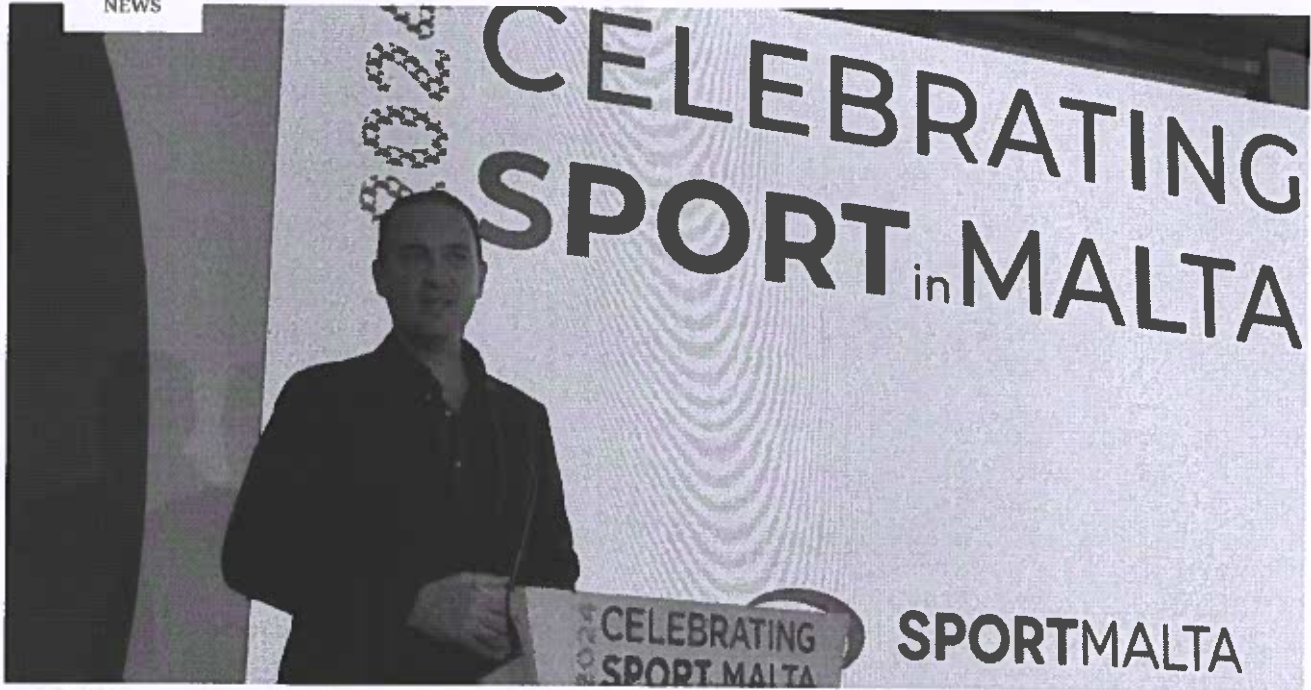


NEWS



Millions spent by Sport Malta, MOC raise questions on funding administration



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Millions of euro in yearly 'assistance' to sports organisations issued by Sport Malta, often through the Malta Olympic Committee (MOC) have raised several questions on transparency regarding the disbursement of public funds.

Recently published data on Sport Malta's financials and a partial breakdown of grants to different sports organisations conspicuously lack details on how the funds are allocated.

Sport Malta's audited accounts for 2021 and 2022, recently tabled in parliament and previously unpublished, show how the agency spent more than €9.5 million in "assistance to sports organisations" in 2022, up some €2.7 million from the previous year.

While a large portion was allocated through subsidies on renting venues and land, sizeable tranches of the millions spent on assistance were disbursed directly to the MOC or schemes administered by it.

The accounts include no further details on how the funds were split up.



Sports Minister Clifton Grima only provided partial breakdowns of how the funds were distributed following multiple parliamentary questions, often delaying answers for months. In one case, the costs of some €5 million, spent in 2022 and 2023, initially earmarked for athletes' training in preparation for last year's Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE), were only broken down by the type of sport funded, rather than by organisation or athlete as requested.

Further details on the portion of those funds issued last year were only tabled in parliament last week, following repeated questions months after the games' completion. Questions sent to Minister Grima and Sport Malta CEO Mark Cutajar on how a further €1.65 million, announced this year, will be distributed remain unanswered.

The games hosted by Malta last June were controversial due to Sport Malta's failure to complete several sports infrastructure projects in time.

Additionally, chunks of the public funds earmarked for local athletes were diverted to hire foreign athletes, who were issued Maltese passports to compete in Malta's name.

ASSISTANCES TO SPORTS ORGANISATIONS

Year ended 31 December

2022	2021	€
10,000	20,000	Education Assistance
31,118	71,640	Equipment Assistance
41,597	60,533	Facility Improvement Assistance
637,843	204,602	International Participation Foreign Assistance
-	14,328	International Participation Local Assistance
679,663	661,277	Malta Olympic Committee
166,412	73,617	Sports Tourism Scheme
327,666	296,667	Venue Assistance
4,263,627	4,149,803	Lands Assistance
-	-	Youth Development Assistance
61,822	64,791	Assigned Workers
667,426	478,420	Assistance agreements with Sport Organisations
-	-	Adhoc Assurances - Coaching Fees for GSSE 2023
1,286,293	289,329	NDSF - GSSE 2023 Associations
144,817	-	NDSF - MIMF RaceTrack

An excerpt from Sport Malta's recently tabled accounts for 2022 shows tranches of funding allocated to the MOC or MOC-administered schemes.

Concern surrounding the Authority's lack of transparency in its finances had been raised for years but heightened with the agency's increased spending in the wake of the Small Nations' Games.

Last October, in response to questions raised in parliament months earlier, Grima revealed that Sport Malta had allocated another €3.4 million to the Malta Olympic Committee for the GSSE's organisation but gave no further details on how it was spent.

Despite being asked by Opposition MP Ivan Bartolo for a detailed list of contracts and their awardees, Grima simply noted that the assistance was given wholesale to the MOC, burying details on how it was spent.

The MOC has not answered The Shift's questions on how those funds were allocated at the time of publishing.

Malta's National Olympic Committee administers the country's participation in all international Olympic games. Committee President Pace Bonello was concurrently a member of the Sports Malta Board until recently chaired by Professor Andrew Decelis.

Following The Shift's reports on Decelis' resignation, public information on the board was removed from Sport Malta's website.

Sport Malta CEO Mark Cutajar also served as a MOC director until he was appointed to the government position. Conversely, the MOC's Director of Sport, Charlene Attard, sat on Sport Malta's board until 2021.

Cutajar, Minister Grima and the MOC's Pace Bonello have repeatedly ignored The Shift's questions for further details on Sport Malta funding.

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