

Circular economy country profile – Malta



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Introduction

The European Commission requested the EEA to produce EU country profiles that offer an updated view of the following elements:



- circular economy policies being implemented at a national level with a particular focus on elements that go beyond EU mandatory elements; and
- best practice with a focus on policy innovation.

While implementing the EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP 2020), Member States are encouraged to advance circularity at a national level by adopting policies and initiatives that go beyond EU regulations, while preserving the Single Market.

This circular economy country profile is based on information reported by the Eionet network and, in particular, the Eionet Group on Circular Economy and Resource Use in the third quarter of 2022. The organisations involved in this work from Malta include the Circular Economy Malta, Malta's Environment & Resources Authority and Malta's National Statistics Office. The information was reviewed and edited by the European Topic Centre on Circular economy and resource use (ETC CE). A selection of Eurostat data was made to further complement this country profile.

The information is current as of 22 September 2022 (final review), when members of Eionet verified the content of this profile.

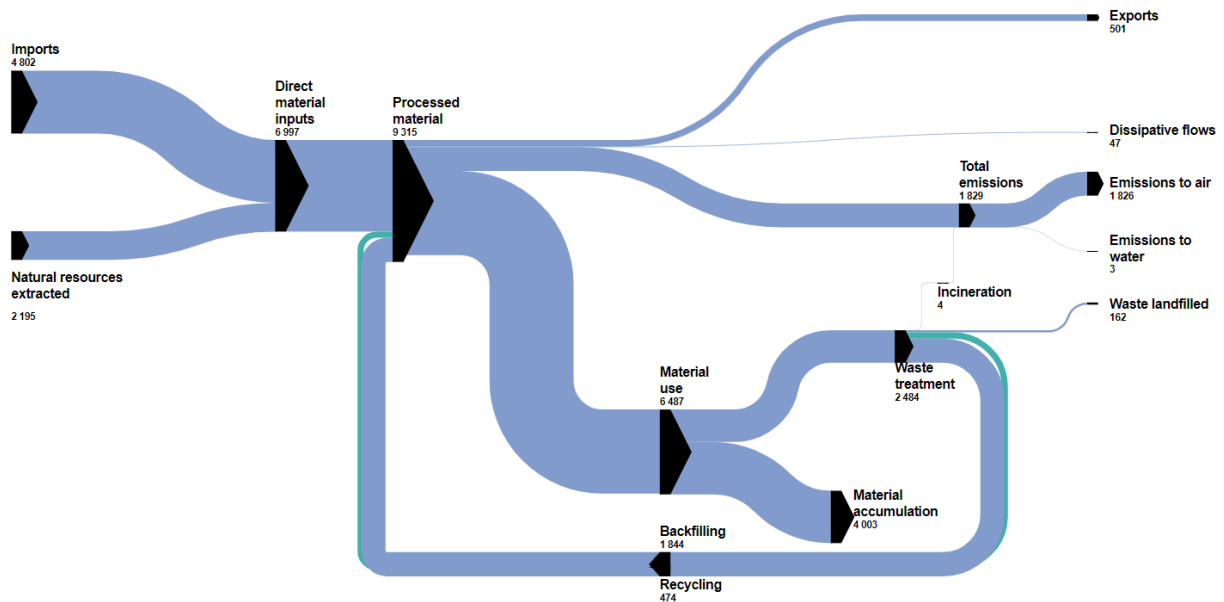
Malta – facts and figures

	<p>GDP: EUR 13.1 billion (0.1 % of EU27 total in 2020)</p>
	<p>GDP per person: EUR 25 330 (purchasing power standard) (96.4 % of EU27 average per person figure in 2020)</p>
	<p>Use of materials (domestic material consumption (DMC)) 6.5 million tonnes DMC (0.1 % of EU27 total in 2020) 12.6 tonnes DMC per person (93.6 % of EU27 average per person in 2020)</p>
	<p>Structure of the economy: Agriculture: 0.5 % Industry: 14.8 % Services: 84.7 %</p>
	<p>Employment in circular sectors: Data not available</p>
	<p>Surface area: 315 square kilometres (0.01 % of EU27 total)</p>
	<p>Population: 514 564 (0.1 % of EU27 total in 2020)</p>

Note: all definitions and metadata used in this profile are taken, as shown, from Eurostat

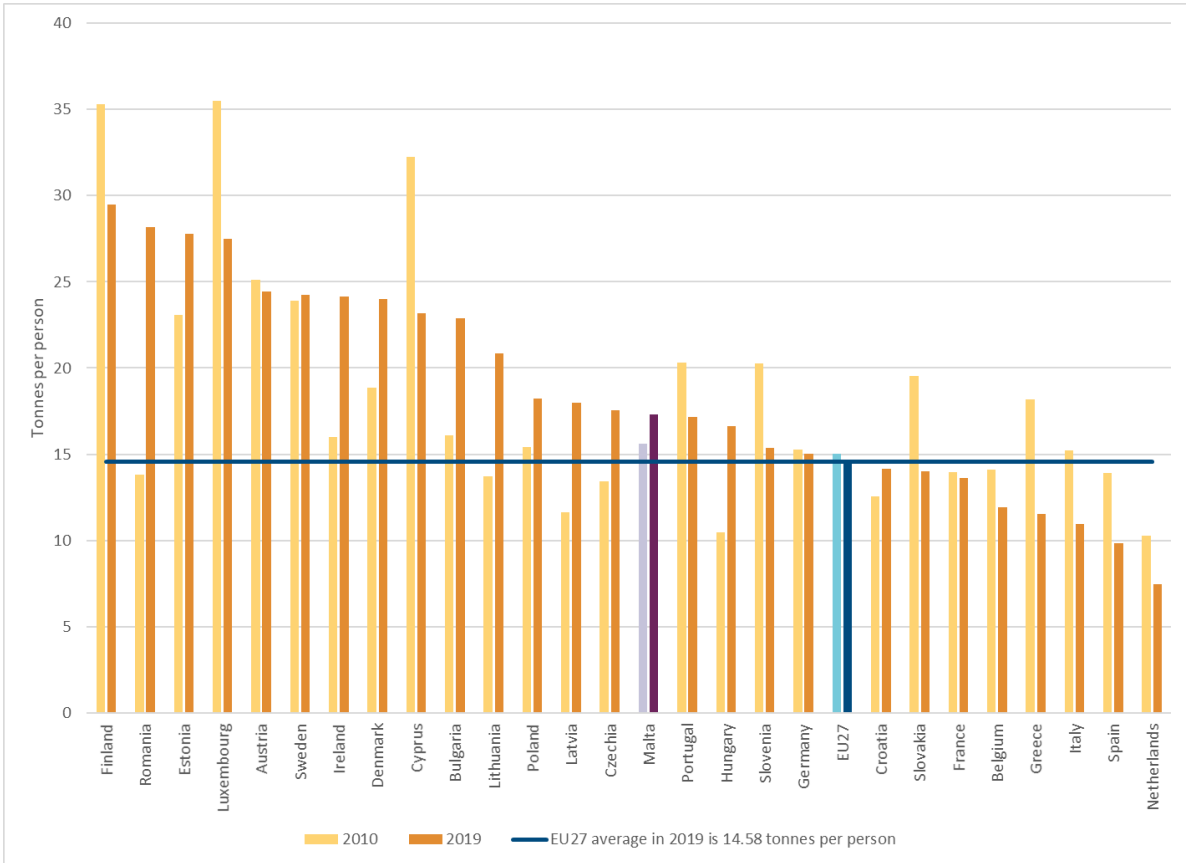
Source: Eurostat datasets, EU27 2020 (accessed 20 June 2022)

Figure 1 Material flow diagram for Malta in 2020, '000 tonnes



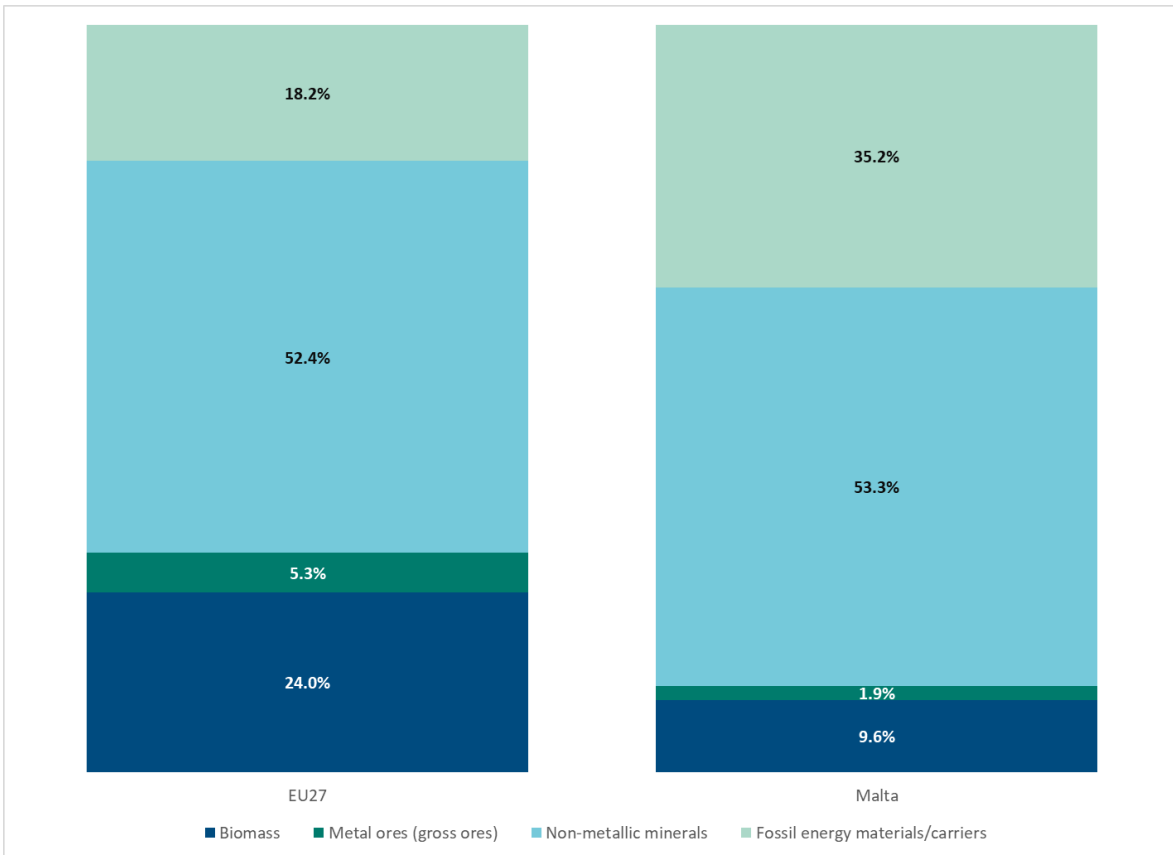
Source: Eurostat (2022) [env_ac_mfa], [en_ac_sd], [env_wassd] (accessed 20 June 2022)

Figure 2 Material footprint (raw material consumption), EU27, 2010 and 2019, tonnes per person



Source: Eurostat (2020) [env_ac_rme] (accessed 4 July 2020)

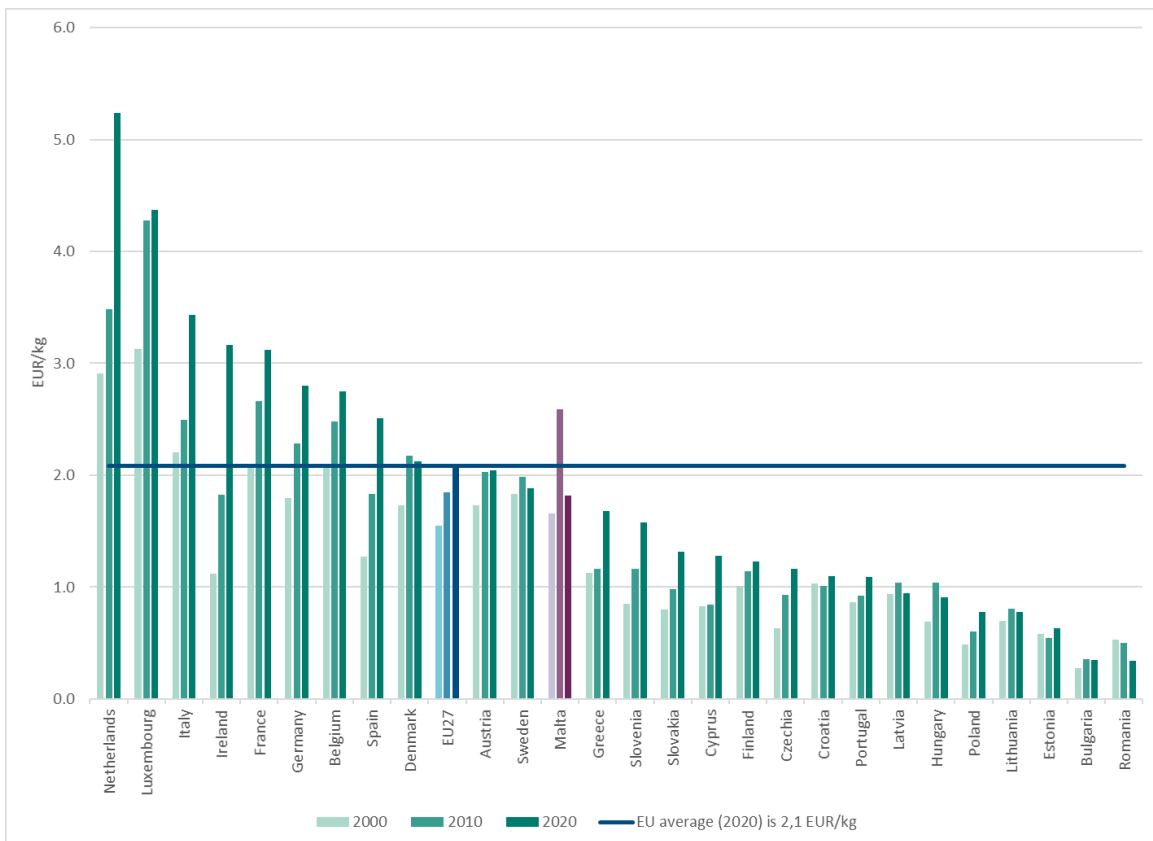
Figure 3 Domestic material consumption by selected material category, EU27 and Malta, 2020, per cent



Note: totals may not sum to 100 % due to rounding

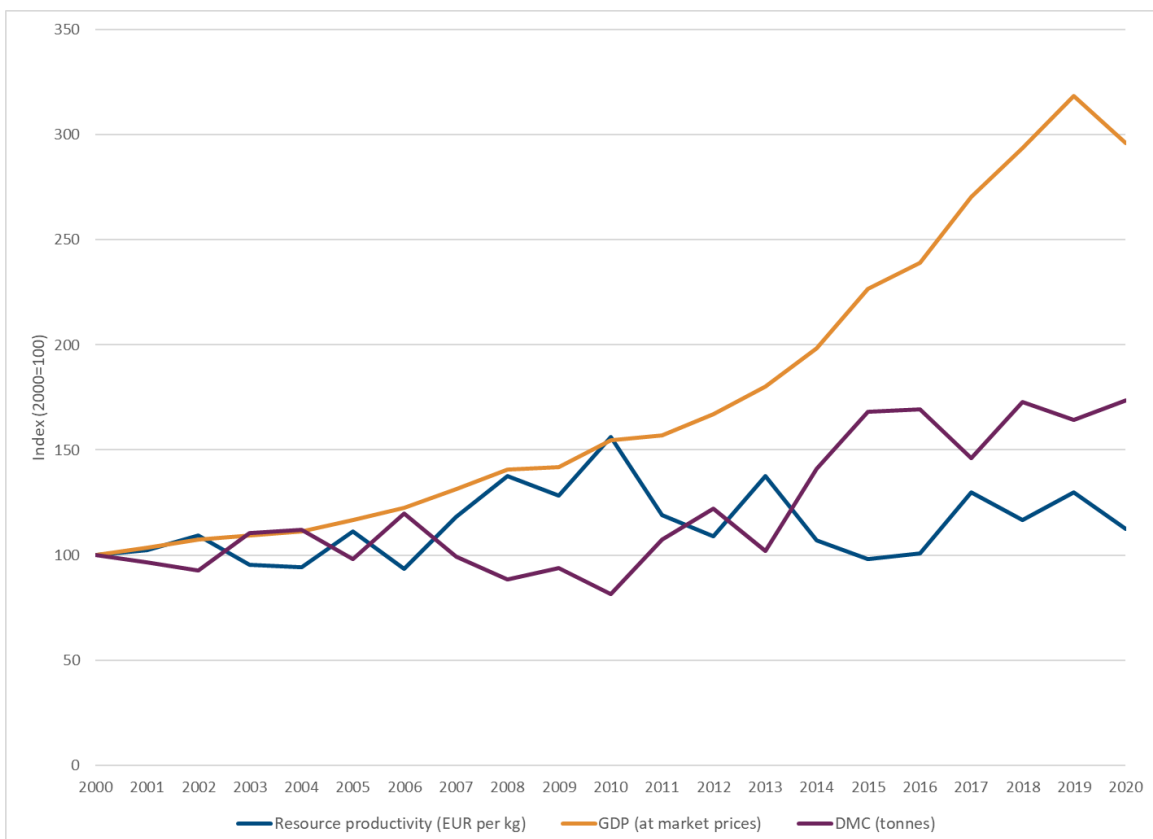
Source: Eurostat (2022) [env_ac_mfa] (accessed 20 June 2022)

Figure 4 Resource productivity (gross domestic product/domestic material consumption), EU27, 2000, 2010 and 2020, EUR per kilogram



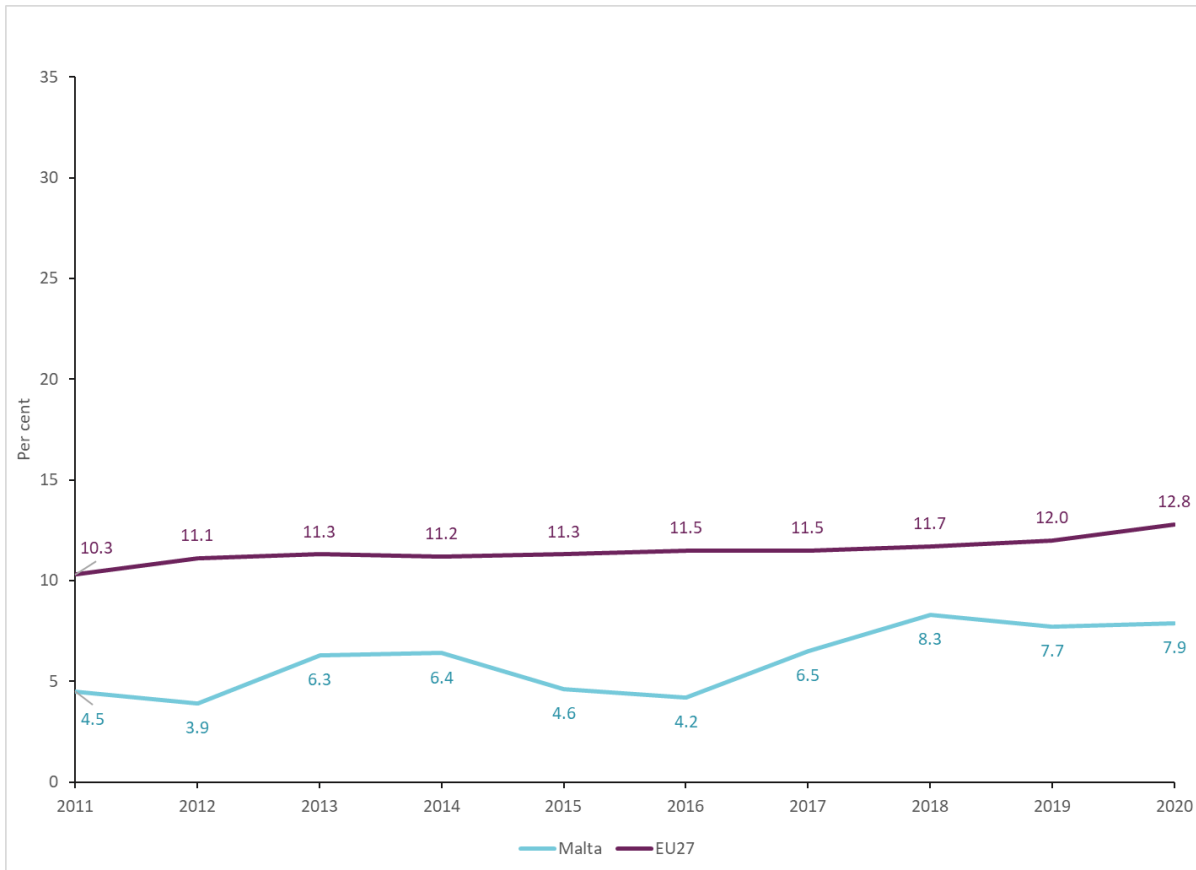
Source: Eurostat (2022) [env_ac_rp] (accessed 20 June 2022)

Figure 5 Gross domestic product, domestic material consumption and resource productivity trends, Malta, 2000–2020, index (2000=100)



Source: Eurostat [env_ac_mfa], [env_ac_rp] & [nama_10_gdp] (accessed 4 July 2022)

Figure 6 Circular material use rate in Malta, 2011–2020, per cent



Source: Eurostat (2022) [env_ac_cur] (accessed 20 June 2022)

Existing policy framework

Dedicated strategy, roadmap or action plan for circular economy

Malta has a Circular Economy Strategic Vision – Towards a Circular Economy 2020–2030 ⁽¹⁾

The Circular Economy Strategy Vision 2020–2030 was developed to go along with the government's plans to build the country's first waste-to-energy plant and continue its efforts to reduce landfilling. The vision aims to establish an environment that will lead to the development of a sustainable, low-carbon, resource-efficient, and competitive economy, in line with the EU Commission's Circular Economy Strategy.

The following actions have been identified:

- 1) fiscal incentives for the donation of products;
- 2) extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes for various types of waste and measures to increase their effectiveness, cost efficiency and governance;
- 3) deposit-refund schemes and other measures to encourage the efficient collection of used products and materials;
- 4) sound planning of investment in waste management infrastructure, including through European funds;
- 5) promote sustainable public procurement to encourage better waste management and the use of recycled products and materials;
- 6) use of fiscal or other means to promote the uptake of products and materials that are prepared for reuse or recycled; and
- 7) support for research and innovation in advanced recycling technologies and remanufacturing.

To date, the main focus has been the implementation of Action 3 (above), for which implementation is planned to begin in the near future. The whole regime will be mainly governed by S.L. 549.134 Beverage Containers Recycling Regulations².

The objective of these regulations is to enhance the circular economy (CE) by making provision for the establishment and operation of a beverage-container refund scheme, improving the collection and recycling of beverage containers, increasing national recycling efforts and reducing litter.

These regulations do not exempt producers placing beverages in containers on the market from their obligations under S.L. 549.43 Waste Management (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations³ (in Maltese) for any beverages or beverage containers or other forms of packaging that are not covered under these regulations.

Circular economy policy elements included in other policies

Circular economy policy element	Included in policy
The setting up of standards for the construction industry. These standards include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• best practice for (de)construction⁴;• classification of construction and demolition waste;• appropriate excavation activities;	Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy for Malta 2021-2030 This Strategy is a framework acting as a driver intended to bring about a cultural and behavioural shift within the sector in terms of its attitude towards excavation, demolition and construction methods. The Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy for Malta

¹ <https://cemalta.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/email-version-fin..pdf>

² <https://cemalta.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BCRS-Regulations.pdf>

³ <https://legislation.mt/eli/s/549.43/eng/pdf>

⁴ Deconstruction refers to “demolition carried out focusing on the separation of construction materials.”

Circular economy policy element	Included in policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dimensions of internal and external apertures of residential dwellings. <p>The aim of these standards is to first and foremost to reduce the amount of construction and demolition waste generated, while at the same time encouraging on-site separation to improve the quality of the waste streams for subsequent re-use or recycling.</p>	<p>will further Malta’s transition to a CE and hence close the loop of products’ lifecycles.</p>
<p>Support the establishment of a reuse and repair centre to promote such practices.</p> <p>The Long Term Waste Management Plan, through the waste prevention programme, aims to facilitate the creation of a centre to which people can take items that are suitable for repair, upgrade or reuse. Furthermore, reuse, upgrading and repair activities will be promoted through positive economic incentives, quality assurances and warranties to improve confidence in second-hand goods.</p>	<p>Long Term Waste Management Plan 2021-2030</p> <p>The Waste Management Plan 2021–2030 aims to maximise the resource value of waste through holistic waste management solutions by adopting a collaborative approach whilst fostering the necessary behavioural change. This Plan is intended to be the cornerstone of a process that will strengthen the transition to a CE.</p>
<p>The setting up of “green corners”</p> <p>The strategy aims to encourage schemes for grocery shops to set up “green corners” for packaging-free foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to promote responsible consumer behaviour; • to reduce the generation of plastic waste; <p>to inform consumers about the availability of reusable alternatives</p>	<p>Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta 2021-2030</p> <p>The objective of the Single-Use Plastic Products Strategy for Malta is to reduce environmental harm from certain plastic products, and to promote the transition to a CE with innovative and multi-use alternatives.</p>

Monitoring and targets

Assessment of circular economy performance

The **Circular Material Use rate** has increased both in the EU27 and Malta over the 2010–2020 period. Malta's rate has, however, always been lower – by 2020 the EU27 rate had reached 12.8 %, whilst that of Malta stood at 7.9 %.

A review of the statistics that are published in the **EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework** reveals that the rate of recovery or recycling varies between categories of waste. Malta performs best in the recovery of construction and demolition waste. In fact, between 2012 and 2018 the rate for this indicator was 100 % in Malta, in comparison to an average rate of 88 % in the EU-27 in 2018. The reason why Malta scores so well in this is that in Malta non-metallic mineral construction and demolition waste is used for the backfilling of voids which resulted from quarrying or it is recycled into new construction products. The data show that recycling of this type of waste is increasing at a fast rate and if current trends are sustained recycling will outstrip backfilling of construction and demolition waste in the coming years. In terms of circularity, this development is welcome since it eases the pressure on local production and on the importation of non-metallic minerals to keep up with the demand from construction activities.

From 2014 to 2020, the **recycling rate of municipal waste** for Malta averaged 11 % and the trend is fluctuating. On the other hand, the EU27 average, over the same period, was 46.4 %, with an increasing trend. A closer look at municipal waste statistics shows that Malta is heavily reliant on landfilling municipal waste.

The nationwide collection of **organic waste from households** began in November 2018. Data for the calendar years 2019 and 2020, during which organic waste was collected from all households, show that the amounts for 2020 were lower by 2.8 % when compared to those of 2019. In comparison, the total population increased by 0.3 %. Such figures indicate that further efforts need to be made to increase the organic waste collection from households and to introduce a similar collection from businesses. In fact, as from May 2022, a pilot project to collect organic waste from catering establishments was launched.

A significant proportion of municipal waste **consists of packaging waste**. The overall packaging waste recycling rate for Malta, like the municipal waste recycling rate, is lower than the EU27 average. Since 2014, the EU27 recycling rate has averaged 66.5 % and a decline can be seen from 67.6 % in 2016 to 64.4 % in 2019. In Malta, over the same period, the rate of recycling packaging waste has averaged 37.2 % and a decline can be noted from the 41.1 % of 2014 to the 33.7 % of 2019. The recycling of packaging waste is highly dependent on the export market due to a lack of recycling facilities on Malta.

With regards to e-waste, the recycling rate for Malta is lower than that for the EU27. In 2017, the last year for which data is available, Malta's recycling rate for e-waste, based on CEI WM050⁵, stood at 20.8 % while that of the EU27 was 39.5 %. Since 2012, Malta's rate has increase continuously, as has that of the EU27.

The generation of waste, excluding major mineral wastes, per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) shows that from 2010 to 2018 the value for the EU27 has decreased slightly, from 69 to 66 kilograms per thousand Euros (kg/EUR '000). In Malta, amounts have fluctuated, reaching a peak of 63 kg/EUR '000 in 2016, and going down to 49 kg/EUR '000 in 2018. These fluctuations have mainly been the result of the ratio between waste generation and GDP, because the waste generation figures on their own show that for the period under review the only decrease was in 2018. This decrease, however, does not mean that waste generation is on the decline; to note that hazardous waste generation in 2016 was abnormally high due to a one off scenario whereby hazardous end of life oil rigs arising during the said year were exported as

⁵ The indicator name is "Recycling rate of e-waste" and it is found on the Eurostat website. The online data code is: CEI_WM050 - https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/cei_wm050/default/table?lang=en

waste for recycling. Nonetheless, even if this waste is eliminated from the figures for waste generation of 2016, an increase would also be seen in 2018.

The generation of municipal waste per person in Malta has also increased since 2014, with the only decrease being registered in 2020, mainly because of the economic consequences and restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Municipal waste generation per person in the EU27 has also shown an increase, however in Malta municipal waste generation is higher by an average of 163 kilograms per person per year. Whilst various factors account for this discrepancy, it is worth mentioning that the waste that is generated by tourists in Malta is recorded as municipal waste. If the nights spent in Malta by tourists were to be translated into the net equivalent population ((the number of nights spent by tourists in Malta - number of nights spent by Maltese tourists abroad)/number of days in the year), the total population would increase by an average of 7.2 per cent for the period under review, excluding 2020 which was an abnormal year for tourism.

The increase in the waste generation can be considered to be a function of the total population and the economic performance of the country. From 2010 to 2020 the total population of Malta, tourism and the Gross Domestic Product have all increased substantially, thus resulting in a higher waste generation. Malta is highly reliant on imported products, both for raw materials for its manufacturing industry as well as for consumer products, and so developments and decisions that are taken in other countries with regards to product design, material composition, packaging, shelf life, retrofitting and the possibility for repair all impinge upon the islands' waste generation. As a result, it is imperative that efforts at the international level are pursued in order to minimise the waste generation that is brought about by an increase in consumption and to increase the recyclability of products once their lifetime is over.

Circular economy monitoring frameworks and their indicators beyond the ones from Eurostat

Currently there are no other national or regional CE monitoring frameworks.

Circular economy targets

The Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy for Malta 2021–2030 recognises the need to set specific targets related to the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition waste. **The main aims of such targets are:**

- to decrease the dependency on natural resources;
- to reduce the need for virgin aggregates; and
- to move towards a CE.

The Strategy identifies the **following targets** to facilitate the achievement of the above aims:

- a minimum of 40 % of excavated material shall be reused or recycled;
- a minimum of 15 % of construction material shall be made up of reused material or materials recycled locally, with a possibility of further reuse or recycling at a building's end of life;
- at least 25 % of the granular material used for construction shall be made up of aggregates recycled locally in order to decrease the dependency on virgin materials. The percentage share of recycled aggregates used will contribute to the 15 % target for reuse and recycled materials highlighted above; and
- a minimum of 40 % by weight of non-hazardous waste generated during demolition activities shall be prepared for reuse, recycling and/or other forms of material recovery (excluding backfilling operations), with a view to increase the minimum target to 55 %. Information on the intended reuse and materials destined for recycling will be included in pre-demolitions audits to be submitted prior work starting.

The above mentioned measure is to be implemented between 2026 and 2030.

Innovative approaches and good practice

Examples of public policy initiatives (national, regional or local)

The Long Term Waste Management Plan 2021-2030 aims to maximise the resource value from waste through holistic waste management solutions by adopting a collaborative approach whilst fostering the necessary behavioural change. This Plan is intended to be the cornerstone of a process that will strengthen the transition towards a CE. The Plan identifies various measures to promote resource efficiency and reduce waste generation across sectors. These measures seek to incentivise greener business processes, and prompt societal change towards smarter consumption patterns. Furthermore, such measures seek to maximise the intrinsic resource value of waste as well as reducing pressure on Malta's waste logistics and infrastructure and the islands' dependence on either exporting waste or landfilling

- *Good practice example: Product-related policies, including on the R-strategies (repair, reuse, remanufacturing, etc.)*

The establishment of a reuse and repair centre

The Waste Management Plan identifies the need to establish reuse centres, creating places to which people can take items that are suitable for repair, upgrade or reuse. In view of this, during 2022, Wasteserv Malta opened its first reuse centre, at which the public can donate items that are still in good condition for reuse/resale. It is envisaged that in the coming years more reuse centres will be opened with the money raised through them used for other environmental initiatives.

- *Good practice example: Change in consumption patterns and consumer behaviour*

Green corners

This initiative involves the setting up of incentives for supermarkets (at national level) to provide packaging-free areas where customers can only buy the selected food products without plastic packaging. The aim of such initiative is both to encourage consumers to move towards reusable containers as well as reducing the amount of plastic waste generation.

- *Good practice example: producer/supplier responsibility - change in consumption patterns and consumer behaviour*

The establishment of a Beverage-Container Refund Scheme

The Beverage-Container Refund Scheme will incentivise the return of single-use beverage containers by applying a refundable deposit on the sales of beverages. This CE initiative will encourage returns of single-use beverage containers by consumers, which are then collected and sorted for recycling. The whole system will be governed by S.L. 549.134 Beverage Containers Recycling Regulations, which include provisions for the establishment and operation of a beverage-container refund scheme, will enhance the collection and recycling of beverage containers, increase national recycling efforts and reduce litter.

- *Good practice example: public procurement*

Green Public Procurement 2nd National Action Plan⁶

Malta's Second Green Public Procurement (GPP) National Action Plan came into force on 1 January 2022. It provides a series of targets and measures that sees a level of ambition that has never before existed in Malta. Implementing the Plan and achieving its targets will require the support and commitment of economic operators as well as those responsible for public procurement. Building on the success achieved in the first National Action Plan, the Second GPP Action Plan aims to progressively increase the share of greener products and services in government procurement to 90 % by 2025 – a target which although not

⁶ <https://environment.gov.mt/en/decc/Documents/environment/gpp/secondNap/greenPlanBook.pdf>

set by the European Commission, will drive action on the ground, promoting sustainable consumption and production. An ambitious but realistic approach is considered the best way forward in order to coax the market into a smooth transition. Consequently, the Plan sets out targets for 17 product and service groups, 14 of which will be mandatory. Green public procurement will also further work towards greener consumption and contributing to increased circularity by implementing nine new initiatives to increase GPP uptake.

Examples of private policy initiatives (sectoral)

Textiles store

A private initiative has set up a zero waste and low impact lifestyle store that sells a variety of homeware and kitchen items, beauty goods, toiletries, cleaning products, and certain food staples that either remove or decrease the needless waste of the packaging that comes with these products.

All of the goods promote a low-impact lifestyle and are low-waste alternatives to commonplace items. Some goods, such as food staples and cleaning supplies, also have refill choices.

Construction and buildings: SORGI.

SORGI is a research project on the potential of circularity in Malta, the first result of which is an outdoor furniture collection for public areas that is very critical of the increasing building sector. Six seats, each inspired by a different structure damaged by the local construction boom, will serve as a reminder of today's decisions as well as a recommendation for future acts. All the bench pieces are created from recycled construction waste, inviting visitors to consider the island's growth and its influence on the environment, as well as its social and historical significance.

After mapping out the building sector and waste-producing locations, numerous materials were investigated and tested, including glass fragments, recycled concrete and asphalt, and marble offcuts: all significant resources that are now being discarded in landfill sites that are already at capacity. For example, the use of pigments was tested as a way of adding colour and creating remarkable textures, increasing the uniqueness of each bench, during the development and production phases.

All leftover components and possible rubbish were gathered and recycled during the production process to make small products such as coasters and pots, which are also available for purchase.

<https://www.sorgi.mt/>

Construction and buildings: reconstituted stone.

The procedure entails crushing and grading waste limestone, building blocks or excavation trash and then processing the waste aggregate into an appropriately graded powder. After that, the powder is transformed into a workable paste that can be moulded. The reconstituted stone material that results is a firm, dense limestone that can be cut and polished in the same way as virgin limestone.

There is presently no waste limestone- or concrete-recycling option that provides such significant benefits. When it comes to strength, water resistance and weathering, the recycled material outperforms the parent material.

This method allows some construction waste to be converted into revenue-generating recycled building materials. Given the usage of waste as a raw material, the final goods are expected to perform well in publicly funded projects or those pursuing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

<https://www.um.edu.mt/knowledgetransfer/technologies/materials/reconstitutedstone>

The way forward

Addressing barriers and challenges

Challenge 1: Institutional challenge for a cross-sectoral development:

Being a small island, Malta has limited economies of scale. Nonetheless, small countries like Malta do not find it economically feasible to develop treatment facilities for all waste and all types of treatment, meaning that some waste has to be shipped abroad for treatment.

Community and international policies that allow small island countries like Malta to be circular even beyond national borders can certainly be of help. Actions that could help include:

- co-ordination across different levels of government to align priorities, goals, regulation and funding sources;
- system thinking to ensure policy coherence across different sectors, such as waste, water, energy and transport, to maximise synergies and ensure a coherent set of incentives;
- collaboration and dialogue between the public sector, not-for-profit actors and businesses to stimulate innovation for more sustainable production and consumption patterns.
- development within local administrations and across businesses.

Challenge 2: Companies' ability to grasp opportunities

The main concerns and challenges that companies experience are:

- maintaining consumers' expectations;
- implementing government regulation;
- lack of waste treatment facilities;
- lack of recycling technologies;
- level of costs for implementing CE concepts.

Challenge 3. Market barriers

A CE approach can support the prevention of waste at all stages of a product's lifecycle, from design, production and distribution right through to use and disposal. Designing a product to be easily repaired or upgraded can maximise its use before it reaches its end of life.

As indicated in the Circular Economy Action Plan, although 80 % of products' environmental impacts are determined at the design phase, the linear pattern of take-make-use-dispose does not provide producers with sufficient incentives to make their products more circular.

As many goods available on the market in Malta are imported. Malta is limited in terms of influencing the products' entire lifecycles as it does not have much influence on the design and production stage.

Challenge 4: Consumer behaviour

Consumption patterns and choices shape the amount and type of waste generated. Current consumption levels are unsustainable. A reason for this low engagement in CE practices could be that consumers lack information about product durability and reparability, as well as the lack of sufficiently developed markets, for, amongst others, second-hand products, renting, leasing or sharing services.


Challenge 5: Indicators and targets

- Limited data on material stocks and waste created
- Necessity of investigating not only existing CE targets but also possible or advisable targets
- Identifying and establishing CE indicators and targets
- The need to examine targets beyond specific solutions, economic sectors, or geographical characteristics

Final remarks:

Overall, Malta is in its infancy with regards to the CE. The transition towards one can be facilitated through government action to create a favourable climate for responsible, positive impact investment by providing technical assistance and mobilising financial resources for sound investment in sustainable innovations. This has been happening in Malta, through visions, policies and regulations. The transition towards a CE is dependent on the stakeholders' willingness and capacity to collaborate and forge long-term relationships with one another.

Ranking types of barrier

High barrier  Low barrier	Institutional challenge to develop policy for a complex cross-sectoral issue
	Companies' ability to grasp opportunities
	Market barriers for recycled resources
	Consumer behaviour and awareness
	Good indicators and targets

Future policy plans

Malta's Recovery and Resilience Plan includes various measures that aim to shift Malta towards a more CE. In 2021, Malta **implemented measures from the Recovery and Resilience Plan**, in particular:

- the prohibition on the imports, production, sale and distribution of certain single-use plastic items, including lightweight plastic carrier bags; and
- the adoption of the Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy, which is in line with the main aims of EU waste legislation and the EU Construction and Demolition Waste Protocol. The Strategy provides for measures to encourage options that deliver the best overall environmental outcome by promoting a shift towards a more CE and hence closing the loop of products' lifecycles.

During 2022, Malta is implementing one of the measures in the Construction and Demolition Waste Strategy for Malta 2021–2030, which has also been included as a national Resilience and Recovery Plan. The aim of this measure is to establish standards for the construction industry in the form of mandatory guidelines for economic operators within the sector.

Main initiatives and planned action:

1. Establish best practice for (de)construction, aimed at reducing the generation of construction and demolition waste and purifying the resulting waste streams.
2. Establish a classification for construction and demolition waste by type, material, composition and weight to encourage on-site separation as well as improve the quality of waste streams for subsequent reuse or recycling.
3. Establish standards for appropriate excavation work, with the aim of reusing excavated rock for the purposes of construction.
4. Establish standards for the dimensions of internal and external apertures of residential dwellings aimed at encouraging the re-use of fittings as well as reducing diversity, bringing about economies of scale.

These standards will be incorporated within the regulatory framework and compliance with these standards will be an essential requirement prior to the issuance of an executable Development Permit.

The above standards aim to:

- classify construction and demolition waste according to the material type and composition in order to improve the quality of waste streams for subsequent treatment;

- extract material for reuse in construction or agriculture;
- purify the main construction and demolition waste stream (i.e. inert material); and
- promote onsite reuse operations.

In the coming years, Malta will implement other measures through the Recovery and Resilience Plan with the aim of transitioning to a more CE. In particular, Malta will **introduce a new regulatory framework for the management of construction and demolition waste**. The main objective of the regulatory framework is to set in place a legal framework that focusses on the construction industry in an holistic manner, from the placement on the market of construction products to the management of generated waste, and taking account of the industry's environmental impact at every stage. To ensure a shift towards a more CE, the regulatory framework will focus on the prevention of waste; separation at source; and the promotion of the use of secondary raw materials.

Furthermore, Malta will conduct a **study on the feasibility of expanding EPR obligations to additional waste streams**. The aim of the study is to assess the feasibility of extending EPR obligations, which are currently in place for some waste streams, to additional ones. The outcome of the study will determine the feasibility of establishing EPR to additional waste streams through new legislation.

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