MCA
MALTA COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

Annual Plan 2014

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1.   INTRODUCTION

This document represents the Malta Communications Authority's (MCA's) Annual Plan for 2014. It focuses on the priority work-streams and related individual tasks that the MCA intends to undertake during the year.

The Annual Plan is framed within the context of the MCA's mandate, mission and strategic objectives as well as ongoing and envisaged trends in the sectors that the MCA regulates, namely, electronic communications, postal services and e-commerce. The MCA is also responsible for the promotion and facilitation of the uptake of Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) amongst citizens and businesses in order to further promote the digital society.

The Annual Plan is reflective of the MCA's Strategic Plan Update covering the period 2014 - 2016.[1]

1.1   Mission Statement

The mission of the MCA is:

'To regulate the electronic communications, e-commerce and postal sectors for sustainable competition, customer choice and value for money; and

To facilitate the development of an environment that is conducive to investment, innovation and continued social and economic growth.'

1.2   Strategic Objectives

For the MCA to achieve its mission over the next three (3) years, the following are the identified strategic objectives emerging from the MCA's Strategic Plan Update 2014 - 2016.

Electronic Communications		
T1	Regulating for lasting competition in the electronic communications sector
T2	Ensuring that electronic communications undertakings provide a transparent, value for money service to users whilst adhering to incumbent social obligations
T3	Contributing to the development and implementation of electronic communications regulatory policy at an international level
T4	Facilitating innovation and investment in ICTs
eCommerce		
E1	Facilitating eCommerce uptake and the use of electronic signatures
Postal Services		

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[1] Refer to the MCA's Strategic Plan Update 2014 – 2016 which represents the MCA's strategic direction and factors in new developments that are seen to have a significant impact during the plan period (http://www.mca.org.mt/notices-and-announcements/strategic-plan-update-2014-2016).

P1	Regulating a liberalised postal services environment that ensures ease of entry to new undertakings and sustainable competition
P2	Ensuring that postal undertakings provide a transparent, value for money service to users whilst adhering to incumbent social obligations
P3	Contributing to the development and implementation of postal regulatory policy at an international level
Information Society	
IS1	Achieving widespread eLiteracy, digital inclusion and the use of ICTs as a tool to improve quality of life for all citizens, in particular, disadvantaged groups
IS2	Encouraging the use of eBusiness models by local enterprises as a means to improve competitiveness

1.3   Legal Frameworks

The MCA's mission, mandate and functions derive from the Malta Communications Authority Act (Cap 418). The MCA is the national regulatory authority (NRA) responsible for:

■   the regulation of electronic communications networks and services, radio communications equipment and the management and use of the radio frequency spectrum and telephone numbers as defined in the Electronic Communications (Regulation) Act (Cap 399);

■   the regulation of postal services as determined by the Postal Services Act (Cap 254); and for

■   ensuring compliance with the Electronic Commerce Act (Cap 426).

1.4   Accountability Framework

The MCA is accountable to the Minister responsible for Communications, for the preparation and presentation of its business plan for approval, following consultation by the responsible Minister with the Minister responsible for Finance, every year.

The MCA also presents its annual report to the Minister responsible for Communications and the Minister responsible for Finance on its operations for the preceding year.

The MCA is also held to account by the sectors it regulates and by the public / consumers on whose behalf it regulates. The MCA, on a yearly basis, publishes its Strategic Plan Update and Annual Plan, following its approval by the Minister responsible for Communications, and its Annual Report on its website.

1.5   Consultation and Communication

The MCA is committed to ongoing consultation with a broad range of stakeholders when developing policy and regulatory initiatives. The major stakeholders include citizens, consumers, industry, government, the EU, interest groups and other regulatory authorities. The maintenance of

reasonable open, effective and timely communications with all stakeholders is therefore a key element of the MCA's operations.

The MCA intends to use various communication channels available, whether through traditional, digital or social media in order to effectively build greater awareness on the outcomes of the MCA's activities, its roles and responsibilities, its various initiatives and on general trends in the sectors it regulates. The MCA will also use these communication channels to continue to empower consumers by providing information on their rights and in assisting them in making informed choices across all communication services.

1.6   Measuring Performance

The MCA carefully monitors and reviews its performance and progress towards the achievement of its strategic objectives through:

■   performance management;

■   the publication of an Annual Report; and

■   feedback sought from stakeholders.

Progress towards the attainment of the MCA's strategic objectives is measured by a series of related activities. In this respect, the MCA, on an ongoing basis:

■   formally and informally, ascertains stakeholders' perceptions of the regulator;

■   carries out bi-annual communication market reviews providing an overview of the trends in the sectors regulated by the MCA;[2]

■   conducts performance measurement and monitoring in line with the key performance indicators (KPIs) identified in the MCA's Strategic Plan Update; and

■   monitors the achievement of the MCA's objectives and work programme, identifies any shortfalls and takes the necessary steps to remedy them.

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[2] Refer to: http://www.mca.org.mt/market-overview

2. WORK PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES

What follows is an overview of the MCA's priority work-streams - including the MCA's major ongoing work areas - to be carried out during 2014 and that will contribute to the achievement of the identified strategic objectives.

2.1 Electronic Communications

2.1.1 Strategic Objective T1

Regulating for lasting competition in the electronic communications sector.

Facilitating the Deployment of Next-Generation Access Networks

The deployment of Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband networks presents opportunities for both business and domestic users in terms of new applications and services, with resultant socio-economic benefits. In line with the MCA's strategic framework for the regulation of NGA networks, the MCA will continue to facilitate the rollout of NGA broadband networks. The MCA will continue to focus its work on developing regulatory approaches and practices which facilitate competition and thereby market entry and investment in the new high-speed broadband environment.

The MCA will ensure sufficient wholesale access to NGA broadband networks in line with regulatory remedies imposed on GO Plc, as the operator designated as having Significant Market Power (SMP) in the infrastructure access market. This will include, amongst other things, the obligation to provide alternative operators with 'virtual' access to its next-generation fibre infrastructure (referred to as virtual unbundled local access - VULA) so that they can effectively compete in the supply of high-speed broadband services.[3]

In line with its responsibilities with respect to symmetric regulation of co-location of electronic communications infrastructure, the MCA will this year finalise a framework whereby authorised undertakings may request to share the physical network infrastructure of operators. In addition, the MCA will put in place a framework for the sharing of electronic communications wiring inside buildings. These regulatory frameworks should serve to facilitate the roll-out of NGA broadband networks by clarifying the 'rules of engagement' for such activity, with the intent of maximising economies in deployment and minimising disruption caused by works, thanks to infrastructure sharing.

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[3] Reference offers for access to GO Plc's network such as Local Loop Unbundling - LLU, Sub Loop Unbundling – SLU and Leased lines / Ethernet services will continue to provide an important channel for wholesale access in addition to VULA.

Development of the Radio Spectrum Potential

The MCA is responsible for ensuring the optimal use of the electro-magnetic spectrum identified in the national radio frequency plan.[4]

The radio spectrum is used to support a wide range of applications and electronic communications services such as radio and television broadcasting, mobile telephony, emergency services communications and wireless broadband. All of these activities are reliant on appropriate and reliable access to radio spectrum and it is therefore essential that this resource is managed effectively and efficiently.

Radio spectrum needs to be provided in sufficient quantities on a technology and service neutral basis, to facilitate the rollout of competitive, high-quality wireless services. The MCA is committed to responding to market needs by managing spectrum usage rights in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory fashion.

The MCA will continue with its work to successfully coordinate spectrum to facilitate the effective provision of high speed broadband services in the 790 - 862 MHz frequency band, referred to as the 800 MHz band, with a view to maximising the digital dividend for Malta.[5] This will depend on the collaboration of neighbouring states in the international coordination of radio frequencies within the 470 - 694 MHz frequency band (also referred to as the 'UHF band').[6]

The international coordination process is still ongoing but should come to a successful conclusion in relatively short order. Once the international coordination process is successfully completed, the MCA will be in a position to free up the 800 MHz band by migrating the multiplex reserved for Maltese General Interest (GI) TV transmission, Channel 66, to an alternative channel. This will enable the MCA to make available the 800 MHz frequency band for the provision of high speed broadband networks using 4G technologies such as LTE (Long Term Evolution).

In addition, the MCA will this year implement the European Commission Decision on the harmonisation of the 2 GHz band for terrestrial systems capable of providing electronic communications services such as LTE. This frequency band is currently solely used for UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) wireless communications, known as 3G networks.

Additional radio spectrum in the 2.6 GHz frequency band and in the 3.4 - 3.8 GHz frequency band is also available for the provision of high speed broadband networks. These frequency bands allow

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[4] The MCA reviews the National Radio Frequency Plan (NFP) to reflect changes to the allocation of spectrum taking into account European and International regulations:
http://www.mca.org.mt/national-frequency-plan.

[5] The 'digital dividend' refers to the part of the radio frequency spectrum freed up following the switch from analogue to digital which took place on the 31st October 2011. In Europe, the digital dividend was defined as the 800 MHz band (790-862 MHz – Channel 61 - 69).

[6] In line with a resolution agreed at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) WRC-12 to allocate 694 - 790 MHz frequency band (known as the 700 MHz band) for mobile services, the MCA's efforts to coordinate additional frequencies for digital terrestrial TV are focused within the 470 - 694 MHz frequency band.

new and innovative high speed broadband services to develop - critical in enabling the development of platforms for the next generation of converged services and in creating opportunities for innovation.

Exploring '*Ex-Post*' Regulation

The MCA has a strategic role to create an environment that is conducive to the development of competition in the sectors that it regulates, to the benefit of consumers. It is therefore empowered to intervene in order to avoid competition failure. On the other hand the Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA) has the remit to address breaches of competition law.

This situation creates a degree of overlap between the powers of the two authorities. Consequently there have been a number of instances where undertakings have asked both authorities to intervene with respect to the same dispute. The current situation does not grant any one of these authorities sufficient powers to comprehensively deal with certain competition issues that cut across both legislative frameworks.

With the intent of ensuring seamless interaction between *ex-ante* and *ex-post* regulation, the MCA, together with Government, is exploring the options relative to the migration of *ex-post* electronic communications regulation (including *ex-post* postal regulation) to the MCA. The assumption of these additional regulatory responsibilities would allow the MCA to provide a one-stop-shop in sector regulation, free up MCCAA resources to alternative uses, and maximise the MCA's expertise in the field.

In the event that *ex-post* competition regulation accrues to the MCA, the MCA will setup the appropriate structures and processes in order to cater effectively for these new responsibilities and ensure seamless dovetailing with its *ex-ante* regulatory remit.

Market Reviews and Analysis

In line with the EU recommendation on relevant markets,[7] the MCA, like all other European NRAs, must review a pre-determined set of sector markets and decide, based on facts and evidence, whether or not they are, or are likely to become effectively competitive. If not, appropriate regulatory remedies must be imposed.[8]

NRAs may mandate an equivalent provision of service for wholesale access seekers, thus allowing other operators to use wholesale inputs from the dominant operator's network to create and sell retail services. The MCA must regularly review those decisions - typically every three years as prescribed by the EU regulatory framework. If the MCA concludes that regulation is no longer justified, it must remove the retail or wholesale regulation.

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[7] Refer to Commission Recommendation on relevant product and service markets within the electronic communications sector susceptible to ex-ante regulation (17th December 2007):
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:344:0065:0069:EN:PDF
[8] The EU telecoms rules give the European Commission the power to oversee regulatory remedies proposed by national regulators. The objective is to avoid inconsistent regulation that could distort competition in the single telecoms market.

The MCA will continue to monitor the application of the imposed *ex-ante* remedies resulting from the analysis of the relevant markets carried out during the past years. In addition, the MCA will continue to review and monitor the relevant retail and wholesale markets, the aim being to ensure that market review decisions remain relevant and that remedies reflect any changes in the markets since the previous review.

From a forward-looking perspective, the MCA will continue to participate in the relevant BEREC (the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications) working group that is addressing the review of the current EU recommendation on relevant markets which can be regulated *ex-ante* by NRAs to address structural competition problems. The European Commission will present an updated recommendation on the relevant markets in the first half of 2014.

International Roaming

The European roaming regulations set retail price caps and retail transparency measures that apply to mobile telephony subscribers in a particular country when travelling in other EU countries. They also set wholesale price caps and other access requirements that apply between different mobile service providers.

Further changes in roaming will take place in the coming years. The biggest changes relate to the decoupling of roaming packages from domestic packages which will allow users to choose separate service providers with respect to calls and data services. The decoupling will take place in July of this year and is intended to create more competition in the mobile market.

To ensure that all consumers benefit from the protection that these measures afford, their implementation by operators and the impact on competition will be subject to continuous monitoring.

Efficient Management and Use of Numbers

The MCA is responsible for the efficient management of Malta's telephone numbering plan.[9]

Numbering is a key enabler of electronic communications services and the need to preserve this finite national resource must be balanced against the need to ensure an adequate supply of numbers to support the demands of new and existing customers and service providers.

The MCA will continue to manage the numbering plan by allocating numbers to service providers for new and existing services and by monitoring the utilisation to ensure efficient use of numbers.

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[9] Refer to Malta's telephone numbering plan: http://www.mca.org.mt/numbering

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective T1

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective T1**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T1 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Facilitating the Deployment of Next-Generation Access Networks	
Virtual unbundled local access (VULA) for fibre networks	Analysis of GO Plc's VULA Reference Offer Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision
Co-location regulatory framework - An Infrastructure Access Code	Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision
Framework for the sharing of in-building wiring	Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision Public Consultation on the technical guidelines Publication of guidelines
Development of guidelines for overhead installations	Identification of issues encountered by operators Establish solutions to network rollout issues and present recommendations to Transport Malta (TM) and other stakeholders Publication of guidelines
Development of the Radio Spectrum Potential	
Review of National Frequency Plan (NFP)	Review of the NFP Approval from Government / Publication
Assignment of the 800 MHz radio frequency band	Public consultation on the policy framework and assignment methodology Report on consultation / Decision Expression of Interest for the rights of use
Implementation of the European Commission Decision on the harmonisation of the 2 GHz band	Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision
Market Reviews and Analysis	
Wholesale fixed termination market	Public consultation on the market analysis (published in Q4/2013) Consideration of responses to consultation Notification of draft decision to the European Commission Report on consultation / Decision
Retail fixed access services market	Public consultation on the market analysis Consideration of responses to consultation Notification of draft decision to the European Commission Report on consultation / Decision
Wholesale fixed call origination market	Public consultation on the market analysis

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T1 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	Consideration of responses to consultation
	Notification of draft decision to the European Commission
	Report on consultation / Decision
Wholesale leased lines market	Public consultation on the market analysis (expected in Q1/2015)
International Roaming	
Roaming management and monitoring	Ensuring that the mobile operators adhere with the obligations set out in the EU Roaming Regulation
Efficient Management and Use of Numbers	
Manage allocations from the national numbering plan	Monitor operator utilisation to ensure efficient use of numbers

2.1.2   Strategic Objective T2

> Ensuring that electronic communications undertakings provide a transparent, value-for-money service to users whilst adhering to incumbent social obligations.

Informing, Empowering and Protecting Consumers

As competition intensifies, consumers must be appropriately informed, empowered and protected. The MCA intends to focus further on empowering consumers by providing information on their rights and in assisting them in making informed choices across all communication services.

The MCA will continue to ensure that consumer rights with respect to operator contracts, switching between providers and provision of information are protected so that they can enjoy the benefits of competition to the fullest possible.

(a)   Operator Contracts

The MCA will continue to monitor the contractual obligations of all operators providing a connection to the public communications network and/or publicly available electronic communications services to ensure that they are providing their subscribers with clear and comprehensive contracts in line with applicable legislation.

All undertakings providing a connection to a public communications network and/or publicly available electronic communications services are required to provide their subscribers with a contract that specifies in a clear and comprehensive manner, amongst other things, information on the minimum service quality levels, as well as on compensation and refunds available in cases where these levels are not met, and clear information on the qualifying criteria for promotional offers and on the termination of a service.

(b)   Ease of Switching Between Providers

The ability of consumers to switch between service providers is the basis of a competitive market place and a safeguard for consumer welfare. The MCA plays an important role in removing any barriers to switching that may exist in the market, in order that consumers can enjoy the full benefits of competition.

The MCA will continue to monitor switching and service termination processes and the extent to which they promote good consumer and competition outcomes. The aim is to ensure that there are no unreasonable barriers, constraints and disruptions to switching and service termination, and that consumers are aware of their rights.

(c)   Provision of Information

A significant challenge for consumers is to analyse and quantify the differences between seemingly similar products and pricing plans. The MCA recognises that consumers may not have the required

information or knowledge to fully understand and compare the specifications and functions of electronic communications products on offer and the value for money they present. This is made all the more difficult as service providers continue to innovate and bundle products together to attract consumers. Such products, while valued by consumers, tend to complicate their decision-making.

The MCA will, via its on-line price comparison portal, www.telecosts.com, continue to ensure transparency by providing consumers with the necessary tools to ensure that they are aware of alternative suppliers and services, so that they can easily compare information on prices, features and quality.

(d)   Other Consumer Related Work

The MCA will continue to work to:

■   Strengthen its powers vis-a-vis consumer protection in order to be in a better position to safeguard consumers' interests and enhance their welfare.

■   Continuously update and enhance the information available to citizens and consumers via, amongst other things, the MCA's website and the use of social media, such as:

  −   maintaining up-to-date information in relation to common communications issues experienced by consumers;

  −   the choices as an electronic communications consumer with respect to products and services, prices and switching;

  −   the specific rights and entitlements of consumers of electronic communications in relation to aspects such as universal service, billing, tariff transparency, international voice and data roaming rates, contract terms as well as conditions for service termination, complaints handling, directory subscriber data and information services, access to emergency services and fixed/mobile number portability;

  −   information at each stage of the purchasing process including: choosing a provider, choosing a service plan, managing use of the service plan, and deciding whether and when to switch an existing provider or plan for all communications services;

  −   information to assist customers to verify charges on their bill in order to protect consumers from 'bill shock' and unexpected charges along with other billing related issues such as online billing; and

  −   information explaining the benefits and uses of new and innovative technologies.

■   Ensure that consumers are protected from a range of potential nuisances and that they are aware of their rights by:

  −   addressing the problem of mis-selling through codes of practice;

– protecting vulnerable consumers in relation to Premium Rate Services, thus ensuring that the consumer is confident and safe in using those services;

– disseminating information through a number of channels including, consumer guides, the MCA's website, social media and marketing campaigns; and by

– ensuring information is accessible, appropriate to need, accurate and timely.

■ Inform consumers via end-user surveys and research on the consumer attitudes to and use of communications technologies.

■ Collect relevant, accurate and timely information on the electronic communications market in an efficient and effective manner and publish bi-annual communication market reviews.

Monitoring of Service Quality

The MCA reviews quality of service (QoS) provision principles and policies on an ongoing basis, in light of technology evolution and a multiple operator environment. To the extent necessary, the MCA will enforce and monitor QoS standards and measures particularly in those areas where market forces may fall short of producing desired results. The MCA will, where necessary, continue to provide information to the public relative to the performance of undertakings.

The MCA will this year be in a position to measure and publish the QoS offered by broadband service providers, following the establishment of the related methodology for measuring broadband performance experienced by consumers using different platforms. These measures are intended to prevent significant disparities between end-users' expectations of broadband performance and their actual experience. The objective is to help reduce the gap between the bandwidth offered in the contractual terms and the actual speeds experienced by the user when connecting to the network and using the service.

Continued Availability of the Universal Service

A competitive market, in which all the key players have a purely commercial remit will serve the needs of most consumers, but there is a danger that some may be left behind. Access to electronic communication services is an essential part of life. Without such access, citizens run the risk of social exclusion. The EU regulatory framework therefore recognises the importance of ensuring that a basic service – 'the Universal Service' - is provided to all consumers at an affordable price.

GO Plc is currently designated by the MCA as the Universal Service Provider (USP) for the provision of a publicly available telephone network at a fixed location, capable of supporting voice, facsimile and data communications at broadband data rates,[10] payphones, directory enquiry services, telephone directory and services for users with disabilities. As the USP, the MCA sets QoS

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[10] Currently at the choice of the end-user, the designated universal service provider is required to provide a broadband connection at a guaranteed access line speed of 4 Mbps (subject to certain conditions).

requirements on GO Plc with respect to its universal service obligation (USO). The performance of GO Plc's USO is monitored and reported upon on a yearly basis.

Regulators have an important role to play in defining the Universal Service, to ensure that it remains relevant to the needs of consumers, in designating the USPs, where required, and in ensuring quality of service. As technology develops and consumer needs evolve, policymakers must consider the appropriate measures to ensure that the services provided continue to be aligned to consumer's needs and in step with the market. The MCA will this year finalise a review of the Universal Service and related obligations, taking into consideration the changing needs of users.

Financing the Universal Service

If a designated USP feels that it is subject to an unfair burden, as a result of providing all or part of the universal service, it may submit a written request for funding to the MCA. On receipt of such a request and all required information in support of it, the MCA shall determine whether the universal service does represent a net cost and an unfair financial burden on the USP, in the period to which the request relates. Net cost refers to the efficiently incurred costs arising from the provision of the service which the USP is unable to cover with the proceeds from the service, as against the cost of operating without the USO - taking into consideration the intangible benefits resulting from the provision of the service. The MCA may determine that the universal service does not represent a net cost and unfair burden on the USP. If the MCA determines that the net cost of the universal service does represent an unfair burden on the USP then it shall be reimbursed for the portion of the net cost of the universal service forming an unreasonable burden in line with legislation.   The MCA will this year finalise a study to determine whether the first claim for funding the universal service made by GO Plc, as the designated USP, represents a net cost and an unfair financial burden.

Migrating terrestrial broadcasting meeting General Interest objectives

In line with the derogation under the Decision of the European Parliament and the European Council of 14th March 2012, establishing the multiannual radio spectrum policy programme (RSPP),[11] Malta is required to carry out the authorisation process for the use of the 800 MHz band for electronic communications services other than broadcasting by the 30th June 2014 at the latest. In addition, Malta is also required to allow the use of the 800 MHz band for electronic communications services other than broadcasting by the 31st December 2014 at the latest.

As already mentioned, such a course of action will necessitate the migration of Channel 66, used for terrestrial television meeting GI objectives, to an alternative channel outside the 800 MHz band. As a result, the MCA has started to draw up a road-map, involving all stakeholders, to effectively migrate terrestrial television meeting GI objectives to an alternative channel. Subject to the successful coordination process with neighbouring countries, the migration of the multiplex reserved for GI TV channels is expected to take place by the end of this year, to make way for the assignment process of the 800 MHz band for electronic communications services other than broadcasting.

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[11] Refer to: http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/rspp-roadmap-wireless-europe

The MCA will ensure that consumers are appropriately informed and given guidance, if required, about retuning their TV sets or set-top-boxes once the migration has taken place.

Keeping the Radio Spectrum Free of Interference

The MCA monitors the radio spectrum and takes action to prevent harmful spectrum interference and unauthorised use of spectrum. The increasing demand for, and use of, radio spectrum leads to a corresponding increase in the risk of interference. The MCA will continue to take action to prevent harmful interference and to mitigate it when it occurs.

The MCA will continue to provide assistance to the MCCAA, when requested, on market surveillance in order to ensure that technical equipment and devices meet standards and requirements set out in national and EU legislation, and that non-compliant equipment is removed from the market.

Monitoring Electronic Magnetic Field Emissions

The MCA will continue its routine monitoring of electronic magnetic field emissions (EMF) with a view to ensuring that levels of electromagnetic radiation do not exceed the levels established by the International Commission of non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), which are also endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Licensing Access to the Radiocommunications Equipment / Co-ordination

The MCA manages the licensing of radiocommunications equipment. Where necessary the MCA makes frequency assignments and also co-ordinates the use of radio spectrum internationally. The MCA will continue to enhance the radiocommunications equipment licensing regime and will examine the scope for applying further general authorisations where appropriate.

Information Gathering

Timely access to accurate and reliable information and data is vital to support the MCA's decisions. To this end, the MCA collects a wide range of data from electronic communication providers, in line with its statutory powers for this purpose, where appropriate. The MCA depends upon the close cooperation of electronic communication providers in submitting accurate and timely responses to our data directions and request for information. This activity is supplemented by public and business perception surveys as necessary in order to assess, amongst other things, the level of satisfaction with the services provided by electronic communication operators and the extent to which it is addressing customer needs. The results of these surveys serve as an additional source of information for regulatory decisions, and to indicate how customers' needs are changing over time.

Ensuring Compliance

The MCA will continue to deal effectively with operator non-compliance by carrying out mystery shopping, answering consumer queries and liaising with operators to achieve a resolution to consumer complaints. In addition, the MCA will continue to monitor compliance by service providers with requirements in relation to matters having to do with consumer rights.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective T2

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective T2**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T2 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Information, Empowering and Protecting Consumers	
Empowering consumers via the provision of information	Ongoing provision of information to consumers via the MCA's website and other media
Monitoring of Service Quality	
Monitoring broadband quality of service	Analysis of broadband QoS measurement data submitted by operators
	Establish a format for the publication of broadband QoS performance measures by the operators
	Publication of broadband QoS measurements
Quality of service review of electronic communications markets	Commission survey on QoS experienced by consumers
	Identification of any issues / concerns with QoS
	Public consultation and Decision (if required)
Migrating terrestrial broadcasting meeting general interest objectives	
Clearing the 800 MHz band (Channel 66) - Migration of terrestrial broadcasting meeting GI objectives	Discussions with all stakeholders on the migration of the multiplex reserved for GI TV channels
	Changes to rights of use of radio spectrum granted to PBS for the multiplex reserved for GI TV channels
	Information campaign (as necessary)
Monitoring Electronic Magnetic Field Emissions	
Electromagnetic Field (EMF) audit and monitoring	Ongoing EMF monitoring and publication of results
Continued Availability of the Universal Service	
Review of Universal Service Obligations / Designated USP(s)	Public consultation
	Report on consultation / Decision
	Issue call for Expression of Interest
	Designation of USP(s) as necessary
Financing the Universal Service	
Review of USP's (GO Plc) claim for funding the universal service	Public consultation on Year 2010 claim for funding
	Report on consultation / Decision
	Public consultation on Year 2012 claim for funding
Information Gathering and Ensuring Compliance	
Business perception survey	Design and commission survey
	Publication and dissemination of results
Collection of relevant, accurate and timely information on the electronic communications markets	Inclusion in bi-annual communications market review report

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T2 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Compliance, enforcement and investigations	Ongoing monitoring and enforcement of authorised undertakings

2.1.3 Strategic Objective T3

> Contributing to the development and implementation of electronic communications regulatory policy at an international level.

European / International Dimension

The MCA's mission in the regulation of electronic communications is conditioned by the over-arching regulatory framework set by the EU. This is currently facing yet another significant change that could impact the sector throughout Europe. In 2013 the European Commission proposed a Regulation for further harmonisation of the European Single Telecoms Market.[12] The MCA will this year continue to actively participate in the debate as to the final form which this new Framework will take. The MCA will need to be deeply involved in the debate in the interest of Maltese operators and service-users alike. As its role of adviser to Government on the European and international dimension of electronic communications policy and regulatory framework, the MCA will continue to provide advice to Government on this proposed new Framework.

The MCA's international obligations will, first and foremost, entail participation in the following EU organisations:

■ The Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) which sets out Common Positions and statements of Best Practice to foster regulatory consistency and excellence across the EU. The MCA is an active member of BEREC and is involved in all of its working groups. During 2014 the MCA will continue to be actively involved, with a particular focus on the following issues: contributing to position papers and opinions on the proposed draft Regulation on the Single Telecoms Market; contributing to the common positions on remedies regarding wholesale products; contributing to the successful implementation of the EU Roaming Regulations through developing guidance and monitoring market developments; the consistent application of regulatory remedies, both through the contribution to the market review process and through the development of a monitoring programme; and further analysis of issues related to traffic management and the open Internet (Net Neutrality).

■ The Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) which provides high-level strategic advice on spectrum policies to the European Commission. The MCA is an active member of RSPG and is involved in a number of its working groups. During 2014 the MCA will continue to be actively involved, with a particular focus on the following issues: a long-term strategy on the future of the UHF radio spectrum band 470 – 694 MHz in Europe, ITU WRC-15 preparation (common European policy objectives for WRC-15) and 'Good offices' to assist in bilateral negotiations between EU countries.

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[12] Refer to:
https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/regulation-european-parliament-and-council-laying-down-measures-concerning-european-single

The MCA will continue to contribute and participate in other EU organisations such as:

■   The Communications Committee (COCOM) which assists the European Commission in carrying out its executive powers under the regulatory framework for electronic communications.

■   The Radio Spectrum Committee (RSCOM) responsible for the development of implementing decisions with respect to technical implementation measures that ensure harmonised conditions across Europe for the availability and efficient use of radio spectrum.

■   The European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) in relation to incident reporting and security regulation.

The MCA will also continue to participate in other international fora such as:

■   The ITU, with regard to, amongst others, the preparation for the next ITU World Radio Conference taking place in 2015 (WRC-15).

■   The European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT), the International Regulators' Group (IRG) and other related workgroups.

■   The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and in the Commission's High Level Internet Governance Group (HLIGG).

■   The Global Submarine Cable Forum dealing with matters related to submarine cable networks.

In addition, the MCA will continue to provide advice to Government:

■   on proposed EU legislative measures, recommendations and other communications; and

■   on the interpretation and application of any new regulations, directives, recommendations, guidelines, advice and regulatory best practice and other EU documents as well as any related issues and disputes arising.

Pan-European Initiatives

The MCA will continue to actively contribute to pan-European initiatives in relation to:

■   The ongoing formulation of EU regulatory initiatives and guidance instruments, such as the periodic review of the overall EU framework for regulating electronic communication networks and services.

■   The European Commission proposed Regulation for further harmonisation of the European Single Telecoms Market.

■ The European Commission proposed Regulation on measures to reduce the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks.[13] The proposed Regulation intends to reduce the cost and enhance the efficiency of deploying high-speed electronic communications infrastructure, primarily through measures intended to reduce the costs of civil engineering works during rollout. The measures include streamlined procedures for applications for permits, and a requirement to make passive infrastructure available for sharing on request.

■ The review of the recommendation on Relevant Products and Service Markets within the electronic communications sector susceptible to ex-ante regulation - anticipated to be adopted in the first half of this year.

■ European policy development in relation to Net Neutrality, to ensure that consumer choice is not impaired through diminishing quality of service.

■ The implementation of the European Radio Spectrum Policy Programme (RSPP) - a five year policy programme for planning and harmonising the use of the EU's radio spectrum.[14]

■ The finalisation of the international co-ordination process leading to replacement of Channel 66 with an alternative channel in the 470 – 694 MHz band to make way for the assignment process of the 800 MHz band for electronic communication services in line with the RSPP. The mediation of the European Commission via the RSPG 'Good offices' has been instrumental towards Malta exercising its rights to the utilisation of an alternative channel.

■ The Digital Agenda for Europe which underlines the importance of broadband deployment to promote social inclusion and competitiveness.

■ The ongoing submission of accurate statistics and information to the EU organisations.

■ The work related to stimulate the take-up and effective use of cloud computing in Europe.

■ The work related to better access to emergency services - '112' - by extending the access requirements from traditional telephony to new technologies.

■ The common European-wide telephone services of social value via the harmonised numbering range beginning with '116'.

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[13] Refer to:
http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/proposal-regulation-european-parliament-and-council-measures-reduce-cost-deploying-high-speed

[14] RSPP Decision 243/2012/EU of 14 March 2012. The European Commission intends to publish a report on the measures adopted pursuant to this Decision by mid April 2014. A review of the current RSPP should be done by the end of December 2015.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective T3

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective T3**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T3 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
European / International Dimension / Pan-European Initiatives	
Proposed new EU Regulations	Contribution to the proposed EU Regulation on the European Single Telecoms Market and on the proposed Regulation on reducing the cost of deploying high-speed electronic communications networks
EU and International policy and regulatory initiatives	Ongoing participation and contribution in the following fora and related working groups: - BEREC, RSPG, RSCOM, COCOM, IRG, ENISA, CEPT, ITU, ICANN and HLIGG
EU Radio Spectrum Inventory	Contribution to the EU radio spectrum inventory on the use of radio spectrum (400 MHz – 6 GHz)
ITU World Radio Conference (WRC-15)	Preparation for the WRC-15 - in particular in relation to the co-primary allocation to mobile services in the 700 MHz band alongside the existing primary allocation for broadcasting services and to identify this frequency band for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT)

2.1.4   Strategic Objective T4

Facilitating innovation and investment in ICT.

Supporting Government's Broadband Policy Direction

The MCA will continue to support Government's policy direction in broadband deployment to promote social inclusion and competitiveness coupled with the adoption of high-speed communications and the rolling out of efficient NGA broadband networks.

In addition, the MCA will continue to provide logistical assistance to Government with its work in relation to the facilitation of nationwide NGA network (fibre-to-the-home) deployment in Malta.

Digital Malta Strategy

The MCA will work with the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) towards the attainment of a digital economy strategy covering the period 2014 – 2020 - referred to as the Digital Malta – National ICT Strategy.[15]

Forward Looking and Innovation Function

The MCA will this year consolidate the forward looking aspect vis-a-vis innovation in electronic communications by setting up an internal function to oversee technology developments and related challenges and opportunities.

The MCA will develop and implement a series of programmes and measures to promote innovation and a future looking culture in the electronic communications industry. The MCA will explore a number of options that can contribute to a tangible forward-looking approach. These options include:

■   the setting up of a Telecommunications Innovation Centre in conjunction with industry players, academia and Malta Enterprise;

■   the compilation of an inventory of all current research and development (R&D) initiatives in the area of electronic communications;

■   working with the University and Malta Enterprise to evolve the business incubation concept;

■   working closely with other government entities, the industry and business sectors, tertiary institutions and industrial support organisations to promote R&D and the introduction of innovative technologies in the market;

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[15] Refer to https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=757

- the promotion of internationally accepted standards in the industry to underpin technological development;

- supporting Government in a review of its policy on undersea cable operations in Maltese waters;

- assisting Government in establishing feasibility of an additional International link; and

- leading ad-hoc research and studies related to potential disruptive technologies and provide direction to Government - such as in respect of cloud computing, digital media and Over the Top (OTT) services.

Making Spectrum Available to Enable New Services

The MCA sees radio spectrum as an asset which can drive competition and enable innovation. In order to encourage new and innovative technologies and services the MCA will, among other things, continue to promote the uptake of test and trial radio spectrum licences to encourage the development of innovative spectrum usage in a safe and technology-neutral environment.

Promoting Internet Governance

The MCA will continue to promote Internet Governance through the Malta Internet Governance Forum. The Malta Internet Governance Forum, chaired by the MCA, is a national multi-stakeholder forum where industry, government, academia and civil society meet to discuss key issues associated with the Internet. Its aim is to provide a local forum that engages interested stakeholders in debate on Internet Governance issues.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective T4

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective T4**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective T4 (Electronic Communications)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Government's Broadband Policy	
Assistance to Government's work on nationwide NGA network deployment in Malta	Ongoing assistance to Government as required
Forward Looking and Innovation function	
Forward looking and innovation technology function	Consolidation of a forward-looking function vis-a-vis innovation in electronic communications Development of a three year innovation and forward looking strategy

2.2   eCommerce

2.2.1   Strategic Objective E1

Facilitating eCommerce uptake and the use of electronic signatures.

Development of a National eCommerce Strategy

As on-line shopping by consumers and businesses continues to grow, both locally and across the globe, the increased adoption of eCommerce services, and the development of eCommerce related services by the different sectors of the economy, is expected to lead to economic growth as well as new employment opportunities in areas related to the digital economy.

Recent research draws attention to the need for Government to take steps to ensure that, where a business case for eCommerce exists, entrepreneurs have the necessary means to allow them to capitalise on this opportunity. To this end, the MCA, together with Government, will this year finalise an eCommerce strategy which will set out the Government's policies in relation to eCommerce and identify a set of initiatives to be undertaken over the coming three years.

Public and Service Provider Awareness / Confidence

The MCA will continue to address a number of tasks in its ongoing thrust to increase public confidence in eCommerce and facilitate the proliferation of eCommerce activity. Such initiatives will include:

■   Ensuring adequate awareness at a service provider level of obligations arising out of the eCommerce Act.

■   Ensuring that customers are aware of their rights and avenues of redress.

■   Providing adequate and up-to-date information to service providers regarding requirements relative to the take up and pursuit of such services.

■   Conducting surveys on eCommerce take-up with a view to identify activity, perceptions and intentions that are influencing eCommerce activity in Malta.

■   Carrying out a bi-annual eCommerce forum to keep interested parties informed of regulatory and technical developments.

Monitoring Compliance

The MCA will continue to monitor eCommerce service providers to ensure that they are in line with legislation. In addition the MCA will, as necessary, carry out eSignatures technical and security audits in line with the eCommerce Act.

Proposed EU Regulation on Electronic Identification and Trust Services

The European Commission is proposing more comprehensive legislation which seeks to enable secure seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens and public authorities, thereby increasing the effectiveness of public and private online services, e-business and electronic commerce in the EU. The MCA will provide advice to Government on the EU proposal for a Regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market.

Removing Barriers to Cross-border eCommerce

Electronic commerce constitutes an important means to promote cross-border trade, improving the accessibility of Europe's population to more varied products, to more qualitative products, and exerting greater price competition in the on-line and off-line world. The MCA will continue to contribute to the work being carried out by the EU to remove barriers that continue to interfere with the free flow of online services across national borders.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective E1

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective E1**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective E1 (e-Commerce)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Development of a National eCommerce Strategy	
eCommerce strategy and plan	Consultation with stakeholders Strategic Plan and work programme Implementation of identified actions
Public and Service Provider Awareness / Confidence	
Ensuring compliance with the eCommerce Act	Ongoing monitoring and enforcement
eCommerce surveys	Design and commission eCommerce household and business surveys Publication and dissemination of results
European Dimension	
Proposed EU Regulation on Electronic Identification and Trust Services	Contribution to the proposed EU Regulation on Electronic Identification and Trust Services
Participation in eCommerce Expert Group (EU Commission)	Monitoring developments taking place within the EU Participation and contribution

2.3 Postal Services

2.3.1 Strategic Objective P1

Regulating a liberalised postal service environment that ensures ease of entry to new undertakings and sustainable competition.

Development of a Fully Competitive Environment

The MCA's primary objective with regard to the regulation of the postal sector is to safeguard the provision of an efficient, affordable, high quality universal postal service together with the promotion of fair market conditions, conducive to effective competition between postal operators.

Full market opening of the postal sector in Malta took place on the 1st of January 2013, when the area reserved to MaltaPost Plc, as the designated USP, was completely abolished. A regulatory framework that strikes a balance between ensuring fair and effective competition, on the one hand, and safeguarding the provision of the universal service on the other, is now in place.

In line with the new postal regulatory framework, MaltaPost was classified as having Significant Market Power (SMP) in all the markets falling within the scope of the universal service and thereby liable to the continued application of cost-orientation and tariff approval, among others. Such obligations are thus no longer automatically applicable as a Universal Service Obligation but accrue as a result of market dominance, following an analysis of the letter and parcel post markets in which MaltaPost operates.

The MCA will continue to monitor the application of the *ex-ante* remedies imposed on an SMP postal operator to prevent anti-competitive practices and to safeguard the interests of users. In addition, the MCA will continue to review and monitor the relevant postal service markets, the aim being to ensure that market review decisions remain relevant and that remedies reflect any changes in the markets.

Regulation of MaltaPost's tariffs

The MCA will continue to monitor MaltaPost's tariffs in order to, amongst other things, ensure the sustainability of the universal service. The postal regulatory framework requires that the tariffs for each of the postal services provided by the designated USP which form part of its universal service and where it still has a significant bearing in the market, must be, among other things, cost-oriented and give incentives for an efficient universal service provision.

Authorisations for the Provision of Postal Services

In line with the postal authorisation framework, an individual licence is required to provide postal services within the scope of the universal service, and a general authorisation is required to provide only postal services outside the scope of the universal service.

The MCA will continue to ensure that operators that start to offer services which fall within the scope of the universal postal service are appropriately licensed to carry out such activities. This is particularly important to safeguard the provision of the universal postal service.

Postal operators providing only postal services that fall outside the scope of the universal service (such as express and courier services) are in the main only required to provide assurance as to their adherence to the essential requirements relating to mail integrity and complaint handling, as long as their services are manifestly shown to be outside of the scope of the universal service.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective P1

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective P1**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective P1 (Postal)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Development of a Fully Competitive Environment	
Market analysis of the Parcel Post Market	Public consultation on the market analysis (published in Q4/2013) Response to Consultation / Decision
Monitoring the postal service markets	Ongoing monitoring of sector competition developments
MaltaPost's Price Control Framework	
MaltaPost price control framework	Ongoing monitoring of MaltaPost's tariffs in line with the established price control framework
Regulatory financial reporting	Ensuring MaltaPost's compliance with the regulatory financial reporting requirements

2.3.2   Strategic Objective P2

> Ensuring that postal undertakings provide a transparent, value-for-money service to users whilst adhering to incumbent social obligations.

Continued Availability of Universal Postal Service

The MCA will continue to ensure the availability of a universal postal service within, to, and from Malta at an affordable price for the benefit of all postal service users. Ensuring the financial sustainability of the universal postal service which meets the needs of business and residential customers is a priority for the MCA.

The MCA will this year review the minimum set of universal postal services that MaltaPost is required to provide in light of present day user requirements. The objective is to, where justified, ensure that the regulatory burden of the USO on MaltaPost, as the currently designated USP, is not excessive. However, for the universal postal services, it is essential that effective regulation is applied to ensure that those universal postal services are provided and are available. In this respect, the MCA will continue to monitor the USP's compliance with its regulatory obligations.

In relation to access to the universal postal service, the MCA intends to review its current decision on the minimum access points required to meet the postal service user's rights of access to the universal postal services. Access points for the provision of the universal service include public letter-boxes, retail counters and the facilities provided to deposit bulk mail.

The MCA will continue to monitor the QoS requirements of the universal postal service (for both inland and cross-border mail) to be achieved by MaltaPost to ensure that postal service users continue to get the appropriate first class service they are paying for.

Empowering Consumers

As in the case of the electronic communications sector, the MCA will continue to update its complaints handling mechanisms. The MCA will ensure that the public is kept informed of regulatory and market developments that are taking place within the postal sector. In addition, the MCA will empower postal service users by providing information regarding the provision of postal services in Malta. This information will help to ensure that postal service users are informed of the choices available to them from a range of postal service providers.

Information Gathering

The MCA will continue to collect relevant, accurate and timely information on the postal market in an efficient and effective manner and include this in published bi-annual communications market reviews.

This activity is supplemented with public and business perception surveys as necessary in order to assess, among others, the level of satisfaction with the services provided by the postal operators and the extent to which it is addressing customer needs. The results of these surveys serve as an additional source of information for regulatory decisions, as well as an indication of how postal users needs are changing over time. The MCA depends upon the close cooperation of postal service providers as regards data requests and development.

Ensuring Compliance

The MCA will continue to monitor compliance by the USP and other service providers with requirements in relation to protecting the integrity and security of mail, access to universal postal services, complaints handling and compensation schemes, as well as quality of service.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective P2

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective P2**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective P2 (Postal)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Continued Availability of the Universal Service	
Review of universal postal service obligation	Study on the USO in light of present day user requirements Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision
Review of access points to universal postal services	Public consultation Report on consultation / Decision
Monitoring of USP's (MaltaPost) activities	Ongoing monitoring of the universal postal service - mail integrity, postal service schemes, QoS, complaints handling
Information Gathering	
Collection of relevant, accurate and timely information on the postal markets	Inclusion in bi-annual communications market review report
Postal consumer perception surveys	Design and commission postal surveys - households, micro businesses and bulk mailers Publication and dissemination of results
Ensuring Compliance	
Compliance, enforcement and investigations	Ongoing monitoring and enforcement of authorised postal operators

2.3.3   Strategic Objective P3

Contributing to the development and implementation of postal regulatory policy at an international level

European / International Dimension

The MCA will continue to achieve this objective by means of the following key activities:

- Ongoing provision of advice to government on proposed EU legislative measures and other communications.

- Ongoing provision of advice to government on the interpretation and application of any new regulations, directives, recommendations and other EU documents as well as any related issues and disputes arising.

- Active participation and contribution to the European Regulators Group for Postal Services (ERGP), responsible to advise and assist the European Commission in consolidating the internal market for postal services and ensuring the consistent application of the European postal regulatory framework for postal services. The MCA is an active member of ERGP and is involved in all of its working groups. During 2014 the MCA will continue to be actively involved, with a particular focus on the following issues: tariff regulation in the context of the declining mail volumes, the implementation of the universal postal service and the effects of potential changes on the scope of the USO, and on the functioning of competition on European cross-border e-commerce parcels delivery market(s).

- Participation in the European Commission's Postal Directive Committee and the European Committee for Postal Regulation (CERP).

- Ongoing submission of accurate statistics and information to the EU and other international organisations.

- Collaboration with peer regulators on a one-to-one basis or collectively in the relevant organisations.

- Ongoing monitoring of the development of end-to-end competition in other Member States.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective P3

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective P3**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 - Strategic Objective P3 (Postal)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
European / International Dimension	
EU / International policy and regulatory initiatives	Ongoing participation and contribution in the following fora and related working groups: ERGP and the Postal Directive Committee

2.4   Information Society

2.4.1   Strategic Objective IS1

> Achieving widespread eLiteracy, digital inclusion and the use of ICTs as a tool to improve quality of life for all citizens, in particular, disadvantaged groups.

Digital Inclusion

The MCA will continue with the implementation of a number of thrusts emerging from the MCA's Digital Inclusion Strategy 2012 - 2015[16] (currently under review) aimed at facilitating and supporting the development of a digital society that capitalises on the opportunity brought about by ICTs for social cohesion and economic development.

During 2014 the MCA will focus its work on the following key tasks:

■   **Inspiring Everyone to Get Online**

- *eAgeing* - The MCA will continue to promote ICT use by the elderly as a means to encourage active ageing and eInclusion.

■   **Facilitating Access and Opportunity**

- *Consolidating the CTLC network* - The MCA will continue, together with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local councils and other community organisations, to develop the existent Community Technology Learning Centre (CTLC) network, aimed to increase reach, widen the variety of services to users, ensure quality and consistency in service delivery.

- *Free access to wireless Internet* - The MCA will continue to provide free Wi-Fi access in all public libraries and key public spaces together with the local wireless broadband players.

■   **Building Digital Skills and Competencies for a Networked Society**

- *Internet safety for minors* - In conjunction with key local stakeholders, the MCA will continue to participate in the EU Safer Internet Programme. This will include a series of media campaigns, publications, school campaigns and information days targeting children, their parents/carers, and educators.

- *Safer internet campaign* - The MCA will continue to promote tips and guidelines on how to keep safe when using the Internet.

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[16] Refer to the MCA's Digital Inclusion Strategy 2012 - 2015 - http://www.mca.org.mt/networked-strategies

■   **ICT as a Social Equaliser**

   – *Supporting civil society initiatives* - The MCA will continue to incentivise 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.

■   **Contributing to Better Policy**

   – *Monitoring and explaining the digital divide* - The MCA will continue to monitor ICT usage, adoption trends and competence levels of the Maltese population.

   – *Participating in European Debate* - The MCA will continue to engage in debates on the subject, namely at the EU, ITU and other international fora.

■   **Better Employability and Workforce Adaptability**

   – *ICT competences for better employability and workforce adaptability (Enter)* - The MCA will carry out a nationwide awareness campaign aimed at helping adults understand ICT and inspiring them to go online by explaining the benefits this can offer. In addition, the MCA will carry out two training programmes. The first programme will introduce participants to the basics of ICT in daily life contexts whilst the second will focus on the use of ICT in work related scenarios.

■   **UniteIT**

   – *Uniting Europe Through Digital Empowerment (UniteIT)* - The MCA will continue to participate in the UniteIT initiative by contributing to overcome the digital divide in the EU by means of networking and empowerment action, and supporting groups at risk of being excluded from important activities - such as youths and adults coming from disadvantaged groups.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective IS1

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective IS1**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective IS1 (Information Society)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Inspiring Everyone to Get Online	
eAgeing – mastering everyday technology	Increasing ICT awareness with the elderly population
Facilitating Access and Opportunity	
Free Wi-Fi in public places	Ongoing monitoring of free Wi-Fi spots
	Launch of more sites with a focus on Valletta and main promenades
	Review of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to ensure higher availability
Building Digital Skills and Competencies for a Networked Society	
Be Smart Online – Making responsible choices online	Produce and disseminate resources for parents
	Mark safer Internet Day 2014
	Hold a seminar with foreign experts
	Conclude parents / carers training
	Organise an Industry Forum
	Hold an event to exchange expertise/best practice with non-EU countries
ICT as a Social Equaliser	
Supporting civil society initiatives	Meeting with NGOs to setup collaboration agreements
	Identification of target audience through NGOs and public entities
	Identification of appropriate projects
Better Employability and Work Force Adaptability	
ICT competencies for better employability and workforce adaptability - Enter	Awareness campaign
	Training initiatives for adults – Basic ICT in daily life, ICT in work related scenarios
UniteIT	
UniteIT	Participation and contribution in the EU UniteIT initiative

2.4.2   Strategic Objective IS2

> Encouraging the use of eBusiness models by local enterprises as a means to improve competitiveness.

eBusiness

The MCA will continue with the implementation of a number of thrusts emerging from the MCA's eBusiness Strategy 2012 – 2015[17] (currently under review) aimed at facilitating the emergence of a Networked Enterprise in Malta. This will form part of a wider national drive to place ICT at the centre of the country's economic and social development and aims to assist the Maltese entrepreneur to identify the available ICT tools.

During 2014 the MCA will focus its work on the following key tasks:

■   **Awareness and Motivation**

- *Best practice showcase* - The MCA will identify, document and promote best practice case studies of local ICT applications within the advanced or strategic sectors.

- *eBiz Awards* - The MCA will hold its annual eBiz awards with a view to showcasing and promoting the best 'ICT in business' solutions implemented in Malta.

- *Business executive campaign* - The MCA will run a campaign targeted at business leaders in the mature and advanced sectors. The campaign will showcase testimonials and best practices from foreign executives who have managed to transform business through ICT and entrepreneurial flair.

■   **Capacity Building**

- *ICT skill audit kit for micro-enterprise* - Jointly with industry representation, the MCA will develop an ICT skill audit kit that enables small and micro enterprises to gauge their level of readiness for ICT take-up. The kit will also serve as an instrument to identify skills gaps and training needs.

- *ICT skill gap analysis for small and micro enterprises* - Based on the skills audit kit, the MCA will continue to conduct regular skills gap analyses with a view to provide a picture on the level of ICT skills amongst micro-enterprises operating in specific sectors.

- *Training for vulnerable enterprises* - Jointly with industry representation, training providers and the CTLCs the MCA will identify, promote and facilitate training opportunities for enterprises in sectors considered vulnerable.

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[17] Refer to the MCA's eBusiness Strategy 2012 – 2015 - http://www.mca.org.mt/networked-strategies

■ **Exploiting Opportunities**

− *Galileo pilot projects* - The MCA will co-ordinate pilot project initiatives related to the European Galileo programme.[18]

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[18] The Galileo programme is Europe's initiative for a state-of-the-art global satellite navigation system, providing accurate, guaranteed global positioning services under civilian control.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective IS2

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to the achievement of **Strategic Objective IS2**.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Strategic Objective IS2 (Information Society)	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Awareness and Motivation	
Best practice showcase	Sourcing best practices
	Organise workshops
	Publish Information Sheets
eBusiness awards	Launch of 2014 awards
	Disseminate winning solutions for 2014
Capacity Building	
Training for vulnerable enterprises	Identify vulnerable enterprises
	Commence training programme
ICT skill audit kit for micro enterprises	Develop a check list and user manual to be used for carrying out self assessment of their employees' skills
	Information sessions
	Dissemination of user manual and check list
eBusiness campaigns for vulnerable sectors	Identify vulnerable sectors
	Discuss and analyse how ICT can help these sectors
	Identify and engage experts to offer technical support to vulnerable sectors
	Organise seminars
Exploiting Opportunities	
Galileo pilot projects	Co-ordination of pilot projects related to the European Galileo programme

2.5   Organisational

The MCA is committed to maintaining an efficient and effective strategic and business planning function, supported by the monitoring of actual performance against set targets.

In order to optimise its performance, the MCA is also committed to ensuring that its knowledge-workers possess the necessary expertise to contribute fully towards the achievement of its objectives. The MCA will ensure that their knowledge remains up-to-date through a programme of ongoing investment in training and continuous learning.

The MCA will continue to focus its work on the development of new e-services as well as the efficient utilisation of existing ones both internally to simplify interaction within MCA, as well as externally via online services (including the effective dissemination of information via its website and other digital media) to all its stakeholders.

Individual and organisational performance will continue, along with ways to work smarter and minimise the cost of regulation, both internally and in our dealings with industry and other stakeholders.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Organisational

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2014 that will contribute to working effectively.

Priority Programme of Works 2014 – Organisational	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Organisational	
Strategy and business plan	Development of MCA's Business Plan 2015 – 2017
Annual report and financial statements	Publication of MCA's Annual Report 2013
MCA conference	MCA conference - planned for October 2014
Performance management review	Ongoing quarterly performance management reviews
Bi-annual communications market reviews	Publication of Communications market reviews: July 2013 - December 2013, January 2014 – June 2014

2.6   Delivery of Work Programme - Dependencies

Delivering on all areas of the MCA's work programme is vital for the MCA to meet its statutory duties to citizens and consumers. The MCA will work to ensure that the priority work streams for 2014 are adequately resourced to ensure delivery of its planned objectives. Where additional resource requirements arise in the course of the year due to unexpected developments, these priority areas will take precedence over other areas of activity.

The priority outputs listed under each strategic objective represent the MCA's current best view of the priority work streams that the MCA will be undertaking during 2014. These are presented to provide as much clarity as possible. However, there are a number of factors that are beyond the MCA's control and which could impinge on the successful delivery of its work programme namely:

■   external dependencies that may affect our timing;

■   interdependencies between work-streams of work, that may entail knock-on effects in the event of delays; and

■   external events that are difficult to predict and which we are required to respond to.

The MCA's experience over the past years has shown that, while the MCA's strategic plan enables us to identify the key areas to address for the longer-term future, the complexity and fast-paced nature of changes and developments in the communications sector means that unexpected issues will inevitable arise.

The MCA may have to adjust its plans in a variety of areas due to unplanned external developments (for example in the light of ongoing market, legislative and regulatory developments). The MCA therefore intends to retain flexibility within the 2014 work programme, in order to allow it to respond to changes and new issues arising in the course of the year. The MCA will update its plans and make adjustments to its 2014 work programme, as necessary, to make sure it keeps pace with the rate of market change and any critical issues affecting citizens and consumers at any one time.

3.   FINANCIALS

The MCA is committed to providing value for money services to its stakeholders. The MCA reviews its processes and systems on an ongoing basis in order to ensure that it continues to deliver on its objectives and provide an effective service. The MCA continuously strives to streamline its administration and optimise the cost of regulation whilst maintaining the highest possible standards of efficiency and effectiveness.

The MCA will ensure that it has adequate finances to meet its regulatory mandate and will make sure that it delivers the best possible service to its stakeholders. In so doing this the MCA will also ensure that it provides a full accounting of its activities as required by law.

3.1   Financing the MCA's Activity

Electronic Communications

The regulation of the electronic communications sector is funded on a self-financing basis via the levying of administrative fees collected from the sector players. These administrative fees are used solely to cover the administrative costs incurred in regulating the electronic communications sector. In 2014 the recurrent cost for regulating the electronic communication sector is expected to be €3,313,905.

Radio Spectrum Management / Radiocommunications Equipment Licensing

The financial requirements related to the management and monitoring of radio spectrum and the management of radio communications equipment licences is financed via the deduction of the necessary amounts from fees collected on behalf of Government. In 2014 the recurrent cost for the management and monitoring of the radio spectrum is expected to be €408,667. Furthermore, the capital expenditure in relation to spectrum monitoring equipment is expected to amount to €35,000. In 2014 the recurrent cost for the management of licensing of radiocommunications equipment is expected to be €75,576.

Postal

The regulation of the postal sector is funded via the levying of administrative fees collected from the sector players. The administrative fees are used solely to cover the administrative costs incurred in regulating the postal sector. In 2014 the recurrent cost for regulating the postal sector is expected to be €252,069.

eCommerce

The financial requirements with respect to facilitating the uptake of eCommerce and ensuring compliance with the Electronic Commerce Act are catered for via the deduction of the necessary amounts from fees that are payable to Government. In 2014 the recurrent cost with regard to eCommerce is expected to be €155,022.

Information Society

Activities carried out by the MCA in relation to the Information Society initiatives are in the main financed by Government via a yearly Government subvention. In 2014, the activities related to dealing with the IS initiatives is estimated to amount to €527,399.[19]

3.2   MCA's Projected Expenditure

The MCA's projected expenditure for 2014 for each of the above activities is expected to be as shown in the table overleaf.

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[19] This excludes EU grants receivable to cover recurrent expenditure of specific IS initiatives.

MCA Projected Expenditure - 2014						
	Staff Costs (€)	Administrative Expenditure (€)	Operational Expenditure (€)	Project Expenditure (€)	Depreciation Charge (€)	Total (€)
Electronic Communications	1,872,255	354,746	493,875	413,207	179,822	3,313,905
Radio Spectrum Management	262,143	56,262	72,216	18,046	-	408,667
Radio Communications Equipment Licensing	57,478	15,357	2,064	677	-	75,576
Postal	148,306	17,214	6,945	79,604	-	252,069
eCommerce	28,360	4,304	16,520	105,838	-	155,022
Information Society	208,288	110,261	11,616	195,899	1,335	527,399
EU Funding - Information Society	86,506	-	-	403,331		489,837