

Strengthening global impact: partnership empowers small island states and international policy



In 2020, the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade (MFET) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the [Islands & Small States Institute](#) (ISSI), affirming the institutions' shared commitment to promote the interests of islands and small states at the local and international level. In the past four years this partnership resulted in concrete fruitful outcomes that benefited students, policy, the research community and Malta at large.

As part of the MoU, the Ministry committed to fund scholarships for students hailing from Small Island Developing States (SIDS), seeking to further their studies at the ISSI. Since 2021 a total of seven students, six for the Master by Research and one PhD in Islands and Small States Studies, benefitted from the scheme, which also attracted a further number of other students to join the programmes at UM. This scheme also won the UN SIDS Partnership Award in the social category, recognising the empowerment of SIDS nationals to develop their knowledge and skills to effectively act as catalysts for the sustainable development of their local communities. This successful scheme is being renovated and the number of students benefiting will increase.

The MFET and ISSI partnership continued with ISSI supporting the work of the Ministry at European and international level to champion the interest of small states in the field of global composite indices, following the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to nominate Prof. Lino Briguglio as one of the eleven world experts to develop a 'Multidimensional Vulnerability Index', to create additional metrics to allocate concessional funding. Furthermore, MFET entrusted the ISSI to develop a multidimensional climate vulnerability and resilience index that was first launched at COP28 in Dubai in November 2023, with preliminary results presented at the fourth UN conference on SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024. Future plans for this mutually successful partnership include continuing the work to champion the interest of small states and to support Malta's foreign and European policy.

Such meaningful partnerships help to *"broaden the University's respectful and enriching engagement with the region and the world"* - one of the main commitments of the [International Outlook](#) pillar of the University's [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#).

Featured in the photo are ISSI staff and MFET officials attending the SIDS4 conference in Antigua (from right: [Dr Stefano Moncada](#), [Prof. Lino Briguglio](#), Ms Nicole Sarsero, Ms Gabriella Cassola, Prof. Rebecca Hamilton, and [Dr Pedro Pombo](#)).

Through this [Quality Mailshot Initiative](#), the QAC aims to disseminate best practices at UM that align with both national and European standards for quality in higher education. If you have an example of good QA practice which you would like us to share, please get in touch with us at qac@um.edu.mt