

NATIONAL REPORT



COUNTRY:
Malta

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1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIONAL SPORT SYSTEM/ARCHITECTURE

In Malta, sport policy is under the responsibility of the Ministry for education, sport, youth, research and innovation. The Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS), SportMalta and the Commercial Sports Facilities Commission are bodies officially appointed by the Ministry. Malta has recently separated the Sports Operator (SportMalta) and the Sports Regulator (AIMS). Policy work (excluding Sport Promotion and physical activity) shall fall within the remit of the AIMS which shall create collaboration, networking and competence in this area.

In May 2019, Malta's third national sports strategy covering a 10-year period was launched by the Maltese government.¹ It identifies five strategic themes:

- (i) Building a more active and healthier Malta;
- (ii) Enhancing the competence of all stakeholders;
- (iii) Stimulating a new sporting culture;
- (iv) Transforming Malta into a centre of sporting excellence;
- (v) Achieving success at the top of international competitions.

From a regulatory point of view, the recent adoption of the Sports Governance and Integrity Act (Act No. LIV of 2021) is worth mentioning. Its main purposes are to provide for the regulation of Sports Governance and Integrity in Malta; establish the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport; support the development and implementation of the objectives described in the Act; promote consistent principles to uphold the principles of good governance and defend the integrity of Maltese sport; exercise regulatory functions and perform related services; and make provision with respect to matters ancillary thereto or connected therewith.

2. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE A SPORT DIPLOMACY STRATEGY?

At present, Malta does not have a sport diplomacy strategy per se. Nevertheless, references to sport diplomacy are made in the "National Policy for Sport in Malta and Gozo 2017-2019"². According to this document, "sport is a tool which can bring about change as it has the ability to bring people together no matter what their background. Particularly, the diplomacy of sport has the potential to bring down barriers caused by ethnicity, religious belief, gender or other differences. The world is in turmoil more than ever, but sport can play a very significant role. Sport diplomacy facilitates communication, being in itself a soft power bringing about peace."

In 2021, through the Sports Integrity Act, Malta created a Sports Regulatory Authority that should be pursuing sport diplomacy, as it is currently at the design stage. Malta is currently drafting a Sustainable Development strategy (to which Sport is directly related in its goals) based on a vision document that was published in 2018.³ The sport diplomacy Strategy is expected to be published this year.

¹Available at <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOJ/Press%20Releases/PublishingImages/Pages/2019/May/21/pr191132/PR191132a.pdf>.

²National Policy for Sport in Malta and Gozo 2017-2019, [https://meae.gov.mt/en/public_consultations/mede/documents/sports%20calendar%20output%20\(1\).pdf](https://meae.gov.mt/en/public_consultations/mede/documents/sports%20calendar%20output%20(1).pdf)

³https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/Msport_diplomacyEC/Documents/Malta%27s%20Sustainable%20Development%20Vision%20for%202050.pdf.

As for the most relevant objectives of sport diplomacy in Malta, national experts affirm they would be to improve the country's global reputation and create a Maltese nation-brand, promote peace and inclusiveness and create business opportunities and drive economic growth.

3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT DIPLOMACY GOVERNANCE AND WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS?

Sport diplomacy governance is decentralized in Malta since different actors are in charge of specific programmes and resources. A number of Ministries are involved in sport diplomacy governance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry for education, sport, youth, research and innovation (mainly through the work of the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS) and SportMalta), and the Ministry for Environment, Energy and Enterprise (regarding sport and tourism). One of the national experts affirmed that the Maltese diplomatic services are trained in and aware of sport diplomacy and that most diplomats have received academic training on this topic.

Other actors have been also mentioned by national experts:

- a. Sports bodies are considered to play a relevant role in this regard.
- b. Media: promotion and awareness, raising interest and participation in sporting issues.
- c. Private sector: larger companies have introduced sports into their policies.
- d. As for the role of athletes, one of the national experts claimed that they should be seen as ambassadors, since they have a major responsibility when they represent the country.

4. TOOLS OF SPORT DIPLOMACY

From a budgetary perspective, economic resources dedicated to sport diplomacy are difficult to quantify as a variety of actions and measures are related to it. However, a specific budget line does not exist. One national expert considers that before allocating a specific sport diplomacy budget, a sport diplomacy vision and clear output indicators are needed.

On the specific questions concerning the tools of sport diplomacy, national experts provided some interesting answers although they did not always share the same analysis. While they agree on the deployment of diplomatic and political efforts to attract mega-events, or on the setting up of media coverage and international broadcasting, opinions diverge on the employment of high-profile sports people or the organisation of trade missions.

Concerning collaboration with less developed countries, the experts' opinions are relatively similar and they consider that there are a few mentoring or training programmes as well as partnerships for sports competitions.

Moreover, the experts' opinions diverge concerning funding for collaborative projects aimed at specific values, which is very present to one and relatively absent to another.

Concerning activities implemented with the aim of empowering sport diplomacy actors, the experts agree on the relatively significant implementation of dedicated resources and coordination tools, as well as monitoring and evaluation processes. On the other hand, opinions diverge concerning training for diplomats and athletes and political support, which are

considered to be underdeveloped by one expert, while the other considers them to be relatively present.

The most important sport diplomacy activities in Malta are sporting exchanges conducted under bilateral agreements with third countries..

5. SPORT DIPLOMACY'S FUTURE

The greatest weaknesses of sport diplomacy in Malta are:

- a. Lack of awareness (this is changing -see section 2 of this Report).
- b. Geographical situation and small size of the country.
- c. Bringing together private actors and public authorities.

National Experts have identified the following possible disadvantages in connection with the existence of an EU common sport diplomacy strategy:

- a. Agreement on objectives would take a long time. One national expert suggests that sport diplomacy may be better achieved through the Subsidiarity principle (closer to the communities). Another option is for the EU to agree on minimum standards which could be a start.
- b. Lack of harmonisation at EU level.

As for the possible advantages, they mention:

- a. Better coordination.
- b. EU Projects (and Funds) may get better value. Studies and research would be better conducted as data would derive from the EU and not from Member States.
- c. More relevance of the EU at international level and less transaction costs for Member States.

All national experts agree that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Suggestions made by the national experts include:

- a. Offering technical assistance to neighbouring countries and other continents which could serve as assistance.
- b. Including Sport Diplomacy information in all national educational curricula.
- c. Create a budget strand for Sport Diplomacy under Erasmus+ to enhance its promotion further.
- d. Sharing good practices on Sport Diplomacy. In the case of Malta, a good practice mentioned by the national experts is the creation of a Voluntary Desk to transfer knowledge and capacity: <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-and-malta-establish-new-desk-enhance-voluntary-sector>.

6. INTERVIEWS

- **Ryan Borg** serves as Director for Strategy, International Relations and Support at the Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS).
- **Robert Dingli** is a lawyer and expert in sports law.

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