, etc) is required to enable the Immigration Section to strengthen the patrol and control activities at the external border. Transportation means for the use by personnel for the transport of persons found entering the borders illegally are a constant requirement for orderly management of migration flows. It is also highly desirable that immigration officers are equipped with improved radio communication equipment to enable enhanced coordination of the various activities related to border and immigration. Further requirements of the Immigration Section include amongst others ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) to track vehicles crossing the external borders, bio-radar, equipment for strengthening examination of and detection of false travelling documents. Training on the utilisation of these new resources is envisaged, as this will ensure maximum exploitation of the capabilities provided by these investments.

Further investments are required specifically at the Sea Passenger Terminal, operated by the VISET Malta plc. This entails border crossing infrastructure for the separation of flows of persons arriving from Schengen and non-Schengen countries. Indeed most of this investment has been carried out during the year 2007 in preparation for the lifting of the internal borders on the occasion of Malta joining the Schengen zone. Further upgrading of the Sea Passenger Terminal is envisaged to continue during 2008 in order to continue to ensure a high level of management of flows of persons, in conformity with the Schengen Acquis. Investments include upgrading of signage for the separation of persons and vehicles; detectors; X-ray machine; barriers and facilities for Immigration Authorities amongst others. These investments will enhance security and organisation at the Sea Passenger Terminal to the levels and requirements of the Schengen Acquis. These investments will be supplemented by training of Sea Passenger Terminal's staff in operations at border crossing points.

The surveillance and patrol of the external borders needs to be supplemented by adequate facilities either for those intercepted after having crossed the border illegally or when approaching the external borders with a view to illegally entering the territory of the islands. In view of the challenge of illegal immigration being faced by Malta, in particular through the maritime borders, there exists the need to strengthen the accommodation facilities for these persons. The building and upgrading of areas and centres shall improve the management of the flow of persons entering the islands in an illegal manner and provide them with accommodation while their status is being considered and checks, including medical, are being carried out. Inevitably, in view of Malta's very limited resources and densely populated land mass, accommodation facilities for persons intercepted at the external borders or attempting to cross the external borders illegally reach levels of overpopulation. Constant addition of new centres is required in order to alleviate the existing overcrowding problem and provide for the accommodation of the continuous inflow of new illegal immigrants every year. The exact quantification of the number of centres/buildings that need to be refurbished/built for this purpose cannot be indicated, as it relies on the fluctuating population of immigrants. Nonetheless, in view of the trend noticed in the last years, the requirement for accommodation will remain a constant and the Maltese authorities will continuously assess the situation and carry out the necessary actions in the annual programmes.

Malta also seeks to enhance its visa issuing procedure and beef up the effort in combating illegal immigration by the use of falsified documents and misuse of visas. To this end, the consular posts necessitate the strengthening of their operational capability. Malta's consular posts may be divided in two: the high-risk/high-volume missions and the low-risk/low-volume missions. The requirements of the consular posts differ in relation to their present situation and status of preparation described. The high-risk/high-volume missions (approx. one-third of the number of the consulates) require the adaptation of the existing security features and structures as well as the development of software in order to enable them to capture biometric information. On the other hand, the lower-risk/lower-volume consulates (remaining two-thirds of consulates) will benefit from an enhancement of their security features at their premises. The prevailing conditions will be studied and enhancements will be carried out according to the specific needs of the consular posts, in order to increase the level of security.

It should be noted that the National VIS (N-VIS) is housed centrally in Malta. All missions (except for the ones still to be set up) and air and sea border crossing points are currently connected to the government network and are therefore able to connect to the N-VIS. The next step is to integrate the N-VIS to the central EU VIS (C-VIS). This shall be done at a central level, which essentially means that all missions will have immediate access. What is now required is, apart from the improvement in the structural and security levels at the missions, hardware and software in order to eventually allow also such posts to be able to capture biometric data in line with the regional approach being adopted by the EU, and transfer such data to the central N-VIS, which in turn will transfer it to the C-VIS.

As for the BCP's, as indicated these have already been connected to the N-VIS out of national funds. What is now required is that one interface be set up to search in the various databases. This will facilitate and speed up the work of the border guards and reduce waiting time for travellers. Additionally, the authorities have already carried out the necessary preparations to allow for the use of VIS for the issuance of visas at the BCP's in exceptional cases (in line with Council Regulation 415/2003).

Furthermore, training requirements at the consular posts are ongoing, both for new recruits and for the continuous professional development of experienced staff. The training programme indicated on pg7 will be continued, and will be supplemented by training on the new technologies and systems that will be introduced along the years.

In relation to the implementation of the Information Technology arm of the Schengen Agreement, the next step for Malta is to continue to update and strengthen its administrative and technical capabilities in order to be in a position to upgrade the Schengen Information System from SIS1+ (the Portuguese solution SISone4all) to SISII. This will entail investment in software and hardware necessary to foresee a successful migration of national systems to SISII and SIRENE II. Furthermore, installation of the customised application and configuration, as well as the compliance testing and the necessary training of personnel, will need to be carried out in order to achieve a successful migration from the existing platform. Additionally, the existing national police system PIRS-2 will need to be modified to cater for specific SISII requirements.

Fulfilling these requirements will certainly allow the immigration authorities on the island to upgrade the already available equipment and know-how and enhance the current procedures of the management of the external borders and the means to fight irregular migration of any form. In view of Malta's limitations, financial support to carry out such initiatives is however needed and assistance through the External Borders Fund is being sought.

2.2. The operational objectives of the Member State designed to meet its requirements

In view of the situation in Malta and the migratory flows affecting it, and in line with the shortcomings and needs identified above, the operational objectives for Malta under this Multi-Annual programme shall be:

- 1) Countering illegal immigration through the enhanced surveillance of the external maritime borders.
This will be achieved through the enhancement and strengthening of the capabilities for AFM to both monitor the blue borders and intervene within the substantial geographical area under the responsibility of Malta;
- 2) Strengthening the capacity for patrol and controls at Border Crossing Points and inshore.
This will be achieved through the strengthening of the operational capabilities and resources of the Malta Police Force Immigration Section, in order to carry out its duties in relation to border checks and control at airport, seaports, yacht marinas etc;
- 3) Sea Passenger Terminal infrastructure, in line with the Schengen Acquis requirements in relation to management of flows of persons and vehicles;
- 4) Increased capacity to accommodate persons intercepted at the external borders or after crossing the external borders illegally;
- 5) Connecting the centrally-located N-VIS to C-VIS by May 2009 and enable consular posts to capture biometric data in line with the regional approach adopted by the EU;
- 6) Integrating biometric features in the N-VIS for onward transmission to C-VIS.
- 7) Setting up of one interface at the BCP's to consult the various databases available.
- 8) Successful migration from the SIS1+ to the second generation Schengen Information System and SIRENE II ;
- 9) Building of pool of professionals in all entities involved in border control and surveillance and in operating border crossing points, in order to carry out their respective duties in line with national and Community law and to the best of their capabilities.

3. STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES

Introduction

Four years into the membership of the European Union, Malta has achieved a lot in the field of external border management and visa issuing activities. Malta has joined successfully the Schengen Zone and remains fully committed to implementing the acquis. However, more still needs to be done in order to carry out its obligations and face the challenges arising out of its strategic positioning in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea.

Malta intends to target the first four Priorities under this Fund as these are deemed relevant to its requirements and objectives. Targeting Priorities 1 & 2 over the coming years will enable AFM to strengthen its operational capability to patrol, monitor and intervene along its maritime borders and counter illegal crossings. Furthermore, actions carried out under these priorities will also add to the assets and equipment available for the Malta Police Immigration Section to carry out its duties at Border Crossing Points and inner coast. The enablement of Maltese consular posts to capture biometric data and improve structures and security levels at low-risk/low-volume missions, constitute an important aspect of Maltese policy in the management of external borders and will be targeted under Priority 3 and 4. This will enable Malta to abide by the target date of May 2009 for interfacing with C-VIS and issuing visas with biometric information. Full compliance with the IT requirements of the second generation of the Schengen Information System will also be achieved with the assistance of the Fund and Priority 4.

In view of the fact that various training activities will be incorporated in the first four priorities, Malta will not be targeting Priority 5.

3.1 Priority 1: Support for the further gradual establishment of the common integrated border management system as regards the checks on persons at and the surveillance of the external borders

<p>Objective 1:</p>	<p>Consolidation of the underlying communication infrastructure in order to support the various operational functionalities in all aspects of external border management.</p> <p><i>Under this objective, Malta shall invest in ICT and equipment for real time exchange of information between relevant authorities. Primarily this objective shall aim at upgrading the internal communications systems that support the ability to command and control patrol, surveillance and intervention resources while undertaking border control tasks. A coherent system will be designed for implementation of a communications network supporting those AFM units and resources involved in maritime border-control functions. The system must provide secure communications and support not only the classical voice-communications but also data-transmissions. This network will support backwards compatibility with legacy equipment still operated by the AFM as well as lateral compatibility with other national agencies and international partners. Furthermore, it will ensure access of deployed assets to the various information support systems and databases available for the verification of information. It will also support future functionalities as well as providing an upgradeable platform capable of delivering long-term utility. The</i></p>
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	<p><i>geographical scope of the system will be extended from the current system which is limited in range and thus does not support Joint Operational activities in other operational areas.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2007-2010.</i></p>
Key Actions	<p><i>Purchase of operating equipment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of an integrated open architecture communications network; • Installation of the terminals of said network in those locations and on those assets directly involved in maritime border control operations; • Specialised training of selected personnel in maintenance and operations of the technology associated with the network; • Contracting of a field-support package for the system.
Targets	<p>Upgrading the current legacy communications systems at the single maritime NCC, with enhanced security measures, provide for voice/data transmission and for interagency and cross-border interoperability.</p>
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability to conduct data transmission between the NCC and all national assets; • Capability to conduct voice/data communications with these assets within the complete Mediterranean Region; • A high level of communications security by means of user-defined online encryption.

Objective 2:	<p>Strengthening of operational capacity for border management by the Malta Police Immigration Section.</p> <p><i>This objective entails the strengthening of the operational capability of the Immigration Section (SpecialBranch) of the Malta Police Force, by beefing up their resources. As indicated in Section 4 above, this entity, responsible for border control at sea-and air-terminals, has identified various operational needs. The procurement of the below non-exhaustive list of equipment will allow it to strengthen its operations of control and surveillance at the border crossing points, and the surrounding areas.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2007-2010</i></p>
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of means of transport for the patrol, surveillance and operations at the external borders. This shall include the procurement of commercial vehicles (for use as mobile units, equipped with relative border surveillance tools, and for the transportation of persons found crossing the external borders illegally) and inshore crafts; • Purchase of operating equipment which amongst others includes infra-red goggles; binoculars, portable computers; document examination

	<p>instruments; detection tools, wireless hand-held computers to consult SIS+ and SISII and national databases; radio communication equipment; ANPR system; bio-radar; upgrading of equipment for the detection and examination of forged documents; optical surveillance equipment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialised training for Malta Police Force personnel on the use of the equipment procured.
Targets	To equip the Immigration Section of the Malta Police Force with the much needed resources to carry out patrol, surveillance and control at border crossing points.
Indicators	Immigration Section (Malta Police Force) equipped with own modern equipment required to carry out its duties of border control; More efficient and effective patrol, surveillance and control at the border crossing points and during field duties, by the Immigration Officers.

Objective 3:	<p>Enhancement of the management of flows of persons and vehicles at the Sea Passenger Terminal in Valletta</p> <p><i>This objective entails the investment in infrastructure and equipment for ensuring efficient and secure management of flows of persons at the external border in order to ensure, on the one hand a high level protection at the external borders and on the other hand, the smooth crossing of the external borders in conformity with the Schengen Acquis and the principles of respectful treatment and dignity.</i></p> <p><i>In view of the fact that this terminal is the sole Sea Passenger Terminal in Malta and it receives passengers and vehicles from both Schengen and non-Schengen states, it had to be aligned to the requirements of the Schengen Acquis. Actions aimed at achieving the first part of this objective were carried out during 2007.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, security at the terminal will be enhanced and personnel trained in order to ensure the highest level of security and control at this important authorised point of entry.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2007-2009</i></p>
Key Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement and installation of border crossing infrastructure, such as fencing, barriers, vehicle inspection shed, upgrading of signage, facilities for Immigration Authorities etc; • Procurement of operating equipment such as video-surveillance, detectors, x-ray machine etc for enhancement of security at the Sea Terminal; • Training of personnel in the use of systems and equipment procured, in sea terminal operations and related security issues at the border.
Targets	Infrastructural and organisational restructuring of the passenger handling facilities at the Valletta Sea Passenger Terminals, in order to meet the

	commitments of the Schengen Acquis and improve the level of security at the Border Crossing Point.
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation of flows of persons and vehicles (Schengen and non-Schengen) according to the Schengen Acquis; • 24hr registered record of controls, checks and monitoring of the passenger handling facilities at the sea passenger terminal in Valletta; • Strengthening of security procedures and border control, as per the Schengen Acquis.

Objective 4:	<p>Building/upgrading of compounds for the accommodation of persons found crossing the external borders illegally.</p> <p><i>A border management system will be crippled if it does not provide facilities for accommodating those intercepted by the authorities responsible for surveillance and patrol while crossing or attempting to cross the air and sea borders illegally. Malta has been experiencing a continuous flow of illegal immigrants in the vast majority through the Southern external maritime borders.</i></p> <p><i>In line with the Decision, Article 4, specific objective 3(f), it is envisaged that centres will be erected and/or buildings renovated in order to provide shelter for such illegal immigrants pending the consideration of their status. This objective will thus aim at reducing the pressure on the present facilities for accommodation of such persons.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2009-2013.</i></p>
Key Actions	Building and upgrading of areas and centres for persons whose entry is refused and for persons who are intercepted after having crossed the borders illegally or when approaching the external borders with a view to enter illegally the territory of the Member State.
Targets	To increase accommodation facilities for illegal immigrants crossing the external borders and entering Maltese territory.
Indicators	The estimation of the number of centres and their capacity that will be built in the coming years is difficult. These quantifications depend upon various factors, upon which the Government does not have direct control, such as illegal migration flows. The Maltese government will however remain committed to providing accommodation to persons intercepted whilst crossing or with the intention of crossing the external border illegally. This despite the fact that there is a limit as to what the smallest Member State can be expected to provide, particularly if the present scenario, that already presents formidable challenges to the Maltese authorities, worsens. Continuous assessments of the situation will be performed and planning and implementation of such actions will be carried out accordingly. The assistance of the Fund will hopefully alleviate some of the burden being carried out by Malta in accommodating persons illegally crossing the southern Mediterranean border of the EU.

3.2. Priority 2: Support for the development and implementation of the national components of a European Surveillance System for the external borders and of a permanent European Patrol Network at the southern maritime borders of the EU Member States.

<p>Objective 1:</p>	<p>Enhancement of the capability for the surveillance of the external borders: Purchase of equipment for detection and identification in case of unauthorised crossing</p> <p><i>Investments in state-of-the-art technology will be carried out, in particular in relation to equipment for detection and identification in case of unauthorized crossing of the external maritime borders. With this objective, falling under specific priority 2, Malta will seek to strengthen its ability to conduct constant, in-depth surveillance of the coastal waters and jurisdictional areas.</i></p> <p><i>By adding optronic and thermal-imaging elements to the various VTS sites already in place, the identity of a large proportion of the suspect targets can quickly be established without recourse to direct intervention. While such a system will not completely eliminate the need to deploy air and maritime resources, nor will it allow surveillance of offshore areas, it will reduce the requirement for their use in coastal waters. This capability will not only support national operations but be available to underpin cooperative measures undertaken in the area such as Joint Operations and the European Patrol Network.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2007-2010.</i></p>
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Procurement of operating equipment: addition of thermal-imaging elements to the various VTS sites; Training of AFM personnel in the operation and maintenance of the equipment procured.</p>
<p>Targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased external border security with upgraded detection equipment. - Provide the Armed Forces of Malta with an increased capability as regards to coastal surveillance and border control using fixed coastal sites, by adding at least 4 thermal imaging cameras in selected coastal outposts.
<p>Indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 80% of the VTS targets within 12NM of the coast definitively identified; • A minimum decrease of 50% in direct arrival of migrant craft as compared to previous years on Maltese shores.

Objective 2:	<p>Strengthening of operational capacity for external maritime border management by the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM)</p> <p><i>Targeting specific priority (3).</i> <i>This objective entails the strengthening of the operational capability of the entity responsible for maritime surveillance and patrol, equipping it with more substantial and modern equipment making use of the latest technology, in order to assist them in combating illegal crossing of borders and enhance the facilities for patrol and surveillance. Achieving this objective shall also increase the capacity to take part in/or contribute to the operational cooperation in the management and surveillance of maritime borders between the Member States as coordinated by FRONTEX.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2008 – 2013.</i></p>
Key Actions	Procurement of means of transport for the patrol, surveillance and operations at the external maritime borders, inter alia, fixed wing aircraft, inshore patrol boats (4), Coastal Patrol Boats, offshore patrol vessels and helicopters.
Targets	<p>The target is to provide the Armed Forces of Malta, in its role in border control, with a more deployable, faster, cost-efficient and technology-based operational capability in the air and at sea. These improved capabilities will also be deployable in support of cooperative measures such as Joint Patrolling and the European Patrols Network. By achieving this objective, Malta will be carrying out a recommendation of the Schengen Evaluation Team which inspected Malta's maritime and air borders in February 2007.</p> <p>It is also envisaged that training of personnel be carried out, in order to operate and maintain the new capabilities.</p>
Indicators	<p>Procurement of vessels and crafts for the surveillance of maritime borders and for the exchange of real time information. Training of personnel in maintenance and operation and the contracting of a field-support package.</p> <p><i>Impact Indicator</i> Strengthening of air and sea capabilities for external border surveillance and patrol, reducing transit time to incidents and direct operating costs ,as well as improving ability to deploy directly to other EU member states. Additionally, these capabilities will assist in detecting a higher number of migrants attempting to cross the external borders illegally.</p>

3.3. Priority 3: Support for the issuing of visas and the tackling of illegal immigration, including the detection of false or falsified documents, by enhancing the activities organized by the consular and other services of the Member States in third countries.

<p>Objective 1:</p>	<p>Enhancing the structures at consular offices (high-risk/ high-volume) in order to enable them to capture biometric data.</p> <p><i>These consulates are already connected to the N-VIS and enjoy a high level of security features and their procedures and working methods are in line with the Schengen recommendations. Under this objective, the Maltese Authorities aim at adapting the structures at these consulates which process the highest amount of visa applications (and some of which are found in the North African region) in order to enable them to capture biometric data. The objective is to carry out the necessary amendments to the structures and infrastructures in order to allow for the installation of the required hardware. The necessary equipment and hardware, including the software integration kits will also be procured under this objective.</i></p> <p><i>It can be estimated that the cost for the structural adaptation and the procurement of equipment, installation and training per mission will be around € 25,000- €30, 000. It is also envisaged that new high risk/high volume offices be totally restructured and set up, in order to achieve this objective. Of course in such cases, the costs incurred will be much higher.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2008-2010</i></p>
<p>Actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation of structures at present and new consular posts for the integration of the procured hardware; • Development of biometric software to integrate with current N-VIS; • Development of biometric matching system to check for biometric data already stored/captured in national databases; • Procurement of required hardware to enable the capturing of biometric data and installation by the technical persons of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; • Training for consular staff on the use of the installed software and hardware.
<p>Targets</p>	<p>The target is to have all_high-risk/high-volume consular missions structurally enabled to capture biometrics.</p>
<p>Indicators</p>	<p>According to the regional approach being adopted by the EU, the respective missions will be upgraded and equipped with structures and equipment to issue biometric visas.</p>

Objective 2:	<p>Enhancing and upgrading the security level and enabling the capturing of biometric data, at the low to high-risk/low-volume consular missions</p> <p><i>Despite having relatively smaller quantities of visa applications and the majority of them having shown, from experience, a lower risk of attempts at use of false and falsified documents,(thus posing a lower risk illegal immigration) these consular offices (which roughly constitute around two-thirds of the total) will benefit from beefed up security features. New low-risk/low-volume missions may also be addressed in this respect in order to target this objective.</i></p> <p><i>However, this objective shall also cover newly established missions (envisaged to start operation in late 2008 and early 2009) which are being rated as high risk/ low volume offices, in order to ensure the necessary security levels required by the EU for the issuance of visas, including the capture of biometrics.</i></p> <p><i>This objective aims to enhance the basic security features in these second level consular missions, in order to improve the security of the premises and the consular staff. The level of security featured in these consular posts varies and efforts will be made under this objective to carry out improvements in about 50% of them. Such improvements may include strengthening of physical security, such as installation of video-surveillance systems, procurement of safes, metal detectors, document examination instruments and visa counters, according to the prevailing needs in the respective consular post. The structural and infrastructural improvements will also cater for the requirements to capture biometric data.</i></p> <p><i>The costs for the security and (infra)structural improvements is estimated to cost around €75,000-€100,000 per low-risk/ low-volume mission. The purchase of biometric capturing tools shall also be included in these missions. An additional cost of €25,000 for this purpose is also envisaged. In the case of newly established missions, requirements and costs will be established at the initial stages of the project, through a site visit for carrying out a risk assessment. .</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2008-10.</i></p>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-use of biometric capture and biometric matching software mention in Objective 1 above - Carrying out of structural and infrastructural works to improve security; - Procurement and installation (by technical persons from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs) of the necessary security and biometric data-capturing equipment; - Installation of and training on software for capturing and handling biometric data.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing security level in at least 50% of the high to low-risk/ low-volume consular offices and enabling them to capture biometric data

Indicators	Enhanced security in approximately 50% of the posts (high to low-risk/low-volume) over the period 2008 - 2010; According to the regional approach being adopted by the EU, the respective missions will be upgraded and equipped with structures and equipment to issue biometric visas.
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3.4. Priority 4: Support for the establishment of IT systems required for implementation of the Community legal instruments in the field of external borders and visas.

Malta's increased participation in and networking of IT systems for improving cooperation in the field of external borders and visas requires continuous investments. The strategy of Malta in this regard is to continue to strengthen its capacities in this field in order to effectively and efficiently implement the Community legal instruments.

Objective 1:	<p>Integration of centrally-located national VIS (N-VIS) with the central VIS (C-VIS). Specific priority 2: investments linked to the Visa Information System (VIS)</p> <p><i>The long awaited final Interface Control Document Version 1.72 was published in April 2008. With this document in hand Malta can now initiate a gap analysis between the N-VIS and C_VIS in order to allow for a seamless integration. Assuming that the legal instrument regulating VIS is finalized in the near future and once adopted there are no major changes to the ICD Version 1.72, the Gap analysis should be completed towards the third quarter of 2008. Work on the development is to start immediately afterwards.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2008 -2009</i></p>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase of hardware which may be required to facilitate the integration. - Development, testing and implementation of the integration of N-VIS to C-VIS and training are required and will be completed by mid 2009. - Compiling of a disaster recovery plan to be completed by mid-2009 - Possibility of purchase of IT hardware in line with the disaster recovery.
Targets	Integration of N-VIS with C-VIS by June 2009
Indicators	Capability of sharing Visa application requests, all data on visa applications and on the related decisions of the visa authorities as laid down in the VIS Regulation, with other Schengen partners. The data will include biometrics.

Objective 2:	<p>To provide access to VIS data for Border Control Officers, allowing for the establishment of a single interface interacting with both N-VIS and N-SIS.</p> <p>Specific priority 1 & 2: investments linked to the Schengen Information System (SIS) and Visa Information System (VIS)</p> <p><i>This objective aims at providing the immigration officials with one interface to consult the various databases at the BCP's. This will, inter alia, allow immigration officials at border crossing points with access to VIS information, for the identification and verification of visa sticker numbers at points of entry. This will not only expedite query mechanisms but will allow for facilitated identification and verification of VISA documentation and VISA holders. The proposed mechanism will also allow for biometric examination and verification. It is also intended that border control officers will be able to interface with N-SIS and have access to other national databases.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2009-2011</i></p>
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To design and implement a communication structure that will allow for the interconnectivity between National VIS with Central VIS based on Interface Control Document Version 1.72¹¹ • To procure and integrate biometric scanning devices with the National VIS allowing for the capture of biometrics in all posts that process VISA applications. This includes the Central Visa Unit (CVU). • To integrate the National VIS with National border control systems. • To implement necessary changes to the National Border Controls Systems to allow for the verification of biometric data. This will also require the procurement and installation of biometric reading devices. • To implement necessary changes to the Police Incident Reporting System (PIRS) to allow for interaction with N-VIS.
Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Control Points able to interact with N-VIS through a single interface.¹² • Border Control Points able to consult VIS during border checks for verification and identification. • Authorized patrol police officers able to interact with N-VIS data for immigration purposes, in order to identify and verify travel documents.
Indicators	<p>Border control officers will be in a position to access N-VIS data to verify both alphanumeric and biometric data.</p> <p>Police patrol officer will be in a position to access N-VIS data through the Police Incident Reporting System (PIRS)</p>

¹¹ Version of ICD document is dependent on whether any alterations are introduced during the project lifespan.

¹² Despite this single interface, the data of the two systems, VIS and SIS and the access rights to this data shall remain strictly separated. Indeed, data will be stored on two different systems.

Objective 3:	<p>Migration from SIS1+ to SISII and integration of SIRENE II with national data systems. Specific Priority 1 : Investments linked to the Schengen Information System</p> <p><i>Malta has, through the SISOne4ALL project, integrated with SIS1+ and as of December 2007 (Sea borders) and March 2008 (Air borders) lifted all internal borders with the Schengen Zone. The next step is to migrate all operational data and service to the new SISII environment. Malta remains committed to fully participate in SISII and it will seek assistance from the Fund to make the necessary preparations. The Maltese authorities have secured the Italian SISII and SIRENEII applications through existing strong bilateral relations. The final phase requires that these systems be modified to allow for the integration with national systems according to Schengen regulations and for migration from SIS1+ to SISII.</i></p> <p><i>The indicative implementation period for this objective is 2008-09.</i></p>
Actions	<p>Procurement and installation of additional hardware and software necessary for the implementation, integration and migration to the SISII platform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modification of SISII & SIRENEII software made available by the Italian authorities necessary to integrate with national police systems; • Modification of national police systems necessary to integrate with SISII & SIRENEII applications creating a workflow system for end users. (this will also create a wider use base of SIS data); • Procurement of additional hardware, software, authentication and storage devices necessary to support the above SISII environment; • Connectivity of police secondary stations to provide wider access to SISII data; • Provision of additional mobile computers to allow for access to SISII data from patrolling police officers¹³; • Modification of police main and secondary data centres to allow for the housing of SISII equipment.
Targets	<p>To prepare the necessary framework to participate in formal tests, migration and implementation that will lead to formal implementation of SISII. The migration to SISII in accordance to the SISII Global Schedule.</p>
Indicators	<p>Integration of SISII, SIRENEII and NPS to form one work flow system; Access through 17 police stations and 60 mobile patrol officers; National Police systems (PIRSII and NSL) will be directly integrated with SISII.</p>

¹³ The procurement of additional mobile computers will complement the resources procured under Priority 1, Objective 3 and thus allowing for a wider range of officers who can query SIS data or VIS data depending on their role and access rights.

3.5. Priority 5: Support for effective and efficient application of relevant Community legal instruments in the field of external borders and visas, in particular the Schengen Borders Code and the European Code on Visas.

This Priority will not be targeted.

By way of conclusion, it has to be stressed that Malta continually strives to strengthen its border control and visa issuing capabilities, yet the limitations cannot be denied. While acknowledging the need of fulfilling its international legal obligations, Malta requests the assistance of the EU, in line with the set Priorities, in addressing the operational capabilities gap and the need for training in implementing relevant EU regulations. Through such assistance, Malta would be better equipped to shoulder the burden of patrolling, surveilling and managing the southern external borders of the European Union and tackling illegal immigration in all its forms.

4. COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER INSTRUMENTS

This strategy complements and strengthens Malta's achievements in the field in its bid to join Schengen and implement regulations related to VIS and SIS. Furthermore the enhancement in its operational capacity in relation to patrol and surveillance of its external borders will enable Malta to combat criminal networks engaged in illegal maritime migration, through the operations coordinated by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX).

Malta's capacity to issue visas has been strengthened by technical assistance provided by the Austrian Agency for European Integration and Economic Development (AEI) within the framework of a **twinning light project under the EU Transition Facility 2004**. This programme was designed for the training of Consular and Immigration Staff, including Train-the-trainers sessions in the application of the CCI, preparation of National Visa Instructions, Visa Management System training, on-the-spot training in consular offices and the preparation of training manuals.

Furthermore, the **Transition Facility 2004** programme provided funds for a project entitled '*Strengthening Malta's Capacity To Issue Visas*'. These funds covered part of the financing required for achieving the necessary upgrading in five (5) of Malta's diplomatic and consular representations - Tripoli, Moscow, Beijing, Tunis and Cairo.

Another project financed under the **Transition Facility 2004** has provided valid assistance in strengthening Malta's border control capacity. The project '*Development of the Border Management Control in Malta*' was made up of 4 components namely (a) Twinning Light 1 : Assistance for the Effective Implementation of the Schengen Acquis; (b) Twinning Light 2 : Assistance for the proper set up and management of the SIRENE Office; (c) Supply Contract: Procurement to enforce the Implementation of the Schengen Acquis (Ground Power Unit); (d) Supply Contract: Procurement to enforce the Implementation of the Schengen Acquis (Vests).

The **Transition Facility 2005** has furthermore supported a project entitled '*Integration of national IT systems in accordance with the Schengen Acquis*'. This project entailed the issuing of a service tender for the development of SIRENE services and the integration of the local systems with

SISII¹⁴; supply of SISII equipment; supply of network connectivity, including hardware for border checkpoints; supply of security equipment; IT server and Visa printers.

The indicated instruments have assisted Malta, in particular, in the preparation for joining the Schengen area. The External Borders Fund will continue to assist Malta in strengthening and building upon the work carried out so far. It will also assist Malta in fulfilling certain recommendations made by evaluators in order to further strengthen the facilities, resources and operations for the management of the external borders.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

5.1. The publication of the programme

The approved Multi-Annual Programme will be published on the website of the Ministry for Justice & Home Affairs (www.mjha.gov.mt). Potential beneficiaries will be also informed individually by e-mail/post about this facility, which will help them to develop their actions for the annual programmes.

5.2. The approach chosen to implement the principle of partnership

The Principle of Partnership has been put in practice as from the initial stages of the drafting of this document. Authorities and entities involved in the surveillance and patrol of the external borders as well as in the issuing of visas and other related consular matters were actively involved in the drafting of the document. These included the Armed Forces of Malta; the Malta Police Immigration Section; the VISET sea terminal operators and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in particular the Central Visa Unit and the Information Management Unit responsible for IT matters. Furthermore, the Malta Maritime Authority, the Customs Division within the Ministry for Finance, as well as the Malta International Airport were consulted in the process.

Consultation meetings with these stakeholders were held in advance, during which the importance of the document and its structure was explained. A written input from each was requested, in order to have complete understanding of the needs and of the expectations of all parties involved. All stakeholders were also invited to an individual consultation meeting to further develop their input. After being considered on a policy level, these comments were incorporated in the strategic document. The multi-annual programme was submitted again to the stakeholders for final consultation before submitting to the Commission. In this way the Responsible Authority has ensured that the partners that have interest in the field of the Fund, had their say in the development of the strategy for the next 6 years and the process to arrive to the final draft was as transparent as possible.

These stakeholders will continue to be involved in the implementation of this Multi-Annual Programme. They will be invited to information sessions held when launching call for proposals, as the basis for the Annual Programmes. It is envisaged that the stakeholders will also be involved in future revisions of the multi-annual programmes and any evaluations thereof.

¹⁴ At the time of the planning of this Transition Facility project, Malta was not participating in the SIS1+ (SISone4all) as the indications were that the new Schengen- states will be integrating into SISII. Eventually Malta joined the SISone4all and will now have to migrate to the SISII platform.

Multi-Annual Programme: External Borders Fund 2007-2013

6. INDICATIVE FINANCING PLAN

Multiannual Programme - Draft Financial Plan								
Table 1: Community Contribution								
Member State: Republic of Malta								
Fund: External Borders Fund								
<i>(in 000' euros - current prices)</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
Priority 1: [...]	3,784,573.34			2,000,000.00	2,600,000.00	2,000,000.00	5,400,000.00	15,784,573.34
Priority 2: [...]		7,200,000.00	12,491,871.90	8,000,000.00	11,000,000.00	18,000,000.00	22,000,000.00	78,691,871.90
Priority 3: [...]	1,612,800.00			2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00	2,500,000.00	10,112,800.00
Priority 4: [...]	219,300.00	2,470,983.00		1,000,000.00	500,000.00	1,000,000.00	2,500,000.00	7,690,283.00
Priority 5: [...]								
Technical Assistance	36,604.30	72,373.84	45,128.10	32,000.00	87,000.00	83,000.00	99,000.00 ¹⁵	455,106.24
TOTAL	5,653,277.64	9,743,356.84	12,537,000.00	13,032,000.00	16,187,000.00	23,083,000.00	32,499,000.00	112,734,634.48

Multiannual Programme - Draft Financial Plan								
Table 2: Overall Financing Plan								
Member State: Republic of Malta								
Fund: External Borders Fund								
<i>(in 000' euros - current prices)</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
Community Contribution	5,653,277.64	9,743,356.84	12,537,000.00	13,032,000.00	16,187,000.00	23,083,000.00	32,499,000.00	112,734,634.48
Public cofinancing	1,693,337.75	3,247,785.61	4,163,957.30	4,333,333.33	5,366,666.66	7,666,666.66	10,800,000.00	37,271,747.31
Private cofinancing	180,077.85							180,077.85
TOTAL	7,526,693.24	12,991,142.45	16,700,957.30	17,365,333.33	21,553,666.66	30,749,666.66	43,299,000.00	150,186,459.64
% Community Contribution	75.11%	75.00%	75.07%	75.05%	75.10%	75.07%	75.06%	75.06%

6.2.2 – The percentage Community Contribution exceeds 75% because it includes the technical assistance which is financed at 100%.

Date :

Signature :

¹⁵ The amounts envisaged as Technical Assistance for the year 2013 is considered adequate for the time being. Should it be considered necessary, the amounts will be revised closer to date.