



RESIDENT FIRST 2020 - 2024

VISION SUMMARY



**Assoċjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**
Local Councils' Association Malta

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INTRODUCTION

OPENING SPEECH

MARIO FAVA

Bdejt dan il-vjaġġ bħala President tal-Assoċjazzjoni Kunsilli Lokali sentejn u nofs ilu, dan tani ċ-ċans u l-opportunita' li niltaqa' ma' ħafna minnkom b' mod personali. Stajt nara' mill-viċin d-dedikazzjoni, id-determinazzjoni u x-xogħol li wettaqtu b' passjoni għall-ġid tal-lokalitajiet tagħkom. Dan minkejja li iffaċċajtu u għadkom tiffaċċjaw ta' kuljum sfidi li mhux dejjem ikun faċli li jġu melgħuba.

L-Elezzjonijiet tal-Kunsilli Lokali ta' Mejju li għadda ikkonfermaw li l-Gvern Lokali huwa fundamentali għar-resident. Dan għaliex r-residenti, ġustament jistennew li l-Kunsill Lokali tagħhom jagħti s-sapport meħtieġ lillhom u lill-familji tagħhom jistennew li l-Kunsilli Lokali jkunu l-qalb tal-komunitajiet.

Bir-raġun ukoll ir-residenti jistennew servizz effettiv illi jwassal biex ikun hemm titjeb fl-ekonomija lokali tagħhom, jaspiraw għal lokalitajiet u kommunitajiet li joħolqu l-impjigi filwaqt li jgħixu f' ambjent sigur. Jistennew li jkun hemm policies effettivi li jassiguraw li l-familji tagħhom ikollhom il-ħiliet bażiċi meħtieġa biex jirnexxu. Bħala mexxejja eletti b' mod demokratiku, il-Kunsilliera jagħmlu dak kollu possibbli biex jagħtu s-sapport meħtieġ lill-komunitajiet tagħhom minkejja li l-poteri u r-riżorsi finanzjarji ħafna drabi jkunu limitati. Minkejja dan, aħna nemmnu li b' vizjoni, linji gwida, il-ħiliet meħtieġa u investimenti raġonevoli, il-Kunsilli Lokali jistgħu jagħmlu ħafna aktar biex jassiguraw titjeb fil-lokalita' tal-ħajja tar-residenti u l-livell t' ghejxien bħala nazzjon.

Dan huwa kapitlu ġdid fl' istorja tal-Gvern Lokali. Iridu naraw illi jkollna vizjoni li l-Gvern Lokali jilħaq l-aspettativa tal-aspirazzjonijiet tar-Residenti għal kwalita' ta' ħajja aħjar. Irridu naraw li l-mira tagħna tkun dik illi nilqgħu għall-problemi b' mod proattiv milli nirreagixxu għax tinqala' emerġenza. Is-servizzi offruti iridu jkunu minsuġa skond il-ħtiġijiet tar-residenti tagħna liema servizzi jridu jwasslu biex itejbu Kwalita ta-ħajja tal-individwu, tal-familji u tal-komunitajiet billi nipprovdu postijiet aħjar li wieħed jista' jgħix fihom.

L-ambjent urban huwa tal-ikbar importanza, l-aktar meta wieħed jiftakar li Malta hija fis-seba' post ta' pajjiżi li għandhom denista' ta popolazzjonijiet l-iktar għolja. Għalhekk il-lokalitajiet tagħna, irid ikollhom influwenza diretta u bl-aktar mod wiesgħa fuq l-impatt li dan iġib fil-ħajja tagħna u l-ambjent inġenerali, ifisser li l-lokalitajiet tagħna għandhom ikunu aktar sostenibbli.

Il-Kunsilli Lokali jifhmu l-irwol illi għandhom sabiex il-lokalitajiet ikunu parti importanti biex itejjbu l-ħajja tar-residenti tagħhom u għalhekk huma kommessi li jaħdmu fuq din il-materja. Irridu niftakru li l-Kunsilli Loakli flimkien mal-Gvern Ċentrali għandhom l-obbligu illi jipprovdu livell ta' kwalita' ta' ħajja għolja u opportunitajiet illi permezz tagħhom iċ-ċittadin ikun jista' jaħdem, jinnegozzja u jinvesti fihom.

Iż-żoni urbani, huma katalisti fl-iżvilupp ekonomiku u minkejja li dawn jipprovdu servizzi tas-saħħa, edukazzjoni u mobbiltà dawn huma wkoll assoċjati ma' tingis tal-ambjent, kongestjoni ta' traffiku, kriminalità u esklużjoni soċjo-ekonomika.

Bla dubju ta' xejn hija sfida għalina l-Kunsilli Lokali sabiex nassiguraw illi policies relatati ma' żoni urbani jkunu ko-erenti u jilqgħu għal dawn l-isfidi. Istituzzjonijiet governattivi jista' jkollhom għanijiet diversi minn xulxin u dawn ħafna drabi jiġu implimentati b' mod indipendenti imma b' effetti negattivi, huwa għalhekk li l-irwol tal-Assoċjazzjoni li tassigura koordinament effettiv f' kull direzzjoni u f' kull livell. L-ambizzjoni tal-Gvern hija li joħloq pajjiż aktar kompetittiv, sostenibbli u inklussiv f' dinja li qed issir dejjem aktar globalizzata. Il-Kunsilli Lokali jridu jaħdmu lejn lokalitajiet aktar atrajenti, vibranti u b' saħħithom sabiex jipprovdu lill-generazzjonijiet tal-lum u t' għada, spazji atrajenti li jistgħu jgħixu, jaħdmu u jirrilasaw fihom. Din hija ċ-ċavetta biex tassigura tkabbir ekonomiku sostenibbli fit-tul.

Minkejja dan kollu, l-Assoċjazzjoni tapprezza li m'hemmx soluzzjoni waħda ta' one size fits all biex jintlehaq dan l-għan. Din il-preżentazzjoni tal-lum qed issir biex ikun hemm viżjoni koerenti u direzzjoni ġenerali għall-Kunsilli Lokali b' mod individwali biex ikun hemm skambju ta' ideat u eżempji prattiċi ta' suċċess bejn il-Kunsilli biex ikun hemm titjeb fil-ħajja tar-residenti.

Għladaqstant bi pjaċir nipprezentalkom il-viżjoni 2020-2024.

Residents First.

Opening Speech by Mario Fava, President of the Local Councils' Association during the Plenary Meeting - Vision 2024 held on 26th October 2019.

VISION 2024

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

WALKING & ACCESSIBILITY

Walking is the most basic and fundamental mode of human transportation. It is free, good for our health and the most sustainable transport choice for all people. Walking through a few blocks or crossing a street in our localities has become inconvenient and unsafe. It is not that we don't have the desire to walk, but it is our built environment that does not allow us to.

Councils must safeguard the residents' right of walking and their safety in all localities. Our streets are more than movement corridors for vehicles. They are first and foremost part of the public space network a social space where people gather, interact, move and socialise.

In our upcoming guideline documents, we will raise awareness of the importance of walking to deliver urban environmental quality and liveability in our towns and villages. We will establish why and when walking should take priority and how walkability is part of a broader accessibility and connectivity strategy. We will frame this discussion within well-established urban design parameters such as the walking distance model, to guide future decision-making.

The document will give an equal focus on the qualitative aspects that enhance the walking experience. We will provide an 'on-the-ground' understanding of the various types of pedestrian infrastructure, from fully pedestrianised routes to segregated pavements, and the design principles for each, through a mix of technical data and good practice case studies. We will give insights on providing comfort and public safety in the street through various means such as:

- the provision of trees and other vegetation
- the integration of street furniture elements and amenities such as public convenience facilities
- the design of safe access-for-all spaces and streets to be enjoyed by everyone

Finally, we will address the interface with building façades, parking and its management and the administration of pavement appropriation, including outdoor catering areas. All this to give back our localities to its residents, especially to our elderly, children and people with reduced mobility.

VISION 2024

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

LAST MILE TRANSPORTATION

It is one of the country's most significant challenges. Vehicle traffic congestion on our roads is a national problem. The Central Government, together with Transport Malta and Infrastructure Malta, is partly addressing the issue thanks to an unprecedented investment in the country's road infrastructure designed for a growing population and increasing economic activities. While this is essential on arterial and distributor roads, we need to offer long term alternative mobility solutions within the local road network.

Currently, for most, the only feasible mode of transport is the private vehicle – this does not benefit our environment. It certainly does not benefit the liveability of our localities, people's health and well-being not the air quality of our urban environment. More long-term sustainable solutions should be sought, through introducing intermodality on the island – providing an equal, and more extensive choice between different modes of mobility.

After walking, our focus turns to solve mobility issues within the 'Last Mile'. This corresponds to the last leg of people's travels within a locality - be it after they park their car, alight a bus or undertake a quick trip to the corner shop. If you're living in an urbanised area, chances are you do travel the last mile on a daily basis.

The last mile problem, at its core, is quite a simple one. Public transport doesn't take us exactly where we need to go, and parking is not always available everywhere we go. Using a private vehicle for all forms of trips is not feasible, or sustainable – owning a private vehicle is sometimes not possible or even reasonable. This document will provide the LCs with an understanding of the various principles of intermodality and last-mile transportation, including:

- how various users of the streets are to be prioritised for safe and comfortable intermodality
- where and when to provide efficient transfer from private transport modes to active modes of transport, framing this discussion within urban design parameters such as the cycling distance model, to guide future decision-making.
- understanding of active forms of transport such as bicycles, but also the upcoming forms of mobility, namely e-bikes and other micro-mobility modes such as e-scooters
- a technical understanding of the principles of bicycle infrastructure
- where and how parking for such active and e-modes of mobility are to be planned and managed
- an on the ground understanding on making other forms of mobility efficient and feasible

Our localities need to have better infrastructure, links and access to urban cores, ferry services and public transportation.

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SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

SHARED TRANSPORT

Shared transport as defined by Interreg Europe, describes a demand-driven vehicle-sharing arrangement, in which travellers share a vehicle either simultaneously or over time and in the process share the cost of the journey, thereby creating a hybrid between private vehicle use and mass public transport.

A number of public and private initiatives already exist. Councils should take the lead in promoting and managing such schemes on a local level.

This document will first discuss:

- the various types of existing shared transport, from e-scooters to shared vehicles
- how the focus of shared transport should be on electric modes, namely electric scooters and electric vehicles, ID: providing a network of charging points
- an understanding of the requirements for shared transport, its parking management and space requirements
- the approach for vehicular streets, wherein priority should be given to forms of shared transport, through dedicated shared lanes

We will then guide Councils on how to:

- develop local urban mobility plans in consultation with local stakeholders, and to incentivise and promote school and workplace travel plans
- create mobility centres and online information services within their localities
- better manage access to town and village centres
- create walking buses and cycling trains schemes

New mobility services do not take the place of high-quality, frequent public transportation, or safe, walkable streets. Rather, they work in tandem with them, within a comprehensively thought-out movement and connectivity framework.

VISION 2024

URBAN GREEN

Providing a well-designed green environment means providing for increased well-being and quality of life, as evidenced by numerous studies worldwide. A green environment may have different forms – from parks to tree-lined and landscaped streets – but it essentially means the provision of nature and the retention of biodiversity in our built environment. Not surprisingly, the natural and living environment is one of the nine dimensions of the quality of life indicators defined by the European Union.

Green spaces and streets have high biodiversity levels, containing various flora and fauna. Studies have shown a strong correlation between health impacts and the presence of nature within the urban environment, even boosting creativity and innovation within workplaces. Direct access and connection to nature foster healthier communities, which in turn supports social harmony and urban quality.

Sustainable communities aim to provide social, economic and environmental sustainability as a long term goal. Policies and strategies should simultaneously promote economic opportunities, improve environmental quality and inclusive social well-being of the community.

A greener lifestyle is a bigger understanding that the long-term benefits of working with nature are far greater than the short-term gains which cause irreversible damage to the environment. It is achieved out of everyday choices towards greater sustainability, such as reducing our water and energy consumption, and reducing our consumption and dependence on plastic.

Here is where Councils are expected to participate. Councils, in partnership with stakeholders, can genuinely change the environment we live in by helping people make the right choices and leading by example in their management. Residents should be at the core of councils' strategies. All stakeholders should take part in the decision-making process so that policies are truly inclusive.

The Association will publish guidelines wherein important environmental issues and concepts that will initiate successful steps toward sustainable cities and long term sustainable living. The guidelines will encourage local councils to implement the principles in practice and to promote partnerships with all stakeholders and residents to address several issues in a holistic manner. We will look at different ways of greening our urban environment and of safeguarding and introducing more biodiversity in the places and spaces where we live.

These documents will also provide tools to assess, and improve the air quality in our localities through a series of initiatives and partnerships with governmental agencies and private companies. They will also provide knowledge on the various methods to monitor noise pollution levels and identify ways of mitigating noise pollution and its adverse impacts on the surrounding communities' wellbeing.

VISION 2024

URBAN GREEN

As our localities expand, improving waste management and cleanliness in our regions is becoming an urgent issue. Any council should firstly gain an understanding of human waste and its impact on the environment for it to demand adequate planning for infrastructure. It should also take the lead in communicating our role as active citizens, promote cleanliness and incentive collective schemes such as community composting.

Finally, we will assist your council in identifying the most efficient ways of environmental safeguarding and protection, street monitoring and stricter enforcement. The Association will also propose a collective position on waste disposal in public areas and larger developments, and equipping local councils to have a greater say on the built environment in their communities by promoting the concept of sustainable communities and neighbourhoods, increasing energy efficiency to achieve nearly-zero energy buildings and promote alternative energy solutions.

In this manner, Local Councils will be able to fulfill their crucial role in transforming policies into awareness and action amongst local communities and organisations on sustainability principles and their implication on the residents' quality of life.

VISION 2024

OPEN URBAN SPACES

Open spaces comprise the urban areas that are freely accessible by the public, and function as the common ground for social activities and interaction to take place. They are the spaces in between the buildings – our streets, urban cores, piazzas, plazas and urban squares. Areas where we can exercise and play – playgrounds, playing fields, parks, beaches and the sea.

Public spaces are also green spaces; they provide biodiversity in the urban environment – a critical part of an open space network. Green streets connect to multi-use and robust public spaces. Open spaces offer the opportunity for nature to enter into our built environment, as part of a broader strategy termed green infrastructure. In turn, this may go a long way with improving the environmental conditions within our built environments and balances our otherwise grey infrastructure.

Green public spaces are very beneficial to both our built environment and the image of our settlements, and they provide immense aesthetic value. They provide physical boundaries between the buildings and become the ground for social and physical activities to occur, increasing vitality within our neighborhoods and limiting social exclusion. Open spaces are essential for our physical and emotional well-being. Many leading city strategies today acknowledge the healing nature of green spaces within the city, as places that can become the catalysts of positive change. People enjoy being in nature, especially when it is otherwise extensively deprived, as is the case in urban environments. Attractive neighborhoods contribute to positive attitudes and social norms that in turn, encourage community values.

The World Health Organisation considers urban open spaces as very important to human physical and mental health. Unfortunately, public space in Malta is limited, and open spaces are also decreasing. Our streets are predominantly traffic arteries dedicated to parked cars. The potential of our public spaces is not always fully realised, with some spaces being dilapidated or having limited access. Our focus should be shifting to greening our localities and introducing back nature into the areas in which we live. It is the role of the Councils to protect, maintain, restore and properly design our urban cores and historical heritage. Identify ways of making better use of publicly and privately-owned open spaces which today are inaccessible.

The association is working on a set of documents, guidelines and policies to assist the councils in defining and transforming its open spaces strategically. It will focus on the regeneration of our urban cores and hubs, open up restricted government-owned properties such as schools, gardens and sports facilities and work with private investors to increase Open Spaces for the benefit of our residents.

The documents shall provide councils with the main design principles of public open spaces, introducing the idea of public spaces as a network of connected, open spaces as well as insights to the types of green infrastructure and their social, aesthetic and functional benefits.

The involvement of the residents in the process of creating meaningful places is essential.

VISION 2024

SMART CITIES

The 20th and 21st century have given birth to some of the largest cities in the world. Current statistics indicate that by 2030, 70% of the world population is likely to be concentrated in urban areas. The ever-increasing population is competing for the available space, resources, infrastructure and services. The demand for affordable housing, sanitation, food supply and healthcare services are all put under pressure as a result of mass migration.

Malta is not a megacity, but with a population density of 1,300 persons per square kilometre, by far the highest population density in Europe, the Island's challenges are comparable. Malta's population is growing dramatically, adding thousands of jobs, along with international residents and housing units, leading to increases in transportation demands, public safety challenges and increased pressure on its services and infrastructure. The population growth is expected to persist amid a growing economy which necessitates more foreign workers. As a result, the Island is under constant pressure to present itself as a more desirable place to live and work, competing to attract the best talent and investment.

The solutions cannot be limited to building new infrastructure – Cities and countries around the world are investing in Smart Cities solutions and Internet of Things technologies to improve their communities. A Smart City is an urban ecosystem that emphasizes the use of digital technology, shared knowledge and cohesive processes to underpin residents' benefits in mobility, public safety, health and productivity.

The Association's Vision is focused on providing solutions for localities' residents and businesses, not on technology and innovation. However, information and communication technologies are critical enablers of more efficient, effective and responsive local government. It is a human-centric vision of smart localities based on co-creation with its residents to improve the quality of life and generate prosperity. A desire to create a better, more liveable, prosperous and sustainable nation.

Our localities will have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when everybody creates them. The vision document will aim to encourage participation and collaboration across all stakeholders. It will assist Councils to actively engage in bottom-up thinking and co-creation to identify, develop and implement suitable locality-based solutions.

The framework builds upon the Association's three other pillars, of sustainable mobility, green environment and open spaces. It strives to give back 'time' to its residents, a scarce commodity in today's world. It has a powerful impact on the individual's ability to reduce stress, maintain happiness and health.

In practice, the Association, in partnership with competent agencies and government authorities, will address traffic congestion in its localities, by making use of intelligent traffic and parking systems alongside policies to reduce motor vehicle dependency.

VISION 2024

SMART CITIES

The document will encourage Open Data Platforms enabling residents to choose the fastest routes and the most efficient modes of mobility according to a particular destination, day and time. It will seek to introduce machine learning-enabled software to improve public safety and timely enforcement. Promote better overall wellbeing by adding preventive apps to reduce the average physician visits. Finally, improving productivity by digitizing the Councils' services and simplify processes when residents interact with their locality's administration. The introduction of digital technology to enhance the reliability of the information, city maps and wayfinding to encourage walkability, the locality's businesses, amenities and services.

This Vision will tap into collective intelligence centred around people, to implement engaging solutions and to create truly smart localities that are relevant to this generation and robust and resilient enough to cater for future generations.



**Assoċjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**

Local Councils' Association Malta