

ELRC

IN THE CONTEXT OF POLICY MOVEMENTS IN MALTA

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OVERVIEW

- Policy Movements in Malta
- LT @ UM
- ELRC in Malta

POLICY MOVEMENTS IN MALTA

THE MALTESE LANGUAGE

- Maltese is the only EU official language having semitic roots, which however is written using the Latin alphabet
- Semitic layer + Romance superstrate + English adstrate

Examples: to imagine -

- *imaginer(FR)/ immaginare(IT)/ **nimmajina(MT)***

- ***nistħajjel(MT)***

ARTICLES 5 AND 74 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- The **National language** of Malta is the Maltese language;
- Maltese and English are both **official languages** of Malta

But what about the use of language in the Judicial, Administrative and Legal contexts?

LEGAL, JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXTS

ARTICLES 5 AND 74 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Legal:

Every law shall be enacted in both the Maltese and English languages and, if there is any conflict between the Maltese and the English texts of any law, the Maltese text shall prevail.

Judicial:

The language of the Courts shall be the Maltese language.

Administrative:

The Administration may for all official purposes use any of the official languages. Provided that any person may address the Administration in any of the official languages and the reply of the Administration thereto shall be in such language.

OTHER LEGAL INSTRUMENTS ...

- **Judicial Proceedings (Use of English Language) Act**
[Chapter 189 of the Laws of Malta]
- **Maltese Language Act**
[Chapter 470 of the Laws of Malta]

Establishes the National Council for the Maltese language, with the aim of adopting and promoting a suitable language policy and strategy.

- **In the pipeline: Official Languages Act [?]**

Laws of Malta website: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/>

MALTA AI STRATEGY (OCTOBER 2019)

states that:

- “[...] *the country will make crucial investments in the development of Maltese language resources and tools. The investment will enable computers to be able to process, understand and generate Maltese text and speech, and AI solutions to be developed and accessible in both of Malta’s national languages and become a part of everyday life”.* [AI Strategy, p. 48]

[https://malta.ai/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Malta The Ultimate AI Launchpad vFinal.pdf](https://malta.ai/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Malta%20The%20Ultimate%20AI%20Launchpad%20vFinal.pdf)

AN AI STRATEGY PILOT PROJECT – SERVIZZ.GOV OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

- The **servizz.gov platform** is the central point of information for all government services
- The project **“AI for customer service”**, will explore how applying AI into the servizz.gov customer service workflow can drive performance enhancements
- *“All these services will be developed in both English and Maltese so that servizz.gov can serve clients in their preferred language. Furthermore, as an additional long-term strategy, it is envisaged that servizz.gov will be able to use machine translation services to communicate clearly with foreign nationals living in Malta in their preferred language”. [AI Strategy, p. 30]*

https://malta.ai/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Malta_The_Ultimate_AI_Launchpad_vFinal.pdf

TEACHING OF MALTESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

National Policy for the **Teaching of Maltese as a Foreign Language** in the Framework of Bilingualism and Plurilingualism (September 2019), states that:

- *“Registration for the learning of MFL should be open to migrant children/students, and, on a voluntary basis, to children/students with one parent/guardian in possession of a foreign ID card. In the first phase of registration the parents/guardians of the child should be given clear information regarding the obligation for everyone, without exception, to learn Maltese and to be assessed on their knowledge of Maltese [...]”.* [MFL Strategy, p. 9]

https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MEDE/Documents/EN%20National%20Policy.pdf

DEVELOPMENT OF A SPELL-CHECKER FOR MALTESE

The **National Budget 2020** (October 2019):

- Allocation of EUR 8 million for the development of an online Maltese spell-checker
- *“We will begin the necessary process for the Maltese language to have a spellchecker available for online use, as one can find for other languages. This new initiative is aimed at encouraging the use of the Maltese language, while keeping it alive and making it easier to use Maltese in written communication.”* [Budget Speech, p. 64]

https://mfin.gov.mt/en/The-Budget/Documents/Budget_Speech_English_2020.pdf

LT @ UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- Main Actors
 - ICT Faculty: Depts AI, CS, CCE
 - Inst Linguistics and Language Technology
- Funding
 - University (UM Research fund, Takeoff)
 - National (MCST)
 - EU (H2020, COST, CEF)

CURRENT PROJECTS

- MASRI: Maltese Automatic Speech Recognition (UM Research Fund)
- MLRS: Maltese Language Resource Server (UM Research Fund/MCST)
- Assiduity: Intelligent Legal Search (Take-Off)
- MAMCO: Maltese Multimodal Corpora (UM Research Seed Fund)
- NL4XAI: Interactive Natural Language for Explainable AI (H2020)
- Multi3Generation: Multi-Task, Multilingual, Multimodal Language Generation (COST)
- Nexus Linguarum: Linguistic data science (COST)
- ANON: multilingual anonymisation toolkit (CEF)
- ELG (CEF)

ELRC IN MALTA

ELRC – HISTORY

- February 2016 – first ELRC workshop in Malta:
 - Goal: awareness, contacts
 - Provision of data for ELRC Share
 - Main contributors: Min. Justice, DOI, UM
- January 2019
 - Appointment of PS-NAP
- November 2019 – second ELRC workshop in Malta:
 - Goal: adoption of eTranslation
 - 98 participants (mostly from PA)

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE DATA IN ELRC-SHARE

- Bilingual data in the ELRC-SHARE Repository
 - Paracrawl (3M)
 - Maltese/English Websites (26,000)
 - Laws of Malta (9,000)
 - Malta Government Gazette (5,000)
 - Malta International Airport newsletter extracts (<1,000)
- Monolingual data in the ELRC-SHARE Repository
 - Gabra (lexical database)
 - Terminology resources

OBSTACLES TO LR SHARING IN MALTA

- Legacy
 - Legacy role of English
 - Difficulties writing correct Maltese
 - Maintenance cost for bilingual communication/dissemination
 - Reluctance to adopt state-of-the-art IT support tools
- Awareness/Perception
 - Potential contribution of Machine Translation
 - Value of bilingual data for improving quality of MT
- Procedural
 - Coherent translation workflow
 - Legal/Authorisation issues
 - Translation procedures

CRITICAL FOR THE FUTURE

- Decisions concerning national language policy are needed
- Implications of AI Strategy regarding adoption of Language Technology
- Establishment of coherent translation workflow
 - Usage of eTranslation tools
 - Resource Acquisition
- Pilot adoption of the eTranslation platform
 - Individuals
 - Ministerial Infrastructure
 - On-site Assistance (OSA) provided by ELRC

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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