



The Hon. Dr. Robert Abela
Office of the Prime Minister
Auberge de Castille
Valletta VLT 1061

17th June 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

We, the undersigned group of civil society organisations and NGOs within Malta, are writing with regard to the Government of Malta's participation in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which is committed to core democratic values and civic engagement. We greatly welcome Malta's move to become a member of OGP in 2011, since it is an opportunity to tackle key transparency and accountability issues within a structured framework based on collaboration, commitment, and open dialogue.

We are, however, deeply concerned by Malta's recent lack of engagement and commitment to its obligations as a member of OGP. The Maltese Government has already been notified by OGP, [as per an official letter](#), that the country is under procedural review by the OGP Criteria & Standards Committee for two reasons:

- a. The Government of Malta failed to submit a new OGP Action Plan in 2017, and was subsequently moved to the 2018-2020 Action Plan cycle.
- b. The International Association for Public Participation "Involve" requirement as part of the development of the 2018-2020 Action Plan was not met by the Government of Malta.

As the Government of Malta acted contrary to the OGP process across two consecutive Action Plan cycles, the country has been placed under procedural review.

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As far as we have been informed by OGP, the Maltese government has not yet responded to the official letter OGP sent on 7th February, 2020. This is disconcerting since it signals - not only to Maltese citizens, but also to the international community of OGP - that Malta's government does not seriously heed the values of OGP: transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in policy-making. In light of this, we ask which Ministry is currently responsible for coordinating the Government of Malta's OGP activities and responsibilities, since the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality - which previously held that responsibility - has been dissolved.

Furthermore, the fact that there is no evidence for civil society input or "influence" in Malta's final 2018-2020 Action Plan, appears to undermine OGP's objective to empower citizens. In order to fulfil these obligations effectively, we believe the Maltese Government should establish a permanent multi-stakeholder forum for OGP, which is a minimum requirement for OGP participation. We urge you to use such a multi-stakeholder forum to engage with civil society more effectively, moving beyond basic consultation processes and tools such as a public questionnaire. We would be very willing to assist or advise on this matter.

One of the shortcomings in the content of Malta's 2018-2020 Action Plan was the lack of relevancy to OGP values of three out of five commitments. While there was merit in commitment 2 (migrant integration) and commitment 5 (strengthening of local government and the Commission on Domestic Violence), the 2018-2020 Action Plan failed to address some of the significant issues that pervade Malta's civic environment, most notably commitments that address corruption, transparency and government integrity, as well as the state of media freedom.

We therefore urge Malta's government to recommit itself to the OGP process, providing both an explanation as to how the government will meet OGP standards in the future, as well as a written update on the status of the co-creation process for the forthcoming 2021-2023 Action Plan, which is due for submission this year. We additionally urge Malta's government to seriously consider the recommendations set out by the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism pursuant to [the review of Malta's 2018-2021 Action Plan](#) and implement them in the co-creation of the forthcoming 2021-2023 Action Plan. We also urge Malta's government to use the OGP Action Plan and platform to address some of the most pressing issues facing the country today.

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We are keen to support and lend our assistance to the Maltese government's participation in the OGP process, whether that be through strengthening mechanisms for government-civil society dialogue, engaging with the national researcher that is assigned to Malta by OGP, facilitating any data collection, or providing specialist expertise in the relevant areas.

Yours sincerely,

Signatories:

Matthew Caruana Galizia, Director, *The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation*

Neil Falzon, Director, *aditus foundation*

Claudia Taylor East, CEO, *SOS Malta*

Maria Pisani, *Integra Foundation*

William Grech, Executive Director, *Kopin*

Robert Aquilina, President, *Repubblika*

cc

The Hon. Dr Edward Zammit Lewis, Minister for Justice, Equality, and Governance

Mr Mario Cutajar, Principal Permanent Secretary

Mr Johan Galea, Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Justice, Equality, and Governance

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