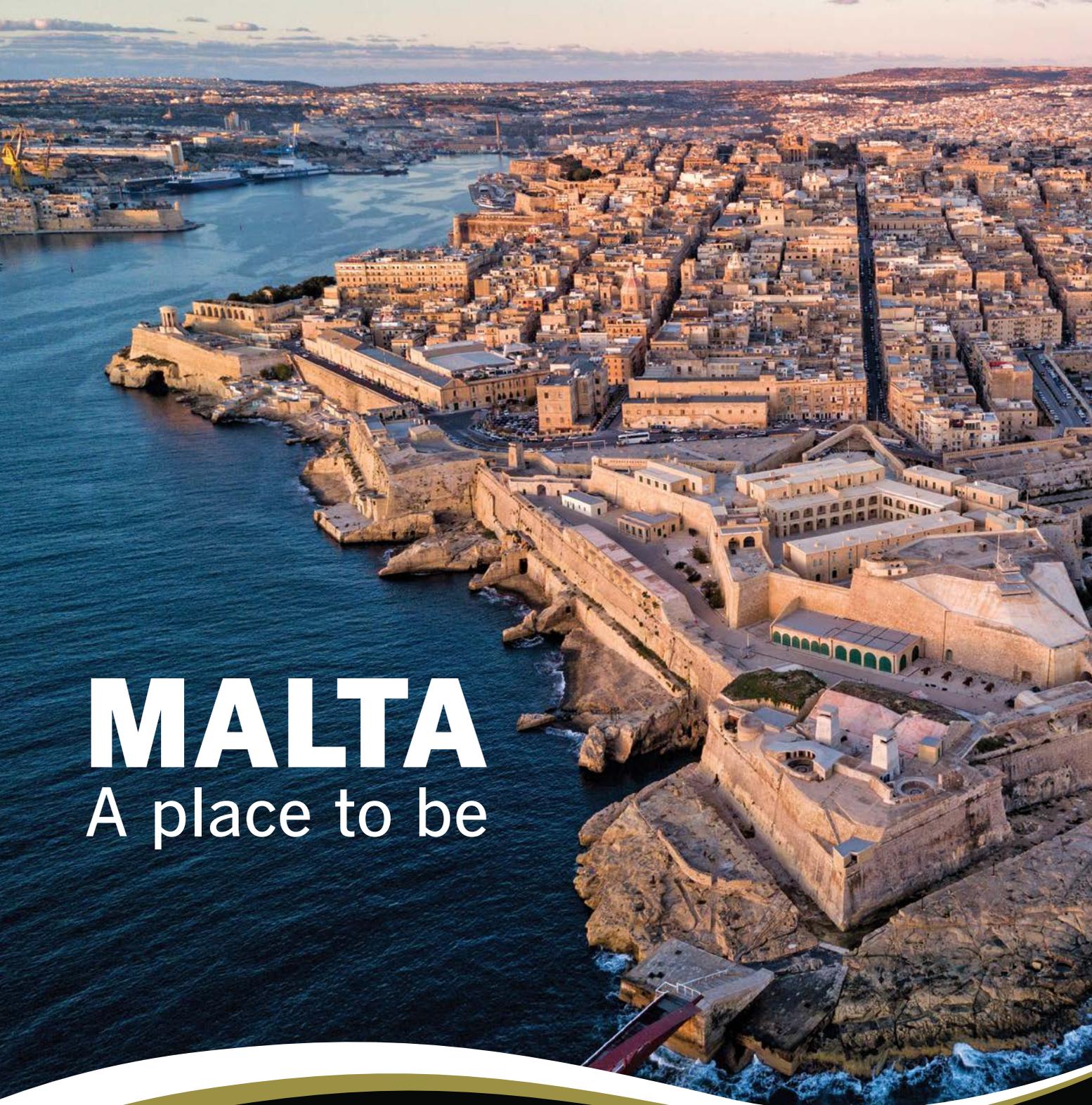


Live and work in **MALTA**

With new citizenship and residency by investment programs plus a digital nomad residence permit, the beautiful island nation is a perfect location for global investors, entrepreneurs and remote workers



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MALTA

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Stable governance in the service of business

The small, agile and open Pearl of the Mediterranean is well positioned for the new post-COVID economic landscape



Malta's capital, Valletta, is a United Nations World Heritage site

There are many reasons to come to Malta. Located at the heart of the Mediterranean region, this island nation—a European Union (EU) member state—boasts incredible weather and a rich culture reflecting its history as the crossroads of Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

From its beautiful capital city of Valletta, the country that is no stranger to outsiders can be explored conveniently and in comfort. Cosmopolitan, outward looking and firmly planted within the eurozone, Malta has been able to leverage its unique position to build a diverse economy, the dynamism of which belies its relatively small size. While its location means that tourism will always be a vital pillar of prosperity in the country, pro-business government policies have helped transform the Pearl of the Mediterranean into an innovative and future-proof economy. Traditional sectors such as financial services, manufacturing, tourism, aviation and maritime are now complemented by technology-intensive industries including gaming, blockchain, artificial intelligence, fintech, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

As COVID-19 ravaged Malta's neighbors to the north, the country is to be commended on its management of the pandemic. Its world-class health system was able to stay on top of the crisis by testing at a rate which was the third-highest per capita in the world. As a result, Malta never had to fully close its economy, its hospitals were not overloaded and, thanks to other smart government policies, tens of thousands of jobs were preserved that could have been lost—an impressive feat when you consider that its population is only just over 500,000. "We faced this crisis without resorting to austerity measures and putting the burden on the people. Instead, we launched the biggest ever financial aid package for businesses and workers," says Prime Minister Robert Abela, "We protected lives and livelihoods. And we are one of only two countries in all of Europe where job opportunities rose rather than diminished."

With a vaccination campaign on track to be among the EU's fastest, Malta is poised to take advantage of future opportunities. As the rest of the world emerges from widespread draconian lockdowns, Malta has been adapting its economy for the altered post-COVID landscape and it's increasingly looking like Malta will have a running head start as the world seeks to put the experience of the pandemic behind it. "We've managed to achieve a lot despite the troubled times. Now imagine what we could do as we head toward normality," comments Abela. "I'm looking at 2021 with optimism and positivity. We will emerge much stronger than we started."

A modern, post-industrial economy

Classified as a highly industrialized advanced economy by the International Monetary Fund, the benefits of living and working in Malta can best be understood in terms of convenience, access and dependability. English—which

shares the title of official language with Maltese—is widely spoken, a fact that makes life considerably more navigable for visitor and new resident alike. As a member of the EU, Maltese citizens have frictionless access to that vast market, as well as the sophisticated legal and institutional safety net that is built into the European Constitution. Among Europe's southernmost countries, Malta is conveniently situated within close proximity to North Africa and the Middle East, allowing for easy access to these vast markets. It has a strong manufacturing base, especially for pharmaceuticals and electronics. Unusually for a small island nation, Malta also has a notably vibrant film industry and many marquee Hollywood films have chosen it as a shooting location.

Rule of law, property rights and personal rights are priorities in this stable democracy. In addition, the country's relatively small size is a great asset: while many larger democracies lack the ability to implement bold forward-focused policies due to partisan strife or lack of cohesiveness, in Malta there remains

"We faced this crisis without resorting to austerity measures. And we are one of only two countries in Europe where job opportunities rose rather than diminished."

Prime Minister Robert Abela

the ability to be nimble and responsive to the needs of the population and businesses. Given its situation—small and with few natural resources—the country has had to be adept in positioning itself as a welcoming environment for business investment. It has a relatively low tax rate and a government that is keen to work with industry leaders to map the best path forward. Such adaptability has worked to Malta's benefit, as the country is looking forward to 5 percent growth in gross domestic product in the coming year, according to its central bank.

Malta's plans for future growth put great emphasis on creating the right ecosystem for economic development and innovation in order to become the incubator of Europe. Part of achieving this goal includes attracting the right kind of talent and investment from abroad. Toward these ends, the country has updated and improved its residency and citizenship by investment programs so that it can be more effective as well as more discerning. It wants to bring to its shores talent, skills and wealth, but it must be the right kind of talent, skills and wealth. People who come must not see it as a toehold from which the lucrative European economy can be accessed. Instead, the new rules aim to encourage newcomers not only to add to the vibrancy of the Maltese economy, but also to have a sense of place in Maltese society at large.



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Blue waters make Malta popular for scuba divers

Malta boasts some of the finest weather in Europe

Malta keeps its rank as the best place to migrate to in 2021

New citizenship and residency rules aim to reinforce an innovative economy with talent and capital

Investment migration can be best understood as a trade: the migrant is offered residency or citizenship upon satisfying certain demands for investment in a country. The individual and often their families will be able to enjoy all of the benefits of the state—which in Malta are considerable—and, in return, the migrant will add to the economic life of their adoptive homeland.

Malta is a global leader in this area: its citizenship program has been ranked the best in the world for six years running by Henley & Partners' independently adjudicated Investment Migration Programs report, most recently in 2021, while its residency program is placed joint-fifth in the same highly regarded publication.

To ensure its offerings remain world class, the Maltese government has established two distinct bodies and revamped its schemes: the Residency Malta Agency oversees and implements the new Malta Permanent Residency Programme, while the Community Malta Agency administers and processes all citizenship-related matters under one roof, including the new Citizenship for Exceptional Services by Direct Investment Programme. These schemes have been accompanied by the introduction of improved practices and better standards that aim to create a more equitable system while, at the same time, strengthening the government's ability to investigate any potential malfeasance of those that might try to take advantage of the system.

The two new programs, which both came into effect in 2021, hold potential residents and citizens to a high standard of wealth and propriety. In the case of those seeking residency, for example, among other considerable financial contributions to the government, incomers must prove that they possess no less than €500,000, buy a residential property worth at least

€300,000 or rent one for over €10,000 a year. Lower thresholds have been set for property prices on the smaller island of Gozo in order to encourage people to buy in less populated but no less stunning locations, which should spread the economic benefits to the parts of the country that need it most and raise the quality of life for all on the islands.

Those looking to become citizens, on the other hand, must invest a minimum of €600,000 depending on how long they've been resident in the country and purchase or rent property costing over €700,000 or €16,000 a year, respectively. In both cases, donations need to be made to a local sport, cultural, scientific, philanthropic, animal welfare, or artistic non-governmental organization.

Malta's new rules reflect a holistic approach to investment migration. In the past, for instance, you did not have to be a resident of Malta in order to apply for citizenship. That is no longer the case. A person or family that seeks to become Maltese must now reside there for at least 12 months. The idea behind this is to ensure they feel that they have a stake in the country's future prosperity and are active members of its society. As Community Malta Agency makes clear, the country doesn't want new arrivals to be aloof, unassimilated millionaires—it encourages those choosing to become Maltese citizens through investing to bring with them a desire to engage with local society and culture.

A thorough screening process

The reforms have been two sided: not only must the applicant provide more, but also the government and responsible agencies have streamlined their services for maximum efficiency and due diligence. There is additional information sharing, deeper background checks and a focus on developing a relationship with applicants. Through this qualitative improvement, Malta's reputation is likely to get even stronger.

Charles Mizzi, CEO of the Residency Malta Agency, gives further clarification: "Around 10 percent of applications are rejected by us, which is standard, and about 3-4 percent of applications are withdrawn following questions to applicants. With almost 15 percent not making it through, you can see it is a legitimate and efficient filtering system. This gives a lot of confidence to those that are granted admission."

Optimism runs high for what these newcomers will bring to the economy. The new Citizenship for Exceptional Services by Direct Investment Programme, for instance, replaces the previous Individual Investor Programme (IIP) that, since its inauguration in 2014, brought in investments of €1.4 billion and quickly reached its capped limit after enabling 1,800



Valletta: a city resounding in Renaissance and Baroque architecture

SHUTTERSTOCK: NICHOLAS COURTNEY

high-net-worth individuals to gain citizenship of the country, a feat which it achieved ahead of schedule. The benefits the nation accrued as a result of the IIP were far reaching, according to experts: among other things, gross domestic product rose, capital came into the country and the economy was able to diversify. Another tangible way in which the lives of Maltese citizens improved as a result of IIP is through the sovereign wealth fund that was bolstered by proceeds from the program. This fund supports key areas of society and proved a crucial aid to the government last year in its battle against COVID-19.

The new Citizenship for Exceptional Services by Direct Investment Programme is looking to improve on this past success while ironing out some of the older initiative's flaws. For one thing, it is looking to put a premium on attracting talent from across the world to broaden the scope for what talent can be brought in to advance the Maltese economy. The same is true of the new Malta Permanent Residency Programme. "Attracting new investors to our shores, opening up new opportunities and investing in new businesses are factors that we are giving a lot of importance to," says Alex Muscat, Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities.

He sees the vitality of investment migration as only growing in the wake of the pandemic, which has altered people's perception of where they can work and how they can live. As working in a dense office environment was deemed unsafe around the world, companies made the swift transformation to having their employees work from home, where all people required was a decent internet connection to complete their tasks. Many predict that this new approach to work—working remotely or, at the very least, a hybrid between working remotely and being in the office—is here to stay.

Why not be in a warm, safe and welcoming climate such as Malta? The cost of living is cheaper than in London, New York or Berlin, for example, the climate is far more temperate, yet the amenities are on par with any of those places. From kindergarten to university level, the Maltese education system is excellent. There is also a top-notch medical safety net in place, as the country's experience with COVID-19 made evident. In addition, dining and entertainment in Malta are world renowned, with the nation boasting no fewer than five Michelin-starred eating establishments.

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Charles Mizzi, CEO, Residency Malta Agency

Newcomers that want to come to Malta and set up businesses are an extra boon for the country. Officials there are confident that, by attracting the right kind of talent, an even more dynamic economic environment will be created. It's a perfect cycle: the more talent that enters, the more vibrant the economy becomes, which will itself draw in more talent. "Ultimately," says Muscat, "those businesses will thrive and contribute to economic growth, making Malta a better place for all that live here. If you'll allow me to mix my metaphors, it's not just a jigsaw, we are talking about a domino effect too."

A small, nimble government makes for an attractive investment destination



A stable government means a strong **judiciary** that protects the interests of the business owner



Welcoming to outsiders and safe for residents, **Malta** is a secure and open country



Malta's pro-business government has proved agile in decision making



The **University of Malta**, the country's oldest, was founded in **1769**



Among **Malta's** biggest draws for both tourists and investors is its **fabulous weather**



The Cittadella on Gozo has been inhabited since the Bronze Age

After a dark year, time for tourism's return

Malta is looking forward to an influx of digital nomads

Everyone in Malta is excited to see the return of tourism, a sector that makes up 15 percent of the country's gross domestic product and was painfully affected by the pandemic.

Malta has long been one of the most sought after destinations in Europe. The starting point for visitors is Valletta, which has been the capital city since the 16th century. From here, visitors can start peeling away at the layers of Malta's history, with numerous cultures leaving their mark on the islands: since ancient times, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Normans, Aragonese, Knights of St. John, and, until 1964, the British have all had their time at the helm of the archipelago's government.

This rich history is woven into daily life and colors the experience of all who visit the country. It is this history that tourists encounter as they experience Malta's three United Nations World Heritage sites, and it is a history that is tasted in Malta's fine cuisine. The weather is another substantial draw. Much of Europe is cold and damp, something that is of no issue in Malta, where it is sunny most days of the year and there is an average annual temperature of 23°C.

Extended vacation experiences

Clayton Bartolo, Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection, is hoping that, with the country's revised citizenship and residency programs in place, people who come to Malta might decide not to leave. He is looking forward to a future where there can be a new, hybrid type of tourist, one who arrives in Malta to work for part of the week, but then spends the rest of the week playing. With its modern infrastructure, many amenities and fabulous potential for outdoor activities, there is little to getting in the way of a working holiday.



Malta has had a thriving maritime culture for millennia

Such an approach is in keeping with the rise of digital nomadism in a world where people can work from anywhere. Those coming to Malta will find a highly evolved, innovative economic landscape where friendly, pro-business government policies are attracting a wealth of interesting companies that are anticipating the industries of the future.

Seeing the writing on wall, Bartolo is looking forward to a time in the not-too-distant future when Malta will be offering residence nomad permits to those who, no longer chained to a desk and chair, want to escape the dense cities and cold climates of Central and Northern Europe or further afield to make a beeline for Malta's beautiful beaches. Quality of life is certainly a huge selling point in this regard: Malta is safe, has good schools, fabulous dining offerings, and a demonstrably good medical system.

With an eye toward recovery, he "wants to improve the total experience, so that our visitors enjoy clear value for their money. Our visitors will be treated to high-quality, not just in our four- and five-star hotels, but everywhere they go, whether that be to our beaches, our restaurants or our cultural attractions." Toward these ends, his ministry has focused on combining different avenues of niche tourism with an experience that will keep the country among the top rated by holiday makers.

"Our visitors will be treated to high-quality, not just in our four and five-star hotels, but everywhere they go, whether that be to our beaches, our restaurants or our cultural attractions."

Clayton Bartolo, Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection

As it invites outsiders to join its robust economy, Malta's advantages are hard to ignore: it welcomes innovation at the same time as it strives to conserve its history, environment and culture; it has a pro-business government that values consumer protection and market stability; unemployment rates are low; and the country currently ranks well with the ratings agencies, leading many to predict that the economic rebound will be a strong one. And just as it has welcomed diverse visitors throughout its history, Malta will continue to do so in the future, says Bartolo. "My vision is that, as soon as a tourist steps off the plane or the ship here until the moment they go back home, the experience is so unforgettably good that they will immediately want to return."



MALTA PERMANENT RESIDENCE PROGRAMME

NEW CHAPTERS, NEW POSSIBILITIES

The Malta Permanent Residence Programme grants beneficiaries permanent residency in Malta whilst enjoying visa-free access to Schengen area.

With a mild climate, excellent educational opportunities and access to top-class healthcare, Malta offers families residency in a safe and stable jurisdiction with a robust business-friendly economy.

Residency Malta Agency

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www.residencymalta.gov.mt

Strengthening the community through economic stimuli

Alex Muscat, Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities, sees investment migration growing dramatically in the post-COVID-19 era



What are some of the key projects that you and your ministry are focusing on in 2021?

Quite a number are in the pipeline. The majority of the initiatives falling within my purview were very useful in terms of the wealth that they created for Malta to be in a much stronger position in terms of COVID-19. Most of the initiatives that the government was taking were also partly financed via our initiatives, via foreign direct investment (FDI) coming in through a number of programs that we had in place.

What we are seeing for 2021 is, hopefully, a post-COVID era now, where vaccination in Malta is going very fast. The intention is to even increase the rate at which we are vaccinating our people and to hit the ground running as fast as we can. Investment migration is top on the government's agenda. Basically, attracting FDI, attracting new investors to our shores, opening up new opportunities and investing in new businesses are factors that we are giving a lot of importance to. An increasingly growing number of families are realizing how important it is to have multiple residences and have residency based in a number of countries.

“If you want to come here to Malta, the doors are open, but only for the people who are able to prove that they have generated their wealth through good and proper means.”

Alex Muscat
Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities

2020 proved to be a turbulent year for investment migration at the global level. What are the main differences between Malta's former citizenship by investment program and the new one that you launched in 2021?

We are prioritizing quality over quantity, we are not after the numbers like maybe other countries are. We are more after the individual talent of the investors who end up, not only participating in the program, but actually investing in other areas here in Malta. That is something that we give a lot of importance to: not just attracting the individual to ultimately obtain Malta's citizenship but, actually, truly becoming a member of our society, becoming part of the community and investing in other areas. One of my main goals is to increase the percentage of the investors who have been participating in the previous Individual Investor Programme (IIP). At the end of the day, the goal is not just participating in the IIP, but also investing in other areas here in Malta.

How would you characterize the evolution of standards in the industry when it comes to transparency and how are you working with your counterparts in the European Union (EU) to ensure the highest standards are continuously upheld?

The IIP and the new program are the most rigorous in the industry when it comes to due diligence. As a percentage, our rejection of applications for the IIP and now also for the new regulations are by far the highest in the market. If you want to come here to Malta, the doors are open, but only for the people who are able to prove that they have generated their wealth through good and proper means. We value this a lot, we are open to anyone, but only as long as they have generated their wealth in a legal manner.

This is something which we have also been discussing with the EU Commission and with other players and countries in the market. We were not happy to see other countries being much less stringent than we are. We would rather have some common approach across the EU to set the level as high as possible rather than going for the low-hanging fruit.

Malta's vibrant economy packs a powerful punch considering the country's size and population. What are some of the latest highlights of Malta's future-proof economy? Is the economy still facing a labor shortage and, if so, how is your secretariat working to tackle this challenge?

Malta is still facing a labor shortage. Within my remit is Identity Malta, which is the Maltese agency responsible for giving resident and work permits to non-Maltese people, be they EU or third-country nationals. We have had businesses craving for labor and it was much more cumbersome to get foreign labor to come to Malta during the pandemic, especially when airports were not functioning as normal.

On the other hand, we are working on our first nomad residence permit. During the pandemic, a lot of people realized that you could work from home and your home can be anywhere in the world. We want to attract this kind of person and we see this as a great opportunity. We will be launching our nomad residence permit very soon. We know other countries have already ventured into this area, but they are mainly giving national visas. A residence permit gives you even more flexibility when it comes to what you can do, not only in Malta but also in the rest of the EU, especially in the Schengen area. You will still be paying your national income tax where you are physically employed—you are just living in Malta, enjoying our economy, our weather, our lifestyle and enjoying not being in a lockdown.

In terms of investment opportunities for those seeking citizenship, what



are the most attractive and lucrative openings in Malta today, both in terms of real estate and other areas?

Real estate has always been very interesting in Malta. The Maltese property market is a very special one. Due to our size and the limited land we have, never in Maltese history have we had a situation where property prices went down. That makes the available stock more limited.

“We are prioritizing quality over quantity, we are not after the numbers like maybe other countries are.”

Alex Muscat
Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities

What would be your final message to readers of Newsweek about Malta as a place to invest, live and work?

Being the size it is, Malta has always paid a lot of attention to the sense of community. In a way, you are not just investing, you are not just a number in Malta, you are an individual. The physical contact between investor and the politician gives much greater ease of mind to the investors, knowing that they are close to the legislator in a way. This way, the legislator can be much more responsive to the needs of investors and this is something that gives them reassurance.

On the other hand, also because of our size, we tend to be much faster when it comes to legislative processes—a year in other countries takes maybe three months here in Malta. We are not the biggest of fish but we most probably are one of the fastest. That is one of our advantages. Opportunities are much more tailored here in Malta, much more particular, but that is also why we are a little bit more selective and maybe we can afford to be that little bit more discerning.

That is what we intend to keep on doing: keep on attracting investors, be more attentive to the investors who come in and maybe be a little bit more selective. We have always been and I believe that there are still lots of opportunities. The way our economy and our society at large reacted during the pandemic I think will put us in a situation post-COVID-19 where investors will evaluate us differently. They will value the fact that our health system never collapsed, our economy was never really hit that hard. All of these things put together will make Malta a very attractive opportunity for all investors around the world who want a safe place not only to reside, but also to invest and make sure that their investment keeps on growing.

Introducing numerous initiatives to claim Malta's true potential



Malta's previous citizenship scheme, the **Individual Investor Programme (IIP)**, started in **2014**



The **IIP** generated over **€1.5 billion** in Malta's economy



Malta's **IIP** was created with a cap of **1,800** applications, a limit that was quickly reached



Over **€600 million** has been accumulated in Malta's **National Fund** through IIP



Malta boasts an **industry-high rejection rate** thanks to an immaculate due diligence process



Following the pandemic, Malta's GDP currently stands around **€14-15 billion**



Throughout the pandemic, Malta implemented few **hard restrictions** for **COVID-19**



Malta has had one of the **lowest number of COVID-19 cases** and casualties worldwide



Despite the pandemic, Malta has managed to maintain a low **4.4%** average unemployment rate



Prior to **COVID-19**, Maltese universities attracted more than **80,000** international students

Utilizing all the right ingredients to garner international interest

Clayton Bartolo, Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection, strongly believes that Malta has the potential to be at the forefront of digital tourism



As the new Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection, what is your vision for Malta's tourism industry and what are some priority projects you are focusing on to create new momentum in the sector?

The pandemic has brought long-awaited inevitable change and it has forced us to implement solutions. As a country in this recovery stage, we need to strike a healthy balance between volume and operations, creating a workable strategy to ensure revenues which will make operations viable. A few weeks ago, we mapped out a 10-year strategy for Malta's tourism industry, which we are currently maturing in discussions with the primary local stakeholders.

The tourism sector is fundamental in our local economy. It needs to recover as quickly as possible in order to ensure a quick economic recuperation for the rest of the country. Connectivity is key for smoothing the recovery period and assisting us in leaving behind the impact of the pandemic as soon as possible.

"We need to work together as a country to ensure recovery as quickly as possible and open the gates for more local support while continuing to attract foreign presence."

Clayton Bartolo, Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection

The second pillar is rethinking our tourism product. While the pandemic has been a challenge, it also provides us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to overhaul our tourism offering and ideology. Rather than just concentrating on number crunching or a simple quick fix, we are taking the time to rethink our value proposition to revitalize the industry as we head into the next decade.

Revitalizing means injecting capital and directing investment, but not in the traditional way of just thinking in terms of hotels and more beds. We are encouraging local and international investors to invest in new and innovative products for tourism, such as digitalization. We need to work together as a country to ensure a quick recovery and open the gates for more local support while continuing to attract foreign presence. Foreign direct investment plays an important role in any economy, and in the Maltese open economy it is a perfect fit.

Could you tell us a bit about your experience during this post-global-lockdown period and about the most effective programs and initiatives implemented to mitigate the impact? What are you currently working on to prepare for the expected rebound of the tourism sector?

With a country of around 500,000 people, domestic tourism in Malta is not as strong as it is in bigger countries with several regions. However, staycations

have become quite popular, even with the locals. Many Maltese go to Gozo, our sister island, spending long weekends there, which has kept the economy going.

In Malta, we are one of the few countries to never have gone into lockdown, and we have managed despite that to keep the number of cases down. We have restrictions, which we are looking at easing up on as time goes by. At the moment, we have the typical restrictions, such as wearing masks in public, closing bars and clubs, and closing restaurants by midnight. If the situation improves in the following months, we will decrease these restrictions in order to continue moving forwards toward normality.

We are focusing on niche tourism, and I can mention several areas in which this gives us value as an attractive destination. Malta is known for its dive sites and we are looking to capitalize more on that. In fact, we are finishing up on the details of a package to attract divers this coming summer here to the island.

We are also developing an offering around religious tourism. An interesting fact is that we have around 365 churches, one church per day. We are studying ways to increase the number of religious and spiritual tourists of all faiths and belief systems, enticing tourists who would like to begin or continue a spiritual journey here in Malta. We have recently signed an agreement with the Salesians, who have a presence in well over 230 countries around the world. They will also promote Malta and religious tourism here, with the aim of attracting especially young tourists here to Malta in this particular niche.

Malta also has a very good climate for sports, so we are very well suited to sports tourism. Recently, we hosted an international women's football tournament, where we had a number of teams come from all over the world. Under the appropriate health protocols and testing, they held a very successful, COVID-19-free tournament. Cycling and sailing are two other important activities that fall under this niche. The exploration of these activities and more is helping to build our future tourism sector.

One of our major selling points is our hospitality, which is ingrained in the Maltese culture. From the point of view of tourism, it rests on the needs and the wants of the clientele we wish to attract. We are gradually moving toward a more sophisticated level in all aspects of quality. We recently entered into a partnership with Michelin in our initiative to enhance our gastronomic experience. Their stamp of quality will go a long way in promoting our restaurant sector, which is upgrading its levels across the board.

We are also diversifying our source markets as we are attracting a more discerning type of visitor. Our major source markets are mostly European: France, Italy, Spain, Germany and the U.K. We are now expanding our targeted source markets to not depend on one country or region over another, which ties directly in with the vital nature of strengthened connectivity. This will help us



attract high-wealth clientele and allow us to continue building our tourism sector on a solid foundation. Now is the perfect time for us to rebuild and, in the process, rethink and innovate our tourism product with these niches.

The old adage 'quality over quantity' has never been more relevant. What kind of focus-driven, experience-driven and sustainable tourism are you embracing at the moment for future trends?

There are various tourism trends that we are noticing and have been studying through the Malta Tourism Authority network in many countries. For example, one trend which stands out is LGBTQIA+ tourism, which is another niche where we believe quality over quantity needs to take centre stage. The investment made in hotels here in Malta over the past few years ranges from three-star to five-star, and now we are also seeing the five-star-superior accreditation springing up. While emphasizing quality over quantity, we need to find a balance that ensures that these hotels get their return on investment, while providing a higher quality experience and, in turn, attract high-quality tourists. We are working steadfastly on this area together with the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Planning in order to increase green areas and clean air in Malta. This style of working with all the ministers and cabinets together to achieve these goals is the way forward. These synergies between the departments of government are essential to elevating our tourism product and the resulting experience for our visitors.

I am emphasizing the experience because it is a game changer, not just for today, but for the future. My vision is that, as soon as a tourist steps off the plane or the ship here until the moment he or she goes back home, the experience is so unforgettably good that they will immediately want to return. Our aim is for each tourist to feel at home in Malta and for Malta to become the home of tourism within the Mediterranean basin.



What are your views on the trend of digital nomads who are eager to find new places to live and work from?

Malta is a country where a person can live, work and enjoy oneself. Being such a small island, you can literally be at the beach in the morning and in a Michelin-rated restaurant in the evening, savoring all that is available on an island. These digital nomads also bring an added value to our economy. With this trend we have the opportunity to create a robust ecosystem of digital nomads who work here in Malta, earn their wages here and invest in the economy.

At the same time we are ensuring and heightening sustainability because they will not be traveling as much, as nowadays we are relying more and more on digital means of communications. Malta can easily support this ecosystem with its very sound digital and excellent internet connectivity infrastructure. Malta already has all the right ingredients to become a digital nomad hub, attracting future residents, mostly from the Northern European countries where they can do the same work but in a much different climate.

"Our aim is for each tourist to feel at home in Malta, and for Malta to become the home of tourism within the Mediterranean basin."

Clayton Bartolo, Minister of Tourism and Consumer Protection

What would be your final message for readers of Newsweek?

Malta is open for business, coming out of the pandemic even stronger than it was before. We are undertaking a very exciting project here, not just involving tourism, but affecting the whole economy. Come join us, be a part of our projects and together we can be a success.

Recover, rethink and revitalize: Malta's vision in the post-pandemic era



Malta offers more than **100** dive sites around its islands



A high proportion of the population has received at least a **first dose** of COVID vaccine



In **2020**, Malta boasted more than **€100 million** in tourism income



Until **2030**, Malta forecasts a maximum of **3-3.2** million tourists reaching the country



In **2020**, the government saved more than **100,000** jobs through supplements

Forging a robust and enticing profile for Malta

Charles Mizzi, CEO, Residency Malta Agency, believes that the pandemic provided Malta with the impetus to think long term



In what ways did you shift or refocus your priorities over this last year to tackle the challenges and opportunities that have emerged during this time?

The past 12 months have been incredibly challenging for everyone, and Residency Malta Agency was no exception. From an operational standpoint, we made some internal changes to allow some of our employees to work remotely. Over the last six months, we have been working on a new IT system to improve internal processing and to put us in a position where we will eventually receive part of the residency application process digitally as well. This would improve our efficiency and allow us to respond better in situations like the pandemic. Agents and applicants will be able to reach us more easily and submit part of an application online.

The last 12 months have also been fruitful because we were able to process a lot more applications than we used to. COVID-19 gave us more time to dedicate to such applications, and now we are processing applications as they come in. This gives us enough time to review the applications thoroughly and allow applicants to reply to any questions that may arise in the due diligence process.

Furthermore, we had time to assess the entire structure of the program and we came up with a new residency by investment proposition, building on the strong points of our old program with some additional features aiming to provide more value to our target audience. It is a win-win situation for both the country and the applicant. We made sure to involve stakeholders in the process, and I am proud to say the feedback from agents has been positive.

“Malta has been and always will be a welcoming country to entrepreneurs who want to settle here or expand their business.”

Charles Mizzi, CEO, Residency Malta Agency

The new program is called Malta Permanent Residence Programme. Prospective applicants will still have two options to choose from, either to buy or rent a property in Malta. If they decide to buy a property, they will have to contribute €68,000. If they rent, the contribution will go up to €98,000. Over and above that, they will need to make a €2,000 donation to a local non-governmental organization to strengthen the link with the local community. Property purchase prices will also go up by €30,000. Applicants may either buy property in the southern region of Malta, for example in Gozo, or else in the rest of the country. In the south and Gozo, the minimum price is €300,000, while in the rest of Malta, the price would be a minimum of €350,000.

Why should investors, professionals and digital nomads choose Malta as a new place of residence? What are Malta’s main advantages compared to other competitive destinations in the region?

To start with, Malta is a very safe country. I emphasize this because our principal target market comprises family units, people who want to give better opportunities to their families, better education, healthcare and they want to bring up their families in a very safe environment. We have a very stable and democratic jurisdiction. This gives peace of mind to investors who want to come to Malta to raise their children. We have a robust economy, one of the best in Europe. Our climate is also a strong point. The sun shines 300 days of the year. This is something our visitors value enormously as they do not have this experience at home.

The Maltese are a hospitable and welcoming people. We also have a large expat community which is a big help when people are choosing a place to live. There is a mix of many varied cultures and communities, yet English is an official language, so people find it easy to communicate. The level of education is high with a large selection of both public and private schools, and the healthcare system is state-of-the-art, one of the best in the world. These are just some of the factors that make Malta an attractive proposition to our target audience.

What strategies are you applying in your agency’s due diligence and standard setting processes to ensure that the highest levels are continuously upheld?

One needs to be close to the sector to be aware of the level of detail that goes into analyzing an application. It takes a lot of time, effort, resources and even money, and it is something that we pride ourselves on because we are not after quantity, but quality. We only want those who are suited to Malta to make it through the program.

We have a four-tier due diligence program, which starts by checking the documentation that we receive to make sure that applicants are providing the correct information. Then, we perform seven different checks on police databases to make sure that there is no criminal history involving the candidates. We go into a great deal of detail involving source of wealth, source of funds and we also commission reports from top due diligence companies worldwide, which costs a substantial amount of money.

Eventually, when we have all this information in hand, we construct a story for each application which is then presented to the Approvals Board that makes further inquiries before deciding on whether an application is approved or not. Throughout the course of the process, we also ask questions to applicants if there is anything missing or if something does not make sense. Occasionally,



we might seek further qualifications to make sure that we have the true and full picture of each application before rendering a decision.

What are your views on the trend of programs attracting digital nomads with one- or two-year visas? How is Residency Malta leveraging the opportunities that have come about from the current surge in remote working?

At the moment, we are also working on a nomad residence permit, which is similar to what other countries are offering with some differentiating factors. This is not something completely new, because digital nomads are already present in Malta. They are made up of European workers who came to Malta to work from here namely for our climate, environment and the infrastructure. This new initiative will target third-country nationals who need a permit to travel to Malta and reside here, stay for short periods, and do business or work remotely from our country.

What would be your final message for readers of Newsweek?

Malta has been and always will be a welcoming country to entrepreneurs who want to settle here or expand their business. Our strategic location makes



us a gateway for entrepreneurs to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. We go that extra mile to attract new business and make visitors feel at ease and look at Malta as their second home.

When it comes to our own sector, the future looks bright. We look forward to what the new program will bring to the country. Feedback from agents has been extremely positive and we are hopeful that it will help to attract more talent to Malta. Our aim is to entice people to settle here and bring their families to

“COVID-19 gave us more time to dedicate to such applications, and now we are processing applications as they come in.”

Charles Mizzi, CEO, Residency Malta Agency

continue the growth we have had over the last few years. There are new projects in the pipeline and we will continue to assess the residency program with new options to be introduced in the coming months, so quite an interesting and busy period is ahead. It is our intent to make Malta the place to be.

Promoting Malta internationally through refined processes



Residency Malta has reduced its application turnaround time to within **4-6 months**



Over **5 years**, **Residency Malta** has generated around **€50 million**



The new **Malta Permanent Residence Programme** aims to triple profits



Malta Permanent Residence Programme was launched on **29 March 2021**



Out of the due diligence process, around **10%** of applications are rejected



Malta has a population of less than **500,000** people



Malta’s **COVID vaccination rate** is one of the **fastest in Europe**



According to recent national statistics, more than **60,000** foreign employees reside in **Malta**



The property rental threshold in **Malta** is **€10,000** per annum in the south and Gozo



The **Digital Nomad Permit** will allow a remote worker to live and work in **Malta**

Fortifying citizenship for a stronger Malta

The newly formed **Community Malta Agency** promises to improve the efficiency of investment migration while increasing levels of due diligence



The pandemic made 2020 quite a challenging year for us all. Our agency, which deals with citizenship matters and depends to a large extent on people traveling, had its fair share of challenges as well.

The Agency's operations were affected in various ways and it needed to refocus its priorities to tackle the unprecedented situations during this time. This included matters such as the travel restrictions, closed embassies, people working from home and not able to meet physically. All the processes involved, be it gathering the required documentation, authentications and going to embassies for certifications, just to mention a few, were things previously taken for granted which became virtually impossible to do.

The Agency reviewed its procedures and wherever possible, adjusted to meet the new realities. Certain elements were facilitated, delays in the submission of documents were accepted, but the non-submission of required documentation was by no means allowed. Sacrificing the quality while jeopardising the long-term project was never an option.

Higher standards, more diligence

Malta is renowned for operating at the highest standards, setting the bar for others to follow, but there is always more to do. Given that we have an open-minded approach, and with Malta constantly changing and improving, the government closed the Individual Investor Programme and implemented more rigorous regulations. While applicants who had already started the process could continue having their application scrutinized, future applications would start being processed under the latest revised set of legislation that was issued in November 2020.

With the merging of Identity Malta Agency's Citizenship Unit with the

newly established Community Malta Agency, all Maltese citizenship-related matters can now be administered and processed under one roof. Services include the issuance of certificates of Maltese citizenship; acquisition of Maltese citizenship by birth, by registration, by naturalization through long-term residence, for exceptional services by merit and for exceptional services by direct investment in Malta; and the renunciation of Maltese citizenship. This way, we can further strengthen the equal-treatment-for-all and provide the same level of service to anyone who applies for Maltese citizenship. One can simply visit the newly set up website, www.komunita.gov.mt, where potential Maltese citizens are guided on who is eligible to apply, what process one should follow, what forms are to be filled and what documents are to be submitted, and all the applicable fees.

One of the major changes under the new set of regulations is that there is no outright application for citizenship under the Granting of Citizenship by Naturalisation for Exceptional Services by Direct Investment. An applicant may not come to Malta and apply for citizenship straightaway. They must first be residents of Malta and only afterwards can they apply for eligibility to citizenship. Applicants need to submit detailed information about themselves clearly identifying who they are, how they made their wealth and what their business interests are. In-depth and intuitive due diligence is then conducted on the submitted documentation.

All the information is gathered and passed on to the Minister who decides on whether the applicant is eligible to apply for Maltese citizenship. After 36 months residency status, or if they decide to invest higher after 12 months, they may apply for citizenship, after which the Minister gives his final decision.



The result is that there is more time for evaluation. Maltese citizenship is not for someone who is in a rush. There are no half measures. The Agency's function is to ensure that only those who are deserving, acquire it. After the initial 12 or 36 months, there is one final diligence update.

We are aware that all of these measures may never be completely watertight. There will always be individuals who manage to make it through somehow, even though our safeguards are strong. The Agency employs the highest levels of diligence when processing applications to ensure that Maltese citizenship is granted to those who truly deserve it. We pride ourselves as being global leaders in our field and continue to strive to enhance our standards. In case anything does emerge later, the Minister can always initiate procedures to deprive citizenship.

This is a truly solid system that will ultimately provide more value to those who are making it through. The individuals and families who apply, contribute to Malta, invest here and obtain citizenship know that they have gone through strict levels of due diligence, background checks and intelligence gathering. It's not a simple transaction one can get easily off the shelf. It must be earned. Being a Maltese Citizen is a privilege that carries with it the honour and prestige of forming part of a nation relishing a great culture and its deep historical roots.

Licensed agents

Another major implementation is the dedicated regulations specifically enacted to license persons to act as agents for the purpose of processing applications under the Granting of Citizenship for Exceptional Services Regulations.

Applicants need to make use of the services of licensed agents who are approved and licensed by the Agency. The agents are authorized to guide these applicants through the whole application process and submit their applications. These agents may be public accountants or auditors, lawyers or financial advisors duly licensed by a competent authority upon attending training organized by the Agency.

With these agents come increased intelligence sharing and background checks. Everywhere around the world, the negative focus tends to be on those who obtain citizenship through direct investment. This is just a small fraction of those persons who through many ways can acquire citizenship, such as through marriage or because they have been a resident for several years. What checks are being done there?

Through consolidations and joint efforts, we are trying to build a culture where everyone gets an adequate level of background checks. Those

who are earning citizenship through investment will continue to get the highest and deepest level because that is where the highest stake of money is. Even so, it must continue to be checked thoroughly.

Investment opportunities

Should an application be processed successfully, then welcome to the Pearl of the Mediterranean! New talent is never sufficient and initiatives like citizenship or residence by investment are being adopted by many countries specifically to attract skilled labour.

The world is becoming a competitive arena for the best minds because that is how economies grow and survive. That is exactly why Malta is focusing its energies in this area. Being a small country with limited natural resources, only a handful of successes are needed to benefit the economy at large. This is what allows us to be selective, but the fight for top talent will never cease. For us, what remains of utmost importance is to ensure the right safeguards are in place.

Maltese citizenship is not for someone who is in a rush. There are no short cuts or half measures. The Agency does not cut corners in its diligence work and its function is to ensure that only those who are deserving, acquire it.

Community Malta Agency

Malta has always worked closely with the private sector's innovators, identifying new fields and niches to excel in. Whenever there is a new global opportunity, Malta has always embraced the opportunity. With the new Community Malta Agency, and a raft of improved rules and regulations, Malta has shown that it is dedicated to continuing the migration of talent to its shores. The new arrivals will bring their skills and entrepreneurial talent to add to the vibrancy and dynamics of the economy at large.

Malta is an archipelago of islands positioned right at the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, acting as a bridge between the European and African continents and a gateway between the East and West.

We welcome anyone who would like to be part of our family on the exciting journey that lies ahead, bringing new opportunities for investors, wealth creators, entrepreneurs, talented individuals and families to our nation, which is always striving to be at the forefront of innovative ideas, technologies and industries.

Malta at a glance



Fitch A+ rating, stable outlook and 5% GDP forecast for 2021



2nd most vaccinated country in the world



More monuments per mile than any other nation



On average, 300 days of sunshine a year

The crossroads of Europe and Africa



Malta is the ideal combination of a stable democracy, vibrant economy and beautiful weather



Welcoming to foreign investors

With a population hovering just over 500,000, a full 20% of residents are foreign born



A safe bet for investment

Malta attracted \$3.6 billion in FDI over the course of 2020, bringing the total stock to \$206 billion



EU member state

To have access to Malta is to have access to the whole of the European Union



Solid education

From the primary level to university, Malta has world-class educational offerings



Easy communication

Malta is a bilingual country with both Maltese and English spoken in equal measure throughout the land



Stable politics

Since gaining independence from the U.K. in 1964, Malta has been a parliamentary democracy



International financial center

The country boasts 26 licensed banks, a thriving fintech scene and a growing finance sector



Dedicated to justice

Malta's justice system offers protection to investors and business owners



Top-notch medical services

With medical access for all citizens, the country successfully withstood the COVID-19 pandemic



A place in the sun

Valletta is Europe's sunniest city, with the capital receiving an average of 2,957 hours of sunshine a year



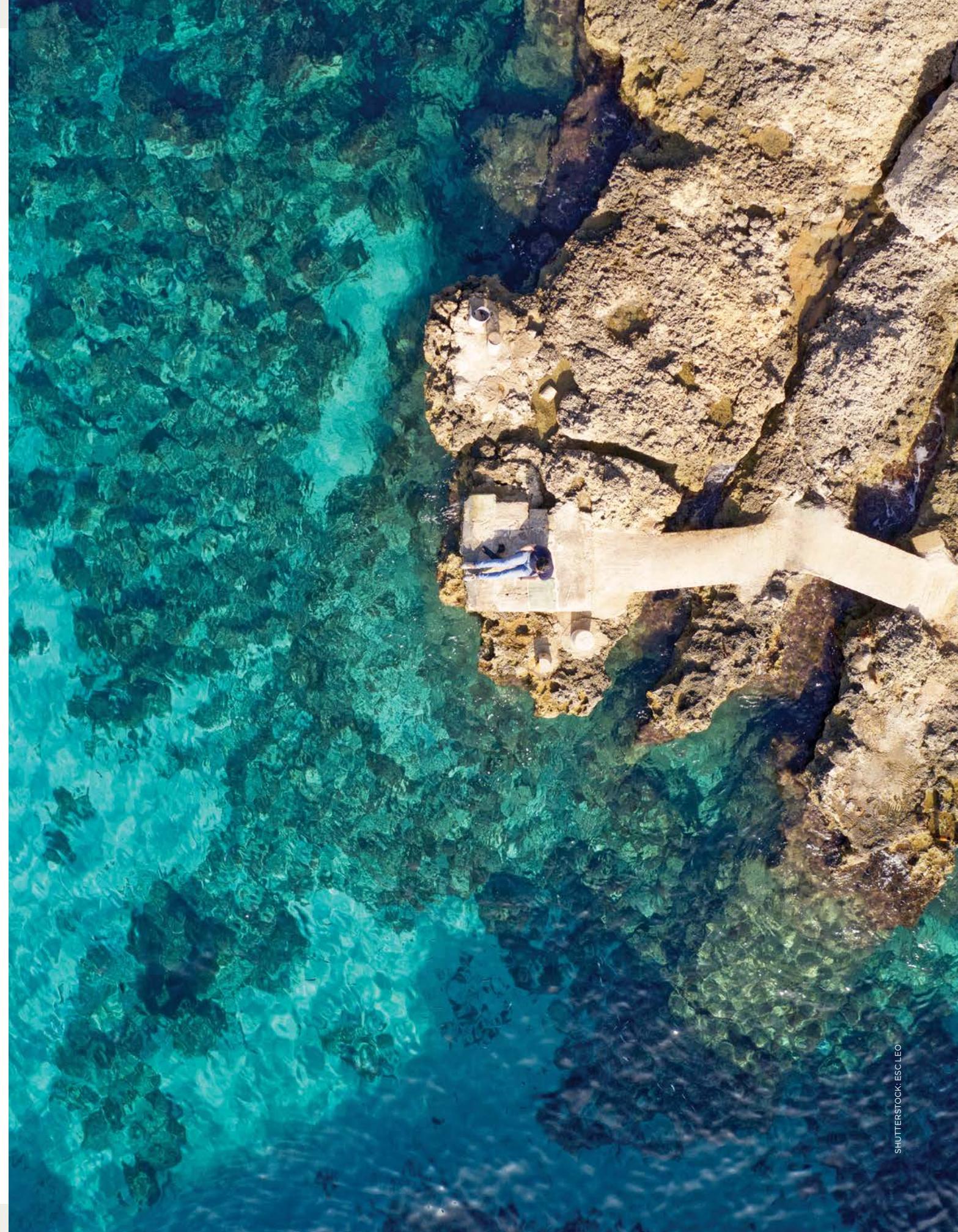
Dining and entertainment

Malta has a bustling nightlife and 5 Michelin-starred restaurants



Law and order

A low crime rate means Malta has consistently been rated among the safest countries in Europe





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AGAIN
#MORETOEXPLORE



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