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**Making an Impact: Shifting from a Vision to Exploring the Influence  
of Hosting Larger-Scale Sport Events in Malta**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 The Maltese Context

Nestled in the heart of the Mediterranean, Malta - a small yet vibrant archipelago - is an embodiment of resilience and ambition. With its sun-kissed shores and cultural legacy spanning multiple millennia, Malta has always been more than its modest 316 km<sup>2</sup> landmass or its population of just 532,956. The locals, who have an average life expectancy of 81.8 years, are bilingual since the official languages are Maltese and English. Yet most residents are willing to share the stories of the islands with foreigners visiting from all over the world, as many locals are fluent in other languages such as Italian, French, German, or Spanish (World Health Organisation, 2024; National Statistics Office, 2024). Malta is a nation that celebrates its rich tapestry of history while setting its sights on future aspirations.

Malta's story begins in antiquity, with Neolithic settlers from Sicily and the oldest free-standing temples from the Megalithic era. Its story unfolds through millennia of diverse civilizations: Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, the Knights of St. John, Napoleon, and the British Empire before gaining independence in 1964. Each left its mark, shaping Malta into a cultural mosaic. Today, Malta celebrates 50 years as a proud republic and 20 years within the European Union, with its democratic governance and economic stability a testament to its enduring strength.

Economically, Malta punches well above its weight, as reflected in different ratings achieved internationally. From tourism to cutting-edge industries like iGaming, advanced manufacturing, aviation, education, healthcare, ICT, maritime, visual arts, financial services, and life sciences, the country has built a robust and resilient economy. Even in turbulent times like the COVID-19 crisis, Malta weathered the storm, maintaining low unemployment rates and steady growth. This economic dynamism, coupled with a stable political landscape, positions Malta as a forward-looking nation with a strong global presence.

## 1.2 Sport in Malta

### 1.2.1 Malta's Sports Setup

Amidst this economic and cultural backdrop lies Malta's sports landscape—another thread in the fabric of its identity. Sports in Malta was influenced by the historical shifts and colonial legacies. From football and horse racing introduced during British rule to modern Olympic participation, Malta's sporting journey reflects its broader story: small beginnings blossoming into larger ambitions.

During the Roman period and the era of the Knights of St. John, sports adapted to the needs and priorities of the ruling powers. Under British rule, sports like football, horse racing, polo, sport shooting, and cricket experienced significant growth, with land leased for the establishment of a multi-sports club. In 1928, the Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC) was formed under the presidency of Anthony Cassar Torreggiani, enabling Malta to debut in the Amsterdam Olympic Games, competing in waterpolo (Camenzuli C. , 2024).

Nowadays, sport in Malta has three main entities representing it. These are:

1. Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC) – *“the supreme and exclusive authority on matters relating to Malta's representation at all games falling under the jurisdiction of the International Olympic Committee. The Committee's main commitment is that of encouraging, promoting and funding of Maltese participation in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Games of the Small States of Europe and Mediterranean Games just to mention a few”* (Maltese Olympic Committee, 2024). The MOC is the only entity within this group that is autonomous and not tied to the government.
2. SportMalta – This is the government's sport entity that leads the promotion for participation in sport, administers the government sports facilities, distributes governmental financing for sport, and makes recommendations on national sport policy to the Minister responsible for Sport. The Maltese Sports Council, as it was originally known, came into existence through Act XXVI of 2002 (Maltese Government, 2002).

3. Authority for Integrity in Maltese Sport (AIMS) – This authority is the most recent addition to the list of national sport entities, being formed in 2023. It offers a regulatory framework for Maltese sport with the task of safeguarding the integrity of sport in Malta. This is done through promotion, education, and acting on issues related to integrity, competition manipulation, and fair play while ensuring that the national federations are duly registered according to the documentation needed (AIMS, 2024).

### 1.2.2 The Maltese Olympic Journey

Following Malta's first participation in the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games, the MOC participated in an additional 17 editions of the Summer Olympic Games and the last three Winter Olympic Games. Though the elusive Olympic medal remains a goal, moments of pride - such as the joint fifth place gained by the waterpolo team in Amsterdam 1928, Peter Bonello's ninth place in the windsurfing event of Los Angeles 1984 and the ninth, eighth and ninth place earned by double trap shooter William Chetcuti in the Athens 2004, Beijing 2008 and London 2012 Olympic Games respectively – underscore Malta's potential. (Maltese Olympic Committee, 2024) Only a few medals were won in the Commonwealth and Mediterranean Games. In 2022, Matthew Galea Soler became the first Maltese medallist (bronze) at the European Youth Olympic Festival. Currently, the MOC has 42 National Federations affiliated with it, including Olympic and non-Olympic sports.

### 1.2.3 Games of the Small States of Europe

Perhaps no event better encapsulates Malta's sporting spirit than the Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE). The GSSE, held biennially, were the brainchild of Mr Bertie Muscat, who, at the time, occupied the role of General Secretary of the MOC. The GSSE include the smallest NOCs in Europe whose countries have under one million citizens (with the exception of Cyprus which, at the time of inception in 1985, still had under one million inhabitants, but then it grew larger). The initial eight countries were Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, and San Marino, which were joined by Montenegro in 2009. Muscat's vision for these Games were to create a level-playing field



where athletes from Europe's smallest nation could compete to shine. However, further benefits were obtained through the GSSE, such as the building of new sports facilities in the hosting nations and a better perception and further awareness of sport in general (Camenzuli C. , 1999).

Nowadays, the Games cater to around 1000 athletes and another 500 accredited persons, including NOC members, officials, coaches, referees, and media (European Olympic Committees, 2024). Appendix 1 gives further details on the GSSE, including who hosted each edition, overall medal standings, participation figures, and sports in each edition. Hosting the GSSE in 1993, 2003, and 2023 presented both challenges and significant opportunities for Malta, offering athletes a chance to excel while testing the nation's organizational capacity. The Games consistently boosted public enthusiasm and media attention (GSSE Technical Commission, 2020).

In 2023, Malta achieved an unprecedented position at the top of the medals table, excelling in both gold and overall medals—a result that exceeded expectations. Malta was also commended for its excellent hosting capabilities, with the Andorra National Olympic Committee president highlighting the well-organized and hospitable nature of the event during the closing ceremony (TVMsport, 2023).

### 1.3 The Research Questions and Objectives

The saying, *“in any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or to step back into safety,”* attributed to American psychologist Abraham Maslow, has never been truer for the Maltese sports scenario. Malta is a small country that has successfully hosted three editions of the GSSE. Bold decisions need to be taken to make the next steps forward, both in terms of hosting larger sports events and also to improve the sporting scene in Malta. The NOC is interested in exploring the feasibility of Malta's escalating to the next level of hosting sporting events. In this context, the research question being addressed is:

**What can be the significant impacts that shall determine whether Malta should escalate from hosting small sporting events to larger sporting events such as the Commonwealth or Olympic Youth Games?**

The research sub-questions include the following:

- How can hosting larger youth multi-sport events influence Malta's long-term national sports development, including athlete performance and organisational capacity?
- What operational and strategic considerations must be addressed to ensure the feasibility and long-term legacy of hosting larger events in Malta's context?

For the purpose of this study, small sporting events are defined as the Games of the Small States of Europe or smaller Games in terms of participation numbers, recognition within the continental and international structures or number of different sports involved such as for example the Malta Invitational Games, LEN Waterpolo Champions League Final Four, European Handball Phase 1 Qualifiers and UEFA Under-19 Euro Finals. Conversely, larger sporting events involve broader participation, including more countries or higher status within continental or international frameworks, such as the Commonwealth Youth Games and the Youth Olympic Games.

The objectives of this study are:

1. to prepare a feasibility study to assess how possible is it for Malta to successfully bid to host larger sporting events
2. to assess the impact that hosting larger sporting events can have on Malta

After this introduction, the study will continue with a literature review focusing on the research questions under examination. Qualitative data will be collected through bench learning and interviews. The results will be analysed to determine alignment or discrepancies with existing literature, enabling an assessment of the potential impact of hosting larger sporting events in Malta. This research aims to provide actionable insights, culminating in a feasibility study for the MOC. Malta's history has shown that size is no barrier to greatness. The Latin saying, "*Sic parvis magna*" attributed to adventurer Francis Drake, means greatness from small beginnings. I hope that this study can serve as a small contribution to a larger journey—a step forward into growth and opportunity for Maltese sport. Let it serve as a beacon for what Malta can achieve, driven by its enduring will and the belief that greatness is always within reach.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Legacy and Long-term Impact of Hosting Events

Duglio and Beltramo (2017) developed a model of event typologies to better classify and understand the nature of events being analysed. In the context of the Maltese Islands, the Youth Olympic Games or Commonwealth Youth Games would be classified as Type C events, while the Games of the Small States of Europe would fall under Type E events. Similarly, Parent & Ruetsch (2020) came up with a model that lists large-scale sports events as a type of major sport event that can be considered as a special event.

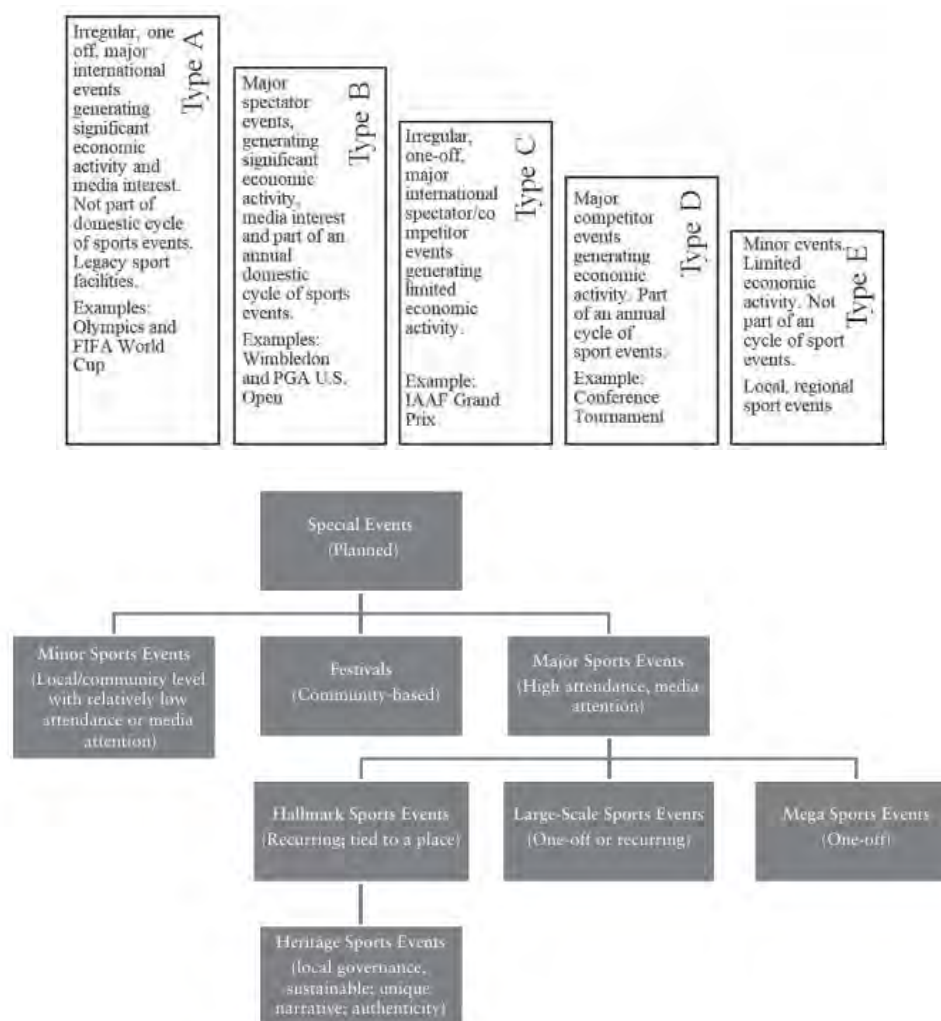
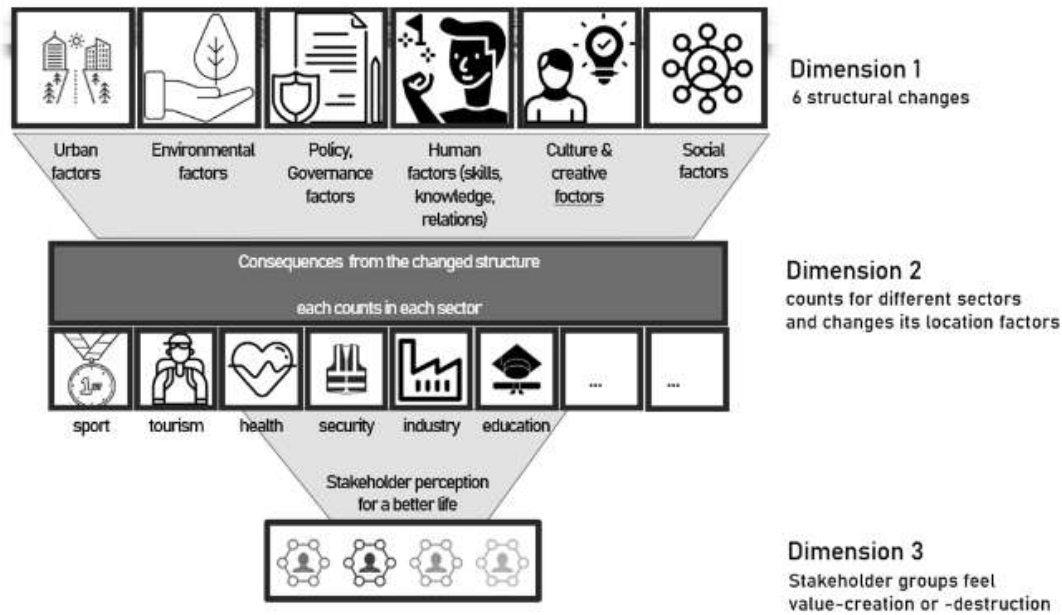


Figure 1 Event Typologies according to (Beltramo & Duglio, 2017) (top) and Parent and Ruetsch, 2020 (bottom)

Hosting large-scale events such as Type C requires substantial investment, creating legacies that can either benefit or burden host cities or nations. Assessing these impacts is complex due to overlapping developments and varied effects on stakeholders, including businesses, commuters, and the public (Preuss, 2015). The same author highlights that motivations for hosting events often extend beyond the event itself, aiming for holistic regional development. Policymakers must carefully evaluate the potential benefits and risks for all stakeholders.

The concept of legacy in sports events has evolved post-2005, incorporating social, environmental, and political dimensions alongside traditional focuses on economic and infrastructural impacts (Thomson, Schlenker, & Schulenkorf, 2013). Legacy perspectives vary among stakeholders and can be short-term, long-term, or undefined, depending on when opportunities arise to realize them (Preuss, 2015; Chappelet, 2012). The IOC conveyed Olympic legacy as the “result of a vision. It encompasses all the tangible and intangible long-term benefits initiated or accelerated by the hosting of the Olympic Games/sports events for people, cities/territories and the Olympic Movement.” (International Olympic Committee, 2017).

Preuss delves further into the subject of legacy and conceptualises a framework for Olympic Games legacy. This framework holds three dimensions, of which, the first dimension is the change in structure that relates to the new or altered action taken or caused by the Games. In this dimension, there are six different structural changes or new objects that occur when hosting games: urban change, environmental factors, policy and governance, human, cultural, and social. These changes lead to a consequence, which is the second dimension of the framework. The consequences can be tangible or intangible, can be either positive or negative, can vary from one person to the other and can be altered in time. Finally, in the third dimension, we find the stakeholders who are feeling the effect of the cause from the structural change (Holger, 2024).



*Figure 2 Legacy Framework by Holger Preuss (2024)*

A study on the Youth Olympic Games shows how host cities increased worldwide visibility, improved their environmental measures, improved their sense of identity, residents upskilled themselves and improved sporting legacies through grassroots and more skilled coaches and officials (Parent M. , 2024).

The following chapters will explore specific legacy dimensions in the context of the Maltese Islands and their potential to host the Youth Olympic Games.

## 2.2 The Role of Sports in Enhancing the National Identity

National identity extends beyond legal or birthright associations, encompassing a commitment to and familiarity with a nation's symbols, narratives, and imagery, forming part of a larger collective (Topic & Coakley, 2010). Back in 2013, Maltese identified themselves with several things, such as the Maltese language, religion, Kinnie (local soft drink), and Twistees (local cheesy snack). However, in the realm of sports, only Olympian William Chetcuti was recognized as a figure with whom the Maltese identified (Debono, 2013).

*“Il-Kotra qamet f’daqqa u għajtet,  
‘jien Maltija,  
Miskin min ikasbarni,  
miskin min jidhak bija.’  
...u l-Kotra għanniet f’daqqa  
u semmgħet ma’ l-irjieħ  
l-Innu ta’ Malta tagħna;  
u l-leħen kien rebbieħ”*

*“The spectators suddenly rose and  
shouted, ‘I am Maltese...  
Woe betides those who denigrate me;  
woe betide those who deceive me  
...and the spectators sang together  
And voiced with all the winds  
Our Maltese National Anthem  
And the voice was victorious*

(Briffa, 1945)

The above is a stanza from a Maltese narrative poem called *Jum ir-Rebh* (“Day of Victory”). The poem recounts the friendly played between the Maltese National Football team and Hajduk Split from ex-Yugoslavia (now Croatia). However, with Malta being a British colony at the time, it was protocol that the British National Anthem and the Yugoslavian Anthem were to be played. The Maltese present at the stadium stood up and started singing the Maltese National Anthem spontaneously. In this short poem, the poet symbolises the gallant spirit of the Maltese nation through its battle for national identity (Caruana, 2005).

Chaeroni et al. (2024) explore the intricate relationship between nationalism and sport, showing how symbolism, sports media, political influences, and public opinion drive the promotion of national identity through sport. The method varies by context: China elevates successful athletes as national symbols, Scotland highlights traditional sports, and Australian media positively frames its athletes to boost nationalism. Sport serves as a strategic tool for fostering national identity, uniting society, and disseminating political narratives globally (Chaeroni et al., 2024).

Evidence from the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore 2010 suggests that a higher sentiment for national pride can also be divulged amongst the people who might not necessarily follow any of the events or news items related to the Games (Leng, Kuo, Baysa-Pee, & Tay, 2015). Conversely, hosting major sport events might not always influence

patriotic attitudes of a nation. Slovenia displayed a lack of a significant impact on national identity when it hosted EuroBasket 2013. However, one must sum up all factors, such as being a singular sport event rather than a multi-sport event, to truly understand why this happened (Licen, 2019).

Mega-sport events extend beyond fostering national pride and identity; they serve as strategic platforms to showcase nations globally (Marin-Montin, 2020). For example, the 2008 Beijing Olympics' Opening Ceremony served as "a grand cultural gala aiming to display traditional Chinese culture." (Liang, 2021). Similarly, upon unveiling the mascot for the Commonwealth Youth Games 2023, the Minister of Sport for Trinidad and Tobago stated how the mascot mirrors the diverse culture of the country and added how they were working to deliver the Games in order to showcase the beautiful islands (Ghana News Agency, 2023). The sartorial statement set by the uniforms during the parade of the nations also relates to the national identity and the image that a country wants to communicate to the global audience (Shin, 2014). Thus, literature tends to suggest that sport not only embraces national identity and enhances national pride but also offers a platform for it to be revealed to the rest of the world.

## 2.3 Economic Impact of Hosting Sports Events

Research concerning the economic benefits or drawbacks of hosting sports events was predominant mostly between 2004 and 2008, with a focus on mega-sports events such as the Olympics or the Football World Cup (Saayman & Saayman, 2014). Assessing the economic outcomes of large-scale sports events is inherently complex, influenced by the host nation's objectives and often requiring long-term evaluation (Chengli, Huai-Chun, & Hsiou-Wei, 2011). Immediate results are not always evident, and data may be inaccurate due to insufficient awareness of spending patterns and visitor numbers.

Understanding the full economic impact necessitates recognizing the roles of diverse stakeholders, including sports tourists, local residents, and periodic tourists ("changers")

who may avoid the destination during the event to escape potential disruptions (Preuss, 2005). As illustrated in the image below, there are numerous economic benefits that can be derived from hosting the Youth Olympic Games. However, meticulous planning is essential to ensure both short and long-term benefits.

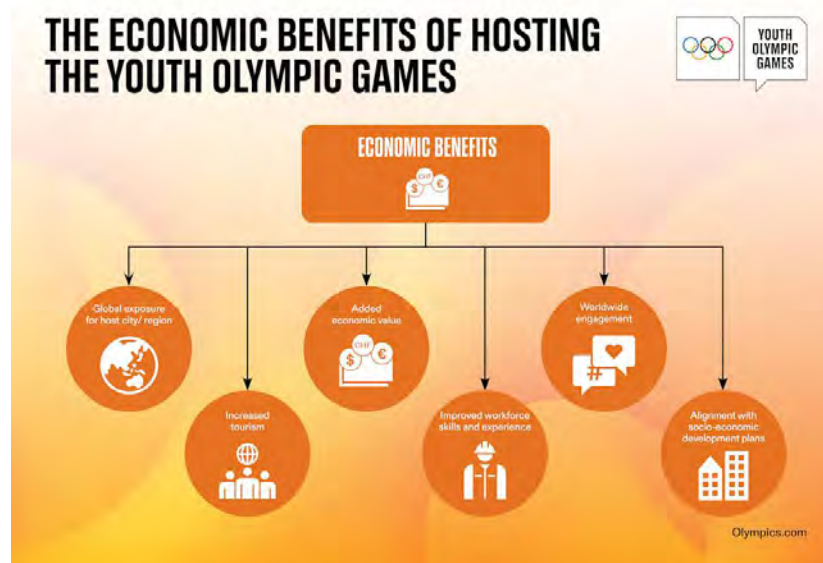


Figure 3 The Economic Benefits of Hosting the Youth Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2024)

Unfortunately, research on the Youth Olympic Games and Commonwealth Youth Games remains limited. The difference in budgets and economic impact between these events and larger events such as the Olympic Games is significant, due to their varying requirements (Chappelet & Schnitzer, 2014). (Matheson, Victor, 2006) concludes that, *“more modest development plans based on the economic impact of a large number of smaller events are much more likely to yield positive net benefits than are grandiose schemes based on attracting a handful of large mega events.”*

## 2.4 Sports Tourism Development

Tourism has long been a cornerstone of Malta's economy with the Malta Tourism Authority stating that it renders directly or indirectly for approximately 30% of Malta's Gross Domestic Product (Malta Tourism Authority, 2022). However, on different television and radio discussion programmes, it is being more often mentioned that Malta needs to focus more



on 'quality tourism'. In fact, 33 academics from different departments within the University of Malta met for a workshop in October 2023 which highlighted the essential necessity for new pathways in Maltese tourism focusing on quality tourists. These are tourists "who care for and respect the host community, its culture and its physical environment, and recognise the value of and accept to pay the right price for what is experienced in the host destination" (Briguglio, 2023). Parallely, one of Malta's strongest points through the years has been its skilled human resource. However, the expertise of the Maltese labour market has been diminishing throughout the years, mainly due to the number of imported labourers, according to Unjoni Faddiema Magħqudin (one of Malta's leading trade unions), Chief Executive Officer Mr Josef Vella (Fenech, 2024).

Sports events are serving increasingly as a strategic marketing tool for host nations to brand, promote, and position themselves as possible destinations (Salina & Han, 2014). Likewise, sport events serve as opportunity to upskill volunteers and employees with volunteers themselves becoming spending tourists (Baum & Lockstone, 2007). The definition of sport tourism by Standeven & Knop, 1999 as, "*all forms of active and passive involvement in sport activity, participated in casually or in an organized way for non-commercial or business and commercial reasons, that necessitates travel away from home and work locality*" fails to give an exact consensus but rather puts all kind of tourism related to sport under the same umbrella. Thus, sports tourism is a term used to describe not only the tourism that happens during the actual days of the event that is being hosted, but can also refer to related touristic activities prior to and after the event. Without a long-term strategy, however, the benefits of sports tourism may remain localized to the event's duration (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003).

Previous Youth Olympic Games host cities have benefited from the Games in multiple ways. Lausanne 2020 gained global exposure as 191 countries were exposed to the Games through national or regional media. Additionally, there were over 3 million users during the 13 days of the competition on Olympic digital platforms, together with 715 million social impressions. Moreover, Lausanne 2020 also benefited from an improved workforce through expertise and skills gained through the Games that helped them host more international

events following the Games in the snow park used for the Games. Similarly, Lillehammer 2016 reinvested its surplus into the sports system, including the Lillehammer Legacy Centre, to continue training future prospects in sport. Lastly, Singapore benefited from increased tourism with a high spend from international visitors that attended the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2023)

## 2.5 Impact of Sport Event Hosting on Youth and Grassroots Participation

The question about how big the impact of hosting sports events on youth and grassroots participation is in sport has always been tricky. This is because researchers who argue that there is a positive impact, usually do so after having interviews with involved personnel rather than quantitative data that gives a direct answer. Moreover, there was always an assumption of a positive impact for increased participation and hence policies in this regard were not always being set and subsequently implemented. Evidence tends to suggest that actually, mega-sport events have little to no impact at all on grassroots participation. However, it seems that hosting mega sport events tends to encourage already practicing athletes to do better or those athletes to have stopped, to re-start take pick up or to regenerate any lost motivation that the athletes might have lost over the last week (Weed, 2018)

Despite this, many countries and cities still aim to host multi-sport events, with one of the key reasons being to foster grassroots participation, often as a strategy to promote social unity or combat health issues like obesity (Thomas, Brittain, & Jones, 2018).

The World Health Organisation informed that Malta tops the obesity charts within the European Union having 36% to 40% of Maltese children and adolescents overweight, a figure that costs the country Euro 45-50 million per year (Said, 2024). A survey by the MOC in 2021 also found out that just over 1500 females and just over 6000 male youths are registered in a sports club within any one of the 42 affiliated National Federations (Maltese

Olympic Committee, 2022). The above clearly shows the need for an investment and strategy towards sports participation. Malta's past attempts to address these issues through the *National Policy for Sport in Malta & Gozo 2017–2027* (The Parliamentary Secretariat for Research, Innovation, Youth and Sport, 2016) and the *National Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity: Aiming Higher* (Micallef, 2019) have largely been neglected, with minimal implementation or reference in subsequent years. This highlights the need for actionable strategies to improve participation

Hence, while one of the strategic goals of the Youth Olympic Games remains to increase participation at the grassroots level, these Games shifted more towards a high-performance event for the most talented few (Krieger, 2012). In consistency with other studies, there is a lack of direct relation that these Games help with an increase in grassroots participation in sport. To achieve meaningful growth in youth sports, host nations must implement practical, well-planned policies and strategies to support participation, ensuring these initiatives extend beyond the Games themselves.

## 2.6 Capacity Building and Institutional Development in National Sports Organizations

Small countries like Malta face unique challenges in developing robust sports organizations. “*Backer (2001) described capacity building as “strengthening non-profits so they can better achieve their mission” (p.38)*” (Stevens, 2018). In the same study, Stevens (2018) finds that Hall et al. (2003) and Venture Philanthropy Partners both came up with frameworks to better understand organisational capacity, in which financial capacity, human-resources capacity, and structural capacity were common elements for both frameworks. Hosting events such as the Youth Olympic Games can serve as catalysts for reform and growth within national federations and sports organisations.

With Malta being a small island with a small population, hosting Games tends to give volunteers who are helping in the operations an improved skill set in both the soft skills and

hard skills, not only for the duration of the Games but also skills that can still be used in the medium and long term (Koutrou, 2021). In a study on the volunteers' memory in the Youth Olympic Games, it seems that memories from the volunteering experience during these Games, which were overall positive, were still present even after four years. These memories gave a social formation and belonging to these volunteers (Wang, Derom, & Theeboom, 2023). Apart from the social bonding, volunteer and young leaders' experiences in the Youth Olympic Games built their qualifications while attaining hands-on experience and creating new contacts and networks (Hanstad, 2014). Additionally, with Maltese Sports Federations heavily relying on volunteers with limited formal training to lead them, it is imperative that leadership training is given to empower strategic capacity (Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011).

From a financial perspective, the MOC received a five-million-euro grant from the National Development and Social Fund for the technical preparation of the athletes earmarked to compete in the Games of the Small States of Europe hosted in Malta in 2023 (Camilleri, 2021). This fund surely helped build the capacity of Maltese athletes, as it was shown clearly from the results, as Malta topped the medals table for the first time ever (The Malta Independent, 2023). Through hosting Games, one can also attract different revenue streams, thus reducing the dependence on Government and Olympic Solidarity funding.

Table 1 shows that whenever Malta hosted the Games of the Small States of Europe, better results were achieved. As an indirect result, Malta also managed better results in other major Games such as the European Youth Olympic Festival, the Commonwealth Games, and the Mediterranean Games in the year leading to the GSSE Malta 2023 (Camilleri, 2023).

Year	1985			1987			1989			1991			1993			1995			1997			1999			2001			2003		
Medal	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B
Andorra	0	0	4	0	0	1	3	1	4	0	5	8	0	6	10	2	5	8	3	5	10	5	12	11	5	6	7	4	6	8
Cyprus	15	8	9	13	17	16	26	25	28	24	14	20	26	23	22	22	25	22	30	25	14	14	13	15	27	21	17	34	20	27
Iceland	21	7	4	27	14	7	21	20	9	24	17	18	36	17	15	33	17	28	33	32	32	29	20	24	31	18	16	20	24	23
Liechtenstein	0	0	4	3	1	6	5	2	7	0	3	3	4	2	7	5	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Luxembourg	11	23	18	15	26	21	12	16	18	22	21	15	8	14	10	20	26	12	4	3	9	20	16	19	12	24	16	21	17	15
Malta	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	1	3	1	2	4	4	7	20	1	4	7	5	10	12	4	8	8	7	12	16	11	18	15
Monaco	0	0	2	6	3	11	5	7	9	8	13	13	7	11	11	3	4	17	7	6	14	5	9	6	5	8	14	7	7	10
Montenegro	Montenegro's first participation in the Games was in 2011																													
San Marino	2	11	11	1	5	5	2	4	2	1	2	3	2	6	5	2	5	2	3	5	11	6	5	7	12	8	16	6	10	9
Year	2005			2007			2009			2011			2013			2015			2017			2019			2021			2023		
Medal	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B	G	S	B
Andorra	8	14	9	4	6	7	1	7	9	3	7	5	2	1	3	4	1	6	1	6	10	3	4	11	Not held due to Covid-19			4	7	10
Cyprus	39	28	24	36	33	24	58	47	34	32	30	20	28	17	24	20	16	16	30	35	19	21	27	16				30	28	29
Iceland	26	23	27	31	23	24	32	24	25	20	23	25	28	30	30	38	46	31	27	14	19	19	13	23				11	13	18
Liechtenstein	5	5	3	3	5	5	2	4	12	6	10	11	11	15	8	7	9	9	4	5	9	9	5	6				2	2	5
Luxembourg	18	21	23	20	25	36	26	17	19	30	15	27	36	39	31	34	22	24	38	36	24	26	27	24				16	22	28
Malta	7	13	18	4	9	17	3	6	12	8	12	9	2	10	14	4	9	18	4	9	16	6	12	9				38	30	29
Monaco	11	8	18	19	16	17	8	17	17	6	9	14	7	8	15	7	11	16	8	10	16	15	13	20				13	8	12
Montenegro										4	2	2	9	0	2	9	4	8	13	6	12	15	6	14				5	6	8
San Marino	6	9	7	4	6	6	4	9	16	3	4	11	1	4	8	0	6	6	6	10	14	1	4	7				6	9	7

Table 1 - Each country's performance in each edition of the GSSE

With the above experiences, the MOC and the Maltese sporting public's bar seems to have risen. It seems that the sporting entities, national federations, sport professionals, coaches, and athletes alike do not want to stagnate with 'just' the GSSE but would like to make the next step in larger sporting events. The MOC and Local Organising Committee showed that they have the ability to host such Games with great attention to detail and professionalism. Hence, the MOC is motivated to possibly host larger events in terms of participation numbers and/or quality, such as the Commonwealth Youth Games or Youth Olympic Games. The MOC believes that through this hosting, additional funding can be obtained, which will help in grassroots sports participation, technical preparation of the elite athletes, better organizational setup of the National Federations, and improved infrastructure to support all sports in Malta.

## 2.7 Feasibility and Strategic Planning for Hosting Larger Events

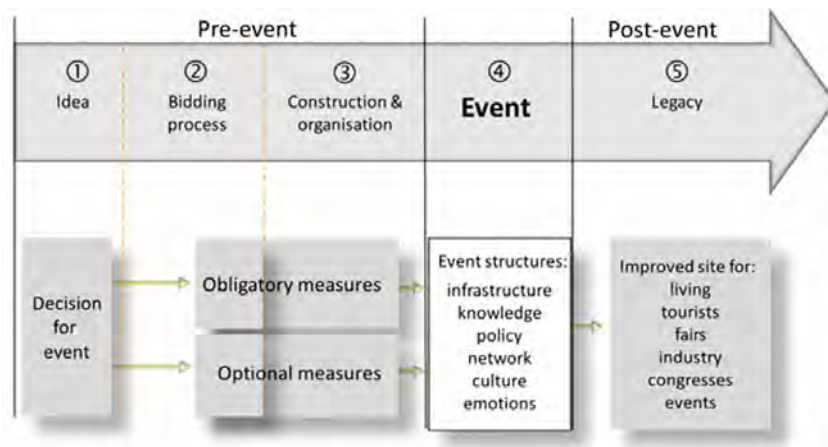


Figure 4 Process of building up planned legacy. Source: Preuss (2015)

Preuss' (2015) framework process model for building up a planned legacy suggests that there are five stages as per Figure 3. Each stage is essential because in each one, strategic objectives have to be set and met.

Hosting large-scale sports events poses significant challenges for smaller countries, requiring careful consideration of feasibility and strategic planning. In the previous chapters, it was noticed that existing literature highlights critical prerequisites, such as robust logistical frameworks, sustainable funding models, and effective collaboration with international sports organizations. Studies emphasize the importance of aligning infrastructure development with long-term national goals to avoid burdensome post-event costs (Chappelet, 2014).

Research also points to the role of comprehensive feasibility studies in assessing a country's readiness to handle complex logistical demands, such as transportation, security, and accommodations (Malfas, Theodoraki, & Houlihan, 2015). Together, these frameworks in relation to the Youth Olympic Games Operational Requirements, as determined by the International Olympic Committee for prospective bidders to host Youth Olympic Games, provide a roadmap for small nations to maximize the socio-economic and reputational benefits of hosting large-scale sports events while mitigating potential risks.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to investigate further the theoretical review of the long-term benefits for Malta in escalating from hosting small sporting events to larger ones. The methodology is designed to ensure a robust, comprehensive, and systematic approach to answering the research question while maintaining reliability and validity.

### 3.1 Research Objectives

Below are the objectives that have been identified for the purpose of this study.

1. to prepare a feasibility study to assess how possible is it for Malta to successfully bid to host larger sporting events
2. to assess the impact that hosting larger sporting events can have on Malta

### 3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews and bench learning for comparative analysis. Interviews with key stakeholders provide in-depth insights, capturing experiential knowledge and contextual nuances (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bench learning enables cross-case comparisons, drawing lessons from successful models (Van Aken, Berends, & Van der Bij, 2012).

Thematic analysis will be the tool used to identify recurring themes and patterns from the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By combining expert perspectives with proven best practices (Yin, 2018), this methodology enhances the study's reliability and applicability to real-world scenarios (Argyris & Schön, 1996). For the sake of this project, it was decided that a survey to assess the interest of the Maltese population would not be carried out because this study relates more to the impact of the Games, should a political decision be taken.

## 3.3 Data Collection Methods

### 3.3.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with stakeholders, including:

- NOC President and Co-Chairperson of the GSSE Local Organising Committee for GSSE Malta 2023 Games to understand the lessons learnt from hosting Smaller Games in Malta and the challenges faced
- The Sports Director for the EYOF Maribor 2023 Games to understand how they prepared for the EYOF Games in Slovenia, while having a perspective from another European country for hosting similar Games to the ones we have planned.
- An interview with the President of the CGA of Trinidad & Tobago, who also sat on the Trinbago 2023 CYGOC, to understand the impact, feasibility, and challenges for a small-sized island to host such games.
- An interview with a member of the YOG Buenos Aires 2018 Organising Committee to understand the challenges and feasibility of hosting such games and better understand the needs of how a host city or country should prepare.

### 3.3.2 Bench Learning

For this purpose, the Trinbago 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games Report and the final legacy report from Buenos Aires 2018 YOG were selected since these are the last organised Games from the two types of Games Malta envisages hosting. These reports will allow for a deeper understanding of best practices from previous editions while offering an opportunity to make a comparison with primary findings from interviews to validate conclusions and highlight the unique aspects of Malta's context.



### 3.4 Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent: All participants are informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and consent is obtained before participation (BERA, 2018).
- Confidentiality: Participant identities are anonymized, and data is stored securely to protect privacy.
- Transparency: Findings are reported honestly and without bias, and any conflicts of interest are disclosed.

## Chapter 4: Data Analysis

### 4.1 The Approach

As described in Chapter 3 on Research Methodology, four interviews were held with different experts from four different Games, all of whom had different roles. Apart from the GSSE, which was a comparison of the biggest Games hosted to date in Malta, the other Games chosen were based on the following selection criteria:

1. Similar or identical in terms of number of participants
2. Similar or identical in terms of number of sports
3. Youth Games
4. Similar or identical Games' objectives
5. Latest editions of the Games held to have more relevance to current times
6. Host cities or countries had to have similar geo-demographics if possible.

<b>Games</b>	<b>EYOF Maribor 2023</b>	<b>CYG Trinidad &amp; Tobago 2023</b>	<b>YOG Buenos Aires 2018</b>
<b>Participants</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Number of Sports</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Youth Games</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Objectives</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Latest Edition held</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Similar Geo-demographics</b>	✓ European 'small' country	✓ Two 'small' Islands	X Not Applicable

As seen in Appendix 4, semi-structured interviews conducted had four different segments. These segments focused on (1) the objectives of the host for the Games they organised, (2) the planning, organisation and challenges of hosting such Games, (3) the positive and

negative impact of hosting such Games, and finally, (4) the lessons learned, improvement, and/or recommendations for future hosts. Through coding, seven themes featured concurrently in each of the interviews. These were:

1. Strategic Objectives of Hosting Events
2. Stakeholder Engagement
3. Financial Management and Sustainability
4. Infrastructure and Facilities
5. Human Resources
6. Tourism and Economic Impact
7. Focus on Youth and Education

A comparison table of the main points in each interview for the main theme can be seen in Appendix 5.

Next, benchmarking was conducted using reports from Buenos Aires 2018 YOG and the 2023 CYG in Trinidad & Tobago, as these are the two types of events Malta is most interested in hosting. This helped provide a deeper understanding of the potential impact such Games could have on Malta as a potential host country. The triangulation of these sources reveals important strategic and operational considerations that extend beyond those captured through interviews alone, thereby offering a broader understanding of legacy planning and delivery for future event hosts. While the interviews capture the lived experiences, intentions, and operational realities of event organizers, the official reports contributed a more systematic and strategic framing of key elements

## 4.2 Interview Analysis

### 4.2.1 Strategic Objectives of Hosting Events

Across all four case studies, a clear set of strategic objectives emerged that underlie the purpose behind hosting multi-sport events. Primarily, nations sought to enhance their international profile and showcase their capacity and ability to organise larger-scale sporting

events. This was, however, done in different ways. While two participants argued that hosting the Games in their country served as a stepping stone towards attracting other prestigious sports competitions, another host stressed and centralised their mission on urban transformation and sport legacy by exploiting the Games to regenerate underdeveloped areas. Moreover, one of the respondents stated that the Games helped in demonstrating one's cultural identity and diversity. This sentiment of national identity and sense of national togetherness was felt across all interviews.

A recurring objective across all four interviewees was youth empowerment, elite sports development, and promoting healthy lifestyles. All interviewees acknowledged that these events presented a rare opportunity to inspire young generations and strengthen sports systems. This came in different forms, such as increased grassroots participation to improve the sporting levels of the athletes and upskilling of the National Federations.

Finally, strategic goals ventured beyond the sporting aspect to embrace a broader societal impact, including infrastructure development, tourism stimulation, and community cohesion. The interviewees seemed to agree, however, that these strategic goals can be achieved through different paths and key performance indicators. In essence, a successful strategic outlook relied on alignment between national sports priorities, available resources, and the social ambitions of the host country.

#### 4.2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement was fundamental to the successful delivery of all four events. Governments, National Olympic Committees (NOCs), sport federations, local authorities, and private partners played a pivotal role. With most interviewees stating that the venues used for sports were owned by the Government, it was essential to have a highly coordinated effort between the NOC and the Government or the authorities representing it. This was done either to increase the availability of the mentioned venues or to upgrade them and, in one case, to develop new areas to be used for the Games. However, this

collaboration went beyond the venues and sports aspect. Issues such as transport and traffic arrangements, logistics, and cultural inclusion were other items that needed full cooperation between the host NOC, the Organising Committee, and the Government, together with its local authorities.

Another key stakeholder was the general public. In one case, it was evident how community consultations by the Organising Committee with neighbourhood associations helped in avoiding backlash. One of the interviewees also pointed out how different solutions can be brought forward to minimize the negative impact that one stakeholder can have on any of the others. In a specific example brought up, it was mentioned how university dormitories were used for athlete accommodation. However, although it was summer, some students had already booked and paid to rent this accommodation. Hence, the organising committee decided to help relocate these students for several weeks to make the necessary arrangements for the Games, while they helped subsidise further weeks after the Games as a token of appreciation for the inconvenience caused.

All interviewees seemed to agree that to have a notable success factor, one must have a detailed organigram with adequate personnel leading each department. This should ideally be coupled with experienced personnel. One of the interviewees explained how sending personnel to visit and observe previous Games helped them organise and prepare themselves better, thus fostering smoother planning and operations. Across all four events, integrating various stakeholder groups ensured clarity in responsibilities, co-ownership of outcomes, and broader societal support. Challenges often emerged where stakeholder roles were not well defined early on or when political transitions occurred. Another challenge was mentioned in terms of interpersonal relations. When dealing with people, some might pull a rope in different directions, and it is essential to have good leaders and negotiators to redirect all in the same direction. The key takeaway is that long-term planning, cross-sectoral collaboration, and proactive communication with institutional and grassroots stakeholders are essential for hosting success.

### 4.2.3 Financial Management and Sustainability

Financial strategy and sustainability were crucial themes throughout the analysis. Most interviewees argued that through prudent budgeting and a focus on existing resources, one can ensure cost reduction. By simplifying the scope of events and being strategic in the sport selection phase, one can match readily available venues, manage accommodation, and save on the catering costs. In one of the cases, it was mentioned how a surplus by the Organising Committee was done, which could then be of benefit not just to the participating sports but also support non-participating federations through legacy funding.

Having said that, organising committees tend to also face challenges in the financial aspect. Currency exchange, political shifts, inflation, procurement laws, and budget escalation were some of the challenges that cropped up with regards to financing such Games, albeit to some extent these were justified as large-scale investments in infrastructure that aided long-term social returns, especially in housing and sports facilities.

Across the board, host cities learned that success relies on detailed early planning, realistic scope, and contingency budgeting. Cost-effective strategies, transparent management of public funds, and the importance of early state buy-in were repeatedly emphasised as these served as trust-building elements with all the stakeholders involved. Financial sustainability emerged as a key determinant of whether a country can transition from smaller-scale events to hosting larger multi-sport Games.

### 4.2.4 Infrastructure and Facilities

Another theme that featured prominently in all the interviews, both as a key objective and as a challenge, was infrastructure and sports venues. In three of the interviews, the hosts were pragmatic with the choice of sport to be held to make use of existing venues and, hence, minimize new capital expenditure. They opted to ameliorate the current facilities, thus improving the standard and quality of the infrastructure available and, in some

instances, upgrading facilities to international or regional standards that could hold international training camps or competitions. In other instances, other ancillary facilities such as dormitories and athletic facilities were upgraded to further enable the possibility of future hosting of major events like continental championships.

However, the fourth interviewee host stated how the Games were a catalyst to transform the urban plans and construct entirely new vibrant spaces dedicated to sports or as residential hubs on abandoned land. Here, planning was crucial to ensure that the investment made left a long-term community and social impact, or else an elite athlete development purpose. Additionally, competitions were hosted in urban spaces, thus minimising the environmental impact where it was not needed. A recurring recommendation from this interviewee was to design infrastructure with multi-use capability and sustainability in mind—ensuring it remains functional and relevant long after the event concludes.

#### 4.2.5 Human Resources

The development of human resources was often an underemphasized legacy of all four events. While the people involved were not always mentioned directly, two interviewees described how staff from smaller NOCs had to multitask and juggle between the regular NOC work and the Organising Committee work. On the other hand, one of the interviewees explained how a structured upskilling approach through observation at previous events and the integration of key NOC personnel in the organising committee allowed the host to be better prepared. One interviewee also delved deeper, stating how the organising committee was mostly composed of young professionals, many of whom went on to work internationally in sports event management. This created a human resources impact that extended well beyond the event's lifespan. Across all case studies, the importance of early recruitment, well-defined role allocation, and systematic knowledge transfer was consistently highlighted. Organising committees acknowledged that the successful execution of multi-sport events extends beyond infrastructure and financial resources; it fundamentally depends on the development of skilled and committed personnel. Strategic

investment in human capital facilitates the effective delivery of the current event and contributes to the long-term cultivation of future leaders and professionals within the field of sports event management.

#### 4.2.6 Tourism & Economic Impact

The results from the interviews seem to correlate with the literature review, as there seems to be a relationship between the hosting of events and the economic and tourism impacts generated. Apart from having direct tourism through large delegations staying in major hotels and utilising different transport means both to arrive at the host city and also to travel within the city or country, thus stimulating the local economy, dormant areas were transformed and through long-term urban regeneration, property values increase, and new investment was attracted. In one specific reply, it was remarked how, although the admission was free, the influx of locals and international visitors still drove economic activity.

Importantly, hosts recognized that to sustain tourism benefits, legacy planning must include post-event usage of venues, ongoing sports programming, and future event bids. Economic impact was both immediate through occupancy and spending, but also long-lasting through continuous use of infrastructure, making it a central justification for investment in sport events.

#### 4.2.7 Focus on youth and education

Youth engagement and educational programming emerged as a central and fundamental pillar of all four events, distinguishing them from other elite competitions. Apart from the increased grassroots participation and further funding opportunities dedicated towards youths directly impacted by the Games, all interviewees mentioned how youth were empowered and educated. This was done through different opportunities such as safeguarding workshops, anti-doping education, nutrition education, and a youth journalist program. Legacy efforts extended into school outreach and student caravans, ensuring



lasting engagement.

One of the interviewees stated how the Games they hosted helped foster a comprehensive youth sports strategy. An athlete identification initiative allowed thousands of children to experience sport for the first time. The Games also sparked national federation engagement with schools and parents, helping guide young athletes into regular training pathways. These programmes helped to achieve good sporting results both in the same competition and also further forward in the athlete's career.

Most importantly, the interviewees recognised how sport alone is not enough and that it is essential to embed cultural, social, and ethical education alongside competition for the participants to make the utmost of the experience and to generate a long-term impact. These events created holistic legacies aligned with Olympic values by engaging youth not only as athletes but as learners, volunteers, and spectators.

## 4.3 Bench Learning

### 4.3.1 Strategic Planning

While interviewees across all four case studies highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration and the overarching strategic objectives of promoting youth engagement, sport development, and national visibility, the Buenos Aires 2018 and Trinbago 2023 reports offered deeper operational clarity in this regard. Notably, both reports emphasized the necessity of formalized project governance structures, including the early appointment of full-time project managers with clear lines of accountability. The Trinbago 2023 report, in particular, underlines *“the necessity of appointing a Project Manager from the outset, clearly defining roles, and ensuring access to key resources”* (Organising Committee Commonwealth Youth Games Trinbago 2023, 2023). The lack of defined project management roles was a critical obstacle that led to inefficiencies and delayed decision-making across functions such as logistics, volunteer management, and accreditation.

Furthermore, both legacy reports advocated for structured inter-agency coordination frameworks. Trinbago's ability to mobilize ministries, local authorities, and private sector stakeholders within a one-year preparation period was attributed to cross-agency task forces. While interviews did reference collaborative efforts, particularly in Malta and Slovenia, the discussions tended to be informal and descriptive rather than systematically structured. Consequently, it is evident that while stakeholder engagement was recognized as vital by interview participants, the institutional mechanisms for ensuring coherence and accountability were more clearly defined and operationalized in the official legacy reports.

#### 4.3.2 Human Capital and Volunteer Impact

Although volunteerism emerged as a strong theme in the interview data—particularly in the YOG and GSSE case studies—the legacy reports provided a more forward-looking vision of volunteer engagement. The Trinbago 2023 Games introduced the concept of rebranding volunteers as Sport Ambassadors, with a proposed framework for post-Games retention including official certification, inclusion in national databases, and future deployment in local and regional events. Similarly, the Buenos Aires 2018 report noted the young leaders' network through the strategic involvement of early-career professionals who later transitioned into international roles in sports administration.

These practices represent a significant advancement from the more transactional treatment of volunteers observed in the interview narratives, where volunteer involvement was often discussed in the context of short-term operational necessity rather than long-term capacity building. Institutionalizing volunteer legacy strategies, as recommended in the reports, would enable host countries to convert short-term human resource needs into sustainable human capital pipelines, benefiting both sport systems and national event-hosting capabilities.

#### 4.3.3 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability was a prominent legacy theme in both reports but was not addressed in any of the interview data. The Buenos Aires 2018 YOG integrated sustainability across its infrastructure and operations, including green transport initiatives, waste reduction policies, and the preservation of urban green spaces. Similarly, Trinbago 2023 incorporated environmental messaging through its mascot 'Cocoyea' and implemented eco-friendly practices such as reusable water bottles and environmental education programs (e.g., “Turtle Talks”).

The absence of environmental considerations in the interviews, points to a potential gap in planning and discourse, particularly among smaller nations where resource constraints may deprioritize sustainability. However, as sustainability becomes an increasingly non-negotiable criterion in international sport event bids, its early integration into planning frameworks represents both a reputational opportunity and a logistical imperative. Future hosts should therefore adopt environmentally conscious policies not merely as a legacy element, but as an integral dimension of event governance and community impact.

#### 4.3.4 Monitoring the Sporting Impact

A further area of divergence between the interviews and the official reports lies in athlete legacy monitoring. While interviewees frequently referred to increased youth participation as a qualitative success indicator, only Buenos Aires 2018 implemented a structured post-Games monitoring system to assess how many athletes transitioned from participation into regular training or elite sport pathways. This data-driven approach enabled the host nation to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of its sport initiation programs and to fine-tune its youth development strategies accordingly.

The absence of similar tracking mechanisms in the other cases suggests a missed opportunity to empirically assess the impact of major events on athlete development. Embedding legacy evaluation tools within sport federations and NOCs would not only validate investment outcomes but also strengthen the case for future hosting opportunities

by demonstrating measurable impact.

## 4.4 Discussion

### 4.4.1 Discussion

The literature defines legacy as a multi-dimensional concept encompassing social, economic, environmental, and political impacts (Thomson et al., 2013; Preuss, 2015). This was confirmed in interviews, where respondents repeatedly stressed that a successful Games must be guided by legacy planning from the outset. Both Buenos Aires 2018 and Trinbago 2023 reports highlight that early governance structures, dedicated legacy teams, and long-term frameworks are necessary. Preuss's framework highlights structures as a key dimension of legacy. In Malta's case, the interviews showed consensus that new infrastructure should only be developed if it has a sustainable post-Games use. Both reports studied show a heavy investment in temporary or modular facilities to reduce long-term costs and environmental impact. Given Malta's spatial constraints and lack of redundant sporting venues, upgrading existing infrastructure and using temporary setups is preferable. Moreover, Malta's heavy summer tourism load and limited transport systems mean that hosting should occur during the low season (e.g., October) to reduce congestion, maximise accommodation availability, and avoid overburdening infrastructure. Public transport limitations were noted in interviews, and mitigation strategies must include subsidised shuttle services, staggered event scheduling, and venue clustering.

A variance was found between the literature review and the data collected. Weed (2018) casts doubt on the link between mega-events and increased grassroots participation. However, the CYG and YOG case studies suggest that impact is possible when legacy programmes are embedded in education systems. Buenos Aires' report shows that through strategic talent identification and tracking athlete development through structured pathways, a long-term participation legacy can be created. However, this requires stronger integration and strategic implementation between the Ministry of Education, SportMalta, and national

sport federations to ensure that participation is not increased in a specific sport through transfer of participants from one sport to another but rather that the actual increase in participation is a result of a generic increase in sport participation. Apart from increasing participation, both the literature and the data showed that hosting major sport events can strengthen national identity and international recognition (Topic & Coakley, 2010), as could be seen through the interviews and reports. GSSE Malta 2023 has already boosted Maltese pride and visibility. Hosting a larger event would amplify this effect, particularly if it incorporates cultural programming, youth media coverage, and international storytelling through branding and digital platforms.

#### 4.4.2 Justification

The findings from the interviews and legacy benchmarking put in comparison to the literature review, indicate that escalating to host larger-youth-oriented sports events such as the Youth Olympic Games or Commonwealth Youth Games is both viable and strategically advantageous for Malta, provided certain planning elements are addressed, legacy policies are set and that there is good collaboration from the multiple stakeholders involved.

Having said that, the Youth Olympic Games seem to deliver broader transformational change but also incur higher costs, whereas the Commonwealth Youth Games seem to provide a more cost-effective pathway to promote ideology, youth development, and national identity. This distinction can guide Malta's decision depending on whether it prioritizes systemic reform or symbolic nation-building. Hence, the Commonwealth Youth Games can be considered as the next natural step that Malta should take before considering hosting the Youth Olympic Games.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion & Recommendations

### 5.1 Recommendations

This section presents practical recommendations for Malta to create long-term benefits if it decides to host a larger youth multi-sport event, such as the Commonwealth Youth Games or the Youth Olympic Games. These recommendations focus on four main types of impacts: environmental, social, economic, and sport related. Each of these areas can support Malta's national development goals if properly planned and implemented.

To create a positive environmental impact, Malta should include sustainability in every part of the Games planning and delivery process. This includes the use of eco-friendly materials and waste-reduction strategies. Hosting should be guided by clear sustainability policies that apply to how venues are built or upgraded, how people move between venues, and how resources are used during the event. This would also help from an economical perspective, where a cost-conscious approach should be taken by using current infrastructure or infrastructure that is planned to be built in the pipeline, regardless of whether the Games are hosted in Malta or not. In addition, Malta could use the Games as an opportunity to raise awareness about environmental issues. For example, educational campaigns in schools and communities could teach children and families about recycling, climate change, and keeping our seas clean. These programmes could be linked to the Games' branding, such as the choice of mascot, to reach a wider audience. To avoid building unnecessary or unused facilities, Malta should focus on upgrading existing infrastructure and planning for post-event use either by the local federations, clubs, and communities, as is the current practise, or by continuing to host individual sport competitions. This would reduce environmental impact and ensure that public investment creates lasting value.

Secondly, the Games have the potential to create a meaningful social legacy. This can be supported by involving schools and youth groups in both the planning and delivery of the

event—for example, through mascot competitions, school roadshows, and assisting as Games helpers. Implementing educational programmes in schools that promote key sport values like respect, inclusion, fairness, and teamwork can contribute to shaping more inclusive and socially aware communities. These principles reflect the ideals of the Olympic and Commonwealth Movements. The Games can also offer young people valuable volunteering opportunities. A national volunteer initiative should be introduced to provide training in advance and formally recognise contributions with certificates or awards. This approach encourages continued engagement in sport and community activities after the event concludes. Early involvement of local councils, cultural associations, and NGOs is also recommended to ensure that the Games are rooted in Maltese identity and community values. These stakeholders can support the delivery of complementary activities such as festivals, youth-led projects, and local workshops that bring the Games into daily life. Finally, it is strongly advised that Maltese organisers send observers to previous editions of the Games. This would allow key staff and volunteers to gain hands-on experience, strengthen planning skills, and ensure more effective event delivery.

To maximise the economic legacy of the Games, tourism can also play a huge part. Partnerships with VisitMalta (the brand name of the Ministry for Tourism), local businesses, and hotels can attract ‘quality’ tourists who do not just visit the islands as Games spectators but also engage in other activities and possibly extend their stay with the children who might be participating in the Games. Moreover, hosting the Games should also be capitalised by securing longer-term sponsorships. Similarly to what has been done in GSSE Malta 2023, this revenue stream and other surpluses can be reinvested within the sporting community through legacy funding targeted at ameliorating the capacity of the National Federation, increasing grassroots projects, and other projects proposed by all affiliated National Federations.

Finally, hosting these Games can also create important benefits for Malta’s sport system. To make the most of this opportunity, national sport organisations should work together to identify talented athletes early and support them through structured development pathways. This includes scouting young athletes in schools, clubs, and local communities, and

providing them with coaching, mentoring, and access to regular competition. An athlete monitoring system that collects data on participation, training, and performance can help measure whether the Games lead to long-term progress in athlete development. Alongside talent development, the Games can be used to build the capacity of national sport federations. By aligning Games preparation with long-term sport strategies, federations can access new resources, attract sponsors, and raise their professional standards. Workshops and technical support from international sport organisations could also help federations improve their coaching, administration, and planning.

Hosting a larger youth multi-sport event has the potential to generate significant benefits for Malta across environmental, social, and sport development areas. However, these benefits will only be achieved through careful planning, early investment in legacy initiatives, and strong partnerships between government, sport bodies, communities, and international organisations. If approached with clear goals and inclusive strategies, such an event can leave a lasting and positive impact on future generations.



## 5.2 Action Plan

This strategic action plan is based on the premise that Malta is chosen as the host for the Commonwealth Youth Games between the end of October 2027 and the beginning of November 2027 (decision to be communicated in July 2025).

Recommendation	Actions Required	Responsibility	Stakeholders Informed	Key Performance Indicator	Priority	Budget	Timescale
Strategic Planning	Appoint Project Manager / CEO for the Games	Executive Board MOC	Government	Appointment finalised and Public Announcement	High	€ 75000	August 2025
Strategic Planning	Establish an Organigram and Organising Committee	Project Manager / CEO	MOC / CGA, SportMalta, Government	Approved organigram with defined departments and roles to head each department	High	€ 300,000	September 2025
Social Legacy	Gender Balanced Organising Committee	Project Manager / CEO	MOC / CGA, SportMalta, Government	Ensure 50-50% representation on the Organising Committee	High	€ -	September 2025
Strategic Planning	Games' Observer Programme	Project Manager / CEO	MOC / CGA, SportMalta	Sending of 8 key figures from the different departments within the Local Organising Committee to observe work done in the Commonwealth Games and Youth Olympic Games in 2026	Medium	€ 25,000	July – November 2026
Environmental & Economical Impact	Upgrade and repurpose existing sports infrastructure to suit the needs of the Games and the needs after that	Head of Facilities Department (SportMalta)	SportMalta, Government, National Federations	All facilities used have continued use after the Games for National Championships. A third of the facilities used hold a regional championship at least once in the 5 years following the hosting of the Games.	High	Capital Expenditure	August 2025 – September 2027
Environmental Impact	Mascot connection to environment / seas	Head of Games' Marketing Department	NOC/CGA, Government, Media	Approved Games Mascot / Logo / Slogan	High	€ 30,000	October 2026

Environmental Impact	Deliver eco-education programmes in schools and communities	Head of Education Department	Government (Ministry for Education & Minister for Environment, Energy and Cleanliness)	10 eco-education programme sessions in schools per academic year (2 academic years) prior to the Games	Low	€ 5,000	October 2025 – June 2027
Environmental Impact	The Commonwealth Games' Garden	Government	MOC / CGA	The transformation of a barren piece of land into a public open space / garden (the Commonwealth Games' Garden)	Low	Capital Expenditure	July 2026 – June 2027
Environmental Impact	Use of Electric Fleet for Games' Transportation	Head of Transport Department	Government (Ministry for Transport)	Use of an electric fleet for all land mass transportation systems	Medium	€ 500,000	November 2025 – November 2027
Environmental Impact	Make use of existing environmentally sustainable accommodation	Head of Accommodation Department	MOC/CGA	Use of hotels that are certified to have a low carbon footprint per guest	High	€ 2,000,000	November 2025 – November 2027
Environmental Impact	Waste Management Policy	Head of Facilities Department	SportMalta	Implementation of a waste management policy and installation of required infrastructure such as recycling bins and the Bottle Collection Recycling Scheme (BCRS) Machines that can be used to purchase event merchandise in all facilities	Medium	€ 75,000	August 2027 – November 2027
Social Legacy	Launch a National Sport Volunteer Development Programme covering different aspects, e.g. sponsorship, reporting, set up, administration / operations, governance, finance and sport-specific programme	Head of Volunteer Department	National Federations, SportMalta, MOC / CGA, Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector	Implementation of the programme, having 200 attendees obtain a certificate of completion for a 20 hour programme	Medium	€ 25,000	October 2026 – November 2027

Social Legacy	Free Uniforms for use in Games and to keep as souvenirs. Free Entry Tickets to Volunteers for National Team Games. Volunteer's End of Games Party Creation of a Volunteer Database	Head of Volunteer Department	National Federations, SportMalta, MOC / CGA, Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector	Implementation of actions + Average Score of 4/5 on Games' Experience and Willingness to participate as a volunteer in future events	High	€ 75,000	October 2026 – November 2027
Social Legacy	Create a values-based school / community engagement roadmaps and educational programme consisting of Olympic / Commonwealth Assemblies in Schools and Local Council Roadshows	Head of Education Department	SportMalta, NOC / CGA, Local Councils, Ministry for Education	1 assembly per week over the scholastic year + 1 local council roadshow per week from April 2027 to October 2027	Medium	€ 75,000	October 2025 – June 2027
Social Legacy	Create an inter-cultural school twinning programme where 1 Maltese school class collaborates with another 3-5 classes from different countries and have a cultural exchange where students learn more about each other's countries	Head of Education Department	Ministry for Education, CGA / NOC	Successful twinning of all countries with a Maltese class having a minimum of 4 sessions (2 pre-Games, 1 during Games and 1 post-Games period)	Low	€ -	January 2027 – December 2027
Social Legacy	Create a Commonwealth / Olympic Educational Programme (magazines) including information on each region and the countries within that region such as demographics, flags, traditional food, culture, etc..., information on the Commonwealth / Olympic Games and information on the NOC / CGA of Malta	Head of Education Department	Government (Ministry for Education), NOC / CGA	Creation and distribution of a Leaflet Magazine for each year group for all students in Maltese state and non-state schools	Medium	€ 10,000	October 2026 – June 2027

Social Legacy	Integration of Paralympic Sports during Competition	Head of Technical Department	NOC/CGA, Government, SportMalta	Implementation of 2-3 different Para-sport in the sports programme	Medium	€ -	
Social Legacy	Gender Balanced Games	Head of Technical Department	NOC/CGA, Government, SportMalta	Achieve 50-50% (±10%) representation across all entries	Medium	€ -	
Economic Impact	Tourism Plan	VisitMalta	Local Businesses, Tourism Agencies, Malta International Airport, Government, National Federations	Generate a targeted number of bed nights directly related to the Games  Have a targeted number of stay extensions after the Games  Successful uptake of pre-set tourism packages for accredited personnel	High	€ 50,000	January 2027 – December 2027
Economic Impact	Sponsorship Packages	Head of Marketing Department	Project Manager / CEO, NOC / CGA	Attraction of minimum Eur 250,000 worth of sponsors funds of which at least 50% in cash value	Medium	€ 25,000	October 2025 – June 2027
Economic Impact / Strategic Plan	Legacy Funding Policy	Director of Sport	NOC / CGA	Monetary savings of Eur 100,000 + any other surplus made across the 2 years leading to the Games to be used as a legacy fund post-Games especially focused on the National Federations that didn't participate in the Games	High	€ 100,000	January 2026 – December 2028
Sport Benefits	Anti-Doping, Safeguarding and Prevention of Manipulation of Competition Education Programme to all Games participants	Head of Education Department	All NOCs / CGAs, AIMS	Successful implementation of all 3 programmes for all the participants during the Games' period	High	€ 15,000	October – November 2027

Sport Benefits	Develop a Data-Driven National Athlete Identification System, Evaluation Criteria and Development Pathway	NOC / CGA Director of Sport	NOC / CGA, SportMalta, Ministry for Education, National Federations, Malta Sports Scholarships	Creation and implementation of a talent identification structure, creation of talent development pathways and setting up of evaluation tools	High	€ 750,000	January 2026 – December 2030
Sport Benefits	Deliver Coaching Clinics and Mentoring Programmes for priority / participating sports	NOC / CGA Director of Sport	NOC / CGA, SportMalta, National Federations, Malta Coaches' Sport Association	Attendance to 6 sessions of Coaches' Round Tables where best practices are discussed between the head coaches / technical directors of the participating sports across the 2 years leading to the Games	Medium	€ 2,000	January 2026 – December 2027
Sport Benefits	Increase the number of grassroots participants	NOC / CGA Director of Sport	NOC / CGA, SportMalta, National Federations	A 5-year sports participation evaluation report (3 years prior and 4 years post event) where overall numbers are evaluated together with participation numbers per sport	High	€ -	January 2026 – December 2030
Sport Benefits	Upskill National Federations in their administrative skills	NOC / CGA	SportMalta, National Federations	Implement a pool of shared service experts (Accounts, Administrators, Media) to be used by all National Federations for 5 years (starting 2 years prior to the Games)	Medium	€ 300,000	January 2026 – December 2030
Strategic Planning	Conduct a Legacy Report on all the different sectors mentioned in this Strategic Action Plan	Project Manager / CEO	Head of Departments, NOC/CGA, SportMalta, Government	The issue of a full report on the Impact of the Games	High	€ 3,000	By December 2027
						<b>€ 4,440,000</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

## 5.3 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the potential impacts of Malta escalating from hosting small-scale to larger youth-oriented sporting events, some limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the research relied heavily on qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews with four individuals representing four different Games. While these interviewees held significant roles within their respective events, their perspectives may not fully capture the diverse range of stakeholders affected by hosting, such as athletes, volunteers, local businesses, and residents, thus potentially excluding negative impacts that other stakeholders might have felt. Secondly, the comparative analysis was restricted to secondary data from two legacy reports—Buenos Aires 2018 YOG and Trinbago 2023 CYG—which, although highly relevant, may not generalise to all future events or to Malta’s unique political, economic, and socio-cultural context.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This research project aimed to answer what could be the significant impacts that shall determine whether Malta should escalate from hosting small sporting events to larger sporting events such as the Commonwealth or Olympic Youth Games. Through literature review, the study identified potential positive impact areas such as athlete development, youth engagement, national federation capacity building, national branding, and economic growth through sport tourism. The findings from the expert interviews and case comparisons suggest that hosting larger events could also have a positive significant impact and strengthen Malta’s sports system, but only if backed by careful planning, collaboration, and a clear legacy strategy.

The study also aimed to answer how hosting larger youth multi-sport events can influence Malta’s long-term national sports development, including athlete performance and organisational capacity. The study recognises the need for early talent identification systems, education-linked outreach programmes, and a volunteer development structure

that supports skills retention post-event.

Additionally, the study also aimed to answer what operational and strategic considerations must be addressed to ensure the feasibility and long-term legacy of hosting larger events in Malta's context. The study clearly showed the need to consider the sustainable use of possibly existing infrastructure, a strong inter-agency governance, realistic budgeting, and the integration of social and environmental legacy objectives from an early stage of potential host bid preparation. Moreover, appropriate Games-time scheduling should also be considered to avoid peak tourism periods together with an efficient transport plan and an early appointment of a central organising body to ensure the feasibility and long-term legacy of hosting larger events in Malta's context.

Hence, this research provided evidence that with clear goals and coordinated efforts, Malta can evolve into a credible host of larger-scale sport events – using the Games not only for the benefit of the event itself but also building the Games for an even better future for the country.

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## Use of Artificial Intelligence

ChatGPT was used to brainstorm ideas at the literature review stage by prompting it with the primary research questions I had.

Google Search Engine, Illicit, Google Scholar, and Omni uOttawa Library were used to search for literature by entering keywords such as legacy, impact, hosting, Youth Olympic Games, Commonwealth Youth Games, national identity, economic impact, multi-sport events, etc.

ChatGPT was used for better wording of ideas using prompts such as “please rephrase the below using academic style writing.”

Microsoft Teams was used to undertake the online interviews. Its software was used to transcribe the first draft of the interviews. Similarly, for the in-presence interview, the Dictate tool on Microsoft Word was used to make the initial drafts of the transcriptions from recorded audio files.

## Abstract

Malta, a small island nation with limited capacity for multi-sport events, has hosted the Games of the Small States of Europe (GSSE) on three occasions, most recently winning the 2023 edition hosted in Malta. This study investigates whether Malta should progress beyond such modest competitions and pursue larger-scale events. Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with Organising Committee members from the 2023 Commonwealth Youth Games (Trinidad and Tobago), the 2023 European Youth Olympic Festival (Maribor), the 2023 GSSE (Malta), and the 2018 Youth Olympic Games (Buenos Aires). Their insights were corroborated with official post-event reports of the same editions interviewed from the Commonwealth Youth Games (CYG) and Youth Olympic Games (YOG). The findings inform an assessment of Malta's capacity to stage either the CYG or the YOG, culminating in a strategic action plan enabling the Maltese Olympic Committee to maximise the prospective benefits of hosting such events.

Key words: multi-sport events, youth, host, impact, legacy

## Résumé

Malte, petite nation insulaire disposant d'une capacité limitée pour les événements multisports, a accueilli à trois reprises les Jeux des petits États d'Europe (JPÉE), remportant la dernière édition organisée sur son territoire en 2023. Ce projet examine si Malte devrait dépasser ces compétitions modestes et viser des manifestations de plus grande envergure. Quatre entretiens semi-structurés ont été menés effectués auprès de membres des comités d'organisation : les Jeux du Commonwealth junior 2023 (Trinité-et-Tobago), le Festival olympique de la jeunesse européenne 2023 (Maribor), les JPÉE 2023 (Malte) et les Jeux olympiques de la jeunesse 2018 (Buenos Aires). Leurs témoignages ont été corroborés par les rapports officiels post-événement des mêmes éditions des Jeux du Commonwealth junior (JCJ) et des Jeux olympiques de la jeunesse (JOY). Les résultats éclairent l'évaluation de la capacité de Malte à accueillir soit les JCJ, soit les JOY, et aboutissent à un plan stratégique permettant au Comité Olympique Maltais d'optimiser les retombées potentielles d'un tel accueil.






Mots clés : événements multisports, jeunesse, accueillir, impact, legs

## Appendix 1 – The Games of the Small States of Europe



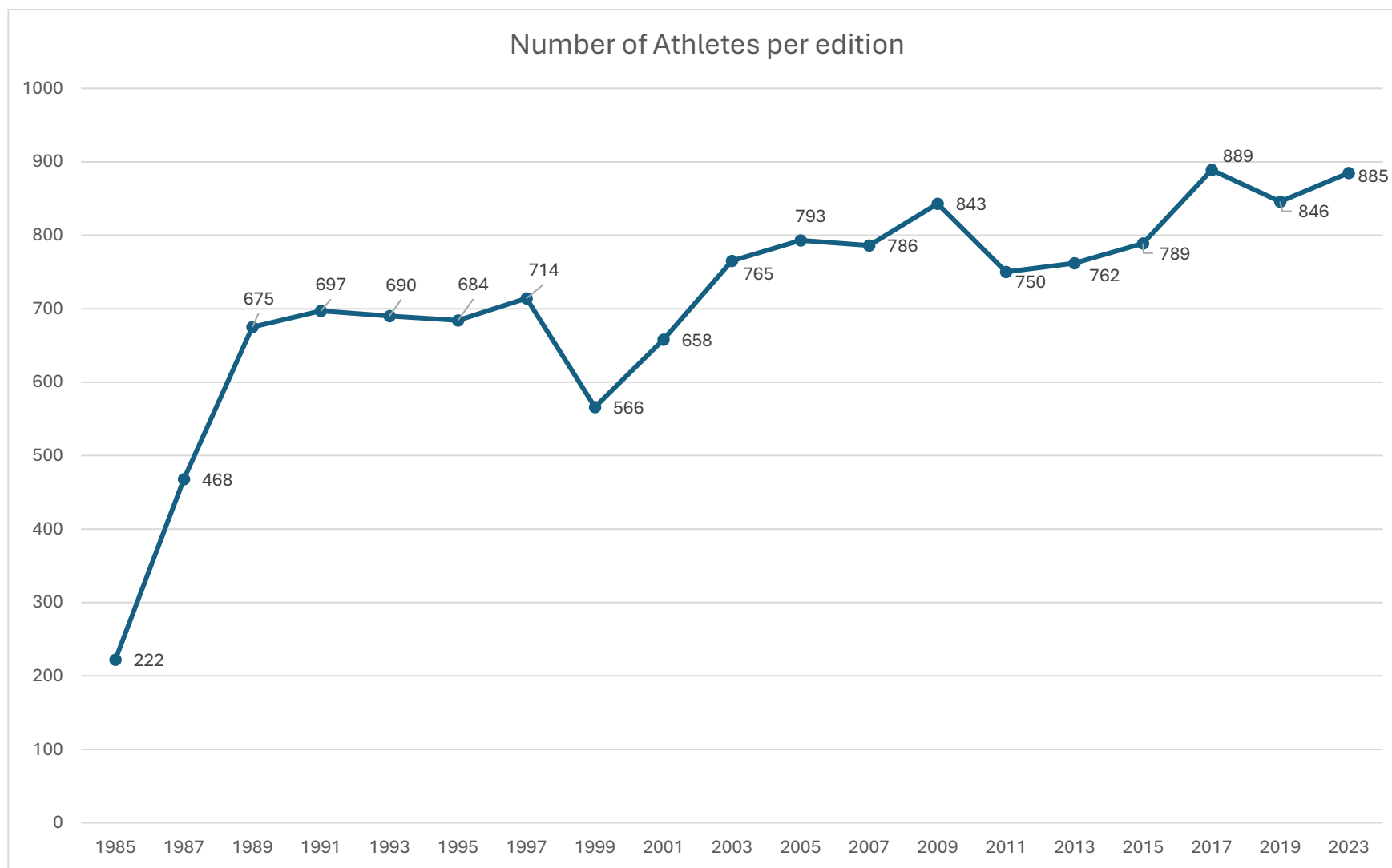
The Logos for each edition of the Games of the Small States of Europe

The planned Games of 2021 were cancelled due to the rescheduling of the [2020 Summer Olympics](#)

Sport (Discipline) [hide]	Body	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	01	03	05	07	09	11	13	15	17	19	21	23
Swimming (records)	 LEN	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Synchronized swimming	 LEN									•											
3-on-3 basketball	 FIBAE																				•
Basketball	 FIBAE	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•
Mountain biking	 UEC													•	•	•		•			•
Road cycling	 UEC	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•			•	•		•			•
Artistic	 UEG							•					•	•		•	•				•
Rhythmic	 UEG													•							
Beach volleyball	 CEV												•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Volleyball	 CEV		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Archery	 WAE																	•			
Athletics (records)	 EAA	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Boules	 CMSB									•			•						•		•
Golf	 EGA																	•			
Sailing	 EUROSAF									•		•	•								
Judo	 EJU	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Karate	 EKF																				•
Squash	 ESF							•	•		•				•						
Shooting	 ESF	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Table tennis	 ETTU						•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Taekwondo	 ETU											•									•
Tennis	 TE		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Weightlifting	 EWF	•	•																		
Sport (Discipline)	Body	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99	01	03	05	07	09	11	13	15	17	19	21	23

The list of sports for every edition of the Games of the Small States of Europe





Number of participating athletes for every edition of the Games of Small States of Europe

## Appendix 2 – The Youth Olympic Games in Numbers

Table 1: Evolution of the Summer and Winter Youth Olympic Games in numbers<sup>11,12,13,14,15,</sup>

	Summer YOG			Winter YOG		
	Singapore 2010	Nanjing 2014	Buenos Aires 2018	Innsbruck 2012	Lillehammer 2016	Lausanne 2020
<b>Dates</b>	14-26 August	16-28 August	6-18 October	13-22 January	12-21 February	9-22 January
<b>Number of athletes</b>	3,524	3,759	4,000	1,022	1,067	1,784
<b>% of female athletes</b>	47.6	49.2	50	45.6	46.2	48.7
<b>Number of NOCs</b>	204 + the independent Olympic participants from Kuwait due to that NOC's suspension	203 + 1 independent Olympic athlete	206	69	71	79
<b>Number of sports</b>	26	28	32	7	7	8
<b>Number of medalling events</b>	201	222	239	63	70	81
<b>Number of volunteers</b>	20,000	18,200	8,300	1,440	3,278	3,300
<b>Number of media</b>	1,768	3,160	2,166	900	653	1,126
<b>Number of Young Reporters</b>	29	35	34	15	15	15
<b>Number of Young Ambassadors or Change-Makers</b>	29	104	83	33	39	11
<b>Number of Athlete Role Models</b>	47	37	62	33	15	24
<b>Budget (in million USD)</b>	289	292	200	30.2	41	48.4

(Parent, 2024)

Sports disciplines	Summer YOG			Winter YOG		
	Singapore 2010	Nanjing 2014	Buenos Aires 2018	Innsbruck 2012	Lillehammer 2016	Lausanne 2020
3x3 basketball	x	x	x			
Alpine skiing				x	x	x
Archery	x	x	x			
Artistic gymnastics			x			
Athletics	x	x	x			
Badminton	x	x	x			
Beach handball			x			
Beach volleyball		x	x			
Biathlon				x	x	x
Bobsleigh				x	x	x
Boxing	x	x	x			
Breaking			x			
Canoe		x	x			
Cross-country skiing				x	x	x
Curling				x	x	x
Cycling	x	x	x			
Diving	x	x	x			
Equestrian	x	x	x			
Fencing	x	x	x			
Figure skating				x	x	x
Freestyle skiing				x	x	x
Futsal			x			
Golf		x	x			
Hockey	x	x	x			
Ice hockey				x	x	x
Judo	x	x	x			
Karate			x			
Luge				x	x	x
Modern pentathlon	x	x	x			
Nordic combined				x	x	x
Rhythmic gymnastics	x	x	x			
Roller speed skating			x			
Rowing	x	x	x			
Rugby sevens		x	x			
Sailing	x	x	x			
Shooting	x	x	x			
Short track speed skating				x	x	x
Skeleton				x	x	x
Ski jumping				x	x	x
Ski mountaineering						x
Snowboard				x	x	x
Speed skating				x	x	x
Sport climbing			x			
Swimming	x	x	x			
Table tennis	x	x	x			
Taekwondo	x	x	x			
Tennis	x	x	x			
Triathlon	x	x	x			
Weightlifting	x	x	x			
Wrestling	x	x	x			

Sport disciplines at the Youth Olympic Games (Parent, 2024)

## Appendix 3 – The Commonwealth Youth Games in Numbers

Edition	Year	Location	Dates	Nations	Opened by	Competitors	Sports	Events	Top Nation
I	2000	 Edinburgh, Scotland	10–14 August	15	Unknown	773	8	112	 England
II	2004	 Bendigo, Australia	30 November–4 December	22	Unknown	980	10	146	 Australia
III	2008	 Pune, India	12–18 October	71	Pratibha Patil	1220	9	117	 India
IV	2011	 Douglas, Isle of Man	7–13 September	63	Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex	804	7	112	 England
V	2015	 Apia, Samoa	5–11 September	63	Tufuga Efi	926	9	107	 Australia
VI	2017	 Nassau, The Bahamas	18–23 July	65	Hubert Minnis	1034	8	96	 England
VII	2023	 Trinidad and Tobago	4–11 August	68	Christine Kangaloo	1000	7	93 <sup>[9]</sup>	 Australia
VIII	2025								



Host cities of the Commonwealth Youth Games

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## Appendix 4 – Interview Sample & Transcript

### Semi-Structured Interview with the Sports Director of EYOF Maribor 2023

Introduction (1 min) - Welcome and introduce the studies, topic, why this interviewee was chosen, and his/her consent

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#### I. Objectives and Goals (2 min)

1. Vision: Can you identify the THREE main objective/s for Slovenia in the lead-up to hosting EYOF Maribor 2023?
- 

#### II. Preparation and Organization (6 min)

2. Planning:
    - After getting confirmation that you would be the hosts for the EYOF, what were FOUR-FIVE key steps that you took in for preparing e.g. 2 years in advance for Maribor 2023 especially in relation to the impact that such Games would leave?
    - Can you mention and develop further on 3 main challenges that you faced in the lead up to organise the Games? Which strategies did you implement to overcome the challenges?
- 

#### III. Impact and Benefits (12 min)

3. Sports events can have both positive and/or negative impacts on the host country/city. Can you elaborate on the four main impacts that EYOF 2023 left on Maribor and Slovenia?
    - Notes for interviewer (Economic / Social & Cultural / Resources & Infrastructure)
  4. Can you determine TWO-THREE changes in which ELITE SPORTS in SLOVENIA benefitted from or made some steps back following the Hosting of the Games? What are the reasons for the above?
  5. Similar to the previous question, can you also determine TWO-THREE changes in which GRASSROOTS SPORTS in SLOVENIA benefitted from or made some steps back following the Hosting of the Games? What are the reasons for the above?
- 

#### Conclusion (4 min)

6. Did the Slovenian NOC have a plan to measure the success / overall result of EYOF 2023? If so, can you explain more in detail the plan used?
7. What are THREE main lessons learned, THREE main potential improvements and THREE recommendations for a potential future host country for such or similar Games?
8. Are there any reports that I can access on the impact of the Games for my studies?

Thank interviewee for the time and availability to help out in my data collection for my research

## Transcript Sample

Speaker 1 - Perfect. So basically, the study is about the impact that games such as the Youth Olympic Games can have on a host country or host city. And I'm doing these interviews with different sports, so I had Commonwealth Youth Games, European Youth Olympic Festival, and I also decided to do the Youth Olympic Games. And basically, in Malta, we hosted the Games of Small States of Europe. So they are games for around 1,000 athletes for the nine smallest nations in Europe, under one million. And we do these games every two years and hosted them three years. We managed to win the last edition in 2023, which was hosted in Malta. And now we want to see kind of the way forward. And before we start, if you can maybe explain briefly your involvement in the York, just to have a perspective of...

Speaker 2 - Yes, yes, for sure. Well, basically, my role in the organizing committee has evolved during the years, but I mean, I was always involved in the sports department. At the beginning, I was coordinating, then I ended up being the sports director. I mean, the focus of that department was more related to the relationship with the international federations and all the services related to sports. So that was my role. I was the sport relations and services director for [REDACTED] organizing committee. So, I've been doing that in full speed for the last two years. For the first two years, I mean, usually you have less people, there is less things to do, and you are basically moving into different hats, always within the sports department.

Speaker 1 - Okay, good. So basically, to start to give kind of an introduction, what were maybe, if you can identify three main objectives that the NOC of [REDACTED] or as the organizing committee you had in the lead up of hosting the games in [REDACTED]?

Speaker 2 - Well, even though I didn't take part into the bidding process, I joined afterwards. I mean, it was key for [REDACTED] to develop the south of the city, in terms of urban development and social housing. So that was one of the main impacts, and one of the biggest objectives. So this is certainly one. Then the other one was related to connecting the city. Because I mean, I don't know if you had it. Yes, you mentioned you came to [REDACTED]. I don't remember.

Speaker 1 - No, no, no.

Speaker 2 - Okay. So basically, as I guess this happens in every big city, everything is kind of concentrated in one place. And you have a lot of free areas in the surroundings. So the idea was to have a plan for transport to better connect and integrate the city. So, I would say that this was the second biggest milestone that the city had. And of course, then the other one was related to the legacy, the sports legacy and the development of our generation connected to sport. I mean, I would say those were the biggest objectives and all of them were achieved.

Speaker 1 - Okay. So basically, with regards to planning, what were maybe key steps, maybe in the area you were involved in, in sports, for example, what were four or five key steps that you took to prepare kind of to reach these objectives and to kind of to have a better impact from the games?

Speaker 2 - Well, starting from the sports point of view, we have in [REDACTED], an entity that is called [REDACTED] which is a high performance entity in [REDACTED] who funds the development of sports linked to high performance, okay, because they based sport is funded by the national government, I would say, just to put it simple and to try to find an organization that you may have in Malta. Okay. So in that moment, it was a project in place, huge project in place, to identify kids because they were very young, that could potentially be part of the [REDACTED]. So it was across the country, talent detection, kind of people going around and doing certain stages of identification, not only by physical conditions, but also by strength and so on, typical sports skills to say, okay, we need to start from scratch. We need to find a generation of kids. Okay, let's go and find them. And it was impressive, because, I mean, we had the [REDACTED] team coming out from this program. And most of those, then participating in [REDACTED], for example, sorry, in [REDACTED], and some of them, yes, some of them even in [REDACTED]. So I mean, they keep competing. It was really fantastic. So I would say that was a huge project in place that developed a generation of athletes in [REDACTED], not only from [REDACTED]. So that was huge. And the results, I mean, you can find information in the webpage about this program, for sure. Otherwise, I can share with you. I'm not sure if it's in English, but it was a huge program. It was really, really cool. And then, of course, the development of the city. I mean, of course, here is the integration between the NOC and the city is key, because it's not only that the NOC wanted to host the games, it's a joint venture. And sometimes that is the most challenging bit of the project, okay, because the interests should at some point be aligned. And it's not easy. I mean, if you really jump on this venture, you will see that there is a lot of points that are in common, but there is a lot of friction as well. It's not really easy. But fortunately, I mean, fortunately, for everyone, we really embrace the development of the [REDACTED], not only because the [REDACTED] found a place, which was kind of an abandoned area that used to be an amusement park. I guess I was a baby in that moment, but it was a long time ago. And then it was closed for a long time, and nothing happens in that place. And it was a very big piece of land. Impressive. Now that is a neighbourhood. Then every single apartment has been sort before the opening ceremony of the games. So I mean, we used the village, it was athletes housing. And then as soon as the games finished, all the allocation process for the apartment started. So it was really cool for us to know that specific people because the target audience for this neighbourhood was specific people with no, I mean, high resources, they need to, you know, the purpose was social housing. I mean, it was for a specific group of the population, exactly. And they had a lot of chances to pay. It was not for free, they paid for the house, but with a lot of opportunities in terms of, you know, fees, instalments, I mean, it was really, really cool for them. And of course, this was led by the city. Okay, the organizing committee of [REDACTED] coordinated the development of the village and all the operations. But the construction process was, I mean, it was really a city thing, and the money came from the city. And then the other one was to develop exactly in front of the village he [REDACTED]. Okay, the same situation happened, it was a huge piece of land, completely abandoned, empty. And the idea was to create there a high-performance centre. I mean, for sports, of course, with a different mindset. So, in the end, we had, if I'm not wrong, it was six, five pavilions, because each of them has the name of one continent. That's why it's five. And those were kind of multi-sports events, kind of, except for the swimming pool. Because that was created to have the swimming pool and the diving area. Then the rest, they were able to host everything because they

were rectangles. So we were transitioning from sports. And that was, I mean, great. And maybe the most challenging projects, those two, because then apart from that, everything was temporary for [REDACTED].

Speaker 1 - Okay.

Speaker 2 - So, we took advantage of the city landscape, existing parks, existing clubs, existing facilities and the city itself. And this is maybe another major thing that we really use the city even to organize the opening ceremony in the middle of the city outside of a stadium. And we did this in the [REDACTED] which is the most important [REDACTED]. And I think it's the [REDACTED], if I'm not wrong.

Speaker 1 - Okay. Okay So basically, you already mentioned the next, the answers to the next question, which I didn't ask.

Speaker 2 - Sorry. Yeah, okay.

Speaker 1 - No, no, it's good. It's actually good. Because it's connected. So basically, it was, it was about the main challenges that you faced also. But you are mentioning that, yeah, maybe there was this challenge with regards to the government and, you know, working together.

Speaker 2 - Whenever you have people together, you have challenges. I mean, it doesn't matter if it's government or not, it's people. But if you have a bit of more insight in terms of challenges, it's detailed. I mean, challenges, of course, for a [REDACTED], budget, for sure. This is a big challenge, especially with inflation. In this side of the world, inflation is crucial. So I mean, you start with a budget X, and you finish with a budget X, X, X, X. So to have this into the planning system, that was a nightmare for us. Yeah. To deal with that. So especially with the procurement process. Being the Sports Director, I had to buy all the sports equipment. So, in that moment, it was around [REDACTED], I mean, something like that of that in [REDACTED]. And now I couldn't compare what you know, what that means today in the money we have, I have no idea. But for example, for us, we need to buy according to the national, or the city, sorry, official procurement law, tendering process. So, it was really challenging. So, procurement, always an issue. Always. The budget, always an issue. And then the other thing, depending on your customs, might be the importation of stuff, if you need to bring things from outside, dealing with that. I mean, it's not only the planning, but also making sure that things arrive on timing, that you have everything secure. I mean, it's a big event. It was [REDACTED] athletes. Yeah.

Speaker 1 - And it was, it was the first time [REDACTED] was holding an event of this size, of this amount of people?

Speaker 2 - It's difficult to say.

Speaker 1 - The [REDACTED], they usually have? Okay.



Speaker 2 - They were in [REDACTED]. Okay. So that was another [REDACTED]. I mean, yeah, exactly. That was another type of multi-sport events. Yeah. So it was, let's say, a new challenge, kind of for you. It wasn't something that you had yet. For us, yes. And also the organizing committee was, I mean, in that moment, I was very young. I was [REDACTED]. I mean, the average of the people was 30-something. Most of the cases, we were doing our first experience. I mean, all my employees were 20-something years old. Okay. And that was also part of the vibe of the [REDACTED], because it was building up a legacy. I mean, a lot of people from [REDACTED] is now spread out in the world, working for other multi-sport events. And this was a huge legacy in terms of HR. Okay. And workforce.

Speaker 1 - Good. Sports events can have obviously both positive and negative impacts on the host country or city. Maybe, can you elaborate on a further, maybe a negative impact that you might have had from the Games, or even some other impacts that you felt that happened on the short term, and maybe also on the longer term, [REDACTED]

Speaker 2 - Yes. I mean, the [REDACTED] are very specific and very special events.

I mean, this is something also to highlight, because it's not the FIFA World Cup or something like that. You know, it's tremendous. It's enormous. And also the requirements are not so high in terms of profile that people usually embrace this type of event. So, one thing that could be complicated is having people against you when you organize an event like this. And in that moment, we really have the support of the citizens, and that was amazing. And also, [REDACTED] organized [REDACTED] that were free of charge. So, you could access to the Games by signing up, getting a bracelet, and your bracelet where your ticket for entry there in the parks. So, this was also something that people could never be against, something that was for free. They were really, really supportive. And then also the [REDACTED] component that we love sport in [REDACTED]. We are very fanatic, specific sports sometimes even more than others, but in general, people love sports here. So, having the chance to go and watch sport for free in the middle of the city, I mean, it was very difficult to have people against. So, I mean, this is, I don't remember exactly something that we could say. We had people, I mean, sometimes we could think about the neighbours because we really blocked the neighbourhood, for example, in the most popular and you know, fancy area of [REDACTED], which is [REDACTED]. And the [REDACTED] literally blocked everything with the neighbours for a month. But, you know, just to do that, we sat with the people managing that area of the city, with the neighbourhood community, with the, you know, people managing the buildings, and we really involved them in the project in a way that then we could avoid having them against us. So, this is something that required planning as well, to have people supporting you and not just throwing, you know, stones from outside. But honestly, I don't, it sounds weird, but I don't remember things. Again, maybe we need to check out the video. It was something that, you know, like in the potential in my role, also took me a bit outside because I was really stressed trying to deliver the game, but it was not something that we can say, oh, that, you know, that was a real mess for us. Honestly, I don't have that in the back of my head.

Speaker 1 - Good. Okay. When it comes to measuring success, probably you, when you were planning or doing your strategy, you would have set some KPIs or indicators that you would say,

okay, if, I don't know, if you had, I'm going to invent numbers now. If you had 1 million children in the grassroots and it went to 2 million, that's success, it went up to 1.2, it's not a success, for example. What kind of maybe KPIs did you set or to kind of really evaluate the success of the games? Were there any quantifiable numbers or it was just from the perception kind of?

Speaker 2 - No, of course we did that, but it was a specific department leading that process. We, as one of the functional areas, which was sports, of course, contributed to that. Just to give you an example, the sport initiation program was one of the programs that for us was really key. I don't remember now the numbers from the top of my head, but this might be in the report you mentioned before. If you go, for example, to sport initiation, we really touched on a lot of children that experienced sports for the first time in their life. And then the national federations managed to enrol, let's say, kids to start practicing. I mean, then it was their job to keep them involved, on track and so on. But because of the use of the games, they had the chance to watch, experience and try the sport for the first time. And then from that moment on, it was a program that someone from the national federation was always involved in the activity and was capturing interests. I mean, if you are a father or a mother, okay, my kid wants to start competing, playing or whatever, and they gave information about where, you know, when, if that age of that kid was appropriated for kicking off with that activity or not. So we tried to do that and it was fantastic in terms of policing. Of course, having in mind the spirit of the [REDACTED] always. But it was to touch as many youth as possible.

Speaker 1 - Good. It's just the last question that I have, and you can conclude. It's very, very, very insightful. Maybe what are three main lessons or recommendations that you can give to potential future hosts? Let's say these three things you really need to work upon. What would they be from your perspective?

Speaker 2 - You mean to a city who may plan?

Speaker 1 - May plan, yeah, exactly.

Speaker 2 - Let's see. I mean, I know that the landscape now for the [REDACTED] changed a bit.

Speaker 1 - Yeah.

Speaker 2 - Okay, but let's try to avoid this information. Because this is now new things and we followed the session the other day and you know, like [REDACTED] will be completely different to [REDACTED]. But I mean, I think that definitely the commitment with the youth is something that a city cannot just avoid. I mean, the future is on them. So maybe that would be perhaps the main topic or aspect why I could sit and think or consider to host this type of event. Because it's a real great opportunity for the youth. Also, because of the message you can spread around is full of values. The [REDACTED] is really great. It's all about inspiration. It's all about bringing role models to, you know, plant the seeds in the future generations to make them better and they will build up the future. So I mean, it's all about that. It doesn't mean that in the Olympic Games you don't have

this. But believe me that the [REDACTED] are special. It's a different thing. It's because of the age of the target audience and so on. And then of course, because even though the requirements and the things you really need to develop are lower, you still have the chance to think about the future, especially today with other accommodations in terms of urban and social and sustainable development into the [REDACTED] and so on.

Speaker 1 – Exactly

Speaker 2 - Now there is a lot of things that we didn't have that for the [REDACTED] are amazing.

Speaker 1 - Yeah.

Speaker 2 - Really amazing. Like [REDACTED]. I mean, [REDACTED]. I mean, if you ask me, would you start all over again? Even though I was super stressed, I wanted to quit three times. Yes, I would.

Speaker 1 – Great

Speaker 2 - It was a real unforgettable experience and sitting now with some of the players that we have in the [REDACTED] national team, for example, in hockey, that they won the [REDACTED], that they started in [REDACTED]. I mean, that is everything. I mean, that replies a lot of those questions that you have. It's definitely building up a generation of athletes.

Speaker 1 - Good

Speaker 2 - You have the opportunity because when you start doing an event like that, it's very difficult that you don't get the support from the city, the government, the country, to invest extra money in developing the athletes, the facilities and so on. So it's a great opportunity to strengthen your community of athletes, but at the same time to spread out a message from Malta, in this case, to the world, which is full of values. I mean, in these days, it's really amazing.

Speaker 1 - Yes, especially with all the issues that there is around the world.

Speaker 2 - That we have in the world. Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 1 - Okay. I won't take any longer.

Speaker 2 - I mean, Daniel, I mean, if you know, I remember

## Appendix 5 – Comparative Thematic Analysis of the Interviews done

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>Interviewee #1</b>	<b>Interviewee #2</b>	<b>Interviewee #3</b>	<b>Interviewee #4</b>
<b>Strategic Objectives</b>	Increase grassroots participation Boost national identity Successful organisation of event Host future events Sport results	Showcase unity in diversity Youth empowerment	Infrastructural upgrades Promotion of sports in new regions Attract youth to sports Show the ability to host	Urban Development (regeneration & social housing) Youth development Sports pathways (talent ID and future elite athletes) Connectivity (transport)
<b>Stakeholder Engagement</b>	Government and its bodies National Federations Hotel operators Local authorities Clear organigram involving experts	Sport Ministry (Government) Hotels Local authorities Well-detailed roles	Government Local authorities NOC National Federations Schools	Government Community Engagement
<b>Financial Management &amp; Sustainability</b>	Simplifying the approach Sport Selection Reliance on Government Legacy Fund	Be realistic Reliance on Government fund Bureaucratic challenges Tight timeline	Struggles due to political shifts Existing Public Infrastructure used	Inflation challenges Strict procurement policies Public investment
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Facilities</b>	Mostly used existing venues Minor upgrades Sport selection is according to readily available premises Transportation / traffic Accommodation challenges	Mix of existing venues + new venues (built purposely to meet the demands)	Renovation of dorms and its challenges Use of existing venues + new venues to promote new sport in the region	Redeveloping abandoned land Agreements to re-sell at favourable rates Multi-sport facilities constructed to offer adaptability regeneration of area economy
<b>Human Resources</b>	NOC-led Limited manpower A good volunteer programme (government assistance with its employees) Organigram	Short-staffed Multitasking Skill Gaps	Use of experienced NOC staff Volunteers trained via observer programmes	Young team HR legacy of future event leaders Long hours needed Challenges of human relations

<b>Tourism &amp; Economic Impact</b>	Off-peak strategy to avoid overcrowding and assist in less active period Creation of legacy fund	Boosted the host's economy during competition  Focus also on host's culture	High hotel occupancy Vibrant city centre	Free-access Games attracted masses Economic impact of hosting Games and budget spikes equalled by the legacy the games left
<b>Education &amp; Youth</b>	Grassroots participation post-Games Legacy fund for youth development programmes	Safeguarding workshops Anti-doping education Youth journalist programmes	Anti-doping and nutrition education Fun zones Volunteer engagement	National sport initiation programme Integration of schools Sport role models Talent retention – future results