**1.       Please identify the obstacles and barriers to access the Internet faced by women in your country. Please elaborate on the nature of these obstacles (e.g. social, cultural norms, literacy gap) and how they manifest themselves in practice.**

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) Information Society conceptualises and rolls out various initiatives aimed at achieving nationwide e-literacy and digital inclusion. For this reason the initiatives of the Information Society have an impact on almost every level of society with a particular emphasis on the cohorts considered to hail from disadvantage backgrounds in society. All the initiatives promote gender equality with various activities focussing on empowerment of women through ICT.

**2.       Please indicate if your Government collects disaggregated data on the basis of sex regarding Internet access. Please provide any other available data on Internet use by women, including with regard to type of access (e.g. broadband, household, mobile) and relevant studies done over the last five years. Please indicate if our Government uses qualitative and quantitative indicators to assist in monitoring progress regarding the ICT sector and/or on the gender digital divide.**

The Government through the National Statistics Office collects disaggregated data on the basis of sex and other demographic information.

<https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C4/Education_and_Information_Society_Statistics/Documents/2016/News2016_030.pdf>

**3.      What measures has your Government taken to facilitate and expand access to Internet for women? Please elaborate on the impact of these measures.**

As can be highlighted from findings indicated in the 2015 NSO survey, there are no gender differences in Internet usage pattern among males and females.

**4.      What are the challenges faced by your Government in implementing policies and programmes to bridge the gender digital divide and to enhance use of enabling technology in order to promote the empowerment of all women and girls? Are there regulatory and supply-side constraints (i.e. low affordability and a lack of digital skills), or barriers on the demand side? Please elaborate on the measures taken or identified to address them (i.e. access to internet in public libraries, universities, public wifi access points, etc).**

The University of Malta’s Department of Gender Studies in collaboration with the University Gender Issues Committee, and a number of faculties, is looking at ways to achieve equal access to and participation in science, engineering and computing for girls and women. It was felt that gender stereotypes and social expectations still exist among the general population with regard to physical sciences.  This has led to a dearth of women and girls in these fields as Eurostat establishes.  The 2015 Global Gender Gap Report maintains 28 percent of tertiary-level students enrolled in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in Malta were female, while the percentage for males stood at 72 percent.  For the same year, the percentage of those who graduated in STEM studies stood at 25 for female, 75 for male.

When women and girls do opt for sciences they are more likely to take up mathematics, statistics, social and behavioural sciences, as well as scientific areas linked with health.  When women graduate from STEM they are less likely to establish themselves in the field in which they have specialised.

It was therefore deemed crucial that Maltese women’s achievements in these fields are promoted through Malta’s new Science Centre and through the media.  It was also felt that further outreach needs to be undertaken to get more girls and women interested in these fields.  Different pedagogical approaches might need to be adopted to encourage more boys and girls in gender atypical fields.

**5.       Please indicate if a national Internet policy exists in your country and if this policy includes reference to human rights and gender considerations.**

The Digital Malta Strategy which was launched in 2014, is based on three main pillars - citizens, business and the government. The aim is to promote more the use of social networking, mobile applications, bridge the digital divide and promote research and innovation. Other objectives are to promote Malta as a digital hub, seek strategic alliances with multi-national companies and improve the government's online platform. On the section that focuses on Digital Citizen, the strategy, emphasises the need that “every Maltese, irrespective of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, education, economic means and race should grow as a digital citizen with rights, responsibilities and abilities to access and use ICT. Digital technologies must serve as a social equaliser, enabling everyone to participate and contribute in community activity.”

**6.        Please indicate if your Government has developed specific initiatives to eliminate gender disparities in digital literacy by 2030, taking into account goals 4 and 5 of the SDGs, as well as other relevant SDGs.**

As part of the Digital Malta Strategy, the government has established the eSkills Malta Foundation. The eSkills Malta Foundation is a coalition of various representatives from Government, industry and education with the following mandate:

        to advise Government and stakeholders on matters related to eSkills policy;

        to contribute to the expansion of ICT educational programmes and related formative initiatives;

        to lead an ICT professionalism development programme;

        to instigate further reform in the ICT educational offerings and contribute to capacity-building in the ICT education community; and

        ​​to champion campaigns and promote the Maltese eSkills potential locally and internationally.

The foundation brings together Government representatives from Education and MITA together with key entities in investment employment and Industry, including Malta Enterprise, Malta Communications Authority, The Malta Gaming Authority and The Chamber of Commerce.​

The eSkills Foundation on a regular basis organise awareness campaigns about careers requiring eSkills and the education opportunities available. Target audiences will be identified by collaborating with stakeholders. Action is to minimise the gender imbalance in the technology field.

**7.      Does your Government have any specific laws or policies to address gender-based violence online? What are the challenges faced by your Government to ensure accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations committed against persons for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the Internet?**

So far Malta doesn’t have any specific laws or policies to address gender-based violence online.