

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (SPED)

The SPED is the national strategic document adopted by the national Parliament in July 2015 which addresses the spatial issues for the Maltese Islands in the coming years. The Plan provides the impetus needed to move forward from land use planning to spatial planning with the ability to address more complex development and environmental requirements faced nowadays by the Maltese Islands. The Plan follows the legal basis provided for by the ‘**Environment and Development Planning Act of 2010 (EDPA)**’. Through this Act the approach to strategic planning has been broadened to encompass the concept of spatial planning as a focus for translating and balancing economic, social, cultural and environmental policies in a geographic context.

The Plan regulates sustainable management of land and sea resources with protection of the environment and provides a long term spatial strategy for the environment and development with 2020 as the first milestone for review. The SPED covers the marine waters up to the 25 nautical mile limit of the Fisheries Management Conservation Zone (adopted by Council Regulation EC No. 1967/2006 under the EU Accession Treaty, 2003).

The need for an updated spatial approach arose from the need of the planning system to meet the challenges of today, predominantly socio-economic development requirements and improvement of the environmental and urban quality. These new challenges are evidently being faced in various sectors that provide for the livelihood and quality of life of the urban and rural environments.

The SPED introduces innovative approaches to planning by establishing a **thematic spatial approach** to planning rather than a policy framework based on the previous segmented approach based on specific sectors (i.e. Housing, Industry, Transport etc.). The Strategic Plan sets out policies for land and sea development illustrated through specific planning maps. The SPED is taken forward by the preparation of Subsidiary Plans (Local Plans, Subject Plans etc.)

KEY ISSUES

- *Socio-Economic Development*
- *Environment*
- *Climate Change*
- *Travel Patterns*

GENERAL PRINCIPLES SEQUENTIAL APPROACH

- *Re-Use of existing development*
- *Re-Development of land and buildings*
- *Where no feasible alternatives exist, use of vacant land*

THEMATIC AREAS

- *Urban Areas*
- *Rural Areas*
- *Coastal Zone*
- *Marine Area*
- *Gozo*

The complex aspects of development or conflicting situations concerning the use of space include the need for urgent regeneration in specific areas for example areas that accommodate significant members of vulnerable groups of society. The Plan provides the framework for the implementation of **Malta's Operational Programmes for the Period 2014-2020 which includes a specific priority axis for 'Sustainable Urban Development'**. This framework works towards the goal of increasing economic growth through competitiveness with investment in adequate physical infrastructure leading to a better quality of life for Maltese and EU citizens. The SPED is the spatial dimension of the national policies such as the **National Reform Programme (2013) for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the National Environmental Policy (2012) amongst others.**

Vision of the SPED
"The Maltese Islands shall raise their potential for social and economic growth in the core sectors for development"



GRAND HARBOUR, VALLETTA



RURAL AREA, GOZO

The Maltese Island's urbanisation follows historically the existing topography based around the Grand Harbour and the Capital Valletta and sets the background for much of the development trends experienced over time. This led to a historical belt of urbanisation that emanated from the harbour inland areas and Inner Conurbation and spread out towards the central and southern areas. The outer areas, incorporating Gozo and the north western and south eastern extents of Malta have remained largely rural in character. With a limited spatial extent of just 316 square kilometres and a high population density of 1,307 persons per square kilometre (increasing during peak season by nearly 2 million tourists per year), the importance of strong economic growth, a healthy quality of life and environmentally sustainable development is paramount. This strategy is beneficial to not only the citizens of Malta itself but also EU residents that have increased since EU membership in 2004, and visiting tourists. The SPED prioritises the regeneration of the Grand Harbour Area (GHA) and other important areas and identifies strategic hubs for business and enterprise.

The formulation process of the SPED promotes an inclusionary planning approach with a wide public and stakeholder consultation system. This includes the whole spectrum of consulted parties from Government, stakeholders, NGOs to the general public. Conflicts and difficulties along the way have been overcome mostly through broad consultation processes. This involved extensive listening, discussion and negotiation meetings to arrive to acceptable strategic direction/s that encompass the document's policy content and increase support. The document has been subjected to consultation from the early stages of its formulation in 2011 and until its approval by Parliament in July, 2015.

The SPED is a dynamic and enabling plan for achieving change. It is promoting an integrated planning system that ensures the sustainable management of land and sea resources whilst protecting the environment by encompassing a wide range of users across various fields of interest. This strategic plan encourages economic development, research and development infrastructure, tourism and culture promotion, transport network improvement, energy and water sectors upgrading, environmental sustainability, risk prevention, urban regeneration, E-society, education and social infrastructure and health improvements. The strategy is intended to modernise Malta's prospects for economic growth and competitiveness in the medium and long term.

Vision of the SPED
"...The Maltese Islands shall improve the quality of life and well being, particularly for vulnerable groups, and environmental awareness of their people..."

The SPED provides the spatial impetus to facilitate socio-economic growth that is required to take Malta into the 21st Century. It is a Strategic Plan that requires that economic growth and maximisation of the country's potential are coupled with ambitious simultaneous and complimentary objectives geared towards quality of life improvements focused on wellbeing and leading to an attractive urban and rural environment to live, work, play and interact.

The policy guidance followed through the SPED focuses on the four main spatial themes namely: the **Urban Area** (Development Zone), the **Rural Area** (Outside the Development Zone), the **Coastal Zone** (up to 12 nautical miles) and the **Marine Area** (between 12 and 25 nautical miles) and **Gozo** as distinct spatial areas within the Maltese Islands.

The policies of the SPED consist of a set of Strategic Objectives which include Thematic Objectives that permeate all socio-economic and environmental sectors and a set of Spatial Objectives for the Maltese Spatial Structure.

Integrated & Alternative Transport

Coastal Resort Regeneration

Infrastructure

Creativity Hubs

Enterprise & Business Hubs

Protecting Vulnerable Areas

Eco-Gozo

Public Transport

Integrated Maritime Strategy

Consultation Timeline

2011	Cabinet initiates formulation process for new Strategic Plan (February) Extensive Consultations with Ministries and Entities for insight into upcoming plans and programmes so as to identify spatial dimensions and requirements
2012	Consultations continue on drafts with Ministries and Entities First round of Public Consultations Consultations on revised draft with Cabinet and Ministries
2013	Intensive consultations with Ministries and Entities on 2nd revised Draft following change in national administration
2014	Public Consultation on revised draft of SPED and its Strategic Environmental Assessment and consultations with NGOs, Local Councils, Stakeholders and General Public Preparation of Final Draft discussed with Government
2015	Submitted to Parliamentary Standing Committee for the Environment and Development Consideration by Standing Committee of revised draft following input by eNGOs during public hearing (May-June) Consideration by the House of Representatives and Approval (July)



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