Malta

Structural Focus - Digital Safety

Policy Recommendations

1.Establish and fund a 24/7 national helpline for digital violence

Malta should dedicate sustained public funding to create a centralized, 24/7, multi-lingual national helpline for all victims of gender-based violence. Staffed by professionals trained in both digital harm and trauma-informed response, the service would provide immediate, specialised support and referral pathways for victims navigating online abuse, stalking, doxxing, and other forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). This intervention fills a critical operational gap between legal frameworks and on-the-ground access to protection and assistance, ensuring that victims are not left without recourse in moments of crisis.

2.Mandate specialised training on technology-facilitated gender-based violence for law enforcement and judiciary

To improve institutional response to digital forms of gender-based violence, Italy should develop and mandate specialised training for law enforcement and judicial personnel on the identification, investigation, and prosecution of crimes such as cyberstalking, doxxing, and non-consensual image sharing. A standardised curriculum, grounded in trauma-informed practices and digital evidence handling, would address the current knowledge gap among frontline actors, which often results in secondary victimization and low reporting rates. International frameworks like the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention and GREVIO monitoring reports define state obligations in this area, while EU-funded initiatives such as *GenderSAFE* provide practical models for training and prevention.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia
Digital Gender Gap, Digital Violence, Housemaking.
An education and awareness programme

Malta

Access Layer of the Digital Gender Gap

Identified Issue:	Malta's national digital policy, while successful in achieving full infrastructure coverage, has not adequately addressed affordability and device access. The Hypatia report identifies a unique urban affordability gap, where a higher percentage of women in cities report being unable to afford an internet connection compared to those in rural areas.

Policy Recommendations

1.Institute a "Digital Access" voucher for low-income urban households

To reduce affordability-related barriers to digital participation, Malta should introduce a means-tested voucher program targeting low-income women, single-parent households, and housemakers in urban areas. The voucher should offset the cost of monthly broadband subscriptions and contribute toward the purchase of a basic digital device, such as a tablet or laptop. This approach addresses two often-overlooked barriers: the cost of connectivity and the lack of personal access to a dedicated device, both of which can limit women's ability to engage in digital learning or remote work. International models such as the U.S. *Affordable Connectivity Program* demonstrate the feasibility and impact of combining service subsidies with device support to promote equitable digital inclusion.

2.Mandate and promote social tariffs from all major telecom providers

To enhance broadband accessibility among low-income households, Italy should establish a regulatory requirement mandating all major telecom providers to offer standardised and affordable "social tariffs." Additionally, these providers should actively promote such tariffs to eligible users. The enforcement of this mandate should be the responsibility of the national communications authority, which must provide clear guidelines regarding pricing, eligibility criteria, and visibility to ensure that these services are both accessible and widely adopted. Social tariffs represent a sustainable, market-based approach to addressing this disparity in access. The model employed by the UK's Ofcom illustrates how effective regulatory oversight can ensure that these offerings are not only available but successfully reach those individuals in need.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia

Malta

Usage Layer of the Digital Gender Gap

Identified Issue:	While Malta shows near gender parity in internet use among younger and middle-aged adults (16–54), a significant digital divide emerges in the 55–74 age group. According to Eurostat (2024), 76.1% of men in this age group use the internet daily or almost daily, compared to only 69.2% of women — a 6.9-percentage-point gender gap. This indicates that older women remain considerably less connected despite overall high digital uptake in Malta.The data suggests that digital inclusion policies have succeeded for younger generations but have not adequately addressed the combined effects of age and gender, which shape access, skills, and the ability to engage online among older women.

Policy Recommendations

1. Integrate a gender specific Pillar into Malta's Digital Strategy

Malta should introduce a dedicated strategic pillar within its digitalisation strategy focused specifically on older women, including explicit recognition of older women as a priority group, gender and age-disaggregated indicators in all monitoring frameworks, requirements that all digital public services undergo gender- and age-sensitive usability testing, involvement of women's and ageing organisations in co-designing digital services.

2. Create a National "Digital Inclusion and Affordability Programme for Older Women"

Introduce a national programme specifically targeting women aged 55+, combining subsidised broadband and device grants for low-income older women (tablet/laptop + affordable connection), community-based digital mentors trained to support women with low confidence, assisted onboarding to essential services (e-ID, health portals, digital banking), digital safety and financial literacy training tailored to older women, permanent offline alternatives for all essential public services.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia

Malta

Skills Layer of the Digital Gender Gap

Identified Issue:	Malta shows higher "Above basic digital skills" (38% of women, 36% for men) compared to EU data with 25% for women and 29% for men), and a significant national disparity in skills based on formal education level (4th largest gap in the EU). This deficit in advanced skills directly contributes to the ICT specialist shortage.

Policy Recommendations

1.Scale funding for advanced digital skills bootcamps via public-private partnerships

To close the gender gap in high-skill ICT roles, Malta should allocate a dedicated share of the National eSkills Strategy budget to co-fund intensive digital skills bootcamps for women, focused on high-demand fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data analytics, and blockchain. These programs should be delivered in collaboration with private-sector partners, such as Tech.mt and leading employers, and include guaranteed internships or job placement support to ensure transition into the workforce. Such an approach moves beyond basic digital literacy to equip women with job-ready, advanced competencies, directly addressing the persistent underrepresentation of women among ICT specialists.

2. Integrate gender-sensitive pedagogy into national STEM education

Malta should include mandatory training in gender-sensitive pedagogy as part of its Digital Education Strategy (2024–2030). This training will help educators address classroom dynamics and assessment practices that contribute to the "confidence-competence gap" among girls in STEM. By focusing on unconscious bias and teaching methods, the goal is to encourage more girls to engage with technical subjects in early and secondary education. The EU Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) provides a framework for this implementation.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia
Digital Gender Gap, Digital Violence, Housemaking. An education and awareness programme

Malta

Employment Layer of the Digital Gender Gap

Identified Issue:	Malta has a critical ICT specialist shortage, exacerbated by the second-lowest share of female ICT specialists in the EU (14.7%). The pipeline from education to employment is broken.

Policy Recommendations

1.Enforce gender mainstreaming in all digital policy and funding

To effectively promote gender equality in digital transformation, Malta should require Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) for all digital policies, including the National eSkills Strategy and public ICT procurement. Existing gender mainstreaming frameworks must enforce measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for gender balance in outcomes, staffing, and beneficiaries. Despite having comprehensive strategies, their impact remains limited due to inconsistent enforcement and the lack of gender considerations in digital planning. Linking GIA results to funding decisions and contract approvals can enhance accountability and align national efforts with EU standards for inclusive digital governance.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia
Digital Gender Gap, Digital Violence, Housemaking. An education and awareness programme

Malta

Innovation Layer of the Digital Gender Gap

Identified Issue:	Female-led ventures face a "funding crisis," with only 2% of European VC funding going to all-female teams. In Malta, this is compounded by "serious data transparency gaps", as there is no detailed national data on women-founded startups.

Policy Recommendations

1.Mandate gender-disaggregated data collection for innovation funding

To enhance accountability and address structural inequities within startup and innovation ecosystems, Malta should mandate that all national innovation funding entities, as well as any private venture capital (VC) funds engaged in public-private partnerships, collect and publicly report gender-disaggregated data. This data should encompass information regarding founders, team composition, funding applications submitted, and the amounts awarded. Addressing this data gap is an essential first step toward evidence-based policymaking and facilitates the monitoring of gender disparities in access to capital. In the absence of transparency, targeted interventions remain speculative; conversely, with such transparency, Malta can foster a more equitable and data-informed innovation landscape.

2.Establish a national co-investment fund for female founders

Malta should create a national co-investment fund to match private venture capital for tech startups founded or co-founded by women on a 1:1 basis. This approach directly addresses the structural bias in venture funding, where women-led firms consistently outperform in terms of returns but receive a disproportionately small share of investment capital. By sharing risk and demonstrating state confidence, the fund would encourage private investment in high-potential female-led ventures while providing much-needed capital to an underfunded segment of the innovation ecosystem. Successful models such as Canada's Women Entrepreneurship Strategy and the EU's Women TechEU initiative provide strong precedents, while the UK's Investing in Women Code emphasises the importance of combining access to capital with data transparency and institutional accountability.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Hypatia
Digital Gender Gap, Digital Violence, Housemaking. An education and awareness programme