Renewal of the Public Service
2013-2021
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In these pages one will find what public officers managed to accomplish in renewing the Public Service. We can still hear it being said that the Public Service is stagnant, without ideas, and with demotivated workers. This publication is testament that in a few years — seven years in all — the Public Service has transformed from a political issue to one which — apart from winning international awards for its service, has earned its place in the highest European rankings and with 72% of the people saying that they are satisfied with the service provided — a true leader in society in various areas. More than anything, these pages are depictions of will and determination.

Practically all this has been achieved in five years. Before this period, we needed to assess the exact bill of health of the Public Service, where we envision it to be in the short term, and the plans needed to achieve the delineated vision. Five years ago, we set up servizz.gov and the Institute for the Public Services (IPS) and much of the renewal has been carried out through them. Through IPS, we conveyed the message internally, and trained public officers to change the way service is provided. Through servizz.gov we changed in practice the way the service is provided. For a customer to run from one department to another to obtain the service they need, is now virtually unheard of. Whoever imagined at that time that some 1500 services would be made available literally from under one roof with two, three, people? This represents precisely the gist of the reforms that were carried out. A renewal that has transformed the way we deliver our services. A renewal that was targeted and led us to achieve the vision we set out when we started out on this path of having an accessible public service by everyone, and from anywhere, 24 hours a day all year round.

These pages are one chapter that paved the way for a new one that intends to lead us to a service of excellence. When we laid down our vision in 2013, this was probably met with a dose of scepticism, as we might similarly also find those who, even today, crack a smile when a service of excellence is mentioned. We have nonetheless made it, both through the renewal carried out, and the consolidation that is needed next. The second phase is precisely the consolidation of the Public Service because, for us, a service of excellence translates into a service that one is not discouraged to make use of, is straightforward, and very easy to use. I believe that the Maltese people do not deserve anything less than this.

Renewal was built on the pillars of quality, planning, and delivery, on the focus on the customer without any exceptions, and on the willingness of the Public Service to renew itself and carry out that which makes it even better than it already is. This renewal will be carried out through quality, accountability, and sustainability and, whilst explaining their need and urgency, we deliver on them by utilising the three key elements of the Public Service: people, technology, and service.

I invite you for the next step...

Mario Cutajar
Principal Permanent Secretary and Cabinet Secretary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2013: The start of the necessary renewal</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Vision: accessible quality Public Services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An accountable Public Service</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Results and recognitions</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Public Service as an agent of change and leader in various areas</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Strengthening the Public Service: a new strategy towards a service of excellence</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2013: The start of the necessary renewal
In the history of the Public Service, there are years that are marked as years of reform, where public administration stops to review the service provided, and introduces a series of changes needed in that particular period. It is enough if one mentions those held in 1974 and 1987, focusing mainly on the administrative structure. Back then, they believed that an improvement in structures, and salaries, will motivate more and thus reflect on a better service. This was not the case in either.

While the 1974 reorganisation focused entirely on grades, the 1987 attempt which also dominated the first half of the 1990s did the same, and added some other measures such as codes of ethics and a bigger boost in investment in technology that was started at the start of the 1980s. There was a lot of expectation for the results of this reform. Almost 25 years later, in 2011, a new report was commissioned to examine whether the objectives of this reform had been achieved. This report received little to no attention, even if it demonstrated that the objectives set had not been achieved.

All this led to the state of the Public Service having also ended, in 2013, a political theme in that year’s electoral campaign. Upon appointment of a new public administration, the renewal process of the Public Service had become a key priority.

The first decision of the new legislature was announced in statement 384 issued by the Department of Information, which announced the appointment of Mr Mario Cutajar as Principal Permanent Secretary and new Public Service Head, as well as Cabinet Secretary.

Following the appointments of new Permanent Secretaries a few days later, both government’s programme and the renewal of the Public Service could be implemented in earnest with the impetus that was required. The necessary change could now be made, and without delay. We didn’t lose time in studies, also because in previous years many reports on various aspects have never been implemented. In the first months of 2013, we collected all the reports that had been issued in previous years on the various aspects and departments, including those from the Offices of the Auditor General and the Ombudsman among others, and an analysis of how many recommendations had been made and how
many had been implemented was carried out. There were hundreds of recommendations, but the extent these were implemented could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The state of play of the Public Service has started to be analysed and the first measures and plans to implement them have started to be prepared. The need for renewal was urgently felt. The analysis carried out in 2013 and the findings of the 2011 report had much in common.

After years of status quo, this initial work in the first months of 2013 brought new energy to the Public Service to start looking at its internal processes, simplify unnecessary red tape, and increase efficiency.

**INTERNAL REFORMS**

In 2014, during an internal steering meeting of the Public Service, a series of internal reforms that changed the way the Service operated were announced. For the first time, the Public Service was entrusted with reforms to be made in its own internal structures. However, at the same time, a clear signal was given that for this change to come about, there must be a change in culture by which a decision is delegated bottom-up instead of the contrary, in what the Head of Public Service Mr. Mario Cutajar called a ‘crisis’ leadership.

A number of recommendations to improve working practices were kickstarted. These practical and realistic reforms had to remove rules and procedures considered redundant which were undermining the people’s trust in the Public Service, leading to concrete results in the briefest time possible.

Two new directives, directive number 9 and directive 10, were announced in the same month. Through them, a process of decentralisation of the delegation of authority to the recruitment process and reinforcement of planning in the Public Service.

Directive number 9, dealing with the delegation of authority, forwarded the delegation to the Permanent Secretaries so that they prepare and manage the recruitment process in their departments. This effectively means that the recruitment process will be taking place in less time, and with less red tape.

Directive 10 introduced the obligation of financial and human resources plans over a period of three years, updated from year to year. This would achieve the objective of strengthening the effectiveness of the Public Service, as well as financial management.
Other important measures implemented in these months were those facilitating prompt responses to customers, and timely decisions that, apart from not discouraging these same customers, are taken without delay.

Among the first work carried out at this time, it is also worth mentioning the importance given to the elements of planning and delivery in the Public Service. A system was introduced for regular monitoring of the work to be carried out, including on the execution of budgetary measures. This was fundamental not only to achieve the targets set, but also to identify certain challenges hampering progress in advance and thus immediate action could be taken to address it. All this has increased the efficiency of the Public Service but also led to more accountability — for the first time the public had an account of what measures were actually implemented, and not just promised.
Meanwhile, the process of simplifying red tape has started to bear fruit, as laws have been identified and removed. These were anachronistic and were no longer valid to a modern society. A total of 36 laws and 116 subsidiary laws have been removed. The concept of a ‘Sunset Clause’ was also introduced whereby when Parliament introduces a new law, it can give a date of its entry into force and when to be removed.

With these changes and internal reforms, the public administration has given clear signals from the outset that it believes in delegating decisions to swiftly implement the necessary renewals in a collective effort. Those reforms provided new impetus to Public Service structures where reforms have taken place for everyone and not just the top, as well as improving the quality of public services by simplifying red tape.

The first renewal measures reinvigorated the Public Service. The focus of renewal, unlike the two previous reforms, was without exception the client. The objectives could now be set on paper and planned. All objectives and work were all aimed in one direction. This time round, the Public Service knew the exact direction it had to take.
The Vision: accessible quality
Public Services
The new management of the Public Service was aware that for the Public Service to take the next step, it needed a long-term vision of where to arrive. For the first time, at a conference with public officers, Principal Permanent Secretary Mario Cutajar announced the vision of quality and accessible public services twenty-four hours a day, all year round. This was the basis and essence of the renewal of the Public Service.

This vision provided clarity to such an extent that, for the first time, a client-centred culture began to be inculcated; indeed, the Public Service has its own clients. In contrast with previous reforms, this renewal was also looking outwards and not just inwards. The focus was shifted on the people who make use of public services, and their needs.

The vision had to have a strong focus on service and quality. To achieve these, there had to be a strong investment in technology, which had now started to be regarded as the key to many of the changes required. New permanent structures have been set up, such as servizz.gov, the Institute for the Public Services, and the People & Standards Division, while for the first time quality has been given a specific definition with several measures introduced to safeguard the qualitative element in the Public Service. All of these were born to put into practice the vision of renewal.
SETTING UP SERVIZZ.GOV

The vision of renewing the Public Service has put people and clients at the centre of the Public Service’s work. In other words, the services were to be made more accessible and responsive to the needs of the user — bringing the services to the citizen, and not the other way round.

To achieve this goal, the necessity was felt to set up a new structure to bring all government services into its fold while preserving their quality.

servizz.gov saw its inception from a pilot project initially bringing services related to industry and trade under oneroof - under Business 1st. The experiment was very successful. It is enough to mention that the time it takes to set up a business was now reduced from 28 days to just three. Another result was that from 22 different forms to start a business, a form is now required only once.

Following the success of the ‘Business 1st’ pilot project, servizz.gov was officially set up in December 2015. This step is considered to be a historical one because for the first time in the history of the Public Service, all government services are now available under one roof. People no longer needed to run from one government department to another as in the past. A one-stop-shop concept became operational.

Through a strategic partnership with the private company Centrecom, servizz.gov service was set up with the aim of making government services available under a single umbrella and to allow more effective management of the services offered. The Public Service was one of the first to adopt this innovative concept, and subsequently also inspired the private sector to do the same. That the Public Service provides more than 1,500 services under one roof is unprecedented.

The first regional servizz.gov centres were opened in Paola, Birkirkara, and Qawra. Two more centres were later opened in Ħal Qormi and Birgu. The choice of localities in itself also meant that government services were being delivered in the heart of the community, for more comfort to customers to make use of these services. Today servizz.gov service has 23 one-stop-shop around Malta.
The agency also invested in opening the first three specialised service hubs in a few months. In January 2019 it launched edu.servizz.gov, with more than 50 services related to educational services. Following were ‘Ċentru Servizz Familja’ for social services, and ‘Taxpayer Services’ for services related to taxation.

If technology was to be the key to a better Public Service, the regional service hubs servizz.gov were to be a reference to those who are not so comfortable with making use of technology.

After the success of the initial five years, the strategic partnership between servizz.gov and Centrecom was strengthened through a further five-year agreement. This agreement has increased the services offered and will significantly improve the quality of the service provided.
servizz.gov continued to implement the vision of more accessible services by widening operations platforms, including telephone contact. Therefore, freephone 153 was revived and strengthened. We found 153 with a subpar service that takes over 2,000 phone calls - and dissatisfied customers. Today, the 153 service receives some one million phone calls a year, and its service is lauded to be among the best in the country.

The Public Service started to pave the way for more services through the use of technology and strong online presence. Therefore, service accessibility was being pushed forward. As the Public Service had a regional one-stop-shop, it now had an online one-stop-shop.

Progress in the range of multi-platform public services went on at a remarkable pace. The strategy for Government mobile services was launched in November 2015 and five months later, Maltapps was launched with the first set of mobile phones services (mservices). This further cut red tape, made use of quicker processes, and improved the quality of the service provided.

In December 2016, the website www.servizz.gov.mt was launched, which started to serve as a platform for all government services, with forms related to them grouped in a single portal.

The impressive advancement in the technological field was possible through substantial and unprecedented investment totalling €200 million over six years. As part of this investment, in May 2017 the Public Administration embarked on a €40 million project called ‘CONvErGE’, which will strengthen the ICT system of the Public Service and create a number of new electronic services.

Despite this investment, the Public Service did not look back. In June 2019, it launched the ‘Mapping Tomorrow’ strategy
for the digital transformation of Public Administration.

This built on the successes achieved in previous years, in particular e-government, and will lead to the next step: the application of technologies operated through Artificial Intelligence.

All this illustrates the transformation that the service offered has undergone. Whereas in 2013 digitalisation in the Public Service simply meant downloading a form to print, fill it in, and scan it or take it personally to a department, within a few years the Public Service has successfully built up a full e-government system. The efficiency of this system has put Malta first among European countries, and it has been recognised on several occasions through international awards.

Unprecedented investment in technology and the wide range of online services serve to deliver 24/7 public services without thsee being mind-boggling to use by customers.
Stating that quality service should be provided will only be rhetoric if it does not define what quality it is. Quality itself is subjective, and so needed to be defined. This can be measured and therefore managed and therefore, improved.

In this sense, quality service depends on four pillars: the voice, i.e. listening to the client and the officers both in criticism of the service as well as to offer any idea that could lead to improvements; design, so that the formulation of policies and processes reach levels desired by customers; the package, in order to provide the service in a timely manner which reaches - and perhaps also exceeds - customers’ expectations; and accountability, through honest delivery of the service and providing the client with a clear account of the work carried out by the Public Service.

The next step was to introduce several new procedures to make the highest level of quality felt in the delivery of the service. Among others, a mystery shopping system in government departments was set up, with a view to identifying possible shortcomings in the provision of the service and remedy the situation with immediate effect.

It is worth pointing out that the mystery shopping process works by visiting a number of places where the service is provided to the public acting as if they are ordinary citizens who need a service. The service provided is consequently assessed and, where necessary, improvement is recommended. This system has been recognised as a success story by the European Commission in 2020 whereby a report was drawn up, where this project was taken as a case study.

There has also been a reform of how the Public Service conducts inspections of businesses to protect quality. To this end, after public consultation, a central office with a legal framework has been set up to coordinate and facilitate cooperation among inspectorates. This reform established common criterias and a common IT system, through which bureaucracy and burden on businesses have been substantially reduced.
THE SETTING UP OF IPS AND P&SD

This was followed by structural changes. The Institute for the Public Services (IPS) was set up, which is considered the twinned structure for servizz.gov. This replaced what was formerly known as Centre for the Development of Research and Training (CDRT), and earlier the Staff Development Organisation. The two predecessors of IPS were never centred on the running of the Public Service. Therefore, they worked independently of what was being done in the Public Service. In this way, the effects were minimal in impact. IPS is now completely focused on the ongoing renewal and addressing renewal needs. IPS intensified training and invested in research. In order to provide the training and strategic development needed by the Public Service, IPS was set up in partnership between the University of Malta, MCAST, and the Public Service. The Institute continuously invests in enhancing the quality of public officers, and thus completes the quality cycle.

This is done through the various training courses offered throughout the year, including for industrial grades. In May 2016, a detailed course for public officers also started to be held, both for those holding senior office, as well as for those aspiring to one, and is called Management Leadership Toolkit. This course focuses on a number of important areas including HR, finance, policy-making, public procurement rules, IT, and industrial relations, and has become a crucial part for everyone who occupies a headship position. Thus, the running of the Public Service as such now had all the necessary tools to be managed optimally and in synergy with the renewal strategy.

Indeed, from 2013 to 2020, more than 86,000 participants received training in various areas ranging from IT to management, communication and public procurement, among others. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that in the same period, over 620 sponsorships were granted in various courses ranging from certificates to Master’s degree level, both in local institutions and universities, and also overseas.

In 2021, IPS made another step forward to truly act as a Public Service Academy, with the launch of the IPS Student Scheme. This scheme offers the best chance to students who want to study for the BA Honours in Public Policy and Management or for BA Honours in Procurement and Finance. This is because those who complete their course successfully will be fully employed by the Public Service, after they have been given the opportunity to combine their studies with work as employees throughout the course.

Another important step in this quality strategy took place in October 2016, when the People & Standards Division was set up instead of what was formerly known as Public Administration Human Resources Office (PAHRO).
Our Values

We believe in an ongoing commitment to excellence, effective helpfulness at all times, and fairness of service performed with due diligence, responsibility and integrity.
The concepts were different, and the change was not only in name. Its aim is to look at the public officer as a person at the centre of everything and not just as a resource. It was said that from Personnel Management we moved to HR Management. The way forward with the P&SD is now People Management, where the person is considered holistically. Under the umbrella of the P&SD, we also placed the Employee Support Programme (ESP), which is very helpful and supportive for public officers.

By setting up this division, the Public Service has combined the concept of people management with the protection of quality of service. In fact, among the important structures that P&SD has are the structures related to service quality.

The Public Service Management Code (PSMC), a key reference for public officers, has been simplified. From a massive document, it was made into one consolidated and easy to understand document. This was done so that public officers can obtain information related to the operation of policies concerning human resources more easily. The P&SD also set up a One-Stop-Shop for public officers, and frequently asked questions and answers have started to be published, to explain the procedures needed by public officers most.

Internal communication with public officers was also strengthened with the emergence of the IDEA initiative. This gave public officers the opportunity to put forward their ideas for improvement in the Public Service, and ideas are publicly recognised. IDEA has brought renewal to the public official who now found themselves at the centre of everything that was being done.
People and quality have become a single chain in a single structure. Quality structures are those that check and touch on the quality of service daily. It is, among others, those who analyse newspapers and the media so that complaints can be dealt with promptly. One needs also mention the mystery shopping tool. But above all, these structures work on internal processes to offer as many excellent services as possible, and without unnecessary bureaucracy.

For those departments and entities that provide these services and reach a high level of quality-of-service provision, Quality Awards have been introduced. They are only awarded if departments or entities reach a proven level of excellence. These awards can also be withdrawn if the service is no longer provided at the desired level. It thus serves not as a point of arrival, but as an honour to continuously encourage the best levels of quality.
An accountable Public Service
Ħidmat tas-Servizz Pubbliku
In the renewal of the Public Service structures by which permanence in that which is being stated, and carried out, is given, were strengthened. As from 2013 onwards, there has been a change in the way the Public Service plans and delivers, but also in keeping track of what work has been carried out and communicated to the general public.

A number of publications were published for the first time in which the Public Service took stock of the work carried out over the years. Therefore, these publications followed the changes closely, but also added an element of transparency and accountability in all that the Public Service has been able to achieve.

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Budget Implementation**

It was in November 2014 that the Public Service published for the first time the publication “It-Twettiq tal-Baġit”. This publication was a result of a clear methodology of continuous monitoring by Cabinet for carrying out the measures announced in the Budget for the year 2014.

In the introduction to the publication, the Principal Permanent Secretary, Mr Mario Cutajar, mentioned that “the Public Service as the administrative hand of the government needs to renew itself with the times, as it has in fact done. It is not acceptable that the Public Service only protects itself to safeguard its systems and justify deficiencies. If it is to look inwards, it should also do so to strengthen itself and conduct an awareness test. The moment the Public Service starts to look outwards, it will start to see how it delivers the service in the clearest way.”

This publication continued to be published year-on-year, with high rates of measures implemented, standing at 68%, 70%, 79%, 74%, and 65% in the unprecedented pandemic situation. In total, over 1,600 measures have been carried out in recent years. Also for the first time, Budget measures have been aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development targets.
Simplification measures

In January 2015, the Public Service published for the first time the publication “Mizuri ta’ Simplifikazzjoni”, with detailed reporting of measures implemented in 2014 to give the country a more efficient Public Service and with less red tape. Among others, it contained changes so that those who want to invest and create jobs can make it less burdensome to set up their own business, while the citizen who needs to make use of government departments and bodies find the task easier.

This publication has also become annual. In recent years, over 1,070 measures have been taken to reduce the burden of beaurocracy.

In September 2020 there was a change in the name of the publication, and this has now become “Il-Ħidma tas-Servizz Pubbliku f’dawn l-aħħar 12-il xahar” (The work of the Public Service in the past 12 months). In addition to simplification measures, attention has started to be given to the overall work of the Public Service.
Governance

In May 2016, the Public Service published for the first time its response to the Auditor General’s report, focusing on financial aspects and audits of government departments and entities. This was done with the first publication of its kind, named “Governance — Action on the NAO’s annual report 2014”.

It is worth mentioning that for years, unfortunately, recommendations of the Auditor General in his reports fell on deaf ears. Now, not only have we started to carry out the recommendations, but we also take stock of their implementation. The Public Service has created new structures which have given permanence also in this respect. In the introduction of the publication, the Head of the Public Service, Mario Cutajar, stated: “This is another first... These, along with a number of other measures, are all helping the Public Service to make new inroads in its continued development.”

Over the years the Public Service reached an average of around 80% in implementation of the Auditor General’s recommendations. From reports for which little action was taken, we have now reached a situation where auditors go to departments and entities of the Government and certify good practices because they have found nothing that they can report on.

In November 2018, the Public Service started to provide its reactions also for the Ombudsman’s annual report. In the first publication, “Governance Action on the Parliamentary Ombudsman’s Report 2017”, it showed how 85% of cases presented were resolved, and general recommendations made by the Ombudsman were all implemented. The Principal Permanent Secretary said: “As this report lay out, the Public Administration is achieving positive results and surely, the culture of continuous improvement and customer centricity is being inculcated. Behind this achievement is the daily and silent commitment of all our customer-facing staff, customer care units and those executing back-office functions geared towards achieving excellence in service delivery.”

In November 2019 ‘Governance action on the Parliamentary Ombudsman’s annual report 2018’, was published, which showed
how the Public Administration acted as it should have for 97% of cases submitted by the Ombudsman and implemented recommendations which were presented to it. As a structure and to give permanence to this annual exercise, the Public Administration appointed a central liaison officer in each Ministry for coordination between ministries, more accountability, and transparency.

It should be noted that taking into account the 13 million transactions that the Public Service performs in one year, and comparing with how many complaints were received by the Ombudsman, this translates to an insignificant percentage of 0.003%. Until last year, looking at all cases still pending at the end of the year, out of 92 cases, only 16 were pending at the ministries, three were suspended due to legal proceedings, and 73 cases were in the Ombudsman’s own hands.

The Public Service is determined that with the solid structures in place, it will continue to give provide these statements annually.
OTH ER PUB LI C AT I O N S

In April 2021 two books (one in Maltese and one in English) were published in which there was a collection of the 72 bulletins that were issued by the Department of Information during the Covid-19 pandemic.

By means of these bulletins, the Public Service provided all the necessary information to the Maltese people in the initial phases of the Covid pandemic. The publication was presented to the President of Malta on the World Public Services Day celebrated in June 2021.

In May 2021, the first 25 “Ittraħbar” issues were collected in one publication (2016—2021). This was done so that all the renewal carried out in the Public Service remain permanently documented.

C O M M U N I C AT I O N

In the history of the Public Service there has never been a time when the service and reforms have been delivered to people in the same way as today. The Public Service, in a consistent manner, communicates with people to deliver all the necessary information about services available and, above all, about the ongoing reforms.

In reforms that were undertaken, the service has remained straightforward to use, but made accessible 24 hours a day and from everywhere, and it was fundamental that the Public Service inform people of the changes that were underway.

Throughout the process of renewal that the Public Service has undergone in the latter years, there was not only external communication with external customers, but also internal communication with the public officers themselves. Thus, the public service vision of an excellent service has reached everyone.

A number of methods and information campaigns have been used to reach out to everyone, both those who are familiar with the new media, and those who use more traditional means.

In May 2015, the Public Service launched a new website called publicservice.gov.mt. The site keeps both the public and public employees updated in what is going on in
Public Administration. This is done through news, official statements, photos, and links to important documents and initiatives.

The first edition of Ittraħbar was published in February of the following year. This continued to be issued regularly to keep public officers up to date with the last developments in the Public Service. In June 2021, the 25th edition of Ittraħbar, these were all grouped in a single publication to be kept with permanence at the National Library.

A policy on communication in the Public Service was launched in May 2016, based on five principles. These are professionalism, accountability, clarity, transparency, and participation. This led to the opening of another source of communication, on social media through a Facebook page to maintain efficient contact with its clients.

Apart from the Public Service central page on Facebook, departments within it also have their own separate pages. One such instance is the Department of Information, through which the Public Service has provided a daily bulletin information service about the spread of Covid.

Apart from this, there are methods considered to be more traditional. The Public Service remained present in popular and most followed TV programmes. It also maintained presence on the radio and via road billboards. This was the case even through publications on work and governance, and various brochures.

In communication, everything is interlinked so that the message is united and clear. That is why work is underway so that communication in the Public Service is elevated to a department with permanent structures. Moreover, in the new strategy, we will keep communication under the spotlight to improve it and make it more efficient.
Another effective way of getting the Public Service to the people were the events organised as part of the Public Service Week. Unlike what was previously done, days devoted to the Public Service no longer consist of days, but weeks full of activities. Moreover, even in Public Service Weeks, the focus has always been to highlight one of the pillars on which the renewal of Public Service was built. In total, seven weeks for the Public Service were organised so far:

The first Public Service Week, which took place between 23rd and 30th January 2015, focused on quality. Activities during this week included a number of conferences and discussion meetings focusing on quality and IT, including with foreign guests. The public was given the opportunity to visit different entities to see closely how the Public Service works, including the Gozo General Hospital, Sant’Antnin recycling plant, Police Headquarters, MITA, Department of Civil Protection, the Armed Forces of Malta, and Heritage Malta.
The Second edition took place from 29th January to 5th February 2016 with the theme ‘Investing in People’ — so we could not fail to discuss the well-being of the employees themselves. The Annual Conference dealt with various topics, including the Presidency of the European Union in 2017, performance management, and quality and standards, to which foreign speakers were invited.

Several government buildings were reopened to the public. These included MITA, the majority of Heritage museums in Malta, the Manoel Theatre, the Ċittadella in Gozo, and the Reverse Osmosis Plant in Pembroke, which were open for free for everyone.
In the third edition (27th May — 3rd June 2016), a number of meetings with clients of the Public Service were organised for the first time, something that remained in place every year.

In the same week, an agreement was signed between Government departments and public entities that have committed to making the process to set up a business in Malta much quicker.

The week closed off with a concert held at St George’s Square, Valletta.
Public Service Week 2018 (18th May — 27th May), with the theme “Public Services for everyone everywhere”, treated the vision for the future and the goals still to be met to bring public services to everyone, everywhere. It included an activity of recognition where the Public Service thanked public officers who put forward their ideas on how to improve its operation.

The Public Service was brought closer to its clients through family activities in various open days. A joint concert was held in Valletta by the Armed Forces Band and the Police Band.
“Towards a Service of Excellence” was the theme of the fifth edition of Public Service Week 2019 (20th-29th September).

Among the activities that were organised were a seminar on Artificial Intelligence and digitalisation in Public Administration. Another award ceremony was also held. While recognition for the best ideas was given, recognition was also given in relation to the simplification measures implemented during 2018, as well as another acknowledgement entitled “Planning and Delivery”.

For the first time, as part of Public Service Week, Quality Awards were awarded to departments and service providers of excellence. The Quality Awards were distributed by H.E. the President of Malta, George Vella, and the Principal Permanent Secretary, Mr Mario Cutajar, at a ceremony at the Verdala Palace. The underground streets leading to cisterns were opened in Valletta.

Public Service Week started to become renowned not only for the high level of discussions held, but also for the quality of the organisation and activities open to the public.
On Public Service Week 2020 (18th-25th September), under the theme ‘Public Service always with you’, the majority of activities were presented in a virtual way due to the pandemic restrictions. This pandemic has shown that the Public Service is able to adapt and be present under any circumstances.

The activities held during this week included a presentation on an academic study dealing with the renewal of the Public Service, a seminar on Artificial Intelligence, meetings with clients on European Union funds and public procurement, and a seminar on new balances between life and work in the Public Service. Heritage Malta opened museums in Valletta for free and for the first time, the letter that Napoleon had written to his generals to come to Malta was on display.
L-itra firmata minn Napuljun, iddatata 19 ta’ April 1798, li tat bidu ghall-invazjoni ta’ Malta.

Napoleon’s signed letter, dated 19 April 1798, which started the invasion of Malta.
The seventh edition of Public Service Week (28 May — 5 June 2021) closed the renewal chapter and opened a new one: Strengthening The Public Service.

Despite the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, the Public Service organised another Public Service Week with all precautions taken as suggested by the health authorities.

Activities held during this week included policy meetings on the new Public Service Strategy based on three pillars — Technology, People, and the Service, as well as meetings with clients about public procurement, education for adults, and services for people with disabilities. Another awards evening was organised and an activity recalling the 5th anniversary of the Institute for the Public Services was organized, with the launch of the IPS Student scheme.
On the eve of Environment Day, a memorandum was signed between entities and Government departments which took part in the campaign “Insebbhū Pajjiżna”, so that this campaign could continue periodically, whilst the competition aimed at children entitled “What would you like to become when you grow up?” ended with awards, exhibition of works of the children at Castille and job placements.

Video productions were broadcast on television and included concerts by the Police Band, and the Band of the Armed Forces, whilst videos on public officers at their duties were screened.
Results and recognitions
The rapid reforms made to renew the Public Service in the short term have led to a turnaround where from a political issue, the Public Service started to win awards even internationally. We have seen this numerous of times.

**ISSA GOOD PRACTISE AWARD**

**April 2016**

The Public Service has been recognised by the International Social Security Association, ISSA, for simplification in granting Children’s Allowance and Supplementary Allowance benefits.

Malta was given the ISSA Good Practice Award eligible to European countries, during an award ceremony in Stockholm. In this competition, held every three years, there were 71 submissions from 19 different countries.
**REDUCED LEAD TIME FOR PROCESSING TENDERS**

*September 2016*  
Malta was recognised by the European Union for best practices in public procurement, after the lead time for processing a tender in our country was reduced from 242 days to 84 days. This is also much lower than the EU average of 120 days.

**SERVICE DESIGN AWARD**

*November 2017*  
servizz.gov won the international ‘Service Design Award’ during Service Design Global Conference held in Madrid, Spain. servizz.gov was among 14 finalists from around the world, selected by an international jury.
FIRST IN ONLINE SERVICES

November 2017

Towards the end of November, the European Commission, through the e-Government Benchmark Report 2017, ranked our country first among all the European Union countries in online services. In its report, the European Commission said that Malta placed first in all indicators established, including online accessibility and technical availability.

Source: eGovernment Benchmark, Capgemini.

BEST INITIATIVES IN EGOVERNMENT

December 2017

servizz.gov was a finalist at the Malta Communications Authority eBusiness Awards, in the category for best eGovernment initiative.
POSITIVE RESULTS IN THE EUROPEAN QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY

March 2018

Malta ranked third place in the European Quality of Life Survey in terms of perception of quality in public services. The survey focused on a number of areas in public services, including childcare services (where Malta ranks first), the education system (second place), services of long-term care services (second place), social housing (second place), healthcare (third place), and state pension system (seventh).

Figure 20: Quality ratings for seven public services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Health services</th>
<th>Education system</th>
<th>Public transport</th>
<th>Childcare services</th>
<th>Long-term care services</th>
<th>Social housing</th>
<th>State pension system</th>
<th>Average rating</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6.9</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

April 2018
According to Women Leaders Index 2016-17, the proportion of women in top Public Service posts in Malta has increased substantially from 2013 onwards: from 31% in 2013 to 31.7% in 2014, to 35.8% in 2015, then to 38.1% in 2016. These are results driven by the introduction of several work/life balance measures. Until the end of 2020, these numbers continued to consolidate, where from a salary scale 1 to 5, the Public Service had around 800 women in the leadership positions, contrary to around 200 in 2010.

EGOVERNMENT

June 2018
Malta qualified in first place, from among all the European Union countries, in eGovernment, in four different priority areas.

i. User centricity
ii. Transparency
iii. Accessibility
iv. Technological infrastructure

Simplification Award

Country performance: eGovernment progress across four top-level benchmarks
July 2018  

servizz.gov, through Business 1st, was the winner for the best initiative to speed up and simplify Business Environment processes of the European Enterprise Awards. These awards are targeting businesses and small enterprises.

THE BEST DIGITAL SOLUTION

October 2018  

At the International Summit Awards, servizz.gov was nominated for the best national digital solution worldwide. It was selected along with 400 projects from around the world.

INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR SOCIAL MEASURES

May 2019  

The Ministry for Solidarity and Social Justice, Family and Children’s Rights gained international honour on Social Security (ISSA) in which the package of social measures launched by the Ministry during the last 5 years was recognised. 76 projects from 20 European countries competed. The Maltese project obtained a certificate of merit with special reference from the jury.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

June 2019  

The Public Service, again, was granted international recognition, this time through the Department of Information within the Office of the Prime Minister. This recognition was granted by Twiplomacy, Twitter-led website measuring the use of social media by entities and government leaders around the world.
BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY

June 2019

The BiedjaCam app won the prize for the best use of business transformation technology at the MCA eBusiness Awards. BiedjaCam gathers geographical information from images taken directly by satellite. The app is operated by the Agency for Agriculture and Rural Payments within the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, in collaboration with servizz.gov

EXCELLENCE IN IMPLEMENTATION

June 2019

The Ministry for Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change won the honour for excellence in implementation regarding targets set for sustainable development. The honour was given by the Commonwealth.
GOOD RESULTS IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

June 2020
Malta gained fifth place in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) with a score of 62.7. This means a substantial increase on the average of European countries, which was 52.6. The index is computed with five indicators which are: Connectivity, Human Capital, Use of Internet Service, Integration of Digital Technology, and Digital Public Services. In Digital Public Services, Malta ranks 1st in administrative information (pre-filled forms) and completion of online services.

TRUST IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE SHOOTS UP

August 2020
Eurobarometer survey showed that public trust in the Maltese Government and Public Service has increased with a substantial amount of 12 points. This is the best result among EU states and 18 points above the European average.

KNOWLEDGABLE ABOUT THE RENEWAL OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

August 2020
According to a survey of 600 citizens made by leading academics, 64% were found to be aware of the renewal carried out in the Public Service and 61% believe that government services have improved. 58% believe that the Public Service has become more efficient and 74% believe that online government services have made a leap forward.
1ST IN EGOVERNMENT

September 2020
Malta maintained first place from all the European Union countries for e-government services, thanks to the major investment made in this area in recent years. Statistics in the e-Government Benchmark Report puts our country first in a number of categories, including availability, transparency, accessibility, and technological infrastructure.

SUCCESS IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

December 2020
In a year dominated by Covid-19, servizz.gov recorded extremely good results, showing that the Public Service was always alongside the public in the moment of need. Statistics for 2020 showed that there were some 3 million hits on the website and also about a million phone calls on the 153 freephone.

• 3,000,000 hits on website
• About 140,000 walk-ins
• Around 1,000,000 calls to freephone 153 in a year
• Over 70mservices
• 1,500 services under one roof

PROVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

March 2021
Eurobarometer 94 found that 72% of Maltese are happy with the provision of public services in our country. Malta ranks third with this percentage, which is 26% higher than the European average.
August 2021

The European Commission gave Business 1st a nearly perfect result for the way they offered their services during the pandemic. In a report forming part of the Single Digital Gateway, Business 1st was granted an approval rating 4.9 out of 5. During the first phase of the Covid pandemic, Business 1st replied to over 60,000 e-mails, almost 70,000 phone calls and almost 14,000 walk-in.
The Public Service as an agent of change and leader in various areas
Today the Public Service is an agent for the change. If previously criticised for lack of leadership and decision, today the Service is taking initiatives that are not only solutions needed for it, but address wider society’s aspirations. The Public Service has positioned itself a leader in society in a number of areas.

**REMOTE WORKING POLICY**

The Public Service was not only the first to speak, but also to act, for the introduction of remote working, a more flexible system on how to work from beyond traditional offices. In 2019, the Public Service had initiated a pilot project in which a whole ministry left their offices and started working remotely.

When the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in 2020, it further spurred the need for this concept in the Public Service. The pandemic may have been a threat to this initiative. Instead, the Public Service transformed it into an opportunity to investigate the effects on the service and on its officers. From there emerged the concept of remote workspaces and other ideas that today form part of the remote working policy.

These remote workspaces are equipped with the latest technology which a public official can make use of whilst working remotely. Altogether, in 2021 there will be 15 remote workspace across the country.

Following the course of the pandemic and the involvement of a working group that analysed the pilot project, in July 2021 a first Remote Working Policy was published to enter into force on 1st October 2021. There is a transition process of 18 months after which remote working will be replacing telework. Telework and remote working for the Public Service are two different concepts.

The policy on remote working also includes guidelines ensuring professional standards in service provision, data protection, employee welfare and technological equipment, as well as to safeguard laws, policies and sectoral agreements in force. This was also the first policy that would embrace the principle of right to disconnect.

The concept of remote working is modern and strikes a new work-life balance, as well as between service demands and the needs of public officers. But not only. Through remote working, the Public Service will continue to give back to society.

Workers should be motivated more, and we should see positive effects on traffic and the environment. The service should be further improved and employees gain more time for them to spend with their families.
Another pilot project on the same trend is being carried out to study new ways of storing and transferring information without the use of paper — the less paper office.

The pilot project started in September 2020 and is currently being analysed by a working group set up by the Principal Permanent Secretary. This group aims to put this concept into practice and recommend the way forward. With remote working officers move away from a formal office concept, one must also analyse registries, communication and filing, among others.

The challenge remains how to transition to effective electronic ways without affecting accountability and good governance and compiling data will be more effective than at present.

This has been done because the Public Service now has a vision of where it wants to arrive. One could not press on the remote working concept and then remain anchored on traditional concepts of how we deal with work. The first work that was done related to the less paper office was a snapshot of how registry systems are currently working.

It was found that in total there are over 70 registration units (Registries) across the Public Service. These units store fundamental information to the Public Service, including documents relating to human resources, public procurement, contracts, and other files on many different matters. The less paper working group wants to see how this system, which has worked for years in the Public Service, can be exported into a digital system.

There are various considerations, including data protection, ethics in the use of data, the strength of technology and the intact storage of documentation together with the facility that data can move from one department, also the Only Principle Once which then best serves Public Service customers.

Both the Less Paper Office project and the Remote Working testify to the fact that this is a Public Service which leads with innovative ideas and also to implement them rapidly.

At the same time, nothing is working in silos, and everything fits into a strategy towards one goal and one vision.
The switch to electric vehicles has been a topic that has been raised many times in our country in recent years. It was the Public Service that in February 2021 started implementing this ambitious transition from words to concrete action, announcing that vehicles for general use in the Public Service should be switched to a power-operated, cleaner source.

This is a reform which at the forefront strengthens the environmental credentials of the Public Service due to its many advantages. A complete change which will lead to lower emissions for the environment.

Work started by issuing a call for a detailed study of all general public service vehicles with a view to build the way forward. A holistic study taking into account various aspects including fleet management, new infrastructure that will be needed, and the use of the current fleet and how its use can be made more efficient. The related tender of the study has now been finalised and this important work will start. Again, this is a step that will consolidate the Public Service as a leader and will lead to improvements in the environment where the solutions it adapts also address wider societal needs.
Strengthening the Public Service: a new strategy towards a service of excellence
The Public Service is drawing up a five-year strategy to be introduced in 2022. It is an ambitious strategy based on three pillars - service, technology, and people, with a view to a service of excellence, and relies on three principles that contain within each of the objectives — quality, accountability, and sustainability.

This strategy should ensure that everything we have achieved in recent years, in the renewal of the Public Service, can be built on and strengthened.

Internal discussions have taken place for months so that this strategy includes all the aspects needed to make the Public Service one to deliver a service of excellence. Public officers, but also experts in different fields outside the Service, took part in the preparations.

Such a holistic approach to the Public Service is being drawn up for the first time. It is not a strategy that is focused on just one aspect of the Public Service such as the ‘Mapping Tomorrow’ is on the technological aspect, or the strategy of the 1980s that looked more at the internal structures of the Public Service. This approach is linking a number of elements in the Public Service to ensure that the vision is achieved by a serious and efficient plan where each target leads to a unified objective.

Some 13 million interactions take place in the Public Service every year on more than 2000 services. The new strategy will set clear targets to be achieved in the coming years. While we are aware how much servizz.gov has brought government services closer to citizens, this progress will not be sustained if we no longer invest. The service, and how it is delivered, must continue to be updated as is necessary.

The other two pillars on which the Public Service strategy is being built are technology, and people.

Regarding technology, we must keep up to date with the technological changes taking place every day. One of the main factors should be artificial Intelligence, and how to get the best out of it.

Technology is already being used it to a large extent. The leap during the pandemic for public officers to work from home without undermining the service given could not be made if we did not invest in the entire plug and play equipment. Technology, coupled with the will of employees made the Public Service the only machine that continued to work in society during the pandemic. The same happened when the remote workspaces were set up and now soon the less paper office.

Another fundamental pillar in all of this is people. By ‘people’ we mean both service providers and recipients.

And here we come to the structures that give permanence to everything that is done. Good governance structures and quality protection structures in everything we do. Where a cycle is created through which measures are strengthened. People & Standards Division, operating from a single building, and together leading to a management of the quality system. Internal audit and mystery shopping leading to the location of certain remaining shortcomings that are identified so that the necessary action can be taken. Finally, shortcomings are addressed through further training.

In all this it will take on a more fundamental role the Institute for Public Services. This institute will continue to play an integral role in the Public Service, as it will provide everything needed as training. The Institute for Public Services, which this year celebrates five years from its inception, will also go into everything being currently developed in the Public Service. Apart from training, the same
Institute will be improving and enlarging its research function so that it too remains well advanced in all it does.

This is a continuous cycle. Quality leading to audits demonstrating where the service can be improved, to be addressed through training and other processes that bring a higher quality of service to customers... and the cycle continues.

This is the Public Service today. In a few years it has changed from a liability to an award-winner, from a service that saps customers’ morale to a service that inspires trust in people, as amply shown by surveys. From an unmotivated Public Service to an agent of change and a leader in society. From a stagnating one, to a self-renewing Public Service both in providing an ongoing service of higher quality, to regulating itself as it did with the new Public Administration Act, and to strengthen itself as an institution as in its annual publications and even in the way the Permanent Secretaries began to be appointed.

This is the Public Service that promises you a service of excellence... and what we promise, we deliver.