



Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development

PROMOTING A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
National study for Malta

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Executive summary

Tourism development in the Maltese Islands has grown to be one of the most important economic activities on the islands. From a mere 12,500 tourists in 1959 tourist arrivals increased to over 1.2 million in 2007. Nonetheless, recent years have shown that the destination may have reached its saturation level along the tourist area life cycle curve. The introduction of low cost airlines had an important role in achieving the arrivals level recorded in 2007 and the introduction of additional low cost airlines may progress such increase in the future.

Tourism developed very much along the mass tourism approach creating various environmental social as well as economic problems. Unplanned tourism development on the coast and in rural areas have resulted in the transformation of landscapes and habitats. Uncontrolled urban sprawl has also led to the reduction of rural areas.

The coming into force of the Development Planning Act and the Structure Plan policies has led to a slowdown in development, nonetheless, despite policies and environmental safeguards, there is still the risk that coastal areas are taken up for development. This results when the decision taking structures ignore policy and decide on an ad hoc basis. The scheduling process was an important instrument in ensuring that coastal and rural areas are protected, nonetheless the protection of these areas may require more legal protection.

Despite these risks, a number of initiatives have been taken to ensure a proper development of the sector. The Tourism Development Plan for the Maltese Islands in 1989 was an important stage which guided the transformation of tourism since the nineties, although the concept of planning for the sector has not been totally ingrained in the sector. Despite the various short term strategic plans prepared, which were simply a list of actions to be undertaken, planning requires a much wider looking and long term approach. A tourism policy has been prepared and approved and this document should guide the preparation of a plan for this sector .

The nineties has seen the development of new tourist markets particularly during the winter months in the form of cultural tourism, educational tourism, health tourism as well as conference and business tourism. These developments were instrumental in attracting more tourists during the off peak months. This has led to a slight change in the tourist arrivals patterns by season, with the winter months increasing their share whilst the summer months experienced a reduction.

Various initiatives have been taken which address elements of the MCSD Strategy particularly the setting up of Marine Conservation Areas and the Eco-certification scheme as well as training schemes. However, such initiatives need to be followed up as the initial enthusiasm starts to decrease by time.

Training initiatives to all sectors should bring about a better understanding of tourism and its complexity and reduce the myopic approach to tourism development.

Government should support NGO initiatives in the management of sites since examples have shown that such initiatives have resulted in protection of resources whilst ensuring adequate economic returns.

In conclusion, the development of sustainable tourism in the Maltese Islands needs a sincere commitment and belief in such an approach firstly at the political levels as well as amongst the various stakeholders. All stakeholders need to participate in the decision taking mechanisms regarding tourism development. A greater integration is needed between tourism and other development sectors to ensure sustainable tourism development succeeds. Integrated planning should ensure protection of environmental, social and cultural resources whilst achieving economic objectives.

I. Part I - Tourism context and trends, policies and strategies

The Maltese islands are located almost at the centre of the Mediterranean and between Northern Europe and North Africa. The Islands are composed of three main islands – Malta, Gozo and Comino – and together make up a surface area of approximately 316 km². The current population level, as per 2005 census, is around 404,962 (www.census2005.gov.mt/reports) with a population density of 1285 persons per km². (2005 census population report) This is the highest amongst European Union countries where the average is 117.5 per km².

For over a century and a half since 1800 the Maltese Islands were dependent on the British Services and the greater part of the economy was dependent on the provision of services to the British military base. With the gradual departure of the British Services in the late 50s the Islands had to seek alternative economic opportunities considering that the population was on the increase and job opportunities at the time were very limited. In fact there was a massive emigration activity after the Second World War. Thus in the early 60s government identified three main sectors which were to be developed further – Industry, Agriculture and Tourism.

Tourism was identified as one of the main pillars of the new economy and during the 60s Government provided a number of schemes to assist the growth of this industry considering that investment in tourism at that time was very limited. Such assistance was mainly in the form of grants to assist the construction of hotels as well as marketing and product development. In 1958 Government had set up the Malta Government Tourist Board with the task ‘to do all things necessary, advantageous or convenient to encourage tourists to visit Malta, and particularly to investigate, formulate and carry out schemes by means of advertising or otherwise, that are calculated to bring the attractions of Malta as a tourist resort to the notice of other people in other countries’. (John Pollacco, In the National Interest, 2004, pg8)

Tourism to the Maltese Islands initially was very much dependent on its beaches, however, as the use of such beaches increased, particularly as a result of increased mobility by locals, the beach product became less and less attractive. However, the tourism infrastructure depended very much on this aspect since the product developed mainly around the summer tourist market.

This created some problems when seeking to attract new markets during the low season and therefore most hotels had to refurbish or redevelop to improve their facilities and add others to widen their product base. Hence, new conference facilities, as well as thalassotherapy and health and fitness facilities, were among the improvements made.

Besides the conference and business tourist markets, Government towards the end of the eighties and beginning nineties embarked on a number of product development initiatives particularly to improve the historical and cultural assets of the islands, namely museums and archaeological sites. In addition to this the natural environment was also targeted for the development of country walks and trails. The Maltese Islands do not enjoy scenic features such as mountains or rivers, however, its natural environment offers interesting geophysical features as well as an ecology which boasts a number of endemic species.

As indicated seaside tourism still remains an important part of the summer tourist product and government has embarked on various projects to replenish specific beaches which lost most of their sand in the past. One particular project was in St. George’s Bay, St. Julian’s. The Islands’ cultural assets have also received an increased attention and despite a slow pace, nonetheless a number of archaeological and historic sites have received substantial upgrading e.g. The National Museum of Archaeology, the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site,

and the temples of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra, also World Heritage Sites, which are in the process of receiving better protection and visitor facilities.

The rural environment is also playing an important role in the overall tourism product, particularly through the encouragement of walking trails in the countryside. However, this aspect of the Islands' environment still needs more attention since the pressure from the construction industry, mineral extraction as well as hunting and trapping activity tarnish various initiatives in this regard. The Islands offer various endemic species as well as unique geological attractions which are an important asset to the tourism product and which sometimes cannot be appropriately enjoyed due to other conflicting activities.

Such improvements and a new direction in the development of tourism in the Maltese Islands were sparked by the recommendations made in The Tourism Development Plan for the Maltese Islands which was commissioned by Government and prepared by Horwath and Horwath in 1989. The plan identified three main strategies – Diversification, Seasonality and Product Improvement. Although the tourism industry in the Maltese Islands was quite a mature industry at the time yet the importance of the plan should not be underestimated. After years of substantial unplanned development in the sector, this plan set new foundations for the sector. Looking back, now that almost twenty years have passed from the commissioning of this plan, one can say that the plan was successful in various respects, particularly in encouraging the improvement of the tourism infrastructure through the upgrading of hotel accommodation, diversifying the product base (e.g. cruise ship tourism, cultural tourism, Teaching English, business and conference, nature tourism) and bringing more co-ordination in the sector particularly through joint initiatives between the private and the public sector and the setting up of the Malta Tourism Authority which better organised the various public sector functions in tourism which were previously somewhat fragmented. On the other hand recommendations with regard to the improvement in the seasonality pattern have not materialised as was planned and the pattern of arrivals practically remained the same.

In 1959 around 12,500 tourists visited the Islands. This grew to over 1.2 million in 2007. Tourism contributes around 25% to the GDP and generates 41,000 full time equivalent jobs (Malta Tourism Authority, The Economic Impact of Tourism in Malta, 2000). However, over the last twenty years annual growth rates in tourist arrivals were not as high as in the seventies and eighties. This shows that the Islands are probably moving towards the saturation stage of the tourist area life cycle. Annual average tourist arrivals grew by 1.6 % between 1980 – 1990, by 2.8% between 1990 – 2000 and increased by 0.2% between 2000 – 2007, indicating that the Islands will not experience huge influxes of tourist numbers in future. Nonetheless, the introduction of the low cost airlines, which started operating in November 2006, may have had an important impact on tourist arrivals during 2007 since figures exceeded the previous record level in 2000 surpassing the 1.2 million figure and registering an increase of over 10% above the 2006 figure. How much such growth can be sustained and its implications one will still have to see.

This slowdown in the tourism sector over the recent years resulted in the closure of a number of hotels, most of which are redeveloping into residential apartments. This situation creates various issues. On the one hand the islands had a surplus of tourist accommodation beds which placed the sector at the mercy of tour operators who sought competitive rates whilst the reduction in the over-supply in bed capacity would now lead to a better demand – supply relationship. However, now that tourist arrivals seem on the increase pressure may be made to increase the number of beds, especially since airline seat capacity is also increasing.

As stated above over the last 20 years tourism development was steered away from just the sun and sand product which had characterised most of the 70s and 80s. Government through its tourism agencies set out to improve the image of the Islands, identifying new product

opportunities as well as new markets through a strategy of niche marketing which targeted cultural tourism, business, conference and incentive tourism, learning English tourism and cruise tourism amongst others. This new strategy encouraged new tourists to visit the Islands such that between 1987 and 2007 tourist arrivals increased from 745,900 to 1,243,510 an increase of 67% or an average annual increase of around 3%.

The main strategy was to improve the quality of the Islands tourist product. The accommodation sector was one of the areas to be targeted and in the early 90s Government’s stated policy was to allow only 5 and 4 - star hotels to be developed. This resulted in a number of proposals being put forward and over the last 20 years the stock of 5 star hotels increased from around 5 establishments in the late 80s to 15 establishments in 2007. This policy had various implications on the tourism development of the Islands and particularly on other forms of tourist accommodation. Three star establishments could not compete effectively with the prices that were being charged by such 5-star hotels to fill the excess bed supply that resulted and most of the former establishments moved out of the tourism sector and developed the properties into homes for the elderly as well as apartment blocks. The sudden increase in the five star bed stock was not adequately matched with the expected upgrading in the overall tourism product and in recent years such establishments had to rely on students to fill the rooms during the summer months.

The slowdown in tourist arrivals over the last years since 2000 led to a number of properties to redevelop into either commercial or residential development. This had various effects particularly the loss of jobs and the decrease in tourist beds, although to some extent the latter was necessary. Nonetheless, now that arrivals seem to be on the increase the industry is already pressing for beds and although there seems to be no major pressure to build new hotels, possibly existing ones will seek to expand their properties. This may create pressure in areas which are not within the development zones, particularly tourist accommodation located along the coast and in rural areas. In fact last year an extension to an existing hotel was granted a permit whilst another is still being processed.

The improvement of the seasonal pattern of tourist arrivals was also an important objective of the tourism strategy during the last twenty years. Despite increases in tourist arrivals during the various months, the pattern of arrivals remained practically constant during the 90s but showed a marked change in 2007, primarily during the summer and winter months as indicated below.

Table 1 – Seasonality pattern for specific years

Year	Winter (jan-feb-nov-dec)	Shoulder (mar-apr-may-jun-oct)	Summer (jul-aug-sep)
1987	16.4%	43.3%	40.3%
1997	18.5%	45.6%	36%
2007	19%	43.4%	37.6%

Source: NSO

An improvement has been registered during the winter months where share of tourist arrivals increased to 19% whilst during the summer months the share decreased to 37.6%. The shoulder months remained practically the same. This shows a relative success in the efforts to spread arrivals which included development of new products e.g. business and conference, countryside walking trails, health tourism and other products to attract tourists during the winter months. The introduction of the low cost airlines may have also helped to encourage short break holidays during the low season. In fact statistics show a 9% decrease in nights stayed in January 2007 over the previous year and this has been attributed to shorter stays in private accommodation. Nights spent in hotel accommodation increased by 2.8% over the previous year in the same month. The

length of stay during this month was 8.6 nights, 1.1 nights less than January 2006. Nights stayed in January 2007 was also 20% less than that recorded in January 2005. This same situation was also experienced in February 2007 where despite an increase in tourist arrivals of 6.9% over the same month in 2006 total nights stayed decreased by 3.4%. (NSO News Releases)

Another main issue over the last twenty years was the development of golf courses. This issued created a lot of controversy particularly due to the sites that were being proposed for such development. Government prepared a policy guidance paper on the subject which was approved in 1997 by the then Planning Authority (now Malta Environment and Planning Authority). In November 2004 Government asked MEPA to identify potential sites for such a development and 5 sites were proposed. Notwithstanding this report Government targeted another area in the north of Malta. After carrying out various studies on this sensitive area, Government decided not to proceed further with the consideration of this area for golf. Currently, there is no identified site but the issue in this regard has not been definitely shelved and the golf course issue may crop up again in the near future.

1. Reduce the adverse territorial and environmental impacts of tourism, especially in existing coastal tourist areas

The lack of appropriate planning of tourism development in the past resulted in locating such developments in sensitive areas, particularly along the coast. With the coming into force of the Development Planning Act in 1992 all forms of development were being regulated. The Structure Plan and then Planning Authority, which came into force with this Act, were the main regulating instruments /agency with regard to the use of the land. The Coastal and Rural Conservation policies regulated any forms of development outside the designated Development Zones and despite some extensions given to existing hotel accommodation and a couple of other new developments, the coastal zone and rural areas were in general safeguarded from such development. Between 1994 and 1998, 144 tourism and recreation related applications were submitted and 60 were granted a permit (MEPA, Coastal Strategy Topic Paper, 2002)

The Development Planning Act also gives MEPA authority to schedule buildings as well as designate Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance. This scheduling, particularly of coastal cliffs and other coastal areas as well as valleys and rural areas is an important tool in ensuring the protection of sensitive sites.

The Malta Tourism Authority has also introduced the Eco Certification scheme in 2002 which is a voluntary scheme whereby tourist accommodation establishments are certified each year on a number of criteria, almost 100, with the aim of assessing their performance in terms of reducing the impact of their activities on the environment in the areas of waste management, energy saving, water conservation measures as well as raising awareness amongst employees with regard to their impact on the environment. Most of the 5 and 4-star hotels participate in this scheme and results have been positive.

Another initiative is the Special Thanks and Recognition scheme (STAR) introduced by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) to give public recognition to all those who work directly or indirectly in the tourism industry. This initiative helps to increase the tourism culture amongst the local population making them aware that every small action from their part is an important element in offering a positive holiday experience to visitors.

2. Promote sustainable tourism which in turn reinforces social cohesion and cultural and economic development, enhances Mediterranean diversity and specificities and strengthens synergies with other economic sectors, especially agriculture

Although there is still a long way to go in ensuring that tourism in the Maltese Islands is developed along sustainable development principles, yet Government and its tourism agencies have committed themselves many times to ensuring such an approach. The Malta Tourism Authority's various strategy documents have given due attention to this aspect. The first Strategic Plan for 2000 – 2002 indicated as part of the Key programmes of the Product Planning and Development Directorate the formulation of recommendations for a national policy for sustainable tourism development. This did not exactly materialise although in the approved Tourism policy it is stated that one of the objectives is to 'manage tourism in Malta and Gozo on the principles of sustainable development' and 'to maintain and conserve environmental and socio-cultural resources, being the key elements of the Maltese Islands' tourism product'. In addition, tourism policy seeks to 'manage and balance economic, social and environmental impacts seeking the national interest but not at the expense of degrading environmental and socio-cultural resources.'

It has been stated that the Government tourism plan is based on sustainable tourism but integration with other sectors is not so strong. Policy indicates that there should be this integration but appropriate structures have not been in place although there is an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Tourism chaired by the Prime Minister. Nonetheless, the function of this Committee is more to 'deal expediently with cross-ministerial issues affecting Malta's tourism performance' rather than to integrate policies and plans.

Most of the actions taken with regard to developing sustainable tourism products have evolved from the initiatives by individuals and in some cases the local councils. Agro-tourism initiatives, restoration and promotion of heritage resources by NGOs and local councils are only a few examples of such initiatives.

3. Increase the added value of tourism for local communities and actors in developing countries

Although tourism activity is still mainly concentrated within the traditional tourist areas and the principle attractions, yet the last few years saw a gradual improvement in the spreading of tourist activity to other less frequented localities. Although, this has been a slow process, yet a proper planning of such activity should ensure that tourism activity benefits the local community and is directed by them rather than imposed on them by external agents.

4. Improve governance for sustainable tourism

There is still a lot to be done in this regard since this involves having all stakeholders part of the decision making process with regard to tourism development. A number of local councils have taken up local tourism related initiatives e.g. opening up of heritage venues (towers, shelters, etc), but when it comes to influencing major decisions on tourism development, local councils are similar to any other pressure group. In Gozo locals have taken up various initiatives in offering more authentic tourism products in the form of local culinary products, agro related tourism as well as accommodation in the form of traditional farmhouses.

II. Part II - In-depth assessment of the progress made

1. Controlling tourism's territorial and environmental impact

1.1. Anticipate and reduce the negative impact of developments, urbanisation and tourist infrastructures on coastlines

1.1.1. Implementation

The mechanisms to reduce such impacts have been put in place with the formulation and subsequent approval of the Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands, the Development Planning Act (1992) and the setting up of the then Planning Authority (now Malta Environment and Planning Authority – MEPA). The rapid and unplanned development that occurred in the late 60s, 70s and 80s, necessitated a planning system as well as the enactment of the Environment Protection Act (1991).

The Environment Protection Act (1991) introduced the need to carry out Environment Impact Assessments (EIA). EIA Regulations were formulated in this regard specifying the procedure as well as listing development that would require such a study, including tourism development.

In 1999 the MTA finalised the Tourism Carrying Capacity for the Maltese Islands. This study was crucial in determining the appropriate threshold for tourism arrivals to ensure that it would not adversely affect the social and environmental fabric whilst ensuring an acceptable level of economic activity. The study identified a threshold of 160,000 tourists or 1.4 million guestnights in the peak month of August. This means an equivalent of just over 45,000 tourists on the island each day.

The Structure Plan policies, followed by the detailed local plans for the Islands provide the policies to protect coastal areas, as well as rural areas, from any development not only tourism that will adversely affect such areas. Within 1 km of coastline, 21% of the coastal area is developed. This includes harbours and coastal locations, particularly along the east to south east stretch of the Island of Malta and a few locations in Gozo. The local plans provide detailed guidance regarding the use of the coastal areas as well as any protection they deserve, particularly those meriting scheduling. Local Plans also identify areas for the creation of Nature Parks.

The Natura 2000 programme resulted in the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). This further ensures the protection of such sites which include coastal cliffs, wetlands and other sensitive locations, from any potential development which may cause harm to such areas.

1.1.2. Progress made

The Local plans for the Maltese Islands have been approved in 2006 and therefore a framework has been established to reduce the possibility of inappropriate development in rural and coastal areas. The Local plans have formulated specific policies indicating where tourism development would be considered appropriate and have also defined tourist resort areas.

The Coastal Strategy Topic Paper approved in 2002, provides the basis for the formulation of appropriate policies in the upcoming review of the Structure Plan regarding the protection of the coastal zone. With regard to tourism the coastal strategy identifies the need to safeguard popular

tourist areas, particularly beaches and dive sites, from incompatible uses. Improved access to the coast is another important issue to bring coastal areas more accessible whilst ensuring the protection of such resources. The Malta Tourism Authority have identified a number of areas where improved access is required and have also applied for a development permit in some of these areas.

The Carrying Capacity Study (CCA), which covers the period 2001 – 2010, has also provided the basis for the formulation of the National Tourism Policy, particularly with regard to stabilising the volume of the bed stock in serviced accommodation and ensuring that summer tourist volumes stabilise below saturation levels. With regard to bed stock this has been maintained particularly since a number of hotels have moved out of the tourism business and redeveloped into other forms of development. However, summer volumes, particularly in August still increased and since 2003 tourist volumes during this month exceeded the threshold established in the CCA Study. For example in 2005, 2006 and 2007, tourist arrivals during the month of August totalled 178,319, 164,302 and 176,372 tourists respectively. Guestnights for the same years were 1,950,275, 1,806,692 and 1,927,863 respectively, well above the threshold set of 1.4 million guestnights.

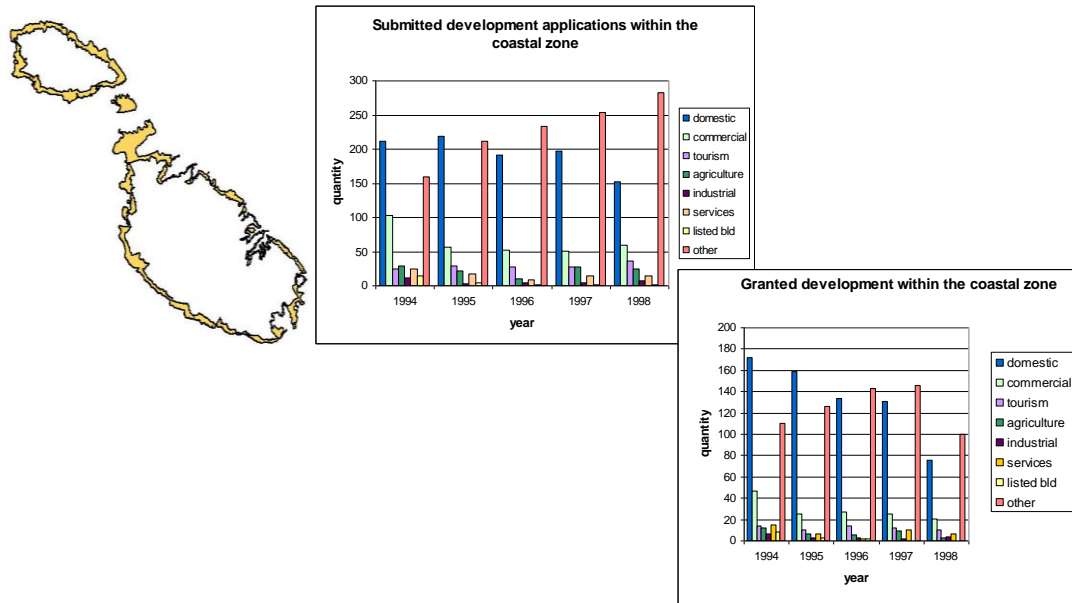
As part of the EU Habitats Directive a number of Natura 2000 sites have been identified. Malta has proposed 26 terrestrial sites to form part of the Natura 2000 network, these representing about 12.6 percent of the Maltese Islands' land area, as well as a marine site. Management plans for these sites are being formulated and such designations have ensured that such areas are not adversely affected by inappropriate development. A Natura 2000 site can also be designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), as required by the EU Birds Directive, when the site is known to be particularly important for the conservation of wild bird species. Malta has declared 12 such sites, covering 4.5 percent of the land area.

1.1.3. Obstacles encountered

The main obstacles resulted from development decisions taken which go against policy. The composition of decision taking boards where no accountability exists for decisions taken, has often resulted in developments, resulting in degradation of coastal areas or sensitive locations being given the green light. A recent development which created controversy was an open air disco in a coastal area, outside the development zone and within an area scheduled as an Area of Ecological Importance and a candidate Special Area of Conservation site or Natura 2000 site.

The scheduling process also takes time and in the interim sensitive sites risk being proposed for development. Scheduling is a process contemplated in the Development Planning Act and therefore competes with development related decisions, which are usually given more priority. The risk of development being allowed in coastal areas exists. Fortunately, however, most of the coast has been scheduled, however natural coastal stretches within or close to the urban areas still risk being developed. Between 1995 and 2005 protection in the coastal zone increased from 9.59% to 50.89%, as a result of scheduling. (MEPA, Deduce Indicator)

Figure 1 - Development applications within the coastal zone



Source: MEPA, Coastal Strategy Topic Paper

One of the main obstacles that prevent the achievement of the above mentioned actions has been the composition of tourism decision taking bodies which have always been composed of representatives of the tourism industry and other stakeholders were absent. The Travel and Tourism Services Act (1999), establishes the composition of the Malta Tourism Authority Board and its composition is made up primarily of representatives of hoteliers, travel agents, the national airline and others representing interests of the tourism industry. This excludes other important sectors like NGOs and representatives of the general public. This lack of representation of important stakeholders meant that decisions are taken primarily in the interests of the tourism industry.

1.2. Reducing consumption of natural resources and the pollution caused by tourist accommodation and activities

1.2.1. Implementation

The Malta Tourism Authority has since 2001 set up the Eco Certification scheme which aims to give hotels a certification related to their performance with regard to environmental protection. The Malta Tourism Authority's Eco-Certification Scheme has succeeded in encouraging hotels to deliver a better product to meet the demand of the evermore environmentally aware tourist. To participate, hotels must comply with a number of criteria all aimed at improving the hotels' environmental performance and increasing environmental awareness amongst employees. Hotels have to comply with almost 100 criteria designed to ensure the improved environmental performance of each hotel. Currently 14 hotels have been given the Eco-certification, mostly in the 5, 4 and 3-star categories.

Training programmes to make those working in the industry more aware of the various elements of tourism has also played an important role in giving players a wider vision of what constitutes tourism. One of these programmes was '*Malta Int u t-Turist*' (*Malta You and the Tourist*). This training programme, organised by the MTA together with Malta University Services, was addressed at those in contact with tourists, particularly employees working in tourism-related establishments and support services. The aim of the *Malta, Int u t-Turist* programme is to enable tourism front liners to be better informed about all aspects of the local tourism product,

including customer relations and field trips. The training modules cover subjects in the following areas:

- **Economic and Social Aspects of Tourism**
- **The Natural, Historical and Cultural Attractions of the Maltese Islands**
- **Customer Relations.**

The improvement of a number of tourist facilities have encouraged a number of products which attract tourists during the winter months. One of these has been the development of business and conference travel which constitutes around 7% of tourist arrivals, 82% of which come in the low and shoulder months. The upgrading and promotion of cultural and heritage assets, although there is still a lot to be done, has enhanced the awareness of such heritage attracting tourists during the winter and shoulder months accounting for 62% of the market during these months. The relatively good weather during the winter months has encouraged tourists, particularly those from northern Europe to spend the winter months on the islands since it turns out to be more cheaper.

In 2004 the MTA shifted its marketing from a geographical centered marketing approach to a segment centered one focusing on those primary motives that attract tourists to the Islands. These include – Culture and Heritage (16%), Sports Tourism (3%), Diving (5%), Language Learning (5%), Conference, Business and Incentive (7%), Film Production, Health and Wellness, Short Breaks (3%), amongst others. (www.mta.com.mt)

1.2.2. Progress made

The Eco-Certification scheme showed that hotels managed to save on their water and energy costs. Results in 2004 have indicated that Electricity consumption reduced at an average of 4% per bed-night, water consumption at an average of 18% per bed-night, Fuel consumption at an average of 4% per bed-night and Gas consumption at an average of 6% per bed-night.

The seasonal pattern has also improved slightly over the last 20 years. As indicated previously, the share of total tourist arrivals during the winter months increased from 16.4% in 1987 to 19% in 2007 whilst the share during the summer months decreased from 40.3% to 37.6% during the same period. The shoulder months remained practically the same. This shows that the winter offer has attracted a growth not only in the number of arrivals but also in the overall share of tourist arrivals.

The changes in seasonality indicate that the new products on offer particularly during the winter months have given results. Although the summer product remains very important for tourism in the Maltese Islands the development of alternative products lengthen the tourist season and generate interest in the off peak months ensuring acceptable levels of occupancy during these lean periods. The Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association's Hotel Survey which is carried out each quarter indicates that for 2007 occupancy rates improved for all the high category hotel establishments. Annual Occupancy in Five star accommodation stood at 67.5% compared to 63.2% the previous year. Four star occupancy stood at 75.5% compared to 70.2% in 2006 while Three star accommodation registered 70.1% occupancy compared to 62.9% in 2006. During the winter months over the last 4 years there has been a slight improvement in occupancy levels particularly during November and December as can be seen in the Table below.

Table 2 – Monthly occupancy levels in hotel accommodation (in %)

Month	2004	2005	2006	2007
January	32.9	35.7	31	33.3
February	40	42.9	37.4	40.3
March	41.6	51.5	40.3	51.1
April	52	50.3	51.1	53.2
May	53.8	57.3	53.2	57.9
June	61.4	66.2	60.9	66.2
July	75.4	80.3	77.8	87.5
August	84.1	85.9	83.3	89.3
September	68.2	69.6	63.5	73.9
October	59.6	59.5	56.6	64
November	44.4	40.1	41.3	46.6
December	34.4	31.2	33.7	35.3

Source: NSO

Revenue for hotels have also improved. In 2007, five-star hotels registered an Average Achieved Room Rates (AARR) of Lm40.92 compared to Lm38.29 in 2006. Four star registered Lm17.28 compared to Lm15.98 in 2006 while three star registered Lm12.58 compared to Lm10.43 in 2006. Gross Operating Profit per Available Room (GOPAR) for five star hotels stood at Lm4,312 compared to Lm3,269 in 2006. Four star registered Lm2,265 GOPAR in 2007 compared to Lm1,587 the previous year while three star registered Lm1,106 GOPAR in 2007 compared to Lm514 in 2006.

1.2.3. Obstacles encountered

The scheme passed through ups and downs. When the scheme was launched different hotels joined during different intakes reaching a total of 21 certified hotels at one point in time. However for the past few years no new members were allowed to join the scheme. Now the scheme is about to be launched again and the objective is to increase the amount of certified hotels by a further 6. Currently 13 hotels are certified. The others dropped out for various reasons (5) whilst others due to closure (3).

It would seem that the Eco-certification scheme has lost its initial enthusiasm. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the re-launching and the results themselves should encourage the sector to adopt such measures.

1.3. Controlling the development of tourist leisure activities affecting the sea and coastal environment

1.3.1. Implementation

The Structure Plan for the Maltese Islands includes a number of policies regarding the marine areas and specifically identifies a number of candidate sites for designation as Marine Conservation Areas. Around 14 areas have been identified. These are designated as candidate sites since at the time of the preparation of the Structure Plan not much data was available.

A sand replenishment project has been implemented by Government expanding a previously depleted sandy beach in the St. Julian's area. This created a sandy beach 20 m wide over a stretch of about 140 metres of coastline. This project is managed by the Malta Tourism Authority and

the aim is to achieve Blue Flag status for this beach. Together with the Development Planning application a Beach Management Plan was submitted. The Plan included provisions for:

- 1) the management of conflicting leisure uses such as swimming and boat mooring
- 2) provisions for increased safety to swimmers
- 3) implementation of health and safety measures such as warden patrol, lifeguard services, availability of sanitary facilities, and strict compliance to bathing water criteria mandatory for Blue Flag beaches
- 4) proposals for beach cleaning methods

The Ports Directorate of the Malta Maritime Authority (MMA) has the main responsibility of ensuring, at all times, the provision of port workers, pilotage and mooring services, safety of navigation equipment, pollution prevention measures and other ship requirements in all ports. This also includes the yacht marinas.

The Handbook Safety at Sea published by the MMA refers to the protection of the environment. In this handbook mariners are advised that:

- a) fuel, oil, detergents, chemicals and paint should not be disposed of at sea and whenever possible buy products with a lower level of pollutants.
- b) Bilge pumps must not be emptied in harbours and close to swimmers;
- c) A rubbish bin should always be kept on board and disposed of in bins on land. No rubbish should be dumped overboard as plastic bags and other inorganic materials can pollute the seas by sinking to the seabed or floating at the surface;
- d) Appreciate marine life and avoid overfishing.

The scuttling of craft to act as wrecks creating new diving sites has become a common activity. However, this activity needs planning permission and in most cases the requirement of an EIA. This was the case with regard to the scuttling of a vessel (Patrol Boat P31), West Comino, a project undertaken by the Malta Tourism Authority.

The construction of a yacht marina where the number of berths exceeds 200 requires an Environmental Impact Statement as indicated in the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2007).

1.3.2. Progress made

The first Marine Conservation Area has been set up between Rdum Majjiesa and Ras ir-Raheb on the north-western coast of Malta. The setting up of a Marine Conservation Area will ensure the proper management of a stretch of sensitive coastal area. The rich marine environment embracing the area, is home to a variety of important marine species and habitats that are in need of protection. Currently a management framework exists for this area, however, in future a management plan should be drawn up for this area. An Action Plan has also been drawn up for the Dwejra area in Gozo. This includes not only the marine area but also the land area and has been the result of a collaboration between MEPA, the San Lawrenz Local Council, Nature Trust, WWF and the Ministry for Gozo. A Marine Protected Area Strategy is also being drawn up and this should identify existing gaps in setting up such protected areas and how such gaps are to be addressed. Candidate sites will also be identified.

In these areas activity, particularly fishing, is restricted, as well as in those areas where wrecks have been scuttled. Although not designated as yet, nonetheless such areas can be considered as Marine Protected Areas due to various measures regulating such areas as set out by the Malta Maritime Authority.

1.3.3. Obstacles encountered

Regarding the setting up of Marine Protected Areas the lack of appropriate data is hindering the process in the designation of such sites. The main issue relates to the cost involved in obtaining such data which requires survey of the seabed around the islands.

Regarding wrecks and beach replenishment the enthusiasm towards such projects poses the risk that certain projects may fail. In one instance one particular wreck was not scuttled where it should have been and ended in much more deeper waters making the wreck a danger to divers. With regard to the transformation of a stretch of rocky beach in St. Paul's Bay (Qawra area) into a sandy beach with the first storm the sand dispersed into the adjoining rocky foreshore indicating that the development of sandy beaches should not be proposed on sites which were never a sandy beach.

2. Promoting tourism as a factor in sustainable social, cultural and economic development

2.1. Developing national and local strategies aimed at better reconciling tourism, the environment and sustainable development

2.1.1. Implementation

The main instruments in this regard consists of plans particularly the Structure Plan and the various local plans prepared by MEPA as well as the Malta Tourism Authority's various strategic plans. Whilst the former are concerned with the use of land and the zoning of areas for specific uses, the latter plans mainly indicate MTA's programme primarily with regard to product development and marketing. Two strategic plans have been drawn up whilst a third is still in draft form. The first strategic plan (2000 – 2002) recommended the formulation of a national policy for sustainable tourism development. This was to be implemented by setting guidelines for future tourism development and identify optimum models for accommodation developments, catering establishments, tourist services, tourism attractions, sports and leisure facilities and cultural heritage.

In addition to the above Action Plans have also been prepared for specific coastal areas whilst others are still in preparation. These plans aim to reconcile recreational and touristic activities in specific areas with coastal protection measures to ensure their containment and the improvement of these coastal facilities.

2.1.2. Progress made

The local plans have been approved in July 2006 whilst the review of the Structure Plan is still not complete. The formulation of a national policy for sustainable tourism development has not materialised either. In December 2006 a policy for tourism development was presented and approved in 2007. This policy requires that tourism development should respect environmental and social resources.

Action plans have also been prepared for the areas of Dwejra/Qawra heritage park, in Gozo, and Marfa in the North West. Still in preparation is the one for the St. Thomas Bay Coastal Recreation Area, in the South of Malta. These are mainly areas which have attracted domestic tourism and the construction of illegal beachrooms in most cases. The aim of these plans is to contain such activity and better organise such facilities and prevent any further degradation of coastal areas.

2.1.3. Obstacles encountered

Very often there is little co-ordination between departments and government agencies and this lack of integration often results in conflicting decisions. Although protection of coastal resources, as well as other environmental resources, have been ingrained into policies and plans, very often deciding bodies ignore the significance and the value of such policies and decide on an ad hoc basis. This places environmental resources at risk. Sometimes the lack of appropriate training and understanding of the sensitivity of the issues in hand by decision makers places ecological areas and environmental and cultural resources at the risk of being destroyed.

2.2. Promote the diversification of tourism and balanced regional development.

2.2.1. Implementation

Since the 1989 Tourism Development Plan for the Maltese Islands, the strategy was to steer away from the sun, sand and sea type of tourism which the Islands had been attracting for years and develop new products. As stated previously new tourist products were developed primarily in the form of cultural and educational tourism, business and conference tourism, medical tourism. More recently there has been an interest in the development of rural tourism and possibly agro tourism. The Tourism Topic Study prepared by MEPA in 2001 encourages this form of development as a means to reinstate derelict rural buildings. However, appropriate criteria need to be established to guide this form of development and prevent any speculative proposals for development in this regard.

The Tourism Topic Study states that tourism activity has generally been kept within the main tourist areas of the islands. Tours are also organised to the main tourist attractions. The imbalance between localities with regard to tourism activity is clearly evident. Mdina and Valletta attract over 80 % of the tourists visiting the islands whilst the Three Cities (Cospicua, Senglea and Vittoriosa) barely attract 20%. The Structure Plan for the Maltese islands has a specific policy which states that tourist accommodation would be considered within the Urban Conservation Areas of towns and villages, i.e. within the old parts of these localities. This was to encourage new forms of tourist accommodation which move away from the usual resort hotels and offer tourists the opportunity to lodge within traditional properties in localities away from the main tourist localities and ensuring a spread of tourism benefits even geographically.

A new initiative which is being planned is the preparation of a local tourism plan for the locality of Mellieha. This plan is still in its early stages, nonetheless the fact that the Tourism Secretariat is seeing the need to plan tourism development even at the local level and provide a pilot project for other areas is a positive step, at least in intention. The plan would primarily look at the product development and marketing aspects for this area along sustainable tourism principles. It is planned to have a series of meetings with key stakeholders in the month of June.

2.2.2. Progress made

Since the new Government has been in place from last March, the Prime Minister has taken responsibility for MEPA as well as Tourism. Although it is still early to see any progress in this regard but this should lead to more integration of tourism and environment and land use strategies and policies. This would however, depend on the stakeholders involved and their understanding of the importance of the inter-relationship and integration between these sectors.

In terms of new forms of accommodation practically there has been no progress and proposals submitted have been for developments of more of the same kind of tourist accommodation establishments. However, in Gozo traditional farmhouses have been converted and renovated providing both international and domestic tourists with an alternative form of accommodation

which makes use of existing facilities and encouraging the preservation of these traditional buildings.

In Gozo tourism is more widespread regionally and practically all towns and villages enjoy a share of the tourism activity that Gozo generates. Tourists are not concentrated in specific areas but explore almost every corner of the island. Unfortunately, however, day excursions still take tourists on a rushed tour of the prime locations. Yet those staying in Gozo or exploring Gozo by car tend to visit most of the towns and villages.

2.2.3. Obstacles encountered

The main problem seems to lie with the fact that decisions taken with regard to the tourism sector are taken by the big hoteliers and therefore there is little consideration for the other forms of accommodation. In fact the policy in the early 90s was to encourage 5-star tourist accommodation development. This resulted in an oversupply of such accommodation not being matched by an equal increase in the 5-star tourist market. Thus to fill beds such accommodation reduced rates to a level that 3-star establishments could not compete and these had to change business, some opening as old people's homes.

Lack of sufficient finances and commitment led to a slow progress in the upgrading of heritage and cultural sites, thus the potential that the cultural aspect has in attracting tourists specifically for such resources, has been limited. Sometimes, the construction works and demolition of traditional town houses has also resulted in traditional localities losing their appeal and character.

3. Develop Mediterranean cooperation

3.1. Implementation

In this regard a number of initiatives have been taken with the aim of bringing the Mediterranean destinations to follow concerted actions particularly with regard to the development of sustainable tourism. One can mention the Hyeres Declaration which brought the Ministers of Tourism of the Mediterranean to sign a Declaration committing themselves to the development of sustainable tourism. This led to the formulation of a Charter which was approved in Casablanca in 1995.

3.2. Progress made

Very little progress has been made, yet the Charter is there as a basis on which countries can refer to in formulating their tourism development policies. Most co-operation initiatives have been on the level of specific projects like the Medina Project.

Co-operation initiatives have taken the form of joint marketing efforts particularly between Malta and cities in Sicily as well as projects funded by the various EU funding opportunities e.g DELTA project.

The DELTA Project was conceived in order to contribute to the enhancement, in the Euro-Mediterranean region, of the potentialities of integrated development between economic, environment and cultural heritage, which have not yet been wholly exploited. The Project is part of the 3rd Field of Intervention of the Euromed Heritage II Programme: Enhancement. The project involves four EU countries (Italy, France, Greece, Spain) and five Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Palestinian Authority, Israel, Malta and Morocco). The Cottonera area has been chosen for as the participating locality in Malta. The team made up of various stakeholders from government and non-government organisations devised three pilot projects following the DELTA parameters. These Pilot projects for the area of the Cottonera - Three Cities comprise the following:

- 1) **Highlight and develop educational campaigns - The role of the Cottonera Lines in the Social and Cultural History of the area.**
- 2) **Prepare the necessary framework for the Development of Economic Systems - Crafts and Small Business development.**
- 3) **Develop an Interpretation Strategy of the Area - Focusing on the tangible (built) and intangible (crafts and oral) heritage.**

Another project is the MEDINA project. **MEDINA** (the acronym stands for MEDiterranean by Internet Access), partially founded by the European Commission, includes eighteen partners from fourteen countries in the Mediterranean area: national or regional tourism offices, ministries of culture and tourism, universities and private corporations etc. It started in 2002 and ended in June 2006.

The project wishes to support a new emerging forms of tourism, particularly “cultural tourism”. The "cultural tourists" live a vacation mainly as a cultural experience – an opportunity for increasing their knowledge. For cultural tourists, the preparatory phase of vacation is a learning experience per se. They enjoy in reading about the places of their future visit and about the related aspects of the local culture, both in a national perspective and in a wider civilization context.

MEDINA is based upon a series of linked national web sites (Algeria, Cyprus, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia) and the MEDINA portal, integrating (part of) the information of the national web sites. The overall system provides information about the heritage of the Mediterranean basin: each national site focuses on the cultural heritage of a specific country and provides country specific contents. The MEDINA portal highlights the common cultural background of the different countries, and the contributions of the different civilizations. The web site address is www.medinaproject.net.

III. Part III - Good practices

1. Rinella Battery

Title		Rinella Battery			
Country		Malta			
Destination (indicate if coastal, urban, rural one)		Coastal			
Per-field and per-type classification (tick among the following fields and types of activities those to which the GP is directly linked)					
Field of activity					
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Waste water	<input type="checkbox"/> Waste	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Ecosystems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> Local economy	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Land planning	
Other (specify) :				
Type of activity					
<input type="checkbox"/> Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Heritage management	
Classification according to sustainable development issues¹ (tick the box to which the GP is linked)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change	<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Protection of seas and oceans	<input type="checkbox"/> Growth and growth distribution		
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Regulation of globalisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to basic services for all	<input type="checkbox"/> Strengthening health and education systems		
<input type="checkbox"/> Combating discriminations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Safeguarding cultural heritage				
Contact information					
Internet site		www.wirtartna.org			
Publication(s)					
Contact person		Mr. Mario Farrugia			
Participants (Name, type of local/regional/national authority, organization, company or other stakeholder involved)					

¹ Cf. Plan Bleu Strategic Orientations and Intervention Framework documents : http://www.planbleu.org/planBleu/orientations_strategiquesUk.html

1.1. Detailed description:

This project involved the restoration of a derelict military battery by an NGO – Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna. This structure has been given on lease by Government to this NGO who over the years have managed to restore most of this battery as well as the 100 – ton Gun which is the main feature of this attraction.

This has been the NGO's main project with regard to the recuperation of abandoned military heritage resources, which also include pill boxes and other fortifications. Through volunteers, this resource has become one of the main attractions offering visitors an educational as well as an entertaining experience.

Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna – the Malta Heritage Trust is a voluntary non-governmental organisation active in the field of heritage preservation. It looks after several historic buildings and sites in Malta, all of which are open to the public. It's properties cover all period's of Malta's 7,000-year-old history, from pre-history to the 20th century. These range from a megalithic temple at Kordin to a great baroque gate once serving as the main entrance into the imposing 7km long Cottonera bastioned ramparts as well as the Rinella Battery armed with the world's largest cannon. Emphasis is made at all of these sites to faithfully provide the visitor with the highest form of interpretation that will make both the site friendly and the visit memorable.

All sites are cared for by a combination of paid staff supported by volunteers. The latter, freely dedicate much of their time and effort to maintain these sites to the highest order possible.

The Main Objectives of the foundation are to:

- Encourage the better understanding and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Maltese islands.
- To undertake the rehabilitation and restoration of any cultural property be it its own or that of other parties.
- To undertake the management of any property both for cultural and commercial uses.
- To join in partnership with other parties for the achievement or furtherance of its goals.
- To encourage heritage appreciation and preservation on a local level through the establishment of local groups based at town or village level.
- To transmit its objectives and deeds through published, electronic or any other means.
- To establish and run cultural collections into museums.
- To recreate aspects from the past through historical re-enactments.
- To establish a database and resource center for documentation and other types of information related to the historical heritage of the Maltese Islands.

As part of its ongoing commitment to increase the general appreciation of the nation's cultural heritage amongst the public, Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna organizes the "Hands-on Heritage Education Programme". This project is aimed at providing students with an innovative way of learning more about heritage, through direct activities from those usually employed in the classroom.

To further accentuate this aim, participants are engaged in a variety of extra-curricular activities directly linked to the respective heritage site where the session is held. In this way heritage appreciation takes on a colourful and lively dimension. Sites falling under this programme are Kordin III megalithic site, Fort Rinella and its 100 ton gun, Vittoriosa Air Raid Shelter, Notre Dame Gate, The Saluting Battery and Fort St. Angelo.

During a typical session, a student is offered the opportunity to try and learn some of the patterns of life, crafts and skills of the original builders or occupiers of the respective building.

At Fort Rinella, school parties are introduced to similar aspects of late 19th century military life. They will be offered hands-on sessions in visual military signalling using semaphore flags and heliographs as well how to lift heavy weights using a pulley. Soldiers' uniforms and equipment are brought to life by displaying such items through life enactment.

Another salient aspect of this NGO and its work at the Rinella Battery is the setting up of The Heritage Interpretation Group (HIG). The main function of this group is to provide re-enactments based on historic facts in order to bring to life historic sites restored and managed by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna. These events are attended by hundreds of locals as well as tourists.

The HIG is based at Fort Rinella. In fact the HIG is today synonymous with both the fort and its excellent portrayals of the Victorian soldier. The HIG launched its re enactment activities with the forming of a unit depicting the Royal Malta Fencible Artillery of 1878. This has now been replaced by the Royal Malta Artillery of 1892.

With the restoration of the R15 pillbox at Naxxar by FWA, the Heritage Interpretation Group set up a small section depicting the King's Own Malta Regiment during the Second World War. Although small in size this unit is furnished with the full plethora of weapons and equipment one might expect to find in a pillbox during the Second World War. The last unit created by the HIG is a small three-man section representing Royal Engineers telegraphers. This section comes into its proper element whenever events are organised at the Gharghur Semaphore tower.

Members of the HIG are also given the opportunity of re enactments at sites other than those managed by FWA. Re enactment events have been held along the Victoria Lines, at the Main Guard in Valletta, and abroad.

In 1997 the HIG were invited over to the UK to take part in a large eight-day re enactment event organised by English Heritage to mark the centenary of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In subsequent years HIG members have participated in various other re-enactment events in the UK.

The Heritage Interpretation Group also publishes a bi-monthly journal called The Broad Arrow. This publication features articles on historical and military subjects with particular emphasis on the Victorian period.

The HIG has over the years shown itself to be a flexible and dynamic organisation. The Group is not there to choreograph events and re enactment activities, but its aim is to act as a catalyst towards the better understanding of military history with special emphasis being laid on the local scene. Thorough research, faithfulness to history, and attention to detail ensure that the HIG re enactments do not degenerate into a fancy pageant but become a mirror of the past and an instructional experience.

1.2. Economic and financial aspects

Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna relies entirely on voluntary donations, sponsorships by private companies and public subscriptions or membership fees. Additional funds are also raised through the regular opening of its heritage sites to the public. Although no statutory support is offered by the Government, yet one full-time staff is seconded to the NGO.

1.3. Funding: costs and sources of funding, possible feasibility studies

As indicate above funds are obtained through membership fees and sponsors mainly. Most of the costs go into the restoration work required on the site.

1.4. Monitoring activities

Monitoring is mainly done through visitor surveys to ensure that visitors are achieving a satisfactory experience. Besides visitors, monitoring is also carried out with regard to the Battery itself in terms of its restoration requirements.

1.5. Results / Lessons learnt

The main lessons were that through perseverance and commitment results can be achieved. Visitors appreciate authentic experiences and this is shown by the attendance of hundreds of visitors during specific events organized at the Battery.

The management of Rinella Battery and the involvement of volunteers has shown that results can be achieved by just enthusiasm and commitment. Although funds were limited, yet through the work of volunteers the limited funds were invested into those areas of restoration which required such investment.

1.6. Replication possibilities

The devolution of sites to NGOs show that initiatives result in appropriate management and upgrading of resources, whilst achieving appropriate and adequate economic returns which are invested into the preservation of the resource. This approach speeds up the recuperation of heritage resources, since through the engagement of volunteers work can be done with minimal costs. Government has recently considered bringing in NGOs to manage specific areas so this concept seems to be catching up.

2. Eco-Certification

Title		Eco-Certification			
Country		Malta			
Destination (indicate if coastal, urban, rural one)		Coastal and Urban			
Per-field and per-type classification (tick among the following fields and types of activities those to which the GP is directly linked)					
Field of activity					
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waste water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waste	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction
<input type="checkbox"/> Ecosystems	<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> Local economy	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Land planning	
Other (specify) :				
Type of activity					
<input type="checkbox"/> Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Action plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Environmental Management/Auditing	
Classification according to sustainable development issues² (tick the box to which the GP is linked)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate change	<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protection of seas and oceans	<input type="checkbox"/> Growth and growth distribution		
<input type="checkbox"/> Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> Regulation of globalisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Access to basic services for all	<input type="checkbox"/> Strengthening health and education systems		
<input type="checkbox"/> Combating discriminations	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:				
Contact information					
Internet site	http://www.mta.com.mt/index.pl/eco_certification				
Publication(s)					
Contact person	Mr. John Magri				
Participants (Name, type of local/regional/national authority, organization, company or other stakeholder involved)					
Hotel accommodation establishments and Malta Tourism Authority					

² Cf. Plan Bleu Strategic Orientations and Intervention Framework documents : http://www.planbleu.org/planBleu/orientations_strategiquesUk.html

2.1. Detailed description:

The Malta Tourism Authority’s Eco-Certification Scheme has succeeded in encouraging hotels to deliver a better product to meet the demand of the evermore environmentally aware tourist. The Eco-Certification scheme has the aim of reducing costs, increasing profitability and reducing the impact on the environment. Tourism accommodation establishments will have the opportunity to be in a position to deliver better value for money to their tour operators and customers.

To participate, hotels must comply with a number of criteria all aimed at improving the hotels’ environmental performance and increasing environmental awareness amongst employees. Hotels participating in this scheme are to comply with almost 100 criteria designed to ensure the improved environmental performance of each hotel. These criteria are distributed in 10 areas of assessment as follows:

Environmental management systems	Waste management
Products and materials	Energy use
Water use	Air quality
Noise protection	Buildings and green areas
Local culture	Guest information

38 criteria are compulsory whilst 62 are not. In order to be awarded Eco-Certification, tourism accommodation establishments must fulfill 100% of the compulsory criteria and 65% of all criteria. Hotel establishments being accredited with an Eco certificate will form part of the scheme for two years and during those two years will be required to adhere to the requirements as set out in the Green Policy.

The criteria were adapted to Malta’s scheme from criteria already being used by Alcudia, Majorca (Spain). Before finalizing the criteria a semi-structured interview took place with the General Managers of various hotels in the 5 and 4 star categories related to the implementation of an eco-labelling scheme, besides the assessment of the criteria. The main results of this research concluded the following:

Positive findings included:

- a) In general, the eco-label initiative was seen as a realistic and profitable tool to implement.
- b) The questionnaire was seen as a valuable tool to reducing operating costs in energy, water and waste.
- c) The eco-label process has been seen as a very good opportunity to raise environmental awareness among employees.
- d) Possibility of benchmarking with others hotels, especially with hotels from abroad, was a greatly appreciated option.
- e) Information on legal and government environmental initiatives has been identified as an urgent need.
- f) There is no relevant difference in environmental performance between hotel categories.

Negative Findings included:

- a) Hotels performed low on compliance with the criteria of the Environmental Management System. This confirms the early stage in the awareness phase.

- b) The waste collection (separated waste) is a bottle neck to improve environmental performance.
- c) Information to guests has performed very low which also confirm the low level of management awareness on environmental issues.
- d) The guest environmental awareness is not reflected in the management priorities.

This information and information on the criteria determined the following action taken:

- a) All criteria were reviewed and most of them reworded.
- b) New tools have been created to help hotels to communicate better with guests and tour operators.
- c) A training program for Environmental Co-ordinators has been designed.
- d) An Environmental scorecard was designed for the certified hotels to support benchmarking and improvement.
- e) Information on ROI (Return on Investment) was to be included in the information and in the improvement process.
- f) A weighting system for criteria will be developed to create a balance of the environmental impact on operations and on the guests themselves.

The creation of a weighted system for criteria made use of the following tools: Environmental Impact Matrix and Green Impact Matrix (Appendix A). The Environmental Impact Matrix assessed each criterion in terms of magnitude of the harm the indicator does to the environment against its frequency. The Green Impact Matrix was then used to fit the guest perception of the criteria against the environmental impact. From the results obtained the compulsory list of criteria was established.

The completion of this ground work enabled the scheme to be planned. It was thereafter agreed that, in order to join the scheme, hotels needed to meet the compulsory criteria as established by the Green Matrix and comply with at least 65% of all criteria. It was agreed that following compliance, the hotel would need to appoint an eco-coordinator and this employee must attend a 1 day training session.

2.2. Economic and financial aspects

Hotels participating in the scheme have reported savings on energy and water costs. Some hotels had already invested in such measures so the introduction of the scheme was not a burden on their finances, however, other hotels had to introduce some improvements. However, some of the criteria required more a change in management practices rather than an initial investment in infrastructure.

2.3. Funding: costs and sources of funding, possible feasibility studies

The main costs related to the improvements that hotels had to undertake to install appropriate systems particularly with regard to energy saving measures. Some of the new hotels had included such investment in the design of the hotels, yet the existing hotels had to carry out a number of improvements. Some hotels have reported that the savings being made have covered the initial investment and so it paid to be part of the scheme.

2.4. Monitoring activities

The auditing of the criteria is done by a local company and a meeting is set up with hotel management, MTA and the auditing company. A first audit is carried out of the hotel's

performance and an initial report sent to hotel management. A second audit is carried out to ensure that hotel is complying with the criteria.

A final report is prepared by the auditing company and sent to MTA to be viewed by the Green Commission (made up of different govt. entities and associations). The Commission is responsible for approving the certificates on behalf of MTA. On approval the hotel is awarded with the Eco-certification for a period of two years. Final report is also passed on to the hotel.

2.5. Results / Lessons learnt

As part of the criteria eco-certified hotels need to attend training on environmental management in the hotel industry. The MTA organises this training free-of-charge for all currently certified hotels and other interested hotels. During the training seminar that took place in April representatives from the 13 eco-certified hotels in addition to representatives from 20 others attended. A total of almost 60 people attended the seminar.

The scope of the training is to create awareness amongst hotel management with regard to the scheme. During the seminar presentations were given by the three high performing hotels and their success at involving their staff. Experience has proven that unless both the staff and management are involved the scheme will not have as positive results.

The main tangible results achieved by hotels include:

- Reduction of water consumption (18% per bed night)³
- Reduction of energy consumption (4% per bed night)⁴,
- Increase in use of clean energy equipment,
- Reduction of waste,
- Increased recycling,
- Better environmental commitment.

Other positive results are that Eco-certified hotels are at an advantage when attracting green tourists and that Malta is being recognised as a country that gives importance to, and recognises, good environmental practices.

2.6. Replication possibilities

The scheme may be replicated in the future to target other types of establishments. The MTA also encourages the better performing eco-certified hotels to take the next step and get the EU Eco-label which in many respects is similar to the Eco-certification. The Malta Standards Authority is responsible for this label.

³ This is calculated taking account of the annual costs divided by guestnights during that year and compared with the previous year to determine the percentage savings.

⁴ idem

IV. Part IV - Proposals

Sustainable tourism development cannot be seen in isolation and unless there is a concerted effort at national level to move towards sustainable development in all sectors tourism will suffer and sustainable tourism development will not be achieved. This requires a political will, belief and commitment towards sustainable development principles as well as integrated planning.

Through integrated planning resources, environmental, cultural, social and economic, are directed towards complementary initiatives which aim at advancing and progressing all development sectors, but not at the expense of each other. Integrated planning necessitates setting priorities and ensuring that resources are directed towards achieving those priorities.

Planning has shown that it is the main tool towards achieving sustainable tourism development. It gives direction and when the planning process involves all stakeholders it is more likely to succeed. Planning fails if it excludes key stakeholders in the process. Similarly any tourism decision taking body should include all stakeholders. Tourism affects all and any decisions taken should reflect the common interest and not the whims of specific sectors to the detriment of others.

Training is also another important element. Unfortunately there is still a certain myopia with regard to what constitutes tourism, particularly those working in the sector since they see tourism mainly from their specific sector whether it is a tour operator, a hotelier, a restaurateur. There is a lack of knowledge on the wider context of tourism and particularly with regard to management and planning aspects of tourism development as well as its impacts. Multidisciplinary courses and training programmes are important in informing those working in the sector about the wider perspectives of tourism. Moreover such training needs to be extended to local councils as well as the local residents. This should ensure a greater awareness towards environmental and cultural resources and encourage appropriate behaviour in terms of aspects relating to waste and use of resources like energy and water.

Initiatives by NGOs have shown that sustainable tourism development practices can be achieved, particularly since there is commitment as well as the involvement of volunteers which do not place a strain on financial resources. The devolution of sites to NGOS has shown that the efforts of such groups have resulted in the recuperation of sites which were left derelict by government or which needed proper management. Experiences have shown that such NGOs in most cases have managed to raise funds and seek sponsors to assist in the improvement, management and upgrading of such sites.

Having proper legislation is also important to ensure that coastal areas as well as other environmental and cultural resources are protected. The scheduling process was instrumental in ensuring that such resources are safeguarded from development pressures. The requirement of Environmental Impact Assessments has also led to projects being modified to ensure that they respect and protect environmental and cultural resources. Nonetheless, there is no specific legislation to protect the coast in particular and this lack of legislative mechanism places such resources at risk. A legislative framework would give a more stronger protection to the coast and decisions concerning development on the coast would be taken with more caution.

Carrying Capacity Studies are important but these are not one off exercises. The Carrying Capacity Study should be a continuous exercise and the effects of tourism monitored to ensure

that the sector is developing within the appropriate capacities and thresholds that ensure an acceptable tolerance of the level of activity. Through management limiting factors may be addressed and therefore thresholds may increase and Carrying Capacity revised. In the case of Malta carrying capacity limits have been exceeded and this warrants a revision of the study, particularly since this has been the basis for the formulation of the tourism policy and would direct any future planning of the sector.

Eco labels are important and have indicated that results can be achieved. However, since these schemes have been on a voluntary basis they have not received the expected level of interest. The fact that the eco-certification scheme was launched by the Malta Tourism Authority may also have influenced its success or otherwise. Had the scheme been pushed by the private sector and particularly the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association which represents most of the accommodation and catering establishments, it would have received greater attention and continuity. Therefore, eco labels or similar schemes should be encouraged by the private sector and particularly the associations that represent them.

In recent years there have been various initiatives by local councils, particularly, to promote their local heritage through events as well as the opening up of heritage sites. This is to be encouraged since it offers the opportunity to spread tourism activity into new areas and thus the benefits of tourism are enjoyed by other localities away from the main resorts. It also provides an authentic product of the local culture rather than stereotyped attractions and making use of existing facilities and resources rather than having to develop new facilities.

Policies should also encourage a variety of accommodation establishments offering visitors different experiences. The emphasis given throughout the years on large hotels have hindered the development of small family run units. Such developments should enhance the characteristics of the localities and not result in adverse impacts on the locality. Thus the use of existing buildings through re-conversion is encouraged. This should be an opportunity to integrate tourism activity into the life of the locality and attract participation by the local community.

Development guidance documents are also an important instrument to guide specific forms of development. Such guidance documents are important in developing rural tourism and other forms of tourism. Such documents would indicate planning parameters in terms of locational criteria, parking issues, scale as well as design issues. Government should also provide incentives (e.g. tax rebates, marketing advice, etc.) to those who engage in such forms of tourism to encourage such investment.

V. APPENDIX

Table 1- Environmental Impact Matrix

Weighting system

Matrix 1		Environmental impact				
		Magnitude				
		V. High	High	Medium	Low	V. Low
Frequency	Very Frequent	25	20	15	10	5
	Frequent	20	16	12	8	4
	Medium	15	12	9	6	3
	More often	10	8	6	4	2
	Rarely	5	4	3	2	1

Weighting explanation	
25	Very important
20	Important
15	Medium
10	Not important
5	Not important at all

Table 2 - Green Impact Matrix

Weighting system/ cont

Green Impact Matrix					
Matrix 2		Guest perception			
		V. Important	Important	Medium	Not Important
Environment Impact	V. Important	44 items - 33% of items			
	Important				
	Medium			67% items	
	Not Important			86 items	
	Not Imp at all				

Weighting explanation	
Compulsory	These items should be completely fulfilled.
Extra	These items are extra points for the hotel