[NS]

NETWORKED SOCIETY

MCA'S DIGITAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

2012
2015

mca
MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

CONTENTS

Note on Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all statistics quoted in this document have been extracted from the Eurostat database on http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu during January 2012. Where available, EU averages have been included and used to benchmark Malta's current situation and its progress.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an age where ICT plays a central role in everyday life and where those who actively engage in online activity enjoy significantly more opportunities than those who are not ICT literate or active participants in the online society, it is imperative that each and every citizen has both access to ICTs, as well as the competences required, to fully participate in the **Networked Society.**

A NETWORKED SOCIETY:

i. Gives individuals new tools to communicate and keep contact, despite distance or disability;

ii. Enables lifelong learning by giving everyone access to a world of knowledge, providing an array of tools to suit individual learning needs;

iii. Provides households with new and smarter ways of managing their income and expenditure through online banking and shopping;

iv. Makes Government more transparent and brings it closer to citizens by providing the tools to actively participate in the democratic processes of the country;

v. Enables individuals to become more involved in their respective community's activities by sounding their voice and contributing to activities;

vi. Allows for more effective and flexible ways of working, facilitating family life, overcoming health or disability-related barriers and gives businesses unprecedented ways of balancing economic interests and employees' wellbeing;

vii. Gives civil society the tools to become more effective within the community; and

viii. Provides everyone with unprecedented opportunities to improve the quality of life, be it through activities related to work, school, home or simply entertainment.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide, the gap between those who are using the Internet and those who are not, is real and significant. The following figures speak for themselves:

125,000 Maltese have never used the Internet;

35,000 Families are not connected to the Internet;

30,000 Individuals aged between 65 and 74 are not using the Internet and cannot access eHealth services;

113,000 Individuals aged between 45 and 64 are not using the Internet and will find difficulty using ICT for work-related purposes.

2. ICT TAKE-UP IN MALTA

Over the past decade, ICTs have become part of the daily lives of most Maltese. Computers and the Internet have penetrated households and places of work as the number of users continues to increase steadily.

2.1 ACCESS

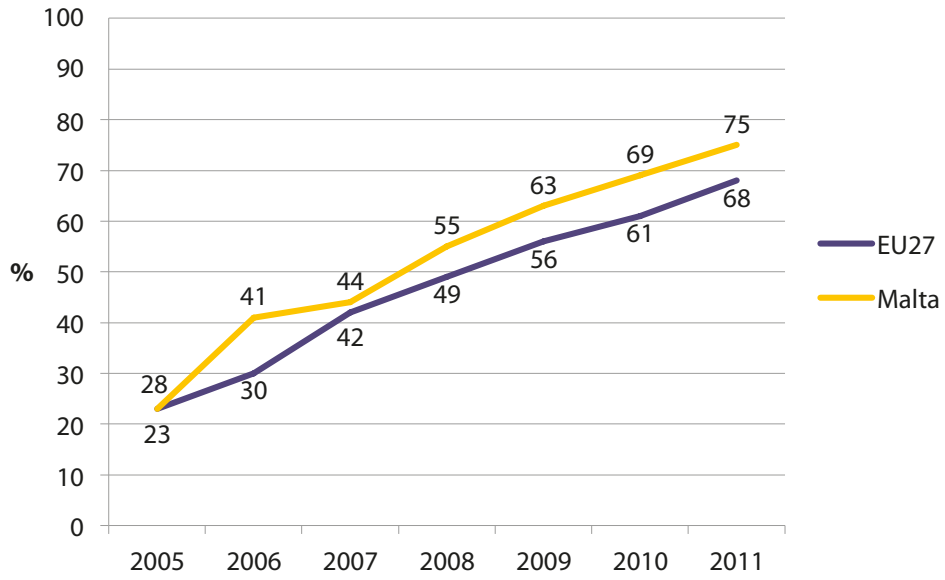
Over the past six years, broadband penetration in households has tripled, reaching 75% of all Maltese households (see Figure 1). Malta ranks 7th in the EU (average of 68%) in broadband penetration, indicating good service, coverage, and a generally healthy market demand.

As outlined in Figure 2 (page 10), internet penetration is highest in households with child dependants and considerably lower in the other households. Although this trend is also observable in other European countries, this discrepancy is wider in Malta.

Market research[1] commissioned by the MCA shows that most individuals, who do not have an internet connection at home (64%), show little interest in purchasing one in the immediate future and claimed they do not feel the need for it. Only 2% of those who are not connected attributed their situation to the price of internet connections.

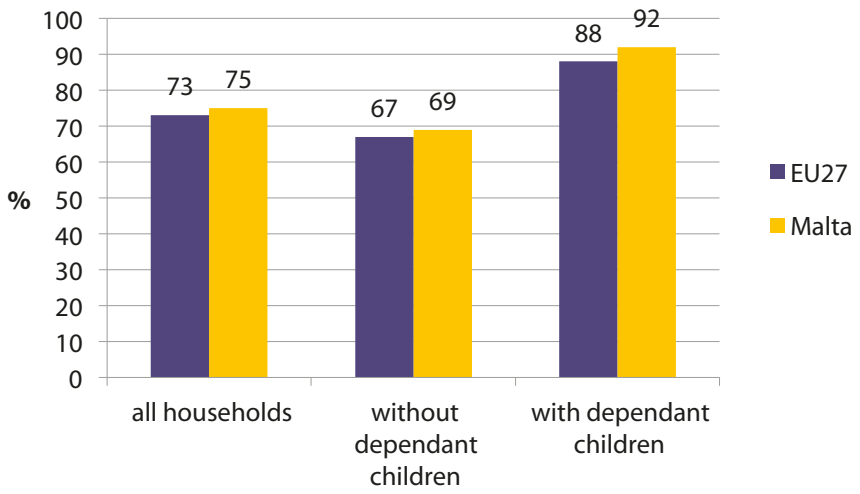
All schools and 95% of businesses are connected to the Internet.

Figure 1:
Percentage of households connected via broadband



[1]MCA Market Research, Consumer Perception Survey Results – Internet (August 2011)
http://www.mca.org.mt/sites/default/files/articles/110801%20Consumer%20Perception%20Survey%20-%20Broadband.pdf

Figure 2:
Percentage of connected households by presence of child dependants (2011)



2.2 USE

The number of Maltese using the Internet has doubled over the past six years reaching 66% of the population (see Figure 3). Despite this substantial increase in usage, one in every three Maltese (see Figure 4) does not use the Internet and is excluded from taking part in any online activities.

Despite Malta having lower usage levels than the EU, this gap appears to be closing and, if the current trend persists, this gap may close or reverse by the year 2013. Malta currently reports lower levels of usage across most recorded internet applications, including internet banking, eGovernment and online shopping.

Figure 3
Percentage of population who access the Internet (minimum once a week)

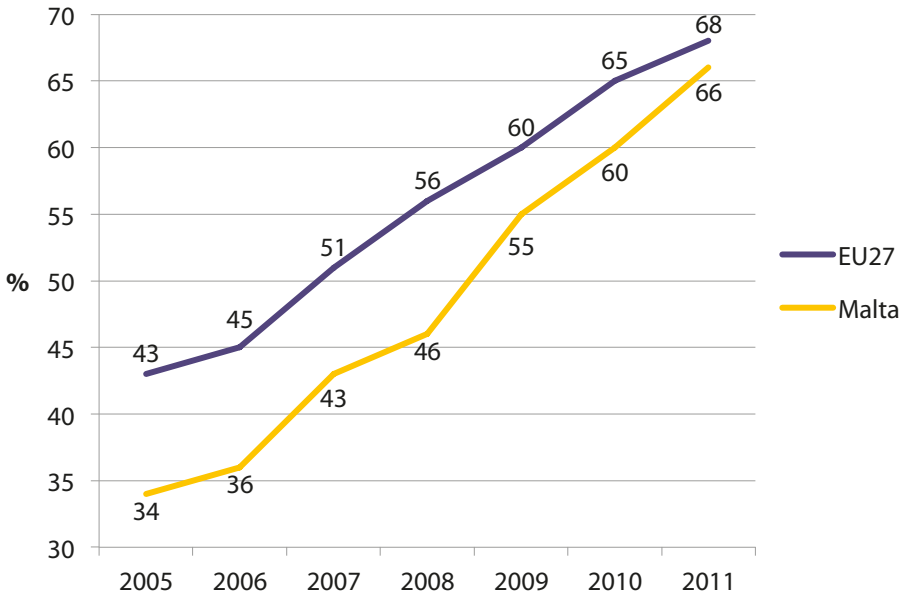
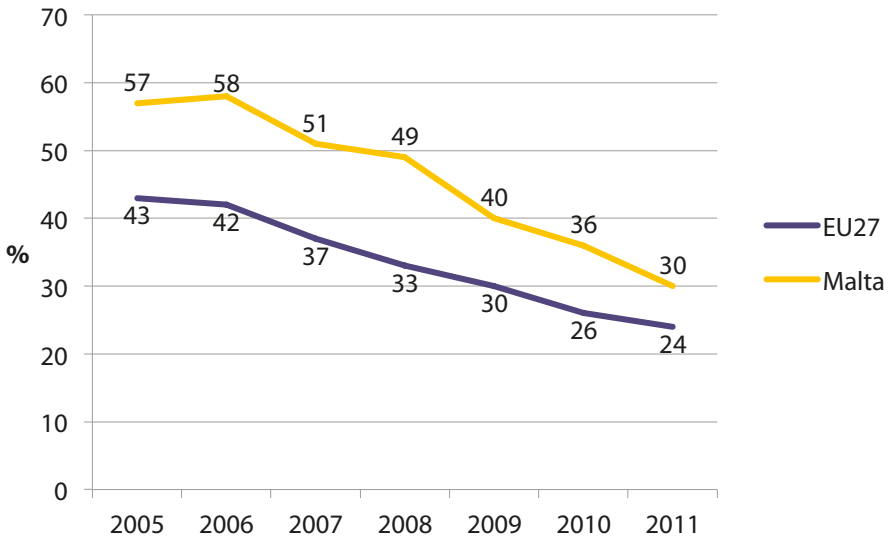


Figure 4
Percentage of individuals who never use the Internet



3. THE DIMENSIONS OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital divide refers to the inequalities between those in society who have access and use ICT, against those who do not. The latter cannot take part in the activities undertaken by the Networked Society. The wider the divide becomes, the bigger the impact on the individual, on society and on the economy.

3.1 THE DIGITAL AGE DIVIDE

The digital age divide has created a division between the young and older generations. The digital natives get a headstart as they grow up exposed and familiar with ICT. Older generations fall into a vicious circle of non-adoption as they find themselves alien to the cues and metaphors of this new environment.

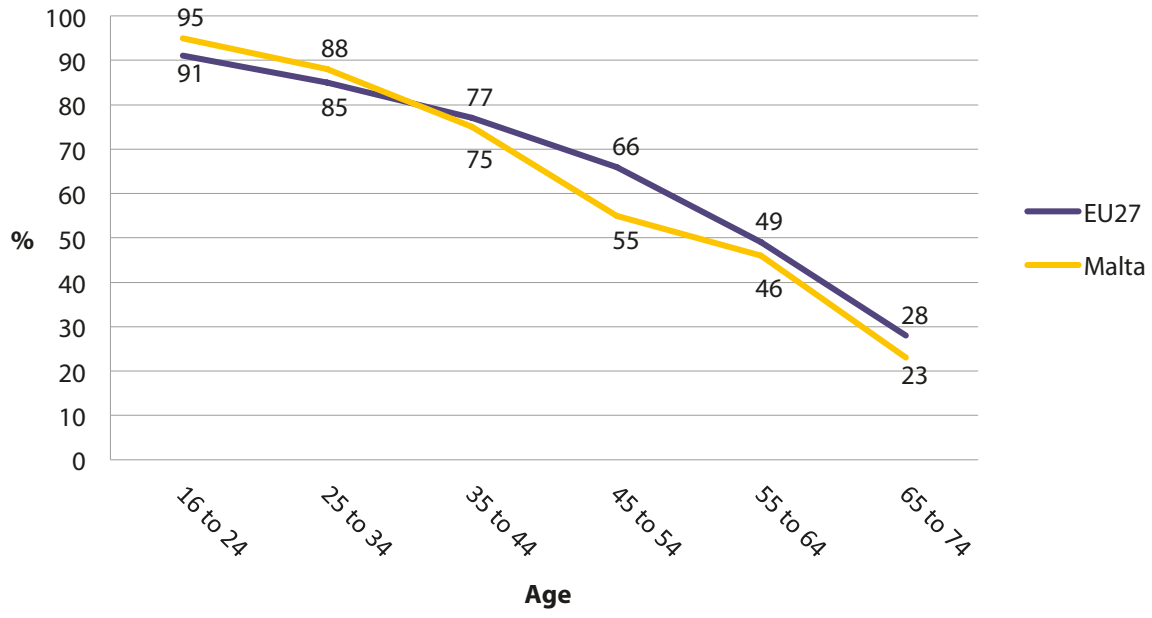
Malta has one of the widest digital age divides in Europe. As outlined in Figure 5, Maltese young people are amongst the most avid users of ICT in Europe whilst the usage by older cohorts shows the opposite. At the extremes, whilst 97% of Maltese aged 16 to 24 use the Internet, only 11%

of those aged between 65 and 74 are users.

The usage gap between Maltese and EU Nationals aged between 40 and 60 also needs to be addressed. An inability to use ICT exposes individuals to higher unemployment risks, and limits the capacity and flexibility of the Maltese workforce.

The very high usage values reported for young people augur well for Malta's future as the connectivity divide between these age cohorts is minimal. Such positive figures for this cohort also promise a future skilled workforce and various opportunities for the local industry, as long as these young people continue to remain competent users of ICTs as these evolve over time. Malta's biggest challenge is to attract more adult users to get connected and use ICTs. Whilst availability and costs of technologies have considerably declined, older generations still appear to be deliberately opting to stay out of the Networked Society.

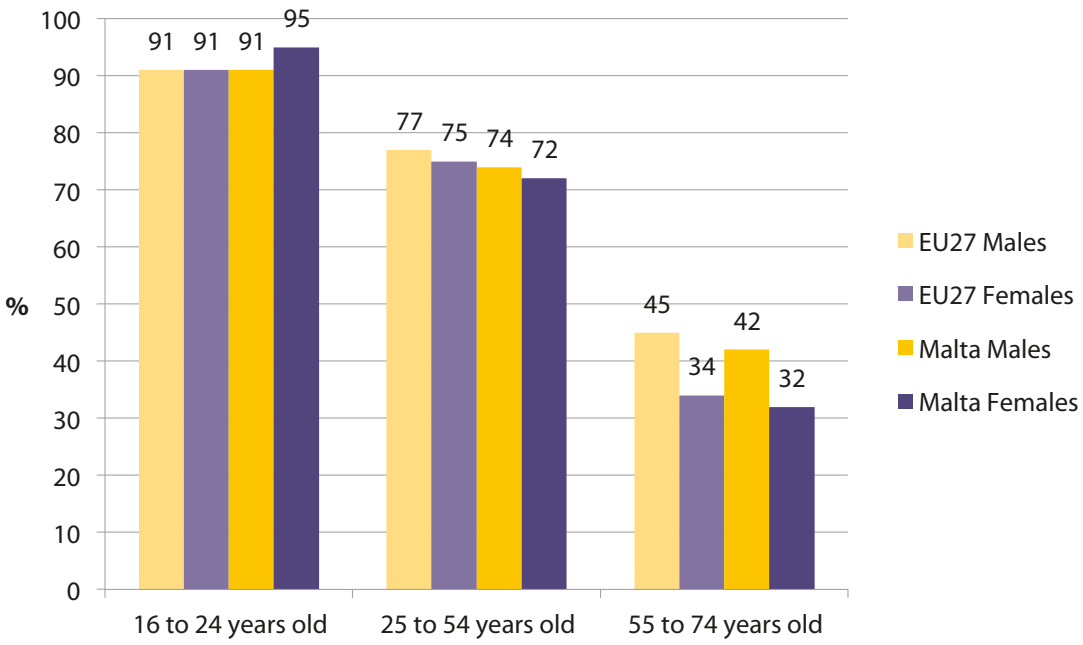
Figure 5
Internet usage by age (once a week or more, 2011)



3.2 A SHIFTING GENDER DIVIDE

Although past statistics have shown males as more avid adopters and users of the Internet and related applications than females, recent figures show that this trend is reversing amongst the younger generations (see Figure 6). It appears that the Internet is not only appealing to both genders but is also attracting higher usage intensity amongst females. This trend is common across Europe although in Malta, this discrepancy is again more pronounced. Such shifts in trends prove how mainstreamed ICTs have become cross-societal and how their many applications target and reach everyone. The digital gender divide amongst the older generations is still present and considerably, high possibly because it is also influenced by lower levels of education and unemployment of females in the older cohorts.

Figure 6
Internet users by gender (once a week or more, 2011)



3.3 A WIDE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVIDE

The levels of education and income are strong predictors of an individual's access and propensity to use ICT. Figure 7 shows the strong relation that exists between household income and access to the Internet, whilst Figure 8 contrasts ICT usage with level of education. Both indicate that the households with the lowest income and the individuals with lower education levels are by far the least connected, when compared with the rest of society. Therefore, the poor are also the most prone to be excluded from the Networked Society.

Figure 8 shows that this trend is prevalent in Europe. Maltese individuals, with low education levels, show the same low levels of Internet use as their European counterparts. In contrast, Maltese with medium or high levels of education show a higher propensity to use the Internet than their European counterparts.

The above indicates that the socioe-conomic divide in Malta is wider with a potentially bigger impact on digital poverties and exclusions.

Figure 7

Percentage of households with internet access by income percentile (2011)

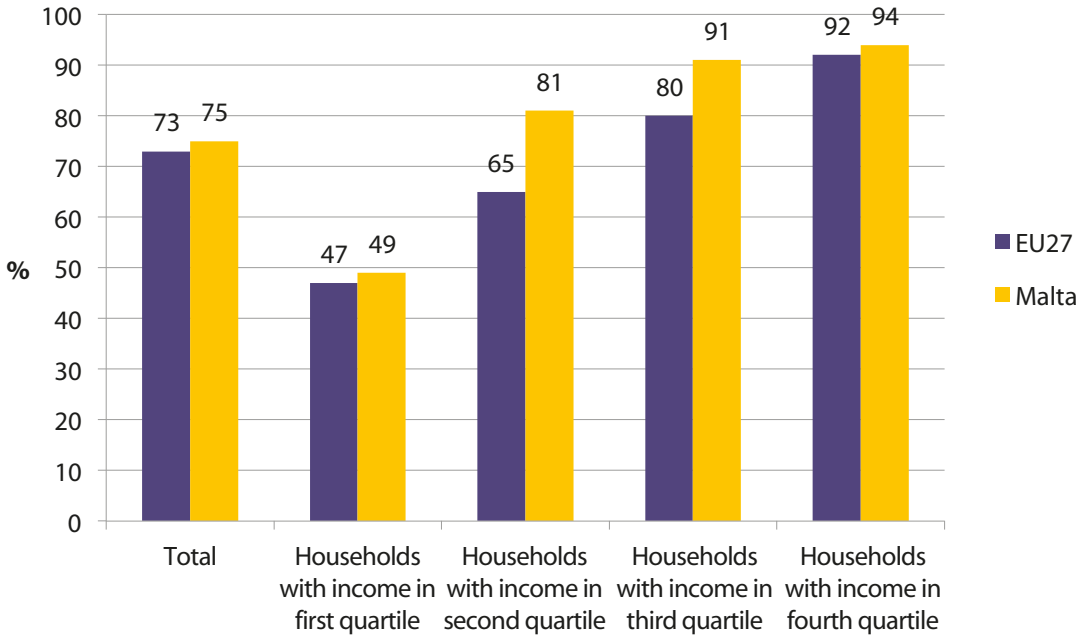
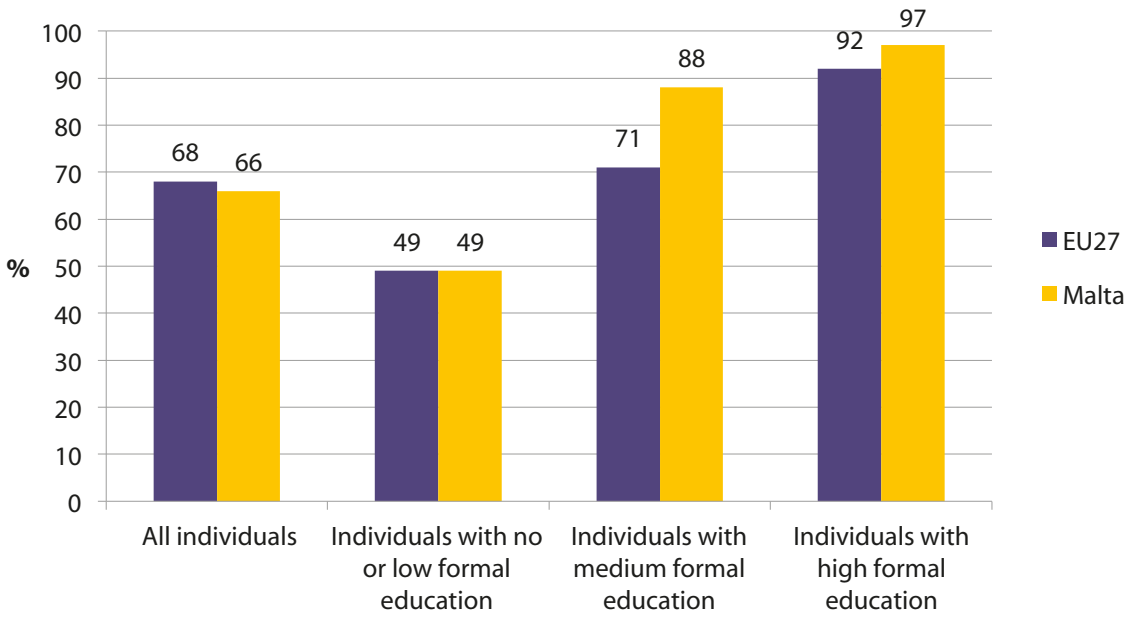


Figure 8

Percentage of individuals who use the Internet (once a week) by level of education (2011)



4. THE NEW DIGITAL DIVIDES

Exploring of access and use of ICT alone does not provide a full picture of all the dimensions of the digital divide.
As the presence of ICT applications becomes more ubiquitous and an integral part of daily life, the digital divide has a more pronounced negative impact.

4.1 THE EMERGENCE OF DIGITAL POVERTY

We are approaching an age where lack of access or inability to access and use ICTs will contribute directly to poverty. Individuals who are not able to get connected may automatically become excluded from the activities undertaken by society and their respective community, including opportunities to work and earn a living.

Children who live in households that are not connected are not able to follow their eLearning school programmes to the full, cannot access the web of knowledge, and cannot communicate with peers via their social network.

Adults who are not connected may be paying more when buying goods or services, may be unable to access employment opportunities, and may not have the familiarity and competences with technologies that would enable them to work in better paid positions.

As Government continues to rollout new electronic services, those who are not networked risk not only missing out on Government services, but more seriously, risk being excluded from the democratic processes of the country.

4.2 LACK OF BASIC COMPETENCES

Digital poverty cannot be attributed solely to lack of access and use. At an age when ICTs have become pervasive and accessible to almost everyone, the lack of the basic competences is a form of vulnerability.

ICT has become a common part of most daily activities undertaken by society such as education, work, entertainment, shopping and social interaction. A lack of basic ICT competences excludes individuals from participating in these daily online activities to their personal detriment, and to the detriment of their families, and society at large.

Lack of basic competences may also lead to an inability to ensure one's own wellbeing in the networked world. Similar to the physical world, the Internet may harbour risks and those most at risk are the same vulnerable sections of society that are usually most exposed. Vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, people with a disability and individuals experiencing poverty, are at most risk and need the right mix of competences to become aware of the potential pitfalls of the online world and how to keep safe in this new environment.

4.3 MULTIPLE DIGITAL DIVIDES WITHIN THE NETWORKED SOCIETY

There seems to be an assumption that society is divided between those who do and those who do not embrace ICT. One could expect the young, well-educated, high-status males to be the highest adopters, and the 'disadvantaged' to lag behind.

However, as technology becomes more pervasive and sophisticated and myriad applications become available to everyone, generalisations based on socio-economic factors may no longer hold. Social networking, gaming, and blogging are examples where usage intensity does not follow traditional socio-economic generalisations.

The selection of technology and intensity of use are becoming closely related to the specific situation, preferences and needs of the individual. Hence, an individual may be considered to be on the wrong side of a digital divide if they fail to adopt and make use of a technology or application that is of relevance and that can potentially add value to their daily life.

In tomorrow's digital world there will be many forms of digital divides and people on the wrong sides of these digital divides may come from different walks of life.

Below are some examples of how individuals may miss out on the opportunities of ICTs:

The civil servant who prints and files hard copies of all emails as s/he is still unable to make the electronic filing system work;

The teenager who is hooked on social networking but is unable to appreciate the repercussions of being too open about him/herself online;

The restaurant employee who cannot use the new ordering system because it seems so complicated;

The micro-entrepreneur who does not have the time to explore and identify the right set of ICT tools to manage the business;

The parent who has ill-advised a child on when and how to use the Internet, exposing him or her to undesired risks;

The guesthouse owner who does not appreciate the potential of social media to promote or sell the service.

The architect who cannot grasp the Computer Aided Design (CAD) software and is no longer able to work on large projects;

The university professor who cannot master his word processer and, unlike most of his colleagues, spends too much time arranging the layout of documents;

The new forms of divides are easy to observe, but difficult to measure. They are specific to individual needs, the environment and the community.

5. ICT AS A SOCIAL EQUALISER

ICT brings unprecedented opportunities for those who have traditionally been disadvantaged in society.

SOME OF THE PRESENT SOCIAL CHALLENGES THAT MALTA IS FACING INCLUDE:

i. an ageing population that places a high demand on health and social services, whilst risking social exclusion and isolation;

ii. an influx of migrants that often lack the skills to enter into employment;

iii. a segment of the workforce whose work skills and experiences are becoming obsolete in an economy that is shifting its focus; and

iv. low female participation in the labour market.

ICTs CAN PROVIDE THE TOOLS TO HELP ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

Mobility is a prime cause of social exclusion for ageing individuals and people with a disability. The new communication channels give unprecedented opportunities for such individuals to retain contact with family, friends and the outside world. The opportunity of keeping contact through a social network is surely a means of overcoming isolation and remaining active within the community.

Online services such as eGovernment, eHealth and eBanking can all introduce flexibility in the lifestyle of many. Such services, for example, can provide people with mobility difficulties a chance to lead a more independent lifestyle. Through the use of ICTs, Government, businesses and civil society have increasingly become more accessible and can reach and be reached by everyone more effectively and efficiently.

ICTs have revolutionised the concept of lifelong learning by opening up new modes of learning. Learning is no longer confined to a specific time and place. It has become more flexible and more adaptable to the diverse needs of society. Technology opens up new opportunities for many to acquire and develop new skills and competences at their own pace and style.

Technology also provides the means for more employment flexibility. Whether it is for family commitments, health issues, age or disability, ICT solutions can often open a way to overcome restrictions and limitations.

6. DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

The objective of increasing digital skills within the population shares both a social and an economic dimension.

Achieving widespread digital skills is a cornerstone for a country that aspires to build its economy on ICT and related emergent industries. On the other hand, achieving widespread digital literacy is also paramount for a society that believes in inclusiveness and that strives to attain better social cohesion. Being ICT illiterate is a cause for poverty as it can lead to various disadvantages, including unemployment and social isolation. Society must establish a common basic level of competence for all its members, to ensure that everyone can participate and contribute to its activities. The priority given to digital literacy in past policies has produced very positive results with many individuals participating in training courses and starting to use technology for the first time. However, there are still many Maltese who lack these basic skills. Whilst opportunities to attend training are not lacking, many individuals still do not perceive a value in ICTs and therefore do not feel the need for training.

There is no question that achieving widespread skills should continue to hold a central position in the national initiatives to bridge the digital divide. Nevertheless, initiatives on this front face a number of challenges caused by social and technological developments:

- The demand for basic training is narrowing as the number of ICT users is increasing. Attracting the remaining pockets to participate in training is becoming a challenge due to lack of motivation. Moreover it appears that subsidies are no longer a good enough incentive for participation.

- A classroom setup might not be a suitable learning environment for everyone as this does not

leave enough space for individual interaction and discussion that is much sought after by adults and the elderly. The elderly in particular seem to prefer an informal learning style where experiences are shared rather than taught. Adults who have been out of formal education for very long may find formal learning arrangements intimidating and discouraging.

- Many have already attended basic training but want or need to learn something new. The skills that are considered to be essential for active members of a Networked Society constantly evolve with the dynamics of technological and social development. Narrowly-defined policies tend to be superseded quickly with a risk of becoming obsolete, even before implementation.

- Technology interfaces are becoming simpler and more intuitive whilst applications are becoming more diverse and sophisticated. Knowing what one can do is often as important as knowing how to do it. Furthermore, current training is too focused on technology, leaving very little space for its application and good use in situations that are relevant to daily life.

Future basic training initiatives need to present ICT within contexts that are relevant to users and that offer real value to each individual. Where a need is felt, alternative modes of learning should be explored. Contribution by civil society should be encouraged and supported. The development of resources that facilitate self-learning should also be supported and promoted.

Many users, despite mastering the technology, may still lack the full set of competences that enable them to profit from ICTs, whilst also ensuring the wellbeing of their self, family and community. Future education initiatives need to promote a wide array of competences consisting of knowledge, skills and attitudes that enable members of the Networked Society to choose and use ICT applications wisely.

The European Parliament and European Council[2] recommended digital competence as one of the key competences for lifelong learning[3].

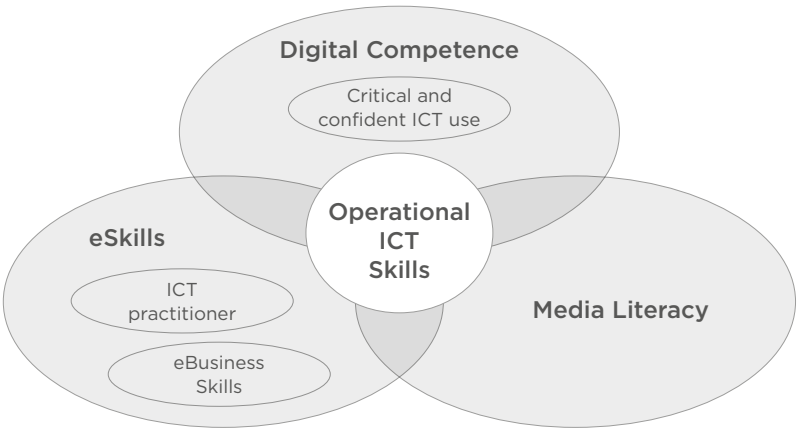
Digital competence is defined as follows: *"Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of information society technology for work, leisure, learning and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, access, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet."*

Digital competence is a broad concept that includes *"a sound understanding and knowledge of the nature, role and opportunities of* ***information society technology*** *in everyday contexts: in personal and social life as well as at work."*

Figure 9 in page 29 highlights a conceptual framework that bridges together the core ICT operational skills with digital competences, digital media and eSkills. The basic operational skills are at the core and serve as the foundation for the development in any of the three sets of skills and competences.

[2]http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF
[3]The others being: communication in a mother tongue, communication in a foreign language, mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology, learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

Figure 9
Visual representation of concepts relating to digital competence, eSkills and media literacy



Adapted from European Commission document "Digital Competence in the Digital Agenda"

Digital competences, therefore, relate to everyday use of ICTs including computers, smart phones, tablet PCs and other devices, that may allow access to the Internet. At the lowest level of competence, users have the operational skills to make basic use of technology. At an intermediate level, users can actively apply ICT to daily life situations in relation to work, learning contexts, communication, participation in society and leisure. At the highest level of competence, individuals become critical and reflective users, can appreciate their responsibilities in the online world, can understand legal and ethical principles and are confident and creative users.

Although eSkills, media literacy and digital competences share operational ICT skills as their foundations, they are different in their objectives. eSkills and media literacy, as defined in this conceptual framework, do not fall within the remit of this strategy and are addressed under different policies.

[4]http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/scoreboard/docs/pillar/digitalliteracy.pdf

7. A STRATEGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NETWORKED SOCIETY

This strategy defines a policy direction and a three-year work programme for the MCA in its efforts to contribute towards a Networked Society. The strategy aims to facilitate and support the development of a Networked Society that capitalises on the opportunities brought about by ICT for social cohesion and economic development.

More specifically, this strategy is based on five activity thrusts each with specific goals and a series of initiatives as shown in Figure 10 below. The Strategy forms part of a wider national drive to place ICT at the centre of economic and social development.

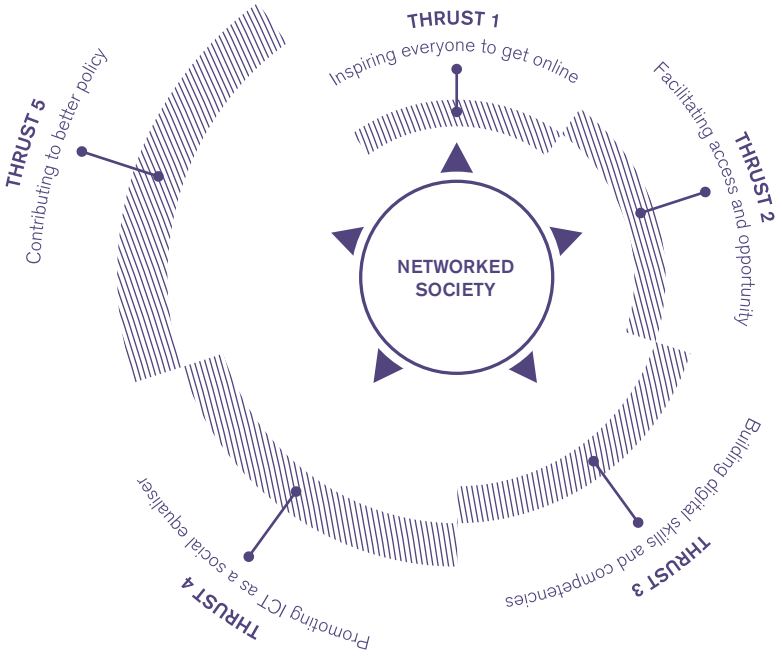


Figure 10
The five activity thrusts of the Networked Society Strategy

THRUST 1 – INSPIRING EVERYONE TO GET ONLINE

Society seems to be divided between those who feel that they cannot live without being connected and those who see no value in the online world. Non-users, despite acknowledging that the Internet has become a present day reality, adamantly insist that ICT is not for them.

Do the people on the other side of the divide really understand what living in a connected society is about? Would ICT, in its multitude of forms and applications, add value to a person's daily life?

The scope of this series of initiatives is to give individuals an opportunity to explore and learn what the Networked Society is all about and how it can positively impact individuals' quality of life and general wellbeing. This will enable such persons to make an informed decision about whether or not to go online.

1.1 Digital heroes campaign

The Authority will identify six ICT champions from different walks of life to become ambassadors of the Networked Society. The individuals will play a core part of the MCA's initiatives under this strategy, acting as testimonials to the benefits of using ICTs. These individuals will feature in promotions, media interviews and training material produced, thus giving the message a context which is more relevant to the target audience.

1.2 'Try something new' campaign

The Authority will run a campaign inviting people to explore new activities using ICT. The idea behind the campaign is to help individuals appreciate the versatility of ICT and that its applications can suit the specific needs of each individual.

1.3 'eAgeing' roadshow campaign

The Authority will rollout a roadshow touring elderly homes, day centres, local councils and parishes demonstrating how easily ICTs could be used for communication with family, friends and the community.

1.4 Get Online Week

Together with other European countries, Malta will celebrate the annual Get Online Week through the organization of a week of activities including media appearances, brochures and information days. The Get Online Week serves to attract newcomers to the Internet and its applications.

THRUST 2 – FACILITATING ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

The promise to overcome the digital divide lies in ensuring that anyone who wants to join the Networked Society finds the means to do so. The series of initiatives listed under this thrust are intended to act as a bridge for those who, for some reason might have, so far, been unable to fully benefit from the use of technology, but have now decided to form part of the Networked Society.

These initiatives aim at facilitating access to ICTs and the opportunities its applications bring about, irrespective of age, gender, abilities and employment.

2.1 Consolidating the CTLC network

The Authority, together with NGOs, local councils and other community organisations, will continue to develop the existent Community Technology Learning Centre (CTLC) network, aiming to increase its reach, widen the variety of services to users, ensure quality and consistency in service delivery, regularly upgrade equipment and last but not least, ensure that funds are managed effectively and transparently.

2.2 Promoting and facilitating accessibility

Together with the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA), an educational campaign will be undertaken amongst internet content and service providers, highlighting accessibility issues, standards, guidelines and best practices.

2.3 Helping intermediaries go online

The Authority will establish a scheme aimed at offering advice and technical support to NGOs to establish a presence on the Internet with a specific focus on creating more local content and online services, whilst maximising contact with clients through the use of social networks.

2.4 Promoting mobile internet

A scheme intended to give more people the opportunity to experience mobile data will be launched with a view to increase take-up, whilst also stimulating further competition between service providers.

2.5 Free Wi-Fi in public places

With the support of private industry, the Authority will consolidate the existent free Wi-Fi service to ensure its long-term sustainability.

THRUST 3 – BUILDING DIGITAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES FOR A NETWORKED SOCIETY

The levels of digital illiteracy remain relatively high, despite the training opportunities provided in the past years. Furthermore, as technology advances, skills need updating to reflect technological developments and new applications. Digital literacy remains a paramount objective on this Strategy's agenda.

Members of the networked society need more than the technical knowhow. They must instead hold a wide range of new competences that enable them to critically and confidently choose and make use of available applications.

This thrust builds on thrusts 1 and 2 and looks at giving the Networked Society the required set of skills and competences.

3.1 ICTforALL Basics

The Authority, with the continuous support of various organisations, will continue to develop its ICTforALL flagship training programme that is intended as a first step for anyone wishing to join the Networked Society.

3.2 ICTforALL Lifestyles

For those who wish to learn more, the Authority will be introducing new learning opportunities. A series of new courses that are relevant to individuals' everyday needs will be introduced.

3.3 Community digital leaders

Jointly with a number of NGOs, public entities and academia, the Authority will be developing a pool of trained volunteers to provide individual help to adults and elderly persons encountering difficulty when using ICTs. The scheme will offer the opportunity to facilitate learning in an informal, yet more relevant way. Digital leaders will be trained and accredited through a specialised programme.

3.4 Customer care digital leaders

This scheme will help organisations working in ICT and related sectors to improve their customer care service, especially when dealing with the elderly and ICT illiterate individuals. The scheme will consist of a training programme and an accreditation structure for employees who deal with clients. Participating entities will have digital leaders forming part of their customer care service, to act as reference points for those clients who may need additional assistance. This scheme will target companies such as banks, ISPs and computer vendors, amongst others.

3.5 Information Sessions

The Authority will develop and deliver a series of information sessions on various ICT-related topics. These sessions will be delivered at the CTLCs, local councils and other community establishments. Topics addressed will include internet shopping, internet banking, social networking and internet safety.

3.6 Self-learning resources

A series of self-learning audiovisual resources will be produced and made available for download or streaming online. These resources will be produced in consultation with civil society and will each provide step-by-step guidance and tips in Maltese on how to use a specific ICT application in day-to-day situations.

3.7 Internet safety for minors

In conjunction with key local stakeholders, the Authority will continue to participate in the European Union funded Safer Internet Programme, with a view to continue the beSmartOnline! project. The programme will include a series of media campaigns, publications, school campaigns and information days targeting children, their parents/carers, and educators. The Authority will also continue to support the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) in the operation of a dedicated hotline and helpline.

3.8 Safer internet campaign

A media campaign promoting tips and guidelines on how to keep safe when using the Internet will target Maltese households, focusing on online shopping, internet banking and email.

3.9 Smart social networks campaign

A media campaign targeting social network users will focus on the smart use of social network communication channels, promoting respect for others, netiquette and the protection of one's own privacy.

THRUST 4 – ICT AS A SOCIAL EQUALISER

These initiatives aim at promoting and facilitating the use of ICT to give disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals a better opportunity to participate in the community. The potential contribution of civil society is given importance under this thrust.

4.1 Education campaign

The Authority will hold a series of seminars for civil society and specialised public agencies working

with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, with a view to promote the use of ICT as a social equaliser.

4.2 Supporting civil society initiatives

The Authority will support a number of projects that capitalise on ICT as a social equaliser and that can be undertaken by civil society. The Authority will support these projects through its resources, expertise and, where warranted, through funding. Following a public call, the Authority will identify and support projects in the areas indicated below:

i. Disadvantaged children and/or teens;
ii. Integration of migrants in society;
iii. Overcoming unemployment;
iv. Physical disability;
v. Drug rehabilitation;
vi. Reintegration in society following crime detention;
vii. Social integration and opportunity for individuals with mental illness and/or intellectual disability;
viii. Technology assisted living.

4.3 Award for best contribution to the community

The Authority will establish a national annual award given to the NGO that has harnessed ICT to fulfill its mission, leaving an impact on the community it serves.

THRUST 5 – CONTRIBUTING TO BETTER POLICY

As an extension to its regulatory role, the Authority will actively monitor and measure the adoption and use of ICT by society. It will provide advice in this field to Government, civil society and the private sector. The Authority will also represent Malta at the EU and other international levels as requested by Government.

5.1 Monitoring and explaining the divide

The Authority will continuously monitor usage, adoption trends and competence levels of the Maltese population through the annual Eurostat/NSO statistics, whilst also conducting additional ad hoc surveys to add further understanding. The Authority will further undertake a qualitative study on a yearly basis, to explore a relevant topic specific to the causality of the digital divide. A report will be published annually, highlighting key findings and societal developments.

5.2 Participating in European debate

The Authority will continue to engage in debates on the subject, namely at

the EU, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and other international fora. The Authority will take part in initiatives and contribute to networks established at a European level.

5.3 Accessibility policy review

The Authority will take an active part in the review of policy frameworks related to accessibility, the digital divide and ICT as a social equaliser.

5.4 Structural Funds

As identified under action 57 of the Digital Agenda, the Authority will contribute towards the development and implementation of digital literacy and competences initiatives funded through Structural Funds.

7.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In implementing this Strategy the Authority will follow these guiding principles:

- This Strategy spans horizontally across the remits of various public entities. The Authority must limit fragmentation by seeking ways to synergise its efforts with those of the diverse entities involved in the field. The MCA may take a leading or supporting role, depending on the needs of the specific intervention.

- Civil society may be better positioned to reach out to the community than a single public body such as the MCA. Entities that are established within the community can understand the specific needs of the community and can provide a service that meets those needs better. Civil society is usually more accessible and trusted than public and private establishments. The MCA will seek to increase its outreach through the engagement of various intermediary community civil society entities.

- The MCA must seek win-win collaboration opportunities with local and multinational leading industries. Technological development and diffusion is shaped by commercial initiative and competing market dynamics. The involvement of the industry gives initiatives undertaken as part of this Strategy a context and tangibility. On the other hand, private industry is often seeking ways to involve itself in the community through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. The Authority will objectively support and work with private

sector entities without exclusivity and solely in the interest of society.

- In implementing any initiative, the Authority must maximise its resources, operate diligently without conflict of interest with respect to all stakeholders that contribute to its initiatives.

7.2 STRATEGY OUTCOMES

By 2015, this Strategy would have contributed towards achieving these levels of ICT pervasiveness:

- 95% of Maltese households will be connected to the Internet;
- 75% of individuals will be using the Internet on a frequent basis;
- 60% of individuals in employment will be using the Internet on a frequent basis;
- 40% of individuals aged between 60 and 75 will be using the Internet on a frequent basis;
- Only 10% of individuals would have never used the Internet.

7.3 STRATEGY OUTPUTS

By 2015, the Authority would have implemented this Strategy and delivered the outputs listed below:

- Skilled 2% of the adult population in Malta;
- Reached all children in schooling on the smart use of the Internet;
- Reached all households with content on the benefits of ICTs;
- Supported 5% of people in retirement;
- Assisted 100 NGOs;
- Published an annual report on the status of the Maltese Networked Society.

7.4 KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The success of this programme depends on the synergies that need to be sought, explored and built, linking the work undertaken by the Authority with that of other key public entities that are readily established to work in this field.

Table 1 – Key stakeholders

	Areas of collaboration
1 Department for Local Government	Awareness campaigns and education initiatives – reaching the community through the local councils. Setting up of free Wi-Fi points
2 Directorate for Education Services (DES)	Internet safety campaigns in schools
3 Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA)	ICT accessibility ICT as a social equaliser for people with a disability
4 Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA)	Promotion and access to eGovernment services Building of core operational skills
5 Malta Police Force (Cybercrime Unit)	Safer internet for minors Safer internet for vulnerable groups
6 The Foundation for Social Welfare (FSWS) – *Aġenzija Sedqa and Aġenzija Appoġġ, Aġenzija Sapport*	Promotion of internet safety with minors Internet safety support line Internet dependence Promoting ICT as a social equaliser with vulnerable groups

7.5 PARTNER INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATIONS

Over the past years, the Authority has teamed up with 17 intermediary organisations, each targeting specific communities. These centres have offered access to technology and literacy training across the different segments of society and aim to increase social inclusion, better employability and to enhance quality of life through the use of ICT.

Table 2 – Intermediary organisations

	Partner	Locality established
1	St Francis Parish	Qawra
2	Birkirkara Local Council	Birkirkara
3	*Ċentru Pastorali Raġħaj it-Tajjeb* (ETC)	Victoria, Gozo
4	Inspire Foundation	Bulebel, Żejtun
5	Isla Local Council	Isla
6	Kalkara Local Council	Kalkara
7	Local Councils Association	Balzan
8	National Council for Women (NCW)	Blata l-Bajda
9	PHRF	Paola
10	Richmond Foundation	St Venera
11	UHM	Floriana
12	Assoċjazzjoni tal-Bdiewa	Ta' Qali
13	Employment Training Centre	Ħal Far
14	Caritas San Blas	Siġġiewi
15	Aċċess	Vittoriosa
16	Substance Abuse Therapeutic Unit (SATU)	Mtaħleb, Rabat
17	Corradino Correctional Facilities	Corradino

NETWORKED SOCIETY

MCA'S
DIGITAL
INCLUSION
STRATEGY

2012
2015

MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

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