



**HON. MINISTER MICHAEL FARRUGIA**

## How does the Maltese Presidency remain important

### in the field of asylum and migration?

Asylum and migration featured high in the Maltese presidency agenda and a substantial amount of work was carried out in this regard. The Maltese Presidency has pursued the examination of the legislative proposals aimed at reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), and adopted a thematic approach in order to address key points of concern across the board.

In the context of the negotiations on the Commission's Proposal to reform the Dublin Regulation, discussions with a view to reaching a compromise on the effective application of the principles of solidarity and responsibility have been taken forward by the Maltese Presidency. Even though consensus has so far not proved possible, some elements have emerged as general stable points which could attract a good measure of agreement. There is now a mutual understanding that the revised CEAS needs to strike the right balance between responsibility and solidarity, and that it needs to ensure resilience to future crises.

The letter issued during the last days of the Maltese presidency term, complements

the June progress report on the revised CEAS, which will be used as a starting point for discussions during the Estonian Presidency.

During the first week of July, I had the pleasure of attending the Justice and Home Affairs Informal Meeting in Tallinn, as part of the Estonian Presidency programme, and migration featured highly in the agenda.

The migration situation in the central Mediterranean route is indeed very serious and requires a collective effort by all the Member States. In these situations, no Member State should be left to shoulder responsibility on its own.

The measures identified in the latest Commission Action Plan in response to the Mediterranean crisis, fall within what the Heads of State agreed in the Malta Declaration at the informal summit in Malta last February. Implementation of these measures is what is now needed. In its Action Plan the Commission also states that it will launch new resettlement pledging exercises with third countries in conjunction with the UNHCR.

The situation in the central Mediterranean can only be addressed through a collective effort and goodwill from all. The migration crisis is an EU challenge which needs an EU response, and therefore, solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility is crucial. The EU needs to impart the message that it is also a Union of solidarity – it is a message of credibility that needs to be sent to the EU citizens as well as to the outside world.



# Towards a Migration Integration Action Plan in 2017

Although our island has been at the crossroads of the movement of peoples since time immemorial, integration governance in Malta in the strict sense does not have a long history at all.

The 2005 policy document *Irregular Immigrants, Refugees and Integration* was useful in that it provided a pragmatic approach to integration at a time when other member-states were floundering over - ultimately useless - ideological debates and deep changes in European societies when the shockwaves of 9/11 crossed the Atlantic. At the time, very few individuals and organizations had any sort of competence in the field of integration, and the document served as a first framework or, at least, an opposition to a framework. At the same time, the onset of social media revolutionised, for better and for worse, human interaction, which is at the end of the day what integration is.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of the 2005 document was greatly reduced by the linkage to the reality of boat arrivals which had sparked the document in the first place. The policy was never really rooted anywhere, and once the situation on the ground started changing, it was evident that integration governance was nowhere to be seen in public structures, and indeed vanished without much of a trace.

The Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties, set up in March 2013, was the first ever Maltese ministry to be designated as a lead Ministry on integration; a Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) was subsequently set-up within this Ministry. One of the first initiatives taken was to disseminate information relevant to migrants through a dedicated website ([www.integration.gov.mt](http://www.integration.gov.mt)), on such topics as necessary documentation, housing,

education etc. and corresponding publications. A public consultation, as part of the *Mind D Gap* project followed, and this led to the Framework Document 'Towards a National Migrant Integration Strategy, 2015-2020'. This document brought together opinions from citizens, government entities, civil society organisations, academic institutions and international organisations. The aim was to get as much feedback as possible on any relevant issues or necessary changes. The Framework Document also published the results of a survey on perceptions on integration, where it was found that a majority of the population agreed with the concept of integration once it was explained properly.

Currently, HRID is finalizing a *Migration Integration Action Plan*, which will introduce a new phase of integration governance.

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## European Migration Network Annual Conference

Malta Presidency of the Council of the European Union

The National Contact Point of the European Migration Network within the Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security, held its Annual Conference on the 24th and 25th May 2017. The Annual Conference was very well attended, since it also was a Malta EU Presidency event. A good number of both Maltese and foreign speakers and academics took part delivering various presentations focusing on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, highlighting issues such as, the current situation, asylum-causing factors and possible future trends,

asylum procedures within the EU, legal pathways and resettlement, cooperation with other countries and also, the role of civil society organizations.

This gave the possibility to delegates to explore various aspects of asylum and irregular migration, root causes and possible solutions. A panel with various speakers discussed the various recurring problems in the sphere of asylum and irregular migration. This panel was made up of, Dr. Ahmed Bugre who is the Director of the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants; Ms. Sophie

Magennis who is Head of the Policy and Legal Support Unit at UNHCR's Bureau for Europe in Brussels; Ms Charmaine Hili who is a Policy Officer within the European Commission, and Maltese MEP Dr. Miriam Dalli. All panellists gave their views on the present situation which were very much in common and were basically summed up by Maltese MEP Miriam Dalli by stating that there is still much work to do, since consensus between the 28 EUMS on various issues, especially on the aspect of burden sharing, has not been reached.



# Education initiatives for third country nationals

A number of structures are in place within Malta's education system in a bid to help asylum seekers/beneficiaries of international protection integrate better in the system within a short time. Migrant students without linguistic competences in English and Maltese and who have difficulties to communicate are incorporated into the education system through linguistic induction provided in classes/hubs/centres for the learning of these languages. Similar support to migrant students is also provided at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST), which offers the possibility of additional support in English for MCAST students, asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection through its Learning Support Unit. As from academic year 2015-2016,

MCAST is also offering a basic course in Maltese For Foreigners. In 2016-2017, MCAST further launched its second language programme: Maltese for Foreigners (MFF) Stage 2.

In 2015, the Ministry for Education and Employment formally set up a Migrant Learners Unit for the provision of induction into the mainstream education system for learners under 16. The unit coordinates the teaching of Maltese and English to newcomer learners who cannot communicate in these languages which are considered important for social integration as well as for academic progress. Support is given either through full-time enrollment in intensive induction classes for up to one scholastic year, or through partial enrollment especially

in cases where further reinforcement of existing language skills is needed. Moreover, Malta has put in place systems, modelled on the teaching principles of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) that address the specific needs of those students who cannot communicate with the mainstream system, i.e. teaching a language through the teaching of other subjects. Furthermore, the aim of the educator is to draw a linguistic benefit from each educational activity undertaken in induction classes. The Migrant Learners' Unit within the Ministry for Education and Employment is also providing intensive language courses in summer to consolidate / facilitate the acquisition of Maltese and English in compulsory school aged learners.

The Directorate for Lifelong Learning within the Ministry for Education and Employment pursues a policy of inclusivity. Courses are open to both Maltese and non-Maltese nationals. The Directorate has developed courses in Maltese-as-a-foreign-language (MFL) and English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL). At enrolment stage, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are given the same rights as Maltese and EU citizens. Courses in English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) and Maltese-as-a-foreign-language (MFL) offered by the Directorate for Lifelong Learning within the Ministry for Education and Employment are accredited and lead to the awarding of a General Education Award at Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) levels 1 and 2.

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# JHA Informal Ministerial Council Meeting

## Tallinn, Estonia 07 & 08 July 2017

Andres Anvelt, Minister of Interior of the Republic of Estonia highlighted various issues during the JHA Informal Ministerial Council Meeting held in Tallinn – Estonia, the country which presently has the EU rotating Presidency after Malta. He started his address by stating that Italy is not alone. On the solidarity topic, he stated that the Estonian Presidency aims to approach the topic of migration in a holistic manner including the tackling migratory flows, improving external border management and strengthening return management.

EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos continued on what Min. Andres told the media present, by stating that numbers are rising once again on the Central Mediterranean route. He also informed the media present that the EU is also supporting voluntary returns from Libya to countries of origin in cooperation with IOM emphasizing the fact that more migrants have already returned in the first part of 2017, than in the whole of 2016. It was also highlighted that in the Sahel Region, the EU is supporting countries like Niger, to better manage their borders. On the situation in Italy, he emphasized the fact that it is an urgent situation, and the EU needs to further step up its work. The EU is standing by Italy in these difficult moments.

Regarding the action plan being proposed, the EU Migration Commissioner stated that this action plan implements the fundamental principles of the EU's migration policy. So, in solidarity with those fleeing war and persecution, at the same time we are stepping up our work to return those who have no right to stay in Europe.

Regarding financial support, Comm. Avramopoulos stated that, the important aspect is not just to contribute much more substantially within the EU-Africa Trust Fund, but also to accelerate relocations for all those eligible, to better coordinate the maritime operations to save lives at sea and fight human smugglers, and those who jointly step up engagements with the media, Egypt, Algeria, as well as Libya, to improve SAR operations and to improve returns internally and externally.

Comm. Avramopoulos also had words of praise for the important preparatory work carried out in the sphere of migration, during the Maltese EU Presidency, but he said that it is important that there will be a continuation of that work through further discussions.

Comm. Avramopoulos also focused on the Dublin issue stating that, the new Dublin will be a new fair Dublin. This is

what was lacking before, because when Dublin was adopted some years ago, the situation was not as it is today. So a more balanced and fair Dublin system will be of a top priority.

Comm. Avramopoulos emphasized the importance of cooperation with third countries. Case in point will be the meeting in Tunis, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, where, the Presidency will be meeting with ministers from all countries of the region. The priority will be to help Italy, by better managing the Southern borders of Libya. This is very important as the EU can collaborate with the Libyan authorities in the training of their Coast Guard, and also providing them with the means and the tools. In fact Italy will provide them with vessels, in order to better manage the sea borders. So it is a more comprehensive policy, in order to support Italy and this is what the EU means by stating that Italy is not alone.

The EU Commissioner for Migration enhanced the fact that our duty is to save lives and this duty remains unchanged. But flows need to be stemmed, and this should be understood by everybody. The answer to this issue lies in equipping the Libyan Coast Guard, to save lives within its own territorial waters.