



MINISTRY FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
AND EQUALITY

# INTEGRATION = BELONGING

Migrant Integration  
Strategy & Action Plan

Vision 2020



# **INTEGRATION = BELONGING**

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>PART 1: MIGRANT INTEGRATION STRATEGY</b>	
A. Introduction	1
B. Background	3
C. Integration governance	5
C.1 Human Rights and Integration Directorate	
C.2 Integration Unit	
C.3 Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration	
C.4 Forum on Integration Affairs	
C.5 Other structures	
D. Equality and anti-discrimination	7
E. Mainstreaming	8
F. The 'I Belong' programme	9
F.1 Integration request	
F.1.1 Who can submit an integration request?	
F.1.2 What happens if no such request is submitted?	
F.2 The integration itinerary	
F.2.1 Stage 1 – Pre-Integration Certificate	
F.2.2 Stage 2 – Qualification for Permanent Residence Status	
F.3 Integration and support	
F.4 Final integration assessment	
<b>PART 2: MIGRANT INTEGRATION ACTION PLAN</b>	
A. Integration measures	13
B. Monitoring and evaluation	

# ACRONYMS

<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FIA</b>	Forum on Integration Affairs
<b>HRID</b>	Human Rights and Integration Directorate
<b>I&amp;S</b>	integration and support
<b>IMCI</b>	Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>IU</b>	Integration Unit
<b>LCA</b>	Local Councils' Association
<b>MCAST</b>	Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology
<b>MEAE</b>	Ministry for European Affairs and Equality
<b>MEDE</b>	Ministry for Education and Employment
<b>MFCS</b>	Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity
<b>MGOZ</b>	Ministry for Gozo
<b>MHAS</b>	Ministry for Home Affairs and National Security
<b>MHLO</b>	Migrant Health Liaison Office
<b>MJCL</b>	Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government
<b>MLU</b>	Migrant Learners Unit
<b>MQF</b>	Malta Qualifications Framework
<b>MSDC</b>	Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>ODPM</b>	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Health
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>PIP</b>	personal integration plan
<b>TCN</b>	third country national
<b>UNHCR</b>	Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UoM</b>	University of Malta

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



During the previous legislature, Government set up the Directorate for Human Rights and Integration and the Forum for Integration Affairs. With the Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan (Vision 2020), Government is now setting up a stronger framework for integration of migrants who are already working, living and sending their children to school in Malta.

Malta was always at the crossroads, and our culture and language reflect this. For Government, it is important that no individual or community feels isolated from those around them.

A clearer definition of the respect of diversity in this context is one that recognises the true value of migrants. Social cohesion is crucial if we are to continue to grow economically for the betterment of our country.

I augur that this Strategy and Action Plan will serve as a tool that provides direction thanks to the structures that will be enhanced, and the training and services that will be provided. Everybody's role is important and thus I thank in advance all those who will provide their part so that together we change our country for the better, for us and for those who will follow us, even if they come from afar.

*Helene Dalli*

# PART 1: MIGRANT INTEGRATION STRATEGY

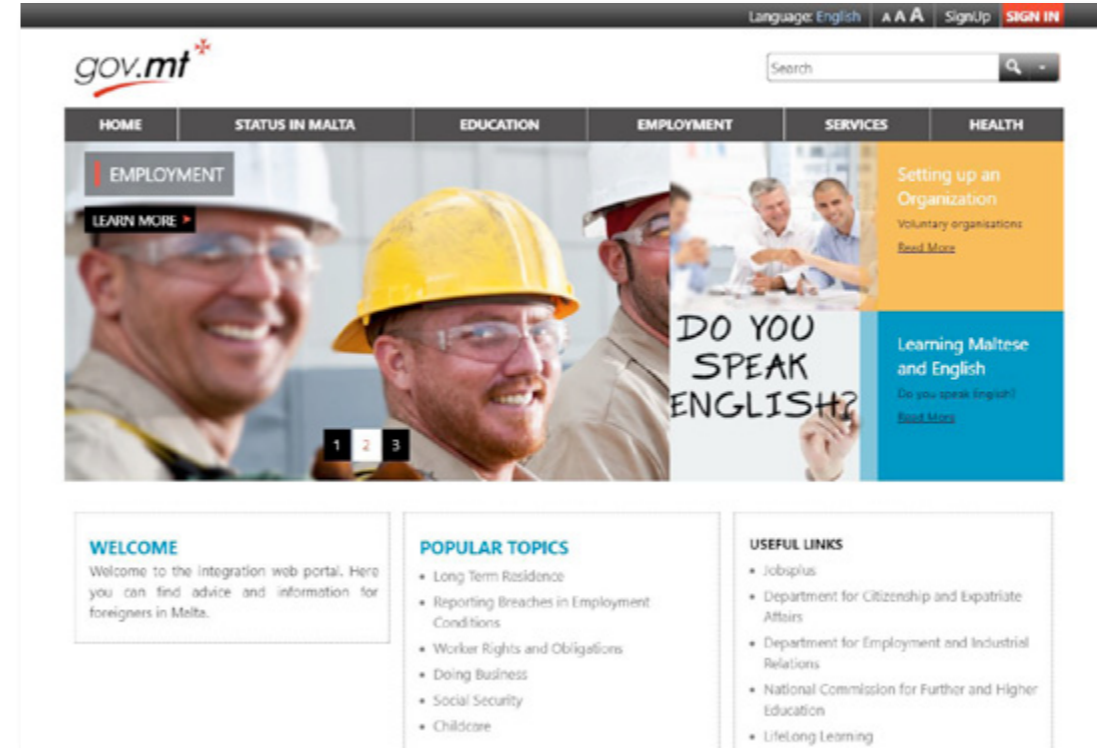
## A. INTRODUCTION

This *Migrant Integration Strategy* creates a framework for understanding successful integration through the level of the migrants' own sense of belonging to Maltese society and the space Maltese society allows for such integration in its different sectors and strata.

Malta today is a receiving country in terms of migration flows, and in turn is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically, culturally and linguistically. This development is in sync with similar trends experienced by other developed nations before us and is an indicator of the country's economic development and prosperity. The accommodation of this diversity in all spheres of society presents both a challenge and an opportunity, which, if addressed properly, can lead to the enrichment of Maltese society as a whole. The process launched by this first strategy is especially necessary as this diversity is expected to continue to increase in the years to come, especially in view of the projected labour market needs<sup>1</sup>.



Minister Evarist Bartolo during an activity promoting the use of tablets at St. Catherine's High School



Front page of www.integration.gov.mt

In this sense, integration means that Malta as a host country retains its multifaceted and evolving identity in a globalised world. It also means that, henceforth, the identities of locals and newcomers to our society will increasingly be interwoven.

Of course, the recognition and celebration of diversity and the promotion of equality are not sufficient in themselves as an integration strategy. Instead, we need to ensure that migrants in Malta have a voice, are recognised for their true value and are able to build their sense of belonging within society. It is this pathway that will enable us to ensure a fair and just society for all, a society that maximises on every individual's potential.

True belonging also addresses the concerns and perceptions we have heard during the consultation processes leading to here, and creates spaces for community building at the local and national levels for all those who call Malta home.

<sup>1</sup> NSO, Gainfully Occupied Population, available at: [https://nso.gov.mt/en/News\\_Releases/View\\_by\\_Unit/Unit\\_C2/Labour\\_Market\\_Statistics/Pages/Gainfully-Occupied-Population.aspx](https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/View_by_Unit/Unit_C2/Labour_Market_Statistics/Pages/Gainfully-Occupied-Population.aspx)

## B. BACKGROUND

Although Malta has been at the crossroads of the movement of peoples since time immemorial, migrant integration governance has only a short history. It started to some extent with the 2005 policy document *Irregular Immigrants, Refugees and Integration*, which was sparked by the onset of migrant boat arrivals<sup>2</sup>.

Nonetheless, the first time that a Ministry was specifically charged with an integration portfolio and, consequently, a systematic approach, was in March of 2013 when the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (MSDC) was set up.

One of the first initiatives taken was to disseminate information relevant to migrants through the dedicated website [www.integration.gov.mt](http://www.integration.gov.mt) on such topics as necessary documentation, housing, and education. These initiatives were made in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The website's aim was to act as a portal of quick access to the most important and necessary information, especially for newly arrived migrants.

As part of the *Mind D Gap* project led by MSDC, a public consultation was carried out in mid-2015, with the resulting document being a Framework Document entitled *Towards a National Migrant Integration Strategy 2015-2020*<sup>3</sup>. This document brought together opinions and proposals from individual citizens, governmental entities, civil society organisations, academic institutions as well as international organisations, and pointed towards what an integration strategy for Malta could look like. The aim was to get as much feedback as possible on any relevant issues or necessary changes. The Framework Document also published the results of a national telephone survey on perceptions on third country nationals (TCNs) and immigration in Malta where it was found that a relative majority of the population agreed with the concept of integration<sup>4</sup>. Those who opposed it were often either unsure of its meaning or had no direct contact with migrants in Malta. A conference ensued in June 2015 to launch these results.



Front cover of the Framework Document launched in June 2015

The Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) was set up in November 2015 as a new structure within MSDC. In the ensuing period it kicked off several initiatives, which are expected to be consolidated and expanded upon. For example, the Forum for Integration Affairs was established, meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration were held, and a strong collaborative relationship was established with the Migrant Learners Unit (MLU) within the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE).

As a result of existing rights enshrined in current legislation and various initiatives by civil society and self-help groups, amongst others, some form of integration is already happening in families, in schools, at the workplace, on the streets and elsewhere. It is now Government's responsibility to ensure that public policy and targeted measures support these efforts and institutionalise new ones, because it is ultimately in the best interest of everyone that it succeeds. Government is therefore creating a basic but sufficient framework to improve the chances of success for all migrants that want to belong, and will continue to tweak policies and services in order to remove unnecessary bureaucracy and burdens.

The integration portfolio was confirmed in June of 2017 with the setting up of the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (MEAE). HRID was incorporated within MEAE.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs & Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity (2005), *Irregular Immigrants, Refugees and Integration Policy Document*, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51b197484.html>

<sup>3</sup> MSDC (2015), available at: [https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public\\_Consultations/MSDC/Documents/2015%20-%20Integration/MSD\\_Report%20booklet\\_JF\\_rev4.pdf](https://meae.gov.mt/en/Public_Consultations/MSDC/Documents/2015%20-%20Integration/MSD_Report%20booklet_JF_rev4.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> MediaToday (2015), *Perceptions about third country nationals and immigration in Malta*, available at: [http://meae.gov.mt/en/public\\_consultations/msdc/documents/2015%20-%20integration/public%20perception%20survey%20report.pdf](http://meae.gov.mt/en/public_consultations/msdc/documents/2015%20-%20integration/public%20perception%20survey%20report.pdf)

## C. INTEGRATION GOVERNANCE

### C.1 HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTEGRATION DIRECTORATE

HRID is specifically tasked with the advancement of the areas of civil liberties, foreign communities, integration and minority rights. Since its setting up, it contributed towards Government's human rights agenda through the development of legislative proposals, policy frameworks and collaboration with civil society amongst others.

The Directorate has also carried out the groundwork for the development of this Strategy and its corresponding Action Plan, and will continue to act as a hub for integration related work, also through the setting up of an Integration Unit (IU) within it.

### C.2 INTEGRATION UNIT

The IU will be set up as a dedicated integration unit with HRID. Once set up, it will take care of the day-to-day implementation of this Strategy and the Action Plan. It will serve as the main governmental coordinating body that imparts information, receives integration requests (see Section F.1) and follows migrants' progress on their integration in Malta.

The Unit will also draw attention to patterns of issues and concerns raised by migrants and their respective organisations, with the aim of drawing durable solutions as well as assisting Government policy development in this field. Furthermore, the Unit will make best use of existing sources of funding for the enhancement of services, provision of training, awareness raising and community building.

### C.3 INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON INTEGRATION

Chaired by MEAE, the IMCI is the structure that will coordinate Government's actions in the field of integration, draw general approaches and assist horizontal collaboration between ministries and their respective institutions, as necessary. The IMCI will also assist the participating ministries to develop their respective action plans and monitor the progress of their implementation.

### C.4 FORUM ON INTEGRATION AFFAIRS

The FIA is a forum that includes representatives from a range of migrant community organisations active in Malta. It advises Government on migrant integration-related solutions, any necessary amendments to legislation and policy, and the improvement of services offered.

### C.5 OTHER STRUCTURES

The mainstreaming of integration policies in all areas of governance (see Section E) will require the setting up of additional structures that deliver targeted services for specific cohorts of people. As an example of such set-ups that already exist, one finds the MLU, that manages services for newly arrived migrant children and adolescents and prepares them for successful enrolment as learners in Maltese schools.



*Closing conference of the Mind D Gap project (June 2015) © DOI – Reuben Piscopo*

## D. EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION



*A participant intervening during the conference © DOI – Reuben Piscopo (detail related to previous picture)*

Like other minorities, migrants may be discriminated against on the basis of a range of personal characteristics, which characteristics vary from person to person and over time. Over and above such characteristics, they may be further discriminated in view of their colour, ethnic origin, race, belief, creed, religion, language, and/or nationality. As a result, the discrimination experienced by migrants is often compounded on more than one ground.

The prevalence of such discrimination may be further exacerbated due to public misunderstandings relative to the size of the migrant population, the motives for their presence in the country, and the sensationalism of the magnitude of criminal activity conducted by them. In turn such misunderstandings may encourage ethnocentrism on the part of the Maltese, and segregation and marginalisation among immigrants, leading to the fracturing of communities and unnecessary tensions. In view of this, Government will continue to include a migrant perspective in its equality work, and will work closely with migrant communities well beyond basic administrative needs related to their settling and ability to function in Malta.

Awareness-raising campaigns and events will allow all citizens to learn facts on migration and integration and find out how they can participate in the integration process. 'Myth-busting' initiatives improve public opinion by providing a true-to-life picture of immigration based on facts and personal accounts; it sensitises society to the special attributes and needs of different migrant groups, especially the most vulnerable and stereotyped.

## E. MAINSTREAMING



*An event organised by migrant communities with the aid of the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (Summer 2016) © DOI – Kevin Abela*

Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation. In practice, this means that:

- I. A migrant integration perspective should be incorporated in all sectors, such as education, employment, health, social services and other sectors, and at all levels and stages;
- II. Services need to be tailored to their target population, bearing in mind all of its characteristics, including the presence of persons with a migrant background. In practice this means that while on certain occasions general measures only need adaptation to meet migrant needs, on other occasions targeted measures are needed on a temporary or permanent basis.



## F. THE 'I BELONG' PROGRAMME

### F.1 INTEGRATION REQUEST

A formal request to integrate in Malta and the decision to follow an integration itinerary will in itself set in motion the process that Government is offering to those who want to belong.

The decision for the introduction of the integration request track is inspired by the conviction that such an important decision in the life of an individual as well as for Maltese society needs to be explicitly formalised.

#### F.1.1 Who can submit an integration request?

Requests will be accepted from all migrants (regardless of whether they come from the EU or third countries) who wish to be considered. Asylum seekers whose request is being processed and residents in a closed centre may also apply. Detailed information about integration will be provided by the IU at this stage to prospective applicants, with the assistance of cultural mediators, in order guarantee informed decisions to the greatest extent possible. Quality information is essential for successful integration. This information will also be available at all times to stakeholder organisations and key partners within key premises and across ICT platforms and social media. An app will be rolled out to provide up-to-date 24/7 integration-related information.



A stand by a migrant community © DOI – Kevin Abela (detail related to picture 6)

#### F.1.2 What happens if no such request is submitted?

An integration request is not obligatory. However, migrants who do not submit one will not benefit from some of the integration measures and support outlined in this strategy. They will be subject to general rights and obligations as laid down in Maltese legislation.

### F.2 THE INTEGRATION ITINERARY

The integration itinerary consists of two stages. Initially, there will be a transition process from existing services to the framework outlined here.

#### F.2.1 Stage 1 – Pre-Integration Certificate

EU nationals, TCNs and other migrants are eligible to apply for Stage 1 (or parts of it), which consists of the following components:

1. Accredited Maltese language classes (MQF Level 1) (\*)
2. Accredited English language classes (MQF Level 1) (\*)
3. Basic cultural and societal orientation (MQF Level 1) (^)
4. A record and assessment of qualifications, trade, work experience and skills.

This entails knowledge of basic Maltese and English as well as knowledge about Malta's Constitution and laws, institutional set-up, equality and non-discrimination, and customs.

(\*) offered by MCAST, unless applicant is already certified by MQRIC

(^) offered by MCAST to all applicants

Successful participants will be awarded a Pre-Integration Certificate.



Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and Minister Helena Dalli meeting migrant communities at the annual migrant integration event organised by the Gzira Local Council (November 2016)

## F.2.2 Stage 2 - Qualification for Permanent Residence Status

The Pre-Integration Certificate (Stage 1) is obligatory for registration to Stage 2. Stage 2 is open to persons who intend to lodge an application for a permanent residence status with Identity Malta.

The following are the components of Stage 2:

1. A course of at least one hundred hours having as its subject matter the social, economic, cultural and democratic history and environment of Malta, with a specific focus on the Constitution, law, democratic values and practical sessions.

2. Pass mark of at least 65% in Maltese at MQF Level 2.

As a rule, applicants will be assigned a caseworker from the IU, whose main function is to accompany and counsel the applicant through pre-integration, and to draw up with the latter a personal integration plan (PIP). Caseworkers will be provided with the required training and supervision.

These requirements may be modified to meet the needs of individual applicants, as proposed by the PIP, particularly to ensure that applicants are not made to follow what they already know. All programmes are designed in conjunction with experts in the respective fields, taking into account the diverse client group.

The pre-integration stage is considered complete when all requirements have been certified. Throughout the duration of the programme, the applicant and the caseworker will finalise the PIP, and the latter will explain the meaning and implications of the integration and support (I&S) stage.

Upon the successful completion of the pre-integration stage, the applicant is issued with an officially recognised certificate, plus a transcript of one's qualifications. Work experience and other skills will also be assessed and accredited.



*Minister Helena Dalli participates in an event celebrating Hanukkah (December 2016) © DOI – Kevin Abela*

## F.3 INTEGRATION AND SUPPORT

Empowered by the pre-integration stage and the reciprocal measures, the applicant is supported to enter into formal employment, which enables them and their family (if any) to live a dignified life as well as to contribute to the economy and society at large. In addition, the applicant will face the issues of documentation, housing, access to health, education and other areas of life. They will continue being followed by a caseworker for a duration to be determined by the IU.

In all cases the ultimate goal of this process is belonging to Maltese society. Permanent residence, granted on condition of a successful final assessment and other conditions as may be prescribed by law, is in other cases the ultimate goal. Whereas it is beneficial to ask of persons to make an integration request as a symbol of their intended commitment, this needs to be matched by providing long-term peace of mind and stability. Those who are committed to integration must not have to have the fear of the potential for the Maltese authorities to cut short their long-term plan to belong here.

The policies and services required for integration already exist in the mainstream, whether in the public sector, public-private partnerships or in the private sector. Some have already for a long number of years catered to TCNs and the refugee community and persons with international protection. There is already considerable experience and expertise, and these are sound foundations on which to build.

This Strategy will address the perception that successful integration in Malta is not possible. Primarily, this requires that the current existing political will supporting integration filters down to all policies and services at all levels to ensure that clients who are doing their utmost to belong do not face a wall of impossible or contradictory or disorganised demands.

## F.4 FINAL INTEGRATION ASSESSMENT

At its conclusion, the applicant and the IU will discuss the former's integration itinerary, and the latter will draw up a final integration assessment.

In the case of those who submit an integration request but do not reach the final stage, or who do not obtain a positive final integration assessment, the integration process is stopped at the stage where the person stops. Benefits achieved will not be lost. In the case of stoppages due to loss of employment, the IU will make recommendations on the best way forward.

# PART 2: MIGRANT INTEGRATION ACTION PLAN

## A. INTEGRATION MEASURES

### Measure 1: Setting up an Integration Unit within HRID

An IU will be set up to implement and administer the integration requests received, to act as Government's coordinating body on integration, and to ensure that this action plan is implemented.

Owner: HRID, MEAE

Timeline: Throughout

### Measure 2: Delivery of courses for Stage 1 and Stage 2 applicants

Courses in Maltese, English and cultural orientation will be delivered to applicants. Successful completion of Stage 1 leads to the award of the Pre-Integration Certificate, required for admission to Stage 2, which comprises the two integration conditions required of applicants for the permanent residence status.

Owner: IU, Identity Malta, and MCAST

Timeline: Throughout\*

\* with a period of transition in 2018 from current to new arrangements in the case of Stage 2

### Measure 3: Strengthening of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Integration

The IMCI will be strengthened and will hold frequent meetings to coordinate Government's actions in the field of integration, draw general approaches, and assist horizontal collaboration between ministries and their respective institutions as necessary. The IMCI will also assist the participating ministries to develop their respective action plans and monitor the progress of their implementation.

Main Owner: MEAE

Timeline: Throughout

Secondary: MEDE, MFCS, MHAS, MJCL, ODPM, Parl. Sec. for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification at OPM, and other Ministries and entities as required from time to time.

### Measure 4: Intra-ministerial migrant integration action plans

Supported by the IMCI, as well as by the IU, Ministries will develop their internal migrant integration action plans to thus further the reach of integration policy to all services. Government Departments and agencies will also ensure appropriate, regular engagement with migrant communities. This engagement will be facilitated by the IU. The IU will provide training to Government departments and agencies to ensure that staff is trained to inform migrants accurately of their rights and responsibilities.

Owner: MEDE, MFCS, MHAS, MJCL, ODPM, Parl. Sec. for Reforms, Citizenship and Simplification at OPM

Timeline: Throughout\*

\* Conclusion and publication of Ministerial action plans by end of 2018

### Measure 5: Revamp and subsequent regular updating of [www.integration.gov.mt](http://www.integration.gov.mt)

Reliable and comprehensive information both for potential applicants as well as for the general population is key to successful integration. This website will be kept updated with IU information and links to mainstream services and information.

Owner: IU

Timeline: 2018\*

\* Website revamp by end of 2018

**Measure 6: Development and administration of the I Belong App**

This app will complement the website, but will ensure greater immediacy of information through alerts and other tools. Persons on the integration track will have easy on-the-go access to key information.

Owner: IU

Timeline: 2019

**Measure 7: Pool of trained cultural mediators to be deployed as required in public services**

Trained cultural mediators, both of local as well as of migrant origin, assist professionals and clients to overcome language, cultural and other barriers, and thereby facilitate integration

Owner: Coordinated by IU, training by UoM

Timeline: Throughout

**Measure 8: Confidence-building awareness campaigns and 'befriend a migrant' project**

The 'befriend a migrant' project approach complements awareness campaigns with a person-to-person approach. It provides an opportunity for Maltese nationals and migrants alike to exchange information informally in a friendly setting, and in turn assist migrants to form their social network and orient themselves around Malta.

Owners: IU, UNHCR, LCA, local councils and NGOs

Timeline: Throughout

**Measure 9: Strengthening the integration role of the Migrant Health Liaison Office**

Migrants coming from different cultural backgrounds are often unfamiliar with the health care system of the host country and do not know how, when and where to seek help. Language barriers may also impede utilisation of health services. Health professionals are nowadays facing new challenges due to cultural differences in the explanation for the cause of disease and the interpretation of symptoms. Cultural diversity in health care poses a challenge to service providers who need to manage complex differences in communication styles, attitudes as well as expectations of migrants. The MHLO was set up to address issues that migrants come across when accessing health care services and to train health professionals on cultural competence to address mismatches that exist due to cultural and linguistic problems.

Owner: ODPM

Timeline: 2018

**Measure 10: Issuance of employment licences to beneficiaries of protection up to the validity of their status certificate issued by the Refugee Commission.**

Jobsplus is presently the entity responsible for the issuance of employment licences to foreign nationals needing an authorisation to work in Malta. Beneficiaries of international protection are issued with an employment licence on their own names, which can authorise them to carry out various jobs with different employers. The employers would be required to submit the mandatory declaration of employment. Licences are presently issued for a maximum period of one year, renewable. Jobsplus is now in the process of issuing these permits up to the validity of the status certificate issued by the Refugee Commission upon request by the applicant. This aims to provide longer access to the labour market to beneficiaries of international protection.

Owners: Jobsplus

Timeline: Throughout

### Measure 11: Coming into force of Credit Institutions and Financial Institutions (Payment Accounts) Regulations

Chapter IV of the Payment Accounts Directive requires member states to ensure that all consumers have access to a payment account with basic features through a sufficient number of credit institutions offering this service. This is designed to target 'unbanked' EU citizens who are presently unable to open a payment account with basic features.

Owner: MFSA

Timeline: 2018

### Measure 12: Setting up an integration hub on Gozo

A significant number of third-country nationals are living and/or working in Gozo, which means that migrants living there could miss out on much of what this Strategy and Action Plan aim to provide, unless a dedicated centre is set up to address their needs.

Owner: IU and MGOZ

Timeline: 2019 and 2020

### Measure 13: Local Councils' Integration Charter

A number of local councils have already taken interesting integration-related initiatives. In a sense, they have developed their own 'integration concept' or strategy. Often it is developed in a participatory process in which key actors in the local community find answers to emerging questions. The Integration Charter will be a tool to support local councils to support each other to meet the integration needs of their increasingly diverse local communities by highlighting some key values, methodologies and projects.

A Local Integration Fund will be developed by the IU to support actions by local councils towards integration.

Owner: IU, LCA and local councils

Timeline: 2018

### Measure 14: Networking with migrant communities, international organizations and non-governmental organisations

The IU will make funding available to local and national groups to carry out joint integration initiatives, including one-off initiatives, with particular emphasis on local and regional effects. Activities may include, for example, measures to increase mutual understanding between the local community and migrants, actions to introduce migrants to Maltese society and enable them to adapt to it, or measures to encourage migrant participation in civil and cultural life.

Owner: IU

Timeline: Throughout

### Measure 15: Undertake research and related action focusing on the specific integration needs of vulnerable groups

Significant statistics related to migrants in Malta are hard to come by. This is because while data is gathered by various institutions it is often not gathered and processed centrally. A system for such data collection and processing will be developed with research institutions.

Owner: IU

Timeline: Throughout

### Measure 16: International integration initiatives

HRID will work closely with UNHCR (Malta) to raise resolutions and other initiatives on the agenda of international institutions with regard to integration. This will put integration on the agenda and make recommendations for future advances in integration governance.

Owner: HRID and UNHCR

Timeline: Throughout

## B. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

At the end of each quarter covered by this document, the IU will draw up a report focusing on progress achieved with implementation. The report will be discussed within the IMCI, and feedback will be taken on board. An annual report will be generated on the progress of the action plan and will be presented during the annual integration conference organised by the IU.



**Forum on  
Integration Affairs**

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