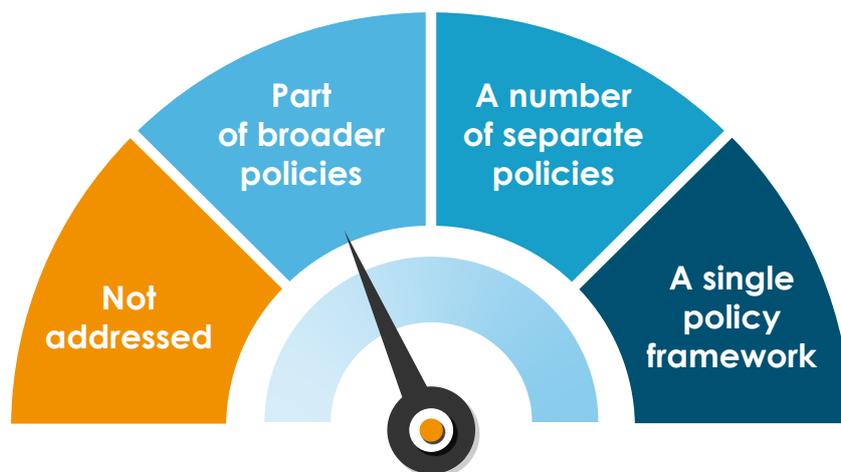# Malta

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Map is a tool used to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU Member States on the themes and recommendations of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (or BIK Strategy) first set out by the European Commission in May 2012. The third BIK Policy Map report (2020) examines the implementation of the BIK Strategy in 30 European countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

For each country in the BIK Policy Map study, we outline findings for Policy frameworks, Policy making and Policy implementation, and conclude by providing a selection of good practices.

Download the full BIK Policy Map report from the Better Internet for Kids website.

1. Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks refer to the organising principles and long-term goals for policies, guidelines, decisions and other statements made at the national level in the course of putting into practice the BIK Strategy.

In Malta, the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children has featured in national policy debates on the subject of children's use of the internet. This topic is covered as part of broader policies, principally through policies, laws and regulations which address the four different pillars of the BIK Strategy. Some examples are given below.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people

- The National Children's Policy (2017)seeks to promote the well-being, best interests and empowerment of all children through protection of children's rights and freedom.

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

- A National Curriculum Framework for All, 2012.

- The National Children's Policy (2017) seeks to promote the well-being, best interests and empowerment of all children through protection of children's rights and freedom.

Pillar 3: Creating a safer environment for children online

- The National Children's Policy (2017) seeks to promote the well-being, best interests and empowerment of all children through protection of children's rights and freedom.

Pillar 4: Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation

- Law or regulation are the primary means for implementing Pillar 4 which includes the CRIMINAL CODE, Chapter 9, Article 208.

2. Policy making

Policy making refers to the general process by which policies are developed within each country, including how coordination and oversight is managed, the extent to which the policy agenda is informed by an evidence base, and whether there are arrangements for young people to be involved in the policy process.

2.1 How are policies coordinated?

In Malta, more than one ministry, agency or body is responsible for coordinating policies addressing the BIK Strategy with four to six ministries involved in the process.

There are several important stakeholders such as Tech.mt, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, the Office of the Commissioner for Children, the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes, and the Cyber Crime Unit within the Malta Police Force which play an important role in the policy-making processes of policies for a better internet for children. All entities contribute by means of reports, studies, projects and evaluations that feed into the formulation of policies, and they also play an important role in the implementation and monitoring of such policies.

2.2   Who is primarily in charge of policy coordination?

Responsibility for coordination of BIK-related policies varies by each respective pillar of the BIK Strategy.

- Under Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people, this is primarily overseen by the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes.

- Under Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment and Pillar 3: Tools and regulation for an online safe environment, Tech.mt is the agency with responsibility for policy coordination.

- In Pillar 4: Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services has the primary responsibility for policy coordination.

Inter-departmental communication mechanisms are implemented through the BeSmartOnline! project which brings together Tech.mt, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, the Office of the Commissioner for Children, the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes and the Malta Police Force.

2.3 Data collection in the last three years

Data collection to support policy making related to the BIK Strategy includes national and regional surveys with quantitative data specifically focused on children's use of the internet, quantitative data on some topics of children's use of the internet collected as part of a broader survey, and qualitative research specifically focused on children's use of the internet.

As part of the EU Kids Online 2020 study, the University of Malta, in collaboration with the BeSmartOnline! consortium (Tech.mt, Office of the Commissioner for Children, Foundation for Social Welfare Services, Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes and the Cybercrime Unit) conducted research in 2018 on internet opportunities and risks for Maltese children. The survey was carried out with a representative sample of 1,234 boys and girls aged 9-16 years.

Evaluation process
The National Children's Policy (2017) is continuously evaluated. To give an example, the National Children's Policy gives reference to measures related to the production, possession and dissemination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). It stresses the importance of strengthening efforts to eliminate such material through increased law enforcement and public reporting. In response to such recommendations, Malta has strived to build a stronger and more harmonised mechanism between the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and the Malta Police Force Cyber Crime Unit when it comes to dealing with reports. Evaluation of the policy is still ongoing.

New policy development
The National Children's Policy (2017) addressed the issue of children's use of the internet and calls for the strengthening of initiatives in order to equip children with the necessary skills to think critically when using the internet. It also addresses the issues of child sexual abuse material and promoting an online-offline balance to prevent problematic internet use.

2.4 Involvement of young people in policy making

The involvement of young people in policy making is described as one whereby young people are systematically and directly consulted and informed (for example, through analysis of existing surveys or data collections).

One of the main responsibilities of the BeSmartOnline! project (particularly through the Office of the Commissioner for Children) is youth participation. The Office of the Commissioner for Children created the Council for Children which has an advisory role, and young individuals act as ambassadors and form the link between youth and policy makers. Furthermore, a fixed

youth panel is always consulted in resource development and campaign ideas. Additionally, recommendations are frequently drawn up by young people and presented to policy makers. This was a significant contribution by youth to the formulation of the National Children's Policy in 2017.

3. Policy implementation

Policy implementation refers to the involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the delivery of initiatives and the spread of activities as envisaged under each of the four pillars of the BIK Strategy.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people

Activities under Pillar 1 are led by the Maltese Safer Internet Centre. Government ministries have a complementary role. Examples include:

- In terms of stimulating the production of creative and educational online content for children, it is the Safer Internet Centre which takes the initiative to use both national and EU funds to create such content. Such content is generally created in collaboration with other public agencies such as educational institutions and industry players.

Summary of Pillar 1 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Initiatives to stimulate the production and visibility of quality content for children	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to encourage children's creativity and to promote positive use of the internet	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to implement standards for quality online content for children	☐	☐	☑
Other relevant activity (please specify)	☐	☐	☐

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

In terms of Pillar 2, it is the Safer Internet Centre which takes the initiative to use both national and EU funds to organise awareness activities and campaigns. Such activities and campaigns are generally created in collaboration with other public agencies such as educational institutions and industry players.

Summary of Pillar 2 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
"Teaching online safety in schools"			
Strategies to include teaching online safety in schools	☐	☑	☐
Activities to reinforce informal education about online safety	☑	☐	☐
Activities to provide for online safety policies in schools	☐	☑	☐
Activities to ensure adequate teacher training in online safety	☐	☑	☐
Activities to support public-private partnerships in online safety	☐	☑	☐
"Digital and media literacy activities"			
Activities to support young people's technical skills required to use online media content and services	☐	☑	☐
Activities to encourage critical thinking around media industries and evaluating content for truthfulness, reliability	☐	☑	☐
Activities that encourage interaction, engagement and participation in the economic, social, creative, cultural aspects of society through online media	☐	☑	☐
Activities that promote democratic participation and fundamental rights on the internet	☐	☑	☐
Activities that challenge radicalisation and hate speech online	☐	☑	☐
"Scaling up awareness activities and youth participation"			
National support for public awareness-raising campaigns	☐	☑	☐
Involvement of children when developing national campaigns	☐	☑	☐
Involvement of children when developing legislation with an impact on their online activities	☐	☑	☐
Activities or initiatives to match the Commission's support for the national Youth Panels	☐	☑	☐

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Industry funding and technical support for NGOs and education providers	☐	☑	☐
Industry dissemination of awareness material either online or at the point of sale	☐	☑	☐
"Simple and robust reporting tools for users"			
Mechanisms for reporting content and contacts that may be harmful for children such as cyberbullying or grooming	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to facilitate cooperation between helplines and law enforcement	☐	☑	☐
Initiatives to monitor the effective functioning of reporting mechanisms at a national level	☐	☑	☐

Pillar 3: Creating a safe environment for children online

Activities under Pillar 3 are led by the Safer Internet Centre. Government ministries have a complementary role.

Summary of Pillar 3 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
"Age-appropriate privacy settings"			
Activities to ensure the implementation of EU legislation	☐	☐	☑
Self-regulatory measures by industry about age-appropriate privacy settings	☐	☐	☐
Awareness-raising activities regarding age-appropriate privacy settings	☐	☑	☐
"Wider availability and use of parental controls"			
Activities to promote the availability of parental control tools	☐	☑	☐
Tests and certification for parental control tools	☐	☐	☐
Efforts to support industry implementation of parental control tools	☐	☐	☑
"Wider use of age rating and content classification"			
Activities to promote the adoption of age rating and content classification among relevant stakeholders	☐	☑	☐

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A complaints process for the effective functioning of such systems	☐	☐	☑
"Online advertising and overspending"			
Activities at the national level to ensure that legislation regarding online profiling and behavioural advertising is observed	☐	☐	☐
Support industry in developing codes of conduct regarding inappropriate advertising	☐	☑	☐
Monitor implementation of codes of conduct at the national level	☐	☐	☐

Pillar 4: Fighting against child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation

Activities under Pillar 4 are led by government ministries. NGOs and civil society organisations have a complementary role.

Fighting against child abuse and child sexual exploitation falls under the responsibility of various entities, particularly the Ministry for Home Affairs, National Security and Law Enforcement under which the Malta Police Force Cyber Crime Unit deals with such cases. Additionally, the Foundation for Social Welfare Services which forms parts of the BeSmartOnline! consortium works hand in hand with the Cyber Crime Unit in handling reports related to child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and child sexual exploitation.

As of March 2019, the Malta Police Force Cyber Crime Unit was included as an official partner in the BeSmartOnline! consortium and received funds to assist its work in fighting against child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.

Summary of Pillar 4 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Increased resources for law enforcement bodies that fight against child abuse material online	☐	☑	☐
Effective safeguards in place to ensure democratic accountability in the use of investigative tools to combat child sexual abuse	☐	☐	☐
Activities to support the functioning and visibility of hotlines at the national level	☐	☑	☐
Activities to support the improvement of cooperation between hotlines and industry for taking down child abuse material	☐	☑	☐

4. Good practices

The following are three selected examples of good practices in supporting children's use of the internet in Malta:

Memorandum of Understanding with the national hotline

Harmonisation of measures related to child sexual abuse online by which the Maltese Cybercrime Unit has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the national hotline run by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services. Such a memorandum enables hotline analysts to pursue their work within a legal framework. Through the use of the hotline, reports are received which the general public may not feel at ease reporting to the Police, thus more people are reached. The hotline passes all illegal content to the Maltese Cybercrime Unit which maintains a "stop-list" of known child abuse websites.

Online safety curriculum

Online safety as part of the national syllabi for the Personal, Social and Career Development (PSCD) of primary students. The learning objectives related to internet use and safety within the syllabus have been strengthened and given more impetus through collaboration with the BeSmartOnline! consortium.

Dance roadshow

Educational outreach is achieved through school roadshows disseminating key messages on the safe use of the internet through dance. This collaboration with Malta's national dance company, reaching over 1,000 students, covers themes including digital footprints and digital identity, online grooming, and cyberbullying.