

## **Answers for Malta, provided by the Ministry for Energy and Health Malta**

### **Which are the NCCP priorities with regards to rare cancers?**

Malta published its first National Cancer Plan in 2011. This plan has a time frame that will conclude in 2015. You can access this plan from <https://ehealth.gov.mt/download.aspx?id=4720>.

This Plan did not make any specific mention to rare cancers. Its main aim was to improve the accessibility to and the quality of cancer care services for all cancers. A new cancer plan for the time frame starting in 2016 will be drafted during 2015 and the concept of dealing specifically with the particular needs of patients diagnosed with rare cancers will most probably be more explicitly addressed. A National Plan for Rare Diseases is also being compiled.

### **Where are rare cancer patients treated in Malta?**

The majority of oncological care in Malta is currently being provided and coordinated by the Department of Oncology at a small hospital called Sir Paul Boffa Hospital. However, some cancer patients, namely paediatric patients and patients with haematological malignancies are managed at Mater Dei Hospital which is the major acute general public and teaching hospital on the Maltese Islands. A new Oncology Hospital which will include all adult and paediatric oncology services (including haematology) is being built on the Mater Dei Hospital site. These oncology services will migrate to the new facility when this is due to start functioning in early 2015.

Through an Agreement with the UK Government that has been active since the 1970s, Maltese patients can access diagnostic and therapeutic care services in specialised centres in the UK through the Maltese public healthcare system. These services are mostly concerned with the provision of specialised and tertiary care services which are not available locally due to either lack of locally available expertise and/or unfavourable economies of scale due to the smallness of the population residing in Malta. Patients with rare diseases (including several rare cancers) are the most common beneficiaries of these services. Examples of centres in the UK to which Maltese patients with rare cancers are referred include the Royal Marsden Hospital for Head and Neck tumours, haematological malignancies and gastro-intestinal stromal tumours (GIST), the University College Hospital for cancers of the testis, penis, vagina and vulva and the Nuffield Orthopaedics Hospital (Sarcoma Unit) for bone sarcomas.