

Sustainable Development Annual Report 2013



**Ministry for Sustainable Development,
the Environment and Climate Change**

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1.0 Background

Inspired by the run up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) Malta endeavoured to provide a legislative framework for sustainable development. In addition, the Environment and Development Planning Act (Cap 504) was designed to focus the responsibility for development planning and environment within the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) whilst elevating sustainable development to a stand-alone responsibility within the Office of the Prime Minister. During the debate on the Environment and Development Planning Act, the previous administration had justified the removal of sustainable development from this Act by promising a separate Act for Sustainable Development. On 10th July 2012 Parliament passed the Sustainable Development Act (Cap 521) which was agreed upon in principle by the then opposition.

The Act provides for the function of a Guardian of Future Generations entrusted with promoting sustainable development principles and safeguarding the interests of future generations. In addition the Sustainable Development Act, 2012 creates a framework through which sustainable development is to be mainstreamed across Government through the Competent Authority, and provides for a Sustainable Development Network tasked with promoting Sustainable Development in Malta.

This Act aims to raise awareness on sustainability issues and principles across the governing structure in addition to society and the private sector. The co-ordinating role is vested in the Competent Authority which is supported by the Sustainable Development Network and the civil service through the Permanent Secretaries which are appointed as Sustainable Development Co-ordinators.

2.0 Scope

In 2013, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Act was designated to the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change. This was effectively the first year of implementation. A key provision emerging from Part VI, Article 14 of the Sustainable Development Act is the contribution by the Competent Authority to present an Annual Report. Article 14 requires that the Competent Authority produces a report to be submitted to the Minister in charge of the Sustainable Development portfolio delineating generally the activities carried out by the Competent Authority during the previous financial year.

‘The competent authority shall, not later than three months after the end of each financial year, make and transmit to the Minister a report dealing generally with the activities of the competent authority during that financial year and containing such information relating to the proceedings and policy of the competent authority as the

Minister may from time to time require. The Minister shall cause a copy of any such report to be laid on the Table of the House and a debate held thereon as soon as practicable.'

This report presents an overview of the activities carried out during the first effective year of implementation.

3.0 Setting up the Structures

The initial step was to ensure that operative mechanisms were in place, namely the Competent Authority, the Guardian of Future Generations, the Sustainable Development Network, together with the necessary administrative and secretarial assistance.

The Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change, Hon. Leo Brincat met the newly appointed Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network on 10th July 2013.

Both the Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network believed in capitalising their synergistic efforts and have so far scheduled various joint meetings.

3.1 Competent Authority

The Prime Minister has designated the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change (MSDEC) as Competent Authority through a notice in the Government Gazette on the 4th of June, 2013

The Competent Authority's obligation in accordance to Article 5 and 6 of the said Act is to provide the fabric required to maintain the dissemination, collation of information, the Implementation and permeation of sustainable development across all governing entities. It entails realising the revision and implementation of the sustainable development strategy and developing related indicators whilst making sure that other entities' strategies and plans are in line with sustainability objectives as well as identifying trends and carry out audits to evaluate sustainable development integration within government policy. The Competent Authority is also required to 'encourage and stimulate good practices' with respect to the utilisation of resources and work closely at local level with different stakeholders.

The Competent Authority also has the faculty of issuing recommendations at various governing levels as well as triggering amongst others, training, projects, initiatives and has the capacity of 'requesting information from the public administration'.

The duties of the Competent Authority were centralised within the Office of the Permanent Secretary, MSDEC and is led by the Chief Officer Strategy, Ms. Michelle Borg, with a view to develop a dedicated structure within MSDEC.

The structure aims at providing the necessary components to facilitate sustainable development implementation across the board, particularly given the collective impetus each Ministry needs to make to ascertain the achievements of common objectives.

The main task performed by the Competent Authority during this year was to gradually build the communication channels between the different structures established under the Act, namely the Guardian of Future Generations, the Sustainable Development Network, the fourteen Ministry Sustainable Development Focal Points. Investing in this task at an early stage is envisaged to provide the basis on which the purpose of the Act is to be achieved. The work plan for 2014 was also developed, with a priority to revisit the Draft National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2007-2016 with a view to formulate a functional document that provides a vision and direction on the implementation of sustainable development as a dynamic process given the evolution in policy development and numerous plans that have been adopted since the preparation of the existing Strategy.

3.2 Guardian of Future Generations

The Guardian of Future Generations was re-appointed following the change in administration in March and is chaired by Mr Michael Zammit Cutajar, with Mr Michael C. Bonello, Ms Simone Mizzi and Dr Roberta Lepre as members.

The roles of the Guardian of Future Generations are wide-ranging but are delineated by Article 8 (3). The Guardian of Future Generation's mandate is to advocate sustainable development across policy and government entities and safeguarding future generations through the promotion of sustainable development principles. The latter can also be attained through its capacity of developing a scientific research network and developing audits within different sectors. Furthermore it has the possibility of 'permeating the sustainable development concepts within the private sector' and encourages non-governmental organisations' participation in sustainable development advancement.

The Permanent Secretary responsible for Sustainable Development, the Head of the Competent Authority and the Office of the Prime Minister's representative, sit on the Guardian of Future Generations as observers.

3.3 Sustainable Development Network

The Sustainable Development Network is chaired by Mr Alfred Quintano, whilst Mr Mark Causon, Mr Joshua Zammit and Mr Marco Cremona were appointed as members of the said body. Ms Michelle Borg was appointed as vice-chairperson, whilst in accordance with the Act the Permanent Secretaries representing the three pillars of sustainable development are

also part of the network. These include Mr Joseph F Caruana, Permanent Secretary MSDEC, Ms Pauline Mamo, Permanent Secretary Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business and Mr Mark Musu, Permanent Secretary Ministry For The Family and Social Solidarity. The representative of the Office of the Prime Minister, Ms Claudine Sciberras is a member.

The Sustainable Development Network is entrusted with promoting sustainable development in Malta. The Network's function is to encourage sustainable development knowledge and practices widely. Its composition lends it the potential to act as catalyst to integrate sustainable development concepts with governance aspects in the civil service.

3.4 The Role of the Civil Service

The Public Administration plays a very important aspect in the context of the Sustainable Development Act. The Competent Authority on its own is not enough to ensure the integration of sustainability principles into policy making and implementation.

3.4.1 *Sustainable Development Coordinators*

The Sustainable Development Coordinators are the Permanent Secretaries in every Ministry. The Sustainable Development Coordinators are key nodes to the implementation of sustainability objectives across their Ministries together with the help of the Sustainable Development Focal Points. The Coordinators are obliged to provide 'the competent authority with any input it may require in fulfilment of its functions.'

3.4.2 *Sustainable Development Focal Points*

The Sustainable Development Focal Points are the Directors or Heads of Ministries and government entities. The position of the Focal Points is determined by Article 7(3). The Focal Points assist the Sustainable Development Coordinators in ensuring that sustainable development is being mainstreamed accordingly and in line with the sustainable development strategy. They also assist the Sustainable Development Coordinators in developing their Ministry's position in line with what is requested by the Sustainable Development Competent Authority. The role of the Focal Points together with the Coordinators is essential in informing the Competent Authority of the realities, efforts and difficulties encountered on a daily basis in their line of duty when attempts are made to mainstream sustainable development principles.

Every government entity, department and agency has appointed a Sustainable Development Focal Point and nominations were submitted to the Competent Authority.

4.0 Initiatives

A number of initiatives have taken place during 2013 that contributed towards momentum build-up in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Act.

The Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network held joint meetings twice during the course of 2013. The joint meetings were aimed to define clearly the role and tasks of both bodies. The bodies commenced discussions on the establishment of their work plan and the symbiotic elements which would be valuable to both.

The Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network met Hon. Ian Borg Parliamentary Secretary within the Ministry for European Affairs and the Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto on the 4th of September. Hon. Borg gave a presentation on the EU Presidency 2017 and EU Funds. The scope of the meeting was to inform both bodies regarding the EU funding priorities for 2014-2020.

The Network Chair and Mr Marco Cremona also met with Malta Council for Science and Technology officers on the 9th October 2013 in order to have a better understanding with regards the National Research and Innovation Strategy 2020 which was then submitted for public consultation. Feedback by Mr Quintano and Mr Cremona was also submitted on behalf of the Sustainable Development Network.

A meeting chaired by the Hon. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change was held with the 14 Ministry Focal Points on Wednesday 11th December 2013. The scope was to introduce the Sustainable Development Act, and kick start communication channels with the Sustainable Development Focal Points in view of tasks ahead. The two presentations delivered focused on the draft National Strategy for Sustainable Development: one on the historical context influencing its preparation and the second providing an overview of the SWOT analysis carried out by SD Network. The Sustainable Development Focal Points actively participated during the meeting and are currently providing feedback on the administrative setup and work of their respective ministry with regards policy development and the mainstreaming of sustainable development.

This meeting provided the right platform for all the Sustainable Development Focal Points and the Competent Authority to come together, better grasp the context of the sustainable development issue and exchange initial views both on the nature of the work expected as well as on the concepts to be used.

5.0 Conclusion

The dimensions of sustainability are multi-faceted and sustainable governance is not straightforward. Sustainable development is an ongoing process depending on the introduction of relative new approaches to operations that have long been taking place. It is a dynamic process and requires consistent action and monitoring. It is highly dependent on human behaviour, effective participation and communication channels along with links amongst all stakeholders. Hence the framework developed in the SD Act itself.

Attention is drawn to the importance of every entity's role in succeeding to attain sustainable shifts that contribute towards addressing inconsistencies and utilising our natural and human resources efficiently. One must appreciate that sustainable development implementation is an ongoing challenge. During the first year of implementation the main achievement for the Competent Authority has been to operationalise the structures and develop a work plan. The Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network have on the other hand proposed a number of potential themes to work on. Discussions are at an advanced stage and a way forward is expected in early 2014.

Whilst there have been no budget allocation for Sustainable Development in previous years, the Budget for 2014 has dedicated a budget line for the Revision of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. In fact, the focus in the coming year will be to build synergies between the respective structures set by the Act in order to facilitate and deliver the revision of the Strategy that should guide the shift towards more sustainable practices and facilitating capacity building through training opportunities.
