



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

# Embracing Super-Diverse Communities 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

OCTOBER 2021

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Project Manager and Academic Advisor  
Dr. Maria Pisani, Expert Technical Advisor  
Mr. Peter M. Farrugia, RSO II



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



**Embracing Super-Diverse Communities:  
'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda**

**Embracing Super-Diverse Communities  
'Migrant Inclusion' on the  
Maltese Policy Agenda**



L-Università ta' Malta  
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



## **Introduction**

This was a very delicate project that looked at one particular angle of the migrant experience. This report surfaces how this population in our community still struggles and the challenges we face are real and urgent. The Faculty in collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities has once again been a trailblazer to provide the space to surface such a delicate issue that needs the right social policy solutions.

**Prof. Andrew Azzopardi**

Dean

Faculty for Social Wellbeing



## Table of Contents

1.	Executive Summary	9
	Key Themes	10
	Key Findings	11
	Key Recommendations	11
2.	Introduction	15
3.	Theoretical Framework	19
	Migration and Integration	20
	Perspectives from Super-Diversity	21
	Bordering and Belonging	23
	Strategic Visions for Migrant Inclusion in Malta	25
4.	Methodology	27
	Research Questions	28
	Data Collection Tools	28
	Participants	29
	Access and Recruitment Strategy	29
	Ethical Considerations	29
	Sampling Strategy and Data Analysis	30
	Potential Limitations of the Study	30
5.	Findings and Analysis	31
	Super-Diversity:Us/Them	32
	Paradoxes of Interdependence	32
	Acknowledging Super-Diversity	33
	Bordering Practices	34
	Community Communication	35
	Media Representation	36
	Racism	38
	Service Provision	39
	Anxiety and Wellbeing	40
	Anxiety and Documentation	42
	Anxiety and Leaving	43
	Precarious Belonging	44
	Strategy Implementation	44
	Parochial Attitudes	46
	Political Responsibilities	46
	Calls for Inclusion	47
	Examples of Good Practice	47
	Political Voice	48
6.	Conclusions and Recommendations	51
	Super-Diversity: Conclusions	52
	Bordering Practices: Conclusions	53
	Anxiety and Wellbeing: Conclusions	54
	Precarious Belonging: Conclusions	55
	Political Responsibilities: Conclusions	56
	Key Recommendations for Policy	56
7.	Citations	63
8.	Appendices	71
	Appendix A: Figures	72
	Appendix B: Focus Group Protocols	75
	Appendix C: Recruitment Materials	81







## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past decades, migration and integration have become central yet controversial themes in contemporary Maltese policy. This is due to their fundamental enmeshment with related phenomena including development, economic growth and productivity, demographic change, social cohesion, and the upholding of human rights and the rule of law.

This report was commissioned by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Citizenship and Communities and conducted by the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, to provide a point of reference for the direction of future policy that aims towards greater inclusion of the diverse communities residing in the Maltese Islands.

The report presents findings and recommendations that address the following key research questions:

- What are the integration experiences, needs and aspirations of migrant community members living in central Malta?
- In what ways can migrant communities, indigenous communities, and local-level stakeholders collaborate more effectively towards inclusion?

Primary data was generated through three semi-structured focus group sessions conducted with indigenous and migrant community members living in Malta in the summer of 2021. Participants from migrant communities spoke alongside representatives from local councils, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations.

## **KEY THEMES**

A qualitative process of thematic analysis was applied to the groups' sharing, from which emerged a number of key themes. These include super-diversity, presented as a contextual reality for participants' experiences of interdependence among indigenous and migrant communities in Malta. Exclusionary bordering appears as a pervasive feature in migrant community members' experiences, intersecting across diverse groups within the migrant population and in direct contradiction to the lived realities of social and economic interdependence within Maltese society.

Anxiety emerges as a thematic accompaniment to migrants' sharing about the uncertainties and lack of clarity they face during the integration process, with direct negative repercussions on wellbeing across migrant communities and families. The theme of precarity in inclusion follows this pervasive sense of indeterminacy, amplified by the informal, parochial forms of influence that emerge in the absence of active authorities.

Political responsibility-bearing emerges as a thematic category that queries responsibilities for inclusion within localities and across services. Likewise, the notion of democratic responsibility-sharing emerges as an inclusive measure to welcome all residents in the locality, and to ensure the meaningful empowerment of all communities.

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

### KEY FINDINGS

- Findings report an incongruity between the integration objectives proposed by current strategy and its perceived implementation, particularly by primary service providers such as Identity Malta Agency. It emerges that existing initiatives are generally successful due to the commitment of individuals rather than a structural process of change, as envisaged in the national strategy (Integration=Belonging, 2017).
- Participants from local councils describe Malta's evolving super-diversity as under-acknowledged, leading to precarity of belonging in localities and across society. Reliance on informal and parochial structures emerges as a further limitation, problematising the inclusion and participation of migrant communities. These views are echoed by educators and non-governmental representatives, who describe under-investment in national initiatives and resources for inclusion at the local level.
- Participants from migrant communities identify the need for policies that acknowledge and enable super-diverse environments, and effectively respond to the exclusionary bordering practices currently being encountered during the documentation process and in accessing key services.
- Findings indicate that current practices of bordering and the absence of long-term strategies for inclusion in Maltese society, compounded by a political and public discourse that relentlessly problematises migration, are pushing individuals and families to search for opportunities elsewhere in Europe.
- Findings reflect participants' ambivalent perspectives on the adaptation and settlement of migrant communities in Malta under conditions of super-diversification. For example, resistance from indigenous communities within localities has produced a situation in which representatives of local government are reluctant or unwilling to engage with migrant communities, for fear of perceived 'political stigma'.
- Inclusion in super-diversity includes the recognition of intersectional diversity within and across all the residents of Malta. For example, findings make clear that people of colour from migrant communities are experiencing intersectional oppressions, which undermine their integration process through encounters with racism and exclusionary discrimination.

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Given the growing complexity, acceleration of change, and increasing interconnectedness across localities, strategies for integration must be reconsidered beyond the limitations of a normative integration paradigm. The delivery of a Local Councils' Charter for Inclusion (first proposed in Integration=Belonging, 2017) that responds to locality-based needs is therefore essential, in harmony with national strategic objectives for migrant community inclusion in Malta.

2. The delivery of training for super-diversity orientation and anti-racism training to all staff at governmental agencies, including but not limited to Identity Malta Agency, International Protection Agency, Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre, and Jobsplus Public Employment Service.
3. Harnessing the benefits of new technologies as part of an integration strategy that promotes effective information sharing and service delivery, while also foreseeing challenges such as false information and the propagation of harmful stereotypes. Optimising new technologies to enhance service delivery for key migrant services must be paralleled by necessary education and training opportunities among service users and providers.
4. Responding to considerable concerns in terms of clarity, transparency, and delivery of services encountered by migrant individuals and families, particularly service provision experiences regarding Identity Malta Agency. A programme of review and refinement is required, to ensure that all national service provision is efficient, effective, respectful and humane. Tangible measures include revisions of validity periods for key documentation and subsidising costs for migrant individuals and families experiencing economic precarity.
5. Enacting intersectional policies, which recognise the specific vulnerabilities experienced by migrants due to factors including race, age, gender, and social mobility. For example, the specific needs of migrant women and children with migrant backgrounds must be accorded due consideration in all policy planning for effective integration.
6. Measures that preempt the long-term needs of evolving communities across multiple generations require sufficient investment in research and policy-planning to better understand the evolving context. Investment in community initiatives linking schools and families with the locality represents one such direct measure, to build inclusive belonging across multiple generations.
7. Engaging with new stakeholders in the locality by prioritising opportunities for leadership among residents in the locality. For example, inclusion of young people from indigenous and migrant communities within locality-based initiatives promotes a peer-to-peer approach to social inclusion through cultural and activities-based interventions.
8. Promoting opportunities for political representation in local government among migrant communities residing and working in the locality. Prioritising pathways for the representation of migrant communities in local government is long overdue, as part of larger processes for authentic democratic inclusion in the Maltese Islands.
9. Long-term investment in locality-based resources that equip localities to provide education for integration in the context of super-diversity. Trust-building campaigns are a further measure, to ensure that local government is acknowledged and its role, in terms of integration policy, is understood.

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

10. Ensuring the mental and emotional healthcare needs of migrant individuals, families, and communities are adequately addressed, by prioritising holistic indicators for wellbeing in the design and implementation of all relevant policy reforms.
11. Mechanisms for robust assessment and evaluation of local initiatives for inclusion, to ensure that the exigencies of super-diversity are adequately considered across social, economic, and cultural variables and successful initiatives are shared among regional localities as examples of good practice.
12. It is essential that the lived experiences of members of migrant and indigenous communities inform any approach to integration, particularly, highlighting ongoing risks of exploitation and exclusion. Inviting direct feedback from individuals and communities who have experienced the realities of former and current inclusion policy is a necessary element of future investment in research, policy development, and implementation assessments.

In conclusion, cultivating opportunities for communication and participation emerge as an ethical imperative, rooted in a national responsibility to ensure inclusive belonging and democratic dialogue among all residents in Malta. Sustained political will to achieve such ends therefore requires a united parliamentary commitment to support optimal strategies for integration outcomes, by prioritising community wellbeing and locality-based engagements.

Growing awareness of super-diverse interdependence in localities is a call for more dignified processes of migrant community inclusion at every level, as the Maltese Islands become a place in which migrant individuals and families, called by Malta to make a living, might also feel welcome to make a home.







# INTRODUCTION



Addressing the launch of public consultation for the first National Action Plan Against Racism, on 8 October 2020, the Parliamentary Secretary Hon. Alex Muscat highlighted cultural diversity as underpinning Malta's "resilient and sustainable economy", providing "a place where multiple generations are seeking prosperity and opportunities" (Times of Malta, 2020). This study follows through on that vision, to promote measures that welcome the presence of super-diversity and the long-term wellbeing of Maltese society after a decade of unprecedented levels of migration.

Opening policy to such a perspective, rooted in authentic recognition and belonging, becomes all the more urgent under current conditions of super-diversity in the Maltese Islands. The need for migrant labour in the context of emerging industries, demographic change and the larger reality of life in a globalised world, must therefore be reflected in serious action for the inclusion of migrants in the social, economic, and cultural life of the country.

Furthermore, Malta represents one of the most urbanised and densely populated places in the world and by far the most densely populated in the European Union, generating challenges of its own. The diversification of localities and regions of the islands is an ongoing process, with individuals and families from indigenous and migrant communities already living beside one another - if not yet living 'together'.

The number of "foreigners living and working in Malta" in 2021 has nearly quadrupled since 2013 (Malta Independent, 2021) with localities in the central region representing an area of high-density diversity for both residential and workplace environments (NSO, 2019). It is in this context that the research asks key questions about the 'integration' experiences of residents; the particular perspectives of migrant community members living and working in Malta; the role being taken by local government representatives in regard to community concerns, and professionals whose work brings them in touch with indigenous and migrant community needs and aspirations.

The Parliamentary Secretariat for Citizenship and Communities, in commissioning the Faculty for Social Wellbeing to conduct this research, is furthering an essential commitment to support diversity in Malta. Moreover, this study comes with an awareness of the concomitant need for effective strategies of belonging that are socially, economically, and culturally sensitive, and tangibly manifest a common path for inclusive policies in the future.

The launch of the Anti-Racism Strategy (2021-2023) represents a critical opportunity to reformulate public and political discourse around a shared agenda of social belonging that is intrinsically inclusive, in so far as "[a]nyone who is committed to being part of our community, anyone who recognises a responsibility to the rest of society and wishes to make a contribution, is part of the Maltese dream" (Parliamentary Secretariat for Equality and Reforms, 2020: 1).

The aims of this research study respond to the call for data that gives due recognition to the question of how diverse communities, comprising indigenous and migrant individuals, families, and groups, view the effects of strategic policies of integration in Malta. By engaging with the needs and aspirations of community members and relevant stakeholders, this study addresses gaps in the existing research, to provide a clearer understanding of the following questions:



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

- What are the integration experiences, needs and aspirations of migrant community members living in central Malta?
- In what ways can migrant communities, indigenous communities, and local-level stakeholders collaborate more effectively towards inclusion?

The following chapter (see, Theoretical Framework) further explicates the theoretical framework used to locate this research in theory and practice. Key concepts are explored, including the established use of 'integration' within public and political discourse. However, as this research highlights, the term is itself contested within the larger perspective of Malta's super-diversification over the past decades. The framework explores how super-diversity and intersectionality come together to provide a powerful critical lens, interrogating a reductive national discourse that has proved largely unable to respond to the legitimate needs of all residents of the population in Malta.

The chapter on Methodology provides information about the specific research design envisioned by this study and the qualitative research methods adopted to meet the aims of the research. Data was collected through three semi-structured focus groups held over the summer of 2021. The chapter provides more information on the research tools, criteria for participation, a description of research participants, data collection procedures, analysis, and ethical considerations.

In the fourth chapter (see, Findings and Analysis) the experiential sharing of participants is presented in the context of key emergent themes and sub-themes. These include the phenomenon of super-diversity and its effects among diverse communities in Malta; pervasive experiences of bordering and exclusion that negatively impact migrant inclusion; the precarity of belonging in situations of ongoing uncertainty, due to perceived insufficiencies across multiple areas of policy formulation and/or implementation; struggles of emotional and mental health among migrant community members and, in particular, their families; and the new opportunities for political responsibility-sharing that emerge within super-diverse localities and society at large.

In Conclusions and Recommendations, encompassing themes are distilled to reflect the most figural concerns, needs, and aspirations expressed by participants. Conclusions therefore provide an encapsulation of thematic currents, from which actionable and focused recommendations for policy have been drawn. Recommendations are responsive to the larger context of participants' sharing, in order to better reflect the intermingling of indigenous and migrant community members' experiences of relevant policies in Malta. In this way, the study aims to improve the effectiveness of inclusion strategies at a local and national level.





# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



## MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

The study of migration has come to reflect an increasingly complex nexus of policy priorities (Bommes and Morawska, 2005; Scholten et al., 2015), producing multidisciplinary (Brettell and Hollifield, 2015) and methodologically diverse (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2018) perspectives in theory and practice. Inquiry extends across a range of interlocking areas, including international and internal migration (Skeldon, 2018), migration-related diversity (Scholten, 2018), and the implications of long-term social and cultural interdependence (Gonda et al., 2021, Giglito et al., 2021).

Shadowing the growth of migration studies, there has been a concurrent focus on practices for controlling migration (Mlambo, 2020; Lauwers et al., 2021) and the management of migrant community inclusion within existing national structures (Helbling et al., 2020). This is particularly evident in countries' responses to migration within their borders, producing an intermingling of policy and research priorities in national discourses on migrant integration (Scholten, 2011). However, the very indeterminacy of the concept of integration and its relation to specific communities' social needs and aspirations has long led to assertions that "integration is in itself a chaotic concept" (Robinson 1998: 118) lacking any "single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration" (Castles et al., 2002: 122) and tending towards problematic reductions of the actual diversity present in contemporary populations (Sontag, 2020).

Increasingly, dominant notions of migrant integration are facing serious scrutiny in terms of their relevance to fast-changing environments and rapidly diversifying societies (Grzymala-Kazłowska 2015). In spite of such reservations, integration is central to policy strategies regarding migrant settlement, with Bommes and Morawska (2009: 44) arguing that "integration has emerged as the most widely used generic concept for describing the target of post-immigration policies." At the level of EU governance, the importance of comprehensive integration measures remains an essential topic in migration policy, clearly evident in the 'New Pact on Migration and Asylum' and 'Action Plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2027' (European Commission, 2020).

The discursive thrust of policy has long related the term integration to "the process by which immigrants become accepted into society" (Penninx, 2005:1), with the European Commission having further defined integration as a dichotomous negotiation or "two-way process of mutual accommodation" (European Commission, 2005) and more recently, integration as "a right and a duty for all" (EC, 2020). Member States such as Malta endorse and mobilise this framework and its commitments, by pursuing integration strategies that aim for harmonised action and common adjustments. The New Pact further prioritises the mainstreaming "effective integration policies" in the context of national and supra-national strategic commitments, remarking that "[p]art of a healthy and fair system of migration management is to ensure that everyone who is legally in the EU can participate in and contribute to the well-being, prosperity and cohesion of European societies" (European Commission, 2020).

Aside from the contested usefulness of 'integration' as a conceptual frame to achieve these objectives in contemporary society, concerns emerge that strategic action for integration has occurred in response to historical patterns that are increasingly dissonant with contemporary experiences of migration (Tyldum and Lillevik, 2021; Snel et al., 2021). The identification of integration as a two-way process of settlement casts social actors in an encounter between migrant persons and indigenous populations (Naveed and Wang, 2020; Tatarko and Jurcik,

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

2020) yet the rapidly developing context of migration in the twenty-first century and the concomitant super-diversification of societies are posing serious challenges to the validity of this inherently dualistic perspective.

Critical inquiries into the discourse on integration go further, to remark on the asymmetries of agency and access created by a binary approach are ultimately embedded in “structural and functional assumptions that immigrants constituted an alien element needing adjustment” (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2017). The long-term implications of migration “management” emerge as a process by which society itself is articulated in terms of restrictive enclosure - nationally homogenous, socially unambiguous, and culturally contained.

The inflexibility of such a perspective emerges with particular saliency in light of global changes in broader society. For example, diverse populations in Malta (and in particular, Maltese youth) represent increasingly globalised subjects, interacting in ways that instantiate webs of social, economic, and cultural interdependence. Evolving patterns of human movement have led to “the rise of a new migration order” (Strangio and De Rose, 2015), producing complex transnational social fields which have accompanied the migration of diverse communities (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Interconnected fluidity has been further characterised by the ubiquity of digital technologies, which support pre-existing relations in countries of origin and transit while also providing ground for spatially unspecific connections and relationship-building (Dekker, 2014). In this context, see for example the recent measures taken by Malta to attract migrating workers as “digital nomads” (Times of Malta, 2021).

Shaped by such changes, societies already marked by characteristics of fluidity and diversity (Engbersen & Snel, 2013) have witnessed new expressions of resident mobility and deepening super-diversification. These overlap with important contextual factors, including the destabilising effects of nationally “coherent cultural systems and traditional institutions” diminishing in relevance (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2017), rapid shifts in community demographics (Seabrooke et al., 2020), and concurrent increases in divisive practices that perpetuate inequalities (Giddens 2006, Lamb 2020), all of which call for a careful policy response, particularly in the context of migration in Malta. Strategic planning for the future requires an approach rooted in these human experiences of super-diversity, to ensure that relevant policies are inclusively conceptualised, implemented, and assessed.

### PERSPECTIVES FROM SUPER-DIVERSITY

The term ‘super-diversity’ reflects larger movements in social research, towards a theoretical and methodological framework that can capably hold those “multiple modes of social differentiation and fragmentation” that occur in contemporary experiences of economic, social, and cultural “re-ordering” (Vertovec, 2012: 308). In the work of Steven Vertovec and others, super-diversity is understood as a conceptual and analytical bridge that articulates the transition from traditional forms of migration into evolving forms of social relations and potential inclusion. It comes in response to unprecedented increases in migration to Europe (Batsaikhan, Darvas, & Raposo, 2018; UNHCR, 2017) now further problematised by the global pandemic (IOM, 2020).

Super-diversity describes demographic complexity as feeding the “transformative diversification of diversity” (Vertovec, 2007: 1025), driven by emergent patterns of human movement. Despite a degree of contestation (Ndlovu, 2015), super-diversity is acknowledged as having moved beyond the discursive limits of multiculturalism as both a demographic



reality and an analytic lens, through which to better imagine complex layers of differentiation. While the concept of multiculturalism has been challenged and to some degree discarded by academics and policy-makers, a so-called “zombie category” in social studies (Meer and Modood, 2014), super-diversity has come into play as a means of perceiving “increasingly complex and dynamic social, demographic, and lingua-cultural changes” (Lamb et al., 2020) in the experience of diverse individuals and communities.

Although the concept of super-diversity has become popular in European debate and is widely adopted by academics and policy-makers, it has provoked critique. This comes on the grounds that it may romanticise difference (Ramadan, 2021), usurp the discourse formerly dominated by multiculturalism (Sealey, 2018), or “partly reveal a Eurocentric worldview” and attitude to regional demographic change (Czajka and de Haas, 2014: 289). The suggestion has also been made that the concept of super-diversity is a return to earlier modes of human movement and mixing (Ndhlovu, 2016) and not a novel phenomenon. However, the scale, speed and spread of super-diversification in the twenty-first century has so far exceeded general experiences in much of the world (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015) and corresponds only to exceptional historical or primordial precedents.

For this reason, it is crucial to recognise that super-diversity is not, primarily, a diagnostic category for demographic complexity in Europe or elsewhere. Rather, it applies a discursive frame from which to conceptualise the complex ways that migrant and indigenous communities are sharing super-diverse societies across multiple variables (Vertovec, 2007, 2011), and the ways in which communities shape and are shaped by this ongoing dynamic (Grzymala-Kazłowska and Phillimore, 2017). This has hastened a mapping of super-diversity in terms of its intersectional complexity (Abu-Laban and Nath, 2020), recognising in experiences of migration that “a migrant is not an essence or type of being, but rather a positionality” (Humphries, 2015).

In comparison to super-diversity, intersectionality has long been recognised “as a framework for studies of social positioning, as a theoretical and methodological paradigm, and as a lens for political interventions” (Humphries, 2015). Intersectionality emplaces “the practice of interrogating the power dynamics and rationales of how we can be together” (Garza, 2020), with major implications for social theory (Lykke, 2011). The critical intertwining of individuals’ and communities’ intersecting experiences within super-diverse societies therefore emerges from the dynamic relations taking place among multiple-origin, socio-economically differentiated, and legally stratified residents who are sharing increasingly diverse spaces.

Coupling super-diversity with intersectionality thereby provides a critical perspective for engaging with and within this new reality, “to critique the ideological and structural apparatus of neoliberalism, to address inequality in all its forms, to situate its analysis historically, to be adaptable to different global contexts and temporal scales, and to have practical application to improve people’s lives” (Lamb, 2019: 3). Re-focusing intersectionality through super-diversity supplies a further corrective to at least some reservations raised by researchers regarding migrant integration policies, by spotlighting the experiences of interdependent and super-diverse communities (see Formenti and Luraschi, 2020); experiences of exclusion, racism, and discrimination within these same communities (see Bradby et al., 2020); and the intersectional lens required to sustain supportive social structures for all communities in super-diversity (see Vacchelli and Mesaric, 2020; Martin-Cano, 2020).

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Rather than conceptualising integration as fixed on the extent to which 'minority communities' are integrated into a 'majority', super-diversity gives purchase for more complex analyses of social encounters within and between evolving and diverse indigenous and migrant populations. In this context, super-diversity provides guidance in the void left by post-multicultural theory (Fomina, 2010). It provides lessons on diversification so earnestly needed for effective research and policy-making, re-oriented towards exploring diversity and its intersectional emergences in the lived experiences of individuals and communities.

### Bordering and Belonging

Lending weight to assertions that "the 21st century will be the century of the migrant" (Nail, 2020), the demand for migrant labour has led to a world that is ever more bordered, as Western nations in particular attempt to control and manage new, unpredictable patterns of human mobility (Nail, 2020). Critically assessed in the context of such encounters with/in diversity, a so-called 'two-way model of migrant integration' has been challenged for ultimately pushing responsibilities for successful integration outcomes onto migrants (Klarenbeek, 2019), while ignoring the problematic asymmetries of power that emerge as a direct result.

In a decade-long longitudinal study of data provided by OECD, Meissner and Vertovec (2015) identify nations in the global North as the primary instigators of diversity, driving a demand for migrant labour while simultaneously enacting bordering policies that problematise migrant belonging. To better understand the peculiar paradox of necessity and exclusion being experienced by migrants and their communities, Thomas Nail (2020) provides clarification that "the migrant has always been a constitutive social figure. In other words, migrants are not marginal or exceptional figures, as they have so often been treated, but rather the essential lever by which all hitherto existing societies have sustained and expanded their social form."

The historical context of Malta is useful to foreground this reality, evident in the multiple processes of Maltese emigration and inflows of migration over the centuries (Amore, 2007) including exceptional figures like St Paul and the Knights of Malta, whose touristic appeal remains thoroughly embedded in contemporary narratives of Malta and 'Malteseness'. More recently, since 2013 Malta has encouraged an economic model that locks into the economic potential of migrant labour (Grech, 2015), yet is still grappling with the implications for society and its transition into ever more complex forms of super-diversity.

Addressing migration in terms of social bordering, which emerges in the lacunae left by such policy delays, Nail goes further to uncover the fact that while migrant labour sustains "whole sectors of economic and social life that would collapse without them ... these migrants remain largely depoliticised compared with the citizens their labor sustains, often because of their partial or non-status." Furthermore, the national framing of migration is rarely neutral, often feeding a paradox of interdependence. In the Maltese context this emerges in the clear need for migrant labour, which simultaneously positions migrant individuals, families, and communities as problematic outsiders. It is such questions of status, citizenship, and participation in narratives of national belonging that also inform Yuval-Davis, on the importance of moving beyond the dichotomous language that categorises 'the migrant' as an outsider in the first place.

The discursive dichotomisation of identity, underlying the exclusionary bordering identified by Nail, are apparent in a pervasive rhetoric of 'Us/them' that insinuates identities in antagonistic social roles (Yuval-Davis, 2010). The dichotomy goes further, by working to positively enforce

and represent 'we/us', often in terms of citizenship, while conversely enforcing negative and precarious representations of 'them/others' (Eaton et al., 2011). Most perniciously, this discourse is implicitly deployed in the creation and maintenance of "national identity" as a category of ethnic and cultural belonging, where "them/others" signifies groups that are excluded from this dominant identity (Muller, 2008). Dichotomies of migrant and national identities therefore emerge as inherently reductive, coding notions of "race" and ethnicity at their core" (Yuval-Davis, 2010: 261) in a larger programme for national homogenisation and the production of bordering.

Fluid and multi-directional flows of migration in the context of super-diversity continue to call into question the stability of any such a priori "nation-state-society" formulations of homogeneity (Favell 2010). Yet in their response to recent migration, nations have sought to reassert such a formula and its inbuilt dichotomising of residents. By reasserting national narratives, the adaptation and inclusion of migrant communities has been framed within a national context of assumed or imagined dominance, in terms of one ethnic group, culture, and/or belief/value system. Highlighting resistance to the reframing of national identity and its implications for statuses outside of citizenship acquires additional saliency, when it is recognised that status largely determines migrant communities' access to vital support for accommodation, employment, and in particular, healthcare (see, Hannigan et al., 2016).

Due to the normalisation of a homogenous national identity, migrant individuals and communities experience intense pressure to reshape their identities. This occurs due to the fact that the only pathways for inclusion often involve absorption into the homogenous 'us/we' discourse of national belonging (Muller, 2008). Migrant communities are left to become the primary agents in their integration processes, being encouraged to enhance their social capital and seek out nationally prescribed education (Kristen and Granato, 2007; Kogan, 2011), to accommodate unilateral cultural adaptations (Tselios et al., 2014), and to proactively develop relationships with members of indigenous communities (Koopmans and Schaeffer, 2015) when no reciprocal expectation or responsibility exists.

A lack of shared accountability for social belonging, arising as a consequence of the asymmetrical 'Us/them' dichotomy, has more serious repercussions when it involves situations of enforced dependency in migrant communities (Schneider and Crul, 2010) or is compounded by racism and other bordering forms of discrimination (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). Yet national responsibilities for successful outcomes continue to be generally de-emphasised within receiving societies and among indigenous communities (Schinkel, 2018). This is in stark contrast to the inherently multilateral dynamics of super-diversity itself (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 2012), which encourages adaptive measures among all communities for meaningful belonging in super-diverse societies.

Concerns have further been raised that national interest in migrant integration strategies has tended to fall in a narrow range of desired determinants and outcomes (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2015). Responsibility for successful integration is often shown to centre on such unidirectional factors as migrant education for language acquisition, achieving prescribed cultural competencies, and mastering the ability to effectively engage with national services and within institutions that may act as sources of further bordering. Rarely do they encompass the holistic wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities - deep-rooted needs for stability and a sense of belonging (Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018).



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

In effect, a disproportionate focus on functional indicators, rather than socially comprehensive measures, results in policies for integration that broadly respond to migration by strengthening the existing socio-cultural order and its inbuilt dichotomy. "Migrants are made to perform and reproduce the very social formations that make possible the citizen, and their own exclusions," while simultaneously allowing national narratives of citizenship to legitimise these bordering practices (Nail, 2020). This has profoundly negative effects on opportunities for meaningful exchanges to take place (Schwartz, 2010), rendering strategic support for reciprocal efforts to achieve inclusive belonging all the more urgent.

### STRATEGIC VISIONS FOR MIGRANT INCLUSION IN MALTA

Policies for migrant integration come part and parcel of larger strategic commitments, encompassing processes of migration as a whole. For this reason, the narrative of crisis and containment that has accompanied questions of migration in Malta over two decades (Mainwaring, 2018) must be seen side-by-side with growing interdependency, prioritised since 2013 as an essential element in Malta's high-paced economic development (Tory-Murphy, 2018). Concurrent focus on the social and cultural dimensions of this development have only more recently become a policy priority. Indeed, the "generic migration crisis as a hegemonic representation ... readily invoked to describe migration" (Cantat, 2020: 7) is routinely deployed, even as it flattens the actual diversity of migrants and migrant communities in super-diverse regions of Malta.

It comes as no surprise then that, over the past eight years, migration features as a top concern among Maltese respondents to Eurobarometer surveys. In the survey conducted at the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 'migration' was still the first concern with 58 percent of respondents, compared to 25 percent who named 'health' as their top priority (Eurobarometer, 2020). The construction of migration-as-crisis remains ingrained in representations of migration in general and the belonging of migrant communities in particular. Addressing "the media's migrant crisis machine" in Malta, Mark Micallef traces the development of national discourse "instantly dominated by words like 'crisis', 'influx' and 'siege'" that has since come to embody a "general tone of coverage [that] never really moved away from crisis mode" (Micallef, 2017: 53).

Consolidated throughout the 2010s across Europe, the notion of migration as a crisis collapses the important differences among migrants, as internally diverse as asylum-seekers and Third Country Nationals, into a single discursive category. It is this rhetorical erasure that has become generalised and generic, "operat[ing] as a category of power, which in turn gives way to particular ways of dealing with and responding to migration" (Cantat, 2020: 6). Exclusionary bordering practices emerge in response to migration-as-crisis, and are at once legitimised as 'governance by crisis management' and positioned as the routine model for organising and responding to migration (Aguiton et al., 2019; Gilbert, 2019).

Over the past decades and in the wake of emergent super-diversity, authorities have been reluctant to prioritise measures for migrants' inclusion and policies for belonging in Malta. Significantly however, the 2013 appointment of a Minister for Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties included issues specifically relating to integration on the government agenda. A 2014 report on national integration in Malta describes policies at the time as minimal. When these do appear, they reveal a discourse already homogenised around themes of crisis and concern, and the absolute omission of 'third country nationals' from national debate on migration: "[I]n most public and political discussions on integration [the main targets] are

beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers, leaving the larger third-country national category out of the national debate.” (Camilleri, 2014: 7).

Malta's first attempt at a comprehensive strategy for migrant integration (aside from one fragmented effort in 2009 - see Camilleri, 2015: 8) comes into being with the 2017 adoption of a national commitment to “Integration=Belonging: Migrant Integration Strategy & Action Plan”. The strategic vision, which concluded in 2020, includes actions intended to strengthen communication among government ministries on issues of integration, provide opportunities for language acquisition among migrants, and support cultural orientation in increasingly diverse contexts. No mention is made of the migration-as-crisis discourse, and its instantiation in a national narrative of difference, nor of outcomes that would address this underlying impediment to effective policy.

A promising corrective emerges in the recent Horizon 2020 ‘Migration as Crisis: Framework Paper’ (2020), which identifies an urgent need for clarity about “when, why and by whom crisis discourses are articulated, and what this may tell us about the way in which a certain normality is established and reproduced” (Cantat, 2020: 5). Over the past decades, the tensions and contradictions created by “a certain normality” in crisis have increasingly come to the fore. Indeed, socially and politically reproduced discourse around migration and migrant integration “have become inseparable from a discourse of ‘crisis’” (Cantat, 2016: 12), a fact which finds earnest articulation in migrants’ experiences of bordering and exclusion in Malta (Vaughan-Williams and Pisani, 2020).

The result continues to be a flattening of diversity, as migrant communities are exposed to practices of bordering and exclusion, which lead to linked abuses and risks of exploitation. It is essential to note that the exploitation of migrant labour in global migration is “not the side-effect of neoliberal globalisation, it is the main effect. Neoliberalism should thus be understood as a migration regime for expanding Western power through the expulsion and accumulation of migrant reproductive labour” (Nail, 2020). It is this process of othering, and the reduction of migration to one excluding and (as Yuval-Davis emphasises) discriminatory discourse, which continues to negate the actuality of diversity already present in super-diverse societies such as Malta.



## METHODOLOGY

What follows is an overview of the methodological approach adopted in this study. It presents the research questions that have underpinned its formulation and the qualitative research design implemented to engage with those questions, and to obtain meaningful results. This overview also includes information about data collection tools, methods for gaining access to participants, sampling and recruitment strategies, and approaches to the analysis of data.

Guiding this research study are a number of ethical considerations, which are included alongside a short review of potential limitations.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two key research questions guide this study, informing its design and implementation:

- What are the integration experiences, needs and aspirations of migrant community members living in central Malta?
- In what ways can migrant communities, indigenous communities, and local-level stakeholders collaborate more effectively towards inclusion?

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Research was approached from a variety of perspectives, utilising appropriate tools for gathering qualitative data. In this regard, use was made of academic literature, reports, and policies relating to migrant integration strategies, procedures, and key conceptualisations. These were analysed to gain an in-depth insight into the evolving context of community inclusion in Maltese society among indigenous and migrant groups. The research team engaged in internal discussions supported by advisory expertise, in order to build a study design that capably engages with a spectrum of relevant participants and their specific concerns. Moreover, existing and emergent policies were also considered, to discover ways in which the integration of diverse communities is currently taking place in Malta and to evaluate plans that are designed to move relevant policy forward.

Primary data was generated through semi-structured focus group sessions. Three focus groups were held during the summer of 2021. The first focus group with local councillors, educational professionals, and NGO members was held via an online platform, on the 7 July 2021 in order to accommodate directives that were then active due to the Covid19 Pandemic. A second focus group with members of diverse migrant communities was held on the 14 July 2021. In order to accommodate participants who were unable to access online resources, the session was held outdoors and participants were social distanced and wore masks. The final focus group was held on the 27 July 2021 and took place in Valletta, at a location that was accessible and fulfilled medical requirements. During the third session, participants included representatives from indigenous and migrant communities alongside professionals working with these communities, and representatives from local government.

Focus groups were approximately 90-100 minutes in duration and structured to encourage but not dictate the flow of organic discussion on relevant topics (see Appendix B for exemplar Protocol). During each of the focus groups, an intense interest emerged among participants to share their experiences with other respondents. A sense of collective solidarity arose in response to deep-rooted frustrations shared among indigenous and migrant communities. Participants expressed urgency throughout the focus groups, both in terms of giving voice

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

to the experiences of migrant communities and the aspirations emerging from within the locality, for the necessary support to enact more inclusive measures of benefit to all residents.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The combined total of participants across three focus group sessions was 39. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 60, with the majority of participants in their late 20s to early 40s. Gender representation was evenly mixed in educational, NGO, and local council representation. In the group from migrant communities, participants were overwhelmingly male - of the 29 participants, 3 were women.

The majority of migrant-identified participants arrived in Malta as Third Country Nationals and all participants were in possession of legal permission to live and reside in Malta. In fact, the majority of such participants had responded to calls for specialised migrant labour. Migrant participants include students, business persons, IT specialists, healthcare professionals, educators, and hospitality workers. It is notable that considerable diversity emerges among the participants from migrant communities. Representation of migration from Europe (non-EU), North America, Africa, and Asia were included in the focus groups, representing multiple countries within each continent (see Appendix A, Figure 1).

Participants, including indigenous and migrant community members, feature representation from the following localities in the central region: Balzan, Birkirkara, Gzira, Lija, Msida, St. Julian's, Sliema, and Ta Xbiex (See Appendix A, Figure 2). Locality-based respondents include heads of school and educators working within the central region; professionals supporting community liaison initiatives within the region; representatives of non-governmental organisations; local councillors and other members of local government in the region.

### **ACCESS AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGY**

Gaining access to relevant participants was carried out through non-probability sampling in two main vectors, namely, snowball sampling and purposive sampling. This was enacted via direct recruitment, engaging specific local councils, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations active in the diversity-dense central region of Malta. This region was defined in conformity with the definition supplied by Government as part of the five regions of Malta. Participants from migrant communities in the same region were recruited on an opt-in basis via social media platforms and dissemination was aided by the ubiquity of social media networking in Malta. All participants were presented with information about the research study, its objectives and methods, as well as assurances regarding ethical considerations (Appendix C, Recruitment Materials). Participants from migrant communities represent Third Country Nationals over the age of 18 who are English speakers.

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This research is in conformity with the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice and Research Ethics Review Procedures. Confirmation of the project and its framework was received, following review, from the University Research Ethics Committee - Data Protection (UREC-DP) on 25 May 2021.



Potential participants were provided with all details about the study, as well as their rights as a research participant and according to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Recruitment and Consent Forms presented the nature and scope of the study, and all information and study tools were provided in English to increase accessibility among diverse participants. Focus group facilitators discussed the consent form and its implications with participants ahead of each session.

Participants were promised anonymity and only generic details have been included in order to be faithful to this promise. All participants were reminded of their commitment, contained in the Consent Form, to respect group confidentiality. No compensation was offered for participation.

The study indicates respondents according to their self-designation as members of a migrant community, professionals working in educational settings within a locality, local councillors serving a locality, and NGO representatives whose work brings them in touch with diverse communities within the region. A breakdown of the respective representation of roles is included in Appendix A, Figure 3.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Thematic analysis was carried out on the data collected through focus groups. Thematic analysis, which is the process of identifying themes and patterns within data, enables an accessible and theoretically flexible approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following transcription of each focus group session, the data was closely analysed and initial codes were generated to enable further analysis of key emergent themes and integrated sub-themes (see Appendix A, Figure 4). Meaning was extracted from common thematic qualities, topics, and patterns that emerged, in preparation for their construal as recommendations intended for policy development.

## **POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is not without methodological limitations. The selection of participants reflects the broader diversity of residents in Maltese localities, as well as a good spectrum of representatives from various groups within those localities. However, sampling considerations might have introduced an element of bias in the inclusion of certain individuals expressing outlier views on issues of migrant integration policy and/or social inclusion, although the general consensus of views noted in the findings would indicate otherwise.

An additional limitation of the focus group format is its reliance on supported discussion to produce results. Consequently, the facilitation of the discussion is critical and two experienced facilitators were present throughout all three focus group sessions. A further weakness inherent to the format is the fact that participants are self-selected and study results are therefore more difficult to generalise across the larger population.

Further, participants were required to be conversant in functional English and have access to, or contact with a source of, social media. Participants from migrant communities included a large number of professionals and specialised workers, therefore other industries highly dependent on migrant labour (for example, construction) are absent. Due to the fact that all participants are legally residing and working in Malta, the voice of undocumented and irregularly residing individuals is not included.



## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The following analysis elicits core themes that arise from positions shared by participants, rooted within a framework that draws from theories of belonging, bordering, and super-diversity (see, Theoretical Framework) to formulate actionable recommendations, which respond to the urgent concerns included in these findings. The analysis follows the critical needs of participants while also considering the social context in which their lives are embedded, and from which the participation of diverse communities is enabled or restricted within localities and across society in Malta:

*“Give us the opportunity ... we want to talk. Let us talk about the reality affecting the general population, all of us.” (Migrant Community Member)*

## SUPER-DIVERSITY: US/THEM

The findings highlight what Suzanne M. Hall (2017, 1562-1563) calls the “state of contradiction” between a sustained economic demand for migrant labour, and a political commitment to “a national authenticity in which hierarchical notions of ‘race’ and ethnicity are core”. This section draws attention to the particular ways in which this process plays out, with repressive contradictions manifesting and insinuating themselves across the breadth of participants’ sharing.

Such contradictions provoke an inherent paradox. Participants acknowledging the basic realities of super-diversity and societal interdependence, taking place among diverse communities in Malta, also obscure its basic implications. This is achieved by the discursive reduction of those social actors involved in its very production.

Complex flows of migration that have given rise to Malta’s super-diversity are obscured by a fundamental bordering via a Maltese/migrant, Us/them dichotomy. The discursive construal of national and migrant identities, in bordered opposition, emerges throughout participants’ sharing on subjects of meaningful visibility (see, *Bordering: Media Representation*), community exclusion (see, *Bordering: Community Communication*), and experiences of racist aggression (see, *Bordering: Racism*).

## PARADOX OF INTERDEPENDENCE

The following findings suggest that Malta has, despite the intensification of super-diversification over the past two decades of migration, been unable to fully embrace the interdependence of migrant communities within Maltese localities. As the following extracts suggest, findings point to a situation in which migrants and Maltese people are simultaneously living together yet perceive their lives to be fundamentally divided.

The findings reflect an ongoing social dichotomisation of migrant and national identities, which is inherently reductive and asymmetrically configured - coding divisive notions of otherness at its core (see, Theoretical Framework). Within the boundaries delineated by the dichotomous status quo, relationships lack depth because they are restricted to a single plane. They remain disconnected, even in the midst of super-diversity:

*“We seem to be living parallel lives which never merge ... I don’t see that kind of connection at the moment.” (NGO Representative)*



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

*"There are so many cultural clashes we have noticed between migrant and Maltese communities." (NGO Representative)*

Reflecting on national political attitudes in terms of migration, the following excerpt reveals a preoccupation with other expressions of pervasive dichotomous reduction in Malta:

*"We don't practice politics in the right way... it's very two-sided, opposition and people in government, and there is a big problem in that, we are not educated to think critically about politics." (NGO Representative)*

On the subject on migrant communities within localities, the following excerpt captures the general sense of disconnection:

*"It's as if their culture is on its own and our culture is on its own, everyone minding their own business, and no integration yet." (Local Council Member)*

This tendency towards reduction results in further simplifications, obscuring the deep complexity of an increasingly racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse Maltese society. Interactions among communities and families of different origins are a source of growing diversification that is flattened by the systemic imposition of homogeneity.

Similarly, the flattening of migrant experiences renders invisible the important differences among migrant individuals, communities, and groups. As the following extract demonstrates, a monolithic discourse emerges in participants' sharing that is at once both racialising and criminalising (see also section, *Bordering: Media Representation & Bordering: Racism*):

*"We hear students saying 'we heard that on the news!' ... they are exposed to stories that quote foreigners, different nationalities, being involved in rows, fights, and these are reinforcing certain beliefs [among students] that whoever is a foreigner in Malta needs to go back to their country." (Local Council Member)*

Forms of including/excluding are dependent on a host of factors, rendering a homogenised response to migration in Malta untenable. It is incapable of perceiving the particular needs of individual migrants and their families because the lived experiences of migration in Malta are far more complex than any a priori reductions will allow.

Findings demonstrate the ways in which reductive processes of including and excluding are emplaced and enacted, as ongoing bordering practices that, as shown below, aggravate acute anxieties among migrants and their families by undermining any sense of their belonging to society in Malta.

### **ACKNOWLEDGING SUPER-DIVERSITY**

Changing environments within localities bear the effects of super-diversity in contemporary Maltese society, yet participants draw attention to the lack of awareness, focus, and intention being directed to support the presence of such super-diversification, at a basic level:

*"Mainstream educators seem to be helpless about how to handle a multicultural classroom. Are we going to provide this kind of training? School demographics are not the same as they were 20 years ago, and we must adapt to the changing times." (Educational Professional)*



When the effects of super-diversification are noted, differentiation of migrant communities appears in economic terms and along lines framed by affluence or access to employment. This bolsters the sense that wealth acquisition is a major measure of advantage and disadvantage for the inclusion of particular migrants and their families:

*"It is important to note that there are big demographic differences even in the central region...migrant people living in Msida and Gzira are very different. People tend to think it's one-size-fits-all but this is not true. People in Gzira tend to have higher paying jobs, they do not live six to a room." (Local Council Member)*

Economic asymmetries within migrant communities arise as a cause for migrant community participants' experiences of precarity. Such situations provoke far greater difficulties for successful integration within the locality, compounded along intersecting lines of exclusion on the grounds of ethnicity, race, status, gender, and employability.

While multiple factors emerge as impediments for community participation, at certain intersections these also become potential sources of supportive connection. This appears particularly relevant among similarly precarious groups in Malta. Within the diverse cohort of participants from different communities in the region, migrants' precarity emerges as a key point of solidarity.

For example, persistent difficulties faced to successfully access services (see also section, *Bordering: Service Provision*) is a striking commonality, an issue which cuts across the entire group. This includes the perception that national authorities are under-performing in their ability to accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse migrant population:

*"Even if it is compliant legally... actually Identity Malta simply does not know what to do with complex statuses... They do not understand fringe or exceptional statuses and this has an effect on certain migrants." (Migrant Community Member)*

Diverse communities, statuses, and identities collapse under the weight of simplistic reductions, in a paradoxical intertwining with the super-diversification of society in Malta. The following section explores the ways in which this paradox emerges with destructive force, either covertly excluding or reacting with overt hostility to the presence and participation of migrant communities in Malta.

## **BORDERING PRACTICES**

The proliferation of bordering practices experienced by migrant communities in Malta do not occur in a social vacuum. They are intertwined with a pervasive dichotomy, where discourses of national identity construct a largely negative 'them' (homogenised migrants) in contrast to a generally favourable 'us' (homogenised Maltese).

This emerges in the instances of 'everyday' bordering disclosed by migrant participants, further complicated by a lack of basic communication among the communities in Maltese localities. This section demonstrates how densely nested practices of bordering are undermining efforts to nurture belonging through inclusion. Participants express concerns that occur in their interactions with service providers; experiences of racist discrimination; and a perception that biased narratives of racialised and criminalised migration predominate in national media.

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

### COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

In their sharing on questions of understanding among diverse communities, participants perceived a lack of communication even among those living in close proximity. The exigencies of geographical proximity, particularly in the context of a country characterised by expanding urban density like Malta, indicates that without sufficient support simple proximity does not result in any greater understanding:

*"The way migrant communities perceive our culture and our way of life is important for us to understand, and empowering members of these communities to work with us is a necessary step forward. However there is nothing like this." (NGO Representative)*

Despite the fact that migrant communities live in the locality, it emerges that common spaces designated for use by all residents are either unacknowledged or perceived as unwelcoming, with certain communities therefore rendered unable to connect with local government representatives and access services and/or support. The effects of this compromised communication have made it difficult for all residents to find a shared sense of belonging within their localities:

*"There are migrants who have been living in Malta for many years and they do not even know where the local council is, only the police station... [T]here is clearly a lack of integration." (Local Council Member)*

Bordering practices that maintain rigidly dichotomous boundaries, appropriating the power to declare who does and does not belong, further feed into a lack of understanding among groups. Local community organisations who historically have dealt almost exclusively with the indigenous Maltese population, for example, at times prove hostile to the participation of migrants and in particular, people of colour in migrant communities:

*"Because of their skin colour [migrant POC] did not get a warm welcome from local organisations which deal with the Maltese community." (Local Council Member)*

This has the effect of perpetuating problematic divides within the locality, an Us/them reduction that precludes opportunities for communication and understanding (see also section, Precarious Inclusion) that would otherwise draw attention to the need for urgent investment of resources and support to counteract discrimination and exclusionary practices.

There also exists a perception that mainstream services are primarily intended to respond to the needs of indigenous Maltese citizens exclusively, which further problematises the ability of local councils to effectively respond to all residents regardless of how long they have resided in the locality or their particular status, race or ethnicity. A resistance to changes in the locality also emerges:

*"We hear from Maltese people who come to the local council and complain about the presence of migrant groups... although these complaints are slowly lessening." (Local Council Member)*

The situation generates difficulties for local councillors who are seeking to build communication among communities, and are themselves tasked with responding to the needs of all their

residents and therefore require the support of relevant authorities to do so in effective ways (see also section, Political Responsibilities).

The absence of sustained communication and pathways for understanding has also led individuals and families facing precarity to encounter further risks, falling through the net of national services. For example, the following extract highlights the potential complexity at play in work on issues of domestic violence, an experience held in common by individuals and families from all backgrounds and of all statuses in Malta:

*Maltese women married to foreigners and foreign couples we have worked with tend to be more afraid and less likely to report [domestic violence] ... We have had to make sure that gender sensitivities are respected when we work with certain migrant communities, and we need support and training to work in the way we work with our Maltese clients but in this case, with migrant clients." (NGO Representative)*

The sharing of participants further highlights a preoccupation with the need for services that operate beyond the reductive dichotomy, with providers who are welcoming and therefore more capable of effectively communicating with, and seeking to respectfully understand, the needs of all residents.

Responses that address the needs of different individuals and families within a super-diverse society require an underlying process of trust-building between service providers and recipients, a lack of which emerges as a primary source of isolation and perceived neglect:

*"There is a lot of fear in some migrant communities about reporting [experiences of] abuse. We have found it difficult to make successful inroads into certain communities because of the reluctance to discuss the matter." (NGO Representative)*

## **MEDIA REPRESENTATION**

Participants from migrant communities, local councils, NGOs and educational institutions unanimously identify national media portrayals of migration as reproducing, and in some cases intensifying, a dichotomising perspective. This is grounded in a criminalising crisis-driven discourse that is perceived to instantiate practices of bordering. In the following extracts, community members explore the pervasive implications of media representation, which are impeding awareness about the fullness of Malta's super-diversity.

Focusing on young people, media representations emerge as exerting a powerful influence in Maltese society, shaping an understanding of migration among young people as threatening and migrants themselves as unwelcome:

*"We did a study with [young people] and one question in particular was about the media. Unfortunately when they get information about migration it seems to only be about one group, illegal migration, and the media only shares negative information... The journalists might be pressured, but they want to put a story out there that attracts views and unfortunately that means showing migrants in a negative light." (NGO Representative)*

The sharing of migrant community members, quoted below, provides further nuance by querying whether it is media bias originating negative representations, or if it motivates and



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

reproduces this discourse in response to the perceived demand. The notion that localities and society in Malta are tacitly assenting to problematic reporting recalls the dichotomising presence of an internal Us/them, which demands practices of bordering as part of its larger commitment to an exclusionary vision of imagined national homogeneity.

A vision that, the findings suggest, does not reflect the reality of contemporary Maltese society nor the active interdependence of communities upon which it is built - an interdependence that is taken for granted and effectively ignored in media representation. The result of this is that the term 'migrant' is reserved for overwhelmingly negative coverage:

*"The problem is with the way these negative stories are being repeated and highlighted [by the media in Malta]. We never hear the media saying that we need migrants to do basic jobs, like sanitation. Going to the public and saying that migrants create more taxes than average, that they contribute to jobs, would create a completely different perception. We would have a different idea from the media, but I think the real problem is from society and what they want to see in the media." (Migrant Community Member)*

*"We're not really seeing positive integration stories in the media. There is always a misunderstanding, a negative idea in the media. Integration is changing, and I think there is not enough media helping to support integration, involving people who are already in the process." (Migrant Community Member)*

Returning to the question of media producers' responsibilities, participants' sharing reveals a general dissatisfaction with the quality of, and justification for, coverage of migrant communities and their experiences. Rather than acting as a stable support for integration strategies and their intended outcomes, participant perceptions of media query ulterior motives:

*"The media is lacklustre in its reporting [on integration], and only comes out in force when there are high ranking officials from government involved." (Local Council Member)*

Moreover, continuing on from the ways in which media representation is implicated in perpetuating divisive or potentially racist discourse, migrant participants disclose the radical ways in which communities' perceptions are being shaped by their exposure to such routine representations:

*"The media creates a narrative, not how we actually behave but how people start to see us. We need to be included, to make sure that these depictions are accurate." (Migrant Community Member)*

*"To my surprise, I have a friend in Malta and he told me that I am unlike other black people. I asked him what was different about me, and he said 'You are different, I thought all of you were the same.' ... The media needs to come to our level, to help the Maltese population to have a more open reaction towards us." (Migrant Community Member)*

It is evident that a lack of migrant community members actively participating in the construction of media representations is not only producing inaccurate depictions. It also creates a sense of disconnection among individuals and groups who are otherwise interacting on a daily basis in their localities and places of work, while simultaneously exploiting their differences.



The effects of a discourse that is criminalising but also racially charged emerges as a powerful element in POC participants' perceptions of media representations on issues of migration. This has particular relevance to people of colour within migrant communities, whose shared experiences are typified either by exploitation via misrepresentation or are largely ignored due to other priorities that deflect attention from the needs of migrant people of colour in Malta. The following sub-section on racism explores these crucial concerns in further detail.

## RACISM

While all migrant participants described various experiences of discrimination (see below), not all of these were rooted in the experience of racism. This section reflects concerns shared by people of colour within migrant communities, reporting on the racism they experience in Malta. Racism emerges as a topic of widely differing saliency within the migrant community at large, noted among migrant POC and non-POC participants:

*"Other [migrants] here said they have not seen racism in Malta, but we experience it... because we are black." (Migrant Community Member)*

Migrants of colour who are engaged in the care sector, and who work across many other sectors of Maltese society, describe their daily interactions as characterised by casual forms of racist aggression. The following short excerpts frame participants' frustration working in Malta:

*"I have been to so many offices in Malta and I have faced racism and discrimination, even as part of my work [warranted professional]. You name the place, Mater Dei Hospital, Mount Carmel Hospital, others here. They tell me to go back to my country, and who are they to tell me?" (Migrant Community Member)*

*"Where I work discrimination occurs because people are accustomed to these 'traditions' [racist practices] - when they see a black man they think 'he is an illegal' and they do this because they hear it in their houses, on the media, and it is reflected in the streets." (Migrant Community Member)*

It clearly emerges that the decades-long legacy of a racialising discourse, which has dominated society's vision of migration in Malta and framed migration as an ongoing crisis characterised by illegality, is having far-reaching impact on the experiences of migrants of colour who try to live and work in Malta:

*"I see them behaving like we are criminals, to the black people and even the darker migrants. I am hearing the workers in Identity Malta ask, 'Why are you coming here? Asking why we are coming to Malta, even the higher officials.'" (Migrant Community Member)*

*"The media creates a narrative, not how we actually behave but how people start to see us. We need to be included, to make sure that these depictions are accurate." (Migrant Community Member)*

As pinpointed in the preceding excerpts, experiences of racism arise in the sharing of migrants from a variety of ethnicities. Various ethnicities experience misrepresentation in national

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

media portrayals without any collaborative inclusion of migrant communities themselves, in a process which consistently undermines the realities of super-diversity. Likewise, it is only recently that policies have emerged to draw further awareness to such concerns among indigenous communities.

*"Black people" and "darker migrants" come to the fore as the targets of particular discrimination through exclusionary bordering practices, in distinction to the experiences of other migrants whose confrontations with bordering generally, but not exclusively, focus on difficulties with service provision in Malta (see below).*

### SERVICE PROVISION

Participants from all migrant communities reveal pervasive instances of bordering and excluding at the level of service provision:

*"I have experiences of aggression from the local community, I know that locals do not always see us as we see ourselves. The people working directly with migrants, front liners, should have some basic training. It is difficult to work with people, but they need to be flexible and organised. I remember that sometimes more than one queue would appear and the security guards would order us to go to the back of the line, even if we had been waiting for hours." (Migrant Community Member)*

Overwhelmingly, these experiences are framed in terms of access to processes of documentation. The urgency with which this is expressed becomes clear when it is recognised that access to legal documentation predicates almost every aspect of a migrants' ability to belong within the nation-state, including healthcare, education, and employment:

*"Last time when I went [to Identity Malta], there was an Indian guy who was making noise because he had been waiting for 1 and a half years. His father was in critical condition at hospital, and he wanted to go back to see him. But he did not get his ID card, and it's because of the racism." (Migrant Community Member)*

Discriminatory practices are therefore ongoing tension points (see also below, Anxiety and Wellbeing) that restrict migrants' reception of the quality of service to which they are entitled, and from which stability, security, and a sense of belonging can be derived.

The figuring of problematic narratives reappears as part of the larger process of excluding by dichotomising. Even though Malta's identity as an English-speaking country is routinely promoted, the national language is weaponised as an instrument of exclusion:

*"I had a friend who was here for only a year, and he called for assistance ... The woman who answered spoke Maltese and when he told her he was not Maltese, he apologised and asked her to speak in English. She said, 'First learn Maltese because you are in Malta' and cut." (Migrant Community Member)*

Furthermore, participants make a clear distinction between different categories of migrants who enter the documentation process in Malta, suggesting that preferential and discriminatory attitudes are part-and-parcel of their perceptions of service providers working with migrants:

*“What passport you have makes a difference to the way you are treated. ... Your country of origin as well, and the language you can speak, I think these are the most important [indicators of] how a person will be treated.” (Migrant Community Member)*

The following excerpt illustrates the felt sense of disrespect that informs the sharing of migrant participants, in the treatment of migrants as discardable commodities rather than human beings. Stress and anxiety (see following section) again emerge as typical experiences in the interactions between migrant service users and national service providers:

*“We had already completed documentation for all of my family, myself and my wife and our children. But after we had completed things, they asked us to start from the beginning to get our ID cards for one year only, and at the same time slowed down our residency process. This also affected my children’s time at school, and this whole experience stresses me out very much.” (Migrant Community Member)*

Indicating the general sense of disaffection, frustration, and long-sufferance of migrant community members in Malta, one participant says:

*“Malta has some kind of inbuilt restrictions which they do not openly talk about but which exist ... There is a feeling that they are not exactly as welcoming as other countries in Europe.” (Migrant Community Member)*

The perceived treatment of migrant community members as expendable and exploitable, in contradiction to actual socio-economic interdependence, arises as a point of major concern throughout participants’ sharing. Rather than welcoming and supportive of migration, the exclusionary dichotomy leads to perceptions of Malta falling short of “other countries in Europe.” The consequences of this state of affairs on the wellbeing of migrant community members will be more fully explored in the following section.

## **ANXIETY AND WELLBEING**

Anxiety interlaces participants’ sharing at multiple points, in particular the experiences of migrant community members who are attempting to make a life for themselves in Malta. Reported menaces to migrant community wellbeing appear, in experiences of racism (see section, *Bordering: Racism*) and institutionalised hostility (for examples, see *Bordering: Service Provision*).

Anxiety among migrant community members emerges as an under-acknowledged and under-served reality, jeopardising a sense of belonging in super-diverse Maltese localities:

*“As immigrants we come here to exchange years of our life for the benefit of our families, our children. But when we are here it is unfair when the laws are not respected and the system is not adequate.” (Migrant Community Member)*

## **ANXIETY AND DOCUMENTATION**

Documentation and integration represent a toxic nexus of anxieties. Migrant community members navigating the documentation process describe it as the most important element for successful outcomes of integration in Maltese society. It is also the most fraught with uncertainty:



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

*"What seems to be the most important problem among migrant communities right now is the problem with permits, visas, and identity documents." (Migrant Community Member)*

Feelings of powerlessness emerge, partially due to a lack of clarity surrounding the process of documentation and partly, migrants' perceptions of the arbitrariness of relevant systems staffed by insufficiently trained service providers (for further information see above, *Bordering: Service Provision*):

*"Standardisation of timelines is essential, and how standard operating principles are working, and how people can apply and know what the procedure is. Knowing how long we must wait and what documents are needed. It is essential to help with our anxiety." (Migrant Community Member)*

Migrant community participants accessing education when they first arrived in Malta describe the stress that accompanied their educational experiences, stemming from inconsistencies and delays from service providers:

*"It is difficult for students to focus on their studies rather than being anxious... not really knowing if there is anything wrong with their application or how long they have to wait to get a visa." (Migrant Community Member)*

These challenges become an inescapable occasion for anxiety, impacting multiple members of migrant families and communities. Speaking on their families' experience, participants describe anxiety arising from their interactions with processes that lack sufficient care for the holistic wellbeing of migrants and their families:

*"My daughter's ID card was expiring and I had applied three months before, even though you are only meant to apply one month before. But I was prepared, since we had booked a holiday, so I completed all the documents. ... They did not allow us to apply at that time, and said we had to do it in October. It was very stressful." (Migrant Community Member)*

*"Getting an ID card at the end of the month, for several months, was very stressful especially when I was concerned about my children." (Migrant Community Member)*

Commonality of experience, among migrant community participants in general, is expressed as solidarity in the face of systemic violence. Reflecting on the difficulties of accessing documentation, the following excerpts give voice to the toll of this struggle:

*"I am a good example of the brutality of Identity Malta. It took us 9 months to get [ID cards] and we could not legally work. My friend who did try to work was deported by the government. We spent a lot of money to come here and we tried sending emails and calling Identity Malta, but they did not reply to us." (Migrant Community Member)*

*"Regarding Identity Malta, we once slept outside from seven p.m. the previous day to make sure we would get served. I think they need proper training, to develop strategic planning, and to learn empathy." (Migrant Community Member)*



## ANXIETY AND LEAVING

In the vein of “brutality”, participants also pinpoint exploitation as a critical cause of distress. Malta’s dependence on migrant labour stands in stark contrast to the perceptions of objectification and instrumentalisation that are evident in the sharing of migrant community participants.

Over and again, participants make clear that a sustainable and long-term integration strategy must respond to the holistic needs of migrant individuals and families. If migrants are made to feel unwelcome, unable to plan for their future, and disconnected from society (see section, Political Responsibilities) Malta will not be seen as a viable destination.

The exploitation of migrant labour and the manifold practices of bordering come together in a way that participants describe as stress-inducing precarity, often resulting from unstable, unregulated, or undignified working situations:

*“It can be difficult to relax in Malta sometimes because of the situation here. It can be so difficult.” (Migrant Community Member)*

*“I have a lot of friends who work in healthcare... and they say there is a kind of exploitation going on.” (Migrant Community Member)*

Ultimately, experiences of exploitation provide further context for migrants’ decisions to leave the Maltese Islands. Racial discrimination is an essential factor, which informs the integration experiences of migrant people of colour. The very possibility is raised of whether any integration strategy can make Malta a welcoming home for prospective residents without first addressing racism in a credible way:

*“If they define us by our colour and not by our character, then we feel isolated and then, how can we integrate?” (Migrant Community Member)*

Challenging perceived priorities, the following extract juxtaposes national disinterest for migrant communities who are active in Maltese society, in favour of investments that support the transient visitors attracted by Malta’s powerful tourism industry:

*“In Malta they only care about tourism and not caring about education or issues of immigrant families, [they only] want our work.” (Migrant Community Member)*

Prolonged stress and anxiety emerge as causes for uncertainty among migrant communities. Individuals and families are pushed into making the choice to move on, if they are able to do so, rather than become permanent members of society in Malta:

*“Malta needs more [migrants] and yet they are making them face more hardships, asking us to come here and adjust to a new way of life. Yet these difficulties make them wonder if they should return to India or go elsewhere in the world, which I know many of them are doing.” (Migrant Community Member)*

The findings suggest that individuals who arrive with every intention of making a life for themselves in Malta are increasingly considering their time here to be transitory. Difficult

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

experiences of being 'needed' by Malta but largely 'unwanted' reemerge as a striking contradiction, which runs through participants' sharing.

### PRECARIOUS BELONGING

Unpreparedness in dealing with the impacts of super-diversity, particularly at the level of national policy, has rendered Malta's evolving attitude towards migration both contentious and imperfectly understood. In practical terms, this has led to the proliferation of bordering practices (see section, Bordering) and ambiguity in the implementation of meaningful strategies for social belonging within localities and across society.

Under the conditions of super-diversity, a blurring of responsibilities has allowed parochial forms of care to reassert their preeminence. Participants from migrant communities refer to the importance of "locals", who emerge as key figures in migrant access to services. An absence of secure pathways for inclusion is tacitly allowing for ad hoc solutions, which are either inherently precarious or do little to respond to migrants' underlying experiences of discrimination and uncertainty.

### STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Describing the implementation of the Integration=Belonging (2017) integration strategy, participants from local government were unimpressed at what they perceive to be a lack of investment in its full implementation. Participants confirm that several key deliverables of the action plan have not materialised and the strategy lacks sufficient visibility within their organisations and localities:

*"There is a lack of understanding, and we need to find a way to educate everybody as a national strategy that is repeated and maintains visibility, not disappears after a while."  
(Local Council Member)*

While other objectives have been supported and come to fruition, particularly those delegated to the Human Rights Directorate, objectives that task local councils with actively engaging migrant communities have fallen into neglect. In particular, "Measure 13 for the Development and Implementation of a Local Councils' Integration Charter" was highlighted as an essential and, as yet, unrealised objective with a purported completion date scheduled for 2018:

*"A simple answer is that this charter [Local Councils Integration Charter] was supposed to be done but there has been no interest to have it done."  
(Local Council Member)*

*"We have reached out to find information about how to safely and effectively conduct outreach among different communities but we are not guided [by the integration policy] in any real way. There is a lack of coordination and direction, so we do our best and try to include important methods in our approaches but there are more things to be prepared for that we are not being prepared for. We need to do more work with migrant associations, to learn from them."  
(NGO Representative)*

Existing structures and services emerge as incapable of successfully adjusting to Malta's super-diverse and evolving context. Rather, structures and systems that were never designed with current diversification in mind are proving inflexible, falling behind the lived



realities being faced by participants from migrant communities, local government, NGOs, and educational institutions.

Resource allocation and access to support are similarly lagging, evinced in the following excerpts:

*Local councils are understaffed and there is a lack of active participation. This reduces their effectiveness in general and for integration in particular.” (Local Council Member)*

*“We will then be able to coordinate with these communities but at the moment, this idea is falling on deaf ears. Not even within the Local Council is there an interest to include migrant community representation.” (Local Council Member)*

Furthering the uncertainty, not unlike that expressed by migrant community members within the same cohort, Maltese participants in local councils and NGOs comment on the absence of clarity, querying support for integrative initiatives in the absence of a clear political commitment:

*“For example, the strategy does not include any plans or references to a plan for services to support families living in situations of precarity or violence.” (NGO Representative)*

*“The national policy on integration is not as strong as it should be ... we can utilise it in better ways.” (Local Council Member)*

Local council members express uncertainty about the practicable dimension of their role and its delivery, explaining that a lack of attention from political authorities leaves individuals without direction or support:

*“The integration policy has not, for us, been a guide about what to do.” (Local Council Member)*

Therefore, actionable participation at any level of political engagement is seriously compromised:

*“[There are] vast differences between the aims of the national policy and what is actually happening on the ground.” (NGO Representative)*

## **PAROCHIAL ATTITUDES**

Building on the experiences of neglect and powerlessness expressed among local councillors, participants explore the role being taken by the Catholic Church in responding to migrant needs in Malta. As an organisation with deep historical roots in Maltese society, particularly in-service provision, representatives from the Church appear as key figures who provide information about, and offer services to, migrant communities within various parishes.

This blurring of parish and locality snaps into focus when clergy act in the stead of governmental representatives and authorities. One participant baldly states:

*“When it comes to migrants in our locality, we can put our minds at rest because we know that the parish church is taking care of them.” (Local Council Member)*



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Vague perceptions of responsibility for the implementation of migrant integration policies leads to informal negotiations of authority, where the onus of action is firmly accented towards the Church and away from local government:

*"When the parish priest needs us, he reaches out to us and we help as we can." (Local Council Member)*

In light of the perceived lack of support or direction from national authorities, reliance on the Catholic Church in Malta infiltrates various layers of responsibility, which would be more appropriately handled by elected officials in local government. The allocation of resources to implement the integration strategy, for example, is described as slipping from the councils' agenda with the perception that Church authorities are shouldering leadership:

*"As a local council, we have not gone into much detail about [migrant community] needs or demographics because we rely on the Church." (Local Council Member)*

To assume the Church's role as the main provider of care, for the vast and diverse number of migrant communities within localities, simultaneously feeds into the perception of migrant communities as recipients of charitable service while tacitly denying the legitimacy of access to mainstream services due to residents within a locality.

Alongside the influence of ecclesial authorities as primary 'care providers' in certain migrant communities, participants experience other forms of informal authority bargaining. A 'helpful local' or benefactor with sufficient social capital among "locals" is seen as indispensable to access key integration processes in Malta:

*"The local system is so difficult and getting a visa quickly depends on help from locals." (Migrant Community Member)*

In sharing experiences of racist discrimination, one participant recalls the key role played by a benefactor to receive services - including emergency healthcare:

*"I feel upset because I have been a victim of discrimination due to my skin colour... [I] had to go to hospital, somebody accompanied me to make sure I was seen and taken care of because of the discrimination. If I go there by myself, they would keep postponing to see me and I would not receive the same kind of service. It is not fair. I needed to go to hospital with somebody who is not of my colour to get the service." (Migrant Community Member)*

The need for such benefactors supports Us/them dichotomisation, which restrains opportunities for authentic agency outside the national group. Moreover, members from migrant communities are not engaged as active participants in the political process, which automatically precludes their ability to critique and change oppressive systems:

*"Let us create a policy that at least covers the basics, and includes the voices of migrants... We have some local councillors who publicly state that they will help Maltese but not migrant residents. We therefore cannot rely on the good hearts of people in positions of authority, in schools or local government. We need a strategy and we need to hold people in power accountable." (Educational Professional)*



The perpetuation of a narrative that casts migrant communities as dependants and recipients of charity not only perpetuates the extremes of a bordering dichotomy. It also attempts to place migrant individuals and families outside of the scope of services that are theirs by right, while still projecting an image of national largesse.

The elision of parish and locality in this regard is particularly striking, as two faces of a single national identity. However, with terrible irony, this state of affairs further negates the stark reality - a great many of these services and sectors are dependent on disenfranchised migrant labour in order to function at all.

Querying a national commitment to the inclusion of migrant communities, the following excerpt highlights the divisive dichotomy and squarely demands a “real commitment” to address practices of bordering and exclusion:

*“I am sceptical that we [in Malta] believe in inclusion. There are real barriers to inclusion and NGOs need a real commitment from authorities to address these barriers.” (NGO Representative)*

The section to follow, on Political Responsibilities, explores those ways in which political accountability and on-the-ground engagement emerge as areas in need of urgent development in Malta’s integration strategy.

## **POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Themes of political responsibility emerge in interconnected areas, spanning service provision, strategic planning, investment, and all levels of leadership. Asserting the necessity of responsibility-sharing, participants identify the need to include members of migrant communities, already present within localities in Malta, as representatives in local government (see below, Calls for Inclusion).

The following excerpt highlights the need for unmediated participation, which involves a basic shift away from dichotomous projections of an Us/them mentality that sees the migrant-as-commodity or recipient of charity. What rises to replace it is the recognition of a fundamental human right to democratic inclusion within political process:

*“When we are speaking about political force, until you are a citizen then [migrants] need to go through the NGOs... There needs to be more political force to support the process.” (Migrant Community Member)*

This section builds on the analysis applied to exclusionary practices of bordering (see, Bordering) and consequent anxieties (see, Anxiety and Wellbeing), to explore the experiences of migrant communities excluded from political processes, and the concurrent need for opportunities to engage in democratic dialogue and authentic representation.

## **CALLS FOR INCLUSION**

The call for politically active migrant community members strongly emerges, as necessary to develop a strategy for integration that acknowledges the complex realities being lived in Malta. However, the findings suggest that the potential for migrant experiences to be actively included, even in the development of more welcoming localities, remains compromised:

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

*"We need to have spaces that [migrant communities] also had a hand in designing."  
(NGO Representative)*

Migrant community members themselves are clear in calling for inclusion. Anxieties produced by exclusionary practices in spaces of national control (see section, Anxiety and Wellbeing) reflect larger experiences of political abjection and disillusionment:

We can help [politicians] to develop their strategies... We are not asking you to pay for us, but to give us a way, to make it possible for us. Right now it feels impossible." (Migrant Community Member)

In the following extracts, participants call out to be seen, heard, and acknowledged, as part of a reciprocal process within society that acknowledges and respects their considerable contributions:

*"Rather than learning from migrants asking what challenges they are facing, the authorities say and write whatever they want without including migrants. We need to be asked about our experiences." (Migrant Community Member)*

*"We are not asking for too much. All that we are asking for is to be included in the discussion. Why are we never invited? We can explain our problems and sit down together to find solutions. But we are never asked, always in parliament they are sitting there and making decisions for us without talking to us. We can help in their discussions, but they isolate us and they isolate themselves. And this is not helping any of us." (Migrant Community Member)*

Professionals working with migrant communities are of the same mind, further stating that by sharing responsibilities with migrant communities, authorities are required to act on their responsibility to invest in effective inclusion:

*"We have worked with members of migrant communities who are now in a position to be front-liners for inclusion in their communities, however such people are not being given the opportunity to do this work." (NGO Representative)*

By taking action to acknowledge super-diversity in Malta, thus effectively supporting the social interdependency from which it emerges, national authorities must engage in longer term processes that aim to build trust and understanding. In the groups' sharing on good practice (see below) participants cite the active participation of community members as essential, to achieve practical action for social inclusion.

### EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The following sub-section includes examples of strategic investment and leadership that are producing inclusive practices in support of super-diversity in Malta. Certain practices represent potentially robust responses to address the political and discriminatory concerns that underly participants' sharing. This comes with a concurrent need for good practice that promotes inclusion at all levels, including in service provision and political participation.

An example that brings investment for integration services together with an investment in individual development is the recent inclusion of Cultural Liaison Officers (CLOs) in educational



teams, placed within regional schools:

*"CLOs are helping us with cultural or value clashes that we have encountered, working with migrant parents. For example, one big issue is the question of disciplining children." (Educational Professional)*

Also representing good practice in schools, the presence of parents from migrant communities as members of school councils is an example of democratic responsibility sharing, which emerges as a catalyst for positive change:

*"One place we have found helpful are the school councils, where parents and teachers come together for the good of the students. Encouraging the participation of migrant parents working alongside teachers has been a good way of understanding the struggles being faced by teachers and parents, and how to work tougher to overcome these challenges." (NGO Representative)*

Implicit in the expectation of good practice is the breaking away from Us/them reductions and the parochial or charitable approaches thereby enabled. Rather, what emerges is a call for deeper collaboration and inclusion.

Participants share further examples of positive outcomes that involve an ongoing relationship with government agencies, including Agenzija Zghazagh and Agenzija Appogg:

*"With the support of Agenzija Appogg we have carried out a variety of initiatives among our migrant communities... and we maintain good relationships with them and feel prepared to reach out to them and support their ideas for integration activities." (Local Council Member)*

## **POLITICAL VOICE**

The findings suggest that super-diversity is not adequately reflected in the electorate and as a result of this, migrant communities are being excluded from localities. What emerges is a system that is seriously out of sync with the realities of diversification in Malta:

*"Work is being done for voters rather than residents and members of communities... [there is] a lot of selectivity in terms of who is included and who is not." (NGO Representative)*

The present system emerges as not only unable to effectively encourage inclusion but is also implicated in fuelling divisive practices that perpetuate migrants' disenfranchisement:

*Some prospective councillors... skip migrants [front doors] and do not ask how they can be of help. They will get no vote so why waste their time? This is the mentality." (Educational Professional)*

*I meet mayors of local councils who, one to one, are genuinely inclusive. But they tell me to my face that their hands are tied... There is no political will [because] inclusive measures including migrants will not encourage voting." (Educational Professional)*

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Local councillors describe a political zero-sum game, to explain the way democratic processes are currently operating within their localities. Exclusively engaging with citizens, council responsibilities towards other residents are rendered peripheral. In the following excerpt, a local councillor describes actual avoidance because of political 'stigma' attached to issues of migration (for reasons addressed above) - issues that are the lived reality of migrant individuals and families:

*It is entirely true that people in local government are scared of losing votes and for this reason they do not attend or support activities for migrant integration. People have told me that if they show up, it will [negatively] affect their voting base." (Local Council Member)*

Addressing the problem requires policy that is authentically collaborative and enables a sharing of responsibility, as an integral prerequisite for political legitimacy on issues of inclusion:

*"Let us create a policy that at least covers the basics and includes the voices of migrants, pushing unpopular buttons with voters but if we do not do this we don't really believe in inclusion." (Local Council Member)*

Ultimately, participants recognise an urgent need for political processes that respect the presence of residents rather than exclusively privileging the identity of citizens. Super-diversity in Malta is equally a call to engage in evolving systems of participation, to correct a system that participants perceive is "not working" in the interests of inclusive social wellbeing:

*"Elections are a problem... to give a chance to non-Maltese people to be represented [but] there is a lack of communication and a lack of information about how to get involved." (Local Council Member)*

*"Yes, it is time for there to be a mechanism for migrant voting in local councils... There is a lack of integration, a lack of knowledge about what is happening in terms of local government, and this is not on. The system is not working." (Local Council Member)*

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Reading emergent themes through the critical lens applied in this analysis, clear needs are expressed by participants both in terms of effective strategies for community integration and a larger vision for migrants' political inclusion in the super-diversity of contemporary Malta. The concluding chapter presents a list of recommendations informed by the research findings, in response to participants' lived experiences of bordering and discrimination, their sharing on themes of responsibility and inclusion, and ultimately their hopes for profound change:

*"Addressing the real problem would mean learning how to be more human, more open to integrating with different cultures." (NGO Representative)*







## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Society in Malta is at a crossroads, facing the choice to embrace ongoing processes of demographic change in the context of globalisation, or to persist in an outmoded myth of national homogeneity that is incapable of accommodating the super-diversity that characterises contemporary localities in the Maltese Islands. The European Union's 'Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion: 2021-2027' goes so far as to foreground the need for social integration as a duty and a right: "If we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of society, with integration being both a right and a duty for all" (European Commission, 2020).

However, recognising the urgent need for inclusive social transformation, which promotes belonging at every level, is nothing new. There has been a consistent call for "perspectives highlighting the challenges faced by multiple populations .... to fill the persistent gap in the problematisation of these issues" (Azzopardi and Grech, 2012, 1), especially relevant in terms of current community interactions in the Maltese context. In the second decade of the twenty-first century such challenges have become unavoidable, assuming unprecedented relevance in light of super-diversification and its effects.

Even so, findings report a consistent sense of incongruity between the integration objectives proposed by current policy and their perceived implementation. Participants perceive a lack of sufficient political commitment to fully acknowledge Malta's evolving super-diversity, leading to the phenomenon of what this study identifies as 'precarious inclusion'. While it is clear that the migrants in Malta form an intrinsic part of Maltese society, participants describe a sense of 'inclusion' only to the extent that migrant labour and expertise are sustaining the economy and key institutions.

Under these conditions, 'inclusion' is being experienced as a stressful, ill-dignified and ultimately, precarious process. Precarity of belonging in localities and across society also emerges as a phenomenon that is constructed and maintained by pervasive bordering practices, which exclude migrant communities from meaningful inclusion through social, economic, and political participation.

Findings clearly identify the need for policies that enable super-diverse environments, promote belonging at every level, and engage localities, communities, families, and individuals in democratic strategies for inclusion and participation including at the political level. Conclusions call for further investment in implementation and evaluation, to develop long-term strategies that recognise migrant community inclusion as a prerequisite for the holistic and healthy development of society in Malta.

## **SUPER-DIVERSITY: CONCLUSIONS**

Findings propose a provocative question primarily addressed to policy-makers in Malta, about whether acknowledging the sustainable inclusion of migrant communities is now an unavoidable component for any stable strategies of social wellbeing. Experiences of life in the midst of super-diversity ground the sharing of participants from indigenous and migrant communities, who unite in the insistence that their experiences must be better reflected in contemporary policies, if these are to competently promote long-term inclusion, understanding, and belonging.

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Navigating the diversification of localities in central Malta and throughout the islands emerges as entirely contingent on the shift to a new sense of social belonging, in which opportunities for the participation of all residents receive adequate investment and support. However, existing policy directives are perceived as fragmented, insufficient, or under-supported in ways that undermine holistic policy goals for migrant inclusion, with deleterious impact on the wellbeing of the population in general.

Policy-makers are therefore encouraged to acknowledge and prioritise the interdependence of migrant and indigenous communities by recognising migrant community members as invaluable collaborative partners, rather than problems to be dealt with or transient visitors to be temporarily tolerated. Ways in which such a shift can be achieved are predicated on the acknowledgement of Malta's super-diversity, rather than attempts at enforced homogeneity. This implies a move beyond national dichotomisation, which generates antagonism between 'citizens' and 'non-citizens'.

A realistic vision of interdependent communities, families and individuals therefore rests on the awareness of their relatedness and an active avoidance of tokenism or short-term goal-setting. Findings reveal that dichotomous narratives have legitimised the treatment of migrant individuals as objects, exposed to violence and exploitation (see, Anxiety and Wellbeing: Anxiety and Leaving) in the context of myopic socio-economic objectives.

However, all individuals enmeshed in the dangerous reduction of national homogenisation are being adversely affected. Those who are locked in myths of national homogeneity are compromised, including young people in Malta (and this will include minority ethnic Maltese) whom participants identify as particularly susceptible to the negative influence of media representations on migration, race, and minority ethnicities. Of most urgent concern are the migrant individuals, families and communities of colour whose lives are being lived in the shadow of these reductions, reflecting persistent experiences of discrimination, exclusion and racism.

### **BORDERING PRACTICES: CONCLUSIONS**

Participants from local councils, educational institutions, and NGO participants expressed frustration at the perceived lack of governmental investment in services that promote positive channels for community contact. This was also true for existing services, including Community Liaison Officers and Outreach Workers (both acknowledged as best practice), which were perceived to be under-resourced and under-supported. Participants refer to the need for further investment in professional services and cultural orientation training, in order to accommodate the legitimate needs of a super-diverse population.

Throughout the sessions taken as a whole, participants' discussions on governmental support and public service provision focus on two key themes (see, *Bordering: Service Provision*). Firstly, individuals perceive national systems as currently inadequate or otherwise incapable of supporting the meaningful implementation of the proposed integration strategy. Secondly, participants identify a lack of stable and empathic dialogue with government authorities at a range of levels, including reported hostility from service providers and a reluctance among local government representatives to engage on issues of migrant inclusion.

Furthermore, participants express a lack of governmental support for policies that work with cultural differences. Rather, various forms of difference are experienced as becoming

weaponised in practices of bordering, further dividing communities that are actually interdependent. As a result, migrant and indigenous community participants both describe a sense of disempowerment and frustration (see, Anxiety and Wellbeing).

Local councillors, educators, and non-governmental organisations report a similar lack of empowerment, due to the perceived dearth of investment on issues of migrant integration within their particular localities (see, Political Responsibilities). Education in critical thinking is flagged as an important preventative measure and untapped opportunity, to address concerns that people in Malta are being exposed to predominantly negative representations of migration and migrant communities in national media, blurred with notions of criminality and threat.

As noted above, participants perceive a lack of sufficient political will to address these concerns, which is curtailing the involvement of local government while simultaneously perpetuating the disenfranchisement of migrant community residents. This gives rise to a dangerous political strategy, perpetuating the Us/them dichotomous divide that is, in the long term, untenable under conditions of super-diversity in Malta. Migrant participants in particular perceive the media to be a mirror that reflects larger concerns about discrimination and fuels practices of social exclusion.

Focus group participants are unanimous in acknowledging racial discrimination as a serious issue in Malta. Significantly, while participants from local councils agree that racism is an important issue that merits immediate attention in Malta, they do not feel it is an issue for local councils to shoulder alone. The strategic mainstreaming of the Anti-Racism Strategy (2021) among national entities and service providers is intended to provide support for long-term implementation of significant national measures. Long-term commitment is essential in the context of migrant community inclusion at a local level, and indeed, the inclusion of ethnic minority Maltese citizens. The multiform impacts of racism, and its intersections with other structural concerns, emerge as a direct impediment to successful belonging for multiple identities, within and across regional localities and among a variety of groups.

## **ANXIETIES AND WELLBEING: CONCLUSIONS**

Impediments to wellbeing being experienced by individuals, families, and communities were frequently expressed, occurring throughout the sharing of migrant participants in particular. Participants principally highlight their anxieties associated with accessing government services and engaging in what is perceived to be a stressful, overly bureaucratic, and at times hostile environment.

Participants from migrant communities describe feelings of insecurity and tension as a result of their interactions with national service providers, including essential services. It would be remiss for these conclusions not to highlight participants' repeated and insistent sharing on their experiences with Identity Malta Agency, in terms that appear to be particularly traumatic for migrants and their families.

Migrant community members also focus on persistent anxieties associated with the larger effects of problematic integration processes in Malta. Reflecting on their families, participants share the difficulties faced in uniting families when one member is living and working in Malta. The stress in attempting to raise children while dealing with situations of ongoing uncertainty and bordering is another example of precarious inclusion.



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

An investment in migrant mental healthcare is implicit in the commitment made in *Integration=Belonging* (2017), to mainstream “health, social services, and other sectors”. Developing this commitment to reflect the needs of participants would necessitate specific measures for mental healthcare among migrant communities, responsive to the anxieties and stressors currently being experienced. Moreover, findings underscore the importance of effective and accessible mental healthcare that specifically supports migrant families in Malta to address feelings of hopelessness and confusion while also supporting indigenous communities to make the transition into super-diversity.

In order to optimise the existing Action Plan, in particular Measure 9 (“Strengthening the integration role of the Migrant Health Liaison Office”), the sharing of participants would indicate that there is far more to be done to improve access to psycho-emotional support for migrant residents in localities. It clearly emerges that while Malta was not intended as a temporary place of residence by members of migrant communities many are beginning to look elsewhere, due to their ongoing perceptions of mistreatment, problematic access to services, and experiences of exclusionary discrimination.

### **PRECARIOUS BELONGING: CONCLUSIONS**

Findings confirm that an unaddressed tendency towards dichotomous homogenisation places migrant communities and indigenous communities in opposition, sustaining a national narrative that is of active concern across participants. Such reductions are negating the actual complexity and intersecting realities of an increasingly racially, ethnically, linguistically diverse Maltese society. The flattening of migrant experiences is further evident in findings that foreground the way important differences among migrant groups, including intersectional experiences, are rendered invisible or unacknowledged.

In particular, findings note the perpetuation of a troubling vision of the migrant as racialised and illegalised. The findings also suggest that a lack of political commitment to acknowledge Malta’s evolving super-diversity has generated the phenomenon of precarity across processes of inclusion, which has allowed parochial forms of influence and authority (see, *Precarious Belonging: Parochial Attitudes*) to overtake national responsibilities for the inclusion of migrants and their communities. A lack of political will also emerges as a possible factor in the fractured approach to migrant integration policy implementation.

The need for skilled community leadership that responds to such concerns within localities, to represent diverse perspectives and needs, emerges as a cornerstone measure for the effective inclusion of migrant communities moving forward. Participants also emphasise the need for integration education and training among educators and service providers in Malta, as well as more effective safeguarding to ensure that intersectional experiences of discrimination are identified and addressed, particularly within governmental structures. In this regard, the National Anti-Racism Strategy (2021) sets out to meet current concerns.

Alongside the need for training in government entities, participants from NGOs and educational institutions experience a lack of sufficient opportunities for stakeholder training and support, in order to practice relevant approaches in their workplace. A united vision for integration in Malta must therefore include provisions for empowering multiple stakeholders throughout localities, particularly the non-governmental sector and other professionals (eg. Youth and Community Workers).



## **POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITIES: CONCLUSIONS**

Participants working in local government, with non-governmental organisations, and in educational institutions share a general sense of having been left to implement a policy that remains poorly understood and under-implemented, even among those entities explicitly identified among its key stakeholders. The implications of this perceived neglect become most clear in the context of localities and their management by local councils, which are assigned a pivotal role for the meaningful implementation of the 2017 integration policy.

However, essential measures for integration, including the proposed Integration Charter for Local Councils (Integration=Belonging, Measure 13), have remained inoperative as have sustained efforts to achieve “confidence-building awareness campaigns” in localities (Measure 8). Participants perceive a lack of political interest and accountability to ensure that responsibilities are being met in a way that accurately reflects the intention and scope of the strategic vision.

In light of Malta’s ongoing super-diversification, participants from educational institutions and local councils were the most insistent that the political participation of migrants in Malta is critically important, in terms of achieving meaningful and stable integration within localities.

Migrants themselves pinpoint a perceived lack of political interest to include their voices in political spaces, or to engage in meaningful dialogue even on those issues that directly impact migrant integration and wellbeing. Finally, diverse participants from all focus group sessions describe their concern that the situation is worsening rather than improving, as migrant communities are targeted by anxiety-provoking exposure to bordering practices and precarity.

The political representation of migrants emerges as a potential remedy, occurring with the greatest frequency during the first and final focus group sessions. Participants actively working in/with existing structures point to inbuilt obstacles to migrants’ inclusion as being profoundly political. Throughout the findings, ‘political participation’ emerges as a joint concept covering voting, nomination, and public representation.

However, exclusion from electoral politics particularly at the level of local government does not preclude migrant community members from other expressions of local or national political action. For example, indigenous and migrant communities engage in advocacy within non-governmental organisations, participate in political demonstrations, and manifest other expressions of grass-roots activism.

## **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY**

Recommendations reflect participants’ perspectives on the adaptation and settlement of migrant communities, under conditions of super-diversification and an ongoing discourse of migration ‘crisis’ in parallel to demands for migrant labour (see, Theoretical Framework). Given the growing complexity, acceleration of change, and increased interconnectedness across localities, findings suggest that strategies for integration be reconsidered beyond the limitations of a normative integration paradigm to better reflect life in contemporary Malta.

In honouring the diverse voices of migration, the following recommendations invite reflection on the complexity associated with super-diversification in Malta, while also outlining

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

opportunities to re-conceptualise policy strategies for integration. Highlighting different ways of thinking about migrant adaptation and settlement makes it possible for the multi-dimensionality of integration processes to more fully emerge, as an active and inclusive element in Maltese society.

In this way, policy may more accurately respond to the diversity in Maltese localities, by shaping occasions for inclusion well beyond traditional areas of policy intervention such as education and the labour market. Findings highlight further areas, including holistic wellbeing for mental health; the need for a new agenda around the integration of transnational populations; integration in fluid and super-diverse communities; and the relationship between integration, new technologies, and evolving modalities of social relations.

### 1. DELIVERING THE LOCAL COUNCILS' CHARTER FOR INCLUSION

- Urgently prioritising the delivery of a Local Councils' Charter for Inclusion, by accessing appropriate resources (Local Integration Fund) to ensure that desired policy outcomes as stipulated in the Inclusion=Belonging (2017) strategy are, in fact, being completed.
- The development of a relevant charter ensures that local councils are encouraged, supported, and monitored in the implementation of locality-based integration initiatives; taking action that is in harmony with national objectives for integration; fostering a sense of shared accountability among local government representatives, indigenous communities, and migrant communities for its successful implementation; and allowing local councils to share good practices within specific administrative regions, with united responses to common concerns.

### 2. HARNESSING NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR INTEGRATION

- Including effective communication strategies in all future policies for integration, by promoting a balanced and evidence-based approach that acknowledges and addresses both the challenges and opportunities of migration in Malta.
- New media provide a wide range of opportunities for communicating the realities of super-diversity and intrinsic interdependence among indigenous and migrant communities in a way that reflects up-to-date developments. Future policy will be best placed to utilise opportunities for virtual communication while foreseeing challenges such as false information and the propagation of negative stereotypes via media.
- Optimising new technologies to enhance service delivery for key migrant services is another positive trend towards greater harmonisation and efficiency, while ensuring that all residents are able to access and benefit from new innovations.

### 3. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS IN SERVICE PROVISION

- Addressing lacunae in, and criticism of, service provision is a fundamental task for future policy, to ensure clarity and transparency across all services, as part of a holistic programme of review and refinement to provide services that are more efficient, effective, respectful and humane. Service provision thus would occur in the context of welcoming and belonging, rather than a potential source of bordering.
- Ensuring that responsibilities for the provision of key services for and key information about migrant community demographics, needs, and concerns are being shouldered by duly delegated governmental authorities, addressing risks that unregulated networks of influence may be undermining transparent, equitable integration processes and exacerbating risks of migrant exploitation.



- In order to ensure respectful and dignified service provision the delivery of training for super-diversity orientation and anti-racism training to all staff at governmental agencies is essential, particularly service providers working in super-diverse environments on behalf of national entities encountered by migrants, including but not limited to Identity Malta Agency, International Protection Agency, Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre, and Jobsplus Public Employment Service.
- Providing updated information on all matters related to migrant documentation and integration processes promptly on all media, and any other relevant material provided by government services and authorities. It is essential that all stakeholders are aware of changes in legislation and policy concerning the documentation process in a timely fashion and in a way that is sufficiently clear.
- Improving efficiency in documentation processes may, for example, include revisions of validity periods for key documentation. Policy-makers are further encouraged to review all necessary processes to ensure that potentially prohibitive costs are not impeding access to documentation services by, for example, subsidising costs for all migrant individuals and families experiencing economic precarity.

#### **4. TAKING ACTION ON INTERSECTIONAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL NEEDS**

- Furthering existing commitments to gender equality and the eradication of gender-based violence by ensuring that integration policies designed for the specific needs of migrant women are featured on the policy agenda and are being successfully implemented. The absence of a designated gender strategy in the Integration=Belonging (2017) action plan reveals the need for further scrutiny, to ensure that women from migrant communities in Malta are able to effectively access services already available among indigenous communities.
- It is essential that the needs of all children with migrant backgrounds are accorded due consideration in policy planning for effective integration. This is particularly important in light of reported experiences of anxiety occurring in migrant communities and families, as a result of exposure to extant integration processes in Malta and in Maltese society.
- Promoting strategies for intergenerational inclusion and social mobility among migrant communities are vital for long-term inclusion. Schools emerge as pivotal actors fostering opportunities for community inclusion. Investing in community initiatives, linking schools and families with the locality, represent a direct measure to build inclusive belonging across multiple generations.
- Attention is necessary not only in terms of education and labour market policies, but also combatting discrimination and promoting super-diversity in Malta as part of a comprehensive cross-sectorial strategic commitment to support the long-term integration of migrant communities in society. Shared commitments to long-term objectives further amplify the responsibility sharing envisioned in Belonging=Integration (2017) for “an inter-ministerial committee on integration” (Action Plan: Measure 3).

#### **5. ENGAGING NEW STAKEHOLDERS IN THE LOCALITY**

- Supporting migrants' social integration beyond the traditional domains of education, language, and the labour market also requires new and innovative partnerships among diverse communities, thereby building belonging by engaging all residents as active stakeholders in the locality. Localities are ideally placed to identify opportunities for involvement of migrant communities by building a sense of belonging through local

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

initiatives that address the day-to-day concerns shared by all members of the community.

- More focused forms of participation are also necessary, such as locality-based opportunities for youth leadership that engage young residents from diverse communities while prioritising their participation in the social, cultural, and political life of the locality. Programmes that engage youth as mentors to other youth have proven effective in multiple areas, encouraging responsibility-sharing and the empowerment of young people as active and trusted collaborators.
- Prioritising opportunities for the representation of migrant communities in local government is long overdue, as part of authentic democratic process in a super-diverse society, which is currently experiencing qualities of socio-economic interdependence that cannot go unacknowledged in the political life of localities.
- Promoting democratic practices to faithfully reflect the super-diversity of Maltese localities demands a concurrent commitment to consider pathways for the political representation of migrant communities across all levels, as responsible and respected contributors to the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of Malta.

### 6. INVESTING IN LOCAL COUNCILS FOR INTEGRATION SUPPORT

- It is necessary to equip localities with resources to provide education for integration in the context of super-diversity, thereby prioritising integration as a shared responsibility among indigenous and migrant communities. Such initiatives could include opportunities for basic legal orientation for migrants in their integration process; super-diversity programmes in schools and places of work; collaborative initiatives between the local council and local businesses; and supportive systems that offer residents more capacity to participate in meaningful ways. Locality-based dialogue in the context of super-diversity not only accelerates migrant community participation but also includes indigenous communities as learners in the process, perceiving newcomers as potentially permanent collaborators within the locality.
- Developing relationships built on trust and mutual respect identifies the local council as a reliable source of support and communication among diverse communities, thereby ensuring that local government is acknowledged and its role is understood both in terms of mandated services and opportunities for inclusive participation within democratic processes.
- Locally based resources would provide a space for locality-level access to mental healthcare for migrant communities, ensuring that the implicit commitments already contained in Measure 9 of Integration=Belonging (2017) are effectively and faithfully fulfilled. Effective fulfilment is dependent on holistic reforms, which prioritise structural change in extant service provision that are a reported source of stress and anxiety among migrant individuals and families.

### 7. EVALUATING PROJECT-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN THE LOCALITY

- Empowering local councils to engage in locality-based integration initiatives is a further opportunity to focus on shared concerns among all residents and promote the inclusion of all voices as part of their commitment to super-diversity. Small-scale projects developed by local stakeholders and authorities may be useful not only for the local communities concerned, but also for gaining knowledge about successful strategies for inclusion in Malta's overarching strategic policy.



- To learn from local projects, sufficient care is required in their designing and evaluation. Capacity-building in terms of programme design and evaluation, on which different actors from diverse communities can draw, should therefore be considered as an investment within localities. Projects evaluated as successful may then be scaled up if appropriate, or successful elements may be integrated into mainstream initiatives.
- Ensuring that integration policies are sustainable would mean that local councils are better placed to review and optimise their efforts to meet evolving conditions of super-diversity in Malta. Sustainability in policies for integration therefore requires the adoption of sustainability indicators that give measurable data about the evolving economic and social factors being encountered within the locality, variously impacted by and engaging in processes of super-diversification.

## **8. FRAMEWORK FOR THE SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF INTEGRATION STRATEGIES WITHIN LOCALITIES**

- It is essential that the lived experiences of members of migrant and indigenous communities inform any approach to integration through formative evaluation processes. For this reason, consideration should be given to the incorporation of longitudinal studies, in recognition of the fact that migration trajectories, migrant and indigenous communities, and societal configurations will continue to evolve and shift, and that integration is not a short-term process and may extend across multiple generations.
- Gaining direct feedback from individuals and communities who have experienced the realities of former and current inclusion policy enables precious insight that complements the establishment of rigorous longitudinal evaluation for all future initiatives.
- Investing in research for quantitative and qualitative data and conducting both summative and formative evaluations ensures sufficient context is provided for future refinement of policy objectives. Therefore, it is critical to develop an evidence-based and data-driven framework to measure integration outcomes within localities and beyond.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Underlying the recommendations included in this chapter is a basic need to move beyond the rhetoric of 'crisis management' and achieve a beneficial re-orientation in national discourse, which transforms the ways individuals and families from diverse migrant communities are presently being portrayed, engaged, and included within Maltese society. For this reason, it is important to note that these recommendations reflect the valuable sharing of participants from multiple migrant communities, NGO representatives, members of local councils, and educational professionals (see, Methodology).

Findings reveal persistent and reductive dichotomies in participants' sharing, instantiating the larger binaries at play in Maltese society. Questions emerge over these antagonistic oppositions, while simultaneously flattening the diversity of indigenous communities and migrant communities, and instantiating more complex anxieties experienced in the tension of permanence and change.

In the context of super-diversity, it becomes evident that participants encounter the same serious questions facing society at large, grappling with processes of social, economic, and



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

cultural transformation. Acquiring the ability to resourcefully adapt is essential, to address areas of prolonged stagnation and embrace meaningful change within and across existing integration structures for long-term benefits.

This report makes clear that human lives are being traumatised by the perceived inhumanity of current systems and a lack of the necessary commitment to embrace political, economic, and social change in the Maltese Islands as part of a process that assures migrant communities' inclusion and sense of security. In this regard, political inclusion emerges as a measure of the first order.

Cultivating opportunities for communication, understanding, and participation is therefore crucial, rooted in a national responsibility to promote democratic opportunities for dialogue that include all residents in Malta. Without the political engagement of migrant communities, as acknowledged co-creators of Malta's super-diversity, it becomes impossible to effectively tackle ongoing risks of exploitation, exclusion, and violence.

Sustained political will demands one united parliamentary commitment to integration, to ensure optimal social, economic, and cultural outcomes across society as a whole. Growing awareness of super-diverse interdependence in Maltese society must therefore be reflected in more dignified processes for migrant community integration, as the Maltese Islands become a place in which migrant individuals and families, called by Malta to make a living, might also feel welcome to make a home.





## CITATIONS

Abu-Laban Y., & Nath, N. (2020) Citizenship, Multiculturalism, and Immigration: Mapping the Complexities of Inclusion and Exclusion Through Intersectionality. In: Tremblay M., Everitt J. (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Aguiton, S.A., Cabane, L. & Cornilleau, L. (eds.) (2019). *La fabrique et Le gouvernement des Crises*, Critique Internationale, n. 85.

Amore, K. (2007). Malta. In: Triandafyllidou, A., & Gropas, R. (eds.). *European Immigration: A Sourcebook*. Routledge.

Anthias, F. and Yuval-Davis, N. (1992) *Racialised Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Colour and Class and the Anti-Racist Struggle*. Routledge.

Arena, J. (2021, June 23). Malta seeks to lure “digital nomads” with €300 residency permit. *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/one-year-residency-scheme-for-digital-nomads-announced.876356>

Azzopardi, A. & Grech, S. (eds.) (2012). *Inclusive Communities - A Critical Reader*. Sense Publishers.

Batsaikhan, U., Darvas, Z. & Raposo, I. (2018). *People on the move- migration and mobility in the European Union*. Blueprint Series 28. Bruegel.

Benton, M., Batalova, J., Davidoff-Gore, S., & Schmidt, T. (2021) *COVID-19 and the State of Global Mobility in 2020*. Migration Policy Institute and International Organisation for Migration.

Bradby, H., Lindenmeyer, A., Phillimore, J., Padilla, B., & Brand, T. (2020). 'If there were doctors who could understand our problems, I would already be better': dissatisfaction with health care and marginalisation in superdiverse neighbourhoods. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 42(4), 739–757.

Braun, V. & Clarke V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3:2, 77-101.

Brettell C., & Hollifield, J. (2015). *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*. (3rd Ed.) Routledge.

Camilleri, C. (2014). *Interact: A Report on National Integration Policies in Malta*. INTERACT Project, European University Institute.

Cantat, C. (2016). Rethinking Mobilities: Solidarity and Migrant Struggles Beyond Narratives of Crisis. *Intersections*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v2i4.286>

Cantat, C. Thiollet, H., with Pe?coud, A. (2020) *Migration as crisis. A framework paper*. European Commission: Horizon 2020.

Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E. and Vertovec, S. (2002) 'Integration: Mapping the Field.' Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

Cheung, S. Y., & Phillimore, J. (2013). *Refugees, Social Capital, and Labour Market Integration in*

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

the UK. *Sociology*, 48(3), 518–536.

Cho, S., et al. (2013). 'Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis.' *Signs* 38(4): 785-810.

Crul, M., & Schneider, J. (2010). Comparative integration context theory: participation and belonging in new diverse European cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1249–1268.

Czajka, M. & de Haas (2014). The globalization of migration: Has the world become more migratory? *International Migration Review*, 48 (2), 283-323.

Dekker, R., & Engbersen, G. (2013). How social media transform migrant networks and facilitate migration. *Global Networks*, 14(4), 401–418.

Eaton, C., Eswaran, M., & Oxoby, R. (2011). 'Us' and 'them': The origin of identity, and its economic implications. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 44: 3, 719-748.

Engbersen, G. & Snel, E. (2018). Liquid migration. Dynamic and fluid patterns of post-accession migration flows. In: Glorius, B., Grabowska, I. & Kevin, A. (eds.). *Mobility in Transition*. University of Amsterdam Press.

Eurobarometer (July 2020). Public Opinion - COVID-19. Commission of the European Communities, Directorate-General Audivisual, Information, Communication, and Culture.

European Commission (2005). Communication on a Common Agenda for Integration. Action 1, Section 2. COM(2005) 289.

European Commission (2020). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. COM(2020) 758.

Formenti, L. & Luraschi, S. (2020). Migration, culture contact and the complexity of coexistence. A systemic imagination. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults* 11 (3). 349-365.

Garza, A. (2020). *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*. One World.

Giglietto, D., Ciolfi, L., & Bosswick, W. (2021). Building a bridge: opportunities and challenges for intangible cultural heritage at the intersection of institutions, civic society, and migrant communities. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 1–18.

Gilbert, A. S. (2019). *The Crisis Paradigm: Description and Prescription in Social and Political Theory*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Go?da, M., Pachocka, M., & Podgórska, K. (2020). Measuring the Cultural Dimension of Migrant Integration and Integration Policy in the European Context: Dilemmas and Discussions 1. *International Migration*, 59(1), 241–262.



Government of Malta. Parliamentary Secretariat for Equality and Reforms. (2020). Public Consultation: Towards a National Action Plan against Racism and Xenophobia.

Grech, A. (2015). Understanding the Macroeconomic Impact of Migration in Malta. Central Bank of Malta.

Grzymala-Kazłowska, A. (2016). Social anchoring: Immigrant identity, security and integration reconnected? *Sociology*, 50(6), 1123–1139.

Grzymala-Kazłowska, A., & Phillimore, J. (2018). Introduction: Rethinking integration. New perspectives on adaptation and settlement in the era of super-diversity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(2), 179–196.

Hannigan, A., O'Donnell, P., O'Keeffe, M. & MacFarlane, A. (2016). How do variations in definitions of “migrant” and their application influence the access of migrants to health care services? World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe.

Helbling, M., Simon, S., & Schmid, S. D. (2020). Restricting immigration to foster migrant integration? A comparative study across 22 European countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(13), 2603–2624. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2020.1727316>

Humphris, R. (2015). Intersectionality and Superdiversity: What's the Difference? IRIS Key Concepts Roundtable Series.

Kogan, I. (2010). New Immigrants ? Old Disadvantage Patterns? Labour Market Integration of Recent Immigrants into Germany. *International Migration*, 49(1), 91–117.

Koopmans, R., & Schaeffer, M. (2015). Statistical and Perceived Diversity and Their Impacts on Neighborhood Social Cohesion in Germany, France and the Netherlands. *Social Indicators Research*, 125(3), 853–883.

Kristen, C., & Granato, N. (2007). The educational attainment of the second generation in Germany. *Ethnicities*, 7(3), 343–366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796807080233>

Lamb, T., Hatoss, A., & O'Neill, S. (2020). Challenging Social Injustice in Superdiverse Contexts Through Activist Languages Education. In: Papa, R. (ed.). *Handbook on Promoting Social Justice in Education*. Springer.

Lauwers, N., Orbie, J., & Delputte, S. (2021). The Politicization of the Migration–Development Nexus: Parliamentary Discourse on the European Union Trust Fund on Migration. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 59(1), 72–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13140>

Lykke, N. (2011). Intersectional Analysis: Black Box or Useful Critical Feminist Thinking Technology? In: Herrera Vivar, M. T., & Lutz, Helma (eds.). *Framing Intersectionality*. Routledge.

Mainwaring, C. (2018, August 20). Malta's History of Failed Migration Deterrence. Refugees. <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/community/2018/08/20/maltas-history-of-failed-migration-deterrence>

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Meer, N. & Modood, T. (2014). Cosmopolitanism and integrationism: is British multiculturalism a 'Zombie category'?, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. Taylor & Francis.

Meissner, F. (2015) 'Migration in migration-related diversity? The nexus between superdiversity and migration studies' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (38) 4: 556-567.

Meissner, F. and Vertovec, S. (2015) 'Comparing super-diversity' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (38) 4: 541-555.

Micallef, M. (2017). The Challenge of Normalising Media's Migrant Crisis Machine. In: How does the media on both sides of the Mediterranean report on migration? A study by journalists, for journalists and policy-makers. European Union: International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

Mlambo, V. (2020). Externalization and Securitization as Policy Responses to African Migration to the European Union. *African Human Mobility Review*, 6(3).

Morawska, E., & Bommers, M. (2016). *International Migration Research: Constructions, Omissions and the Promises of Interdisciplinarity* (Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations Series) (1st ed.). Routledge.

Muller, J. (2008). Us and them: The enduring power of ethnic nationalism. *Current*, 50(1): 9, 18-35.

Nail, T. (2020). Borders, Migrants, and Writing. *Konturen (SI)* 11. 152-173.

Naveed, A., & Wang, C. (2020). Can Attitudes Toward Immigrant Explain Social Integration in Europe? EU versus Non-EU Migrant. *Social Indicators Research*, 153(1), 345-383.

Ndhlovu, F. (2015). A decolonial critique of diaspora identity theories and the notion of superdiversity. *Diaspora Studies*, 9(1), 28-40.

Ramadan, T. (2021). *On Super-Diversity* (Sternberg Press) (English, Dutch and Arabic Edition). Sternberg Press / Witte de With.

Rees, P., Bell, M., Kupiszewski, M., Kupiszewska, D., Ueffing, P., Bernard, A., Charles-Edwards, E., & Stillwell, J. (2016). The Impact of Internal Migration on Population Redistribution: an International Comparison. *Population, Space and Place*, 23(6), e2036.

Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': for an end to neocolonial knowledge production. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1).

Scholten P., Entzinger, H., and Pennix, R. (2015). *Integrating Immigrants in Europe* (IMISCOE Research Series). Springer.

Scholten, P., Entzinger, H. & Penninx, R. (2015). Research-policy dialogues on migrant integration in Europe: comparison and conclusions. In: Scholten a.o. (Eds.) *Integrating Immigrants in Europe: Research-Policy Dialogues*. Springer.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept

of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist*, 65(4), 237–251.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019330>

Seabrooke, L., Tsingou, E., & Willers, J. O. (2019). The Political Economy of Policy Vacuums: The European Commission on Demographic Change. *New Political Economy*, 25(6), 1007–1021.

Sealy, T. (2018). Multiculturalism, interculturalism, 'multiculture' and super-diversity: Of zombies, shadows and other ways of being. *Ethnicities*, 18(5), 692–716.

Skeldon R. (2018). International migration, internal migration, mobility and urbanization: Towards more integrated approaches. Migration Research Series N° 53. International Organization for Migration.

Snel, E., Bilgili, Z., & Staring, R. (2020). Migration trajectories and transnational support within and beyond Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(14), 3209–3225.

Sontag K. (2021). Beyond "Integration"—Why There is More at Stake. In: Berg J., Grüttner M., Streitwieser B. (eds) *Refugees in Higher Education*. Higher Education Research and Science Studies. Springer.

Strangio, D., & De Rose, A. (2015). A new Italian migration toward Australia: Evidences from the last decade and associations with the recent economic crisis. In F. Fauri (Ed.), *The history of migration in Europe*. Routledge.

Tatarko, A., & Jurcik, T. (2020). Migrant Integration Policies, Perceived Group Threat and Generalized trust: a Case of European Countries. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22(2), 705–727.

Tory-Murphy, L. (2018, August 6). Migrants Malta Does Not Want Are Powering Its Economy. Refugees. <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/articles/2018/08/06/migrants-malta-does-not-want-are-powering-its-economy>

Tselios, V., Noback, I., van Dijk, J., & McCann, P. (2014). Integration of Immigrants - Bridging social capital, ethnicity, and locality. *Journal of Regional Science*, 55(3), 416–441.

Tyldum, G. & Lillevik, R. (2021). *Migration policies and irregular migration into Europe: A review of the current knowledge base*. Fafo Press.

Vaughan-Williams, N., & Pisani, M. (2018). Migrating borders, bordering lives: everyday geographies of ontological security and insecurity in Malta. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(5), 651–673.

Vertovec, S. (2007) Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (30) 6: 1024-1054.

Vertovec, S. (2011). The cultural politics of nation and migration. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 40, 241-256.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006) Intersectionality and Feminist Politics. *European Journal of Women's*

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

Studies London, Sage. Vol. 13(3) 193-209.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2010). Theorizing identity: beyond the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 44(3), 261-280.

Zapata-Barrero, Ricard and Yalaz, Evren. (eds.). 2018. *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies*, IMISCOE Research Series. Springer.



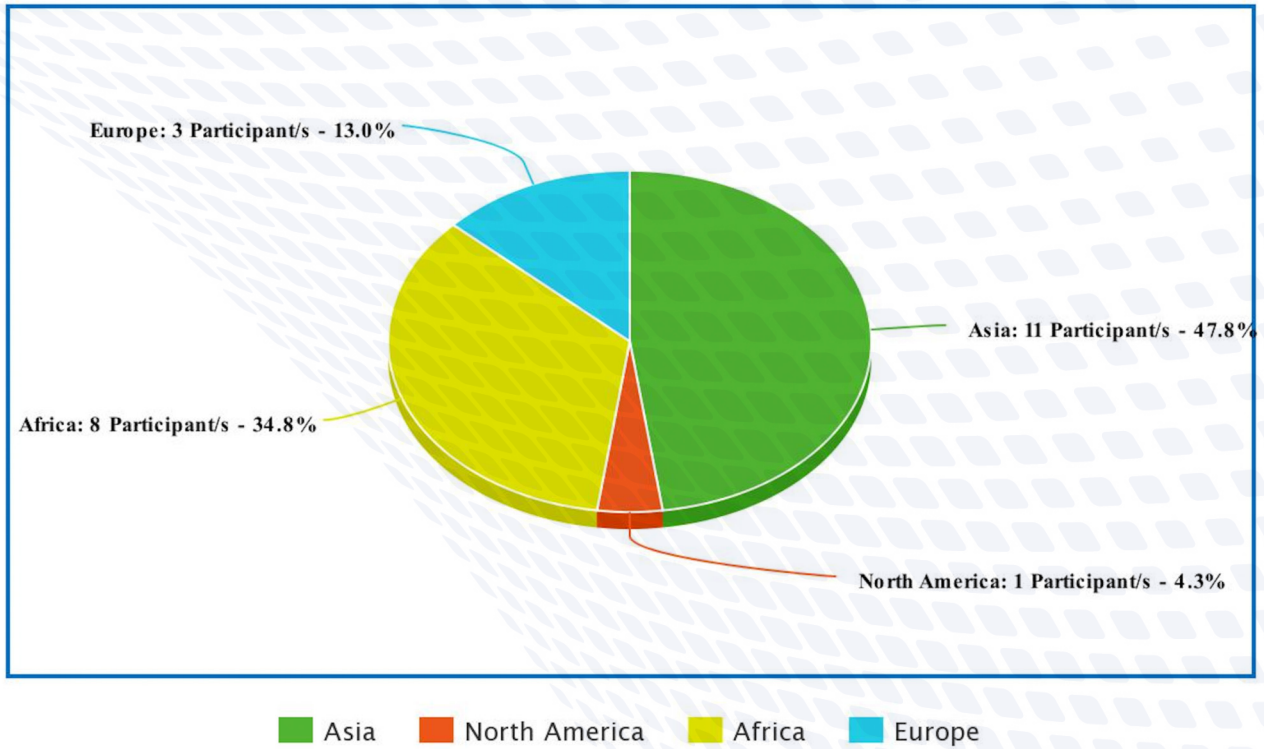




# APPENDICES

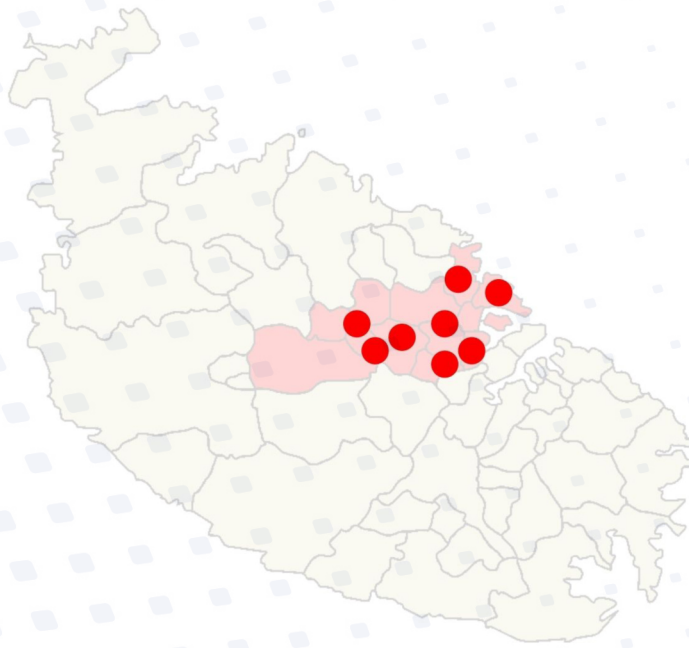
## APPENDIX A: FIGURES

Migrant Community Participants (Places of Origin)



**Figure 1: Migrant Community Participants (Places of Origin)**

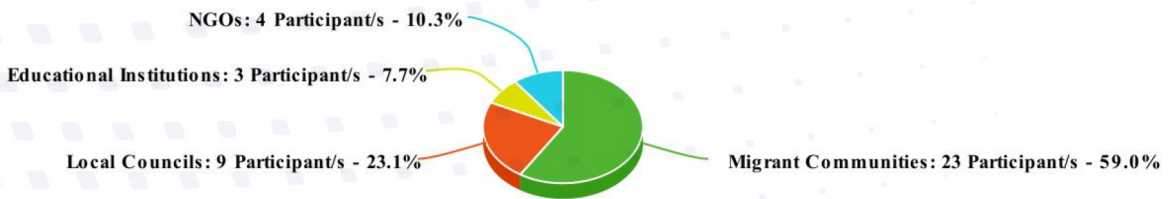
# Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda



## Central Region Localities Featured in the Study:

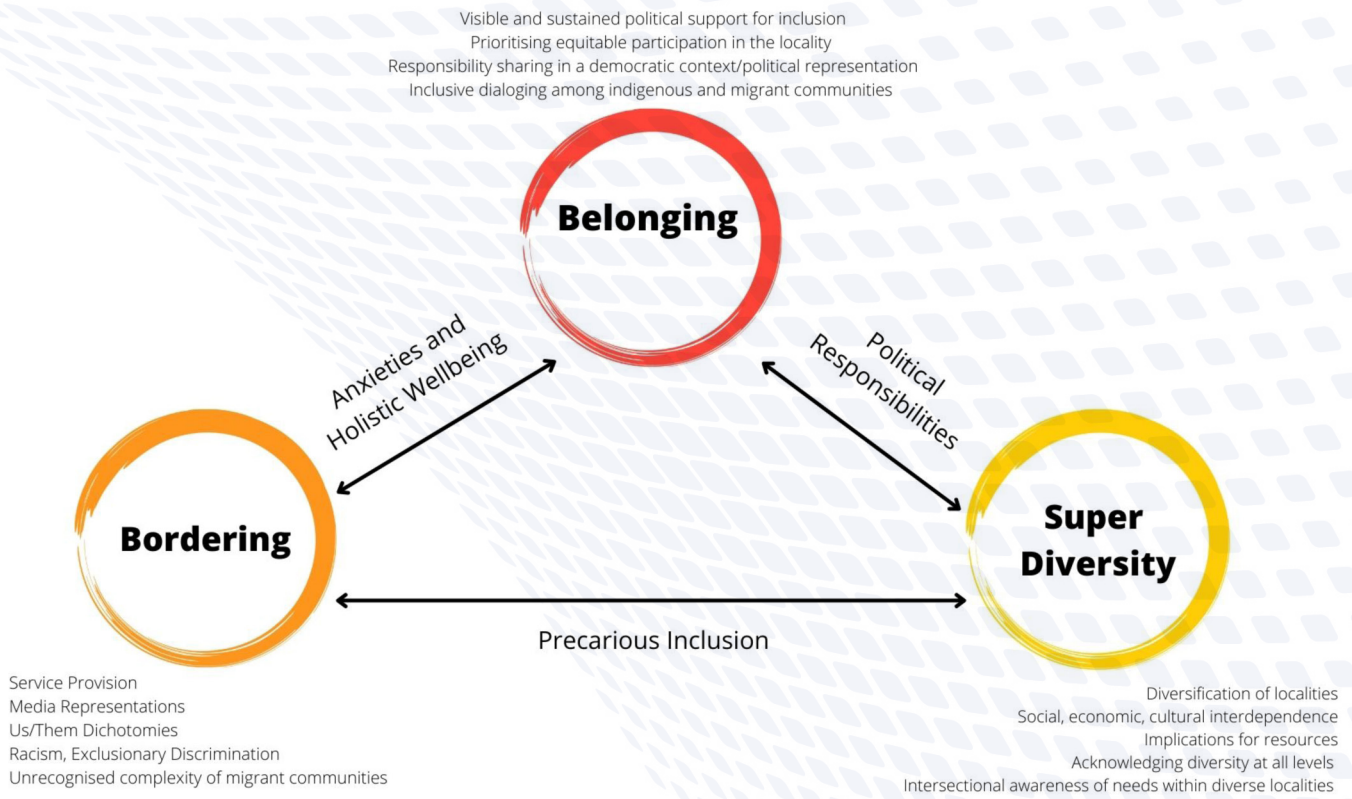
- Balzan
- Birkirkara
- Gzira
- Lija
- Msida
- St Julian's
- Sliema
- Ta' Xbiex

## PARTICIPANT ROLES



- Migrant Communities
- Local Councils
- Educational Institutions
- NGOs

Figure 2: Central Region Localities Featured in the Study



# Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

## APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOLS

The Protocol is a framework for facilitating focus group discussions as part of this study's qualitative research methodology. Throughout the three focus group sessions, two facilitators prioritised organic and emergent sharing in a semi-structured approach, by engaging participants as active contributors. Therefore, the protocol series provided below represents an exemplar only.

### FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL I, II, III: WELCOME

Welcome. I want to thank you for coming today. My name is Peter Farrugia and I will be the facilitator for today's group discussion. I am a research officer within the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta.

The study is funded by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Citizenship and Communities. What we learn from today's discussion will help us to formulate policy recommendations that improve strategies for migrant integration in your localities, and nationally. We would like to talk with you today about your impressions of migrant integration processes.

### GROUND RULES

Before we begin, let us review a few ground rules for the discussion.

- a. Together with a co-facilitator, I am going to ask several questions. We do not have to go in any particular order but we do want everyone to take part in the discussion. We ask that only one person speak at a time.
- b. Feel free to treat this as a discussion and respond to what others are saying, whether you agree or disagree. There are no right or wrong answers. We are asking for your opinions based on your own experiences. We are here to learn from you.
- c. Do not worry about having a different opinion than someone else. But please do respect each other's answers or opinions.
- d. If there is a particular question you do not want to answer, you do not have to.
- e. We will treat your answers as confidential. We are not going to ask for anything that could identify you and we are only going to use first names during the discussion. We also ask that each of you respect the privacy of everyone in the room and not share or repeat what is said here in any way that could identify anyone in this room.
- f. We are audio recording the discussion today and also taking notes because we don't want to miss any of your comments. However, once we start the audio recorder we will not use anyone's full name and we ask that you do the same.
- g. We have presented you with a Consent Form and Information Sheet, and we have gone through each of these with you to ensure that everyone understands the implications of these measures.
- h. Finally, this discussion is going to take about one hour and thirty minutes and we ask that, if possible, you stay for the entire meeting.





Does anyone have any questions before we start recording?

Introductions

We would like to go around and have each person identify themselves. Please tell us your first name only and a little bit about yourself.

### **FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL I**

#### ***Topic #1: National and Local Strategies for Migrant Integration***

The first thing that we would like for you to discuss is the main strategies for migrant integration currently being implemented, on both a national and local level.

1. To start off, tell us about your familiarity with the national Migrant Integration Strategy.
  - a. PROBE: How would you describe Malta's national strategies for integration?
  - b. PROBE: How would you describe the impact of such strategies in your localities?
2. In what ways have you engaged in local initiatives that support inclusion?

#### ***Topic #2: Perceptions of Migrant Visibility and Participation in the Community***

Next we'd like to discuss your impressions of migrant communities within your localities.

3. What words would you use to describe the presence of migrant communities in your localities?
4. Do you feel encouraged to support migrant participation initiatives in your localities?
5. How could migrant inclusion be further supported in your localities?
  - a. PROBE: How accessible are community-level healthcare, education, other resources?
  - c. PROBE: Tell us about the impressions you've noticed from indigenous community members, towards migrants in the locality.
  - d. PROBE: How can opportunities for interaction between indigenous and migrant communities be further supported?

#### ***Topic #3: Goals for Further Development***

The last thing that we would like to discuss is some further impressions of migrant communities' inclusion, and how it can be better supported in the locality.

6. What ways forward would make the most sense in your locality, to ensure that migrant inclusion is a priority?
  - a. PROBE: How often is migrant inclusion a topic of discussion in your activities?
  - b. PROBE: What kind of needs for support have you and your colleagues encountered among migrant communities?
7. What more could be done by localities, to welcome and include migrant communities?
8. What more could be done on all levels to encourage dialogue across diverse communities?
9. What additional services/resources would you like to see made available to facilitate inclusion?

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

10. If you had a chance to speak with migrant community members in your localities, what is something you would want to tell them about your locality?

### **FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL II**

#### ***Topic #1: Experiences of Integration***

The first thing that we would like to discuss with you is your experience of integration in Malta.

1. To start off, tell us about your impressions of integration on the level of your localities.
  - a. PROBE: Have you had to adjust views, attitudes, behaviours etc. to feel included in your locality, and if so, how?
  - b. PROBE: How have you noticed, if at all, indigenous communities adjusting to accommodate your community?
2. In what ways have your experiences of integration processes in Malta shaped your thoughts about authorities and citizens in Malta?
  - a. PROBE: What encounters have you had, within the locality and with government services, which made you feel included/excluded?

#### ***Topic #2: Needs of the Community***

Now, we'd like to discuss your impressions of the needs being expressed within your communities.

3. How included do you feel your community is within the locality, in terms of access to local and national services?
4. In what ways could the needs of your communities be better met by the support of the locality in which you live?
5. What about the more intangible needs, in terms of social and cultural inclusion, that you've noticed in your community?

#### ***Topic #3: Goals for Further Development***

The last thing that we would like to discuss is some further impressions of the aspirations you and your communities hold, to be more successfully included in Maltese society.

6. What ways forward would contribute to inclusive processes that support communities and localities?
  - a. PROBE: How can relevant authorities be more responsive to your needs?
  - b. PROBE: What kind of requests for support have you made to local councils and other local authorities, and what were the outcomes?
7. What are the most problematic impediments to inclusion that you have noticed, standing in the way of meaningful belonging within the locality?
8. What more needs to be done, to nurture dialogue and togetherness within localities?
9. If you had a chance to speak with local government representatives in your localities, what is something that you would want to tell them about your community?



### **FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL III**

#### **Topic #1: Integration in the Locality**

The first thing that we'd like for you to discuss are your respective and shared experiences of integration processes in Malta.

1. To start off, tell us about your impressions of Malta's strategy for integration (2017), and what you understand by its focus on a "two-way" process of integration.
2. In what ways is dialogue taking place in localities, and if it is not, what is being done to promote healthier opportunities for communication?

#### Topic #2: Integration Needs

Now, we would like to discuss the needs that you have noticed within your community and/or locality.

3. How easy is it for everyone in a locality to access essential services regardless of their community affiliation, beyond being residents? In what ways are these needs being addressed locally and nationally, and if not, why do you think that is so?
4. How are representations of diverse communities, in public debate and media in Malta, either contributing to togetherness or fostering divisions?
5. When considering the pivotal role played by opportunities for cultural inclusion (expressing diverse languages, customs, faith traditions etc.) in successful strategies for integration, what needs are presently being left unmet?

#### Topic #3: Enhancing Integration

The last thing that we would like to discuss with you today is some further impressions of the aspirations held in common, to achieve a more successfully inclusive and welcoming Maltese society.

6. What ways forward would you propose, to further strengthen inclusive action among your communities and the locality?
  - a. PROBE: How can local government be more responsive to the needs communities?
  - b. PROBE: In what ways are migrant communities reaching out and engaging?
7. What are the problematic impediments to inclusion, that you have noticed, standing in the way of integration within the locality?
8. What are sources for social inclusion that you have noticed, which support residents (indigenous and migrant communities) within the locality?
9. What more could be done to keep channels communication open between all stakeholders in a locality?

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

### FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL I, II, III

#### *Final Thoughts.*

Those were all of the questions that we wanted to ask. Does anyone have any final thoughts about community integration that they haven't shared yet?

Thank you for coming today and for sharing your views with us.



## APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

### **Social Media Message**

Hello, my name is Peter Farrugia. I am a Research Support Officer, working on a research study being carried out by the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, commissioned by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Citizenship and Communities.

The Principal investigator for this research study is Professor Andrew Azzopardi and Dr Maria Pisani is the project's Expert Advisor.

One essential aim of our research is to better understand the experiences of migrants in their own processes of integration, and the needs and aspirations for better inclusion among migrant communities in Maltese society. If you are a migrant aged 18+ and able to communicate in English, we would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and will take place in a single session in the form of a focus group (approx. 1.5 hours long). Should you be interested, a second focus group will also be held with participants from migrant communities, local government, and other locality-based representatives.

If you decide to take part, you will be given an Information Sheet to better understand what the research is about. All the information you provide is considered completely confidential. This research is in conformity with the University of Malta's Research Code of Practice and Research Ethics Review Procedures.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email on: peter.farrugia@um.edu.mt

Alternatively, you may contact the Faculty by telephone on +356 2340 2693. Your contribution is of great value to this study. While thanking you in advance, we look forward to your participation.



## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

### **Information Sheet**

My name is Peter Farrugia, and I am a Research Support Officer in the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta, which is currently conducting a research project on behalf of the Parliamentary Secretary for Citizenship and Communities.

The Principle Investigator of the project is Professor Andrew Azzopardi, and the Technical Expert is Dr Maria Pisani. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of this study is to learn more about your particular experiences of integration processes, and the needs and aspirations you perceive within the community and locality in which you live and/or work. By participating, you will be supporting national efforts to strengthen social inclusion and cohesion, and suggesting improvements to current policies and practices in pursuit of these aims.

Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group which would last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. Should you wish, you may also participate in a second focus group, which will be held at a later date. The focus group/s will be held at a date/time that is convenient for all participants. Should the focus group be held online, it will be video recorded via the Zoom recording function and transcribed. Zoom makes use of end-to-end encryption as a key feature, meaning the focus group and the video-recorded session will only be visible to the parties involved in said session.

Data collected will be treated confidentially. Participants will be given a pseudonym to conceal their identity and any identifying information will be altered or omitted. Video recordings will be stored in an encrypted manner on a password-protected computer, as well as on the Zoom Cloud and personal data will be stored securely and separately from the pseudonymised data. The video-recorded session will be deleted from the Zoom Cloud and computer storage by not later than December 2021.

Your name and surname, or any other personally identifiable details, will not be used in the study. Data collected will be pseudonymised, and only the project's researcher, Principle Investigator and Technical Committee will have access to it.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from you will be deleted.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you, and your participation does not entail any non or anticipated risks. Should the discussions during the focus group prove distressing, you will be provided with a list of appropriate service providers.

Since you will be participating in a focus group, other participants will be present. While participants will be asked to declare not to divulge details about other participants, the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality in this regard.



Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study. A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail: [peter.farrugia@um.edu.mt](mailto:peter.farrugia@um.edu.mt).

You may also contact the project's Principal Investigator, Professor Andrew Azzopardi via email, [andrew.azzopardi@um.edu.mt](mailto:andrew.azzopardi@um.edu.mt) and Technical Advisor Dr Maria Pisani via email, [maria.pisani@um.edu.mt](mailto:maria.pisani@um.edu.mt)

Sincerely,  
Peter M. Farrugia  
Research Support Officer

## Embracing Super-Diverse Communities: 'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda

### Participant Consent Form

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in this research study, and this consent form specifies the terms of my participation.

I have been given written and verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.

I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased for as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data will render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives.

I understand that I have been invited to participate in a focus group in which the researcher will ask questions and facilitate discussion to explore processes of migrant integration in central Malta. I am aware that the focus group will take approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. I understand that the focus group is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.

I understand that this focus group will be recorded and if online, the Zoom video recording function and audio will be transcribed verbatim. I am aware that Zoom makes use of end-to-end encryption as a key feature, meaning the focus group and the video-recorded session will only be visible to the parties involved in said session.

I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned.

I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.

I have been informed that the pseudonymised verbatim transcript will be stored securely and separately from recordings, which will be kept in an encrypted file on a password-protected computer and/or on the Zoom Cloud. All recordings will be destroyed and any material deleted from Zoom Cloud and computer upon completion of the study, not later than December 2021.

I have understood that personal data will be stored securely and separately from the pseudonymised data. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cupboard. I have understood that the consent form will be stored securely and retained for a period of three years following this study, after which it will be destroyed.

I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study.

I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.



I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

I am aware that, if I give my consent, this focus group will be recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

I am aware that focus group discussions should be considered confidential and that I should not disclose details of those participating and/or of the nature of discussions to others.

I am also aware that the researcher cannot guarantee that other participants will not disclose any details even though they have been asked to sign a similar consent form to mine.

I have been informed that the Primary Investigator and Technical Committee have the right to access the data collected for verification purposes.

I have been informed that the study may be available at the University of Malta Library and is therefore accessible to students, staff and members of the public.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Principal Investigator (andrew.azzopardi@um.edu.mt)

Dr Maria Pisani Technical Advisor (maria.pisani@um.edu.mt)

Mr Peter M. Farrugia, Research Officer (peter.farrugia@um.edu.mt)

**Embracing Super-Diverse Communities:  
'Migrant Inclusion' on the Maltese Policy Agenda**



