MALTAENTERPRISE

RELOS3
Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

From Regional to Local: Successful deployment of the Smart Specialization Strategies

LOCAL ACTION PLAN FOR MALTA

March 2020

Contents

Part I – General information

Project: RELOS3 - From Regional to Local: Successful deployment of the Smart Specialization Strategies

Partner organisation: Malta Enterprise (www.maltaenterprise.com)

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): N/A

Country: Malta

NUTS2 Region: Malta

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RELOS3 focuses on implementing regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3) in a local context by actively involving local authorities, innovation actors and companies. The local level is often overlooked; however, it is deemed crucial to involve this level in innovation strategies.

The project brings together six partners from six countries:

- The Economic Development Agency of Sabadell (Sabadell, Spain, Lead Partner)
- Tartu City Government (Estonia)
- Metropolitan City of Bologna (Italy)
- Local Authority of Emmen (the Netherlands)
- The Wielkopolska Regional Authorities (Poland)
- Malta Enterprise Corporation (Malta)

Most partners have a local R&I ecosystem connected to industrial systems, advanced manufacturing, applied industrial design and ICT.

RELOS3 is a unique opportunity to develop and contrast local RIS3 strategies. The findings should contribute to improve the Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Funds, specifically to promote delivery of innovation at local level. The partners aim to achieve this objective by:

1. Demonstrating the importance of the role of local authorities' involvement in the RIS3 strategies implementation.
2. Analysing the partners' current situation by elaborating a detailed baseline and final study, including an evaluation survey and collection of good practices.
3. Producing local action plans on the basis of the transnational exchange and co-produced with the support of Local Stakeholder Groups.
4. Involving the policy owners and the relevant local actors and make them work together as a "local stakeholder group".
5. Undertaking capacity building activities for policy owners, policy makers and relevant stakeholders.

The RELOS3 project divides the interregional learning exchange and analysis in the following themes:

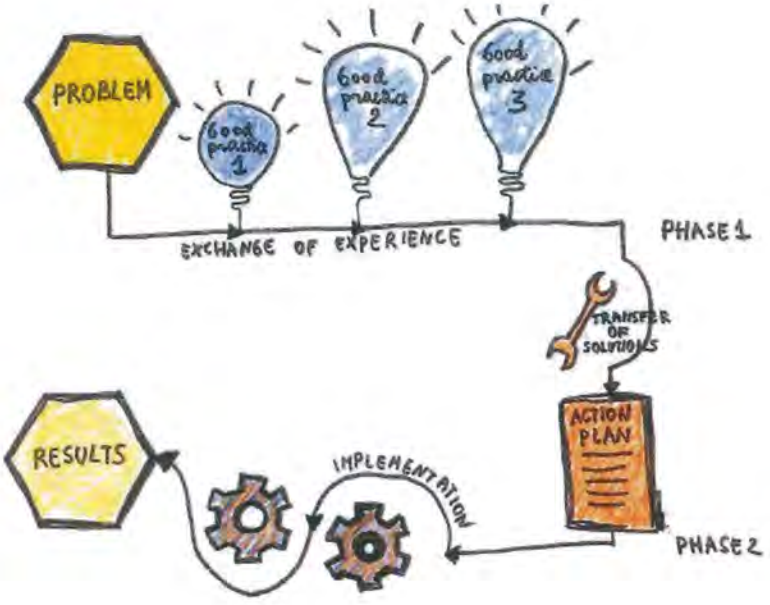
I. Alignment of local economic development strategies to RIS3 strategies

II. The participation of private sector in territorial innovation operations to pave the way of RIS3 deployment

III. Promotion of cooperation between EU regions with similar or complementary smart specialisations

IV. Sustainability of Quadruple Helix Collaboration (industry, academia, government and civil society) beyond RIS3 strategy

Through the RELOS3 project Malta Enterprise aims to influence Malta's ERDF Operational Programme by proposing a number of actions which facilitate the deployment of RIS3 by, among other, focusing on fostering, supporting and increasing academia-industry collaboration in Malta across the smart specialisation areas, but in particular smart specialisation areas which have room for improvement and which deployment could be considered as lagging behind.



Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	☐	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	☐	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	x	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:
"National Research and Innovation Strategy"

Malta being one of the smallest Member States of the European Union (EU), and situated in the middle of the Mediterranean, is faced with natural and particular disadvantages when compared to other European Member States. These disadvantages range from accessibility and isolation from European infrastructure to the absence of natural resources and having one of the highest population density in the EU, amongst others. Hence, these factors continue to impact on the socio economic growth of the country (Operational Programme 1, 2015[1]).

The Europe 2020 strategy places R&D&I at the forefront of Europe's efforts to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy which delivers high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Europe's competitiveness, capacity to create new jobs depends on its ability to translate innovation into new or renewed products, services and businesses. In 2014, the Maltese Government launched the National Research and Innovation (R&I) 2020 Strategy which sets out the strategic framework for interventions within this sector and takes into account the state of play of Malta's development needs within the R&D sector as well as the Europe 2020 targets (Operational Programme 1, 2015).

In line with the National R&I Strategy, Malta's smart specialisation areas are tourism product development, maritime services, aviation and aerospace, health with a focus on healthy living, active ageing and e-health, resource efficient buildings, high value-added manufacturing with a focus on processes and design, and aquaculture. Importance is given to multi-disciplinary research in order to leverage Malta's comparative advantage in this area.

The Strategy emphasises the need to build an enabling ecosystem for R&I and also outlines the importance for investment in research infrastructure, rural development, capacity building in climate change adaptation and investment in human capital. Furthermore, the Strategy identifies ICT as an enabling technology for development and innovation. This strategic thrust is aimed at facilitating the cooperation and networking activities among various innovation actors including academia, the higher education sector as well as facilities fostering research, development and technology in an effort to maximise synergies and promote technology transfer whilst bridging the gap between academia and the business sector.

Within this context, the relevant OP (*ERDF Operational Programme 1, Investment Priority 1a: "Enhancing R&I infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.")* aims to address the needs and challenges faced by Malta through a series of actions including: R&I facilities, access to finance for enterprises as well as through the development of human capital. Such measures are supported through the OP, based

[1] https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/Operational%20Programmes/Programming%20Period%202014%20-%202020/Operational%20Programme%201/Documents/Adopted%20OPI(ff).pdf

on identified needs and challenges, with the aim of fostering research investment in the private sector and achieving stronger academia-enterprise links.

The main local needs as put forward in the OP are:

1. the need to contribute towards the achievement of Malta's EU2020 target of 2% Gross R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP by 2020;
2. the need to invest in the necessary high quality research infrastructure, in particular indigenous research; and
3. the need to contribute to a long term higher and sustainable investment in R&I.

These needs are addressed through three specific parts of the Operational Programme 1, being:

- Investing in research, technological development & innovation.
- Enhancing R&I infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.
- Stimulating participation in R&D&I through the development of the necessary public infrastructure in line with the Smart Specialisation Strategy.

The instrument aims to support actions to develop public infrastructure for the creation of multi-disciplinary research to enable Malta's increased participation in research, resulting in increased collaboration across sectors as well as in the Quadruple Helix.

Malta Enterprise's aims through its participation in RELOS3 to improve appropriate tools for RIS3 deployment at local level as a part of its innovation drive within its role as national economic development agency. Based on this, it has initiated the developed of new ideas to improve private-public initiatives and other R&D projects led by public sector in the framework of Smart Specialization and create a closer collaboration network with all the relevant innovation actors, across the Quadruple Helix, in the country.

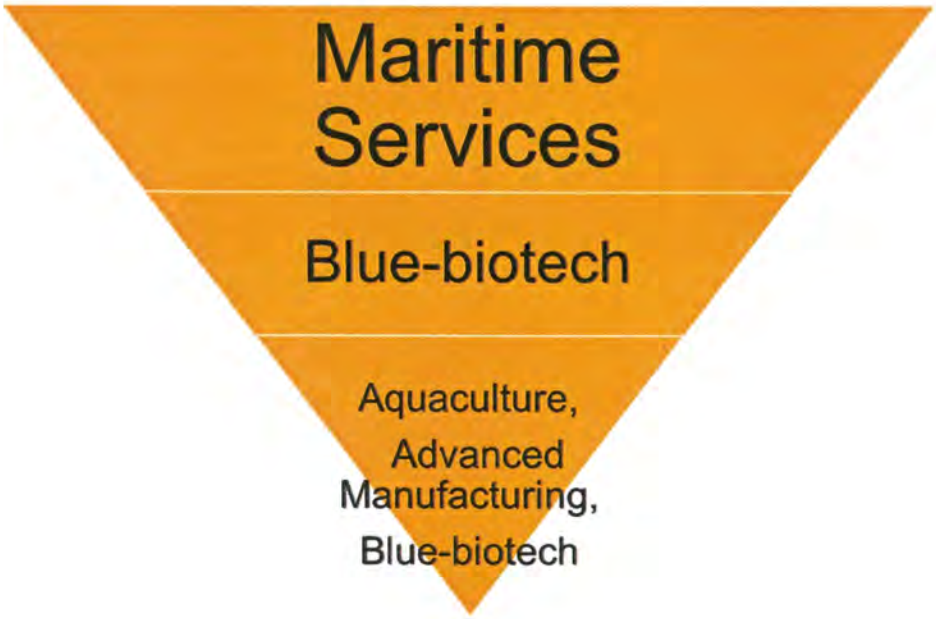
This action plan, considering that the current programming period is ending in 2020, will have limited impact on the existing ERDF Operational Programme in the current programming period. Therefore, as the original policy instrument cannot be impacted, this Action Plan will target another existing policy instrument at local level: The National R&I Strategy, which is being currently revised.

Since end 2018, Malta Enterprise has been closely involved in the discussions at all levels about the development of the new National R&I Strategy for post-2020, the National R&I Action Plan as well as the interlinked Smart Specialisation Strategy for the 2021-2027 programming period, with the Malta Council for Science and Technology, the policy and strategy owner, as well as all relevant stakeholders at all levels.

By means of this action plan, Malta Enterprise particularly aims at strengthening industry-academia collaboration, by proposing initiatives which bridge the gap identified, and allows for increased numbers of joint projects, shared knowledge and overall increase in R&I and hence directly in line with the current OP, the current National R&I Strategy and the revised future National R&I Strategy.

Focus area

The RIS3 specialisation area initially focused on was Maritime Services, a mature economic sector in which Malta has a historic legacy and world-level profile. 15.4% of Malta's economy is dependent on the marine environment, and it is estimated that Malta's maritime cluster contributes to the employment of more than 20,000 people, with a value added benefit to the national GDP of Malta of approximately 11%2. The sector is also of European importance and Malta can contribute to the EU targets of increasing 5.4 million jobs to 7 million jobs by 2020, and that EU blue economy's contribution would increase from €500 billion a year gross added value to €500 billion a year. The Maritime economic sector has diversified over time to provide a wide range of services to the maritime sector but the variety of services remains fragmented.



It was found that there was potential scope for improved clustering of maritime services in order to provide more integrated, new and improved services with the aim of transforming Malta into a Maritime Hub. The country's history, strong economic sector and geographical location make Malta an attractive choice for Maritime Services. However, it is argued that Malta's drive towards becoming a stronger maritime hub should also include a drive to foster innovation in other related key areas like marine/life sciences, engineering, ICT, design and services. Therefor the scope of the project has evolved from focusing on Maritime to also include other areas of interest to Malta Enterprise, particularly advance manufacturing, life sciences and ICT.

[2] Integrated Maritime Policy – Making Malta a Centre of Maritime Excellence
https://economy.gov.mt/en/public_consultation/documents/integrated%20maritime%20policy.pdf

SWOT analysis

By gathering stakeholder input, particularly focused on the overarching theme of Maritime Services, a SWOT analysis was developed. Under "opportunities" a number of themes with potential for development have been listed.

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
• Location • History / name in the sector • Established maritime sector • Large part of value chain present • Dedicated sectorial services available • Experienced human resources	• Peripheriality • Size of country • Lack of skilled human resources • Not enough drive for RD&I • Outdated public procurement methods • Gaps in national legislation
Challenges	**Opportunities**
• Lack of cross-cutting policies within the maritime sector • The establishment of a wide-ranging policy framework and the implementation of specific relevant legislation • The promotion of sustainable development in a maritime context • The need of infrastructure to host new investment • Competition from neighbouring States in the same maritime market	• Targeted incentives to address the lack of drive for innovation • Through quadruple helix collaboration improve the value-chain • Capacity building through improved industry-academia collaboration and knowledge transfer • Redesigning outdated laws and regulations • Create targeted education and training to address lack of human capital • Push for innovative public procurement

Participation in events

This overview shows the various project meetings and events Malta Enterprise as well as a number of the Maltese stakeholders participated in. The exchange of good practices, knowledge and inspiration have been valuable for the development of our proposed actions as well as for capacity building of the persons who the knowledge was shared with.

Date and place	Event	Local stakeholders participation
21-22 February 2017, Sabadell (Spain)	Kickoff Meeting	Malta Enterprise (manager)
16 - 17 May 2017, Pieta (Malta)	Thematic Event 1: Alignment of local economic development strategies with RIS3 strategies,	13 (from 33 total) from: Malta Enterprise; Malta Council for Science and Technology; Malta Communications Authority; Ministry for the Economy, Investment & Small Businesses; Malta Business Bureau and Malta Life Sciences Park.
27 - 29 September 2017, Bologna (Italy)	Thematic Event 2: Sustainability of quadruple helix collaboration beyond RIS3 strategy,	Malta Enterprise (manager); Knowledge Transfer Office of the University of Malta (director); Malta Council for Science and Technology (manager)
21 – 22 November 2017, Tartu (Estonia)	Thematic Event 3: Participation of private sector in territorial innovation operations, to pave the way for RIS3 deployment	Malta Enterprise (manager)
28 Feb – 1 March 2018, Poznan (Poland)	Thematic Event 4: Removing silos between R&D policies and public led innovation ecosystems	Malta Enterprise (manager); Malta Council for Science and Technology (manager)
13-14 June 2018, Seville (Spain)	Thematic Event 5: Building capacities to deploy smart specialization strategies at the local level	Malta Enterprise (manager); MA OP1, Planning and Priorities Coordination Division within the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (manager)
17-20 September 2018, Emmen (Netherlands)	Long Term Visit 1	Malta Enterprise (head of department and manager); Malta Marittima (manager)
28-29 November 2018, Sabadell (Spain)	Long Term Visit 2	Malta Enterprise (manager); Malta Council for Science and Technology (manager)
11-14 June 2019, Tartu (Estonia)	Long Term Visit 3	Malta Enterprise (Chief Officer and manager)

Key events throughout Phase 1

Not only did we participate in the various events as established by the project we also organised or participated in events organised by ourselves or stakeholders. The key events that we organised or participated in during Phase 1 are the following:

22 March 2018: Business breakfast

Malta Enterprise, in collaboration with the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) and Malta Marittima, organised a business breakfast bringing together 25 local policy makers, experts and key stakeholders in the local Maritime sector in the light of the RELOS3 project. The participants discussed initial project findings and ideas on actions to address the main areas for improvement in the local maritime services industry, and the overarching Maltese blue economy sector.

6 November 2018: Public consultation RIS3

Malta Enterprise presented the RELOS3 project in a national debate on Malta's Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3). The debate was organised by the Malta Council of Science and Technology, as part of Malta's National Research and Innovation Strategy 2020. Government officials, researchers, academics, entrepreneurs, and citizens interested in the development of Research and Innovation in Malta, exchanged experiences, comments and suggestions, and all the stakeholders were given the opportunity to express opinions, raise issues and provide feedback on Malta's current Smart Specialisation Strategy and the deployment of RIS3 in Malta.

5 April 2019: Public consultation Maritime Services: Research and Innovation in Malta's Maritime Sector

The Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) and Malta Enterprise organised a thematic consultation session on Malta's Maritime sector as part of Malta Enterprise's involvement of the RELOS3 project. The consultation provided participants with the opportunity to discuss the sector's capacity and potential for research and innovation and identify challenges that could be addressed in the RELOS3 action plan. Breakout sessions helped develop further a number of the areas discussed. Over 35 local entrepreneurs, researchers, government officials and citizens all contributed and shared their views.

11 October 2019: Roundtable discussion with Expert on Industry-Academia collaboration

Inspired by the RELOS3 project we organised a high level industry – academia event. Dr Christopher Haley (UK) shared highlights of his experiences and best practices on Industry–Academia collaborations. This was followed by a roundtable discussion sharing views on current experiences/best practices in Malta and an open discussion on maximising opportunities and address challenges and gaps in Malta, which eventually culminated in a number of recommendations and suggestions for business, industry and academia to forge closer links. The event was attended by 14 senior level executives from industry, academia and government.

Development of action plan

Maritime Services had been initially selected as the focus area for this Action Plan. A number of themed stakeholder meetings/events were organised as well as a regular stakeholder focus group consisting of Malta Enterprise, the Malta Council for Science and Technology, Malta Marittima and University of Malta who presented the outcomes and potential themes for actions to propose to the stakeholders. Unfortunately, Maritime Services as a sector proved too large and too fragmented for the RELOS3 project to design suitable and focussed proposals. Also the sector showed little push for innovation in general. In parallel, the National RIS3 strategy has been undergoing a review and from the preliminary discussions it is considered if Maritime Services should be removed as RIS3 area.

Hence, it was agreed to focus on blue-biotech as a niche within Maritime Services, as it is highly R&D focused and could potentially grow, considering the overarching country's strengths and opportunities, as a niche sector for Malta. However, based on sector analysis undertaken by an internal focus group, it emerged that the local blue-biotech sector is extremely small in Malta, not more than 1-2 active companies working in the area, and therefore it was deemed not viable to dedicate the RELOS3 action plan only to this area.

Subsequently, it was decided to extent the scope and look also at aquaculture, advanced manufacturing, and ICT as enabling technology, as these are also three of Malta's RIS3 areas and can be linked to Maritime Services.

Malta Enterprise has decided to focus this action plan on the opportunities that improved industry-academia collaboration and knowledge transfer presents, as well as the improvement of targeted incentives to address the lack of drive for innovation and fostering quadruple helix collaboration to improve the value-chain. It is argued that Malta Enterprise is perfectly positioned to facilitate, promote and support increased industry-academia collaboration, which in turn will help deploying RIS3 locally by forging better links between the quadruple helix, based on the various good practices from the project partners and guest speakers.

Malta Enterprise has designed four actions that support industry-academia collaboration, and are of support to the said areas as well as other areas of importance to the Maltese economy. It aims to deploy the plan by closely collaborating with all relevant stakeholders and other key players, who can add value to this action plan and the desired outcomes.

The four actions proposed are:

- Action 1: Improvement R&D industry support scheme.
  This action has been inspired by Regions of Smart Factories, Emmen.

- Action 2: Development of a Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing.
  This action has been inspired by ECOmunity Park, Oosterwolde, and Green Pac Polymer Application Centre, Emmen.

- Action 3: Formal collaboration between ME and UoM to support academic spin-offs.
  This action has been inspired by Emilia-Romana High Technology Network, Bologna.

- Action 4: Periodic Industry – Academia workshops.
  This action was inspired Mobile Monday, Tartu.

Part III – Proposed Actions

Action 1: Improvement R&D industry support scheme

The background

The Malta Enterprise R&D 2014-2020 incentive aims to assist undertakings that carry out industrial research and experimental development required for acquisition of knowledge leading to the development of innovative products and solutions. In practical terms this means an industry – academia collaboration. It also encourages cooperation between firms by providing additional assistance for collaborative industrial research or experimental development projects.

However, through the first phase of the project it has become clear that scheme do not address market failure appropriately. The largest part of the incentive is a fiscal measure, which is a tax credit mechanism of which the enterprise can only avail itself from when it actually makes a profit, however it does not address risk.

As the incentive does not address risk, the financial support for the acquisition of knowledge when profit is still not being made, it makes it difficult for startups and new entrepreneurs to avail themselves of assistance and establish a startup – academia collaboration.

Therefor the action proposed is to improve this support scheme, adjusting it to better suit the requirements of industry, particularly startups and new entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, it is proposed to modify the scheme to allow for better startup-academia collaboration by allowing beneficiaries to subcontract a higher amount of research rather than limit the aid to in house and collaborative projects. This should address better the needs of SMES and new enterprises which might have low in-house R&D capabilities.

This action has been inspired by Regions of Smart Factories, Emmen (NL). We want to emulate the success Emmen has achieved by brining small companies to the forefront of innovation through collaboration with the quadruple helix. Our scheme encourages cooperation between firms by providing assistance for collaborative industrial research and/or experimental development projects. Emmen has achieved this collaboration across the quadruple helix. We share similar difficulties and scepticism with regards collaboration in this manner and hope that the knowledge obtained from their experience will allow us to address market failure of startups collaborating effectively with academia.

Action

To improve the Malta Enterprise R&D 2014-2020 incentive, making startup-academia collaboration achievable.

- Setup in-house Evaluation Committee consisting on in-house experts
- Committee to review current incentive
- Draft proposal updated incentive
- Launch updated incentive
- Monitor startup-academia collaboration increase
- Incentives Unit to present report to Malta Enterprise management with results

Players involved

Malta Enterprise

Timeframe

- Q1 2020: Setup in-house Evaluation Committee consisting on in-house experts
- Q1 2020: Committee to review current incentive
- Q1 2020: Draft proposal updated incentive
- Q1 2020: Launch updated incentive
- Q1 – Q4 2020: Monitor startup-academia collaboration increase
- Q1 2021: Incentives Unit to present report to Malta Enterprise management with results

Costs

This action will be supported through Malta Enterprise's own budget.

Funding sources

Malta Enterprise's own budget.

Action 2: Development of terms and parameters for a Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing

The background

This action concerns the development of the terms and development parameters to develop in the future a Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing, ultimately aimed at supporting the development and modernisation in the implementation of Industry 4.0, Internet of things, DLT and AI. This Centre should promote innovation and technology transfer to SMEs, to educate SMEs how to fill tech and knowledge gaps, facilitate transfer of tech from academics to SMEs and vice versa, and create a collaborative network.

The development of such Centre is currently being discussed, and is likely to be proposed for funding through the next Operational Programme.

Phase 1 is proposed to be done under this current OP period and clearly impact the current OP period in the formulation of strategic decisions for future investment. It is the creation of a working group, who based on, among other, expertise and key knowledge obtained from the RELOS3 project, will determine the terms and development parameters for the preparatory feasibility studies and cost benefit analysis necessary for the potential development of such Centre. This working group is then expected to commission the relevant studies.

If Phase 1 is satisfactory finalised, and the results are positive then Phase 2 could consist of the development, creation and running of the Centre which is proposed for the next OP funding period, however this is beyond the scope of this RELOS3 project.

This action has been inspired by the Green Pac Polymer Application Centre in Emmen (NL) and the ECOmunity Park in Oosterwolde (NL).

Whilst the Green Pac Polymer Application Centre has provided a clear idea how such Centre could be managed, what activities can be emulated locally and how the Quadruple Helix can be involved, the ECOmunity Park provides insight on how to develop an ecological park which provides the best possible infrastructure to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and sharing of knowledge.

The Green Pac Polymer Application Centre is an excellent example on which to base our Centre for Advanced Manufacturing. It is an open innovation centre, driven by a local industry and academia for (green) plastics, fibres and composites, initiating and facilitating business-driven knowledge development. Effectively all stakeholders in this industry are involved. Furthermore, it is an example of how intervention at the local level can increase innovation and effectiveness of funding for advanced manufacturing collaboration.

Activities which can be emulated include:

- shared promotion of local industry
- finalizing proofs of concept ready for large-scale production, not only by technical support, but also support in managerial/organisational related activities
- support for start-ups
- shared projects on applied research in emerging technologies
- Take jointly advantage of external (co-)funding opportunities from EU programmes

The ECOmunitypark in Oosterwolde is the industrial park of the future: an ecological working landscape focused on innovation, entrepreneurship and sharing of knowledge and facilities. The park will be one of the most beautiful working landscapes in the Netherlands, with exceptional spatial qualities. All businesses in this park are disconnected from the sewer system, green roofs ensure climate regulation and water and greenery provide cooling and water storage.

Action

Set up a Committee to undertake the necessary work to determine the terms and development parameters for the preparatory feasibility studies and cost benefit analysis, also based on knowledge obtained through RELOS3, to assist the current policy owners in developing the strategic decisions for the best possible development of such Centre.

Players involved

- Malta Enterprise
- Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses
- Malta Life Science Park in an advisory role

Timeframe

Q2 2020: Setting up of working group to spearhead this initiative
Q4 2020: Agreement by all players on terms and development parameters
Q1 2021: Issue of call for the required services
Q4 2021: Reports finalised and will feed into the proposal for the development of the Centre post 2021.

Costs

The preparatory work to establish the terms and development parameters are covered by each entity's budget. The cost of the relevant studies and reports are to be determined, based on the parameters put forward by the working group in due time.

Funding sources

Funding will be sought through national budget.

Action 3: Generation of new industry-academia projects by the creation of a formal collaboration between ME and UoM to support academic spin-offs

The background

The commercialisation of scientific and technological knowledge produced by our academics and scholars is a pillars for fostering, developing and sustaining Malta's economic growth. A promising way to transfer research results to the market place is by the creation of academic spin-offs. However, it is argued that limited attention has been devoted to specifically supporting the creation, development and fostering University spinoffs - for which the real challenge is to champion both research and entrepreneurship at the same time.

There is a substantial commercial potential of various research projects being developed by scholars and researchers at the University of Malta. However, academic spinoffs face particular challenges, very specific and different than regular startups or enterprises in general, and can require specific start-up and development assistance - depending on the demands and requirements of the spinoff.

Till present, a degree of specific assistance has been facilitated through interpersonal contacts between members of academia and staff at Malta Enterprise. However, it is argued that spinoffs require more, better and dedicated support to start-up, thrive and grow. It is proposed that a formal collaboration is created between Malta Enterprise and the University of Malta (UoM).

This formal collaboration will not only improve the support to spinoffs but in equal measure link researchers with enterprise partners to collaborate, innovate and create new marketable solutions.

This action has been inspired by the Emilia-Romana High Technology Network in Bologna (IT). Since 2001, the Emilia-Romagna Region has been strengthening the cooperation between the research world and the production system. It has developed towards a model, where enterprises and research centres collaborate within the most important industrial sectors identified by the Emilia-Romagna Smart Specialization Strategy.

The High Technology Network links researchers and enterprises to gain new solutions and develop innovation. The Network impacts in a large number of companies that are now used to have productive relationships with universities and university labs. On the other side, there are now many university-based researchers and university labs which have high level capabilities for structured collaborations with companies.

Also, this formal collaboration also allows for internal learning, creating understanding of any difficulties or barriers, and in this way Malta Enterprise will have a closer interaction and better knowledge of needs and challenges, and can better influence relevant policies and improve where necessary its support actions.

This should result in more encouragement for academics to create spinoffs as well as an increase in collaboration projects between academia and industry.

Action

The creation of a formal collaboration between ME and UoM to support academic spin-offs aims to address the specific challenges of academic spinoffs. These challenges include, but are not limited to: financial, operational, managerial and organisational challenges.

To facilitate the creation and development more and better spinoffs a formal collaboration between Malta Enterprise and the University of Malta (and potential other knowledge-based organisations) is required. Malta Enterprise is in an excellent position to assist in addressing these challenges, among other using its strong network to create linkages to industry, external entrepreneurs and potential investors, as well as provide financial, and non-financial, support to spinoffs.

This action will achieve an increase in academic spinoffs by 1) the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities; 2) the commitment to organise collaborative events to promote entrepreneurship by academics or to pitch spinoffs to investors; 3) provision of strategic assistance and business mentoring to academics; 4) the facilitation in the provision of access to finance to commercially feasible projects; 5) facilitating when necessary innovation brokerage between academia and industry; and 6) creating a feedback loop to the relevant policy, based on the day-to-day learnings of this formal collaboration.

Players involved

- Malta Enterprise
- University of Malta
- Industry playes as required
- Malta Life Sciences Park in an advisory role

Timeframe

Q2 2020: Setting up of working group to spearhead this initiative
Q4 2020: Process design approved
Q2 2021: Signing of MOU
Q4 2021: First results expected of increased academia – industry collaboration

Costs

Initially no cost is envisaged for the creation of this formal collaboration. For future joint events, publications or other funds might be necessary, but will be established on a case to case basis.

Funding sources

When needed funding will be sought through the OP or national budget.

Action 4: Generation of new industry-academia projects by community driven Industry – Academia workshops

The background

To help bridge the gap between academia's applied research and industry needs, it is being proposed that periodic industry – academia workshops shall be organised. Though various events happen sporadically, it is argued that a more organised approach would be essential to create better understanding between the full quadruple helix as well as catalyse the development of new solutions, educational competencies as well as innovative products and/or services.

There is no one-fits-all format for the proposed workshops. Thus workshops can be of a general topic covering multiple industries and academic areas or focused on a particular research subject or industry.

It is argued that by organising community driven workshops periodically through a dedicated team, an ecosystem that brings together academics, industry players, the public sector and potentially civil society can be developed. It is believed that apart from developing a better and more structured dialogue between industry and academia, which is currently missing locally, these workshop will have a positive impact the RTDI capacity in industry (especially SMEs).

All workshops should focus on instigating discussion, supporting brainstorming, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and the sharing of experiences and inspiring participants to establish collaborations. It is argued that such periodic workshops can also improve public and private sector cooperation in innovation related initiatives, it can help local government, private sector and academia to develop new initiatives and promote other community driven events.

With this in mind Malta Enterprise has organised a first pilot workshop in Q4 2019. The pilot workshop was attended by 14 senior level executives from industry, academia and government. The workshop was facilitated by a UK expert who shared highlights of his experiences and best practices on Industry–Academia collaborations. This was followed by a roundtable discussion sharing views on current experiences/best practices in Malta and an open discussion on maximising opportunities and address challenges and gaps in Malta, which eventually culminated in a number of recommendations and suggestions for business, industry and academia to forge closer links. These recommendations have been taken on board, firstly in this action plan, and secondly, in the feedback that Malta Enterprise provides to the policy owners.

This action was inspired Mobile Monday in Tartu (EE). Mobile Monday has been an eye-opener on how to create a community driven event with strong attendance and involving the Quadruple Helix.

Malta Enterprise would like to emulate the structure of strengthen the local community and involve them to contribute to the various workshops, as it has identified the increasing need to help the local (science and business) community to collaborate in such initiative. It is argued that building a better academia-industry collaborative space will also help to provide international exposure and business opportunities for local companies and helps them to exchange personal experiences gained, like is the case with Mobile Monday.

Action

Organising periodic industry – academia community driven workshops, in which participants are strategically prompted and supported to launch collaborations and share experiences which will result in new projects and collaborations and secondly provide Malta Enterprise with better understanding of required policy changes, which will be put forward to the respective policy owner.

Players involved

Malta Enterprise
Quadruple helix and external experts as required

Timeframe

Q2 2020: Setting up of internal team to spearhead this initiative
Q3 2020: Map out potential topics and respective formats for events, create calendar of events and get buy-in from top level management and stakeholders
Q4 2020: First event
Q2 2021: Second event
Q4 2021: First results expected of increased academia – industry collaboration

Costs

No initial costs are foreseen.

Funding sources

Any event costs will be from Malta Enterprise own budget or OP.

Monitoring and impact

The following dashboard will be used for monitoring the Action Plan and expected impact.

Action	Who	Plan	Ambition
Action 1: Improvement R&D industry support scheme	Malta Enterprise	Q1 2020: Setup in-house Evaluation Committee consisting on in-house experts Q1 2020: Committee to review current incentive Q1 2020: Draft proposal updated incentive Q1 2020: Launch updated incentive Q1 – Q4 2020: Monitor startup-academia collaboration increase Q1 2021: Incentives Unit to present report to Malta Enterprise management with results	New incentive launched by 2020 Increased startup - academia collaboration by 2020 with presentable results in 2021
Action 2: Development of a Centre of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing	Malta Enterprise With input from: Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses; Malta Life Science Park; Industry when required	Q2 2020: Setting up of working group to spearhead this initiative Q4 2020: Agreement by all players on terms and development parameters Q1 2021: Issue of call for the required services Q4 2021: Reports finalised and will feed into the proposal for the development of the Centre post 2021	Report to support development Centre of Excellence by 2021 Increased industry – academia collaboration through working group from 2020 onwards
Action 3: Creation of formal collaboration between ME and University of Malta to support academic spin-offs	Malta Enterprise With input from: University of Malta; Industry when required	Q2 2020: Setting up of working group to spearhead this initiative Q4 2020: Process design approved Q2 2021: Signing of MOU Q4 2021: First results expected of increased academia – industry collaboration	Signing of MOU by 2021 Presentable industry - academia collaboration results by 2021
Action 4: Periodic Industry – Academia workshops	Malta Enterprise With input from: University of Malta; Other stakeholders and external experts when required	Q2 2020: Setting up of internal team to spearhead this initiative Q3 2020: Map out potential topics and respective formats for events, create calendar of events and get buy-in from top level management and stakeholders Q4 2020: First event Q2 2021: Second event Q4 2021: First results expected of increased industry-academia collaboration	Q4 2020: first event Q2 2021: second event Increased industry – academia collaboration from 2020 onwards with presentable results in 2021

Signatures

The proposed actions and deliverables in this action plan are supported by the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses.

Its implementation is to be monitored by Malta Enterprise as part of the RELOS3 project.

Signature and stamp:

For the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Businesses

Date: 11.03.2020

Name: Nancy Caruana

Position: Permanent Secretary
Ministry for the Economy,
Investment and Small Business

Signature and stamp:

MALTA ENTERPRISE

For Malta Enterprise Corporation

Date: 11/03/2020

Name: KARL HERRERA

Position: Chief Officer Incentives Development and Evaluation