mdia MALTA DIGITAL INNOVATION AUTHORITY

MALTA AI

WHERE INNOVATION MEETS TRUST FOR WELL-BEING

GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE ECONOMY, TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS

‘Malta’s vision is to create a trusted AI ecosystem that promotes societal well-being, inclusive social and economic progress, and sustainability.’

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Hon. Silvio Schembri
MINISTER FOR THE ECONOMY, TECHNOLOGY AND STRATEGIC PROJECTS

Against the backdrop of our nation's celebrated resilience and acclaimed ingenuity, Malta stands as a driving force for digital innovation. However, the ongoing arc of technological progress requires the development of a supporting infrastructure. In light of this, the EU has crafted pioneering regulations for innovative technologies and artificial intelligence (AI).

Since the launch of Malta's AI strategy in 2019, the world has faced significant challenges. Nevertheless, our country has made significant progress, with 80% of measures already fully or partially implemented. In the face of adversity, Malta has claimed higher international rankings and achieved remarkable strides across various AI metrics. The 2026 AI strategy builds on this established legacy, seamlessly aligning our vision with the latest advancements of our time. Its primary goal is to foster digital innovation for the betterment of societal well-being.

This strategy forms a key pillar of *Malta Vision 2050*, which outlines our long-term ambition to become a future-ready and resilient nation grounded in sustainability, innovation, and inclusivity. By integrating AI into this broader vision, we are creating the foundations for a diverse economy and a society empowered by responsible, human-centric technology.

In the spirit of progress and unity, Malta must strive to remain a valid contender in shaping a future in which innovation is the cornerstone of our shared prosperity.



Mr Wayne Grixti
MDIA CHAIRPERSON

2019's *Strategy and Vision for Artificial Intelligence in Malta 2030* established Malta as one of the first global players to publish a plan with aspirations for the Island to become the ultimate AI launchpad, where local and foreign companies can develop, prototype, test and scale AI, and springboard from Malta to the rest of the world. In parallel, Malta published its ethical AI framework, *Malta: Towards Trustworthy AI,* to guide AI adoption and development in Malta. Malta quickly acknowledged the importance of integrating the ethical dimension as a fundamental aspect of its AI strategy.

Malta developed a strong AI ecosystem, and while our ambition remains to foster the right conditions for AI products to go global, the advancements within the AI landscape during these last few years call for a realignment of our strategy and vision. In 2026, we still believe in the importance of trustworthy, safe, and human-centric AI, while our hopes are for AI to become an enabler for societal well-being and sustainability.

The Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) was established to build national competence in recognising and certifying digital technologies. Being among the pioneering authorities established globally, recent regulatory advancements like the *EU AI Act* and *Cybersecurity Act* have enforced its existence to guarantee the trustworthiness of technology through, among other things, market surveillance, giving citizens peace of mind that AI is safe.

The MDIA, having already garnered valuable experience, is well-positioned to continue taking a leading role in establishing frameworks for new regulations. This capability is evident in the realigned AI strategy, which not only encourages and supports technological innovation and growth but also reflects the authority's ability to stay ahead of the curve in terms of adapting to and implementing evolving regulations.



Mr Kenneth Brincat
MDIA CEO

The MDIA has been at the forefront of shaping Malta's digital future, particularly in the dynamic and transformative field of AI. Since the inception of the 2019 national AI strategy, the MDIA has served as both a driving force and a facilitator, ensuring that Malta not only keeps pace with global advancements but also cultivates an ecosystem where innovation thrives within a framework of trust and responsibility.

As an authority with a dual mandate of regulating emerging technologies while actively promoting their optimal and secure adoption, we have consistently sought to balance innovation with governance, ensuring that progress in AI aligns with societal values and economic aspirations. The rapid evolution of AI demands agile yet robust policy frameworks, and the MDIA has been instrumental in developing mechanisms that support safe experimentation, risk mitigation, and long-term strategic growth. The recent introduction of the *EU AI Act* represents a pivotal milestone in this journey, reinforcing the necessity of structured oversight while embedding key regulatory instruments such as AI regulatory sandboxes, conformity assessments for high-risk applications, and a risk-proportionate approach to governance. These measures do not merely impose constraints; rather, they provide the scaffolding for responsible innovation, ensuring that technological advancement proceeds with accountability and foresight.

The realigned AI strategy is a testament to Malta's commitment to sustaining this momentum. Building upon the foundations laid in 2019, this strategy incorporates critical lessons from our regulatory experience, aligns with evolving EU directives, and positions Malta as a proactive player in the global AI landscape. It is not merely an update but a strategic evolution, reflecting our deepened understanding of AI's societal implications and our resolve to foster an environment where cutting-edge technology serves the public good.

As the national authority entrusted with steering Malta's digital transformation, we are confident that this strategy will further solidify our leadership in AI policy and governance. It is designed to empower businesses, safeguard citizens, and reinforce Malta's reputation as a jurisdiction where innovation is both ambitious and principled. Our vision is clear: to cultivate an AI ecosystem that is inclusive, forward-looking, and resilient, ensuring that Malta remains at the vanguard of technological progress while upholding the highest standards of ethics and accountability.

The MDIA remains steadfast in its mission to guide this journey, and I am confident that we as a country, can achieve transformative outcomes anchored in both innovation and integrity.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, Malta was amongst the first wave of countries to launch a national strategy addressing AI. The strategy aimed to place Malta on the path towards increased AI adoption, consequently spurring technological innovation and economic growth, whilst embracing ethical principles to promote safety and trustworthiness. Seven years later, the impact of the strategy is tangibly evident: widespread adoption of AI, both in the public and the private sector, increased public awareness of AI, the launch of various educational and training programmes in AI, and the improvement of Malta's ranking in various international metric-based AI-related rankings. The implementation of over 80% of the measures proposed in the 2019 strategy certainly played an important role in this progress. However, these seven years have also seen substantial shifts and changes from technological, regulatory, and social perspectives, necessitating the realignment and rethinking of the national vision for AI and the definition of a strategy to move towards it.

The realigned strategy is built around the core principle that AI can act as an enabler for **improved societal well-being and sustainability**. Balancing the adoption of cutting-edge AI to improve the quality of life and collective welfare while also ensuring that AI development and advancement are driven by ethical principles and are regulated to foster trustworthiness and protection of its users is paramount.

This approach aligns with *Malta Vision 2050*, which outlines the nation's long-term strategic direction, emphasising innovation, resilience, and sustainable growth. AI plays a critical role in this future, serving as a transformative tool to enhance public service efficiency, drive economic diversification, and improve quality of life. As Malta forges ahead, its AI strategy will continue to evolve in synergy with the broader national vision, ensuring that technological progress remains inclusive, ethical, and forward-looking.

In order to enable the achievement of these goals, the strategy identifies two key enablers:

- Firstly, Malta should focus on **cultivating an informed public and a skilled workforce.** There are two dimensions to this enabler: (i) the demand dimension: we must ensure that the public is aware of the opportunities that AI brings along, but also the need to be aware of associated risks and challenges; and (ii) the supply dimension: in order to support the growth of the sector and have AI use flourish, we need to ensure that Malta is working towards the development of the workforce necessary to face these challenges.



- Secondly, Malta should ensure that it has the right combination of **regulation, policy, security and support** to assist in the proliferation and advancement of AI. We must ensure that we have effective intelligence measures to enable the identification of arising opportunities and existing gaps thus allowing timely intervention. Furthermore, the need for constructive national policies, and the development and sustainment of regulatory frameworks supporting AI, are key to success.

Based on these enablers, the AI strategy focuses on three pillars for growth:

1. At the heart of AI adoption and maximising its impact, is the need to focus on the availability of **data and infrastructure**. We need to ensure that we have both the regulatory and supportive infrastructure to encourage and enable an increase in the collection and availability of data repositories. In addition, we must ensure that Malta continues investing in the computational infrastructure needed for the deployment of cutting-edge AI technologies.

2. The second pillar of the strategy is to promote the **leveraging of AI** to support and increase the effectiveness of business operations and processes, and to facilitate the creation of new ones. In the public sector, this yields opportunities to improve public services in terms of ease of access, efficiency, and transparency for the citizen. Supporting AI adoption in the private sector is key to economic growth, and the strategy addresses this from awareness of opportunities to the development of new solutions based on AI.

3. Another pillar alongside that of supporting AI adoption is that of fostering the **advancement of AI technology** through financial incentives and strategic support. Through the promotion of both industry-based R&D and academic research, Malta can ensure its participation in cutting-edge and innovative technological development in AI as a foundation for AI proliferation.

The rate at which technology changes outpaces the most agile of strategies and policies. In order to ensure that structures are in place to monitor, assess, and realign the AI strategy over its lifetime, it is being implemented as an evergreen strategy, with introspective measures to maximise outcomes, thus ensuring it remains relevant and effective.

The realigned AI strategy establishes a long-term vision for AI in Malta, taking into account and building upon the success derived from the 2019 strategy and the experience gained. In addition, it proposes and identifies 86 concrete measures across these different enablers and pillars as a short- to medium-term plan towards ensuring continued growth and development of AI in Malta.



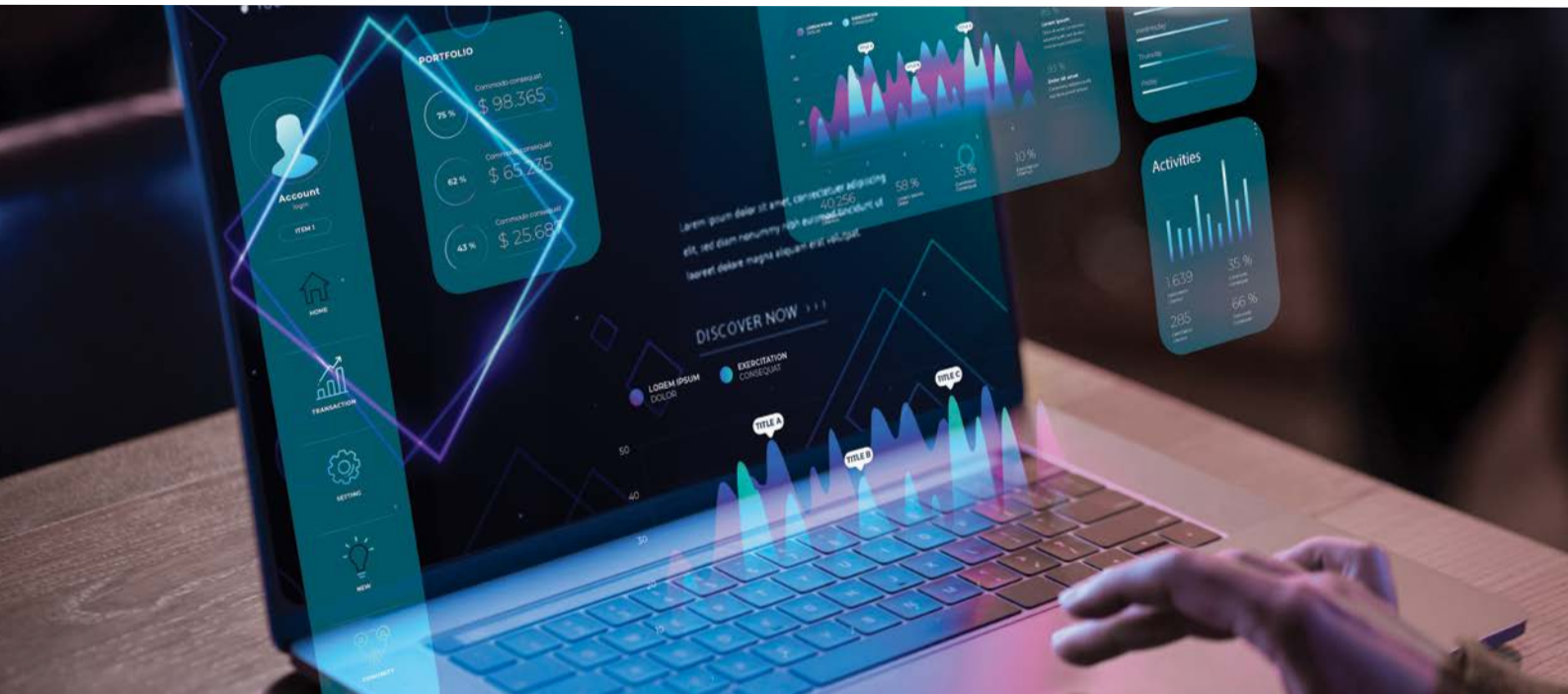
INTRODUCTION

The development of computing devices was one of the most momentous innovations in the history of humankind. The leap between automata specialised in performing a single task to general-purpose machines which can be programmed to perform any algorithmic task was a huge paradigm shift, with limitations being set only by the ingenuity and throughput of human programming. These machines would do anything they were programmed to do, but also nothing other than that. Equally momentous a paradigm shift was the development of AI, enabling machines to learn to perform complex tasks rather than being limited to direct human programming of task execution. AI brought about opportunity to boost economic growth while simultaneously introducing new challenges in the form of potential ethical dilemmas, potential job displacement considerations and others.

The recent acceleration in the scale and effectiveness of AI led countries to formulate national policies, roadmaps and strategies to address the development and adoption of AI. In 2019, Malta was amongst the first countries to develop and launch an AI strategy and an ethical framework on the use of AI. Since then, the country has continued giving due importance to the technology. The Government intends to continue to position Malta as a leading best practice of a national AI ecosystem for societal well-being, economic prosperity, and sustainability. This commitment aligns with *Malta Vision 2050*, which outlines a long-term framework for innovation-driven national progress, with AI playing a key role in achieving sustainability and resilience.

Malta's small size, typically a challenge for achieving economies of scale, has been historically leveraged to create unique opportunities for specialisation and rapid market response. Applied to AI, Malta's scale enables swift knowledge transfer, agile innovation, and controlled, trustworthy deployment of AI technologies within structured, standards-compliant ecosystems.

Since 2019, Malta has been promoting AI in line with the clear goals of the 2019 *Malta: The Ultimate AI Launchpad* national strategy. The strategy had outlined 72 measures across six pillars focusing on investment, innovation, public and private sector AI adoption, education, legal frameworks, and infrastructure. As of 2023, over 80% of these measures have been put into action, leading to significant advancements. The initial phase saw the public sector leading AI integration, paving the way for increased focus on the private sector, and leveraging educational and infrastructural foundations to amplify AI's societal and economic benefits.



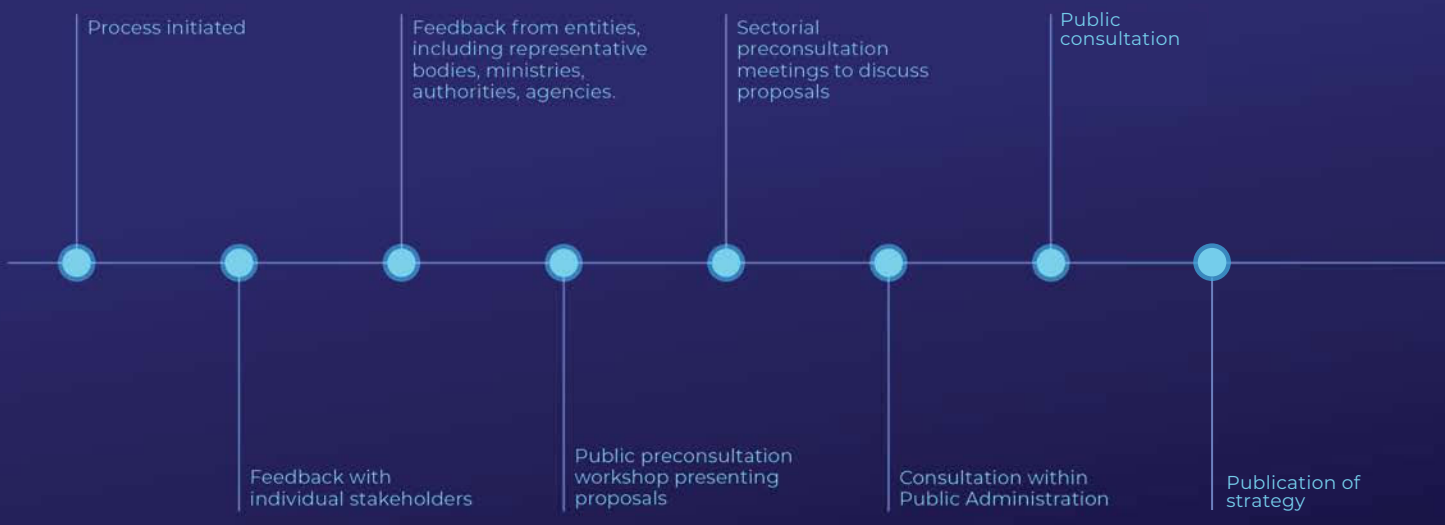
Malta remains committed to the 2019 *Malta: The Ultimate AI Launchpad* vision. Since then, the global AI landscape has changed radically: new technological innovations have presented unforeseen new opportunities and necessities, international and EU-wide efforts towards regulating AI have also since started being developed, and the COVID pandemic has brought about unexpected societal changes. All these facts call for a realignment of the 2019 strategy. Whereas the original vision and direction remain valid, the approach has to be rethought and realigned with the new realities of 2026. This realignment is in line with *Malta Vision 2050,* which emphasises the need for future-ready policies that respond to digital transformation and socio-economic shifts. The relevance of a strategy can only be ensured through stakeholder development in both its inception and implementation. The design of the revised strategy involved various stakeholders and entities throughout the whole timeline, as can be seen in Figure 1.

This experience has highlighted, more than ever before, that technology-related policies and strategies need to be agile and able to be readjusted as fast as the technology itself and its impact on societal changes. Static, long-term policies are bound to date and be of limited impact, and an evergreen approach is not only desirable but necessary. This is the approach advocated in this strategy, with in-built mechanisms to monitor, assess, and readjust in synchrony with new developments.

***FIGURE 1:** Stakeholder Consultation*

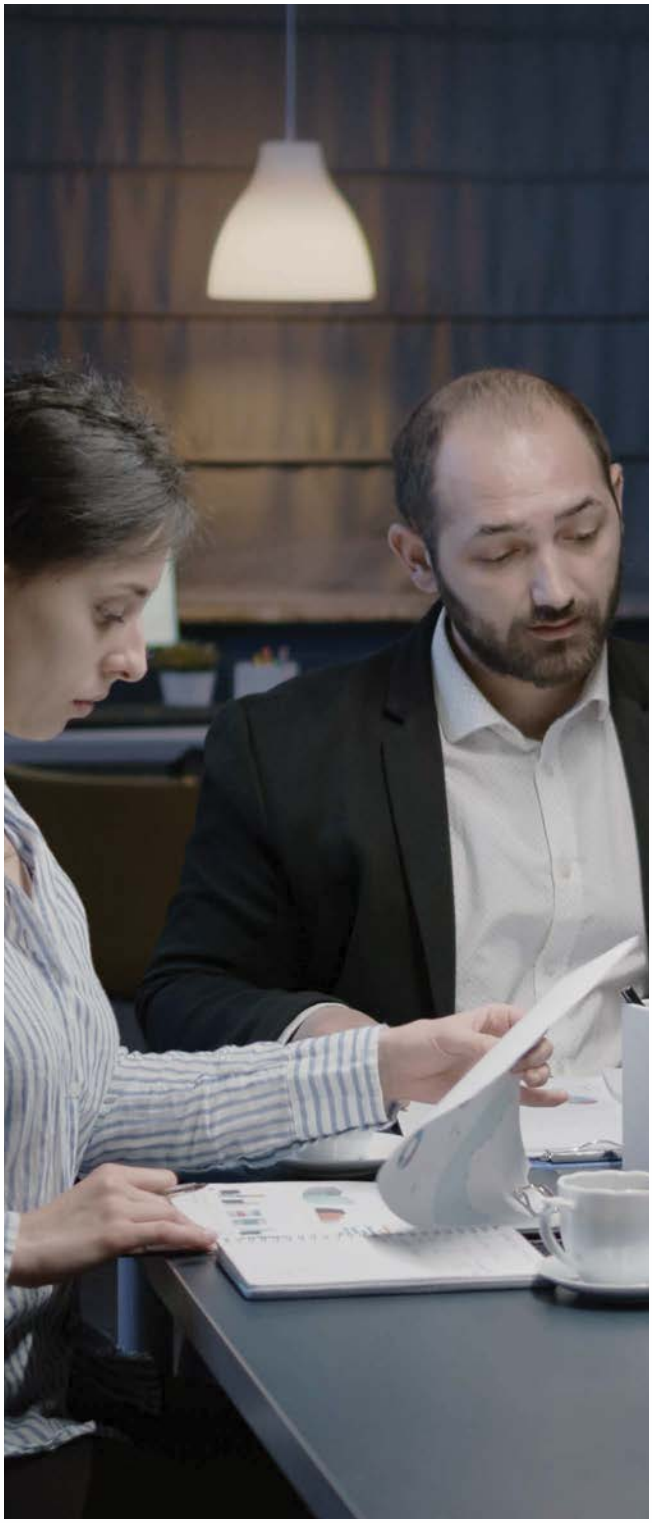


***FIGURE 2:** Strategy Development Process and Stakeholder Engagement*



THE 2019 MALTA AI STRATEGY

AI, with its promise of combining human-like reasoning with computer-like speed, has long been seen as a technology with the potential to accelerate productivity and economic growth. Technological and algorithmic developments in these past years have seen AI delivering concrete results in many sectors, transforming them through new machine-mediated services. Many countries realised that, due to this transformational nature of the technology, laying out a sound AI strategy and accompanying policies can maximise the return from the technology while ensuring increased trustworthiness, thus safeguarding users from its downsides.



The *EU AI Act*[1] defines AI as *"a machine-based system designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments".*

Furthermore, the *EU AI Act* lists the following inference techniques as covered by it:

a) "machine learning approaches that learn from data how to achieve certain objectives"; and

b) "logic- and knowledge-based approaches that infer from encoded knowledge or symbolic representation of the task to be solved".

In 2019, Malta was part of the first wave of countries to define a national AI strategy, a strategy which has, since then, guided AI-related policy and measures. The 2019 *Strategy and Vision for Artificial Intelligence in Malta 2030* aimed to place Malta as the "Ultimate AI Launchpad", setting goals for 2022 and 2030. The strategy identified 72 measures and had three vertical strategic pillars: (i) investment, startups, and innovation; (ii) public sector adoption; (iii) private sector adoption; and three horizontal strategic enablers: (i) education and workforce; (ii) legal and ethical framework; (iii) infrastructure.

[1] *EU AI Act, 2024*

Substantial progress has been achieved since the launch of the strategy, with over 80% of the measures being implemented by 2023. Key achievements arising from the strategy are identified below:

80+ Projects in AI

€7m Establishing of a European Digital Innovation Hub in Malta

€4m Pilot projects in the public administration

67% of adult population familiar with the term AI[2]

Established a culture of collaboration through the MDIA AI Applied Research Grant

Launched innovative concepts for various ages including summer camp, bootcamp and MaltaVarians comic

Malta ranks among top six countries in the EU for the adoption of AI in the private sector[3]

Malta acted as role model for other countries through the adoption of an AI sandbox in the new EU AI Act

The 2019 strategy addressed the need to seed the growth of AI adoption having the public sector lead by example, launching a number of AI-powered solutions. This has set the scene for a revised strategy, shifting the focus to private sector adoption and building upon what was achieved in terms of AI education and training programmes. Additionally, it ensures that other infrastructural needs are in place, transitioning to a second phase seeking to maximise further societal and economic impact.

[2] *MISCO (2023) MDIA Digital Innovation Technology Report*
[3] *DESI (2022)*

Since the launch of the 2019 strategy, substantial shifts and **developments** have been experienced, further establishing the need for a strategy realignment.

- One of the major challenges in having a technology-centric strategy is the rapid, frequent, and unpredictable technological strides. AI is no exception, and recent **technological developments** have resulted in huge gains in the range, ease, and quality of applicability of AI. Developments in machine learning techniques to learn more effectively and with less data have led to an acceleration in AI use and adoption. Whether it is language models and chatbots, computer vision and image generation, or predictive models, we are seeing more tools adopting AI algorithms and more people using and depending on these tools.

- Back in 2019, the regulatory landscape for AI was still barren. The 2019 strategy focused on building a regulatory framework and tools to promote trustworthy AI. Since then, we have seen major **regulatory developments**, with various regulatory and normative developments being launched or in progress, including the *EU AI Act,* the *EU AI Liability Directive*, and the *European Commission's AI Ethics Framework Proposal*. The new strategy will shift the focus from a Malta-centric regulatory framework to one focusing on the adoption of these frameworks.

- Finally, **social developments** have also shifted the goalposts and opened new opportunities for AI. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most significant game-changers, accelerating the digitalisation of services and shifting work modalities, resulting in a direct influence on the adoption of AI and its impact.



THE CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL AI STRATEGY

AI is increasingly embedded in our daily lifestyles. Although AI started being explored back in the 1950s, it was only in this past decade that it has attained substantial recognition by the general public.

Recent AI advancements are making AI more accessible and visible to the general public than ever, and the emergence of solutions such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and similar, provided concrete means for the public to engage with AI that, until recently, was distant and abstract. By fostering curiosity, playfulness, and user-friendly interfaces, emerging solutions have not only expanded the adoption of AI but have also drawn in a broader audience eager to explore its applications across diverse domains.

Malta can capitalise on this wave of AI awareness to advance social well-being and economic growth. There is ample opportunity to support improved quality of life, education, and industry with AI discoveries, exploit breakthrough innovations, and replicate successes to scale. Historically, Malta has not only mitigated the economic constraints of its small scale but has also harnessed this characteristic to enhance its competitive edge.

AI CHALLENGES

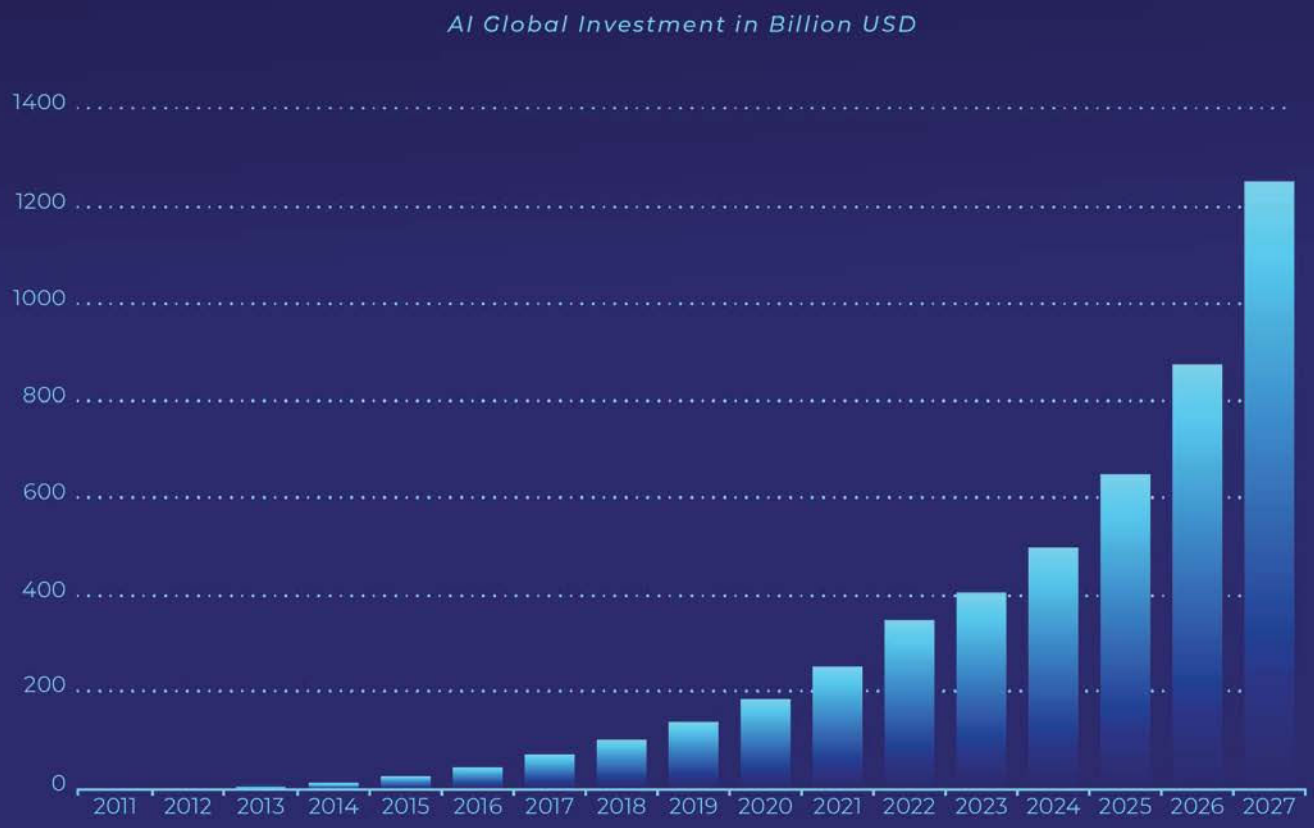
As AI models become increasingly sophisticated, they are accompanied by a rise in processing demands, leading to concerns about their environmental impact, escalating costs of training large AI models, and the availability of skilled talent. Ethical considerations, such as AI's propensity for biases and misuse, are prompting efforts to improve these technologies and establish robust regulatory frameworks. These innovations necessitate careful consideration of AI's far-reaching implications, underscoring the importance of regulation and vigilant monitoring of its evolution.

As AI advances at an unprecedented rate, there is also a growing challenge in matching talent and training with the pace of innovation. Elevating education, enhancing AI knowledge, and workforce training will play a pivotal role in shaping any nation's competitive position, especially as most countries vie to attract top talent.

Concerns exist around the limitation of AI technology which is prone to hallucinations, biases and can be easily tricked into serving unethical intentions. It is expected that these tools will continue to improve at a fast pace to mitigate, and possibly solve, many of the current concerns. In parallel, much work is being done at all global levels to timely construct the necessary regulatory frameworks that ensure safety while empowering innovation.

This past decade, AI has presented capabilities that were unimaginable before. Since 2022, we have seen almost monthly releases of new large-scale language models that, on various counts, surpass human abilities in decision-making, content generation, and information processing capabilities.

AI could be the most impactful innovation for humankind. Concerns exist about AI's rapid and pervasive diffusion into various sectors, including commerce, education, healthcare, jobs, and cybersecurity, among others. The swift rate of AI adoption has created apprehension about potential unintended consequences, such as ethical dilemmas, data security issues, and workforce disruptions. In light of these concerns, the necessity for AI regulation and ongoing monitoring of emerging AI developments becomes evident.



IN NUMBERS

McKinsey's State of AI in early 2024 shows that AI adoption is steadily increasing, with 72% of global industry respondents reporting the use of AI in 2024, an increase from 50% in 2020, and 65% reporting the use of generative AI in at least one business function. The rapid growth of the global AI market is expected to continue in the coming years, to reach $632 billion by 2028, from the present market value of $235 billion.[4]

There is EU and international consensus that AI is of high strategic importance and a key driver of social and economic development. This has led governments to formulate national AI strategies. By 2017, three countries had released a national AI strategy. This increased to 66 countries by 2022, with others in development. 127 countries have passed bills referencing AI.[5] Malta was among the first countries to implement a national AI strategy. It has now released a realignment to the strategy to capitalise on the emergent AI discoveries and regulations.

Notwithstanding its size, Malta's advancement in AI has been remarkable, and a majority of the 2019-2030 AI strategy measures have been accomplished. By 2021, enterprise adoption of AI technologies in Malta was two points above the EU average. By 2024, 80% of employees reported that employers provide them with the necessary tools or training to work with innovative digital technologies, including AI –12 points above the EU average.[6]

The 2024 *Government AI Readiness Index* gives a 63.64 score to Malta, well above the global average of 47.59[7], but below the regional average of 69.56, indicating solid progress and the importance of realigning the strategy.

[4] *McKinsey, 2024; IDC, 2024*
[5] *Global AI Index, 2024*
[6] *Eurobarometer, 2025*
[7] *Global AI Index, 2024*

The *OECD AI Policy Observatory* reports Malta's intention *"to bring research and innovation to communities together, enabling the sharing of knowledge and best practices, and to facilitate networking and collaboration"*.[8]

The Observatory recognises that Malta has a number of policy instruments, namely (i) networking and collaborative platforms; (ii) grants for business R&D and innovation; (iii) indirect financial support; (iv) AI skills and education; (v) public awareness campaigns and civic participation activities; (vi) data access and sharing; (vii) AI computing and research infrastructure; (viii) knowledge transfer; (ix) business advisory services; and (x) science and innovation challenges, prizes, and awards.

In the *Digital Economy and Society Index*,[9] Malta ranks in the top 6 of the EU member states in terms of AI technology adoption. Widening the scope to AI-enabling technologies, and including the adoption of AI, cloud, and data analytics, Malta is ranked 5th, at 68.3%, which is significantly higher than the EU average of 54.6%. Whereas, in previous indices Malta's focus on the development and deployment of digital technologies such as AI and blockchain was one of the drivers, a sectorial diversification of the start-up scene has been noted, including fintech, AI and legal tech. Malta scores above the EU average in ICT graduates, but scores just below the EU average when it comes to ICT specialists (4.7% of total employment compared to the 4.8% of the European average).

[8] *OECD Policy Observatory, 2023*
[9] *DESI, 2024*



INTERLINK WITH EXISTING NATIONAL STRATEGIES & POLICIES

AI FOR SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIETAL WELL-BEING

Sustainable development is tightly knit to AI development and adoption, not only as a guiding principle in defining the parameters of the vision of an AI strategy, but also in that AI is a strong enabler of improved sustainability. Various goals identified in Malta's *Sustainable Development Vision for 2050* and the United Nations' *Sustainable Development Goals* can be supported through increased and appropriate adoption of AI, including supporting the transition towards a digital economy, health and well-being, and in enabling measures towards sustainable urban development and mobility. Conversely, the goals of the vision align with those of the national AI strategy, particularly in the transition towards high-skilled and high-value-added jobs, high-quality education and training, and investment in research and innovation. The AI strategy has been aligned to ensure synergy with Malta's *Sustainable Development Vision for 2050* and *Malta Vision 2050*.

Resonating with the sustainability goals, the *Malta Diġitali* strategy takes a persona-centred approach whose vision is that of improving lives, business, and government services, presenting the digital world as a means to an end, emphasising user-centricity, confidence, trust, inclusivity, and sustainability. Similarly, the national ethical framework *Malta: Towards Trustworthy AI*, proposes that AI systems should take a human-centric approach where design starts from the users' needs, making sure to preserve the dignity, autonomy, and self-determination of the individuals. Building on this, it emphasises the need to strike the right balance between innovation and risks, protection and disruption, and regulation and agility. This is reflected in the new AI strategy vision which places the social well-being of the individuals as its starting point.

ALIGNMENT WITH MALTA VISION 2050

The *Malta Vision 2050* objective of improving quality of life through sustainable economic growth, inclusive services, resilience, and smart resource use is structured around four pillars, to which the AI strategy contributes directly.

01. Sustainable Economic Growth

The AI strategy promotes innovation and improved efficiency through the use of AI, viewing it as a means towards economic diversification and enhanced competitiveness. This in line with *Malta Vision 2050's* emphasis on future-oriented industries and emerging niches.

02. Accessible People-Centred Services

The AI strategy aims to achieve smarter public services, enabling more efficient and transparent decision-making. The goals of the AI strategy directly support *Malta Vision 2050's* commitment to citizen-centric governance and improved public outcomes.

03. A Resilient Country and a Modern Education System

The AI strategy prioritises an AI-literate population and a skilled workforce, in line with the *Malta Vision 2050's* objective of strengthening Malta's capacity to adapt to technological change while ensuring long-term social and economic goals.

04. Smart Land and Sea Usage

The use of AI in sectors such as transport, and the promotion of the use of AI for the optimisation of resource use, is aligned with *Malta Vision 2050's* focus on the responsible and efficient use of natural resources.

The national AI strategy and *Malta Vision 2050* share common foundations, with both:

(i) adopting a human-centric approach, where technology serves societal well-being; and

(ii) positioning sustainability and long-term resilience as a primary driver for long term goals.

From a research and investment perspective, *Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027* places health, well-being and sustainable use of resources at the top of the list of smart specialisation areas, while AI is listed at the top of future digital technologies of focus. The intersectionality of these elements makes this strategy very well aligned with the new AI strategy, which seeks to deploy the latest AI technologies to improve the lives of individuals in a sustainable way.

Malta's *OECD Action Plan 2024-2025* commits to "adhere to the OECD Council Recommendation on Artificial Intelligence" (Proposal 2.5). The realigned AI strategy has been designed to be in alignment with the OECD recommendation, which lays out guiding principles aiming towards trustworthy AI. The vision and principles of this strategy are in line, with the aim to maximise the potential to improve sustainability, and the welfare and well-being of people whilst recognising the adverse effects that the spread of the technology may incur, proactively providing means to identify and address such risks.

DATA AS AN ENABLER FOR AI

One of the basic tenets of AI is the element of learning and there can be no learning without data. Given that public administration has a treasure trove of data which could fuel AI algorithm training, the *Data Strategy in Public Administration 2023–2027* is of particular relevance to the future of AI in Malta.

Emphasising the intrinsic value of data and raising awareness of the associated risks while ensuring its quality and fair use are crucial principles that the AI strategy builds upon. In practical terms, these principles translate into the establishment of the data registers, data governance framework, and data exchange platforms, propped up by a proper legal framework and an integrated public administration ICT infrastructure. Importantly, the data strategy also refers to the *data culture* that needs to be cultivated with a strong foundation in data governance, data interoperability, data intelligence, and democratisation.

Initiatives to encourage data sharing and reuse in the public sector are echoed in the *MITA Strategy* and *Malta Digitali*. The target is to ensure that data is accessible across government services and solutions, but also to make open data available. Such data is a crucial prerequisite for the goal of implementing technological solutions to make better use of aggregated and linked data for strategic decision-making as intended through the new AI strategy.

CYBERSECURITY AS A PREREQUISITE FOR AI

Cybersecurity is a crucial prerequisite for the provision of digital services, particularly when such services deal with sensitive aspects of human life. If users of services are not given the right level of security assurance, the required trust cannot be built. Without such trust, users might not feel comfortable providing personal details, depositing their money, and potentially trusting such systems with their lives. This is emphasised in the *Data Strategy in Public Administration 2023–2027* which lists protection as one of the main objectives, a sentiment echoed in a number of other national strategies, including *Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027, Malta Digitali,* and the *Malta Digital Innovation Authority Strategic Plan 2023–2025*. Given that AI-based systems depend on sensitive data collection and are frequently used to deliver such services in the first place, a mature cybersecurity environment can be considered as a precondition for their success.

Two main building blocks highlighted by the *National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023–2026* are a shared responsibility amongst stakeholders and a balanced risk-based outlook which proportions cybersecurity allocation in relation to the risks involved. Both of these resonate with the AI strategy: the former complements the open data culture referred to above, which presupposes a shared effort towards building a collaborative environment with coordinated initiatives. The balanced approach proposed in the cybersecurity strategy is reflected in the AI strategy which pushes for innovation but keeps the users' safety and well-being at the centre of any development.

A further relevant goal of the *National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023–2026* is to enhance cyber defence through improved monitoring and response mechanisms to cyber threats. Although different in its focus, the element of ongoing monitoring is equally crucial for the AI strategy, ensuring that the quality of the input and output for AI systems is assessed to be to the desired level.



LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

A number of strategies refer to the provision or revision of legal frameworks to reflect the advancement in related technologies. Among these, the *Data Strategy in Public Administration 2023–2027 and Malta Diġitali* list updated laws and regulations as a strategic enabler to address challenges and opportunities. Similarly, the *National Cybersecurity Strategy 2023–2026* lists the consolidation and adaptation of legal frameworks, standards, and best practices as tools contributing towards capacity building.

AN AI-LITERATE CITIZENRY & AN AI-KNOWLEDGEABLE WORKFORCE

Various national strategies address the need to ensure AI awareness in the general public or to empower and reskill workers to ensure the availability of a more AI- and ICT knowledgeable workforce. *The National eSkills Strategy 2022* addresses these goals in a wider ICT perspective, not limited to AI. Its pillars align with the goals of the AI strategy, with one of the principal pillars addressing society, and covering digital empowerment in order to reduce the digital divide through digital literacy. The complementary pillars of education, workforce, and ICT professionals, address the training and reskilling of the workforce to provide a professional workforce able to work in innovative technologies, including AI.

In parallel, the *Digital Education Strategy (2025–2030)* embeds digital competence and AI at the core of lifelong learning, treating AI as a cross-curricular enabler integrated through digital literacy, computational thinking, and ethical technology use across all education levels.

The need to support the digital transformation through education plays a central role in Malta's *National Strategic Action Plan for Further and Higher Education 2022–2030*, for the general public through lifelong learning, and also throughout the whole formal education trajectory.

Malta Diġitali identifies the need to address digital innovation skilling of society, including investing in digital technologies within education to reskill and upskill educators and to provide training to those in need of help to access digital technologies. As in the *National eSkills Strategy 2022*, the strategy highlights the need to expose students to the opportunities of pursuing a professional career in digital technology.

RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT & INNOVATION

The need to support advancing digital innovation in its various guises is recognised in a number of national strategies. *Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027* identifies a number of smart specialisations, from health to smart manufacturing, from marine technologies to sustainable use of resources, practically all of which include aspects of digital innovation and address challenges well-adapted to the use of AI. In addition, it identifies future digital technologies, including AI. The strategy addresses the need for building research infrastructures, capacity building, and national policies to support the growth of the digital economy.

Malta Diġitali places as one of its goals that of establishing Malta as a hub for digital technology research by attracting digitally innovative startups and by nurturing new digital economic niches. It also emphasises the need for addressing technology regulatory policy to support technological infrastructures, thus enabling growth in R&D.

The strategy *Mapping Tomorrow: A Strategic Plan for the Digital Transformation of the Public Administration 2019-2021* lists AI at the top of the list of emerging technologies to be adopted by public administration in its commitment to excellence in service delivery. In particular, this can be achieved by automating processes, thus reducing bureaucracy; tailoring services to offer improved experiences, for instance, in the case of tourism; and optimising resources, for instance, through smart traffic management and pattern recognition for tax compliance and cybersecurity threat detection.

AI ASSISTANT IN EDUCATION: A PILOT PROJECT

Initiated in November 2020, the *AI Assistant in Education* is a project seeking a transformation in education by optimising and personalising the learning experience for each student. Through the use of AI, the system continuously and meticulously calibrates educational content to align with each student's abilities and competencies, ensuring a tailor-made learning journey.

From the students' perspective, this assistant offers a customised and adaptive learning experience, catering to their unique learning styles and abilities, supporting students in achieving better results, but also making education more engaging and fun. The system's gamification aspects add an element of enjoyment to learning, fostering a more inclusive and effective educational environment, especially for students requiring additional support or those academically gifted.

Educators also benefit significantly from the system's support in implementing syllabi and managing classroom activities by reducing their workload through the automation of various tasks. Moreover, the system provides educators with detailed analytics and predictions about student performance, enabling them to intervene proactively and offer more individualised attention.

The project was shown to lead to a notable improvement in student performance, particularly with students who struggled academically. This underscores the system's effectiveness in providing quality education to all students, irrespective of their learning abilities.

AI IN TOURISM: A PILOT PROJECT

Malta's *AI Tourism Platform* is designed to facilitate the transformation of the island's tourism sector towards a more robust data-driven approach. The platform consists of a state-of-the-art repository consolidating data and information from disparate sources, laying the foundations for machine learning algorithms to discover useful insights. These AI capacities support tourism management in dealing with today's rapidly changing realities.

The project is also designed to facilitate data-driven policymaking in tourism. Predictive analytics grant policymakers a vantage point over unfolding trends, allowing for pre-emptive interventions for sustainable growth. From the identification of up-and-coming hotspots to easing strains on established sites, this will enable agile and dynamic decision-taking, leading to increased protection of Malta's tourism sector.

The *AI Tourism Platform* is designed to unite public and private stakeholders to interface and energise joint solutions. The secure aggregation of different data sources, built with privacy by design, will generate more valuable insights and relevant recommendations by the platform that can serve as APIs for other systems to consume. This also achieves the aim of this system to serve as a seminal initiative that lays the foundation for more AI-driven systems to be built upon it.

SYMBIOTIC NATIONAL STRATEGIES

The *Malta Diġitali* strategy acknowledges the link to the national AI strategy, highlighting AI as one of the current main global drivers and referring to the opportunity of AI as a way of providing superior quality services as recognised in *Mapping Tomorrow: A Strategic Plan for the Digital Transformation of the Public Administration 2019-2021,*

Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy 2021-2027 also acknowledges its relationship with the national AI strategy, particularly identifying the need for investment in big data technologies to support decision-making processes in critical areas. AI is highlighted as one of the niche areas of focus whilst also including big data and analytics as a horizontal application.

The MDIA started out in 2018 with a focus on Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLT) but has since expanded its focus also to cover critical systems, cybersecurity, and AI. Amongst its responsibilities, the MDIA has been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the AI strategy. It has already launched several AI-related initiatives, such as the Pathfinder Scholarship Scheme, the MDIA Technology Sandbox, and the AI Applied Research Grant.



VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

THE VISION

The AI strategy is premised on a vision that places human and societal well-being at the core of technological advancement. Societal well-being encompasses a wide range of aspects, covering the basic needs, growth and balance of the individual, including physical, mental and emotional health, career and financial well-being, and social connections.

The Government intends to position Malta as a leading best practice of the national AI ecosystem for societal well-being, economic prosperity, and sustainability. We are committed to leveraging the potential of AI as a driver for sustainable economic development and as a foundation for improving the quality of life and happiness for individuals and society at large.

At the heart of this vision is the dedication to drive growth and innovation while ensuring all AI users are empowered with knowledge, conscious of their options, and safeguarded by robust principles. This necessitates raising awareness about AI, enabling AI at different levels of education, and supporting AI adoption and advancement. In this way, we intend to move towards a future where AI not only propels us forward but does so with an unwavering commitment to the greater good.

The strategy is designed to be internally reflective while also adopting an outward-looking approach, therefore ensuring that while we innovate by embracing the projected trajectory of radical innovations that AI affords, we remain vigilant by ensuring continuous monitoring, evaluation, and intervention of this same strategy, by design.

PRINCIPLES

The realigned 2026 national AI strategy, is guided by five fundamental principles crucial for the responsible development and deployment of trustworthy AI. These principles include (i) **Diversity, Equality, Fairness and Anti-Discrimination**, highlighting the need for AI systems to be inclusive and unbiased; (ii) **Accountability, Responsibility and Legal Liability**, emphasising auditable and accountable AI practices; (iii) **Transparency, Explainability, Human Agency and Oversight**, advocating for understandable AI systems with mandatory human oversight; (iv) **Safety**, focusing on harm prevention, safe innovation, and technical robustness; and (v) **Privacy, Data Protection and Data Governance** upholding stringent standards for data ethics and compliance. Together, these principles form the backbone of our strategy, aimed at harnessing the power of AI while establishing the importance of ethical integrity, social responsibility, and legal conformity.



Malta's vision is to create a trusted AI ecosystem that promotes societal well-being, inclusive social and economic progress, and sustainability.

AI STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

- **PRINCIPLE 1** — Diversity, Equality, Fairness and Anti-Discrimination
- **PRINCIPLE 2** — Accountability, Responsibility and Legal Liability
- **PRINCIPLE 3** — Transparency, Explainability, Human Agency and Oversight
- **PRINCIPLE 4** — Safety
  - Prevention of Harm
  - Safe Innovation
  - Technical Robustness
- **PRINCIPLE 5** — Privacy, Data Protection and Data Governance

PRINCIPLE 1: DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, FAIRNESS & ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

At the forefront of the realigned strategy is the principle of Diversity, Equality, Fairness and Anti-Discrimination. This principle is foundational in guiding how to design, develop, deploy, and manage AI technologies. The commitment is to cultivate diversity in all aspects of AI initiatives, from the team composition to the data sets used, ensuring that a multiplicity of perspectives and experiences are represented. Equality is central to the approach, guaranteeing that AI systems offer equitable benefits and opportunities to all users, regardless of their background. In alignment with fairness, systems must be rigorously tested to refine algorithms to prevent biases and to require decisions made by AI to be just and impartial. Moreover, the strategy takes a firm stand against any form of discrimination, actively working to identify and minimise biases in AI systems. This necessitates the continuous monitoring and updating of AI systems in order to enable their adaptation to evolving societal norms and values. By adhering to this principle, the strategy is aimed not only at fostering innovation and efficiency but also at upholding the highest ethical standards, promoting the use of AI technologies to contribute positively and fairly to society.

PRINCIPLE 2: ACCOUNTABILITY, RESPONSIBILITY & LEGAL LIABILITY

The principles of Accountability, Responsibility and Legal Liability are integral to establishing trust and integrity in AI systems. The strategy emphasises the need for a strong sense of accountability, ensuring that AI operations are transparent and can be traced back to responsible parties. This includes maintaining clear records of decision-making processes and algorithmic operations, and taking proactive actions to prevent and mitigate the adverse impact of AI systems. Responsibility is a key tenet, where individuals and teams involved in AI development and deployment understand their roles and are equipped to address the ethical, social, and legal implications of their work. Furthermore, the strategy highlights the need for adherence to legal liability standards, requiring AI systems and practices to comply with relevant laws and regulations, addressing legal and ethical issues arising from the use of AI technologies.

PRINCIPLE 3: TRANSPARENCY, EXPLAINABILITY, HUMAN AGENCY & OVERSIGHT

The third cornerstone of the strategy is anchored in the principles of Transparency, Explainability, Human Agency and Oversight. These principles seek to make understandable and accessible the inner workings of AI systems by explaining how AI systems reach conclusions, particularly in decisions with significant implications. In line with explainability, the strategy emphasises the need to demystify AI operations, making them accessible and comprehensible to users and stakeholders. Recognising the importance of human agency, it is essential that while AI aids in decision-making, it does not undermine human autonomy. Systems necessitate a robust framework for human oversight, including a clear human oversight, especially in scenarios where AI decisions carry considerable weight. This oversight is crucial in monitoring, evaluating, and, if necessary, correcting AI decisions, thus ensuring a balanced synergy between automated efficiency and human judgement. By adhering to this principle, we aim to foster AI systems that are not just advanced and efficient but also responsible, understandable, and operate under appropriate human control, thereby reinforcing trust and accountability for AI applications.

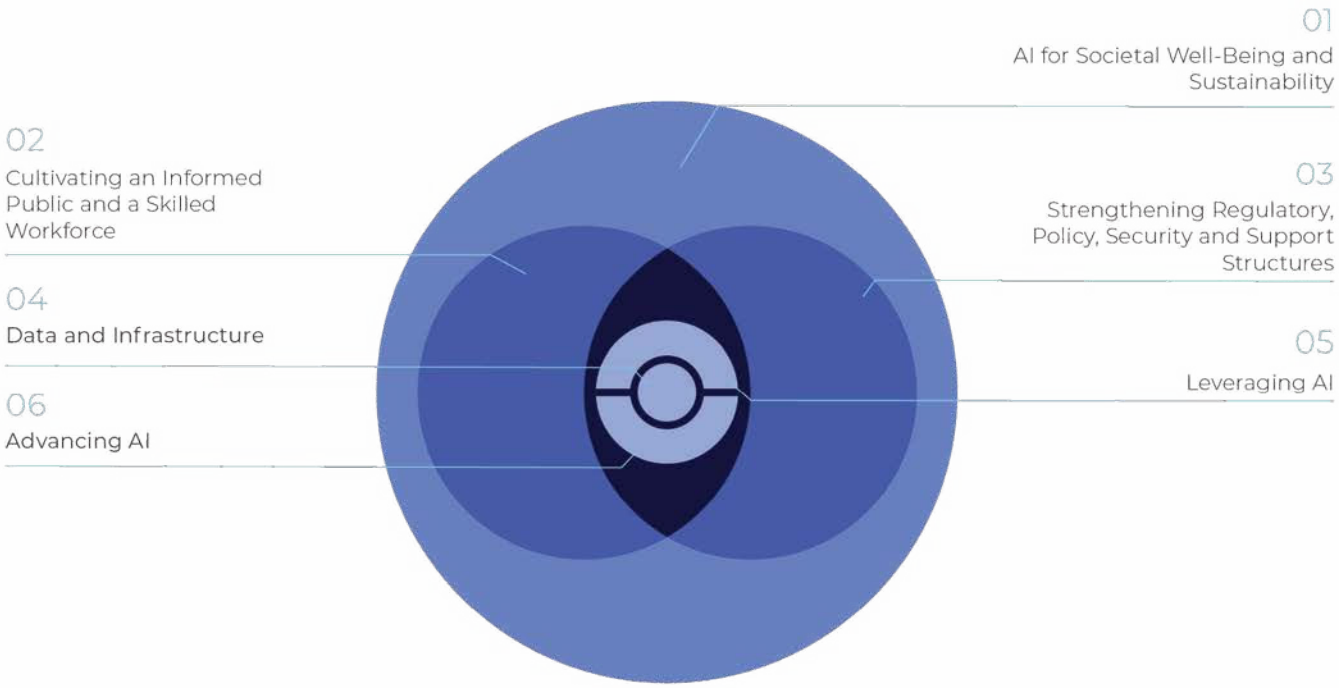
PRINCIPLE 4: SAFETY

Central to our AI strategy is a commitment to safety, which stands as a threefold imperative. Firstly, the emphasis on the **prevention of harm** – that AI systems do not harm individuals or society. This involves rigorous testing and ethical considerations in all stages of AI design, development, deployment, and retirement, with a keen focus on avoiding unintended consequences. Secondly, importance is given to **safe innovation** — balancing the fostering of creativity and advancement in AI technologies with risk assessment, in order to ensure that new developments align with ethical standards and societal values. Lastly, the principle of safety underlines the need for **technical robustness**. AI systems must be reliable, secure, and resilient against failures or malicious attacks, which involves implementing robust algorithms, continuous monitoring, appropriate cybersecurity measures, and updates in order to adapt to new challenges and threats. In essence, this principle ensures that AI initiatives are not only pioneering and forward-thinking but also secure, reliable, and beneficial for all stakeholders.

PRINCIPLE 5: PRIVACY, DATA PROTECTION & DATA GOVERNANCE

This principle of the national AI strategy defines the commitment to ethical data management and usage. It is of utmost importance to protect the privacy of individuals, ensuring that all personal data that is handled by AI systems is treated with the highest level of confidence and security. The approach to data protection is in strict compliance with Malta's obligations under national, EU, and international laws such as the *European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)* and the *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*, promoting the use of the highest standards for ethical data harnessing and processing, with transparency and accountability in how data is collected, used, and shared. Furthermore, data governance must ensure that data management practices are not only compliant with legal requirements, but are also aligned with ethical standards and societal values. By upholding this principle, we aim to foster a trustworthy AI ecosystem where data is utilised responsibly, protecting the rights of relevant actors and stakeholders.

STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS



UNDERLYING FOUNDATIONS

AI for Societal Well-Being and Sustainability

From a policy perspective, AI and digital technologies have long been seen and treated as an economic driver. The potential social implications and the opportunities these technologies bring about are frequently seen more as a side-effect of the economic growth of the AI industry. In contrast, the vision of this strategy is to place societal well-being on the forefront, and have economic growth arise as a side effect of improving society.

STRATEGIC ENABLERS

Cultivating an Informed Public and a Skilled Workforce

Training and education are key enablers for achieving the goals of this strategy. The responsible adoption of AI requires an informed public, and supporting the accountable growth of the AI industry requires an appropriately skilled workforce.

Strengthening Regulatory, Policy, Security and Support Structures

Moving towards safer and more trustworthy development and use of AI requires the development of appropriate regulatory structures and sound policy measures. Support measures, including information gathering, enable the maximisation of the outcomes of the strategy in line with the principles upon which the strategy is based.

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

Data and Infrastructure

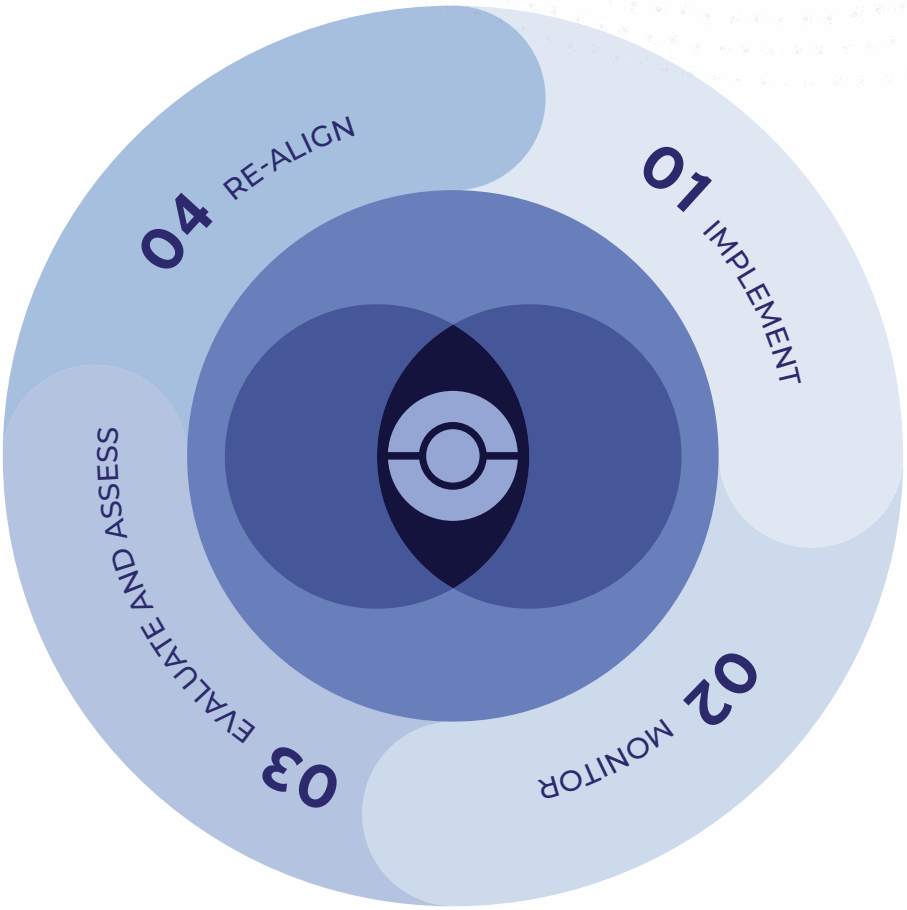
Availability of data and appropriate data policies are a necessity for enabling AI development. Supporting the safe development of such data repositories and ensuring the availability of an appropriate infrastructure to carry out its analysis are key to the acceleration of the adoption and growth of AI, all in line with the principle of safety and trustworthiness.

Leveraging AI

The second strategic driver of the strategy focuses on supporting the adoption and use of AI technologies to optimise existing business processes and enable new ones. Applied in the public sector, this is an opportunity to improve government and public services, resulting in a more effective and transparent citizen experience. Support for this in the private sector is key to enabling economic growth through the development of innovative AI-based solutions.

Advancing AI

Support for research and development to advance AI techniques and develop new ones is the third strategic driver of the strategy. This can be achieved through measures to help startups and scaleups, and promoting the commercialisation of academic research breakthroughs, despite the difficulty of having a critical mass of researchers in the context of a small country.



IMPLEMENT

Set up a team to drive the implementation process, identifying ownership of measures, budget requirements, etc.

MONITOR

Continuously monitor (i) the measures, (ii) identified strategy success criteria; and (iii) identified nationwide AI adoption and quality metrics.

EVALUATE AND ASSESS

Evaluate the results and effectiveness of the measures and their impact on the AI ecosystem. Identify and publicise success measures, and seek less successful measures assessing whether they need to be supported differently or whether they are no longer relevant to the objectives.

RE-ALIGN

Identify and plan corrective measures for realigning the strategy and measures. In particular, set up running failure flags to ensure agile realignment and turn-around strategy relevance procedures.



STRATEGY & MEASURES

UNDERLYING FOUNDATIONS: AI FOR SOCIETAL WELL-BEING & SUSTAINABILITY

AI has much to offer to societal well-being. The use of AI goes beyond mere gains in efficiency (which, in themselves, may already contribute to increased well-being), also enabling solutions which directly improve the quality of life. This may be in minor ways such as an appointment management app which guides us in managing appointments to minimise traffic and waiting, or in more critical ways such as a health application, which may support a doctor's diagnosis. There are, however, other sides to AI for societal well-being. With the rise of the ubiquity of AI around us, we have to guarantee that safeguards are in place to ensure that such solutions are appropriately trustworthy, human-centric, and free of undesirable bias. We also need to make sure that AI's application is widened beyond the utilitarian to the artistic and cultural realms, thus supporting new human experiences hand in hand with technology.

Reinforcing Malta's commitment to a future centred on enhanced quality of life, as outlined in the recently published *Malta Vision 2050,* the *EU27 Median Disposable Income*[10]*,* the *Overall Experience of Life*[11] and the *Human Development Index (HDI)*[12] offer key international benchmarks. This AI strategy directly supports the national aspirations by aiming to positively influence the core *HDI* dimensions of health, education, and standard of living. It is envisaged that the ripple effect of the investment associated with the strategy will result in increased efficiency and productivity from Maltese business across the economy and the decrease in the additional total workforce required. Measures within this strategy are thus geared not only towards technological advancement but towards tangible improvements in human development, ensuring safe AI serves as a robust engine for societal well-being in alignment with *Malta Vision 2050.*

Finally, we also have to recognise that widespread AI adoption may also have negative consequences, and it is essential that a national strategy enacts (i) mitigation measures to avoid or minimise such consequences; and (ii) a monitoring body to identify such consequences in order to trigger appropriate mitigation actions when these are encountered.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals

[10] *Eurostat, 2024*
[11] *Eurostat, 2024*
[12] *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2024*

SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIETAL WELL-BEING

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
1	**Job displacement due to AI.** Monitor international developments regarding job displacement due to AI. Periodically report on sectors with high risk, mitigation measures which can be adopted, and report to policy-making bodies identifying major challenges arising.	Issuing of periodic reports
2	**Upholding Societal and Mental Health Well-Being.** Safeguard societal well-being by monitoring AI developments, evaluating their mental health and addiction impacts on vulnerable groups, and guiding timely mitigation measures.	Number of AI-related mental-health risk assessments conducted Number of monitoring or trend-identification reports produced Number of mitigation measures identified and communicated to relevant stakeholders
3	**AI and legislation.** Monitor international, European and local regulation and legislation in order to (i) assess how the use of AI will impact the legislation and the effectiveness of its enforcement; (ii) assess the impact of the legislation on the development and adoption of AI; and (iii) identify local regulatory realignment required.	Updated legislation Availability of internal procedures
4	**AI for social causes.** Launch grant programmes and support or capitalise on existing grants for the use of AI for ESG initiatives, also integrating with high-tech companies' corporate social responsibility.	Availability of grant

5	**AI, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.** Ratify the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law* while exploring ways how to identify and address opportunities and challenges in the area.	Ratification of convention
6	**AI and the environment.** To assess the use of AI applications for environmental modelling, monitoring and management in a targeted field.	Availability of targeted locally trained AI system for environmental, modelling, monitoring and management
7	**International collaboration for the addressing of regional challenges through AI.** Prioritise international collaboration in the application of AI to address Mediterranean and European regional challenges. This measure includes establishing internal processes for the assessment of technology security and leakage risks.	Number of collaborative activities
8	**Technology Ethics Committee.** Continue with the establishment of the National Technology Ethics Committee to provide advice regarding the ethical use of AI and its intersection across various policy initiatives.	The establishment of the National Technology Ethics Committee

LIVING HERITAGE

9	**AI and cultural heritage.** Carry out a study to assess how AI can support the long-term protection and accessibility of cultural heritage, and implement key recommendations.	Availability of study Number of recommendations implemented

10	**AI and long-term archival of cultural heritage data.** Capitalising on ongoing efforts for the digitalisation and archival of cultural heritage, set up schemes to support the use of AI on such data.	Availability of scheme
11	**Tool support for the Maltese language.** Support the creation of toolsets to enable digital processing and analysis of Maltese artefacts, in both its written and spoken form, including spellchecking and transcription support.	Number of tools developed
12	**Language models for the Maltese language.** Support research and development in the creation and use of language models with a focus on the Maltese language.	Budget of total projects funded

ART, CULTURE AND WELL-BEING

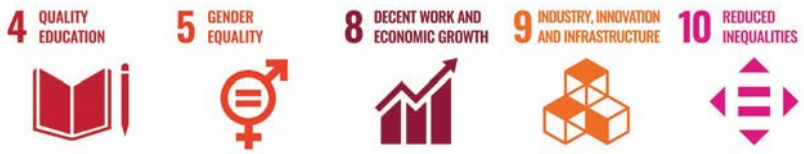
13	**Awareness on the use of AI amongst artists and artisans.** Set up training programmes targeting artists and artisans in the use of digital technologies, including AI.	Number of training programmes organised Number of persons following the training programmes
14	**Malta as a hub to attract activity in AI and art.** Capitalise on the Malta Biennale or similar event to bring together an art exhibition, master classes and art-technology talks on arts and AI.	Number of artists and attendees participating in the Biennale or similar event

15	**Information and support for IP and the use of digital innovation in the Culture and Creative Industries.** Awareness-raising and information programmes about IP issues in digital, algorithmic and AI generated or modified art, aimed at (i) artists; (ii) artisans; and (iii) entities which curate and exhibit such art.	Number of participants in these programmes
16	**AI in sports.** Focus sports activities for all campaign on the potential use of AI to move Malta through the development of sport for healthy, inclusive and successful society.	Availability of communication campaign Number of participants in a nationwide competition
17	**Advancing AI-driven health, wellness and performance.** Enhancing educational programmes in sports technology: (i) empowering PE teachers, trainee teachers and sports coaches with training on AI & digital tech, and (ii) expand and enrich the integration of AI into sports science curricula at educational institutions.	Number of training, conferences or similar initiatives organised Number of programmes with AI elements integrated in them

STRATEGIC ENABLER 01:
CULTIVATING AN INFORMED PUBLIC AND A SKILLED WORKFORCE

It is important to recognise the pivotal role of ensuring that Malta builds a large enough base of proficient AI experts. With the rapid evolution of the field of AI, and in order to meet the growing demands of innovation, a skilled workforce is essential. Investing in educational programmes that nurture talents in machine learning, data science, and related disciplines is paramount, as is creating the environment to attract talent to the island. This is crucial to enable both the development of new AI techniques and for the adoption of AI across various sectors.

An equally important part of an AI strategy is the education of end users, whether it is the general public, or the non-technical manager who chooses to adopt an AI solution as part of a business process. As AI becomes ever more integrated in our daily lives, the greater the importance that individuals understand both the capabilities and limitations of these technologies — responsible, safe, and ethical AI use is contingent on user comprehension. Awareness campaigns and training programmes aimed at the general public and non-technical executives can empower them to make better informed decisions by demystifying AI and highlighting important aspects they should be aware of as they adopt and use AI tools.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals



GENERAL PUBLIC AI AWARENESS

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
18	**AI, diversity and gender.** Take measures to prevent discrimination and inequalities arising from the use of AI, ensuring that everyone, no matter their background, has an equal chance to thrive in the digital world in Malta by promoting equitable AI awareness opportunities, especially for underrepresented and vulnerable groups.	Number of initiatives Number of persons reached
19	**Provision of educational programmes on AI for the general public.** Set up information sessions and courses to provide the general public with awareness and knowledge of AI as a technology, ethical aspects related to AI and AI tools that they can use in their everyday life. Focus on specific cohorts, such as older people and persons with disability.	Number of participants
20	**AI for All.** Place the power of AI in everyone's hands through free courses, national certification, and practical sessions for parents, students, workers, and the elderly. Demonstrate how AI can help individuals study better, work faster, and live more comfortably. Upon completion of the course, participants will receive a free subscription to an AI service, ensuring continued daily use of future-ready tools.	Number of individuals completing the AI for All course Number of free AI service subscriptions issued

MANDATORY SCHOOL AGE

21	**Computational elements in foundational education.** Introduce more elements related to computation, including computational thinking and AI awareness in primary schools to ensure that students are exposed to these notions early in their educational journey.	Number of students taking the pilot programme
22	**Bootcamps and summer schools.** Increase the number of bootcamps and summer schools for children and teenagers with a focus on emerging technologies, particularly AI. This measure includes the development of such initiatives in both Malta and Gozo.	Number of participants

23	**Hackathons and competitions.** Organise competitive AI and related digital technologies team event/s to encourage the application of technical skills and build a community of young technologists.	Number of events organised Number of participants
24	**AI tools in support of the learning process.** Build upon existing initiatives to explore the use of AI to support the learning and teaching processes in primary and secondary school education. The measure includes capitalisation of ongoing pilot project in the educational field to cover additional subjects, taking account results achieved.	Number of processes supported through AI tools

FURTHER EDUCATION

25	**Investment in AI in further and higher education.** Investment in strengthening the AI research and education capabilities in the public higher education institutes – the University of Malta (UM) and the Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology (MCAST), to increase the quality and throughput of AI-related educational programmes and research results.	Increase in number of students graduating in AI Number of programmes introducing an element of AI Increase in publications in AI
26	**AI across a wide range of education programmes.** Investigate how AI-related units can be introduced across a wide range of further and higher education programmes, including non-technical ones. Such units may range from AI ethics to the use of AI as a tool for a particular discipline.	Number of introduced AI units and students exposed to AI
27	**Creation of AI expertise.** Provide financial support to individuals who want to further their knowledge in AI through scholarships or similar initiatives.	Number of scholarships awarded

28	**Achieving critical mass in AI expertise through clustered studentships.** Create scheme/s to finance directed research projects identified by research groups through the funding of scholarships and fellowships. This will ensure that critical mass is achieved in research groups through funded students and early-stage researchers.	Number of research projects supported
29	**Fostering research-leaders from researchers.** Provide a scheme to support postdoctoral research with the aim of attracting researchers to Malta. Such postdoctoral fellows may also be partly associated with the private sector.	Number of postdoctoral researchers funded
30	**Proactively seek opportunities for AI educational programmes.** Periodically identify opportunities for new academic and training programmes to address gaps in local skillsets and industry needs.	Programmes reviewed to address needs
31	**Attracting AI expertise to the island.** Explore solutions for visas for third-country nationals seeking to move to Malta to follow study programmes in AI, including ones seeking to study part-time whilst working in the industry.	Number of persons obtaining visa in relation to AI programmes
32	**An open-source AI showcase.** Set up support for the open-source creation and maintenance of repositories of AI solutions arising from students, practitioners and researchers. In particular, highlight ethically aligned, transparent and socially responsible AI solutions building on ethical AI frameworks with a focus on Malta's framework.	Number of participants

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

33	**Training or similar events on compliance with regulation relating to AI and other technologies targeted at executives.** The introduction of the *EU AI Act* and other technology-oriented regulation will bring new challenges in the industry. Develop and provide training or similar events for executives to expose them to compliance with such regulation.	Number of persons reached
34	**Training programmes in technical auditing and assessment.** With the adoption of new regulation requiring the technical auditing and assessment of AI and other technological solutions, there is a need to develop expertise in such activity. Support the development of training programmes for technical auditing and conformity assessment.	Number of persons trained/ employed
35	**Intensive short courses on Data Science and AI.** Develop and deliver intensive short courses in the form of summer and winter schools in AI, data science and other related areas for practitioners seeking to widen their expertise into such domains, including techniques to ensure that data used to train algorithms is representative and unbiased.	Number of persons trained
36	**Training programmes on the use of AI for educators.** Support training programmes to equip educators with practical skills to capitalise on the use of AI in education, providing them with tools to apply cutting edge AI tools in the design and delivery of impactful educational content.	Number of persons trained

WIDENING THE TALENT POOL

37	**Creation of upskilling and reskilling opportunities.** Develop programmes to provide upskilling and reskilling, including targeting individuals whose jobs may be displaced due to digitalisation and adoption of AI, thereby facilitating a just economic transition.	Number of persons reskilled and upskilled
38	**Sharing successful AI implementation stories.** Identify and publicise Maltese innovators, both in Malta and abroad, behind success stories in AI, whether it is through contribution to the advancement and use of AI or applications and solutions which use AI.	Number of success stories identified
39	**Networking opportunities with expats in AI.** Develop programmes to involve expats living outside the island in local AI-related projects and in educational programmes. The measure includes targeted invitations to join as Technical Experts or similar schemes published by the MDIA.	Number of expats reached
40	**Professional realignment to create multidisciplinary experts.** With the wide-ranging applicability of AI, there is a need for individuals with a multidisciplinary background in AI and another professional domain. Support the development of professional realignment programmes supporting the training of professionals in AI, with a focus on the opportunities AI brings about in their original area of expertise.	Number of programmes launched Number of persons following these programmes

STRATEGIC ENABLER 02: STRENGTHENING REGULATORY, POLICY, SECURITY AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Over the past years, we have seen a growing consensus that technology must be regulated in order to promote safety and trustworthiness to the users. The complexity of such technology and opaqueness regarding how it works make it difficult for the average user to be able to assess which solutions are most appropriate for their needs while safeguarding their interests. A regulatory framework to provide assurances to users without stifling innovation is now being more widely recognised.

Malta was one of the earlier advocates of such regulations, and with the *EU AI Act* and other related regulations, it is important that Malta continues to be at the forefront of the adoption and implementation of such regulations and policy. Supporting the public sector and the local industry in building the capacity to handle compliance with such new regulations is key to the country's success.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals



STRENGTHENING REGULATORY, POLICY, SECURITY AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
41	**International AI governance and diplomacy.** Sustain involvement in international AI governance fora to support AI diplomacy endeavours, including OECD, ISO and EU-wide efforts to identify and address risks and opportunities arising from AI and other related critical technologies.	Number of collaborations
42	**Assessment of the existing AI human resource landscape.** Carry out a regular evaluation of the AI workforce, obtaining detailed statistics of the local workforce (i) talent already involved in AI development and use; (ii) talent with the required underlying skillsets to contribute to AI, or require minor upskilling to enable such a contribution.	Number of evaluations
43	**Assessment of the state of AI uptake and education in the local context.** Gather AI-related information to understand the overlap and remaining gaps between AI use and education: (i) identifying local uptake of AI solutions and AI-enabled applications being used in Malta; and (ii) identifying what areas of AI are being covered in the local educational system.	Number of surveys and evaluations
44	**Policies and guidelines for AI in the public sector.** Develop and/or promote guidelines and/or documentation for the adoption of AI solutions in the public sector, covering aspects such as data privacy, security, transparency and impact on fundamental rights.	Publishing of guidelines

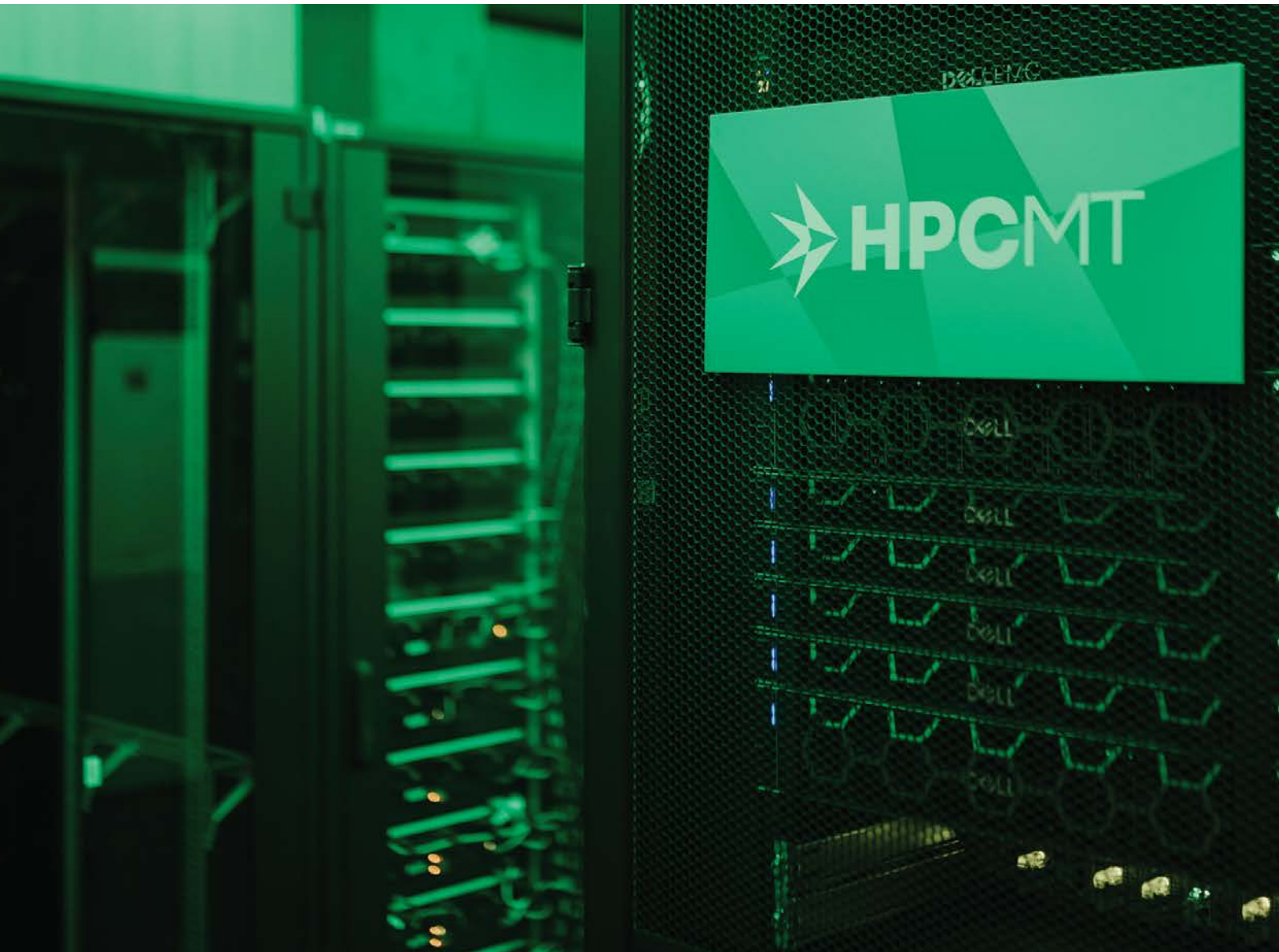
45	**Strengthening the regulatory support to AI systems before deploying them in real-world scenarios.** Review the current MDIA Technology Sandbox to provide an opportunity to operators in Malta seeking such support in line with the requirements arising from the *EU AI Act* at an early stage of implementation of the regulation.	Publishing of updated sandbox guidelines
46	**Transformation of existing regulatory framework.** Malta has been on the forefront of developing technology regulation to ensure trustworthiness. With the rise of various EU-wide regulation in the domain, implement legislation to ensure effective and timely implementation of the *EU AI Act.*	Timely implementation of the *EU AI Act*
47	**AI and gender balance.** Promote gender balance in AI by supporting women's participation in the AI workforce through targeted initiatives and training programmes, ensuring equal opportunities and fostering diversity in the rapidly growing AI sector. These efforts aim to contribute to Malta's ambitions with regards to the *Global Human Development Index (HDI).*	Number of initiatives Achieve Malta's ambitions in the pertinent measures associated with the *HDI*

STRATEGIC DRIVER 01:
DATA AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Datasets are a prerequisite to AI, and a strategic emphasis on data collection and ethical handling of data is key to the success of the AI strategy. In this AI strategy, we underline the importance of investing in data availability and infrastructure, to encourage a data-centric approach supporting the development and deployment of AI systems.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals



DATA AND INFRASTRUCTURE

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
48	**Strengthen national AI ecosystems and extend access to AI-optimised supercomputing resources through the development of an AI Antenna in Malta.** CALYPSO - the Computational AI factory Link Yielding Performance, Services, and Outreach - will act as Malta's AI Factory Antenna within the EuroHPC network. Led by the MDIA and linked to Greece's PHAROS AI Factory, CALYPSO will function as both an extension of PHAROS and a national innovation hub. It will provide Maltese startups, SMEs, researchers, and public bodies with access to EuroHPC AI supercomputing, algorithmic support, training, and datasets in key sectors, fostering AI development, compliance, and collaboration across Europe.	Implementation of deliverables of AI Antenna Project
49	**Synergy with the data strategy.** Develop policy to facilitate adoption of AI to ensure alignment with the Maltese *Data Strategy in Public Administration* for the period 2023-2027.	Publishing of policy
50	**Open data for the public sector.** Increase the range and volume of open data availability from the public sector, in order to support AI use cases.	Amount of data made available
51	**Incentivising private sector open data.** Investigate the development of support initiatives to encourage the private sector to adopt partially or fully open data policies, supporting the development of AI.	Volume of data made available

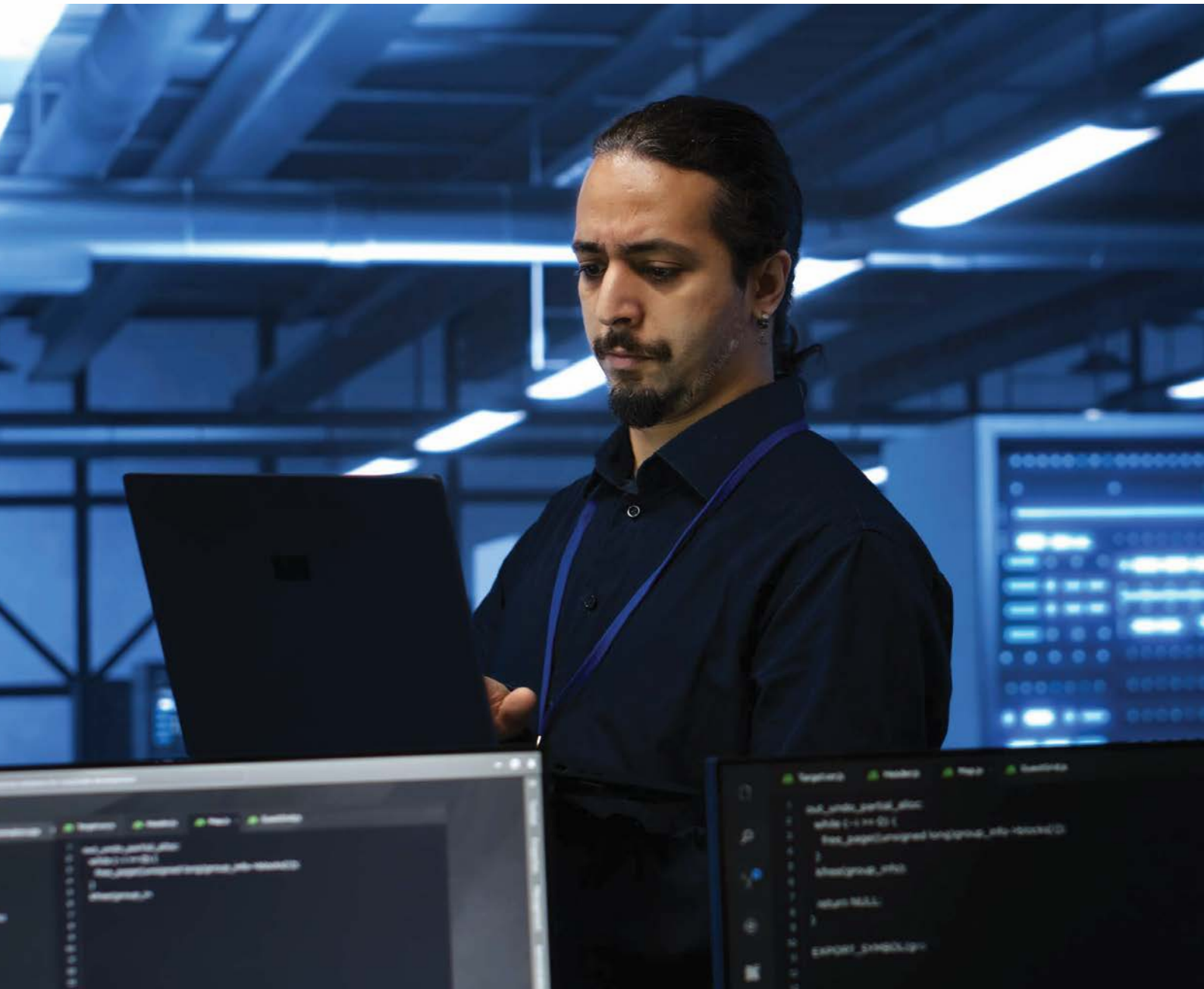
52	**Regulatory support for data brokerage.** Develop regulatory and technological support for data intermediation services and data altruism.	Implementation of regulations
53	**An innovative AI-aware IP framework.** Explore the setting up of an innovative IP framework which addresses AI-specific challenges and contribute to international/EU discussions on the matter.	Availability of documentation supporting conclusions of the exploratory measure
54	**Infrastructural support for data processing.** Setup and, if necessary, expand (i) data processing facilities to ensure the availability of computational and processing power, and (ii) provision of training and support to ensure the maximisation of such resources.	Budget dedicated to facilities Number of trainees
55	**Assessment and recognition of well-curated datasets.** Consider the use of a Sandbox approach to address data-centric issues, thus supporting companies to test data-related innovative concepts and solutions in a safe environment. Explore the assessment and recognition of open data sets, reviewed for proper safeguards addressing anonymisation, bias-threats, and other related risks.	Evidence of consideration and availability of plan

STRATEGIC DRIVER 02: LEVERAGING AI

The use of AI in both the public and the private sector is a driver for economic growth, but also results in societal progress and improved quality of life through access to new services. In the public sector, there are opportunities to streamline bureaucratic processes and to improve public service delivery, whereas in the private sector, AI-driven innovation can lead to increased productivity and novel products and services. In recognising the impact AI can have on both public and private sectors, the strategy proposes support in harnessing the impact of such advancements for societal and economic advancement.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals



PUBLIC SECTOR

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
56	**Enhance the coordination and alignment of AI initiatives across the public administration.** The Chief AI Officer role and a dedicated Public Administration AI Coordination Committee or equivalent will ensure coherence in the implementation of national AI priorities in the public sector, promote collaboration among public entities, and facilitate the consistent monitoring and sharing of best practices in liaison with MDIA and MITA.	Number of coordinated AI initiatives across public administration
57	**Identification of business cases for AI adoption in the public sector.** Business development support scheme to help identify benefits of adopting the use of AI and other innovative technologies, and integrate solutions into the current business models. Assess how such cases can be carried out in collaboration with the private sector.	Number of opportunities identified and established
58	**Understanding of the impact of AI adoption in the public sector.** Support the design and adoption of an AI impact assessment to cover evaluation of issues prior to deployment.	Availability of an AI impact assessment
59	**Trustworthy AI in the public sector.** Design and publish documents to be followed when adopting AI in the public sector, ensuring minimisation of risks and improving trustworthiness and transparency. Training will also be provided to ensure alignment with the *EU AI Act*.	Availability of training programme Availability of published documents

60	**Support for the public procurement of AI and innovative digital technology.** Set up a centralised office to support public procurement tender drafting for AI and other innovative technologies, providing appropriate expertise in order to ensure their safety trustworthiness.	Availability of published documents
61	**Dissemination of AI success stories from the public sector.** Identify success stories of AI adoption in the public sector and public-private partnerships, and publicise them, with a focus on benefits reaped and highlighting lessons learnt and best practice, including the identification of flagship projects with scalable and replicable potential.	Number of stories publicised
62	**Adoption of AI systems in the health, transport, education and other critical and key sectors.** Provide support for the adoption of AI systems in the health, transport, education, RegTech and other critical and key sectors in line with the EU *Apply AI Strategy* and *Malta Vision 2050*. Consideration of private sector involvement in adoption of AI systems.	Number of opportunities identified and set up

PRIVATE SECTOR

63	**Acceleration of AI adoption in the private sector.** Capitalise on programmes or set up schemes to support the adoption of AI in the private sector and actively monitor such adoption to reach targets committed by Malta for the *Path to the Digital Decade*. This measure will include consideration of the requirements of startups, SMEs and deployers, and identification of flagship projects with scalable and replicable potential.	Achievement of MT target for AI adoption as established in the *Digital Decade* roadmap Number of lighthouse projects identified

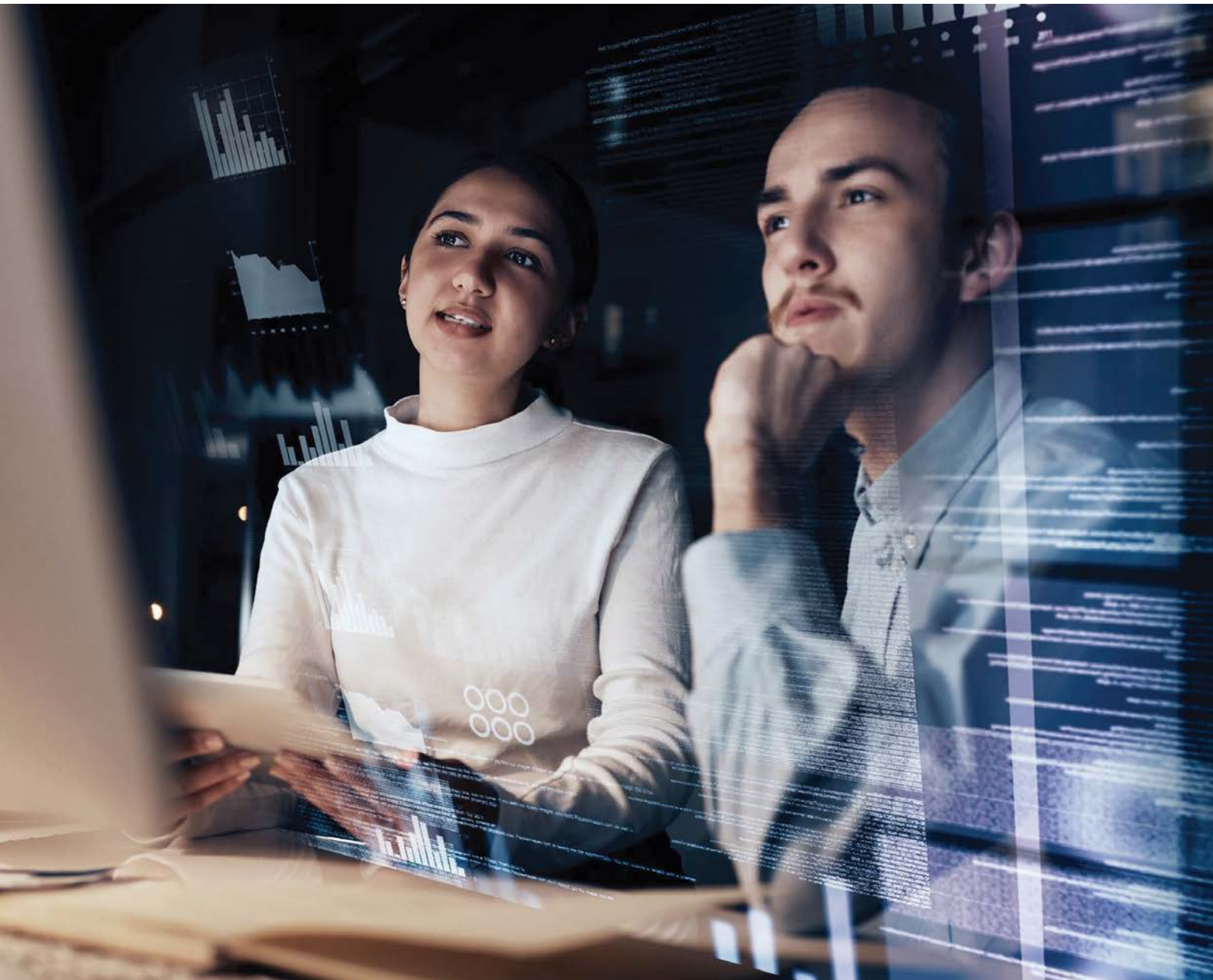
64	**Executive workshops for the promotion of AI adoption.** Set up executive workshops to highlight the benefits and potential of AI on business processes in the private sector.	Number of trainees
65	**Transforming business processes for AI.** The adoption of AI to streamline business processes frequently requires internal management reorganisation to maximise returns. Set up or capitalise on existing business aid through funds, consultancy and training, to provide auxiliary business reorganisation support when leveraging AI as a first-class driver in the business processes. This measure will include consideration for the particular requirement of startups and SMEs.	Amount of funds dedicated
66	**Improved cybersecurity for AI solutions.** The adoption of AI implies more sensitive data availability and heightened risks of cyberattacks. Capitalise on existing schemes to support improvement of cybersecurity for companies adopting AI and other innovative technology solutions. This measure will include consideration for the particular requirement of startups and SMEs.	Companies and individuals reached through the schemes
67	**Research commercialisation programmes.** Continue funding AI-related research commercialisation programmes and technology development, and update research priorities on a periodic basis.	Availability of periodic review of research priorities Number of projects funded
68	**Focus of national priority areas as opportunities in AI adoption.** In order to ensure focused support, niche and priority business sectors and domains which will benefit from leveraging AI will be identified. An exercise will be run to identify a number of such areas which indicate greater return on investment. These areas will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and topical.	Availability of document identifying priority areas

STRATEGIC DRIVER 03:
ADVANCING AI

Growing research and development activity in Malta aiming to advance the state of the art in AI is a key element of this strategy. While we recognise that there are challenges to building a critical mass of researchers and relevant infrastructure in a small country, we propose to address them by (i) creating an environment supportive of R&D in the private sector, particularly in the case of startups, and (ii) facilitating the transition of academic breakthroughs into commercial applications. Through these, we aim to see an increase in AI R&D in Malta.



Forward-looking Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals



INDUSTRY R&D

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
69	**Bridging the development of new AI techniques and its local adoption.** Set up support for projects which involve the transfer and use of local innovative AI solutions within the local market, whilst capitalising on structures for such innovative solutions to tap the international market.	Number of companies supported
70	**Maximising use of local expertise.** Sustain a seconding scheme to support academics and researchers to spend time working in the AI industry, enabling tapping of human resources in the context of commercial AI research and development.	Number of researchers participating in the scheme

ACADEMIA

71	**Research grants for innovative AI research.** Set up research grants for academic AI projects, both ones with immediate projected commercialisable outputs, and ones focusing on basic research potentially through public-private partnerships.	Number of grants awarded and total budget
72	**Maximise international collaboration.** Set up grants to support international collaboration between local academics with other established centres for research on AI, with the aim of widening the scope of the local AI expertise, and increasing participation in international research projects.	Number of collaboration agreements signed

GENERAL

73	**Promotion of open-source and open-data.** Set up a community around open-source and open-data to support the adoption of AI systems.	Number of participants in the community
74	**Focus of areas for improved opportunities in foundational AI.** A number of foundational AI domains will be identified to focus support schemes around. These domains will be identified in an initial exercise with local researchers based on current strengths and opportunities, and will be reviewed throughout the lifetime of the strategy to ensure their relevance.	Availability of updated priorities

FURTHER STRATEGIC DRIVER:
ACCELERATE LOCAL AI GROWTH

In this section, we present measures that cut across both leveraging and advancing AI, focusing primarily on the needs of the private sector to achieve more in the AI sector.



FURTHER STRATEGIC DRIVER: ACCELERATE LOCAL AI GROWTH

	MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
75	**AI startups mentoring.** Set up an AI mentoring programme for startups and scaleups, linked to existing programmes and incubators, but providing specialised support for AI.	Number of companies availing from support
76	**Harnessing venture capital investment in AI.** Secure and encourage venture capital support for high-risk start-ups and scale-ups, especially when looking towards internationalisation.	Amount of funds invested
77	**Compliance with new AI legislation.** With the *EU AI Act* and other technology-related regulation, the private sector, particularly microenterprises and SMEs will be facing the challenge of compliance. In order to ease the way into such regulation: (i) Sustain information desk with experts, both regulatory and technical, to support understanding requirements and obligations for compliance. (ii) Sustain a support scheme to support compliance through the use of MDIA recognised Technical Experts. (iii) Extend compliance support to high-risk AI systems. (iv) Promote compliance tools and guidelines published by the EU AI Office.	Number of persons supported within stipulated timeframes
78	**A centre of excellence for conformity assessment.** Position Malta as a hub for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), third-party entities responsible for conducting conformity assessments on products with digital elements and AI systems.	Availability of Conformity Assessment Body/ies

AN EVERGREEN STRATEGY

It must be recognised that technological development happens faster than traditional policy-making can keep up with. By the time a strategy addressing a cutting-edge technology is in place, it has already started dating. In identifying longer-term strategic goals, such policies and strategies may ensure their longer-term relevance, but one must recognise that an iterative approach is required to revise the strategy throughout its lifetime, thus ensuring continued relevance. The AI strategy aims to be an evergreen strategy, and in this section we present measures to monitor, assess, and review the results of this strategy, thus enabling the continuous realignment of the strategy to match new contexts as they arise.



MONITORING PROGRESS ON THE STRATEGY

MEASURE DESCRIPTION	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR/S
79 **Implementing an AI strategy progress bar.** Develop and launch a public facing online AI strategy progress dashboard keeping track of progress and any arising issues, using gender-disaggregated data, where applicable, to monitor reach and impact. A dedicated team will monitor the implementation of the AI Strategy by tracking KPIs, responsibilities, and impacts, providing input to ensure the progress bar remains up to date.	Availability of AI strategy progress bar
80 **Live dialogue with social actors on AI and the effectiveness of the AI strategy implementation.** Capitalise on existing national fora to engage in a continuous dialogue on AI and its impact on society. In addition, gather and monitor feedback on their views on the achievements and the ongoing direction of the AI strategy. Investigate the setting up of a digital pact amongst MCESD partners to push the national upskilling and reskilling initiative.	Availability of evidence on dialogue
81 **Continuous alignment of focus areas.** Define and monitor the identified national priority sectors and domains driving the implementation of this strategy, as identified in the relevant measures.	Availability of focus area

MONITORING THE STRATEGY ENVIRONMENT

82 **Social Impact Assessment.** Incorporation of Social Impact Assessment as a component of the strategy's design, implementation, and ongoing monitoring to ensure effective strategic processes.	Availability of Social Impact Assessment/s

83	**Dissemination of AI success stories in the local context.** Identify and keep track of local success stories in private sector development and adoption of AI and related innovative technologies. Use the gathered information to publicise and promote the use of AI on a wider scale.	Number of success stories identified
84	**Strategically addressing new trends in AI.** Monitor new trends in AI and their relevance to the AI strategy and measures therein. Where relevant, action the updating of measures or the introduction of new measures.	Evidence of periodic review of measures
85	**Local trends in AI information gathering.** Periodic surveys amongst businesses in order to identify trends in AI application areas, thus enabling shifting the focus of support schemes to better match the needs of local businesses.	Availability of survey every two years
86	**Alignment with *Malta Vision 2050.*** Periodically monitor how the AI strategy is supporting the objectives and goals of *Malta Vision 2050.* In addition, identify ways in which new developments in AI can further contribute to this vision as the technology evolves.	Evidence of periodic review of alignment

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