

*COMBINED STRATEGIC AND ANNUAL  
PROGRAMME REPORT  
FM14-21*

Malta

2019

## A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Malta's 3<sup>rd</sup> Combined Strategic and Annual Report (CSAR) for the programming period 2014-2021 is being prepared for the first time on the programme's management system GRACE. As in previous years, the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD) within the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (MEAE)<sup>[1]</sup>, acting as both NFP and NFP as PO of the EEA and Norwegian Grants in Malta, is responsible for the compilation of this report. This third strategic report is reviewing the activities carried out in the implementation of the programme under Priority Area 10: Local Development and Poverty Reduction for calendar year 2019.

In accordance with Article 2.5 of the Regulation, on 1 February 2017, the Donor States and Malta agreed on an implementation framework outlining the following Programmes:

- Local Development and Poverty Reduction - €2,996,000 under EEA Financial Mechanism (FM) and €2,988,000 under Norway FM and €1,056,000 from Malta Funds.
- Fund for Non-Governmental Organisations - €700,000 under the EEA FM
- Social Dialogue – Decent Work - €36,000 under the Norway FM

Other allocations include the Technical Assistance and the Fund for Bilateral Relations at an amount of €340,000 for each fund.

The year 2019 was a crucial year for the NFP, the NFP as PO as well as the PPs, who shall be implementing the four PDPs and the SGSO, who shall be acting as operator of the Small Grant Scheme. This particular year set the ball rolling for the first activities marking the start of implementation of the projects. Both sides learnt a lot from both the successes and failures of implementation and the collaboration established between the NFP as PO and the PPs was crucial in ensuring continuity and risk mitigation.

The four predefined projects, which all concurrently started implementation during the year under review, and their budget allocation (including the 15% co-financing Malta funds) are namely:

- PDP 1 – 'Reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease' implemented by the Ministry for Health (MFH), with a total project cost of €2,407,059;
- PDP 2 - 'Opportunity Knocks' (OK) implemented by Appoġġ Agency within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), with a total project cost of €941,176;
- PDP 3 - 'Training of Local Council Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability', for which a total budget allocation of €200,000 is earmarked, in parallel with an additional sum of €1 million in grants through a Small Grant Scheme (SGS) for Local Councils in Urban Areas. Both are led by the Local Government Division (LGD) under the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (MJCL)<sup>[2]</sup>;
- PDP 4- 'The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage' implemented by Heritage Malta (HM), with a total project cost of €2,015,529.

In 2019, efforts continued to be made with Stavanger Maritime Museum, so that a bilateral initiative could be fulfilled in preparation for the activities under PDP4. By the end of the year, communication to this effect was once again renewed and finally an agreement was reached whereby the curator and staff of the Maritime Museum shall visit and meet the curator and staff of Stavanger Museum in February 2020. Hence, now, all four PDPs have established collaboration with a Donor Project Partner: some being in the very early stages of collaboration and others continued building on past initiatives, as is the case for PDP 3, between the LGD of Malta and KS of Norway. The programme in Malta has definitely seen a significant intensification in bilateral relations, as compared to the previous programming period.

Another challenge, which Malta is facing in this programming period, is the organisation and implementation of the SGS for urban localities, a first-time experience under these grants. Though the responsibility as SGSO was transferred to the LGD through a Covenant signed between the PO and the

LGD, FPD still acts as the main focal point in the administration of the scheme. The NFP as PO is an active observer on the Project Stakeholders Committee and will be involved in the final approval of the proposals selected under the first call. A number of bilateral meetings with the SGSO were held during 2019 to establish the internal procedures to be followed in the management of the scheme and the terms of reference of the call.

The NFP and NFP as PO also proudly highlight the mid-term communication event, which, according to the Communication Strategy, was planned to be a drawing competition for young children, based on the programme's theme 'poverty reduction'. The outcome of the competition and presentation of awards was actually escalated to an international event, marking the 25th Anniversary of the EEA Grants, during a national night of culture and arts, *Notte Bianca*, in Fort St Elmo, Valletta on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Five national focal points from Europe participated in the event and promoted the grants within their own countries while high dignitaries were invited and presided over the award of prizes to 6 young contestants. The NFP and NFP as PO received a lot of encouraging remarks about the outcome of the event and looks forward to organising some other communication event to promote the Grants in the coming years!

Considering the challenges faced in 2019, and learning from them, gives the NFP and NFP as PO the impetus to continue with the same enthusiasm and willingness to reach the targets agreed upon in the Programme Agreement. The first few hurdles in the implementation of the projects have been outdone and 2020 promises to be a year where more tangible results will be achieved. To date, PDP3 already has overwhelming outputs represented in the number of persons from local councils, trained during 2019. The programme now looks forward to reaping the success of these trainings through the submission of quality proposals from, and for, the eligible urban localities. Our challenge for 2020 is now to reach the more tangible outputs and outcomes on all four PDPs and SGS!

*[\*] As a result of an election for a new Maltese Prime Minister held in mid-January 2020, the Ministry has now been renamed as Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA).*

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## B. PERFORMANCE

### MT-LOCALDEV Local Development and Poverty Reduction

#### 1. Programme context

In 2019, the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD), within the portfolio of the MEAE, as both NFP and NFP as PO, worked extensively with the Project Promoters, who are benefitting from the funds awarded under the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021. The grants were awarded for projects responding to Programme Area 10, which emphasises *Local Development and Poverty Reduction*. Through these projects, Malta is investing in a number of key strategic issues that target vulnerable children and youths, persons with disabilities, the elderly, the working poor and the unemployed, thus contributing to further social and economic cohesion.

All four pre-defined projects and the eligible actions under the Small Grants Scheme address some of the shortcomings highlighted in *The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and for Social Inclusion 2014-2024*, released by the Government of Malta on 19 December 2014. This policy document outlines a ten-year plan that maps Malta's strategic direction to address poverty and social exclusion up to year 2024 and has three objectives; to increase Malta's sustainable development; to promote empowerment and social solidarity, and to consolidate social services in order to address these challenges.

Poverty levels, as defined by the European Union, have declined in recent years to 20.1% of the population in 2016, and stood below the EU average. Most vulnerable are those persons who are inactive, unemployed, retired, or single (especially those with children). Among the foreign workforce, non-EU

migrants tend to be at higher risk of poverty when compared to EU workers. Children and elders also tend to be more vulnerable than working age adults.

In recent years, the authorities have introduced a number of measures aimed at tackling this social blight. These include increases in pensions and allowances for the elderly, such as those living in their own residence or for those caring for them. Furthermore, there were measures aimed to encourage the participation in the labour force, such as in-work benefit schemes, increases in rent subsidies for people in need and schemes promoting an increase in the supply of social housing. The above analysis suggests that these measures have indeed made an impact on reducing poverty levels, though further scope for improvement remains.<sup>[1]</sup>

Such a strategy will also form the basis for the evaluation and selection process to be carried out on the proposals submitted under the Small Grant Scheme (SGS), open to urban localities<sup>[2]</sup> which, according to a Malta National Statistics Office (NSO) study, "*Social Protection in Malta and the EU (2015)*", are considered to have the most severe social challenges. Based on the findings of this study, the regions in Malta registering the highest expenditure in terms of social security benefits are the Northern Harbour area (€258,398) and the Southern Harbour areas (€185,562). Subsequently, an analysis of this expenditure at the level of locality per capita was undertaken with a view to address the localities, which are most in need. Grants under this scheme will be awarded as support for the implementation of pilot initiatives in physical, economic and social regeneration of the deprived communities in these urban areas. The first call for proposals was published in December, with the deadline for submission being February 2020.

### 1.1 PDP 1 – Reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease

The project PDP1: *Reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease* is spread over three main areas in health provision in Malta: - Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT), the screening for phenylketonuria (PKU) and Nucleic Acid Amplification Testing (NAT).

Malta has, during the last 10 years, experienced a population growth - 405K in 2005 to 460K in 2016 - due to the wave of economic migrants, who are helping to meet the gap between local labour supply and the current demand for labour. In general, an economic boom should be a positive development for any nation. However, economic booms typically result in an influx of economic migrants and a resultant hike in the rental market prices. One is therefore bound to start observing widening inequalities within the resident population. In fact, the at-risk-of-poverty (AROP) rate in 2018 had risen by one percentage point since 2014, as opposed to 0.3% over the previous 4-year period (EUROSTAT). Obviously such percentage growth out of an increasing larger population masks the sharper growth in the total number of individuals affected. Especially when considering that most economic migrants are young adults in their peak reproductive age, one cannot but focus on children as a vulnerable population, especially children with disabilities, who are most likely to be affected by rising societal inequalities. The Government is conscious of these developments and of its social responsibility to mitigate such inequalities, especially in limiting cumulative disadvantage in children with disability.

The first part of PDP 1, the SIT Centre, shall provide an opportunity for accessibility and equality in health services, aimed at helping children with sensory processing difficulties to be exposed to sensory stimulation in a structured, repetitive way. The theory behind it is that over time, the brain will adapt and allow children to process and react to sensations more efficiently. Besides refurbishing a new SIT centre in a primary school environment and the procurement of specialised equipment, this part of the project shall most of all focus on providing training to specially trained professionals like occupational therapists, who will eventually provide such therapy..

PKU, the second part of PDP 1, is an inborn error of metabolism that results in decreased metabolism of the amino acid phenylalanine and is a genetic disorder, usually inherited through the individual's parents. Screening for PKU shall enable professionals to recognise this condition in affected children at a very early stage of their lives, and hence prevent any devastating mental degeneration that accompanies exposure to wrong diet.

Last but not least, NAT testing is a technique utilised to detect a particular nucleic acid, virus or bacteria which acts as a form of germ in blood, tissue and urine. The NAT system differs from other tests in that it detects genetic materials rather than antigens or antibodies. Part of this project shall be dedicated to the investment of hardware and capacity building specifically for NAT testing.

Malta's healthcare system is free at the point of delivery and has achieved recognition on European and international platforms, such as being classified as the country with the 9<sup>th</sup> best health sector in the world, out of a hundred and fifty-nine (159) countries around the world<sup>[3]</sup>. Whilst being proud of its achievements, the government of Malta is determined to continue strengthening the commitment towards a high quality health care for the people of Malta and Gozo through new and enhanced measures in every budget presented on an annual basis.

In 2012, the Ministry for Health in Malta initiated development of a national health system strategy for 2013–2020 (NHSS) in order to meet the many challenges facing the health system in Malta. These challenges include an ageing population, growing burden of noncommunicable and chronic diseases and environmental changes.<sup>[4]</sup> In this strategy, the government identified major goals to be achieved, namely providing every individual with the opportunity to lead a healthy and active life, equitable access to quality health care and moving towards achieving a sustainable health care service.

### 1.2 PDP 2 – Opportunity Knocks (OK)

PDP 2 – Opportunity Knocks (OK) project is very much in line with the '*National Youth Policy - Towards 2020: A shared vision for the future of young people*'<sup>[5]</sup> launched in 2014. This policy is implemented through two strategies, which, at its inception, the project referred to and to date is still recognizing in its implementation.

Having regard to the changing lives of young people in Malta today and the need for employing effective strategies in support of them, this policy focuses on all 13-30 year olds and has two related aims, namely to effectively support and encourage the young individual in fulfilling her/his potential and aspirations, while addressing their needs and concerns, and to effectively support young people as active and responsible citizens, who fully participate in and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of the nation and Europe.

Primarily, this policy is intended to support young people through cross-sectoral collaboration and enhance their social participation and their learning and employment prospects. Through the implementation of this project and with close reference to the grants' objectives, youths at risk of social exclusion are assisted to leap forward in life and lead a socially and economically independent life. This is carried out by frequent contact and direct assistance, thus ensuring that the targeted cohort is supported accordingly.

It is intended that a multi-disciplinary team of professionals shall provide professional services to the participating cohort of young people. These vulnerable young people will be offered various opportunities to gain independence and lead a socially integrated life. A residential safe house setting shall support highly vulnerable young people deriving from dysfunctional families.

### 1.3 PDP 3 – Training of Local Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability

The newly introduced reform in local governance in Malta provides more impetus on the necessity of training to all those involved in the local governance sector, particularly on good governance, transparency and accountability. This need emerges particularly from the training needs analysis carried out by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform within the Council of Europe, a peer review on Local Government in Malta report drafted by experts engaged by the Council of Europe and from the annual

report carried out by the National Audit Office on the financial and systems processes of the said Local Governments.

Following the reports mentioned above and in the context of a new group of local councillors elected during the June 2019 local council elections in Malta, it was deemed the right moment in time to initiate such initiatives. The integrated approach adopted by this pre-defined project will aim towards creating an environment conducive to economic development, whilst sustaining an improved urban environment which is safe, liveable and environmentally friendly. From a bilateral relations point of view, the collaboration between the Local Government Division and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) will foster sharing of knowledge on good governance within this pre-defined project and support in the implementation of the small grant scheme.

#### 1.4 SGS 1 – Local Development and Poverty Reduction

The Maltese economy has undergone a strong and job-rich expansion in recent years. In parallel, some fiscal incentives have been introduced to tackle social exclusion, such as childcare reforms and other initiatives focussing on increasing active inclusion in the labour market.

The European Union measures poverty using information from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), which is an annual EU-wide survey collecting micro-data on income, poverty, social exclusion, housing, labour, education and health. In Malta, the survey is compiled by the NSO, with the sample being extracted from a database based on the latest Census. More than 4,000 households are interviewed per year, of which 75% are re-interviewed in the following year.

A widely used poverty indicator that is collected through the SILC is the “at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion” rate (AROPE). The definition of poverty under AROPE is an aggregation of three measures, which are: (i) the at-risk-of-poverty (ARP) rate, measuring monetary poverty; (ii) the severe material deprivation rate (SMD), measuring resource poverty; and (iii) the low work intensity (LWI) rate, measuring unutilised labour potential. An individual falling under any one of these poverty categories is considered as being at risk of poverty or social exclusion. However, these measures are not mutually exclusive, meaning that it is possible for an individual to fall under more than one measure. In 2016, the Malta profile of AROPE shows that 85,000 individuals were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, of which 50,000 suffered from monetary poverty, 8,000 from severe material deprivation, and 6,000 from low work intensity. Meanwhile, there were 21,000 persons who experienced a combination of two or more forms of poverty<sup>[6]</sup>.

On a positive note, an article by a Public Broadcasting Services journalist states that “*Malta is listed in 12th place out of the 28 EU member states which has the least number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The rate in Malta is less than the EU average.*”<sup>[7]</sup>

The AROPE rate also shows that the Harbour area districts in Malta, which are the most densely populated areas, have the highest rate of persons at risk of poverty. When one analyses the urban localities in the Maltese Islands, it transpires that the highest number of persons receiving supplementary allowances are residing in localities such as Valletta with 18.7% and Floriana with 16.1%.

In order to address inequalities between different districts, the Local Government Division (LGD) within the Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (MJCL) shall be elaborating on a sustainable development strategy for urban localities by adopting a bottom-up approach, thus involving all stakeholders. In line with the guiding principle of the Strategic Plan for the Environment and Development, the objective of this strategy shall be to continue enhancing urban areas in order to improve the quality of life and sustainable living standards of deprived communities. This grant scheme aims to address the inequalities and socio-economic challenges encountered by localities considered as Urban areas through a number of pilot initiatives in physical, economic and social regeneration of these deprived urban communities.

The integrated approach adopted will aim towards creating an environment, which is conducive to economic development, whilst sustaining an improved urban environment which is safe, liveable and

environmentally-friendly, complemented with social and educational services for stronger sustainable neighbourhoods.

The strategy will form the basis of small project initiatives funded through this Small Grant Scheme, which will be launched in parallel with PDP 3. In order to improve the quality of life and sustainable living standards of these deprived communities, the LGD, through the Norway Grants 2014-2021, shall also be providing training to the administrative and politically appointed Local Council representatives. The training, though separate from the SGS, will focus on good governance as well as transparency and accountability and hence, inducing essential skills and good practices in the running of a Local Council and management of the scheme.

### 1.5 PDP 4 – The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage

The Malta Maritime Museum (MMM) in Vittoriosa is housed in the former Royal Naval Bakery, built in the 1840s as the main bakery for the Mediterranean Fleet of the British Forces. It is the largest museum on the Island with a collection of over 20,000 artefacts.

Vittoriosa, one of the Three Cities, is situated in the Harbour area, the area which, as already stated earlier, has the highest rate of persons at risk of poverty and is characterised by high unemployment, particularly among youths. The high population density, coupled with the high level of urbanisation and the socio-economic inequalities of the Harbour area, call for measures to address the needs and problems of the area.

Due to their major role in Malta's rich history, however, the Harbour district happens also to be characterised by a high concentration of rich urban fabric including a significant concentration of historical and cultural buildings, which have a direct effect on the economic and touristic activity in the area. It is interesting to note that history and culture ranked as the prime reason for choosing Malta amongst tourists residing in Valletta/ Floriana with 53.6%<sup>[8]</sup>.

The upgrading of the Maritime Museum to international standards and the digitisation of some of its artefacts would enhance the contribution of cultural heritage to the sustainability of the Malta's economy, especially the Three Cities area. To achieve this, HM intends to utilise funds from the Norway Grants 2014-2021 to progress its vision for this museum. This can indeed attract more tourists to the area thus increasing HM's income as well as Malta's economy and address local development in the Cottonera area.

[1] *"Poverty, Social Exclusion and Living Conditions in Malta: an Analysis using SILC"* - Article published in the Quarterly Review 2018:2, pp. 61-70C of the Central Bank of Malta

[2] For the purpose of the SGS, localities considered as rural were deemed non eligible.

[3] [https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/Budget\\_Speech\\_English\\_2020.pdf](https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/Budget_Speech_English_2020.pdf)

[4] *"Malta – Health system review 2017"* – Health Systems in Transition, Vol 19 No 1 2017

[5] [https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National\\_Youth\\_Policy\\_Towards\\_2020.pdf](https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Documents/Policy%20Documents/National_Youth_Policy_Towards_2020.pdf)

[6] *"Poverty, Social Exclusion and Living Conditions in Malta: an Analysis using SILC"* - Article published in the Quarterly Review 2018:2, pp. 61-70C of the Central Bank of Malta

[7] <https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/malta-with-least-number-of-people-at-risk-of-poverty-and-social-exclusion-in-the-eu/>

[8] Theme 4 The Tourist Experience – Evaluation and Monitoring Research Findings 2015, Valletta 2018 Foundation

## 2. Results

### *Outcome 1: Improved access to and quality of health services in Malta*

#### **Results for Output 1.1 – Professionals trained in Sensory Integration Therapy:**

- Twelve (12) Occupational Therapists (OTs) will be certified in SIT by January 2020, after completing the 6th module of the online/onsite training by The Collaborative for Leadership in Ayres Sensory Integration (CLASI).
- Phase 2 training has already commenced and another 8 Maltese OTs, 2 Norwegian OTs, 2 Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) and 2 Physiotherapists (PTs) have started their training in SIT.
- 22 educational psychologists, who work within the National School Support Services Department, Psychological School Services, under the Ministry for Education and Employment, were trained in ADOS Phase 1 by a Norwegian tutor.

#### **Results for Output 1.2 – Sensory Integration Clinic set up and operational:**

Infrastructural Works and Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) Engineering works on the Sensory Integration Clinic at Marsa Primary School, 3rd Floor, are works-in-progress while most of the equipment, including lifts and SIT specialised equipment, have been procured. The Clinic is expected to become fully operational and open to its clients by quarter 4, 2020.

#### **Results for Output 1.3 – PKU Screening service developed:**

- The PKU equipment has been procured and the UHPLC equipment successfully installed in the quarter of 2019.
- 2 medical laboratory scientists were trained on the use of this equipment and also how this can be used to identify and also quantify significant amino acids in human samples.
- Third quarter of 2019 saw the start of the first trial runs using the PKU screening kits, which were procured in the same year.

#### **Results for Output 1.4 – Nucleic Acid Amplification (NAT) testing developed:**

- The NAT equipment was procured, commissioned and successfully validated in first half of 2019 and the system went live in August 2019.
- Its maintenance and operator training was included within the contract of award for the supply of the reagents and consumables.
- Operator training (20 hours) was carried out onsite for 9 members of staff (5 females and 4 males).

### *Outcome 2: Improved well-being of vulnerable children and youths*

#### **Results for Output 2.1 – Opportunity Knocks (OK) pack developed for children and youth at risk:**

- The pack is still being developed by a multi-disciplinary team and will be ready for dissemination in 2020.

#### **Results for Output 2.2 - A residential safe house for young people (under 18 years of age) set up:**

- A residential safe house for young people (under 18 years of age) was set up in an urban town in Malta and 14 youths are being given shelter in it.



**Results for Output 2.3 - Integrated services for children and youths at risk provided:**

- 3 social workers (executive III), 4 part time professionals (executive IV), 1 prevention officer, 1 coordinator and 1 senior administrator were engaged as part of the multi-disciplinary team.
- 108 youths were assisted on an individual basis;
- 25 prevention sessions were carried out, throughout which 411 youths were reached;
- workshop sessions at the Centre of Residential Restorative Services (CoRRS) at Imtaħleb were organised, throughout which 16 youths were reached;
- 26 applications of interested vulnerable youths for Opportunity Initiatives were received.

*Outcome 3: Improved quality of life of deprived communities in urban localities*

**Results for Output 3.1 – Public Administration staff in targeted localities trained in good governance principles:**

- 89 public administration staff - 41 males and 48 females - representing 66 Regional/Local Councils were trained in principles of good governance, transparency and accountability.
- 27 public administration staff - 14 males and 13 females - representing 12 Local Councils were trained in good governance, transparency and accountability with direct relationship to the small grant scheme application form and guidelines.
- 18 public administration staff - 12 males and 6 females - representing 11 Local Councils attended another training session on good governance, transparency and accountability, focusing on a final updated version of the small grant scheme application form and guidelines.

**Results for Output 3.2 – Pilot Initiatives under the Small Grants Scheme (SGS) implemented:**

- No finite results can be recorded to date, since the first SGS call was published in December 2019 and will close on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

*Outcome 4: Cultural Heritage Management enhanced*

**Results for Output 4.1 – Malta Maritime Museum restored and upgraded:**

- Until the end of the year, most of the work of the PP was dedicated to the drawing up of the technical specifications of the works tender and the publication thereof. Tender is expected to be awarded early 2020 and works can start immediately.

**Results for Output 4.2 – Innovative presentation of the Malta Maritime Museum's collection supported:**

- Heritage Malta's call for recruitment of a project manager, knowledgeable in the field of digitisation, was unsuccessful and till the end of 2019, this position was still vacant.

*Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme*

**Analysis of bilateral relations and achievements at Programme Level:**

The Honorary Consul General of Norway, Ms Giselle Balzan Demajo, had the pleasure to invite the NFP Head and staff to a reception on the occasion of the National Day of Norway on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2019, held in a residence in Dingli, Malta, in the presence of the Ambassador of Norway, Hon Margit Tveiten.

Ms Balzan Demajo was subsequently invited to, and attended the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event held during Notte Bianca in October 2019 at Fort St. Elmo, Valletta. During the latter event, Hon Dr Edward Zammit Lewis, Minister for European Affairs and Equality, Dr Gabor Gyorivanyi, Consul of Hungary, Chevalier Maurice Mizzi, Honorary Consul-General of Iceland were also present during this celebration. The event served well for exchanging of greetings between all the dignitaries and with the Hon Minister, who presided over the evening's proceedings, including the presentation of gifts to the young participants of the Drawing Competition.

#### ***Analysis of bilateral relations and achievements for PDP 1***

- Oslo University was registered as a Donor Partner on PDP1 in the Programme Agreement, as the appropriate entity which could offer further training to Maltese clinicians in the field of PKU. As stated above, the equipment is in place and functional and hence, the next step is for MFH to identify and select clinicians, who would be working on PKU and would be interested to undergo further training at Oslo University, No dates have yet been established for the familiarisation visit and training.
- The training of the educational psychologists within the Psychological School Services was delivered by a Norwegian tutor, by the name of Dr Elin Antoniussen, from Bergen. She was contacted through Haukeland Universitetssykehus, with whom an agreement was signed by the Ministry for Education and Employment in August 2019, for the delivery of ADOS training (Phase 1) during October 2019.
- On 17-18 October 2019, the Norwegian Directorate of Health and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health organized the first meeting of the network for children and adolescent health of the EEA and Norway grants. This was held at the Norwegian Directorate of Health Office in Oslo, Norway. Participants included representatives from government at national and regional level, researchers, and public health practitioners in the field of child and adolescent health from the countries of Norway, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Malta and Romania. Representatives from the EEA and Norway Grants Financial Mechanism Office (FMO) and EuroHealthNet – both based in Belgium – were also present. The aim of the meeting was to lay the foundation for a new network focused on children and adolescent health. During the project period 2019-2024, the FMO noted that a number of projects were focused on child and adolescent health. As such, it was proposed to create a network of these pre-selected projects so that they could exchange experiences and learn from one another's approaches, activities, and outcomes. The Maltese Ministry for Health was invited to participate in this first network meeting. Although this activity was not included in the original contract or linked to the objectives of the project, it was deemed to be an opportunity for further collaboration with the donor partner. Presenting the challenges faced by the children and youth in Malta, including the Sensory Integration Therapy, was thought to be a positive endeavour and a means to further strengthen the partnership with the donor as well as develop collaboration with other European countries. Following the participation, a recommendation was made by the 2 public officers for the set up of a committee representing different other entities, that provide services for children and adolescents for similar challenges, which were presented by the participating countries, including obesity and lack of exercise, mental health, substance abuse and access to healthcare.

#### ***Analysis of bilateral relations and achievements for PDP2***

Already at Programme Agreement phase, contact was made with the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, who showed interest in collaborating and signed a letter of intent. However, the PP lost touch with this entity and only managed to restore communication in the last quarter of 2019. Thus, it was agreed that the application form for the Fund for Bilateral Relations at Programme Level is amended to feature a new timeframe to foster such collaboration.

It has been now agreed between both parties that such bilateral relation will be greatly significant for sharing of knowledge and good practices. It is in fact envisaged for both parties to organise a bilateral visit in each respective country to consolidate and share good practices among both parties. This initiative is meant to enrich experience for all participants so as to better organise and implement services for vulnerable youth.

#### ***Analysis of bilateral relations and achievements for PDP3***

The bilateral dimension on PDP3 is a continuation of a bilateral relationship established during the previous programming period. KS, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities in Oslo Norway

were roped in again due to their expertise and resources with regards to urban development, inclusiveness, citizen participation, good governance, energy issues as well as climate changes issues in order to assure provision of knowledge and experience. In June 2019, KS and LGD signed a Partnership Agreement, defining the rights and obligations of both Parties and setting forth the terms and conditions of their cooperation in the implementation of the pre-defined project. Besides advising and facilitating training to local councils' administrative staff and elected members, KS is also actively participating in the Projects Selection Committee, even through video conferencing.

#### ***Analysis of bilateral relations and achievements for PDP4***

Ever since the launching of activities of PDP4, the Malta Maritime Museum (MMM), in collaboration with the authorities of Heritage Malta, tried to get in contact with Stavanger Maritime Museum in an attempt to strike a bilateral relationship. The Donor countries had, from the very start, insisted that this would be a great opportunity for the Maltese curators and administrators to get experience of good practices in exhibiting and digitising a maritime collection. At first contact, Stavanger Museum seemed reluctant to participate in this initiative, since a very important and demanding exhibition was being developed till October and had no time to coordinate such a visit until then. However, as soon as this task was completed, Stavanger Museum's administration showed great interest in establishing the link again with MMM's administration, a programme of a visit to Stavanger was established and the visit planned for quarter 1, 2020. The visit will definitely be just the start of a good bilateral rapport between the two Museums, which can continue throughout the implementation of PDP4.

#### ***Pre-defined projects***

##### **PDP 1 – Reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease**

**1) SIT CENTRE** - Most of 2019 was dedicated to the infrastructural works, including construction and mechanical & electrical engineering works. The tender was awarded in early 2019 but, due to some bureaucratic tendering procedures, works commenced in April 2019 and are, to date, work-in-progress on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Marsa Primary School. However, by the end of the year under review, the works were considered as being in an advanced stage. The delays in construction, which were experienced during the Easter holidays, were made up for during the school summer holidays and construction and M&E works are being finished off in tandem.

The lifts tender was awarded and lifts were procured. However, the lifts have not been installed as yet due to the delays prevalent in the structural works, which in turn affected the M&E works as well. The lifts are in storage but it is expected that they will be installed in the early months of 2020.

The standardized assessment tools and Sensory Integration Therapy equipment have been procured. The call for quotes for feeding clinic equipment was issued in December 2019. The floor matting tender was cancelled due to lack of compliance with the tender specifications and a revised tender will be reissued in the early months of 2020. The furniture tender was also published and was divided into 2 lots. The offer for the first lot was accepted whilst the offer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> lot was declined due to warranty issues of domestic appliances for the kitchen. The IT equipment tender will be issued at the beginning of 2020.

In parallel to the infrastructural works being carried out on site at Marsa, and in order to make sure that the Centre, once open is fully operational and functional, the PP, in collaboration with other stakeholders, focussed on the training activities under PDP 1. This training will increase the human resources significantly of certified/trained therapists in the SIT approach and intervention strategies, which will allow the proper set up of a national SIT centre to provide free services accessible to all the Maltese population including immigrant children or children from socially deprived areas aged 3 to 16 years. This will lead to an elimination of the demand for funding by families of children with SI difficulties seeking services abroad and will achieve the objective of health systems development.

During 2019, 12 Occupational Therapists (OTs), who will be responsible for providing SIT services, were recruited for training in Phase 1. By the end of 2019, the online/onsite training by The Collaborative for Leadership in Ayres Sensory Integration (CLASI), a training company that was founded by Dr. Jean Ayres,

the founder of SIT, has reached the 5th module out of 6 modules. The 6th module will be completed in January 2020 and therefore 12 Occupational Therapists (OTs) will be certified in SIT. Meanwhile, phase 2 training has commenced and another 8 Maltese OTs, 2 Norwegian OTs, 2 Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) and 2 Physiotherapists (PTs) have started their training in SIT.

The training of the educational psychologists within the Psychological School Services, National School Support Services Department, under the Ministry for Education and Employment, Psychological School Services was delivered by a Norwegian tutor, by the name of Dr Elin Antoniussen, from Bergen. She was contacted through Haukeland Universitetssykehus, with whom an agreement was signed by the Ministry for Education and Employment in August 2019, for the delivery of ADOS training (Phase 1) during October 2019.

The training of professionals to provide a free service that was previously unavailable, links well with the programme objective of 'universal access to health care'. The ultimate objective is to ensure that children with SI difficulties are provided the necessary intervention to prevent long-term disability and promote participation within society both in the early years as well as in later life as adults capable of self-reliance through engagement in work-related activities. This would support the target for a 'reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease'.

2) **PKU** - After all PKU equipment was procured and installed, the 3rd quarter of 2019 saw the start of the first trial runs using the PKU screening kits, which were procured in the same year. Technical problems were encountered during the first trials. These problems were discussed with technical support specialists and as a result recent trials provided results of a better quality. Latest data has been sent to the technical specialists for evaluation and MFH is currently waiting for their feedback. These problems had an impact on the launch of the PKU screening programme. However considering the impact that such a screening test has on the newborn, MFH needs to be confident that the best quality results are being obtained before official screening starts.

First consignment of kits for the analysis of phenylalanine levels have been procured and are currently being used to validate the methodology. This should lead us to the first newborns being screened for PKU.

3) **NAT** - The NAT equipment was procured, commissioned and successfully validated in first half of 2019. Its maintenance and operator training was included within the contract of award for the supply of the reagents and consumables. The cost per test includes all the expenses related to the equipment and anything else required to carry out testing. Reagents and consumables for NAT testing for HIV, HBV, HCV, WNV and HEV are being supplied in regular consignments for routine use. The frequency of deliveries is determined by the available shelf life at the manufacturer and the rate of consumption of each parameter. Payment is being done on pay per use basis (that is, unit cost x number of tests carried out).

Operator training (20 hours) was carried out onsite for 9 members of staff (5 females and 4 males). The system went live in August 2019 and NAT screening for HIV, HBV and HBC commenced on all blood donors on a routine basis. WNV screening is being carried out on donors who visited endemic countries within the previous 28 days. It is the intention to commence HEV testing in a short time on a percentage of donors to satisfy the demand for HEV Negative blood for patients who require such products.

The introduction of NAT testing has enabled the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) to review its donor recruitment criteria. Following the go live date, potential donors who visited endemic countries are not deferred any longer. The NBTS has also re-assessed its policy of banning all men who have sex with men (MSM) from contributing via blood donations. MSM individuals are now allowed to donate blood removing the perceived discrimination of the LGBTIQ community.

#### **PDP 2 – Opportunity Knocks (OK)**

Till the end of 2019, 3 social workers (executive III), 4 part time professionals (executive IV), 1 prevention officer, 1 coordinator and 1 senior administrator were engaged as part of the multi-disciplinary team. In all, they managed to reach the following targets:

- 108 youths were assisted on an individual basis;
- 25 prevention sessions were carried out, throughout which 411 youths were reached;

- workshop sessions at the Centre of Residential Restorative Services (CoRRS) at Imtaħleb were organised, throughout which 16 youths were reached;

Till the end of the year under review, in reply to an Opportunities Initiative Grant call, 26 applications of vulnerable youths interested in an opportunity to choose an educational strand, with the aim of enabling them to make a positive leap in his/her life, were received. These initiatives and opportunities would help the young person to gain independence and lead a socially integrated life. In the meantime, the appropriate procurement procedures are being followed in order to engage the necessary service providers to offer such opportunities to interested youths. Opportunities vary from hairdressing courses, makeup courses and driving licence lessons.

Concurrently, a residential safe house for young people (under 18 years of age) was set up in an urban town in Malta and 14 youths are being given shelter in it. The Project Promoter (PP) is augmenting its collaboration with other stakeholders involved in the field of children and youth. Various meetings are being held with the Department of Education, Department of Health and other similar entities in order to promote the project and its objectives, whilst building bridges for further collaboration.

A Memorandum of Understanding is currently also being drafted between the Foundation for Social Welfare Services(PP) and the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) to facilitate educational opportunities targeting shared cohort.

### PDP 3 – Training of Local Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability

The 1<sup>st</sup> training session on the principles of good governance, transparency and accountability was organised on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019. In all, 89 public administration staff attended, out of whom 41 were males and 48 females. 66 Regional and Local Councils were represented.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> training session on good governance, transparency and accountability with direct relationship to the small grant scheme application form and guidelines was organised on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019. Overall, 27 public administration staff attended out of whom 14 were males and 13 females. 12 Local Councils were represented.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> training session on good governance, transparency and accountability, focusing on a final updated version of the small grant scheme application form and guidelines, was held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Overall, 18 public administration staff attended out of whom 12 were males and 6 females. 11 Local Councils were represented.

It is worth noting that the target value, as set out in the Programme Agreement, covering the '*number of public administration staff trained in good governance principles (disaggregated by gender)*' was specified at 20 persons. However, the actual persons trained to date totals 134 persons, of whom 67 are males and 67 females. In parallel, the target value, as set out in the Programme Agreement, covering the '*number of local councils covered by the training on good governance principles*' was specified at 20 local councils. However, the actual number of Local Councils covered to date totalled 66 Regional/Local Councils in all.

The training was deemed necessary in order to ensure sound financial and administrative management of the small grant scheme. In line with the areas of support outlined in the programme area number 16 (Blue Book), the training carried out to date focused on principles of "*good governance, accountable institutions and transparency*" with special emphasis on managing small grant schemes.

### PDP 4 – The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage

Until the end of the year, most of the work of the PP was dedicated to the drawing up of the technical specifications of the works tender. The tender CT3029/19, with 2 clarification meetings held on site with potential bidders, was published with the deadline for submission of bids being 8th August 2019. The evaluation phase was finalised later on in the year but until the end of 2019, it was still at the stage of

getting final approval from the General Contracts Committee under the Department of Contracts. It is expected that the tender will be awarded early 2020 and works can start immediately.

In parallel, Heritage Malta's call for recruitment of a project manager, knowledgeable in the field of digitisation, was unsuccessful. A request to include experience in such a specialised area of expertise in a call for tender was not approved by the Department of Contracts, through the Principal Permanent Secretary. Hence, the only other solution to this problem was to go through a direct order, the process of which had just been approved by the Office of the Prime Minister by the end of the year under review. The final endorsement of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government (under whose portfolio HM falls) is expected in early 2020, so that any person selected would be on board by end February 2020. Once this process is finalised, the recruitment of the remaining personnel and the procurement of the digital equipment for the Digitisation process can be implemented.

### **SGS 1 - Small Grant Scheme (SGS) for Urban Localities**

A Covenant between LGD and the PO was signed on the 3rd June 2019, establishing LGD as the SGSO while outlining its main duties as operator of the SGS and its obligations towards the NFP as PO of the programme. At the same time, an Agreement was signed between LGD (the PP) and KS (Norwegian donor partner), highlighting the main responsibilities expected from both parties on the project. Concurrently, based on the NSO report - *Social Protection in Malta and the EU (2015)*, a list of the Regions registering the highest expenditure in terms of social security benefits was established, namely the Northern Harbour (258,398) and the Southern Harbour Regions (185,562). Subsequently, an analysis of this expenditure at the level of locality per capita was undertaken with a view to address the localities, which are most in need.

In June 2019, the Projects Selection Committee (PSC) met for the first time to review and approve its Terms of Reference, the Application Form for the 1st SGS Call and the Guidelines thereof. A number of stakeholders in the local government area, RSM Ltd (the Project Manager sub-contracted by the PP), KS (through video conference) and a representative of the NFP as PO office participated actively in this first committee meeting. The launch event was done by the SGSO on the 30<sup>th</sup> July, pending the Donors' final approval of the contents of the Application form and the Guidelines. Once the final clearance was received, the SGSO formally launched the call through an email sent to all eligible Local Councils and held a further one-hour meeting with the eligible Local Councils in December 2019, to update them on the amendments that were done in the documentation. The deadline for submission of proposals is 28th February 2020.

## **3. Implementation**

### *Financial status*

<b>Project Code</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Eligible Expenditure covered by the Grant</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>Disbursement by end of December 2019</b>
FBR	Fund for Bilateral Relations	340,000	340,000	Nil
PDP 1	Reduction in Social Inequalities in Health and the Burden of Disease	€2,046,000	€2,407,059	€735,084.37
PDP 2	Opportunity Knocks (OK)	€800,00	€941,176	€21,657.38

PDP 3	Training of Local Council Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability	€170,000	€200,000	€15,772.89
PDP 4	The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through poverty reduction	€1,713,200	€2,015,529	Nil
SGS	Small Grant Scheme	€1,000,000	€1,200,000	Nil
SGS PO Costs	SGS PO Costs	<b>€105,200</b>	€123,764.71	€16,650.10
PO Costs	Programme Operator Costs	<b>€299,600</b>	€352,470.59	€65,763.20

**a) commitments and disbursements made by the programme:**

The table above shows the Grant amount and the total amount committed for each project/budget heading under the programme, while the last column denotes that the amount of funds disbursed by end December 2019 and uploaded on the programme's management system CARSII.

Besides the activities directly attributable to PA10 under the responsibility of FPD as NFP and NFP as PO, Malta is also participating in other programmes funded through the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021.

- SOS Malta was once again awarded €700,000 to operate the Active Citizens Fund (ACF) in Malta. The first open call for proposals within the context of the ACF Programme was launched in October 2019, during an Information seminar where potential applicants were guided through the Application, Evaluation and Selection Process of the call, with an overview of the objectives and indicative activities for proposals. Deadline for submission of proposals is 25th January 2020. Ms Csilla Czibalmos, from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, was invited as key speaker to provide ideas for successful bilateral cooperation with organisations from the Donor States - the experience of Norwegian Civil Society Organisations and the norway.org - Active Citizens Fund NGO database. More info can be found on <https://activecitizensfund.mt/acf-fund>. A strong collaboration exists between the NFP as PO and SOS Malta, and both entities work closely on the sharing of information and documentation.
- The Malta Communications Authority & Tech.MT is participating in a partnership, which will implement the Women4IT project, with a budget of €347K (for Malta only). The project was launched in June 2019 (more info on <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/the-launch-of-women4it.716241> and <https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/e350000-in-funds-for-700-women-to-obtain-digital-skills-within-next-two-years/>). **Women4IT**'s aim is to develop digital competences and thereby the employability of young women at risk of exclusion from the labour market as well as to provide innovative solutions to increase

the number of young women in ICT careers and women participating in the digital economy. (<https://www.mca.org.mt/initiatives/women-4-it>).

- In November 2019, the General Retailers and Traders' Union (GRTU) was awarded around €17K under the Social dialogue and Decent Work Programme, which is currently undergoing contracting phase. The overall aim of the project is to improve working conditions when it comes to micro- and small enterprises, which represent over 95% of all businesses in Malta. Through the training of GRTU staff and also the organisation of a Conference targeting employers, the GRTU would be reaching employers both directly and indirectly through enhanced awareness and better access to improved decent work arrangements. The outcome would therefore be an increase in workplaces that foster improved working conditions.

***b) Disbursement and problems related to absorption and/or disbursements, with suggested solutions:***

The figures above clearly denotes a low disbursement pattern for 2019, and this was mainly due to the fact that all 4 pre-defined projects launched their projects and commenced activity early in 2019. The two most pressing problems all across the four projects were (1) recruitment and (2) procurement.

***Recruitment:*** in the case of PDP1, the call for a project administrator had to be issued 4 times. The first 3 times, applicants were either ineligible or declined the invitation for an interview. Finally, on the 4<sup>th</sup> call, there was one eligible applicant, who was interviewed and was successful. She commenced work in October, but unfortunately submitted a letter of resignation in November due to a more favourable post within another Ministry. Efforts are now being made to work around the problem by possibly making use of a framework agreement, which the Department of Contracts might have for such services. If this is unsuccessful, another call will be issued early 2020.

In the case of PDP4, the call for recruitment of a specialised project manager, with high expertise in digitisation, was stalled by the Department of Contracts, due to a legal restriction with regards to experience as selection criteria. PP has indicative information from basic in-house expertise for the equipment and manpower required but without the expertise of this Project Manager in place, digitisation risks remaining at a standstill. Bearing in mind the uniqueness of the position and the expertise required to record and digitize the maritime collection, HM had to resort to a different type of procedure i.e. go for direct recruitment instead of sub-contracting.

The procedure, which will be followed for the Digitisation Project Manager post, shall be an open call based on normal internal procedures for recruitment of personnel with Heritage Malta. The contract will be for a defined period and dedicated solely to the function of this post. This situation came about because of persistent failure, dragging months on end, to reach agreement with the Department of Contracts on matters of experience requirements for the Project Manager Digitisation (since the requirements are very specific for this specialised sector) whilst a BPQR type of open tender was being drafted for publication. Eventually this stalemate forced the Project Beneficiary to abandon this route altogether. With all approvals from higher authorities already in place, it is expected that the selected candidate shall be on board by end February 2020.

LGD, as PP of PDP3 and PO of SGS1, also had to resort to sub-contracting the project management of PDP3 and SGS1, in view of the fact that it would have taken many months to recruit through the usual government channels, and as happened in PDP1, it is becoming very difficult to employ persons on a project basis for the duration of the project only.

The PP of PDP2 encountered difficulties in engaging the envisaged complement of human resources. This issue is not exclusive to this project but reflects a nationwide shortage of professionals working in such specific social field. Consequently, commitments and disbursements of the project were affected. To such aim, the PP is currently drafting an addendum to the Project Contract, in which, amongst other requests, an extension to the project's final date of eligibility is being requested until June 2021. This extension may allow the Project Promoter to overcome the delay in recruiting the envisaged complement of human resources to carry out the proposed activities and reach the set targets.

***Procurement:*** LN352 of 2016 delineates the Public Procurement Regulations, which all four project promoters have to meticulously follow in any procurement procedure they undertake. The most time-



consuming and complicated procedures are more prevalent in call for tenders for infrastructural works and equipment. The project promoter has to be extra careful of listing the exact technical specifications in the Bill of Quantities. Any variations, exceeding the percentage stipulated in the original call, are considered as highly risky and can result in loss of funds, even though the works are completed and/or equipment received and used.

The management on PDP1 spent almost all 2019 working on compiling the technical specifications of the construction and M&E works and the specialised equipment, together with the training and assessment tools.

Heritage Malta also had quite a difficult year in establishing the technical specifications for the structural works required on PDP4, bearing in mind the importance of a scheduled building like Malta Maritime Museum. Interested contractors are also another problem, due to the current economic boom, not to mention the difficulties faced by a contractor when carrying out works in such buildings.

Another problem HM faced in the compilation of the works tender, was due to the fact that, once bids were received from the contractors, it was obvious that both of them were much higher than they had originally envisaged and estimated. Evaluation was stalled for an indefinite time, awaiting confirmation from the Ministry for Finance (MFIN) for availability of additional funds to either potentially award tender to cheapest technically compliant bidder or cancel tender outright due to insufficient funds, with all arising implications on the fund and project.

### *Conformity with specific requirements*

The Programme Agreement stipulates four (4) general conditions attributed to the implementation of the programme.

The 1<sup>st</sup> condition stipulates that *"the NFP shall ensure that for the outcome 3 indicator "Percentage of residents 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their local council's performance in targeted localities", where the baseline value is "to be determined" (TBD), the PO shall submit to the FMO for approval the baseline value together with a description of the data collection method used"*. This had to be submitted no later than six months after the finalisation of the selection of projects under the Small Grants Scheme. The Local Government Division (LGD), Programme Operator for the Small Grant Scheme (SGSO), launched the application form on 17 December 2019. The indicator of Outcome 3 shall be determined by the eligible Local Councils themselves through a survey that each Local Council shall prepare in conjunction with the application. The survey template, to be used by the Local Council to determine the related baseline, was annexed with the Application Form. Any costs incurred by the Local Councils in order to prepare and carry out this survey, shall be covered by the SGSO.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> condition regards PDP4, wherein, for Outcome 4 indicator, the NFP is obliged to ensure that the PO shall submit to the FMO for approval the baseline value, together with a description of the data collection method used, no later than six months after the signing of the Project Contract with Heritage Malta, related to the *"Average audience experience rating (on a scale of 1 to 5), where the baseline is still to be determined"*. Heritage Malta installed a device at the Maritime Museum exit area for the visitors to rate their experience at the museum. The total number of visitors, who participated in the survey, was 309. The rate had a scale of between 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest. The following are the results.

Rating: 1 (lowest) – 9.4%; 2 – 2.3%; 3 – 63.4%; 4 – 16.5%; 5 – 8.4%

Calculating the total of respondents and total points submitted and then dividing the total points with the total respondents gives an amount of 3.12, therefore the baseline value for this indicator is of 3.12. By the end of the project, the target to be achieved shall be that of (+1), meaning an amount of 4.12 of satisfied visitors.

As a 3<sup>rd</sup> condition, the NFP is to ensure that no more than 50% of the total eligible expenditure of the programme is allocated to hard measures i.e. infrastructure. According to the estimates presented in the Application Forms submitted by the PPs, the financial situation at present is as follows:

	Description of Hard Measure	Estimated amount according to AF	Total Eligible Budget	% of hard measures/eligible expenditure
	Structural and M&E works	€1,075,000	€2,407,059	45%
	No hard measures	0	€941,176	0%
	No hard measures	0	€200,000	0%
	Structural and M&E works	€1,095,529	€2,015,529	54%
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>€2,170,529</b>	<b>€5,563,764</b>	<b>39%[1]</b>

Once all tenders involving infrastructure are published and committed, the PO will be in a better position to calculate the total expenditure of these tenders and present the actual percentages to the FMO.

The NFP shall ensure that refugees and migrants are included in the programme as important target groups, especially in the small grant scheme under the outcome "*Improved quality of life of deprived communities in urban localities*" (4<sup>th</sup> condition). The NFP as PO is participating as observer in the Project Stakeholders Committee for projects' selection under the SGS and hence would be in a position to ensure that this target group is given its due importance in the projects. As for the other PDPs, the NFP as PO will monitor the requirement of this condition through the bilateral meetings held with PPs.

With regards to the specific concerns stipulated in Annex B to the MOU, the PDPs awarded funds under the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 are being implemented in conjunction with the programme Local Development and Poverty Reduction. Bilateral relations between the Donor States and Malta shall be strengthened with the aim of stimulating and developing long-term cooperation within all PDPs. In this respect, three (3) PDPs have already commitment from a donor project partner to collaborate with them on their projects. As for the remaining PDP, i.e. PDP 4 – The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage, a contact with Stavanger Museum has been made with the possibility of a bilateral initiative in year 2020.

[1] This excludes equipment which is not considered as hard measure that is infrastructure

## Progress by the Joint Committee on Bilateral Funds

Towards the end of 2018 and throughout 2019, the NFP as Chairperson of the JCBF (in line with the Bilateral Agreement, Art 2.3) received various proposals for funding but these were not in line with the Strategic Priorities discussed in the previous year's JCBF meeting namely *Valletta 18*, *Our Ocean* and *Domestic Violence*. In view of this, there was agreement with the Donors to keep the two Strategic Priorities identified in 2018, that is *Our Ocean* and *Domestic Violence* and add other new Strategic Priorities as defined in the Partnership Agreement.

### Clean Oceans

During the third JCBF meeting held in March 2019, the NFP informed the Committee that with regards to the strategic priorities, the only proposal in hand was more related to marine litter (Clean Oceans) than to 'Our Oceans' Conference. It was pointed out by the Donors that the original proposal for strategic priority had been on Clean Oceans, and Our Ocean was a concrete project under that strategic priority. Hence, it transpired that the proposal received from the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC)<sup>[1]</sup> was clearly in line with the strategic priority of Clean Oceans, and the topic was still of high importance to Norway. It was also mentioned that an awareness campaign was a good way to start working on clean oceans.

The NFP explained to the Committee that the first proposal that had been put forward by MESDC, included equipment to monitor marine litter in Maltese harbours. The NFP had asked the Ministry concerned to emphasise more on the bilateral aspect, which was somewhat lacking from the original application. Also, the expenditure related to the equipment amounted to around €140,000. The NFP had also asked whether this could have been considered eligible under the bilateral funds.

The second proposal, which was presented after the NFP put forward these questions, had more of a bilateral aspect since it included Norwegian expertise and had the potential to include Norwegian schools as well. In the submitted Application, the proposal was planning to procure some gadgets and the NFP asked the Committee whether these gadgets could be considered eligible for funding.

The Donors emphasized the need for both sides, that is the Maltese and Norwegian partners, to sit down to discuss the idea and develop the bilateral initiative together as this would be more feasible and advantageous for both sides – that is, the two partners should be on board from the very start at the identification of the idea and then define the project proposal further. In that way, the bilateral aspect would be much stronger, and both sides would decide whether the gadgets were essential for the initiative proposed or not. The Donors informed the Committee that there were NGOs in Norway that could contribute to Clean Oceans related projects. With regards to the issue of eligibility of expenditure, the FMO informed the Committee, that the equipment can become eligible in a bilateral initiative, when it serves the purpose for the bilateral component of the initiative. In this sense, the bilateral objective had to be established first and foremost, before deciding on what constituted as eligible for funding under the bilateral funds. The Maltese partner should therefore decide on what the bilateral initiative is, rather than immediately write out a proposal. The FMO also remarked that expenditure linked to equipment should also be assessed in terms of proportionality taking into consideration the cost of the equipment compared to the total project cost. Hence, the assessment should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis. Concerning the Clean Oceans proposals, it was agreed that the NFP would forward the proposed application to the JCBF Committee in order to identify potential Norwegian or Icelandic partners that could collaborate with the Maltese partner and improve further the proposal.

### Initiative Title: Clean Oceans

Summary/brief description: The Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change (MESDC), would like to embark on a Marine Litter Awareness Raising Campaign - a collaboration with a local supermarket with a view to increase awareness among the public on the importance of reducing plastic waste which could eventually end up in the sea. The aim is to work with the supermarket on a plan to reduce as much as possible plastic packaging and in so doing, convey the message that with the

reduction of plastic waste from supermarkets and hence from consumers, the risk of waste ending up in the sea, that is marine litter, is reduced. Given that Malta is made up of an archipelago of islands, it is surrounded with sea and therefore it is very important to mitigate the problem of marine litter and avoid it in the first place. The target audience would be the public and supermarkets across the Maltese islands. The same activities could be replicated in Norway too as part of the partnership.

Budget: €93,340

Bilateral Relevance: Through this project, the Government of Malta wishes to strengthen the bilateral relations with the Donor countries by sharing of knowledge between local and Donor experts from the Donor states in the activities of the awareness campaign. The experts will exchange good practices and disseminate information, technology and relevant experiences during activities held.

**Update:** MESDC had approached the two potential Norwegian partners that the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment had suggested, namely Hold Norge Rent and Loop. Both NGOs informed MESDC that they did not have the capacity to participate in any other projects in 2019. As considerable time elapsed, MESDC had to perforce pursue the initiative elsewhere. The Donors forwarded the name of another NGO (*The Future in our hands*), which could be a potential partner in the project. MESDC has written to 'The Future in our hands' NGO, asking if they were interested in partnering up with former in the project related to plastic waste/marine litter and are awaiting a response from them.

*[\*] As a result of an election for a new Maltese Prime Minister held in mid-January 2020, the Ministry has now been renamed as Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning (MECP).*

#### **Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence**

The NFP informed the Committee that on 18 March 2019, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (MFTP)<sup>(\*)</sup> received an email from Icelandic partners on various topics including gender equality and gender-based violence. There was agreement that the priority title Domestic Violence be reworded in such a way as to include other initiatives related to gender-violence. The title was thus reworded to Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence in order to include proposals on the Istanbul Convention. The Donors informed the Committee that the Ministry for Justice in Norway was interested in working on the Istanbul Convention with a Maltese partner as it had already worked on several activities related to Domestic Violence. Therefore, the NFP was to forward the contact of the Norwegian Ministry to interested Maltese Partners.

During the meeting, the Icelandic Donor informed the Committee that Iceland had many partners that worked on Domestic Violence. The Police in Reykjavik was also a potential partner that could be of interest. The representative provided a list of interested Icelandic partners with a view to facilitate partner search for interested Maltese Ministries. The NFP agreed to share the Icelandic proposals received from Iceland with potential stakeholders and provide an update to the Icelandic Donor accordingly.

*[\*] As a result of an election for a new Maltese Prime Minister held in mid-January 2020, the Ministry has now been renamed as Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA).*

**Initiative Title:** Integrated Policies within the context of Domestic Violence

Summary/brief description: Appogg Agency intends to partner with a Norwegian/Icelandic entity to exchange knowledge and good practices whilst consult with other specialist multi-disciplinary services in the area of domestic violence. This will be done through a number of organized study visits amongst partners, consultancy meetings and a final conference.

Budget: €25,456

Bilateral Relevance: This initiative would be beneficial for both parties hailing from Iceland/Norway and Malta. It will serve as a platform of exchange of knowledge and good practices in order to improve the Integrated Policies in relation to the three levels of prevention. Throughout such a venture, a value-added

aspect to services rendered in both countries will be attained, ensuring that a high-level standard of operations is adhered to, after sharing modus operandi and procedures amongst both parties.

**Update:** Soon after the JCBF meeting in March 2019, the contact details of the Ministry of Justice were forwarded by the Donors for onward transmission to *Appogg* Agency within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. *Appogg* Agency has been in discussions with the Norwegian Ministry for Justice and Public Security regarding the possible partnership on gender-based violence and the implementation on the Istanbul Convention. However, a response is still awaited from the Norwegian Ministry. Intervention by the Donors is needed here. The project leader has changed three times but *Appogg* are still interested in pursuing the project.

## Health

Apart from tweaking the above two listed Strategic Priorities for Malta in 2018 in the Workplan, namely Our Oceans and Domestic Violence to Clean Oceans and Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence respectively, agreement was also reached during the 2019 JCBF meeting, on the withdrawal of the proposal on Valletta 18. Since Valletta 18 was no longer considered as a priority, the NFP suggested including other Strategic Priorities important for Malta under the FBR. In this sense, it was proposed to streamline the Work Plan Strategic Objectives with the National Strategic Objectives namely:

- Funding Priority 1: Fostering competitiveness through innovation and the creation of a business friendly environment, having one of its main thematic areas as Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI)
- Funding Priority 2: Sustaining an environmentally friendly and resource efficient economy, having one of its main thematic areas as Environment and Resource Efficiency
- Funding Priority 3: Creating Opportunities through investment in human capital and improving health and well-being, having one of its main thematic areas as Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty.

The NFP commented that the EU Commission should soon be presenting the post-2020 strategic priorities for Malta: therefore, as expected in the near future, these strategic priorities would also change. Therefore, the €125,000 reserved for the open call under the FBR could be dedicated to the new strategic priorities for post-2020.

The NFP proposed that Health should be one of the new strategic priorities and that such an important Priority Area which is linked to national and European Union policies, be introduced in 2019, considering that following a needs assessment process, even the Donors agreed to include Health in the pre-defined Local Development Programme Agreement. It was agreed that the new Health Strategic Priority could be included in the revised Workplan. Thus, there was support by the Donors to introduce Health as a third strategic priority under the Bilateral Fund in addition to Clean Oceans, Gender Equality and Gender-Based Violence. The Donors however emphasized that supported projects would need to secure strategic bilateral partnership for both parties, under the three priorities.

During the March 2019 JCBF meeting, it was mentioned by the Donors that Malta could officially present the Health bilateral initiatives, which were already in the pipeline. However, the initiatives had to focus more on strategic bilateral partnership for both parties and the applications had to perforce be revised accordingly. Once revised, the applications would once again be presented to the JCBF members for their evaluation.

As considerable time elapsed from the date of submission of the projects to the date that support by the Donors to introduce Health as a third strategic priority was given, two of the three bilateral initiatives, namely Transgender Healthcare in Malta and Switching from Originators to Biosimilars in Malta, became obsolete.

However, the following third remaining initiative is being pursued:

**Initiative Title:** Observation of the operations at and learning from the experience of Department of Genetics and Molecular Medicine at *Landspítali University Hospital*, Reykjavik

Budget: €6,309

*Summary/brief description:* The Ministry for Health has embarked on the collation of a strategy that is aiming at presenting the actions required to update and upgrade the medical genetics services provided in Malta by the public healthcare system. The main aim of this strategy is for this service to be able to meet the forecasted increasing volume and breadth in demand over the next few years. Actions will include measures that will address capacity and different levels of professional expertise requirements in the human resources operating these services. A review of the available and required upgrades in the technological infrastructure and equipment necessary for a modern medical genetics service will also be performed. The strategy will also address organisational structures and processes, and collaborative systems and agreements with other involved parties such as researching and academic institutions (particularly at the University of Malta), the industry and relevant patients' groups and representatives.

*Bilateral Relevance:* The project will involve bilateral visits by key Maltese stakeholders to the Icelandic facility to observe better how the services operate. There will also be a visit to Malta by an Icelandic expert to meet with more stakeholders and tap into the expert's advice on possible solutions. Both visits will also help towards establishing a functional network between the specialist experts in the two island nations. Since genetic services, is a fast-evolving domain, the Icelandics can learn from Malta as well. They can show that what worked in their country can also work for communities that inhabit small island peripheral nations like theirs. They can then build on this knowledge for further development and investment at their end.

**Update:** MFH is trying to establish communication again with the Icelandic counterpart Director General for Quality and Prevention within the Ministry for Welfare (incl Health) in Iceland, with a view to build on the application together. This project would be a first with an Icelandic partner.

#### **Initiatives linked to Predefined Projects**

During the second JCBF meeting held in 2018, it was agreed that an amount of €30,000 would be ring-fenced for bilateral initiatives aimed at the preparation of the pre-defined projects, pre-contract. All the contracts for the pre-defined projects were signed in October 2018 and such bilateral funds (seed money) were not utilized. It was agreed however, that although the projects had already started their initial implementation stages, the project promoters could still make use of these funds at a later stage, since there was still the need to develop the bilateral component of the pre-defined projects.

#### **Ministry for Health**

**Initiative Title:** Ministry for Health (MFH) participation in Norwegian network (Preliminary visit to the Norwegian Directorate of Health as an initiative linked to the predefined project PDP1).

*Summary/brief description:* The Norwegian Directorate of Health invited the Ministry for Health in Malta to participate in an EEA Norway Grants Network meeting for children and adolescents' health on 17 and 18 October 2019 in Oslo Norway. This stemmed from an agreement between the two countries for the implementation of PDP 1 project 'Reduction in Social Inequalities in Health and the Burden of Disease EEA Financial Mechanism 2014 – 2021'. This project has three components namely:

1. The setting up of a Sensory Integration Therapy Centre including training of a minimum of 12 Maltese Occupational Therapists, 2 Norwegian Occupational Therapists, 2 Maltese Physiotherapists and 2 Maltese Speech and Language Pathologists with the aim of providing SIT services to children and adolescents
2. Adding Phenylketonuria (PKU) to the panel of diseases for which new-borns in Malta shall be screened at birth in collaboration with the Norwegian new-born Screening Programme at Oslo University Hospital. Investing in hardware and capacity to enable Maltese Pathology Services to follow up children diagnosed with PKU
3. Investing in hardware and capacity building for Nucleic Acid Amplification Testing (NAT) (all blood donations from donors with a history of travel to endemic countries within the previous 28 days)

A request was made for funding of travel and subsistence for two public service employees, who are already involved in PDP1, to attend this meeting.

Budget: €1800 (to be revised)

Bilateral Relevance: Attendance to the networking meeting was deemed beneficial for future collaboration with the Donor partners especially on:

1. The setting up of similar Sensory Integration Therapy (SIT) services in Norway (since these are currently not available within the public health services)
2. Offering training to 2 Norwegian Occupational Therapists employed with the Norwegian Directorate of Health (besides the 2 Norwegian Occupational Therapists that have been indicated by the Norwegian OT Association) since there is no SIT training opportunity in Norway and Malta has contracted the founding Sensory Integration Therapy American organization (CLASI) through the project.
3. Future collaboration and possible exchange visits to further develop children and adolescents' health services, including the SIT services in both countries, as well as other beneficiary countries participating in the network.
4. Sharing of knowledge, good practices and experiences, together with resources and tools between all the countries in the network.

Update: During the two days of the meeting, the 7 countries (Romania, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Malta and Norway) presented the challenges in children and adolescents in their countries. There were evident common challenges across all countries including:

- Obesity and lack of exercise
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Access to healthcare

Each country also presented a brief description of the Norwegian funded projects (some directly linked to these issues and some indirectly). There was a lot of interest in Malta's project especially by Romania and Norway. It was decided that it would be a good idea to host network meetings every 6 months to one year in each country selecting a particular topic.

Decision needs to be taken by MFH together with the NFP regarding Malta's future participation and if this eventuates, funding for the 6 monthly meetings in the beneficiary countries as well as Malta's hosting event, would need to be made available from the Bilateral Fund. This would mean that Malta would have to fund the meeting when it is Malta's turn to host. In this case, a committee would be set up to plan this event. Membership within the network should also involve other professionals dealing with children and adolescent challenges in Malta for example a Psychiatrist, a Paediatrician, Health Promoters, Researchers on obesity, etc. In this sense, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), Appogg Agency (for children, families and the Community), Commissioner for Children, Commissioner for Domestic Violence, Education and Police, can all come together.

The NFP is in discussion with MFH, with a view that the latter makes a full 2 to 3 year proposal on a bilateral initiative, planned out together with the Network, and which should also include the event to be organised in Malta on a national level.

#### **Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)**

*Initiative Title:* Sharing of Good Practices in youth welfare services (Preliminary visit to the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs in Norway as an initiative linked to the predefined project PDP2)

*Budget:* €6,000

*Summary/brief description:* This bilateral initiative is being planned in conjunction with the pre-defined project PDP2: Opportunity Knocks (OK), in order to share good practices during various initiatives held with transnational partners. Meetings are being planned with Donor countries, carrying out on site visits

and exchanging of work practices in relation to youth welfare services. In this way, it can be ensured that the aims and objectives of PDP2 are met.

*Bilateral Relevance:* This initiative would serve as a platform to improve understanding by the Donor Country of the existing practices in Malta and a value-added aspect to the OK project, ensuring that a high-level standard of operations is adhered to, after sharing *modus operandi* and procedures amongst both parties.

*Update:* A letter of intent was sent by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs on 27 July 2018, committing themselves to participate as partner in the project Opportunity Knocks (OK).

After various reminders by Appogg Agency to the Norwegian Directorate due to lack of a response, and the subsequent intervention by the Donors, the latter informed the Committee that the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs were still interested in collaborating with the Foundation for Social Welfare Services but at a later date in 2019. The Donor partner has established contact again with Appogg Agency, wherein the latter requested an extension of the time frame to September 2019. A draft application of the proposed initiative with a new amended timeframe to June 2020, was sent to the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, on 3 December 2019 requesting them to sign the application.

#### **Local Government Division (LGD)**

*Initiative Title:* Preliminary visit to the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) (as an initiative linked to the predefined project PDP3)

*Budget:* €12,396 (to be revised)

*Summary/brief description:* 'Sharing and strengthening good governance practices at local and regional levels' is an initiative, which served as a preliminary meeting for the pre-defined project 'Training of Local Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability'.

*Bilateral Relevance:* The meetings would help to continue strengthening the relationship between major representatives of Local and Regional Governments in Malta and those of Norway and make sure that the past and current relationship are sustained through further cooperation in the future.

*Update:* The visit took place successfully and the NFP is currently processing the payments thereof.

#### **Heritage Malta (HM)**

*Initiative Title:* Preparatory visit to Norwegian Maritime Museums (as an initiative linked to the predefined project PDP4)

*Budget:* still tbc

*Summary/brief description:* Tapping into the expertise of one of the Maritime Museum/s in Norway, to complement the bilateral Components of the pre-defined project aimed at renovating structures and exhibits of the Malta Maritime Museum, including digitization of the collection.

*Bilateral Relevance:* Norway is one of the main Donors of the EEA and Norway Grants and having such bilateral relations between Malta and Norway, are important on both a national and European level.

*Update:* After being informed by Stavanger Museum that there were issues of capacity, the NFP turned again to the Donors to intervene. The Donors explained that Stavanger Museum was still interested in collaborating with the Malta Maritime Museum (MMM), but in 2020, due to lack of human resources attributed to a major exhibition held in 2019. The NFP felt that 2020 may be too late for Heritage Malta to discuss the needs of the pre-defined project since the scope was to visit a center before the actual start of the implementation of the pre-defined project. The Donors confirmed that Stavanger Museum had the expertise in both exhibiting Maritime Museums as well as digitization. Thanks to the Donors' intervention, there was a breakthrough in bringing both parties together, and the project will proceed in March 2020. The



MMM is in contact with Stavanger Museum to draw up the bilateral project together and to establish costs including the number of participants attending the bilateral visit.

As can be noted from the above initiatives, the Funds and Programmes Division faced many challenges throughout 2019, most especially when trying to locate Donor project partners for Maltese partners. This challenge was highlighted during the JCBF meeting held in March 2019.

## Management and control system

Various revised versions of the document entitled “*Management and Control System Description*” (MCS) were submitted to the FMO before finally receiving a letter on 5 February 2019 from the latter, stating that the Management and control system meets the minimum requirements of Article 5.7.5 of the Regulations on the implementation of the EEA and Norwegian FMs 2014-2021. This letter also outlined that, however, the FMO could not approve the MCS in its totality since there were some procedures that needed further clarifications. The FMO requested a revised version of the MCS to be submitted within six months from the date of the letter. Following this letter, the NFP presented the final version of the MCS on 27 May 2019 taking into consideration the following recommendations:

- *Separation of functions*: The MCS includes description of the NFP's role as well as NFP as PO. However, roles and responsibilities should be clearly divided between the staff, carrying out responsibilities as NFP and staff carrying out others as NFP as PO. Procedures should be described with clear distinction between the roles.
- *Irregularities*: The MCS description of reporting on irregularities could benefit from more details. The description of irregularities reporting in the Manual of Procedures could be adapted to the MCS.
- *Complaints mechanism*: The MCS includes a very general level complaint mechanism in accordance with the Regulation. However, the descriptions would benefit from more details and procedures should be more clearly described.
- *Monitoring*: The MCS needs to differentiate between results, risk and compliance monitoring. The section is also missing information on frequency of monitoring.
- *Risk identification and assessment*: Please include a procedure for NFP as PO to follow up on risks, that are deemed to be high.
- *Sampling*: Sampling is covered with Annex 6, but procedure could use some clarifications.

After taking into consideration the above recommendations and suggestions, the FMO finally accepted the MCS on 29 August 2019.

The processing of payments on CARS 1421 started off well in 2019. Training was offered to project promoters to familiarise themselves with the system and assistance throughout the year was also given to those project promoters, who had difficulties with certain payments. As of 18 November 2019, the Treasury part of the payment flow in the system was taken up by a specific unit within the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality, replacing the Treasury Department at the Ministry for Finance. This change is reflected both in the Manual of Procedures as well as the MCS.

## C. LEARNING

### 1. Monitoring

In line with the Monitoring Plan presented in the Combined Strategic Annual Report for 2019, and Art 5.6.1 of the Regulations, the NFP as PO held bilateral meetings with the project promoters in January, March, May, July and November 2019. Project leaders, administrators and line ministries concerned were called in for these bilateral meetings to discuss developments, issues and risks encountered in the implementation of the project. Each Project Promoter prepares an updated brief, indicating developments between one meeting and another, including financial commitments/disbursements made on each budget heading.

The first two bilateral meetings for PDP1 were held on site at Marsa Primary School. Complementing these bilateral meetings, the NFP as PO conducted desk-based checks on PDP1 once the works tenders were contracted, in order to verify that procurement was carried out according to public procurement procedures. The latter check is formally carried out by the NFP as PO on any invoices uploaded on the system before these are included in the next IFR, as per Regulations Art 5.6.2.

Besides the bilateral briefs, the PPs are also obliged to send Project Progress Reports on a six-monthly basis i.e. twice a year, as stipulated in our Manual of Procedures. These reports contain description of the implementation carried out during the first and second six months of the calendar year, depending for which period the report is being presented.

These monitoring exercises are crucial in order to ensure that the PP is being compliant with the Regulations and internal procedures, while implementing the correct activities to ultimately reach the required results. The progress towards attaining results is discussed during each bilateral meeting and serves also to recognise any inherent risks, which might or might not be immediately possible to mitigate. Both sides are yet aware of them and efforts continue from both sides to mitigate them between one meeting and another. This continuous, yet varied monitoring routine, also facilitates learning for both sides, that is the PP and the NFP as PO. The latter gets first-hand insight on the peculiarities of each procurement procedure carried out by each PP, whether it be services or goods or works, and passes on these insights to the PP, who, in turn can utilise them for future transactions and avoid repetition of mistakes.

The programme's IT monitoring tool, CARS 1421, which is web-based and hence easily accessible to its users, offers the possibility for project promoters to upload all necessary documentation related to procurement and expenditure of the various budget headings. This facilitates the process of real time monitoring and verification of expenditures by the NFP as PO and the Financial Control Unit (FCU). The NFP as PO carries out 100% verification of all expenditure as per Regulations Art 5.6.2, followed by the FCU, which verifies expenditure based on a sample basis.

The monitoring plan for the next reporting period is provided as Annex 5 to this programme report.

## 2. Evaluation

The NFP shall be issuing a call for tenders in 2022 for a final ex-post evaluation to be concluded by March 2023. The aim of this final evaluation exercise is to have *"a systematic, objective, and independent assessment of the design, implementation and/or results achieved in programmes and projects with the aim of determining the relevance, coherence, consistency, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and/or sustainability of the financial contribution"*. Results of this evaluation exercise will be presented in the Final Combined Strategic and Annual Report, on completion of the programme.

The Evaluation Plan is provided as Annex 6 to this programme report.

## 3. Lessons learned

This year marked a crucial and very busy year for both the NFP as PO and the PPs! Immediately after the contracts were signed, the first steps of implementation started off for all the PDPs and this impetus continued throughout the year. This was a major lesson learnt by the NFP as PO, who, through its monitoring exercises, open communication and professional relationships made sure that this impetus does not slacken down at any point in time during the year. Risks of occurrences, which hinder progress, cannot ever be completely avoided but the NFP as PO was always available to act as liaising person between the PP and the Authorities. The creation and maintenance of this professional relationship is the foundation of the success of the programme and without it, both sides will not be able to achieve much!

The NFP, NFP as PO and PPs are aware of the possibility to learn from each activity, no matter how significant, on the projects and consider it as a learning experience for the future. Regulations and internal procedures might seem cumbersome and bureaucratic until assimilated but, ultimately, both sides came to realise that these exist to help structure implementation. Making mistakes is human, but learning from these mistakes and avoiding repeating them is growing professionally and enables one to get satisfaction from achieving results, even minor ones, with the final objective of reaching the project's main goals.

Built on previous experience, it is recognised by all parties concerned that procurement is a big challenge! Yet, an important lesson learnt in this aspect is the fact that careful and timely planning before any procurement procedure is launched is the essence of success in this process. It is not always realistically possible to plan out every detail of the process, but crucial to all, is knowing what exactly is required and this is translated clearly in the terms of reference and bill of quantities. In the works tenders, we learnt that, no matter how accurate one tries to be in these lists, some variations will always occur. Yet, the latter can be as minimal as possible if special attention is given to detail during the drafting of tenders. The procurement procedure is a learning process in its own right and more lessons are to be learnt during the implementation of this programme.

As for the ex-post evaluation tender, the NFP shall plan quite ahead and work on the tender document during 2022, in order to publish the tender at the earliest possible, thus mitigating any risks related to submission and award and thus, allowing ample time for the contractor to work on appropriately collecting data and recording of results.

## D. WORK PLAN

Period	Activity	Responsibility
January	26 January – Deadline to submit CSAR (annual report) 2019	NFP/PO
February	20 February – Forecast of likely payments	PO and CA NFP/PO
	27 February – Bilateral Meetings	
March	15 March – submission of IFR	NFP/PO
	18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> March – NFP Heads Meeting Iceland	NFP/PO JCBF committee
	25 March – JCBF meeting	NFP/PO – Donors - FMO
	26 March – Annual meeting	
April	22 April – internal meeting to plan an annual communication activity	NFP/PO
May	5 May Bilateral meetings	NFP/PO
July	20 July – Forecast of likely payments	PO and CA NFP/PO
	28/29 Jul Bilateral meetings	
September	15 September - submission of IFR	NFP-CA
	20 September – Forecast of likely payments	PO and CA NFP/PO
	24/25 Sep Bilateral meetings	
October	Communications Workshop (to be proposed to be held in Malta)	FMO – PO FMO – PO
	NFP Heads Meeting (tbc)	
November	20 Nov – Forecast of likely payments	NFP/PO NFP/PO
	26 Nov Bilateral meetings	

December	Drafting of the CSAR 2020	NFP/PO
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## **E. ANNEXES**

- 1. Updated results (indicator achievements)**
- 2. Communication summary**
- 3. Overview of contracted projects**
- 4. Risk management**
- 5. Monitoring plan**
- 6. Evaluation plan**
- 7. Evaluation report**
- 8. Technical assistance report**

## Annex 1: Updated results (indicator achievements)

### MT-LOCALDEV Local Development and Poverty Reduction

Objective: Strengthened social and economic cohesion								
Outcome 1: Improved access to and quality of health services in Malta								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Number of children and adolescents receiving Sensory Integration (SI) therapy in Malta	Annual number	0.00	-	-	-	0	800.00	-
Level of satisfaction (by parents) with Sensory Integration (SI) services	Scale 1-5	N/A	-	-	-	1	4.00	the service is not yet being given so the value at end of 2019 should be still 0. However the system is giving a notification that the value has to be equal or larger than 1.
Number of children and adolescents seeking Sensory Integration (SI) services abroad through the Malta Community Chest Fund or other NGO funding	Number	7.00	7 (Strategic Report 2018)	-	-	7	0.00	-
Percentage of blood donations undergoing testing for West Nile Virus	Percentage	-	-	0	0	-	100.00 %	-
Percentage of neonates born in Malta screened for phenylketonuria (PKU) by 2021	Percentage	-	-	0	0	-	95.00 %	-
Output 1.1: Professionals trained in Sensory Integration (SI) Therapy								

Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>Number of Occupational Therapists certified in SI</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	12.00, 2 of which shall be Norwegian OTs, who will not be gainfully employed in Malta	Training has started and is still ongoing
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Number of Physiotherapists trained in SI</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	2.00	Training has started and is still ongoing
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Number of Speech Language Pathologists trained in SI</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	2.00	Training has started and is still ongoing
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Output 1.2: Sensory Integration Clinic set up and operational</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		

			period					
<b>Number of Sensory Integration Clinics set up</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	1.00	Infrastructural and other works are work-in-progress and it is envisaged that the Clinic will be launched by the end of 2020.
<b>Output 1.3: PKU screening service developed</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>PKU screening service added to the existing congenital hypothyroidism screening as part of blood spot testing</b>	Binary	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	The PKU equipment has been procured and the UHPLC equipment successfully installed in the quarter of 2019. • Third quarter of 2019 saw the start of the first trial runs using the PKU screening kits, which were procured in the same year.
<b>Number of Clinical Chemists trained in PKU screening</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	1.00	-
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Number of Medical Lab Scientists trained in PKU screening</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	2	2.00	Training received by these two medical laboratory scientists was on the use of the UHPLC equipment.
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Output 1.4: Nucleic Acid Amplification (NAT) testing developed</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>System and governance for NAT blood testing service in Malta set up</b>	Binary	No	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	Equipment was procured, commissioned and validated in Q1/2 2019 and the system went live in August 2019. Maintenance and operator training was included in the contract for the supply of the reagents and consumables. Training (20 hrs) - 5F & 4M staff.
<b>Number of NBTS staff trained in NAT testing</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	2.00	-
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Outcome 2: Improved well-being of vulnerable children and youths</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>Annual number of children and/or youth staying at the residential safe house</b>	Annual number	0.00	-	-	-	14	10.00	14 youths are being given shelter in this residential home



<b>Number of children and youths at risk accessing integrated services</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	108	500.00	108 youths were assisted on an individual basis
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	50	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	58	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Age</i>								
<i>Children and youth (0-17)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	54	-	-
<i>Young adults (18-29)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	54	-	-
<i>Adults (30-64)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Elderly (65+)</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Number of youths (16 -25) in education, employment or training 12 months after having received services</b>	Number	0.00	-	Reported 2020 and then annually			50.00	-
<b>Output 2.1: Opportunity Knocks (OK) pack developed for children and youth at risk</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>Number of OK pack copies distributed</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	2,000.00	The pack is still being developed by a multi-disciplinary team and will be ready for dissemination in 2020.
<b>Output 2.2: A residential safe house for young people (under 18 years of age) set up</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		

Capacity of the residential safe house of youths (in number of beds)	Number	0.00	-	-	-	14	20.00	a residential safe house for young people (under 18 years of age) was set up in an urban town in Malta
<b>Output 2.3: Integrated services for children and youths at risk provided</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Integrated services (employment facilitation; business start-up skills, confidence building) related to independent living provided	Binary	No	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	-
<b>Outcome 3: Improved quality of life of deprived communities in urban localities</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Number of vulnerable individuals benefitting from services provided through the Small Grants Scheme	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	1,000.00	-
<i>Gender</i>								
Female	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Male	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Not specified	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Age</i>								
Children and youth (0-17)	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Young adults (18-29)	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Adults (30-64)	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Elderly (65+)	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
Not specified	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-

Percentage of residents 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their local council's performance in targeted localities	Percentage	TBD, Baseline to be determined once localities are selected following call for project proposals	-	0	0	-	(+11%)	Baseline will be known once projects under the SGS will be awarded funds.
<b>Output 3.1: Public administration staff in targeted localities trained in good governance principles</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Number of local councils covered by the training on good governance	Number	0.00	-	-	-	66	20.00	-
Number of public administration staff trained in good governance principles	Number	0.00	-	-	-	89	20.00	-
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	48	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	41	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Output 3.2: Pilot initiatives under the Small Grants Scheme implemented</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Number of pilot initiatives implemented under the Small Grants Scheme by urban local councils	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	6.00, Since the scheme is based on a bottom-up	First call for proposals was launched Q4 2019 and selected pilot initiatives

							<p>approach, the initiatives will be based on the aspirations of the residents living in the urban areas as highlighted in the same regional economic, social and cultural community plans. Hence the concept note cannot be more specific about the results of these outputs at this point in time. Notwithstanding, the grant schemes will address the social, educational and environmental needs of these vulnerable individuals in the urban areas.</p>	<p>under the SGS will be known by mid-2020.</p>
<b>Outcome 4: Cultural Heritage Management enhanced</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		

			period					
Number of jobs created at the Malta Maritime Museum	Number	0.00	-	Reported 2023 and then annually			4.00	-
Annual number of unique digital visitors to the Malta Maritime Museum	Annual number	16,000.00	-	-	-	16,000	21,000.00	-
Annual number of visitors to the Malta Maritime Museum	Annual number	20,281.00	-	-	-	20,281	25,351.00	-
Average audience experience rating (on a scale of 1 to 5)	Scale 1-5	3.12	-	-	-	3.12	4.12	-
<b>Output 4.1: Malta Maritime Museum restored and upgraded</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
Number of Malta Maritime Museum assets digitised	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	2,600.00	Digitisation process has started through the recruitment of a Project Manager and a specialised team, which took some time (even 2020) to be finalised.
Structural upgrade of the Malta Maritime Museum completed	Binary	No	-	-	-	No	Yes	-
Total area of visitor facilities, museum and exhibition space added to the Malta Maritime Museum (in m2)	Number	1,086.00	-	-	-	1,086	1,629.00	-
<b>Output 4.2: Innovative presentation of the Malta Maritime Museum's collection supported</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		

<b>Number of events targeting audience development</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	6.00	-
<b>Number of new temporary exhibitions displaying Malta Maritime Museum objects</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	0	3.00	-
<b>Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>Level of satisfaction with the partnership</b>	Scale 1-7	TBD, Survey to be carried out by the FMO	-	-	-	-	≥4.5, And an increase on the baseline	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>State type</i>								
<i>Beneficiary State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Level of trust between cooperating entities in Beneficiary States and Donor States</b>	Scale 1-7	TBD, Survey to be carried out by the FMO	-	-	-	-	≥4.5, And an increase on the baseline	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>State type</i>								
<i>Beneficiary State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<b>Share of cooperating organisations that apply the knowledge acquired from bilateral partnership</b>	Percentage	N/A	-	-	-	-	≥50%	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>State type</i>								
<i>Beneficiary State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Bilateral Output 1: Exchange of knowledge and experience between Maltese and Donor State entities facilitated</b>								
Indicator	Unit of measurement	Baseline	Achievements until end of previous reporting period	Achievements until end of December 2019			Target	Comment
				Numerator	Denominator	Value		
<b>Number of projects involving cooperation with a donor project partner</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	4	3.00	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>								
<i>Norway</i>	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-
<i>Iceland</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
<b>Number of staff from Malta in exchanges</b>	Number	0.00	1 (Strategic Report 2018)	-	-	-	6.00	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>								
<i>Norway</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Iceland</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Number of staff from Donor States in exchanges</b>	Number	0.00	-	-	-	-	6.00	-
<i>Financial Mechanism</i>								
<i>EEA Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Norway Grants</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Gender</i>								
<i>Female</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Male</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Donor State</i>								
<i>Norway</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Iceland</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Not specified</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



## Annex 2: Communication summary

### a. Visibility of the Grants and the donors

Year 2019 marked four project launches. The first launch took place on 16 January at the Maritime Museum in Vittoriosa. Heritage Malta launched project PDP4 – The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage. This launch was mentioned in the local news bulletin as well as in two popular English newspapers and in the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry's portal.

In June 2019, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services opened an office in Paola which will be offering services to vulnerable young people aged between thirteen and eighteen. During this opening the Minister for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, Hon Michael Falzon, emphasised that this service is being made available thanks to the funding from the EEA Grants. Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds and Social Dialogue, Hon Aaron Farrugia, said that this project was chosen following long negotiations between the Donor countries and Malta so that, through the work carried out among young vulnerable people, the aim to eradicate poverty completely among those who are most disadvantaged, will be reached.

In July, the Local Government Division together with the Parliamentary Secretary for Local Government, Hon Silvio Parnis, and the Parliamentary Secretary for EU Funds and Social Dialogue, Hon Aaron Farrugia, launched Project PDP3 – Training of Local Council Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability. The aim of this project is to improve the skills of all those involved in the local governance sector so that they would be able to offer a better service to the community.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Local Government Division launched the Small Grant Scheme for the country's urban localities aimed at reducing poverty. This scheme has a budget of €1 million and shall be funded through the Norway Grants.

On 5 October 2019, the NFP and NFP as PO organised a multicultural event celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EEA Grants. This event took place at Fort St Elmo in Valletta during the national culture and arts festival, *Notte Bianca*. Present at this event were the Minister for European Affairs and Equality, Hon Edward Zammit Lewis, the Director of EEA and Norway Grants at the Financial Mechanism Office, Mr. Henning Stirø, the country officer for Malta, Ms Mualla Cirakli, NFPs from five beneficiary countries namely Romania, Poland, Hungary, Latvia and Cyprus and the NFP and NFP as PO for Malta amongst other guests. This successful night was also given media coverage. A video of this celebration was also prepared. This video shall be uploaded on FPD's two websites.

### b. Website and social media

#### Continuous updates are being uploaded to two different websites.

The website <http://www.eufundsmalta.gov.mt/> which was created in April 2018 is a responsive website, which reports news and events. This website includes other funding programmes besides the EEA and Norway Grants, under which Malta is eligible to benefit from funding.

The webpage <http://eeanorway2014-2021.gov.mt/> is used mainly to report on all events and as a follow up of the new updates related to the projects under EEA and Norway Grants. On this webpage, one can also find uploaded all the legal documents related to the Grants. Such documents include the Memorandum of Understanding, The Regulations of the EEA and Norway Grants and the Programme Agreement. It also provides access to updated documents such as the Manual of Procedures for the project leaders to follow as well as other documents such as applications and other manuals. This website is a tool both for the beneficiaries of these Grants as well as the public in general.

The Local Government Division responsible for both PDP3 and the Small grant Scheme (SGS), is providing the general public with information regarding both projects on the following links:  
<https://localgovernment.gov.mt/en/DLG/Department%20for%20Local%20Government/Pages/pdp3.aspx>  
and <https://localgovernment.gov.mt/en/DLG/Department%20for%20Local%20Government/Pages/Small-Grants-Scheme.aspx>

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services is also in the process of developing a webpage dedicated to the project PDP2: Opportunity Knocks. In the coming days, the NFP shall also encourage the other two projects to plan on having a dedicated website or webpage for their projects.

### c. Best practice examples

PDP 1 - *Reduction in social inequalities in health and the burden of disease* was given high importance during a morning television talk show. During this TV show, Dr Alex Aquilina, Director of the Blood Transfusion Unit and person responsible for the NAT project, gave information to the general public regarding the new equipment on blood testing co-financed by the EEA grants. Dr Aquilina emphasised the importance of donating blood and the lack of blood supply on a weekly basis. He explained that by means of this equipment, called Nucleic Acid Amplification Testing (NAT), the window period for a person to donate blood can be minimised therefore this will help in having more blood supply. This equipment shall be testing viruses in blood such as HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis A and B and West Nile viruses from mosquitoes such as the ancient tiger mosquito.

PDP 2 – *Opportunity Knocks (OK)* – The project leader, Ms Remenda Grech, and the contact person, Ms Elaine Aquilina, were invited on a morning TV programme during which they discussed the OK project by explaining the four pillars that the project focuses on. Ms Grech also explained the importance given to teaching the vulnerable youths those skills that could help them even when applying for work since the target is for these vulnerable youths to become employable. Ms Aquilina explained that this project is being financed by the EEA Grants and that a Norwegian Donor Partner is also on board.

A Drawing Competition as part of the mid-term event (as planned and stipulated in the Communication Strategy for Malta) and in connection with the Multicultural Event celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EEA Grants was organised during the summer of 2019. The drawing competition's theme was *Local Development and Poverty Reduction*. Youths aged between twelve and sixteen were eligible to take part in this competition and all their drawings were then exhibited at Fort St Elmo during the Multicultural Event, held during the annual national culture and arts festival, *Notte Bianca*, on 5th October 2019. There were six paintings in total and all were exhibited and awarded prizes. The number of participants was not high due to summer holidays and difficulty in interpreting the theme of the drawing competition. Since only six youths participated, the NFP decided to give prizes to all participating youths. These prizes were presented to these youths by the Minister Hon. Edward Zammit Lewis, Minister for European Affairs and Equality and Mr Henning Stirø, Director of EEA and Norway Grants within the FMO. The 6 contestants were also given the opportunity to explain the message they wanted to deliver through their paintings. The six paintings were also used as pictures on a printed calendar for 2020.

### d. Multimedia

**The following links refer to media coverage during launch event for Project PDP4 – The Malta Maritime Museum: local development through cultural heritage**

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/maritime-museum-in-vittoriosa-to-open-access-to-naval-ovens/>

<https://www.maltachamber.org.mt/en/malta-maritime-museum-to-expand-capacity>

<https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-maritime-museum-to-expand-by-500-square-metres.699426>

<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-01-16/local-news/Birgu-Maritime-Museum-to-get-2-million-revamp-6736202156>

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2019/January/16/pr190064en.aspx>

**The following link refers to media coverage during launch of Project *Women 4IT* under the Fund for Youth Employment**

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/e350000-in-funds-for-700-women-to-obtain-digital-skills-within-next-two-years/>

**The following links refer to media coverage for Official opening of the newly acquired offices in Paola as part of project *PDP2 -Opportunity Knocks (OK)***

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/new-office-opens-offering-services-to-vulnerable-young-people/>

<https://newsbook.com.mt/en/opportunity-knocks-project-for-vulnerable-persons-set-up-in-paola/>

**The following links refer to media coverage during launch of project *PDP3 – Training of Local Council Staff in Principles of Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability***

<https://newsbook.com.mt/training-project-for-those-involved-in-local-governance-sector/>

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/e200000-mill-fondi-tae200000-from-norwegian-fund-for-training-of-executive-secretaries-of-local-councils-in-good-governance-and-transparencyn-norvegja-ghat-tahrig-lis-segretarji-ezekuttivi-fuq-il-gov/>

**The following links refer to media coverage during launch of the Small Grant Scheme**

<https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/e1-2-million-scheme-to-reduce-poverty-in-urban-localities/>

<https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2019-07-30/world-news/Government-launches-scheme-aiming-to-further-assist-urban-areas-6736211583>

<http://www.one.com.mt/news/2019/07/30/titnieda-skema-ta-e1-2-miljun-ghal-12-il-kunsill-lokali-biex-jindirizzaw-sfidi-socjali-2/>

**Media coverage during the Multicultural Event for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the EEA Grants during Notte Bianca**

<http://www.one.com.mt/news/2019/10/06/il-fondi-taz-zona-ekonomika-ewropea-u-l-fonditan-norvegja-rrizultaw-fi-progetti-ta-fejda-ghall-izvilupp-socjoekonomiku-ta-pajjizna/>

## Annex 3: Overview of contracted projects

### MT-LOCALDEV Local Development and Poverty Reduction

Outcome	Projects	#	# of donor project partners	Amount contracted	% of outcome budget contracted
<b>Outcome 1: Improved access to and quality of health services in Malta</b>	Pre-defined	1	2	€ 2,407,059	100.00 %
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	<b>Total Outcome 1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>€ 2,407,059</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>
<b>Outcome 2: Improved well-being of vulnerable children and youths</b>	Pre-defined	1	1	€ 941,176	100.00 %
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	<b>Total Outcome 2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>€ 941,176</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>
<b>Outcome 3: Improved quality of life of deprived communities in urban localities</b>	Pre-defined	1	1	€ 200,000	16.67 %
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	<b>Total Outcome 3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>€ 200,000</b>	<b>16.67 %</b>
<b>Outcome 4: Cultural Heritage Management enhanced</b>	Pre-defined	1	0	€ 2,015,529	100.00 %
	Contracted through open calls	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	Contracted through small grants scheme	0	0	€ 0	0.00 %
	<b>Total Outcome 4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>€ 2,015,529</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>
<b>Programme</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>€ 5,563,764</b>	<b>84.76 %</b>

## Annex 4: Risk management

### MT-LOCALDEV Local Development and Poverty Reduction

Programmatic risks						
Risk description	Risk related to	Likelihood	Consequence	Risk score	Response type	Risk N/A?
Inadequate programme/project strategy or processes of the whole programme	Both objectives	1	4	2.00	Avoid/Terminate	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	The NFP/PO will be monitoring closely the implementation of all pre-defined projects through on the spot checks, bilateral meetings as well as risk assessment exercises, in order to identify and address any problems emerging from the implementation in real time and solve at the earliest possible so as to avoid stalling of any activities.				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO keeps constant communication with the PP/SGSO and the donors to make sure that the programme strategy and targets are reached.				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	To keep on the same current practice of constantly communicating on with all parties involved through various methods, so as to make sure that each project strategy remains focussed on the programme's objectives and processes.				
Inadequate programme/project strategy or processes of the Small Grants Scheme (SGS)	Reducing social and economic disparities	2	4	2.83	Transfer/Share	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	The NFP shall be entrusting the management of the Schemes to the LDG, being the only government entity in charge of the Local Government/Councils and acknowledging their experience in schemes issued to local councils. The NFP entrusted the management of the schemes to LGD and has drafted the covenant which is being reviewed by the LGD				

	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO is a member on the SGS monitoring board				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	The NFP as PO shall build upon the strong professional relationship established with the SGSO and continue on the good practice of keeping constant communication with him. Representation by the NFP as PO, even though as an observer, will continue on the Projects Stakeholders Committee, which is the Monitoring and Selection board of the SGS.				
	Both objectives	2	3	2.45	Mitigate	No
Technological issues related to CARSII	<b>Description of planned response</b>	CARS II is now at operation stage and payments are already being processed through the system. Training shall be given to the project leaders in January 2019.				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO contracted MITA (Malta's National IT Agency) to upgrade the system when and if required.				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	Besides the provision of in-house IT support on the system, MITA will always be available to provide immediate support on more complicated aspects of the database, as and if required.				
Obtaining permits	Reducing social and economic disparities	2	2	2.00	Accept	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	Planning and building permits are out of the control of both PO and PP. Most of the basic permits are already in hand and hence the risk is limited. Yet contingency changes to these permits might be required in specific cases like for example the Maritime Museum, being so structurally old (1800's) and with the possibility of revealing new archaeological findings. The NFP/PO shall be monitoring planning permits through bilateral meetings with the PPs				

	<b>Description of actual response</b>	Most of the planning permits are already in hand. The NFP as PO will continue to monitor the process				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	To keep constant contact with the Project Partners.				
Lack of time for proper implementation	Both objectives	2	3	2.45	Mitigate	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	The NFP/PO will endeavour to mitigate this risk by making sure that the PPs submit a realistic and achievable milestone plan before the signing of the Programme Agreement. During implementation, the NFP/PO will follow up closely on the project activities and timelines to ensure adherence to this timeplan as accurately as possible. The milestone plan was submitted to the NFP/PO. NFP/PO will follow up with PPs when implementation starts				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO kept constant communication with the PP to monitor the projects implementation.				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	Regular bilateral meetings, when possible on bi-monthly basis, shall continue to be held by the NFP as PO with all project promoters to ensure a timely implementation of all activities on the projects. Only in this way can real time solutions be found in case of a crisis management issue.				
<b>Operational risks</b>						
<b>Risk description</b>	<b>Risk related to</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Risk score</b>	<b>Response type</b>	<b>Risk N/A?</b>
Possible delays in procurement	Reducing social and economic disparities	2	2	2.00	Mitigate	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	Regular contact between NFP/PO and PP and timely necessary action taken by the Head of NFP/PO through contacts with the Department of Contracts. This shall be followed through bilateral meetings with the PPS and communicated to the Department of Contracts accordingly				

	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO kept constant communication with the PP to monitor each and every procurement process				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	Regular bilateral meetings, when possible on bi-monthly basis, shall continue to be held by the NPF as PO with all project promoters to ensure a timely implementation of all activities on the projects. Only in this way can real time solutions be found in case of a crisis management issue.				
Tender offers exceeding available budget	Reducing social and economic disparities	2	2	2.00	Mitigate	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	Detailed Market Research will be conducted before the publication by the PP. But in case of fluctuations in prices, consultations between NFP/PO and Ministry for Finance will be carried out in order to cover the increased outlay of costs.				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO kept constant communication with the PP to monitor each and every procurement process				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	Regular bilateral meetings, when possible on bi-monthly basis, shall continue to be held by the NPF as PO with all project promoters to ensure a timely implementation of all activities on the projects. Only in this way can procurement issues be discussed and hopefully solved in real time . A strong professional relationship will also continue with the Department of Contracts, who usually assist with such issues.				
Tender offers found technically non compliant during the evaluation process	Reducing social and economic disparities	3	3	3.00	Accept	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	PPs will be encouraged to organise clarification meetings/site visits during the procurement procedure in order to avoid such occurrences. Regular contact between NFP/PO and PP in order to allow sufficient time in the issuance of tenders, where possible.				



	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO kept constant communication with the PP to monitor each and every procurement process				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	Regular bilateral meetings, when possible on bi-monthly basis, shall continue to be held by the NPF as PO with all project promoters to ensure a timely implementation of all activities on the projects. Only in this way can procurement issues be discussed and hopefully solved in real time . A strong professional relationship will also continue with the Department of Contracts, who usually assist with such issues.				
Eventuality of appeals lodged following publication of further results	Reducing social and economic disparities	2	4	2.83	Accept	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	Encourage PPs to conduct adequate market research and include all the necessary information in the tender dossier. Regular contact will be kept between NFP/PO and PP in order to allow sufficient time in the issuance of tenders, where possible.				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	No appeals are in hand				
	<b>Planned future response</b>	The NFP as PO will continue to monitor each procurement process and take the necessary actions accordingly.				
Retain the right staff in adequate numbers	Both objectives	2	2	2.00	Mitigate	No
	<b>Description of planned response</b>	Higher financial packages will be offered to the staff. Better communication between senior management and officers.				
	<b>Description of actual response</b>	The NFP as PO kept an open communication with the staff and assess the performance regularly				

	<b>Planned future response</b>	Vacancies will continue to be regularly open and promoted on the Govt Recruitment Portal		
<b>Overall risk of the programme</b>				
	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Risk score</b>	
OVERALL RISK OF THE PROGRAMME	2	3	2.45	

## Annex 8: Technical assistance report

### Overview of main activities

#### Additional Management Systems

The team of the Bilateral, Other Funds and Programmes Unit under the Funds and Programmes Division (FPD), within MEAE, is managed by the Director: Programmes and Projects, Ms Carmen Dalli. In the absence of a Senior Manager in 2019, this unit was also supervised by Ms Dalli. Ms Dalli was supported by two desk officers, Ms. Alison Grech and Ms Angele Azzopardi. Ms Grech fulfils the management function of the NFP as PO, while Ms Azzopardi fulfils the management function of the NFP, both on a full-time basis. 100% of their total working hours is charged through the EEA and Norwegian PO costs and TA. The position of Senior Manager was still vacant until the end of the year under review.

The Financial Control Unit (FCU) within the Funds and Programmes Division also performs duties related to verification of payments such as procurement, on a sample basis. Ms Yanica Grima, the financial controller who verified the 2018 Programme, was replaced by Ms Raisa Cacciattolo, who is currently verifying the payments before submitting the next IFR. This manager reports directly to the Director General, Mr Raphael Scerri, who acts as the Head of the Maltese NFP.

#### Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting for year 2019 was held on 21 March at the Situation Centre (SITCEN) of the Office of the Prime Minister in Valletta. The meeting was attended by officials from the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanism Committee (FMC), the Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels (FMO), a representative from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Malta, a representative from the Internal Audit and Investigations Authority (IAID) in Malta, a representative from the Certifying Authority in Malta, a representative from the Treasury Department in Malta and the Maltese NFP and NFP as PO. An official from Iceland was also present via video link.

The draft minutes of the Annual Meeting 2019 were sent to the FMO on 17 April 2019 and adopted accordingly.

#### Other meetings

The first business trip effected during 2019 was on 21st January, when Mr. Raphael Scerri and Ms. Alison Grech attended the National Focal Point Workshop with the Donor States and FMO in Brussels. The workshop focussed on Results and Evaluation, the template of the Strategic Report and the GRACE System.

On 16 May, Ms Alison Grech was invited to represent Malta and the Water Awareness Centre Project, funded under the 2009-2014 Programming period, during the EU Green Week in Brussels. During this event, the Permanent Representative of Malta to the EU, H.E. Daniel Azzopardi, visited the stand and his team interviewed the country officer for Malta at the FMO, Ms Mualla Cirakli. In return, the Communications Team also prepared a short interview with H.E. Daniel Azzopardi.

Between the 14th and 16th October, Mr Raphael Scerri and Ms Carmen Dalli attended the NFP Workshop held in Liechtenstein. During this workshop, the state of play of the 2014-2021 Programme was presented. Other presentations included good governance, risk management and control environment.

The last business trip for the year 2019 was on 22-23 October. Ms Alison Grech and Ms Angele Azzopardi attended the Communications Workshop in Krakow Poland. During the first day, all the participating beneficiary countries were divided into groups and asked to prepare a video each. The next day, each group showed the prepared videos, on which a discussion ensued. It was concluded that when making a video, it is important that a strong clear message is given and that the idea/concept, composition, perspectives and music are good. Best practice examples of communications activities carried out since the last meeting followed from representatives of various beneficiary countries, including Malta.

#### Promotion and information activities

In conjunction with the Multicultural Event celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the EEA Grants, the NFP as PO prepared freebies such as pens, pencils, USB sticks, sticky notepads and notebooks for the attending guests. A nomadic stand as well as two banners were also prepared for this event. A video filmed in Malta by the FMO, promoting the importance of water and including footage of the Malta Water Awareness Centre, was also uploaded on two VR 360 glasses. The general public had the chance to experience this video in 360 degrees view during the same multicultural event.

The NFP also prepared a diary and a calendar for year 2020. These were distributed to all national stakeholders.

### Budget overview

In accordance with Article 9.3 of the Regulations on the EEA and Norway Grants, the NFP annually submits two Technical Assistance Interim Financial Reports (IFRS), which are certified by the Certifying Authority in accordance with Article 5.4 of the Regulations and approved by the FMC. The two IFRs submitted this year in February and September reported nil certified expenditure.

The following table presents an overview of the expenditure financed through the Technical Assistance budget which were processed by the end of December 2019 and are still to be certified in the next IFR in March 2020.

Description	Allocated Budget	Expenditure incurred (i.e. processed through the computerised accounting system) by end of December 2019
I. Additional management systems (article 8.11.2 (a))	€200,000	€58,226.2
II. Monitoring Committee, annual and other meetings (article 8.11.2 (b))	€39,000	€5,303.95
III. Meetings and Conferences to share experience (article 8.11.2 (c))	€44,000	€1,386.12
IV. Promotional and information activities (article 8.11.2 (d))	€25,000	€5,780.03
V. Audits (article 8.11.2 (e))	€10,000	€0
VII. Reviews and evaluations (article 8.11.2 (g))	€20,000	€0

VIII. Implementation of the FM 2009-2014 (article 8.11.2 (g))	€2,000	€0
TOTAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	€340,000.00	€70,696.3

### Procurement

The above-mentioned activities mainly involved claim for reimbursement of salaries, travel expenses (including procurement of flight tickets and subsistence allowance) and procurement of promotional and information activities. The relative procurement procedures as stipulated in section 5.1.1 'Public Procurement' of the Manual of Procedures were strictly observed.

### Staffing

National Focal Point				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Raphael Scerri	Director General (Funds and Programmes Division)	Head of NFP	10%	N
Carmen Dalli	Director (Programmes and Projects)	NFP as PO - Monitoring the implementation of the management functions of PO	40%	N
Alison Grech	Programme Manager (EU Funds)	NFP as PO project management-related duties	100%	Y (from PO Costs)
Angele Azzopardi	Programme Manager (EU Funds)	NFP related duties	100%	Y (from TA)
Certifying Authority				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Edwin Camilleri	Chief Coordinator (EU Certifying Authority)	Counter checking and Submitting the forecast of likely payments four times a year and the IFRs twice a year	5%	N

Yana Mifsud	Senior Manager (EU Certifying Authority)	Counter Checking and Submitting the forecast of likely payments four times a year and the IFRs twice a year	5%	N
<b>Audit Authority</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Caroline Theuma	IAID Senior Audit Manager	Sample auditing of verified payments	5%	N
<b>Irregularities Authority</b>				
Name of staff	Official position	Main tasks	Level of effort (% of working time)	Funded through the Grants (Y/N)
Mark Said	Director (Financial Investigations)	Preparation and Submission of irregularities reports	5%	N