

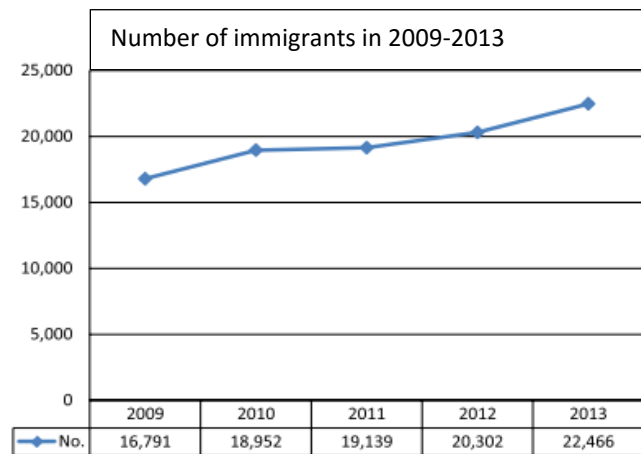
PROTECTION or EJECTION?

Malta, the smallest country in the EU with the highest density of migrants amongst all the EU member states.



1

As time goes by, the number of immigrants that come to Malta is always increasing. This country turned from a losing country to a receiving country in the past years. In fact from 2009 to 2013 one can see an ever-increasing number of immigrants.



Source: Eurostat, 2015.

But, why do these migrants decide to leave their home country and go to live in another country? Is it their only choice?

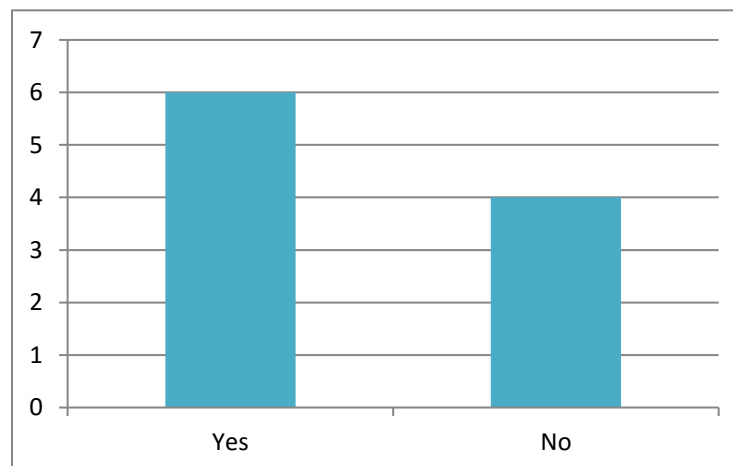
I had the opportunity to interview a woman and her son who have been living in Malta for 4 years and had come from Syria due to wars inside the

¹ <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20130709/local/over-100-migrants.477219>

country. The woman explained to me the trip that she had made with her family to arrive here. “It was a very difficult trip”, this woman said, “First we had to ride an auto-car to go to Lebanon, after we took the plane for the next destination, Egypt, then we rode an auto-car again this time to go to Libya and finally we went on a small boat to come to Malta”. She described this trip as long-lasting, tiring and definitely uncomfortable. Her reaction about the Maltese people was that they are helpful and friendly and when I talked with her son he was of the same opinion. He was very happy that he has immediately found friends at school. When I asked her if her rights were protected in Malta she gave me an unexpected answer. She told me that she was disappointed about the housing since it wasn’t free at all like other receiving countries and an additional complaint was that her children can never have Maltese citizenship. In other words, according to this Syrian woman, despite the government help, it is clearly not enough.

While talking to the boy, he pointed out a problem that comes from the society itself and it is something which can be solved if there are more awareness about multiculturalism. This 12-year-old boy at times experienced name-calling and even physical violence from children his age because he wasn’t Maltese and has a different culture.

Are we, Maltese, in favour of accepting immigrants coming to Malta? I had the opportunity to conduct a vox pop in Valletta to see what citizens think.



The majority are in fact in favour of accepting migrants. 3 out of those 6 who said *yes* remarked that although they agree, they are concerned because of the large numbers so they suggested a limit, 2 others think that these people are humans like us and so they deserve a secure life, just like us and the other sees that there is no difference with or without them. In contrast, the ones who said *no*, all have different reasons such as that they are taking our jobs, that we don't have enough space, that with migrants there would be a larger possibility of culture conflicts and that the taxes that we pay are spent on the immigrants.

It is important that we welcome the migrants but furthermore we can help their home country financially so the government could cope with economic problems in the country and there won't be economic migrants. Maybe this is very difficult for an individual state but sure we can help as a united team, the European Union.

Nicole Bezzina 4.2
St Ignatius College, Girls Secondary School, Handaq
Young Reporter for the Environment