Malta Communications Authority
Annual Plan 2021

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

This document represents the Malta Communications Authority's (MCA) Annual Plan 2021. It sets out the priority work-streams and related individual tasks that the MCA will be conducting during 2021. The Annual Plan is reflective of the MCA's Strategy Update covering the period 2021 - 2023.

1.1 Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives

The mission of the MCA is:

'To promote and safeguard a communications environment that is conducive to investment, innovation, economic growth and social well-being'

For the MCA to achieve its mission over the next three years, the following are the identified strategic objectives emerging from the strategy update for the period.

1.	Promoting and safeguarding competition in the electronic communications sector.
2.	Ensuring that electronic communications undertakings provide a transparent, quality service to users in line with incumbent social obligations.
3.	Maintaining open, safe and secure electronic communications.
4.	Maximising the potential of radio spectrum.
5.	Supervising the provision of relevant digital services.
6.	Safeguarding sustainable competition in the postal sector.
7.	Ensuring that postal undertakings provide a transparent, quality service to users in line with incumbent social obligations.
8.	Contributing to the ongoing development and implementation of sector policy.
9.	Conducting relevant research, exploring and developing emergent policy areas.

1.2 Legal Frameworks

The MCA's mission, mandate and functions derive from the Malta Communications Authority Act, Cap 418. The MCA is responsible for:

- the regulation of electronic communications networks and services, radiocommunications equipment and the management of the radio spectrum and numbering resource as defined in the Electronic Communications (Regulation) Act, Cap 399;

- the regulation of postal services as determined by the Postal Services Act, Cap 254;

- ensuring compliance with the Electronic Commerce Act, Cap 426;[1] and for

- improving the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, S.L. 418.03.

As reflected in the Second Schedule of the Malta Communications Authority Act, the MCA is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the following EU regulations:

- Regulation (EU) 2015/2120 laying down measures concerning open internet access and amending Directive 2002/22/EC on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services and Regulation (EU) No 531/2012 on roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union;

- Regulation (EU) 2018/644 on cross-border parcel delivery services;

- Regulation (EU) 2018/302 on addressing unjustified geo-blocking and other forms of discrimination based on customers' nationality, place of residence or place of establishment within the internal market (referred to as the Geo-blocking Regulation); and

- Regulation (EU) 2017/1128 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market (referred to as the Cross-border Portability Regulation).

1.3   Accountability Framework

The MCA is accountable to the Minister responsible for Communications for the preparation and presentation of its financial estimates for approval, following an annual consultation by the responsible Minister with the Minister responsible for Finance. The MCA presents its Annual Report on its operations for the preceding year to the Minister responsible for the MCA and the Minister responsible for Finance. The MCA is also held to account by the sectors it regulates and by the public on whose behalf it regulates. On a yearly basis the MCA publishes its Strategy Update, Annual Plan and its Annual Report on its website.

1.4   Measuring Performance

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

- carries out biannual market reviews providing an overview of the trends in the sectors under its mandate;

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[1] The MCA is required to ensure the proper functioning of the eCommerce sector as provided for by the Electronic Commerce Act which follows the EU Directive 2000/31/EC. The same applies to eIDAS (EU Regulation 910/2014) where MCA assumes the role of a supervisory authority.

- conducts performance measurement and monitoring in line with the key performance indicators (KPIs) identified in the MCA's strategy update and other benchmarks, such as the EU's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)[2]; and

- monitors the achievement of its objectives and work programme, identifies any shortfalls and takes the necessary steps to remedy them.

1.5 Communication and Engagement

The MCA is committed to engaging with various stakeholders, including citizens, consumers, authorised entities, government departments and other regulators, constituted bodies, the business community, the EU, and various other international bodies. A variety of communication channels, such as its website and social media channels, are utilised in order to effectively build greater awareness of the MCA's activities, its roles and responsibilities, its various initiatives and on general trends in the sectors it regulates. The MCA also uses these communication channels to empower consumers by providing information on their rights and in assisting them in making informed choices across all communications services. In the context of regulatory decision-making stakeholders have the opportunity to provide the MCA with feedback and express opinions on developing regulatory measures and proposed regulatory decisions through an established consultation process.

1.6 Work Programme

Section 2 sets out the MCA's programme of work to be carried out during 2021. The objectives of the work programme are aligned with the MCA's Strategy Update 2021 - 2023.

The work programme presents continuity in a number of legislative and regulatory initiatives that are well-under way, whilst taking into consideration new developments that will have an impact on the communications sector and on the MCA's organisational and operational capacity.

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[2] The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) is a composite index that summarises relevant indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracks the evolution of EU member states in digital competitiveness.

2. Programme of Work and Priorities

What follows is an overview of the MCA's programme of work for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of the identified strategic objectives.

2.1 Strategic Objective 1 - Promoting and safeguarding competition in the electronic communications sector

Overview

The MCA has a central role in ensuring that consumers and businesses benefit from a range of electronic communications services and applications that support their social and economic needs, with the market providing good outcomes in terms of choice, price, quality, investment and innovation. The MCA does this by ensuring that markets can work effectively, through regulation where appropriate, so that consumers can gain from the benefits of competition. Appropriate regulatory measures have continued to support both infrastructure- and service-based competition in the electronic communication sector.

Changing consumer and business needs continue to drive demand for better quality of service, improved reliability and security, and additional bandwidth on both fixed and mobile networks. The MCA will continue to focus its work on promoting and safeguarding competition, and creating a favourable climate for increased investment and innovation in next-generation fixed and mobile networks.

Safeguarding a competitive environment

To be competitive in the electronic communications sector, operators must provide a range of innovative wholesale and retail products. Competition is the driving force behind markets, driving investment and innovation, and delivering quality services to users at lower prices. However, markets do not always work well, and regulatory interventions are sometimes needed to ensure that markets work correctly and consumers are protected.

The MCA promotes competition and consumer choice in electronic communications markets through the Significant Market Power (SMP) Framework. The MCA reviews a pre-determined set of electronic communications markets and assesses whether or not they are, or are likely to become effectively competitive. If not, the MCA imposes appropriate pro-competitive obligations as necessary, including those relating to access, pricing, non-discrimination and transparency. Such obligations are designed to promote competition by enabling other operators and new entrants to compete on a level playing field with the SMP operator.

In 2020 the MCA concluded an assessment of the wholesale fixed broadband access market. Given the presence of two large operators, the MCA assessed the market for the presence of joint dominance and has found that there is inadequate competition in the market. The impact of the outcome of this analysis will shape the competition scenario for the provision of electronic

communications services in Malta for the foreseeable future. The MCA plans to publish its decision in the first half of 2021.

In 2021 the MCA will commence a review of the market for wholesale high quality access at a fixed location. Wholesale high quality access services, also known as 'wholesale leased lines' services, play an important role in facilitating the provision of ICT services to medium and large sized business.

In addition, the MCA will continue to monitor the progress in the provision of the existing regulated fixed broadband access (VULA) agreement. Reviews will take place, as necessary, in order to support ongoing viable access arrangements.

Facilitating infrastructure roll-out and sharing

The MCA will continue to facilitate the deployment of very high capacity fixed and wireless broadband networks by providing the necessary support and guidance to sector players and other institutional players. Such support and guidance will address areas related to the sharing and re-use of existing physical infrastructure and access to in-building physical infrastructure. The MCA will also work with other competent authorities so as to further facilitate the deployment of very high capacity networks, including fibre and 5G networks.

Managing information as the means to promote competition

The MCA will continue to collect data from the electronic communications service providers and publish bi-annual market reviews, quarterly market data and monthly retail price movements. The data collected from the service providers is vital in supporting the MCA's regulatory decisions that serve to promote and safeguard competition. The information collected is also a valuable tool in empowering end-users to make informed choices (refer to Strategic Objective 2).

This activity is supplemented by public and business perception surveys. The results of these surveys serve as an additional input to the shaping of regulatory decisions and indicate how consumers' preferences, behaviours and perceptions of electronic communications services are changing over time. In 2021 the MCA will commence a new round of consumer and business perception surveys across all the electronic communications markets.

Managing the compliance framework

In addition to promoting competition and consumer choice in electronic communications markets through the SMP framework, the MCA ensures efficient and effective use of radio spectrum (refer to Strategic Objective 4) and numbering resources. Radio spectrum and numbering resources are essential for the functioning of electronic communications.

The MCA will continue to manage Malta's numbering plan by allocating numbers to service providers for new (e.g. IoT technologies) and existing services, and by monitoring their utilisation to ensure efficient use of numbers. The MCA will also continue to ensure that all end-users who so request can retain their number(s) independently of the undertaking providing the service.

Effective competition also depends on factors such as the ability and willingness of customers to switch suppliers in response to a better deal in the marketplace. In the context of promoting and safeguarding competition in the electronic communications sector the MCA will continue to ensure that there are low barriers to consumers exercising their choice.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 1

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 1.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 1	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Wholesale local access provided at a fixed location - Market review and analysis Wholesale central access provided at a fixed location for the mass market - Market review and analysis	– Public consultation (Q2/2020) – Notification of draft Decision to the European Commission – Report on Consultation / Decision
Wholesale high-quality access and connectivity provided at a fixed Location – Market review and analysis	– Public consultation – Notification of draft Decision to the European Commission – Report on Consultation / Decision (Q1/2022)
Monitoring GO's VULA Reference Offer (RO)	– Monitoring of the VULA Reference Offer – Monitoring of VULA service level agreements – Review of revisions to wholesale charges
Facilitating sharing of physical infrastructure	– Guidance on access to physical infrastructure and access to in-building physical infrastructure to operators – Mediation services to facilitate agreement on issues related to physical infrastructure access and pricing
Consumer Perception Surveys *(Mobile Telephony, Fixed Telephony, Fixed Broadband, Broadcasting and Bundles)*	– Review and update consumer perception surveys – Commence field work – Analysis of survey findings and publication
Business Perception Survey *(Mobile Telephony, Fixed Telephony, Business connectivity, Broadband)*	– Review and update business perception survey – Commence field work

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 1	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	– Analysis of survey findings and publication
Informing stakeholders on key data and trends in the electronic communications sector	– Publication of bi-annual market review report (*June - December 2020 / January - June 2021*)
	– Publication of quarterly data report sheets
	– Publication of a quarterly pricing bulletin

2.2 Strategic Objective 2 - Ensuring that electronic communications undertakings provide a transparent, quality service to users in line with incumbent social obligations

Overview

While digital innovation and competition helps to deliver widespread, affordable and good quality electronic communications services for consumers, competition cannot deliver this alone. The MCA will therefore continue to focus its work on empowering consumers by providing clear information on their rights and in assisting them in making better informed choices in their use of digital communications services. The MCA will also continue to ensure that public electronic communications providers provide value-for-money services to users in line with their incumbent social obligations.

Reviewing operators' quality of service (QoS) delivery especially in data services

In 2021 the MCA will publish it decision on the measurement and publication of QoS related information across all publicly available electronic communications services. The MCA will take into consideration the BEREC[3] guidelines when specifying the QoS parameters to be measured and the content, form and manner of the information to be published. The measurement and publication of such information is intended to provide greater transparency on the quality difference between different types of electronic communications services, and therefore lead to overall improving service provision to the public. The information will ensure that people and businesses have the right information to make informed decisions about the electronic communications services best for them.

Improving the MCA's capabilities vis-à-vis consumer protection

Beyond being aware of the service that consumers are actually receiving, end-users of electronic communications services have a right to protection with respect to subscriber contracts. Contracts are an important tool for end-users of electronic communications services to ensure transparency of information and legal certainty. In 2021 the MCA will finalise a review of existing decisions relating to consumer contracts and, where permissible, provide further protection to consumers in line with the principles and obligations set out in the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC)[4]. The MCA will also finalise a review of existing decisions regarding end-user rights (such a switching and contract duration and termination) considering that changes may be required in order to implement the EECC.

Reviewing the Universal Service Obligation (USO) framework in the context of current and envisaged user needs

The Coronavirus pandemic has amplified the importance of having an adequate and affordable broadband internet access service in order to effectively participate in society. In 2021, following the transposition of the EECC, the MCA will publish its decision on the minimum functional characteristics

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[3] BEREC stands for Body of European Regulators in Electronic Communications.

[4] Directive (EU) 2018/1972 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code (EECC), is currently in the course of transposition in national Law.

of an adequate broadband internet access service and the procedure for ensuring the availability of an adequate broadband internet access service, including the underlying connection, at a fixed location for all end-users. The MCA will also work with Government to ensure the affordability of broadband for consumers with low-income or special social needs. Broadband as a universal service will present new opportunities in bridging the digital divide and in the making of a truly digital society.

The MCA will continue to monitor the performance of GO's USO. GO is currently required to, among others, provide a publicly available telephone network at a fixed location, capable of supporting voice and data communications in areas where no other undertakings offer such a service at an affordable price. GO is also required to provide specific measures for users with disabilities. In 2021 the MCA will finalise an assessment of GO's claim for funding the net-cost incurred in the provision of the USO for the years 2017 and 2018. The MCA will also commence an assessment of the net-cost incurred for the year 2019.

Improving consumer awareness

Consumer awareness on fixed and mobile products and services - In 2021 the MCA will implement the necessary changes to its price and service comparison tool ([Telecosts](#)) in order to make the tool more accessible and easier to use. The price and service comparison tool assists consumers in comparing and evaluating different phone, fixed and mobile broadband, and pay-TV services, both on price and quality of service. In addition, the MCA will also continue to report on pricing trends in fixed, mobile and pay-TV services.

Operator contracts - The MCA will continue to monitor the contractual obligations of all electronic communications operators to ensure that they are in line with applicable legislation. The MCA will ensure that such contracts provide clear and relevant information helping users to take informed and correct decisions when acquiring electronic communications services.

Termination of contracts and switching providers - The MCA will continue to monitor inter-operator porting and switching processes, and the extent to which they promote good consumer and competition outcomes. In addition, the MCA will continue to monitor and assess the cancellation and termination arrangements of electronic communications service providers (after or during the initial commitment period), and the impact these have on consumers' ability to exit their service contract quickly, conveniently and without error.

Mobile roaming rules - The MCA will continue to monitor compliance with the roaming rules,[5] including through consumer complaints, and engage with stakeholders if compliance concerns arise and where appropriate take enforcement action.

Ensuring consumer rights and customer service - The MCA will continue to ensure that electronic communications service providers uphold the rights of their customers and deliver acceptable levels of customer service. The MCA will continue to handle and resolve complaints it receives from

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[5] Since 15th June 2017 consumers who have roaming services have been able to use their phone abroad within the EU for no extra charge, subject to certain safeguards.

customers of service providers. In 2021 the MCA plans to take on the role as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) entity, as established in the EECC, with a view to resolving disputes between providers and consumers.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 2

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 2.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 2	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
QoS framework for providers of publicly available electronic communications services	– Public consultation (Q4/2020) – Report on consultation / Decision – Implementation of QoS framework (monitoring and publication of QoS measurements)
Review of subscribers' contract related decisions	– Public consultation – Report on consultation / Decision
Broadband as a universal service - Availability of an adequate broadband internet access service	– Public consultation (Q3/2020) – Report on consultation / Decision
Broadband as a universal service - Affordability of an adequate broadband internet access service	– Public consultation – Report on consultation / Decision – Call for expression of interest (as required) – Designation of universal service provider/s (as required)
Review of GO's claim for funding the net cost incurred to provide the USO	– Public consultation on GO's funding claim for the years 2017 and 2018 – Decision on GO's funding claim and source of funding for the years 2017 and 2018 – Assessment of GO's funding claim for the year 2019
Management of the Price Comparison Portal	– Maintaining the Price Comparison Portal - electronic communications services / packages (including prices and quality of service)

2.3 Strategic Objective 3 - Maintaining open, safe and secure electronic communications

Overview

The Coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated the strategic importance of a robust, resilient and secure digital infrastructure to the social welfare of everyone in society and the continued functioning of the economy. Society has become increasingly dependent on access to open, safe, reliable and secure electronic communications systems. A growing number of basic functions in all sectors of society such as digital services, electricity supply, water, health care, transport, finance, etc. require that electronic communications networks, services and equipment work everywhere - and at all times.

Building the necessary network and cyber-security capacity

In 2021 the MCA will continue building necessary network and cyber-security capacity. The MCA will ensure that providers of public electronic communications networks and publicly available electronic communications services manage security risks posed to the security of networks and services and provide appropriate levels of resilience. The MCA will continue to work with the European Commission and ENISA[6] to implement mitigating measures to address 5G cybersecurity risks[7] and the secure 5G deployment.

The MCA will also finalise its review of the minimum security and integrity requirements and reporting obligations of public electronic communications network and service providers. The review will provide further clarity on what is expected of the service providers. Moreover, the establishment of the security and reporting measures will facilitate future actions that the MCA may need to take in case of operators who are not compliant with the legal requirements.

Analysing net neutrality practices

The open internet is considered an important building block in the EU electronic communications rules, as it guarantees, through specific obligations on the operators, an open internet for the benefit of end-users. This enables innovation by internet users and access to the content and services of their choice. The MCA will continue to closely monitor and ensure compliance by the operators with net neutrality principles, taking utmost account of BEREC guidelines, in order to safeguard equal and non-discriminatory treatment of traffic in the provision of internet access services and related end-user rights. The MCA will continue to publish its annual report regarding its monitoring and findings. With the roll-out of 5G services, expected during the business plan period, the MCA will have an important role in contributing to continued, predictable and consistent application of the open internet regulation.

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[6] The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).

[7] EU toolbox on 5G cybersecurity and the secure 5G deployment.

Monitoring security and integrity of public fixed and mobile networks

The MCA ensures that operators take appropriate measures to ensure the integrity and security of their networks and services in line with the established technical guidelines issued by ENISA. The MCA also ensures that incidents on network failures above a certain threshold are reported to the MCA. The MCA will continue to follow up any incidents of concern in order to understand their cause, the appropriateness of the operator's response, and the steps that have been taken to minimise the risk of recurrence. On an annual basis the MCA reports any severe incidents to ENISA together with the action taken.

The MCA will continue to work closely with the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Local Enforcement (MHAS), the Critical Information Infrastructure Protection (CIIP) Unit within the Critical Infrastructure Protection Directorate (CIPD), the Office of the Information and Data Protection Commission (IDPC), Malta Security Services (MSS) and the police on matters related to cyber-security.

The MCA will continue its routine monitoring of electronic magnetic field (EMF) emissions 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). In addition, the MCA will maintain ongoing liaison with the department responsible for environmental health on EMF related issues and will continue with its EMF auditing programme. In 2020 the MCA commenced with the implementation of a project to facilitate the monitoring of EMF emissions by carrying out such monitoring remotely.

Participating in the Internet Governance Forum

The Internet Governance Forum serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the Internet. In 2021 the MCA will continue to contribute to the Internet Governance Forum dealing with matters relating to: data governance; safety, security, stability and resilience; and digital inclusion.

Mapping broadband services as an information tool relative to broadband network capabilities

In 2020 the MCA commenced an exercise leading to the mapping of information on the available fixed and mobile electronic communications networks and services across Malta and Gozo. Such a platform is intended to, among others, enable consumers to be in a position to check coverage and availability of fixed and wireless broadband infrastructures, information on the operators, service and technology availability, available bandwidths and quality of public electronic communications networks and services. The mapping of broadband networks will also assist the MCA in ensuring that both physical and spectrum infrastructure is effective, resilient and ready for the future as well as maintaining the systems that have supported communications in Malta in the past.

This initiative is also intended to implement the obligations emerging from the EECC on the mapping of the reach of electronic communications networks capable of delivering broadband services. In implementing a mapping solution, the MCA will also take into consideration BEREC guidelines on

geographic surveys of broadband networks. The implementation of the broadband mapping solution is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 3

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 3.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 3	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Cyber-security of 5G Networks	– Monitor development within the EU on the implementation of the 5G Cybersecurity Toolbox – Implementation of respective security instruments as identified within the EU 5G Cyber-Security Toolbox.
Network security and integrity guidelines	– Public consultation on the minimum security and integrity requirements – Response to consultation / Decision – Commence preparatory work on commissioning of security audits – Audit the public electronic communications networks and service providers in order to assess the measures being taken to comply with obligations
Notification requirements related to security and integrity of networks	– Monitor operator reports on integrity and security incidents – Report on severe incidents to ENISA and the action taken
Net Neutrality - Compliance and Reporting	– Monitoring of the product offers by internet access service providers – Annual report on the MCA's activities
Internet Governance Forum	– Participation and contribution to the Internet Governance Forum
EMF emissions - monitoring compliance	– Audit of EMF measurements – Publication of results

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 3	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	– Information and education campaign of 5G and EMF
Mapping - Broadband Infrastructure and Services	– Scoping the broadband mapping exercise – Identification of a mapping solution – Implementation of mapping solution (End 2022)

2.4 Strategic Objective 4 - Maximising the potential of radio spectrum

Overview

The MCA is responsible for ensuring the efficient use of the radio spectrum identified in the National Radio Frequency Plan.[8] This includes planning for future spectrum requirements, such as for mobile data and fixed wireless backhaul. Efficient use of the radio spectrum resource is a key factor in terms of delivery of services, competition, choice and widespread availability. The MCA ensures that sufficient radio spectrum is made available for new wireless technologies in order to facilitate the deployment of new and innovative services.

Assignment of 5G radio spectrum bands

In 2021 the MCA will make available the 700 MHz, 3.4 - 3.8 GHz and the 24.25 - 27.5 GHz radio spectrum bands for the deployment of next generation (5G) wireless networks in Malta. The licence conditions will, among others, include measures related to quality of service and security of 5G networks. The licence conditions will facilitate infrastructure sharing, in order to facilitate access to base stations and small-area wireless access points (also referred to as small cells) for both existing and new operators. The licence conditions will also support the availability of private 5G network solutions.

In 2021 the MCA will lay down the reassignment frameworks for radio spectrum licences which will expire over the coming years. The rights of use of the 2.1 GHz band currently assigned to GO, Vodafone and Melita for the provision of 3G mobile services, will expire in 2022.

The MCA will continue to work with the European Commission to make the 900 MHz, 1800 MHz and the 2.1 GHz radio spectrum bands available for the deployment of 5G technologies.

The MCA will also continue to work with the respective entities and agencies responsible, among others, for the building and upkeep of the countries roads, ancillary road infrastructure, as well as the relevant street furniture in order to facilitate the deployment of 5G networks.

Implementing the TV and Radio transmission strategy for commercial transmissions and contributing to General Interest (GI) broadcasting policy

GO's commercial DTT spectrum licence expires in May 2021. In 2020 the MCA published an expression for interest for the rights of use of the sub-700 MHz band in order to ensure continuity of commercial DTT in Malta. GO has expressed interest in the rights of use of the sub-700 MHz band until June 2022.

During 2021 the MCA will continue to contribute to the committee led by the Broadcasting Authority (BA) and tasked with updating Government's policy for General Interest (GI) broadcasting. In addition, the MCA will support BA in relation to resilience and continuity plans concerning FM radio

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[8] The MCA regularly reviews the National Frequency Plan (NFP) to reflect changes to the allocation of spectrum taking into account European and International regulations.

transmission. The MCA will also provide recommendations to the BA regarding Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) national broadcast.

In 2021 the MCA will lay down the reassignment framework for the rights of use of radio spectrum used for DAB radio services, currently assigned to Digi B Network until March 2022.

Ensuring efficient and effective use of spectrum and associated radiocommunications equipment

The MCA manages the authorisation framework of radiocommunications equipment. The MCA will continue to enhance the radiocommunications equipment licensing regime and will examine the scope for applying further general authorisations where appropriate.

In 2021 the MCA will commence a review of the licensing regime for PMSE (Programme-making and special events) service links in order to ensure the efficient use of spectrum. The MCA will also finalise a review of the current licensing regime for fixed links (specifically in the case of fixed links using spectrum above 40 GHz) capable of providing base-station backhauling for the deployment of 5G networks.

Managing effectively the spectrum compliance framework

The increasing demand for radio spectrum leads to a corresponding increase in the risk of interference. The MCA will continue to monitor the radio spectrum and take all necessary action to prevent harmful interference and to mitigate it when it occurs. In 2020 the MCA carried out a major upgrade of its radio spectrum monitoring facilities to be in a better position to plan for future assignment of radio spectrum as well as for monitoring all kinds of emissions.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 4

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 4.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 4	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Reassignment of the rights of use of spectrum for commercial DTT (sub-700 MHz DTT)	– Assignment of spectrum for DTT (Q1/2021)
Assignment of the rights of use of 5G spectrum - 700 MHz band, 3.4 – 3.8 GHz and 26 GHz band	– Public consultation on the spectrum assignment framework (Q1/2021) – Response to consultation / Decision – Invite expressions of interest for the rights of use

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 4	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	– Assignment of the rights of use (depending on market interest)
Review of 900 MHz, 1800 MHz radio spectrum bands to enable 5G technologies	– Consult on the proposed revisions to the various national instruments concerning the harmonised 900 MHz, 1800 MHz bands – Update current radio spectrum licences
Reassignment of the rights of use of spectrum - 2.1 GHz band	– Public consultation on the reassignment framework for the 2.1 GHz radio spectrum band – Response to consultation / Decision on the spectrum reassignment framework – Invite expressions of interest for the rights of use of the 2.1 GHz band – Award of the rights of use of the 2.1 GHz band (dependent on market interest)
Reassignment of rights of use of spectrum used for T-DAB	– Public consultation on reassignment framework for the rights of use of spectrum for T-DAB – Response to consultation / Decision on the spectrum reassignment framework – Invite expressions of interest for the rights of use of radio spectrum for T-DAB services – Issue relevant rights of use for radio spectrum for T-DAB
Review of licensing framework for fixed links operating above 40 GHz	– Public consultation – Response to Consultation / Decision on licensing framework

2.5   Strategic Objective 5 – Supervising the provision of relevant digital services

Overview

The MCA is responsible for supervising the provision of relevant digital services. The regulation of digital services is addressed through a mix of regulatory oversight and consumer information. The MCA also targets web accessibility as a means of digital inclusion.

Updating the National eCommerce Strategy

In 2021 the MCA will update the National eCommerce Strategy which expires at the end of 2020. The new strategy will outline the framework for the development of eCommerce in Malta over the coming years. The strategy will take into consideration the rapid developments in eCommerce over the past few years and explore how proliferation of the service can be assisted via the appropriate policy measures. The strategy will assess how both incoming and local eCommerce can proliferate to the benefit of both local businesses and the general public.

Organising stakeholder fora, commissioning of surveys of public usage and perceptions of eCommerce, implementing targeted information campaigns.

The MCA will continue to focus its work on awareness raising by ensuring that Malta-located information society service providers (ISSPs) are aware of their obligations arising out of the Electronic Commerce Act and that consumers are aware of their rights and avenues of redress. In particular, the MCA will continue to:

- provide online guides aimed at businesses that sell goods and/or services online and those that intend to set up their own online business;

- provide information to service providers regarding requirements relative to the take-up and pursuit of such services;

- enhance trust in digital services, including by providing a high level of consumer protection and transparency of digital services;

- provide information to users of eCommerce services of their rights and the pitfalls in online ordering that they should be looking out for;

- assess the adoption of eCommerce by local businesses and consumers via the findings of eCommerce business and consumer surveys;

- carry-out educational programmes, via the *eBiznify* initiative, to encourage local enterprise to undergo digital transformation;

- hold the eCommerce forum to keep interested parties informed of regulatory and technical developments; and

- participate and contribute to fora targeting the uptake of eCommerce amongst SMEs.

Maintaining regulatory oversight on the activities of ISSPs

The MCA will continue to maintain regulatory oversight on the activities of the local ISSPs in order to ensure that locally established websites adhere to the essential requirements of the Electronic Commerce Act, relating mostly to ensuring that the local ISSPs display specific information to facilitate consumer redress.

Monitoring Regulation Geo-Blocking and Cross-border Portability Regulations

The MCA will continue to monitor the Geo-blocking Regulation on addressing unjustified online sales discrimination based on customers' nationality, place of residence or place of establishment within the internal market. In addition, the MCA will continue to monitor adherence to the Cross-border Portability Regulation of online content services.

Ongoing management of eIDAS

The MCA is tasked with the supervision of qualified trust service providers in line with the eIDAS Regulation.[9] The MCA, as required, grants qualified status to trust service providers and the services they provide. The MCA will continue to supervise qualified trust service providers to ensure that the services they provide meet the requirements of the eIDAS Regulation. In addition, the MCA will continue to develop the eIDAS Regulatory regime in order to facilitate any type of electronic transactions between citizens, companies and public administrations. The MCA will also encourage the deployment and use of innovative trust services in Malta.

The MCA will continue to explore new authentication solutions that would further enhance the potential of the licensing framework to attract both Maltese and overseas registrations, such as regulating the use of remote identification procedures. Such procedures shall contribute to the uptake of eCommerce and the general trust of the public and business in digital services.

The MCA will also continue to participate in the Forum of European Supervisory Authorities for Electronic Signatures (FESA) which comprises of regulatory bodies from all EU countries that meet twice a year to develop common points of view for dialog with political and technical institutions. The FESA discusses, amongst others, best practices for trusted list management and conformity assessment methods.

Implementing the regulatory framework for remote identification in trust services

In 2020 the MCA consulted, on behalf of Government, on regulations to regulate the use of remote identification procedures by qualified trust service providers. In 2021 the MCA will assist Government

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[9] The 'eIDAS Regulation' creates an European internal market for electronic trust services (eTS) - namely electronic signatures, electronic seals, time stamping, electronic delivery service and website authentication - by ensuring that they will work across borders and have the same legal status as traditional paper based processes.

in bringing into force the regulations on remote identification. The MCA will also implement the regulatory framework once adopted by Government.

Website accessibility continued implementation

The MCA will continue with the implementation of the Web Accessibility initiative relative to public sector websites and mobile applications. Public service digital platforms are required to be perceivable, operable, and usable by persons with disabilities, and they must be robust enough to work on different browsers and different assistive technologies. The MCA will continue to work with the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and the Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility (FITA) in order to ensure compliance with the provisions of the regulation. The MCA will also continue to raise awareness on the accessibility requirements, their benefits to users and to owners of websites and mobile applications, and give feedback in the case of any failure by public sector bodies to comply with the requirements at law.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 5

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 5.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 5	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Update of the National eCommerce Strategy	– Market research / Intelligence gathering – Organisation of stakeholder workshops – Drafting of eCommerce Strategy – Public Consultation – Publication of National eCommerce Strategy
eCommerce monitoring of essential requirements	– Ongoing monitoring of local websites
Updating eCommerce Guides	– Update current eCommerce Guides
eCommerce use by consumers - perception survey	– Commence field work (Q4/2020) – Analysis of survey findings and publication
eCommerce use by businesses - perception survey	– Commence field work (Q4/2020) – Analysis of survey findings and publication
eIDAS Regulation - Promotion and Monitoring	– Monitoring and supervision of qualified trust service providers in line with the eIDAS Regulation

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 5	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	– Contribute and participate in FESA meetings
Web Accessibility Directive - Implementation of Regulation	– Monitoring of public sector websites and mobile apps with the support of CRPD and FITA

2.6 Strategic Objective 6 - Safeguarding sustainable competition in the postal sector.

Overview

The MCA safeguards sustainable competition in the provision of postal services, subject to ensuring the availability of a universal postal service. All postal service providers need to be flexible and innovative to adapt to the ongoing declines in postal letter volumes or to take advantage of any new opportunities that may arise in the changing postal sector, noting the greater competitive dynamics in the delivery of packets and parcels. The MCA uses appropriate regulatory intervention in case of actual or potential competition problems.

Continuing enhancements to the MaltaPost economic control model

MaltaPost's regulatory accounts are critical information for the MCA to be in a position to assess how the universal postal service is performing financially, for assessing universal postal services' prices for compliance with tariff requirements of the Postal Services Act, and other regulatory requirements. MaltaPost's regulatory accounts also contribute to the MCA's cost modelling work of MaltaPost's postal network. The MCA will continue to enhance its economic control model used to monitor tariffs and price change requests raised by MaltaPost. The MCA will also review MaltaPost's cost allocation methods and, if necessary, update its rules to ensure they remain fit for purpose. In assessing any claims for changes in tariffs the MCA considers whether the universal postal service is provided at prices which relate to cost and give incentives for efficient universal service provision.

Analysing competition dynamics in specific postal markets

The MCA will continue to monitor the application of the *ex-ante* remedies imposed on MaltaPost in those postal service markets where it has Significant Market Power (SMP), the aim being to ensure that market review decisions remain relevant and that remedies reflect any changes in the markets. These *ex-ante* remedies imposed on MaltaPost aim to safeguard the interests of users and operators alike. In 2020 the MCA withdrew all *ex-ante* regulatory obligations currently in force on MaltaPost in the domestic parcel market. MaltaPost no longer holds SMP in the market for domestic parcel mail, given the strong indirect competitive constraints posed by express postal operators on the pricing behaviour of MaltaPost in a deregulated environment. The competition dynamics of the postal markets, specifically in the parcel post market, will be monitored more closely in light of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic resulted in an increase in local parcel delivery and the onset of new operators focused on the local market.

Managing the Postal compliance framework

The MCA will continue to ensure compliance of both licensed operators providing services within the scope of the universal postal service and operators subject to a general authorisation providing only services that fall outside the scope of the universal postal service. The MCA will ensure that operators that offer services that fall within the scope of the universal postal service are appropriately licensed to carry out such activities. This is particularly important for safeguarding the provision of the universal postal service.

Maximising efficiencies in collection and analysis of data

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 biannual market reviews. The ongoing availability of accurate and comparable information about the postal market and its developments is essential for the MCA to ensure that it performs its regulatory duties and safeguards sustainable competition.

This activity is supplemented by periodic public and business perception surveys. The results of these surveys serve as an additional source of information in support of regulatory decisions, as well as an indication of the extent to which the postal sector is meeting the reasonable needs of users in light of changes in the market, in particular the growth in online shopping and continued decline in the traditional letters markets. In 2021 the MCA will commence a new round of household and business perception surveys of the postal sector.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 6

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 6.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 6	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Price control model to ensure sustainability of the universal postal service	– Simulate MaltaPost's separated accounts on MCA's price control model – Generate hypothetical future-looking scenarios – Improvements as necessary to the price control model – Monitor any price changes requests proposed by MaltaPost
Regulatory financial reporting by MaltaPost	– Ensure MaltaPost's compliance with the regulatory financial reporting requirements – Review MaltaPost's regulatory accounts and update MCA's price control model – Communicate and follow-up points of the annual review with MaltaPost as required – Monitoring of MaltaPost's financial performance with regard to the universal postal service

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 6	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Competition dynamics in specific postal markets	– Ongoing analysis of competition dynamics in specific postal markets
Compliance, enforcement and investigations	– Monitoring and enforcement of operators licensed to provide services within and outside the scope of the universal postal service – Monitoring and enforcement of operators subject to a general authorisation providing only services outside the scope of the universal postal service
Postal consumer perception surveys *(households, businesses, bulk mailers)*	– Review and update consumer perception surveys – Commence field work – Analysis of survey findings and publication
Informing stakeholders on key data and trends in the postal sector	– Publication of bi-annual market review report *(June - December 2020 / January - June 2021)* – Publication of quarterly data report sheets

2.7 Strategic Objective 7 - Ensuring that postal undertakings provide a transparent, quality service to users in line with incumbent social obligations

Overview

The MCA ensures that postal undertakings provide transparent and quality services to users. The MCA also seeks to ensure that there is a universal postal service that meets the reasonable needs of postal service users.

Determining the feasibility of existing universal postal service obligations

The MCA's objective is to ensure the future of the universal postal service in the light of continuing change in the sector. Challenges relating to the sustainability of the universal postal service have increased drastically with the Coronavirus pandemic. With the ongoing decline in traditional letter mail volumes and the transformation of the parcels sector (resulting from the significant growth in e-Commerce), the sustainability of the USO has become increasingly dependent on incoming cross-border mail. In addition, the move towards cost-orientation as basis for settlement of postal terminal dues for the delivery of cross-border mail could increase the costs of delivery to some overseas destinations. A comprehensive stocktake of the USO is therefore required in order to continue to ensure a sustainable universal postal service of high quality that meets the reasonable needs of users of postal services.

In 2021 the MCA will continue with its review of MaltaPost's efficiency in the provision of the USO. The work will provide the MCA with additional insights into the likely future sustainability of the universal postal service and any changes to the USO that may be required.

Managing the compliance framework, with focus on quality of service provision

The MCA will continue to keep the public informed of postal market developments and postal trends that are taking place within the postal sector. The MCA will continue to empower postal service users by providing information regarding the provision of postal services in Malta. The MCA will also continue to monitor compliance by the USP and other service providers in relation to protecting the integrity and security of mail, complaints handling procedures and compensation schemes, as well as quality of service.

Ongoing management of the EU regulation on cross-border parcel delivery

The EU Regulation on cross-border parcel delivery services aims to: improve price transparency and regulatory oversight; and ensure that citizens and small businesses have access to reasonably priced cross-border parcel delivery services. The MCA will continue to gather information from parcel (including small packets) delivery service providers about their services and the public list of tariffs applicable for single-piece postal items. Information on the services and public tariffs of all EU Member States are published by the European Commission on a dedicated website. As a result citizens are able to compare parcel delivery costs more easily and benefit from more affordable prices for cross-border parcel delivery.

In 2021 the MCA will carry out the third assessment of cross-border single-piece parcel tariffs within the scope of the USO. The assessment, which will be carried out in line with the European Commission's guidelines, will identify those tariffs deemed to be unreasonably high.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 7

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 7.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 7	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Ensuring the sustainability of the universal postal service / USO	– Efficiency review of MaltaPost's USO – Establishing a way forward on the review of MaltaPost's USO
Implementing the EU Cross-border parcel Regulation	– Cross-border prices forwarded to the European Commission for publication – Assessment of tariffs considered to be unreasonably high – Report to the European Commission – Review reports of other EU Member States
Monitoring QoS performance of the USO	– Monitoring of QoS performance (reliability and regularity of mail) – Audit of QoS measurements
Monitoring of the USP's activities and other service providers	– Monitoring of mail integrity, postal service schemes, QoS and complaints handling

2.8 Strategic Objective 8 - Contributing to the ongoing development and implementation of sector policy

Overview

The MCA's strategic and business objectives are influenced by decisions made at national, European and international level. At a national level the MCA works with stakeholders so that it can be more effective in pursuing its objectives. Beyond the national level the MCA contributes and participates in various EU and other international fora to ensure that any future policies benefit the Maltese communications sector. The MCA also advises Government on communications policy and regulation.

Transposing the European Electronic Communications Code into Maltese law

Over the past two years, in its role as adviser to Government on communications policy and regulation, the MCA provided advice to Government on the transposition of the EECC into Maltese Law. The timely transposition of the EECC, will provide regulatory certainty for business and citizens from a solid regulatory framework as a foundation to build trust, increase investment and rollout of digital infrastructure, and enable opportunity for citizens and society.

Establishing a Malta position for fixed and mobile termination rates

In line with the EECC, in December 2020 the European Commission adopted a delegated act setting a single EU-wide maximum fixed / mobile termination rates, which are imposed on any provider of mobile voice termination or fixed voice termination services, respectively, in any Member State. As from 2021, the MCA will ensure the implementation of the fixed and mobile termination rates as set by the delegated act. In addition the MCA will ensure that the operators adopt these rates.

Providing input to the review of the EU Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (BCRD) 2014/61

In 2020 the European Commission launched an evaluation of the Broadband Cost Reduction Directive (Directive 2014/61/EU) - BCRD - with the aim of adopting a new proposal in 2021. The BCRD aims to facilitate and incentivise the roll-out of high-speed electronic communications networks by promoting the joint use of existing physical infrastructure and by enabling a more efficient deployments of new physical infrastructure so that such networks can be rolled out at a lower cost. The BCRD was transposed into Maltese Law in 2016. The institutional responsibility is shared among four government entities (including the MCA), with the larger part falling within the remit of Transport Malta (TM).

The review of the BCRD will review the rules in light of technological, market and regulatory developments. The review should enable a quicker and more efficient rollout of very high capacity networks, including fibre and 5G, ensure the rules are aligned with the EECC and explore potential environmental safeguards. In 2021 the MCA will contribute to the development of an opinion by BEREC on the revision of the BCRD. In addition the MCA will provide technical and policy advice to Government on specific aspects of the review of the BCRD, as well as in the eventual transposition into Maltese Law.

Providing input to the review of the Roaming Regulations

The European Commission aims to review the Roaming Regulation and is expected to publish a new legislative proposal in the first quarter of 2021. The MCA will contribute to BEREC in this process in the provision of its inputs and opinions. The MCA will also provide technical and policy advice to Government on the review of the Roaming Regulations.

Providing input relative to the review of the EU Postal Services Directive.

In July 2020 the European Commission launched a public consultation on the evaluation of the Postal Services Directive. The public consultation aims to assess the impact of the directive and better understand the needs of the postal sector, especially in the light of changes due to digitalisation and the growing e-commerce economy. The results of the public consultation will factor into the evaluation report that will assess, in the first place, whether the Postal Services Directive still fits the purpose for which it was adopted in 1997 and, second, whether new policy objectives might need to be considered in the future. Although the European Commission has stated that conducting an evaluation does not imply a commitment to revise the Directive, it is to be expected that in the light of the fundamental changes the postal sector went through, the Postal Services Directive will actually undergo a revision. In 2021 the MCA will develop a vison for a new Postal Services regulatory framework in order to be in a better position to provide support and advise to Government during the discussions on a new EU Postal Services Directive. The MCA will also contribute to the ERGP[10] with regard to any requests from the European Commission for technical assistance, support and advice in the process of reviewing the regulatory framework.

Providing input on the new Digital Services Act package, which includes the review of the eCommerce Directive

The digital transformation has profoundly changed the functioning of the global economy and society, and those changes require an update to improve the situation in several areas. The current EU rules for digital services have remained largely unchanged since the eCommerce Directive was adopted twenty years ago. The new Digital Services Act package (the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act)[11] is intended to modernise the current legal framework for digital services by means of two main pillars: clear rules framing the responsibilities of digital services to address the risks faced by their users and to protect their rights; and *ex-ante* rules covering large online platforms acting as gatekeepers. Legislative negotiations on the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act will commence in 2021. The MCA will during 2021 provide technical and policy advice to Government on the proposed Digital Services Act package as well as in the eventual transposition into Maltese Law.

Providing input to the planned eIDAS Regulation

The eIDAS Regulation is currently being reviewed by the European Commission and a report on the application of the legislation is expected by the end of 2020. This report will assess to what extent

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[10] ERGP stands for the European Regulators Group for Postal Services.

[11] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-services-act-package

the eIDAS framework remains fit for purpose in delivering the intended outcomes, results and impacts and may identify possible actions to improve regulatory performance. The MCA will provide technical and policy advice to Government on any proposal for a new eIDAS Regulation.

Assisting Government in bringing into force the Regulations on Remote Identification

In 2020 the MCA consulted, on behalf of Government, on regulations to regulate the use of remote identification procedures by qualified trust service providers. In 2021 the MCA will assist Government in bringing into force the regulations on remote identification.

Interacting at various EU-related and international fora

Active participation on EU and International fora will remain high, in view of the need to consistently put forward Malta's position, particularly in areas which are of particular relevance to the domestic environment. The MCA's international obligations entail active participation in the following EU organisations:

- BEREC which ensures independent, consistent, high-quality application of the European regulatory framework for electronic communications markets for the benefit of Europe and its citizens. In 2021 the MCA's CEO will be taking up the seat of BEREC Vice-Chair. The MCA oversees a number of BEREC deliverables and tasks as part of its participation in BEREC's leadership team.

- The Radio Spectrum Policy Group (RSPG) which provides high-level strategic advice on spectrum policies to the European Commission.

- 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 measures that ensure harmonised conditions across Europe for the availability and efficient use of radio spectrum.

- The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) in relation to cybersecurity and network security regulation.

- ERGP responsible for advising and assisting 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 European Commission's Postal Directive Committee (PDC) which serves as a scrutiny body for the application of postal legislation and for the improvement of quality of service, notably the establishment of quality standards for intra-EU cross-border services.

- The Expert group on electronic commerce which advises the European Commission on issues relating to electronic commerce and related services.

The MCA will also continue to represent Malta in international fora:

- The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) with regard to preparation for participation in the ITU World Radiocommunication Conferences. The next WRC will be held in 2023.

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

- The European Committee for Postal Regulation (CERP).

- The Universal Postal Union (UPU). The MCA will participate in the 27th UPU Congress which is planned to be held in 2021, following its postponement due to the Coronavirus crisis.

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

- the harmonisation of additional spectrum for wireless broadband services;

- the telecoms chapter of the DESI which provides a snapshot of the electronic communications markets in each Member State, from an investment, regulatory and market perspective.

- the European Commission's vision and policy actions to turn Europe into a Gigabit Society by 2025;[12]

- the European Commission's 5G Action plan in relation to the development and introduction of 5G wireless technologies in the EU;

- the European Commission's Recommendation on a common Union toolbox for reducing the cost of deploying very high capacity networks and ensuring timely and investment-friendly access to 5G radio spectrum, to foster connectivity in support of economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in the Union; and

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

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[12] By 2025, all main socio-economic drivers (i.e. schools, hospitals, transport hubs) should have gigabit connectivity, all urban areas and major terrestrial transport paths should be connected with uninterrupted 5G coverage, and all European households should have access to connectivity offering at least 100 Mbps upgradable to Gigabit speeds.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 8

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 8.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 8	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Transposition the EECC into Maltese law	– Public consultation on the transposition of the EECC (Government) – Contribute to the review of responses received to the public consultation – Submit proposed changes to legislation to Government
Monitoring fixed and mobile interconnection rates	– Consultation with operators – Implementation of fixed and mobile interconnection rates
Review of the EU Broadband Cost Reduction Directive	– Participating in the BEREC and European Commission discussion on a new Broadband Cost Reduction Directive – Technical and policy advice to Government
Review of the Roaming Regulations	– Participating in the BEREC and European Commission discussion on the review of the Roaming Regulations – Technical and policy advice to Government
Review of the EU Postal Services Directive	– Participating in the ERGP and European Commission discussion on a new Postal Services Directive – Technical and policy advice to Government
New Digital Services Act package	– Participating in the BEREC and European Commission discussion on the new EU Digital Services Act package – Technical and policy advice to Government
EU and International policy and regulatory initiatives	– Ongoing participation and contribution in the following fora and related working groups: *BEREC, RSPG, RSCOM, COCOM, ENISA, ERGP, Postal Directive Committee, Expert*

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 8	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
	group on electronic commerce, CEPT, ITU, CERP and the UPU – Provision of statistical and other information to EU and international fora

2.9 Strategic Objective 9 - Conducting relevant research, exploring and developing emergent policy areas

Overview

The MCA remains committed to promoting and facilitating development in relevant communication niches. The MCA also, on an ongoing basis, researches and explores emergent policy areas of relevance to its mandate. The MCA will focus its work primarily in the following areas: (1) supporting fixed and wireless broadband research and development; and (2) exploring the needs and the opportunities for the space communications industry in Malta, whilst consolidating its role in this policy area. In addition, the MCA will also launch into establishing its role and contribution, together with that of the sectors it regulates, towards making the European Green Deal a success.

Supporting wireless research and development

The MCA will continue to support fixed and wireless broadband research and development via the Broadband Competence Office (BCO). As the BCO for Malta, the MCA helps citizens and business get better access to broadband services and provides technical support for the development of next-generation fixed and mobile broadband networks.

The MCA will continue to make spectrum available to enable new and innovative wireless technologies and services (refer to Strategic Objective 4). In addition, having regard to future trends, including the increased demands for advanced mobile services, potential impacts of IoT and 5G, and new wireless opportunities associated with space communications, the MCA will continue to promote the use of spectrum for innovation, mainly via the uptake of test and trial licences.

The MCA will continue participating in an EU sponsored initiative under the heading of 5GZorro, which stands for Zero-touch security and trust for ubiquitous computing and connectivity in 5G networks. The project envisions a real-time spectrum market, supported by a Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) infrastructure, whereby diverse business agents, including mobile network operators, venue owners, or private users, could trade in real-time spectrum rights bound to a given geographical area and time period.

The connectivity requirements for IoT devices are particularly wide and will require new service offerings to meet the individual requirements. IoT devices are heavily reliant upon robust and secure communication as the data collected by device sensors can include sensitive information. IPv6 enables more secure M2M communication and allows for the IoT to continue to expand. With the current exhaustion of IPv4 addresses, it is becoming crucial for the future of IP communications that a fast and efficient transition to IPv6 is achieved. The MCA will continue to encourage and monitor the roll-out of this future-proof protocol.

Stepping up Space Communications Initiatives

In 2021 the MCA will step up its space communications initiatives and continue exploring the needs and the opportunities for the space communications industry in Malta, whilst consolidating its role in this policy area. The MCA will continue to encourage satellite operators to register space resources with the ITU through Malta in line with the satellite filing framework. In 2021 the MCA will finalise a review of the satellite filing framework.

The MCA will continue to support local industry and academia participating in the Galileo projects. The MCA will also continue to support Government by participating in programme committee, evolution and supervisory authority meetings. The MCA will continue to contribute and participate in the European Commission's expert group on governmental satellite communications (GovSatCom) concerning the feasibility for setting up a European satellite communications network to address governmental communication needs. The MCA will also participate in the ENTRUSTED initiative. A new research project, dedicated to the development of secure satellite communications for governmental users launched in September 2020. ENTRUSTED will identify needs and requirements of secure satellite communication end-users.

The MCA will continue working with the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) and other players responsible in facilitating investment in space-related activities in Malta. The MCA will also contribute to the taskforce responsible for formulating Malta's National Space Strategy[13].

Addressing the implications of the European Green Deal on relevant sectors and the MCA's regulatory mandate

Besides the ongoing digital transformation, climate change is another defining phenomenon of our time. Digitisation promises to bring major efficiency gains that will translate into major reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the digital sector's environmental footprint is increasing, with a growth in energy usage occurring. Hence, the environmental consequences of digital technologies require careful assessment of direct impacts, such as energy consumption and end-of-life disposal, and indirect impacts, e.g. change in consumption patterns and choices. In 2021 the MCA will commence an initiative which foresees the initiation of a discussion on the Green Deal and specifically the role of the sectors regulated by the MCA and the MCA's contribution.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 9

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 9.

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[13] https://maltaspace.com/news/maltas-national-space-strategy/

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Strategic Objective 9	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
Facilitating 5G trials in Malta	– Identification of possible 5G use cases – Facilitate the deployment of 5G use cases in Malta
Galileo - Participating in the GNSS and PRS programme	– Attending programme committee, evolution and supervisory authority meetings – Increasing public awareness, visibility and interest in Galileo and supporting dissemination of project results – Assisting government, industry and academia to foster academia-industry relationships that benefit each party – Enhancing knowledge transfer and sharing of lessons learned with other Member States
Addressing the implications of the European Green Deal on relevant sectors and the MCA's regulatory mandate	– Engage with local authorities and operators – Publication of Strategic Statement and Framework

2.10 Ensuring Quality and Continuity in Delivery

The MCA strives to be an active and dynamic organisation that is capable of responding to the rapidly changing environment and is positioned, in terms of expertise, robust analytics and up-to-date information, as well as resources, to address issues that affect our ability to fulfil our mission.

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 employees possess the necessary expertise to contribute fully towards the achievement of its objectives.

The MCA will ensure that staff expertise remain current through ongoing investment in training and continuous learning in order to be able to optimally address its mission and mandate. As new functions are assumed the MCA will dovetail these with its business in as seamless a manner as possible. The MCA's mission, strategic objectives, organisation structure, policies and procedures will be updated to reflect the new state of affairs.

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 to all its stakeholders.

In 2021 the MCA would have upgraded all its external forms to allow new features such as e-ID log-in and integrated payment services. These forms will enable the MCA to streamline its interaction with the general public by means of advanced workflow capabilities. This will allow MCA and the public to interact in a more efficient and transparent manner.

In 2021 the MCA will commence a review of its Statistical Analysis and Management System (SAMS) which has been deployed at the MCA for more than 10 years. The SAMS is a core tool which helps the MCA carry out its various strategic outcomes in relation to the collection and analysis of data.

2021 marks the twentieth year that MCA has been in operation. Late in 2021 the MCA plans to hold its twentieth year anniversary conference. The conference will discuss key trends and challenges in the communications sector.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Organisational

The table below contains a listing of the priority work streams for 2021 that will contribute to working effectively.

Priority Programme of Works 2021 - Organisational	
Project / Activity	**Planned Output**
20th Anniversary Conference	– Host event (planned for Q4/2021)
SAMS Upgrade	– Analysis of the current system – Updating of SAMS – Deployment and testing – Implementation
Annual report and financial statements	– Publication of MCA's Annual Report 2020
Strategy Update and Business plan	– Publication of Strategic Update 2021 - 2023 – Publication of Annual Plan 2021 – Strategy Update 2022 - 2024 – Business and Financial Plan 2022 - 2024
Performance management and monitoring	– Quarterly performance management reviews
Processes and procedures	– Ongoing review of the MCA's business processes and procedures
Staff training	– Ongoing staff training in both soft and hard skills

2.11 Delivery of the Work Programme

The major outputs listed under each strategic objective represent the MCA's current best view of the priority work streams that will be undertaken during 2021. The MCA may have to adjust its plans due to unforeseen external developments (for example in light of ongoing market, legislative and regulatory developments, appeals to the MCA's decisions, and disputes between operators). The MCA therefore intends to retain flexibility within the 2021 work programme, in order to respond to changes and new issues arising during the course of the year. The MCA will update its plans every quarter and make adjustments to its work programme when 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. Financial Projections

The MCA's projected expenditure for 2021 is expected to be as shown in **Table 1** below:

Table 1: MCA's Expenditure Analysis 2021					
	Staff Costs (€)	Administrative Expenditure (€)	Operational Expenditure (€)	Projects Expenditure (€)	Total Expenditure (€)
Electronic Communications	2,097,647	480,490	544,620	410,350	**3,553,107**
Postal Services	296,417	42,074	44,322	104,900	**487,713**
Radio Spectrum Management / Monitoring	215,048	60,742	237,136	230,850	**743,776**
Radiocommunications Equipment Licences	107,206	22,511	2,981	4,800	**137,498**
eCommerce and eTrust Services	153,504	26,677	30,384	195,800	**406,365**
Total Expenditure (€)	**2,869,822**	**632,494**	**859,443**	**946,700**	**5,308,459**