



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

IOM contribution to the Public Consultation

Mind D Gap Together we can make a difference

IOM commends the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties for making such leaps in progress in the area of integration. It is in IOM's opinion that the four areas identified for informing the National Migrant Integration Strategy are all key, however, the Organization would like to take this opportunity to voice its views on the current situation and highlight the areas which can be further ameliorated through the conception and application of a comprehensive integration policy. This public consultation is to be considered as a step forward. Through the recent statistics which emerged in the MIPEX report, Malta ranks in the 33rd place out of a total of 38 countries with the MIPEX score equal to 40/100, therefore leaving ample space for improvement.

As stated in the MIPEX Report, **non-discrimination and equality** are the main channels through which the Government of Malta uses to progress forward on the integration policy.

As was stated in the IOM contribution to the White Paper Consultation on *Towards the Establishment of the Human Rights and Equality Commission*, despite the numerous measures in place, IOM is still concerned about the fact that migrants and refugees continue to experience discrimination in the field of employment, both to access labour market and with reference to employment conditions. IOM recommends that reference to these specific circumstances be made in the revised legislation. Measures to remedy the lack of equal opportunities or discrimination should be envisaged and be largely disseminated through the media.

As highlighted in the MIPEX report, non-EU nationals still suffer from many restrictions to become long-term residents. This automatically means that this group of individuals would not be entitled to access the same basic equal rights as Maltese nationals in various areas. This in turn affects their opportunity to invest in their future and properly integrate. According to the MIPEX report, Malta is one of the countries with the longest list of requirements and discretion when it comes to giving this permit. Considering that the requirements to obtain long term residency are excessively high on accommodation requirements and language tests, IOM recommends that these requirements are revised and can also provide support to the Government of Malta by creating standardized programmes and tests which will be uniform for all, leaving less room for discretion and abuse and making the system a transparent one. Set criteria should be evenly applied. The experience by other countries in the EU or North America can be shared as lessons learnt.

The restrictions for non-EU residents in respect of the right to work, study and eligibility to benefits are most rigid in Malta than in other MIPEX countries. In fact the MIPEX report states that Malta ranks 28th out of 38 countries on the scale of equality. The integration policy should look into the possibility of allowing equal **labour market mobility** for Maltese residents with non-EU national.

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The 2014 National Employment Policy stated that it is the Government's duty to facilitate labour market integration as well as increase migrant's training and education to fill labour shortages, and consequently favour labour mobility. On this matter, IOM can, together with the Government of Malta, assess the labour market needs within the Maltese context and provide the required trainings, in collaboration with public and private entities, in order to address these shortages.

According to the MIPEX, Malta ranks as one of the highest country with the lowest success rate with respect to **family reunifications**, mainly due to 'long-delayed, restrictive and discretionary policy'. So much so, that it ranks at the 32nd out of 38th countries in respect of being the country which is least welcoming to new families, naturally this causes a huge obstacle to integration.

IOM considers the possibility of reuniting with family members as one of the fundamental aspects of integration whether it be in Malta or abroad. To this effect, IOM can provide support to the Government in applying Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in the reunification of Unaccompanied Migrant Children whose parents(siblings) are to be found in another EU MS. These SOPs were carefully drafted and tailored to the Maltese context after several consultation meetings which were carried out with all entities involved through the PRUMA project. This methodology of consultation carried out in PRUMA could also be replicated in order to facilitate a smoother application of the family reunification clauses to allow for family members or refugees regularly residing in Malta.

Another area which is essential to integration is the **education** sector. Integration measures in this sphere should address the needs of the migrant pupil population which in turn, will avoid social segregation. Given the large number of adolescents with either migrant parents or who are migrants themselves, an essential component of schools is that they need to restructure the educational system in order to better address the needs of these students. This need was repeatedly highlighted through one of our current integration projects which targets awareness raising and training of trainers in order to facilitate the integration process of TCNs. The intercultural skills provided through the training developed in the project could be potentially replicated in other sectors in such a way that all front liners dealing with non-EU nationals could receive this type of training. Given that most of the participants/trainers are teachers, they often expressed how they felt such training was necessary and also highlighted the challenges they face, and those faced by the non-Maltese students. IOM feels that there is a need to continue to carry out such trainings in order to decrease the gap which currently exists across all schools in Malta. To this effect, IOM would like to implement a project which would identify a non-EU teacher focal point in every public school and equip him/her with the skills in order to better understand the issues which non-Maltese pupils might be facing. Through a system of cascade training, these skills could later be disseminated throughout the school. In conjunction with this, IOM will organise a number of activities for students who will come together, through various activities, and celebrate each other's diversity. IOM proposes that an ad a tailor made training curriculum becomes integral part of teachers' curriculum development.

As integration is by definition a two way process, IOM welcomes the recognition by the Maltese Government that policies and activities should address both nationals and newcomers and that due attention should be given to both groups.

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IOM is currently carrying out a project through which a curriculum was developed and civic orientation sessions are being carried out to TCNs living in Malta in order to assist them in their integration process. These sessions provide basic and initial information about Malta and what it offers to non-EU nationals. On the basis of this project, IOM proposes to carry out the same project in schools, in order to provide the information to non-EU adolescents living in Malta as well as their parents. These sessions could also be carried out in their mother tongue, through the assistance of interpreters. In this manner, IOM will continue to build on the initial pilot projects carried out in order to better the language and parental support for integration.

A Situation Analysis Report (SAR) was drafted as part of the Equihealth project¹, in which IOM presented a number of policy recommendations in the **health** sector following an assessment done in Malta (November 2013) and integrated with the outcomes of the national consultative committee (September 2014). With respect to the Policy and Legislative framework, IOM recommends that the Government of Malta seeks to draft a solid policy framework on migration management and health care entitlements for migrants. The policy should also distinguish between the different groups, listing the entitlements of all individuals in Malta under different forms of protection and this should also be clarified through the policy. This is also echoed in the MIPEX 2015 report.

There needs to be a clear policy at law as to health entitlement depending on the different status. The legislation regarding social benefits should also be updated so as to reflect the current reality and simplified in a way that it should be understood by its potential beneficiaries.

IOM can provide guidance to the Government and assist in the dissemination of information within the communities. This could be done through the set-up of information dissemination and education to health care providers and other relevant operators of migrants' health care entitlement as to access to health and social services. Simultaneously, IOM can increase the awareness of migrants on their health rights and promote communication between both groups by means of workshops and other media.

The overall constructive discourse and reporting on migration and public health is important for fostering social integration, whilst at the same time addressing misconceptions in the community. It should duly be noted that miscommunication about infectious diseases leads to fear both amongst the local authorities and the public. In this respect, the socially responsible collaboration with the media is key and information campaigns on the positive contribution which migrants make to the community should be promoted.

The issue of the limited number of cultural mediators has often been highlighted as being one of the issues which arises in the health departments and hospitals. IOM can assist by reinforcing the health and social support systems, including interpretation, cultural mediation and psychosocial assistance. IOM proposes to develop standardized procedures in order to guarantee the presence of competent/fully-trained interpreters and cultural mediators in this sector. IOM can develop training for Cultural Mediators as well as setting up a roster of those available on call to be shared with those "institutions" in need.

¹ EQUI-HEALTH: Fostering Health Provisions for Migrants, the Roma, and Other Vulnerable Groups

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On a final note, IOM also underlines that migrant communities could be further integrated by consulting them beforehand on national policies, particularly those which have a bearing on their life – one such way is to allow them **political participation** which would in turn give them a sense of ownership as well as belonging. According to the MIPEX survey, 10,020 non-EU adults are excluded from democratic life. Non-EU nationals can potentially participate in this consultation and IOM is in favour of including the empowerment of migrants and migrants' associations in order for them to express their views in all open consultations and acquire a more active role in the society.

IOM stands ready to provide its inputs in the development of different policy areas, including by facilitating sharing of experiences and knowledge at international level.

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