The 20-year-old promise of a primary health care reform is to move forward in the form of a consultation document that outlines the government's strategy on primary health care services in Malta and Gozo.

Speaking at a Press Conference, Social Policy John Dalli did not deny that such a commitment for a reform is bound to raise scepticism: “Perhaps some may be sceptical of yet another announcement of reform to primary care since it is something that has been debated for around twenty years.”

Yet, he insisted: “I have taken the baton from my predecessors and will persist in the effort to carry out those changes which I feel are essential for our country's long term development and our population’s well being.”

“I am more than convinced that there is now an urgent need to place primary care at the centre of our system and to re-orient our efforts towards health promotion and disease prevention. We can only do this successfully if we work through an effective, high quality system that delivers value for money,” Minister Dalli added.

The Social Policy Minister said that the document is based around the “central tenet of a formal relationship being established between every single patient and his / her care provider.”

He also listed certain key principles from which the government is not ready to depart and these include:

1. Equitable access to high quality health care for everyone, even those without sufficient means
2. Accountability for standards of care
3. No duplication of services to ensure most efficient use of scarce resources.

The reform is also likely to include the private sector. “We will build upon the primary care system offered by the private sector which is already accounting for around 70% of patient contacts,” the Minister said.