



SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 18/19

Meeting #2
University of Malta, Take Off
6th August 2018, 17:30

MINUTES

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner):

- 1) Approval of the agenda - *Approved nem con*
- 2) Approval of minutes – *Approved nem con*

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to the bottle cap campaign, the aim of which is to help out L-Istrina, we would greatly appreciate your input as each bottle cap equivalates to 10 cents (€0.10) and the money which represents each bottle cap will be used to buy facilities for people in need. If you could collect bottle caps from home and from your own events, we would really appreciate your help.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): When is the end of this campaign please?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): December.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): As for upcoming events, we have the '*Majjalata*' which is basically a celebration where you get to enjoy each other's company. Each executive board member from your organisation can come for free. We highly recommend you to invite your friends, who will come against a cost of 7 euro. In order to book a ticket, you have to book online and pick them up at the KSU office, both if you are going to pay or not for the event.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to the doodle facility, for the first time round we gave you a number of options and allowed you to choose one. This time round, we allowed you to choose more options. It is up to you to give us feedback as to which method you prefer.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): As for today's topic, we would like to inform you about the importance of your vote. Once you vote, you cannot take your vote back. Moreover, no votes will be accepted via email and anything of the sort.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to immigration, 2 million non-EU citizens immigrated to the EU in 2016. Foreign citizens made up 7.5% of persons living in the EU Member States on 1 January 2017. Moreover, the population of Malta increased by 15,700 in 2017, over 15 times the rate in the EU when adjusted for the size of the population, hence bringing the population to 475,700. Furthermore, EU Member States granted citizenship to almost 1 million persons. Reference should also be made to Germany's refugee open-door



policy. Merkel has come up with an open-door refugee policy which she decided to ditch, hence garnishing a lot of criticism. With regards to the local scenario, Malta has one of the highest numbers in terms of immigrants, 38.1 immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants as last recorded in 2016 to be precise. A quarter of Maltese uncomfortable being friends with an immigrant; 1 in 5 would not be comfortable with working with immigrants whilst a third were uncomfortable with having an immigrant as their job superior. Furthermore, a new EU-wide survey on migration and integration has found that Maltese are the most likely to think that immigrants are a burden on the Welfare State. Back in February, Frontex has fuelled concerns that Malta might face an influx of migrants for which it is not adequately prepared. Recently, Salvini insisted that Malta should take in a rescue vessel carrying more than 239 migrants whereby the NGO-operated ship be impounded, and its crew detained for their safety. He pledged to put an end to illegal immigration by denying access to Italian ports for the rescue vessels run by NGOs. He refused to allow the vessel to dock in Italy as according to Italy, the boat was travelling in waters which fall under the jurisdiction of Malta. Moreover, he accused Malta of acting in an inhumane way. Basically, it has been demanded that Malta accepts the vessel instead. Malta refused, prompting a diplomatic rift. Salvini wants Malta to open its ports for migrants. Hence, it was not the first time that Malta and Italy had a rift between them due to the migrant boats with over 450 migrants. This sparked an outrage in Malta due to the problem of illegal immigration. Moreover, in June Malta was forced to take the German NGO boat Lifeline carrying over 234 migrants. Reference should also be made to the difference between asylum seekers and immigrants. An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. Contrarily, an immigrant is a person who has come to a different country in order to live there permanently. With regards to the EU Migration Policy, the EU aims to set up a balanced approach to managing regular immigration and combating irregular immigration. Proper management of migration flows entails ensuring fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States, enhancing measures to combat irregular immigration, including trafficking and smuggling, and promoting closer cooperation with non-member countries in all fields. It is the EU's aim to establish a uniform level of rights and obligations for regular immigrants, comparable with that for EU citizens.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): You are going to be split up in small groups of 6/7 so that you can discuss this issue further. The focus group approach adopted today helps you engage in discussion. Ideally, each group will have a leader appointed to discuss this issue. You are going to have 10 minutes to discuss in depth a question. Then you are going to have another 10 minutes to briefly discuss the rest of the questions so that, when coming to discuss the entire topic, you will have a grasp of what you want to say. It is important that each leader speaks on behalf of both the majority and the minority so that the recommendations are as representative as possible. Furthermore, we have not handed out a printed copy of the question so as to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

Members present were split up into 5 groups



Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We can start with the discussion. We can start with the first question. The group who discussed the question are to present the fruits of their discussion and then the other groups are free to comment on the points raised by the former group. The first question is:

“In Germany, there have been more than 1,000,000 people settling within the last year. With this in mind, do you agree with Angela Merkel’s open-door policy?”

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): There were mixed feelings about this. In Malta, an open-door policy would not necessarily work as there is already a burden financially and otherwise. Seeing it from another standpoint, you have to be able to accept immigrants, especially from a humanitarian standpoint. In Germany, which is a powerful country when compared to Malta, they do have the power to make a policy which can go against EU frameworks, but they would not be sanctioned for it. Although there are numerous agreements, ties are very difficult to reach, and sanctions would thus not work in the same way in every country. In Malta, we should not have an open-door policy. We should accept immigrants if we know that we are going to get support from other countries. However, the problem is that other countries are not helping us deal with the situation.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): Personally, I had a problem with the way the question was framed. Were the 1,000,000 people settling asylum seekers or were they in general people settling there? If they were not in general all asylum seekers, then the open-door policy is present in Malta. If we look at the companies that are coming to Malta, immigrants are being encouraged. We have all these industries that are willing to accept immigrants, hence having an open-door policy, but not all types of migrants. Obviously, we are talking about refugees, asylum seekers, and irregular migrants. If we are talking about an open-door policy, we have to see whether we are talking about regular or irregular migrants.

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): We also differentiated between legal immigrants, illegal immigrants, and asylum seekers. In Malta, it is relatively easy for legal immigrants in other EU and European countries to settle for a job in Malta. Maybe in the future, they may contribute to society but maybe in the short-term it is not so sustainable.

Chiara Vassallo (personal): Technically, it would be unsustainable without migrants because Malta’s economy would not have been the same without the influx of migrants coming into Malta. As a population, although densely populated, we are too small to cater for the such situations. We need immigrants to help us increase our workforce.

Nathan Grech (ESA): With regards to sustainability, it is related to natural resources, area, water, and the like. Malta greatly depends on what other countries give us, especially in relation to water as we are a water scarce country. If Malta’s population keeps growing, be it migrants and its local population, it is unsustainable in that manner as its population will not be able to sustain itself for future generations.



Albert Galea (The Yuppie): Just to add on what Chiara Vassallo had to say, this morning there was a press conference wherein it was held that 20% of the country's workforce are actually foreigners, be it EU and non-EU. If we are talking about reliance on immigrants, you have to mention that 20% of the workforce are immigrants wherever they are from. In terms of illegal immigrants, in Germany, the actual proportional entries is the same as in Malta.

Alex Clayman (personal): The aim behind today's discussion is to make a press release, whose purpose is to comment on topical event, which is that people are drowning in Mediterranean because of our country detaining 3 vessels in a port. If we were to make a press release, it should be that we disagree with this in the short-term.

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): With reference to the 20% previously mentioned, in a country which is more densely populated, then that percentage would be higher as it is based on population and not population density. Hence, you cannot take it into consideration.

Hanien Alouzi (personal): A lot of people are mentioning the workforce and immigration in that respect. Even though our workforce highly depends on migrants, it does not necessarily accept migrants. Migrants are being used to help people, but in reality, it is very difficult for them to access jobs. These jobs are usually for higher positions. Our population has the highest percentage of school leavers, the lowest percentage 13+ year-olds with post-secondary education, so the reason why we depend on migrants is different to irregular migration.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): Compared to the UK, Italy, and Ireland, Malta accepts a lot of immigrants in its workforce.

Hanien Alouzi (personal): When we are talking about irregular migrants, for them to work, they need a status. For you to work you need this status but to get this status, it takes quite a long time.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): On what Alex said, the questions are very geared towards social policy. The first point that should be made is that these people are humans and the first port of call should be to look after human life and decide what is going to happen with them after. Currently, we are not discussing the fact that Malta and Italy are being held liable under criminal charges. Criminal charges such as human trafficking are valid, but many of them are red tape, insufficient applications, and the like. In the meantime, thousands are dying in the Mediterranean.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): I agree. On a more conceptual level, if we are talking about intra-EU labour migration, which is important to discuss because we have many workers who are employed short-term but who will be living among us for a long time, so we need a strategy for that, if we are going to discuss such a topical and pertinent issue, it needs to be discussed by itself and not in the framework of finding a strategy for immigration because it is going to get lost.



Liam John Portelli (UOMR): I agree with the responsibility previously mentioned. People feel that they have it for different reasons. We should be focused on why and on having the backing to do it.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): That's part of another discussion we should have. Even though JEF Malta are pro-EU, the EU should still bear responsibility. This is why we would like to propose an EU-wide platform why Malta should not do all the burden-sharing. We believe that that discussion is subsidiary to saving lives.

Matthew Paris (Betapsi): I agree with what both of you said but we discussed how these things cannot happen in steps. We cannot first say them and see what to do with them, and then, once we see what to do with them, we do not save the one coming. They must come together. Unfortunately, it is not the best way to handle something, but it is the only option we have to save people's lives, we have to have a separate plan for what to do with them short-term, a separate plan for what to do with them long-term, and the like. It must happen holistically.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): I would like to see the EU do more not when it comes to regulation itself but in the sense that they are currently not doing anything to overthrow leaders of countries which are not democratic. It has to start at home.

Albert Galea (The Yuppie): In reality, the EU is actually funding the trail from the Libyan coast guard to properly rescue immigrants. The problem is that they are not enforcing and making sure that the training is actually being followed. Hence, saying that they are not doing anything in my opinion is incorrect.

Samwel Bondin (ESO): They do send personnel, but they only do so in areas where there are EU companies at stake.

Albert Galea (The Yuppie): The Libyans do not even let the UNCHR, who regulate Human Rights, to access 80% of the refugee camps. It is very difficult to say that the EU has to do this.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It is very evident that from this question you would like another discussion to tackle irregular immigration. For the sake of keeping a flow to the argument, we propose another KPS meeting next week to discuss this issue more directly.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): The focus should not be irregular migration in general. We are talking about the issue of sending boats to save lives at sea because, for irregular migration, we would have to tackle the whole strategy which would not really work.

Alex Clayman (personal): If we were to postpone the discussion of whether or not we agree with people dying at sea by another week, then I think that there is something wrong. I think that we should be able to come up with a statement today.



Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): It is not postponing it. It is creating a flow in the arguments. The thing is that there are different points which have been raised and hence we should separate the discussion. It is us focusing on something specific and coming up with a strategy and recommendations that relate directly to this.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): Why do another KPS meeting if there is no one who is against saving people from drowning?

Naomi Bugre (Insite): The thing is that we are all in favour of saving them. The problem we are facing is how they are to be saved. The boats, the registration, the licensing, and the like all have issues which come out, hence we have to discuss them. If we just come out with a statement that we want to save lives, then we are going to get the same treatment as everyone else is getting. It would be beneficial to discuss these things and then coming up with a proper strategy to tackle this issue. Can we tackle it today?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): Do you agree that there should be a separate KPS meeting to discuss the strategy? We start discussing the matter today and then next week we can delve into the other issues in more detail. The whole point of this KPS was to regulate whether there are enough measures which are controlling immigration. You all pointed out that you want to tackle aspects of irregular immigration. Hence, do you agree that there should be a separate KPS meeting tackling this issue separately?

Naomi Bugre (Insite): We all want a separate meeting but we all want it to be today.

Julia Cini (The Yuppie): Would it be possible to propose a focus group so that the people who are most interested in this issue discuss this together, bring these ideas to us, and then we take the idea from there instead of another KPS meeting?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We are going to take a vote on tackling this issue now and then tackling the rest of the questions after.

Approved nem con

Julia Cini (The Yuppie): You said “education”, did you mean by educating people to integrate them into society and/or also educating the generations before us about the issue, how they can be susceptible to it, and the information behind it?

Matthew Paris (Betapsi): When I said “education” I meant education about what immigration is, why we should save their lives, and the like. Basically, the whole thing.

Naomi (Insite): As Insite, we believe that the issue of saving lives is of absolute importance. However, we also think that it should not be the case that people are saving lives, but they do not have the proper licensing to do it. It will put us in a situation where this issue is happening due to smuggling. People have no other option to cross into Europe. The situation is obviously



dodgy so they end up drowning. If we do not stop this issue, the smugglers will say that they are NGO boats and that they cannot be stopped. There should be proper licensing granted to NGO boats and clear and strict rules are to be maintained on how to apply. At least there would be one unified way of how we are going to tackle the issue.

Liam John Portelli (UOMR): I think we went from a hazy middle ground to an absolute. You either do as much as you can from the legislation we have or else you resort to the absolute alternative.

Naomi (Insite): In our group, it had come up that these people should be given an emergency boat that do not need to have a proper licence to operate. The middle ground would be that the problems faced by them is that the licensing was not done under the correct procedure. It is a very long and unclear procedure. We are saying that we have to find a middle ground to create a simplified way of getting to know whether the persons are rescued or not, create an efficient way of licensing, and stick to it, hence providing a quick, easy and safe way of registering. Let these boats register, drop the criminal charges, and let's move on like that.

Julia Cini (The Yuppie): With regards to the registration process, are you proposing it on a national, EU or international level? This is what we have to see now. At an international level, you have to get every single country to adhere by it, which is impossible. At an EU level, if the boats are not registered in the EU, what is going to be the next step? How is the EU going to reregister you there? It is a very good solution, but the technical side to it is a bit of a hassle. You have to look at how are we going to register, what are the available safeguards, and the like.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): The problem falls on the fact that Frontex is massively underfunded. It cannot be Malta's job because we cannot afford such an expense. There should also be more emphasis on Frontex. I think that by lobbying for more funding for Frontex, we would be allowing more time to find the proper solution.

Antonia Gambineri (CSA): Some governments have issues with rescue and migrant boats. It needs to be clarified that the mayday call was made in the case of an emergency. You have to clarify whether it is a real emergency call.

Alex Clayman (personal): What Julia said was important. She said that we need a system in place. Someone needs to tackle the matter, but it is not our job to dictate the specifics of the immigration policy. However, we should be doing something about it. We need to propose a solution.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): What we can do is that, as a student body, we need to state that we think that this is an issue that needs to be tackled. However, I don't agree with you that it has to stop there. Many bodies and many organisations have said the same things. We need to say that there is a problem and that there are a number of solutions that we need to explore so that we can back up our claims. Can we issue a press release and say that we are discussing this



important issue and that we are in agreement? We can postpone by a week or two weeks to come up with a proper strategy.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We do not think that this issue can be tackled in one time, so we suggest that a subcommittee is set up to discuss this matter instead of organising another meeting.

Approved nem con

Samwel Bondin (ESO): We should take note of the fact that the EU is allocating a budget to the Turkish camps so what the EU is doing is keeping the immigrants there in a healthy condition.

Chiara Vassallo (KNZ): We also need to recognise our limitations. Certain recommendations cannot be made to the EU. Something like putting pressure on the MS governments to lobby for more protection for Frontex should be limited to pressure on the national government and not to the EU.

Naomi Bugre (Insite): Who is going to draft this press release and when will it come out please?

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): The press release is going to be released in the coming days and we will be drafting it. We will obviously be taking your input into consideration when drafting the said press release. After the press release is issued, we will be opening the subcommittee to discuss the matter. We will now move on to the next question:

“Do you think that EU measures, such as the EU Immigration policy, have been effective enough or do they need to be improved?”

Naomi Bugre (Insite): We split it into external and internal. External is not working because the EU has limited competence to tell us what to do as a State. One of the things which is a huge problem at the moment is the Dublin regulation in relation to the burden sharing system. We believe that a solution is to have mandatory burden sharing rather than optional burden sharing. As Samwel said, we want to see the EU, as an institution, influence foreign policy more. We could talk about legal avenues for migration, collaborating with countries to create legal ways for people to apply for asylum, and the like. We also mentioned Frontex, which is too limited and practically only works with the Italian Government. We also tackled intra-EU migration and said that it is working efficiently at the moment because people are moving around in the EU which is very important. However, at the same time, are we really being integrated? They need to be properly integrated and form part of our society.

Andre Camilleri (MHSA): Under this immigration policy, it is held that this burden sharing is to be governed by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, which is not an actual framework. There is no actual legislation covering the aforementioned. It should not be voluntary, but it should include a number of sanctions.



Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): Currently, under the Dublin II Regulation, if a regular migrant lands in Malta, then he has to be housed in Malta and, if he is granted asylum, he is Malta's problem unless another country agrees with burden sharing. We do not agree with this and I am sure that ESO agrees with me. We think that the EASO should look after processing asylum applications from every single country. If they are accepted, they are given Maltese residency, hence EU residency. If they are processed by EASO, then they are given EU residency through Maltese residency. They are not obliged to keep those migrants until someone else shows some kindness. Currently, Hungary has been very resistant to burden sharing and they have every right to do so because there are no sanctions. Malta should not be taking all the burden just because we are a border country while other countries do nothing.

Hanien Alouzi (personal): The situation in Malta is not adequate for them. When people are relocated here, they are being punished. They leave because conditions are bad and they return to find them worse.

Julia Cini (The Yuppie): This is also a process of education. One of the main backlashes that you hear from people is that they are coming here to take our jobs. Another one is that they are depending on the welfare state. This report has to show ways of how to integrate them within the Maltese society. We are the problem. We have to allow them to be happy here. Hence, we have to tackle integration in Malta and take off the burden off them by helping them build a life here.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will now move on to the next question:

“Under EU law, asylum seekers must lodge their applications in the first EU country they enter, which mostly affects States such as Malta, Italy and Greece. With this in mind, do you agree with this law?”

Yacopo Baldacchino (S-cubed): Regarding lodging the application, it would help to have an idea of the people coming in, with the correct details of the said people. We agree with the law as it is rather than sending these people to another country.

Antonia Gambineri (CSA): It is really important to have adequate policies. In the US, you have to bring a card. In some European countries, these people would need employment. Therefore, something EU-wide would be very helpful in such situations.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will now move on to the next question:

“Do you think that there needs to be a way to control illegal immigration in Malta? Do you think that the process for asylum seekers is adequate and fair enough?”

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): There are already controls. We suggest putting EASO in charge of receiving applications, hence granting them temporary residence until they are processed. With regards to the second question, not really. JEF had done a seminar on this and people held that we are still behind. In other countries, they have a much smaller intake of immigrants given



their population size. They are given proper courses where you would become eligible for certain jobs. In Malta, we do not recognise drivers' licences from some African nations. With regards to the second question, speaking personally, the process is quite fair in Malta, saving individual cases. In that regard, we are doing quite well.

Daphne Cauchi (MMSA): I agree with most of what you said. In Malta, we tend to take a lot of the immigrants which come in. I do believe that, as a small country, we take in a lot of immigrants and, having unlimited resources, we provide housing which is very cheap for them to live in so like that we reduce the amount of people living on the streets, which is unsanitary, makes Malta look ugly and is illegal in Malta. The problem in Malta is that we are very fair when it comes to providing work but sometimes there is a sort of bureaucracy when it comes to providing the working permit. They would have to work illegally, employed for less minimum wage. That is unfair. But I do think that we are quite fine.

Daniel Cassar (JEF Malta): They want to build their career and not welfare. They want a place in the workforce rather than being given money in the short term.

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We will now move on to the last question:

“Are the conditions offered to immigrants in Malta adequate enough? What do you think needs to be improved?”

Hanien Alouzi (personal): We tackled conditions in relation to irregular migrants, in which case we do not agree with the conditions. Many stay at the detention centre for at least 24 hours. The open centre and the detention centre are both inadequate with regards to their conditions. There is no mental health practitioner present in the detention centre. Given that they would have had a traumatising experience to arrive in Malta, it does not make sense that there is no mental health practitioner. Some would also not have been checked for their health, that is not identified and tackled straight away. There are certain countries where there are no interpreters and in Malta we barely have. The situation is that physically and mentally they do not look at these people as humans.

Russell Debono (SHS): Did you know that very few social workers work with migrants? There are only around 30. They are looked down upon. Why aren't we making these fields better so that they can attract more people?

Liam John Portelli (UOMR): It is probably because people don't care about migrants.

Russell Debono (SHS): Why don't we make them care? Why don't we help them care? Aren't we all human on one planet? I am not particularly religious but all religions state to respect your neighbour.



Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): We are going to take a vote on whether we should issue a press release on the concern we have about irregular immigrants dying at sea and that controlling measures need to be improved on and whether a subcommittee should be set up to come up with a strategy on how this inhumane treatment should be improved.

Approved nem con

Petra Grech (KPS Commissioner): With regards to Campus FM, all those organisations who wish to take part in this project are to send us the topic that they would like to tackle as soon as possible. Basically, the programme is going to be split up into two parts:

- 1) 5-10 minutes on the organisation's aims, initiatives and the like. Please refrain from mentioning any alcohol-related events.
- 2) 20-25 minutes on a particular topic that your organisation feels it should tackle.

There is going to be a presenter presenting the programme and it is best that each organisation has two/three representatives. Most importantly, there should be the social policy officer and the president to discuss the aims. We are also going to ask you to sign a small agreement related to commitment and not to mention anything related to partisan politics. The sessions are going to be pre-recorded and are going to start as of end of August and will run till end of September. They will then be aired from October to January. Most importantly, the programme is going to be in Maltese so whoever is going to be talking needs to be fluent in Maltese. It is very important that you take this seriously. It is an opportunity for you to broaden your organisation's reach.

Meeting adjourned – 19:20
