



GOVERNMENT  
OF MALTA

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTRY FOR HEALTH

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT  
FOR EUROPEAN FUNDS



EU funds  
for Malta  
2014-2020

PROJECT PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

Superintendence  
of Public Health



HOW DOES THE  
WAY WE LIVE

**DETERMINE  
OUR HEALTH?**



# Introduction

Most of us are aware that physical activity, a balanced diet, not smoking and not taking up addictive substances are amongst the key factors contributing to better health and well-being. But what about our job, education, environment, and relationships? Can these affect our health, too? Research conducted across Europe by the WHO European Regional Office has shown that all these factors can make a significant difference to the quality of health that we enjoy.

For that reason, the Superintendence of Public Health within the Ministry for Health has prioritised this area through the *ESF Project – Establishing a National Platform to Address the Social Determinants of Health*. The aim of this project is to understand which of these factors are most likely to affect the health of Malta's population and the manner they can do so, and embark on an information campaign on what we can do to tackle these factors as individuals and as a nation.

Part of this campaign is the booklet you are holding, which is the fifth in a series of five. In this booklet, we focus on mental health and well-being and how, by taking care of ourselves, by talking about how we are feeling, by listening to each other, and by seeking professional help, we can make a huge difference to our way of life.

But, of course, this is not a one-size-fits-all since persons and their networks of loved ones are distinct and face unique economic, cultural, and societal realities. Nevertheless, change does not need to be overwhelming to be effective: small, yet decisive, steps towards being healthier and feeling more fulfilled are just as powerful. Moreover, the Government, through its many services, offers help along the way, fostering and encouraging positive change for all.



“**W**hat is it now?” Jesmond says, rather angrily, as he makes his way to the front door.  
“It’s me, Mario,” says his brother from the other side of the door. “Open up; I’ve brought you some oranges from our garden.”





Jesmond lets Mario in and invites him into the kitchen for a cup of tea. They settle at the kitchen table.

“Jesmond,” Mario begins, “I also wanted to see how you’ve been. I noticed you haven’t been your usual self lately...”



"I've just been busy with work and doing up the house... and, well, I broke up with Daniel, too... It's all affecting me badly, and I feel anxious and exhausted all the time," he says with a heavy sigh.

"I can understand that," Mario replies, placing his hand on Jesmond's shoulder, "but you need to take care of yourself. Are you making time for that?"

"Not really. I don't even know how to, if I'm being honest."





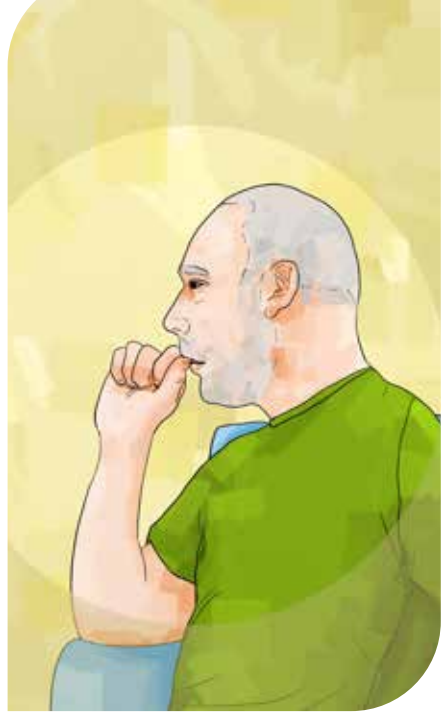
“Well, seeing as I’ve been in your shoes before, I have a trick or two up my sleeve...”

Jesmond laughs.

“No, hear me out. One way I’ve learnt to let go of the stress is to remind myself that I can’t control everything. I am only responsible for certain things. And I can’t take on other people’s work and responsibilities and expect to perform at my best.”

"Okay, go on..."  
Jesmond replies.

"Then I also look at the ways I am coping with stress. Am I biting my nails? Am I working longer so I don't think about my problems? Am I overeating? Am I smoking to reduce stress?" he says, eyeing Jesmond's lit cigarette.





Jesmond puts out his cigarette. "Okay, but that doesn't solve my problems."

"It's a hard pill to swallow, but unfortunately, life will never be problem-free," Mario says. "But we can work on healthy ways to deal with the stress and focus on what's within our control. Plus, remember that I'm here

for you when it all gets too much, as are many other people. And if we can't help, there are nutritionists, psychologists, and other experts who can guide you. You're not alone, remember that!"





"Thank you for saying that," Jesmond smiles. "You're right; I need to start taking better care of my emotional and mental health. Maybe it's time I spoke to a professional about all this."

"It can only help!" Mario says, smiling back.





The electronic version in Maltese and English  
may be accessed here:



Operational Programme II – European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020  
“Investing in human capital to create more opportunities and promote the well-being of society.”  
Project part-financed by the European Social Fund  
Co-financing rate: 80% European Union Funds; 20% National Funds

