**1.**

*National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014 - 2020* (as endorsed by Cabinet, Government of Malta, as proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary [Junior Ministry] for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing).

**2.**

Tick all

**3.**

Tick: Policy/Programme/Strategy/Action Plan on Ageing

**4**.

Tick: National

**5. (a) Practice**

The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* represents a much needed development for Maltese ageing policy. A necessary first step for the successful implementation of active ageing principles is the integration of policy responses to population ageing, together with the concerns of older persons, into national development frameworks. The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* reflects the government’s quest to implement a vision that acts as a catalyst for improved levels of positive, productive and successful living in later life. The policy also affirms the government’s mandate to not solely ‘add years to life’, but in parallel, also to ‘add life to years’. Malta refrains from viewing older persons as ‘dependants’, and is deeply committed towards the implementation of strategies that improve their well-being through the extension of citizenship rights. After all, it is not ‘old age’ *per se* that leads to ageism, age discrimination, elder abuse, and poverty, but the absence of citizenship rights. It is the assumption that older persons are a homogenous category, linked together by physical and cognitive infirmness, that engenders their social exclusion. Malta is adamant that older persons are not to be treated differently from other younger cohorts and generations. The large majority of older persons in Malta and elsewhere are healthy, physically mobile, and intellectually sharp. Older people constitute a strong and important resource as much as their younger peers,more so given the projected steady decrease of the workforce in the coming future.

The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* compels the government to address the continuum of challenges that hinder the formation of an active ageing society. Active ageing demands strong levels of social cohesion, inclusion and participation by ensuring equal opportunities and access to services and to political, social, recreational and cultural activities. Older adults cannot assume key roles in society unless one ensures training and lifelong learning activities that are sensitive to the needs of older workers for further engagement in the labour market. Such actions recognise the values of older age groups and their contribution to society, which will function to promote positive perceptions and attitudes towards older persons, and hence, facilitate their engagement in official decision-making arenas. At the same time, active lifestyles will only become a reality if one advances the practice of health promotion, disease prevention, gerontological rehabilitation, and early diagnosis throughout the lifecycle, all of which lead to improved levels of independent living in later life. In parallel, one should also find strong policy measures that provide sustainable and adequate pensions which mitigate towards the possibility of at-risk-of-poverty lifestyles in later life. Finally, recognising the unique needs of vulnerable older persons such as women, persons with disability, and migrants should not be underestimated, and policies must ensure that more resources are available to the most vulnerable. However, the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* does not redress these obstacles in a value-free manner where the end justifies the means. The Maltese government is not simply contented with the location of technocratic solutions, but remains unyielding in its quest to contribute towards a fairer society, one that is based upon the principles of social justice. Indeed, the policy is underpinned upon three key values that we believe should lie at the heart of present and future Maltese society:

* First, that Malta is truly transformed into a ‘society for all ages’, one that adjusts its structures and functioning, as well as its policies and plans, to the needs and capabilities of all, thereby releasing the potential of all, for the benefit of all. A society for all ages enables diverse generations to invest in one another and share in the fruits of that investment. It is a society in which the respect, equality, independence, participation, care, and self-fulfilment, and dignity of older persons will be pursued at all times. In this respect, the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* supports the recommendations in the United Nations’ *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* by promoting a range of foundation themes that include human rights, income security and poverty eradication, empowerment, individual and social development, mental health and well-being, gender equality, intergenerational solidarity and inter-dependence, health care and social protection, partnership between all major stakeholders in the implementation process, and affirmative action towards vulnerable groups.
* The value of ‘intergenerational equity’ constitutes a second unfailing dimension in the rationale and strategies as proposed by the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing*. Ageing policy in a truly democratic society champions equal respect, equivalent opportunities, and comparable living standards between different generations. It is important that policies on active ageing communicate the dimensions of respect and what citizens, as opposed to government and policy experts, regard as the rights appropriate to different stages of life. Only so, will it be possible to implement strategies that take account not only of differences in income between different generations but also of responsibilities for paid and voluntary work, and recognising the social, psychological, and financial costs of caring which generally fall disproportionately on women. The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* promotes the rights of both carers and those cared for, advances gender equality, and in doing so, renders more transparent and visible the exchanges of caring on behalf both older and younger persons.
* A final steadfast emphasis present throughout the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* is empowerment, as it demonstrates a commitment to renew public policies on ageing so as to revolve around the needs and wishes of the older population. The government believes that older persons are to have greater control over the identifying the type of support they require, and more choice about and influence over the services on offer. The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing* puts people at the centre of the assessment process whilst also providing them with a greater freedom to select the type of care they want. It seeks to empower older persons through improved access to comprehensive information, choice from a range of options, and rights to redress any perceived injustices and discrimination. The emphasis on anti-ageist measures signifies that the policy is not to be read as another example of professional paternalism, but as a vehicle for capacity and confidence building, skills development and training, and opportunities for direct action and collective action.

It is not the goal of this introduction to produce a concise summary of the directives and recommendations that characterise this national strategic policy. Nevertheless, it is surely pertinent to highlight its salient points as this will serve to as an opportunity to outline the government’s vision for active ageing.

The first section on ‘active participation in the workforce’ reflects the governments’ intent in achieving a right balance between work and retirement, and hence, facilitating longer working lives. Strengthening the older workforce is key to overturn a shrinking working age population that risks as acting as a drag on economic growth through labour and skills shortages. As the national strategic policy attests, this is only possible through the implementation of more age-friendly working arrangements, healthy workplaces, and flexible retirement schemes. Enabling support to informal carers is also paramount as this has the potential to increase labour market participation especially amongst women, as is adequate vocational training since retraining is constitutes an important tool to avoid the obsolescence of skills and premature retirement. Prevention against age discrimination is also key as this ensures equal rights for older workers in the labour market, refraining from using age as a decisive criterion for assessing whether a worker is fit for a certain job or not, as well as thwarting negative age-related stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards older workers.

The second section on ‘participation in society’ highlights the necessity of policies directed at persons who either choose or are forced to exit the labour market. Inclusive policies must be enacted so that retirement should not push older persons towards a fringe role in the Maltese social fabric. Active participation in later life may be promoted through a range of positive policy initiatives such as encouraging the retired to take on part-time or voluntary work, engaging older persons in community and learning programmes, and by adapting fiscal measures to recognise informal care that is provided by older persons. These measures go a long way in aiding older persons to maintain their feeling of self-worth, hence avoiding the various risks associated with isolation, loss of confidence and reduced self-esteem. Moreover, it is imperative that societal structures mitigate against social exclusion in later life by offering older persons equal opportunities to participate in society through cultural, political and social activities. Emphasis is also to be made on the need for stronger income security systems that provide adequate incomes later life for older persons to be able to live in dignity.

The third section on ‘independent living’ highlights the role of well-being, health and healthcare in the achievement of active ageing lifestyles and preventing poverty, mental issues, and social exclusion. As such, the maintenance of the autonomy and independence of the older generations should be a central goal of active and positive ageing policies. The policy underlines that the quest for health and independent ageing is possible through two basic routes. On one hand, the promotion of health over the whole life course, one which aims to prevent health problems when older through actions that increase physical activity and the adoption of health diets and non-risk behaviours. On the other hand, an unwavering commitment to tackle health inequalities that are strongly linked to social, economic, and environmental factors. Central to latter objective is the adaptation of local environments, as well as goods and services, so that they are also suitable for older people of all ages through the use of information and communication technologies. It is only by transforming Malta into an age-friendly society that guarantees the physical, mental, and social well-being of persons well into later life.

**5. (b) When and how it was adopted**

The practice was adopted on 13 March 2013.

**5. (c) How long it has been used / implemented**

It has been implemented since November 2013 and runs until December 2020.

**5. (d) Its geographical scope**

Its geographical scope is national, covering the whole of the Republic of Malta.

**6.**

The Active Ageing Unit, within the Parliamentary Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disability and Active Ageing, in consultation with Dr. Marvin Formosa, Chairperson of the National Commission for Active Ageing.

**7.**

The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* promotes and protects the following rights of older persons

* Older people’s right to freedom from discrimination
* Older people’s right to freedom from violence
* Older people’s right to social security
* Older people’s right to health
* Older people’s right to work

**8.**

The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* promotes and protects such rights by combatting ageism and age discrimination, drawing attention to the multiple discriminations, improving the levels of dignity in older persons’ lives, as well as leading towards the necessary, legally binding protection of older people’s rights, complement and raise the profile of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, provide a reporting and accountability mechanism for Malta’s actions towards older, as well as offer a platform for a framework to guide policy decision-making in ageing welfare.

**9.**

All older persons in the Republic of Malta benefit from the implementation of the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020*. However, special attention is devoted to vulnerable older persons - namely, older persons with less-than-average levels of physical, social, financial and emotional capital.

**10.**

Following the European Commission’s and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe’s *Active Ageing Index*, four key indicators have been identified to assess the implementation and efficacy of the various initiatives proposed in this Strategic Policy - namely, employment rates, participation in society, independent, healthy and secure living, capacity for active ageing. Therefore, the implementation and monitoring procedure guiding the *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* seeks to command active ageing initiatives in three broadly defined areas: employment, participation in society, and independent living. Whilst measures in the area of employment aim at creating better opportunities and employability for older workers, social participation channels focus on combating the social exclusion of older people by fostering their active participation in society. Measures in the area of independent living encourage healthy ageing and independent living by emphasising a preventive approach in health and social care, and making the environment more age friendly. The final indicator, capacity for active ageing, measures the resources that older adults possess that serve as a catalyst for optimal active ageing lifestyles.

**11.**

It is understandable that not all policy recommendations can be attended by one single political office, and for any strategic policy on ageing to be a success, it has to be assisted by robust inter-ministerial infrastructures. Executing the Strategic Policy requires governments to approach population ageing in extraordinary ways, whilst also seeking active collaboration with organisations across public, private and voluntary sectors.

**12.**

The *National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing: Malta 2014-2020* could certainly serve as a model for other countries. However, it remains imperative that other countries construct their ageing policies from a bottom-up approach that is built upon a wide consultation as possible with both stakeholders in the field of ageing and the general public.