

Committee of the Parties

Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating violence
against women and domestic violence
(Istanbul Convention)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Reply by MALTA to the reporting form on the implementation of the Recommendations of the Committee of the Parties adopted on 15 December 2020

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Secretariat of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention
on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

In accordance with Article 68, paragraph 12, of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the Committee of the Parties adopts, on the basis of the report and conclusions of GREVIO, recommendations addressed to state parties concerning the measures to be taken to implement the conclusions of GREVIO.

The applicable procedure for issuing recommendations was settled by the Committee of the Parties at its 4th meeting and is described in document IC-CP(2018)6. In accordance with this procedure, the recommendations call upon state parties to implement all the proposals and suggestions set out in GREVIO's baseline evaluation report. However, the obligation to report on measures taken is limited to those specifically outlined in section A of the recommendation, namely: a) all the proposals and suggestions formulated by GREVIO throughout the report which require immediate action – these are qualified by the use of the verb “urge”, and b) the proposals and suggestions related to Chapters I and II of the convention which require taking remedial action in the near future and are qualified by the use of the expression “strongly encourage”. According to the agreed procedure, state parties are given a period of three years to implement the recommendations of the Committee of the Parties and report back to the Committee.

To facilitate this reporting, state parties are requested to use this questionnaire to report on the implementation of recommendations issued by the Committee of the Parties. Recommendations not issued in relation to Malta do not need to be reported on. **As a result, the Maltese authorities are not required to answer questions 12-13 and 8-10 in the reporting form.**

The reporting deadline given to Malta was set at 15 December 2023, which has exceptionally been extended to **1 February 2024**. Information related to the monitoring of Malta is available on the dedicated [country monitoring webpage](#).

I. Fundamental rights, equality, and non-discrimination (Article 4)			
1	Have your authorities taken measures to ensure that the provisions of the Istanbul Convention are implemented without discrimination on any grounds listed in Article 4, paragraph 3, of the convention, including in terms of the availability of services and the protection by law enforcement agencies?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>The principle of non-discrimination in Malta's legislation is enshrined within Article 45 of the Constitution of Malta which states “... no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect”. Malta is a signatory to the European Convention of Human Rights since 1966, which explicitly states in Article 12 that the rights laid out in the Convention should be safeguarded “... without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status”.</p> <p>Malta launched its third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028), titled ‘UNITE. ENGAGE. ELEVATE’, on 29 November 2023. The strategy was developed through desk-based research carried out by the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society. Like its precedent, it is based on the four pillars of</p>		

the Istanbul Convention and the GREVIO recommendations. Its five-year timeframe seeks to sustain the achievements of the two previous strategies whilst incorporating a more longitudinal vision in its measures and actions. Specific measures addressing the intersectional element of violence, such as the implementation of evidence-based policies, have been included to ascertain that the rights of all victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV) are protected and that services are provided without discrimination.

CGBVDV hosted a panel discussion for EuroPride 2023 to address the challenges that LGBTIQ+ persons may encounter when they come out to their families and when experiencing intimate partner violence. The discussion sought to generate awareness among the LGBTIQ+ community on the support services available for persons experiencing family violence or intimate partner violence. Furthermore, CGBVDV set up an awareness-raising stand in Valletta to disseminate informational material on GBV, DV and the professional support services available in Malta. This campaign concluded with a published article aimed at raising more awareness on GBV and DV within the LGBTIQ+ community.

Additionally, Malta launched its first [Gender Equality and Mainstreaming Strategy & Action Plan \(GEMSAP\) \(2022 – 2027\)](#) in 2022. GEMSAP recognises that society cannot reach its full potential without allowing each and every person to thrive equally, without gender-based obstacles. This Strategy aims to identify and eradicate those obstacles by strengthening the gender perspective at all levels and stages of policy making.

One of GEMSAP objectives also focuses on the elimination of gender imbalance in the field of justice by addressing gender bias and gender stereotypes to tackle GBV and discrimination. Other relevant measures within GEMSAP which are currently in advanced stages include the criminalization of virginity testing, where the law is expected to enter into force by the first quarter of 2024, and the identification of any provision within Maltese legislation that needlessly differentiate between men and women (which will be eventually amended).

In May 2023, Malta adopted its third [National LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy and Action Plan](#), which aims to continue building on the achievements of its predecessors and cementing Malta as a best example for good practices in the field. This document covers several thematic areas, including access to health and education, and the protection from harm including those motivated by LGBTIQ+ phobia or committed in domestic settings.

The Domestic Violence Services (DVS) provided by Aġenzija Appoġġ within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) are accessible to all, irrespective of their diverse identities.

FSWS, through Aġenzija Appoġġ, provides the following services in relation to DV:

- **Domestic Violence Unit (DVU)**

The service consists of a team of professionals, including social workers, who provide support to victims of DV and their children. It aims to assist victims at times of crises by providing them with immediate aid to meet their immediate needs, carrying out a risk assessment with the victim, helping them develop a safety plan, and providing ongoing support.

- **Domestic Violence Risk Assessment**

The professionals in this service are equipped with the necessary training to conduct risk assessments for individuals who report instances of violence and abuse to the police. Their role includes determining the most suitable services and protection measures for the victim. In situations where victims and their children require urgent protection and safety, the risk assessors provide immediate support and facilitate referrals to emergency shelters. This service is available round the clock and is delivered from the Gender-Based Domestic Violence Unit (GBDVU) of the Malta Police Force (MPF).

- **Għabex Shelter**

The Għabex Emergency Shelter was set up in October 2000 and it is entirely government funded. It provides a safe and supportive environment for female victims of DV and their children who have experienced DV, abuse, or other forms of intimate partner violence. The service offers a setting conducive to self-healing for women and their children who suffer emotional, physical, sexual, and any other form of DV. Upon admission, victims are provided with food, clothing and toiletries to meet their basic needs. Staff at the shelter are trained to provide immediate crisis intervention, emotional support, safety planning, and support victims to connect with community resources, including legal aid, healthcare and social services. Residents can share their experiences, receive emotional support, and learn coping strategies through individual sessions and support groups. At the shelter, residents are taught how to develop safety plans to protect themselves and their children, both during their stay and after leaving the shelter. Għabex provide age-appropriate support and activities for children who stay with their mothers, which include group work, educational assistance, and recreational activities. Għabex plays a crucial role in providing a lifeline for women and children fleeing abusive situations and helping them transition to a safe and independent life.

- **Child to Parent Violence Services**

Victims of child to parent violence are supported by a social worker and other professionals to address the safety and protection of each member of the family. This service aims to assist all members of the family to receive support from available services. This service works systemically with the social worker of the parents/primary caregivers and other professionals/services working with the family to address the various traumas experienced by the family.

- **Stop the Violence & Abuse Service**

This service aims to assist perpetrators who are abusive in intimate relationships, to become aware of, understand, and take responsibility for their behaviour, thus encouraging change. Before being accepted into the programme, perpetrators undergo individual sessions with a professional who assesses their suitability for the group. Through participation in the programme, perpetrators of violence are assisted to change from being abusive to being respectful in their beliefs; and subsequently, in their behaviour.

- **MARAM**

Professionals from DVU coordinate the intelligence and operations of different entities who work directly with victims of DV and their children. The role of MARAM is to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate effective information sharing between entities, and to enable appropriate actions to be taken towards the reduction of harm risk to victims of DV and to increase public safety.

The provision of legal advice and court representation by Legal Aid Malta Agency extends to all victims of crime irrespective of sex, gender, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, state of health, disability, marital status, migrant or refugee status, or other status.

In accordance with the [Patient's Rights Charter \(2016\)](#) all those accessing health care services are protected to "receive services irrespective of one's age, colour, disability or illness, gender, marriage, civil partnership, maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, or social status."

The Victim Support Agency (VSA) services are delivered seamlessly to all victims indiscriminately and according to personal needs and specificities of the case. VSA embraces an inclusive philosophy and uses universal design concept with regards to information, promotional and awareness-raising campaigns and materials. VSA provides the following services:

- Information: Follow up on Police Reports and Services offered in support of Victims of Crime. This was complimented with the introduction of two important measures in 2023:
 - (a) The 116 006 victim support line
 - (b) DV Prevention Application where interested parties may seek information on their partner in a confidential manner as to ascertain on whether there was court sentencing related to past DV offences.

In addition, VSA has also adopted an EDR (Early Date of Release) Exercise earmarked for victims whose actual perpetrator was imprisoned and shall be released from custody. VSA informs the victim in upfront with the date of release as to avoid re-traumatization. Lately, VSA is also addressing and assisting victims, whose perpetrator files an application for parole, by informing them of application and assisting them to access the services of VSA.

- Emotional Support Services: Victims of crime may seek emotional support prior to filing a police report or after. An intake assessment is carried out to evaluate the needs of the service user and then referred to emotional support which may also be required to proceed for therapeutic support. The VSA also provides Court Accompaniment which aims at supporting the victim from an emotional wellbeing perspective when summoned to witness in court.

- Legal Advice: Through this service, victims of crime are provided with free legal advice on Criminal Court matters and given an insight of what is expected in court. Sometimes service users are also given interpretation of legal documents handed to them, often by the Court itself.

The Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) created awareness and support by the Migrants Advisory Unit which provided information about support structures processes, NGOs, and support available. The Migrant Advice Unit also introduced a leaflet providing information on GBV, female genital mutilation (FGM), DV and health. AWAS also provides counselling group sessions, held by AWAS' own Psychosocial Team, which consists of Assistant Psychological Officers (males and females), 2 female Counsellors and a Psychologist. Outreach and counselling sessions were also provided to female beneficiaries by TAMA (NGO), in coordination with AWAS. The Migrants Advisory Unit supports female beneficiaries by providing all the necessary information regarding Legal Rights and Procedures and refer accordingly to free legal aid support.

All International Protection Agency (IPA) protection officers attend the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) core modules (interviewing techniques, inclusion, and evidence assessment), which include elements related to gender. These officers can also attend other training modules developed by the EUAA which are related to gender (e.g., the module on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation).

In 2022, the Detention Services Agency (DSA) concluded an agreement with the Government's Mental Health Services for the provision of an in-house psychiatric clinic and a crisis service for urgent situations. Detainees are offered routine screening for psychological issues and other medical complaints such as ophthalmic problems, sexual health and other issues. All admissions are also routinely screened for signs of ill-treatment or torture which is documented in the admission sheet. Furthermore, persons can also access a Welfare Officer working on a full-time basis within the Agency.

As a rule, when legal aid service is requested by female migrants during the asylum and return appeals procedures, the Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality (MHSE) assigns a female legal representative (and interpreter, if required) to the case.

The Housing Authority (HA) strives to identify market shortfalls and address them accordingly – especially when it comes to the most vulnerable members of society. The HA's vision is captured by the Mission statement, "To provide and sustain decent social and affordable housing opportunities, promote stability, and support social mobility." In line with this, the HA ensures equal access to applicants and victims and that the processes are non-judgemental, without prejudice, whilst giving dignity to victims and applicants. The services provided are people-centred, and continuous evaluation takes place to develop new schemes and improve existing ones.

HA offers 16 schemes to assist households, including those of victims of DV, to adjust to the market situation. These schemes are grouped in three categories:

- Supporting individuals in becoming homeowners
- Providing relief and assistance to low-income earners who are not homeowners but are able to rent out their own place
- Increasing and regenerating the stock of social accommodation

HA is committed to remaining abreast with ongoing developments in consultation with stakeholders to identify new areas of vulnerability. Recent schemes, like the New Hope and Sensibility schemes, both of which are targeted towards persons with disability, are a testament to the HA's sensitivity to assist vulnerable categories, that will help to make a difference in the lives of these beneficiaries.

With regards to employment, Jobsplus strives to assist its clients in finding the right job and providing tailor-made guidance services based on their individual needs. Any person residing legally in Malta is eligible to benefit from the training, schemes and services mentioned below, provided the eligibility criteria is met.

Upon communication with Jobsplus for initial guidance, clients are allocated an employment advisor. Victims of DV may opt to be referred to the Inclusive Employment Services or remain in the mainstream caseloads. In both cases, a meeting between the individual and the employment advisor is set to discuss the current situation, the options available and to develop a Personalised Action Plan. During this meeting, the employment advisor provides information on where to search for jobs, local training opportunities and relevant Jobsplus services such as short courses, work exposure schemes, traineeships, and any other Jobsplus initiatives. More specific services include career tests, mock interviews, CV building and the Outcome Star tool which focuses on the current state of the individuals and the milestones expected to reach following reaching out to Jobsplus. Jobsplus also organises other activities such as ad hoc information sessions and developmental workshops to targeted audiences. These workshops/information sessions which may be organised in collaboration with other entities, tackle different themes related to employment.

If a victim of DV opts to be referred to the Inclusive Employment Services Unit, they are then offered specific services to vulnerable clients. Most of the services are offered through the ESF funded VASTE Programme. The programme provides a holistic assessment to participants by means of various training options and professional support which might lead to several employment opportunities. Through the VASTE Programme, individuals can benefit from counselling, social work and psychological assistance, specific training for employment, motivational interviewing, and mentoring services amongst others.

DV victims can also benefit from the Bridging the Gap Scheme and the Access to Employment (A2E) scheme. The Bridging the Gap Scheme is designed to support the client in the transition period from unemployment to employment. It allows the employer to evaluate the performance of the client in the workplace, prior to proper engagement. The employer and Jobsplus enter into an agreement regarding the work exposure period, whereby the client is placed on the scheme with the prospect of employment. On the other hand, the A2E Scheme provides financial employment aid to enterprises in Malta and Gozo to promote the recruitment of the more challenging jobseekers and inactive persons. Through this scheme, the integration into the labour market is facilitated by enhancing opportunities to access the labour market and providing work experience to those furthest away from gainful employment, bridging the gap between labour market supply and demand and increasing social cohesion.

1.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
2	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to prevent and combat violence against women who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>CGBVDV is committed to designing and delivering regular awareness-raising campaigns to increase awareness amongst the public on the different forms of GBV and DV. CGBVDV designed and implemented several campaigns which addressed the intersectional element of violence, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘We Are All Human’ campaign which focused on same-sex intimate partner violence. This online campaign, held in 2021, was developed in consultation with LGBTIQ+ activists. • ‘My Disability Does Not Mean Consent for Abuse’ was an online campaign delivered in 2021 and it sought to raise awareness on violence experienced by persons with disability. This campaign was implemented in collaboration with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD). • ‘All Humans have Dignity. RESPECT. PROTECT.’ campaign aimed to target the experiences of migrant victims of GBV and DV, the barriers that migrants and professionals working with migrants encounter and to raise awareness on GBV and DV within migrant communities. This campaign was delivered in 2022 in collaboration with the Migrant Women Association Malta and the UNHCR Malta. • ‘The Fear of Coming Out and Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence’ was an informative panel discussion organised for Euro Pride 2023. Through this initiative, CGBVDV raised awareness on the negative experiences that LGBTIQ+ persons face when they come out to their families, abusive intimate relationships, and the professional support services available. <p>National helplines were included in all campaigns to empower persons affected by violence to seek help or report abuse.</p> <p>Through the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028), and as part of its work in implementing policy measures under the pillar of prevention, CGBVDV is committed to develop targeted awareness-raising campaigns addressing specific communities where the prevalence of violence and abuse may be greater. CGBVDV shall also be conducting research on the prevalence and barriers encountered by migrant communities in Malta to better shape policy development. Furthermore, CGBVDV shall develop training programmes for professionals who work with migrants to facilitate the early detection of abuse and identify barriers encountered by migrants who are victims of GBV and DV. This strategy also aims to strengthen specialised services by focusing discussions on establishing new accessible shelters for different groups (e.g., victims with substance abuse, male victims, and persons within the LGBTIQ+ community etc). Measures specifically targeting the Gozitan community have been included, particularly those related to increased capacity across agencies, awareness-raising efforts, and minimizing barriers to reporting by victims in Gozo.</p>		

Addressing challenges that arise due to double insularity for those residing in Gozo, the Ministry for Gozo and Planning (MGP) participated in the events organised by the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, particularly through training of personnel and awareness raising. Additionally, the MGP is represented on the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) chaired by CGBVDV to highlight areas that need to be addressed within the Gozitan Community while also staying abreast of the ongoing services that are available for victims or potential victims of GBV and DV in Malta and Gozo.

The [LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy and Action Plan](#) recognises the additional institutional and social barriers faced by LGBTIQ+ victims of DV and intimate partner violence (IPV). As such, Measure 05.05 seeks to sustain the works of CGBVDV to target high-risk groups (incl. trans and intersex persons) in awareness-raising efforts and access to reporting.

GEMSAP also adopts intersectionality throughout, considering not only gender, but gender in combination with other personal characteristics or identities, ensuring that gender mainstreaming truly results in equality for all.

The services offered by DVS are mindful of intersectionality experienced by the service users, such as migrant women, LBTIQ women, older women, and persons with different abilities. Training initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns always promote the prevention and elimination of violence against women who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination.

The Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA) comprises various health entities. Besides having a blanket policy as documented in the Patients' Rights Charter which does not discriminate between patients, additional services are available to target patients who may encounter intersectional vulnerabilities such as the Obstetrics and Gynaecology consultant and team with a special interest in Migrant Health. This team aims to provide obstetric & gynaecological services for migrant women including those who may have experienced FGM, which practice has been outlawed in Malta. The Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department also collaborates with FSWS on a project whereby their responsible Ministry provides funding for the provision of long-term contraception for service users with social problems, such as, minors in care homes among others.

The [Migrant Health Liaison Office within Primary Health Care](#) (PHC), provides a range of services promoting cultural competence within the health care service, health education for migrants, training for cultural mediators, supporting cultural mediators working at PHC, participation in related EU projects, assistance for those who are at risk of FGM and training of health care professionals in migrant health issues. A General Practitioner service was also set up within migrant detention centres to address the needs of migrants.

Sub-title II of the Criminal Code addresses Sexual Offences, including abductions, marriages with abducted persons, defilement of minors, inducing or instigating minors or persons of age into prostitution or to participate in pornographic performance. In 2021, amendments were introduced to Articles 202 and 208AC of the Criminal Code include aggravating circumstances that increase punishment by one or two degrees when a crime includes minors, relatives, partners or ex-partners, victims with a disability, etc. In addition, in 2023, Parliament approved a proposal to amend national legislation which will allow victims and witnesses of sexual offences to give testimony via recorded means or through video conferencing. This aims

to further safeguard victims from re-living trauma and facing their perpetrator. These amendments show Malta's commitment to implement the Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA of 24 October 2008 on the fight against organised crime.

In line with Chapter 602 of the Laws of Malta, the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act, the Child Protection Network is held quarterly, and it is aimed at fostering collaboration on child protection matters, including cases, across different departments, namely the Police, the Department of Health and the Department of Education together with the Directorate of Child Protection Services. The Technical Sub-Committee was set up in 2020 as directed by the Minister for Social Policy and Children's Rights and was represented by the Education Department (and the National School Support Services (NSSS)), the Health Department, the Directorate for Child Protection Services, the Directorate for Alternative Care, AWAS and the police. The first task of the Technical Sub-Committee was to issue the Mandatory Reporting Guidelines which state that child abuse and maltreatment are usually associated with episodes of physical violence on a minor; inappropriate sexual acts on a minor; neglect on a minor; episodes of belittlement, humiliation and emotional derogation on a minor; sexual exploitation; FGM; exposure to violence or risks; fabricated induced illnesses; forced marriage; online abuse; human trafficking; child labour; etc. The same document includes FGM under harmful practices that cause physical harm and hence constitute abuse. It also specifies that if someone suspects that a minor is known to be at risk of FGM; underage marriage; exposure to violence; exposure to risks associated to addictions; child labour; human trafficking; prostitution; fabricated illnesses; etc. the person is obliged to immediately refer the minor to the Child Protection Directorate. The guidelines were issued in 2020. In 2023, NSSS also revised the working practices between NSSS and DVS within FSWS which were published in the '[Collection of Services](#)' issued by CGBVDV.

AWAS has other measures in place to prevent migrant and asylum-seeking women and children from falling victim to criminal activity such as trafficking and exploitation. AWAS introduced a gender Specific Welfare Officer in the Initial Reception Centres providing hospital and health support to females especially single mothers and pregnant women. Moreover, male and female doctors were assigned in the reception centres to cater for different gender needs. Sessions have also been ongoing in AWAS centres to provide information about services to assist in dealing with past traumatic situations and awareness in relation to the threat posed by human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The sessions were delivered by FSWS as part of the All Equal project, in collaboration with AWAS and the Correctional Services Agency, and coordinated by the Human Rights Initiatives Unit within HRD. These sessions have been designed on the basis that knowledge is the key to combat human trafficking. While every person can end up a victim of human trafficking, AWAS is aware that certain situations increase the risk of persons to be trafficked. The sessions were aimed towards those marginalized groups that would include migrants, homeless persons and persons in prostitution.

In March 2021, IPA and AWAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on procedures regarding medical referrals of applicants for international protection with FGM-based claims. The MoU establishes an automatic referral mechanism whereby IPA can refer female asylum applicants, who base their protection claim on FGM grounds and subject to their consent, to AWAS for onward referral to national health authorities. The aim is to obtain a medical assessment resulting in a certificate documenting whether or not FGM has been performed on the applicant. A fast-track procedure has been established between the GU clinic and AWAS to establish a better relationship to support the beneficiaries to be referred to such clinic. AWAS professionals attended GBV roundtables organised by UNHCR. These female beneficiaries are followed daily by a social worker

and a gender specific welfare officer. In cases of separated children, AWAS introduced a DNA Test Procedure which is also being used in suspected cases of trafficking.

AWAS are also liaising with Active Citizen Education in creating workshops for male and female beneficiaries that focus on integration, equality and diversity, exploring the benefits of being an active citizen for one's self and society, to develop a better understanding of diversity and the benefits of inclusion, including improved morale and retention in the workplace and gain practical skills in using art forms, such as music or dance, to promote social inclusion and raise awareness about important social issues.

During the process of conducting a risk assessment to ascertain whether an applicant possesses a legitimate apprehension of persecution or faces a tangible threat of significant harm upon repatriation to their country of origin, IPA diligently considers all pertinent factors. These factors encompass the applicant's comprehensive profile, such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and others, alongside an examination of the prevailing conditions within the applicant's region of origin. It is imperative to emphasize that this evaluation also includes an appraisal of the potential risk of GBV that female applicants seeking international protection may encounter in their respective countries of origin.

When an unaccompanied minor submits an application for asylum, they are provided with a representative, appointed by the competent authorities. In this regard, it is important to note that before IPA can proceed with the asylum procedure, a representative needs to be appointed to ensure that the unaccompanied minor is provided with the necessary assistance. Moreover, a personal interview will only take place in the presence of the applicant's representative. IPA takes all possible measures to ensure that personal interviews and decision-making involving unaccompanied minors are done by staff specifically trained in child-related matters. To this effect, IPA staff regularly participates in relevant EASO training modules, including the module 'Interviewing Children'. If it is established that an unaccompanied minor does not meet the criteria to be granted international protection, IPA would grant them Temporary Humanitarian Protection until they reach the legal age of 18, to avoid an unaccompanied minor being repatriated to their country of origin. Accompanied minors are generally not interviewed, unless a request is made directly by the adult responsible for them, by the minor themselves, or it is established that a personal interview would be in the best interest of the child.

[Malta's Social Vision 2035](#) aims to integrate a system which recognises and addresses the complexities of experiences of violence to target and address intersectionalities and different vulnerable groups. The future policy goals incorporated in the Social Vision 2035 which relate to intersectionalities include:

1. Drive inter-disciplinary action and inter-agency collaboration for the prevention, reporting, timely intervention to address abuse and exploitation.
2. Reduce barriers to reporting abuse and victimisation through more secure protection for victims that report abuse.

The Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights (MSPC) has initiated implementation of the policy goals under its remit, particularly policy goals on childhood, poverty and families. Other policy goals are expected to be achieved through the implementation of targeted policy instruments, strategies and action plans developed by the relevant ministries and stakeholders. The objectives defined within the [Malta's Social Vision 2035](#) will

	be monitored by the MSPC on a bi-annual basis through appropriate monitoring tools to ensure that the objectives outlined within the Social Vision are implemented through the various strategies, plans and policies as appropriate.
2.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:
3	<p>In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Article 4, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:</p> <p>Malta shall be implementing the necessary changes to existing legislative and administrative procedures to protect migrant victims of violence and abuse to ensure they are not prevented from leaving violent relationships due to fear of deportation, loss of legal status or revoked custody over children.</p> <p>Despite the name of the service including only the words ‘domestic violence’, the DVS unit within Aġenzija Appoġġ also work with victims of GBV. The DVS collaborates with other entities and stakeholders that offer specialised services to women who are or might be exposed to intersectional discrimination, such as UNHCR, AWAS, Active Ageing & Community Care (AACC), Rainbow Support Service, Gender Wellbeing Clinic, Aġenzija Support, amongst others.</p> <p>Various entities are involved in the prevention of GBV and DV through the delivery of information and awareness-raising sessions with students and young persons, as well as adults in the community, and professionals who meet victims and perpetrators. These include the CGBVDV, CRPD, FSWS, the Commissioner for Children (CfC), the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) HRD, VSA, and the NSSS.</p> <p>Malta recently enacted the Domestic Violence Prevention Act whereby a legal mechanism was created to enable persons in a relationship to access information through the Victim Support Agency, to check whether their partner was previously convicted of cases of DV.</p> <p>With regards to GREVIO’s recommendation encouraging the Maltese authorities to raise awareness and provide training and guidelines to all professionals who may be in contact with women and girls at risk of FGM, a total of 78 professionals from NSSS within the Ministry for Education, Sports, Youths, Research and Innovation (MEYR) attended training on FGM during the summer of 2023. The training was delivered by TAMA, a Maltese NGO. Further training is planned for more professionals and educators during scholastic year 2023-2024.</p> <p>Information on the services provided to victims of crime and DV has been specifically included in all Legal Aid Malta Agency’s leaflets and translated into Arabic, French, Italian and Russian. In addition, in 2023, the information campaign about legal aid services was televised on national television and social media included material about the rights of victims (which includes GBV and DV). The Agency also intends to keep promoting legal aid services to victims in its awareness and information campaigns.</p> <p>In line with the Intra-Ministerial Anti-Racism Action Plan, MGP is holding dialogue and cooperation meetings with members of minority groups and their representative organisations. These meetings enable discussions and a better understanding on any measures needed, as perceived by residents and citizens alike, to be taken to promote and protect the right for everyone, to live free from violence in both public and private sphere.</p>

	<p>In June 2022, Malta introduced the aggravating factor of 'femicide' as a legal amendment in its Criminal Code, Chapter 9 of the Laws of Malta. Whilst the Criminal Code already provided for the harshest punishment for crimes of murder, the new provision, Article 211(a) of Chapter 9, encourages the judiciary to not exercise leniency when considering the judgement of persons found guilty of attempted wilful homicide or wilful homicide of a person of the female gender. Furthermore, Article 227 of the Criminal Code reiterates that wilful homicide under the circumstances outlined in Article 211(a) shall not be excusable, thereby removing the possibility of 'crime of passion' defence usually used in such cases to elicit a softer sentence.</p>		
<p>II. Comprehensive and co-ordinated policies implemented under the responsibility of an adequately mandated and resourced co-ordinating body (Articles 7 and 10)</p>			
4	Have your authorities developed a long-term plan/strategy to prevent and combat violence against women?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A (a plan/strategy was already developed at the time of GREVIO's baseline evaluation) <input type="checkbox"/>
4.1	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
5	<p>Which forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention are addressed by the plan/strategy? Please offer a brief description specifically indicating the forms of violence not previously addressed in plans or strategies at national level.</p> <p>Malta's third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028) places a particular focus on the development of targeted policies on specific forms of violence, including female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sexual violence, sexual harassment and gender-based cyber violence. Such policies shall be coordinated and developed in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders. The Strategy also mentions GBV in its broader sense to ensure flexibility so that issues arising throughout its implementation period will also be addressed.</p> <p>Forms of violence which are included in the third national strategy but were not addressed in Malta's previous strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Psychological violence - Economic violence - Stalking 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sexual harassment - Child Witnesses <p>In accordance with Measure 1.1k of the third National Strategy, Malta plans to develop a strategy on human trafficking which shall address issues related to forced prostitution and exploitation for sexual purposes as a crime.</p> <p>In addition, Malta is working towards criminalising the act of virginity testing to eradicate this traumatic and violent experience against women and girls. A Bill to amend Chapter 9, Criminal Code, of the Laws of Malta has been presented to Parliament by the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality and has already been approved in the second reading. This law is expected to enter into force in the first quarter of 2024.</p> <p>The Minister for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector together with the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality presented a Bill to amend Article 251F of the Criminal Code (Forced Sterilization) to comprehensively ban enforced sterilization, with the only exception being in cases of medically necessary life-saving treatment. Emphasis on the importance of free and informed consent in line with the UNCRPD is being made, particularly since forced sterilization disproportionately affects women with disabilities. Aggravated circumstances to one degree when fraud, false pretences and coercion are used to make the person consent are being introduced, in addition to already existing aggravating factors.</p> <p>Evidence-based measures referring to child witnesses of GBV and DV have been included in the National Strategy after research has been conducted on prevalence rates and their experiences with witnessing GBV and DV.</p>		
6	Was specific attention given to place the rights of women victims at the centre of all measures planned?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.1	If yes, please specify how:		
6.2	<p>[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:</p> <p>Malta continues to uphold its gender-neutral stance as set out in the Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 581) of the Laws of Malta. Thus, the measures within the national action plan aim to prevent and combat GBV and DV committed against women whilst also recognising that there are other victims of violence, such as queer and non-binary individuals, boys and men, including within the LGBTIQ+ community. Nevertheless, the actions within the strategy are comprehensive and whilst acknowledging that violence disproportionately affects women and girls, the measures aim to encompass all genders to ensure all persons are protected from violence.</p>		
7	Do the plan/strategy and the measures contained therein involve all relevant actors, such as government agencies, the national, regional and local parliaments and authorities, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

7.1	<p data-bbox="297 229 707 256">Please specify the actors involved:</p> <p data-bbox="297 296 2038 395">A multi-disciplinary approach to GBV and DV has been adopted in the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028). It includes 23 measures and 81 specific actions which various entities are responsible for, either individually or in collaboration. Government agencies, authorities and equality bodies, responsible for these measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="344 472 1043 571">- Ministry for Social Policy and Children’s Rights (MSPC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="394 507 909 534">▪ Office of the Commissioner for Children <li data-bbox="394 541 1003 568">▪ Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) <li data-bbox="344 612 1330 890">- Ministry for Home Affairs, Security, Reforms and Equality (MHSR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="394 647 743 675">▪ Malta Police Force (MPF) <li data-bbox="394 681 788 708">▪ Victim Support Agency (VSA) <li data-bbox="394 715 947 742">▪ Department of Probation and Parole (DPP) <li data-bbox="394 748 1330 775">▪ Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (CGBVDV) <li data-bbox="394 782 1133 809">▪ National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) <li data-bbox="394 815 831 842">▪ Human Rights Directorate (HRD) <li data-bbox="394 849 1205 876">▪ Policy Development and Programme Implementation Unit (PDPI) <li data-bbox="344 932 1155 995">- Ministry for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector (MIV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="394 967 1155 995">▪ Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) <li data-bbox="344 1037 1155 1209">- Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector (MJR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="394 1072 792 1099">▪ Court Services Agency (CSA) <li data-bbox="394 1106 855 1133">▪ Office of the Attorney General (AG) <li data-bbox="394 1139 775 1166">▪ Department of Justice (DoJ) <li data-bbox="394 1173 707 1200">▪ Legal Aid Malta (LAM) <li data-bbox="344 1251 1272 1315">- Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="394 1286 1272 1315">▪ Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability (DRLLE) <li data-bbox="344 1356 1079 1383">- Ministry for Social and Affordable Accommodation (MSAA)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Authority (HA) - Ministry for Finance and Employment (MFE) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jobsplus - National Statistics Office (NSO) - Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA) - Ministry for Gozo and Planning (MGP) <p>Civil Society was also given prominence throughout the Strategy. NGOs which provide a service in the sector as well as those committed to advocacy work in the field were consulted and their feedback was taken onboard. The following NGOs have been consulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rainbow Support Services – MGRM - Men Against Violence - Dar Merħba Bik (DV first stage shelter) - Dar Santa Bakhita (DV second stage shelter) - Women’s Rights Foundation - Fondazzjoni Sebħ (DV second stage shelter) - Victim Support Malta - SOS Malta - SOAR – St Jeanne Antide Foundation (provides services of community social work and a family centre for DV victims) - Women for Women Foundation <p>CGBVDV is also committed to continue holding frequent meetings with civil society organisations to strengthen the collaboration between national stakeholders and NGOs. A specific action in the Strategy ensures that NGOs will be involved in the design of policies and legislative changes, through consultation processes and quarterly meetings between the IMC and NGOs.</p> <p>Finally, the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) will serve the CGBVDV to continue to ensure that adequate monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy along with bilateral meetings being held with more focused discussions on the implementation of particular measures.</p>			
7.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:			
8	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%; padding: 2px;">Have the authorities assigned the role of co-ordinating body to one or more fully institutionalised entities?</td> <td style="width: 15%; padding: 2px;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="width: 15%; padding: 2px;">No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Have the authorities assigned the role of co-ordinating body to one or more fully institutionalised entities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Have the authorities assigned the role of co-ordinating body to one or more fully institutionalised entities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>		

			N/A (a co-ordinating body was already established at the time of GREVIO's baseline evaluation) <input type="checkbox"/>
8.1	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
9	Please specify the mandate, powers, and competences, as well as the composition, of the co-ordinating body/bodies:		
9.1	In particular, please indicate whether the co-ordinating body/bodies is/are responsible for:		
	- Co-ordination of policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> The co-ordination body responsible is:	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Implementation of policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> The co-ordination body responsible is:	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat violence against women	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> The co-ordination body responsible is:	No <input type="checkbox"/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-ordination of the collection of data, analysis and dissemination of its results 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> The co-ordination body responsible is:	No <input type="checkbox"/>
10	Please specify the human and financial resources allocated to the co-ordinating body/bodies:		
11	<p>In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Articles 7 and 10, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:</p> <p>CGBVDV has signed several MoUs with national stakeholders to ensure effective cooperation and coordination in the areas of education and training, research, awareness-raising, and data collection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MoU with the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) - MoU with the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) - MoU with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing (UoM) - MoU with the Department of Justice (MJR) - MoU with the Women’s Rights Foundation (NGO) <p>MSPC has contributed towards the setting up of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meeting (MARAM) in collaboration with MPF. In conjunction with this, work was carried out on the proposal of a subsidiary legislation to strengthen the MARAM’s role and functions within Malta’s legal and policy areas. This measure was taken to ensure prevention and protection of victims of violence, especially women and children. FSWS is represented in the MARAM through the Domestic Violence Unit, the STOP! The Violence and Abuse Service, Sedqa Community Team, and Child Protection Services. The Designated MARAM Officers (DMOs) of each service contributes to these meetings by presenting and discussing high risk cases being seen by the respective services. Other Ministries, agencies and entities which participate in the MARAM include the MHA, VSA, NSSS, MPF and the Department of Probation and Parole.</p> <p>MPF implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in early 2023 which focuses on providing a service of excellence to victims of DV aimed at ensuring that immediate and proportionate actions is taken uniformly across MPF for each report that is filed.</p>		

VSA also entered into agreements and MoUs with other entities including NGOs to enhance service provision and ensure a uniform and common referral system. VSA is currently conducting a legal screening exercise to evaluate all pertinent legal instruments. Furthermore, VSA is currently conducting an internal exercise with external experts to identify strengths and weaknesses in the service provision.

As from 1st January 2024, Legal Aid Malta Agency has created two specialized panels to assist victims: one for legal advice (pre-litigation) and another panel for court representation. This will strengthen victims' (including victims of GBV and DV, who are women and girls, victims of human trafficking, and others) opportunity to benefit from the assistance of dedicated legal professionals for court representation.

Legal Aid Malta has entered MoUs with these entities:

- Declaration of intent between VSA and Legal Aid Malta declaring the intention of both public bodies to assist and cooperate with each other to support victims of crime (September 2021).
- MoU between Legal Aid Malta, FSWS and the Police Victim Support Unit to establish terms and conditions under which each entity will meet and function across the Maltese Islands.

MEYR has always prioritised the safeguarding of children, being the first Ministry to locally issue a Child Protection Policy back in 1999. The procedures define the four types of child abuse and include clear referral procedures and mandatory reporting for all education staff. A revised MoU was signed in 2016 as an addendum to the National Policy issued in 1999. The MoU was revised in 2018 and both documents remain active to date.

Following the enactment of the Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act (Chap. 602), NSSS were invited to join the National Child Protection Investigative Network which is targeted to build a local integrated child protection system. The Child Protection Network is held quarterly to foster collaboration across different departments on matters related to child protection, including cases. This network consists of the Police, the Department of Health, the Department of Education and the Directorate of Child Protection Services. The first task was to revise the 2016 MoU. The MoU reflects the legal definition of child abuse which was amended in the 2020 Minor Protection (Alternative Care) to include a wide-encompassing definition of "significant harm" such that it includes abuse, neglect, harassment, ill treatment, exploitation, abandonment, exposure, trafficking, fear of violence, female genital mutilation as well as experiencing and witnessing DV. Significant harm is therefore the threshold at which children's social care services have a duty to intervene in family life to protect a child. Forced marriage also falls under the definition of child abuse and maltreatment. This MoU is in its final stages of approval.

The Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE) works closely with Child Protection Services and victim support services. Relevant feedback on children attending SfCE's schools is provided and discussed during MARAM.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) has developed and signed MoUs with the following entities:

- Aġenzija Appoġġ, Għabex shelter, Stop the Violence Abuse Service and Child to Parent Violence within FSWS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Support Malta • Dar Merħba Bik and Dar Santa Bakhita within The Good Shepherd Sisters – Dar Merħba Bik Foundation • Il-Milja within Fondazzjoni Sebħ • Department of Probation and Parole • The Malta Police Force <p>The HA assists victims of DV who have just moved out of their matrimonial home by financing the deposit and first rent required to lease a privately owned dwelling (dwelling within an area where the victim has community support and would be away from the perpetrator). This initiative, demonstrates empowerment, encourages economic independence and enables the start of a new life away from the perpetrator.</p> <p>Victims may benefit from social accommodation in a residence provided by the state once their court case for separation has been settled, however in the meantime, documents related to their application are also accepted, to facilitate their process.</p> <p>The Ministry for Justice and Reforms of the Construction Sector (MJR) has set-up an interdisciplinary team of professionals tasked with making recommendations on the reform of the family courts and related services such as mediation in the family court. The first set of recommendations are going to be issued for public consultation and they address in part the process of the family court to make it more sensitive to the plights of victims of DV who are undergoing separation or divorce proceedings. Once implemented, the measures will indiscriminately apply to all the residents in Malta and Gozo.</p> <p>At the same time, MJR is internally discussing other initiatives that would address the needs of victims in all instances, including victims of DV.</p>															
III. Financial resources (Article 8)																
12	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">Have your authorities allocated specific funds at the</td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>- national</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>- and/or regional</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>- and/or local</td> <td>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>levels of government for activities to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention?</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Have your authorities allocated specific funds at the			- national	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	- and/or regional	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	- and/or local	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	levels of government for activities to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention?		
Have your authorities allocated specific funds at the																
- national	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>														
- and/or regional	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>														
- and/or local	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>														
levels of government for activities to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention?																
12.1	If yes, what is the annual amount of these funds? If possible, please specify the percentage of the total national state budget that the amount represents.															

12.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
13	Have these funds increased since the publication of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, by what amount:	No <input type="checkbox"/>
14	Have your authorities taken measures to foster long-term and sustainable financial support for non-governmental organisations working to support victims and prevent violence?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
14.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>MSPC annually allocates funds to finance Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) for a duration of 3 years with a possibility of renewal with various Voluntary Organisations (VOs) and NGOs which, directly or indirectly, support victims of DV and operate specialized services for women and their children. These VOs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Support Malta which runs Care for Victims of Sexual Assault (CVSA): €420,000 (2024 – 2026), • Dar Merħba Bik (DV first stage shelter) and Dar Santa Bakhita (DV second stage shelter): €1,074,195 (2022 – 2024), • St Jeanne Antide Foundation (SOAR) which provide various services in the sector including community social work and a family service centre for DV victims among others: €162,240 (2024 -2026) • Il-Milja Programme (DV second stage shelter) which is run by Fondazzjoni Sebħ under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Malta: €1,013,070 (2021 – 2023). Negotiations are underway for another 3-year renewal. <p>The Ministry further sponsors other organisations which offer more generic services including homeless shelters which extend emergency services to distressed women and their children, and who eventually are transferred to the more specialised services/homes mentioned above.</p> <p>In 2015, MGP signed a tripartite contract with MSPC and Fondazzjoni Kenn u Tama with regards to the management of Dar Emmaus which serves as an emergency shelter for DV and homelessness. As part of this contract, the MGP provides €40,000 in funding to Fondazzjoni Kenn u Tama for the administrative management of this shelter.</p> <p>Services are not restricted to women with children. Gender-neutral victims are similarly catered for through a tailor-made agreement, which was negotiated in 2023 with the Association of the Friends of Thouret. The association supports and assists vulnerable persons, particularly those involved in prostitution, through their services at Dar Hosea.</p>		

14.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
15	In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Article 8, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:		
IV. Non-governmental organisations and civil society (Article 9)			
16	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to further recognise, encourage and support the work of relevant non-governmental organisations and of civil society active in combating all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including in terms of funding and co-operation?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
16.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>Government is committed to honour the Istanbul Convention and through collaboration with various NGOs, endeavours to meet the demand of DV victims, victims of sexual assault and any other type of violence or abuse. FSWS acknowledges the efforts of non-governmental organisations through engaging in Public Social Partnerships (PSPs) through the MSPC. These PSPs are funding agreements with NGOs who run a service delivery, such as Dar Merħba Bik Foundation and Fondazzjoni Sebħ, who run an emergency and second-stages shelters. This ensures that women who are victims of abuse and their children have an alternative, secure and safe residence during times when they require shelter and protection.</p> <p>Aġenzija Appoġġ monitors and verifies the provision of services extended by partner VOs. Through this control process and the ensuing feedback, the PSP Working Group ensures that allocated funds are being properly utilized and accounted for.</p> <p>The option of self-referral already exists in our systems. Anyone can go and knock on Dar Merħba Bik, Maria Dolores, Tereza Spinelli or Il-Milja at any time of the day and the victims would be welcomed. As per agreement, the shelter must then to refer them back to the system so they can be further assisted with other social problems they might be facing.</p> <p>CGBVDV holds regular meetings with non-government organisations to support their work, listen to their feedback and raise any concerns with the relevant stakeholders. Every quarter, CGBVDV invites representatives from NGOs to participate in IMC meetings to further foster multi-agency cooperation between government and non-governmental services.</p> <p>Following the internal drafting of the third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028), a consultation exercise was launched with all stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, which were invited to contribute their perspective, suggestions and long-term vision for their respective organisations to ensure that these are adequately reflected in the scope of the national strategy. CGBVDV recognises that civil society's voice is integral to the shaping of policy and crucial partners in the implementation of such policy measures.</p>		

CGBVDV co-operates with civil society on the delivery of multi-agency training on GBV and DV for frontline professionals which include police officers, social workers, risk assessors, doctors, nurses, counsellors, guidance teachers, probation officers, lawyers and representatives from other governmental agencies and civil society organisations active in combatting all forms of GBV and DV. This training is provided several times a year and targets newly recruited professionals and aims to promote multi-agency cooperation between the various service providers.

Furthermore, CGBVDV collaborates with civil society in the development of its awareness-raising campaigns in accordance with their area of expertise. Several campaigns were designed and implemented in consultation and collaboration with civil society organisations specialising on the following topics:

- *'We Are All Human'*, an online awareness-raising campaign in 2021 on same-sex intimate partner violence in consultation with activists involved in various LGBTIQ+ NGOs.
- *'Your Voice Can Set You Free'* was an awareness-raising initiative as part of the 16 Days of Activism 2022 campaign which consisted of animated videos capturing the experiences of persons affected by DV.
- *'Engaging men and boys in violence prevention'* in collaboration with Men Against Violence. The awareness-raising campaign ended with a conference held on the 18th of March 2022.
- Awareness-raising campaign on sexual violence in 2022, *Consent Matters: Stop Sexual Violence*, aimed at highlighting the importance of consent and the active bystander approach whilst providing more information through video interviews with professionals to explain the services which aid victims of sexual violence. The service providers involved in this campaign were Aġenzija Appoġġ, the Malta Police Force, Health, the Legal Aid Malta Agency and Victim Support Malta.
- Awareness-raising campaign, *'All Humans have Dignity: RESPECT! PROTECT!'*, which centred on migrants' experiences of GBV and DV. This campaign was delivered in collaboration with UNHCR Malta and the Migrant Women Association Malta.

CGBVDV also coordinates multiple training programmes for professionals and information sessions both for professionals and the public. CGBVDV regularly reaches out to NGOs to deliver these sessions and financially compensates them for conducting the sessions.

HRD organises several awareness-raising campaigns through social media posts on different issues related to gender equality. This is often done in collaboration with the GEMSAP Inter-Ministerial Committee, which includes a representative from each Ministry in Malta and the Consultative Council for Women's Rights (CCWR). The CCWR was set up in 2017 with the aim to represent women's rights and serve as a platform for policy development and legislative proposals. The purpose of the Council is to advise the Government on issues affecting women in Malta and to present policy proposals, in the context of an ongoing dialogue with the Minister. The members of the Council are appointed from among persons active in organizations working in the field of women's rights.

VSA has agreements in place with various NGO's regarding service provision, common referral system and joint initiatives and actions.

	<p>In the coming years, Legal Aid Malta Agency intends to initiate various collaborations with non-governmental organisations to provide training to its legal aid warranted professionals providing services to victims.</p> <p>AWAS created awareness and support by the Migrants Advisory Unit which provided information about support structures processes, NGOs, and support available. AWAS also collaborated with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) which organised Women's Circles in open centres. Dance Beyond Borders also organised art workshops and dance therapy groups for female beneficiaries in the centres. Moreover, visits by lawyers and NGOs, including UNHCR, are allowed at open and closed centres to provide information.</p> <p>The HA maintains regular communication with all stakeholders, including NGOs that carry out priceless work in areas such as drug rehabilitation, homelessness, DV, persons with a disability and the elderly. These NGOs are an indispensable source of support for persons with specific needs. The HA is also in communication with CCWR, who are working on proposals directly on ways how victims can be helped even further in terms of housing.</p> <p>Besides social accommodation and schemes provided, the HA collaborates with several NGOs by leasing properties at subsidized rents. In turn, these NGOs will sublet to their clients, who are mainly vulnerable and are on the verge of social exclusion.</p> <p>The HA is also involved in numerous Specialized Housing Programmes, which are projects that are intended to serve as a preventive measure to combat loneliness, isolation, and homelessness. Over the past few years, the HA has collaborated with NGOs such as Richmond Foundation (Dar Tereža, Bormla), Fondazzjoni Sebħ (Dar Mixtla in Birkirkara), Mid-Dlam Għad-Dawl (Dar Bla Ħitan in Birgu), YMCA (Hope in Valletta) and MGRM (Dar Qawsalla in San Ġwann).</p> <p>Specifically, 'Dar Mixtla', which will be headed by Fondazzjoni Sebħ, will be assisting young people, women, and their children, who have been victims of DV and have reached the final stage of support to start living independently. €100,000 have been allocated for this project. What is unique to these programmes is that they are seeking to promote a new approach to housing provision namely through the combination of inclusive domestic design and specialised service provision. At the core of the implementation process is the collaboration with different stakeholders – non-governmental organisations and the Chamber of Architects. While most of these projects are still works-in-progress, their completion will eventually strengthen the social safety net provided by social accommodation in Malta.</p>
16.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:

V. Data collection and research (Article 11)		
17	In implementation of the recommendation addressed to your authorities, have new sectors of the administration started the collection of data in accordance with the requirements of Article 11, paragraph 1?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
17.1	<p>If yes, please specify which sectors:</p> <p>Since 2017, NSO has been collecting and compiling data from shelters aiding victims of DV: FSWS, Victim Support Malta, Emergency Healthcare and the MPF. During 2020 and 2022, new shelters were included in the list of contributors to this data collection exercise. Furthermore, during 2023, Primary Health Care Services, which are responsible for the local clinics (Health Centres), started collecting data with the aim to be included in future exercises.</p> <p>The results of this exercise are published in CGBVDV's annual report and online through the NSO's website at: NSO Malta Crime - NSO Malta (gov.mt).</p> <p>FSWS passes on its data to the NSO for the harmonisation of data on DV and will continue to contribute to the collection of disaggregated data. FSWS also collects and issues statistical reports twice a year: an interim half-yearly report (Jan-Jun) which is then replaced on the website by the full year report (Jan-Dec). The reports can be found in the following link: EN Statistical Report</p> <p>The Gender Based Domestic Violence Unit (GBDVU) within MPF has been collecting data since its inception in October 2020.</p> <p>Health care services collect and provide disaggregated data on victims of GBV and DV on a yearly basis to the Crimes Unit within NSO.</p> <p>The Courts Services Agency (CSA) has started collecting more disaggregated data regarding the nature of the cases being brought before the Family Court, Criminal Jurisdiction which Court presides over DV cases. Past issues related to the data collection of such cases had to do with the different types of cases over which the court presided, and the lack of data management structure needed to observe the data collection parameters outlined in Article 11. Currently, however, CSA is about to issue a tender for a new court management system that will enable a more comprehensive collection of this data.</p> <p>The Court Management System will address lacunae in data collection across all courts. Furthermore, efforts will be initiated in 2024 to streamline the data between the Police GBV Unit, the Office of the Attorney General and the Courts in order to ensure a seamless transition of data between all the different entities involved in DV cases. This is in line with the strategic goals of the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic</p>	

	Violence 2023 -2028 and the Malta Digital Justice Strategy 2022 -2027 which seeks to enhance the analytic capabilities within justice and which specifically mentions the data collection obligations emanating from the Istanbul Convention as one of its goals.		
17.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
18	In implementation of the recommendation addressed to your authorities, have sectors of the administration improved their data collection?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
18.1	<p>If yes, please specify which sectors and how, in particular whether new data categories were added:</p> <p>During the past months, the DASH Risk Assessment was incorporated into the Case Management System and discussions are underway to incorporate the Danger Assessment tool into the Case Management System as well. Therefore, statistics and data on cases of all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention can be collected.</p> <p>The MPF is committed to improving its data collection which is an ongoing process. Collection is conducted by an officer who has the sole responsibility for the task to avoid risks of duplication, false entries and misinterpretations. The collection is carried out through a standardised template which has been redesigned and simplified to instruct personnel to ensure uniformity in data entry. Moreover, a meeting is scheduled in January 2024 with a representative from the MJR since such statistics form a crucial role in formulating external feedback and replies to parliamentary questions.</p> <p>The Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA) is exploring and considering how to improve the quality of the data collection through meetings with health informatics experts on how to include the indicators relevant to GBV and DV in current hospital information systems, including exploring how to trigger referral to services in an automated manner. Talks are still underway between stakeholders to determine how best to implement this and tackling any legal and policy concerns which may arise.</p> <p>Currently, CSA is collecting some disaggregated data related to DV cases that will permit an initial understanding of data trends. More refined data will start to be collected once the Court Management System is implemented.</p>		
18.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
19	Does statistical data collection by law-enforcement agencies and the judiciary enable cases of violence against women to be tracked in order to indicate:		
	- Conviction rates	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	- Types of sentences	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	- Attrition rates	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	- Time-barred proceedings	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>
20	<p>As regards population-based surveys, please indicate any survey conducted since the publication of GREVIO's baseline evaluation report, while specifying the forms of violence covered:</p> <p>Malta took part in a EUROSTAT grant project which included a population-based survey which was implemented across the territory of the EU. More information can be accessed here: Overview - Gender-based violence - Eurostat (europa.eu). Dissemination of main indicators at EU level have already been disseminated. Nationally, results will be disseminated during the coming weeks.</p>		
21	<p>In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Article 11, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:</p> <p>Malta's Social Vision 2035 aspires to build a robust system to effectively recognise and address the diversification of experiences of violence. This will be crucial in addressing intersectionalities and different vulnerabilities. Such a system will require an inter-disciplinary approach and inter-agency collaboration for the prevention, reporting, timely intervention, and holistic compensation of instances of abuse and exploitation. The protection and safety of victims is a priority across the board.</p> <p>The future Policy Goals identified by the Social Vision 2035 related to data collection are the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place the victim at the centre of all legislation, policy development and service provision, by developing and consolidating objective monitoring and evaluating the impact of services and support measures on the individual. 2. Strengthen efforts to address the root causes of violence and other preventive mechanisms. <p>Through the MoU with the Faculty for Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta, CGBVDV commissioned a research study entitled 'Safety in Childhood: A prevalence study of childhood abuse experiences in Malta'. This study was the first of its kind for Malta and the primary objective was to obtain a local prevalence rate of persons who witnessed DV and experienced other forms of abuse during their childhood. The findings of this research study shall further contribute towards informed service provision and policy development in the areas of DV and child abuse.</p> <p>CGBVDV also collaborated with MEYR on the implementation of a pilot project entitled 'A Pilot Study Evaluating the Implementation of 'Safe Dates' – a Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Programme'. The aim of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the 'Safe Dates' programme in changing students' beliefs and attitudes on dating violence and gender stereotypes. The programme was piloted in four secondary state schools with Year 10 students during Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) lessons. The findings of this research are expected to be launched in 2024.</p>		

	<p>The study 'Perpetrators of Domestic Violence: Statistics and Perceptions of Risk Factors for Harmful Behaviour' was commissioned by the Maltese government to the Faculty for Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta to identify the perceptions of professionals regarding risk factors and effectiveness of intervention practices with perpetrators of DV. The findings from this study showcase the importance of perpetrators understanding the consequences and taking responsibility for their crimes whilst recognising that perpetrators require support to take responsibility and change their actions and behaviour.</p> <p>MHSR, on behalf of HRD, has signed an MoU with the University of Malta. This collaboration envisages more research to be conducted in the realms of gender equality and the LGBTIQ+ community. Moreover, the two parties commit to touch base with regards to their respective marketing efforts and policy making in this field. HRD and the University of Malta, in collaboration with multiple other partners, have already hosted three research symposiums on LGBTIQ+ equality which included presentations on research exploring the experiences of LGBTIQ+ victims of violence. These were followed by two research publications, with a third scheduled for next year. This MoU complements the ongoing work the Directorate is pursuing in line with GEMSAP and LGBTIQ+ SAP.</p> <p>The research department within FSWS supports all students from post-secondary level upwards and other individuals to carry out studies and academic research into issues related to violence against women, including by disseminating research studies amongst professionals working within the organisation and encourage them to participate in research studies (https://fsws.gov.mt/en/Pages/StudentForms.aspx). This includes, but is not limited to, the area of DV.</p> <p>Moreover, the DVS within FSWS underwent a thorough review conducted by foreign experts appointed by the European Social Network who identified strengths and recommended alternative solutions to address certain gaps in the service.</p> <p>FSWS is contributing towards the validation process of the Danger Assessment by providing the necessary data required. This validation process is being undertaken by MSPC through the work carried out by Dr Clarissa Sammut Scerri.</p>		
VI. Custody, visitation rights and safety (Article 31)			
22	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to ensure that incidents of violence covered by the scope of the Istanbul Convention are taken into account in the determination of custody and visitation rights of children, notably by judicial authorities?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
22.1	<p>If yes, please specify how this has been done (by legislative amendments or other means)</p> <p>The third national strategy includes an action addressing the monitoring of progress of the coordination between the Family Court and Criminal Court. Discussions on relevant reforms are ongoing through a working group established under the Ministry for Justice.</p>		

	Services within FSWS that work directly with children and families ensure that incidents of violence are taken into account when determining custody and visitation rights of children. Social work court reports are submitted in front of judicial authorities to provide a full assessment of the situation and recommend supervised access visits (SAVs) in cases involving DV.	
22.2	<p>If yes, please specify how the above obligation is implemented in practice, including by providing data indicating to what extent judicial authorities consider all issues related to violence against women in their decisions on custody and visitation rights:</p> <p>As stated above, in child protection cases and separation cases where DV is prevalent, the professionals working with the family recommend to the judicial authorities that SAVs are required. SAVs may continue over an extended period or be discontinued once incidents of DV cease and the perpetrator is receiving the required support, as determined through social work assessment and intervention.</p>	
22.3	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:	
23	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to ensure that visitation rights do not jeopardise the rights and safety of the victim or children?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
23.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>The supervisors in the Supervised Access Visits service guarantee that visitation rights do not compromise the rights and safety of the victim or children. In instances of DV, the supervisors pick up children from their residence and accompany them to the designated venue of the visitation. This is done to prevent there being any contact between the victim and perpetrator whilst ensuring that children are not exposed to additional disputes, arguments, or DV incidents.</p>	
23.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:	
24	<p>In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Article 31, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:</p> <p>CGBVDV collaborated with the Judicial Studies Committee on the organisation and delivery of a training seminar for members of the judiciary in May 2023. The training focused on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dynamics of DV including the concept of power and control and psychological violence. • Understanding victims' experiences including the intersectional element. • Understanding and working with perpetrators of DV including the preventive role of perpetrator programmes and incorporating them into the criminal justice system as a tool to reduce recidivism. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How children experience DV. • FGM and child marriage. <p>In the coming years, CGBVDV is committed to continue to provide training opportunities for the judiciary on various topics related to GBV and DV as outlined in the third national strategy and action plan.</p>		
VII. Immediate response, prevention, and protection (Article 50)			
25	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to improve the prompt and appropriate response of law enforcement agencies, in particular by:		
	- Enhancing training of law enforcement officials on the gendered nature of violence against women and its consequences	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Ensuring a sufficient number of female police officers	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Setting up premises designed to establish a relationship of trust between the victim and the law enforcement personnel	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Ensuring the efficient collection of evidence so that the reliance on the victim's testimony is lessened	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
25.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>The third National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2023 - 2028) contains several measures and actions on training. CGBVDV is committed to strengthening the provision of multi-agency training to improve coordination and cooperation amongst service providers to which law enforcement officials working in the specialised GBDVU within MPF are regularly invited to attend. This training programme includes components which address the gendered nature of violence against women and its consequences, including psychological and trauma experienced.</p> <p>The provision of training is an ongoing process. Each and every member of MPF, including recruits, regularly receive specialised training. Members of the GBDVU receive more frequent and intense training. In 2023, the training sessions were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-agency training – 30 newly-joined personnel - Customer Care for a Service of Excellence Course organised by the Institute of Public Service (IPS) - 30 personnel - Danger Assessment Training – 40 personnel - GBDV course organised by the University of Malta – 12 personnel attended the first group session in 2023 and the remaining officers shall attend in 2024 in three other groups. - Prevention of Juvenile Crime and Domestic Violence organised by Cepol – Insp. C. Sheldon - Rise for Change Training organised by Thames Valley Partnership – 47 personnel 		

	<p>Additionally, the GBDVU workforce has seen a substantial increase in the representation of female police officers. 50% of the GBDVU workforce consists of female police officers as 30 out of 60 officers are female.</p> <p>The Santa Lucija hub will shortly be inaugurated in the Southern region of the island, which will serve as a dedicated workplace for the GBDVU officers and victims alike. Another hub in the Northern region will be inaugurated in Mtarfa. Both hubs should be finalized and inaugurated in 2024. Design of these hubs has taken into consideration numerous factors, especially aimed at providing a comfortable environment which feels safe for the victims and their children who come forward to report their perpetrators.</p> <p>The efficient collection of evidence is governed by the Standard Operating Procedure of the MPF published in 2023.</p>		
25.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
26	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to enable the identification and careful analysis of any failure of protection?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
26.1	<p>If yes, please specify what kind of measures, and if further preventive measures were adopted to remedy this situation:</p> <p>Following the femicide of Bernice Cassar in 2022, a public investigation was conducted to analyse any systematic shortcomings. This investigation, carried out by Judge Emeritus Geoffrey Valenzia, identified two priority areas: scarcity of resources and increasing workloads predominantly at the police force, the court and in social work. The government is implementing several recommendations which emerged from this investigation. To enhance immediate action to safeguard victims of DV and GBV, the government is working on amending the legal definition of the family and domestic unit in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. Such amendments will lead to a reduced workload, allowing for a specialised focus on DV and GBV cases. The MPF will also inaugurate two DV hubs in the northern and southern regions of Malta in 2024 so that victims could benefit from a specialised, accessible, and effective assistance. Remedial action in these instances is dictated by the SOP of the MPF and law enforcement officers are guided accordingly on how to ensure victim protection. In 2023, an addition of 25 police officers joined the GBDVU within MPF, 2 social workers joined the DVU within Aġenzija Appoġġ and, with the aim of motivating students to choose a career in social work, an increase in the stipends of social work students was effected. An increase in magistrates on cases of DV was also noted resulting in a reduction in the backlog of such cases. Moreover, in line with the recommendations from the investigation, an evaluation on risk assessment methods was conducted and the Danger Assessment Tool will soon be operating in Malta.</p> <p>Furthermore, the third national strategy sees the inclusion of an action to study the possibility and develop an action plan for eventual implementation of a centralised system recording bail conditions, protection orders, restraining orders and temporary protection orders when they are issued by the courts. The system is to be made readily accessible to the police and the courts to ensure that violations are registered and sanctions are imposed within the shortest timeframe possible.</p>		

	<p>Moreover, the Family Reform Working Team is about to publish a number of recommendations that are aimed at streamlining the procedures within the Family Court in order to make it less burdensome on the parties involved. Some of the recommendations forwarded by GREVIO in Recommendation 159 are included in this first set of recommendations, such as, the forfeiture of mediation in DV cases, the new role of child advocates as protectors of the rights of the children, the enhanced role of professionals and the introduction of new timeframes which should make the process more efficient. Furthermore, the Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector (MJR) was also actively involved in the redefinition of the DV in national legislation, making it more aligned to the Istanbul Convention and thereby enabling the Family Court in its Criminal Jurisdiction to be more focused on the needs of DV cases.</p>		
26.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
27	In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Article 50, which were not covered by the questions above, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:		
VIII. Emergency barring, restraining or protection orders (Articles 52 and 53)			
28	As regards emergency barring orders, have your authorities taken measures contributing to ensure that the competent authorities are granted the power to order, in situations of immediate danger, a perpetrator of domestic violence to vacate the residence of the victim or person at risk, and to prohibit the perpetrator from entering the residence of or contacting the victim or person at risk.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
28.1	<p>If yes, please indicate which authorities have the power to issue emergency barring orders:</p> <p>Emergency barring orders are only issued by the duty Magistrate, following a request made by the Police. Consequently, the Police has no authority to remove an abuser from the victim's residence indefinitely. The Police only has the authority to enforce such orders.</p> <p>The Criminal Code provides for two types of protection orders, namely the protection order (Article 412) and the temporary protection order (Article 540A).</p> <p>Article 412C of the Criminal Code stipulates the way that protection orders are issued in Malta. The same Article specifies that the Courts are responsible to issue protection orders after due consideration of a number of risks relating to the victims, and the accused. Sections 5, 7 and 8 of</p>		

	<p>Article 412C, relate to the restrictions and prohibitions that the Court may deem fit given the circumstances of the case. Once issued, the Courts are to immediately liaise with the MPF to ensure the monitoring of the protection order and its related barring conditions.</p> <p>The temporary protection order (Article 540A of the Criminal Code) procedure is initiated by the executive police once they receive information or a report on the alleged abuse. A risk assessment is immediately carried out by professionals from a designated agency, and if it results that there are persons at risk of harm, the police will notify the duty magistrate and initiate the procedures for the temporary protection order. A temporary protection order is issued by the courts within 8 hours from application and this remains in force for 30 days or until the date of the first sitting, whichever comes first.</p>		
28.2	<p>If yes, please indicate the length of time for which emergency barring orders may remain in force:</p> <p>Emergency barring orders may remain active for the duration of the court proceedings or for a period of three years from the date of judgement.</p> <p>A temporary protection order is valid for a maximum of 30 days or until the first hearing of the case, given that the police have to institute proceedings within 30 days from the issuing of the temporary protection order. On the other hand, a protection order can remain in effect for a period not exceeding 5 years.</p>		
28.3	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
29	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to ensure the availability of restraining or protection orders to victims of the following forms of violence against women?		
	- Domestic violence	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Stalking	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Sexual violence	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Sexual harassment	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Forced marriage	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Female genital mutilation	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Forced abortion	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	- Forced sterilisation	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
29.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>Restraining or protection orders can be requested at the discretion of the investigating officer for all types of crimes involving violence against women.</p>		

	Protection orders are meted out depending on whether the prosecuting officers request them. The Court will then consider the merits of the application and accord a protection order or temporary protection order based on the evidence brought before it.		
29.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
30	Have your authorities taken measures contributing to ensure the effective enforcement of barring, restraining or protection orders?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
30.1	<p>If yes, please specify:</p> <p>The effective enforcement of barring, restraining and protection orders is governed by the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Malta Police Force.</p> <p>Ongoing initiatives to further strengthen the enforcement of these orders include amendments to legislations on electronic tagging to ensure that cases of GBV and DV are also catered for when protection orders are issued. MHSR is currently also working on the procurement procedures to implement the amendments once they have passed through Parliament.</p>		
30.2	[Optional question: if not, please specify the reasons]:		
31	In case your authorities have taken further measures contributing to the implementation of recommendations in relation to Articles 52 and 53, which were not covered by the questions above, in particular in relation to the collection of data on the number of orders issued and their violations, please report on these measures [word limit: 1000 words]:		

Specific recommendations	
32	Please report on measures taken by your authorities contributing to the implementation of the recommendation to ensure the availability of dedicated rape crisis and/or sexual violence referral centres in Malta and Gozo equipped with trained specialised staff, providing a response to sexual violence and rape with a victim-centred approach, as well as longer-term psychological support, on a one-stop-shop basis, while at the same time ensuring that the reproductive choices of women victims of rape do not constitute a barrier to their access to such services (Recommendation A.7, IC-CP/Inf(2020)9).

	<p>In mid-2022, a working group including all stakeholders, such as, forensic experts, members of MPF, medical professionals and representatives from Victim Support Malta (VSM), the NGO that provides the Care of Victims of Sexual Assault Service (CVSA) within Mater Dei Hospital (MDH), was established and led by MDH. This group meets regularly to update and discuss improvements to the sexual assault services pathways. Over this period, MDH has drafted and updated sexual assault policy to ensure it is more comprehensive, inclusive of services for children and all genders of possible victims whilst adopting a victim-centred approach. This policy is currently at an advanced draft stage pending input from the MDH legal team. MDH is also liaising with the Chief Magistrate regarding this project. A training plan has also been formulated for clinical staff involved in the care of victims of sexual assault to address identified lacunae in knowledge and skills in this area. In the short-to-medium term, two rooms within the current footprint of the Emergency Department have been identified and will be prioritised for the care of victims of sexual assault. These rooms are being equipped for this purpose. In the longer term, the planned new footprint of the enlarged Emergency Department includes a room dedicated for this purpose. Furthermore, victims of sexual violence are provided with the Morning After Pill and the PrEP and PEP medication to protect victims against HIV following sexual assault. These medications are prescribed even if the patient does not wish to submit a police report.</p> <p>FSWS contributes towards the CVSA through the provision of social work and emotional support to victims at the initial stages of police reporting and examination by health professionals and provide follow-up as necessary. This crisis support is available on a 24/7 basis and CVSA crisis workers also assist victims with any follow-up support needed, such as, input from psychologists, psychiatrists and lawyers.</p> <p>The NGO concerned organises and supports victims of sexual assault both in the immediate and in the long term. Hence, NGOs are an essential stakeholder in the pathway for the CVSA providing opportunities for both formal and informal feedback.</p> <p>The service is a coordinated one amongst the different entities that provide the necessary services for victims of sexual assault.</p>
33	<p>Please report on measures taken by your authorities contributing to the implementation of the recommendation to ensure that upon arrival or swiftly thereafter, women asylum-seekers are screened for vulnerabilities such as experiences or risk of GBV that would require safe accommodation and/or special support services and counselling with a view to ensuring their swift transfer to open reception facilities, while at the same time ensuring that women and girls are not placed in mixed-sex reception facilities or immigration detention facilities, including while in asylum detention (Recommendation A.12, IC-CP/Inf(2020)9).</p>
	<p>All irregular migrants are swiftly screened for any emergency medical care that might be required upon arrival in Malta.</p> <p>In 2021, AWAS together with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) formed a Vulnerable Assessment Team which screened asylum seekers for vulnerability. Vulnerability assessments are voluntary and target undocumented migrants and are carried out in closed centres, open centres and even in the community. The Special Needs Vulnerability Assessment tool being used consists of initial observations, background information about the person referred, medical/health conditions and wellbeing, psychological and psychosocial conditions, indication of vulnerability linked to the journey (torture, violence due to armed conflict, FGM, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), GBV, trafficking in human beings (THB), chronic health concerns, and/or risk of harm, current situation and recommendations. FGM is addressed in AWAS' policies on SGBV. The policy related to</p>

SGBV is aimed to establish clear guidelines for the prevention, identification, intervention and follow-up of victims and perpetrators alike of SGBV, who reside in AWAS open centres or are being provided with other AWAS services. The main purpose of such Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to ensure practices are in conformity with a human rights-based approach, to ensure the expression of human dignity and human development; irrespective of gender, to ensure the appropriate referral and work in liaison with the relevant mainstream services when dealing with SGBV victims and perpetrators and to ensure that the best interests of the child are maintained when providing services to minors (accompanied and/or unaccompanied); in collaboration with the relevant mainstream services and Advisory Board as necessary. In January 2023, AWAS set its own Assessment Team which consist of assessors who conduct both Vulnerability Assessments and Age Assessments.

AWAS officials are also present during boat disembarkations to identify the most vulnerable so that they are referred immediately for medical care and for a Vulnerability Assessment and given the necessary support by the Psychosocial Services and Social Work Unit within AWAS.

Women, if detained, are accommodated in separate areas. Minors, families, and vulnerable groups are accommodated in specific open centres to cater for their needs and are not detained.

In 2023, DSA constructed and inaugurated a brand-new Female Compound. This is the first time that the DSA has a specific area to house female detainees which is being operated under a specific SOP.