

INVEST MALTA



Malta may be tiny but it is not afraid of thinking big. Innovative pro-business and liberal social policies have positioned Malta as one of the world's most forward-looking nations that is expected to become Europe's fastest growing economy in 2019.

The Big Story of a Small Island

A booming economy with high GDP growth and record-low unemployment; 7,000 years of history and three UNESCO world heritage sites; an increasingly cosmopolitan country combined with a Mediterranean island lifestyle. This is Malta, a melting pot of old and new, local and global, work and play.

Uniquely Mediterranean

Let's be clear, Malta is small. The archipelago, which comprises Malta, Gozo and Comino, could fit into London five times, but it is densely populated and home to 460,000 people. The main island, Malta, is 27 kilometres long and measures 14.5 kilometres at its widest point, which means crossing Malta rarely takes longer than one hour. The capital city Valletta is both the administrative and business centre of the country, while Sliema and St Julian's are the most popular seaside towns. ►



◀ Mediterranean in nature but with strong Arabic influences, Malta's character is a reflection of its location at the periphery of Europe and on the doorstep of North Africa. Malta's history has seen a succession of foreign rulers, and Malta has always been a place where many cultures meet and mix. This has helped the country to develop its own rather unique flavour. Case in point: the language. Maltese and English are the official languages, with 90% of Maltese being completely bilingual. Maltese, the only Semitic language to be written in Latin script, sounds almost as if it is a dialect of Arabic, with Italian and English words thrown in.

Colourful Malta

Malta enjoys a typical Mediterranean climate, with the average temperature ranging from 12 degrees in winter to 30 degrees in summer. Malta can be windy but clouds never last long – not even in winter, when the countryside starts to come alive after the dry summer months, and the island turns green, with orange and lemon trees adding colour and scent.

Malta has become increasingly multi-ethnic in recent years. Strong economic growth and career prospects have attracted a large expat population, with foreign nationals accounting for 12% of the population. Religion – an estimated 97% of the population are Roman Catholic – is considered an important part of Maltese culture. But despite being a predominantly Catholic country that only began allowing divorce in 2011, Malta today is home to some of the most progressive LGBTQ-related laws in the world.

An Unexpected Star

In recent years the Maltese have worked their way into the super-league of the world's best performing economies. Malta's growth rate has been forecast to reach 5.4% in 2018 and 5% in 2019, which, according to the European Commission's Summer 2018 Forecast, will be the highest rate in the EU. Unemployment is at historically low levels, and Malta is going all out in making itself attractive to foreign workers to fill the positions that become available. Measures include flat income tax rates and fast-track visa services for certain overseas professionals.

At first glance, Malta's rise to the top might seem surprising given that the country possesses no special advantages and only gained independence from Britain in 1964. Many in Malta and abroad credit the decision to join the EU in 2004, and the Eurozone in 2008, with boosting the country's economy. Joining the European club has made Malta far bigger than it has ever been before and bolstered its status of a key business hub in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

While business-friendly policies helped Malta win investment from international companies, its diversified economy that pursued innovation and tapped into new ideas proved to be more resilient than those of much larger countries.

Exportable Service Industries

Famous for its 300 days of sunshine, Malta has become a top tourism destination. In 2017, the island welcomed a record of over two



"We must embrace change and diversity, and we must convert Malta into a cosmopolitan society that is both proud to be Maltese and proud to welcome everyone who wants to live and work here to help raise our country up."

Joseph Muscat
Prime Minister of Malta



Malta's unique appeal, which at times combines a big city vibe with Mediterranean charm, is also playing a role in making Malta an attractive place to work and live.



“Malta is becoming a solid top performer in economic terms, and the outlook is bright. In 2017, our GDP grew by a record 6.6%, one of the highest in Europe.”

Edward Scicluna
Minister for Finance

million tourists, and tourism today accounts for some 25% of the country's GDP. Malta has also seen the growth of exportable service industries. The island has become a centre for financial functions of multinationals and mid-scale firms. In recent years, the finance sector has grown by 18 to 20% annually and today accounts for 11% of the country's GDP. The maritime industry is one of the oldest, and today Malta is home to the largest ship register in Europe and is one of the major logistics providers in the Mediterranean.

The country has also registered strong success within the iGaming industry. iGaming accounts for 10% of the Maltese economy, and the presence of some 250 plus iGaming companies is attracting platform providers, game developers, payment services, support firms and start-ups, who are flocking to the island in droves to join Malta's thriving iGaming ecosystem. There are also opportunities in education, health, energy, aviation, life sciences and pharmaceuticals. A new industry that is expected to add to GDP growth and create jobs is the production of medical cannabis, while the island has a head start on what many believe will be the next great economic opportunity: Distributed Ledger Technologies.

Investment Attraction

Some prominent companies that have invested in Malta include HSBC and BNF in banking; French line CMA-CGM in the port sector; Microsoft, Huawei and Vodafone in IT and telecoms; and Lufthansa Technik and Playmobil in manufacturing. Foreign investment has helped to push Malta's economic performance throughout the years. Malta offers investors a secure and transparent environment in



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which to start or expand a business. The country has introduced business-friendly policies underpinned by a legal and regulatory framework that is fully harmonised with EU legislation. Malta has also built up modern telecommunications and international transport links, while a full package of incentives that range from fiscal benefits to the provision of custom-built production facilities are available to investors. A

fast-track service for visas and work permits, as well as a flat tax rate of 15% for highly qualified foreign professionals, have been introduced to attract the best and the brightest to work in Malta.

Think-Big Confidence

Strong economic growth has transformed Malta into a confident nation, which is now seeking to strengthen its position on the global stage. In view of Brexit,

Malta says it could become the UK's gateway to the European Union. Although Malta is not pitching as aggressively as other nations for UK business, it is quietly positioning itself as an attractive alternative for companies seeking an address in the European Union.

Concurrently though, Malta has to defend its economic model given the increased focus on tax competition in Europe. The island stresses that its tax regime has withstood the tough scrutiny of the European Commission and that the country is supporting all EU and OECD initiatives to combat tax evasion. While Malta's ability to maintain its tax base will define its economic future to a certain extent, taxes are also widely seen as just one factor driving commercial decisions, and the country is paying attention towards increasing the overall ease of doing business.

Moving Forward

Malta's economic diversity strategy of recent years has paid off in spades. Analysts and international institutions all agree that the country's investment appeal has been crucial in unlocking its full potential. Its world-class business environment, cutting-edge technology, competitive labour costs, highly educated workforce and gateway position to European and African markets helped Malta attract companies and capital from Europe, Asia and the US. Investment, across all sectors, will remain a key driver of future growth. When it comes to attracting new businesses, keeping costs in check and maintaining Malta's competitive tax and regulatory frameworks will be important.

Malta's unique appeal, which at times combines a big city vibe with Mediterranean charm, is also playing a role in making Malta an attractive place to work and live. The Prime Minister has set the country the lofty challenge of turning Malta from the best in Europe into the best in the world. Malta is likely to emulate the success of global business locations such as Singapore and Dubai. Mimicking other places though is not an option. Malta will need to draw on its own strengths to define and create its own 21st century identity. ■

Converting Economic Growth into THE WELL-BEING OF A NATION

Malta's sovereign wealth fund is investing in the social transformation and liveability of one Europe's most dynamic countries.

Malta's economy has been one of the best performing in Europe, with the country experiencing an economic renaissance and having enjoyed seven years of breakneck GDP growth. The economy is nearing full employment, which has meant the island has had to attract talent from across the world, but despite these windfalls not everyone in society has benefited equally. Malta now wants to ensure that all segments of society reap the benefits of Malta's booming economy, but, more importantly, the people at the bottom of the ladder who are most at risk of social exclusion. To ensure economic growth truly transforms people's lives, Malta's Government set up a sovereign wealth fund, known as the National Development and Social Fund (NDSF), which has been tasked with investing in sectors that provide essential services to society.

The NDSF

The NDSF is the government agency established to manage and administer 70% of the contributions received from the country's Citizenship-by-Investment scheme, known as the Individual Investor Programme (IIP). The IIP is intended to attract the best and the brightest individuals from around the world, who are not only willing to invest in the country, but also believe in the potential of this small island nation. The Fund has recorded revenues of over €432 million since it was established. It has a wide remit to deliver a positive impact on Malta's society as a whole, including improving access to basic services, enhancing economic opportunities and reducing the vulnerability of the poor.



First Investments

The health sector has been among the first beneficiaries of the Fund, with the national hospital receiving just under €1 million to allow the cardiology department to upgrade the catheterization suites. Another €5 million has been committed to the construction of new apartments in London for Maltese cancer patients undergoing specialist treatment not available in Malta. Some €50 million will be spent on social housing for low-income families and those most at risk of poverty. The Fund will be investing in many more initiatives aimed at eliminating social exclusion, such as educational and support programmes that have the power to break the cycle of poverty. Other projects that are under consideration are the creation of public parks and the building of recreational facilities to promote an active and healthy lifestyle.

Going Forward

While the key focus of the Fund will remain on areas such as the environment, education and health, the Fund also has the mandate to invest in sectors that support the social and economic development of the country. The growing population and heightened economic activity are putting ever-increasing pressure on Malta's health, education, housing and recreational facilities. The Fund is willing to enter into strategic partnerships and alliances to help attract private schools to operate in Malta, expanding both public and private health infrastructure, as well as increasing the supply of housing for low-income families. It is also looking at working with universities and institutions to attract researchers to conduct R&D projects in Malta and increase the level of sophistication of work being carried out from Malta.

An Opportunity for Social Progress

Malta believes that economic growth, as important as it is, will not alone guarantee improvements to all people's lives. Through the NDSF, Malta is clearly not looking at measuring its success by how well the top earners in society are doing, but more by the results the country is achieving in reaching those who need help the most. The NDSF wants to bring about real and sustained changes, so that people feel the difference in their day-to-day life, and to contribute to making Malta a pleasant place to work, live and raise a family. ■



"Our mission is to contribute and support major projects and initiatives, which are intended to develop and improve the economy, public services and the general well-being of present and future generations."

David Curmi
Chairman of the
National Development
and Social Fund

NDSF



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State of INNOVATION

As Malta ventures into new economic sectors, global investors and multinationals are taking advantage of the island's economic boom.



"Toly has been operating in Malta for nearly 50 years. Today, we supply 22 out of the top 30 beauty companies in the world."

Andy Gatesy
Chairman & CEO
of Toly Group



"Lufthansa Technik was the first foreign pioneer in the aviation sector in Malta. This year, we are celebrating our 15th anniversary and with that constant development, growth and success."

Marcus Motschenbacher
CEO of Lufthansa
Technik Malta

In spite of its small size, Malta has become a hotbed for manufacturing multinationals, global finance firms, Pharma producers, IT and software developers, games studios, and blockchain start-ups, which have set up operations on the Mediterranean island. Their growth and success has helped Malta emerge as one of Europe's best performing economies according to the International Monetary Fund. Malta has long recognised that traditional investment incentives are no longer enough to attract foreign companies to its shores. The country's decision to focus on sector-specific regulations, infrastructure, talent and technologies is paying off and driving investment into Malta.

More than Manufacturing

When gaining independence from the UK, Malta had little choice but to attract foreign businesses to offset the fact that it had few natural resources. Initially, Malta sold itself as a cost-competitive manufacturing base for foreign firms. German toy manufacturer Playmobil and French-Italian electronics manufacturer ST Microelectronics were among the first to arrive in the 1970s and 1980s. Other long-time investors include the engineering group Trelleborg and packaging specialists Toly. Many of Malta's first arrivals are still operating on the island, and while new sectors have emerged, existing industries have reengineered their activities to maintain and enhance their competitive edge. Malta has significantly diversified its economic base since it joined the EU in 2004, and the island has seen strong investor interest in areas such as financial services, iGaming, digital games, ICT, aviation, maritime, and life sciences.



Big Name Investors

International banks such as HSBC and trade finance specialist FIMBank, as well as insurance companies like Munich Re, Aon and Marsh have set up operations in the country. Fund administrators Amicorp, Citco and Custom House are also present on the island, as well as a selection of Fortune 100 companies that have structured financial operations in the country. Malta's IT sector has probably attracted the largest number of companies. In addition to software developers, many iGaming companies have chosen Malta because it was the first EU country to regulate this industry. Aircraft maintenance took off when Lufthansa Technik and SR Technics established operations in the country. Currency printing company De La Rue has been on the island since the 60s, while Crane Currency is a more recent addition to Malta's FDI community. The island is also increasingly on decision makers' shortlists when it comes to choosing the location of their international and regional headquarters. Konica Minolta and HeidelbergCement are just some of the corporations that have located corporate management functions on the island. They are now being joined by companies from the fast-growing Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) sector, including Binance, OKEx, DQR, Neufund and Chilliz.



Secret to Success

In many areas, the key to Malta's success is regulation. The island has been continuously pushing the regulatory boundaries in an effort to provide a stable and predictable environment for companies to operate in. Practitioners in Malta's finance centre point to the link between the strong performance of the sector and the island's carefully crafted and continuously developed regulatory frameworks for many specialist activities. Concurrently, business-friendly legislation has breathed new life into Malta's aircraft management industry. The island is also the birthplace of regulated online gaming and, more recently, Malta has received a lot of positive attention for its decision to regulate DLTs. Pharma companies initially came to the island to take advantage of a legal framework for the production of generic drugs. Today, Malta is keen to become the next powerhouse in the medical cannabis industry after coming up with a framework that allows for the manufacture of cannabis-based pharma products. The idea is not just to attract the manufacturers but also their clinical and laboratory research arms. Global leaders in this field are already looking at establishing facilities on the island.



Malta's government has committed itself to making Malta the hub of choice for a wide range of sectors and to make doing business in Malta as easy and efficient as possible.

Talent & More

To guarantee a pipeline of talent for established and new companies moving to Malta, the country is investing heavily in its workforce. The engineering skills of the Maltese are the backbone of Malta's manufacturing firms, offering a vital source of innovation and competitiveness. The aviation sector has benefited tremendously from the introduction of courses for aviation technicians, which were designed in response to industry needs. Malta is also throwing its doors wide open to foreign professionals, who, in sectors such as finance and gaming, can benefit from a 15% income tax rate, as well as a fast-track service for work permits of third-country nationals.

The underlying strengths of Malta are its location and the ease of access that it offers into surrounding markets. Malta's EU membership provides companies with access to the Union's massive internal market of over 500 million people, but the island's connections go far beyond that, and Malta is an ideal jumping-off point for accessing the growing markets of the region. Malta's approach also places a strong emphasis on the creation of sector-specific infrastructure. The government has built a cluster development dedicated to the aerospace industry, including hangars and ancillary facilities, as well as a Life Sciences Park that fosters the growth of biotech companies.



"Trelleborg in Malta was set up in 1961 and is one of the oldest examples of foreign direct investment in Malta. From this tiny island, it supplies 1 billion safety critical seals per year globally to major automotive and industrial players."

Martin Hignett
Managing Director
of Trelleborg Malta



"Crane Currency provides the paper for US currency and banknotes to central banks worldwide. We have built in Malta the most modern banknote printing operation. The facility is twice the size of the Malta football stadium and will be the company's centre of banknote printing."

John Scott
Director of Operations
of Crane Currency



“This summer De La Rue celebrated the production of the 50,000,000th passport at its site in Malta. The first ever purpose built ePassport production facility opened its doors in Malta in 2008 and since then De La Rue has seen productivity grow year on year.”

Edward Chetcuti

General Manager
Operations of De La Rue



“We wanted to tap into the vast and talented resource pool of the EU, and Malta was the perfect place for this. The Malta office now employs highly skilled people from 10 different countries.”

Dean Sharpe
CEO of 4AGames

The Next Generation

The country is now setting the conditions for the next generation of FDI. Manufacturing is moving into Industry 4.0, and companies comment favourable on Malta's ICT infrastructure and connectivity. Research and development, robotics, blockchain technologies and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions are equally gaining in importance in Malta's economic mix and are attracting companies from Europe, Asia and beyond. The digital entertainment industry is poised to become one of Malta's next success stories, with the island attracting studios and digital artists from around the world. There is also the expectation that Malta will become a leader in the medical cannabis field due to the lack of regulations in other European countries. It is one of Malta's priorities to build further the niches it started in recent years. In the aerospace sector, this means that Malta is positioning itself as an on-the-ball-player in the field of drone testing and the development of commercial applications.

Innovation Driven

Malta's government has committed itself to making Malta the hub of choice for a wide range of sectors and to make doing business in Malta as easy and efficient as possible. Leading the way in attracting new companies, as well as supporting companies operating in the country, is Malta Enterprise. The agency is armed with an attractive package of incentives, including soft loans, investment allowances, training grants, tax incentives and the provision of ready built specialised factory space. While smoothing the path for new companies



and getting new investors off the ground, Malta Enterprise is no longer focused on just attracting multinational corporations to invest and set up base on the island. The organisation is also playing a greater role in supporting companies' adoption of automation, nurturing digital capabilities and up-skilling of the workforce.

Into the Future

The long-term goal is to reinforce and widen Malta's economic mix by developing an international standing, not only as a production base, but also as a test-bed for innovation. To achieve this, the government is encouraging research, development and innovation activities, while ensuring that the right skills are in place to keep up with the breakneck pace of change in the development of global manufacturing processes and technologies. By marrying a still relatively inexpensive and business-friendly environment with close proximity to major European and North African markets and a skilled workforce, Malta is luring foreign companies with a unique set of advantages.



DeLaRue

betsson group

TOLY

FIMBANK

HSBC

CRANE
CURRENCY™

4A GAMES

playmobil

Lufthansa Technik

Microsoft

VISTA JET

Munich RE

TRELLEBORG

vodafone

Power of THE NICHE

While nurturing a solid manufacturing sector for over 50 years, Malta has not lost its appeal and is readying itself to become a global leader in high-end niche areas, says **Mario Galea, CEO of Malta Enterprise.**

Rather than focusing on one sector or two, we want to grow **AN ARRAY OF SUCCESSFUL SECTORS**. But we are choosing sectors that we believe we can excel in; sectors that are niche in nature but we can become world leaders in. Examples include our focus on life sciences, aviation, research, advanced manufacturing, ICT and green projects, as well as Distributed Ledger Technologies.

We keep on **REINVENTING OURSELVES**. In aviation, we are a reliable maintenance and repair hub, and now we are positioning ourselves as the ideal location for the testing of drone technologies. In the pharma sector, we started with attracting generic drug manufacturers, now we are on the cutting-edge of medical cannabis production. In the IT sector, we are experiencing strong interest from blockchain companies with the most innovative business ideas.

Malta is not the cheapest location but we know that costs are an important factor for companies when investing abroad. We also have other **UNIQUE SELLING POINTS**, including quality workmanship and advanced engineering skills.

Many of the big-export led projects that invested in Malta in the 1970s have moved up the value chain and are still operating from Malta, and we want to continue **SUPPORTING THE INDUSTRIES** that are already operating from Malta.

In our work, **WE LOOK BEYOND EUROPE** and leverage the advantages of European Union membership to diversify the sources of investment. While we will continue developing our relationships with our traditional partners such as Germany and Italy, we are focusing our efforts on new markets, including Israel, US, Canada, Turkey and Asia.

With a view to Brexit, we are **OFFERING UK COMPANIES** a base that will enable them to continue to access the EU Single Market.

We want to make setting up in Malta as **SEAMLESS AND EFFICIENT** as possible. We can handhold companies through their entire investment journey while facilitating contact with business partners and regulatory authorities. We will continue to support the entities that we have in Malta and attract other quality enterprises in these same niches, but we also want to attract the industries of the immediate future.



Malta Fires up its START-UP ENGINE

Move over Lisbon – Malta is putting all the right elements in place to help early-stage businesses be successful and become Europe's next start-up hub.



"We see ourselves as facilitators, easing the life of start-ups and providing support to entrepreneurs at their most critical time."

Stanley Mifsud
CEO of the Malta Investment Management Company Ltd.



Anyone who pegs Malta as a mere holiday destination is entirely missing out. The island has become the location of choice for start-ups and entrepreneurs in a kaleidoscope of sectors such as tech, finance, gaming and now blockchain & cryptocurrencies. Malta has been working hard to create an environment for young businesses to grow and thrive. The country has seen the creation of numerous incubators, co-working spaces and seed-financing schemes, as well as the arrival of venture capital firms.

Malta's main draw-card is the ease of doing business and the cost of operations on the island. Research has shown that Malta is generally 20 to 30% cheaper than the more established European centres, while a company's seed capital may last three to five times longer. Start-ups, especially those in tech, finance and gaming, also find Malta a particularly attractive place due to the concentration of industry players, talent and suppliers on the island, while still being affordable. Entrepreneurs are also attracted to Malta due to the island's drive to nurture new industries by providing dedicated regulations. For instance, Malta's decision to regulate online gaming two decades ago meant it has become the

global capital of iGaming, the place to be for the largest and most innovative players in the industry. In 2018, blockchain start-ups began to move into Malta after the island introduced the world's first holistic regulatory framework for Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs), and now the line-up of companies is a veritable who's who of the industry.

Fostering Innovation

Start-ups in Malta can find many helping hands, including a soon to be launched dedicated start-up agency that will focus exclusively on helping entrepreneurs from anywhere in the world to make their business plan a reality. The Malta Investment Management Company Limited (MIMCOL) has introduced a Seed Investment Scheme to help start-ups raise equity finance. The scheme, capped at €5 million, grants tax credits to individuals residing or operating in Malta who are investing in start-up businesses. The next building block in reinforcing Malta's credentials as a start-up hub is to attract an International Accelerator, and MIMCOL is currently establishing links with foreign accelerator programmes to lure a big-hitter to the island. MIMCOL is also looking at other initiatives that could be pursued to bolster Malta's start-up ecosystem, one of them being a dedicated national centre for start-ups. It is also entertaining the idea of so-called start-up exchanges, where incubators from different countries cooperate to give entrepreneurs the opportunity to explore markets abroad. Start-ups, which are part of a participating incubator, can benefit from free office space for a certain period of time, as well as from introductions to key players in the local ecosystem.

Partnering Up

Malta's move to regulate and oversee products such as gametech, fintech and blockchain technologies means start-ups in those sectors are also looking at Malta as regulators demand safer IT solutions to protect consumers. But that's not all. Due to its small size, the island is also an ideal research and innovation test bed. There are numerous areas of opportunity for industry players to get involved in, either through research and development projects or innovative ideas that could help Malta address some of its very own challenges in sectors such as energy, transport and health. The Maltese authorities are willing to work with innovators developing new technologies and solutions in partnership with the private sector. ■



“The island has become the location of choice for start-ups and entrepreneurs in a kaleidoscope of sectors such as tech, finance, gaming and now blockchain & cryptocurrencies.

Seizing the FUTURE

From the ground up: Malta is reimagining its industrial space to support fast growing sectors, nurture nascent industries and pioneer new economic activities.

Malta is taking a fresh look at its industrial and business parks to cater for the ever-growing number of innovative entrepreneurs and businesses expanding from the island. The ambition is to make the most of Malta's limited land mass and to deliver a top-quality business environment for firms of all sizes.

Given the success that Malta is enjoying, Malta Industrial Parks Ltd (MIPL) is preparing the next generation of the island's industrial and business parks. MIPL plans to re-develop the current facilities and to create a new 'breed' of industrial property stock that caters for today's evolving industries. MIPL has a wide portfolio of property under management, controlling all of the government-owned industrial parks, manufacturing facilities as well as sector-specific infrastructure in the field of aviation. The prime objective is to ensure that the current factory space is being utilised in the most efficient manner while seeking ways to increase the supply of readily available space.



MIPL plans to re-develop the current facilities and to create a new 'breed' of industrial property stock that caters for today's evolving industries.

Catering for a Booming Sector

One cluster that will shortly undergo a transformation is aviation, one of Malta's fastest-growing economic sectors. The island is already home to a number of maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) operators, who have been undergoing major expansions as of recent. There is also clear desire to attract more private jet operators, repair facilities as well as companies offering ancillary services to the aviation industry. In this context, MIPL is evaluating the current land uses in and around the airport precincts in order to facilitate the growth of the sector in a planned and sustainable way.

Multi-Floor Designs

Strong economic growth is also fuelling demand for both factory and office space in Malta's other industrial zones. However, most of these industrial estates were built for traditional manufacturing. The idea is now to re-generate those estates in a way

that is suited to high-tech innovation, automation and industry. Rather than allowing continuous horizontal expansions, multi-storey designs are seen as a way to create more floor space where land supply is limited.

Home for New Industries

Malta's approach also places a strong emphasis on the creation of sector-specific infrastructure to nurture new industries. The island has built a Life Sciences Park that provides laboratory space for biotech companies as well as a Digital Hub that hosts fast-growing IT companies operating in the field of software applications, big data and Distributed Ledger Technologies. The country is also rolling out the red carpet to new businesses that are relocating. Case in point: companies engaging in medical cannabis production, which Malta recently legalised.

Adding Value

In drawing up the next generation of economic zones, MIP is paying attention to the fact that the introduction of new production technologies such as robotics and data analytics will impact production processes and supply chains of many companies. The factory of tomorrow is expected to make use of cutting-edge manufacturing tools, as well as being a breeding ground for transformative ideas and processes. A major goal for MIPL is to provide its tenants with purpose-fit facilities that will help stimulate science, research and innovative capabilities, while ensuring that companies can bring products to market as efficiently and quickly as possible. ■



"Today, together with our clients, we are setting out to create a new breed of industrial properties and are future-proofing our facilities, be they high-tech aircraft repair facilities, cutting-edge automotive production premises or state-of-the-art plants and research labs for pharma and biotech companies."

Karl Azzopardi
CEO of Malta Industrial Parks



Malta Industrial Parks Limited



Exporting WATER SOLUTIONS

Malta's water sector is at the cutting edge of sustainable water management practices and technologies, positioning the island as potentially an important partner in tackling the world's water challenges.



100m below ground – the Ta' Kandja' water galleries



"We have invested heavily in innovative solutions and technologies, including state-of-the-art reverse osmosis plants. Today, we actually distribute more water while producing less due to a very effective leak prevention and detection system."

Joe Mizzi
Minister for Energy and
Water Management



MINISTRY
FOR ENERGY
AND WATER
MANAGEMENT

Investment in infrastructure and the development of new inhouse technologies has seen Malta's water sector become one of the strongest in Europe. Many parts of the continent faced severe water shortages and in some cases drought this summer. Malta – despite being one of the most arid locations in Europe – did not encounter any problems. The island's semi-arid climate meant Malta had to invest early on in water infrastructure and solutions. As far back as the 1600s, the Knights of Malta built aqueducts that transported water by gravity from one village to another. In more modern days, desalination plants have become a key part of the puzzle, while a planned technology upgrade will make its reverse osmosis (RO) plants even more efficient. Malta has also incorporated solutions to recycle and reuse wastewater for agriculture and has become a leader in network leak detection. The island's engineers are regarded among the best in this field and are now exporting their technology and know-how internationally.

The Water Services Corporation

Malta's Water Services Corporation (WSC) was founded in 1992 and is responsible for the complete drinking and wastewater cycle in Malta and Gozo. During the past decades, Malta has become increasingly dependent on desalination, and today WSC operates three RO plants. They contribute 60% to Malta's water supply, with groundwater sources accounting for 40%. Desalination is an energy-intensive and expensive technology, and the country has already invested in new sophisticated technology to make the process more energy-efficient and more cost-effective allowing it to produce much more water with less energy.

WSC is now embarking on a new €130-million EU-funded investment project, which includes upgrades to the latest RO technology, a new RO plant for the island of Gozo as well as the construction of a new water tunnel which blends groundwater with desalinated water. These initiatives will increase the share of desalinated water in Malta's water mix even further, while, at the same time, future-proofing Malta's water infrastructure, which needs to cater for a booming economy as well as population growth. The investment is also based on the highest environmental standards and shall serve as a blueprint to solve water challenges across the globe.

Wastewater as a Resource

Additionally, Malta has started to use water reclamation to recycle water. The Minister for Energy and Water, Joe Mizzi explained how three Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) are currently operating on the Maltese islands, two of which are in Malta and another in Gozo. STP plants treat sewage water by removing solids and impurities and producing treated sewage effluent, which meets the requirements of the Urban Wastewater Directive and is therefore safe to dispose into the sea. While this water has traditionally been released into the Mediterranean, Malta is reaping the benefits of a €22 million investment in three polishing plants. These plants are treating wastewater to so-called 'NEW water' for agricultural and industrial purposes. However, this water can also be treated further and be used to replenish Malta's groundwater sources. It is estimated that more than seven million cubic metres of NEW water could be produced annually.

International Projects

The Water Services Corporation has also developed technology that assists in locating and fixing leakages in water distribution systems. Extensive work and investment on the national networks have helped curb leakages to see Malta achieve the lowest rate in Europe. WSC has built know-how in this area that is attracting attention from not only water utilities but wider sectors. The Corporation is now exporting its solutions to other countries and was chosen by the World Bank to carry out a water leakage management project in Lebanon. WSC's monitoring technology could also be replicated for application in other industries, for instance in the oil and gas sector. Interest in Malta's expertise is growing – developing countries, as well as international companies, have reached out to WSC, which is ready to showcase its utility management, app technologies and expertise to the world. ■

Destination **BLOCKCHAIN** Island

With its move to regulate Distributed Ledger Technologies, Malta is pitching its tent as the global home of blockchain companies and cryptocurrency entrepreneurs.



Malta is making headlines in the cryptocurrency and blockchain sphere with the introduction of the world's first holistic regulatory framework for Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs). Calling itself the 'Blockchain Island', the country's vision is to create a thriving blockchain economy by providing a high level of regulatory certainty to a space that thus far is mostly unregulated. The ambition is that the sector will account for 10% of GDP by 2027. Activity around blockchain technology is already ramping up significantly. Blockchain-powered businesses and crypto exchanges, including global heavyweights Binance, OKEx, DQR, Bittrex, Neufund and Chilliz, are moving operations to the island, intent on using Malta as their springboard to the world.

The Rise of DLT

During the past two years, blockchain technology has rapidly gained popularity with businesses, both big and small, and primarily in industries concerned with cybersecurity and payments. Two of Malta's main industries are financial services and gaming, and hence, blockchain moved early to the top of Malta's growth agenda. While initially there were concerns regarding the anonymity and stability of

the systems, there was the belief that DLT could be Malta's golden opportunity. No other country had provided the industry with a safe operating environment, and Malta felt that it could become a world leader if it was to do exactly that. The country's Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat, gave the technology his full backing. Malta then started to work with some of the best minds in the industry to create a regulatory framework that protects investors yet gives operators the flexibility to grow and develop.

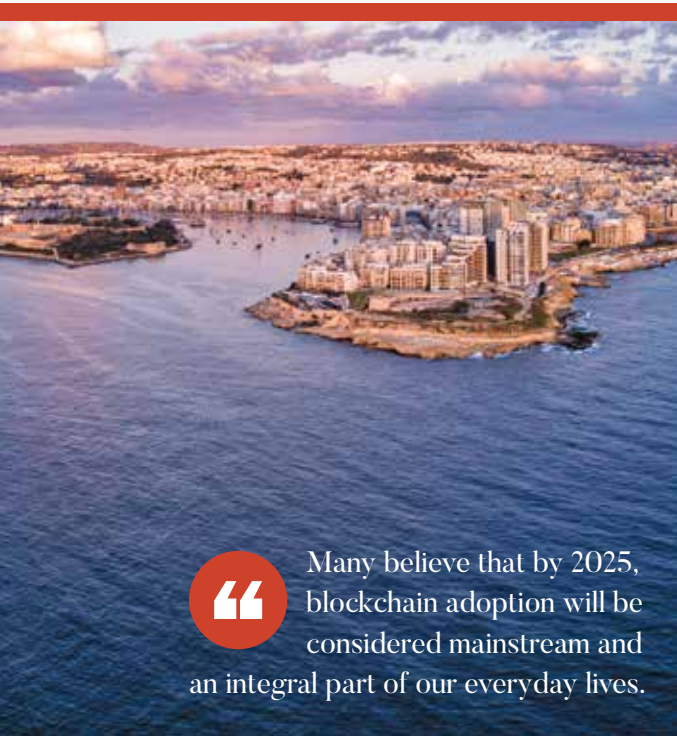
Regulatory Certainty

Malta believes that regulation will move blockchain applications out of the labs and into the mainstream; regulation will increase confidence in the market and help safeguard users from illegitimate products. The island has established a new regulatory authority – the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA). The MDIA, the first regulator of its kind in the world, will certify DLT platforms and smart contracts, while handling the voluntary registration of technology service providers. The Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) has been tasked with the approval and supervision of Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs), as well virtual financial assets and crypto currency exchanges.



"We are convinced that Malta will be the next hotbed for innovative blockchain companies, and a centre of the blockchain ecosystem in Europe."

Changpeng Zhao
CEO of Binance



“Many believe that by 2025, blockchain adoption will be considered mainstream and an integral part of our everyday lives.”



“Malta’s sound risk-based approach will help cultivate a responsible, compliant, and healthy blockchain ecosystem.”

Tim Byun
Chief Risk Officer
of OKEx



“We had a very healthy dialogue about the potential of DLTs with the Maltese authorities. There was a strong willingness to learn about all aspects of the technology. This is something we have not experienced in many other countries.”

Björn Arzt
Genesis Mining/DQR

Room for Innovation

Malta made the conscious decision that certification with the MDIA is voluntary and not mandatory in order to ensure that innovation will not be stifled. However, Malta expects companies to queue up for a licence on the grounds that regulation by an EU member state will ease international scepticism about their operations. Malta’s framework initially captures DLT platforms and smart contracts only, but could be extended to include other platforms and technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and Internet of Things technologies, at a later stage. When it comes to virtual currencies and ICOs, Malta introduced a financial instruments test, which enables entities to determine whether their virtual currency, token or activity falls within the scope of the new law or whether it should be regulated by another piece of financial regulation.

Putting Malta on the Map

This innovative drive has made the island appealing for DLT innovators, and despite its minuscule size, Malta has attracted some of the biggest names in the blockchain and cryptocurrency industry, which have either relocated or opened new offices on the

island. Binance from Japan and OKEx, originally from China, were among the first crypto exchanges to move into Malta. They were followed by Bittrex from the US, while, more recently, well-known investor and Australian business man Rick Klink, the founder of Australia’s largest independent trading platform by trading volume, launched an exchange in Malta. Other crypto companies and blockchain solutions providers that already set up on the island, or are in the process of doing so, are DRQ, Neufund, Tron, Monaco, BigONE, ANX International, Yovo, and many more.

Blockchain Revolution

Many believe blockchain has potential in almost any context where information needs to be agreed and shared. Indeed, every process that requires record-keeping and involves multiple parties could potentially benefit from blockchain technology. Proof of blockchain’s popularity is evident: in the US, total venture capital raised by blockchain and cryptocurrency start-ups has reached \$3.8 billion in 2018, a three-fold increase over last year’s total. Many believe that by 2025, blockchain adoption will be considered mainstream and an integral part of our everyday lives.

Proponents of the technology argue that if properly implemented, distributed ledgers can bring improvements in transparency, efficiency and trust due to the centralised nature of the database and the fact that all changes are encrypted in such a way that they cannot be altered or deleted without leaving a record of the data’s earlier state. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat sees many uses for the technology – both in the public and the private sector, and believes that blockchain is part of a solution when it comes to due diligence and anti-money laundering procedures. Malta’s Government also wants to undertake selected projects itself. This will ensure a flow of projects to attract overseas players to Malta, stimulate the local blockchain industry and encourage start-ups.

Where the Blockchain World Meets

While major countries such as the US, China and the UK have been reluctant in regulating blockchain and cryptocurrencies, tiny Malta has been moving quickly to establish itself as international blockchain hub by introducing legislation to bring virtual assets and DLTs into the regulatory fold. But Malta has done more than that: it has provided a base for a transient industry that has been operating in legal limbo all across the world. What London is for the global finance industry, Malta can be to the fast-growing DLT community: a place they call home. ■

The World's First Institutional-Grade CRYPTO BROKERAGE

Kristian Haehndel, CEO of Digital Quantitative Research (DQR), shines a light on how his company is delivering cryptocurrency users an institutional-grade experience.

Can you give us a short introduction to your company and the two products you will be launching on the market?

Essentially, our company (www.dqr-group.com) has three main divisions: research & education, financial products and our philanthropic foundation, which receives a portion of the profits from our commercial operations to support charitable projects. DQR was founded in 2016 with Genesis Mining, the largest cloud bitcoin mining company in the world, with the aim of providing platforms for trading in cryptocurrencies and financial products. The first product we are bringing to the market is the DQR30 token, which tracks the performance of 30 top cryptocurrencies (excluding Tether). The second is an institutional-grade brokerage exchange, which has been designed from the ground up to answer many of the problems that are impacting cryptocurrency traders at the moment.

Can you elaborate more on the brokerage product?

The brokerage platform will provide a one-stop-shop where users can get access to multiple exchanges, with just one login. We want to create a product that will be the gold standard of the industry and address many of the shortcomings users currently experience on exchanges, such as the time it takes to open an account, inefficient Know Your Customer (KYC) processes, lack of price transparency, transaction delays, price manipulation and cyber security issues. Accessibility is a major issue for many parts of the world, including major economies such as Russia, India and many other developing nations, where users have to pay a significant price premium to acquire cryptocurrencies. With this technology we will bridge the gap and connect users in these countries to the global network. While we cannot reveal how we do this exactly, a key part of our strategy is to have front offices in major cities around the world and jurisdictions where we find the biggest inefficiencies. This provides us with the opportunity to offer our products in those geographical regions while allowing our customers to transact in their local currency, offering users the most fair and transparent price available. We will then do all the heavy lifting and acquire the cryptocurrencies for the client. But we are not only solving the accessibility issue, we are also speeding up transaction times. We are building the platform with institutional-grade infrastructure, which will even allow high frequency trading.



What was the idea behind the DQR30 and what type of clients are you targeting?

Given our long-term exposure to industry, people were constantly asking us which cryptocurrency they should invest in. This inspired us to create an index product that would move the complexity of which coin to choose, what wallet to hold or technology to use and package it into one token that would give exposure to the entire market. We wanted to design a product that makes it easy for users to get access to cryptocurrencies. Due to the large number of cryptocurrencies, we noticed a high level of insecurity on the retail side. The DQR30 token addresses this insecurity and gives users instant access to 30 top cryptocurrencies, spreading their investment risk across a variety of cryptocurrency projects. The DQR30 Index contains all major technologies with a few exceptions. To be included in the index, the cryptocurrency needs to be listed on multiple exchanges. Over time, as the user base grows and demand increases from retail or institutional clients, we will start to roll out more complex indices and other products to the market. While the DQR30 Index is primarily aimed at the retail market, we also have the DQR OTC service for wealth managers and institutional clients.

What plans do you have for the coming years?

Our number one goal is to empower people and connect them to the marketplaces best meeting their needs, no matter where they are in the world, and by the end of next year, we will be rolling out our network of front offices. ■



Piloting the Future of ECONOMIC INNOVATION

Junior Minister within the Office of the Prime Minister, Silvio Schembri is responsible for some of Malta's fastest-growing sectors, including financial services, online gaming, ICT and telecommunications. The latest feather in his cap is launching the world's first holistic regulatory framework for Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs).



Malta decided to **LEAD THE CHARGE IN DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY**, establishing the world's first regulatory framework for blockchain, cryptocurrency and DLT.

Our **REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR DLTS** offers legal certainty to a space that is largely unregulated. The feedback so far has been tremendous.

The **'BLOCKCHAIN ISLAND'** is not just a mere expression, it is now a destination: Malta.

Our island is experiencing **SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC GROWTH** and continues to attract foreign direct investment, but we can only stay on this successful path if we embrace new technologies and innovative initiatives.

My wish is to create **AN ENTIRE NEW INDUSTRY** based on blockchain technologies and attract innovative start-ups. We are willing to throw our doors wide open to help companies develop new solutions in sectors such as transport, finance, utilities, gaming and education.

The plan is that DLTs will account for **10% OF GDP** by 2027.

Malta offers the **COMPLETE GAMING ECOSYSTEM**. We have the resources, the people and the culture to give iGaming professionals and entrepreneurs the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals.

ATTRACTING FOREIGN TALENT will remain key to our future, and we have already smoothened the process for anyone looking at taking up a position in Malta. We want to make sure that onboarding foreign professionals is as uncomplicated as possible.

BLOCKCHAIN IS JUST THE START: AI, IoT, quantum technology and big data are next on our agenda.

5G is becoming **A REALITY IN MALTA**, and it is the next step towards enhancing our digital infrastructure. Malta has to be at the forefront of this technology, which is an enabler for innovative applications, new business models and investment.

A key initiative to keep strengthening the gaming industry and Malta's jurisdictional profile is the enhancement of best-in-class **CONSUMER PROTECTION STANDARDS** and responsible gaming measures.

We are envisaging a **REPOSITIONING** of our financial services sector. We have set up a fintech department and are investing heavily in technology to increase efficiency and efficacy of regulation through regtech.

We were particularly sensitive towards **CONNECTIVITY AND DIGITALISATION**, which have transformed our country and brought about new opportunities, quality jobs and growth.

Clean GROWTH

Malta's gaming industry is embracing technological disruption, while, at the same time, driving global change with new regulatory standards.

Malta has garnered a reputation as the capital of the global iGaming industry. The presence of over 275 iGaming companies is proving a unique draw for platform providers, game developers, payment services, support firms, start-ups and tech investors, who are joining Malta's thriving iGaming ecosystem. To meet the future needs of this evolving industry, the Malta Gaming Authority (MGA) has launched a brand new and comprehensive suite of regulation and legislation that better responds to emerging technologies and new forms of gaming. Cryptocurrencies, blockchain applications and Distributed Ledger Technologies all form part of this new business model. While the MGA has long been a protagonist of innovation, rigorous regulatory oversight, including measures to combat money laundering, as well as the prevention of crime and gambling addiction, remain at the top of the authority's agenda.

Home of Gaming

The island is the birthplace of regulated online gaming being the first EU country to license iGaming in the early 2000s and introducing a dedicated regulatory framework for the industry. Today, Malta serves as the backbone of the industry, attracting the largest gaming operators and suppliers, as well as some of the most innovative start-ups. Some of the most instantly recognisable brands in the gaming world have set up in Malta: Betsson, Paddy Power Betfair, Interwetten, Unibet, Mr Green, Tipico, LeoVegas and Videoslots are just a few of the companies that have a strong presence on the island. But it is not just the major gaming companies that have been beating a path to Malta, following in their footsteps have been all the leading B2B suppliers and service providers. Today, Malta offers a thriving gaming ecosystem, where gaming companies can find everything and everyone they need to do business with.

Innovation and Regulation

Despite all the success, Malta realised that it would need to continue to evolve if it wants to remain relevant as a jurisdiction. The iGaming industry is today facing technological disruption and change like never before. The maturing industry demanded smoother processes, as well as regulation for new activities. Hence, the MGA initiated a process to develop next generation legislation. The new Gaming Act is widely seen as having raised the industry's

standards to a whole new level. The framework empowers the Authority to be more agile in its decision-making, enhances consumer protection standards and responsible gaming measures, while promoting a risk-based approach towards regulation. It also provides the MGA with wider powers in the fields of compliance and enforcement, in line with Anti-Money Laundering and funding of terrorism obligations, which are on top of the MGA's priority list.

According to Heathcliff Farrugia, CEO of the MGA, the regulator has embarked on a major outreach campaign to its fellow regulators and law enforcement agencies around the world in order to collaborate closer and share best practice on how to approach some of the global threats and risks in the areas of anti-money laundering, know your customer (KYC), fraud, tax and business due diligence. In its work, the MGA has adopted a very transparent approach and is sending a very clear message that if you have something to hide, do not come to Malta.

Driving Forward

The MGA believes that regulators should not be afraid of disruptive technologies, such as blockchain and cryptocurrencies, but rather see them as an opportunity to improve regulatory efficiency. The MGA joined Malta's drive to regulate disruptive innovations and launched a sandbox framework for cryptocurrency usage within the gaming industry. Armed with new regulations, the MGA will continue to work with thought-leaders and global innovators to create the right conditions for gaming companies to flourish, while advocating open communication between stakeholders to drive the industry forward. ■



"We don't look at the size of the sector as a measure of success. We look at our effectiveness in ensuring that players are protected and that the sector is kept free from crime, without jeopardising innovation and technological advancements."

Heathcliff Farrugia
CEO of the Malta
Gaming Authority



To meet the future needs of this evolving industry, the Malta Gaming Authority (MGA) has launched a brand new and comprehensive suite of regulation and legislation that better responds to emerging technologies and new forms of gaming.

Gaming CREATIVE Power

Home to IT, gaming and film industries, Malta is now setting out to win the favour of interactive entertainment companies.



"We already have successful video gaming companies here, and we want to ensure that structures are built to give further and sustainable impetus to this sector. We want to work closely with the sector in order to enhance the digital gaming ecosystem and attract key talent to Malta."

Ivan Filletti
Head of Operations and Business Development,
GamingMalta Foundation



'Home of Gaming Excellence', Malta is unleashing its potential as a global creative hub for interactive entertainment. The island is inviting content producers and digital publishers to join its other thriving tech and entertainment industries. Malta has already built the largest iGaming centre in Europe, attracted a host of IT and software development companies, and is a popular location for the international film industry. The island now wants to offer an alternative to global entertainment hubs such as London, Berlin, Paris and Montreal. In its effort to become a pillar of the digital world, Malta is creating a stimulating environment for producers, animators, game developers, 3D artists, VFX professionals, digital painters and illustrators.

Gaming Malta

The industry has built an impressive base of companies operating from the island. The country's strong foundation in IT, iGaming and film provides a sound technical infrastructure for digital media production, which is being further enhanced by a dedicated iGaming academy called the European Gaming Institute of Malta (EGIM). A pioneer in the iGaming sector, Malta has acquired a wealth of knowledge and experience in areas such as digital content production, software development and game publishing. Esports is one of the green shoots that is gaining traction and could well become a significant pillar of Malta's gaming ecosystem. The country's creative track record in the film industry also speaks volumes, with major blockbusters, such as Assassin's Creed, Captain Phillips, World War Z, Munich, Troy, and Gladiator, being shot on the island.

Video Gaming Cluster

The video gaming industry is the newest member of Malta's growing creative industries. There are some high-profile game studios operating in Malta ranging from AAA to Indie game developers. 4A Games and Exient are two of the most well-known companies, producing major games for desktop and mobile, as well as Xbox and Playstation. Investment in this sector is expected to rise in the coming years: The gaming industry, as well as Malta's growing international film industry, are fuelling demand for production houses, including motion capture studios, sound stages and animation facilities. As the global entertainment industry pushes ever more into a virtual world or augmented reality, Malta presents itself as a viable hub for VR and AR game studios. The sheer number of digital companies operating on the island creates opportunities for game studios and start-up developers to test and scale their products.

Global Production Hub

The driving force behind Malta's creative industries is skills transfer. Companies operating out of Malta could benefit from expertise gained in the iGaming sector, such as player-behaviour analytics, data mining, personalisation and customer experience, as well as the monetisation of games and other digital content. The talent and the companies behind the growing dominance of mobile gaming applications have also found Malta a fertile ground to conceive, develop and market their products. A host of tech firms, coders and programmers are already on the ground servicing the increasing needs of the gaming operators. Malta also offers a significant opportunity for innovators with the next disruptive tech in areas such as fintech and blockchain. Most of the major players in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space are relocating to Malta on the back of the island's new regulatory initiatives. This development is being warmly welcomed in particular by game publishers to deliver solutions for licence verification, game token monetisation and the management of what can be millions of assets within the game. Added to this are the global tech labs that have Malta on their radar, as regulators place greater demands on safe and secure IT solutions to protect consumers.

Growing Ecosystem

The positive reception by industry leaders at this year's Gamescom has further strengthened Malta's reputation in the sector. Testament to Malta's creative potential has been the relocation of Trojan Horse Was a Unicorn (THU), a week-long gathering of digital artists. THU, which previously took place in Portugal, brought more than 1,000 creatives and creators from all corners of the world to the island, including executives from the world's leading entertainment companies Disney, Netflix and Ubisoft. THU is set to become a vital showcase of Malta's digital creative ecosystem, which is expected to grow and gain further global recognition in the years ahead. ■



Malta: A Great Place to WORK

Malta is one of the most spectacular locations to work: glorious Mediterranean climate, a magical mix of professionals from all over the world and an unlimited number of exciting opportunities. If you are considering a career move, think Malta. The country has a thriving economy, where you can enjoy an exceptional lifestyle and build a rewarding career.



WELCOME TO MALTA

As a small nation, Malta has always been very outward looking and welcoming to people and ideas from around the world. The island today is very multi-cultural; with nearly 43,000 expats working here. From tech to finance and from healthcare to tourism – Malta offers foreign professionals more than an international work experience but a place to start and grow their career.

THE HOTTEST SECTORS

To keep up with its record-breaking economic growth, as well as to account for foreigners returning home, Malta is looking to attract more than 10,000 people per year to join its workforce. Although the island has already become a destination of choice for foreign talent, some skills remain high in demand and short in supply. The fastest-growing sectors in the economy at the moment are blockchain, gaming, financial services, maritime, aviation, life sciences and tourism, but there are also opportunities in healthcare, manufacturing, construction and beyond.

MAKING THE MOVE

Malta is one of the easiest places to relocate to in the EU and residents enjoy an exceptional standard of living: 10 months of sunshine, an English-speaking

population, and a Mediterranean island setting in which it is easy to find one's way around. Although Malta is a small country, it offers a variety of lifestyle choices that range from urban, cosmopolitan and luxurious to relaxed and rural. Boasting a diverse range of shopping, cultural and leisure activities, all at affordable rates, Malta provides expatriates with a unique opportunity to live every aspect of life to the full.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Although working hours do not vary significantly from those in other countries, many expats say that they enjoy a better work-life balance on the island. Malta is one of the few places in the world where you can truly have it all: eight hours of work, eight hours of play and eight hours of sleep. Malta's small size means beaches, sports facilities and restaurants are just a short ride away. In a tight labour market, many CEOs also understand that flexible work schedules are one of the top reasons why people enjoy working from Malta.



From tech to finance and from healthcare to tourism – Malta offers foreign professionals more than an international work experience but a place to start and grow their career.



BIG & BOUTIQUE

Although Malta is a small country, many expats say that there is more to Malta than meets the eye. The island offers a surprisingly wide choice of job opportunities and interesting career prospects. Malta is home to a kaleidoscope of companies, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to Blockchain startups.

SCALE OF OPPORTUNITIES

The island's diversified economy is performing exceptionally well. Malta is not only a place for high-flying professionals in gaming and finance, the country is putting the call out to fill positions for different skill levels in every sector of the economy. Hardly anyone will struggle to find work.



"While Malta produces its fair share of talent and specialists, a country of 460,000 people needs talent from every corner of the globe. We want to make it as easy as possible for foreign professionals to take up jobs in our thriving economy, and are committed to processing work permits for third-country nationals in a very efficient way."

Clyde Caruana
Executive Chairperson
of Jobsplus



ISLAND FEVER, ISLAND LIFE

Honestly, it's hard to get bored. The sea is never more than 20 minutes from wherever you live in Malta. However, if you need a change of scenery from time to time, Malta International Airport is one of the best connected airports in Europe.

MEET THE LOCALS

The majority of expats finds it easy to meet new people in Malta; and many count locals, as well as other expats among their friends. With English as an official language, communication is no barrier, and especially in the smaller towns and villages, locals will be ready to go out of their way to help newcomers in any way they can so that they quickly feel at home.



FAMILY TIME

As in many southern European countries, family plays an important role in Maltese society. This also means that time-off during evenings and weekends is respected, with many expats citing that they are able to spend more quality time with friends and family.

SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE

Malta provides an excellent standard of education. Children can be educated in one of the private international schools, or enrolled in the local state, church or independent schools. All schools use the British model of education, which is compulsory between the ages of five and 16. If both parents are working, childcare services are free. Kindergarten is not compulsory in Malta, but English-speaking kindergarten and pre-school facilities are widely available.

CUTTING THROUGH BUREAUCRACY

EU nationals can work in Malta without an employment licence. The island has also eased the way for non-EU nationals wanting to take up positions in Malta. Companies are today allowed to recruit for a whole range of positions with no quotas or limits, smoothing the path for applicants from third countries. A fast-track visa approval service for non-EU nationals filling key positions has also been launched, while Jobsplus, the country's public employment service agency, is working to process work permits for third-country nationals as efficiently as possible.

NIGHTLIFE

Malta is dotted with cocktail lounges, rooftop bars and nightclubs, with St. Julian's, Sliema and Bugibba being the entertainment hubs. Malta's capital city, Valletta, home to a number of trendy bars, is a stylish alternative to St. Julian's and attracts a crowd, which is decidedly more upmarket than in the prime entertainment hubs.

TAXATION

Malta has a progressive taxation system, under which individuals are taxed between 15 to 35% of their income. Highly qualified foreign professionals working in sectors such as finance, gaming and aviation can also benefit from a flat 15% tax rate on employment income. ■

New DIGITAL Horizons

Malta has aspirations to grow and is future-proofing its financial services sector, with the introduction of digital finance and blockchain technologies.

Asset, wealth and insurance management have become the power bases of Malta's financial services sector, which has not only expanded in recent years but also internationalised like never before. Malta today can stand tall among Europe's financial hubs and is developing new credentials in a range of sectors such as payments, fintech and Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs). Viewed as a particularly business-friendly location, the Mediterranean island is a favoured entry point to the European Union because of its robust, EU-compliant regulatory framework, diverse financial ecosystem and deep talent pool. Yet, despite its past successes, the island is taking a fresh look at its finance sector, which like its counterparts Ireland, Luxembourg and Switzerland has felt the spotlight of international attention. Malta is rising to the challenge of maintaining its reputation as a robust jurisdiction that has nothing to hide and wants to send a clear message that Malta is no place for financial secrecy.

Fully Onshore

The seeds of Malta's modern-day finance centre were sown in 2004 when Malta was seeking membership of the EU and began to harmonise its legislation, incorporating best practices from the world's most respectable international business centres. Malta introduced a strong supervisory framework as well as a competitive, transparent regime approved by both the EU and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Over the years, Malta has accelerated its efforts to increase the depth and breadth of its finance industry. The finance sector has growth by around 18 to 20% annually and accounts for 11% of the country's GDP, providing almost 10,000 jobs.

The country recognises that the future lays in the provision of a well-regulated financial sector and has moved to overhaul its regulatory environment. The island has continuously ensured that its laws, including anti-money laundering (AML) rules, are



"Unlike some other finance centres, our financial sector is very well diversified. We have seen a host of start-up and smaller niche operators setting up here, attracted by our responsiveness and 'can-do' mindset. However, well-known financial services operators have also established a presence in the country."

Kenneth Farrugia
Chairman of FinanceMalta





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fully aligned with European and global standards. No country is fully immune from bad actors, and Malta, like other finance centres, has been criticised for not doing enough to prevent such instances despite having implemented the latest anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism rules. The country's lawmakers do recognise more needs to be done and have started a process of modernising the island's financial regulator, the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA). The regulator is undergoing a complete overhaul and upgrading of its regtech infrastructure along with the strengthening of its regulatory powers. The actions being taken are clearly having the desired effect as business continues to flow to Malta, which is a strong endorsement of the steps the country is taking.

Specialist Services

Malta has positioned its financial services sector to serve as a European hub for many specialised services. For

an island nation of just 460,000 people, Malta has built up a remarkably diverse financial services portfolio. Today, some 25 banks have established operations in Malta, although only a handful of these are active in the local market. Most use the island as a platform from which to conduct specialised asset financing, corporate banking and trade finance services. The insurance sector has experienced an upsurge due to the presence of expert insurance management services and EU passporting rights, and Malta is now regarded as one of the leading captive insurance domiciles. While there are around 600 investment funds domiciled in Malta, the country has proved particularly attractive to fund platforms, managers and administrators who are servicing funds internationally from Malta. The country has also developed into an important wealth management location. High-net-worth individuals, wealth managers and family offices increasingly avail of the country's wide range of investment vehicles, including trusts and foundations.

Key Players

As Malta's status as a financial centre has grown, the island has attracted international credit institutions such as HSBC and today hosts some 30 fund administrators and 60 insurance companies. Fund administrators such as Apex, TMF and Citco all have a presence in Malta, along with insurance specialists Munich Re, Aon and Marsh. In addition, multinationals such as BMW, Peugeot, Citroën and Vodafone have set up captives on the island.

Regulatory Transformation

Malta has gained a reputation for striking a good commercial balance by providing an appropriate legal framework without over-regulating in a way that might inhibit growth and innovation. Over the years, the MFSA has also worked together with the industry in developing the required capabilities, capacity and regulatory frameworks to move into new lines of business.

However, in light of the growing size of the financial sector, international institutions such as the European Commission and the IMF have called the regulator to strengthen its ability to effectively supervise internationally oriented businesses. While Malta's finance community unanimously refuses to be labelled as a tax haven, many acknowledge that the changing international landscape for tax planning will force a positive change over the longer term. Malta has always insisted that companies have more than 'brass-plate' operations, and the island is fully committed to the efforts undertaken by the OECD in combatting Base Erosion and Profit Shifting in international tax structures.

The country is also working on the reform of the MFSA, which is currently reviewing its processes and practices to remain at the cutting-edge of regulatory innovation. The MFSA is also taking action to ensure it complies with new global standards and has already implemented all the recent Know Your Customer (KYC) and AML regulations. As many global finance centres have come under the spotlight of international institutions and the media, Malta is committed to addressing genuine concerns and to remaining at the forefront of due diligence innovation to give comfort to both the finance industry and its partners in the EU and around the world.

Fintech Vision

Malta's finance industry is now expanding its portfolio into profitable niche areas such as pensions, payments and securitisation, while opening its doors to fintech entrepreneurs. Malta is fast becoming a hotbed for cryptocurrency and blockchain activity. The island has received a lot of positive attention for its decision to regulate DLTs. A new authority, the Malta Digital Innovation Authority will oversee the sector and provide legal certainty to operators, while tokens, virtual financial assets, DLT exchanges and fintech apps will be regulated by the MFSA. Malta has a strong vision for the development of the financial services sector and believes that by providing a strong regulatory environment for the blockchain and cryptocurrency sector, Malta can grow to be leading player in the industry.

Investor Trust

Malta's finance sector continues to grow, and it remains one of the most competitive choices in Europe. Investors believe in Malta: while new and innovative companies are moving into the country, many of the long-established businesses are reinvesting. Pragmatic regulation, creative innovation and service diversification are just some of the strings in Malta's bow.

Working with its global partners in ensuring the integrity of the finance industry as a whole, Malta's government acknowledges that it needs to re-assess the country's weaknesses, while striving to achieve a balance between enhanced financial stability and a competitive regulatory framework. The island is betting big on digital finance and blockchain technologies as a long-term growth niches that will make the finance centre's future ever brighter. ■

The Isle of PLENTY

Gozo is becoming home to a growing community of globe-trotting digital nomads and world-class professionals, who are being lured by the charms of this exotic island paradise.



Welcome to Gozo, the slow-paced charmer of the Maltese Islands. Boarded by the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, Malta's second island has generally been more of a stop-off point for travellers coming to the main island or a place for foreigners to buy a second home. In the last few years, however, the island has developed a reputation of a hip destination in its own right. Tourism is clearly an area of strength for Gozo, and it is expected to remain the corner stone of the island's economy well into the future. Traditionally a quaint holiday destination, the island is now developing into a hotspot for a whole new generation of entrepreneurs, digital nomads, freelancers and professionals who leverage their location independence to indulge in travel and adventure. But digital nomads working as marketers, web developers, tech support, online business owners, writers and accountants are just one face of Gozo's new identity. The island is also attracting blockchain & cryptocurrency companies, gaming, R&D and is now home to a top tier medical school.

Myth & Beauty

What do Odysseus, a megalithic temple older than the pyramids in Egypt, and the Knights of Malta have in common? The answer is Gozo. Malta's little seven-mile-long sister isle is the second largest island of the archipelago with a population of around 30,000 people. The island's fortified capital Victoria is situated on the highest point of Gozo. The attractive little town is still sometimes referred as Rabat, the capital's original Arabic name. The island is more rural than its urban neighbour, planted by cactuses, herbs and olive trees. The beautiful bays, the green hills and the impressive rock formations give the island a unique beauty - no wonder Odysseus stayed here for seven years. Homer's island of Ogygia in the Odyssey is believed to be Gozo. The island also claims to have the oldest freestanding structures in the world. The Ggantija Temples in Xaghra date back to approximately 3,600BC.



"Our natural beauty is particular and unique. Preserving it is one of our top priorities as it is one of the main reasons why people want to live, build their careers and grow their businesses from Gozo"

Justyne Caruana
Minister for Gozo



Eco Island

Tourism has long been an important source of income for the people of Gozo. However, Malta's main island has often stolen the limelight in past decades, which means Gozo has remained a quiet destination, ideal for relaxing at the beach, hiking through the countryside and discover architectural and cultural treasures. Although tourism numbers are on the rise – in 2017 the island attracted close to 215,000 visitors, an increase of 13% over 2016, Gozo never feels crowded. Besides, ecotourism is high on the agenda, and Gozo's green credentials have been given a boost after it won the prize of best sustainable destination in the Mediterranean earlier in 2018. Gozo is truly an outdoor playground, promoting small and sustainable niches – adventure sports such as diving, kayaking and climbing as well as cultural tourism. Medical tourism is another type of tourism-market that Gozo is resolved to conquer after an investment in health infrastructure by US firm Steward Healthcare.

Economic Ambition

However, Gozo is more than just tourism. The island is luring service companies in sectors such as IT and financial services, much like its bigger sister Malta. RS2, a global payment software and managed service provider, and KPMG, one of the Big Four

international audit firms, have already set up shop on the island. In addition, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry have opened a campus on the island, attracting medical students seeking the Barts undergraduate experience

while living in the Mediterranean. Going forward, the island has ambitious plans to attract companies in areas such as gaming, blockchain and education. Entrepreneurs choosing to locate in Gozo can benefit from more advantages tax credits, and the island is a great economic opportunity for businesses seeking to modernise, digitalise, innovate and grow.

Workforce Wanderlust

Gozo has also quietly risen to digital nomad friendly status over the last few years. Gozo isn't a conventional working place – it is an office with

clean air, fine weather and nature tours as well as a chance of outings in charming villages or lounging by the sea. Particularly favoured by professionals who want to escape the daily distractions of big city life, Gozo offers fast and reliable internet connections and a moderate cost of living. Remote-working professionals, as well as entire teams, have already chosen to set up their temporary base on the island to focus on high value projects. To support this scene, as well as to boost its own credentials as an attractive hub for high-tech companies, Gozo plans to lay a second fibre optic cable to increase reliability of service and is opening a new state-of-the-art tech park.

Gozo Estate

Gozo is not only popular with those looking for a temporary location but has also attracted foreign entrepreneurs and artistic-type expats who decided to relocate to the island in search of a slower pace of life. In much the same way, Gozo has become the island of choice for a growing number of high-net-worth individuals and retirees. With a wide selection of farmhouses and modern apartments, finding property to live and invest in is an easy affair. Given the attraction of Malta's visa, residency and citizenship programmes, it is hardly surprising that the interest for Gozo's property market keeps growing. Buying property is one of the criteria to obtain residency status, and lower investment thresholds apply to Gozo than to the main island.

To increase Gozo's appeal as a business and residency location even further, infrastructure upgrades are envisaged. Thus far, it takes a 20-minute ferry ride from Malta to reach Gozo. However, increasing accessibility is an important priority, and the Government is considering the construction of an undersea tunnel between Malta and Gozo to link the two islands in a more effective way.

Island Life Today

Gozo seeks to retain its rural ethos but is readying itself to support a more refined business ecosystem. Gozo cannot be a location for large industrial complexes but it can offer a space for inspiration and innovation. The island has certainly changed in recent years, but the real, authentic Gozo is still very much alive. Gozo today is a place where bohemian vibes mingle with local traditions and an increasingly global lifestyle. ■



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Little BIG Malta

Hip and historic aren't opposites in tiny Malta, and there are plenty of Instagram-worthy sights and spots to get excited about. With azure waters rivaling those of the Caribbean, ancient ruins older than Stonehenge, and a capital city whose architectural heritage is comparable to Venice, Malta packs a lot in its small size.

A few decades ago, Malta had little more to offer than package holidays, but since then there has been a revolution. Today, the country is the ideal place for sunrise yoga and stand-up paddling; nightly DJ sessions and artsy Jazz bars, for swimming in azure waters and visiting megalithic temples, and for top culinary experiences and breath-taking country walks. Its natural beauty and history have long made this one of Europe's most stunning destinations and have helped the island grow massively on the international tourist market. Although it is visited by an ever-increasing number of tourists – 2.3 million people in 2017 – it boasts tons of character and uniqueness, and has a lot to offer.



The Maltese Capital

Valletta was built as a city-fortress by the Knights of St John in 1565. Its honey-coloured walls were barely touched over the centuries, yet in the past few years, Valletta has been smartened up and transformed into a vibrant city. Magical and charming in every way, it offers everything from layers of history and spectacular views, to a host of exceptional restaurants and a lively music scene. But if anything represents modern day Valletta it has to be the City Gate by Renzo Piano. Located at the entrance of Valletta, the City Gate is now a style statement rather than a fortification.



A Walk down the History Lane

Malta has a greater density of historic sights than any other country in the world. Often referred to as mankind's first great architecture, the megalithic temples of Malta are the oldest freestanding structures in the world – 1,400 years older than the Egyptian pyramids. The golden-walled city of Mdina served as Malta's capital before Valletta was built and is definitely one of the greatest historic sights of Malta. The so-called 'Silent City' is known as the most atmospheric place on the islands thanks to medieval townhouses, ornate baroque gates, churches and car-free roads.

Island Hopping

The little slice of paradise called Gozo is one of the best-kept secrets of the Mediterranean. Its magnificent history, red beaches and Byzantine churches are just 20 minutes by ferry away. The island of Comino is another hidden gem that lies between Malta and Gozo. With its white sands and some of the bluest waters in the Mediterranean, Comino's famous Blue Lagoon looks like it has been plucked straight from the South Pacific.





Places to Stay

Malta's hotel sector is booming and expanding. From luxury hotels with breathtaking views to affordable and trendy hostels, hundreds of options are available across the islands. All of the big hotel chains are represented in Malta. They feature opulent suites, outdoor pools, fine-dining restaurants, and tranquil spas. For those who still balk at the idea of a big-name hotel, there is a new wave of boutique hotels in Malta. Recent years have seen centuries old townhouses in Valletta stunningly refurbished into gorgeous spaces — a mix of original features and ultra-modern design.

Active Holidays

Malta is a real outdoor adventure playground. The country is rated one of the world's best diving destinations, and with a variety of cliffs, walls and overhangs Malta is a perfect place to get the adrenalin pumping by trying zip lining or climbing. Whether you choose to explore on foot or wheels, there are beaches, age-old villages, hike trails and plenty of other places to discover.

Young Malta

Being a popular European destination to learn English with 90,000 students per year, Malta sees young and hip visitors arriving in increasing numbers. But this is not the only reason why young people flock to the islands. Malta also offers an incredible, diverse nightlife — from iconic clubs and venues to beach raves and artsy hangouts. What's more, there is a number of international music festivals during the summer season, including 'The Isle of MTV', Annie Mac's 'Lost and Found' and UNITE With Tomorrowland'.

Cultural Hub

Valletta is the 2018 European Capital of Culture. While the year is coming to an end, the streets of the more than 450-year-old capital city still erupt in celebration. Events are taking place almost every week, ranging from big exhibitions to street art and everything in between, including music, visual arts, workshops, exhibitions and film.

Culinary Finds

Food is yet another thread to the multicultural knot that ties the people of Malta together. Lampuki is Malta's national fish, and the best place to try lampuki is Marsaxlokk, the traditional fishing village in the South of Malta. Pastizzi is a local favourite, it's traditional savoury pastry shaped like an almond. Pastizzi can be stuffed with ricotta or mashed peas. But if Malta has a national dish, it is rabbit stew, favoured by the Knights of St John. ■



"We are often asked when is the best time to come to Malta. It is always the right time. Malta has become one of the least seasonal of the Mediterranean's island destinations. We have developed a multitude of off-peak attractions and events that will make your stay special."

Gavin Gulia

Executive Chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority



Chasing the WINTER SUN

5 reasons to visit the Maltese Islands this winter

Light up the dreary winter season this year with some Mediterranean charm and passion. Voted the best climate in the world, Malta's balmy weather and sparkling blue seas make every moment of your holiday an enchanting experience.

The charming island of Malta offers the perfect getaway for anyone looking for an unpretentious, beautiful and refreshingly affordable destination with delightful natural scenery, magnificent architecture, warm, friendly people and a Mediterranean cuisine bursting with natural sun-ripened flavours. Whether you're just visiting for a few days or spending a long lazy winter month on the island, you'll find Malta's charms work their magic on everyone who comes to visit.

1.

WALKING THROUGH THE GALLERY OF LIFE

Sun and sea may be what most people come to Malta to find, but this island nation offers much more. Charming rural landscapes and a stunning legacy of centuries' old art and culture, Malta has something for everyone to enjoy and is perfect for recharging your energy levels.

2.

THE FOOD ISLAND

Wake up to the Mediterranean sunshine, take your breakfast by the sea and watch the world rush by as you sit and relax in a pleasant atmosphere. Take a wine tasting tour and discover the true flavour of Malta. The Maltese are passionate in their devotion to food, and the Maltese cuisine offers some delightful treats.

3.

ESCAPE TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

For the more active traveller, why not combine a marathon challenge with a great travel experience or take to the hiking trails that whisk you along Malta's stunning coastline. Enjoy the magnificent views of Malta's seascape from the comfort of a yacht. Whatever your challenge, Malta has something for everyone.

4.

DIVING INTO THE DEEP BLUE SEA

Rated as one of the world's top diving destinations, Malta boasts a rare combination of top-quality natural and man-made dive sites that make it unquestionably one of the best scuba diving locations, even in winter.

5.

LIVING HISTORY

Often referred to as an open-air museum, with inspiring castles and striking architecture, you can walk in the footsteps of the Knights in Valletta, described as 'a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen' or retrace the steps of the many Hollywood stars who have all spent time in Malta.

Meet me in Malta where the IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE

As one of Europe's sunniest meeting destinations, Malta is playing host to large-scale conferences and more intimate gatherings alike. Don't underestimate this small island nation, the country has all the attractions and facilities of big city destinations.



"There is no such thing as a low season in Malta. With an island as diverse and authentic as Malta, we have a pretty unbeatable offer. The watchword is 'special' rather than 'unique' because every country is unique."

Peter Cauchi
Head of Conventions Malta

Business meetings in Malta offer the chance to explore some of the island's most beautiful treasures and experience the charms of a truly Mediterranean lifestyle. Excellent facilities, year-round good weather and convenient connections to Europe's major airports make Malta a dream destination for incentive planners and conference organisers. Conventions Malta, tasked with promoting Malta as a Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) destination, has adopted an 'access-all-areas-strategy', meaning the country is throwing its doors wide open and making some of the world's most spectacular locations available to event planners. Any location can be transformed into a formidable event space — with even the poshest, swankiest and most iconic venues in the country being on the map. That's why companies and organisations such as the EU, the Commonwealth, WHO, UNDP, Microsoft, IBM, Bayer, Roche, Cable & Wireless, Cadbury, Sony, Dell Computers, Ericsson, UPS, Opel, Deutsche Telecom and many others have already chosen Malta as their meeting place.

Venue Wonderland

From the traditional to the unconventional, Malta boast an impressive selection of inspiring venues. While special conference centres can accommodate up to 10,000 delegates, there are also a variety

of smaller meeting spots, along with a selection of fine dining and top headliner entertainment. From the 16th century Mediterranean Conference Centre in Valletta, to magnificent castles and impressive fortifications, adding a historical accent to any function is easy in Malta. Valletta, the jewel in Malta's crown, which is the 2018 European Capital of Culture, offers one of the most stunning backdrops imaginable. Malta, in essence, does not need to 'disneyfy' itself — it got the real thing. Theme parks, village squares, most beautiful, over-the-top yachts and exclusive sea-front properties are available for a more upmarket kind of feel.

MICE Infrastructure

Conventions Malta offers a variety of services designed to help event organisers. The agency is the first touch point for planners looking at Malta and can connect them with pre-qualified service providers, including professional destination management companies (DMCs), hotels, facilities, venues, audio visual companies, exhibition stand designers and event organisers.

In fact, Malta's MICE infrastructure means businesses find everything they need. From 4- and 5-star hotels and international brand names, to smart business hotels, boutique palazzos and no-frills accommodation, Malta has an extensive range of options to suit every preference. All of them are located a stone's throw away from the airport. One of the country's main strengths is its connectivity with all the major European cities. Travel times vary from three hours (from London) to just one hour (from Rome). Another delightful factor is the great value for money that the island offers.

Where the Fun Begins

Malta's compact size allows groups and delegates to fit business and pleasure activities into a packed itinerary. They can make the most of their stay and enjoy the best of Malta's UNESCO-listed baroque glories, historical sites, cultural and musical events, shopping and mouth-watering food — all within a short distance from each other. Malta's glorious Mediterranean climate also allows plenty of outdoor activities and sports of all types throughout the entire year that can add a fun note to any corporate retreat. ■



SMART PLANNING for a Smart Country

Malta's urban planners want to make the sunshine country even more liveable by incorporating the latest technologies with historic architecture.

Malta plans to join the global movement towards smarter cities and invest heavily in new solutions in the coming years. The Mediterranean island nation believes it can function as a test bed for smart technologies, which could be implemented nation-wide. The country is currently developing a roadmap for a more integrated, connected and sustainable future, and the first projects are expected to kick off in 2019. Smart technologies could underpin many aspects of Malta's infrastructure and services, ultimately improving living and working on the island.

The Need to Scale Up

Many in Malta believe that the country has no choice other than supporting innovative ideas to take its built environment to the next level. In recent years, Malta has seen an influx of foreign companies and professionals, attracted by economic opportunities in a host of sectors including tourism, financial services, iGaming and the creative industries. Limited supply combined with robust economic growth is pushing up demand and prices for affordable apartments, upmarket developments and office space. Malta has already edged out Hong Kong and become the country with the highest residential price gains, according to Knight Frank's latest Global House Price. The island's construction industry is currently going through an unprecedented period of growth and racing to meet the needs of modern Malta. The expectation is that the market, especially on the rental side, will stabilise in the coming two years, as many new units that are currently being build will come onto the market.

Finding a Smart Way

However, it is predicted that Malta's population will surpass the half-a-million-mark in a few years' time. While population growth will most likely increase the productive capacity of the economy, it will put further pressure on the housing market and the existing infrastructure, mainly in areas such as transport, waste and water. Malta's urban planners are now looking at ways to achieve more with less, making infrastructure more efficient and buildings more sustainable. The Planning Authority (PA) is currently conceptualising Malta's smart approach and is emphasising that its ambition is to take into consideration the entire country, not just a single city.

The island's urban planners are back at the drawing board. Much like the Knights of St. John, who designed the island's capital city Valletta

from the ground up, which enabled them to adopt infrastructure that was revolutionary at the time, such as waste disposal and sewage systems, they are open to blue-sky thinking and technologies. The authority is encouraging experts and entrepreneurs to come forward with transformative ideas, and is keen to attract companies of international repute that are ready to go beyond the industry standard and apply the newest technologies, innovative techniques and the latest construction methods. Areas of collaboration could include smart building design as well as services such as intelligent safety, lightning, waste management, parking and traffic management.

Old and New

The challenge might be to respect Malta's heritage and to retrofit digital technology to it, but there are also advantages to it. The island wants to maintain its Mediterranean identity and historic fabric, which makes it attractive for people to live and work in Malta, as well as for high-end buyers seeking to purchase property abroad. While smart cities are inevitably linked with technology, a smart city vision is about more than that. And Malta is not overlooking solutions that complement these such as charging stations for electrical cars.

Quality of Life

Crucial to Malta's future will be the island's ability to plan holistically. The country is looking at many different elements, as it needs more educational and healthcare facilities as well as other urban infrastructure, including sports complexes and recreational facilities, to support more people. Projects such as these will be given priority, and the Planning Authority is keen to see investors as well as private/public sector joint ventures help realise these projects.

On the back of a bold agenda, Malta's real estate and construction sector is poised for significant near-term growth. The island's leaders will be required to make tough decisions about Malta's built environment and infrastructure that will affect generations to come. Their choices will determine whether Malta can position itself as truly global hub for business as well as a very liveable place to work and raise a family. ■



"We want to develop a clear vision for a smart future. We believe Malta can be a pilot project, and many of the intelligent solutions and innovations that Malta is ready to embrace could be rolled out elsewhere."

Johann Buttigieg

Executive Chairman of the Planning Authority



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