

Ensuring the cohesive management of freshwater resources in the Maltese Islands

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Abstract

Due to their semi-arid Mediterranean climate, the Maltese islands have historically faced a shortage of freshwater resources. Increasing populations and economic activities particular since the early 1900's have further exacerbated the challenges related to the scarcity of natural freshwater resources and limited water supplies. Therefore Malta has increasingly depended, since the 1960's, on the production of alternative resources of freshwater such as sea-water desalination and water reclamation.

Malta's Water Policy therefore reflects the context of unavailability of water resources and focuses on the conjunctive use of water demand management and water supply augmentation measures to address an efficient water demand, whilst ensuring a high level of engagement with the population. The main policy objective is that of ensuring the long-term security of water supply, progressively in an increasingly sustainable manner.

Availability of freshwater has historically been an important limitation on Malta's economic growth. Invariably, water is an important element in the development of other economic sectors (such as manufacture and tourism) and agriculture, where the growth of these sectors requires access to secure and affordable water resources. Sectoral policies need to ensure that economic growth is decoupled from water demand through the promotion of efficiency in water use.

The Energy and Water Agency (EWA) was established in 2014 with the aim of ensuring the cohesive development of water (and energy) policies across Ministries. EWA's role therefore focuses on supporting other Ministries in aligning their policies with the objectives of the national water policy. To achieve this, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Water has been established to coordinate the development of Malta's River Basin Management Plans.

Additionally, a National Water Table involving stakeholder representatives has also been set up to ensure the engagement of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, facilitating the effective implementation of cohesive water management plans.

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