

# Addressing Mental Health Challenges in Malta

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## Civil Society Committee

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***Presented to: Minister of Health, Minister of Education, Minister for Social Policy & Children's Rights***



# Background on Mental Health in Malta

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- Rising mental health issues in Maltese society, exacerbated by COVID-19
- Impact on various groups: youth, elderly, parents, and foreign workers
- Statistics: 1 in 2 children experience anxiety; 79% of employees face work-related mental health issues

# Social Impact of Mental Health

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- Mental health affects relationships, education, productivity, and emotional well-being
- Societal cost of untreated mental health issues: projected to reach \$6 trillion globally by 2030

# Addressing the Situation

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Key goals:

- Tackle current mental health challenges
- Prevent future mental health crises through proactive policies
- Need for broad public policy based on social determinants (housing, education, work-life balance)

# Current State of Mental Health Services

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- Introduction of some community service, some hospital refurbishments

## **BUT**

- Under-resourced facilities
- High demand, especially post-COVID
- Limited accessibility for young people and first-time users of services

*Some NGOs fill the gaps and their value should be maximised*

# Building Resilience through Prevention

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- Importance of resilience in adapting to stress and adversity
- Role of education: life skills, holistic development, and responsible citizenship
- Parental education to support children's resilience
- Create education opportunities in places frequented by adolescents and youths

# Mental Health in the Workplace

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- The workplace is a significant source of stress, impacting mental health.
- Personal stress often carries over to the workplace, leading to challenges like anxiety and burnout.
- Statistics: 79% of Maltese employees report work-related mental health issues.

# Mental Health in the Workplace

## Recommendations for Employers

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- Mental Health Awareness Training
  - Educate employees on recognizing stress and mental health signs.
  - Promote open conversations to reduce stigma.
- Access to Support Services
  - Provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and counselling resources.
  - Offer easy access to virtual or in-person counselling sessions.
- Promoting Work-Life Balance
  - Encourage flexible work arrangements where feasible.
  - Normalise breaks and manageable workloads.



# Mental Health in the Workplace

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- Long-term Benefits for Employers and Employees:
  - Enhanced well-being
  - increased productivity
  - lower turnover
  - positive culture.

# Recommendations for National Action

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## Incentivising Workplace Mental Health Initiatives

- Proposed Incentives for Employers
  - Tax Breaks and Grants
  - Tax benefits and grants for implementing EAPs, counseling, or wellness programs.
- Financial support for SMEs to make mental health resources accessible.
  - Recognition Programmes and Certifications
  - Introduce a “Mental Health-Friendly Workplace” certification
  - Public recognition for employers excelling in mental health support

# Recommendations for National Action

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- Encouragement for Organizational Policy Changes
  - Advocate policies prioritizing mental health, e.g. flexible scheduling, mental health days.
  - Work with employer associations to provide workshops on supportive mental health policies.
- Collaboration with NGOs and Mental Health Professionals
  - Partnerships for workplace training and consultation to improve mental health awareness.
  - Frameworks for companies to work with mental health professionals.

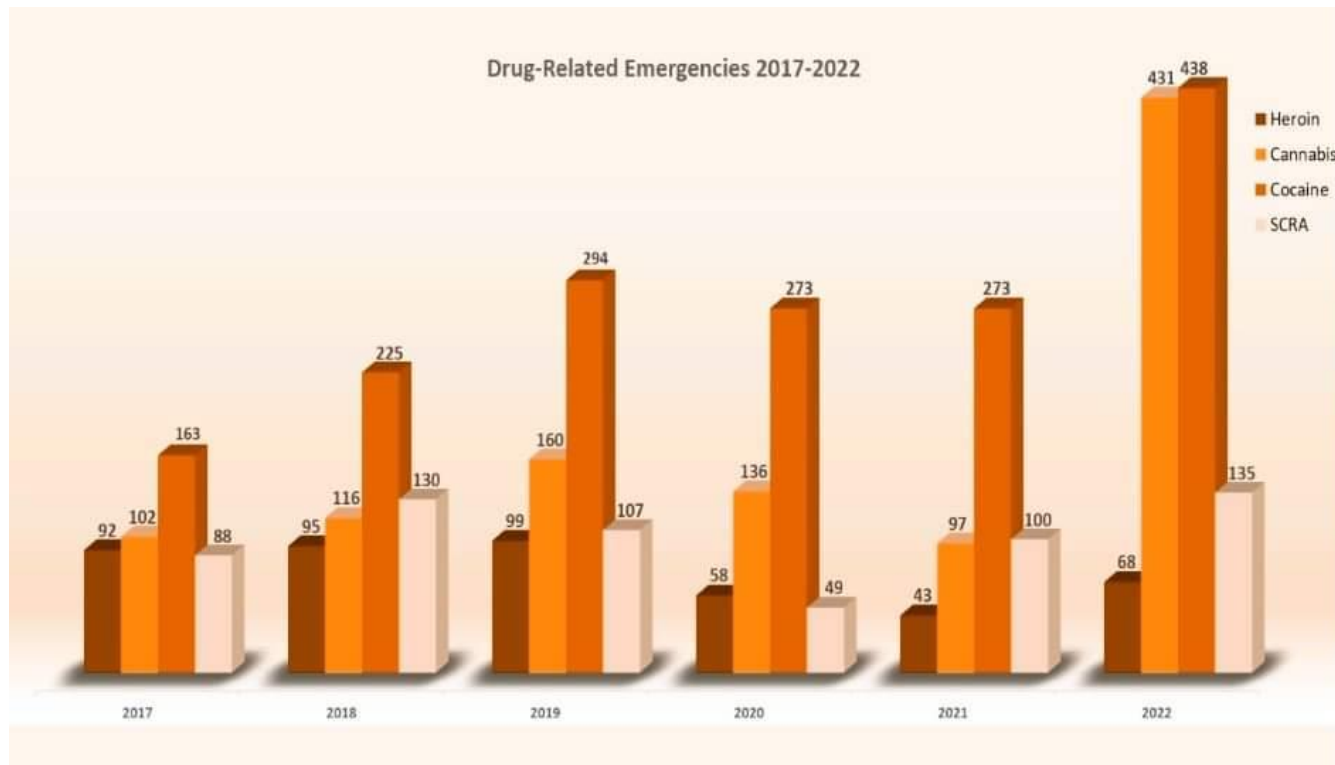
# Recommendations for National Action

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- Expected Outcomes and Societal Benefits
  - Healthier workforce
  - Reduced healthcare costs
  - Improved family and community dynamics

# Recommendations for National Action

- More inter-Ministerial collaboration



# Conclusion

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- Mental health is foundational to a prosperous and healthy society
- Immediate actions recommended to establish mental health as a national priority