

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES CONSULTATION:

Anchoring EUCCC Certification
in National Realities

WP5 – Inclusion, Certification and
Adherence to EUCCC Certification

MALTA COUNTRY PROFILE



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THE EUROPEAN COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTRE NETWORK



ONEFORALL



Co-funded by
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Context: existing certification systems and organization of cancer care

There are no mandatory certification systems for healthcare facilities in Malta

Organization of cancer care

Malta offers virtually universal health coverage and a comprehensive range of healthcare benefits.

Mater Dei Hospital (MDH) is the major, state-run, acute general teaching hospital in Malta. There is a smaller state-run acute general hospital on the island of Gozo. MDH offers a full range of hospital services, both inpatient and outpatient, including an extensive range of specialist services [~1100 beds]. It is also a teaching hospital providing training for medical, nursing, and allied professions together with the University of Malta and QMUL (Malta Campus). Vocational training including a programme for nurses is also carried out at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). As the National Coordination Hub for European Reference Networks (ERNs) for rare diseases, MDH is affiliated to the 24 existing ERNs since 2019.

The Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Center (SAMOC) at MDH, opened in 2015, is Malta's only cancer care center for oncology, haemato-oncology and paediatric oncology. Dedicated multidisciplinary teams of experts exist for almost all cancer sites, and the country benefits from a comprehensive and streamlined framework for cancer care. Paediatric oncology and specialist palliative care is also offered at SAMOC. It offers both inpatient and outpatient services [90 beds]. In 2024, SAMOC registered 4450 in-patient admissions, 12 278 registered day cases, 68 971 registered attendances in its outpatient department, 2 505 patients in the radiotherapy department.

The Cancer Care Pathways Directorate, (DCCP) established in 2014, oversees comprehensive cancer care by coordinating multidisciplinary teams and strengthening governance through an Executive Committee (EXCO). EXCO aims at ensuring a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to decision-making, facilitates alignment with EU and international priorities and strategies, and supports the continuous improvement of cancer services across the care continuum. DCCP focuses on innovation, quality improvement, data management, community outreach, survivorship support, personalized cancer navigation, and fast-track operations to ensure timely, patient-centered oncology services across the care continuum. A recent development was the inception of the first tumour board dedicated to lung cancers.

Like similar small EU countries, Malta has set up strong partnerships with health services abroad in order for its population to have access to the full range of possible treatments, including the most innovative, and ERNs for the rarer cancers. The Treatment Abroad Coordination Office is based at MDH and coordinates the “National Highly Specialised Overseas Referrals Programme” (UK-Malta bilateral agreement, EU regulations cooperations, the agreement with ISMETT, in Palermo, for transplantation)¹.

A strong component of the programme is also organising clinics and surgery sessions carried out by overseas visiting consultants at MDH. These visits serve to alleviate the burden of travel for patients/relatives and are a valuable contact for the local health professionals.

Malta has published two consecutive national cancer policy frameworks – the first covering 2011–15 and the second covering 2017–21. Both focused on the same pillars: reducing incidence, increasing survival rates through screening and early diagnosis, improving patient experience and quality of life, and investing in research and surveillance. Neither National Cancer Plan focused on paediatric cancer or reducing inequalities as standalone aims, but both topics were covered as part of other aims of the policy framework².

Building upon these past frameworks, the National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2023–33³ highlights priority areas for the upcoming National Cancer Plan for 2025–33, which is set to have an even greater focus on patient-centered care. Prevention will remain a core feature, with initiatives aimed at enabling a healthier lifestyle and expanding screening services for more equitable coverage. Treatment and care will also play a key role in the upcoming framework, with plans already in place to improve existing services, such as genetic testing and at-home treatment options.

Identified barriers towards the implementation of EUCCC certification in Malta

- **The main lacuna in the Maltese cancer system is the research infrastructure which is relatively small and new** compared to other EU countries. A Research Lead for MDH was appointed in 2024 and a new MDH Research Ethics Committee has been very recently approved by the national Information and Data Protection Commissioner and will start functioning in the coming months. DCCP has also recruited a Research Manager within its team. DCCP has also recruited a Research Manager within its team.
- **Another issue is the relatively small number of patients that go through the system**

- Sometimes, **the integration of cancer care services between the hospitals in Malta and Gozo remains a challenge.** Patients have to go to Malta for radiotherapy (not available on Gozo), but some chemotherapy regimens have been recently introduced in Gozo hospital, as well as screening programmes.
- **Some dimensions such as survivorship or digital health are picking up and gaining momentum but are relatively recent in their development** and need to gain further maturity. For example, measures of quality of life of survivors are currently being developed and are not yet used routinely.

Identified enablers towards the implementation of EUCCC certification in Malta

- **Very strong political support** from the Ministry and the government towards the pursuit of EUCCC certification. The cancer plan for 2025–2035 will include the strong willingness of MDH to progress towards becoming a CCC.
- **Strong willingness in Malta to boost the research infrastructure** and give clinicians further opportunities to take part in research projects and clinical trials.
- **Very good clinical pathways and overall quality and outcomes of care,** with competent and highly trained clinicians.
- **Malta is participating in other currently operating JAs concerned with cancer including JANE-2, eCAN Plus and will be participating in the upcoming JA PCM.**
- **Looking back over the last 10 years, Malta has seen significant improvements across many dimensions of cancer care.** There has been a clear expansion of initiatives and services in the fields of prevention and screening, patient pathways, survivorship, infrastructure, and human resources. Notable advances also include enhanced multidisciplinary collaboration, improved access to innovative medicines and technologies, strengthened data systems, and the development of supportive services for patients and families. These achievements reflect Malta's commitment to building a comprehensive, patient-centered approach aligned with EU priorities in cancer control.
- Introducing and conducting the EUCCC certification process in Malta will help to consolidate Malta's ongoing cancer control efforts, through the **structured evaluation approach provided and access to external audits** of current systems.

- Mater Dei Hospital is the only potential CCC in Malta. **Thereby, certification (and the certification process) will be invaluable to ensure that the public and patients in Malta gain increasing access to higher levels of care and research opportunities** that will be made possible through being an established member of the EUCCC network.

Conditions for successful EUCCC certification implementation in Malta

- In Malta, it is hoped that EUCCC certification will **expand research possibilities through the participation within and adherence to the network.**
- Like other smaller countries, Malta is relatively less attractive to industry regarding clinical trials. It is hoped EUCCC certification will change this situation and enable Maltese patients to take part in more clinical trials than is now the case. **In other words, it is hoped EUCCC certification will increase visibility of Malta on the EU stage, especially for access to research collaborations.**
- Taking part of the network of EUCCCs will enable Malta to participate in knowledge sharing and training activities. The example of European Reference Networks is a good demonstration of how clinical expert knowledge can be shared at an EU level between countries. **Therefore, it is hoped EUCCC certification will increase Malta's access to best practices in other centers and Member States.**

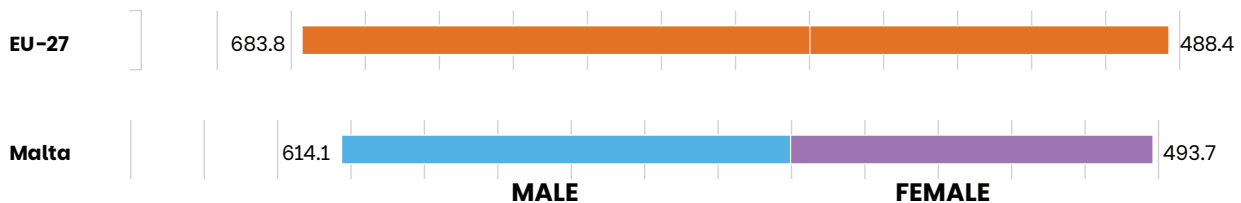
Number of OEIC-certified CCCs: 0

Number of EUCCC pilot centers: 1

Epidemiology: incidence, mortality and survival rates

Incidence rate:

Estimated incidence, both sexes, all sites but non-melanoma skin, 2022 (per 100 000 population)



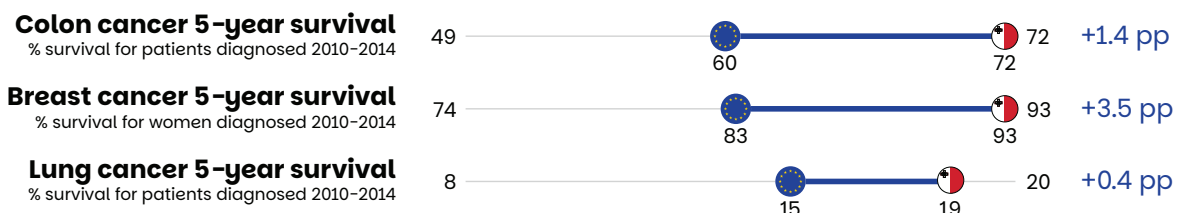
Mortality rate:

Cancer mortality
ASMR per 100 000 population

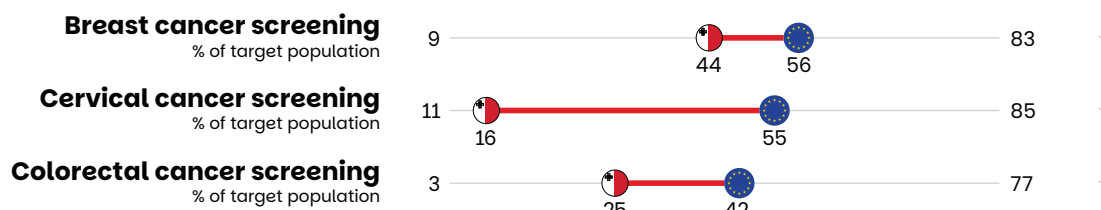


Survival rates:

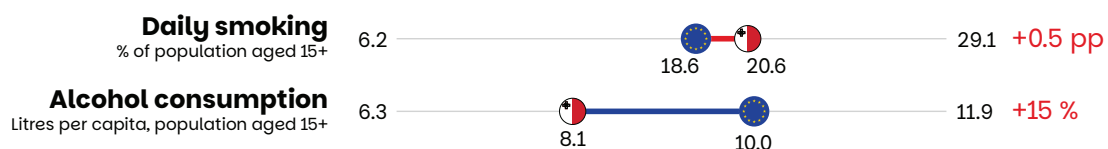
For the selection of cancers:



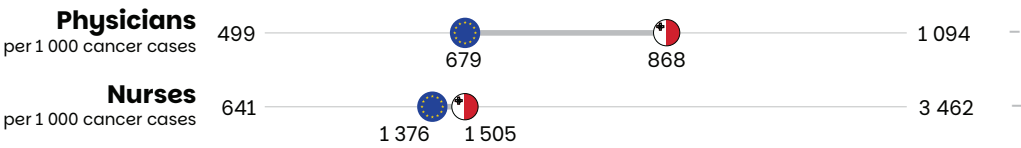
Screening performance



Risk factors



Human resources and infrastructure



Number of clinical trials: 8

Endnotes

- 1. More info can be accessed from: Treatment Abroad – cross-border health services
- 2. ec-oecd-mt-2024-1677-en.pdf Malta OECD Cancer Profile 2025
- 3. A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2023–2033_September 2024.pdf (accessible from health.gov.mt Resources)



**For more information,
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