



Polycymaking for Children

Investing for a Better
Tomorrow



“Policymakers have a social responsibility to shape children’s prospects and opportunities by taking sound decisions”

Our children deserve the best – both now and in the future.

We, as policymakers, have a social responsibility to shape children’s prospects and opportunities by taking sound decisions. Children have diverse realities and often face distinct and complex challenges – attempting to address them all is no trifling matter. This is more so considering the crosscutting aspects impacting children. However, through effective policymaking we have the duty to positively impact the life prospects of every child, leaving no one behind, steering towards a better society to live in.

A child-centred approach to social policy is therefore a fundamental point of departure if we really want to safeguard and promote the welfare of every child.

The success of our children and future generations is also the responsibility of society. This success hinges on appropriate, concrete actions which aim to support the right conditions for children to flourish and influence Malta’s future path.

How are we prioritising children’s needs?

The Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights (MSPC) is committed to continue investing in and supporting our children to enjoy their childhood and have a good quality of life as they grow and realise their full potential.

In recent years, the **Research and Evaluation Directorate** (within the MSPC) took a leading role in the development of policy and strategic documents aimed at improving the lives of children, in particular, the most vulnerable. As a Directorate, every effort is made to listen carefully first and establish an informed opinion. Only through a collaborative and consultative approach can we uphold and promote children’s rights and overall wellbeing.

Investing in CHILDREN



People aged between 0-17 years

2022

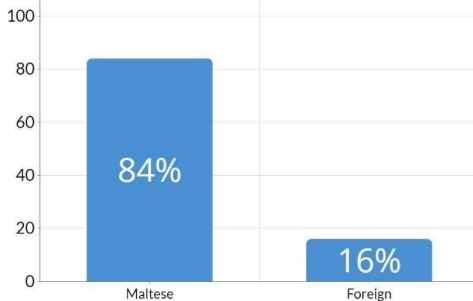
2030



82,677

93,523

Child Population by Nationality in 2021

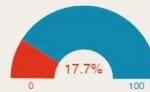
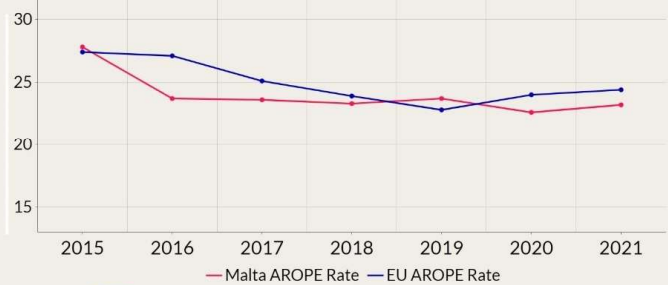


32%
of Households
with dependent
children in 2021

€42 million Government Expenditure on Social Benefits for Children in 2022

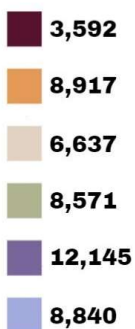


Children At-Risk-of-Poverty or Social Exclusion



National Target to Reduce AROPE Children by 6% by 2030

Beneficiaries by District of Social Benefits for Children and Family in 2020

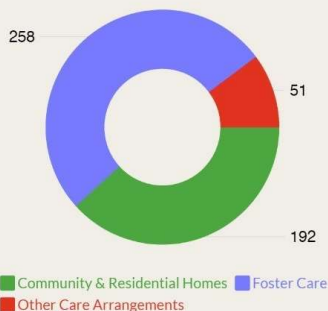


In 2021
22,112 Social Services provided to Children
Provided by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)

Number of Cases of Children:

- 1,191 at the Alternative Care Services
- 2,924 at the Child Protection Services
- 695 at Aġenzija Appoġġ
- 222 at Sedqa Intervention Services
- 16,094 at Sedqa Prevention Services
- 208 at the Gozo Branch
- 305 at the Agency for Community and Therapeutic Services

Children in Alternative Care in 2021



501 Children in Alternative Care Homes*

*These include youths in care who are 18+

€3.7 Million Community Homes Service

€4.9 Million in other Services provided to Children in Alternative Care

Child Guarantee

€145 Million Planned Measures 2022-2027



Social Protection



Healthcare



Adequate Housing



Education



Healthy Nutrition

Social Research in Policymaking:

Why Does it Matter?

Contemporary realities are leading Maltese society towards more diversified and changing needs. The constant changes and challenges faced by our society in recent years, continue to highlight the increasing importance of social research.

A complex relationship binds social research and social policy. Our duty, as policymakers, is to strengthen this relationship to better understand people's realities and address them through effective Policymaking.



Who are we?

Since its inception, the **Research and Evaluation Directorate (RED)**, within the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, was committed towards improving society's wellbeing through the development of evidence-based policymaking. We assist in the development of policymaking through research on selected social themes of contemporary realities within society.

The conduct of robust research is a crucial element for any social policy that seeks to leave a measurable impact. Our primary role as policymakers is to understand the needs of the people, which are generally brought about by dynamic demographic, political, cultural and social realities.

The process of developing policy begins by first identifying a gap: the challenge that people are experiencing. The subsequent steps are policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Each stage entails a degree of research in the process; generally, at the beginning to understand, in between to find and propose solutions, and at the end to evaluate.

What makes Social Policy different from other forms of policy, are its goals. Social policy is centred and focused on the outcomes for people. Over the past decades, a lot has been done in the social sphere. Remarkable social achievements have been accomplished. But more needs to be done. For the social sector to keep on building on its past accomplishments and to keep on succeeding over time, it is critical to continue investing in research and evidence-based policymaking. The ultimate aim is to have a society equipped for future challenges while grasping the opportunities for social prosperity.

Contact Information



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Building the Society of the Future: Social Vision for Malta 2035



Investing in a better society is a collective effort which requires a clear understanding of how we can improve our society and meet the ambitions of our citizens: both now and in the future.

In 2022, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights developed a holistic Social Vision for Malta for 2035, which is intended to serve as a map leading towards a better and more just society.

Addressing the different realities of society requires a thorough understanding of current challenges whilst also taking a leap of faith towards anticipating future challenges which will be faced by society. The development of Malta's Social Vision started through a bottom-up approach, which has led to the identification of eleven thematic areas intended to cover the needs and realities of society in a holistic manner. This initiative would not have been possible without the contribution of various stakeholders including NGOs, academia and various Government organisations who actively contributed towards the development of Malta's Social Vision from the very first steps.



This policy document identifies a number of future policy goals for Government to continue supporting families with children, strengthening the provision of services, ensuring a safe environment, and facilitating child participation.

The next step is to implement Malta's Social Vision and make it a reality to improve the quality of life of citizens and create a better future for our children.

CHILDREN'S POLICY FRAMEWORK 2023-2030

INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN FOR A BETTER TOMORROW



It is believed that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men in future. Renewing our current policies therefore becomes a 'must'. In times of rapid change and emerging challenges, we have to ensure that our policy tools are updated and apt to support the dynamic needs of our children.

As a result, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights is also in the process of developing a renewed Policy Framework for Children 2023-2030.



A pre-consultation event was held in March 2023 to gather feedback and ideas from the stakeholders who work closely with and for children.

While the Office of the Commissioner for Children has already obtained preliminary feedback directly from children, wider consultations with children will be undertaken to ensure that the Policy Framework takes the best interests of the child.

To guarantee a holistic Policy document that provides the necessary direction for the years to come a Public Consultation will be launched during 2023.

'The Policy Framework for Children 2023-2030' outlines the Government's plan of action to ensure that the State serves and protects our children. The Government will seek to consolidate its efforts towards improving the quality of life of children by dedicating the necessary resources for children to succeed. The National Priorities identified by the Policy Framework are:

- Improving Child Wellbeing
- Supporting Families with Children
- Providing a Better Environment for Children; and
- Strengthening Child Participation



National Child Guarantee 2022-2030

The fight against poverty and social exclusion is one of the most specific and longstanding social policy goals that the Ministry has prioritised over the past years.

While results have been positive with the rate of

children at risk of poverty and social exclusion declining from 22.2% in 2013 to 20.3% in 2021, the fight is far from over. Cognizant of the fact that the socio-economic background of a family may significantly increase the risk of poverty and social exclusion in adulthood, policymaking will have to focus in particular on improving economic opportunities and access to good-quality services for excluded groups.

The National Action Plan for a Child Guarantee 2022-2030 is one policy tool to address poverty and social exclusion among children and their families. This policy instrument sets a national target to reduce children at risk of poverty and social exclusion by approximately 6% by 2030.

The Plan outlines a series of specific measures which have been developed to enhance the access of vulnerable children to the crucial services of education, early childhood education and care, school-based educational activities, nutrition, healthcare, and adequate housing.

Through the Child Guarantee, Government is expected to invest €145 million over the next years in measures and initiatives to ensure that no child is left behind.



Empowering Children's Participation

A fundamental role of Social Policy is to reinforce and protect all children's rights at all levels. Children's right to participate in matters affecting them is a **fundamental right**.

Although it is fairly underestimated by many, empowering children to think and express themselves critically increases self-esteem and self-belief leading children to develop a number of skills and capacities. This will in turn also contribute to wider national goals such as fewer children dropping out of school and enhanced employability. Realising children's right to participate in decisions that affect them requires more than just rhetoric – we have to take concrete action.

In 2022, the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) was awarded a grant from the European Commission worth over €155,000 under the CERV Programme. The project entitled 'Empowering Children's Rights in Malta' will be implemented in collaboration with the University College Cork (UCC) and the Office of the Commissioner for Children. The aim of the project is to bring about systematic, long-term, and sustainable changes that will empower children to participate in Malta's democratic process.

A national online platform for child participation that is both child-friendly and easy to use, will be developed in the form of a web tool and a mobile application. This platform will allow children to interact with policymakers and help shape government policies. The project will also place emphasis on activities that enhance the ability of policymakers and professionals to involve children in the policymaking process.

We are convinced that the voice of the children in the decision-making process on issues affecting them is a fundamental right and a crucial point of departure that will enrich and better direct policymaking.



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Final Remarks

Our child population is a significant resource for our country. Children are an indispensable element of today's and tomorrow's society. Ensuring the best possible outcome for children and young people is not only an important aspect of our economic planning but also a moral imperative that will lead to long-term social benefit for society.

A lot has been done, and more has to be done. We as policymakers will keep on persevering and working with all stakeholders to ensure that evidence-based policymaking serves the needs of children, putting their interest at the centre of all decisions while ensuring that all children have equal opportunities to thrive... because yes, our children deserve the very best.

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GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL POLICY
AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The **SOCIAL**
BULLETIN

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