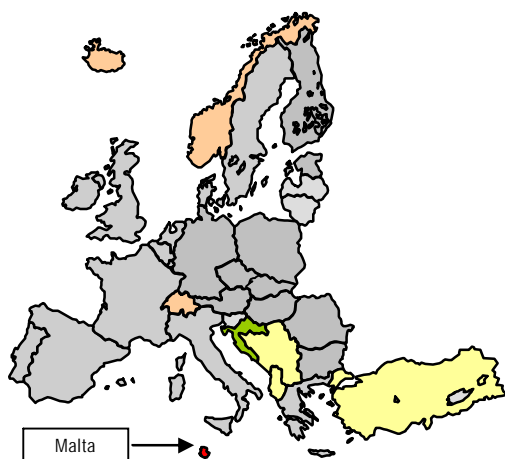


## Malta



Date of last revision: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008

In the EU/EEA since	2004
Population (2008)	410,584
GDP PPP per capita (2007)	€18,931
Currency	Euro
Main languages	Maltese, English, Italian

The State provides a free medical service to every citizen who lives in Malta. Those suffering from chronic diseases are entitled to free medicines. Polyclinics provide free comprehensive healthcare to all patients. Some (free) oral healthcare is provided in these clinics but most dentistry is performed in wholly private practice.

Number of dentists:	176
Population to (active) dentist ratio:	3,041
Membership, Dental Association of Malta	70%

There is a use of (overseas trained) specialists in both the public and private sectors. Dental hygienists are also available. Continuing education is not mandatory.

## Government and healthcare in Malta

The tiny island Republic of Malta, lies to the South of Sicily (Italy), in the Mediterranean Sea. Its total land area, spread over two main islands, is 316 sq km. The terrain of the islands is mostly low, rocky, flat to dissected plains, with many coastal cliffs.

The capital is Valetta.

In 1964 Malta gained its independence as a state within the British Commonwealth, and became a republic in 1974. There is a unicameral House of Representatives (of usually 65 seats, but additional seats are given to the party with the largest popular vote to ensure a legislative majority; members are elected by popular vote on the basis of proportional representation to serve five-year terms).

The Executive branch includes a President and Prime Minister, together with a cabinet appointed by the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister. The President is elected by the House of Representatives for a five-year term, following legislative elections. The leader of the majority party or leader of a majority coalition is usually appointed Prime Minister by the president for a five-year term.

The State provides free medical service, including hospitalisation, to every Maltese citizen who lives in Malta. Anybody who is suffering from chronic diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, asthma etc., is entitled to free medicines. A new central teaching hospital was opened in 2008 to replace the existing one.

Health centres spread around the islands provide comprehensive healthcare to non-paying patients, without distinction on income and wealth. Private hospitals exist and are providing treatment to paying patients who usually have medical insurance.

		Year	Source
% GDP spent on health	8.2%	2007	NSO
% of this spent by governm't	76.1%	2004	OECD

'NSO' is the National Statistics Office

## Oral healthcare

In Malta, the responsibility for planning oral healthcare lies with the Ministry of Health. Dentistry, like the other medical professions, is governed by the Health Care Professions Act of 2002. The dental register is held by the Medical Council of Malta.

	Year	Source
% GDP spent on oral health	0.40% 2007	NSO
% OH expenditure private	22% 2006	NSO

It is not possible to identify the proportion of expenditure on oral healthcare that is private.

The Dental Department within the Ministry of Health looks after all the services provided in the main Dental clinic at St. Luke's Hospital and other Government institutions and Hospitals. There is no payment for any treatment carried out by the public dental service and school children are provided all their dental treatment at the school dental clinic.

Private practice provides the bulk of all dental treatment and patients pay directly for most of the dental treatment. Private medical insurance only covers certain procedures, such as surgical procedures. Private fees are fully "free market" in nature and they are determined in agreements between dentists and their patients.

The normal frequency for routine oral examinations is, on average, 6 monthly.

## The Quality of Care

An annual check by health inspectors ensures that all dental clinics are set up and functioning according to requisite regulations.

## Health data

	Year	Source
DMFT at age 12	1.30 2005	PHC
DMFT zero at age 12	49% 2005	PHC
Edentulous at age 65	8% 2002	HIS

PHC is Primary Health Care

"DMFT zero at age 12" refers to the number of 12 years old children with a zero DMFT. "Edentulous at age 65" refers to the numbers of over 64s with no natural teeth.

## Fluoridation

There are no fluoridation schemes in Malta. However, as part of a promotion for toothpaste, private dental clinics provide free fluoride toothpaste once a year for children.

Tap water in Malta and Gozo had natural fluoride present. However due to the introduction of reverse osmosis plants in 1987 the fluoride content in water in Malta has declined to negligible amounts whilst the water in Gozo has an average of 0.6 ppm.

## Education, Training and Registration

### Undergraduate Training

There is one dental school in Malta, which is in the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the University of Malta. The school is publicly funded.

Year of data:	2007
Number of schools	1
Student intake	8
Number of graduates	8
Percentage female	50%

The dental school derives the legislative framework under which it educates dental students from the Education Act. These regulations follow very closely the recommendations for the five-year dental course in the United Kingdom and so Malta has complied with the EU Directives from before admission of the country into the EU. The legal framework is a legal notice within the Act that prescribes curriculum and structure.

To enter dental school a student has to have completed secondary school (usually at the age of 18) and attained results (minimal grade C) in 2 advanced examinations (which must be Chemistry and Biology), and 3 subjects at intermediate level (with physics and a language subject being compulsory). There is a *numerus clausus* and those applying with the highest grades are accepted. The course opens on a yearly basis and up to two non-Maltese students per year are accepted. These two overseas places are not necessarily filled. The University Admissions Board controls the applications. 55% of clinical time is devoted to clinical training.

Quality assurance for the dental school is provided by the Medical Council.

#### *Qualification and Vocational Training*

##### *Primary dental qualification*

The primary degree, which must be included in the register of the Medical Council, is: Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BChD)

##### *Vocational Training (VT)*

There is a form of specific vocational training (VT), which is not compulsory. It is a two year rotational programme at the Dental department Mater Dei Hospital and peripheral Public Services Health Centres Dental Clinic including the School Dental Clinic. As far as possible students on qualification are encouraged to join the scheme but it is not compulsory and therefore a graduate dentist has a licence to practice after 5 years training course. However, because most general practice is single handed, a VT scheme based in practice would be difficult to implement.

### Registration

Cost of registration (2008)	€ 35
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Dentists are automatically registered with the Medical Council of Malta after graduation. Dentists are given a warrant to work by the Medical Council, which by law has a quasi-judicial board, as it has the power to erase dentists from the Register. It has never done so since it was formed in 1940.

Diplomas from other EU countries are automatically recognised since 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004, when Malta became a full member of the Union. However, there is a 7 year interim period until 2011, during which work permits are at the discretion of the Maltese Government.

#### *Language requirement*

Maltese is not needed as a language requirement for a foreign dentist to work in Malta.

### Further Postgraduate and Specialist Training

#### *Continuing education*

Continuing education is not mandatory under Maltese legislation, but the Dental Association of Malta, together with the Faculty of Dental Surgery, has been organising regular lectures and courses which award CPE points to the participants.

Proposals for legislation to make CPE compulsory for renewal of a licence to work as a dentist had not come to fruition by 2008.

#### *Specialist Training*

There is no specialist training programme in Malta. However there are two training posts as part of the MFDS (UK). These are subject to the regulation of the FDS of the Royal College of Surgeons in London. The specialists who work in both private and public sector would have attained their specialist training overseas.

Following enactment of the Health Care Professions Act, the Medical Council Malta, in consultation with the medical profession, created a Specialist Accreditation Committee. This formulated policy on specialist lists for Malta trained specialists and those entering Malta with overseas diplomas.

Specialist lists for dentistry were created in March 2004. The Act recognises two dental specialties, (oral surgery and orthodontics) that are also recognised by the EU. The University of Malta has recommended that a further 3 specialties be recognised - restorative dentistry, child dental health and Dental Public Health, but this had not happened by 2008.

## Workforce

### Dentists

Many dentists practice in more than one sphere of practice. In 2007, 70% of dentists were below 40 and 15% of dentists over 50; it has been suggested that Malta is training more dentists than will retire in the first years of the millennium.

Year of data:	2008
Total Registered	176
In active practice	135
Dentist to population ratio*	3,041
Percentage female	25%
Qualified overseas	12

\* this figure relates to *active* dentists

There are several dentists with other EU countries' qualifications working in Malta in 2008. Many are Maltese or are married to Maltese nationals, which gives them an automatic right to a working permit.

There is no reported unemployment of dentists in Malta.

#### *Specialists*



In Malta dental specialities have been recognised only since the Health Professions Act was fully implemented in 2004. Initially, orthodontics and oral surgery have been recognised.

However, a number of dentists have additional qualifications in specific areas of dentistry and patients may be referred to them from other dentists.

Year of data:	2008
Orthodontics	7
Endodontics	1
Paedodontics	2
Periodontics	2
Prosthodontics	1
Oral Radiologists	1
Oral Surgery	7
OMFS	2
Dental Public Health	2
Others	7

### Auxiliaries

The system of use of clinical dental auxiliaries is limited to hygienists in Malta.

-  Dental hygienists
-  Dental technicians

Year of data:	2007
Hygienists	17
Technicians	34
Denturists	0
Assistants	75
Therapists	0
Other	0

#### *Dental Hygienists*

The title is legally protected and there is a registerable qualification which dental hygienists must obtain before they can practice. Training is for 3 years in the government hospital. The Board for Professions Supplementary to Medicine holds the registration of dental hygienists.

Dental hygienists work under the prescribed instructions of a dentist, in a clinic or private practice. Their work includes scaling and normal dental hygiene, and Oral Health Instruction.

Most registered dental hygienists work in the public sector but a handful work privately, usually on a part-time basis. Public sector hygienists are always salaried.

#### *Dental Technicians*

The title is also legally protected as Dental Technologist and there is a registerable qualification which they must obtain before they can work independently. Training is also for 3 years in the government hospital. The register is held by the Board for Professions Supplementary to Medicine.

Dental Technicians work in commercial dental laboratories, to construct prosthodontic and orthodontic appliances, to the prescription of a dentist, and they are not able to deal directly with the public. Although, legally, dental technicians must not have direct contact with the public, it is widely reported that people have their dentures repaired directly by them.

Most dental technicians work in the public sector but about a third work solely in private practice. Some of those who work in the public sector also work in private practice.

Like hygienists, dental technicians are normally salaried when working in the public sector.

#### *Denturists*

Denturism is illegal in Malta, but there are known to be some denturists practising.

#### *Dental Chairsides Assistants (DSAs)*

By 2008, DSAs were not officially qualified and were trained by the dentists themselves. Those working in the public sector are usually trained general nurses but those working in the private sector usually have no qualifications and are trained by the dentist who employs them.

A two-year course for DSAs commenced in October 2007, with a total of 15 trainees.

In 2007, there were dental nurses working at a school dental clinic and in the main Dental Department of St Luke's Hospital. The health centres usually have a general nurse

assigned to the dental clinic and there are dental nurses in the dental department at Gozo General Hospital. There are 30 nurses working as DSAs in the public sector.

It is estimated that 70% of dentists in private practice have an assistant working with them.

## Practice in Malta

Oral health services are provided in both the public and private sectors with 95% of the dentists working in the public sector also working in private practice. In 2008, over 20 dentists who were working in both sectors had dental postgraduate qualifications.

Year of data:	2008
General (private) practice	140
Public dental service	23
University	20
Hospital	17
Armed Forces	0
General Practice as a proportion is	80%

### Working in General Practice

In Malta, dentists who practice on their own or as small groups, outside the hospital or polyclinic, and who provide a broad range of general treatments are said to be in *general practice*. Many GDPs also work in the public dental service until the early afternoon each day.

About 80% of private practitioners work in single dentist practices. There are some dentists who own a practice and have a dentist who also works in the practice and earns 50% of the amount that the patient pays for the treatment. This dentist does not contribute to the overheads and running of the practice. There are five group practices where the overall expenses are shared between the partners but the income from the patient fees is on a separate basis.

#### *Fee scales*

Most dentists in private practice are self-employed and earn their living through charging fees for treatments. There are no official fee scales and pricing is unregulated in Malta. The patient pays the dentist in full and some then reclaim partial reimbursement from their private insurance if possible.

#### *Joining or establishing a practice*

Any dentist holding a valid warrant issued by the Medical Council may open a dental surgery anywhere he or she decides. A permit from the Health Department and another one from the Malta Environment and Planning Authority are needed. Dentists in Malta are the only professionals who are taxed (€230 Euros a year) to be able to practise in their place of work.

Practices are normally sited in apartments or small houses converted into clinics. There are no rules which limit the size of a dental practice in terms of number of associate dentists or other staff. Premises may be rented or owned. There is

no state assistance for establishing a new practice, so usually dentists take out commercial loans from a bank.

### Working in the Public Dental Service and Hospitals

It is reported that about a dozen of the dentists working for the Dental Department have postgraduate training in a specialised field.

- In the main dental clinic at Mater Dei Hospital emergency consultation, major oral surgery under local anaesthesia or general anaesthesia, and normal consultations are provided for free to all patients. Some services, such as Restorative Dentistry and Prosthetics (mainly acrylic dentures) are provided only to patients in low income brackets. Extractions for all patients are free, when carried out under general anaesthesia. In 2003 there were 14 dentists working at the main Dental clinic at Mater Dei Hospital.
- There is a dental clinic in the sister island of Malta, Gozo in the Gozo General Hospital and in 2003 there were 3 dentists working there.
- There is 1 dentist working in a dental clinic in a retirement home (SVPR) providing free prosthetics and restorative treatment to those patients who are entitled to it.
- There are 8 Regional Health Centres which have a Dental Clinic which provides emergency dental care, restorative dental treatment to those who are entitled to it (patients in low income brackets and children below the age of 16) and preventive care. In 2003 there were 14 dentists working in these health centres.
- There is a School Dental Clinic which offers free treatment to all children below the age of 16 (child dental health and orthodontics). Referrals to the School Dental Clinic are via the regional health centres and the main dental department in the main hospital. Children who have a high caries rate, require orthodontic treatment and specialist paediatric care are referred to the school dental clinic. Orthodontic treatment which includes any form of removable appliance therapy is provided for free to all patients. Fixed appliance therapy is provided for free to those children who are considered as high priority, such as cleft lip and palate patients, patients with hypodontia, and those patients about to undergo orthognathic surgery. There were 8 dentists working at School Dental Clinic.

Funding for all the above departments is from government funds allocated to the health department. Treatment is free for Maltese citizens.

The provision of domiciliary (home) care is not very common in Malta, and is usually provided by public health dentists.

The quality of dental care is assured through dentists working in teams under the direction of experienced specialists. The complaints procedures are the same as those for dentists working in other settings.

## EU Manual of Dental Practice: version 4 (2008)

Persons employed in the public service receive fixed remuneration (by salary), very often divided into several components such as seniority, specialisation, premium etc.

### Working in University and Dental Faculty

Dentists work in the dental school on a part time basis, as salaried employees of the university. There are also medical staff who lecture to the dental students in their pre-clinical year. The dentists are allowed to combine their work in the faculty with employment or private practice elsewhere.

The main academic title within the Maltese dental faculty is that of University Professor. Other titles include lecturer, assistant lecturer and clinical demonstrators. Senior teachers and professors will have completed a PhD, and

most will also have received a specialist clinical training. Apart from these, there are no other regulations or restrictions on promotion.

The quality of clinical care, teaching and research in dental faculties is assured through dentists working in teams under the direction of experienced teaching and academic staff. The complaints procedures are the same as those for dentists working in other settings.

### Working in the Armed Forces

There are no full-time dentists in the Armed Forces. Members have all their treatment provided free by the state dental services.

## Professional Matters

### Professional associations

There is a single main national association, the Malta Dental Association (DAM). About 70% of active dentists are members.

	Number	Year	Source
Dental Association of Malta	102	2007	FDI

The Association represents private and public health dentists and combines this role by trying to emphasise to common, professional matters. It is not a trade union, but the Government of Malta recognises DAM as the valid representative of all Maltese dentists, for example for EU regulation talks, a new health care profession act, etc.

### Ethics and Regulation

#### *The Medical Council*

The Medical Council of Malta consists of a legal practitioner, medical practitioners, dental practitioners and lay people. Some are nominated and some are elected. Dentistry is incorporated under the Medical Council with appropriate representation of the dental profession on the body. The Council meets as a single body and dentistry is not subservient to Medicine.

#### *Ethical Code*

Dentists are subject to the same ethical code as their medical colleagues. For example, they must only use proven techniques and must constantly update their clinical skills. There is also a special law to protect patients' rights, consent and confidentiality. The Medical Council judges infringements of malpractice. There are no specific contractual requirements for dentists working together in the same practice. The National and European laws on equal employment opportunities, maternity benefits, occupational health, minimum vacations and health and safety, however, protect a dentist's employees.

#### *Fitness to Practise/Disciplinary Matters*

Maltese dentists are governed by the Health Care Professions Act which came into being on the 21st November 2003. A complaint can be lodged by anybody, including lay people with an interest in the case. A simple letter will suffice to start an investigation. In the Public sector the complaint is lodged with Customer Care of the Health Department. In the Private sector it is the Medical Council of Malta which deals with such issues.

If a dentist has been convicted by any court in Malta of any crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year, or of any of the crimes mentioned in specific articles of the Criminal Code, or has been guilty of professional or ethical misconduct in any respect or in any other manner has failed to abide by the professional and ethical standards, then his/her name can be erased from the register, or suspended, or cautioned, or have to undergo remedial training or have a financial penalty.

#### *Data Protection*

In 2002, a law, covering data protection came into force. In July 2003 a document was set up which defines the guidelines to be followed by a Data Controller within the Public Service, for the notification of an organisation's process – both computer as well as manual, existing as well as new. The document also provides instructions on filling in the Notification form. This notification form is to be sent to the Data Protection Commissioner.

See <http://mohweb/healthweb/dataprotection.htm> for more details.

#### *Advertising*

Advertising by dental surgeons is not allowed, although notification of a change of address or working hours is permitted by advertising in newspapers for a maximum of 3 days (but not TV). Post graduate qualifications may be announced, but without a photo. The Medical Council regulates and monitors this.

There is no specific mention of websites in the Ethical Code, but the principles in the Code would dictate that these are not allowable for Maltese dentists.

#### *Insurance and professional indemnity*

Indemnity insurance is not mandatory. There are a few dentists who are insured with the Medical Protection Society (UK) at an annual cost of about €1,400 per annum. The premium is more if the dentist does implants and oral surgery. A patient is entitled to lodge a complaint and demand compensation before a medical court or a common court.

#### *Corporate Dentistry*

There is no corporate dentistry in Malta.

#### *Tooth Whitening*

Tooth whitening procedures are limited to dentists.

### Health and Safety at Work

There is legislation in the field of employee protection. Hep B vaccinations are mandatory in Malta and are provided free by the Health Department.

#### *Ionising Radiation*

There are specific regulations regarding radiation protection -one under the Public Health Act and the other the enabling Act of the Prime Minister.

An employer has the obligation to ensure that there is adequate training for his/her staff. There is no obligation for continuing education and training.

#### *Hazardous Waste*

The EU Hazardous Waste Directive is incorporated into law and actively enforced. Amalgam separators are legally required.

#### Regulations for Health and Safety

<i>For</i>	<i>Administered by</i>
Ionising radiation	Private company
Electrical installations	Private company
Infection control	Department of Infection control of the Ministry of Health
Medical devices	Private
Waste disposal	Private (All private companies are licensed by the Health Department).

Malta

Malta

## Financial Matters

### Retirement pensions and Healthcare

The National Insurance premiums (4.6% of earnings) include a contribution to the national pension scheme. Retirement pensions in Malta are typically 60% of a person's salary on retirement. The official retirement age in Malta is 60, although the average age of retirement is 59.

Dentists practice, on average, to little over 60 years, although they can practice past this age.

### Taxes

For the majority of the Maltese population general health care is paid for mainly through income tax.

There is a national income tax (dependent on salary or income). The maximum amount of tax that can be paid is 35%. National Insurance premiums are an additional 8.3% of salary or income.

#### *VAT/sales tax*

There is a value added tax, payable at a rate of 18% on purchases. Medicinals and certain dental equipment and filling materials are exempt from VAT. Approximately 70% of dental materials and equipment needed are VAT free. Patients do not pay any VAT on treatment, and dentists do not get refunds on purchases.

## Other Useful Information

<i>Main national association and Information Centre:</i>	<i>Competent Authority:</i>
Dental Association of Malta, The Professional Centre, Sliema Road, Gzira GZR 06 MALTA Tel: +356 213 12888 Fax: +356 213 12004 Email: <a href="mailto:mfpb@maltanet.net">mfpb@maltanet.net</a> Website: None	The Director General, Department of Health, Palazzo Castellana, 15, Merchants Street Valletta VLT 2000 MALTA Tel: +356 229 92436 Fax: +356 212 42884 Email: <a href="mailto:joseph.m.stafrace@gov.mt">joseph.m.stafrace@gov.mt</a> Website: <a href="http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=42">http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=42</a>
<i>The Medical Council of Malta:</i>	<i>Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine:</i>
181 Melita Street Valletta CMR02 MALTA Tel: +356 212 55540 Fax: +356 212 55541 Email: <a href="mailto:medicalcouncil.mhec@gov.mt">medicalcouncil.mhec@gov.mt</a> Website: <a href="http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=87">http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=87</a>	181 Melita Street Valletta MALTA Tel: +356 212 55540 Fax: +356 212 55541 Email: <a href="mailto:cpcm@gov.mt">cpcm@gov.mt</a> Website: <a href="http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=84">http://www.sahha.gov.mt/pages.aspx?page=84</a>

#### *Publications:*



The Probe  
 4 times a year newsletter, by the Dental Association of Malta.  
 Editor: Dr David Muscat.  
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Dental School:

The Dean  
Faculty of Dental Surgery  
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Website: <http://www.um.edu.mt/about/uom>  
Dentists graduating each year: 6 (+ up to 2 from overseas)  
Number of students: 30 (+ some from overseas)