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**Gvern Lokali**

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# Local Government Policy 2020

Green Paper



MINISTRY FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE,  
THE ARTS & LOCAL GOVERNMENT



## Preface

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As a Nation we have always viewed and considered inclusivity as a key pillar at the heart of our society. We have always believed that an integral part of the success of our country is the collective contribution of each individual. The Local Government policy review will be embracing these principles and addressing the essential needs in our communities through a holistic framework because we believe that such principles are important in the development of our country and have a direct bearing on the improvement of improving people's quality of life.

This policy comes at a time when the last major reform in the Local Government sphere preceding the 2019 Local Government Reform was done in 2009 where the major thrust was on infusing the concept of sustainable development in the economic, social and environmental strata of our localities. Irrespective of whether such objectives were achieved or not, a decade later it was deemed proper to review the whole system with a view to reform the system of Local Government in Malta in order to "instil a new breadth of life" and renew the system that address the increased "expectations of the citizens in the Maltese localities".

The Local Government Reform which was initiated in 2017 through a process of consultations with the internal and external stakeholders. The completion of consultation process ended in 2019 led to the enactment of a number of legal amendments to the Local Councils Act (now named the Local Government Act). In addition several measures for implementation of the reform process are currently being undertaken and a monitoring structure also introduced to ensure effectivity.

The major thrust of the Reform was to render local authorities (Regional and Local Councils) closer to the communities and the year 2020 we are rolling out a number of initiatives that will see the effective implementation of the Local Government Reform proposals.

In light of these developments, I have the pleasure to present the new Local Government Vision, based on the community legitimate expectations and the principles of Good Democratic Governance at local level.

## Introduction

The system of Local Government has been constantly evolving to meet the challenges as a result of the ever-increasing developments, in particular in the field of technology as well as governance practices that are management-driven. Good management practices, cost efficiency and cost effectiveness are essential elements in today's Local Administration.

Central government, through the Division of Local Government has the primary responsibility to oversee Local Authorities. This ensures that Councils carry out the functions delegated to them in accordance with the Local Government Act and operate within the limits of the conferred powers at law. The Division monitors the functions and operations of Local Government in line with the principle of good governance.

In order to have a truly effective system of Local Government and with due compliance to the guiding principles, local authorities also need to address emerging issues and challenges, such as the issues of: migration, integration, social inclusion, conservation and preservation of the natural environment, minority and vulnerable groups, technology and innovation, community well-being, and sustainability.

## Guiding Principles

The major principles that guide Local Government provide the foundation blocks for a system that promotes decentralization, the framework for the efficient, effective and good local governance. These include the following:

Subsidiarity is a basic principle whereby the central Government should only have a subsidiary function in performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. This principle was the major catalyst for the enactment of the Local Councils Act in June of 1993<sup>1</sup> (Chapter 363, Laws of Malta).

Local Democracy denotes the self-government of cities, towns and villages by democratic means, including the holding of free elections for the local political posts. It also implies a local participatory democracy, that is the local authority's efforts to engage local citizens in its decision making, including consultation and collaborative initiatives with the local citizens, NGOs, business community and persons who work or carry out any other activity in the community.

Local Autonomy denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population. Local autonomy enables local government to have the necessary own resources to perform its functions and to have a positive impact on the well-being of their citizens.

Active citizen participation in local political affairs is also one of the hallmarks of a truly democratic society, coupled with local authorities that operate with strong, effective, effective and accountable local authorities. Sustainability in all decision-making is crucial to ensure that projects undertaken are done with due consideration to be enjoyed by future generations. It has been aptly stated that;



The actions of local government are crucial to the challenge of creating sustainable communities – places where people want to live and work. **With this goal in mind, it is in everyone's interests – national, regional and local – to work in partnership to promote efficiency, getting the most from the available resources to enhance our service to local people<sup>2</sup>.**



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Good Local Governance comprises the key factors that safeguard the responsible conduct of public affairs and management of local public resources. As part of its efforts towards promoting local good governance, the Council of Europe launched the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE), which is awarded to municipalities in Council of Europe Member States which have achieved a high level of good governance measured against a Council of Europe benchmark regarding the twelve Principles of Good Democratic Governance<sup>3</sup>. The Council of Europe places a strong emphasis on local and regional democracy. The European Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe commits the Member States signatory to the Charter to apply basic rules guaranteeing the political, administrative and financial independence of local authorities. It provides that the principle of local self-government shall be recognised in domestic legislation and, where practicable, in the constitution.

Since the inception of Local Government in 1993, Malta has signed and ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government<sup>4</sup> and the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government<sup>5</sup> on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority thus signifying its commitment to provide citizens with the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs as a democratic right as well as having local authorities that can provide an administration which is both effective and close to the citizen.

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<sup>1</sup> By means of Act XV of 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Nick Raynsfor, former UK Minister for Local and Regional Government.

<sup>3</sup> Fair conduct of elections, Representation and Participation; Responsiveness; Efficiency and Effectiveness; Openness and Transparency; Rule of Law; Ethical Conduct; Competence and Capacity; Innovation and Openness to Change; Sustainability

<sup>4</sup> Malta signed the Charter on 13 July 1993 and ratified it on 6 September 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Malta signed and ratified the Additional Protocol on 16 January 2018.

# Local Government Vision



In light of the experiences gained during the past twenty six years of Local Government in Malta and the recent Local Government Reform process that has undergone a wide consultation process both with the internal stakeholders as well as the general public, a new vision for Local Government is being promoted that gives direction for Local Government in the current realities where Local Government plays a crucial role in caring for the locality's community within a set of policy areas<sup>6</sup>.

The Local Government Vision is one that encapsulates the concept of the local authority as being the vehicle for embracing unity within the community. This includes the realization of the concept of subsidiarity as well as that of integrating the different sectors within the local community. Local Government is the ideal vehicle to promote, encourage and assist in uniting the community of residents, immigrants, and the public and commercial sector as well as visitors in the locality.

## “ Embracing Unity in the Community



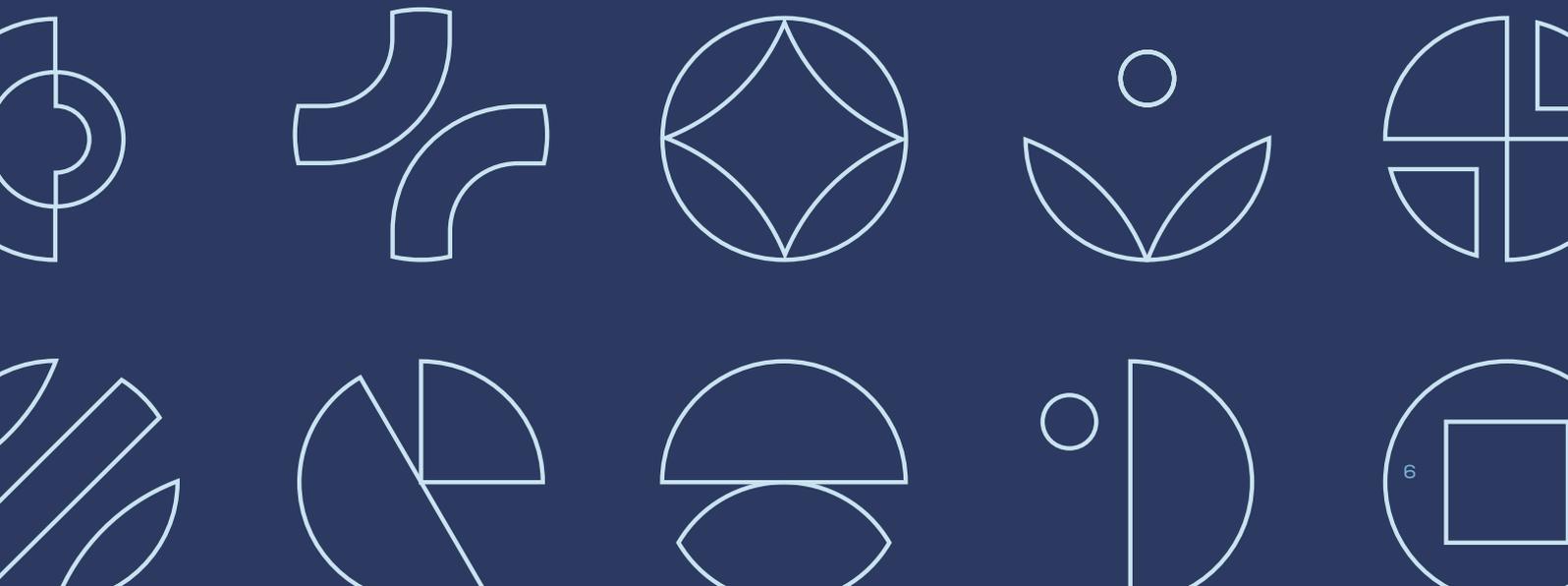
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<sup>6</sup>Policy areas have been set for each one of the ten Pillars as set in this document.

# Objectives

In order to achieve the Local Government Vision, the following objectives have been identified:

- Central Government is committed to continue to support and provide the necessary resources to Local Government in order to assist them to function more efficiently and effectively;
- Increasing the standards for the Local Government functions and operations in order to offer service more professionally;
- Strengthening the Regional Councils for a more efficient service delivery and to have the necessary resources to assist and support the Local Councils within their region;
- Offering more direct services in order to realise the concept of keeping the citizen at the centre of local government services;
- Developing better the means of communication between local authorities and the citizen as well as between the Local Government and central Government as well as other entities;
- Introduce an ICT Strategy for Local Government that is truly customer centric.



# Local Government Policies 2020

The Local Government Policy 2020 continues to build on the Reform and is based on the need to meet the legitimate expectations of the local citizen and those residing and operating within the community as well as the principles of Good Governance (in particular, the Twelve Principles of Good Democratic Governance of the Council of Europe).

The Local Government Policy 2020 is based on 10 major pillars, every one of which is crucial for local governance and to support the well-being of the local community (represented by the residents, business community and the minor groups living or working in the community).

The ten pillars that form the basis of the Local Government Policy 2020 are the following:



Komunità tieghek  
**Inkluzjoni**



Komunità tieghek  
**Saħħa**



Komunità tieghek  
**Ambjent**



Komunità tieghek  
**Servizz Aħjar u Trasparenti**



Komunità tieghek  
**Mobilità aħjar u Aċċessibilità**



Komunità tieghek  
**Kultura u Wirt Nazzjonali**



Komunità tieghek  
**Innovazzjoni u Teknoloġija**



Komunità tieghek  
**Edukazzjoni**



Komunità tieghek  
**Sigurtà**



Komunità tieghek  
**Indafa u Manutenzjoni**

## Inclusion Policy

The communities in the localities in Malta and Gozo are made up of various sectors, that include the residents, the commercial and public sectors, communities of minorities, persons embracing different religions, as well as those who frequent the locality for work or entertainment purposes. Communities are, therefore, a texture of diversity.

It is therefore important that every person who resides, works or visits the locality feel that they are making a contribution to the local community and that they are appreciated as members of the said community even if they belong to a minority group or have any disability or condition that renders them disadvantaged. Local policies, the decisions and activities undertaken by the local authorities should include the principle of integration of the diverse sectors within the community part of that community.

## Environment Policy

The preservation and embellishment of the built and natural environment is essential element to ensure that every person within the community feels that they live or work in a healthy and pleasant environment. It is thus important that the local policies, decisions and initiatives taken on a local level respect the principles of preservation and sustainability of the environment.

A sustainable and healthy environment will lead to a community that is comfortable and proud to be part of that community.

## Mobility and Accessibility Policy

The residents and those who frequent or operate a business or activity in a locality should have easy access to all the local services. For this to succeed, it is necessary for the infrastructure in the locality to facilitate the mobility of persons to travel from one place to another.

In this regard the local authority should aim for an infrastructure that facilitates alternative means of mobility and supports transport systems for those who are vulnerable or who require such services to move within the locality.

Public services should likewise be accessible in a variety of forms to every person, including access to services through information technology. In this way, local public services would in effect be easily accessible to every member of the community.

## Innovation and Technology Policy

Technology undergoes continuous development. It is, therefore, important to adopt methods and practices that can address the continuous challenges. Local authorities, therefore, should adopt a policy that encourages research in order to find innovative ways on how to address the continuous developments and challenges. It is equally important for local authorities to have the necessary technological tools so that the services they provide reach all the sectors of the community, in particular, through better use of ICT. For this purpose, local authorities should have the technological capacity to address both the present and future challenges. Central Government will support the Local Government in their endeavours by developing and implementing, in collaboration with Local Governments an ICT strategy.

Innovation comprises new ideas, creative thoughts, and new imaginations in form of device or methods. Innovation is often also implies the application of better solutions that meet new requirements and needs. In the field of Local Government, innovation involves the provision of more-effective processes, services, technologies, or operational models.

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## Local Security Policy

Every person who lives, operates a business or conducts an activity or who frequents the locality expects to be able to live or conduct their activity in a secure manner. Local authorities should therefore ensure that all parts of the locality are secure so that all those living or frequenting that the locality could do so without any fear.

For this purpose arrangements should be made with the authorities responsible for public security to introduce the necessary measures, such as CCTV equipment, surveillance in the locality through a Community Policing schemes, and for a collaborative approach between authorities and the citizens in order to guarantee the safety. The local authority should provide the necessary safeguards and level of security as part of the interest to promote and improve the wellbeing of all within the community.

## Local Health Policy

In collaboration with the national health authorities, Local Councils have an important role vis-a-vis the local citizens in the fields of health prevention and cure. The local councils' contribution in this field includes the provision of information and seminars on the prevention of illness, the provision of facilities for vaccinations and the organization of activities that encourage a healthy lifestyle, including sport activities targeting all the age groups. The contribution of local councils in this field is one that can reach all the spheres within the community.

## Local Services and Transparency Policy

Local Councils are the level of public authority most close to the citizens, and they should provide services that meet the legitimate expectations of the residents and those who operate a business or any activity in the locality.

The services offered by the local councils should be accessible to all and the requests that they receive be processed without prejudice and in an expeditious manner. There should be in place also systems that process complaints that provide the facility to keep the complainant informed of the outcome.

The local councils' operations should also be subject to the scrutiny of the residents and for this purpose local council meetings should be open to the public and streamed live, and the official documentation, including the financial statements, are to be made public and put online on the local council's website and the official Local Government website.

## Local Culture and Heritage Policy

Cultural Heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation. This includes customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values. Each locality has its own cultural heritage and in order that this is enjoyed by the community it is necessary for it to be preserved and that there is information about such cultural heritage. Local Councils play an important role in the preservation and the provision of information about the locality's cultural heritage. This can be done in several ways such as the use of the social media, the organization of cultural activities and historical re-enactments, as well as by carrying out restoration interventions on historical objects, places and monuments.

## Local Education Policy

In today's globalised world, the pace of educational change is not determined only at a national level. The local education strategy is aimed at lifelong learning to ensure that all persons, young people and adults have the opportunity to obtain the necessary skills and attitudes to be active citizens and to succeed at work and in the community. This should not be hindered by differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status. In this respect, Local Councils have an important role to play, one that addresses different learning experiences by encouraging creativity, critical literacy, entrepreneurship, work placements and student exchanges, and innovation at all levels.

## Cleanliness and Maintenance Policy

Local Councils have an important role to play in the locality's state of cleanliness and to provide the necessary maintenance of the public infrastructure. This one of the first services that Central Government entrusted to the Local Governments. Their role is to ensure that the urban and non-urban areas are free from litter, including illegally dumped waste, as well as to ensure that the environment is in a pleasant state that can be enjoyed by residents and visitors to the locality. A clean environment is a healthy environment which is essential for the community's well-being.

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