

A NATIONAL POLICY FOR SPORT IN MALTA & GOZO 2017-2027

2016



DISCUSSION DOCUMENT



A National Policy for Sport in Malta & Gozo
Draft National Sports Policy Framework
2017-2027

Published by: The Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport.

SPORTS POLICY GROUP

Mr. Joe Cassar (Chairperson)
Mr. Alan Grima (Secretary)
Mr. Jonathan Barbara
Mr. Mark Cutajar

HEALTH & EDUCATION

Dr. Andrew Decelis (Chairperson)
Ms. Charlene Attard
Mr. Kevin Azzopardi
Mr. Paul Debono
Dr. Charmaine Gauci
Mr. Ivan Riolo
Mr. Stephen Cachia

SPORTS PARTICIPATION

Mr. Mario Bonello (Chairperson)
Ms. Anna Calleja
Mr. Christopher Camilleri
Mr. Cyprian Dalli
Mr. Nathan Farrugia
Ms. Maria Mifsud
Ms. Alessandra Pace
Mr. Martin Sacco
Mr. Angiolino Sciberras
Mr. Paul Sultana

THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

Mr. Deo Scerri (Chairperson)
Dr. Chris Bonett
Mr. Xandru Grech
Mr. Paul Stoner

Front page photo: Clifton Fenech DOI

Document compiled by Dr. Chris Bonett

Date: 2016





A NATIONAL POLICY FOR SPORT IN MALTA & GOZO





CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vi
INTRODUCTION	ix
ACRONYMS	x
1. BACKGROUND	1
2. SPORT AND EDUCATION	3
2.1 Situation Analysis	4
2.2 Targets	5
2.3 Recommendations	5
3. SPORTS PARTICIPATION	12
3.1 Introduction	12
3.2 Leisure Sport	12
3.2.1 Targets	12
3.2.2 Recommendations	13
3.3 Grassroots Sport	15
3.3.1 Targets	15
3.3.2 Recommendations	16
3.4 Amateur Sport	18
3.4.1 Targets	18
3.4.2 Recommendations	18
3.5 Paralympics and Special Olympics	19
3.5.1 Targets	20
3.5.2 Recommendations	20
3.6 Elite Sport	21
3.6.1 Targets	23
3.6.2 Recommendations	24
3.7 Concluding Recommendation	25
4. THE SPORTS INDUSTRY	26
4.1 Situation Analysis	26
4.2 Targets	30
4.3 Recommendations	30
5. SPORTMALTA AND THE COMING YEARS	36
5.1 Situation Analysis	36
5.2 Service Provider	37
5.2.1 Recommendations	37
5.3 Regulatory Affairs	39
5.3.1 Recommendations	39
6. CONCLUSION	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

FOREWORD

Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment



***Governments
have embarked
upon numerous
initiatives to support
the development of
sports in Malta***

We want everyone to participate in formulating and implementing a national sports policy. Governments have embarked upon numerous initiatives to support the development of sports in Malta and we have registered significant progress at various levels.

The 'National Policy for Sport in Malta & Gozo' recognises the holistic nature of sports and acknowledges the vital role which the national government and other stakeholders have to play to guarantee a more successful future. It includes many targets and recommendations embedded in three separate but intertwining pillars. Above all, it formulates one common nation-wide strategy that will shape the direction of sport for the next ten years.

My Ministry and the Government witness the importance of sport on a daily basis. We support the broader context it represents and are committed to reach the objectives set out by this policy and position sport where it belongs.

My thanks and appreciation go to all contributors who through their enthusiasm, knowledge, experience and intrinsic love for sports, have realised this discussion document. The ball now rolls back to the Maltese sporting community. Your valid participation in the consultation process is wholeheartedly recommended.



Photo by: SportMalta





Photos by: SportMalta





INTRODUCTION

Chris Agius, Parliamentary Secretary for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport

Sport is a universal language that can bring people together no matter what their origin, background, religion or economic status.

”

This quote certainly sums up the value of sport. Sport is a tool which can bring about change as it has the ability to bring people together no matter what their background. Particularly, the diplomacy of sport has the potential to bring down barriers caused by ethnicity, religious belief, gender or other differences. The world is in turmoil more than ever, but sport can play a very significant role. Sport diplomacy facilitates communication, being in itself a soft power bringing about peace.

The national sports policy 2017-2027, while acknowledging the valuable work done by prior sport administrators, is ambitious and has a wider vision. The policy focuses on three aspects of sport - Sport & Education; Sports Participation; and the Sports Industry, aiming that by 2027, sport in Malta serves the needs of all sport people, from performance to grassroots level.

Moreover, given the Maltese dimension, a dual career in sport is a priority. The government is increasing financial incentives to tackle the lack of professional athletes in our country. It is a reality that our athletes have to shift between their main source of income in a profession and their daily training programmes. This situation needs to be tackled and acted upon.

Engaging in physical activity is another priority of this policy, with the aim to reduce the high rate of obese people in Malta. Making the general public aware that prevention is better than cure is top of the agenda.

In addition, the policy highlights various ways in which sport can facilitate social inclusion and integration, eradicating discrimination and catering for all those who are in one way or other unreachable.

While thanking all those who worked on this document, and all those who were consulted in the process, I emphasise that this is a consultation document and thus we welcome everyone's contribution. The document is not cast in stone and should be scrutinised by athletes, coaches, administrators and all those who have sport and physical activity at heart.

I urge everyone to air their views so that eventually we shall have one sports policy that belongs to the whole nation.

ACRONYMS

AFM	Armed Forces of Malta
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
ERA	Environment and Resources Authority
EU	European Union
FEMA	Faculty of Economics, Management and Accounting
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CPD	Government Property Division
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IPES	Institute for Physical Education and Sport
ITS	Institute of Tourism Studies
KMS	Kunsill Malti għall-Isport
MCAST	Malta College of Arts Science and Technology
MCST	Malta Council for Science and Technology
MOC	Maltese Olympic Committee
MTA	Malta Tourism Authority
MVPA	Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity
NADO	National Anti-Doping Organisation
PA	Planning Authority
PE	Physical Education
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax
WHO	World Health Organisation



Photo by: SportMalta



1. BACKGROUND

The past twenty-five years has seen a paradigm shift in the way national governments treat sport. From a subject solely related to education and culture, sport is now seen in a much broader context. While retaining its social and educational aspect, sport has adapted to the rise in revenues generated by competitive activities, which revenues have undoubtedly had a major economic impact.

Therefore, while reaffirming the notion that the starting point should be promoting participation in sport and physical activity for a healthy lifestyle, national policies have diverged into social inclusion, equality of gender, race and abilities, and the fostering of relationships between people of different cultural and national backgrounds. Governments within the European Union (EU) and beyond, promote sport as a means of leisure, but also recognise that competitive sport, both amateur and professional, contributes significantly in areas such as tourism and job creation.

Health benefits of regular participation in sport and physical activity have been documented and include reduced risk of cardiovascular disease¹, hypertension², diabetes³ and some cancers⁴, while assisting weight loss and weight maintenance after weight loss⁵. There are also mental and social health benefits with sport reducing depression and anxiety and improving self-esteem and self-concept. Children's level of physical activity or sport is positively associated with cognitive functioning or academic success⁶.

There is a growing body of evidence that inactive children are more likely to become inactive adults⁷. A physically active community would use fewer costly medical interventions, reduce the

demand on health services, and contribute to a more productive workforce that is less prone to injury and associated compensation and rehabilitation costs.

It is recommended that individuals engage in adequate levels of physical activity throughout their lives. Different types and amounts of physical activity are required for different health outcomes. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that adults engage in at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week⁸. Existing recommendations emphasise the health benefits of moderate-intensity activities and that recommended levels can be accumulated in relatively short bouts at a time. Children and young people should engage in at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Recent research has also suggested that people should reduce extended periods of sedentary behaviour, such as sitting at work or watching TV, which may constitute an independent risk factor for health regardless of activity levels.

According to data from the Eurobarometer, published in 2014, Malta has the second highest percentage (75%) of people who never or seldom exercise, compared to the EU average of 59%.⁹ Men exercise, play sport or take on physical activity more than women in most countries including Malta. Citizens in the northern part of the EU are more physically active than those in the south.

A recent study, for the first time using objective criteria to measure physical activity in a nationally representative sample of 10 to 11 year old Maltese children, reported that only 39% of boys and 10% of girls meet recommendations for an hour of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) and they are sedentary for an average of 9.5 hours a day¹⁰. Using self-report measures, in EU member states only 20% of children report that they engage in moderate-to-vigorous exercise regularly¹¹. In Malta, 43% of 11 year old boys reported participating in 60 minutes of MVPA daily and 26% of 15 year olds reported similar participation. Among girls the proportion drops from 25% in 11 year olds to 14% in 15 year olds. This indicates that physical activity declines with age, particularly during adolescence.

¹ Haietham, 2012; Wartburton et al, 2006

² Whelton et al. 2002

³ Bassuk, Manson., 2005

⁴ Friedenreich, Orenstein, 2002

⁵ Swift et al, 2014

⁶ Trudaao, Shepard, 2008

⁷ Gordon-Larsen, Nelson, and Popkin, 2007; Ratakin et al., 1994

⁸ World Health Organisation, 2010

⁹ Special Eurobarometer 412, 2014

¹⁰ Decelis et al, 2014

¹¹ HBSC, 2009-2010



Photo by: SportMalta

In consideration of the above, this national sports policy, being presented for consultation, focuses on three pillars. Although each pillar is separate in nature, they intertwine and are to be treated cumulatively in order to attain the targets set out above. These pillars are: sports and education, sports participation, and sports as a means of economic growth. The document also focuses on the metamorphosis of Kunsill Malti għall-sport (KMS) into SportMalta.

Each section will analyse the current situation for each pillar, followed by a number of targets and recommendations to achieve the desired results. Ultimately, following the consultation period, action plans and timeframes will be drawn up on how such targets can be attained in the next ten years. This national sports policy is an attempt to provide ideas for the national stakeholders in sport, namely the government, through the Ministry of Education and Employment, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Research and Innovation, Youth and Sport and SportMalta, and all national sports organisations, to utilise in the period between 2017 and 2027, ensuring

the administration of sport in Malta is target oriented. The aim is to drive all stakeholders to perform the required actions to reach the objectives set out by this policy and meet the aspirations of the Maltese sport movement and the citizens of Malta and Gozo.

Emphasis will be placed on the role of SportMalta as the national authority on sport and the prime motor for the promotion of sports participation across all sectors of society, including leisure activity, and amateur and elite sporting competitions. It will collaborate with the Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC). It shall also provide ideas for the growth of the sporting industry with the intention that Maltese sport may one day be financially self-sustainable and start contributing to the country's economy. In addition to being a service provider, SportMalta has the responsibility of being the country's sport regulator and this document proposes the setting up of a Regulatory Department to meet legal obligations.



2. SPORT AND EDUCATION

2.1 Situation Analysis

The feeling that education should serve as the sound basis for the practice of sport is strong. This builds upon strong foundations in schools. Physical Education (PE) is a core subject within the curricula across the educational spectrum, promoting a healthy lifestyle in all children. Subject content focuses on the development of psychomotor skills and physical, social and psychological development through a variety of games, sports and exercises that teach fair play, values, equity, teamwork, leadership and social inclusion. However, the number of PE lessons are below the EU average, as confirmed by the report of the National Audit Office of 2010 which states that children are not active enough at school. Furthermore, research undertaken by Decelis et al. in 2014, shows that children are active in only 18 minutes of MVPA during school hours and only 5 minutes before school hours, while after school hours they are active for 28 minutes on average. Girls were less active than boys during all time-periods.

Schools have always played a central role in the provision of physical activity to Maltese youth. Traditionally, students have engaged in physical activity during PE lessons, during breaks in the school day and through active transport to and from school. However, alarming health trends suggest schools need to renew and expand their role in providing and promoting physical activity. Over the years, many public health, medical and educational authorities have called on schools to give greater attention to provision of physical activity to students.

Research and development is another area that requires further investment as, to date, there is no official data on participation rates of Maltese children, youth and adults in sport clubs. The number of qualified sports personnel is also unknown but more are needed to improve participation and standards in sport at all levels.





Photo by: SportMalta

Schools have always played a central role in the provision of physical activity to Maltese youth.

”



2.2 Targets

This National Sports Policy set the following targets:

- a. Increase participation in physical activity in schools;
- b. Increase participation in physical activity during and after school hours;
- c. Make inter-scholastic sports competitions relevant;
- d. Change the mind-set so that sport is perceived as a motor for academic achievement, not a hindrance;
- e. Provide links between sport and the community.



Photo by: Reuben Piscopo DOI



2.3 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Participation in Physical Education and physical activity at pre-school age, compulsory schooling age and in all post-secondary and tertiary educational institutions

PE is a compulsory subject that provides regular opportunities of physical activity for children in a school setting. This subject can set the right scenario for promotion of participation in physical activity. It is recommended that at least half the recommended daily amount of physical activity, that is half an hour of MVPA, is carried out at school. This should be developmentally appropriate, enjoyable and involving a variety of activities geared towards physical literacy, improving the confidence and competence for children to be active. It is also recommended that half of the PE lessons are at MVPA level or higher. Physical Education also provides the right setting for the promotion of ethical education and to teach values such as co-operation, fair play, teamwork and leadership.

Schools could become the central element in a community system that ensures that students participate in enough physical activity for a healthy lifestyle. A renewed and expanded role for schools in the area of physical activity is being suggested through various initiatives.

The content of PE programmes should be related to maturity phases of children and allow the development of neuromotor skills. PE lessons should be well planned and designed to ensure success and enjoyment for all in a safe learning environment. Assessment for learning should be an integral part of this programme and teachers should provide regular feedback to children and parents.

It is crucial that PE is not considered as a standalone subject but should be at the fulcrum of all other subjects taught. For this reason, the concept of cross curricular teaching should be adapted by classroom teachers in primary schools. Classroom teachers should also co-operate closely with PE teachers.

PE should be accessible to all children without exception. Less active and less skilled children, as well as those with disabilities and special





Photo by: Pierre Sammut DOI

educational needs, must be included, and differentiated teaching should aim to cater for all. This would ensure the prevention of negative experiences.

Exemption requests from PE lessons, whether temporary or permanent, should be regularised, requiring a formal note from parents and an approval from Head of School. A thorough analysis should be undertaken by all stakeholders, including the parent and child, on the reasons for drop-outs so as to create the right environment for the student's ability.

Schools should provide the basis of sports for all children and youth. The minimum number of hours of participation in PE is outlined in the National Curriculum Framework of 2012, whereby primary classes are to have 5% of total lessons related to PE and secondary level 10%.¹² It is essential that these minimums are enforced and additional opportunities should be given to children on a school and college level basis. SportMalta, in its regulatory role, should devise and publish a defined minimum standard for sporting facilities in schools, and these facilities should be shared with the community.

Initial preparation for PE specialist and primary class teachers should continue to cater for different and changing needs of boys and girls in

local schools. Mentoring is required for all newly qualified teachers and continuous professional development (CPD) is necessary to ensure teachers are updated with the latest pedagogy and creative ways of enticing children to be active.

Children should be physically active from birth to the period before formal schooling. Physical activity should be compulsory in all day-care centres and pre-school programmes. Parents should also be encouraged to increase opportunities for active play and to reduce sedentary time.

Physical activity and sport should continue to be an integral part of activities in all post-compulsory educational institutions. Facilities in such institutions should be attractive and sport development units and programmes should offer opportunities for physical activity during the whole day. There should be opportunities for outdoor physical activities and sports for students of all ages. To be able to provide professional health-enhancing physical activity programmes in schools and other educational entities, there is need to collect data on physical activity using objective measures.

¹² Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012



Recommendation 2

School recess and active breaks

The majority of local schools provide regularly scheduled recess time during school hours. According to studies in the United Kingdom (UK), recess contributes to 17.9% and 15.5% of boys' and girls' daily MVPA respectively.¹³ Schools can offer physical activity and sport clubs during breaks, and children are encouraged to join in. Furthermore, providing safe sports equipment and playground markings can encourage children to choose to be active during recess. Traditional Maltese games could be introduced to encourage more play during recess. Children should also be given active breaks in the classroom in primary schools. This could take the form of movement to music and performing basic movements in between lessons.

Recommendation 3

Active School Transport

Active school transport provides an important opportunity for increased overall daily physical activity in children. Consistent decline in active transport has been reported in the past twenty years. Traffic congestion close to schools suggests most children are driven, rather than walk to school. More research is required to analyse the current situation in relation to active transport, followed by interventions to increase active commuting. More projects such as the Walking Bus, introduced in Malta in 2006, are needed to encourage children to walk to school. Volunteers are required to ensure the success of such projects.

Recommendation 4

School Sports

Interscholastic sports competitions need to reach out to a wider segment of the student population while diversifying the type of events organised. Further collaboration between state, church and independent schools in the organisation of these events is needed. Ways and means need to be sought to increase the number of children involved in these events and the number of events offered.

Through such initiatives, schools will also be serving as talent identification centres with hidden talents easier to spot. In this regard, it is important that routing of potential elite athletes happens through the right channels. Professional

counselling and advice should be provided by a centralised agency working closely with the National Sport School.

This national sports policy aims to extend exposure and opportunities for school children to participate in sports. Innovative ideas and co-operation should be encouraged. These might include ways of facilitating interaction between schools and national sport organisations and their respective affiliated clubs with the latter assisting in training school children immediately before, during recess or after school hours. Other ways of encouraging more active schools is through the creation of School Sports Councils within each primary and secondary schools where students are given a voice to express their opinion, and the creation of a Sports Flag for schools who excel in sport participation.

Recommendation 5

Sport and academic achievement

Participation of children in school sports needs to be encouraged, promoted, recognised and increased. Though in recent years progress has been registered, the image of sports needs to be improved in such a way that it is not perceived to be a hindrance to academic success but as an effective contribution to better mental activity.

Recommendation 6

Setting up a School Sports Coordinator Unit

School sport, currently forming part of the national education curriculum, needs to be supplemented with organised extra-curricular sports through the setting up of a School Sports Coordinator Unit. At present, this role is being undertaken by all members of the Sport Promotion Unit, and may also be expended to be included as part of a Physical Education teacher's load.

Each college should be assigned a College Sports Coordinator with the role of organising sporting activities within the college, coordinating school and college teams, facilitating interaction between schools and clubs or nurseries, and planning and developing facilities within the school. SportMalta should coordinate inter and intra college school sports together with the individual College Sports Coordinators.

¹³ Ridgers et al., (2011)

Recommendation 7 Physical Activity Beyond the School Day

After-School Programmes

The after-school period represents one of the largest blocks of discretionary time in a child's typical day. As a result, after-school programmes have great potential to provide opportunities for increasing physical activity. After-school programmes to promote physical activity include competitive sports teams, leisure sport clubs, classes or training, recreational or non-athletic activities that involve physical activities. In recent years, there has been substantial interest in offering additional after-school activities to serve the needs of more students.

To achieve greater success in terms of numbers, organised transport to towns and villages from schools needs to be organised as this is a major stumbling block for such programmes.

School-Community Links

Traditionally, the role of local schools has been to provide and promote physical activity during the school day (ex. PE, breaks) and/or on the school facilities immediately after school (ex. inter-scholastic competitions). School-based programmes are usually sponsored by the schools themselves and supervised by school employees. However, enormous potential exists for schools

to expand their role, building institutional relationships with community-based providers of physical activity.

Such relationships could manifest in several ways. Schools could make their facilities available to community-based organisations during after-school, weekend, and summer periods. Also, schools could collaborate with community organisations in promoting physical activity programmes for students and their parents.

Schools and community agencies need to collaborate in meeting the physical activity needs of youths. Various efforts have been made to allow community programmes to benefit from school facilities, but the results have not always been positive. But opportunities exist. Leveraging the resources of schools and organisations in the community would provide expanded opportunities for improving the health of children and families.

Collaborative programmes require qualified human resources to guarantee continuity. SportMalta, in collaboration with Educational Institutions and in partnership with the Registered National Sport Organisations, needs to provide accessible teaching and coaching opportunities for the training of sports personnel, particularly in the administration and technical fields.

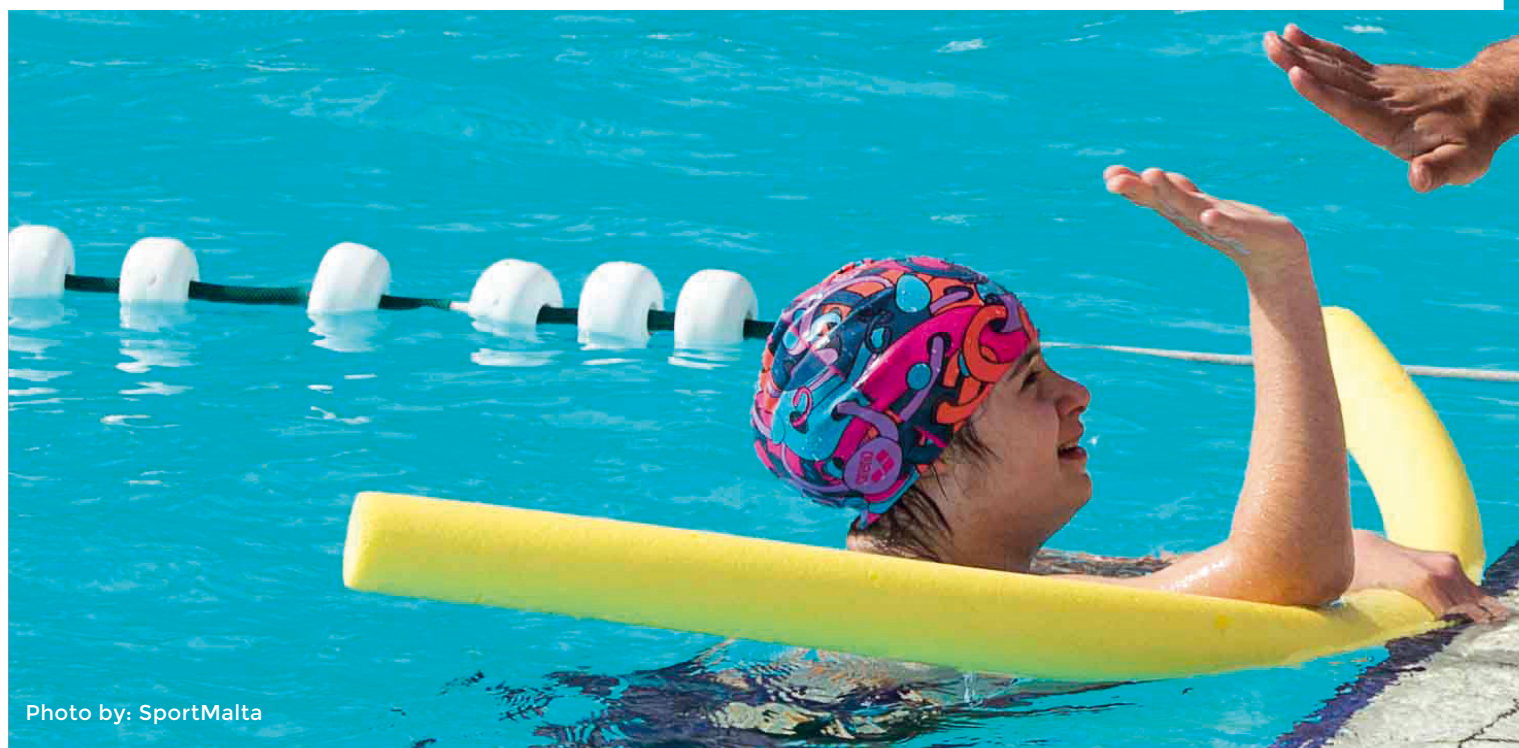


Photo by: SportMalta



3. SPORTS PARTICIPATION

3.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this Sports Policy is to increase participation in all forms and levels of sport and physical activity by attracting individuals from all parts of society to get involved. The five areas that need concrete action in order to ensure that sport is readily available and open to all sectors of Maltese society are looked at separately before stipulating targets and recommendations for each area.

3.2 Leisure Sport

'Leisure Sport' are activities carried out in an informal manner, aimed at challenging physical or mental abilities while bettering the individual's social wellbeing. Informal sports participation is not only of utmost importance for a healthy population but also one of the best tools for social integration and cohesion in the multicultural society Malta has become.

In recent years, informal participation in sport including physical activity, has increased dramatically, however and unfortunately, Malta still lags far behind other countries. A high percentage of citizens are sedentary and obese.¹⁴ In fact, a study published in 2014 shows that Malta ranks second place in Western Europe, only behind Iceland, with 74% of men and 58% of women either overweight or obese. Sport in Malta is still often associated with persons that are already fit and this can be disheartening to people of all ages that need encouragement and more support to participate in some sort of activity. The increase in sporting facilities has benefitted organised sport, however, the general public have been barely encouraged to start some sort of sporting activity.



¹⁴ Gakidou et al., 2013



3.2.1 Targets

This national sports policy aims to mitigate as far as possible the reasons that discourage participation in leisure or informal physical activity, and advocate practices that induce participation. A thinking process should be initiated within Maltese society to value sport participation as an important factor for one to enrich his personal and social life and that of the community in general. By having adequate facilities and an ongoing campaign on the benefits of a healthy life style, the target should be to at least double the participation in leisure or informal sport. The long term goals are a much healthier population and a much lower position in the obesity 'league' table.

3.2.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 **The Development of Local Leisure Facilities**

Specific funding should be made available for the development of local leisure facilities, sanctioned by SportMalta. These facilities could be run in conjunction with schools, local councils, and private entities with additional hubs in central areas of Malta. Government policy should include a minimum percentage of obligatory unstructured sport facilities in regional parks and ensure that the necessary ancillary facilities, such as changing rooms, showers etc., are also included in 'Sport Hubs'. Moreover, personal trainers should be engaged to use sporting hubs on certain days and times, in order to provide free physical activities to the general public.



Photo by: SportMalta

Recommendation 2 Promotion of the Benefits of Sporting Activity

National campaigns on the benefits of sporting activity will be organised in conjunction with the health authorities. Such campaigns will be aimed at:

- i. Children and youths, but more importantly parents, since they are important players in changing our sedentary culture.
- ii. Mature persons who do not participate in sport of a physical nature.

Recommendation 3 Regional Sports Coordinators

Regional Sports Coordinators are to be engaged, with the role of coordinating sporting events within the regions and, in turn, within local councils. Regional Sports Coordinators are to liaise with local clubs or nurseries, private entities, local councils, college sports coordinators, local non-governmental organisations, (such as band clubs etc.) in order to ensure the spread of leisure sport throughout localities.

Through the establishment of Regional Sports Coordinators, local councils can be assisted, technically and financially to organise specific sporting activities such as street sports festivals, inter and intra local council tournaments, and other events.

Recommendation 4 Informal Play/Games & Active Commuting

For health and safety reasons, 'playing fields' in Malta are mainly restricted to the very young and their design facilitates only the use of equipment installed on the premises. An effort should be made to provide other areas to promote informal, unstructured play, such as hide and seek, catch, sand pits, ball games and sport requiring no more than a safe, open and informal layout. Facilities should also be provided for games within open parks and leisure facilities.

This national sports policy promotes active commuting with the provision of adequate changing and shower facilities, at or close to the place of work (Hubs). Employers in the private sector should be given incentives to provide such facilities for their employees. These could be incorporated with the Regional Sport Hubs where applicable.

Recommendation 5 Active Summer Months

There is need to exploit opportunities on the coast, especially in the summer months, by providing assistance in areas such as swimming classes, kayaking and fun water games, possibly by providing equipment and professional help.





Photos by: Stephen Gatt



“

Hundreds of elite athletes may have been lost over the years.

3.3 Grassroots Sport

The grassroots sector usually refers to children and youths who might or might not move on to higher levels of participation. The term is also used to define amateur participation in sport at lower levels, and is in line with the ‘sport for all’ mentality, where enjoyment and personal development is the primary reason for participation.

An improvement has been registered throughout the years with sports at grassroots level on a more sound footing. Most sports organisations have acknowledged the fact that in order to aspire to make improvement at a higher level one must have a strong grassroots base. It can be stated that this sector has become quite organised, structured and active with most sporting federations and associations, or clubs within such federations, having their own youth sectors.

The national sports policy endeavours to consolidate and acknowledge the efforts of those involved in this sector for their contribution towards the educational, health and social wellbeing of the country. Efforts to exploit the organisational and logistical potential of the educational sector will be emphasised.

3.3.1 Targets

In order to target the needs of this sector, it is imperative that a detailed database on participation in the grassroots sector is compiled. This needs to include details of the organisations, active participants, including players and coaches, volunteers, persons employed in the sector, including age and gender, facilities used, potential facilities and other important details such as their economic contribution.

It is important that those working at grass



roots level are offered financial, logistical and organisational support so that the sector can be run more professionally. There should also be a special focus to generate impetus for sports participation at school level.

3.3.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Creation of the Talent Identification Unit

Hundreds of elite athletes may have been lost over the years. This policy strives to provide a structured process so that talented individuals are identified at a young age and given every opportunity to maximise their full potential. A Talent Identification Unit should be set up within SportMalta to work within schools and nurseries.

Recommendation 2 The Establishment of Coaching Register

This recommendation targets school children, up to secondary level of education, who attend club nurseries, and practice their chosen sporting discipline on a regular basis, even at competition level, potentially en-route to elite level. This forms the basis of sports for young sports persons outside their school environment.

In its regulatory role, SportMalta should set up a coaching register, one specific to the different



Photo by: Stephen Gatt

sports and another to generic sports. Coaches need to be registered and regulated under a national regulatory board within SportMalta. Coaches need to attend specified refreshers courses, and a points system, on the lines of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) organised by the Malta Football Association, should be adopted whereby coaches would be required to attain a minimum number of points through their participation and application in these courses in order to retain their registration. This may be done in conjunction with national federations, the MOC, the University of Malta and the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST). Other bodies would be encouraged to promote any courses they provide, which could grant points for coaches coming from different federations or backgrounds. National federations would in turn list which courses would be acceptable as granting points for their coaches.

Recommendation 3 **Assistance to Clubs and Nurseries**

Clubs and nurseries need to be supported to become more professional in their setup and approach. Most administrators are volunteers. Their work needs to be recognised and SportMalta should provide opportunities for them to improve their administrative skills. Registered club or nursery coaches who are government employees should be eligible to apply

for a weekly time allowance to deliver classes to school children before, during or after school hours to assist the School Sports Coordinator in delivering their sports programme.

Clubs should be assisted through the College Sports Coordinator, in setting up links with local schools and colleges for their mutual benefit.

Recommendation 4 **Sports for All Programmes**

SportMalta should endeavour to coordinate sport programmes with clubs and nurseries so that these, as far as practicable, are delivered by the clubs or associations. However, clubs and coaches need to be regulated. The fees for such programmes need to be affordable for the individuals. Where the respective national associations, clubs, or nurseries are not in a position to organise the programmes requested by SportMalta to the required standard, SportMalta should employ coaches directly and run the programmes itself.

3.4 Amateur Sport

Amateur sport can be defined as sport engaged in by adults who practice on a regular basis, sometimes even at competition level, who are either still en-route to elite level or who, for whatever reasons, will never attain elite status. Amateur sports persons are on the increase and need to be supported. Most practice their sports with local clubs.

Strengthening the setup of national associations and clubs affiliated to such associations, will improve the status of the individual sport-person. With the exception of a very limited number of sporting disciplines, all athletes within this category derive no income from their participation. In fact, amateur sports clubs are mostly supported through their own fund raising activities.

3.4.1 Targets

Amateur sport organisations have a dual dimension; as stepping stones for elite sport and providing easy access to sport for the general public. In order to attain targets, amateur associations should be helped to act in a more 'professional way'. Support in logistics, organisation, finance and infrastructure is



necessary in order to maintain the identity and viability of these voluntary organisations.

3.4.2 Recommendations

National Associations and their clubs are to be helped with the following initiatives:

- i. Assistance in the use of government owned sports facilities;
- ii. Provision of administrative support by means of a pooling system between different Associations for both facilities and staff;
- iii. Courses for sports administrators;
- iv. Courses for coaches;
- v. Increase in the number of seconded government employees;
- vi. Upgrading of the Sports Events Unit within SportMalta;
- vii. Creation of a Research & Development Unit within SportMalta.

3.5 Paralympics and Special Olympics

While it is preferable to avoid medical definitions, competitive sports for disabled people is usually divided into six major impairment groups, particularly for international competitions, including the Paralympics. The six groups are:

- i. Learning disability
- ii. Blind and visually impaired
- iii. Deaf and hearing impaired
- iv. Cerebral palsy
- v. Wheelchair users
- vi. Amputees

Access to sport for disabled people has been the subject of discussion within national sports bodies for a number of years. Although efforts have been made to build up adequate policies and practices, the involvement of disabled persons in sports has not yet been addressed effectively.

People are sometimes confused about the meaning of 'inclusion' and what it entails vis-à-vis



Photo by: SportMalta



as to how a particular sporting discipline should relate to disabled people. Disabled people should be enabled, encouraged and empowered to join clubs, share facilities and become involved as coaches and administrators. Disabled athletes should be treated on a par with all other athletes, irrespective of the discipline or ability. Such athletes participate in sporting activity for the same reasons and draw the same benefit as other athletes.

While disabled people tend to compete against people of a like ability, this should not mean that segregation is necessary. Competition, squad training or events can be structured so that opportunities for disabled people take place alongside or within activities for non-disabled people. This is often no more complicated than offering an additional category such as those already provided for age and gender.

3.5.1 Targets

This national sports policy has as its main objective an increase in opportunities for disabled persons to participate in sport through the Special Olympics and Paralympics and see that such a movement is adequately set-up. This can be attained through increased participation within clubs through the provision of appropriate access facilities.

Efforts are to be made to achieve increased participation of disabled persons in main stream activities, both in unified sport and specialised events, and to facilitate access to all award schemes and modified games. A concrete effort must be made to attract new coaches to embark on a career in this area.

3.5.2 Recommendations

A number of initiatives could be taken in order to improve and increase the participation of disabled persons in sport. These could include:

- i. Putting the Paralympic Movement on a sound footing with contributions from the various entities working in this field of sports.
- ii. Promoting inclusion of disabled people in mainstream programmes of sport, with the support of the Special Olympics movement and the Paralympics movement.

- iii. Raising the profile of sport for disabled people through promotional campaigns. Special Olympics can function as one of the vehicles to provide visibility to people with special needs. Visibility is the first step towards a positive cycle of inclusion, understanding and respect in sports.
- iv. Promoting the positive impact Special Olympics has on people with intellectual disabilities.
- v. Unified Sports:
 - a. The initiation of a programme of unified sport and/or fostering other opportunities for athletes to interact with those who do not have intellectual or physical disabilities.
 - b. Promoting the importance of Unified Sports at all levels within an organisation, both internally to staff and partner organisations and to external audiences.
- vi. Building a Young Special Athletes Programme in every region, and encouraging athletes to participate in Special Olympics and Paralympic sport.
- vii. Considering ways to reach out to parents and others close to disabled persons and provide support to them.
- viii. Special funding for Special Olympics athletes and athletes participating in Paralympic sports.

3.6 Elite Sport

In the local context, and for the purpose of a national sports policy, this sector is to be considered to include all individual athletes who either individually, or in a team, partake in official international competitions or reach international benchmarks as set by the MOC or its equivalent. This document acknowledges the important role played by the MOC, as the main stakeholder, and the sound contribution of the National Associations and Federations. For its part, Government is expected to continue supporting the MOC through agreements covering periods of four calendar years.

The international definition of an 'elite' athlete is usually given as, "a person who is currently

or has previously competed as, a varsity player (individual or team), a professional player or a national or international level player.” Paralympic sports persons are included.

Malta has very few athletes of international standard, and only a handful practice their sport on a full-time basis. These should be considered as the true elite of Maltese sport. However, through the years the country has considered athletes who reach a certain baseline standard, equivalent to the Games of the Small States of Europe, as forming an elite group.

Elite athletes are the role models of sport with responsibilities and obligations. Athletes can only reach elite status if they are born with adequate talent. However, raw talent is not enough. Talented individuals need to be developed into the best athletes they can be. Achieving elite status is very much dependent on talent identification at grassroots level.

It is generally thought that SportMalta, the MOC and the various national associations are responsible for providing the necessary support. However, private companies could also have a role and should be given further incentives such as tax credits, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Presently, most funding of elite sports persons comes from their own families and involves huge personal sacrifices.

The Government, through SportMalta, is providing direct support to a number of elite athletes through the Flexi-Training Schemes, Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) sports scheme and other programmes while supporting the MOC and other non-Olympic sports organisations. The MOC is, in turn, providing support through its athletes' elite schemes and to national federations. National federations support a number of athletes by providing coaching assistance and international participation.

This 'pyramid' structure is to be reinforced and enhanced through targeted action which should eventually lead to the correct identification of talent in various sporting disciplines. This is to be followed by a sporting education and upbringing aimed at producing elite athletes. Finally, the structure will produce not just an elite athlete, but also a fully professional one. Only after achieving such structure and support will Maltese athletes

be able to reach the next level in international competition. Government and the MOC have to combine resources in ensuring support for elite athletes, allowing them to succeed in both their sporting and academic careers.

3.6.1 Targets

This national sports policy is proposing schemes and projects to provide the tools for national sports organisations to be organised more professionally and produce professional athletes. However, such projects should be aimed at maintaining professionalism in order to have the 'Elite' group of athletes become the 'professional' group. As stated earlier, focus on the 'Amateur' sector will lead to the increase in opportunities for individual athletes and teams to reach their full potential and compete at an acceptable standard in international competitions.

This can be achieved if the following common needs for elite athletes are addressed in a serious manner:

- i. Adequate training facilities
- ii. Adequate coaching
- iii. Availability of training time
- iv. Financial Support
- v. Competent supporting entourage

It is of vital importance that the country's elite athletes are projected as role models in order to encourage the general public, in particular children, to engage in physical activity. Through increased sport participation, a sufficient talent pool will be created to provide the required sportsmen and women of the future.

Malta is a small nation with a small number of sportsmen and women who have reached European and world standard in their respective sport. This policy highlights the need for investment to increase opportunities to measure ourselves and celebrate success, not solely against other small nations but also at higher levels in a more targeted, wider range of sports. In this regard, this policy aims to support and direct more resources and assistance to those sports which offer the greatest and widest prospects of fulfilling these targets, while not neglecting obligations towards the other sports.



3.6.2 Recommendations

In order to improve Elite Sport the level of professionalism in different associations needs to be strengthened. Personal sponsorship should be encouraged so as to provide the possibility for sports persons to consider participation in elite sport as a career while preparing for the time after the competitive period ceases. In view of the fact that most elite sports persons are already identifiable during their higher education years, the following initiatives could be considered:

- i. Government directing income from lottery funds to sports organisations to create programmes that will help local athletes become competitive on the international stage;
- ii. Provide funding to sports organisations for top-level coaching education programmes
- for the attainment of the highest possible qualifications;
- iii. The implementation of structures within Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to support elite or promising athletes such as recognition of sporting achievements as an academic subject and extension of stipulated course completion periods;
- iv. The setting up of Sixth Form, MCAST, Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) and University Elite Sports Teams who, in turn, can act as ambassadors for the same institution;
- v. Improved and accessible training facilities at the same higher education institutions (HEI) for elite athletes;
- vi. Flexibility in time tables for elite athletes attending HEI;

- vii. Support by HEI for international participation of their elite athletes;
- viii. Regulating and improving coaches in liaison with the National Sports Federation for elite athletes;
- ix. Provide adequate medical support through innovative agreements with the public and private sector;
- x. Improve Functional Diagnostic facilities in conjunction with the University of Malta, MOC and national federations;
- xi. The establishment of a centralised working team composed of technical members of SportMalta, the MOC and the University of Malta;
- xii. The establishment of a Sports Science Unit within SportMalta with the collaboration of the Ministry for Health, MOC, University of Malta and other educational institutions. This Unit would serve to develop athletes from grassroots to elite. Sports development today is not just about coaching and application. Indeed, in recent years there has been a surge in the development and use of scientific methods for the advancement of athletes, such as sports psychology, physiotherapy, nutrition, conditioning and biomechanics. Malta lags behind in this aspect and investment in such a unit is vital for the advancement of local athletes.
- xiii. The introduction of a categorisation system to support sports at the elite level, so that each sport knows how it can be supported and the overall objectives which need to be achieved for the different levels;
- xiv. The strengthening of the National Anti-Doping Organisation (NADO) to ensure fair-play and remove fear that other participants may be cheating. NADO should be provided with the necessary resources in order to extend services and educate athletes, administrators and medical/paramedical staff.

3.7 Concluding Recommendation

The setting up of a 'Task Force' with the main aim of examining various sport strategies implemented in various countries, identifying and proposing a more targeted direction towards a much needed sports culture change in Malta and establishing the right structures for this to happen.



Photo by: SportMalta



4. THE SPORTS INDUSTRY

4.1 Situation Analysis

It is an internationally acknowledged fact that sport's contribution to society comes in various forms. Sport has the capacity to bring people, of diverse cultural and societal backgrounds, together in a way that no other form of human activity is able to achieve.

Sport has educational, public health and business characteristics that, although separate in nature, have the power to engage human interaction and contribute to the furtherance of society. This national sports policy attempts to address all these aspects separately and jointly in order to achieve maximum participation of the general public in the field of sport.

Over the years, national sports policies have always tackled the sports sector from an educational and health perspective. The numerous projects carried out during the years by the various ministries responsible for sport and SportMalta are proof of this, with numerous projects carried out in order to help Maltese citizens lead a healthier lifestyle, reduce obesity and establish a mentality wherein children are brought up being active by engaging in sporting activity.

However, sport has also a very important role to play in the economy of the state. A report on the economic impact of sport in Malta states that in 2013 sport contributed €80.5 million to the national gross domestic product (GDP), or 1.1% of the total GDP, when taken from a production approach, and €136.6 million, or 1.8%, when taken from an expenditure approach. The contribution to the national GDP is in line with other nations, such as the UK (1.5%) and the USA (2%), however whereas in most nations the largest contribution to the GDP is derived from sports organisations (events), retail and government investment, in Malta it comes from sports tourism. In fact, sports tourism





***Sport has the
capacity to bring
people, of diverse
cultural and societal
backgrounds,
together***

”



Photo by: Stephen Gatt



contributes €58.7 million to the country's GDP, with 81% of this deriving solely from scuba diving. In hard numbers, more than 110,000 tourists (7.2% of the whole number of tourists for 2013) visited Malta for sports purposes, with the total expenditure of such tourists amounting to €124.8 million.¹⁵

This national sports policy, while aiming to retain, and improve, the influx of tourists for sporting purposes, also attempts to provide the way for local sports organisations to be financially viable. Maltese sports organisations work tirelessly in order to provide the best possible setup for people of all ages to engage in sporting activities, in the majority of cases on a voluntary basis, and have strived through the years to improve their facilities and their working methods in order to at least try to achieve excellence for their respective sporting disciplines. A quick look at the economic impact assessment shows that in 2013, sports organisations, which are the primary backbone of the sports market, spent together with the government, €19.3 million, with €1.7 million dedicated to infrastructural works in sports venues around Malta and Gozo. This accounts for more than 2,000 full-time and more than 4,000 part-time jobs existing in the sports sector.¹⁶

The Government, mainly through SportMalta, has through the years, played a major part in providing assistance to sports organisations, mainly through heavily subsidised public land concessions for the establishment of sports facilities, the creation of schemes aimed at providing financial incentives for infrastructural projects undertaken by sports organisations and sports tourism, and direct funding from the consolidated fund for individual projects undertaken by such organisations.

Most initiatives undertaken by Government through the years, such as the refund of value added tax (VAT) on infrastructural works carried out by sports organisations, the 'bed-nights' incentives for sports tourism and the establishment of the 'Good Causes Fund' for sports-related projects and public land concessions, are to be retained.

However, the way that direct funding is allocated to sports organisations should be revisited, in order to allow the Government, through SportMalta, to use such funds not to pay for short-term ideas but to provide the tools to



attract investment, both local and foreign, by equipping these organisations with professional personnel. This type of approach would lead these organisations to embark on long-term financially viable projects, in order to make Maltese sports organisations financially self-sustainable. This will in turn reduce pressure on Government, which is still perceived as having the 'duty' to provide the main means of income for sports organisations.

It has been noted that most sports organisations have been granted public land for medium to long term periods, in order to build and manage sports facilities. Indeed, most sports organisations have, with the limited resources available to them, strived to improve these facilities, in order to make such facilities capable of preparing athletes for professional competition. Despite the scarcity of land available, it is imperative that the Government continues granting such concessions.

Current arrangements on the use of such public land, do not provide the opportunity for sports

¹⁵ Farrugia J, Economic Impact of Sport (2015)

¹⁶ Farrugia J, Economic Impact of Sport (2015)



Photo by: Stephen Gatt

organisations to attract private investment or embark on projects which can guarantee a measure of income that would allow the continued viability of the management of such facilities on their own. This has led to sports organisations depending even more on direct funding by the Government, just to make ends meet, compromising the possibility of growth and improvement, which is vital in order for Malta to take part in sports competitions with other countries, even those of similar size as Malta.

In addition to this, sports organisations have made little or no headway in the crucial aspect of governance. Most sports organisations are run by persons, who voluntarily, give their own time out of the passion they have for their particular organisation. While acknowledging and encouraging the voluntary aspect of sports administration in Malta, it has been noted that some sports organisations lack the presence of qualified persons who may guide administrators in projects designed to make their organisations more professional. This may have led to delays or even abandonment of important projects. Moreover,

the lack of persons knowledgeable in certain areas, may be one of the reasons keeping private entities from investing in sports organisations.

Commercially viable projects undertaken by sports organisations may lead to enhanced economic activity through sport. The Maltese sport market could contribute more significantly to the country's GDP. However, this cannot be achieved through direct Government funding. It is absolutely necessary that the Government puts sports organisation into a position where they can attract investment, preferably foreign.

If Maltese sports organisations are not equipped with the necessary tools and persons for growth in the sector, then such investment will never materialise. It is imperative that sports facilities and the administration and management of sports organisations are professional enough to guarantee a return on investment. The Government should ensure sports organisations are standard compliant. No investor will embark on the financing of projects related to sport unless the authorities in Malta are serious in

ascertaining that sports organisations are run in the most professional way.

Moreover, although much has been done in the field of sports tourism, there is large space for improvement. As previously stated scuba-diving accounts for 81% of the total number of tourists visiting Malta for sporting purpose. This national policy should be aimed at promoting Malta, through its size and geographical position, to attract foreign sports organisations to use Maltese sports facilities and organise events which will lead to an influx of tourists who visit Malta for purely sporting purposes. From training camps to the organisation of major sporting events, the Government can use sports funds in order to bring such events to Malta, and generate foreign income.

This will lead to direct foreign investment and job creation. Malta can be 'sold' as a centre of excellence for sports, provided that its facilities are up to international competition standards. Maltese winters can help make Malta a catalyst for

medium to large international sporting events and training camps.

The Government should not treat sport on a par with other areas of industry. Income generated by sports organisations is normally reinvested into the organisation and that particular sporting discipline. However, private investors need to know that a return on their investment in Maltese sport is achievable and the Government should do all that is in its power to assist sports organisations in achieving these goals.

This chapter sets targets and make recommendations that should be the basis for the Government's sports policy for the next ten years in order to establish sport in Malta, but also as an industry capable of providing the country with the necessary private and foreign investment, which in turn will create further commercial opportunities, stimulate economic activity and by a catalyst in the creation of more employment opportunities.



Photo by: Clifton Fenech DOI



4.2 Targets

This national sports policy recommends the Government to:

- i. Make sports organisations financially self-sustainable and decrease the need for direct government funding;
- ii. Put sports organisations in the best position to attract private investment, both local and foreign, in order to enhance sports facilities and provide alternative funding for the improvement of athletes;
- iii. Strengthen sports authorities to acceptable professional standards;
- iv. Ensure Malta is recognised internationally as a centre of sporting excellence in order to attract international athletes and events which will generate economic activity for the state;
- v. Transform the way sport in Malta is perceived from amateur status into a business opportunity.

The ability to commercialise facilities will help sports organisations become financially self-sustainable and attract private investment. The ability to attract private investment is by far the most important spur for economic growth of sport in Malta. There must be a decrease in direct funding by the Government with short-term consequences, if sports organisations are to source private funding.

No one will risk losing money without the prospect of a return on investment. The current land-lease contracts do not allow for such a return. The private sector has already made queries to local sports organisations regarding such investment, however the current restrictions sends them seeking different pastures. A concerted effort is required to enable private entities to 'enter' these facilities through controlled structures.

The following ideas should be considered:

- i. Allow public land, granted for sports facilities, to be used for commercial purposes.
- ii. The creation of schemes, together with commercial banks holding a licence in Malta, whereby financing required for projects undertaken by sports organisations is at a favourable interest rates.
- iii. The continuation of schemes, such as VAT refunds on capital projects in sports facilities, in order to stimulate capital projects and facilities of international standards.
- iv. The creation of a regulator to ensure that adequate standards are met with the regulator assisted by 'technical office' made up of professionals, such as architects, accountants, lawyers etc., to benefit sports organisations who currently do not have the means to employ the services of such persons.
- v. Empowering the regulatory arm of SportMalta. Serious scrutiny is required in the registration process of sports organisations and compliance to the Sports Act. A licensing structure (like the one existing for football clubs) should be considered and an enforcement section is required for possible investigations.
- vi. The creation of procedures within other public entities such as Planning Authority (PA), Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) and

4.3 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 The Commercialisation of Sports Facilities

Local sports organisations are to be allowed to embark on commercial projects to be carried out in their respective sports facilities. Currently, all sports facilities are granted to local organisations by the Government on short or long-term lease contracts or temporary emphyteutical grants. These leases and emphyteutical grants are heavily subsidised by the Government with most ground-rents and rents 'discounted' heavily.

Most of these contracts contain clauses stating that the land acquired by the sports organisation can be used for the practice of the appropriate sporting discipline and that no commercial activity may be undertaken. Organisations have been prevented from exploiting their land to become financially self-sustainable. In fact, the only way facilities have been maintained and improved over the years has been through direct financial intervention of the Government, through SportMalta, or through grants provided by large sports associations to their members, such as the Malta Football Association.

Government Property Division (GPD), allowing sports organisations embarking on certain projects to be granted a fast-track and no excessive bureaucracy.

- vii. The strengthening of the Sports Scholarships Scheme, in order to allow Maltese nationals to gain academic post-graduate qualifications in the field of sports administration, sports science, sports marketing and sports law, and ultimately employment. The possibility of offering courses at the University of Malta, in conjunction with sports management degrees already offered by the Institute for Physical Education and Sport (IPES), and the Faculty of Economics, Management and Accounting (FEMA) at the University of Malta, should be considered.

Recommendation 2

The Application of Good Governance Principles

The increase in the commercial aspect of sport will inevitably lead to more money finding its way in the accounts of local sports organisations. This will increase interest in the affairs of sports organisations, including from those with criminal intentions. Moreover, sport is of huge societal importance, and therefore public trust in the way sports organisations conduct their business is of paramount importance.

It is vitally important that principles of good governance are applied across the board with sporting organisations run in the most transparent, open and responsible manner. In order to achieve this, the following suggestions should be considered:

- i. The creation of a National Tribunal for Sport, so that all commercial issues, not only those relating to sports persons and organisations are resolved in an arbitral setting less rigid than the ordinary courts but providing a mechanism for disputes to be resolved more efficiently and quickly.
- ii. The creation of a national platform for the integrity of sport, with the dual role of ensuring that professional sport in Malta is carried out with integrity, and making sure that persons involved in Maltese sport organisations (particularly foreign investors) are reliable. This entity should work hand in hand with SportMalta, the Malta Police Force

and the Malta Gaming Authority to make sure that cases of corruption in sport are investigated and prosecuted successfully.

Recommendation 3

Malta as a Centre for Sporting Excellence

This national sports policy considers exploiting Malta's geographical position for sports tourism. As stated previously sports-related tourism is the main driving force behind the contribution of sport to the country's GDP. It is to be agreed that the importance of scuba-diving to this sector should be consolidated. However, more needs to be done in other sectors which could produce heavy returns for the country's economy.



Photo by: Stephen Gatt



Indeed factors such as Malta's accommodation facilities, combined with its natural climate, provide opportunities for other areas of sports-tourism. As has already happened in the areas of financial services and information technology, Malta can become a hub for international sporting activity. National sports associations have the ability to bid for the staging of high profile international sporting events. The various Games for the Small States of Europe held in the past twenty-five years, and more recently the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Under-17 Final Tournament of 2014, are a testament to this statement.

However, no such event will be held in Malta until there is serious investment in the country's



Photo by: DOI - Reuben Piscopo



sport infrastructure. It is not coincidental that the abovementioned events were held in Malta following heavy investment in sports facilities, and such an investment should be embarked upon by the Government to guarantee more events of this type over the next ten years.

The commercialisation of sports facilities should allow the Government to reduce direct funding of clubs and associations. This may lead the Government to 'reroute' funds to improve selected national sports venues in order to make them suitable for such international events. Moreover, the commercialisation of sports facilities may lead to privately funded upgrading of sporting facilities and international athletes and teams organising training camps and high profile tournaments or matches in Malta.

Finally, better facilities will lead to better training opportunities for athletes. Moreover, the participation of more foreign athletes in national sporting competitions will undoubtedly help our own athletes to raise their level and improve their standards. It should be the Government's vision to develop more professional or elite athletes, so that Maltese participation in international events can yield better results. Such results will put promote Malta and its facilities and therefore make it more marketable and attractive for such events to be held in the country.

In order for this to be attained the following recommendations are to be considered:

- i. The direct funding by Government in the infrastructural and operational improvement



Photo by: Stephen Gatt



of national sports venues in order for national sports associations to be able to bid for and be granted the right to organise high profile international events. This will lead to an influx of tourists who travel to Malta to spectate and will also prove to be a formidable tool for the marketing of Malta as a tourist and sporting destination thanks to the international media coverage.

- ii. The creation of a group of expert persons entrusted with marketing Malta as a venue of excellence for professional training camps and major sporting events. Funds should be allocated for targeted advertisement of Maltese sports facilities.
- iii. The creation of a 'Sports Events Unit', which will have the ability to help sports organisations prepare and submit bids for the holding of international competitions, and also assist instaging them.
- iv. The establishment of an official for EU funding with the tasks of sourcing funds, determining how sports organisations can exploit EU funding, and taking care of projects undertaken by these sports organisations from the application stage to conclusion.



5. SPORTMALTA AND THE COMING YEARS

5.1 Situation Analysis

The KMS was initially set up as a non-executive Board in 1995 with the aims and objectives being the drafting of a Maltese Sports Law while also advising the Minister responsible for sports. In 2002, the House of Representatives unanimously voted in favour of the Sports Act 2002 Chapter 455 which came into effect in February 2003. This Sports Act regulated the principles as well as the aims, objectives and functions of the KMS which now placed the KMS as the Maltese Government authority of local sports. Through the various functions it became evident that KMS had to carry among other duties, two main roles, i.e. that of a service provider as well as that of a regulatory body. In its service provider role KMS has, throughout the years, expanded its sports programmes, catering for all the age categories including senior citizens; it has also invested and upgraded sports facilities to accommodate the needs of local sports associations, federations, clubs and athletes as well as taking into consideration public needs. In its role as a regulating body, KMS was limited in its actions and focused mainly on the registration of sports persons as established within Article 35 of the Sports Act.

This document is proposing that SportMalta, which has replaced KMS, should have its two main roles operating separately and distinctively from each other. This does not necessitate duplication of resources, nor the creation of a separate Board or managerial structure. The proposal is such that all administration and financial support is still provided and managed directly by SportMalta through its Chief Operating Officer. The importance of this proposal is that the Regulator would be



Photo by: SportMalta



autonomous in decisions pertaining to registration of sports persons, compliance and enforcement in accordance with policies and regulations as approved by the Board of Directors and confirmed by Government.

5.2 Service Provider

5.2.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Event Support Unit

In recent months SportMalta has created an Events Support Unit within its organisational structure. This unit's strategy is to promote not only SportMalta's events and activities but also, through direct support, to help organisations host international events in Malta. Since sports tourism has been acknowledged as an important niche within Malta's tourism industry, it is proposed that the Government should support SportMalta in upgrading the Events Support Unit to strengthen resources and intensify its support to sports organisations in the bid process, preparation and hosting of international events.

Apart from providing support to the Sports Organisations, the Events Support Unit should create an events and activities portfolio. This portfolio should:

- i. Generate significant visibility of SportMalta and its corporate identity;
- ii. Reflect the political strategy and civic importance of SportMalta in its development and implementation of policies, programmes and practices;
- iii. Project SportMalta's objective at improving access and equity in all aspects of local sport;
- iv. Project SportMalta on an international conference platform.

Recommendation 2 The setting up of a Sports Science Unit

This document is proposing that the Government should provide SportMalta with adequate funding for the setting up of a Sports Science Unit in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as the



MOC, University of Malta, Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST), MCAST and ITS. Services provided through such a unit would be another source of support for elite athletes, coaches and ancillary personnel related to sports.

Recommendation 3 The setting up of a Research & Development Unit

This document is proposing that Government should provide SportMalta with adequate funding for the setting up of a Research & Development Unit. The main objective of a Research & Development Unit within SportMalta would be that of obtaining new information related to sport in Malta. This information would eventually be used for new or improved standards, systems and performances in Maltese sport.

Recommendation 4 Creation of the Talent Identification Unit

This document is proposing that Government should provide SportMalta with adequate funding



Photo by: Emanuel Cassar

for the setting up of a Talent Identification Unit. While increasing mass participation remains one of the objectives of this policy, this unit would be responsible for identifying Maltese sports participants with the potential to become elite athletes. The Talent Identification Unit will work jointly with other units in SportMalta to develop and provide talented athletes with opportunities to further improve their potential.

Recommendation 5

Assistance to Sports Organisations

One of SportMalta's main functions is to assist sports organisations in achieving what, without the assistance of government, would not be achievable. SportMalta assists sports organisations through financial and non-financial schemes providing the necessary tools to achieve their goals. Assistance includes the use of sports facilities, subsidies on ground rents and actual financial grants to help athletes in terms of equipment and participation in events both locally and abroad. Whether the assistance is of a financial nature or not, all the schemes are

intended to leave more money in the pockets of sports organisations such that it is utilised for the benefit of athletes.

Schemes have been updated and amended in recent years to meet the demands of sports organisations. The document proposes that SportMalta should continue to ensure that schemes are revised throughout the years in order to provide the best possible assistance to sports organisations in this ever changing, dynamic scenario. Sports organisations which show discipline and good governance in the way they manage their affairs, and those achieving good results, in terms of increased participation in their sport or in terms of elite results, could be given priority assistance by SportMalta. Others would be helped as SportMalta's policy from time to time determines.

5.3 Regulatory Affairs

This document is proposing that the regulatory affairs department shall become the 'Compliance and Enforcement Directorate'.

5.3.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 Compliance and Enforcement

The current functions of the Regulatory Affairs Department needs to be expanded to conform to obligations stipulated in the Sports Act. Compliance on its own does not constitute the regulator's job. It is the enforcement in case of non-compliance that completes the role of the regulator. To date, enforcement has hardly existed, with a shortage of staff and lack of structure and policies. The newly renamed 'Compliance and Enforcement Directorate' must be given the power to implement policy in the manner it deems appropriate, expedient, efficient and effective, subject to all policy being supported by the Board of Directors, thereby giving it independence in terms of decision making, acting separately from the service provision and operational aspects of SportMalta.

This department shall be supported to achieve its full potential and be in a position to implement current and new policies in its role as the main point of reference for sports organisations. The

'Compliance and Enforcement Directorate' should ensure that sports in Malta keeps abreast with developments at EU level with regards to good governance, with special emphasis on managing sports organisations (in particular ensuring democracy, transparency and accountability) and measures relating to anti-corruption in sports.

Recommendation 2 Linking up with SportMalta as a service provider

Although the administration and management of SportMalta's assistance schemes are being proposed to fall within the remit of the service provider, this document is proposing that the 'Compliance and Enforcement Directorate' should be directly involved in the process by way of new procedures. The department is to advise the 'Service Provider' on whether the sports organisation applying for assistance is fully compliant with policies and regulations in place from time to time. The department would also be required to analyse assistance schemes in place and make all necessary recommendations for amendments/changes for approval by the Board of Directors.



Photo by: Jeremy Wonnacott DOI



This measure will ensure that quality standards in place for all sports organisations will be observed while ensuring that sports organisations registered with SportMalta will be accountable and transparent in their administration and governance.

Recommendation 3 **Effective monitoring of property transferred to sports organisations**

The compliance and enforcement department should ensure effective monitoring of property transferred to sports organisations and their obligations to the contract signed and approved by Parliament. Apart from this specific role, once Parliament approves the enactment of the new legislation relating to the commercialisation of sports facilities, the department should be responsible for the preparation of any necessary documentation relating to commercialisation of sports facilities. This documentation would be forwarded to the competent authorities.

‘Compliance and Enforcement Directorate’ should ensure that sports in Malta keeps abreast with developments at EU level

”

6. CONCLUSION

This document is a collection of ideas of persons who care about the development of sport in Malta and Gozo. Moreover, it is also an exercise to stimulate debate across Maltese society and provide government with suggestions in order to extend sport to all. Comments, proposals and suggestions are being welcomed during the consultation period. This discussion document is now open to public consultation and any comments can be logged on the site – sportspolicydraft.mede@gov.mt. The consultation process will be held until the end of January 2017.

The Sports Policy Group, along with established working groups, will hold a number of separate meetings with Government Departments, Agencies, Registered National Sports Organisations, Political Parties, Educational Institutions and Non-Government Organisations to discuss the contents of this document as well as any submitted recommendations, before drawing up the final document. This will ensure that the final document is a combined product. The final document will also include a specific plan of action and time frames.

This discussion document concludes with a further recommendation, i.e. conducting a study to analyse the present situation of sports facilities and the way forward. Land in Malta is scarce and thus, the building of sports facilities must be better targeted, satisfying the real needs of local sports and physically active persons and meeting the minimum requirements for higher quality international competitions, while maximising them fully and promoting them for sports tourism.

Sport is constantly evolving and expanding into new horizons. This necessitates the need for the policy to be reviewed on regular basis to ensure it remains in line with the needs of today, while it satisfies those of tomorrow, for the benefit of Maltese sports and community at large.





the building of sports facilities must be better targeted, satisfying the real needs of local sports

”



Photo by: Omar Camilleri DOI



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bassuk SS , Manson JE., Epidemiological evidence for the role of physical activity in reducing risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, Journal of Applied Physiology, 2005.

Booth VM, Rowlands AV, Dollman J., Physical activity temporal trends among children and adolescents, 2014.

Davison KK, Werder JL, Lawson CT., Children's active commuting to school: current knowledge and future directions. Preventing chronic disease, 2008.

Decelis A, Jago R, Fox KR., Physical activity, screen time and obesity status in a nationally representative sample of Maltese youth with international comparisons, BMC Public Health, 2014.

Farrugia J, Economic Impact of Sport, Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, 2015.

Friedenreich CM, Orenstein MR, Physical Activity and Cancer Prevention: Etiologic Evidence and Biological Mechanisms, J. Nutr., 2002.

Faulkner GEJ, Buliung RN, Flora PK, Fusco C., Active school transport, physical activity levels and body weight of children and youth: A systematic review, 2009.

Gakidou E et al, Global, regional, and national prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adults during 1980–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013, from http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2814%2960460-8/fulltext?_eventId=login&elsca1=TW&elsca2=socialmedia.

Gordon-Larsen, P., Adair, L.S., Nelson, M.C., & Popkin, B.M., Five-year obesity incidence in the transition period between adolescence and adulthood: The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2004.

Haitham A et al., Effects of Physical Activity on Cardiovascular Disease, American Journal of Cardiology, 2012

HBSC, 2009/10 International Report: Social determinants of health and well-being among young people from http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf?ua=1.

Ministry for Education and Employment, A National Curriculum Framework for All – 2012, 2012.

Ministry for Energy and Health, Health Systems Strategy, 2014

Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, Healthy Weight for Life Strategy, 2012

Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, National Cancer Plan, 2011

Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care, Non communicable Disease Strategy, 2010

National Association for Sport and Physical Education & American Heart Association, 2010 shape of the nation report: Status of physical education in the USA, 2010.



National Audit Office, Malta, Performance Audit: Physical Education and Sport in State Primary and Secondary Schools, 2010.

Penedo FJ , Dahn, JR, Exercise and well-being: a review of mental and physical health benefits associated with physical activity. Current Opinion in Psychiatry, 2005.

Raitakan, O.L., Porkka, K.V.K., Taimela, S., Telama, R., Räsänen, L. & Viikari, J.S., Effects of persistent physical activity and inactivity on coronary risk factors in children and young adults: The cardiovascular risk in Young Finns Study, American Journal of Epidemiology, 1994.

Ridgers ND, Saint-Maurice PF, Welk GJ, Siahpush M, Huberty J. Differences in Physical Activity During School Recess, 2011.

Special Eurobarometer 412, Sport and Physical Activity Report, 2014 from http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_412_en.pdf.

Swift DM et al., The Role of Exercise and Physical Activity in Weight Loss and Maintenance. Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases, 2014.

Trudaeo F, Shepard RJ, Physical education, school physical activity, school sports and academic Performance, International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity, 2008.

Wartburton D et al., Health benefits of physical activity: the evidence, CMAJ, 2014.

Whelton SP et al., Effect of Aerobic Exercise on Blood Pressure: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials, Ann Intern Med, 2002.

World Health Organisation, Global recommendations on physical activity for health, 2010.

World Health Organisation, Health 2020: the European policy for health and well-being, 2012







Ministry for Education and Employment
Parliamentary Secretariat for Research,
Innovation, Youth and Sport

