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In March, the annual rate of inflation as measured by the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices stood at 0.5 per cent.

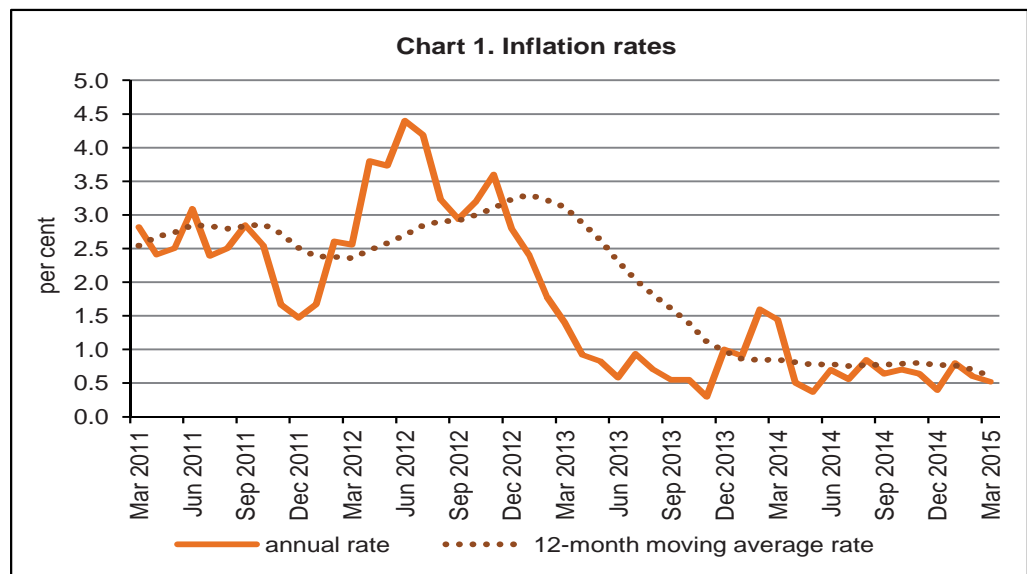
Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP): March 2015

In March, the annual rate of inflation stood at 0.5 per cent. A year earlier the annual rate was 1.4 per cent, as shown in Chart 1.

The largest upward impacts on annual inflation were brought about by the Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages Index (0.4 percentage points), the Restaurants and Hotels Index (0.3 percentage points) and the Clothing and Footwear Index (0.2 percentage points). This was mainly due to higher prices of vegetables, restaurant services and garments respectively (Table 5).

The main downward impacts were recorded in the Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels Index (0.7 percentage points) and the Transport Index (0.2 percentage points). This was mainly due to lower electricity rates and cheaper fuels respectively (Table 5).

The twelve-month moving average rate was 0.6 per cent ■



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Table 1. HICP by division
Average 2005=100

Division	Weight	Indices			Annual rate (%)	Monthly rate (%)
		Mar 2014	Feb 2015	Mar 2015	Mar 2015	Mar 2015
Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages	167.50	143.15	146.62	146.67	2.5	0.0
Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco	35.71	136.16	141.05	141.14	3.7	0.1
Clothing and Footwear	59.64	95.29	93.79	99.07	4.0	5.6
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	81.46	149.14	136.02	135.86	-8.9	-0.1
Furniture, Household Equipment and Routine Maintenance of the House	75.89	113.84	112.89	113.15	-0.6	0.2
Health	42.57	122.88	123.67	123.88	0.8	0.2
Transport	142.40	116.22	114.28	114.19	-1.7	-0.1
Communication	39.34	73.21	72.63	72.80	-0.6	0.2
Recreation and Culture	101.90	100.70	101.33	102.13	1.4	0.8
Education	17.69	154.72	164.67	164.67	6.4	0.0
Restaurants and Hotels	160.98	115.06	113.74	117.38	2.0	3.2
Miscellaneous Goods and Services	74.92	120.76	123.87	123.97	2.7	0.1
All Items	1,000.00	118.91	118.43	119.53	0.5	0.9

Table 2. HICP by division
Rates of change (%)

Division	Weight	Annual rate			Monthly rate		
		Mar 2014	Feb 2015	Mar 2015	Mar 2014	Feb 2015	Mar 2015
Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages	167.50	0.6	2.4	2.5	0.0	0.1	0.0
Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco	35.71	11.3	3.6	3.7	0.0	0.3	0.1
Clothing and Footwear	59.64	0.8	1.2	4.0	2.8	5.4	5.6
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	81.46	1.2	-8.8	-8.9	0.0	0.1	-0.1
Furniture, Household Equipment and Routine Maintenance of the House	75.89	3.5	-0.8	-0.6	0.1	0.2	0.2
Health	42.57	1.1	0.7	0.8	0.0	0.2	0.2
Transport	142.40	-0.1	-0.6	-1.7	1.1	-0.4	-0.1
Communication	39.34	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	0.2	-0.2	0.2
Recreation and Culture	101.90	1.0	1.2	1.4	0.5	0.2	0.8
Education	17.69	7.5	6.4	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Restaurants and Hotels	160.98	1.7	2.3	2.0	3.5	1.0	3.2
Miscellaneous Goods and Services	74.92	0.4	2.8	2.7	0.2	0.5	0.1
All Items	1,000.00	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.9

Table 5. Impact on annual inflation by division *

Division	Weight	Annual rate March 2015	Impact (percentage points) March 2015
Food and Non-alcoholic Beverages	167.50	2.5	0.4
Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco	35.71	3.7	0.1
Clothing and Footwear	59.64	4.0	0.2
Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	81.46	-8.9	-0.7
Furniture, Household Equipment and Routine Maintenance of the House	75.89	-0.6	0.0
Health	42.57	0.8	0.0
Transport	142.40	-1.7	-0.2
Communication	39.34	-0.6	0.0
Recreation and Culture	101.90	1.4	0.1
Education	17.69	6.4	0.1
Restaurants and Hotels	160.98	2.0	0.3
Miscellaneous Goods and Services	74.92	2.7	0.2

* See methodological note 11

Methodological Notes

1. The Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices (HICP) is calculated according to rules specified in a series of European Union Regulations that were developed by Eurostat in conjunction with the EU Member States.
2. The HICP is used to compare inflation rates across the European Union. It has been used by the European Central Bank (ECB) as the measure of price stability across the euro area since January 1999. Indeed, the HICP was developed in the EU for the purpose of assessing whether prospective members of the European Monetary Union would meet the inflation convergence criterion, and later acting as the measure of inflation used by the ECB to assess price stability in the euro area. The main requirement was for a measure that could be used to make reliable comparisons of inflation rates across EU Member States. Such comparisons are not possible using national consumer price indices due to differences in index coverage and construction.
3. While the methodology of the Retail Price Index (RPI) and the HICP is similar, it differs in the following ways:
 - (a) The population base of each index is different. The RPI is representative of private households only. The HICP covers private households, institutional households and foreign visitors to Malta;
 - (b) The RPI is a fixed weight and fixed base index while the HICP is a chain index whose weights are reviewed on an annual basis, every January. Additionally, newly significant goods and services are introduced into the HICP on an annual basis;
 - (c) The coverage of the HICP is based on an international classifications system, COICOP (Classification of Individual Consumption by Purpose). The way in which this broadly maps to the RPI groupings is shown in the following table:

	COICOP Division	RPI Group
01	Food and non-alcoholic beverages	Food (including take-away food and food consumed in restaurants)
02	Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco	Beverages and Tobacco
03	Clothing and Footwear	Clothing and Footwear
04	Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Other Fuels	Housing Water, Electricity, Gas and Fuels
05	Furniture, Household Equipment and Routine Maintenance of the House	Household Equipment and House Maintenance Costs
06	Health	Personal Care and Health
07	Transport	Transport and Communication
08	Communication	
09	Recreation and Culture	Recreation and Culture (including education)
10	Education	
11	Restaurants and Hotels	Restaurants (included under food)
12	Miscellaneous Goods and Services	Other Goods and Services

This comparison is broad and indicative only. Therefore, users are advised to consult the NSO before comparing the results of these indices at such levels.

4. Apart from the disparities identified in point 3 above, both the RPI and the HICP have the same geographic coverage such that both indices refer to the whole country. In addition to this, both indices utilise the same price collection methodologies in respect of, by and large, the same basket of goods and services. Prices are collected from the same outlets.
5. The RPI and the HICP use different weighting schemes. The RPI weights refer to expenditure by private households and are largely based on data derived from the Household Budgetary Survey (HBS). The HICP weights cover private household expenditure, institutional household expenditure as well as tourism expenditure in Malta. The differences in the underlying weighting schemes between the RPI and the HICP account significantly for the disparities in their results on a monthly basis.
6. The HICP largely follows National Accounts concepts of what constitutes household consumption in determining the index scope, and mainly uses National Accounts data sources to weight the items in the basket. This makes for increased coherence between the HICP commodity and population coverage and National Accounts principles. As a result, HICP weights are therefore based on the final consumption expenditure of all individuals in the domestic territory, including spending by private households, institutional households and foreign visitors. National Accounts principles have also influenced the classification of goods and services within this index.

7. The HICP is being published with 2005 as its base year. As already indicated, the HICP is a chain index that is subject to review on an annual basis. It should be noted that the re-basing operation was conducted after rounding all past indices to one decimal place as required by Eurostat. Therefore, there might be slight differences when comparing this series with past data due to rounding.
8. The HICP is published by the NSO and Eurostat on a monthly basis. Eurostat also publishes aggregate HICP indices for the euro area countries and the European Union. In aggregating the individual country indices, Eurostat uses weights that are based on each country's share of each relative bloc's total household final consumption expenditure.
9. The HICP weighting scheme is annually updated in accordance with Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1114/2010.
10. The treatment of seasonal items is in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No. 330/2009.
11. An impact is a measure showing the change in inflation due to the inclusion of an index. The impact takes into account both the weight and the annual rate of inflation by division.
12. Figures may not add up due to rounding.
13. More information relating to this news release may be accessed at:

Statistical Concepts: <http://nso.gov.mt/metadata/concepts.aspx>

Metadata: <http://nso.gov.mt/metadata/reports.aspx?id=9>

Classifications: <http://nso.gov.mt/metadata/classificationdetails.aspx?id=COICOP>