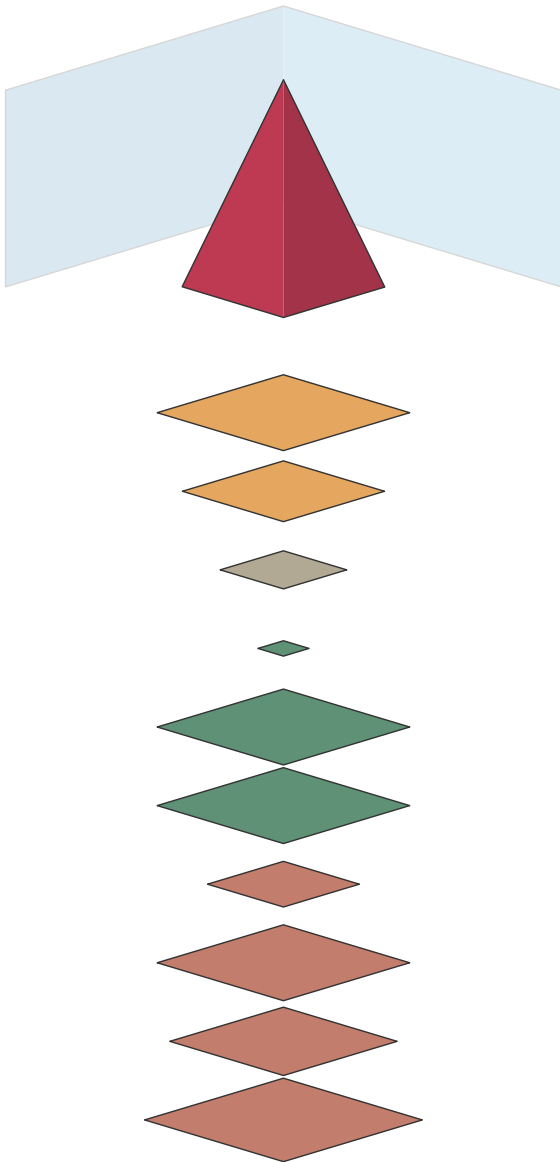


 **MALTA**



 **4.65**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

109th of 193 countries
20th of 44 European countries
4th of 8 Southern European countries

 **CRIMINAL MARKETS** **4.05**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING	5.00
HUMAN SMUGGLING	4.00
ARMS TRAFFICKING	2.50
FLORA CRIMES	1.00
FAUNA CRIMES	5.00
NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCE CRIMES	5.00
HEROIN TRADE	3.00
COCAINE TRADE	5.00
CANNABIS TRADE	4.50
SYNTHETIC DRUG TRADE	5.50

 **CRIMINAL ACTORS** **5.25**

MAFIA-STYLE GROUPS	1.50
CRIMINAL NETWORKS	7.00
STATE-EMBEDDED ACTORS	7.50
FOREIGN ACTORS	5.00

 **5.17**
RESILIENCE SCORE

82nd of 193 countries
33rd of 44 European countries
6th of 8 Southern European countries

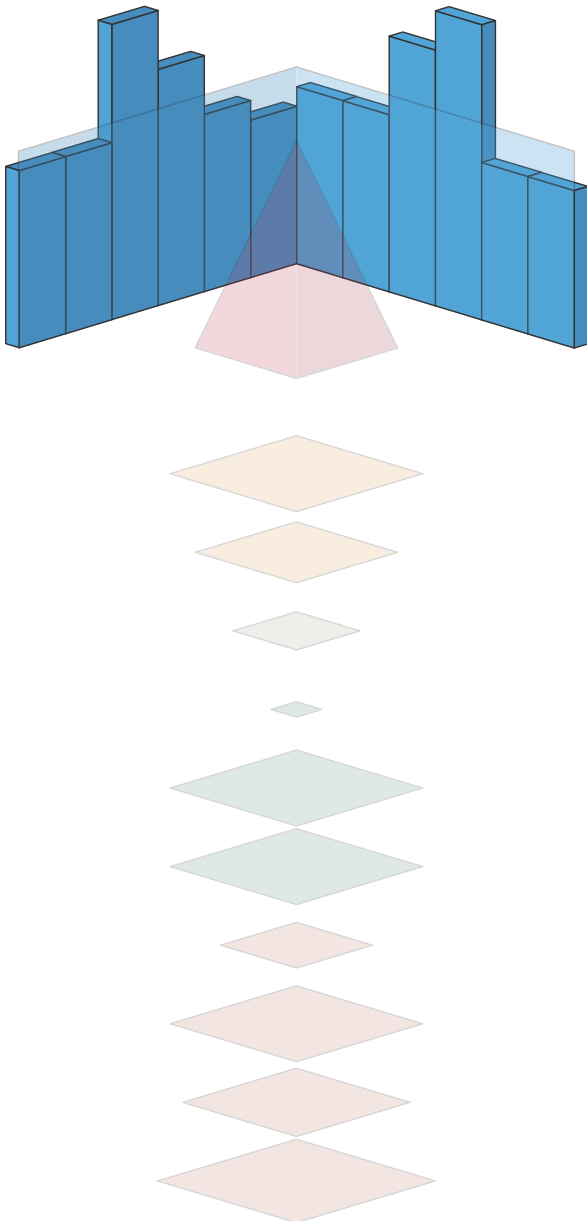


Funding provided by the United States Government.



ENACT is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Institute for Security Studies and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

 **MALTA**





 **5.17**
RESILIENCE SCORE

82nd of 193 countries
33rd of 44 European countries
6th of 8 Southern European countries

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	4.50
GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	4.50
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	7.50
NATIONAL POLICIES AND LAWS	6.00
JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND DETENTION	4.50
LAW ENFORCEMENT	4.00
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY	4.50
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING	4.50
ECONOMIC REGULATORY CAPACITY	6.50
VICTIM AND WITNESS SUPPORT	7.50
PREVENTION	4.00
NON-STATE ACTORS	4.00

 **4.65**
CRIMINALITY SCORE

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 CRIMINAL MARKETS	4.05
 CRIMINAL ACTORS	5.25



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CRIMINALITY

CRIMINAL MARKETS

PEOPLE

Malta is predominantly a transit and destination country for human trafficking, with women from Eastern Europe being moved into Malta for sexual exploitation, and men from Asia for forced labour. Those who end up working in the nightlife industry and in massage parlours are particularly at risk of exploitation. Victims are often tied into debt bondage with their traffickers, and the market largely evades police interference.

Malta is a transit and destination country for human smuggling and is located on a dangerous and growing smuggling route. There are currently approximately 5 000 irregular migrants from Africa residing in Malta, as well as reports of networks of Libyan smugglers cooperating with Malta-based facilitators. Since joining the EU and Schengen zone, smuggling has decreased, although a market still exists for smuggling individuals into mainland Europe with fraudulent documents.

TRADE

While Malta's location makes it a potentially attractive location for illicit firearms trafficking, legislation on the production and trade of firearms is restrictive, and the market is therefore small. Illicit firearm activity is mainly related to other crimes such as drug trafficking and prostitution rings, and firearm trafficking is not seen as a significant market in its own right. The illegal firearms market, such that it is, is largely run by Italian mafia groups, with weapons being moved into Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

ENVIRONMENT

Despite its favourable position between Africa and Europe, there is no evidence of a developed flora crimes market in Malta. However, the country is a hotbed of songbird poaching and illegal tuna fishing, the latter being a hugely profitable market that is facilitated by corruption and poor oversight. Malta's tuna fish operators have been linked to a €25 million pan-European scandal, in which an attempt was made to collude with Spanish authorities to legitimize their illegal tuna haul. The European Commission began infringement procedures against Malta in May 2020 for failing to comply with the EU's IUU (illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing regulation. Because of the large number of birds that migrate between Europe and Africa each year, Malta is also rife with poachers and a smuggling route was discovered between it and Italy in 2018.

Malta does not have an abundance of natural resources. There is therefore a well-developed shadow economy for fuel and oil smuggling, often from North African refineries. Libyan militias and Maltese criminal groups use registered companies in Malta to launder their illegal oil and earn an estimated €26 million annually. Libyan, Maltese and Italian criminal groups cooperate closely in non-renewable resource crimes.

DRUGS

Malta is a destination country for cannabis. It is the most widely used drug in the country and large volumes are seized each year. While possession of cannabis for recreational purposes has been partially decriminalized, its use is strongly controlled and limited. The criminal market usually involves foreign actors who are supported by Maltese criminals. Most cannabis arrives in Malta from Morocco (smuggled via Tunisia and Libya) or from Sicily (smuggled via a well-established route). Malta is a destination and transit country for cocaine, most of which is smuggled from South America through Spain. Malta is among the countries with the largest seizures of cocaine, with its container ports being used to transfer significant amounts of the drug. There appears to be cooperation between Libyan and Maltese criminal networks in the cocaine market, and use is rising while prices are dropping.

Malta is predominantly a destination country for synthetic drugs, with foreign and local actors using power boats to move the drug through the Sicily-Malta route. While the market is small, synthetic drug use has increased in recent years. There is no known local manufacturing of synthetic drugs, and online purchasing from China has become the main source for precursor substances. While it operates as a minor transit country, Malta is primarily a destination country for Afghan heroin that is trafficked through Turkey, North Africa and Europe. However, heroin use is low in Malta and has been decreasing steadily since 2006.

CRIMINAL ACTORS

There are no identifiable domestic mafia-style groups in Malta, although Italian mafia groups are active in the country. Its location between Africa, Asia and Europe makes it attractive to foreign organized crime networks, and foreign groups are embedded in most Maltese criminal markets. Maltese criminal groups usually work with influential foreign groups such as La Cosa Nostra and the 'Ndrangheta in the illegal movement of people and commodities. Various criminal groups are involved in human trafficking from China, Eastern Europe and North Africa, and there is a strong foreign influence in the illegal drug, fuel and money laundering markets.

Loose criminal networks are prevalent in Malta and act across most of the criminal markets in the country. Despite their having only moderate access to weapons, there is a high level of violence by criminal groups, including bomb attacks, facilitated by inefficient law enforcement. There have been a number of high-level corruption scandals in Malta – most notably, the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in 2017, while she was investigating allegations of corruption in the awarding of public contracts

worth US\$517 million. This caused international alarm and raised concerns that high-level government officials were preventing the police from investigating possible collusion between criminal groups and the state. Criminal actors are believed to extract resources from the state through corrupt contracts and public procurement; and the Maltese system of political party financing has been strongly criticized as a way of allowing private interests to bribe and control politicians.

RESILIENCE

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Following the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia and the fall of the previous government, Prime Minister Robert Abela pledged to restore the rule of law and the government publicly communicated its position against organized crime. However, these commitments have yet to be tested. Law enforcement is still poorly resourced, which has a negative impact on state-oversight mechanisms, and the perception of government corruption has worsened steadily over the past two decades. Opinion polls still reveal a high level of perceived corruption, especially in public procurement, despite the range of anti-corruption measures enshrined in the Maltese criminal code. The government has been criticized for not dealing with conflicts of interests, while the statute of limitations on corruption charges for public officials was removed. Allegations of corruption, the misuse of state resources and the inappropriate use of office are widespread. Access to information is limited, there are no independent oversight bodies in Malta, and the commission against corruption is woefully understaffed.

Malta has ratified many UN protocols related to the major criminal markets and is a member of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption. The Maltese police have a specific unit that works and shares information with INTERPOL, and the government cooperates well with the EU and other international bodies as part of its strategy to combat the trafficking of drugs, arms and humans. However, Malta is less willing to comply with international standards against state corruption – particularly with regard to law enforcement. The activities of organized crime groups are criminalized in Malta. However, there are no criminal association laws, which reportedly hinders investigations, especially of high-profile individuals that may have been involved in the cover-up of Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder. Malta has laws in place to cover human trafficking and smuggling, environmental crime and drug trafficking. Arms trafficking is not explicitly criminalized, but it is covered by provisions in the Maltese arms act. Ordinary criminal law is responsible for covering organized crime proceedings,

and there are provisions in place for the investigation and prosecution of corruption offences.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY

With the exception of corruption, Malta does not have a judicial unit focused specifically on organized crime. While the justice system is often criticized for depending on the police to initiate criminal proceedings on corruption, a new prosecution office has recently been created, which presents an opportunity for improvement. Malta's courts are not effective in passing judgments against the defendants of organized crime, and there have been incidents of corruption, including a case in which three members of the judiciary were charged for accepting bribes to alter sentencing. Malta has one prison, which operates above its maximum capacity (the prison population has doubled over two decades), but it meets international standards regarding the fundamental rights of prisoners.

Malta's law enforcement infrastructure is chronically under-resourced and lacking in expertise, especially with regard to the police force's investigative capabilities, which undermines its anti-organized crime efforts and public trust. Specialized police departments have been set up for drug-trafficking and economic crimes – and, despite a lack of resources, have been reasonably successful. The government hopes to establish an agency to fight financial organized crime and prosecute money laundering offences. Malta participates effectively in international intelligence sharing and police cooperation, as well as in the European Patrols Network to help address irregular migration.

Malta is at a crossroad for illegal trafficking, and its strategic location and accessibility to Italian criminal groups have made its borders vulnerable. Italian mafia groups are highly active in Malta, which has led to the government recently entering into an agreement with Italy to improve border control. Malta has a customs service and a specialized immigration unit to control its points of entry and suppress

irregular migration. However, its borders remain porous, with moderate corruption and bribery risks.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Malta is highly vulnerable to money laundering. Given its international status as a finance centre, the country's banking sector is large and internationally exposed. Despite efforts to better understand money laundering risks, the country remains vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing. The money laundering unit within the Maltese police force works with international authorities to assist with money laundering investigations, while the financial intelligence unit works to prevent economic crimes. Malta has made efforts to understand its money laundering risks, but the limited financial resources it provides for its various law enforcement units undermines their capabilities. Malta lags behind most of its European counterparts with regard to the ease of doing business in the country. While it is relatively straightforward to set up and operate a business legally in Malta, there is evidence of corrupt practices, especially in the awarding of public contracts. In 2016 Malta overhauled its public procurement procedures to align itself with EU directives, but there are still concerning connections between some local elites and political figures that threaten fair competition. There are opportunities for businesses to expand, but these are hampered by inefficient government bureaucracy.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In 2017, Malta launched a victim support unit within its police force to provide counselling and education for the victims of crimes. The national welfare agency offers medical care, employment services and legal counsel for the victims of human trafficking. The government also funds training for labour officials on victim identification and referral. Overall, witness protection is well legislated; however, in the case of Daphne Caruana Galizia it was reported that the police protection programme was stopped without reason before her death, sparking fears of interference by state-embedded criminal actors. Malta's national drugs policy emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach to the treatment of drug addiction. There are a limited number of organized crime prevention strategies in Malta. The most glaring gap is in preventative law enforcement, where there is not enough emphasis on emerging threats such as the recent proliferation of unregulated massage parlours and strip clubs. However, organizations such as the Malta Migrants Association recognize that integration is one of the most effective measures against organized crime. Malta's national drug policy framework provides for preventative education campaigns, and its welfare services implement preventative measures alongside NGOs. The nationwide LEAP project aims to consolidate community resources to address social exclusion and prevent criminality.

While the role of civil society organizations in combating organized crime in Malta is not large, the state is open to fostering a strong, independent civil society and supports non-state actors in their activities. The National Commission on Domestic Violence, for example, recently organized a five day, anti-trafficking event to demonstrate the role the private sector can play in limiting criminal markets. The media environment has worsened in recent years, with a number of attacks on free speech and a culture of intimidation and threats, culminating in the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia. There is a lack of data on the media industry, inadequate protection and self-regulation, and concerning levels of political ownership of media outlets.

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