

Country profile 2026: Malta

Introduction

According to the [Digital Decade 2025: Country reports](#), Malta's digital landscape is defined by exceptional infrastructure and a highly performing digital economy, positioning the country as a leader in several key European metrics. Malta has already achieved 100% coverage for both 5G and Very High-Capacity Networks, while its Fibre-to-the-Premises rollout reached 86% in 2024, significantly exceeding the EU average. Malta has a thriving ICT sector that accounts for 10% of the nation's Gross Value Added – nearly double the EU average. Business digitalisation is equally strong, with 81.3% of SMEs reaching basic digital intensity and 17.3% adopting artificial intelligence, though skill shortages persist despite ICT specialists matching the EU employment average. On the human capital side, 63% of citizens possess at least basic digital skills, with a unique positive gender gap: women slightly outperform men. While digital proficiency is nearly universal among youth (96%), it remains a challenge for older generations. According to the [State of the Digital Decade Eurobarometer 2025](#), public sentiment is overwhelmingly positive, with 80% of citizens agreeing that digitalisation simplifies daily life. However, there is an overwhelming demand for public authorities to address online disinformation, cyberbullying, and the protection of minors. Malta's extensive policy framework includes the "Malta Digitali" strategy and the National AI Strategy, focusing on human-centric transformation, ethical governance through the Malta Digital Innovation Authority, and embedding digital literacy across all education levels through 2030.

BIK policies

Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks describe the overarching goals that shape policies for a better internet for kids.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Policy priority	X			
Integrated policy		X		
Influence of the BIK+ strategy		X		
Recognition of children's rights	X			

Table 1: Policy frameworks - Malta

- **This topic is being comprehensively addressed** with children’s protection, empowerment and participation in the digital environment 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.
- **National/regional policies and policy documents explicitly recognise** children's rights in the digital environment.

Key developments and policy frameworks

- The Digital Malta Strategy 2022-2027 (Malta Digitali; “the strategy”) sets out the national strategy for 2022-2027 and 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 to improve children's quality of life by dedicating the necessary resources to ensure they succeed. Priority 3 focuses on creating a better environment for children to promote safe, 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.
- In 2025, the Maltese Parliament passed the [Criminal Code \(Amendment No. 4\) Act](#), which introduced cyberstalking and cyberbullying as specific offences. Under the new legislation, someone using electronic communications to stalk or bully another person with “the intent to cause physical or mental harm” can face 1 to 5 years in prison, and/or a fine of up to €30,000. Penalties are enhanced (“increased by one degree”) when the victim is a minor or a “vulnerable person,” or when the offence is committed by a group. The new legal provisions reportedly came into force on 5 August 2025 under Article 251BC of the main code.

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.

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

Table 2: Policy design - Malta

- **Quantitative data on some aspects of children’s digital activity** is collected regularly as part of broader surveys.
- **Regular (e.g., annual or bi-annual) surveys** include measures of children’s experiences of risks, harms and digital well-being.
- **Systems are in place at the government level** to gather information on children and the digital environment.
- **Existing regular 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 (for instance, to take account of new technologies or emergent risks).

Key national research studies

- The 2024 Malta National Report for the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) was published in October 2025 by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS). This comprehensive study provides a detailed look at the health behaviours and substance use trends of 15- to 16-year-old students across Malta.
- A study was commissioned by the Ministry for Social Policy and Children's Rights, together with the Office of the Commissioner for Children and carried out by the Faculty of Social Well-being within the

University of Malta. The report "[Children and the Impact of Technology on their Well-being](#)," was published in November 2025 by the Office of the Commissioner for Children (Tfal) in Malta. This study represents a major national effort to understand how digital integration affects the physical, social, and psychological development of Maltese youth.

- Systems are in place at the government level to gather information on children and the digital environment, including through regular consultation with national experts. In Malta, the [Safer Internet Centre](#) (Be Smart Online) is routinely engaged by government ministries and public bodies in discussions and decision-making processes related to children's online safety and digital well-being.
- The SIC provides evidence-based insights drawn from its helpline data, awareness activities, stakeholder networks, and participation in EU-level fora. This input has directly supported policy development in several areas, including updates to national online safety strategies, contributions to legislative discussions on harmful online behaviours, and the shaping of educational and preventive initiatives targeting children and young people.
- While there is no dedicated long-term fund exclusively focused on this field, opportunities for research do exist within broader national funding streams. Importantly, when well-designed, evidence-based research proposals are submitted to the Ministry, particularly those that outline clear objectives, methodologies, and expected impact, they are often well received and supported. This provides a viable pathway for advancing research on children's experiences in the digital environment.
- There is an ongoing national discussion regarding safeguards for minors in relation to artificial intelligence, particularly in areas such as data protection, algorithmic transparency, and child-centred digital design. In this context, Malta has strengthened its governance framework by establishing the [Malta Digital Innovation Authority \(MDIA\)](#), which plays a key role in overseeing the safe and ethical deployment of emerging technologies. The MDIA's mandate includes promoting trustworthy innovation, setting standards, and supporting regulatory measures that

help ensure that AI systems impacting children are developed and implemented with appropriate safeguards.

Policy governance

Policy governance examines how policies are coordinated at the governmental level, whether other implementation bodies are involved in their delivery and coordination.

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

Table 3: Policy governance - Malta

- **Policy development sits across different ministries** with leadership officially distributed according to the area of specialisation.
- **A clearly defined, formal coordination mechanism exists** (e.g., task force, steering committee) with a clear mandate. It systematically engages all relevant stakeholders and ensures coherent, cross-cutting policy development and implementation related to children and the digital environment.
- **There is a defined national action plan** on children and the digital environment with accountabilities such as defined timelines, assigned responsibilities or key performance indicators (KPIs).

Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement enquires how different stakeholders can participate in policy development.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Stakeholder forum	X			
Public consultation on BIK topics	X			
Youth involvement in policy	X			

Table 4: Stakeholder involvement - Malta

- **A formal, designated multi-stakeholder forum is in place** that consistently engages all relevant stakeholder groups (e.g., government, civil society, private sector, academia, children, and caregivers) and plays a meaningful role in policy discussion and development.
- **Members of the public are regularly and routinely consulted as part of the policy development for BIK topics.** There is broad, inclusive, and transparent engagement, with feedback actively shaping policy outcomes.
- **Children are actively involved in the design of policies** related to their participation in the digital environment. There are specially designed structures in place for this purpose.

Stakeholder mechanisms

- The **Office of the Commissioner for Children** holds regular consultation meetings with young people as part of its mandate to ensure that children’s voices are represented in national policy development.
- Through structured dialogues, focus groups, and youth-led advisory sessions, the Office gathers insights directly from children and adolescents on issues affecting their well-being, including those related to the digital environment. These consultations play an important role in informing recommendations to the government and ensuring that policy decisions reflect the lived experiences and priorities of young people.
- 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.

BIK+ actions

Pillar 1 – Safe digital experiences

Actions to promote a safe, age-appropriate digital environment that respects children’s best interests.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not present
Content rating systems for online/video games	X			
DSC measures protection of minors	X			
DSC-SIC working relationship	X			
Definition of harmful online content	X			
Complaints handling mechanism	X			
Intimate image abuse laws	X			
Cyberbullying laws	X			
Age verification requirements		X		
Digital wallet for minors		X		
EU harmonised age verification		X		
Laws on online marketing	X			
Protecting mental health and well-being	X			

Table 5: Safe digital experiences - Malta

Implementing EU laws

- Malta applies a formal system for rating and classifying video and online games through the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) system.
- Malta does not have a separate national rating authority; instead, it recognises and uses PEGI as its official content rating framework, in line with EU-wide standards. PEGI age labels and content descriptors are used for the sale, advertising, and distribution of video games across the country, and retailers are expected to comply with these classifications to ensure that age-inappropriate content is not made available to minors.
- There is ongoing, close collaboration among the Digital Services Coordinator, the [Malta Communications Authority](#), and the [Safer Internet Centre operated by FSWS](#). Both entities engage in regular coordination meetings, information exchange, and joint participation in national and international fora addressing child online safety and online child abuse. This structured cooperation ensures alignment of efforts, strengthens prevention and response mechanisms, and supports a coherent national approach to protecting children in the digital environment.
- The [Foundation for Social Welfare Services \(FSWS\)](#) has been formally designated as Malta's National Trusted Flagger under Article 22 of the Digital Services Act by the Malta Communications Authority, in its role as Digital Services Coordinator.

Addressing online harms

- The recent amendment to the Criminal Code of Malta (via Criminal Code (Amendment No. 4) Act, 2025) explicitly criminalises certain types of harmful online content/conduct – namely cyberbullying and cyberstalking.
- Malta applies broader regulatory frameworks and policies to address harmful or illegal online content. For example, as part of its implementation of the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Malta Communications Authority (MCA), which serves as the national Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), publicly acknowledges the need to protect minors from harmful online content.

- The general public can submit reports of potentially harmful or illegal online content directly to the Safer Internet Centre (SIC), which serves as a trusted flagger under the national and EU frameworks. As a trusted flagger, the Centre has formal recognition for its expertise in identifying content that may constitute child sexual abuse material, online exploitation, or other forms of harmful material affecting minors.

Age assurance

- Malta has implemented an electronic identity (e-ID) system called the **Maltese e-ID card**. The e-ID card serves as an electronic identification card 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.
- The e-ID card enables individuals to securely authenticate their identity online, providing a convenient and efficient way to access digital services while ensuring security and privacy. It plays a crucial role in Malta's efforts to digitise government services and promote e-governance initiatives. However, it is available only to minors aged 14 and over.

Supporting digital well-being

- Malta has national codes of conduct and regulations that address online commercial content, including influencer-based marketing. These regulations aim to ensure transparency, protect consumers, and maintain ethical standards in digital advertising. The **Consumer Protection 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 **Maltese Communications Authority (MCA)** 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.

Pillar 2 – Digital empowerment

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not present
Teaching online safety	X			
Digital skills training	X			
Policies on digital use in schools	X			
Adequate teacher training	X			
Non-formal online safety education	X			
Critical media literacy	X			
Creative digital skills	X			
Supports for parents	X			

Table 6: Digital empowerment - Malta

Digital empowerment in formal education

- Training in basic digital skills is increasingly embedded in the Maltese education system, though its implementation varies across levels and subjects. Core competencies include information and data literacy, digital communication and collaboration, content creation, online safety, and problem-solving. A strong focus is placed on responsible internet use, digital well-being, and protection against cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and online exploitation. This is reinforced through awareness campaigns and collaborations with the Safer Internet Centre.
- Students are taught to search for, evaluate, and manage digital information responsibly, to critically assess online sources, and to understand issues such as misinformation.

- While AI literacy is not yet formally mandated as a standalone subject, elements of AI concepts are introduced within ICT curricula, and pilot initiatives in upper secondary schools are exploring generative AI awareness and ethical considerations.
- While digital skills are a core part of the curriculum, implementation is supported by national strategies on digital education and targeted programmes, rather than a single uniform curriculum across all schools. Partnerships with entities such as the Safer Internet Centre, the Malta Communications Authority (MCA), and other educational stakeholders ensure that online safety and responsible digital engagement are consistently addressed.

Digital empowerment and lifelong learning

- In Malta, there are active parent advocacy groups campaigning for measures to delay the age at which children can access social media platforms. These groups highlight concerns about the impact of early exposure to social media on children’s mental health, well-being, and online safety, including risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and addictive use patterns.
- The advocacy efforts have included public awareness campaigns, policy discussions with government bodies, and engagement with educational and digital-safety stakeholders. These initiatives aim to encourage social media companies to implement stricter age-verification mechanisms and to promote a more developmentally appropriate timeline for minors’ digital engagement.

Pillar 3 – Active participation, respecting children’s rights

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not present
Promoting civic engagement	X			
Promoting children's rights	X			
Child-friendly policy documents	X			

Addressing digital inequalities	X
Positive digital content	X

Table 7: Active participation, respecting rights - Malta

Active participation

- The **youth panel in Malta**, as part of the SIC's youth participation on online safety, serves as a crucial platform for young people to voice their perspectives, concerns, and insights on digital security and safety. In an increasingly connected world where the internet plays a central role in daily life, addressing online safety issues has become imperative, especially for the younger generation, who are often the most active user group of digital platforms.
- The youth panel, coordinated by the Office of the Commissioner for Children, comprises a diverse group of teenagers and young adults who come together to discuss various aspects of online safety. These discussions often cover a wide range of topics, including cyberbullying, privacy protection, data security, online harassment, and responsible internet usage.

Addressing digital inequalities

- Malta has implemented a range of initiatives to reduce digital inequalities and ensure that all children can participate safely and effectively in the digital environment. While the country is overall highly connected, targeted measures address disparities in socioeconomic status, geographic location, and access to digital skills.
- Schools, NGOs, and government programmes provide training in basic digital skills, online safety, and responsible technology use for children from lower-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. These initiatives often include access to devices and mentoring support to ensure children can fully participate in online learning and social engagement.
- While Malta is well-covered in terms of broadband access, national programmes ensure that households without adequate internet connections – especially those in rural or underserved areas – receive

support to access reliable internet, bridging potential gaps in digital participation.

- The SIC contributes to reducing inequalities by delivering awareness campaigns, workshops, and resources that are accessible to all children and schools, including those in disadvantaged communities.

Best practices

Example 1

Safer Internet Day (SID) 2025 Activities – Malta via BeSmartOnline! Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)

Annual events organised around the international Safer Internet Day – including info-days, school sessions, public outreach, media campaigns, and creative youth-led initiatives (such as youth-panel videos, songwriting, and awareness materials).

These events raise awareness on online safety, digital well-being, cyberbullying, grooming, AI-related risks, and responsible internet use; engage children and parents; distribute educational materials; and create youth-produced content to foster peer-to-peer outreach. The 2024 and 2025 editions reached thousands of children, families and schools across Malta and Gozo.

This is a sustained, recurring awareness and education initiative that combines institutional backing (public bodies), youth involvement (youth panel), and public outreach (media, schools, families). It demonstrates how periodic campaigns – aligned with international events – can maintain visibility for digital-safety issues and engage multiple segments of society.

Example 2

All Digital Weeks 2025 Malta Campaign (led by Malta Digital Innovation Authority – MDIA)

As part of a Europe-wide initiative promoting digital skills and inclusion, MDIA coordinates Malta's participation in [All Digital Weeks 2025](#). The campaign aims to foster digital competences across age groups – including youths, adults, the elderly, and vulnerable groups – contributing to more inclusive digital citizenship.

Calls for proposals are issued annually to deliver training courses on digital literacy, support the general public in using digital devices and online governmental services, and foster basic digital competencies. The 2025 campaign ran between 17 March and 4 April 2025 in Malta as part of the larger European All-Digital Weeks.

This campaign shows how a national authority (MDIA) can mobilise digital-inclusion efforts across society, not just youth or schools. It highlights the importance of lifelong digital skills development, which in turn benefits children indirectly (when parents, caregivers, and communities are more digitally literate).

Example 3

PLAYCON 2025 – Malta Video Games & Esports Expo

PLAYCON is Malta's leading video games and sports event, combining an expo, industry summit, esports tournaments, and educational sessions. It brings together students, young people, educators, developers, publishers, and policymakers to foster digital skills, creativity, and innovation in the gaming and tech sector.

PLAYCON is a large-scale national event combining education, industry, and public engagement. The 5th edition (2025) hosted thousands of visitors, over 60 exhibitors, and multiple student-focused sessions.

Funding is supported by a combination of government, industry, and private sponsors, including the Malta Gaming Authority and the Ministry for Education.

In 2025, the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) was present at **PLAYCON**, raising awareness among children, teenagers, parents, and educators about online safety, digital well-being, and responsible gaming practices. The SIC provided informational materials, interactive sessions, and guidance on safe online behaviour, integrating child-protection and digital literacy messaging into a popular youth-focused event.

BIK+ index 2026: 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.

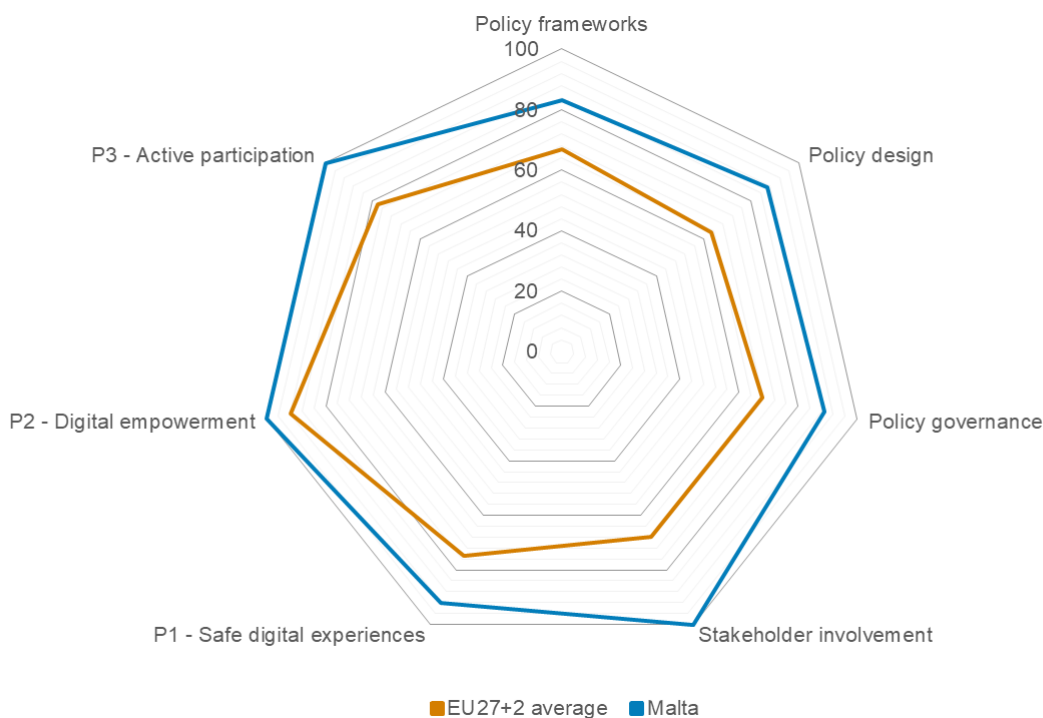


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2026: Malta - EU27+2 average comparison