

MALTA NATIONAL REPORT ON MIGRATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

Activity 1.1.1: Audit on migration, sustainability and development education

Version 1 prepared in March 2018

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Document Version Control

Version	Date	Description
1	19.03.2018	Draft 1 (by Kopin)
1.1	26.03.2018	Reviewed by DDG
2.1	12.04.2018	Draft 2 (by Kopin)
2.2	26.04.2018	Final by DDG



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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Migration is a defining feature of this century and contributes to economic and social development everywhere: indeed, it is key to achieving the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Overseas Development Institute, 2017). One of the 10 targets set down by Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aims to “reduce inequality within and among countries” is to “[f]acilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. Other goals relating to migration include Goal 4, which talks about student mobility; and Goals 5, 8 and 16, which relate to trafficking in human beings. Finally, other goals aim at ensuring equality for all in all areas of life, including rights to economic resources, access to nutritious and sufficient food, access to health, education and decent work, as well as access to adequate and affordable housing to all (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2018; Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, 2018). However, the positive correlations between migration and sustainable development, including decreased unemployment and enriched human capital have “often been underestimated or misunderstood” (UNITAR, 2012).

In Malta, as this report indicates, a dearth of these positive correlations can be found in multiple sectors of society: in the education sector, in the local media, at policy and governmental level, as well as at a public level. The lack of links between migration and sustainable development is not aided by the existing attitudes towards migration, but also towards sustainable development. Negative attitudes towards the former stem from various unfounded reasons, not the least of which are those surrounding employment. Indeed, despite the fact that Malta’s unemployment is extremely low: in the third quarter of 2017 it stood at 4.0 %, the lowest jobless rate since at least 2001 (Trading Economics, 2018); and that Malta’s economic growth is one of the strongest in Europe (International Monetary Fund, 2017), there are still fears surrounding migration in relation to employment as well as in other aspects of societal life. As will be seen in the following sections, fear and negative attitudes are fuelled, or at the very least often not addressed, by media and political discourse. Recent incidents have also unearthed prejudiced attitudes at a judicial level, as demonstrated by a magistrate acquitting a man accused of inciting racial hatred through social media towards a Muslim woman, with the magistrate ruling that the man was simply expressing an opinion (Agius, 2018a).

Meanwhile, there seems to be a lack of awareness, in different levels of the Maltese society, of what sustainable development truly entails, with the concept being often equated with environmental and natural issues. And, while on the one hand, the social and economic aspects of sustainable development are often ignored (thus also making it harder to link to migration unless it is with relation to climate change, a concept which, regardless, many



Maltese do not seem to equate with their country), these are often equated with poverty and thus with developing countries.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

It is in this environment that the Maltese educational institutions are situated. Teachers and students are part of society, and classrooms and schools, as emphasised by the focus group participants¹, are part of communities. In view of the issues laid out in the previous section, the need for further exploration of the tools and resources needed to address these issues is evident. This study thus attempts to unpack the factors influencing attitudes, opinions, policies and driving forces behind the concepts surrounding migration and sustainable development discourses in Malta, in order to better inform the process of developing beneficial tools and resources in targeting the perception and understanding of these interrelated topics, and ultimately lived experiences of migrants and ‘host’ communities in an interdependent world.

1.3 Available Data and Resources

Various resources were used in the carrying out of this research, including national and EU-level surveys, local news sources, local and international literature (including NGO websites and research reports), and national policies, legislation and strategies. There are very limited available national surveys or policies looking into both aspects of the research, that is, migration and sustainable development as interrelated topics, and thus the sources used were often ones which dealt with each topic separately.

1.4 Limitations

The major limitations in this research study relate to three main factors, the first being that some requested interviews which could have shed further light on the topics being researched failed to materialise, thus limiting the completeness of the picture presented. This is also related to the second limiting factor, that is, the rather short timeframe allocated for this research project, which is, in turn, linked to the third factor, that being the vastness of the topics explored (and their interconnectedness), which needed to be looked at from multiple aspects and in different settings, as well as reported on in the limits of a short report. Due to this, the same report might not altogether have done justice to the richness of the interrelation between the subjects which were explored.

¹ See Chapter 3.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Public Opinion²

Introduction

According to the latest Eurobarometer³ results on public opinion in the EU, 32% of people in Malta think immigration is one of the most important issues faced by Malta at the moment. The other two most cited issues were crime (45%) and the environment, climate and energy issues (22%). 72% of Maltese are in favour of a common European policy on migration (Eurobarometer, 2017a). 91% of Maltese are very and somewhat concerned about irregular migration; while 31% believe that the main objective of the government is to limit migration (Foundation for the Promotion of Social Inclusion Malta (FOPSIM), 2018).

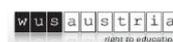
Attitudes towards migration, migrants and refugees

A research study commissioned by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) Malta on housing discrimination concluded that widespread racism and xenophobia, which are grounded in stereotypical beliefs, seem to have an impact on migrants and ethnic minorities living in Malta. The research suggests that certain migrants and ethnic minorities are subjected to a racialisation process, which is possibly grounded in historical constructs that have filtered into the present times. It documents various degrees of abuse by neighbours and property owners, including non-verbal abuse, intimidation and harassment. The research also suggests that racist discourse and practices have become normalised and are conducted with a sense of impunity, so much so that in extreme cases some estate agents even include discriminatory provisos in their written contracts. This results in limited housing opportunities for migrants and ethnic minorities, possibly contributing to the development of ethnic clusters and involuntary segregation, which in turn may fuel and maintain racialised beliefs, thus creating a vicious cycle (Fsadni & Pisani, 2012).

The emphasis on fear of African national and Arabs, which emerged from the above mentioned research, is confirmed by a survey commissioned by the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, where the researchers comment that one recurring theme during the survey was the distinction, by respondents, between different categories of foreigners: many spoke favourably of “rich” migrants who contribute to the economy, and negatively of “poor” migrants, which includes migrants who entered Malta irregularly (Media Today, 2015). The survey found that 48.6 % of respondents were in favour of an integration policy. When seen in view of the fact that 13.4 % replied that it ‘depends’ and 10.6 % were

² This section limits itself to studies published from 2012 onwards, since the migration situation (such as the sources of migration and the situation of detention and open centres for migrants) has changed in recent years.

³ The National Statistics Office (<https://nso.gov.mt>) has no recent statistics on the public’s perception of migration, sustainable development or national security.



not sure, this suggests, as the researchers state, a “lukewarm support for integration policies”. Furthermore, before the term ‘integration policy’ was explained, 47.4 % of the respondents did not know what it meant. However, the study found that the percentage of respondents who are in favour of an integration policy increases (to 55.8 %) when they know a foreign national living in Malta by name, and decreases (to 39.7 %) when respondents do not know a foreigner by name. The major reasons given by those who replied that it ‘depends’ were that they are in favour of an integration policy as long as the numbers are limited and they respect the Maltese laws and rules, and that it depends on the migrants’ nationality and on whether they entered Malta legally. Meanwhile, those who replied ‘no’ to a government-backed integration policy gave various reasons, with the major one being that Malta is too small (19.8 %), followed by the fear that they will take over Malta (12.2 %), that there are too many foreigners (11.5 %). Other noteworthy reasons were that they take Maltese people’s jobs, that more of them will come (both at 7.2 %) and that they are not civilized or are inferior (6.5 %). Similar reasons were given when respondents were asked what their greatest worry about the presence of foreigners in Malta were, with the most cited one being that they take Maltese jobs (21.6 %) and that Malta is too small (17.9 %). However, in this case, 9.0 % mentioned religious extremism, while 5.5 % mentioned crime and the same amount mentioned that they bring disease. Among other reasons were that they will take over Malta (5.3 %), and that Maltese are losing their identity (4.2 %).

The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) found that Malta’s mean score for ‘students’ attitudes toward equal rights for immigrants’ (48.0) was significantly lower than the ICCS international average (50). Maltese female students, particularly those attending independent schools, were more in favour of equal rights for immigrants than males. When evaluating head of schools’ opinions of sources of social tension, Malta’s mean scale score for ‘ethnic and religious conflict’ (50.3) was marginally higher than the ICCS international average (50) (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2016).

It is worth noting that the perception held by the public that the majority of migrants living in Malta is made up of sub-Saharan asylum-seekers is unfounded (PfC & Integra Foundation, 2016). This perception might also be related to the fact that around half of the Maltese population do not consider people from other EU countries as migrants (FOPSIM, 2018). Furthermore, UNHCR Malta (2018) data shows that in 2017, the largest number of asylum applications was made by migrants originating from Syria and Libya. Indeed, the highest number of people from a non-EU country registered as residents in Malta in December 2017 were from Libya (3622), followed by Serbia (2757), the Philippines (2047) and the Russian Federation (2027) (Costa, 2017). A similar situation has been recorded over the last few years: in 2015, 49% of asylum applications in Malta were made by Libyan nationals, while 23% of them were made by Syrians (National Statistics Office, 2016).

Attitudes towards national security risks

Interestingly, a study looking at the Maltese public’s perceptions of refugees and migrants in Malta suggests that the majority of respondents (54 %) are not very concerned that their way of life is under threat from migration. However, this number increases among respond-



ents who live in localities close to Ħal Far, a town in the South of Malta where there are three reception facilities (open centres) for refugees and asylum seekers, as well as an immigration detention centre (UNHCR Malta, 2012). Furthermore, as shown in the next section, there are concerns about the increasing crime rate in certain areas of Malta, which is attributed to migrants. A survey found that 58% of Maltese believe that migration affects the spread of crime (FOPSIM, 2018). A recent court case in which the presiding magistrate commented on the “increasing number of crimes being committed by a small number of foreigners” (Agius, 2018b) perpetuates the idea that Maltese should be worried about crimes committed by foreigners.

Attitudes towards sustainable development and environmental issues

Only 4 in 10 (38%) citizens living in Malta are aware of the SDGs (Eurobarometer, 2017b). With regards to environmental issues, according to a survey conducted by InsightPolls in November 2015, traffic (43%) and immigration (20%) were seen as two of the major issues facing Malta (Corporate Identities, 2018). In a commentary by Briguglio (2015) on another InsightPolls survey conducted earlier in the same year, she comments that the fact that for many Maltese, pollution is the main issue (right after immigration) facing Malta⁴ is not surprising, since, among other factors, the Maltese own more cars per person than almost any other European country; and air pollution is high in localities where housing intensification is ongoing, thus exposing more people to pollution and generating more traffic.

However, a Eurobarometer on attitudes towards the environment reports that 90% of Maltese believe they can play a role in protecting the environment (Eurobarometer, 2014). A study found what seems to be corresponding evidence, that is, that Maltese exhibit voluntary pro-environmental behaviour without any financial incentives in the case of recycling behaviour; although some influencing factors were observed, such as the fact that recycling rates decreased in lower-income, more densely populated, and having a high number of tourists per-capita localities; and increased in localities having pro-government sentiments (Briguglio, Delaney and Wood, 2015). These findings, however, were not confirmed by the fieldwork research, where a certain amount scepticism as to Maltese’s behaviour in protecting the environment emerged⁵.

Conclusion

In the light of the findings from this first section, a strong connection emerges between the general public’s perceptions and its prevalent negative attitudes towards migration in Malta, especially in relation to security issues. Meanwhile, when looking at the Maltese public’s attitudes towards sustainable development and the environment, it is important to note that sustainable development is mainly considered in its environmental sense and mostly addressed in terms of mobility and pollution issues, with a minority of the population being

⁴ 25% of adults in Malta mentioned the environment (mainly air quality and buildings in the countryside) as the key issue that Malta faced at the time and another 20% mentioned traffic as Malta’s biggest problem (Briguglio, 2015).

⁵ See section 3.2.



aware of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. In the framework of the InterCap project, it becomes crucial to address bias on migration and raise awareness about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all its aspects. This translates into the need for the provision of data and information on migration from reliable local and international sources to educators and learners alike, as well as raising awareness on existing relatable good practices fostering mutual exchange and integration, as well as on the SDGs in their entirety.

2.2 Media Response

Introduction

Based on a study commissioned by UNHCR Malta on public perceptions of refugees and migrants in Malta in 2012, UNHCR Malta suggest that the picture appears more complex compared with how these views are often portrayed by Maltese media (UNHCR Malta, 2012). Furthermore, in Malta there is a difference between independent newspapers / media newsrooms and those owned by political parties: the former seems to have a more balanced approach, perhaps more oriented towards evidence-based news. On the other hand, political party-owned newsrooms tend to give importance to news that rely on official statements coming from policy-makers, simply backing them out of duty, and without necessarily analysing those statements in depth. The topics of migration and sustainable development and migration and national security are linked by the media only sporadically; however local independent newspapers often carry out more in-depth research and offer a better, and more informed link, between migration, sustainable development and national security, as opposed to other newsrooms owned by political parties (Moncada, 2018). Even so, there are different reporting styles between independent newsrooms, styles which play a role in influencing public opinion.

Media response to Asylum, Migration and Integration

The Times of Malta (ToM), an English-language daily newspaper whose website is the most accessed newspaper website in Malta (Alexa, 2018), reported that between 2015 and June 2017, more than three quarters of crimes carried out in Marsa were carried out by Maltese nationals (ToM, 2017a). Marsa, a town in the South Eastern region of Malta, has had an influx of migrants as a result of the presence of the biggest open centre hosting single men on the island, and has often been the centre of controversy on the migrant situation of Malta, the latest of which culminated in a solidarity walk by Marsa residents in September 2017, in view of increase in crime which the residents attributed to immigrants (TVM, 2017). But while TVM, the national television station, uses headlines such as “Protest in Marsa against criminality by immigrants”, irrespective as to whether the large part of criminality is caused by immigrants, the Times of Malta tempers the hysteria that is evoked by such headlines with headlines such as in the article referred to above, that is “77% of crimes in Marsa were committed by Maltese”.



Regardless, racialised beliefs continue to be rife even in view of such evidence to the contrary, with views ranging from blaming different ethnic groups (including migrants from Eastern Europe) for high crime rates to blaming such articles as incorrect. This seems to indicate the impenetrability of racialised views and the lack of impact awareness raising has on racism and xenophobia, both of which continue to flourish. This is shown by the uproar which ensued following the government’s proposal to move the migrant open centre from Marsa to Birżebbuġa, a microcosm of which can be seen in the readers’ reactions to the article by The Malta Independent (2017a), another daily English-language newspaper, where members of the public go so far as to state that “After ruining Marsa it is time to ruin Birżebbuġa”, and telling migrants to go back to their own country, an oft-heard statement in Malta. Once again, the reporting of this news piece brings to the fore the difference in the styles of reporting between local newspapers, where the newspapers such as The Malta Independent limited themselves to reporting politicians’ and authorities’ views, while the Times of Malta (2017b) also reports on the migrant community’s take on the issue, who reached out to the government for talks. Bias-eliciting on issues related to migration is shown through various media outlets, including, as mentioned previously, TVM. An example of this is the reporting on an issue which arose in 2016, when a group of Muslims met several times to pray in a public space in front of a Catholic church, eliciting controversial views from the public. An article by TVM (2016), headlined “Msida Muslims claim they are only praying and not inconveniencing anybody”, continues to state that some of the Muslims brought “prayer mats which they spread about the wharf right in front of a traditional Christmas tree”. While the wording of statements in the article and its headline seem to seek to channel the readers’ views into viewing this event as an affront to the Maltese Catholics, the Times of Malta (2016), once again, attempts to present a more balanced view and cites the reason for the group of Muslims praying in public, that is, their having been evicted from their usual meeting place and being, at the time, in search of new premises.

Media response to Climate Change, Environmental Issues and Sustainable Development

In recent years, some newspaper articles covering climate change issues regarding Malta were printed in the Times of Malta, discussing the possible impact of climate change (including global greenhouse gas emissions) on the country in the coming years and its relation to the rising temperatures on the island (ToM, 2018; ToM, 2014).

Both newspapers and social media contain multiple references to other environmental issues pertinent to Malta, with the most recent focus being on the continuous building of areas, including ODZ (outside development zones) ones (for example: Cacopardo, 2017a; Pace, 2017).

Conclusion

The analysis of the mainstream media discourse with regards to migration and related issues in Malta shows that there is a certain degree of bias in reporting on news items involv-



ing foreigners, evidence of which is mainly found in the use of language, especially when looking at state-owned and political parties-affiliated news agencies. It is also evident that, although environmental issues are sporadically addressed in some of the mainstream media, these are often linked to political events, as in the case of the concerns over ODZ development, which has sparked ongoing protests from civil society and intense political debate. In light of this, it would be appropriate to explore basic skills and tools to analyse and compare the use of language in mainstream media – as well as social media – when addressing reporting on migration issues, within training and awareness raising initiatives targeting educators and learners alike, in order for them to become aware of the influence language can exert on the shaping of public opinion, as well as to be able to recognise biased reporting and identify under-reported issues.

2.3 Research and Project Production

Introduction

Research and project production linking migration and sustainable development are scarce at a local level. One such project is described in the next section as an example of good practice. Meanwhile, this section mentions another and then gives a brief overview of some pertinent recent research studies and projects on migration or sustainable development / climate change, on a separate basis.

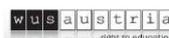
Migration and Sustainable Development

With regards to project production in relation to migration and sustainable development, it is perhaps worth mentioning an initiative carried out in 2017 by SKOP⁶, the national platform of Maltese development NGOs within the project “Educating 4 Change”. The platform organised a youth camp focusing on the issues of climate change and migration in the wider context of sustainable development, involving young participants (18 – 30 years old) from 17 different Mediterranean countries, who had the opportunity to come together and address these themes during a week-long event, which culminated in a conference where the youth presented their shared message (SKOP, 2017a).

Sustainable Development

In 2017, SKOP commissioned a research as part of an EU funded project, which explored Malta’s then current state of affairs and policy (both domestic and foreign) and how they relate to the areas outlined by each sustainable development goal (SDG). The study highlighted some of the key statistics, policies, achievements and challenges in Malta’s contribution towards the achievement of the SDGs. The study observed that the large part of the policies and legislation to which the study refers were enacted before the SDGs were established, and thus, while there are policies in place around each of the themes of the

⁶ ‘SKOP’ is an abbreviation of ‘*Solidarjeta’ u Koperazzjoni*’, which means ‘Solidarity and Cooperation’.



SDGs, the language and targets do not relate specifically to these goals. Furthermore, the study observes that the link between various policy areas (such as education and health) and sustainability is practically non-existent. The study concludes that there is a lack of comprehensiveness in addressing the SDGs and “in comprehending Malta’s role both in contributing at the national level, as well as in making a significant contribution (despite being a small country) at the global level” (The People for Change Foundation (PfC), 2017).

Environmental Issues

The perception of pollution and traffic being among the top of Maltese’ concerns, as mentioned in the first section, is reflected in the Institute for Climate Change & Sustainable Development’s staff publications, which focus largely on transportation (University of Malta, 2017a). Meanwhile, the University of Malta (UoM) has set up a Climate Change Platform (CCP) to facilitate collaboration between UoM entities and academics; and to promote research and teaching initiatives relating to climate change. The CCP organises various seminars on themes ranging from disaster risk-management to low-carbon economy in Malta, as well as sustainable development (UoM, 2016), but so far none on climate change and sustainable development in relation to migration. However, the Sustainable Development and the EU module taught to undergraduate students studying European Studies includes a migration topic (Moncada, 2018; UoM, 2017b).

Migration

Although there are a significant number of publications dealing with different aspects related to migration (including integration, access to healthcare and the job market, sexual and gender based violence, among others), there is a lack of explicit focus on migration in relation to sustainable development and the SDGs.

Extensive information and project outcomes and reports can be found when looking at the work carried out by a number of civil society, migrant organisations and international organisations in Malta, particularly aditus foundation, Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants; Integra foundation, IOM Malta, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta, Kopin, the People for Change Foundation and UNHCR Malta⁷.

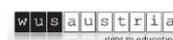
2.4 Case Studies of Good Practices

Migration and Sustainable Development

A locally initiated good practice in the area of migration and sustainable development as interrelated topics is a training course, given by the development NGO Kopin⁸ to teachers and educators, between January and April 2017. The project, called ‘TEAM SD – *Training*

⁷ <http://aditus.org.mt>; <http://fsmmalta.org>; <http://skopmalta.org/about-us/members/integra-foundation>; <https://malta.iom.int>; <http://www.jrsmalta.org>; <http://www.kopin.org>; <http://www.pfcmalta.org>; <http://www.unhcr.org.mt>

⁸ ‘Kopin’ is an abbreviation of ‘Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali’, which means ‘International Cooperation’.



Educators About Migration and Sustainable Development⁹, implemented with the collaboration of the Curriculum Department of the Ministry for Education and Employment, aimed to foster and promote education that builds the notion of global citizenship among Maltese formal educational professionals. Through this project, Kopin gave 12 hours of training to 86 participants on issues related to education for sustainable development and about migration. The project concluded with a conference where participants discussed ideas, challenges and opportunities in continuing their professional development on the relevant topics (Kopin, 2017). Besides this, Kopin has been providing training for teachers and educators on migration, development and sustainability as part of the in-service training optional units offered to state, Church and private school teachers in July and September of every year since 2014 (Kopin, 2016).

Sustainable Development

Other good practices are either related to migration or sustainable development, separately. Regarding the latter, a current example is the training to teachers that SKOP is providing in primary schools in the use of a series of e-books focusing on the SDGs. These books seek to promote development education and raise awareness about the SDGs with school children. Developed by SKOP in collaboration with professional storywriters and illustration artists, these e-books explain the SDGs and Agenda 2030 in a child-friendly manner; and come in Maltese and English versions. The Ministry for Education and Employment is involved in this project in order to ensure that the books meet the required standards in terms of literacy and development education content (SKOP, 2017b).

Other ongoing programmes focusing on Sustainable Development, specifically in the education sector, which are worth mentioning, are the *Ekoskola* (EcoSchools) and the *Dinja Wahda* (One World) initiatives, managed by the NGOs Nature Trust and BirdLife Malta. Both programmes feature a strong environmental component (which is the common denominator in many initiatives on sustainable development implemented in Malta), offering students the possibility of connecting with nature through experiential outdoor education, with the main aim of fostering a sense of environmental mindedness in children and youth (BirdLife Malta, 2018; Nature Trust, 2018). Moreover, organisations such as Kopin, NatureTrust and Koperattiva Kummerċ Ġust (Fair Trade Cooperative) have been providing activities focusing on various aspects of Sustainable Development, both through formal and informal education, as well as teachers' training, since 2006⁹.

With regards to the involvement of Local Councils in projects and initiatives related to Sustainable Development, the ongoing Resilient Communities pilot project, spearheaded by SOS Malta, will see the active participation of the Gzira and Mellieha Local Councils in initiatives fostering civic participation and the promotion of the SDGs (SOS Malta, 2018).

⁹ For example: 'EAThink 2015' (<http://eathink2015.org/en/>); 'Fair Trade in Schools' (<http://www.l-arka.org/about/kkg/>); 'Global Schools2Communities' (<http://psd.skola.edu.mt/2010/11/schools2communities/>); and 'We Eat Responsibly' (<https://www.eatresponsibly.eu/en/about-us/#intro>)



Migration

Good practices implemented with regards to migration in Malta are largely orchestrated by civil society. The following are a few pertinent ongoing examples, although it is by no means an exhaustive overview of current, past or planned projects. Notably, while these initiatives target migration and do not particularly refer to sustainable development as part of their aims, they do target sustainable development through enabling better employment and integration for migrants.

Of note are initiatives undertaken by organisations working in this area. For example, the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants (FSM) is currently implementing a project to improve the prospects and quality of employment for third country nationals (TCNs) through improving literacy and communication skills, as well as increasing their knowledge and awareness of cultural, legal and political context of Malta. It also exposes TCNs to education and employment opportunities, and informs relevant stakeholders on best practices in the provision of education and training for TCNs (FSM, 2017).

Another noteworthy project, initiated by the NGO SOS Malta (with the collaboration of the Valletta Local Council and Valletta 2018 Foundation¹⁰), was the 'Valletta Living Together (VLT): Promoting Integration through Achieving Intercultural City Status', which aims at developing a strategy for the capital city to become an intercultural city, through adhering to the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme. The strategy will promote and enable the integration of TCNs in Malta, through a series of workshops and exchanges (SOS Malta, 2015).

The integration of refugees and TCNs in Malta is also supported by the social inclusion work carried out by a number of civil society organisations and migrant-led organisations, such as the Blue Door Institute¹¹, Integra Foundation, JRS Malta, Kopin, Migrant Women Association¹², Spark 15¹³, and the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society¹⁴ who conduct research, raise awareness and provide services aimed towards the integration of migrants in Malta.

With regards to local authorities¹⁵ addressing migration issues, so far there has not been an organic approach towards these. Indeed, during a meeting organised by UNHCR Malta with representatives of the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (responsible for the implementation of the new integration strategy¹⁶), NGOs and migrant communities on the 27th of February 2018, the government representative mentioned cases of single local councils undertaking integration measures, but when asked whether an organic approach for the

¹⁰ This is the foundation responsible for Valletta's journey towards the title of the European Capital of Culture in Malta in 2018 (<https://valletta2018.org>).

¹¹ <http://volontarjat.org/news/807/>

¹² <http://migrantwomenmalta.org>

¹³ <http://www.humanrightsplatform.org.mt/members-item/spark-15>

¹⁴ <http://pfws.org.mt>

¹⁵ The 2017 integration strategy (see section 2.5) states that a number of local councils have taken integration-related initiatives.

¹⁶ See section 2.5.



implementation of these measures at Local Council level was foreseen, the same representative was not able to confirm this nor give further information¹⁷. However, a few local councils are implementing single initiatives in this area. Some examples include: the Sliema Local Council which, through an AMIF¹⁸-funded project, is providing homework aid for TCNs parents, enabling them to assist their children¹⁹; the Local Council of Gzira which, since 2015, is putting integration at the centre of its annual celebration for World Children’s Day²⁰; and finally, the Local Council of Marsa, one of the areas with the highest presence of migrants on the island, has just recently embarked on the European DEAR (Development Education and Awareness-Raising) project called ‘Snapshots from the Borders’, partnering up with Kopin and planning activities fostering integration and mutual understanding²¹.

Conclusion

As the two sections above indicate, various initiatives relating to projects and research studies on the topics of migration and sustainable development exist, with most of them being initiated by civil society. Nonetheless, the two topics often remain separate (with the exception of a very small number of initiatives targeting education on migration and sustainable development). This indicates that there is a dearth of training and awareness raising on how migration and sustainable development are interrelated. This knowledge sharing needs to be not only aimed at educators but also at the public in general. One of the reasons that the interrelation between migration and sustainable development is not brought to the foreground by the above mentioned projects and research studies is that many of these focus on the environmental and natural aspects of sustainable development. Focus on economic and social aspects of sustainable development could be propagated not only by civil society, but also at a university level through the funding of such research, the organisation of conferences and training sessions, knowledge platforms and courses for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

2.5 Migration Policies and Sustainable Development

Introduction

As noted in section 2.3, the links between local policies and sustainability in Malta are lacking (PfC, 2017). This also applies to migration-related policies. The only reference to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development / SDGs in local policies and / or strategy related to migration/integration can be found in official political documents by the government, and mostly because it is a requirement from the EU (Moncada, 2018).

¹⁷ This information was gathered through personal communication with a Kopin representative in February 2018.

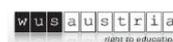
¹⁸ Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

¹⁹ Details can be found at:

<http://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/Migration%20Funds/Documents/AMIF%20and%20ISF/List%20of%20Projects%20-%20AMIF%20and%20ISF/list%20of%20projects%20-%20AMIF.pdf>

²⁰ Details can be found at: <https://fal.org.mt/en/News/Pages/World-Children%27s-day-2016.aspx>

²¹ This information was gathered through personal Communication from a Kopin representative in March 2018.



Sustainable Development within Asylum, Migration and Integration Policies

The main legislative acts which are relevant to migration (that is, asylum procedures, reception conditions and detention) in Malta are the Immigration Act²², the Refugees Act²³ and the Children and Young Persons (Care Orders) Act²⁴. Complementing these legislative acts, there are a number of legal notices in place, regulating international protection, status of refugees, detained persons, and family reunification among others (aditus foundation & JRS Malta, 2017). The Strategy for the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants (Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, 2015) does not refer to sustainable development. Moreover, the AIDA (Asylum Information Database) Malta country report states that such measures as the criminalisation of the use of false documentation by asylum-seekers attempting to enter Malta²⁵ raised concerns among NGOs²⁶ over the fact that not only does the criminalisation violate the 1951 Geneva Convention²⁷, but it also penalises persons opting not to risk their lives at sea (ibid). Such measures seem to go against Goal 10 of the SDGs promoting safe migration.

The Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (MEAE) finally launched the long-promised Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan in December 2017²⁸. The strategy states that it “creates a framework for understanding successful integration through the level of the migrants’ own sense of belonging to Maltese society”. The strategy envisages the setting up of an Integration Unit (IU) with the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) within the same Ministry. The strategy also outlines various measures to be taken towards integration, including delivering courses in Maltese, English and cultural orientation; strengthening the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration; revamping and keep updating the existing website www.integration.gov.mt; training cultural mediators in public services; organising awareness-raising campaigns; lengthening the validity of employment licences; a Local Councils’ Integration Charter; making funds for migrant communities and NGOs available; and developing a system to gather significant statistics related to migrants (MEAE, 2017). However this strategy, while a welcome initiative, makes no mention of the SDGs, nor is there any indication of how the strategy falls within the wider Agenda 2030, despite the fact that it was only published in 2017, almost two years after the SDGs came into force. This was confirmed by the Integration Unit, who specified that the strategy deals neither with sustainable development in general, nor with the Agenda 2030 in particular (Email Communication 1, February 2018). Furthermore, Ahmed Bugre, the director of the NGO Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants, when interviewed by a local newspaper, emphasised the importance of inclusion of migrants in decision-making, rather than integration. Bugre

²² Can be found at: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8722&l=1>

²³ Can be found at: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8886&l=1>

²⁴ Can be found at: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8773&l=1>

²⁵ The AIDA report states that in 2016, there were several reports of cases of applicants for international protection imprisoned for that reason.

²⁶ For example, see JRS Malta’s press statement on World Refugee Day 2016: <http://www.jrsmalta.org/content.aspx?id=410472#.WoWhy6j482x>

²⁷ Can be found at: <http://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>

²⁸ In 2005, the then Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs and Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity published the policy document: ‘Irregular Immigrants, Refugees and Integration’, which can be found here: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51b197484.html>.



insisted that there are systemic gaps in the implementation of the policy, saying that “[t]he system is so bureaucratic” that a migrant who had been in Malta for a decade obtained his identity card in a week instead of the couple of hours it takes a Maltese person (Carabott, 2018). Bugre’s observations are linked to research studies which confirm the diffidence and lack of trust TCNs feel towards Maltese authorities, based on their experiences with them (Fsadni & Pisani, 2012; Zammit, 2012). Indeed, policies and practices in different sectors in Malta do not seem to reflect a sustainable approach with regards to migrants. For example, a report on the risk of poverty among asylum seekers in Malta recommends, among others, that the employment services offered by the national employment agency be made available to all asylum seekers, thus enabling “a smoother interaction in the labour market between demand and supply”; that temporary employment be regulated through a legal framework that adequately compensates the worker; and that rejected asylum seekers who have been residing in Malta for 5 years be given the opportunity to obtain legal status on a permanent basis. These initiatives would enable asylum seekers “to be productive members of Maltese society” (Caruana, 2016) and thus also enable sustainable development. However, actual policies and practices went against these recommendations in the last years. The most recent example surrounded the Temporary Humanitarian Protection New (THPN)²⁹ status given to asylum applicants (UNHCR Malta, 2011). Late in 2016, THPN beneficiaries were informed that the procedure was being reviewed, without being given any information about how to renew their residence and work permit documents (aditus foundation et al, 2016). THPN beneficiaries were then informed that their status would only be renewed until October 2017, and that they would be expected to procure documentation from their country of origin, in order to apply for a residence permit for their stay in Malta, leaving the around 1000 THPN beneficiaries in limbo and threatened with deportation. Ultimately, in October 2017, these beneficiaries were informed that their protection would not be terminated that month, and will continue to be renewed on a yearly basis for the time being. Yet, as the NGO aditus foundation pointed out, there is a need for a status that is “more stable and [that brings] greater peace of mind to migrants” (Carabott, 2017).

Sustainable Development

As mentioned throughout this research report, sustainable development in Malta is often equated with environmental issues, even at policy level, as can be seen through the document ‘A Sustainable Development Strategy for the Maltese Islands’ (GoM, 2016c) and the fact that the Directorate for Sustainable Development³⁰ is part of the Ministry for Sustainable Development, the Environment and Climate Change³¹.

Meanwhile, during a conference for members of parliament from the European Union and the Mediterranean region held in Malta in November 2017, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion was reported by The Malta Independent (2017b) to have talked about the awareness raising that the government of Malta, together with civil society, has been

²⁹ THPN is a local form of protection granted ex-gratia to failed asylum seekers who entered Malta in 2007 or before, subject to meeting a number of eligibility criteria (Government of Malta, 2016a).

³⁰ Attempts to hold an interview with the Sustainable Development Directorate did not materialise.

³¹ Details can be found at: <https://msdec.gov.mt/en/sustainabledevelopment/Pages/Contact-Us.aspx>.



working on: through regular media and social media platforms, they have been working to bring the Agenda 2030 into every household. This not only seems to jar with the finding that only 38% of citizens living in Malta are aware of the SDGs (see section 2.1), but Cacopardo (2017b) also states that while “since the 1990s, when sustainable development first made it to Malta’s statute book, it was retained (on paper) as a direct political responsibility of the Prime Minister”, he notes that: “Unfortunately, not even one of our prime ministers assumed direct political responsibility for the matter as, formally or informally, all of them delegated the matter to the Minister (or Parliamentary Secretary) responsible for the environment”; and that “all the talk on sustainable development by governments in Malta has been an exercise in managing hot air”. These comments are confirmed by the findings from the focus groups carried out as part of this research study³².

Migration within the framework of Sustainable Development

The public consultation document for the National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development for Malta (NSES Board of Governors et al, 2016), released in 2016, makes no mention of migration or migrants, despite the fact that the Minister for Education and Employment stated the need for a “whole society approach” during the official release of the consultation document (The Malta Independent, 2016). In the document itself, organisations working with migrants and refugees and migrant organisations themselves are notably absent from the list of entities and organisations who participated in the data collection phase, a list which includes organisations ranging from pilots’ associations and catering establishments, to youth organisations, educational institutions and political parties (NSES Board of Governors et al, 2016).

Thus, while there are commendable actions being taken: in the education sector, for example, the Foundation for Educational Services commissioned a research study on the integration of TCNs in education (Falzon et al, 2012); the Migrants’ Learners Unit was set up to promote the inclusion of newly arrived learners into the Maltese education system (Government of Malta, 2016b); and with regards to the SDGs in general, Malta was ranked 22nd on the SDG index in 2017 (Sachs et al, 2017); the initiatives on migration and those on sustainable development tend to remain separate and the connection, benefits and dynamics of the correlation between the two is rarely made.

2.6 Migration Policies and International Commitments

Introduction

While the evaluation of the implementation of legislation related to migration and sustainable development was made in section 2.5, this section looks specifically at Malta’s development cooperation and its links to the relevant international documents. It is to be noted that Malta is a relatively new member of the ‘donor countries club’: indeed, it became a do-

³² See section 3.5.



nor country in 2004 when it joined the EU. Meanwhile, its Official Development Assistance (ODA) programme has been running since 2008 (Grech, 2016).

Development Cooperation – Links to SDGs, European Agenda on Migration and other Relevant International Documents

Malta's ODA Policy (2014-2020), in spite of its statement that Malta "is determined to... push forward the sustainable development agenda" (Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), 2014), makes no mention of the SDGs. It was developed with reference to the Millennium Development Goals, and despite its statement that the "policy will be kept up to date with international developments during the 2014-2020 period and is subject to review, especially in view of the post-2015 discussions taking place at various levels" (MFA, 2014), no move seems to have been made towards aligning the policy with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. When contacted regarding this issue, a representative from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs replied that the European Consensus on Development and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development suffice in terms of policy. The representative added that: "it would not be useful to produce more policy documents at this stage. In this regard, our challenge is with the implementation aspect and... we are exploring ways to ascertain that going forward, Malta's official overseas development plan, while fully conforming with the international development agenda, could make a meaningful impact on the ground" (Email Communication 2, 2018).

During a conference for members of parliament from the European Union and the Mediterranean region held in Malta in November 2017, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (MFA) was reported by The Malta Independent (2017b) to have said that Malta had made considerable progress in the field of development. Nonetheless, the actual financial resources allocated by the Maltese government for ODA in the period of 2014-2016 is limited (Grech, 2016), as can be seen from the ODA statistics published by the same ministry (MFA, 2016). In fact, for 2015, Malta's total ODA disbursements amounted to 0.17 % of its Gross National Income, steadily decreasing from 2011, when it stood at 0.25 %. In 2016 it amounted to 0.20% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018).

Furthermore, while the ODA policy includes migration and asylum as one of its ten areas of focus (MFA, 2014), a large part of the ODA reported regularly consists of "refugee costs" (Grech, 2016). For instance, the 2015 ODA disbursement comprises €2,335,796 which was spent on costs incurred by the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security on the Refugee Commission, operational expenses, security services, food and per diem allowances to asylum seekers in Malta (MFA, 2016). In 2016, again, Malta spent 16.1 % of its ODA disbursement on in-country refugee costs, and out of its 0.20 % disbursement, only 0.16 % is considered by the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD) as genuine aid (CONCORD, 2017). AidWatch Malta also reports its concerns about the lack of progress in Malta's ODA commitments, which results from "the absence of an actual strategy or plan for making aid more effective" (ibid). The concern includes the MFA's disregard of NGOs as implementers of development in the Global South, with funds given to NGOs implementing projects in this region continuing to decline from an already very small



amount (ibid). Ironically, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated, in a conference organised by SKOP in 2017, that the “NGO sector has always been, and remains, the long arm of the Government in attaining preparedness towards the implementation of Agenda 2030” and that the ministry appreciates the same NGOs’ work in different communities around the world, aiming to eradicate poverty³³.

Conclusion

As can be observed in these last two sections, migration and sustainable development are mainly treated as distinct subjects even when it comes to policies at national level, where the two spheres are clearly separated and quite rarely impact each other. Even though one might argue that some of the policy frameworks addressing migration could, in fact, contribute to the fulfilment of the targets set out in the Agenda 2030, and that, vice-versa, policy documents and implementation related to sustainable development might affect migration, the lack of an explicit connection might hinder any possibility of correlation of these aspects within the general public, as well as the target groups of the project, that is to say, educators. A possible measure that could be applied when dealing with training and awareness raising activities for educators and learners is to look at the direct and indirect links and influences between the different policies taken into account for the purpose of this research; this exercise could highlight the interrelation of the topics in a wider context, looking at both national and international levels.

3. Field Research

3.1 Introduction

The two focus groups (one with stakeholders in the field of education and one with stakeholders in the fields of migration and sustainable development) were held in February 2018, each lasting around two hours.

The focus group with the stakeholders working in the field of education (henceforth referred to as ‘the educators’ focus group’) comprised seven (two female and five male) participants from different areas in the education sector, including the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST); the Faculty of Education and the Department of Inclusion and Access to Learning at the University of Malta; the Education Directorate and the Education for Sustainable Development at the Ministry for Education and Employment; the Maltese national Focal Point for the Council of Europe’s Global Education Week; the Migrant Learners’ Unit³⁴; and school teachers.

³³ Details can be found at: https://www.eu2017.mt/en/Press-Releases/Documents/PR171544_EN.pdf

³⁴ <http://migrantlearnersunit.gov.mt/en/Pages/About%20us/about-us.aspx>



The focus group with the stakeholders working in the fields of migration and sustainable development³⁵ (henceforth referred to as ‘the experts’ focus group’) comprised six (three male and three female) participants from UNHCR Malta; the NGOs Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants³⁶ and SOS Malta³⁷ (both of which work in the field of migration but whose representatives work on issues such as climate change and global education); experts in the field of Sustainable Development and Global Education; and the NGO Nature Trust Malta (whose representatives also work in the sustainable and environment education sectors)³⁸.

For both focus groups, other participants were also invited who could not make it; one of whom (an academic from the University of Malta lecturing and researching on subjects including climate change and sustainable development, who is also involved in civil society organisations working on migration) replied to the questions explored in the focus groups via email.

3.2 Awareness about International Migration and Sustainable Development³⁹

Education Sector⁴⁰

In the education sector, steps are being taken by the Ministry for Education and Employment to promote education for sustainable development across the curricula. This is being done through training being delivered to teachers in schools who request it. The emphasis is not only on teaching sustainable development through the content of the lessons but also through the methodology, such as through fostering peace and justice (SDG 16) in the classroom. Thus, while until a few years ago, teachers were not aware of the SDGs unless they were personally interested in them; today, several projects in ZAVOD education include the SDGs so there is more awareness.

However, while teachers might know of the existence of the SDGs and are aware that they are related to the environment and sustainability, few are aware of international conventions such as the UN Paris Agreement or the Habitat III. Furthermore, it is doubtful as to whether teachers are aware of the actual content of the SDGs. This partly depends on teachers’ willingness to receive training on the topic and to own the subject, factors which are also contingent on teachers’ workloads and opportunity to take ownership of related initiatives: when initiatives related to SDGs are taken by the school management and the relevant communication is relayed to teachers via circulars, teachers are not engaged in the process, and the

³⁵ Efforts to find a sociologist working on monitoring media and societal attitudes (especially related to asylum, migration, integration, etc.) were to no avail.

³⁶ <http://fsmmalta.org>

³⁷ <http://www.sosmalta.org>

³⁸ <https://www.naturetrustmalta.org>

³⁹ This section reflects views expressed by the participants of the focus groups.

⁴⁰ Unless specified, the findings presented here are those emerging from both focus groups as well as the email correspondence mentioned in the previous section.



sense of ownership (of the teachers) is decreased. Furthermore, although Education for Sustainable Development is officially part of the curriculum, the link to migration is still vague in practice. Additionally, if teachers have a negative attitude towards migration⁴¹, they cannot effectively teach the topic. While policies might exist, putting them into practice is a different matter.

With regards to higher education institutions such as MCAST, while participants expressed doubts with regards to awareness of SDGs themselves, there are initiatives being taken with regards to sustainability.

Migration and Sustainable Development Sector

Although there is a good level of awareness (depending on the person’s level of interest) of documents such as the UN Paris Agreement among practitioners working in these sectors, these are not always linked to the work being carried out on the ground. There is also more awareness of the SDGs than other less known documents like the UN Paris Agreement. The challenge, however, lies in informing the relevant institutions effectively, and in how the agenda of policy makers does not seem to follow the same level of awareness raised by the experts.

Public

Regarding migration, there is no ‘real’ public debate on the real causes of migration, but just a discussion on the impacts in Malta. Regarding sustainable development, in the public’s mind the SDGs are linked to developing countries such as those in Africa and Latin America: people do not link them to Malta, which they perceive as already developed. There is also the perception that migrants are the ‘black’ and that they depend on government handouts: Russians, Italians and other white people are not considered as migrants. If one takes climate change specifically, people do not really know what climate change is, or what brings it about, as evident by the rampant use of plastic bags. Furthermore, the public does not link migration and climate change, nor do they know that migration can mitigate climate change.

3.3 Link between Migration and Sustainable Development

Education Sector

While there is awareness, among teachers, that the SDGs are related to subjects such as science and geography, there is little awareness of how they are related to migration. Thus, while delivering training to teachers on goals such as those related to the seas, water and land is quite straightforward, goals relating to economic growth are harder to get across,

⁴¹ See section 3.3.



especially in how they can be translated in the classroom; and thus there needs to be more work done on training teachers on goals relating to these topics, including migration. Furthermore, teachers encounter difficulties in teaching the concept of migration in relation to sustainable development (unless it is in relation to climate change, that is, environmental migrants), even to older secondary school students. Sustainable development is very much linked to the natural aspect of the environment and less so to the social and economic aspects.

While the participants of the educators' focus group themselves are more aware of the links between migration and sustainable development, they noted that among teachers in general there is even confusion about who migrants are. Furthermore, while there are teachers who connect migration to a better future and society, there are also those who connect migration to negative aspects and think that migration can affect development negatively. The same views are also applied to the classroom: while there are teachers who perceive migrant students as bringing instability to a school, others think differently. These opposing views, which are also held by society at large, indicate the need to educate teachers on: creating the right empowering and equal environment in the classroom, rather than simply one of acceptance (that is, acceptance of migrants by the Maltese); and the positive links between migration and sustainable development.

Migration and Sustainable Development Sector

For these positive links to take place, there is a need to keep skilled migrants (both those who come as students and otherwise) in Malta so as to render migration sustainable. This also links to the need for migrants to be able to vote and participate politically: Malta needs to be more democratic in order for everyone to be able to participate in sustainable development.

On a more general level, social issues and sustainable development are also not linked in public events in Malta, such as exhibitions: sustainable development is generally linked to natural and environmental issues. The compartmentalisation of these topics therefore, does not allow links between the two; and the links perceived by the public between migration and sustainable development are almost non-existent.

Government Level and the Public

At a government level, migration and sustainable development are not linked either: there is no apparent gain at a political level to do so⁴², given that the narrative used by the two major political parties prefers to highlight the negative aspect of migration, rather than looking at the advantages of integration. For example, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change do not work together towards the Agenda 2030: there is a lack of inter-ministerial communication. The Sustainable Development Directorate (within the latter ministry) consists of only one person. This

⁴² See section 3.5.



person is charged with reporting on how Malta is reaching the Agenda 2030 targets, but Malta’s progress towards the SDGs is very disjointed, despite the fact that reports make it seem that Malta is making great progress on the SDGs. Above all, no SDGs underlie Malta’s migration policies: even the new integration policy⁴³ has no reference to the SDGs. Sustainable development is missing from the discourse. The lack of connection made between migration and sustainable development is further demonstrated by such examples as the lack of Maltese government representatives at the annual Global Forum for Migration and Development.

This also translates in how the interrelation between migration and sustainable development are presented (or not presented) to the public: for example, rather than presenting an initiative to reduce poverty among migrants through employment, the national employment agency preferred to present the message to the public that Malta needs to fill in a number of jobs that no Maltese wants to do. Thus, such initiatives have to be “packaged” in a way that suits the Maltese public’s minds.

This situation is further solidified by the fact that in Malta, there are no television programmes that discuss the links between migration and sustainable development, such as remittances and the redistribution of wealth. Hence, the links between the SDGs (which aim at reducing inequality and enabling better migration) and migration are not made. Migration is only given attention by the media when something tragic happens, and this shapes the way the public thinks of migration: in a negative way. There are people who think that migrants are here to work and at some point they should leave. The human beings behind the work are not seen, nor the reasons why they come or where they come from.

3.4 Insecurity

Migration

At national level, the link between migration and national security is not as intense as in other EU member states. It tends to focus more on the possible ‘loss of national identity’⁴⁴, or use of national welfare. Since Malta is a very high densely populated country, where resources (including welfare) are scarce and space is limited, conflicts over the use and access to these resources can erupt more easily than in other European contexts.

Feelings of insecurity relate in some way or another to a feeling of not being safe because of migrants, including a fear of invasion by migrants, as shown by a forthcoming report on online hate speech. Although so far, terrorism does not seem to have affected the perceptions by the Maltese over migration as a security threat, there is an unfounded perception amongst the public that most of the migrants that are currently coming to Malta are Mus-

⁴³ See section 2.5.

⁴⁴ See section 3.5.



lims; and, since Muslims are equated with terrorists, there is the fear that Malta will have the same problems with terrorism as other European countries.

In Malta, feelings of insecurity relating to migrants are also very much related to job security, although the relatively high economic growth and satisfactory employment opportunities for many⁴⁵, have softened these possible tensions. Additionally, fears regarding job security are partly contingent on the migrants' countries of origin: when it comes to migrants from Eastern European countries, people are (unfoundedly) afraid of them taking Maltese people's jobs (and not of terrorist attacks). However, although the public has fears regarding migration and job security such as the perception that migrants are undercutting the wages, there is also a general dislike of foreigners working in Malta, even if this is not related to a particular fear. Ironically, many migrants do the jobs that Maltese people do not want to do anymore because the latter have become choosier with regards to what jobs they take on. Indeed, there is also insecurity among businesspeople in Malta due to the fact that there is a lack of trained labour, making it difficult to find enough people to employ. A feeling of insecurity among businesspeople in the construction business was created when, for example, action was being taken by the government with regards to the THPN status⁴⁶. In this case, business people protested against sending African migrants back, since it would have killed their businesses. Indeed, when some migrants were recently detained, one businessman got them out of detention because he needed them to work in his construction business. Thus, there is currently a fear that the government will take action against migration, resulting in ambivalent feelings towards migration: while there are those Maltese people who have a lower level of education and receive benefits who are against migration, there are those, such as business people, who are in favour of keeping migrants in Malta.

Finally, EU policies affect the public's perception of migration and insecurity in the sense that the relevant EU policies are more focused on controlling and pushing people out, rather than managing the migration flow and seeing it as an opportunity: In Malta, for example, migration is a great opportunity both in terms of jobs as well as in terms of diversity.

Sustainable Development

Maltese farmers and people who work with nature (such as beekeepers) feel insecure with regards to factors such as the importation of foreign food produce; and climate change-related factors such as lack of rain. However, in general, Maltese people do not feel insecure, due to the strong social network and strong social benefits that exist in Malta. Furthermore, even though the Maltese public are aware of climate change, they do not feel its immediate effect with regards to themselves: it is rather perceived as something happening elsewhere. Indeed, people are concerned about factors that affect them directly or personally and are not willing to go out of their way to be more environmentally sustainable.

⁴⁵ See section 2.1.

⁴⁶ See section 2.5.



3.5 Main factors that shape Public Opinion and Instruments to shape Public Discourse

One major factor shaping public opinion is the media, which presents negative images of migration: for example there are differences in the reporting of a court case relating to a non-European migrant and that of a European one. Furthermore, the former are reported more than the latter. Media portrayal of Muslims also leads many Maltese to believe such things as Muslim women not having rights, creating the fear that issues such as these will bring previously non-existent problems to Malta. All this creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’ attitude and a hatred of the ‘Other’, which influences discussions of migrants at students’ homes. Students thus have pre-set ideas of migration, ideas that teachers have to try to challenge in order to find negative stereotypes. Thus, parents have to be included in the equation if negative stereotypes are to be challenged. Furthermore, although today the scenario is changing because children are being exposed to these issues, negative images persist partly because today’s adults were not exposed to such topics at school.

Sometimes the reasons for the fear or negative attitudes are simply that there is a fear of difference from oneself, difference from what one is used to, and fear of the unknown. This is also related to a fear of change. People in general do not like rapid change, and in recent years there has been a great amount of change in Malta (including foreign betting companies basing themselves in Malta; and many foreigners working in the catering business).

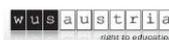
At the same time, there are people whose opinions towards migration are fluid: while there are those who are resolutely against refugees and those who are resolutely in favour, the majority’s opinion falls between these two⁴⁷. The opinions of the latter group are quite fluid, and shift according to specific events, such as terrorist attacks in other countries. Here, social media has a very strong influence on shifting the public’s opinions. Ironically, although people today have easy access to information, there is a lot of misinformation. If there were more awareness of what migration is, more people would be in favour of migration.

The terminology used also affects people’s opinions. In a UNHCR survey on attitudes towards migration⁴⁸, when the term was changed from “refugee” to “a person who is fleeing from war and persecution” in a question posed to Maltese people as to whether they would accept this person in their country, there was more compassion when the second terminology (that is, the “fleeing person” one) was used.

Paradoxically, there is still the idea in people’s minds that African migrants are not working and that they are leeching on the government. These perceptions still exist because of lack of discourse: politicians refuse to discuss it. They do not want the public to know that migrants are contributors to Malta’s economy, and the public does not want to know either. They refuse to accept the reality, “because to accept means the Maltese are weak, and the foreigner came to build our country”. Meanwhile, the government is wary of talking about

⁴⁷ These are findings from a survey carried out by a recent UNCHR Malta, to which the researcher has no access.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



shape it together with the public. The idea behind this is that academics do not necessarily have the ‘truth’ which should be imparted to the public: rather, public discourse needs to be engaged with in a democratic manner.

One idea is for academia (and civil society) to act as a platform through which migrants can speak, be seen and be heard. While this has its own challenges (due to factors such as the diversity of ideas expression both among migrants and also between migrants and locals), it is important that the voices of those who are suffering are louder than the voices of the persons who are interpreting. The educational system (including universities) needs to transmit skills (such as how to listen, how to speak without imposing, how to share ideas, and how to be critical) to students so that they use the power of the information they have to “give voice” to those they speak in favour of. Unfortunately, the education system (and the examination system) only looks for information and memorisation of this information, thus not nurturing these needed skills. Unless this changes, these skills will not flourish.

Migration and Sustainable Development Sector

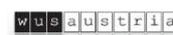
An initiative that can be introduced so as to help fill the gaps in the public’s information on migration could be creating a space where local people can talk about the topic. This could emulate an existing initiative where an anthropologist in Gozo⁵¹ created a space for local people to speak out on why they do not want refugees in Gozo: it is a place where the local population can share their fears. Another initiative taken by SOS Malta that could be applied to the sector of migration and sustainable development is related to the concept of personal character development⁵², promoting critical thinking so that people can analyse the information they receive, promoting more empathy and knowledge of how to treat the other and the self. These reflect and impact on how people treat migrants. Related to this idea is that of promoting happiness: underlying this is that if people are more grateful for what they have, they are less resentful and prejudiced towards others.

Also important is tackling the other side of the coin: the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants (FSM) provides information on the SDGs to migrants themselves and shows them that migration is not an end in itself but a means to an end; and that their time in Malta is a time of learning and capacity building, skills which they can use when, and if, they go back to their countries of origin. FSM empowers migrants with education, which is both a tool of empowerment and a tool of awareness raising.

Efforts like these need to be continuous, especially with the public: while education in schools is important, there is also a need to target the demographic that are not in schools. There are many public events throughout the year, and if efforts such as the initiatives mentioned here are continuous, they will have an effect. Civil society needs to continue advocating and raising awareness.

⁵¹ Gozo is the second largest island in the Maltese archipelago.

⁵² See section 3.7.



However, one of the challenges that civil society in Malta faces is funding. People prefer to give to charities, and companies prefer to fund something that will show immediate results, rather than something which will only show results in the long term (such as initiatives targeted at sustainability). Thus fundraising for civil society in Malta is difficult. Meanwhile, government departments compete with civil society for EU funds and other funding for projects and programmes related to migration. Co-funding for such projects is also an issue for civil society organisations since the amount required is often beyond their budget limits.

Other challenges in implementing the necessary project and programmes involve local councils. Local council members work on a part-time basis; hence in initiatives such as the one being implemented by SOS Malta on resilient communities, they (local councils) cannot do much. The government needs to start channelling services and organising information sessions, through local councils. This decentralisation is necessary because, when it comes to migrants, the situation is different in every locality. Furthermore, local communities can tap into EU funds, which would give them more power, thus removing the power that the government has over them.

Government Level and the Public

As previously indicated, local TV programmes showing the links between migration and sustainable development (including on how migration can mitigate climate change), would help fill gaps in people’s knowledge. Meanwhile, it is not only the public’s knowledge which is questionable, but also the level of politicians’ knowledge of sustainable development and migration issues, as is evident when organisations working with migrants meet with ministry representatives. There is also a lack of inter-ministerial communication on these two topics.

3.7 The Role of Education Systems

Since every school has its own identity, having a nationwide policy with regards to migration and sustainable development would be futile: some schools have classes with the majority of them being migrants, while in other schools there are practically none. There is thus the need to train teachers in unpacking the terms of migration and sustainable development to enable cultural awareness and awareness of the importance of cultural expression. This awareness should not be raised by simply organising a ‘migrants’ day’ twice a year, but rather by indicating what needs to be done in the classroom. Emphasis needs to be made on practical action in the classroom, that is, rather than simply teaching students to respect each other, utilising subject-related tasks (such as mathematics and science tasks) to enable students to connect and create something together, such as a mathematical or scientific solution. Thus there is the need to process attitudes with the students in order to revise these attitudes. Activities themselves mean nothing if these are not related to the outside world: sometimes, schools and classrooms feel like they have a boundary around them and are safeguarded, removed from society in the outside world; yet students are part of society and if the school focuses only on the content (and not on attitudes), it cannot match the rap-



idly changing pace of society. Existing initiatives like the diversity week where children show their understanding of migration through discussions, and learn about different cultures and backgrounds from a young age; as well as the course developed by FSM together with MCAST on cross-cultural mediation and counselling; are raising awareness on the benefits of migration and trying to change the mind-set of the students towards migrants. Indeed, while there are commendable government-initiated initiatives like the Migrant Learners' Unit to help migrant children integrate in mainstream schooling, local children also need to be worked with. A potential idea could also be to have an experimental school where students can learn through a practical model of learning. In this school, teachers work with the students (rather than teachers being the experts teaching students) to arrive at a solution together.

Yet, before this happens, lecturers at higher education institutions and teachers training centres need to start fostering, in themselves, the skills and behaviours that were mentioned previously with regards to students: that is, the fostering of such elements as respect, peace. Currently, there have been incidents such as those where migrant students attend MCAST and University lectures and the lecturer speaks in Maltese. When migrants protest this, they are told "go back to your country". Ultimately, if the attitudes of teachers are not reshaped (for example if the teacher is not comfortable with having migrant students in class), it is futile having new Bachelor's or Master's degrees.

Meanwhile, the already existing Master's degrees in education for sustainable development in Malta focus simply on climate change and the natural environment. Furthermore, there needs to be a change in the methodology and focus of teaching: current university students are not being taught how to use experimental sustainable development methodologies in the classroom. Hence there is a need to work with teachers in-service. During their teaching practice, student teachers tend to focus on their delivery and on the assessment they are undergoing by the assessor: they do not focus on the content, the characteristics of the school they are teaching in, and the surrounding community. Teaching practice should be considered as an experience for the student teachers to get a feel of the school and the community they are working in. Moreover, public schools should hire the teachers themselves, because teachers (not the Ministry) know the needs of the community; and should be given more power in choosing projects to implement, rather than the management of the school making the selection and asking teachers to implement them.

There is also a need for more personal character development and public speaking. People are afraid to speak their own mind, or stand apart from the crowd. If a large number of people are talking about migrants negatively, people tend to be afraid to say something different. Thus before we speak about what is needed what regards to migration and sustainable development, we need to talk about self-development, in which the education system should play a role. The Maltese education system is based on teaching children to do what they are told and to conform. Ultimately, due to the overload of work in the curriculum of the Maltese education system, no one has time to self-develop.



4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

As can be seen from the focus group responses, practitioners and educators have a high level of awareness of the links between migration and sustainable development. Meanwhile, however, the public does not seem to be aware of these links. This is sustained by both the findings from the focus groups, as well as by other research studies discussed in Chapter 2 of this report. The public’s lack of awareness of the positive links between migration and sustainable development seems to stem from a variety of factors, including the lack of connections made between these two topics by the local media, as well as the void left in this area by the discourse propagated by politicians. It could also be due to the fact that in Malta, sustainable development is often correlated with environmental and natural issues (an aspect emerging from both current policies as well as from the field research carried out for this study), rather than being considered as holistic and taking into account “the environmental, economic and social aspects of development” (UNITAR, 2012). In the minds of the public, sustainable development may also be equated with developing countries, and thus not only considered as a ‘faraway’ concept, but also as one to be dealt with through charitable donations.

4.1 National and Local Level Recommendations for Governmental Institutions

As already mentioned, one of the biggest influencers of public perceptions is political discourse and action (or lack of it). Politicians in Malta seem to be propagating (or at the very least, not denying) the same misguided assumptions that inform policies in other host countries: first the assumption that “every livelihood established by a refugee deprives a citizen of the same opportunity”; and second, that “refugees who are able to support themselves will become too comfortable and less inclined to return to their own country, even if it is safe for them to do so” (Crisp, 2017). These assumptions, which are also (or consequentially) absorbed by the public, continue to fuel the government’s policies, who would not take any action that might alienate voters. In one of the focus groups conducted for this study, it was mentioned that unless Malta becomes more democratic and opens its doors to full participation, sustainable development will not likely occur. Opening doors fully to democracy would also mean that everyone would have the right to vote. Given the current climate in Malta, and the varying degrees of “fear of invasion” described in public opinion polls and fieldwork findings, it is doubtful that this would occur anytime in the near future. The fact that the majority of migrants do not vote, in turn, does not propel politicians to act in their favour, since this would garner no votes. The same lack of willingness on the part of politicians to correlate migration and sustainable development and to encourage migrants’ social and economic integration in Malta leads to a vicious cycle: unless migrants can be integrated, they cannot contribute to sustainable development.



Although the links between migration and sustainable development are not consistently and sometimes not fully made even by the NGO and civil society sector in Malta, it is this sector which takes the lead in explaining migration to the public and in pushing the integration agenda. Unfortunately, as fieldwork research findings sustain, unless there is political will, the migration and sustainable development agenda cannot fully take root. Research shows that 51 % of Maltese trust their government (Eurobarometer, 2017c), and, as one of the participants in the focus groups pointed out, politicians can change perceptions much faster than education can. Thus, while initiatives to educate the public and students are necessary and positive steps, unless politicians are willing, these initiatives will not live up to their potential.

This links to the evident need, raised in the focus groups, for education at a government and political level: the concepts of migration and sustainable development have to be better understood not only in the classroom but also at policy level. As discussed above, the diction that is being used by politicians surrounding these concepts is pushing certain agendas, and unless these gaps in information are addressed, there will remain gaps in what is envisioned as being needed. This is not to say that training for teachers is not crucial. On the contrary, focus group findings indicate the need to educate teachers, notably on creating the right empowering and equal environment in the classroom, rather than simply one of acceptance (that is, acceptance of migrants by the Maltese); and on the positive links between migration and sustainable development. Training teachers is, after all, the ultimate sustainable development exercise: the teachers of today are teaching the politicians of tomorrow, and in aiming for a sustainable society, the critical importance of sustainable teaching cannot be overstated. Nonetheless, as stated in the introduction to this report, it is essential that any tools and resources developed for teachers and students are designed with the significant aspects that make up teachers' and students' knowledge, information, perceptions, attitudes and opinions. These aspects comprise life outside the classroom and the school, and include the family, the community, the media, the political discourse and also international events which are part of teachers' and students' lives.

4.2 National and Local Level Recommendations for NGOs

In influencing these aspects, civil society plays an important role in shaping knowledge and attitudes. As Moncada (2018) suggests, positive messages work well in this aspect, together with promoting best practices and 'champions' of integration in order to facilitate the understanding of the positive correlations between migration and sustainable development. Civil society also needs to be critical and present the information that is missing from these debates, and, as also suggested in the fieldwork part of this research, to enable those who cannot, or are afraid to, speak, to do so.



4.3 Local Level Recommendations for Municipalities

In this, the role of local councils is also important, not only because of the fact that the migrant population in each locality is immensely diverse (Sansone, 2018), but also because local authorities know their locality more than national ones. Empowerment of local councils is thus a significant step towards shifting public perception and moving towards a sustainable future.

4.4 National and Local Level Recommendations for Educational Institutions

Finally, as stated in Chapter 2, training and awareness raising on how migration and sustainable development are interrelated, are scarce in Malta. The role of educational institutions here is pivotal. Higher educational institutions such as the university and colleges need to promote, encourage and fund research on the economic and social aspects of sustainable development, and not only on environmental issues (on which there is a strong focus in local research, such as on the topic of pollution). However, even such platforms as those dedicated specifically to environmental and natural aspects such as climate change, can bridge the gap of information on the interrelation between sustainable development and migration through knowledge dissemination, including through conferences, seminars and lectures for the public and students.

4.5 Recommendations for Future Research Areas

On a final note, this research study is only a small step in a long road leading towards a sustainable society in which migration is viewed as, and enabled to be, a positive aspect of development. For this to happen, there needs to be action which is orchestrated by different sectors (political, educational, civil, public, media) towards the same goal. Such action needs to be informed by research which is participatory and involves not only stakeholders in the mentioned sectors, but also involving the true experts of migration, that is, migrants themselves. Only then can Maltese society move forward towards sustainable development.



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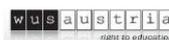
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This presentation was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CARDET and its project partners and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union [InterCap project number: CSO-LA/2017/398-136].

