

TIPS4UA



in cooperation with

LEAD
WITH EUROPE



**Local Councils'
Association**

Assoċjazzjoni Kunsilli Lokali Malta

MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

VISIT TO MALTA

Malta, September 2025



**MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**



SLOVENIA
AID & PARTNERSHIPS



Ministry for Development
of Communities
and Territories of Ukraine

FOREWORD



The President of the Association commented at the end of this journey:

“This visit was not just an exchange of knowledge; it was also a declaration of solidarity. Through the TIPS4UA project, we wanted to show our partners from Ukraine that Malta stands with them, not only politically, but also on a human and community level. Local government is about people, and we believe that the learning shared over these past two weeks will support Ukraine in its journey of recovery and reconstruction.”



The message shared by Tetiana Herlovskaya, Project Manager at the Regional Operations Unit for U-LEAD Europe, was also significant:

“What we found in Malta was not just professional guidance, but also genuine friendship. Every meeting and every conversation gave us new ideas on how we can rebuild our institutions. Above all, they gave us hope. We are returning to Ukraine strengthened by the knowledge that we are not alone in this struggle, and that Europe stands with us.”

TIPS4UA VISIT TO MALTA

The TIPS4UA visit to Malta served as an opportunity to exchange knowledge, strengthen cooperation, and showcase how multi-level governance is applied in one of the European Union's smallest Member States. The programme included meetings with ministries, regional and local councils, NGOs, youth organisations, and independent authorities. Key themes covered during the visit included:

- Multi-level governance in Malta;
- Challenges in EU project implementation;
- Digital transformation and EU funding;
- Social dialogue and civil society participation;
- Youth engagement and cultural initiatives;
- Transparency, auditing, and accountability;
- Social inclusion and community support services.

INTRODUCTION TO MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MALTA

Malta, as the smallest EU Member State, has a unique governance structure that reflects its size, unitary system, and integration within the European Union. Despite its limited territory and population, Malta operates within a multi-level governance (MLG) framework, which ensures that decision-making, implementation, and accountability are shared across different layers of government.

1. NATIONAL LEVEL

At the top of the governance structure is the central government, composed of the President, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet of Ministers, and Parliament. National ministries oversee core state functions such as foreign affairs, finance, health, education, national security, labour, environment, and social policy. Central government remains the dominant authority, especially in policy formation, legislative powers, and resource allocation.



2. REGIONAL LEVEL

Although Malta is a unitary state, Regional Councils were established in 2011 through amendments to the Local Government Act. The country is divided into six regions:

- **Northern (Tramuntana)**
- **Port**
- **Southern (Nofsinhar)**
- **Eastern (Lvant)**
- **Western (Punent)**
- **Gozo**

Regional Councils play a coordinating role between local councils and the central government. Their main functions include supporting local councils in project implementation, ensuring consistency in service delivery, and acting as intermediaries in EU-related projects.

3. LOCAL LEVEL

Malta's 68 Local Councils (including Gozo) form the most direct level of governance for citizens. Established in 1993, they are responsible for a wide range of community services such as waste collection, maintenance of public spaces, local roads, cultural and community activities, and resident engagement. Local councils embody the principle of subsidiarity, bringing decision-making closer to residents.

4. EUROPEAN LEVEL

As an EU Member State, Malta participates in EU institutions and is bound by EU legislation, directives, and funding frameworks. Maltese representatives contribute to EU decision-making in the European Parliament, Council of the EU, and the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Through EU funding programmes, Maltese regions and local councils gain access to structural funds, cohesion policy, and cross-border initiatives.

5. CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PARTNERS

In addition to formal government levels, Malta recognises the role of civil society organisations, trade unions, employer associations, and consultative committees. Structures like the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) serve as national platforms for social dialogue and policy consultation.

WHY MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE MATTERS FOR MALTA

- **Bridging EU and local realities:** Ensures that EU policies and funding are translated effectively into local and regional priorities.
- **Policy coherence:** Facilitates coordination between ministries, regional councils, and local councils to avoid duplication or gaps.
- **Citizen engagement:** Strengthens democracy by bringing governance closer to people through local councils.
- **Capacity and subsidiarity:** Empowers regions and local councils to manage resources efficiently while ensuring oversight at national and EU levels.
- **Shared responsibility:** Distributes governance tasks across different actors, reducing pressure on central government.

01

MALTA TRUST FOUNDATION PROJECTS

The Malta Trust Foundation (MTF) is a key non-governmental organisation that works to address gaps in social inclusion, education, mental health, and youth empowerment. Through its flagship projects, it has become a national leader in designing initiatives that respond directly to community needs, particularly among vulnerable children and young people.

• VILLA BIANCA – SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

Villa Bianca is a unique project that combines music, performing arts, and therapy to create an inclusive educational environment for children and young people with different abilities. The school offers:

- Specialised music and arts education tailored to children on the autism spectrum, with Down Syndrome, visual impairments, or other learning difficulties.
- Therapeutic sessions that use music and creative expression as tools for improving confidence, communication, and emotional wellbeing.
- Training opportunities for educators, carers, and music practitioners to enhance their skills in inclusive teaching.

This project addresses a major gap in Malta's educational system, offering equal access to cultural and artistic development.

• BLOSSOM PROJECT – IN-SCHOOL PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The Blossom Project places professional counsellors and psychotherapists within schools to provide support for students, families, and teachers. Its objectives include:

- Providing early intervention for children facing emotional, behavioural, or psychological difficulties.
- Offering individual and group counselling sessions to promote resilience, coping skills, and mental health awareness.
- Supporting families and educators through guidance and strategies to create healthier learning environments.

The project reflects MTF's belief that education must go hand-in-hand with mental health support to ensure holistic child development.

• CHILDREN'S COUNCIL – EMPOWERING YOUNG VOICES

The Children's Council, established under the Malta Trust Foundation, is a participatory body designed to give children a structured voice in policy and decision-making. Its mission is to:

- Ensure that children's perspectives are actively considered in social, cultural, and educational policies.
- Provide a platform for dialogue between young people, policymakers, and institutions.
- Promote children's rights, in line with Malta's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Through the Children's Council, young people are encouraged to develop civic responsibility, leadership skills, and confidence to advocate for their own needs and those of their peers.

O2

GOZO REGIONAL COUNCIL & GRDA

During the visit, delegates met with the Gozo Regional Council, which provided an overview of the unique governance challenges and opportunities on Malta's sister island. Gozo's smaller scale and relative isolation present distinct needs that highlight the importance of multi-level governance and cooperation between institutions.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS WITH THE GOZO REGIONAL COUNCIL

• MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MALTA

The Council explained how governance responsibilities are distributed across EU, national, regional, and local levels. While Malta remains a unitary state, regional councils serve as vital intermediaries between the central government and local councils. This structure ensures that local needs are represented in national decision-making, while EU policies and funding are translated effectively into local realities.

• CHALLENGES IN EU PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

A recurring theme was the difficulty small councils and regional entities face in accessing and managing EU funds. Key barriers include:

- o Administrative burdens, such as complex reporting and compliance requirements.
- o Limited technical expertise within smaller local councils, making it difficult to prepare strong project proposals.
- o Resource allocation issues, where smaller regions like Gozo may lack the same level of human and financial capital as mainland Malta.

• GOOD PRACTICES

Despite these challenges, Gozo has developed several best practices in aligning local projects with EU and national priorities. Examples include enhanced coordination mechanisms between councils, joint procurement initiatives, and collaborative service delivery that maximise limited resources. These practices provide useful models for other small or insular regions across Europe.

GOZO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (GRDA)

The Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) complemented these discussions by presenting its mandate and ongoing work. GRDA acts as a strategic policy body dedicated to Gozo's sustainable development, bridging local priorities with national and EU frameworks.

• LONG-TERM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

GRDA is responsible for designing and implementing strategies that address Gozo's economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Its plans focus on:

- o Strengthening Gozo's competitiveness;
- o Promoting green and digital transitions;
- o Ensuring balanced development that respects the island's heritage and natural environment.
- Social Impact Assessments

A notable function of GRDA is to evaluate the social impact of EU and national policies. This ensures that policies and programmes deliver real, measurable benefits for local communities, and that unintended consequences—such as widening inequalities—are identified and mitigated early.

By combining strategic foresight with grounded social analysis, GRDA provides a valuable model for how regional authorities can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and better governance outcomes.

03

REGIONAL COUNCILS MEETINGS

Delegates engaged in discussions with representatives of all six Regional Councils in Malta:



Tramuntana
(Northern)



Port



Nofsinhar
(Southern)



Lvant
(Eastern)



Punent
(Western)



Għawdex
(Gozo)

These meetings provided valuable insight into how regional governance functions in Malta, particularly following the 2019 reform of the Local Government Act, which strengthened the role of regional councils.

ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILS

Regional councils act as a bridge between the 68 local councils across Malta and Gozo and the central government. They are tasked with:

- Coordination of services that are more efficiently managed at a regional rather than local level (e.g. waste management, infrastructure maintenance, cultural initiatives).
- Supporting local councils by providing technical expertise and administrative assistance, especially for smaller councils with limited resources.
- Representation of local interests at national level, ensuring that diverse community needs are reflected in policymaking.
- Facilitating EU-funded initiatives, helping local councils access funding opportunities, prepare project proposals, and meet reporting requirements.

CHALLENGES DISCUSSED

The meetings highlighted that while regional councils play a growing role in governance, they also face challenges such as:

- Limited resources and staff capacity compared to their responsibilities.
- Overlapping competences with ministries, creating occasional tensions in implementation.
- Need for greater awareness among citizens about the role and value of regional councils.

GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

Delegates also heard about several good practices that regional councils have developed, including:

- Joint initiatives between multiple councils within the same region to reduce costs and improve efficiency.
- Regional cultural and community programmes that strengthen identity and citizen participation.
- Serving as platforms for innovation by piloting projects (such as digital inclusion initiatives) before scaling them nationally.

By meeting all six regions, delegates gained a holistic understanding of how Malta manages multi-level governance despite its small size. This structure offers a useful case study for other EU countries on how regional entities can add value even in a unitary, small-scale state by ensuring coordination, subsidiarity, and proximity to citizens.

04 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & EU FUNDING

Digitalisation and access to EU funding were among the core themes of the TIPS4UA visit to Malta. The delegates explored Malta's efforts to build digital skills, innovation capacity, and stronger governance structures to ensure inclusivity in the digital age.



Mr Mario Fava, President of the Local Councils' Association, address attendees at the All Digital Summit.

• ALL DIGITAL SUMMIT 2025 – VALLETTA

Malta hosted the ALL Digital Summit 2025, in collaboration with ALL DIGITAL (a pan-European network promoting digital inclusion) and the Local Councils' Association. The summit brought together policymakers, practitioners, educators, and civil society leaders to share experiences and strategies for empowering citizens through digital tools.

Key themes included:

- Bridging the digital divide, ensuring that vulnerable groups—including the elderly, low-income families, and persons with disabilities—are not left behind.
- Strengthening local government's role in offering digital services and supporting citizens to use them.
- The importance of digital skills training for employability and lifelong learning.
- The link between digital citizenship and active participation in democracy.

This event positioned Malta as a European hub for discussions on digital inclusion and highlighted the importance of collaboration between governments, NGOs, and EU institutions.

• SEM (SERVIZZI EWROPEJ F'MALTA)

Delegates met with SEM – Servizzi Ewropej f'Malta, the national agency responsible for helping organisations, local councils, NGOs, and citizens engage with EU programmes and funding opportunities. SEM plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between Brussels and the local level.

Highlights included:

- Capacity building workshops for local councils and voluntary organisations to improve proposal writing and project management.
- Guidance on EU funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Horizon Europe, and structural funds.
- Assistance in navigating complex EU regulations and reporting requirements, which can otherwise overwhelm small organisations.
- Support for cross-border partnerships to increase Malta's participation in European consortia.

Through SEM's work, Malta demonstrates how smaller EU Member States can still maximise opportunities within complex EU funding frameworks.

• MDIA (MALTA DIGITAL INNOVATION AUTHORITY) & DIHUBMT

The visit also explored the role of MDIA – Malta Digital Innovation Authority, the national regulator responsible for digital technologies, AI governance, and innovation policy. MDIA ensures that Malta develops a robust framework for trustworthy digital systems while also supporting innovation ecosystems.

Key contributions discussed:

- Policy development for AI, blockchain, and emerging technologies, in line with EU standards.
- Building a trust framework that promotes accountability and citizen trust in digital services.
- Providing guidance to businesses and councils on adopting digital technologies securely and effectively.

In parallel, DIHubMT (Digital Innovation Hub Malta) presented its role as a practical enabler of digital transformation. It acts as a one-stop shop for businesses, public entities, and local councils to access:

- Expertise on digital tools and smart city solutions.
- Support for innovation projects co-funded by the EU.
- Connections with European Digital Innovation Hubs for knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Together, MDIA and DIHubMT reflect Malta's commitment to aligning with the EU's Digital Decade goals, ensuring that both governance structures and innovation ecosystems are ready to embrace future opportunities.



Participants of ALL Digital Summit at the magnificent Malta Mediterranean Conference Centre.



Meeting at the SEM offices.

05

MINISTRIES AND POLICY DIALOGUE

Meetings with key ministries and senior officials provided delegates with a clear picture of Malta's national priorities and the interplay between central government, local councils, and EU frameworks.

- **MINISTRY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, SECURITY, LABOUR & MIGRATION
(HON. BYRON CAMILLERI)**

Delegates met with Hon. Byron Camilleri, Minister for Home Affairs, Security, Labour and Migration, to discuss Malta's current challenges and policy approaches.

The discussions centred on three interconnected themes:

- **Labour Market Challenges** – Malta's small labour market faces pressure from demographic changes, skills shortages, and the need for upskilling in line with digital and green transitions. Migrant labour plays a crucial role in filling gaps, particularly in construction, care, and hospitality.
- **National Security** – Ensuring public safety while maintaining open, resilient communities is a key priority. This includes community policing initiatives and cooperation with European security agencies.
- **Migration Policy** – Malta's geographic location makes it a frontline EU Member State for migration flows. The Minister highlighted the balance Malta seeks to strike between humanitarian responsibilities, integration measures, and border management within the EU solidarity framework.

- **MINISTRY FOR SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The delegation also engaged with officials from the Ministry for Social and Affordable Housing, where the focus was on addressing housing as both a social necessity and a policy challenge.

Key points discussed included:

- **Housing Shortages** – Rising demand in the private rental market has placed pressure on low- and middle-income households.
- **Affordable Housing Schemes** – The Ministry is expanding initiatives such as subsidised housing, rent-to-buy schemes, and public-private partnerships for affordable housing units.
- **EU Funding Links** – Opportunities exist to integrate European structural and investment funds into long-term housing and urban renewal projects.

- Community Wellbeing – Housing policy was also linked to broader social outcomes, including mental health, family stability, and neighbourhood cohesion.
- **PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (HON. ALISON ZERAFA CIVELLI), PERMANENT SECRETARY MINISTRY FOR CULTURE, LANDS, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MR. KEVIN MAHONEY) & DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MR. EMIL VASSALLO)**

Another key session was with the Parliamentary Secretary, Permanent Secretary, and the Director General for Local Government, which focused on the evolving role of local governance in Malta.

Topics covered included:

- Governance Reform – The 2019 reform of the Local Government Act strengthened regional councils and enhanced citizen participation mechanisms. Current reforms are aimed at increasing accountability, transparency, and efficiency.
- Decentralisation – Shifting more responsibilities from central ministries to regional and local councils, particularly in service delivery, community engagement, and EU project management.
- Subsidiarity – Emphasising the principle that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to citizens, with local councils empowered to respond to community needs directly.
- Capacity Building – Supporting councils with training, technical assistance, and digital tools to ensure they can deliver effectively within a multi-level governance framework.

This meeting reinforced how Malta is working to align local governance reform with broader EU objectives of decentralisation, subsidiarity, and citizen-centred democracy.



Meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary, Permanent Secretary, and the Director General for Local Government.

06

CIVIL SOCIETY & SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Malta places significant emphasis on structured social dialogue and the involvement of non-governmental actors in policymaking. The TIPS4UA visit included exchanges with several bodies that play central roles in this ecosystem.

- **MCESD (MALTA COUNCIL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT) & THE CIVIL SOCIETY COMMITTEE**

Delegates met with the MCESD, Malta's main forum for tripartite social dialogue between government, employers, and trade unions. In recent years, MCESD has expanded to include a Civil Society Committee, ensuring that NGOs and voluntary organisations also have a structured voice in shaping policy.



Meeting at the MCSD Offices.

Discussions covered:

- Consultative processes – How MCESD provides formal input on economic, social, and environmental policies before they are finalised by government.
- Civil Society Committee – A platform enabling NGOs to bring grassroots concerns to the national agenda, including issues related to poverty, youth, migration, and the environment.
- Good practices – Malta's approach of embedding civil society into social dialogue structures was highlighted as a replicable model for other small states.
- **MALTA COUNCIL FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR (MCVS)**

The MCVS plays a pivotal role in supporting and strengthening Malta's voluntary sector, which is made up of hundreds of NGOs active across social, cultural, environmental, and educational fields.

Key contributions include:

- Capacity building – Offering training, legal guidance, and administrative support to voluntary organisations.
- Funding schemes – Managing national and EU-funded grants that help NGOs develop projects and sustain their operations.
- Representation – Acting as a bridge between NGOs and government ministries, ensuring that voluntary organisations' perspectives are considered in policymaking.
- Voluntary register – Maintaining an official registry of NGOs, which enhances transparency and accountability in the sector.

MCVS is instrumental in professionalising the voluntary sector while safeguarding its independence and community-driven nature.

- **MALTA CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION**

The delegation also met with Malta Co-operative Federation, the umbrella organisation representing Malta's cooperative movement. Cooperatives play an important role in building a more resilient and inclusive economy.

Discussions highlighted how cooperatives contribute by:

- Supporting local economies – Encouraging collective entrepreneurship across sectors such as agriculture, retail, and services.

- Promoting social innovation – Cooperatives often address gaps in the market that private or public actors cannot fill, creating solutions that serve communities directly.
- Ensuring sustainability – By prioritising member needs over profit, cooperatives embed social values into economic activity.
- Strengthening resilience – The cooperative model helps small enterprises pool resources and expertise, increasing their ability to withstand crises.

For delegates, Malta Co-operative Federation showcased how the social economy complements traditional governance structures by creating locally rooted solutions with strong community ownership.

07

YOUTH PARTICIPATION & CULTURE

Young people and cultural engagement are central to building more resilient and inclusive societies. The TIPS4UA visit highlighted several Maltese and European initiatives designed to empower youth voices and strengthen cultural identity.

• AĠENZIJA ŻĠHAŻAĠĦ

The delegation met with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, Malta's national youth agency, which works to create opportunities for young people to thrive in society. The agency outlined its initiatives across three main areas:

- Civic Participation – Encouraging young people to actively engage in decision-making processes through youth councils, participatory democracy projects, and representation in national fora.
- Employability – Supporting skills development through training programmes, internships, and entrepreneurship opportunities that prepare youth for an evolving labour market.
- Non-Formal Education – Providing informal learning experiences such as leadership programmes, community projects, and volunteering, which complement formal education and help young people acquire transferable skills.

By equipping youth with knowledge, skills, and platforms for participation, Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ helps ensure that Malta's young citizens are fully included in democratic and social life.

• COUNCIL OF EUROPE YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

The visit also featured input from a Council of Europe Youth Representative, offering a broader European perspective on the role of young people in shaping policies and defending democratic values.

Key themes included:

- The importance of youth participation mechanisms at both local and European levels.
- Opportunities provided through the Council of Europe's youth sector, which promotes access to rights, intercultural dialogue, and democratic innovation.
- Examples of how youth representatives can bridge the gap between institutions and younger generations, ensuring that policymaking reflects diverse voices.

This perspective reinforced the idea that youth engagement is not only a national priority but also a pan-European value.

• MICAS (MALTA INTERNATIONAL CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE)

Delegates also learned about MICAS – Malta International Contemporary Art Space, a landmark cultural project currently being developed at the Ospizio site in Floriana. MICAS will serve as a new national institution dedicated to contemporary art and culture, while also acting as a space for community engagement.

Discussions focused on:

- Cultural participation – How MICAS aims to make contemporary art accessible to a wider public, bridging gaps between artists and communities.
- Urban regeneration – The project links heritage conservation with new cultural uses, contributing to Malta's broader cultural strategy.
- International networking – By hosting exhibitions, residencies, and cultural exchanges, MICAS will strengthen Malta's role in the global cultural landscape.
- Community engagement – Beyond being an exhibition space, MICAS is designed as a meeting point where culture, creativity, and citizenship intersect.

MICAS reflects how cultural projects can go beyond art to strengthen social cohesion, identity, and civic pride, resonating strongly with the themes of the TIPS4UA visit.



A tour around MICAS - Malta International Contemporary Art Space

08

EDUCATION, RESEARCH & STEM

Science, research, and innovation are central to Malta's vision of a knowledge-based economy. The TIPS4UA visit included exchanges with institutions that are shaping Malta's future in STEM education and research policy, while ensuring these opportunities remain accessible to all.

• XJENZA MALTA – MALTA COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (MCST)

The delegation was introduced to the work of the Malta Council for Science & Technology (MCST), which operates under the national brand Xjenza Malta. MCST is the lead agency responsible for research, science policy, and innovation.

Key areas of focus include:

- **National R&I Strategy** – MCST is responsible for aligning Malta's research and innovation efforts with the EU's Horizon Europe programme and the European Research Area.
- **Science education and outreach** – The agency promotes STEM awareness at schools and in communities, ensuring young people develop the skills needed for future industries.
- **Funding programmes** – MCST manages competitive calls for research and innovation projects, supporting universities, SMEs, and NGOs in advancing technology-driven solutions.
- **Policy development** – Advising government on how to harness science and technology to meet national challenges such as energy, climate change, health, and digitalisation.

Through MCST, Malta positions itself as an active contributor to European science and innovation while also tailoring policies to its small-island context.



Meeting at Xjenza, Malta.

• ESPLORA SCIENCE CENTRE

Delegates also visited the Esplora Interactive Science Centre in Kalkara, Malta's flagship science engagement institution. Esplora aims to make science accessible, fun, and participatory for people of all ages.

Highlights of Esplora's work include:

- **Interactive Exhibits** – Hands-on experiments and installations that encourage visitors to explore scientific concepts through play and discovery.
- **STEM Learning Opportunities** – Special programmes for schools, families, and youth groups that inspire curiosity in fields such as robotics, astronomy, physics, and environmental science.
- **Inclusivity in STEM** – Efforts to design exhibitions and workshops that are accessible to children with different abilities and learning needs, ensuring that no one is excluded from science education.
- **International networking** – Esplora forms part of European networks of science centres and museums, sharing best practices in public engagement with science.

The visit to Esplora underscored the importance of informal education and lifelong learning in building a society that values curiosity, creativity, and evidence-based decision-making.

09

SOCIAL WELFARE & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Social inclusion and wellbeing were central themes of the TIPS4UA visit. Malta's network of public agencies and NGOs plays a vital role in protecting vulnerable groups, strengthening communities, and promoting resilience.

• FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES (FSWS)

The Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) is the umbrella organisation overseeing Malta's state-run social services. It operates through three key agencies: Appoġġ, Sedqa, and Sapport.

Its work focuses on:

- Family and child protection – Safeguarding vulnerable children from abuse and neglect, providing foster care services, and supporting families in crisis.
- Addiction services – Through Sedqa, FSWS provides prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programmes for individuals with drug, alcohol, or gambling dependencies.
- Disability support – Through Sapport, FSWS assists persons with disabilities and their families with social inclusion, independent living, and community integration.
- Community outreach – Counselling, helplines, and community services ensure that families in difficulty have access to immediate support.

FSWS represents the state's backbone of social protection, ensuring that no individual is left without access to care.

• RICHMOND FOUNDATION

The Richmond Foundation is Malta's leading NGO in the field of mental health. It complements state services by offering professional, community-based care that addresses both prevention and recovery.

Its main contributions include:

- Therapeutic services – One-to-one counselling, psychotherapy, and specialised programmes for different age groups.
- Community homes – Providing residential services for individuals living with long-term mental health conditions, promoting autonomy and dignity.
- Workplace mental health – Training employers and organisations on stress management, resilience, and mental wellbeing in professional settings.

- **Advocacy** – Raising awareness to reduce stigma and lobbying for stronger mental health policies.

Richmond is recognised as a best practice model in community mental health, showing how NGOs can innovate and respond flexibly to emerging social needs.

• **CARITAS MALTA**

Caritas Malta is one of the country's most established voluntary organisations, offering a wide range of services focused on rehabilitation, reintegration, and social support.

Its programmes cover:

- **Drug rehabilitation** – Running therapeutic communities and day programmes for people recovering from substance abuse.
- **Reintegration services** – Supporting former prisoners, recovering addicts, and vulnerable persons to re-enter society with dignity and purpose.
- **Social support** – Providing food, shelter, and counselling to families facing poverty, homelessness, or financial hardship.
- **Prevention and education** – Outreach initiatives in schools and communities to raise awareness of addiction and promote healthier lifestyles.

Caritas demonstrates the power of faith-based organisations to combine charitable action with professional care, filling important gaps in national service provision.



Meeting with Caritas Malta.

10

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Good governance depends on strong accountability mechanisms that ensure public trust and the effective use of resources. During the visit, delegates met with two of Malta's key independent oversight institutions: the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Office of the Ombudsman.

- **NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE (NAO)**

The NAO Malta is an independent institution mandated by the Constitution to audit the accounts, finances, and performance of government entities.

Discussions focused on:

- Auditing of public funds – Ensuring that taxpayer money is spent efficiently, effectively, and in compliance with legal and financial frameworks.
- Oversight of EU-financed projects – Given the significant role of EU funding in Malta's development, the NAO plays a crucial role in verifying that funds are managed transparently and without misuse.
- Local Government Division – Special attention was given to auditing local councils and regional councils, which often face challenges in financial management due to limited capacity.
- Performance audits – Beyond financial checks, NAO also evaluates whether public programmes deliver value for money and achieve intended outcomes.

The meeting underlined that independent auditing is vital not only for financial discipline but also for building public confidence in government institutions.



Meeting at NAO Offices.

• OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Office of the Ombudsman is another cornerstone of accountability in Malta. It provides citizens with an independent channel to challenge unfair, unjust, or improper decisions by public authorities.

Key points discussed included:

- **Safeguarding citizens' rights** – The Ombudsman investigates complaints from individuals who feel they have been treated unfairly by government departments, agencies, or local councils.
- **Promoting good governance** – By issuing recommendations and reports, the Ombudsman helps public administration uphold principles of fairness, accountability, and transparency.
- **Sectoral commissioners** – The Office also includes specialised commissioners (such as Education, Environment & Planning, and Health), who deal with complex cases requiring sector-specific expertise.
- **Mediation and resolution** – The Ombudsman offers not only formal investigation but also informal mediation to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

The discussion highlighted the role of the Ombudsman as a guardian of citizens' trust in public administration, ensuring that governance remains people-centred.

11

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & SECURITY

Strong institutions and public trust are essential components of effective governance. During the visit, delegates explored Malta's approach to capacity-building in the public sector and community-focused security services.

• INSTITUTE FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICES (IPS)

The Institute for the Public Services (IPS) is Malta's central training and capacity-building body for civil servants and local council staff. Its mission is to ensure that public employees are equipped with the skills, knowledge, and values required to deliver efficient, transparent, and citizen-focused services.

Key areas of discussion included:

- **Training Programmes** – IPS delivers a wide range of courses, from entry-level training for new recruits to advanced leadership programmes for senior officials.
- **Capacity Building for Local Councils** – With councils often facing resource and skills limitations, IPS provides targeted training in financial management, EU project implementation, governance, and community engagement.
- **Professional Development** – Continuous learning is promoted through short courses, diplomas, and executive programmes in partnership with universities and European institutions.
- **Values and Ethics** – IPS emphasises integrity, accountability, and service excellence as core principles of Malta's public administration.

Through IPS, Malta ensures that its public administration remains professional, modern, and aligned with EU standards, even in the context of a small-state system.

• COMMUNITY POLICING MALTA

The delegation was also introduced to Community Policing Malta, a national initiative aimed at strengthening public safety and citizen trust by embedding police officers directly within local communities.

Discussions highlighted how community policing contributes to:

- Citizen Security – Police presence at the local level reassures residents and enhances cooperation between citizens and law enforcement.
- Trust Building – By engaging with communities on a daily basis, officers become approachable figures rather than distant authorities.
- Problem-Solving Approach – Community policing focuses on prevention, early intervention, and mediation rather than purely enforcement.
- Partnerships with Local Councils – Police officers work closely with local councils to address neighbourhood-specific challenges such as vandalism, traffic management, and public order.

This approach reflects a shift from reactive policing to proactive community engagement, ensuring that public security is integrated into wider local governance and social cohesion efforts.

CONCLUSION

The TIPS4UA visit in Malta showcased both the strengths and the challenges of implementing multi-level governance in one of the European Union's smallest Member States. Despite its size, Malta has built systems that allow local, regional, and national authorities to interact with European institutions while also empowering civil society, youth, and citizens.

Delegates gained insights into Malta's efforts in digital innovation, youth empowerment, social welfare, civil society engagement, and transparency in governance. The exchange highlighted several lessons that are particularly relevant to countries seeking to strengthen their democratic and administrative frameworks:

- **THE IMPORTANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LOCAL COUNCILS IN EU PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Local councils are often the closest link to citizens, but their small size and limited resources make it difficult to navigate the complexities of EU funding. Malta's experience shows the need for:

- Specialised training in project management, financial control, and reporting standards.
- Technical assistance provided by regional councils, SEM, or central agencies to guide councils in preparing applications.
- Pooling of resources across councils at regional level to manage projects that are too large for one council alone.

- Digital tools and platforms that simplify processes, reduce administrative burdens, and increase transparency.

Capacity building is not a one-off exercise but a continuous investment, ensuring that local councils can transform EU opportunities into tangible benefits for their communities.

• THE ROLE OF REGIONAL COUNCILS AS INTERMEDIARIES IN MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE

Malta's regional councils illustrate how an intermediate governance layer can coordinate services, support local authorities, and represent regional priorities at national level. This is particularly useful in small states where economies of scale are limited, but local diversity still requires tailored solutions.

• HOW CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS PROVIDE CRUCIAL SOCIAL SERVICES ALONGSIDE GOVERNMENT

From Caritas Malta to the Richmond Foundation and many others, NGOs in Malta fill vital gaps in service provision, particularly in mental health, addiction recovery, and community support. Their contribution demonstrates the value of strong government-NGO partnerships, where the state provides stability and resources, while civil society brings innovation, flexibility, and grassroots knowledge.

• THE NEED FOR CONSISTENT MONITORING, AUDITING, AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Institutions like the National Audit Office, Ombudsman, and GRDA highlight the necessity of rigorous oversight. Auditing public funds, evaluating policy impact, and ensuring accountability are essential to maintaining public trust and securing the effective use of EU resources.

• THE CENTRALITY OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND DIGITAL INCLUSION IN SHAPING EUROPE'S FUTURE

Engagement with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ, the Children's Council, and the ALL Digital Summit reinforced the idea that young people must be at the centre of democratic renewal. Equally, digital inclusion is no longer optional: it is a moral imperative to ensure that elderly citizens, vulnerable groups, and disadvantaged communities are not excluded from services, opportunities, and participation.

FINAL REFLECTION

Malta's experience demonstrates how effective collaboration across different levels of government and sectors can ensure that no community is left behind in the pursuit of EU goals. While challenges remain—particularly in funding capacity, housing, and migration—Malta provides a strong example of how small states can innovate within the EU framework, leveraging partnerships, inclusivity, and accountability to strengthen democratic resilience.

APPENDIX

– CONTACT DIRECTORY

Organisation/Project	Website	Email/Contact	Phone
Malta Trust Foundation	Maltatrufoundation.org	info@maltatrufoundation.org	21221142
Villa Bianca	Maltatrufoundation.org/projects/marchese-di-villabianca/	Via MTF	21241029
Blossom Project	Maltatrufoundation.org/projects/blossom	Via MTF	21221142
Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA)	Grda.mt	info@grda.mt	22156333
Wasteserv Malta	Wasteservmalta.com.mt	info@wsm.com.mt	80072200
ERA-Enviroment & Resources Authority	era.org.mt	info@era.org.mt	22923500
Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS)	Maltacvs.org	Mcv.s.miv@gov.mt	22481110
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Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)	Fsws.gov.mt	Fsws-headoffice@gov.mt	22588900
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Caritas Malta	Caritasmalta.org	info@caritasmalta.org	22199000
Visit Malta	Visitmalta.com	info@visitmalta.com	22915000
Malta Co-operative Foundation	Maltacooperativefederation.coop	info@mcf.coop	21233078
ALL DIGITAL	All-digital.org	contact@all-digital.org	28930201
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Association
Assocjazzjoni Kunsilli Lokali Malta



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