

Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy monitor country profile 2025: MALTA

The [BIK Policy monitor country profiles](#) summarise findings about the implementation of the BIK+ strategy's three pillars (protection, empowerment, participation) across each of the EU's Member States as well as Iceland and Norway. Download the full [BIK Policy monitor report 2025](#) from the [BIK Policy monitor](#) on the new [BIK Knowledge hub](#) and access the [Maltese country profile online](#) on the BIK Knowledge hub.

Introduction

The [Safer Internet Centre \(SIC\)](#), [BeSmartOnline](#), in Malta is a key player in promoting the goals of the BIK+ strategy. The primary objective is to educate children, teenagers, parents, and educators on the safer use of the Internet, with the aim of empowering and protecting them from the various online risks such as cyberbullying, grooming, and non-consensual sharing of intimate images (sexting). The project also promotes a balanced use of technology to prevent excessive use. By advocating responsible and safe internet use, [BeSmartOnline](#) is committed to making the internet a safer place for everyone.

BIK policies

Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks describe the overarching approach for a better internet, and establish the underlying goals, principles and guidelines that shape individual policies within this area.

- This topic is **comprehensively addressed**, with children's online protection, digital empowerment and digital participation incorporated into national/regional laws, regulations and policies.
- There are **separate, dedicated policies which address the topic of children and the digital environment** (protection, empowerment, and participation).
- **The BIK+ strategy is an important influence on policy development** on children and the digital environment (i.e., it informs and guides national policies even if they do not directly refer to BIK+).
- National/regional policies and policy documents **explicitly recognise children's rights in the digital environment**.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Coverage of BIK+ issues in national policies	X			
Integration of policy provision		X		
Influence of the BIK+ strategy		X		
Recognition of children's rights	X			

Table 1: Topic summary - policy frameworks

Key national policy frameworks are:

- Malta has addressed the European strategy for a better internet for children (BIK+ strategy) through several different national public policies focused on BIK-related issues. The overarching policy framework is represented by the **Digital Malta Strategy 2022-2027**, which recognises the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in empowering the economy and society, directly and indirectly, both as critical infrastructure and an enabling tool. Other important policy reference points include the Cyber Security Strategy 2016, which addresses cyber security nationally, and A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo – 2014-2019, which gives

particular attention to digital literacy. Aspects related to cybercrime are covered under the Electronic Commerce Act (2002).

- The [Digital Malta Strategy 2022-2027](#) (Malta Digitali) highlights how Malta intends to maintain its momentum as a leader in digital transformation while remaining mindful of social and economic opportunities and challenges that arise. It sets out how the government shall act not only in its traditional role as policy maker, promoter and regulator but also as a catalyst for change through digitalisation alongside other social and economic actors.
- The [Child Protection \(Alternative Care\) Act](#) (2017) replaces the Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act, the Foster Care Act and the Placing of Minors Regulations to introduce child protection orders to provide for appropriate alternative care and protection for children deprived of parental care or at the risk of being so.
- The [Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030](#) outlines the Government's plan of action to ensure that the State serves and protects all children. The Government will seek to consolidate its efforts towards improving the quality of life of children by dedicating the necessary resources for children to succeed. Priority 3 focuses on providing a better environment for children to promote safe and healthy physical and digital settings. Investing in policy measures that create a child-friendly environment and ensure children's physical, social, and emotional security is crucial. This includes more green spaces, reduced pollution levels, and safer physical and digital surroundings.

Policy design

Policy design asks whether evidence and research support BIK-related policies and whether systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating those policies.

- **Quantitative data on some aspects of children's digital activity is collected regularly** as part of broader surveys.
- **Some but not all aspects of children's experiences of risks, harms and digital well-being** are included in regular surveys.

- **Systems are in place at the government level to gather information on children and the digital environment** (e.g., dedicated research units, think tanks or commissions).
- **Existing national research funding is available for research** on children and the digital environment, but this is not explicitly specified.
- **Policies undergo systematic and regular monitoring and evaluation** to assess the effectiveness of actions in different contexts (e.g., to take account of new technologies or emergent risks).

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Regular data collection		X		
Data on risks, harms and digital well-being		X		
Information systems	X			
National research fund		X		
Monitoring and evaluation	X			

Table 2: Topic summary - policy design

Recent national research studies include:

- **EU Kids Online 2018-19: Malta.** The Maltese EU Kids Online survey data was collected from March 2018 to May 2018. The aim was to carry out a representative survey on children and online risks and opportunities, taking the cross-national comparative study conducted in 2010 by the EU Kids Online network as a point of departure.
- New research is being carried out, which is being led by the **Office of the Commissioner for Children** on gaming and excessive use related to children and young people.

Policy governance

Policy governance examines how policies are coordinated at the governmental level, whether other implementation bodies are involved in their delivery, and whether structured mechanisms are available to guide their implementation.

- **Policy development sits across different ministries** with leadership distributed according to the area of specialisation.
- **A clearly defined coordination function is in place** that involves all relevant stakeholders and encompasses the cross-cutting policy issues relating to children and the digital environment.
- **One or more programmes of action is/are underway** supporting children's online safety and participation in the digital environment. However, these lack accountabilities such as defined timelines, assigned responsibilities or key performance indicators (KPIs).

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Lead ministry for policy development		X		
National coordination body	X			
National action plan or strategy		X		

Table 3: Topic summary - policy governance

- Government ministries take the lead in carrying out activities related to BIK, except for quality online content for children, which is jointly shared.
- The key ministries involved are the Ministry of Education and Employment, the Parliamentary Secretariat for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation, the Ministry for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, and the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security.
- The **Maltese Safer Internet Centre** (SIC) is a consortium of key stakeholders from diverse ministries and agencies coordinating some of the BIK-related

issues. Children are consulted in the policy process through the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) Youth Panel which is held regularly. The Youth Panel is coordinated by the Office of the Commission for Children, which takes the young persons' views into account when drafting position papers and national guidelines that influence and, often, shape policies.

Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement enquires how different stakeholders can participate in policy development. Children's involvement in policy-making is one such key issue. Additionally, international knowledge exchange about children's digital participation is also relevant to this topic.

- There is a **designated multi-stakeholder forum in place** which facilitates the involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups.
- **Members of the public are regularly and routinely consulted** as part of the policy development process.
- **Children are actively involved in the design of policies** related to their participation in the digital environment and there are specially designed structures in place for this purpose.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Stakeholder forum	X			
Consulting the public on BIK topics	X			
Involvement of young people	X			

Table 4: Topic summary - Stakeholder involvement

- The **Safer Internet Centre** convenes an advisory board meeting attended by diverse stakeholders engaged in the care of children, particularly concerning their digital welfare. Within this forum, participants exchange specialised

knowledge and consult regarding potential enhancements at the national level aimed at protecting all children in Malta from online abuse.

- The [Office of the Commissioner for Children](#) has adopted a proactive approach to ensure their voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process. Through structured consultation processes, children are provided with opportunities to express their views, concerns, and suggestions regarding policies that may impact their lives. These consultations are conducted with sensitivity and inclusivity, ensuring that children from diverse backgrounds and circumstances are given a platform to participate and contribute meaningfully. By fostering a culture of dialogue and engagement with children, the Office of the Commissioner for Children endeavours to promote their rights, advocate for their needs, and ultimately enhance their overall well-being.

BIK+ actions

Pillar 1 – Safe digital experiences

Safe digital experiences refers to actions taken to protect children from harmful and illegal online content, conduct, contact, and risks as young consumers and to improve their well-being online through a safe, age-appropriate digital environment created in a way that respects children's best interests.

Implementing EU laws

- In its capacity as the designated Maltese Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), the [Malta Communications Authority \(MCA\)](#) enforces the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#) regulation in Malta.
- The [Maltese Safer Internet Centre](#) specifically the hotline has been granted the trusted flagger status under the Digital Services Act by the Digital Services Coordinator.

Harmful online content

- Malta has been addressing harmful online content through various laws and regulations. One significant piece of legislation is the [Maltese Electronic Communications \(Regulation\) Act](#), which governs various aspects of electronic communications, including online content. Additionally, Malta has adopted the EU's Directive on combating terrorism and the Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online, which imposes obligations on online platforms to remove terrorist content within a specified timeframe.
- As a helpline, the [Maltese Safer Internet Centre](#) hold the status of a trusted flagger with numerous social media platforms. The SIC encourage minors to communicate with the helpline concerning potentially harmful content. This facilitates its ability to assist them in removing such content by promptly notifying the respective platforms.

Harmful online conduct

- The Maltese Criminal Code addresses various forms of harassment and cybercrime, which can encompass revenge porn behaviour. For instance, actions such as distributing intimate images or videos with the intent to harass, embarrass, or harm another person may be considered criminal offences under provisions related to defamation, harassment, or the misuse of electronic communications.
- Malta has implemented national laws addressing intimate image abuse, commonly known as 'revenge porn' or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. In 2016, Malta criminalised the distribution of intimate images without consent, making it punishable by up to two years' imprisonment or a fine ranging from € 3,000 to € 5,000.
- Malta is part of the [Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (known as the Istanbul Convention). This convention addresses various forms of violence against women, including cyber violence, and emphasises the need for legal measures to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

- Malta does not have specific legislation solely focused on cyberbullying. However, there are laws and regulations in Malta that can be applied to cyberbullying cases, particularly those related to harassment, defamation, and online abuse.
- The Maltese Criminal Code addresses various forms of harassment and defamation, which can encompass acts of cyberbullying. Additionally, Malta has data protection laws that may apply to cyberbullying cases involving the misuse of personal data online.

Age verification

- Malta has measures in place that aim to restrict minors from accessing adult or restricted content online, although the age verification mechanisms are still developing. The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) has outlined guidelines that require platforms providing age-restricted content, such as online gambling or adult content, to implement age assurance and verification mechanisms. These mechanisms are intended to prevent minors from accessing such content.
- The implementation of stricter and more robust age assurance technologies is an ongoing process, especially for new and emerging online services. Efforts to improve online safety and age verification, in line with EU regulations and the Digital Services Act (DSA), are expected to further strengthen protections for minors.
- Malta has implemented an electronic identity (e-ID) system called the [Maltese e-ID card](#). The e-ID card serves as a means of electronic identification for Maltese citizens and residents. It incorporates a microchip that stores personal information and can be used for various online services and transactions, including government services, banking, and accessing secure websites. It is available only for minors who are 14 years and over.

Commercial content

- The [Consumer Affairs Act](#) is the main statutory law in Malta that regulates commercial activities, including digital advertising. It incorporates European

Union directives, such as the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (2005/29/EC), which applies to online marketing and influencer-based marketing. It sets guidelines for misleading or aggressive advertising, including the clear labelling of advertisements and sponsored content.

- The Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority has developed [non-statutory guidelines](#) regarding online advertising and influencer marketing. These guidelines encourage influencers and content creators to disclose their commercial partnerships clearly, ensuring that their audiences are aware of any paid promotions or sponsorships.
- [Malta's Gaming Authority \(MGA\)](#) regulates online gaming services, ensuring that gambling-related platforms and games do not exploit children or encourage addictive behaviours. The MGA's regulations include provisions for fair advertising, transparent communication, and the protection of vulnerable groups, including minors, from addictive gaming features.

Mental health and well-being

- The Safer Internet Centre plays a crucial role in promoting online safety and mental health for children. It is a part of a European initiative under the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) programme. The SIC provides resources, conducts awareness campaigns, and supports parents, children, and educators regarding online risks and how to maintain mental well-being online. It also runs helplines for reporting online abuse and offers guidance on the emotional impact of online experiences.
- The [Children's Policy Framework 2024-2030](#) includes measures that address the risks of online abuse, such as cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content. It incorporates elements of mental health support and aims to provide a protective framework for children in the digital space.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Codes of practice		X		

DSC implemented	X
Definition of harmful content	X
Bodies can order content removal	X
Children's complaints mechanism	X
Intimate image abuse laws	X
Cyberbullying laws	X
Age verification requirements	X
Digital identity systems (EUDI)	X
Consumer codes of practice	X
Mental health measures	X
Addressing unfair commercial practices	X

Table 5: Topic summary - pillar 1: safe digital experiences

Pillar 2 – Digital empowerment

Digital empowerment incorporates actions so that all children, including those in vulnerable situations, acquire the necessary skills and competences to make sound choices and express themselves in the online environment safely and responsibly.

Supports for online safety education

- Following educational directives within Malta and Gozo, online safety constitutes an integral component of the curriculum offered to all students aged seven to 16 under the subject of Personal and Social Development. The subject matter addressed within this curriculum varies commensurate with the age group of the students, encompassing themes such as critical thinking, management of inappropriate content dissemination, and understanding digital footprints. Furthermore, teachers responsible for delivering this curriculum undergo periodic training sessions conducted by the Safer Internet Centre, ensuring they remain abreast of contemporary trends and methodologies in the field of online safety education. Additionally, the

educational workbooks utilised by students within this curriculum are developed and endorsed by the Safer Internet Centre, thereby ensuring alignment with established best practices and guidelines.

- The [Safer Internet Centre](#) conducts regular teacher sessions, supplemented by online sessions facilitated by the Institute for Further Education. Additionally, a dedicated curriculum module focusing on online safety has been scheduled for the forthcoming academic year, specifically tailored for educators enrolled in courses at the Institute for Further Education.
- Malta has introduced specific measures to address cyberbullying in schools, including guidelines for schools on how to handle incidents of cyberbullying. The Cyberbullying Prevention Strategy emphasises schools' need for clear policies on managing cyberbullying incidents, including reporting procedures, support for victims, and disciplinary actions for perpetrators. This strategy aims to create a safe environment for students and ensure that school authorities take cyberbullying seriously.
- While Malta does not have a specific national law governing smartphone use in schools, schools are encouraged to develop their own policies regarding mobile phone use. Many schools in Malta have adopted rules restricting smartphone use during lessons to minimize distractions and prevent misuse, such as cyberbullying or accessing inappropriate content. Some schools may allow smartphones for educational purposes under supervised conditions.
- The Safer Internet Centre is also a key player in promoting digital safety beyond formal education. SIC offers outreach programs, workshops, and campaigns targeting various community groups, including vulnerable and marginalised youth. These programs aim to raise awareness of online risks like cyberbullying, online predators, and harmful content. SIC also offers resources for parents and educators, ensuring that the wider community is involved in protecting children and young people online.

Digital literacy skills to empower young people

- The Maltese education system integrates digital literacy across various educational levels. This includes equipping students with the skills to effectively use digital tools and technologies, understanding digital citizenship, and promoting critical thinking in the digital realm. Digital literacy efforts in Malta aim to empower individuals to navigate the digital landscape safely, responsibly, and confidently.
- One notable initiative is the [Media Literacy in Malta](#) project, which aims to enhance media literacy skills among educators, parents, and children. This project includes workshops, seminars, and resources designed to teach children how to analyse, compare, and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information, and digital content. Additionally, schools in Malta integrate media literacy into their curriculum, with a focus on teaching students how to assess the trustworthiness of online information. This often involves lessons on identifying bias, fact-checking, and understanding the potential impact of misinformation.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Teaching online safety	X			
Online safety policies in schools	X			
Informal education about online safety	X			
Adequate teacher training			X	
Basic digital skills training		X		
Critical media literacy	X			
Creative digital skills	X			

Table 6: Topic summary - pillar 2: digital empowerment

Pillar 3 – Active participation, respecting children's rights

Active participation, respecting children's rights, refers to actions which give children and young people a say in the digital environment, with more child-led activities to foster innovative and creative safe digital experiences.

Active participation

- Malta's [National Youth Agency](#) runs various programmes focusing on youth participation, civic engagement, and advocacy in the digital space. These programs encourage young people to get involved in local and national decision-making processes by providing platforms for them to express their opinions on digital issues, such as online safety, privacy, and digital rights. They also encourage youth to take action and advocate for causes they care about in the digital environment.
- Various NGOS and community organisations in Malta run programs that focus on empowering young people to use digital platforms for advocacy and active participation. These programs include digital literacy workshops, online campaigns, and social media activism. The goal is to equip young people with the skills to engage in digital activism effectively, participate in civic discourse online, and influence public policy on issues such as digital rights and online safety
- The Safer Internet Centre Malta (SIC Malta) promotes digital engagement and youth advocacy by raising awareness about online safety, rights, and responsibilities. SIC Malta encourages young people to get involved in online campaigns, discussions, and projects related to digital safety, privacy, and responsible use of technology. The Centre collaborates with schools, youth organisations, and other stakeholders to foster active participation in the digital space.
- Malta has also seen the emergence of youth-led digital advocacy initiatives focusing on topics such as data privacy, freedom of expression, and combating online hate speech. These initiatives allow young people to actively engage in the development of policies and campaigns aimed at protecting

digital rights and promoting a more inclusive digital space. They often involve collaboration with other youth organisations, policymakers, and digital rights groups.

- The **Malta Youth Parliament** is an initiative that allows young people to engage in the democratic process and advocate for issues they care about, including those related to the digital environment. Members of the Youth Parliament are given the platform to discuss issues such as online rights, digital literacy, and internet governance. The Youth Parliament serves as a mechanism for young people to contribute their perspectives on digital policy and to advocate for change on topics like online privacy and the regulation of digital platforms.

Supporting children's rights

- SIC Malta plays a central role in raising awareness about children's rights in the digital environment. The SIC runs various initiatives to educate children, parents, and educators about online safety, digital rights, and responsible internet use.
- Malta's National Digital Literacy Strategy for Schools focuses on educating students on technical skills and their rights and responsibilities in the digital world.
- The Office of the Commissioner for Children ensures that children's rights are upheld in all areas, including the digital environment. This includes educating children about their right to privacy, protection from exploitation, and safe online experiences. The office participates in national and international forums that promote children's digital rights and safe use of technology, ensuring that children's voices are heard in policy discussions on digital issues.
- Malta regularly holds public consultations and forums on issues related to digital policy, where young people are encouraged to participate and contribute their ideas. These consultations may focus on topics such as online

safety, data privacy, and digital rights. Young people are often invited to share their views and advocate for policies protecting their digital rights.

- SIC Malta publishes child-friendly versions of important documents related to online safety, digital rights, and responsible internet use. These guides often break down complex legal or technical language into simpler terms, making them more accessible to children and young people. The Centre develops educational materials and resources for schools and other organisations, such as posters, infographics, and video content, that explain key policy topics related to internet safety and children's rights online in a way that is engaging and easy to understand.

Digital inclusion

- There are various efforts in Malta to ensure inclusiveness in children's active participation. Organisations like the Office of the Commissioner for Children and local NGOs often organise events and activities to engage children from diverse backgrounds. These initiatives typically strive to ensure a balance of age, gender, urban/rural representation, and inclusion of seldom-heard and hard-to-reach youth populations. Moreover, the SIC also seeks to include children from vulnerable backgrounds in their educational campaigns, mainly children facing difficult family situations and residing in residential homes or foster care and children with disabilities.
- The Maltese government has implemented programs to address digital inequality by providing digital devices to children who might not otherwise have access to technology. For example, the government has distributed laptops and tablets to students from lower-income families to ensure that they can participate in online learning and other digital activities. These efforts are particularly important for students who may be at risk of being excluded from digital participation due to a lack of access to the necessary technology.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Promoting active participation and civic engagement	X			
Involvement in policymaking	X			
Awareness raising on children's rights	X			
Child-friendly versions of policy documents	X			
Addressing digital inequalities	X			
Supports for marginalised groups	X			
Positive digital content	X			

Table 7: Topic summary - pillar 3: active participation, respecting children's rights

Best practices

Example 1: Besmartonline - Safer Internet Centre Malta

The [BeSmartOnline](#) initiative is Malta's Safer Internet Centre, dedicated to promoting online safety for children and young people. It focuses on raising awareness about online risks, promoting safe and positive digital behaviours, and educating children, parents, and teachers about online safety.

Example 2: National Digital Literacy Strategy for Schools

This [government-led strategy](#) integrates digital literacy into Malta's school curriculum, ensuring that all students—including those from marginalized backgrounds and children with special educational needs have access to digital tools and learning resources. The initiative includes teacher training, the provision of digital devices (e.g., tablets and laptops), and the development of inclusive educational materials that enhance students' digital skills and support their social inclusion.

Example 3: Malta Youth Parliament – Youth Civic Engagement in the Digital Era

The [Malta Youth Parliament](#) provides a platform for young people to engage directly in policy-making and civic discourse. With a focus on digital issues among other societal challenges, it empowers youth to voice their opinions, advocate for digital rights, and influence the formulation of policies that impact their online lives. This initiative helps build a generation of informed digital citizens who are actively involved in shaping Malta's digital future.

BIK+ index 2025: Malta

The BIK+ index has been developed to provide an aggregated at-a-glance overview of the levels of implementation across the two dimensions, BIK policies and BIK+ actions, in Malta compared to the EU27+2 average. Values are shown in per cent.

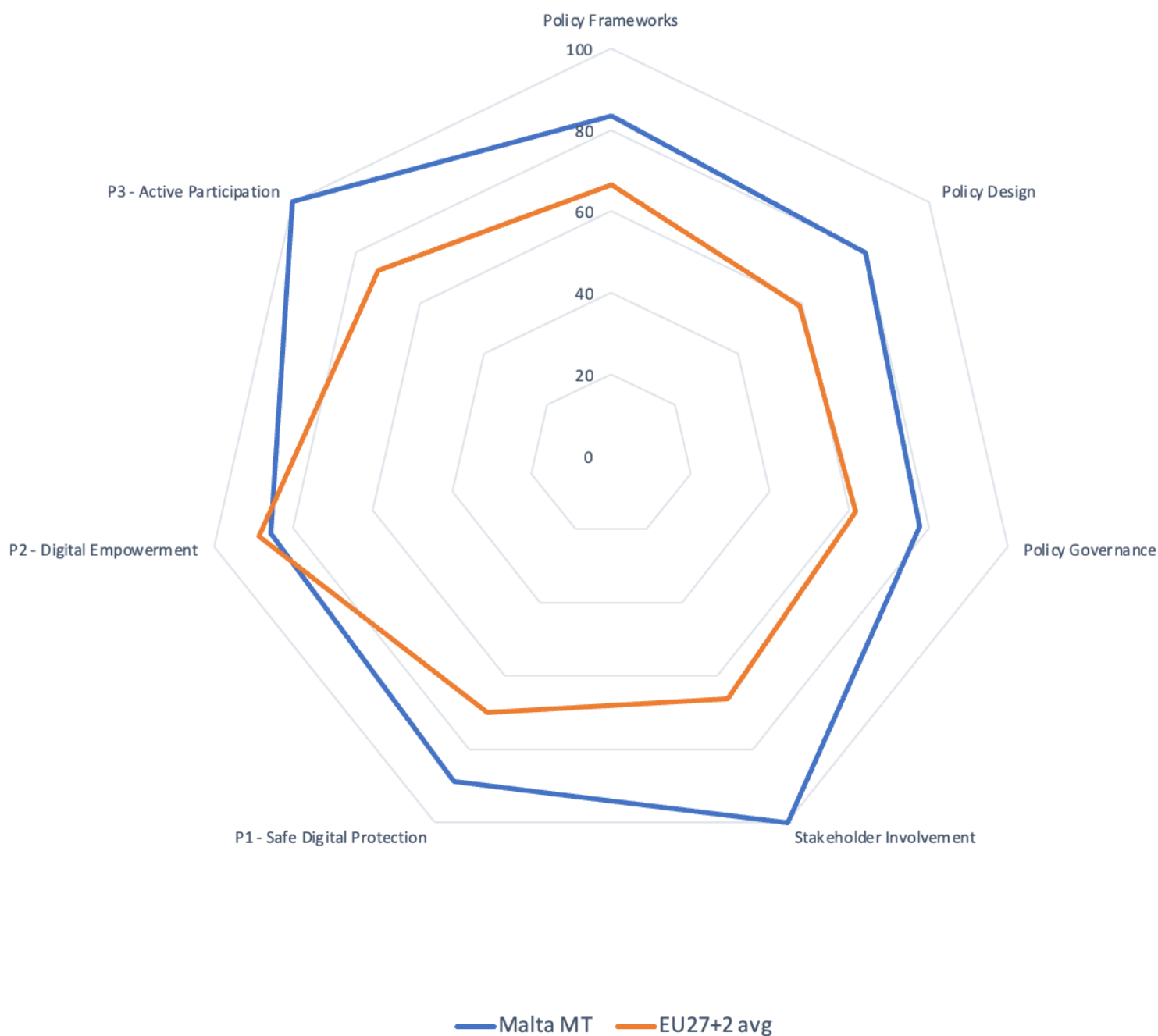


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2025: Malta - EU27+2 average comparison



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