

Reducing Noise Pollution in Maltese Village Cores



**Assoċjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**

Local Councils' Association Malta

© Local Councils' Association Malta, 2025.
Document images are cited by source.

Local Councils' Association Local Government Building Local
Government Road Marsa Malta
T. +356 25968000
E. lca@lca.org.mt
www.lca.org.mt

Contents

1.0	06
Introduction	
2.0	08
Sources of Noise Pollution in Maltese Village Cores	
3.0	10
Impact of Noise Pollution	
4.0	12
Strategies to Reduce Noise Pollution	
5.0	22
The Role of Local Councils in Malta	
6.0	26
Conclusion	



Reducing Noise Pollution in Maltese Village Cores



Mario Fava
President

The **Local Councils Association (LCA)**, as a strong advocate for the well-being of residents and its vision of *“Resident First – Better Quality of Life”*, recognizes the pressing issue of noise pollution in the village cores of the Maltese Islands. Increasing traffic, construction, tourism, and social events are disrupting the tranquillity of these historic areas, where narrow streets and dense populations amplify noise disturbances. The consequences extend beyond inconvenience - prolonged exposure to high noise levels leads to stress, sleep disturbances, hearing impairment, and environmental imbalances.

This report outlines the **LCA's strategic approach** to noise reduction while preserving Malta's villages' cultural and historical charm. The key solutions proposed include:

1. Traffic Management

Establishing pedestrian zones, restricting vehicle access, promoting electric vehicles, and enforcing speed limits.

2. Construction Regulations

Implement strict working hours, encourage noise-reducing materials, and require sound barriers around construction sites.

3. Managing Entertainment & Festivities

Enforcing time restrictions on loud events, promoting silent fireworks, and designing specific performance areas.

4. Enhancing Green Infrastructure

Increase tree planting and green walls, develop quiet zones, and install noise-absorbing pavements.

5. Regulating Commercial Activities

Setting business noise limits, improving waste collection practices, and promoting soundproofing measures.

6. Community Engagement

Raising awareness, establishing complaint mechanisms, and encouraging voluntary noise reduction initiatives.

As the **representative body of local councils in Malta**, the LCA is committed to leading these efforts through policy development, enforcement, and infrastructure investment. By implementing these measures, the LCA aims to create a **more liveable, sustainable, and resident-focused environment**, ensuring Malta's villages remain peaceful and enjoyable for future generations.



A Strategic Approach for Local Councils in the Maltese Islands

1.0

Introduction



Noise pollution has become an increasingly significant concern in the village cores of the Maltese Islands. As the population grows and urban areas become more congested, the noise sources are multiplying, with increased traffic, construction activities, tourism, and social events contributing to the disruption of local communities. The narrow streets and close-knit nature of these traditional villages exacerbate the problem, amplifying the impact of noise on residents. With the continuous rise in noise levels, the quality of life for residents is being negatively affected, leading to health issues such as stress, sleep disturbances, hearing loss, and even cardiovascular problems.

The constant intrusion of noise pollution disrupts the peaceful atmosphere that defines these historic village cores. As many villages in Malta retain a unique cultural identity and traditional way of life, the challenge becomes reducing noise and maintaining the charm and heritage of these areas while fostering a healthy living environment for all. Excessive noise can also hinder social cohesion, as people living in noisy environments are more likely to experience feelings of frustration, isolation, and reduced overall well-being.

This report explores effective strategies to mitigate noise pollution within these village cores, focusing on practical measures that can be implemented locally. It addresses the role of local councils in creating and enforcing policies that regulate noise while also fostering community engagement and awareness.

In alignment with the Local Councils' Association (LCA) vision of "Resident First—Better Quality of Life," this report highlights how local authorities can lead efforts to reduce noise pollution, enhance residents' living conditions, and ensure that the villages remain vibrant, sustainable, and pleasant places to live.

By prioritizing noise control, local councils can preserve Malta's villages' tranquillity and cultural heritage while safeguarding residents' health and well-being. Effective noise management strategies involve collaboration between local authorities, businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to create a shared understanding of the importance of noise reduction. With the right measures in place, it is possible to strike a balance between the demands of modern life and the preservation of the peaceful, traditional environment that defines these iconic Maltese village cores.



2.0

Sources of Noise Pollution in Maltese Village Cores



Factors to be addressed.

1. Traffic Noise

The narrow streets of Maltese villages amplify traffic sounds from cars, motorcycles, and delivery vehicles.

2. Construction and Renovation Works

Ongoing development and restoration projects generate persistent noise.

3. Entertainment and Festivities

Traditional village feasts, nightlife, and street events contribute to loud environments.

4. Commercial Activities

Open-air markets, catering establishments, and shops increase noise levels.

5. Animal Noise

Stray animals contribute to the background noise, particularly dogs.

2.1

Traffic Noise

The narrow streets of Maltese village cores significantly amplify traffic noise, creating a constant source of disturbance for residents. The proximity of buildings to the roads results in sound waves bouncing off walls, intensifying the noise generated by cars, motorcycles, and delivery vehicles. Since many villages were not initially designed for modern traffic, congestion further exacerbates the issue, with honking, engine revving, and braking sounds echoing through the streets. Additionally, the growing popularity of ride-hailing services and delivery vans means an increased presence of motor vehicles at all hours of the day, making it difficult for residents to find relief from the persistent noise pollution.

2.2

Construction and Renovation Works

Construction and renovation works are a major contributor to noise pollution in Maltese village cores, as the demand for new housing and the restoration of historic

buildings continues to rise. Heavy machinery, power tools, and demolition equipment produce high-decibel noise that disrupts daily life. Since many traditional homes require extensive restoration, the sound of drilling, hammering, and cutting stones is a frequent occurrence. Moreover, construction projects often extend over long periods, meaning residents must endure continuous noise for months or even years. The limited space in village centers also means that construction sites are often located very close to residential properties, making it difficult for inhabitants to escape the noise.

2.3 Entertainment and Festivities

Maltese village cores are known for their vibrant social life, particularly the traditional feasts (festi) celebrating local patron saints. While culturally significant, these events bring noise from fireworks, marching bands, and large crowds. Also, nightlife venues, bars, and street performances contribute to high noise levels, especially during weekends and summer. Fireworks, a hallmark of village feasts, are often set off at various times of the day and night, causing sudden and intense bursts of sound that can disrupt residents and pets. While these festivities are essential to Malta's heritage, they pose challenges for those seeking peace and quiet in their homes.

2.4 Commercial Activities

The presence of open-air markets, catering establishments, and small shops in village centers adds to the general noise pollution experienced by residents. Markets, which

often operate early in the morning, bring noise from vendors setting up stalls, customers bargaining, and delivery trucks unloading goods. Restaurants, cafés, and bars contribute through loud conversations, background music, and kitchen operations. The outdoor seating areas of catering establishments, particularly in tourist-heavy locations, often extend into the streets, creating a lively but noisy atmosphere. Additionally, local grocery stores and bakeries attract a steady stream of customers, generating traffic and chatter that blends into the overall soundscape of the village core.

2.5 Animal Noise

Stray and domestic animals also play a role in noise pollution within Maltese villages. The presence of stray dogs and cats, particularly in older village centres, leads to frequent barking and howling, which can be incredibly disruptive during the night. Additionally, pet dogs in courtyards or rooftops often bark in response to passersby, creating an ongoing noise cycle. Birds, particularly pigeons and chickens in rural or semi-urban areas, add to the soundscape with their calls and cooing. While these noises may seem minor compared to traffic or construction, they can become a significant disturbance, particularly in the early morning hours when people are trying to sleep.

3.0

Impact of Noise Pollution



Factors to be addressed.

1. Health Effects

Prolonged exposure to high noise levels can lead to stress, sleep disturbances, and hearing impairment.

2. Reduced Quality of Life

Uncontrolled noise disrupts daily life and affects the tranquillity of village cores.

3. Environmental Consequences

Noise can disturb wildlife and disrupt local ecosystems.

4. Economic Impact

Excessive noise can deter tourists and reduce property values in affected areas.

3.1

Health Effects

Prolonged exposure to high noise levels can have significant health consequences, ranging from minor irritations to serious medical conditions. One of the most common effects is increased stress, as constant noise triggers the body's fight-or-flight response, leading to elevated cortisol levels. Over time, this can contribute to anxiety, high blood pressure, and even heart disease. Sleep disturbances are another major concern, as noise pollution can interfere with falling asleep and maintaining deep, restful sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation can weaken the immune system, reduce cognitive function, and lead to mood disorders such as depression. Additionally, excessive noise can cause gradual hearing impairment, particularly for those exposed to loud environments daily, such as workers in construction zones or residents living near high-traffic areas.

3.2

Reduced Quality of Life

Noise pollution significantly diminishes the quality of life, especially in village cores where people expect a peaceful and traditional living environment. Constant background noise from traffic, construction, and social activities can make it difficult for residents to relax, concentrate, or engage in simple everyday activities such as reading or having conversations. For elderly individuals or those working from home, persistent noise can become a source of frustration and fatigue. Additionally, sleep disruption due to loud disturbances at night can affect energy levels and productivity during the day. Over time, the inability to find quiet moments within one's own home can lead to feelings of helplessness, frustration, and even social withdrawal as people seek to avoid noise-heavy environments.

3.3

Environmental Consequences

Beyond affecting human health, noise pollution also profoundly impacts local wildlife and ecosystems. In rural and semi-urban village cores, excessive noise can disrupt natural behaviors in birds, mammals, and insects, leading to imbalances in the ecosystem. Birds, for example, rely on vocal communication for mating and territory defence, but loud noise can interfere with their ability to hear and respond to calls. Similarly, animals that depend on sound for hunting or avoiding predators may struggle to survive in increasingly noisy

environments. Construction and traffic noise can drive away wildlife in coastal or countryside villages, reducing biodiversity and altering the natural landscape. Even in urbanized areas, persistent noise pollution can discourage the presence of beneficial species, such as pollinators, which are crucial for maintaining local flora and food production.

3.4

Economic Impact

Excessive noise pollution can have negative economic consequences, particularly in areas that rely on tourism and property investment. Many visitors are drawn to Maltese village cores for their historic charm and serene atmosphere, but uncontrolled noise can make these areas less attractive to tourists seeking relaxation. Loud construction work, traffic congestion, and nightlife disturbances may lead tourists to choose quieter locations, affecting local businesses that depend on visitor spending. Additionally, persistent noise can lower property values, as buyers and renters prioritize peaceful environments when choosing a home. Properties in noisy areas, especially those near major roads, entertainment hubs, or industrial activity, may struggle to attract long-term residents, reducing demand and potentially affecting the economic sustainability of these villages.

4.0

Strategies to Reduce Noise Pollution



Traffic Management Measures

- **Implement pedestrian zones in key areas to minimize vehicle noise.**
- **Introduce restricted vehicle access during certain hours, especially in residential zones.**
- **Encourage the use of electric vehicles by providing incentives and charging stations.**
- **Enforce speed limits to reduce engine and tyre noise.**

4.1

Implement Pedestrian Zones in Key Areas to Minimize Vehicle Noise

Establishing pedestrian zones in key village areas can significantly reduce vehicle noise while improving residents' and visitors' overall quality of life. The impact of traffic-related noise pollution is minimized by designating certain streets as pedestrian-only, particularly in historical or commercial centers. This measure not only decreases engine noise, honking, and tyre friction but also enhances safety, making these areas more walkable and accessible. Additionally, pedestrian zones encourage local businesses, such as cafés and shops, to create outdoor seating spaces, fostering a more pleasant and community-oriented atmosphere. Such initiatives have been successfully implemented in various European towns, demonstrating that reducing vehicular presence leads to cleaner, quieter, and more attractive public spaces.

4.1.1

Introduce Restricted Vehicle Access During Certain Hours, Especially in Residential Zones

Restricting vehicle access during peak hours or at night can help control noise pollution, particularly in residential areas where people need rest and relaxation. Excessive noise from vehicles can be minimized by implementing timed restrictions, such as allowing deliveries only during specific hours or limiting through-traffic in village cores. This approach is especially effective in areas with narrow streets where sound tends to amplify. Many cities worldwide have introduced “low-emission zones” or “quiet zones” to manage noise levels while maintaining essential access for residents and businesses. In Maltese villages, such policies could be applied around schools, hospitals, or historical centers to create a more peaceful living environment.

4.1.2

Encourage the Use of Electric Vehicles by Providing Incentives and Charging Stations

Electric vehicles (EVs) produce significantly less noise compared to traditional petrol or diesel-powered cars, making them a valuable solution for reducing traffic noise pollution. Government incentives such as tax reductions, grants, or subsidized charging infrastructure should be kept to promote their adoption. Additionally, expanding the charging station network in village cores and public parking areas would make EV ownership more convenient. Public transport can also play a role in this shift, with the introduction of electric buses or shared e-mobility services, such as electric scooters

and bikes, further contributing to quieter and cleaner urban spaces. Encouraging the transition to EVs would reduce noise pollution and lower air pollution, benefiting public health and environmental sustainability, even though this might not always be the case (air pollution)

4.1.3 - Enforce Speed Limits to Reduce Engine and Tyre Noise

Strict enforcement of speed limits is crucial in minimizing noise pollution caused by vehicles. Higher speeds result in louder engine noises and increased tyre friction against road surfaces, which can be particularly disruptive in village cores where streets are confined. The overall noise level can be significantly reduced by setting lower speed limits in residential and commercial areas. Speed-reducing measures such as speed bumps raised pedestrian crossings, and improved signage can help ensure compliance. Additionally, increasing police presence or using automated speed cameras can deter drivers from exceeding the limits. Slower vehicle movement not only reduces noise pollution but also enhances road safety for pedestrians and cyclists, making village centers more livable and enjoyable

4.2

Regulating Construction Activities

- Implement strict regulations on permissible working hours for construction.
- Promote the use of noise-reducing construction techniques and materials.
- Require noise barriers or enclosures around construction sites.

4.2.1

Implement Strict Regulations on Permissible Working Hours for Construction

One of the most effective ways to reduce noise pollution from construction activities is to enforce strict regulations on working hours. Many residents in Maltese village cores are affected by the continuous noise of heavy machinery, drilling, and demolition, which can be particularly disruptive in the early mornings, late evenings, and weekends. By establishing clear guidelines that limit construction work to specific hours - such as restricting operations to weekdays between 8 AM and 6 PM - authorities can help maintain a balance between development and the well-being of residents. Additionally, introducing penalties for violations and ensuring local councils monitor compliance can help enforce these regulations effectively. Public awareness campaigns can also educate construction companies and workers about the importance of noise control, ensuring that projects are completed with minimal disturbance to surrounding communities.

4.2.2 - Promote the Use of Noise-Reducing Construction Techniques and Materials

Advancing construction technology has led to the development of noise-reducing techniques and materials that can significantly lessen the impact of construction activities. For example, modern construction methods such as prefabrication, which involves assembling building components off-site, can reduce on-site noise levels. Additionally, quieter machinery and tools, such as electric-powered equipment instead of diesel-

powered alternatives, can help lower noise emissions. Using low-noise road surfaces and sound-absorbing building materials can also reduce noise pollution in the long run. Authorities and developers should encourage the adoption of these innovative solutions by providing incentives or regulations prioritizing low-noise construction practices, ensuring that urban development does not come at the expense of public tranquillity.

4.2.3

Require Noise Barriers or Enclosures Around Construction Sites

Temporary noise barriers and enclosures can effectively contain construction noise and prevent it from disturbing nearby residents. These barriers, often made of sound-absorbing materials such as acoustic panels, help reduce the transmission of sound waves beyond the construction site. Enclosures can be particularly useful for high-noise activities such as demolition or roadworks, where machinery and tools generate loud, disruptive sounds. Mandatory noise mitigation measures, especially in densely populated village cores, can help maintain acceptable noise levels. Additionally, developers and contractors should be required to conduct noise assessments before beginning work, ensuring that proper mitigation strategies are in place. By integrating these measures, construction activities can be carried out in a way that minimizes their impact on the surrounding community



4.3

Managing Entertainment and Festivities

- Enforce time restrictions for loud music and firework displays during village feasts.
- Encourage the use of silent fireworks and other less disruptive celebratory alternatives.
- Promote noise-conscious event planning by designating specific areas for music and performances.

4.3.1

Enforce Time Restrictions for Loud Music and Firework Displays During Village Feasts

Village feasts (festi) are a cherished part of Maltese culture, bringing communities together through religious celebrations, music, and fireworks. However, these events can also generate significant noise pollution, particularly when loud music and fireworks extend late into the night. Enforcing time restrictions for these activities can help balance tradition with residents' need for rest. Authorities can implement regulations that limit fireworks to specific time slots and ensure that amplified music from bands, DJs, or loudspeakers is turned off by a reasonable hour. This would prevent excessive noise disturbances, particularly for the elderly, young children, and those with early work schedules. Additionally, improved coordination between local councils and feast organizers can ensure that noise levels are managed responsibly while preserving the festive atmosphere.

4.3.2

Encourage the Use of Silent Fireworks and Other Less Disruptive Celebratory Alternatives

Fireworks are a hallmark of Maltese village feasts, but their loud explosions can cause distress to residents, pets, and wildlife. Silent or low-noise fireworks offer a viable alternative that preserves the visual spectacle while significantly reducing noise pollution. These fireworks rely on colorful light displays rather than loud bangs, making them a more considerate celebration option. Other forms of entertainment, such as drone light shows, laser displays, and synchronized LED performances, can be explored as modern and eco-friendly alternatives. Encouraging event organizers to adopt these quieter options through financial incentives or awareness campaigns can help shift cultural expectations while maintaining the festive spirit. By gradually integrating these alternatives, local councils can work toward reducing the overall noise impact of feasts without diminishing their significance.

4.3.3

Promote Noise-Conscious Event Planning by Designating Specific Areas for Music and Performances

Strategic event planning can play a crucial role in minimizing noise pollution while still allowing festivities to take place. Local councils can ensure that noise is concentrated in locations with less impact on residential areas by designating specific areas for loud music, performances, and other high-noise activities. For instance, open-air concerts and fireworks could be

moved to the outskirts of village cores or public spaces away from homes, such as beaches or large plazas / open spaces (Ta' Qali, Hal Far to mention an example). Additionally, setting decibel limits for amplified music and ensuring speakers are positioned to direct sound away from residential zones can help manage noise levels. Event organizers can also be encouraged to use soundproofing barriers or directional audio technology to control sound dispersion. By adopting a more structured approach to event planning, communities can enjoy their traditions without causing excessive disturbance to residents.

4.4 Enhancing Green Infrastructure

- Increase the number of trees and green walls in village cores to act as natural sound barriers.
- Develop parks and quiet zones where residents can escape urban noise.
- Install noise-absorbing pavements and surfaces in public spaces.

4.4.1 Increase the Number of Trees and Green Walls in Village Cores to Act as Natural Sound Barriers

Increasing the number of trees and green walls in Maltese village cores can be a highly effective and environmentally friendly way to combat noise pollution. Trees, shrubs, and plants act as natural sound barriers by absorbing and diffusing sound waves. Their leaves and branches reduce the transmission of noise, particularly from traffic and construction, while also improving air quality

and enhancing the area's aesthetic appeal. Green walls, which are vertical structures covered with plants, can be strategically placed along busy streets or near residential areas to reduce noise levels. In addition to sound attenuation, greenery contributes to the community's overall well-being, offering residents a more pleasant and calming environment. Urban planners and local authorities can encourage planting trees in public spaces and along streets, emphasizing native species that are well-suited to the local climate and can thrive in the dense urban setting of village cores.

4.4.2 Develop Parks and Quiet Zones Where Residents Can Escape Urban Noise

In bustling village centres, it's essential to create designated spaces where residents can retreat from the noise of everyday life. Developing parks and quiet zones provides peaceful sanctuaries that promote mental well-being and relieve the stress of living in noisy urban environments. These areas can be designed with noise reduction in mind by incorporating natural elements such as ponds, water features, and dense foliage that further absorb and mask noise. The layout of these spaces should prioritize calm, peaceful activities like walking, reading, or meditative practices and discourage loud gatherings or events. Parks and quiet zones can also offer opportunities for children to play, providing them with a space free from the dangers and noise of traffic. These tranquil spaces reduce noise pollution and promote community interaction, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging, all of which contribute to a higher quality of life in village cores.

4.4.3

Install Noise-Absorbing Pavements and Surfaces in Public Spaces

One of the more innovative ways to tackle noise pollution in urban environments is using noise-absorbing pavements and surfaces. These specially designed materials help reduce the sound generated by footsteps, vehicle traffic, and general movement through public spaces. Porous pavements, rubberized surfaces, and other acoustic materials can absorb sound vibrations rather than allowing them to bounce off hard surfaces like traditional concrete or asphalt. These noise-dampening surfaces are particularly beneficial in areas with high foot traffic or public squares where events or gatherings often occur. Installing such pavements in village cores reduces noise and enhances pedestrian comfort and safety, especially in busy areas where the sound of traffic can be overwhelming. Additionally, these surfaces can improve the aesthetic quality of public spaces, making them more inviting and enjoyable for residents and visitors alike. Local governments and urban planners can work with architects and engineers to identify the most effective materials and locations for these noise-reducing interventions.

4.5

Regulating Commercial Activities

- Establish noise level limits for businesses, particularly restaurants, bars, and open markets.
- Promote responsible waste collection practices to minimize early morning noise disruptions.
- Encourage businesses to use

soundproofing materials and proper insulation.

4.5.1

Establish Noise Level Limits for Businesses, Particularly Restaurants, Bars, and Open Markets

Regulating the noise levels of businesses, especially those in bustling village cores like restaurants, bars, and open markets, is essential to balancing economic activity and residents' well-being. Setting clear, enforceable noise level limits can help manage disruptions caused by loud conversations, music, and other noise-generating activities. Local authorities can establish maximum decibel levels for amplified music and outdoor seating areas for restaurants and bars, ensuring that these businesses do not become sources of persistent noise pollution. Similarly, open-air markets can be subject to guidelines that control the use of loudspeakers and vendor activities. Enforcement mechanisms like sound-level monitoring and community feedback systems can help ensure compliance. By regulating noise levels, communities can support local businesses while maintaining the tranquillity of residential areas, particularly in dense village canterers.

4.5.2

Promote Responsible Waste Collection Practices to Minimize Early Morning Noise Disruptions

Waste collection is another source of noise pollution, especially in urbanized areas with high population density, such as village cores. The noise from garbage trucks,

emptying dumpsters, and workers moving bins can disrupt residents, particularly early morning when people are still sleeping. To mitigate this, local authorities can introduce regulations that limit waste collection to certain hours, such as late morning or early evening, when noise disturbances would have a less significant impact. This has to be discussed with all stakeholders when drafting the tender document for waste management. In addition, promoting quieter waste collection methods, such as using hydraulic lift systems and compacting equipment that reduces noise during collection, can help. The collection point concept is another solution. Another approach is coordinating waste collection schedules to avoid multiple trucks operating simultaneously in the same area. Encouraging businesses to keep their waste bins in designated, enclosed areas or use bins with noise-reducing features, like rubberized edges, can minimize disruptions.

4.5.3

Encourage Businesses to Use Soundproofing Materials and Proper Insulation

Encouraging businesses, especially those with loud operations, to invest in soundproofing and proper insulation can significantly reduce noise pollution for surrounding residents. Restaurants and bars, in particular, can benefit from acoustic treatments such as soundproofing walls, ceilings, and floors to prevent noise from escaping their premises. Using sound-absorbing materials in key areas like kitchens, dining rooms, and event spaces can limit sound spread, keeping it contained within the establishment. Similarly, businesses in areas with high foot traffic,

such as open-air markets, can use noise-reducing barriers, such as fences or walls made from absorbent materials, to minimize sound leakage. Proper insulation of windows and doors is also important, as it prevents outside noise from entering the business, creating a more comfortable environment for customers and staff. Financial incentives, such as tax breaks or grants, can encourage business owners to adopt soundproofing practices, ensuring that noise reduction is prioritized alongside other environmental and operational improvements

4.6

Community Engagement and Awareness

- Organize awareness campaigns on the effects of noise pollution and ways to mitigate it.
- Establish complaint mechanisms for residents to report excessive noise.
- Encourage voluntary noise reduction initiatives within communities.

4.6.1

Organize Awareness Campaigns on the Effects of Noise Pollution and Ways to Mitigate It

Raising awareness about the detrimental effects of noise pollution is vital in creating a more peaceful and health-conscious community. Public campaigns can educate residents and businesses on how noise pollution negatively impacts health, well-being, and the environment. By sharing information about the links between noise exposure and conditions like stress, sleep disruption, hearing loss, and cardiovascular diseases, these campaigns can motivate individuals to be more mindful of their

actions. Campaigns can also provide practical tips for mitigating noise, such as using quieter appliances, adhering to noise regulations, and adopting soundproofing measures in homes and businesses. Utilizing various media, such as social media platforms, posters, community newsletters, and local radio stations, ensures the message reaches a broad audience. Furthermore, involving local schools, community groups, and healthcare professionals in the campaigns can amplify the message and encourage proactive community engagement in reducing noise pollution.

4.6.2 Establish Complaint Mechanisms for Residents to Report Excessive Noise

Creating clear and accessible channels for residents to report excessive noise is crucial for effective noise management. Many communities already have noise regulations, but residents may be unaware of how to report violations or hesitate to act. By establishing an easy-to-use complaint mechanism, such as a dedicated phone line, online form, or mobile app, local authorities can empower residents to report disturbances in real-time. This system would allow individuals to report issues like late-night construction noise, excessively loud music from nearby venues, or traffic noise, enabling the local authorities to investigate and take corrective action. Additionally, the complaint mechanism could include

a follow-up process where residents are informed about the outcome of their report, ensuring transparency and accountability. A well-established system makes residents feel heard and helps authorities monitor and address noise pollution issues promptly, promoting a sense of community well-being.

4.6.3 Encourage Voluntary Noise Reduction Initiatives Within Communities

Voluntary noise reduction initiatives can foster community involvement and responsibility in managing noise pollution. These initiatives can include neighborhood programs encouraging residents and businesses to adopt quieter practices, such as reducing noise during certain hours, limiting loud music or machinery use, and keeping streets cleaner to reduce unnecessary noise. Local governments and community leaders can promote these initiatives by offering recognition or rewards for individuals or businesses that make substantial efforts to reduce noise pollution. For example, awards or certificates can be given to businesses implementing soundproofing measures or hosting events with controlled noise levels. Additionally, communities can organize “quiet days” or other public events that promote peaceful, noise-conscious behavior. By fostering a culture of noise sensitivity, these voluntary initiatives can help reduce community-wide noise levels, creating a more pleasant environment for everyone



5.0

The Role of Local Councils in Malta



Local councils in the Maltese Islands play a crucial role in reducing noise pollution through policy implementation, enforcement, and community engagement. Their contributions align with the **Local Councils' Association vision of "Resident First – Better Quality of Life"**, ensuring that noise reduction strategies prioritize residents' well-being. Their key contributions include:

- **Policy Development**
Introducing local by-laws to regulate noise levels in village cores.
- **Enforcement and Monitoring**
Collaborating with the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and the police to ensure compliance with noise regulations.
- **Infrastructure Investments**
Allocating funds for noise-reducing urban planning projects.

- **Public Consultation and Feedback**
Engaging residents in decision-making processes concerning noise reduction strategies.
- **Collaboration with Transport Authorities**
Working with Transport Malta to implement sustainable traffic solutions in village cores.

By actively implementing these measures, local councils help fulfill the Local Councils' Association's vision of placing residents at the center of urban planning, creating healthier, more liveable village cores while fostering a sense of community well-being.

5.1 Policy Development

Introducing Local By-Laws to Regulate Noise Levels in Village Cores

Local councils in the Maltese Islands play a vital role in developing policies to manage noise pollution within their jurisdictions, particularly in village cores, where high

population density and narrow streets can amplify noise. By introducing local by-laws, councils can establish specific regulations that limit noise emissions from various sources, such as traffic, construction, businesses, and entertainment venues. These by-laws can define permissible noise levels during specific hours of the day, outline fines for violations, and set rules for specific activities that contribute to noise pollution. For example, noise limits for outdoor concerts, restaurant patios, or large public events can be set to minimize disturbances for nearby residents. By tailoring policies to the unique needs of their local communities, local councils ensure that noise control measures are effective, practical, and aligned with the priorities of residents who seek a peaceful living environment.

5.2 Enforcement and Monitoring

Collaborating with the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) and the Police to Ensure Compliance with Noise Regulations

Once noise regulations are established, local councils are responsible for their enforcement and monitoring. This often involves collaboration with the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA), the police, and other relevant agencies. These bodies work together to ensure that noise levels are within acceptable limits and that businesses, construction sites, and individuals comply with noise ordinances. Councils can set up systems for residents to report violations, which are then investigated by local authorities. ERA can carry out regular noise assessments, and the police can intervene if

complaints are not addressed or if unlawful noise levels are observed. This collaborative approach ensures that residents' concerns are heard and a mechanism is in place to take corrective action when needed. Active enforcement is key to maintaining a peaceful environment in Maltese village cores, where noise pollution can become a persistent issue.

5.3 Infrastructure Investments

Allocating Funds for Noise-Reducing Urban Planning Projects

Local councils are instrumental in allocating funds for noise-reducing infrastructure projects, which help minimize the sources and effects of noise pollution. Investments in urban planning projects designed with noise reduction in mind can significantly enhance the quality of life for residents. For example, councils might fund the construction of sound barriers along busy roads, improve pedestrian zones with noise-absorbing materials, or create green spaces that act as natural sound buffers. Additionally, redesigning public spaces, such as parks and squares, can help reduce noise transmission by incorporating features like water elements, trees, and plantings that absorb sound. These infrastructure investments mitigate noise pollution and contribute to the aesthetic and environmental enhancement of local areas, making them more pleasant and liveable for everyone. In this regard, the Local Councils should have the adequate budget and financial resources to assist and be relevant on this issue.



5.4 Public Consultation and Feedback

Engaging Residents in Decision-Making Processes Concerning Noise Reduction Strategies

Public consultation and resident engagement are crucial for ensuring that noise reduction strategies are effective and widely supported. Local councils in Malta can involve residents in decision-making through consultations, surveys, public meetings, and workshops, allowing them to voice concerns and propose solutions. When residents actively participate, the strategies developed are more likely to address the specific challenges and concerns of the community. Additionally, engaging the public helps councils to build a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for noise reduction efforts. For example, feedback from residents about the impact of local festivals, traffic, or construction activities can inform policy decisions and lead to more balanced solutions. By fostering an open dialogue, councils can create more inclusive, practical, and effective noise management policies that are aligned with the needs of the people they serve.

5.5 Collaboration with Transport Authorities

Working with Transport Malta to Implement Sustainable Traffic Solutions in Village Cores

Traffic is a significant contributor to noise pollution in village cores, and local councils can work closely with Transport Malta to implement sustainable traffic solutions that reduce vehicle-related noise. This collaboration may involve reducing the number of vehicles in congested areas by implementing pedestrian zones, introducing traffic calming measures like speed bumps or road narrowing, and creating dedicated lanes for public transportation and bicycles. Councils can also advocate for adopting electric vehicles (EVs) or quiet transportation alternatives, which are less noisy than traditional vehicles. Additionally, councils and Transport Malta can collaborate on developing traffic management systems that prioritize quieter transportation modes and minimize congestion, thus reducing overall noise levels. Both entities can design traffic plans that improve mobility while reducing noise pollution, leading to a more sustainable and peaceful urban environment.

6.0

Conclusion



Noise pollution in the village cores of the Maltese Islands is indeed an escalating issue, particularly given the dense population, narrow streets, and the high volume of daily activities. This type of urban noise disrupts the tranquillity of these areas and poses significant risks to public health, including stress, sleep disturbances, and even long-term hearing impairment. Addressing noise pollution effectively requires a multifaceted approach that integrates various strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of village environments.

Effective **traffic management** is essential in reducing noise levels. With narrow streets often congested with vehicles, introducing pedestrian zones, traffic restrictions during peak times, and promoting quieter transportation alternatives, such as electric vehicles, can have a substantial impact. Local councils can collaborate with Transport Malta to design traffic systems that prioritize pedestrian-friendly and noise-conscious urban spaces, helping to reduce engine, tire, and exhaust noises that contribute to urban soundscapes.

Equally important are **construction regulations**, which should be enforced rigorously to limit noise pollution from development activities. Imposing precise working hours for construction projects and encouraging the use of quieter building practices and materials can greatly reduce the impact of construction noise. This can be particularly significant in village cores, where buildings are often close together, and sound is easily carried. Local councils can work alongside the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA) to ensure these regulations are adhered to and that there is minimal disturbance to residents.

While entertainment and cultural festivities are central to the identity of Maltese villages, their noise often extends beyond what is reasonable. Regulating the timing of loud music, fireworks, and public gatherings, as well as encouraging quieter alternatives such as silent fireworks, can help maintain the lively atmosphere while respecting the community's need for rest. By working with event organizers, councils can promote responsible planning that balances celebration with noise control.

Green infrastructure also plays a significant role in combating noise pollution. Increasing the number of trees and green walls in village cores can act as natural sound barriers. Creating quiet zones and parks where people can escape the surrounding urban noise offers a much-needed respite. Integrating noise-reducing pavements and materials into public spaces will further help to absorb and dampen sound. Local councils can allocate resources towards these green investments, improving the environment and quality of life for residents.

Another essential area is **regulating commercial activities**, particularly those businesses with high noise outputs, such as restaurants, bars, and open-air markets. By establishing noise level limits, promoting responsible waste collection practices, and encouraging soundproofing measures, councils can help ensure that the commercial sector does not contribute excessively to the village's noise pollution. Collaborating with local businesses to raise awareness of these regulations and providing incentives for quieter operations can lead to a more harmonious coexistence between commerce and residential living.

Lastly, **community engagement** plays a pivotal role in creating a noise-conscious society. Local councils must engage with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to raise awareness about noise pollution and its effects on health and well-being. Encouraging community participation in decision-making processes, such as through surveys or public meetings, allows for the development of more tailored, effective noise control strategies.

By taking a proactive, coordinated approach, local councils in Malta can significantly reduce noise pollution in village cores while maintaining the character and heritage of these traditional spaces. Through collaboration, innovation, and community-driven solutions, Malta can continue to preserve its vibrant villages, ensuring they remain peaceful and livable for future generations. This aligns with the **Local Councils' Association's vision** of "Resident First – Better Quality of Life," as improving environmental quality directly contributes to the overall well-being of the residents.

www.lca.org.mt



**Assoċjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**

Local Councils' Association Malta