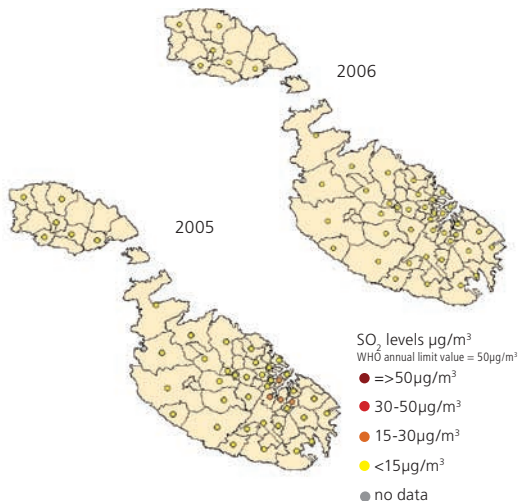


A5 SULPHUR DIOXIDE CONCENTRATIONS

😊 Key policy question: Do sulphur dioxide concentrations in Malta meet EU air quality standards?



Source: MEPA

Sulphur dioxide (SO₂), which is a major air pollutant formed primarily by the combustion of fossil fuels containing sulphur, becomes sulphuric acid when it comes into contact with water. It is harmful to human beings, especially to asthmatics who tolerate acidity less, and to vegetation.²⁰ National average SO₂ concentrations continued to fall between 2005 and 2006, registering a decrease of 41%, from $9.4\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ to $5.5\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. This is once again a great improvement: between 2004 and 2005 concentrations had fallen by 24%. Improvements were registered in almost all localities and locality averages²¹ were all below $20\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The highest reductions, of more than 70%, were recorded at Marsalforn and Xlendi, which registered a reduction of 77% and 73% respectively. While the EU hourly average limit value of $350\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (not to be exceeded more than 24 times a year) was exceeded twice in the Floriana station, the EU daily average limit value of $125\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (not to be exceeded more than 3 times a year) was not exceeded in any of the stations in 2006. Further studies are required in order to ascertain the reason for these improvements since a number of factors may play a role, such as favourable weather conditions.

20 <http://glossary.eea.europa.eu/EEAGlossary>.

21 No EU annual limit value exists, but the WHO annual limit value is $50\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.