

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE SCOPING REPORT FOR THE
MALTA ENVIRONMENT FOUNDATION (MEF)**

Part of the Conservation Collective



The Malta Environment Foundation (MEF) is being set up to protect and restore nature along the unique coastal, terrestrial, and marine ecosystems of Malta.

The Malta Environment Foundation (MEF) will raise funds from people and businesses, locally and internationally, and distribute that funding towards the most influential grassroots environmental initiatives, campaigns, and projects.

This Scoping Report for the Malta Environment Foundation was commissioned by The Conservation Collective and conducted by Gail Sant (May 2022).

1. Introduction

The Maltese archipelago is nestled between Europe and Africa, creating a hybrid environment between the two continents. Like other regions in the Mediterranean, Malta is a biodiversity hotspot. Moreover, as this small 300km² nation is secluded from other land masses, it is home to an array of endemic species.

Malta's fast-growing economy, limited geographical area, and few opportunities to learn about the environment and how it connects to Maltese history and culture, have led to a series of interconnected environmental concerns. Overdevelopment, habitat degradation, pollution and biodiversity loss are some of the main challenges creating hostile conditions for Malta's environment to flourish. This does not need to be the case.

Despite all the adversities it faces, Malta's wildlife has adapted, evolved, and flourished into extraordinary life forms that are found nowhere else on Earth. There are a multitude of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which are dedicating their time and effort to safeguard Malta's incredible nature. The initiatives and their numerous success stories are a testament to the incredible conservation efforts NGOs and researchers are pursuing, despite limited resources. If NGOs can do so much positive work with minimal funding, one can only imagine what their impact would be if new resource streams were made available to them.



Figure 1: Map of the Western Mediterranean. Countries in the EU are in green. Source: <https://bit.ly/3sHDsbD>

As a nimble, non-bureaucratic and strategic regranting organisation, MEF would act as a key supporter to initiatives which work towards a healthy, resilient Maltese environment; thus, building a network of initiatives that promote all sustainable action within the country, encourage collaboration through joint project work, and expand the environmental movement and its influence on politicians and the public. The foundation functions through its collaborative and supportive approach.

2. Main Challenges

The most frequently mentioned environmental issues brought up during this scoping report have been overdevelopment and a lack of enforcement of conservation measures. Habitat degradation results from irresponsible urban development, and it has led to worrying biodiversity loss. Biodiversity loss is further exacerbated by soil degradation, climate change, and an influx of invasive species that outcompete indigenous species.

Low recycling rates, waste disposal systems which do not keep up with local demands, and a littering issue have led to a worrying pollution problem. Since Malta is an island state, littering and pollution tend to lead to marine pollution, harming marine life and creating unsightly environments.

The socio-economic factors that influence environmental mismanagement need to be understood before tackling environmental concerns. During the research stage of this report, participants brought up the following topics which can hinder environmental action:

- Deep fragmentation between the region’s environmental stakeholders. From NGOs, academia, and authorities, participants suggested a disconnect between each other’s work. Fragmentation makes the environmental movement seem smaller and less influential than it truly is. This leads to a lack of political will to promote sustainable management.
- Lack of resources to fund and support projects. NGOs have to compete for the same resources, sometimes leading to conflict instead of collaboration.
- Bureaucratic processes limit both fund acquisition and fund usage.
- Lack of opportunities to learn about Malta’s environment. More specifically, there is a significant lack of ocean literacy.
- Lack of monitoring data available, which leads to environmental mismanagement.

Despite these challenges, there are an inspiring number of environmental NGOs dedicating their time and effort to protecting Malta’s environment. If these people are willing to work so hard with limited resources, supporting their efforts through MEF could potentially catalyse a positive environmental revolution in Malta.

Fundraising was found to be a key element to NGOs ability to influence change. Therefore, MEF would focus on supporting existing environmental initiatives, which would, in turn, maximise MEF’s impact by having a direct effect on the environment through the projects the foundation supports. Also, increasing NGO’s influential power on policy and enforcement, would push for a government which acts more strongly in favour of the environment. As MEF is starting to take shape, its foreseeable future is an exciting one that has the capacity to build a legacy of solution-based nation-wide positive impact.



Long-snouted seahorse. Image credit: Dive on Malta

3. The Conservation Collective

MEF will be based on the successful, tried, and tested model, of the [Conservation Collective](#) (CC) -a global network of environmental foundations rooted in their communities to:

- Preserve, protect, and regenerate biodiversity and ecosystems on land and at sea
- Slow down and adapt to climate change

The CC has launched and supported over 16 local foundations, with 8 of these being in the Mediterranean. The Malta Environment Foundation is an opportunity to conserve and protect Malta’s natural landscapes through the CC’s unique and successful funding model.

The CC model is built on the central belief that people care deeply about protecting and restoring places they know and love. The CC believes in the power of communities to identify local solutions to globally shared challenges. Member foundations work with community champions, integrating their expertise, to identify and overcome the most important obstacles to change, providing a vehicle for collective action and bringing new funding for local environmental causes.

The Conservation Collective supports foundations to raise funding, share knowledge and expertise across the network, whilst providing financial, strategic, and operational support.

For more information contact [Jade Brudenell](#) (Executive Director, The Conservation Collective)

Visit the Conservation Collective website [here](#).



Image Credit: Jeffrey Sciberras

4. Strategy for MEF

The Malta Environment Foundation (MEF) has the potential to act as the urgent beacon of hope which catalyses environmental action and safeguards Malta’s marine and terrestrial landscapes. The essence of MEF lies in its ability to act as a central network of environmental initiatives which work to promote all sustainable action within the country, encourage collaboration through joint project work, and expand the environment movement and its influence on politicians as well as the public.

MEF could be the entity that connects NGOs together through new resources stream and networking opportunities, which would in turn promote a collective impact mentality that fuels resource sharing between the NGOs themselves. This would heighten their impact by aiding project work which has a direct effect on the environment, and increase organisations’ influential power on policy and enforcement, pushing for a government which acts more strongly in favour of the environment.

MEF could support organisations in 3 main ways:

- 1) Fund project work, either by directly funding project expenses or by hiring people who are already volunteering their time to work on an existing project.
- 2) Provide logistical resources organisations can use for free to facilitate their progress.
- 3) Accelerate networking and new work connections.

There are an inspiring number of environmental NGOs dedicating their time and effort to protecting Malta’s environment. If these people are willing to work so hard with limited resources, supporting their efforts through MEF would catalyse a positive environmental revolution in Malta.

The decision to select a project to support would be influenced by MEF’s steering committee and local advisory panel. MEF’s path of action follows the [Conservation Collective’s Theory of Change](#). The model recognises that the network’s impact is divided into different layers and approaches which are responsive to the needs of local NGOs. To create long-term, systemic change the foundation activities need to create social, cultural and economic outcomes which in turn create positive, bottom-up environmental impacts.

In general, MEF has a strong focus on:

- *Preserving, protecting and regenerating natural habitats.*
- *Helping native species to thrive.*
- *Slowing down and adapting to climate change.*
- *Reducing pollution.*

5. Governance of MEF

MEF will comprise:

- A local **executive director** who oversees the foundation.
- A **council** of experienced locals from diverse backgrounds and expertise which discuss and suggest future projects for MEF.
- A **steering committee** made up of 5-10 donors who will financially support MEF and, participate in other aspects of MEF such as future fund-raising or project selection.
- MEF would work to build **alliances between NGOs**, and promote their stories on a global platform

MEF will have quarterly update meetings to discuss the foundation’s progress and next steps. Once the foundation establishes itself and grows, it can host an annual high-level conference to showcase its work from the past year, enable networking between its members, and incentivise new donations from private donors or businesses.

It is essential to fulfil MEF’s function by supporting NGOs and not increase their competition for funds. Due to the Conservation Collective’s unique model which focuses on philanthropy, this is not predicted to be an issue. Environmental philanthropy does not seem to be a popular funding stream in Malta. Thus, MEF has the opportunity to act as one of the first foundations which promotes and incentivises this form of funding by targeting potential donors, both locally and abroad, with deep Maltese connections, with the reputational backing of a global actor like the Conservation Collective.

MEF’s potential as an influential change agent in Malta is far-reaching. It will take a few years to accomplish major national change. However, investing in MEF would certainly bring small tangible positive changes from the start, and investors will be invited to join the MEF’s journey to see both the foundation and Malta’s environment flourish.

6. Next steps and Feasibility

For MEF to reach its overall objective to protect and conserve Malta’s environment, the following steps need to be taken:

- Secure a minimum of €100,000 for the first year of MEF. The funds will be used to support environmental projects and campaigns, and to maintain the general functioning of MEF.
- Continue to reach out to grassroots organisations. Scope out which organisations could be potential grantees or recipients of funding from MEF, and which projects MEF could potentially support.
- Hire an executive director, establish MEF’s steering committee, and identify its first set of projects.
- Officially launch MEF through a large social media campaign and a potential in-person launch or press-release.

7. Join us!

*“Under the shade of the drift nets curling I slept
Centuries ago, cradled in matrix of coral
In spiralling stalactites
With molluscs and octopuses and grouper”*

Translated from Daniel Massa’s ‘Delimara’

By donating to MEF, you can be a part of this new niche that serves to protect and enhance Malta’s environment while it is still possible to do so. We want to ensure that donors can see how their funds have been utilised to improve Malta’s local situation. If you decide to donate, you will be a core part of MEF, and in return, you will be invited to participate as much or as little as you desire in MEF’s future update meetings and conferences.

There is a proverb which states ‘We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children’. Maltese culture is synonymous with strong family values and a historical pride that recognises that throughout history, Malta’s language, culture, and values have withstood the test of time. We are now at a critical point where the way Malta is managed during the next few years will

determine whether its future is a bright one or not. Whether Malta's children can enjoy an abundance of endemic honeybees, healthy reefs, native wildflowers, or whether they live in one conglomeration of concrete. The Malta Environment Foundation can be a part of the legacy which ensures that Malta's environment is appreciated, safeguarded, and alive for future generations to experience. And you are invited to be a part of it.

For more information, contact [Jade Brudenell](#) (Executive Director, The Conservation Collective)

Visit the Conservation Collective [website here.](#)

