



City of Valletta

Intercultural Profile

1. Introduction¹

Valletta is the capital of Malta. It is a municipality with a population of 6,675 within a wider Travel-To-Work Area of about 90,000 people. The city, which is colloquially known as *Il-Belt* (The City) or *Città Umilissima* (Most Humble City) in Latin, is inextricably linked to the history of the military and charitable Order of St John of Jerusalem. Malta was ruled successively by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and the Order of the Knights of St John. Valletta's 320 monuments, all within an area of 55ha, make it one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world as well as a densely-populated centre of government, business, residence and tourism and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Malta's location at the heart of the Mediterranean between three continents has ensured it has been a place visited and settled by many, and jealously-guarded too. All of this influences the level of immigration (of various forms) the island now receives, and the attitudes and policies the islanders have formed in response to it.

2. Background to Migration and Diversity in Malta

Malta consists of three inhabited islands as well as a number of uninhabited islets. It has a total land area of 316km² and a population of 446,547.² With a population density of 1,413 km², it currently ranks as the eighth most densely populated nation-state in the world. Geographically Malta is relatively isolated with the closest significant land masses being the southern coast of Sicily, which lies 100km to the north, and the eastern coast of Tunisia, 300km to the west. The Italian island of Lampedusa is 160km to the south-west and the northern Libyan coast 350km to the south.

The history of Malta is a long and colourful one dating back to the dawn of civilisation. The Maltese Islands went through a golden Neolithic period, the remains of which are the mysterious temples dedicated to the goddess of fertility. Later on, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Romans and the Byzantines, all left their traces on the Islands. In 60 A.D. St. Paul was shipwrecked on the island while on his way to Rome and brought Christianity to Malta. The Arabs conquered the islands in 870 AD and left an important mark on the language of the Maltese. For many years Malta was an extension of Sicily (the Normans, the Aragonese and other conquerors who ruled over Sicily also governed the Maltese Islands), until 1530 when Charles V bequeathed Malta to the Sovereign Military Order of St. John of Jerusalem. They ruled over Malta until 1798 taking Malta through a new golden age. Napoleon Bonaparte took Malta from the Knights on his way to Egypt, but the French presence on the islands was short lived, as the British, who were requested by the Maltese to help them against the French, blockaded the islands in 1800. British rule in Malta lasted until 1964 when Malta became independent. The Maltese adapted the British system of administration, education and legislation. During World War 2 the islands sustained heavy bombardment from the Italian

¹ This report is based upon the visit of the CoE inspection team on 7 & 8 October 2014, comprising Irena Guidikova, Karen McHugh and Phil Wood.

² "Estimated Population by Locality - 31st March, 2013". Malta Government Gazette no. 19094.

and German forces but resisted heroically. Modern Malta became a Republic in 1974 and joined the European Union in May 2004.

With such a history and geography, Malta has inevitably been the host to many and various cultures, languages, religions and models of government. But this has created an ambiguous relationship to the outside world which now influences contemporary attitudes to immigration and diversity. Historically, islands can be seen as places which are, of necessity open, to the outside world though the need to trade the goods they have in surplus in return for those that they lack. On the other hand, islands are set apart from the mainstream and are more easily-defensible places in times of conflict. With its grand harbour and mighty ramparts Malta – and Valletta in particular - exhibit these dual roles, which have become embedded in the very identity of the Maltese people.

However, for much of its recent history Malta has primarily been a country of emigration. Between 1948 and 1967, an astonishing 30% of the nation's population emigrated. According to the Malta Emigration Commission (MEC) approximately 28% of people who left Malta went to Australia, 10.5% went to the United Kingdom and 6.5% moved to Canada and the United States was also a popular destination. Through the assisted passage scheme provided by MEC, these immigrants received help with the costs of their journey, and many were taught to speak and read English. Emigration finally began to fall in the 1970s as prosperity rose.

Since then the story has been one of Malta as an attractant, initially for tourists but also expatriates looking to spend their twilight years in a benevolent climate. But as prosperity has continued to rise Malta has been unable to meet its labour needs from the local market and has required migrant workers. Seasonal employment in agriculture and hospitality have been the main sources of demand and whilst much of this has been conducted via official channels, a substantial proportion of it has gone 'under the radar' leaving the Maltese government unable to offer an authoritative assessment of numbers. What is clear is that Malta has played host high numbers of guest workers such as Filipinos and Serbians as well as traders from China and Russia communities.

The first group of refugees came to Malta in 1973 from Uganda and MEC took on a new role of supporting newcomers in crisis. At the time Malta had no obligation to keep them and offer asylum as it was not a signatory of international conventions. Malta began to receive a trickle of asylum seekers in the beginning of the 1990s, initially from former Yugoslavia, Albania and Iraq. But from 2002 onwards, Malta has experienced an increase of people arriving in an irregular manner, especially by boat. When Malta joined the European Union (EU) in 2004 it became Europe's southernmost country and a key entryway for migrants traveling from North Africa to Europe. While the actual numbers of residing non-citizens and asylum seekers are low, they are quite high vis-à-vis Malta's population of 400,000. For example, although the country received only 2,080 asylum applications in 2012, Malta was nevertheless the EU country with the highest proportion of asylum claims (4.9 applicants per 1,000 inhabitants). Also, with 20 residing refugees per 1,000 inhabitants, Malta ranks eighth in the world and has the highest rate among its European neighbours.

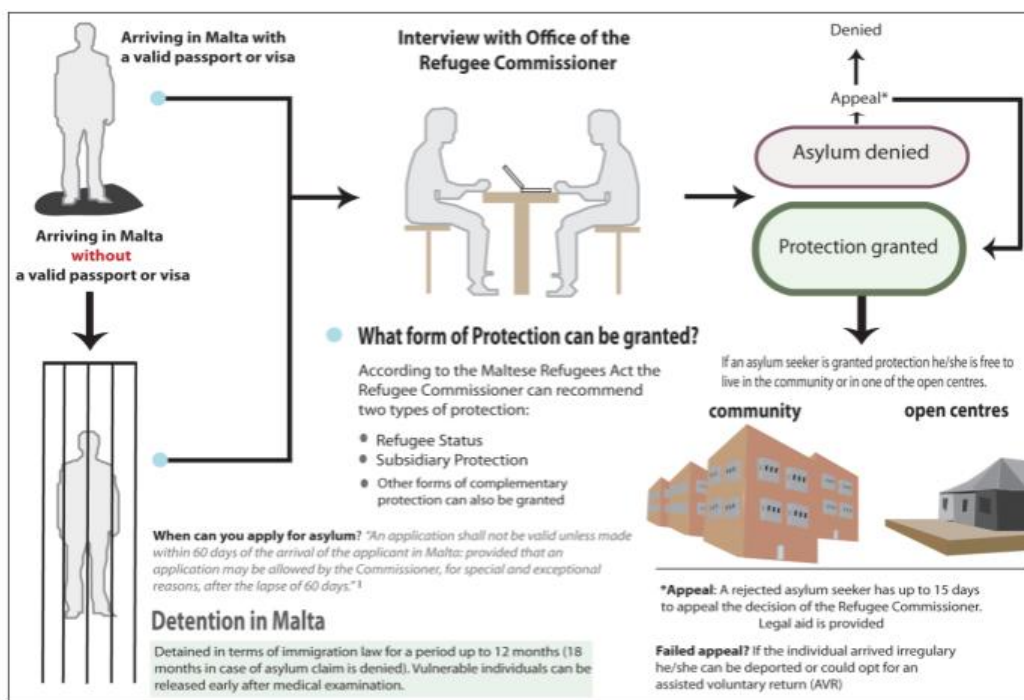
In 2012, out of the 1,890 migrants arriving by boat, 1,838 applied for protection signifying that the majority of the boat arrivals are asylum seekers. The majority of those granted international protection in Malta are from Somalia (86 %) followed by Eritrea (12 %). UNHCR Malta estimates that approximately 30 % of the 16,341 arriving between 2002 and 2012 remain on the island (UNHCR 2012a). This implies that 5,400 of this category of migrants abide in Malta. The vast majority arrive by boat and since the area of Malta is small, news travels fast. Whenever a boat arrives at shore or is intercepted at sea, the whole island knows within a short period of time through the media present at disembarkation. The influx of immigrants has become a 'hot' topic. 'Irregular/illegal' immigration has been the subject of innumerable radio and television shows, and the Maltese word *klandestini* (referring in practice to sub-Saharan migrants as an undifferentiated group) has become a staple of everyday discourse.

The government was prompted in 2006 to declare that undocumented immigration had reached an “emergency scale” and that there was a “national crisis” with respect to administrative detention. It argued that Malta represents an exceptional case due to its small size, high population density, and extensive maritime borders, and demanded support from its larger neighbours.

Malta now applies a form of mandatory detention which, although apparently unique among EU countries, has some similarities to the policy pursued by Australia. Non-nationals without the right to enter, transit, or reside in the country can be subject to a removal order, which once issued automatically triggers detention. Maltese authorities have argued that immigration detention is a “powerful deterrent” and alluded to their immigration control measures as a form of punishment. The Minister of Foreign Affairs said in 2009, “The message needs to ...be received by everyone that entering Malta illegally will not go unpunished.”³

UNHCR Malta has published the following guide to the Asylum Procedure:⁴

Figure 1 Applying for Refugee Status in Malta (UNHCR)



3. National Policy Context

The number of migrants residing in Malta stands at 6.7% of the total Maltese population⁵, which includes citizens of European Union states (68%), TCN (33%) and also asylum seekers and BOP (8%) and the total foreign population has increased from 11,999 in 2005 to 20,384 in 2011

Although the migrant population has doubled over the past decade, it has been said that Maltese laws and policies in relation to integration remain some of the weakest and least favourable in Europe.⁶

³ <http://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/malta/introduction.html>

⁴ http://www.unhcr.org/mt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=441&Itemid=110

⁵ Maltese National Statistics Office 2011

After the 2013 Maltese General Elections, the new Government appointed Hon. Helena Dalli as Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties. It is the first time that a Minister's portfolio specifically includes social dialogue, civil liberties and equality, and consequently issues relating to integration. This can be seen as the recognition of the growing importance of putting social dialogue and integration on the political agenda in Malta, after being largely ignored in the past couple of years. Although there are efforts to bring integration into the political discourse of the country it still remains low on the political agenda of the two largest political parties, with the subject of migration mainly focused on arrival of asylum seekers, border control and relocation. The main target groups identified in most public and political discussions on integration are beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers, leaving the larger TCN category out of the national debate.

The focus of national integration measures to date has been piecemeal and decentralised. Malta's National Strategy for the Promotion of Cross-Cultural Understanding and Management of Cultural Diversity outlines that the national strategy is based on a four dimensional approach:

- the educational sector,
- the cultural sector,
- the internal rule of law dimension, and
- tourism and town twinning

and lists proposed measures to be implemented to achieve these aims. However, follow up has been negligible with only a few measures that have been implemented relating to the labour market and the education sector.

In the absence of a comprehensive national strategy/policy, a number of ad hoc initiatives have been adopted at local or departmental levels in acknowledgement of the need to be engaged with integration. Several Local Councils (municipalities) are active in cultural and social integration activities, whilst government agencies, including primarily service-provision agencies, focus on internal capacity building,

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a widely endorsed tool for assessing, comparing and improving integration policy. It measures policies in 37 countries employing 148 policy indicators creating a multi-dimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in society by assessing governments' commitment to integration. By measuring policies and their implementation it reveals whether all residents are guaranteed equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Malta is currently ranked 34th in the list of 37 countries surveyed⁷. MIPEX concludes, in summary, that:

- Whilst Malta's anti-discrimination law has been improved, it is still one of weakest in Europe.
- Many Non-EU nationals with the right to live in Malta do not have an equal right to work.
- Malta has some of longest waits for family reunion.
- Political opportunities are closed to non-EU residents.
- Education policy leaves Maltese schools as some of the least prepared in Europe for migrant children.
- Malta has one of most exclusionary naturalisation policies in Europe.
- Becoming a long-term resident gives non-EU residents their best chance to integrate in Malta.

⁶ Camilleri, C. and N. Falzon (2014) *Malta Integration Network: a way forward for a National Integration Policy in Malta – Final Report*. Aditus foundation: Malta. Accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/pj938h9>

⁷ <http://www.mipex.eu/malta>

In June 2014 an independent study by a group of Maltese experts confirmed the MIPEX findings and called for the introduction of a National Integration Policy for Malta⁸. However, one of the authors of the report has complained that the report has been misrepresented and discredited with the media giving disproportionate attention to only one of its 60 recommendations⁹.

Some are of the opinion expressed that the government has avoided formulating a clear strategy for cultural diversity because it has not wished to believe that immigrants would ever become a permanent feature of Maltese life. There is a lack of reliable data as to how many migrants are in the country, or official information on spending related to migration and integration. However it is becoming clear that many migrants, whether they wish to be in Malta or not, will remain in the country.

The government has now accepted the need for a national integration policy led by the Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs, and Civil Liberties, Helena Dalli, and have created a new website to encourage a more expansive public discourse, which suggests that 'integration' may be moving beyond its former status as a taboo subject.

4. Local Diversity and Policy Context

Valletta creates a conundrum for the ICC because with a population of only 6,675 it is, strictly speaking, far too small to be admitted to the network. On the other hand, Malta (or at least the main island) is so compact and densely-populated that it could feasibly be considered to represent one urban settlement of several hundred thousand people. Alternatively, it could at least be argued that Valletta is the centre of a contiguous metropolitan (or Travel To Work) district, covering the areas of the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour, which is the equivalent in population and size to one of ICC's smaller member cities, albeit that it is sub-divided into about 15 municipalities, of which Valletta itself is only one.

Valletta functions like many smaller capital cities in as much as its resident population represents only a fraction of the number of people who actually use it. Each day a small army of city workers and tourists throng its streets because Valletta is the home to most of Malta's government and public institutions, many business headquarters and much of its cultural heritage.

The demographic statistics for Maltese localities tell a surprising story.¹⁰ In much of Europe we are seeing capital cities, larger metropolitan areas and urban cores increasing their populations with rural areas and smaller towns static or losing people, but not so in Malta. If we consider the 15 municipalities which might loosely be considered to comprise a 'Greater Valletta' metropolitan area¹¹, they had a combined population of 107,140 in 1993. However by 2014 this had fallen by almost 16% to 90,164. Of the 15 municipalities, only three had seen any growth in that time and Valletta itself had lost nearly 30% of its residents. Even over the last three years the trend has been unremittingly downwards. This should be seen against a backdrop of the Maltese population as a whole rising by 22% over the same 20 year period. Meanwhile, most of the municipalities which have seen population growth of 100% or more (such as Melieha, Pembroke and San Pawl Il-Bahar or parts of Gozo) lie by the sea and have seen tourism development or agricultural expansion.

⁸ Camilleri, C & Falzon, N (2014) *op cit*

⁹ Dr Neil Falzon quoted at <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140622/opinion/An-integration-policy-is-overdue.524476>

¹⁰ Department for Local Government, at <https://secure2.gov.mt/localgovernment/local-councils-data?!=1>

¹¹ Birgu, Bormla, Floriana, Gzira, Hamrun, Isla, Kalkara, Marsa, Msida, Paola, Pieta', Santa Venera, Sliema, Ta' Xbiex and Valletta.

It would appear that Valletta is undergoing a process of transition from once being a place of extremely dense settlement to one which is now much more sparsely occupied. It may take some time before the process achieves equilibrium and Valletta finds its appropriate size for contemporary conditions.

One other paradox which Valletta poses for ICC however is that it is not a place of great cultural diversity in its residential population. Perhaps the demographic and the diversity factors are linked. The growth areas may have been boosted by both expatriate settlement and of foreign workers in the hospitality industry and agriculture – although presumably there must also have been some suburbanisation as the indigenous Maltese have left the overcrowding of Greater Valletta for more spacious surroundings. However, what makes Valletta a city worthy of inclusion in the Intercultural Cities is that, as a capital city it is thronged by a highly diverse population of workers, shoppers, tourists and other users.

Figures on demographic diversity are hard enough to come by at the national level and non-existent at the municipal level so we are only able to operate on the basis of observation and apocryphal accounts. Traditionally, Valletta itself is a very distinctive and enclosed city with a strong sense of its own integrity and culture. We were told that most citizens could trace their roots in the city back over many generations and Maltese from other parts of the country were no more welcome to take up residence there than were foreigners. Both residential and commercial property prices are high and rising (particularly since the announcement that Valletta will become European Capital of Culture in 2018, aka V18) which proves a major barrier for migrants who might wish to move in or set up a business. However, as the wider area around the Grand Harbour contains many lower priced properties it might be anticipated that these will be increasingly populated by people of migrant origin.

Valletta presents something of a dilemma for its politicians and the organisers of V18. Its traditional appearance and social structures are largely unscathed by the familiar trappings of globalisation which certainly give it a distinctive flavour which would charm visitors during 2018. On the other hand it lacks cosmopolitanism, for example in the range of its restaurant and retail offer, because the market is restrictive and difficult to enter. Certain ethnic groups have been able to establish business niches, such as Indian shop-owners and health-care workers, but many of them have been in Malta since the East African evictions of the early '70s. Generally however, the level of visible diversity in the city's commercial offer is very low.

However we should not perhaps draw too many conclusions from Valletta's experience alone but, rather, see Valletta in its historical role as the place which forms opinions and sets the tone for the island nation as a whole. The challenge within the context of ICC is to think how the city can set the tone for the rest of Malta in establishing an open and cosmopolitan culture. Some people suggested to us that 'Multiculturalism' has been a taboo subject for many Maltese people and institutions because it implies that diversity is not just a passing phenomenon but is here to stay. Others however, including the Mayor, believe that if there ever was any such taboo, then Malta has now moved beyond this to a more sophisticated discourse.

Meanwhile we were told that the island of Gozo has traditionally been much more at ease with cultural mixing owing to seasonal agricultural workers. They are said to receive the same services and privileges as locals and the two groups mix during their leisure time. Rents are lower than Valletta so newcomers can more easily get established, and the Church has been seen to be an effective opinion leader for mixing, whilst politicians are more likely to be negative.

5. Education and training

All children of migrant background between the ages of 5 and 16 have the right to free education and to other provisions including support for the learning of any of the official languages and for the teaching of the language and culture of the country of origin of immigrant children. However there are no official data or statistics regarding the numbers of children of minority groups attending pre-school education or

kindergarten centres, primary and secondary schools, and post-secondary and tertiary education. Whilst the Maltese government provides free education to refugees who seek temporary asylum in Malta and also to children of irregular immigrants, there is scant evidence of how they are performing.¹²

According to the EURYDICE Information Database on Education Systems in Europe:

*Immigrant children are mainly included in Government schools although some immigrant children do attend Church schools (which are heavily subsidized by Government). They are expected to follow the curriculum like Maltese children. It is generally quite difficult to cater for their specific needs, particularly as regards to their language and culture since they are often children of 'illegal / irregular' immigrants, staying in Malta for an indefinite period, and coming from countries that generally are not represented diplomatically in Malta. Hence, it is difficult to obtain the support of the immigrants' Government in the provision of the appropriate educational services. However, since English is an official language in Malta, some immigrant children integrate easily with Maltese children and they benefit from their attendance at school. Some schools organize the induction of immigrant children during their first few months at school, assuming that they would be staying for some time.*¹³

The quality and quantity of support to ethnic minority students is said to vary greatly across different colleges. While some offer no specific support which may help the ethnic minority students to integrate, other colleges quote more specific help such as 'Russian Language Teacher', 'Language Support' and 'Cultural Mediators'. Nevertheless it seems that as a general rule specific support is still the exception. One reason for this might be the lack of funds and support from the Education Directorates whose policy seems to treat multi-ethnicity and the integration of ethnic minority students as 'students with special needs'.¹⁴

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC), a government agency responsible for employment related issues, offers cultural awareness courses and basic Maltese and English language courses. The courses are open to any migrant. However, taking these courses and obtaining a 75% pass mark is necessary in order for third-country nationals to be able to apply for Long Term Residency status in Malta. In addition, these courses are not offered on a regular basis, thus making it harder for migrants to enrol and to plan. The Foundation for Educational Services (FES) is the public entity entrusted with the development and implementation of educational programmes and services to promote integration and social inclusion. In 2012, FES commissioned a research report on the integration through education of TCNs¹⁵ which outlined several key recommendations towards informing policy development and programme development, but we have no evidence of if they have been implemented. In addition, the Ministry of Education allows for certain categories of migrants to apply for an exemption from the payment of tuition fees in state educational institutions.¹⁶

We were told informally that many migrant children are picking up Maltese language very quickly and that many schools were keeping classroom sizes small (with 12-15 pupils) which helps with language acquisition. Some schools encourage multilingualism and publish documents in the languages of all pupils. However, we did not have the opportunity to observe a school during the course of our visit.

¹² Grech, M., Calleja, C., & Cauchi, B. (2010). *Education and Ethnic Minorities in Malta*. The e-SPICES Learning Partnership

¹³ Eurybase -Malta, 2006/07, p. 193f

¹⁴ Grech et al, op cit

¹⁵ Falzon, N., M. Pisani, and A. Cauchi (2012) *Integration in Education of Third Country Nationals*. Research Report, Foundation for Educational Services (FES), October.

¹⁶ Camilleri, C (2014) *A Report on National Integration Policies in Malta*. INTERACT RR2014/04. European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Perhaps the best place to start building an intercultural education policy, would be by critically assessing individual schools' initiatives and mainstreaming the best. It would also be necessary to interconnect related policies in a coherent way and ensure a long-term perspective.

6. Employment and business

As indicated in Figure 1, there has been an increase in the general number of foreigners in the Maltese labour market in all categories of migrants. According to the International Organization of Migration (IOM), in 2010, foreigners made up 5.7% of the total employed population, and by 2011, they were up 6.7% of the total employed population with EU Nationals constituting 4.3%, TCNs 1.9% and beneficiaries of protection (BOPs) 0.6%.

Figure 2 Foreign workers in Malta by immigration status



Source: *Employment and Training Corporation data.*

Notes(s): RF: Refugees, AS: Asylum-seekers, SP: Subsidiary Protection (broadly referred to as beneficiaries of international protection).

With regard to the skill level of foreigners in Malta, a recent increase in the highly skilled has been noted among all categories of foreigners. Regarding TCNs and BOPs the increase is significant, but relatively low, whilst the increase is far steeper when it comes to EU nationals whose number grew notably. This can in part be explained by Malta's accession to the EU, and the subsequent opening of the labour market to EU nationals since 2004. Also to the continuous shift of the Maltese economy to sectors requiring higher skilled labour and an acknowledgement that Malta needs time to develop the skills necessary to match the labour market needs. Similar trends can also be seen with low-skilled foreign workers, where there has been a rise in most categories with EU nationals once again taking the lead. BOPs continued to be disproportionately represented in low-skilled employment, with some moving into skilled employment. This reflects in part a lack of formal qualifications as well as the lack of recognition or appreciation of such qualifications when they exist.

The International Organization for Migration does not mince its words when it discusses the issue of discrimination:

Discrimination in the labour market remains rampant in Malta. Sub-Saharan Africans are particularly vulnerable, in part due to the need to find jobs as emphasized by pressures to send money to the countries of origin. There are various manifestations of discrimination that have come to the fore in research on the issue. This research has tended to focus on beneficiaries of protection and reveals exploitation and poor working conditions including lower salaries than Maltese counterparts, non-recognition of qualifications and the resulting downgrading, multiple discriminations against women, a lack of awareness of rights among victims, and non-reporting of discrimination.¹⁷

We were told that Maltese society has not yet fully accepted the notion of a foreign workers and prefers to call them 'experts' as if they have a special knowledge that cannot be found in Malta. Whilst this may indeed be the case in some highly skilled sectors, it hardly accounts for the majority of foreign workers in Malta. Certain groups seem to be classified as 'communities' because they are associated with specific types of work, for example the Indians in retail and health, the Swedes (who run the casinos and the burgeoning online gaming industry), and many from former-Yugoslavia who are in the creative industries.

Turning specifically to the labour market in Valletta we were unable to obtain any hard data. However, we were told that very few TCNs are running businesses as they are expensive to set up, in particular due to high rent and property prices. Neither do many TCNs get jobs in the local service economy. Many Filipinos are involved in care work and Serbians and Ukrainians are notable in construction. It was stated that clientelism still secures most of the important positions in the local economy. However, the Mayor of Valletta stated that he had never had to deal with cases of exploitation in the local labour market.

Most shops in Valletta employ people from Valletta. However, many waiters and shop assistants do not speak Maltese and some locals are put off by this. There are reports that many Sicilians are coming to Valletta opening businesses, restaurants, bringing competition and improving standards of restaurants.

A note of alarm was sounded that because Malta offered so few opportunities to highly-skilled TCNs they were likely to leave through resettlement to Europe or the US. It was feared that Malta was losing the best minds, because the government would not provide the papers and support to enable them to settle.

7. Governance and democratic participation

Valletta is a small municipality, smaller even than a single electoral ward or neighbourhood in most other ICC member cities. The City Council and municipal administration is correspondingly small and with limited powers and responsibilities.

The city administration functions through a council of seven members elected by the registered voters living in the city. The Council is headed by the Mayor, the political head of the city government, who is currently Dr. Alexiei Dingli who represents the Nationalist Party, and also works at the University as a Professor of Artificial Intelligence. The post of Mayor is awarded to the councillor who receives the highest number of votes from the political grouping, which has the majority of seats.

The Executive Secretary, the financial head of the council is appointed by the council and heads the administrative office. The majority of councillors in the Valletta Local Council is currently held by the Nationalist Party (affiliated to the European People's Party), while the rest is made up of members elected on the ticket of the Malta Labour Party (affiliated to the European Socialists).

¹⁷ Urso, G., & Schuster, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Migration, Employment and Labour Market Integration Policies in the European Union*. International Organization for Migration.

We were told that long term foreign residents can vote in elections but it is not easy to get on to the Electoral Register or to participate in elections. Most election literature is in Maltese only and many would-be voters are unable to register or do it too late. Most foreigners are described as 'aliens' for purposes of voting.

Our attention was not drawn to any forms of political participation outside the traditional scope of electoral representative governance in Malta, for example deliberative democracy, participative budgeting or interactive use of new media.

Because of the limited administrative capacity of Valletta City Council it is difficult to imagine it playing the predominant role of leadership and coordination that is expected of a municipality in other Intercultural Cities. Perhaps the most appropriate way forward would be for a shared responsibility in this respect between the City Council, SOS Malta which impeded the city's ICC membership and organised the expert visit, and which has a very committed and experienced team, and the V18 organisation (of which the Mayor is the vice-chair), which has a dedicated administrative team.

It would be useful to look at the key services provided by the municipality and ask whether they could be reconfigured to enhance ethnic mixing and understanding. The city should also ask itself how the presence of migrants could offer new or better ways of delivering services to the whole population, thus offering a diversity advantage.

8. Civil society

Valletta/Malta has a small but active civil society in the field of immigration and diversity. Indeed, it is the organisation SOS Malta (SOSM) which, as pointed above, has been the driving force behind Valletta's candidacy to ICC.

SOSM was set up in 1991 to help and to empower people in crisis, both in Malta and internationally. Its main activities are:

- Overseas development, particularly in Uganda;
- Social solidarity and integration - including the Valletta Living Together Project (VLT).
- Research and training;
- Volunteering eg in hospitals; and,

VLT was set up to promote integration and intercultural exchange, extending to the whole of Malta. It ran a conference 2 years ago which concluded with the target of joining ICC¹⁸, and set itself the objectives of:

- Increasing policy-making and activity
- Mainstreaming integration
- Embedding an understanding of a 2-way process of integration
- Developing a strategic plan.

VLT has already set up an ICC support network and a best practice study group, and already uses key concepts and terminology (such as the Intercultural Lens) in its literature and presentations, which impressed us.

SOSM has a track record of relevant projects, for example:

¹⁸ <http://www.sosmalta.org/interculturalmalta>

- There was need for more local stories of diversity in Malta so, with SOSM's encouragement, the national broadcasting company ran twelve 30 minute documentaries on the lifestyles of different TCN groups, known as the Media InterAct Project (2011 - 2012)¹⁹
- Side By Side produced three newspapers on people living together²⁰

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Malta seeks to accompany, serve and defend the rights of asylum seekers and forcibly displaced persons who arrive in Malta, particularly those who are confined in detention centres. Each arrival's story bears witness to traumatised, disrupted pasts but also to a remarkable will to survive against all odds. JRS Malta specializes in the field of legal assistance and social work services (including healthcare and psychological support), awareness-raising in schools and spiritual care. The aim is to assist with immediate needs while encouraging and enabling the longer term goal of self-sufficiency. The JRS Malta team includes lawyers, social workers, a nurse, Jesuit priests and religious, cultural mediators, outreach workers and administrative staff complemented by a number of regular volunteers.

There are several organisations representing various national groups resident in Malta. For example the Filipino Association, which estimates that 50% of this mainly female group are the wives of local people, and 50% of these are illegal or in marriages of convenience. Also many other Filipinos are based on ships for much of their lives so find it difficult to establish roots or access land-based services. Valletta also has Chinese, Russian and Spanish cultural centres.

The Organisation for Friendship and Diversity organises Summer Camps and this year was successful in having refugee, migrant and Maltese children all participating together.

A comprehensive survey of Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Groups and Housing in Malta was produced in 2012.²¹

As progress towards an intercultural strategy proceeds there will be a need to identify people with sectoral expertise, particularly from civil society, to take on high profile championing roles on key issues of the agenda.

9. Culture

Valletta will be the European Capital of Culture for 2018 and an organisation V18 is already established and fully operational. SOSM's hope is to connect Valletta's membership of ICC to the preparations for V18²², thus creating a three year run-in for the preparation and implementation of an intercultural strategy. V18's director Karsten Xuereb is in accord with this proposal and is looking forward to working in cooperation with ICC. Valletta is planning to spend about €50M on preparing and running the year and its four main themes will be: education, skills, community, events.

In preparation V18 is initiating some joint research with the University. A Cultural Mapping project of the whole island will gather detailed knowledge of Malta's tangible and intangible cultural resources. Stage 1 will explore what are the physical spaces of culture, looking particularly at issues of inclusion or exclusion. Stage 2 will enquire into the human infrastructure. Because Valletta and Malta currently lacks both hard data and cultural knowledge about its ethnic diversity, this research offers an important basis upon which to develop an intercultural strategy. We are particularly pleased to see that it will not simply record the obvious points,

¹⁹ <http://sosmalta.org/mediainteract>

²⁰ <http://www.sosmalta.org/sidebyside>

²¹ Marika Fsadni and Dr Maria Pisani (2012) *I'm Not Racist But... Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Groups and Housing in Malta - A Research Study*. M. FSADNI & Associates. At <http://tinyurl.com/mntvdx4>

²² <http://valletta2018.org/>

but will delve into sensitive issues like identity, accessibility and exclusion, because these are at the heart of Malta's complex cultural ecology.

In his book *Ambivalent Europeans*²³ John Mitchell argues that Malta is a nation walking an uneasy tightrope between embracing the 21st century and adherence to ancient cultural traditions. There remains a great potency in ritual particularly the island's *festi* (feasts), which are used as a means for resolving and expressing anxieties about 'tradition' and 'modernity'. There is a pervasive nostalgia that characterises contemporary Malta, where 'modernisation' and 'Europeanisation' are seen to threaten values, even when they promise greater affluence and economic stability. He also argues that religion, in the form of the Roman Catholic Church, still retains a pervasive influence over key institutions and social practices that is no longer known in the rest of Europe – not least in processes of receiving and integrating migrants.

Valletta seemed to embody these paradoxes of ancient and modern living side by side. The Catholic Church has and continues to play a role that, in other societies, might have devolved to the state or civil society. Not least of course the JRS, and the MEC already mentioned above. We also learned that the Catholics probably have a more detailed understanding of the living conditions and lifestyles of native Vallettans than any state or academic body. On an annual basis Church officials visit every single dwelling in order to administer a blessing, and their findings are recorded.

Other ancient institutions which still play an active role in contemporary Valletta are the festa and band clubs. Band clubs continue to be an essential part of community life far beyond the playing of music for the patron saint. The band club's premises, known as *Il-Kazin tal-Banda*, is usually a meeting point for neighbours and becomes a catalyst for many social connections. The annual parish festa provides the climax of excitement, with rivalry quite the norm when two or more band clubs exist in the same area. Club followers may paint themselves from head to toe in blue or green or any colour representative of their club for the occasion of the festa, while the band members are dressed in their finest with shiny brass instruments to flaunt their skills. Spectacular firework displays are also often involved. Usually a *Xalata* is organised so that hundreds of members of the community can enjoy a day at the beach together as an extended celebration of the festa. This usually involves truck-loads of people sporting the afore-mentioned colour to show allegiance to the particular band club, singing chants and causing a theatrical scene on the road.

Clearly these traditions could offer some of the best opportunities for newcomers and outsiders to meet and engage with local people – although we were not given any evidence that they are fulfilling such a role at present, and may even be becoming more exclusive. Valletta would be well advised to look at examples of how traditional cultures have opened up to diversity elsewhere. In Catalonia the *castellars* have admitted people of diverse backgrounds into their ranks, as have the Basque gastronomic clubs in San Sebastian.

Sport also offers a 'level playing field' for forming new relationships. Only two years ago the Maltese Football Association would not accept migrants but has now changed its stance. Recently the netball and basketball leagues have followed suit. Some local sports clubs host nurseries and are an effective site for mixing

Currently no reference to diversity is made in the criteria for the Malta Council for Culture & the Arts' cultural grants. However, a quarter of the projects supported by the President's Creativity Award Scheme were diversity related.

²³ Mitchell, J. P. (2002). *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, memory and the public sphere in Malta*. Psychology Press.

10. Language and multilingualism

Maltese is the constitutional national language of Malta, having become official, however, only in 1934 before which Italian was the official and cultural language of Malta. Alongside Maltese, English (imposed by the British occupiers after 1800) is also an official language and laws are enacted both in Maltese and English. However, the Constitution states that if there is any conflict between the Maltese and the English texts of any law, the Maltese text shall prevail. Maltese is a Semitic language descended from the now defunct Sicilian-Arabic dialect (from southern Italy), but with substantial borrowing from Sicilian, Italian, a little French, and more recently and increasingly, English. The hybrid history of Maltese is characterised by the existence of different dialects that can vary greatly from one town to another or from one island to another. All the native population speak Maltese whilst 88% also speak English, or Italian (66%), or French (17%). This widespread knowledge of second languages makes Malta one of the most multilingual countries in the European Union.

Maltese language can be learnt through a good lifelong learning service which charges only basic fees. Many public documents and announcements are also made in English but the coverage can be patchy. During the EU elections, for example, all the official communications were in Maltese only, as were all brochures explaining the Valletta festa. Some important forms (eg for Child Benefit) are only published in Maltese. The Mayor said that language was a big issue for him and that communal tension was often caused by miscommunication, for example when foreign residents don't know the rules on waste disposal. He personally felt he was able to communicate well enough with all ethnic/language communities in Valletta, except he could not find a channel through which to reach the Chinese.

The Ministry of Education is working on extra language support and mother tongue teaching. In daily communication people switch to English when people require it. The biggest issue is about language support for non-Maltese speakers who are users of basic services, eg hospital. There is only one migrant working in the hospital, but now thanks to SOSM seven migrants are being trained and will work on language and cultural mediation in hospitals.

11. Public space, neighbourhoods and ethnic mixing

General opinion seemed to be that there were few places in Valletta where local and foreign residents could meet on a regular basis, beyond the bars and heritage sites. The challenge in particular is to create places where families and children can interact more easily at no cost. The basement of St Andrews Scottish Church provides a popular space that attracts many families. Otherwise the best places for social mixing were said to be the playgrounds (particularly the one in Sliema). The city has a network of popular youth drop-in cafes but we were told that they are not used well by migrants. This seems like a missed opportunity.

Out on the streets there was mixed experiences of hospitality and hostility. We were told that the Maltese are given to wearing their heart on their sleeve and to openly expressing their opinions of each other (or of strangers) in public. This did lead to some very uncomfortable and hurtful encounters. One Swedish woman was even told to go home by a policeman. We were told a story of a group of black American basketball players who, when they are playing, are accepted but when out on the street they are abused and told to go home. Some people said that whilst this explicit behaviour could be hurtful, they would prefer it to a culture which was more closed in which people never expressed their true feelings. Some foreign residents have had eggs thrown at their doors soon after arriving in a neighbourhood but they did not take this to be xenophobia but rather parochialism which might equally be directed at native Maltese. They reported that once they showed they were there to stay it stopped and they were accepted. We noted that these cases of conflict represented the exception rather than the norm.

The Catholic Church has a strong ecumenical relationship with other faiths and in November they will host a multifaith conference for refugees of all faiths.

12. Conflict and mediation

Whilst there had recently been a peaceful anti-immigrant protest by about 200 people, the Mayor said that he was not alarmed by such demonstrations and it was better to allow such outlets for public anger than to drive them underground. People were worried that what was happening in Lampedusa would be repeated in Malta. His belief is that public anger grows when people fear that their leaders no longer care, but his intention was to actively demonstrate his concern and leadership. He did admit that Valletta probably needed a more structured forum for consultation on such issues. However, he did not see cultural diversity as the principal source of tension in the city. Poor social housing was a big problem, owing to the government's failure to maintain investment regimes. The worst case of public anger in recent times had been when the YMCA had opened a house for the homeless in a neighbourhood. He said that Valletta is a tough place regardless of whether you are foreign or local.

It did seem to us that there was an absence of professional mediation and conflict resolution in the public domain, and that Valletta might be advised to study examples from other cities in the ICC, for example Reggio Emilia or the Catalan city of Vic. The ICC project SPARDA has also shown that if there is strong leadership across the board with good media relations and provision of accurate information, within a good strategy, it is possible to create a more positive climate for ethnic mixing in neighbourhoods. However, the Mayor felt that presently Valletta was well able to manage any disputes which might arise within its current resources and expertise.

13. Media

The media was not actively involved during the visit. It did report the visit of the ICC team with a reasonable level of accuracy, although it did portray the visit as arising from the actions of SOSM rather than being officially sanctioned by the City Council.

Some said to us that there was a need for the media to detach its reporting of immigration from the wider idea of diversity in Malta, as this tended to paint everything with a uniformly negative image. It would be a good idea to introduce help for community media emerge and to reach out to migrant communities with information about rights and responsibilities, as well as to inform with public discourse with richer and more accurate information about diversity in Malta.

A troubling fact was the overwhelmingly negative and hateful comments on the online fora of newspapers (about the visit and previously about the new government integration web site and about SOS Malta) against migrants and diversity. Presumably these comments belong to a tiny but very vocal minority but the lack of public mobilisation and legal responses to those which clearly cross the limits of what is acceptable in a democratic society, poses questions.

14. Welcoming

In the current embattled climate with an official government stance which highlights the detention and removal of irregular migrants, an unwillingness to acknowledge labour market reliance of foreign workers in some sectors, and persistent taboos about normalising multiculturalism, the institution of specific actions to 'welcome' foreigners would seem a difficult ask. Everyone we spoke to agreed there should be a one-stop welcoming centre but the government prefers the detention centre to be the public symbol of its policy.

Irregular migrants can face a maximum of 18 months detention but the average stay is around six months. Vulnerable people and children should legally not be confined in detention centres, but should go to open centres, but we were told of cases where this was contravened.

People who have been in open centres for any period of time can fear the prospect of moving on into the community in case they lose their jobs or home and are then not readmitted into the system and lose the monthly stipend. The MEC provides lodgings for 400 people in their centres and support for those who are out of work.

15. Summary of the Intercultural Cities Index

The Intercultural City Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 69 questions grouped in 14 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators have been weighed for relative importance. For each indicator, the participating cities can reach up to 100 points (which are consolidated for the general ICC Index).²⁴

These indicators comprise: commitment; education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces; mediation and conflict resolution; language; media; international outlook; intelligence/competence; welcoming and governance. Some of these indicators - education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces are grouped in a composite indicator called “urban policies through the intercultural lens” or simply “intercultural lens”.

According to the overall index results, Valletta has been positioned 58th among the 64 cities in the sample, with an aggregate intercultural city index of 37%, the same as the city of Reykjavik in Iceland, between the Romanian city of Constanta (35%) and the city of Cartagena (40%) in Spain. Valletta has been ranked 29th among cities with less than 200,000 inhabitants and 29th among cities with less than 15 per cent of foreign-born residents.

Our initial response to these finding was that they did not seem to reflect the full picture that we had observed during our visit and that some doubt might be cast upon their accuracy. It subsequently came to our attention that the Index questionnaire had been completed by only one person, an elected member of the City Council. In our opinion, the Index Questionnaire was designed in such a way as to make it impossible to be completed by only one individual or even one department, and that collaboration and cross-referencing was a prerequisite. This may mean that the Index does not tell a true story and may need to be reviewed and completed again by a cross-disciplinary team. We were subsequently pleased to learn that this would indeed be the case.

In the absence of this, the results of the current ICC Index suggest that in Valletta there is still ample room for improvement in the intercultural policies. The municipality could identify useful insights and examples from other cities in the field of commitment, culture, public spaces, outlook policy, intelligence/competence practices and governance. Special attention should be paid to media, language and mediation policies.

On the other hand, Valletta’s achievements in the area of neighbourhood, business and welcoming are higher than the city sample.

In view of the above, we invite Valletta to strengthen in most of the policy areas and improve in the policy areas detailed below.

When it comes to Valletta’s intercultural efforts, with reference to the survey, the city could enhance them in the sectors below by introducing different initiatives:

²⁴ The detailed results of Valletta’s response to the ICC Index can be consulted at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/cities/Index/Valletta.pdf>

- **Commitment:** Valletta might consider ameliorating its intercultural commitment by adopting a public statement about being an intercultural city, by implementing an intercultural strategy, an action plan, as well as by assessing the possibility of having a dedicated body/cross-departmental coordination structure to lead the implementation of the intercultural strategy. The city may also implement an evaluation process.
- **Education:** Valletta might consider ameliorating its intercultural education approach by ensuring that the ethnic background of teachers mirrors the diverse population in local schools.
- **Public services:** Valletta may wish to lay down a specific recruitment strategy to ensure that the ethnic background of public employees at higher level mirrors that of the city's inhabitants. The municipality may also wish to deploy services which are tailored to the needs of the ethnic/cultural background of its citizens.
- **Business and labour market:** Valletta may wish to ameliorate its policies in this field by encouraging 'business districts/incubators'. It may be also interesting to give priority to companies with a diversity strategy in the procurement of goods and services.
- **Cultural and civil life:** Valletta may wish to ameliorate its cultural and civil life policies by setting interculturalism as a criterion when allocating grants to associations and initiatives, by organizing regularly events and debate on the topic of cultural diversity and encouraging people from different communities to mix.
- **Public space:** Valletta may wish to take into account the population diversity and involve citizens from different ethnic/cultural background in the design and management of new public buildings or spaces, as well as when dealing with the reconstruction of areas.
- **Mediation and conflict resolution:** Valletta may wish to ameliorate its intercultural mediation policies by establishing a dedicated municipal service dealing exclusively with intercultural issues and providing intercultural mediation in specialized institutions such as hospitals, police, youth clubs, mediation centres and retirement homes. It may also wish to initiate an organisation dealing specifically with inter-religious relations.
- **Language:** Valletta may wish to ameliorate its language policies in the future, for example by ensuring that all of the city's citizens are eligible to receive training in immigrant/minority languages and by supporting private/civil sector institutions in providing language training in migrant/minority languages. Valletta may also find it interesting to provide specific language training for specific groups; to introduce the learning of minority languages to the regular school curriculum; to introduce awareness measures aiming to give a positive image of migrant/minority languages and to provide financial assistance to minority press, radio and TV programmes.
- **Media:** Valletta may wish to further explore possible media policies, for instance, by providing advocacy/media training/mentorships for journalists from minority backgrounds and by instructing the city's information service to promote harmonious intercultural relations. Valletta may also wish to introduce monitoring mechanisms to examine how media portray minorities.
- **International outlook:** Valletta may wish to ameliorate its international outlook policies by setting up an explicit policy to encourage international cooperation and by encouraging co-development projects with migrant groups' countries of origin.

- **Intelligence and competence:** Valletta may wish to further explore promoting the intercultural competences of the city's officials and staff through training courses; and carrying out surveys including questions about the perception of migrants and minorities, as well as mainstreaming the findings and information about interculturalism and diversity to inform the process of policy formulation.
- **Governance:** Valletta may wish to further explore possible governance policies by setting up a political body representing ethnic minorities and dealing with integration and diversity matters. The city might also introduce activities to increase the representation of migrants in the city administration and establish a standard for the representation of migrant minorities in mandatory bodies supervising schools and public services.

Valletta may wish to look into further examples implemented by other Intercultural Cities as a source of learning and inspiration to guide future initiatives. Such examples are provided in the Intercultural cities database²⁵.

16. Conclusions

Valletta's engagement in Intercultural cities comes at a particularly appropriate moment when the national government is ready to develop a comprehensive integration policy and the city is rethinking its identity and future through the powerful European Cultural Capital process which mobilises a range of public and private stakeholders and significant resources. Several committed and experienced organisations have the capacity, if they manage to work in synergy, to federate the efforts of the many professionals and activists who are keen to contribute to the development of an intercultural strategy for Valletta. Unlike most other ICC member cities, Valletta's strategy will be civil society driven which is a guarantee for its anchoring in the local community and a range of organisations and thus its sustainability.

²⁵ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/guidance_en.asp

Appendix

Valletta Living Together (VLT)

Expert Meeting – 7th/ 8th October 2014

Dar l-Ewropa, Valletta, Malta

Draft Programme

First Day	Location: Dar l-Ewropa Valletta
09.00 – 09.30	Registration
09.30 – 10:30	Introductory Meeting and presentation on ICC Prof Alexiei Dingli – Mayor of Valletta ICC Experts present concept (press present)
10.30-12.30	Open debate on diversity in the city and its evolution Multi - Stakeholder meeting
12.30-13:30	Lunch at Dar L-Ewropa
14.00-15.30	Meeting with Emigrants commission with residents of Valletta, TCN communities, NGOs and religious stakeholders at Emigrants Commission (TBC)
15.30-16.00	Coffee Break
16.00-17.30	Meeting with the V18 board members and other cultural stakeholders at V18 offices (TBC)
Second day	
9.00-10.30	Meeting with business stakeholders including TCN businesses at chamber of Commerce
10.30-11.00	Coffee Break
11.00-12.30	Meeting with Valletta Local Council members and government representatives at Dar l-Ewropa
12.30-13.30	Lunch at Dar l-Ewropa- including discussing next steps with SOS Malta team and ICC team. Coffee

13.30-15.00	Debriefing meeting at Dar l-Ewropa on outcomes, ideas and next steps. ICSN members + VLC members+ SOS Malta Staff
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