A PASSAGE TO MALTA

THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF FOREIGN CHILDREN IN MALTA

L-Università ta' Malta
Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional He-lth

Kummissarju għat-Tfal
Commissioner for Children

A Passage to Malta
The Health and Wellbeing of Foreign Children in Malta

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This research study has been conducted by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta in collaboration with the Commissioner for Children who commissioned the report.

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to all the children who lost their lives in the struggle for a better life

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN

A child-friendly society is one in which children and families, who are alien to that society, feel part of and thrive in it. This is because by their very nature, the rights of children are all inclusive and, therefore, a society that truly upholds these rights is an open one.

It is significant that when, thirty years ago, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child saw the light of day, the overarching principle of non-discrimination, was enshrined as Article 2, second only to the definition of a child. This calls on State Parties to "respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind...".

The above is of deep and immediate relevance to Malta on two counts. Firstly, Malta is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which our country ratified just one year after its adoption. Secondly, since then Malta has become an increasingly cosmopolitan country with approximately 9,000 children of foreign origin out of a total of 84,000 children aged 0 to 18.

These two simple facts were the bases of my Office's decision to commission the present study, which sets out to investigate rigourously and systematically how well foreign children living in Malta are faring in terms of their objective and subjective physical and socio-emotional health, and the attitudes of Maltese children towards them. The study also proposes public actions that can enhance the wellbeing of these children and their families.

An open and child-friendly country as Malta aspires to be can never be a passive recipient of migratory flows. The physical passage to Malta desired and accomplished by thousands of foreign children and their families needs to be followed by Malta's social and cultural passage by embracing the needs and diversity of these people. May this study and the findings and recommendations it presents be a further step in this passage.

Finally I would like to express my appreciation to Prof. Carmel Cefai and his team from the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health within the University of Malta for their sterling work in planning and conducting this mammoth study and disseminating its findings and conclusions by drafting this document. Heartfelt thanks are due also to my staff at the Office of the Commissioner for Children for liaising with the research team towards the publication of the study.

Pauline Miceli
Commissioner for Children

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objectives

The first decades of the twenty first century are witnessing the transformation of Maltese society as it is increasingly becoming more socially, culturally and linguistically diverse. Recent years have been characterised by large migration flows, with both asylum seekers from North Africa, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as thousands of economic migrants from the EU, Eastern Europe and East Asia amongst others. The number of foreign children in Malta has doubled over the last five scholastic years, constituting about 10% of the present school age population. These rapid developments bring both opportunities and challenges for foreign children and young people as they seek to settle down, make new friends and adapt to this major event in their lives. The aim of this study is to explore the physical and mental health and wellbeing of foreign children living in Malta, as well as their access to services, education and inclusion. More specifically it seeks to examine their physical and mental health, wellbeing and resilience, their access to services, their school engagement, their inclusion in Maltese communities, and what may help to create more accessible, inclusive and resilience-enhancing spaces for foreign children living in Malta. The study also explores children's subjective wellbeing, seeking to capture their voices on their lives as children in Malta, including areas like family, locality, school, friends, economic wellbeing, leisure time, and social inclusion. Another objective of the study is to examine the attitudes of Maltese children themselves towards foreign children living in Malta, including openness and tolerance towards interculturalism and diversity.

Methodology

The focus of the study is children aged 0 to 16 who are either born outside Malta or in Malta to non-Maltese parents (or one parent in the case of single parents) who are currently living in Malta. All foreign children in Malta (and their teachers and parents/carers) who could be identified through schools, residential homes, centres and agencies, were invited to participate. A representative sample of Maltese students in Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools, have also been included in the study. The project consists of four studies with about 2,500 foreign and Maltese children making use of both quantitative and qualitative research designs. The major study explores school age foreign children's education, inclusion, physical health, mental health and resilience, access to services and subjective wellbeing. Information on more than 1000 foreign children aged 3-16 (18% of the number of school age foreign children in Malta), attending State, Church and Independent Schools and Open Centres, was collected through a battery of questionnaires and scales completed by children, parents and/or teachers respectively. The second study was carried out with preschool foreign children (aged 0-3) examining their education, inclusion, physical health and access to services. Information on more than 100 children attending childcare centres was collected through questionnaires completed by their parents and their educators respectively. The third

study consists of a qualitative analysis of foreign children's subjective wellbeing in various aspects of their lives. Five focus groups with foreign Primary and Secondary School children of various nationalities attending State Schools and Open Centres were held, with data analysed thematically. The final study explores the attitudes of Maltese students towards foreign children living in Malta. Questionnaires were completed by 1,360 Primary, Middle and Secondary School students attending State, Church and Independent Schools on issues like social interaction, acculturation expectations, intercultural ideology, levels of tolerance and prejudice, perceived consequences of migration and attitudes towards ethno-cultural groups.

Findings

Families and parents

- Sixty percent of the foreign families live in two main regions in Malta, namely the Northern Harbour and Northern region, with the remaining 40% spread in the other four regions. Half of the respondents live in an area with about an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners and more than 40% live in an environment composed of mostly Maltese people. Only 7% live in an area composed mainly of foreigners.

- Whilst the vast majority of both foreign parents and children do not have an adequate knowledge of Maltese, they have a good knowledge of English. African/ Middle Eastern parents and children however, have a relatively better proficiency in Maltese and less knowledge of English when compared to other nationalities.

- The majority of foreign children come from relatively average to high SES in terms of parental level of education and employment, but parents from Africa/ Middle East have a lower level of education and occupation and 15% face economic difficulties.

- Nearly all participants live in an apartment/house in the community, with only 2% living in Open Centres, the latter being mostly asylum seekers from Africa/Middle East. Most families live in more crowded homes in bigger families than native Maltese, namely two to four members living in residences of two to four rooms. Families from Africa/Middle East are more likely to be living in smaller apartments and with more family members compared to other nationalities.

Educational Engagement and Inclusion

- Teachers reported that the great majority of foreign students (80%+) are highly engaged and included at school. They attend school regularly, are well taken care of, are highly motivated and attentive during lessons, participate actively in the lessons and make good academic progress. They have friends at school and are included by peers in classroom activities and group work. Most of the other students play with foreign students during the break. Primary and female foreign students are more likely to be engaged and included than Secondary and male students.

- Students from low SES and who lack proficiency in English and or Maltese, are less likely to be engaged and included. Students from Africa/Middle East appear to be less cared for, to learn new things, to participate actively in classroom activities, to have friends and to be included in social activities, when compared to peers from other nationalities.

Physical health and access to services

- The vast majority of parents evaluate their children's health as excellent or very good with very low frequency of physical health conditions. However, the percentages are significantly lower amongst children from Africa/Middle East and East Asia – these parents are more likely than the other parents to be worried about their children's health, to report that their children are at risk of being seriously ill, experience pain or are limited by physical illness, and to take their children more frequently to the doctor/health centre. On the other hand, these parents evaluate their children's health as much better now than one year ago more when compared with Western/ European parents.

- Most of the parents have very limited knowledge of the community, educational, social and health services available for foreign children and families in Malta, with least awareness and use of the community and social services. Parents would appreciate more information on the services available.

- A quarter of African/Middle Eastern parents make use of interpreting services in contrast to 5% or less of the other nationalities. Of those who use the interpreting services, most are satisfied or very satisfied.

- The great majority of parents (95%) did not experience any lack of provision of care needed or instances of delayed care. The majority are satisfied with the service provided, including adequate time and attention, communication and availability. More than one third, however, are dissatisfied with the social and community services; these are more likely to be from Africa/Middle East and Asia; the latter are also less satisfied with the services' accessibility, when compared to Westerns/ Europeans.

- Whilst the majority are not concerned about discrimination or lack of sensitivity to family values, around 14% to 20% expressed some concern about discrimination, particularly at the community and health services. Parents from Africa/Middle East are more likely to perceive discrimination and lack of sensitivity to family values and traditions, particularly at the community and social services.

Mental health and resilience

- On the whole foreign children and young people enjoy good mental health and wellbeing, with less than 8% exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, compared to the 10% prevalence in the general population. On the other hand, 14% of participants from Africa/Middle East experience significant social, emotional and behaviour problems.

- Both teachers and parents indicate more behavioural than emotional difficulties. Male students are more likely to exhibit difficulties, particularly behavioural problems, and less prosocial behaviour than females, whilst females have higher levels of emotional difficulties. More difficulties are exhibited by students in State Schools and in Primary Schools and early years, from low SES background and with little/poor knowledge of English and/or Maltese.

- Foreign children and young people appear to enjoy a high level of individual, relational and cultural resilience, with young and female children having higher

levels of resilience in a number of areas.

- East European children enjoy higher individual and relational resilience; children from Africa/Middle East have lower levels of relational resilience but a relatively high level of contextual resilience, particularly spiritual; whilst East Asians have low levels of individual and educational resilience.

- Children whose parents are unemployed, are less resilient in individual and relational skills than peers of employed parents.

Subjective wellbeing (quantitative)

- The vast majority of students live in the same home with their family, most of them with another sibling (students from Africa/Middle East live in bigger families) and are satisfied with the people they live with, feel cared for and safe at home; younger and female students are relatively more satisfied. They agree that parents listen to them and to their views when making decisions about them.

- Most of the children live in two to three bedroom apartments and in homes with two or more bathrooms. Almost half have their own bedroom and the great majority their own bed, but children from Africa/Middle East and East Asia are more likely to share their rooms and their beds.

- The great majority of students are satisfied and get along well with their friends and have enough friends, but one in five do not have sufficient friends. Most of their friends are non-Maltese, but students who are proficient in Maltese are more likely to have Maltese friends. Female and younger students have relatively more supportive friends. A quarter to one half, however, complain about frequent arguments and fighting, particularly in State Schools. Seventeen to 25 % report being victims of physical bullying, social exclusion, and name calling respectively.

- Most of the students are satisfied with their school experience, with the things they learn, and with the other peers in their class. They feel safe at school, believe that their teachers care about them and support them in their learning. Primary School and female students appear to enjoy more positive relationships with their teachers.

- Most students feel safe in their neighbourhood, perceive adults as helpful and think there are enough places to play. Some students, however, do not feel so safe, whilst one in five do not think there are enough places to play and have a good time, particularly in the Harbour regions and Gozo.

- Most families possess the necessary amenities for a good quality of life, but Primary School students from Africa/Middle East are less satisfied with the things they have. The vast majority always have enough food to eat, access to basic necessities such as clothes in good condition, enough money for school activities, internet, sport equipment, and fresh school lunch. A small percentage, however, lack these necessities and they are more likely to come from Africa/Middle East.

- The vast majority of students are satisfied with their free time. Whilst doing homework is a regular feature in their lives, only 10% take extra lessons on a frequent basis. They spend most of their time with their families, doing exercise and on social media/TV, but 40% hardly play or spend time outside.

- The great majority are satisfied with the way they look, their health, their life as a whole, the freedom they have and the way they are listened to by adults, and feel positive about the future.

- Most students have a positive view of Malta, agreeing that adults in Malta care about children, that Malta is a safe place to live, that Maltese adults respect children's rights, and that they know their rights as children in Malta. Close to one third, however, are worried about life in Malta; this may be related to the issues of inclusion, prejudice and uncertainty about the future.

Subjective wellbeing (qualitative)

- Foreign children living in the community perceive their immediate family as their home, representing a 'safe haven' where they feel cared for and protected. On the other hand, children living in Open Centres do not see Malta as their 'home', exhibiting instead a strong sense of identity to their country of origin. They still see Malta, however, as a land of opportunity.

- Students living in the community refer to the Maltese language as a barrier, sometimes interfering with their classroom learning and school activities. On the other hand, asylum seeking children have problems in communicating adequately in English which hamper their access to learning, use of services and social inclusion.

- Most students see school as a place of learning and making friends, but they refer to frequent bullying, with some instances of racial bullying and want more protection from school staff.

- Students living in the community feel relatively safe in their neighbourhood, apart from teenage girls who refer to unwanted attention from adults; on the other hand they complain about noisy and sometimes unfriendly neighbours. Those living in Open Centres express their frustration and sense of helplessness with their poor living conditions, such as poor hygiene, lack of greenery, inadequate food and lack of internet access and would like to relocate to another place.

Early years

- The findings of this part of the study need to be treated with caution due to the small and biased sample, with the majority of participants being European children attending childcare centres, and coming from average to high SES families.

- Most of the parents evaluate their children's health as excellent or very good, with no physical limitations, pain or discomfort. The vast majority of children did not experience any physical health condition, except for a small percentage who experienced physical conditions common at this developmental stage.

- Most of the parents have very limited knowledge of many of the community, educational, social and health services available for children and families in Malta. They appear to be more informed about health and educational services.

- There were hardly any experiences of lack of provision of care or delayed care. The majority are satisfied with the sensitivity shown by the services towards family

values and openness to different cultures, but this is more evident in the education and health services. The great majority did not experience discrimination.

- On the whole parents are satisfied with issues like cost of services, availability in the area, transportation and times of service, but around 20% would like to see an improvement in these areas and about 15% also see language as a barrier to community and social services. Parents would also like more information about the use of services, particularly community and social services.

- According to the childcare educators, the vast majority of the children attending the centres participate actively in the activities and are included by their peers. They attend the centre regularly, appear well cared for, have regular fresh lunch, have the material required for the activities, and participate actively in the activities. They play and work collaboratively and are socially included in their groups. They are also treated equitably by the adults at the centres.

Attitudes of Maltese students

- The study which analyses the attitudes of Maltese Primary and Secondary School students towards foreign children shows overall positive, open and tolerant views towards diversity and interculturalism. A closer look at the data however, suggests that a substantial minority of students are still hesitant or resistant towards integration.

- Maltese students refer to the changing face of 21st century Malta as regions, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, communities, and schools are becoming more diverse and intercultural. One in five students report that there are about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese living in their neighbourhood and in their classrooms. About one half of Maltese students have a number of non-Maltese friends. However, social interactions with foreign children are still limited overall with the majority of Maltese students still spending most of their work and leisure time with native peers.

- The attitudes of Maltese students vary according to nationality, with the majority of students preferring peers from Western Europe, North America and Australia, followed by children from Latin America. On the other hand, children from the Maghreb, Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are least liked. There are mixed views about children from Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union countries and East Asia. Students from Independent Schools and in Primary Schools have more positive views of foreign children; those from Gozo have the least positive views.

- The majority of Maltese children are against the segregation of foreign students and in favour of assimilation and integration of foreign children in Malta. They agree that Maltese people should be more open to: accepting people from different countries to live in Malta; help foreigners keep their culture and should learn about other customs and traditions of foreign people living in Malta. One quarter to one third of students, however, appear to be cautious or against full integration of foreigners in Malta. Positive attitudes are more common in Primary Schools and decrease significantly from Year 6 to Year 10 in Secondary School. Students attending Independent Schools believe more in interculturalism than those in Church Schools, whilst those attending culturally diverse classrooms and who have non-Maltese friends and neighbours have also more positive views. Students

from the different regions of Malta and Gozo believe more in interculturalism than students from the South East region.

- Most of the students (from one half to three quarters) have a tolerant and open approach towards migration, with the majority believing that it is beneficial to have children from different countries attending the same school or living in the area and that foreign children should have equal treatment as Maltese children. On the other hand, a small but substantial percentage (10% to 20%) do not agree with these statements. Female students, Independent School students, students attending culturally mixed classrooms and who have non-Maltese friends, have more positive attitudes towards interculturalism and social equity and are more tolerant of foreign people.

- The majority of Maltese students feel happy in the company of foreigners, and do not believe that Malta is suffering because children from different countries attend Maltese schools and live in Malta. On the other hand, they appear to be more concerned about the negative consequences of migration. Around one third see foreigners as a danger to Maltese culture and traditions and do not feel safe as more foreigners are living in Malta. Primary and Independent School children see more positive and less negative consequences of migration when compared to Middle School and Church School students respectively. Students from culturally diverse classrooms and neigbourhoods entertain more positive views about the consequences of foreigners living in Malta.

Recommendations

On the whole the majority of foreign children in Malta enjoy positive physical and mental health, a high level of resilience and wellbeing, a stable family environment, a good quality of life, positive school experience, and social inclusion at school and in their communities. In some areas they appear to be better off than native Maltese children such as the relatively lower level of social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, less bullying, more participation in physical activity and sports and less time is spent on private tuition. They can thus be a positive influence in the lives of Maltese children, not only in terms of the rich cultural diversity they bring with them, but also in encouraging Maltese peers to adopt healthier lifestyles, to appreciate and take more care of what they have, to protect and promote the Maltese language whilst exploiting local expertise as an international hub for the teaching of English, and to be more understanding neighbours. On the other hand, many foreign children are living in overcrowded apartments and centres, struggling with language barriers, particularly Maltese, experiencing problems with access to some of the services, have few Maltese friends, and have limited open spaces in their community.

The study also shows that the foreign children in Malta cannot be construed as one heterogenous group as there are striking differences, particularly in terms of ethnic groups, with the larger group of economic European and North American migrants masking a strikingly different reality of asylum seeking children from Africa and the Middle East and East Asian children. Children from Africa and the Middle East and to a lesser extent East Asia, appear to be a vulnerable and marginalised group, with relatively high levels of mental health difficulties, economic difficulties, poor housing conditions, language barriers, learning problems at school, poor access and little use of services, and facing prejudice and discrimination in some of the community, social, health and educational services. It is thus indicative that different groups of foreign

children have different needs which need to be addressed accordingly.

The study has also explored the attitudes of Maltese children and young people towards foreign children in Malta, and the traditional dualism of Maltese society emerges in this microstudy of children's world as well. While the majority hold positive views of foreign children and interculturalism, a substantial percentage expressed hesitation and concern about intercultural integration, and whilst they express positive attitudes towards children from Western Europe, North America and Australia, they see children from the Maghreb, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa in a less favourable light.

The following section makes a number of recommendations for action to enhance the wellbeing, quality of life and social inclusion of foreign children in Malta whilst addressing prejudice and discrimination amongst the future Maltese generations. The recommended spaces, systems and services would also help to maximise the benefits of interculturalism for Maltese society as it is becoming more diverse and intercultural.

Healthier physical and social spaces for diverse, intercultural communities

- Provision of safer, child-friendly open spaces where foreign children and young people can go out and enjoy themselves, particularly in the Harbour regions and for those living in the Open Centres. Upgrading of the living conditions for children living in the Open Centres, with possibility of relocating to a more suitable place of residence.

- More residential space for a number of foreign children and families, primarily asylum seekers from Africa/Middle East who are more likely to be living in overcrowded, smaller apartments. This would also avoid the potential development of marginalised ghettos in Malta.

- Shared communal spaces to bring children of different nationalities together, including arts, drama and sports facilities, social networking spaces, afterschool centres, and family resource centres. Schools can also work together with the local community and civic society to organise extra curricular activities after school hours, such as sports, socio-cultural, creativity, as well as language/study/homework activities.

- More opportunities for foreign children in Malta to have a voice, with their ideas taken into consideration in families, communities, schools, services, and NGOs. This may be accompanied by more education and awareness about the rights of foreign children as children living in Malta as well as those of their families. Besides leading to fairness and equity, this would also avoid marginalisation and alienation.

More accessible, sensitive and inclusive services for healthier and resilient children

- Increased awareness of services, particularly community and social services, available for children and families, including provision of user friendly, multiple-language, multimedia information on services in key locations.

- Building capacity and diversity in the services, with more community-based and

accessible services and more culturally sensitive staff, particularly with regards to African/Middle Eastern and East Asian families. This entails staff training in interculturalism and socially inclusive customer care.

- Increasing access to services in the community, such as a one-stop shop where multidisciplinary services across health, education and social services are available in an accessible community location, particularly in asylum seeking communities. Some of the services, including community and social services, may be improved with more time and attention given to foreign families, enhanced communication and language, and more sensitivity to different cultures and family traditions. A more inclusive approach to service delivery would help to address the concerns of African/Middle Eastern and East Asian parents about discrimination and the lack of sensitivity to family values and traditions, particularly in social and community services.

- Children from Africa and the Middle East need more support at family, school and community levels, as they are more at risk of manifesting social, emotional and mental health problems. Psychological support may also need to be provided, through schools and/or community based programmes, to children who may have experienced trauma prior to arriving in Malta. This calls for a broad and multi-disciplinary approach encompassing education, health, and social welfare systems.

- Children facing multiple risks, such as low SES, language barriers, traumatic experiences, social isolation and exclusion, need additional support to build their resilience from an early age. Resilience and social and emotional learning programmes in both formal and non-formal education contexts, need to start from an early age.

A more accessible, inclusive and multilingual educational system

- Schools with a high number of foreign students, particularly asylum seeking ones, would benefit from additional resources to address language issues, teacher training and pedagogical resources and programmes, as well as provision of learning support educators where necessary to facilitate learning and inclusion.

- Possible redistribution of foreign students to reduce the concentration of students, particularly low SES asylum seekers, into particular schools to avoid these becoming marginalised ghettos. Presently the majority of low SES students from asylum seeking families are mostly found in State Schools and particularly in two of the six regional areas where their families live. Such contexts may serve to amplify social inequalities rather than addressing them. The Government may provide more incentives to schools, including non-State Schools, to encourage them to take more low SES foreign students.

- Policy and structures to evaluate previous education to connect the present education with previous education and learning would facilitate a smoother transition from one educational system to another.

- More efforts by schools to engage those who are less likely to participate in the classroom and school activities, particularly students from low SES, students who lack language proficiency in English and/or Maltese and students from Africa/Middle

East. Students from Africa/Middle East in particular may benefit from more support at school such as material support, language support and individual learning programmes building on their previous education and experience. Some of these students may also need tailored psycho-social support in view of their higher rate of emotional and behaviour difficulties.

- Teacher education at both initial and professional learning stages, in inclusive education, cultural diversity and multilingual competence, where educators have the opportunity to explore their own biases and prejudices, develop the competence to teach culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, and support students who experienced trauma and manifest emotional and behaviour difficulties. All educators who are teaching and supporting the education of foreign children but lack the required intercultural and linguistic competences, need to be provided with in-house training. Recruiting educators with a migrant background would also help to provide positive role models for the students.

- Schools need to do more to curb student fighting and peer bullying. Bullying policies in schools need to address specifically discriminatory bullying against minority children including foreign children, whilst at the same time promoting school cultures that enhance respect for diversity, tolerance and inclusion. Foreign students may also be supported to develop more friendships with Maltese peers, including peer mentoring and friendship schemes at school and in the community.

- Tailored career education support for foreign young people residing in Malta. Asylum seekers in particular may have missed years of education, experienced lack of continuity from one educational system to another and faced language barriers. They may thus be provided with affirmative actions to facilitate their access to post-secondary, vocational and tertiary education.

- Proactive engagement with parents of foreign students, including provision of accessible information on school services and support available for children and families as well as community resources, organisation of culturally and linguistically sensitive parental education initiatives, and more choice to parents in selecting the schools for their children.

- Introduce 'multilingualism for all' as a resource for all students in the classroom. This requires that all teachers will have an adequate knowledge of language and language learning and support within a school culture which embraces multilingualism and values the multilingual resources of foreign children.

- Early assessment of the language proficiency of students to identify the need for additional language support in Maltese and/or English as soon as their educational programme (preschool/school) starts. Students in transition from one linguistic culture to another need support to transfer successfully their existing knowledge from one language to another and to learn how to successfully communicate and learn different subjects through the medium of new languages.

- Setting up a national foundation for the promotion of Maltese language and culture similar to those in other countries such as the British Council in the UK and Dante Alighieri Society in Italy.

Removing spaces to come together

- Schools may provide more opportunities for Maltese and non-Maltese students to interact interpersonally and work together on common tasks and goals in an atmosphere of mutual respect. More school related initiatives and projects organised together by Maltese and foreign students, projects with other schools and with schools in other countries, particularly those countries perceived negatively, as well as peer mentoring and befriending schemes, would be useful in this regard.

- All students need to have opportunities to reflect on their concerns and attitudes towards non-Maltese people in a safe environment where they can also learn to appreciate the dignity of others and recognize the injustice of discrimination. The educators themselves as well as youth organisations and community leaders and parents of Maltese children, need also to be part of a national initiative to address this issue.

- School and community based activities to encourage Maltese parents and families to value diversity and appreciate its benefits, including activities for and by Maltese and foreign parents in schools and intercultural community hubs, where Maltese and foreign families, children and young people can come together and spend quality time together.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Malta has historically been at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia, with a mixture of people, cultures and languages over the centuries, particularly in the last 1000 years. It has been an attractive destination for sea traders, military empires, holiday makers and more recently foreign workers and migrants. The first decades of the 21st century have been characterised by large migration flows in Europe and the Mediterranean, particularly from Africa and the Middle East towards Europe. Malta has been at the very heart of this movement by virtue of its geographical position as well as a result of its political and economic situations.

Malta is in the middle of the three Mediterranean refugee routes from North Africa to Europe, resulting in an increasing number of migrants in Malta over the past 20 years. Recently Malta has also been experiencing a significant economic boom, with an increasing number of foreign workers taking up opportunities of work offered in Malta. Being a Member State (MS) of the European Union (EU) has made it easier for workers from Italy, Spain, Bulgaria, Romania and other MS hit by the economic recession to find work in Malta. In 2017 the population increased by +33 per 1000 residents, more than 15 times the rate in the EU (+2.1), bringing the population up to 475,700 (NSO, 2018a).

Migration has become the main driver pushing up Malta's population figures, with the number of non-Maltese living in Malta having more than doubled over the last decade, constituting more than 12% of the total population. The number of foreigners settling in Malta is about triple the number of births. The number of foreign workers in Malta in 2017 was about 43,000, the majority from EU MS (Italy, UK, Bulgaria). In 2018, 27,238 non EU nationals were registered to live in Malta, with most coming from North and sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Russia, and the Philippines (NSO, 2018a). The projected population change rates in 2018 includes 10 live births average per day, 10 deaths average per day, and 3 migrants average per day (NSO, 2016).

These increasing population changes have brought both opportunities and challenges for the country, with migrants contributing to the country's economy and making Malta a more diverse, intercultural and cosmopolitan country. One of the main concerns of this movement of people, both from the north and from the south, however, has been the welfare of children and young people who in many instances have little say in what is happening in their lives in such circumstances. There are presently around 9,000 foreign children living in Malta, and their numbers have doubled over the last five scholastic years, constituting 9.7% of the present school age population (NSO, 2018b). Whilst various studies have underlined the academic, social and emotional resilience of such children (OECD, 2018), children living in a different country may face a number of challenges in their education, wellbeing and mental health, including linguistic

and cultural barriers, lack of access to educational, psychological, social and medical services, difficulties in social inclusion and issues in identity formation, amongst others. They may also be at heightened risk for certain mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety, particularly if not provided with adequate and timely support (OECD, 2018). A recent report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2019) reported that refugees and low skilled migrants from outside the EU are at risk of poverty in Malta, while a study on the subjective wellbeing of children in Malta found that children not born in Malta were significantly more materially deprived than native ones (Rees, 2017).

In view of these rapid changes in the Maltese population and the challenges foreign children and young people may be facing in settling down and becoming integrated in Malta, the Office of the Commissioner for Children and the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, sought to identify the educational, social and emotional needs of foreign children and young people living in Malta and consequently the drawing up of a policy on how such needs may be adequately addressed. Although a small number of small scale studies have been undertaken on various aspects of the development of such children in Malta, mainly related to their education, there was a lack of a large scale comprehensive study examining the wellbeing, resilience, inclusion and education of all foreign children and young people living in Malta, whether migrant children from Africa and the Middle East, children from other EU countries such as Italy and UK as well as children of workers from Eastern Europe, Russia and other parts of the world such as the Philippines, China and India.

The aim of the study is to map the physical and mental health of foreign children in Malta, including their wellbeing and resilience, as well as their education, inclusion and other aspects of their lives. More specifically the study seeks to investigate the level of physical and mental health, wellbeing and resilience of foreign children in Malta, and how this varies by individual and contextual factors as well as the factors related to positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience of such children. It examines also their access to services and their inclusion in Maltese systems and communities and what may help to create more accessible, inclusive and resilience-enhancing spaces for foreign children in Malta. The study explores also children's subjective wellbeing by seeking to capture children's own voices about their wellbeing, education, friends, economic wellbeing, leisure time, social inclusion, and what they think of their lives as children living in Malta. Another objective of the study was to examine the attitudes of Maltese children themselves towards foreign children living in Malta and such aspects as openness and tolerance towards interculturalism and diversity.

1.2 Methodology

This study focuses on the health and wellbeing of children aged 0 to 16 who are either born outside Malta or in Malta to non-Maltese parents (or one parent in the case of single parents) and are currently living in Malta[1]. All foreign children in Malta (and their teachers and parents/carers) who could be identified through schools, homes, centres and agencies, were invited to participate. This project consists of four main studies as follows[2]:

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[1] The term 'children' used in this study refers to children and young people 0 to 18. The term 'foreign' refers to children and young people born outside Malta or in Malta to non-Maltese parents and includes migrant, refugee and asylum seeking children and young people.

[2] Another study on the subjective wellbeing of foreign students in post-secondary education (16-18 years) could not be completed due to the very low response rate by the students.

- Study 1: Study carried out with school age foreign children (Kindergarten - Form 5) examining their education, inclusion and physical health, mental health and resilience, access to services, and their subjective wellbeing. Information on more than 1000 foreign children aged 3-16 (18% of the number of school age foreign children in Malta) attending State, Church and Independent Schools and Open Centres was collected through a battery of questionnaires or scales completed by children, parents and/or teachers respectively. Data has been analysed quantitatively.

- Study 2: Study carried out with young foreign children (0-3 years) examining their education, inclusion, physical health and access to services. Information on more than 100 children attending childcare centres was collected through questionnaires completed by their parents and their centre carers respectively. Data has been analysed quantitatively.

- Study 3: Qualitative study on children's subjective wellbeing in various aspects of their lives. Five focus groups with Primary and Secondary School foreign children of various nationalities attending State Schools and Open Centres were held, with data analysed thematically.

- Study 4: Study on the attitudes of Maltese students towards foreign children living in Malta. 1,360 Primary, Middle and Secondary School students attending State, Church and Independent Schools completed a questionnaire on issues like social interaction, acculturation expectations, intercultural ideology, levels of tolerance and prejudice, perceived consequences of migration and attitudes towards ethno-cultural groups. Data has been analysed quantitatively.

1.3 Outline of Report

This report consists of 10 chapters describing the various studies carried out in this project. Chapter 2 presents the overall methodology of the quantitative study carried out with foreign children living in Malta aged 0 to 16. The following chapters present the findings on different aspects of the lives of school age foreign children, including their education, health, access to services, mental health, resilience and subjective wellbeing. Chapter 3 presents the findings on the educational engagement and inclusion of school age children, with data collected from teachers. Chapter 4 describes the physical health of school age children and their access to community, health, educational and social services, with data collected from parents. Chapter 5 explores the mental health and resilience of school age children with data collected from children themselves as well as their teachers and parents. Chapters 6 and 7 present the findings of two studies on the subjective wellbeing of foreign children, making use of two international research tools, one quantitative (Chapter 6) and one qualitative (Chapter 7), developed to capture children's own voices on various aspects of their lives. Chapter 8 focuses on the education, inclusion, physical health and access to services of very young children (0-3 years) and their families, with data obtained from parents and childcare centre carers. In Chapter 9 we present the findings of the attitudes of native Maltese students towards their foreign peers. Chapter 10 presents an overview of the main findings and conclusions of the study and makes a number of recommendations on how the quality of life of foreign children living in Malta, in its various facets, may be improved.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY OF QUANTITATIVE STUDY WITH FOREIGN CHILDREN

2.1 Sample school age children

In 2016-2017, the scholastic year of data collection of the main quantitative study, 5,838 foreign students were identified from statistics provided by the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability at the Ministry of Education and Employment. State Schools had 3,648 students of 105 different and 34 mixed nationalities, with the highest student populations being from Italy, UK, Libya, Bulgaria and Syria respectively. Church Schools had 99 students from 36 countries with the highest student populations from the UK, Italy, Nigeria, Germany and Bulgaria respectively. Independent Schools had 2,091 students of 81 different and 25 mixed nationalities with the highest student populations from Libya, Italy, Russia, UK and Sweden respectively (Table 2.1). Some areas and respective schools in Malta have a high preponderance of foreign children, particularly in the north of Malta (St Paul's Bay/Buġibba/Qawra, Mellieħa, Mosta), the northern harbour region (Msida, Birkirkara, Sliema, Pembroke, Ħamrun) and the South Eastern region (Marsascala, Żejtun, Birżebbuġia). In some areas between 50% and 70% of the school population is made up of foreign children, with some schools having as many as 38 different nationalities of students.

Table 2.1 Population of foreign students by school sector and nationality (2016/17)

School Sector	Total no of foreign students	No of nationalities	Highest student populations by nationality (descending order)
State Schools (Primary and Secondary)	3,648	105 nationalities and 34 mixed nationalities	Italy, UK, Libya, Bulgaria, Syria
Church Schools (Primary and Secondary)	99	36 nationalities	UK, Italy, Nigeria, Germany, Bulgaria
Independent Schools (Primary and Secondary)	2,091	81 nationalities and 25 mixed nationalities	Libya, Italy, Russia, UK, Sweden

All kindergarten centres, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools (and Migrant Learners' Unit) (State/non- State, Malta/Gozo) were invited to participate in the study. Out of 144

schools/centres, 14 had no foreign students whilst another 64, including a number with a considerable number of foreign children, declined to participate or did not get parental consent. The final sample of participating schools consisted of 64 schools and centres, namely 48 kindergarten centres and Primary Schools; 13 Middle/ Secondary Schools; 2 Open Centres and 1 Induction Centre. The total number of foreign children identified in the 64 participating schools and centres amounted to 2,332.

Based on the obtained parental consent forms, 547 student, 1,659 parent and 1,451 teacher questionnaires were delivered in schools. The returned questionnaires included 457 student questionnaires (84% response rate), 860 parents' questionnaires (52% response rate) and 889 teachers' questionnaires (61% response rate). In total data was obtained on 1,078 different children, going down to 1,022 following the database cleaning. This constituted 18% of the total registered school age foreign children in Malta at the time of data collection and is broadly representative of the total population of foreign students in terms of age, school sector and nationality. The exact number of participants varies by respondents and type of questionnaire, but on the whole there were slightly more male than female students (52%:48%), the majority attended Primary School (5 - 10 years) (64.7%) followed by Secondary School (11 - 16 years) (20.1%) and kindergarten (3 - 4 years) (15.2%). The participants come from 54 different countries from various parts of the world, but more than two thirds were Westerns/ European, with 43.9% coming from West Europe/North America, 29.7% from Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union countries, 20.3% from Africa and the Middle East and 6% from East Asian countries[3] (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2. Students by nationality (regrouped)

Nationality		
	N	%
Western	374	43.9%
Eastern	253	29.7%
Africa/M.East	173	20.3%
East Asia	51	6.0%
Total	851	100.0%

[3] The list of students' countries of origin was first grouped according to 10 categories consisting of Western Europe (such as Italy, UK, France, Germany), Eastern Europe (such as Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria), sub-Saharan Africa (such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia), Maghreb countries (such as Tunisia, Libya), Middle East (such as Syria, Lebanon, Turkey), ex-Soviet Union countries (such as Russia, Ukraine), Eastern Asiatic countries (such as Philippines, Korea, China, Thailand), Australia, North American countries (Canada, USA, Mexico) and Latin-American countries (such as Brazil, Argentina). These were then regrouped into four major categories according to the number of participants in the study, namely Western (including Western Europe and a small number of participants from North America), Eastern (including Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union countries), Africa/Middle East (including Maghreb, Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa) and East Asia. Latin-America and Australia were left out because of the very low number of participants.

Most of the students attend State Schools (67%) followed by Independent (30%) and Church Schools (3%) respectively. Slightly more than one third of the students attend schools in the Northern Harbour region followed by the Northern (27%) and South Eastern (16%) regions; similarly most students live in the Northern Harbour (32%) and Northern (30%) regions, while another 16% live in the South Eastern region. Less than 10% live in any of the other three regions, with Gozo having the lowest number of foreign children (7%) (Tables 2.3 - 2.4). The great majority of participants (86%) live in a family with two (different gender) parents (7% with a single mother), with 96% of the parents being the biological parents.

Table 2.3. Students by school sector

School Type		
	N	%
State	681	67.1%
Church	28	2.8%
Independent	306	30.1%
Total	1015	100%

Table 2.4. Students by school district and home district

	School district		Home district	
	N	%	N	%
Southern Harbour	105	11%	52	6.8%
Northern Harbour	331	34.7%	246	31.9%
South Eastern	155	16.3%	125	16.2%
Western	54	5.7%	63	8.2%
Northern	257	27%	233	30.3%
Gozo & Comino	51	5.4%	51	6.6%
Total	953	100%	770	100%

The most common home language of the participants is English (18%) followed by Italian (9%) and Arabic (6%). Only 4% speak Maltese as their main home language, whilst 21% speak another language besides Maltese, English, Italian and Arabic. Only 28% of students have an adequate or better knowledge of Maltese; but 47% of African/Middle

Eastern participants have an adequate knowledge of Maltese or better in comparison with Western students (19%), with East European and East Asian students in between (27% - 29%). On the other hand, the great majority (80%) have adequate or better proficiency in English; the least proficient are children from Africa/Middle East (58%) in comparison to 84 - 91% amongst the other nationalities (Tables 2.5 - 2.7). This reflects the parents' own proficiency in Maltese (21%), but noting that the parents had better proficiency in English (89%) than their children. Similar to their children, parents from Africa/Middle East have better proficiency in Maltese (59%) when compared to the others (39% of Asians, 11% of Westerns and 8% of Eastern Europeans). On the other hand, whilst the vast majority of Western, Eastern and Asian (92 - 98%) parents, have an adequate proficiency of English or better, this goes down to 71% in the case of African/Middle Eastern parents (Tables 2.8 - 2.9).

Table 2.5 Students' Language Proficiency in Maltese and in English

Maltese		
	N	%
No knowledge	290	40.9%
Poor	221	31.2%
Adequate	126	17.8%
Very good	58	8.2%
Excellent	14	2%
Total	709	100%
English		
	N	%
No knowledge	25	3.4%
Poor	118	16.3%
Adequate	209	28.8%
Very good	231	31.8%
Excellent	143	19.7%
Total	726	100%

Table 2.6 Students‘ proficiency in Maltese by country of origin

Language Proficiency in Maltese (Students)								
			No Knowledge	Poor	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	150	74	34	16	3	277
		%	54.2%	26.7%	12.3%	5.8%	1.1%	100.0%
	Eastern	N	56	56	34	7	1	154
		%	36.4%	36.4%	22.1%	4.5%	0.6%	100.0%
	Africa / M. East	N	28	27	28	18	3	104
		%	26.9%	26.0%	26.9%	17.3%	2.9%	100.0%
	East Asia	N	14	11	7	3	0	35
		%	40.0%	31.4%	20.0%	8.6%	0.0%	100.0%

Note: p<0.001

Table 2.7 Students’ proficiency in English by country of origin

Language Proficiency in English (Students)								
			No Knowledge	Poor	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	7	40	71	92	77	287
		%	2.4%	13.9%	24.7%	32.1%	26.8%	100.0%
	Eastern	N	1	20	57	56	22	156
		%	0.6%	12.8%	36.5%	35.9%	14.1%	100.0%
	Africa / M. East	N	13	31	24	30	7	105
		%	12.4%	29.5	22.9%	28.6%	6.7%	100.0%
	East Asia	N	0	3	13	12	7	35
		%	0.0%	8.6%	37.1%	34.3%	20.0%	100.0%

Note: p<0.001

Table 2.8 Parents' proficiency in English by country of origin

Parent English Proficiency								
			No Knowledge	Poor	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	6	19	61	92	123	301
		%	2.0%	6.3%	20.3%	30.6%	40.9%	100%
	Eastern	N	-	8	29	103	60	200
		%	-	4.0%	14.5%	51.5%	30%	100%
	Africa/M. East	N	13	23	38	29	22	125
		%	10.4%	18.4%	30.4%	23.2%	17.6%	100.0%
	East Asia	N	0	1	5	20	19	45
		%	2.8%	7.6%	19.8%	36.4%	33.4%	100.0%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 2.9 Parents' proficiency in Maltese by country of origin

Parent Maltese Proficiency								
			No Knowledge	Poor	Adequate	Very good	Excellent	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	162	104	20	8	5	299
		%	54.2%	34.8%	6.7%	2.7%	1.7%	100%
	Eastern	N	92	90	12	3	-	197
		%	46.7%	45.7%	6.1%	1.5%	-	100%
	Africa/M. East	N	17	33	38	22	12	122
		%	13.9%	27%	31.1%	18%	9.8%	100.0%
	East Asia	N	13	15	12	3	2	45
		%	28.9%	33.3%	26.7%	6.7%	4.4%	100.0%

Note: $p<0.001$

Almost half of the parents (49%) work full-time, followed by full-time homemakers (14%), self-employed (13%) and part-time employment (11%); only 9% are unemployed. Forty-seven percent of their partners work full-time as well, followed by self employed and homemakers (13%); only 10% are unemployed. Forty-four percent of the parents work at professional or administrative levels, but 23% are skilled or semi-skilled/unskilled. Parents from Africa/Middle East are more likely to be unemployed and engaged in unskilled jobs and less likely to work in administrative and professional posts when compared to parents of other nationalities (Tables 2.10 - 2.13).

Table 2.10 Parents' work status

Work Status		
	N	%
Full-time employee	347	48.7%
Part-time employee	75	10.5%
Self-employed	94	13.2%
Unemployed	63	8.8%
Full-time homemaker	99	13.9%
Retired	6	0.8%
Student	10	1.4%
Other	12	1.7%
Don't know	6	0.8%
Total	712	100%

Table 2.11 Parents' type of work

Type of Work		
	N	%
Unskilled	65	12%
Skilled/semi-skilled	60	11%
Executive/clerical work	49	9%
Administrative/managerial	142	26.2%
Professional	98	18%
Not currently employed	27	5%
Other	97	17.9%
Don't know	5	0.9%
Total	543	100%

Table 2.12 Parents' work status by country of origin

Work status						
			Active	Unemployed	Homemaker	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	220	20	46	286
		%	76.9%	7.0%	16.1%	100%
	Eastern	N	172	9	18	99
		%	86.4%	4.5%	9.0%	100%
	Africa/M. East	N	60	29	29	118
		%	50.8%	24.6%	24.6%	100%
	East Asia	N	43	2	1	46
		%	93.5%	4.3%	2.2%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 2.13 Parental work type by country of origin

Work status							
		Unskilled	Skilled/ Semi-skilled	Executive/ Clerical Work	Administrative/ Managerial	Professional	Total
Western	N	26	19	25	83	50	203
	%	12.8%	9.4%	12.3%	40.9%	24.6%	100%
Eastern	N	17	32	21	30	28	128
	%	13.3%	25.0%	16.4%	23.4%	21.9%	100%
Africa/ M. East	N	16	6	2	14	6	44
	%	36.4%	13.6%	4.5%	31.8%	13.6%	100%
East Asia	N	4	1	-	9	9	23
	%	17.4%	4.3%	-	39.1%	39.1%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Fifty pecent of the parents completed university education whilst another 14% completed college or technical education. About 10% did not complete Secondary education. Parents from Africa/Middle East have a lower level of education when compared with the other parents (Tables 2.14 - 2.15).

Table 2.14 Parents' level of education

Parent Educational Level		
	N	%
No schooling	6	.9
Some grade/Primary School	21	3.0
Completed grade/Primary School	9	1.3
Some high/Secondary School	31	4.4
Completed high/Secondary School	149	21.3
Some technical/community college	29	4.2
Completed technical/community college	95	13.6
University	352	50.4
Don't know	6	.9
Total	698	100.0

Table 2.15 Parental education level by country of origin

			Parental educational level			
			Low level of education	Middle level of education	High level of education	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	17	118	160	95
		%	5.8%	40.0%	54.2%	100%
	Eastern	N	5	102	94	201
		%	2.5%	50.7%	46.8%	100%
	Africa/M. East	N	43	30	51	124
		%	34.7%	24.2%	41.1%	100%
	East Asia	N	1	13	32	46
		%	2.2%	28.3%	69.6%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

2.2 Sample childcare centres (aged 0-3)

All the 109 registered childcare centres in Malta and Gozo were invited to participate in the study and were requested to provide the number of foreign children presently attending childcare. Twenty three centres replied that they did not have any foreign children at the time and were thus excluded from the study. Of the remaining 86 centres 37 accepted to participate, 19 declined to participate, whereas 30 did not respond despite various reminders. Out of the 37 participating centres, 10 did not return the completed questionnaires. The majority of the participating centres are private (19) followed by State (7) and Church (1). More than half of the centres are in the Northern Harbour region, with no centres in Gozo. Out of the 798 foreign children attending the registered childcare centres in Malta and Gozo, 114 questionnaires were returned by carers/coordinators and 105 by parents. Information was provided on 125 different children from parents and/or centre carers, giving an overall response rate of 16%.

Sixty-nine children are female (55.2%) whilst 56 (44.8%) are male. The age of children ranges from under one year (7%) to three years (26%), with most children being two years old (41%) (Table 2.16). The majority of the children attend private childcare centres (71%) followed by State subsidised centres (19%) and Church centres (8%). The children come from 27 different countries from various parts of the world, but the vast majority were Europeans, with 49% coming from Western, 32% from Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union countries, and 10% from East Asian countries. Only nine children were from Africa/Middle East and this reflects the high levels of education and profession of the parent participants mentioned earlier; it also partly explains the type of childcare centres the children attended, mostly being private centres (70%)[4].

[4] *The great majority of childcare centres operate under the Government scheme of free childcare for working parents or parents who are continuing their studies.*

Table 2.16 Childcare centres participants by age

	N	%
0-11 Months	9	7.2%
1 year	33	26.4%
2 years	51	40.8%
3 years	32	25.6%
Total	125	100%

Almost half of the children live in the Northern Harbour region (47%), followed by the Northern (23%) and South Eastern (15%) respectively. The most commonly used language by the children is English (44%) followed by Italian (20%). Only 5% speak Maltese as the main language, while 54% speak another language besides Maltese, English, Italian and Arabic. Only 14% have an adequate or good knowledge of Maltese. On the other hand 77% have adequate or better proficiency in English. This reflects the parents' own proficiency in Maltese and English (11% adequate to excellent in Maltese; 97% in English) (Tables 2.17 - 2.18).

Table 2.17 Children's language proficiency in Maltese and English (early years)

Language Proficiency in Maltese (Students)		
	N	%
No knowledge	36	49.3
Poor	27	37.0
Adequate	9	12.3
Very good	1	1.4
Total	73	100.0
Language Proficiency in English (Students)		
	N	%
No knowledge	6	7.3
Poor	12	14.6
Adequate	31	37.8
Very good	20	24.4
Excellent	13	15.9
Total	82	100.0

Table 2.18 Parents' language proficiency in Maltese and in English (early years)

Parents' language proficiency in Maltese		
	N	%
No knowledge	52	51.5%
Poor	38	37.6%
Adequate	6	5.9%
Very good	1	1%
Excellent	4	4%
Total	101	100%
Parents' language proficiency in English		
	N	%
No knowledge	1	1%
Poor	2	1.9%
Adequate	18	17.3%
Very good	38	36.5%
Excellent	45	43.3%
Total	104	100%

Ninety-one percent of the children live in a family with two parents (different gender), 7% with a single mother, with 95% of the parents being the biological parents. Most of the parents work full-time, whilst only 1.9% are unemployed (Table 2.19). 65% of their partners work full-time as well, followed by self-employed (16%), part-time work (7%) and homemaker (4%); only 2% are unemployed. Slightly more than half of the parents work at a professional or administrative level while one fourth are employed as executive/clerical; only 16% are skilled or semi-skilled/unskilled. More than two thirds completed tertiary education or college education whilst less than 10% did not complete Secondary education (Table 2.20).

Table 2.19 Parents' work status (early years)

	N	%
Full-time employee	60	57.1%
Part-time employee	15	14.3%
Self-employed	12	11.4%
Unemployed	2	1.9%
Full-time homemaker	12	11.4%
Retired	1	1%
Student	2	1.9%
Don't know	1	1%
Total	105	100%

Table 2.20 Parents' educational level (early years)

	N	%
Completed grade/Primary School	2	1.9%
Some high/Secondary School	6	5.7%
Completed high/Secondary School	23	21.9%
Some technical/community college	2	1.9%
Completed technical/community college	12	11.4%
University	60	57.1%
Total	105	100%

2.3 Instruments

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997). The SDQ is a brief questionnaire on children's mental health completed by teachers, parents and students (11-16 years), with measures of children's internalised behaviour, externalised behaviour and prosocial behaviour. The Maltese SDQ has correlation coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.89 (teachers) and from 0.71 to 0.83 (parents) on the five subscales, suggesting a satisfactory level of construct validity, whilst the Cronbach's Alpha assessing test-retest reliability ranged from 0.67 to 0.92 for individual items, and from 0.75 to 0.89 for the five subscales, suggesting satisfactory reliability at both individual and subscale levels (Cefai, Camilleri, Cooper & Said, 2011). Analysis of the local data, however, supported a three factor model, namely internalised behaviour, externalised behaviour and prosocial behavior (Cefai, Camilleri, Cooper & Said, 2011), and the SDQ scores in this study were analysed according to the three factor model.

Child and Youth Resilience Measure (Child & Youth versions) (CYRM-28, Resilience Research Centre, 2009). The CYRM is completed by children from 8 years onwards to assess their individual, relational, communal and cultural resources that may bolster their resilience. It consists of three main subscales with each subscale including a number of domains, namely Individual Subscale (Personal skills, Peer support, Social skills); Caregiver Subscale (physical, psychosocial); and Context Subscale (Spiritual, Educational, Cultural). Questions are answered using a five-point Likert scale. The CYRM has good reliability, specifically in the subscales of the individual (Cronbach's alpha 0.80), relational (Cronbach's alpha 0.83), and contextual (Cronbach's alpha 0.79) (Ungar et a.l, 2008). The measure was piloted with a small number of children in English and Maltese. The reliability of the instrument with the Maltese sample, however, is substantially lower when compared with the international version, with some of the subscales being unreliable. The individual subscale's cronbach's alpha is 0.715, relational 0.665 (physical subscale not reliable), and contextual 0.629 (with only spiritual subscale being reliable). This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the findings, particularly in relation to the components of the three subscales.

Subjective wellbeing Questionnaire (Primary & Secondary versions) (Rees & Main, 2015). This was completed by children aged eight and above. Two versions of the questionnaire were developed, one for primary and one for Secondary School students, exploring the same issues, but with some variations reflecting the children's developmental stage. The questionnaires explore such topics as home and people children live with, money and possessions, friends, locality, school and bullying, use of time, and views about themselves, their life and their future, including living in Malta. Three types of scales were used to measure each aspect of children's lives, namely, agreement (five point unipolar agreement scale), satisfaction (10 point scale), and frequency (of activities in last week, month, year). In the Primary School age version, a scale of five emoticons was used for the satisfaction items. The questionnaires have been piloted with focus groups with thousands of children (Rees and Main, 2015); it was also translated in Maltese making use of a backward and forward procedure, piloted with focus groups, and amended accordingly (Cefai and Galea, 2016).

Educational engagement questionnaire. A brief questionnaire was developed to examine the children's academic engagement and learning, behaviour, relationships and inclusion at school. It consists of 30 items in two main sections, one on the child's active engagement and behaviour at school, and the other on the extent to which the child is academically and socially included by both teachers and peers at school. The response rates consist of

a four Likert scale from always to rarely. Completed by classroom teachers (Primary) and main subject/form teachers (Secondary) of the identified students. The questionnaire was piloted with a small number of teachers. Cronbach's alpha (0.949) indicates very good internal consistency between the 30 items, while a correlation matrix showed that all pair-wise correlation coefficients are positive and high. Cronbach's alphas for the two subscales (Section A, active engagement=0.926; Section B, inclusion =0.904) also show very good consistency between the items in each respective part. A simplified version consisting of 15 items was used with children in childcare centres.

Access to Services Questionnaire. A questionnaire completed by parents exploring their and their children's access to educational, social, health and community services, including use of services, culture sensitivity, difficulties in accessing the services, and satisfaction with use of services. Some sections of this questionnaire were adapted from a questionnaire which was used in a previous study carried out with refugees in Malta (Aditus/UNHCR, 2013). The questionnaire was piloted with a small number of parents.

Child Health Questionnaire. A brief questionnaire was completed by parents regarding their children's physical health, including any chronic conditions, mental health, and disability. Some sections of the questionnaire were adapted from the questionnaire used in a previous study with refugees in Malta (Aditus/UNHCR, 2013). The questionnaire was piloted with a small number of parents.

The questionnaires and scales completed by children and parents were translated into six languages namely Maltese and English as well the four other main languages of the participants: Arabic, Russian, Serbian and Italian. The engagement questionnaire was completed in English by teachers and childcare centre carers. Tools which had not yet been standardised were piloted with a small number of children, parents and teachers. The translated instruments were also piloted with parents and students.

2.4 Data collection and analysis

Data collection was carried out primarily through and in schools and centres following ethical approval and participants' consent. Parental consent forms were distributed to participating schools and centres; research packs were then prepared based on the number of signed consent forms obtained from each school or centre. In the case of school age children each pack consisted of a Teacher Pack (SDQ teacher version, Engagement questionnaire), Student Pack (SDQ student version, Secondary Schools, Resilience Scale, Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire) and Parent Pack (SDQ parents version, Health questionnaire, Access to Services questionnaire). A Carer Pack (Engagement Questionnaire) and Parent Pack (Health questionnaire, Access to Services questionnaire) were used in the case of childcare centres. The language of the questionnaires in the parents' packs was prepared according to the nationality and preference of the parent. Student questionnaires were administered in class by school staff (usually a teacher or an Assistant Head) or by the research team.

Data analysis was carried out using different statistical tests, namely chi-square test, t-test, ANOVA, correlation and linear regression. Descriptive statistics of each variable were also computed (frequencies, means and standard deviation). ANOVA and t-test were applied to compare mean scores on the SDQ, the CYRM scales, the Engagement questionnaires, and results by socio-demographic variables, namely gender, school level/age, country of origin, school type, school sector, and parents' work status and educational level. Chi-square test was used to test the associations between socio-

demographic variables and items on the Engagement questionnaire, Subjective Well-being questionnaire and the Health questionnaire. Pearson's correlation was employed to investigate the association between different pairs of variables, namely between SES and SDQ, Engagement questionnaire and Health questionnaire. Linear regression was similarly computed to determine the relationship between SES and SDQ and Engagement questionnaire. To obtain a detailed pattern of the characteristics of children's country of origin, further analysis was carried out between various variables and country of origin. For all tests, a 0.05 level of significance was employed.

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

A total of 776 teachers completed the Student Engagement questionnaire, most of them (60%) from State Schools, 36% from Independent Schools and only 4% from Church Schools. Most of the students are in kindergarten and Primary School (29% and 58% respectively) whilst 13% are of Secondary School age. Fifty-four percent of the students are males and 47% females. Three fourths of the students are from Europe/ North America (47% Western and 27% Eastern Europe) followed by 20% from Africa/ Middle East and 6% from East Asia.

3.1 Active engagement in the classroom

Table 3.1 shows that with the exception of 'takes intiative in some activities' all mean rating scores exceed three indicating that on average the occurrence of each statement was somewhere between 'most of the time' and 'always'. The teachers reported that the vast majority of students are happy to be part of the classroom community (97%), attend school regularly (97%), are well groomed and cared for (95%), are awake during lessons (94%), are highly motivated to learn (92%), enjoy learning activities (93%), are attentive during lessons (85%), participate actively in lessons (84%) and play with others during their break (93%). On the other hand, about 15% are not regularly attentive during their lessons, 16% do not participate regularly in lessons, while 6% are often tired and sleepy during lessons and another 15% are occasionally tired. The great majority of students make good academic progress (83%) and complete set tasks (86%) without much help (80%). However, 17% have problems in academic progress, 11% have problems in completing set tasks and 21% need help in completing tasks (Table 3.2).

Whilst about three fourths of students ask teachers for help when needed, one fourth do so only occasionally or not at all. The great majority of students try hard and do not give up but about 22% have problems in this area. Whilst more than two thirds take initiative in activities, close to one third only do so occasionally or rarely; similarly whilst close to three fourths participate actively in school and extracurricular activities, one fourth only do so occasionally or rarely. The great majority of students work collaboratively and engage in learning conversations with peers during lessons but a substantial 16% - 17% do not (Table 3.2).

Table 3.1 Mean scores of students' engagement

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Seems happy to be part of the class	3.56	0.585
Attends school regularly	3.73	0.557
Appears well groomed and cared for	3.73	0.581
Likes to learn new things	3.55	0.658
Enjoys/has fun during learning activities	3.58	0.635
Plays with others during the break	3.64	0.673
Is attentive during learning activities	3.31	0.784
Is fresh and lively during learning activities	3.71	0.661
Participates actively in the learning activities	3.27	0.784
Makes good progress in academic learning	3.24	0.789
Completes set tasks	3.42	0.732
Completes tasks without much help	3.13	0.862
Asks for help when needed	3.11	0.913
Tries hard and does not give up easily on tasks	3.11	0.894
Works collaboratively with peers during learning activities	3.26	0.829
Engages in conversations with peers	3.29	0.868
Takes initiative in some activities	2.98	0.945
Participates actively in school activities and extra-curricular activities	3.03	0.961

Table 3.2 Foreign students' active engagement

		Seems happy to be part of the class	Attends school regularly	Appears well groomed and cared for	Likes to learn new things	Enjoys learning activities	Child plays with others during breaks
Rarely	N	5	9	7	5	5	17
	%	0.6%	2.6%	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%	2.2%
Occasionally	N	22	17	34	57	47	34
	%	2.8%	4.4%	4.4%	7.4%	6.1%	4.4%
Most of the time	N	281	147	118	216	213	162
	%	36.4%	19.3%	15.2%	27.9%	27.5%	21.0%
Always	N	465	603	617	497	510	559
	%	60.2%	73.7%	79.5%	64.1%	65.8%	72.4%
Total	N	773	776	776	775	775	772
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Child is attentive during learning activities	Child is tired and sleepy during learning activities	Child participates actively in the learning activities	Child makes good progress in academic learning	Child completes set tasks	Child completes tasks without much help
Rarely	N	18	614	18	20	16	43
	%	2.5%	79.4%	2.3%	2.6%	2.1%	5.6%
Occasionally	N	98	116	106	109	65	115
	%	12.6%	15.0%	13.7%	14.2%	8.4%	14.9%
Most of the time	N	283	20	294	306	270	316
	%	36.5%	2.6%	38.1%	39.8%	34.8%	40.8%
Always	N	375	23	353	333	424	300
	%	48.4%	3.0%	45.8%	43.4%	54.7%	38.8%
Total	N	775	773	771	768	775	774
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Child asks for help when needed	Child tries hard and does not give up easily on tasks	Child works collaboratively with peers during learning activities	Child engages in conversations with peers	Child takes initiative in some activities	Child participates actively in school activities and extra curricular activities
Rarely	N	43	51	33	40	59	69
	%	5.6%	6.6%	4.3%	5.2%	7.6%	9.0%
Occasionally	N	156	118	93	92	176	134
	%	20.2%	15.3%	12%	11.9%	22.7%	17.6%
Most of the time	N	250	300	290	247	260	265
	%	32.3%	38.9%	37.4%	32.0%	33.6%	34.7%
Always	N	325	303	359	394	279	295
	%	42.0%	39.2%	46.3%	51.0%	36.0%	38.7%
Total	N	774	772	775	773	774	763
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.2 Inclusion

Table 3.3 shows that with the exception of 'other students seek his/her support' and 'other students are ready to adapt rules', all mean rating scores exceed three indicating that on average the occurrence of each statement was somewhere between 'most of the time' and 'always'. The vast majority of students have friends in the classroom (93.8%) and at school (85%) and are included by peers in classroom activities (92%) and group work/pairwork (90%). More than three fourths of peers help foreign students when needed, but 23% do not or do so only occasionally. More than half of classroom peers ask them for help but 16% rarely do so. Most of the peers play with foreign students during the break (93%) and engage in conversation with them (88%), and one third are also ready to adapt rules of the game for them. The great majority of foreign students are likely to be invited to parties by other students. The vast majority have the opportunity to contribute to classroom activities (95%) and are treated equally by the teachers (99%) according to the teachers themselves (Table 3.4).

Table 3.3 Mean scores of students' inclusion

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Has friends in the classroom	3.61	0.663
Has friends at school	3.41	0.860
Is included by peers during classroom activities	3.58	0.682
Other students work with him/her in pairs or small groups	3.55	0.719
Other students help him/her with work when necessary	3.21	0.919
Other students seek his/her support in school or other tasks	2.69	1.064
Other students play with him/her during the break	3.59	0.672
Other students engage in conversation with him/her	3.46	0.766
Other students are ready to adapt rules of the game for him/her	2.89	1.005
Is invited by other students to their parties and other out-of-school activities	3.33	0.922
Has opportunities to contribute to classroom activities	3.65	0.604
Is treated equitably by the adults in the classroom	3.91	0.329

Note: $X^2(11) = 172.61$, $p < 0.001$

Table 3.4 Foreign students' inclusion at school

		Has friends in the classroom	Has friends at school	Is included by peers during classroom activities	Other students work with him/ her in pairs or small groups
Rarely	N	11	38	13	14
	%	1.4%	5.0%	1.7%	1.8%
Occasionally	N	45	75	46	62
	%	5.8%	9.9%	6.0%	8.0%
Most of the time	N	179	185	196	185
	%	23.1%	24.3%	25.4%	23.9%
Always	N	540	462	517	513
	%	69.7%	60.8%	67.0%	66.3%
Total	N	775	760	772	774
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Other students help him/her with work when necessary	Other students seek his/her support in school or other tasks	Other students play with him/ her during the break	Other students engage in conversation with him/her
Rarely	N	43	124	12	20
	%	5.6%	16.3%	1.6%	2.6%
Occasionally	N	129	216	44	70
	%	16.9%	28.3%	5.7%	9.1%
Most of the time	N	214	198	194	214
	%	28.0%	26.0%	25.3%	27.7%
Always	N	378	225	518	468
	%	49.5%	29.5%	67.4%	60.6%
Total	N	764	763	768	772
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Other students are ready to adapt rules of the game for him/her	Is invited by other students to their parties and other out-of-school activities	Has opportunities to contribute to classroom activities	Is treated equitably by the adults in the classroom
Rarely	N	86	41	7	2
	%	11.7%	6.5%	0.9%	6.6%
Occasionally	N	156	76	32	4
	%	21.3%	12.0%	4.2%	15.3%
Most of the time	N	243	151	183	56
	%	33.2%	23.8%	23.8%	38.9%
Always	N	247	366	548	711
	%	33.7%	57.7%	71.2%	39.2%
Total	N	732	634	770	773
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.3 Overall analysis

When analysed by school level, Primary School foreign students are more likely to be included by peers and be more actively engaged than early years and Secondary School students. However, one must keep in mind that the Secondary School and early years samples were relatively small. Furthermore some of the engagement activities are easier to engage in by older students than younger ones. Female students are more likely to be engaged and included than male students (Tables 3.5 - 3.6).

Table 3.5 Active engagement and inclusion by school level

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Active engagement scale	Early Years (3-4 years)	38.32	9.302
	Early and Late Primary (5 – 10 years)	41.05	8.733
	Secondary (11 – 16 years)	39.37	9.486
	Total	40.27	9.032
Inclusion scale	Early Years (3-4 years)	25.97	7.767
	Early and Late Primary (5 – 10 years)	29.55	6.127
	Secondary (11 – 16 years)	27.21	7.067
	Total	28.56	6.725

Note: Engagement scales were significant as follows (pactive<0.05, pinclusion <0.001)

Table 3.6 Active engagement and inclusion by student gender

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Inclusion scale	Male	27.86	6.958
	Female	29.20	6.410
Active engagement scale	Male	39.17	9.329
	Female	41.10	8.668

Note: Engagement scales were significant as follows (pactive<0.05, pinclusion <0.05)

African/Middle Eastern students are significantly less engaged and included than other nationalities, particularly Western and East Asians. More specifically, the former appear to be less cared for, less attentive during lessons, less likely to learn new things, take initiative and complete set tasks, more likely to give up during work and to have academic problems, and less likely to engage in conversations, work collaboratively with others, participate actively in classroom and school activities, and have friends. Furthermore they are less likely to be included in social activities, such as being invited to parties by their peers, when compared to students of other nationalities (Table 3.7). This reflects the study with migrant 15 year old children in Malta which found that more than half of migrant children do not have a sense of belonging at school in comparison with two thirds of native Maltese students (OECD, 2018).

Table 3.7 Active engagement and inclusion by country of origin

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Inclusion scale	Western	29.57	6.608
	Eastern	28.82	6.076
	Africa/M. East	26.84	7.599
	East Asia	30.47	6.050
	Total	28.92	6.698
Active engagement	Western	41.71	8.876
	Eastern	40.98	8.294
	Africa/ M. East	37.34	9.445
	East Asia	41.66	7.952
	Total	40.66	8.920

Note: Engagement scales were significant as follows (pactive<0.001, pinclusion <0.01)

Students proficient in English and/or Maltese are more actively engaged and more included than those with poor proficiency in the two languages. Those students who have excellent proficiency have the highest level of active engagement and inclusion, though their number is quite small. Students who are proficient in Maltese are more likely to have Maltese best friends when compared to those with poor knowledge of Maltese (Tables 3.8 - 3.9).

Table 3.8 Student language proficiency (Maltese) by active engagement and inclusion

Maltese Language Proficiency		Mean	Std. Deviation
Active engagement scale	No knowledge	38.71**	9.793
	Poor	40.69**	9.015
	Adequate	42.02**	8.020
	Very good	41.84**	9.695
	Excellent	46.08**	5.575
Inclusion scale	No knowledge	28.07*	7.176
	Poor	29.09*	6.409
	Adequate	30.08*	5.848
	Very good	29.33*	6.412
	Excellent	32.67*	3.651

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 3.9 Student language proficiency (English) by active engagement and inclusion

Engish Language Proficiency		Mean	Std. Deviation
Active engagement scale	No knowledge	30.70***	10.844
	Poor	34.66***	9.790
	Adequate	39.24***	8.345
	Very good	42.46***	8.190
	Excellent	45.24***	7.701
Inclusion scale	No knowledge	24.00***	7.101
	Poor	24.88***	7.401
	Adequate	28.40***	6.041
	Very good	30.06***	6.446
	Excellent	32.10***	5.136

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Linear regression between SES and active engagement and inclusion show that students from higher SES are more likely to be included and actively engaged than those from lower SES. Correlation analysis shows that the active engagement scale is significantly positively correlated with inclusion (.758) indicating that the more actively engaged students are the more likely to be included as well and vice versa (Tables 3.10 - 3.11).

Table 3.10 Regression estimates for Engagement scales including SES

Independent variable	Active Engagement scale	Inclusion scale
Socio Economic Status (SES)	0.126[a]*	0.168**
Constant	37.627*	25.120**
R^r	0.016*	0.028**

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, one-tailed test

[a] Standardized regression coefficients

Table 3.11 Correlation between engagement and inclusion sub-scales

	SES scale	Active engagement	Inclusion scale
SES scale	1		
Active engagement subscale	.126*	1	
Inclusion sub-scale	.168*	.758**	1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, two-tailed test

CHAPTER 4: PHYSICAL HEALTH AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

4.1 Families of foreign children

Six hundred and ninety nine parents returned the completed questionnaires on their children's physical health, and 711 returned the questionnaires on their children's access to services. Most of the respondents live in the Northern Harbour (31%) and Northern (29%) regions of Malta, with Gozo, Southern Harbour and Western regions having the lowest share; more Western and Eastern Europeans are found in the Northern region when compared to African/Middle Eastern and East Asians, whilst more African/Middle Eastern and Asians are found in the Southern Harbour. Most of the parents have poor or no knowledge of Maltese (79%); on the other hand they have very good or excellent knowledge of English, with only 11% having poor or no knowledge of English. The vast majority of the children (86%) live in a two parent family, while 8% live with a single mother. In the vast majority (96%) these were the biological parents of the children. The majority of parents are Western/Europeans (45% Western, 30% East Europeans), followed by North African/Middle Eastern/sub-Saharan Africa (18%) and East Asians (7%)[5].

Half of the respondents live in an area with about an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners and 42% live in an environment composed largely of Maltese people. Only 7% live in an area where almost all people are foreigners. Nearly all (98%) live in an apartment/house in the community, only 2% of them in Open Centres, the latter being mostly asylum seekers mainly from Africa/Middle East. Thirty eight percent of respondents have been living in their current residence for less than a year and 40% for two to three years; 22% have been in their current residence for more than four years. More participants from Africa/Middle East than from other countries have been living in Malta for four years or more (38%)[6]. Two thirds of the respondents live in apartments, while one fourth (26%) live in a house or maisonette; 12 families live in a shared apartment; these are likely, though not exclusively, to be from Africa/Middle East. Terraced houses are more frequent among Western participants (22%), maisonettes among East Asians (15%), apartments among East Europeans (78%); and shared apartments amongst East Asians and Africans/Middle Eastern (8%). Almost 80% live in a rented residence and only 18% own a property (lowest rate amongst Africans/Middle Eastern). Whilst owning or renting an apartment characterizes respondents from Western, Eastern and Asian countries, those living in a public funded residence are more common for those coming from Africa/Middle East (Tables 4.1 - 4.2).

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[5] *Further demographic details are found in Chapter 2.*

[6] *A recent study by the Central Bank of Malta reported that between 2002 and 2017 almost one half of foreign workers in Malta left the labour market between one and two years, with only 30% remaining employed for more than six years after their first engagement. Non-EU nationals were found to stay in the labour market longer than foreign workers from the EU (Borg, 2019).*

Table 4.1 Type of home by country of origin

			Type of home					
			Terraced House	Maisonette	Apartment	Shared apartment	Other	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	67	33	177	2	20	299
		%	22.4%	11%	59.2%	0.7%	6.7%	100%
	Eastern	N	20	17	160	2	6	205
		%	9.8%	8.3%	78%	1%	2.9%	100%
	Africa/ M.East	N	15	15	79	5	7	121
		%	12.4%	12.4%	65.3%	4.1%	5.8%	100%
	East Asia	N	6	7	30	2	1	46
		%	13.0%	15.2%	65.2%	4.3%	2.2%	100%

Note: p<0.001

Table 4.2 Housing status by country of origin

			Housing status				
			Owned	Rented	Mortgaged	Public funded	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	63	231	4	-	298
		%	21.1%	77.5%	1.3%	-	100%
	Eastern	N	30	159	9	-	198
		%	15.2%	80.3%	4.5%	-	100%
	Africa/ M.East	N	12	97	-	9	118
		%	10.2%	82.2%	-	7.6%	100%
	East Asia	N	13	32	1	-	46
		%	28.3%	69.6%	2.2%	-	100%

Note: p<0.001

Most of the families (71%) live in residences with two to four rooms, with the most common being three rooms (38%); 18 families, however, live in a one-room residence. African/Middle Eastern participants are more likely to be found in small apartments (apart from Open Centres) whilst Westerns in the larger residences. The majority (69%) live in two to four member households, with four member households being the most common (42%); 11% however live in 6 to 10 member households. The mean for household members is 4.14 (compared to that of 2.6 in the case of Maltese, Eurostat, 2019), whilst that for the number of rooms in the residence is 3.88. Participants from Africa/ Middle East are more likely to be living in smaller apartments (44% live in one or two room apartments) and with more family members (more than 50% live in families of five members or more) when compared to other nationalities such as Europeans (Tables 4.3 - 4.4). Whilst the great majority of participants do not have any problems in paying bills there is a significant difference between African/Middle Eastern and other nationalities. Whilst the vast majority of Western, Europeans and Asians never or rarely have problems with paying bills or buying basic necessities, 15% of the latter face such problems often or daily.

Table 4.3. Number of rooms by country of origin

			Number of rooms					
			1 room	2 rooms	3 rooms	4 rooms	5 rooms or more	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	1	27	94	49	131	302
		%	0.3%	8.9%	31.1%	16.2%	43.5%	100%
	Eastern	N	2	49	88	35	30	204
		%	1%	24%	43.1%	17.2%	14.7%	100%
	Africa/ M.East	N	13	35	47	5	9	109
		%	11.9%	32.1%	43.1%	4.6%	8.3%	100%
	East Asia	N	0	8	21	9	7	45
		%	0.0%	17.8%	46.7%	20%	15.5%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 4.4 Number of household members by country of origin

			Household members			
			0-1 members	2-4 members	5 or more members	Total
Country of origin	Western	N	2	228	70	300
		%	0.6%	75.9%	23.5%	100%
	Eastern	N	5	154	42	201
		%	2.5%	76.4%	21.1%	100%
	Africa/ M. East	N	1	50	60	111
		%	0.9%	45%	54.1%	100%
	East Asia	N	1	29	16	46
		%	2.2%	63%	34,8%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

4.2 Children's physical health

Table 4.5 shows that the vast majority of the respondents evaluate their children's health as excellent (59%) or very good (28%). General health was evaluated as good and excellent in both early years/Primary and Secondary Schools, with no significant difference between Primary and Secondary School students. Excellent and very good health was significantly lower amongst children from Africa/Middle East and East Asia in contrast to Europeans and North Americans, particularly Western. Whilst close to half of Western parents describe their children's health as excellent or very good (48% and 44% respectively), followed by 31% and 30% of East Europeans, the percentages decrease significantly in the case of African/ Middle Eastern (18% and 14%) and East Asians (4% and 10%) respectively (Table 4.6).

Table 4.5. Parents' perceptions of their children's general health

In general, would you say your child's health is:		
	N	%
Fair	14	2%
Good	71	10.2%
Very good	197	28.3%
Excellent	413	59.4%
Total	695	100%

Table 4.6 Child's general health by country of origin

In general, would you say your child's health is:						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
Fair	N	6	3	4	-	13
	%	46.2%	23.1%	30.8%	-	100%
Good	N	23	18	19	7	67
	%	34.3%	26.9%	28.4%	10.4%	100%
Very good	N	86	60	28	20	194
	%	44.3%	30.9%	14.4%	10.3%	100%
Excellent	N	184	117	69	17	387
	%	47.5%	30.2%	17.8%	4.4%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

The vast majority of parents (89%) do not agree that their children seem less healthy than other children they know, with less than 5% being worried about their children's health, the latter is more likely to be found amongst participants from Africa/Middle East. For instance more than 11% of parents from Africa/Middle East believe that their children are less healthy than other children they know. More than 80% of children are not physically limited to participate in activities such as play and sports or to go round in the neighbourhood, play or go to school, or in taking care of themselves and their physical needs. Children from Africa/Middle East are significantly more likely to be limited by physical illness (26%) and in taking care of themselves (31%) than children of other nationalities. Whilst 63% do not have any bodily pain in the past four weeks, only 9% experienced bodily pain or discomfort a few times. Children from Africa/Middle East were more likely to experience moderate or severe body pain than other children (Tables 4.7 - 4.10).

Table 4.7 Parents' concerns on child's health

	My child seems to be less healthy than other children I know		I worry more about my child's health than other people worry about their children's health	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	518	77.1%	215	32.5%
Somewhat disagree	80	11.9%	107	16.2%
Not sure/neutral	36	5.4%	139	21.0%
Somewhat agree	19	2.8%	107	16.2%
Strongly agree	19	2.8%	93	14.1%
Total	672	100.0%	661	100.0%

Table 4.8 Level of child bodily pain or discomfort experienced by children

During the past four weeks, how much bodily pain or discomfort has your child had?		
	N	**%**
None	435	63%
Very mild	151	21.9%
Mild	46	6.7%
Moderate	43	6.2%
Severe	10	1.4%
Very severe	5	0.7%
Total	690	100%

Table 4.9 Frequency of bodily pain or discomfort experienced by children

During the past four weeks, how often has your child had bodily pain or discomfort?		
	N	**%**
None of the time	424	61.4%
Once or twice	195	28.3%
A few times	62	9%
Fairly often	6	0.9%
Very often	2	0.3%
Every/almost every day	1	0.1%
Total	690	100%

Table 4.10 Bodily pain and discomfort by country of origin

During the past four weeks, how much bodily pain or discomfort has your child had?						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M.East	East Asia	Total
None	N	224	122	44	25	415
	%	54%	29.4%	10.6%	6%	100%
Very mild	N	51	54	32	11	148
	%	34.5%	36.5%	21.6%	7.4%	100%
Mild	N	13	9	13	6	41
	%	31.7%	22%	31.7%	14.6%	100%
Moderate	N	8	8	22	3	41
	%	19.5%	19.5%	53.7%	7.3%	100%
Severe	N	2	1	7	-	10
	%	20%	10%	70%	-	100%
Very severe	N	1	3	-	-	4
	%	25%	75%	-	-	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Close to three quarters of the parents reported that their children were never seriously ill but about one quarter indicated that children were seriously ill in the past particularly parents from Africa/Middle East and Asia (29%). About one half are confident that their children are well protected from infections, but 30% are concerned that their children are vulnerable to infections. Parents from Africa/Middle East (almost 40%) and East Asia (50%) are more likely than Westerns/Europeans to believe that their children would become infected. The great majority of the parents (86%) expect a very healthy lifestyle for their children in contrast to 7% who do not. The latter are more likely to come from Africa/Middle East and East Asia. Thirty percent worry about their children's health more than other parents; these are more likely to be found amongst participants from Africa/Middle East and East Asia. Only 7% of the former and 6% of the latter do not worry about their children's health (compared to 63% of Western) (Tables 4.11 - 4.13).

Table 4.11 Parents' expectations about children's health

How much do you agree with each of these statements for your child?				
	My child has never been seriously ill		I expect my child will have a very healthy life	
	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	81	12%	33	5%
Somewhat disagree	77	11.4%	14	2.1%
Not sure / neutral	22	3.3%	47	7.1%
Somewhat agree	123	18.2%	133	20%
Strongly agree	373	55.2%	439	65.9%
Total	676	100%	666	100%

Table 4.12 Children being seriously ill by country of origin

My child has never been seriously ill						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
Strongly disagree	N	26	23	16	11	76
	%	34.2%	30.3%	21.1%	14.5%	100%
Somewhat disagree	N	30	27	15	4	76
	%	39.5%	35.5%	19.7%	5.3%	100%
Not sure / neutral	N	10	3	4	2	19
	%	52.6%	15.8%	21.1%	10.5%	100%
Somewhat agree	N	54	30	26	9	119
	%	45.4%	25.2%	21.8%	7.6%	100%
Strongly agree	N	178	114	46	17	355
	%	50.1%	32.1%	13%	4.8%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 4.13 Worry about child's health by country of origin

I worry more about my child's health than other people worry about their children's health						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
Strongly disagree	N	134	49	16	12	211
	%	63.5%	23.2%	7.6%	5.7%	100%
Somewhat disagree	N	44	23	29	6	102
	%	43.1%	22.5%	28.4%	5.9%	100%
Not sure / neutral	N	59	56	10	7	132
	%	44.7%	42.4%	7.6%	5.3%	100%
Somewhat agree	N	36	31	23	11	101
	%	35.6%	30.7%	22.8%	10.9%	100%
Strongly agree	N	23	34	23	6	86
	%	26.7%	39.5%	26.7%	7%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Most parents agree that their children's health is the same as one year ago, whilst more than one fourth say it is much better, only 3% said that it got worse. Parents from Africa/Middle East evaluate their children's health as much better now that one year ago, whilst only 10% of African/Middle Eastern and East Asian parents report that their children's health got worse than one year ago (compared to 47% of Western parents) (Tables 4.14 - 4.15).

Table 4.14 Children's health during the past year

Compared to one year ago, how would you rate your child's health now?		
	N	%
Much better now than 1 year ago	187	26.9%
Somewhat better now than 1 year ago	83	11.9%
About the same now as 1 year ago	402	57.8%
Somewhat worse than 1 year ago	20	2.9%
Much worse than 1 year ago	3	0.4%
Total	695	100%

Table 4.15 Children's present health by country of origin

		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M.East	East Asia	Total
Much better now than 1 year ago	N	52	46	56	21	175
	%	29.7%	26.3%	32.0%	12.0%	100%
Somewhat better now than 1 year ago	N	26	29	18	7	80
	%	32.5%	36.3%	22.5%	8.8%	100%
About the same now as 1 year ago	N	209	118	42	15	384
	%	54.4%	30.7%	10.9%	3.9%	100%
Somewhat worse than 1 year ago	N	9	6	2	2	19
	%	47.4%	31.6%	10.5%	10.5%	100%
Much worse than 1 year ago	N	3	-	-	-	3
	%	100%	-	-	-	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

During the past six months, one third of the parents did not take their children to the doctor or health centres while 46% did so once or twice. On the other hand, 5% of children were taken to the doctor/health centre frequently. Children from Africa/Middle East (15%) tend to be taken more frequently to the doctor/health centre than children of other nationalities (Tables 4.16 - 4.17).

Table 4.16 Frequency of child being ill in the past six months

During the past six months, how often has your child been ill to the extent that you had to make use of health services such as visit at the doctor/health centre?		
	N	%
None of the time	234	33.5%
Once or twice	322	46.1%
A few times	108	15.5%
Fairly often	25	3.6%
Very often	10	1.4%
Total	699	100%

Table 4.17 Frequency of visit to the doctor by country of origin

During the past six months, how often has your child been ill to the extent that you had to make use of health services such as visit to the doctor/health centre?						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
None of the time	N	117	62	32	14	225
	%	52%	27.6%	14.2%	6.2%	100%
Once or twice	N	138	88	54	27	307
	%	45.0%	28.7%	17.6%	8.8%	100%
A few times	N	39	45	16	4	104
	%	37.5%	43.3%	15.4%	3.8%	100%
Fairly often	N	4	3	14	-	21
	%	19%	14.3%	66.7%	-	100%
Very often	N	4	1	4	-	9
	%	44.4%	11.1%	44.4%	-	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

When asked about the occurrence of a list of 24 different types of diseases/health conditions, the parents' responses indicated a very low prevalence for most of the conditions. Whilst as expected asthma (7%) and chronic allergies/sinus trouble (9%) are slightly more frequent, other physical conditions such as infections and chronic diseases are very low (0.5% to 2% for epilepsy, diabetes, measles, malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/ AIDS, polio, hepatitis). More prevalent are behaviour problems (6%) and problems related to learning (5%), attention (9%), speech (5%) and vision (7%). Infectious illnesses are more frequent in Primary School children, with the parents of such children more likely to be approached by school and health personnel about their children's illnesses (Table 4.18).

Table 4.18 Frequency of health conditions

	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asthma	48	7%	602	87.6%	687	100%
Chronic allergies or sinus trouble	58	8.5%	581	85.6%	679	100%
Chronic orthopedic, bone, or joint problems	19	2.8%	624	92.3%	676	100%
Chronic respiratory, lung, or breathing problems (not asthma)	18	2.6%	630	92.5%	681	100%
Chronic rheumatic disease (e.g. Lupus)	4	0.6%	641	94.4%	679	100%
Diabetes	8	1.2%	641	94.4%	679	100%
Epilepsy (seizure disorder)	6	0.9%	636	94.2%	675	100%
Hearing impairment or deafness	14	2.1%	627	92.6%	677	100%
Speech problems	34	5%	609	89.8%	678	100%
Vision problems	47	7%	594	88%	675	100%
Anxiety problems	26	3.8%	606	89.6%	676	100%
Attentional problems	60	8.9%	579	85.5%	677	100%
Behavioural problems	43	6.4%	594	88.1%	674	100%
Depression	7	1%	628	93.3%	673	100%
Developmental delay or mental retardation	17	2.5%	628	92.8%	677	100%
Learning problems	36	5.3%	603	89.5%	674	100%
Measles	13	1.9%	630	93.8%	672	100%
Diarrheal diseases	16	2.4%	624	92.7%	673	100%
Malaria	3	0.4%	638	94.9%	672	100%
Tuberculosis	4	0.6%	639	94.9%	673	100%
Vector-borne diseases	9	1.3%	630	93.9%	671	100%
HIV/AIDS	8	1.2%	637	94.5%	674	100%
Polio	6	0.9%	637	94.5%	674	100%
Hepatitis	6	0.9%	628	94.7%	663	100%

4.3 Access to Services

Respondents appear to have very limited knowledge about many of the community, educational, social and health services available for children and families in Malta with the great majority leaving this section of the questionnaire empty. When asked about the use of community services such as homework clubs, study/reading groups, language classes, arts and crafts, library facilities, IT courses and parental seminars, only a small percentage reported that their children frequent these services. The overall service use ranges from 1.5% to 11%, with library services being the most used (11%), followed by other activities such as sports, language classes and arts and crafts. Most services attended are provided by the central Government and Local Councils (37%) followed by NGOs and Religious Organisations (7%) (Table 4.19). Participants from Africa/Middle East make more use of services provided by NGOs.

Table 4.19 Main providers of community services

Who is the main provider of the services mentioned which your child attends?		
	N	%
Local Council	84	17.6%
NGOs (e.g. Malta Emigrants Commission)	20	4.2%
Religious Organisations	14	2.9%
Central Government (e.g. Sports Clubs, Youth Café)	91	19.1%
Other	132	27.7%
Don't know	136	28.5%
Total	477	100%

When children are sick, most parents prefer to go to doctors' clinics (53%), followed by health centres (26%) and the general hospital emergency service (13%); but the opposite is true of African/Middle Eastern parents who make more use of the health centres (32%) than doctors' clinics (10%) (Table 4.19). Those with good knowledge of English visit the doctors' clinics more frequently in contrast to those with poor knowledge who make more use of the general hospital emergency services more frequently. The doctor/ general practitioner was the most visited health care professional (46%), with visits to other professionals such as specialists and therapists being very low. The vast majority of parents (95%) reported that in the last 12 months they did not experience any lack of provision of care needed or delayed care. Only 8% required interpreting services during a doctor/ health care provider visit; these are more likely coming from Africa/ Middle East. One fourth of African/Middle Eastern parents make use of interpreting services in contrast to 5% or less for other nationalities. Of those who use interpreting services, most are satisfied or very satisfied; for instance only 10% of African/Middle Eastern out of those who mostly make use of these services are not satisfied (Tables 4.20 – 4.22).

Table 4.20 Healthcare service use by country of origin

		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
Doctor's Clinic	N	170	103	33	22	328
	%	51.8%	31.4%	10.1%	6.7%	100%
Hospital Emergency Department	N	56	9	13	3	81
	%	69.1%	11.1%	16%	3.7%	100%
Hospital Outpatient Department	N	10	7	8	2	27
	%	37%	25.9%	29.6%	7.4%	100%
Health Centre/ Polyclinic	N	44	53	48	16	161
	%	27.3%	32.9%	29.8%	9.9%	100%
School Health Service	N	1	2	-	-	3
	%	33.3%	66.7%	-	-	100%
Friend or relative	N	-	1	-	-	1
	%	-	100%	-	-	100%
Locations outside of Malta	N	1	1	-	-	2
	%	50%	50%	-	-	100%
Other (specify)	N	12	5	1	-	18
	%	66.7%	27.8%	5.6%	-	100%
Total	N	294	181	103	43	621
	%	47.3%	29.1%	16.6%	6.9%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 4.21 Use of interpreters by country of origin

During the past 12 months, did you or your child need an interpreter to help speak with your child's doctors or other health care providers?						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M.East	East Asia	Total
No	N	293	192	88	45	618
	%	47.4%	31.1%	14.2%	7.3%	100.0%
Yes	N	8	11	29	1	49
	%	16.3%	22.4%	59.2%	2.0%	100.0%
Total	N	301	203	117	46	667
	%	45.1%	30.4%	17.5%	6.9%	100.0%

Table 4.22 Satisfaction with interpreter services

If yes, how satisfied were you with the interpreting services provided?		
	N	%
Very dissatisfied	16	5.8%
Dissatisfied	4	1.4%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	12	4.3%
Satisfied	59	21.2%
Very satisfied	20	7.2%
Not provided	167	60.1%
Total	278	100.0%

Apart from the children's allowance (17%), other social services benefits such as unemployment benefits, in-work benefits, milk grant and social assistance for single parents are minimal (1% to 2%). The use of services provided by Appogg (social workers, psychologists, youth workers, family therapy), SEDQA (parenting skills, family therapy) and SAPPORT (persons with disability) is quite low, usually below 2%. Similarly the use of services provided by the Education Directorates such as the Breakfast Club, Homework Club, Migrant Learners' Unit, Early Intervention, school counsellors, school psychologists, social workers, youth workers, ranges from 5% to below 1%. Training

provided by JobsPlus was utilised by only 3% of the participants. Services by FES such as childcare was used only by 2% of children; however 11% made use of Klabb 3-16. Only 12% of parents used private childcare services. The vast majority of parents (96%) reported that their children attended school regularly. In all of the community, health, social and educational services, the vast majority of parents did not make use of private facilities.

Parents of foreign children appear to be more informed about educational and health services in contrast to social and community services. They are most informed about educational (44%) and health (37%) services, followed by social (21%) and community (17%) services respectively. African/Middle Eastern participants are significantly more informed about the four services than those from other nationalities. Participants' satisfaction with the different services is also related to how informed they are about the services, namely the less informed the less satisfied (Table 4.23). Most participants are satisfied with the educational (83.9%) and health services (67.5%), though 13.7% are not satisfied with the latter. On the other hand, one third or more of participants are dissatisfied with both social (32%) and community (37%) services. When analysed by nationality, East Asians and African/Middle Eastern participants are the most highly dissatisfied with community (38% and 31% respectively), health (13%) and social (36% and 32% respectively) services. On the other hand the rate of dissatisfaction with educational services is quite low across nationalities (Tables 4.24 - 4.28).

Table 4.23 Correlation between satisfaction with services and being informed about the services

	Informed Community Services	Informed Health Services	Informed Social Services	Informed Educational Services	Satisfaction Community Services	Satisfaction Health Services	Satisfaction Social Services	Satisfaction Educational Services
Informed Community Services	1							
Informed Health Services	0.620**	1						
Informed Social Services	0.842**	0.669**	1					
Informed Educational Services	0.583**	0.706**	0.614**	1				
Satisfaction	0.621**	0.373**	0.594**	0.336**	1			
Community Services								
Satisfaction Health Services	0.309**	0.509**	0.341**	0.319**	0.519**	1		
Satisfaction Social Services	0.560**	0.409**	0.674**	0.354**	0.761**	0.571**	1	
Satisfaction Educational Services	0.249**	0.295**	0.279**	0.411**	0.375**	0.486**	0.425**	1

Note: p<0.01

Table 4.24 Satisfaction with the services

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	77	22.3%	38	8.8%	69	21.2%	12	2.5%
2	50	14.5%	21	4.9%	35	10.7%	13	2.7%
3	99	28.6%	81	18.8%	96	29.4%	51	10.8%
4	70	20.2%	140	32.5%	63	19.3%	141	29.7%
Highly satisfied	50	14.5%	151	35.0%	63	19.3%	257	54.2%
Total	346	100.0%	431	100.0%	326	100.0%	474	100.0%

Table 4.25 Satisfaction with community services by country of origin

		Community services Total					
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	30	24	42	21	14	131
	%	22.9%	18.3%	32.1%	16%	10.7%	100%
Eastern	N	14	14	36	39	20	123
	%	11.4%	11.4%	29.3%	31.7%	16.3%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	14	4	11	5	11	45
	%	31.1%	8.9%	24.4%	11.1%	24.4%	100%
East Asia	N	11	6	7	3	2	29
	%	37.9%	20.7%	24.1%	10.3%	6.9%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 4.26 Satisfaction with healthcare services by country of origin

Healthcare services							
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	14	13	44	50	58	179
	%	7.8%	7.3%	24.6%	27.9%	32.4%	100%
Eastern	N	9	1	26	58	58	152
	%	5.9%	0.7%	17.1%	38.2%	38.2%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	7	3	5	18	19	52
	%	13.5%	5.8%	9.6%	34.6%	36.5%	100%
East Asia	N	4	4	3	10	9	30
	%	13.3%	13.3%	10.0%	33.3%	30%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 4.27 Satisfaction with social services by country of origin

Social services							
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	24	13	40	20	21	118
	%	20.3%	11%	33.9%	16.9%	17.8%	100%
Eastern	N	15	13	29	34	29	120
	%	12.5%	10.8%	24.2%	28.3%	24.2%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	14	3	12	6	9	44%
	%	31.8%	6.8%	27.3%	13.6%	20.5%	100%
East Asia	N	10	3	10	2	3	28
	%	35.7%	10.7%	35.7%	7.1%	10.7%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 4.28 Satisfaction with educational services by country of origin

		Educational services					
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	8	7	26	71	95	207
	%	3.9%	3.4%	12.6%	34.3%	45.9%	100%
Eastern	N	2	4	13	46	96	161
	%	1.2%	2.5%	8.1%	28.6%	59.6%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	1	-	2	14	38	55
	%	1.8%	-	3.6%	25.5%	69.1%	100%
East Asia	N	-	2	8	6	15	31
	%	-	6.5%	25.8%	19.4%	48.4%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

The above trends are reflected in parents' views on whether enough time and attention was dedicated to their children when they made use of the services, with the high rate of satisfaction with time and attention provided by the educational services (83%) going down to 65% for health, 39% for social and 32% (time)/35% (attention) for community services respectively. On the other hand, more parents are satisfied than dissatisfied with the language and communication used for the services, though around one fourth are still unsatisfied with community (27%) and social (24%) services in this respect. The majority of parents are satisfied with the sensitivity shown by the services towards family values and traditions and the openness shown by the centres to different cultures. More than one fourth, however, are not satisfied with the community and social services in this respect. Whilst one fourth said they did not need to use the health or educational services, more than one third did not need the social and community services. East Asian and African/Middle Eastern parents are the most highly dissatisfied with the time, attention, language and communication, openness in the community and social services and to a lesser extent in the health services. Whilst community services are least sensitive according to East Asians, social services appear to be considered as least sensitive and open by Western, East Asians and African/Middle Eastern participants (Tables 4.29 – 4.34).

Table 4.29 Enough time dedicated to children

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	76	23.3%	31	7.7%	61	19.3%	13	2.8%
2	53	16.3%	27	6.7%	37	11.7%	15	3.2%
3	93	28.5%	83	20.5%	96	30.4%	54	11.6%
4	49	15.0%	130	32.1%	59	18.7%	147	31.5%
Highly satisfied	55	16.9%	134	33.1%	63	19.9%	238	51.0%
Total	326	100.0%	405	100.0%	316	100.0%	467	100.0%

Table 4.30 Attention to children's needs

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	69	21.2%	34	8.4%	57	18.1%	14	3%
2	49	15.1%	28	6.9%	41	13%	17	3.7%
3	92	28.3%	77	19%	93	29.5%	52	11.2%
4	61	18.8%	118	29.1%	57	18.1%	148	31.8%
Highly satisfied	54	16.6%	148	36.5%	67	21.3%	234	50.3%
Total	325	100%	405	100%	315	100%	465	100%

Table 4.31 Language and communication

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	51	15.6%	33	8.2%	46	14.7%	17	3.7%
2	38	11.6%	16	4.0%	28	8.9%	14	3.0%
3	94	28.7%	70	17.5%	88	28.1%	52	11.3%
4	62	19.0%	122	30.4%	66	21.1%	142	30.9%
Highly satisfied	82	25.1%	160	39.9%	85	27.2%	235	51.1%
Total	327	100.0%	401	100.0%	313	100.0%	460	100.0%

Table 4.32 Sensitivity of community services to family values and traditions

Sensitivity to your family's values and traditions / Community services							
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	19	16	44	16	22	117
	%	16.2%	13.7%	37.6%	13.7%	18.8%	100%
Eastern	N	12	20	17	35	36	120
	%	10%	16.7%	14.2%	29.2%	30%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	9	5	10	6	12	42
	%	21.4%	11.9%	23.8%	14.3%	28.6%	100%
East Asia	N	7	3	8	2	6	26
	%	26.9%	11.5%	30.8%	7.7%	23.1%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 4.33 Sensitivity of social services to family values and traditions

Sensitivity to your family's values and traditions / Social services							
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	25	8	41	15	26	115
	%	21.7%	7%	35.7%	13%	22.6%	100%
Eastern	N	11	15	22	32	38	118
	%	9.3%	12.7%	18.6%	27.1%	32.2%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	9	1	11	6	11	38
	%	23.7%	2.6%	28.9%	15.8%	28.9%	100%
East Asia	N	5	2	11	3	5	26
	%	19.2%	7.7%	42.3%	11.5%	19.2%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 4.34 Openness of social services to different cultures

Openness to different cultures / Social services							
		Highly dissatisfied	2	3	4	Highly satisfied	Total
Western	N	23	15	39	17	23	117
	%	19.7%	12.8%	33.3%	14.5%	19.7%	100%
Eastern	N	11	9	28	33	39	120
	%	9.2%	7.5%	23.3%	27.5%	32.5%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	7	2	10	8	9	36
	%	19.4%	5.6%	27.8%	22.2%	25%	100%
East Asia	N	7	-	13	1	4	25
	%	28.0%	-	52.0%	4.0%	16%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

The majority of the participants do not think the services are too expensive, but it is interesting that participants consider the services mostly used as being the most expensive (health and educational). However, parents from Africa/Middle East are the most likely to consider the services expensive to use, particularly community (31%), health (27%) and social (19%) services. The majority of parents agree that services are available in their area, but 14% to 24% disagree; these are more likely to be from Africa/Middle East and East Asia. Transportation to the services is not considered a problem by the majority of the participants, but again about 17% are not satisfied; parents from Africa/ Middle East and Asia have more problems in transportation to these services, ranging from 20% to 46%. The times the services are offered is considered convenient by the great majority of the participants, though about 11% to 16% preferred more convenient times. The majority are not concerned about discrimination with regards to the services, but a small number (14% - 20%) are concerned, particularly at the community (20%) and social (18%) services respectively. Parents from Africa/Middle East and East Asia are more likely to report discrimination in contrast to Eastern Europeans who reported a very low incidence of discrimination. Most of the discrimination is reported in the community and social services, ranging from 30% to 50% of African/Middle Eastern and East Asian parents. African/Middle Eastern participants however, also perceive discrimination in the health (38%) and educational (41%) services respectively.

A similar pattern emerges in the case of the sensitivity of the services to family values and traditions. The great majority do not think the services are not sensitive to family values; amongst those who did (7% to 12%), they are less satisfied with the health and educational services, the most commonly used services. Parents from Africa/Middle East and East Asia are least satisfied (particularly with community and social services, ranging from 22% to 41%) in contrast to parents from Eastern Europe. Participants from Africa/Middle East also perceive lack of sensitivity in the health (22%) and educational (29%) services respectively. About 14% to 18% of the participants see the language used at the services as a barrier, particularly those from Africa/ Middle East (ranging from 18% to 33%) and East Asia (from 17% to 25%) (Tables 4.35 – 4.39).

Table 4.35 Fear of prejudice and discrimination

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	186	52.5%	230	61.7%	183	53.5%	252	64.6%
2	53	15.0%	47	12.6%	47	13.7%	39	10.0%
3	44	12.4%	43	11.5%	49	14.3%	40	10.3%
4	29	8.2%	21	5.6%	25	7.3%	22	5.6%
Strongly agree	42	11.9%	32	8.6%	38	11.1%	37	9.5%
Total	354	100.0%	373	100.0%	342	100.0%	390	100.0%

Table 4.36 Language barriers at community services by country of origin

Language barriers / Community services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	81	18	25	15	11	150
	%	54%	12%	16.7%	10%	7.3%	100%
Eastern	N	81	15	13	9	7	125
	%	64.8%	12.0%	10.4%	7.2%	5.6%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	7	7	8	3	9	34
	%	20.6%	20.6%	23.5%	8.8%	26.5%	100%
East Asia	N	5	4	11	4	4	28
	%	17.9%	14.3%	39.3%	14.3%	14.3%	100%

Note: p<0.001

Table 4.37 Language barriers at health services

Language barriers / Healthcare services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	105	22	21	9	10	167
	%	62.9%	13.2%	12.6%	5.4%	6%	100%
Eastern	N	94	14	11	6	8	133
	%	70.7%	10.5%	8.3%	4.5%	6%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	9	7	6	4	8	34
	%	26.5%	20.6%	17.6%	11.8%	23.5%	100%
East Asia	N	6	6	11	3	3	29
	%	20.7%	20.7%	37.9%	10.3%	10.3%	100%

Note: p<0.001

Table 4.38 Language barriers at social services by country of origin

Language barriers / Social services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	80	21	22	12	12	147
	%	54.4%	14.3%	15%	8.2%	8.2%	100%
Eastern	N	83	13	12	7	7	122
	%	68%	10.7%	9.8%	5.7%	5.7%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	6	11	7	1	7	32
	%	18.8%	34.4%	21.9%	3.1%	21.9%	100%
East Asia	N	5	5	12	3	4	29
	%	17.2%	17.2%	41.4%	10.3%	13.8%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 4.39 Language barriers at educational services by country of origin

Language barriers / Educational services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	108	23	21	7	11	170
	%	63.5%	13.5%	12.4%	4.1%	6.5%	100%
Eastern	N	93	14	14	7	7	135
	%	68.9%	10.4%	10.4%	5.2%	5.2%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	13	5	4	5	12	39
	%	33.3%	12.8%	10.3%	12.8%	30.8%	100%
East Asia	N	8	6	13	1	3	31
	%	25.8%	19.4%	41.9%	3.2%	9.7%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

The vast majority of children have no problem to go to the services and only a small number (5% - 7%) refused to go to the services; these were likely to be from Africa/ Middle East. More than half of the participants are not aware of available community services (55%) followed by social services (46%), but this decreases substantially for health and educational services (28% and 25% respectively). A similar pattern emerged when asked about lack of available information about the use of services, with about half agreeing about the lack of information with regards to the community and social services (52% and 47% respectively) and 30% and 27% with regards to the health and educational services respectively. The vast majority hold positive views about the services with only 7% - 10% perceiving the services in a negative way; these are mostly from Africa/Middle East (negative views ranging from 14% to 23% across the services) (Tables 4.40 – 4.45).

Table 4.40 Not aware of services

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	95	24.6%	159	41.3%	107	28.7%	196	50.9%
2	23	6.0%	36	9.4%	27	7.2%	38	9.9%
3	55	14.2%	81	21.0%	68	18.2%	55	14.3%
4	42	10.9%	25	6.5%	25	6.7%	26	6.8%
Strongly agree	171	44.3%	84	21.8%	146	39.1%	70	18.2%
Total	386	100.0%	385	100.0%	373	100.0%	385	100.0%

Table 4.41 Lack of available information

	Community services		Healthcare services		Social services		Educational services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	94	24.1%	151	38.5%	104	27.7%	195	49.4%
2	30	7.7%	51	13.0%	32	8.5%	40	10.1%
3	63	16.2%	71	18.1%	63	16.8%	52	13.2%
4	43	11.0%	30	7.7%	33	8.8%	35	8.9%
Strongly agree	160	41.0%	89	22.7%	143	38.1%	73	18.5%
Total	390	100.0%	392	100.0%	375	100.0%	395	100.0%

Table 4.42 Negative views about community services

Negative views about community services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	82	20	25	7	7	141
	%	58.2%	14.2%	17.7%	5%	5%	100%
Eastern	N	72	25	23	3	1	124
	%	58.1%	20.2%	18.5%	2.4%	0.8%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	11	5	6	1	6	29
	%	37.9%	17.2%	20.7%	3.4%	20.7%	100%
East Asia	N	8	5	8	2	3	26
	%	30.8%	19.2%	30.8%	7.7%	11.5%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 4.43 Negative views about healthcare services

Negative views about healthcare services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	95	27	23	7	3	155
	%	61.3%	17.4%	14.8%	4.5%	1.9%	100%
Eastern	N	82	17	22	4	4	129
	%	63.6%	13.2%	17.1%	3.1%	3.1%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	11	4	6	2	5	28
	%	39.3%	14.3%	21.4%	7.1%	17.9%	100%
East Asia	N	12	7	7	1	1	28
	%	42.9%	25.0%	25.0%	3.6%	3.6%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 4.44 Negative views about social services

Negative views about social services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	78	20	25	6	9	138
	%	56.5%	14.5%	18.1%	4.3%	6.5%	100%
Eastern	N	74	22	17	3	3	119
	%	62.2%	18.5%	14.3%	2.5%	2.5%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	9	7	6	2	4	28
	%	32.1%	25.0%	21.4%	7.1%	14.3%	100%
East Asia	N	9	3	9	1	4	26
	%	34.6%	11.5%	34.6%	3.8%	15.4%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 4.45 Negative views about educational services

Negative views about educational services							
		Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree	Total
Western	N	104	29	16	3	5	157
	%	66.2%	18.5%	10.2%	1.9%	3.2%	100%
Eastern	N	90	21	14	4	2	131
	%	68.7%	16%	10.7%	3.1%	1.5%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	15	4	2	2	7	30
	%	50.0%	13.3%	6.7%	6.7%	23.3%	100%
East Asia	N	16	4	8	-	1	29
	%	55.2%	13.8%	27.6%	-	3.4%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

The differences between the views of the four groups of nationalities, even if significant in most instances, need to be treated with caution as they are based on relatively small numbers of participants, and thus need to be considered only as being indicative rather than conclusive.

CHAPTER 5: MENTAL HEALTH AND RESILIENCE

5.1 Mental health

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997), a brief questionnaire on the mental health of children and young people, was completed by teachers, parents and students (Secondary). 745 teachers from State (59%), Independent Schools (38%) and Church (4%) schools completed the teachers' version of the SDQ, whilst 673 parents completed the parents' version. In both instances there are slightly more males than females (53%:47%). Most students attend Primary Schools (58%) and early years (28%), with only 14% in Secondary Schools, and most come from the Western group (46%) followed by Eastern European (about 30%), African/Middle Eastern (17%/19%) and East Asia (6%). 123 Secondary School students (57% males and 43% females) completed the students' version (11 years +). Three quarters are from Western/East Europe followed by 17% from Africa/Middle East and 9% from East Asia. The majority of students attend State Schools (54%), followed by Independent Schools (41%). Only 6% of the respondents attend Church Schools (see Chapter 2).

Table 5.1 shows the means and standard deviations of the total difficulties score for the teachers', parents', and students' scores. The scores are highest amongst students (M=10.48), followed by parents (M=7.75) and teachers (M=5.89), suggesting that students are more likely to see themselves as having emotional and behavioural problems than teachers and parents, and parents more than teachers. It is interesting to note the high standard deviations in all three evaluations (SD=5+) showing the high variability in the sample. These overall patterns reflect the trends found in earlier studies with Maltese students but the means of the foreign children are substantially lower, suggesting less difficulties when compared with Maltese peers (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri 2008). It is interesting that in the previous national study Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri(2008) had found that non-Maltese students exhibited more behavioural difficulties than Maltese students in Secondary Schools.

The means for the externalised and internalised problems subscales reflect a similar trend to the overall difficulty score, with the lowest externalised and internalised means for teachers (3.67 and 2.23) going up to 4.54 and 3.24 (parents) and 5.37 and 5.28 (students) respectively. It is interesting to note the high standard deviations (SD=3) suggesting high variability within the respective samples. Both teachers and parents see more behavioural than emotional difficulties whilst the difference in students' evaluations is marginal (Tables 5.2 - 5.3).

Table 5.1 SDQ mean total difficulty scores

Total difficulty scores (0-40)					
Student		Teacher		Parent	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
10.48	5.453	5.89	5.591	7.75	5.292

Table 5.2 SDQ mean externalised scores

Mean externalised scores (0-20)					
Student		Teacher		Parent	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
5.37	3.460	3.67	3.837	4.54	3.311

Table 5.3 SDQ mean internalised scores

Mean internalised scores (0-20)					
Student		Teacher		Parent	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
5.28	3.773	2.23	2.743	3.24	2.929

The cut-off points for the Total Difficulty categories indicate that most of the scores fall within the normal category, though abnormal and borderline categories are more frequent among students' evaluations (Table 5.4). The abnormal category rates in the teachers', parents' and students' evaluations (7.8 - 7.9%) are substantially lower when compared to the 10% rate in international literature as well as Maltese peers (Goodman, 1997; Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri, 2008). On the other hand, Table 5.5 shows that the mean scores on the Prosocial scale are quite close ranging from 8.22 (parents) and 8.15 (students) to 7.50 (teachers); these are very similar to those of Maltese peers (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri, 2008). These findings suggest that foreign children in Malta on the whole enjoy good mental health, more than their Maltese peers whilst exhibiting the same level of prosocial behaviour. The lower prevalence of mental health difficulties may be partly explained by the high SES background of children from Western/ East Europe who consitute close to three fourths of the sample.

Table 5.4 Total difficulty categories (normal, borderline, abnormal)

	Student		Teacher		Parent	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Normal	82	81.2%	595	85.7%	526	86.9%
Borderline	11	10.9%	44	6.3%	32	5.3%
Abnormal	8	7.9%	55	7.9%	47	7.8%
Total	101	100%	694	100%	605	100%

Table 5.5 Mean prosocial scores

Mean prosocial scores (0-10)					
Student		Teacher		Parent	
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
8.15	1.871	7.50	2.339	8.22	1.790

An analysis of the scores by gender (Table 5.6) does not suggest an overall pattern across the three sets of evaluations, but the teachers' clearly suggest that male students are more likely to exhibit more total difficulties and externalised problems and less prosocial behaviour than females. Parents' evaluations also suggest that male students exhibit more externalised problems. On the other hand, both parents' and students' evaluations suggest that female students have higher levels of internalised difficulties than males. These gender differences are similar to those reported amongst Maltese students in earlier studies (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri, 2008).

Table 5.7 shows that according to parents' and teachers' evaluations, Secondary School students exhibit less difficulties and more prosocial behaviour than kindergarten and Primary School children, and that the latter manifest more externalised behaviour problems. It could be that some of these difficulties may be related to the adaptation process, with the older students finding it easier or having had more time to adapt to the Maltese educational and cultural context. The data suggests that State Schools have more problems and less prosocial behaviour than Church and Independent Schools. Table 5.8 shows that there are more total difficulties (student, teacher and parent evaluations, though the latter's difference is not significant), including more externalised (teacher evaluations) and internalised (teacher and student evaluations), and less prosocial (teacher evaluations) behaviours in State Schools. On the other hand

Church Schools have the lowest scores on internalised and externalised behaviours. These findings are similar to those found amongst Maltese students (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri 2008).

Table 5.6 SDQ scores by gender

SDQ scales	Descriptive statistics	Student		Teacher		Parent	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	10.07	11.05	6.90***	5.05***	7.80	5.126
	Std. Dev.	5.518	5.374	5.824	5.493	7.67	5.410
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	8.10	8.21	7.02***	7.92***	8.10	8.34
	Std. Dev.	1.924	1.819	2.519	2.093	1.782	1.812
Externalised (0-20)	Mean	5.38	5.36	4.50***	2.89***	4.76	4.28
	Std. Dev.	3.683	3.163	4.166	3.506	3.252	3.284
Internalised (0-20)	Mean	4.67	6.06	2.36	2.23	3.04	3.47
	St. Dev.	3.248	4.264	2.729	2.829	2.758	3.088

Note: t-test, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.7 SDQ scores by school level

SDQ scales		Student			Teacher			Parent		
		Early years (3-4 yrs)	Primary (5-10 yrs)	Sec-ondary (11-16 yrs)	Early years (3-4 yrs)	Primary (5-10 yrs)	Sec-ondary (11-16 yrs)	Early years (3-4 yrs)	Primary (5-10 yrs)	Sec-ondary (11-16 yrs)
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	-	-	10.41	6.60	6.05	5.28	8.46*	7.84*	6.52*
	Std. Dev.	-	-	5.260	4.888	6.032	5.313	5.417	5.443	4.341
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	-	-	8.17	6.28***	7.64***	7.72***	7.38***	8.31***	8.68***
	Std. Dev.	-	-	1.820	2.601	2.317	2.124	1.965	1.732	1.649
Externalised (0-20)	Mean	-	-	5.32	4.5*	3.77***	2.95*	5.17***	4.72***	3.24***
	Std. Dev.	-	-	3.449	3.670	4.041	3.719	3.368	3.338	2.638
Internalised (0-20)	Mean	-	-	5.28	2.14	2.28	2.40	3.22	3.19	3.37
	Std. Dev.	-	-	3.638	2.489	2.868	2.723	2.920	3.007	2.723

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.8 SDQ scores by school sector

SDQ scales		Student			Teacher			Parent		
		State	Chruch	Independent	State	Church	Independent	State	Church	Independent
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	11.81*	8.17*	9.19*	6.54***	3.83***	5.09***	8.07	7.21	7.00
	Std. Dev.	6.209	4.355	4.130	5.734	3.306	5.388	5.580	4.232	4.480
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	8.14	8.50	8.12	7.14***	8.05***	8.00***	8.19	8.48	8.26
	Std. Dev.	2.023	1.049	1.769	2.440	1.647	2.132	1.819	1.675	1.753
Externalised (0-20)	Mean	5.93	3.83	4.89	4.11***	2.92***	3.06***	4.67	4.17	4.19
	Std. Dev.	3.917	2.229	2.869	4.021	2.962	3.518	3.329	2.697	3.254
Internalised (0-20)	Mean	6.16*	4.00*	4.38*	2.42**	1.00**	2.06**	3.40	3.04	2.88
	Std. Dev.	4.291	3.266	2.848	2.747	1.291	2.801	3.113	2.710	2.402

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Tables 5.9 to 5.12 show that students from Africa/Middle East, when compared to those from other nationalities, experience more social, emotional and behavioural problems with significant differences on both parents' and teachers' evaluations in total difficulty, externalised and internalised sub-scales (though the latter is only a tendency in the case of teachers). An analysis of the individual items also shows significant differences on various internalised and externalised behaviours, indicating that a substantial number of children from Africa/Middle East are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Furthermore, the cut off points for total difficulty score by parents' and teachers' evaluations suggest that 14% of children and young people from Africa/ Middle East have significant social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is not only substantially higher than those of the other nationalities in this study, but also higher than the prevalence rate of Maltese and international students (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri, 2008)[7].

No clear pattern emerged with regards to prosocial behaviour, though teachers' evaluations suggest that Western students have significantly higher scores than African/ Middle Eastern students. Both teachers' and parents' evaluations indicate that students proficient in English exhibit less difficulties, both internalised and externalised, and more prosocial behaviour than those with poor or limited knowledge of English. Similarly teachers' and parents' evaluations show that those with high proficiency in both English and Maltese scored lower on difficulties, particularly externalised behaviours (Table 5.13).

Table 5.9 Total difficulties and prosocial scores by country of origin (teacher evaluations)

Country of Origin	Total difficulty scores (0-40)		Prosocial scores (0-10)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	5.45**	5.521	7.81*	2.280
Eastern	5.83**	5.886	7.49*	2.322
Africa/M.East	7.29**	5.942	7.06*	2.554
East Asia	4.35**	4.277	7.41*	2.061

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

[7] *A recent report by the Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants referred to a high rate of mental health problems amongst asylum seeking migrants in Malta due to 'systemic neglect ' with problems in finding adequate accommodation, lack of access to services and uncertainty about legal status (Bugre, Ultimini & Sammut, 2019).*

Table 5.10 Externalised and internalised scores by country of origin (teacher evaluations)

Country of Origin	Externalised scores (0-20)		Internalised scores (0-20)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	3.38*	3.836	2.03	2.661
Eastern	3.67*	3.832	2.19	2.917
Africa/M.East	4.51*	4.167	2.83	2.957
East Asia	2.47*	2.936	1.86	1.823

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.11 Total difficulties and prosocial scores by country of origin (parent evaluations)

Country of Origin	Total difficulty scores (0-40)		Prosocial scores (0-10)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	7.16***	5.063	8.28	1.719
Eastern	7.46***	5.460	8.01	2.044
Africa/M.East	9.70***	5.465	8.22	1.703
East Asia	7.50***	5.193	8.37	1.550

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.12 Externalised and internalised scores by country of origin (parent evaluations)

Country of Origin	Externalised scores (0-20)		Internalised scores (0-20)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	4.32*	3.288	2.92***	2.777
Eastern	4.57*	3.465	2.91***	2.882
Africa/M.East	5.31*	3.228	4.51***	3.186
East Asia	3.74*	2.832	3.43***	2.774

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.13 Correlation between language proficiency and SDQ difficulty scores

Correlations between language proficiency and SDQ difficulty scores								
	Student language proficiency both (M+E)	Student Total difficulties scale	Teacher Total difficulties scale	Parent Total difficulties scale	Student Externalised scale	Teacher Externalised scale	Parent Externalising scale	Student Internalised scale
Student Language proficiency - Maltese and English	1	0.073	-0.215***	-0.126**	0.121	-0.215**	-0.134**	-0.030*

Note: Correlation, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Children of parents with a low level of education (did not complete secondary education) are more likely to experience more social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, including both externalised (teachers' evaluations) and internalised (parents' evaluations) behaviours, and less likely to show prosocial behaviour (teachers' evaluations) (Table 5.14). Analysis by both parents' work type and status did not show an overall clear picture, but there are indications from parents' evaluations that children of unemployed parents may show internalised behaviour problems and less prosocial behaviour and more externalised behaviour when the partner is unemployed (Tables 5.15 - 5.16). There are indications that a low level of parents' education and work status is related to higher difficulties score and lower prosocial scores, with SES (combined education level and work type) Cronbach alpha of 0.729 (though correlation and linear regression did not show any significant relationship between SDQ scales and SES). This finding is similar to international research including the study with Maltese children (Cefai, Cooper and Camilleri, 2008; OECD, 2018). Socio-economic disadvantage is one of the greatest obstacles to the successful integration of students with a migrant background (OECD, 2018).

Table 5.14 SDQ scores by parents' level of education

SDQ scales		Student			Teacher			Parent		
		Low level	Middle level	High level	Low level	Middle level	High level	Low level	Middle level	High level
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	10.33	10.44	8.97	8.11*	5.98*	5.63*	8.96	8.09	7.45
	Std. Dev.	5.033	5.775	3.912	6.375	5.453	5.589	5.736	5.580	5.079
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	7.25	8.18	8.15	6.52*	7.55*	7.52*	8.28	8.13	8.24
	Std. Dev.	2.062	1.540	1.754	2.865	2.272	2.320	1.691	1.834	1.788
Externalised (0-20)	Mean	7.00	4.54	4.54	5.36**	3.85**	3.32**	5.17	4.60	4.51
	Std. Dev.	3.606	2.873	2.673	4.593	3.718	3.764	3.191	3.330	3.407
Internalised (0-20)	Mean	4.75	5.50	4.71	2.76	2.07	2.38	4.08**	3.45**	2.97**
	Std. Dev.	3.862	4.074	3.487	2.704	2.619	2.833	3.524	3.151	2.650

Note: ANOVA, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5.15 SDQ scores by parents' work status

SDQ scales		Student			Teacher			Parent		
		Active	Unemployed	Homemaker	Active	Unemployed	Homemaker	Active	Unemployed	Homemaker
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	9.95	6.00	11.50	6.07	5.75	5.50	7.55	8.85	8.42
	Std. Dev.	5.153	1.732	6.302	5.891	5.331	4.644	5.132	6.409	5.302
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	8.21	8.25	6.90	7.46	7.35	7.35	8.22	8.25	8.10
	Std. Dev.	1.714	1.258	2.025	2.368	2.263	2.323	1.802	1.806	1.803
Exter-nalised (0-20)	Mean	4.65	4.25	5.10	3.67	3.73	3.72	4.49	4.89	4.91
	Std. Dev.	2.968	1.500	3.247	3.946	3.848	3.586	3.414	3.509	2.907
Inter-nalised (0-20)	Mean	5.29	1.33	5.88	2.38	2.24	1.86	3.06*	4.04*	3.54*
	Std. Dev.	3.949	1.155	3.563	2.787	3.049	2.228	2.718	3.823	3.174

Note: ANOVA, *p<0.1

Table 5.16 SDQ scores by responding parents' partner work status

SDQ scales		Student		Teacher		Parent	
		Employed	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployed	Employed	Unemployed
Total difficulties (0-40)	Mean	9.69	5.50	6.02	5.69	7.79	9.25
	Std. Dev.	5.791	2.121	5.742	4.659	5.405	6.039
Prosocial scale (0-10)	Mean	8.02	10.00	7.15	7.89	8.12	7.98
	Std. Dev.	1.880	.000	2.449	2.011	1.857	2.016
Externalised (0-20)	Mean	4.16	.50	3.80	3.69	4.61	5.58
	Std. Dev.	2.820	.707	4.039	3.868	3.411	3.899
Internalised (0-20)	Mean	5.37	3.33	2.22	2.05	3.13	3.62
	Std. Dev.	3.830	3.055	2.691	1.845	2.941	3.090

Note: t-test, (p<0.1 tendency)

5.2 Resilience

The Child and Youth Resilience Measure (Child & Youth versions) (CYRM-28, Resilience Research Centre, 2009), a measure of children's individual, relational and contextual resilience was completed by 355 students aged 8-16 with 60% attending Primary School and 40% Secondary School. There was a very balanced response in terms of gender, with an almost equal balance. As in the case of the other data collected as part of this study, the largest group of participants come from Western countries (45%) followed by East European (30%), Africa/Middle East countries (18%), down to 7% from East Asia (see Chapter 2).

Tables 5.17 - 5.24 show that the total responses vary from sub-scale to sub-scale, with the highest response in the physical caregiving (N=351) and the lowest in context cultural (N=275), but with the remaining scales being around 300. The means on the eight sub-scales are quite high and close to the top scores on each sub-scale, indicating a high level of resilience on the 8 sub-scales.

Table 5.17 Individual Resilience - Peer Support

Score	N	%
2.00	6	1.9%
3.00	8	2.5%
4.00	40	12.7%
5.00	68	21.7%
6.00	192	61.1%
Total	314	100%

Table 5.18 Individual Resilience - Personal Skills

Score	N	%
9.00	9	3.0%
10.00	11	3.6%
11.00	16	5.3%
12.00	35	11.5%
13.00	54	17.8%
14.00	81	26.6%
15.00	98	32.2%
Total	304	100%

Table 5.19 Individual Resilience - Social Skills

Score	N	%
5.00	1	0.3%
6.00	2	0.6%
8.00	10	3.2%
9.00	15	4.8%
10.00	34	10.9%
11.00	70	22.5%
12.00	179	57.6%
Total	311	100%

Table 5.20. Caregiver Resilience – Physical

Score	N	%
3.00	2	0.6%
4.00	26	7.4%
5.00	60	17.1%
6.00	263	74.9%
Total	351	100%

Table 5.21 Caregiver Resilience – Psycho-Social

Score	N	%
6.00	1	0.3%
9.00	5	1.7%
10.00	6	2.0%
11.00	4	1.3%
12.00	11	3.7%
13.00	21	7.0%
14.00	53	17.7%
15.00	198	66.2%
Total	299	100%

Table 5.22 Context Resilience – Spiritual

Score	N	%
3.00	6	2.0%
4.00	16	5.3%
5.00	50	16.4%
6.00	28	9.2%
7.00	56	18.4%
8.00	48	15.8%
9.00	100	32.9%
Total	304	100%

Table 5.23 Context Resilience – Educational

Score	N	%
2.00	1	0.3%
3.00	5	1.6%
4.00	24	7.7%
5.00	72	23.1%
6.00	210	67.3%
Total	312	100%

Table 5.24 Context Resilience - Cultural

Score	N	%
8.00	2	0.7%
9.00	2	0.7%
10.00	4	1.5%
11.00	17	6.2%
12.00	22	8.0%
13.00	85	30.9%
14.00	72	26.2%
15.00	71	25.8%
Total	275	100%

Female students scored significantly higher than male students on physical caregiving and spiritual resilience, with indications also of higher scores on education (Table 5.25). Younger Primary School students appear to be more resilient than Secondary School students, with significant differences in educational, spiritual and psycho-social caregiving; they also have higher scores on peer support though the difference is not significant (Table 5.26). There do not appear to be any major differences in students' resilience by school type, but students attending Church Schools have the highest scores on individual social skills and the lowest on peer support. However, the number of students in Church Schools was only 10 and therefore this finding needs to be treated cautiously (Table 5.27).

Table 5.25 Resilience scores by gender

Gender			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	Male	13.47	0.122
	Female	13.46	0.133
Individual Peer Support	Male	5.33	0.073
	Female	5.42	0.076
Individual Social Skills	Male	11.17	0.100
	Female	11.27	0.090
Caregiver Physical*	Male	5.58	0.055
	Female	5.74	0.040
Caregiver Psycho-Social	Male	14.30	0.105
	Female	14.28	0.118
Context Spiritual*	Male	6.91	0.143
	Female	7.39	0.136
Context Educational	Male	5.48	0.063
	Female	5.62	0.054
Context Cultural	Male	13.46	0.123
	Female	13.47	0.109

Note: *p<0.05

Table 5.26 Resilience scores by school level

Primary vs Secondary			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	Primary (5-10 years)	13.58	1.548
	Secondary (11-16 years)	13.29	1.601
Individual Peer Support	Primary (5-10 years)	5.45	0.871
	Secondary (11-16 years)	5.26	1.021
Individual Social Skills	Primary (5-10 years)	11.21	1.121
	Secondary (11-16 years)	11.24	1.276
Caregiver Physical*	Primary (5-10 years)	5.69	0.609
	Secondary (11-16 years)	5.63	0.678
Caregiver Psycho-Social*	Primary (5-10 years)	14.43	1.225
	Secondary (11-16 years)	14.07	1.539
Context Spiritual**	Primary (5-10 years)	7.38	1.673
	Secondary (11-16 years)	6.81	1.773
Context Educational**	Primary (5-10 years)	5.65	0.656
	Secondary (11-16 years)	5.41	0.818
Context Cultural	Primary (5-10 years)	13.46	1.508
	Secondary (11-16 years)	13.47	1.070

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 5.27 Resilience scores by school sector

Scores by school sector			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	State	13.41	1.599
	Church	13.30	1.337
	Independent	13.60	1.543
Individual Peer Support*	State	5.45	0.889
	Church	4.90	0.994
	Independent	5.25	1.014
Individual Social Skills**	State	11.09	1.301
	Church	11.60	0.699
	Independent	11.49	0.838
Caregiver Physical	State	5.65	0.663
	Church	5.90	0.302
	Independent	5.67	0.602
Caregiver Psycho-Social	State	14.19	1.563
	Church	14.30	0.823
	Independent	14.51	0.793
Context Spiritual	State	7.28	1.724
	Church	7.30	1.767
	Independent	6.84	1.724
Context Educational	State	5.56	0.755
	Church	5.70	0.483
	Independent	5.52	0.707
Context Cultural	State	13.43	1.451
	Church	14.00	1.118
	Independent	13.49	1.136

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

An interesting picture emerges when results were analysed by students' country of origin (Table 5.28). East Europeans appear to be more resilient on a number of the individual sub-scales, with significant differences in personal and social skills and a similar though not significant trend in peer skills, when compared with children from East Asia. African/Middle Eastern students are the least resilient in caregiving (physical and psycho-social), in contrast to the the other nationalities particularly East Europeans. On the other hand, students from Africa/Middle East are the most resilient in contextual resilience, particularly in spiritual resilience (in contrast to Western) and in education (in contrast to East Asians). East Europeans again appear to be resilient in education and potentially in cultural context but not in spiritual resilience (Table 5.28).

Table 5.28 Resilience scores by country of origin

Nationality			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills**	Western	13.48	1.456
	Eastern	13.82	1.295
	Africa/M.East	13.27	1.859
	East Asia	12.59	1.501
Individual Peer Support	Western	5.30	1.038
	Eastern	5.54	0.788
	Africa/M.East	5.38	0.953
	East Asia	5.17	0.834
Individual Social Skills*	Western	11.09	1.286
	Eastern	11.54	0.818
	Africa/M.East	11.22	1.270
	East Asia	11.00	1.113
Caregiver Physical**	Western	5.66	0.624
	Eastern	5.81	0.415
	Africa/M.East	5.48	0.849
	East Asia	5.61	0.783
Caregiver Psycho-Social**	Western	14.40	1.114
	Eastern	14.53	0.985
	Africa/M.East	13.84	2.024
	East Asia	14.47	0.612
Context Spiritual*	Western	6.96	1.748
	Eastern	7.12	1.700
	Africa/M.East	7.73	1.550
	East Asia	7.41	1.681
Context Education	Western	5.51	0.819
	Eastern	5.67	0.537
	Africa/M.East	5.67	0.653
	East Asia	5.27	0.703
Context Cultural	Western	13.33	1.419
	Eastern	13.73	1.140
	Africa/M.East	13.43	1.471
	East Asia	13.20	1.240

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 5.29 shows that in general children of parents with a low level of education (less than Secondary School education) tend to score lower across the resilience subscales but the difference is only significant on the caregiving scales (physical and psycho-social caregiving). Analysis by parents' work status, shows a similar pattern, particularly in individual social skills and education, but differences are not significant so conclusions are only tentative (Tables 5.30 - 5.31). Various analyses on children whose parents' partners are unemployed, indicate that such children scored lower on individual resilience, particularly social skills, with similar indications in psycho-social caregiving. A clearer pattern emerges when both parents' work status is combined. Children with one or both parents employed are more individually resilient (personal, social, peer skills) and more relationally resilient (psycho-social) than those whose both parents are unemployed (Table 5.32).

Table 5.29 Resilience scores by parents' level of education

Parents' level of education			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	Low level education	12.83	2.038
	Middle level education	13.60	1.490
	High level education	13.46	1.526
Individual Peer Support	Low level education	5.31	1.182
	Middle level education	5.42	0.845
	High level education	5.33	1.001
Individual Social Skills	Low level education	11.23	1.013
	Middle level education	11.25	1.145
	High level education	11.40	0.878
Caregiver Physical	Low level education	5.54	0.660
	Middle level education	5.75	0.570
	High level education	5.76	0.563
Caregiver Psycho-Social**	Low level education	13.58	1.929
	Middle level education	14.45	1.034
	High level education	14.61	0.843
Context Spiritual*	Low level education	7.62	1.557
	Middle level education	7.34	1.514
	High level education	6.80	1.886
Context Educational	Low level education	5.38	0.768
	Middle level education	5.60	0.723
	High level education	5.53	0.725
Context Cultural	Low level education	13.00	1.044
	Middle level education	13.50	1.476
	High level education	13.63	1.049

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 5.30 Resilience scores by parents' work status

Parents' work status			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	Active	13.48	1.492
	Unemployed	12.87	1.922
	Homemaker	13.42	1.816
Individual Peer Support	Active	5.36	0.947
	Unemployed	5.06	1.144
	Homemaker	5.46	0.859
Individual Social Skills*	Active	11.33	1.017
	Unemployed	10.71	1.532
	Homemaker	11.38	1.056
Caregiver Physical	Active	5.71	0.605
	Unemployed	5.65	0.671
	Homemaker	5.86	0.351
Caregiver Psycho-Social	Active	14.46	1.141
	Unemployed	14.00	1.506
	Homemaker	14.44	1.227
Context Spiritual	Active	7.01	1.654
	Unemployed	7.25	1.770
	Homemaker	7.52	2.143
Context Educational*	Active	5.59	0.679
	Unemployed	5.29	0.686
	Homemaker	5.31	1.123
Context Cultural	Active	13.50	1.291
	Unemployed	13.33	1.291
	Homemaker	13.46	1.693

Note: *p<0.1 (tendency)

Table 5.31 Resilience scores by parents' partner work status

Parents' partner work status			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills	Employed	13.51	1.441
	Unemployed	12.73	1.849
Individual Peer Support*	Employed	5.46	0.823
	Unemployed	5.00	1.000
Individual Social Skills**	Employed	11.39	0.962
	Unemployed	10.67	1.231
Caregiver Physical	Employed	5.72	0.596
	Unemployed	5.67	0.617
Caregiver Psycho-Social*	Employed	14.50	1.088
	Unemployed	13.78	1.481
Context Spiritual	Employed	6.87	1.707
	Unemployed	7.25	1.960
Context Educational	Employed	5.53	0.705
	Unemployed	5.45	0.688
Context Cultural	Employed	13.54	1.233
	Unemployed	14.00	1.118

Note: *p<0.1 (tendency), **p<0.01

Table 5.32 Resilience scores by both parents' work status combined

Both parents' work status combined			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Individual Personal Skills*	Both employed	13.46	1.366
	One employed, one unemployed	13.17	1.697
	None of them employed	11.33	2.082
Individual Peer Support*	Both employed	5.41	0.870
	One employed, one unemployed	5.54	0.776
	None of them employed	4.25	0.957
Individual Social Skills**	Both employed	11.28	1.040
	One employed, one unemployed	11.50	0.674
	None of them employed	9.50	1.291
Caregiver Physical	Both employed	5.68	0.648
	One employed, one unemployed	5.80	0.414
	None of them employed	5.40	0.894
Caregiver Psycho-Social*	Both employed	14.55	1.065
	One employed, one unemployed	14.20	1.033
	None of them employed	13.00	2.000
Context Spiritual	Both employed	6.79	1.654
	One employed, one unemployed	6.82	1.940
	None of them employed	7.50	1.732
Context Educational	Both employed	5.52	0.689
	One employed, one unemployed	5.64	0.674
	None of them employed	5.25	0.500
Context Cultural	Both employed	13.43	1.234
	One employed, one unemployed	13.70	1.252
	None of them employed	14.00	1.732

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Some of the findings in this section however, need to be treated cautiously due to the lack of reliability of some of the resilience subscales in this study, particularly the physical, educational and cultural resilience which have very low reliability. The context subscale in particular has very low reliability and findings on contextual resilience are only very tentative suggestions.

CHAPTER 6: SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING I (QUANTITATIVE STUDY)

The Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire measuring students' views on their family, locality, friends, school, leisure time, economic wellbeing and life satisfaction, including living in Malta, was completed by 374 students (see Chapter 2). Sixty percent attend Primary School (8-11 years) and 40% Secondary School (12-16 years). There was a good gender balance, 49.7% (males) to 50.3% (females). About 70% attend State Schools, 26% Independent Schools and 3% Church Schools. Eleven percent said they have a disability or condition. The largest group comes from Western countries (44%) followed by East European countries (31%), African/Middle Eastern countries (19%) and East Asian countries (7%). Only 10% of the participants were born in Malta. The respondents are more likely to be found in the Northern Harbour, South Eastern and Northern regions, but whilst the largest number of Westerns are found in the Northern Harbour and Northern regions, most East Europeans are found in the Northern region; a substantial number of Africans/Middle Eastern are also found in the Southeast region. The most frequently used home languages are English (16%), Italian (9%), Arabic (6%) and Maltese (3%); 18% use another language. English is the most common language used during lessons at school (31%) followed by Maltese (12%), Italian (3%) and Arabic (0.5%). The same pattern emerged with regards to language used with friends, with the main language of communication being English (30%) followed by Maltese (7%), Italian (6%) and Arabic (2%); 7% communicated in other languages (Tables 6.1 - 6.2).

Table 6.1 Demographic characteristics of the student sample

Age	N	%
Primary Level (8-11 years)	225	60.3%
Secondary Level (12 – 16 years)	148	39.7%
Total	373	100%
Gender	N	%
Male	186	49.7%
Female	188	50.3%
Total	374	100%
Country of Origin	N	%
Western	153	43.5%
Eastern	108	30.7%
Africa/M. East	67	19%
East Asia	24	6.8%
Total	352	100%
School Sector	N	%
State	260	70%
Church	11	2.9%
Independent	103	27.5%
Total	374	100%

Table 6.2 Language used by students at home, at school and with friends

	Home language		Language during lessons		Language with friends	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Maltese	38	3.4%	124	12.1%	73	7.1%
English	188	15.9%	312	30.5%	309	30.2%
Italian	91	8.5%	32	3.1%	56	5.5%
Arabic	63	5.5%	5	0.5%	22	2.2%
Other	219	17.9%	24	2.3%	73	7.1%

6.1 Home and Family

The vast majority of students live in the same home and only 5% live in two homes with different adults; similarly 96% live in a house/apartment with their family with the remaining 4% residing in a centre or with carers; the latter are more likely to be of Secondary School age. The vast majority live with their biological parents (98% with their mother, 87% with their father and 7% with mother's partner). Thirteen percent of students do not have any siblings, 43% have one, 21% have two, 11% three and 7% four, the mean average being 1.81. Students from Africa/ Middle East live in significantly bigger families (45% live in families of 6 or larger) and have more siblings (54% have 3 or more siblings) (Tables 6.3 - 6.6).

Table 6.3 Children living in one or different homes

	N	%
I always or usually live in the same home	353	95.4%
I live in two homes with different adults	17	4.6%
Total	370	100%

Table 6.4 Type of home children live in

Which of the following best describes the home you live in most of the time?		
	N	%
I live with my family in a house/apartment in the community	352	96.4%
I live with my family in a centre, facility or institution	9	2.5%
I live with my carers in a house/apartment in the community	3	0.8%
I live with my carers in a centre, facility or institution	1	0.3%
Total	365	100%

Table 6.5 Number of siblings

In total, how many brothers and sisters do you have?		
Brothers or sisters	N	%
0	47	12.9%
1	156	42.9%
2	75	20.6%
3	39	10.7%
4	27	7.4%
5	9	2.5%
6	4	1.1%
7	3	0.8%
9	2	0.5%
10	1	0.3%
11	1	0.3%
Total	364	100%

Table 6.6 Number of family members by country of origin

How many people usually live at home (including yourself)?						
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia	Total
1	N	1	-	-	-	1
	%	0.7%	-	-	-	0.3%
2	N	7	4	1	1	13
	%	4.7%	3.8%	1.5%	4.3%	3.8%
3	N	30	25	3	6	64
	%	20.3%	23.8%	4.5%	26.1%	18.7%
4	N	69	47	11	9	136
	%	46.6%	44.8%	16.7%	39.1%	39.8%
5	N	26	23	21	3	73
	%	17.6%	21.9%	31.8%	13%	21.3%
6	N	10	5	19	2	36
	%	6.8%	4.8%	28.8%	8.7%	10.5%
7	N	2	-	8	2	12
	%	1.4%	-	12.1%	8.7%	3.5%
8	N	-	1	3	-	4
	%	-	1%	4.5%	-	1.2%
9	N	2	-	-	-	2
	%	1.4%	-	-	-	0.6%
12	N	1	-	-	-	1
	%	0.7%	-	-	-	0.3%
Total	N	148	105	66	23	342
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

The great majority of Primary School students (83%) are completely satisfied with the people who they live with, with female respondents more satisfied than males (Table 6.7). The percentage is 58% among Secondary School students but a 10 point scale is used instead of 5 with Primary School children. Moreover, almost another 30% of Secondary School students also scored high on the satisfaction scale. Over 90% of the students agree that there are people who care about them, that if they have a problem, their family will help, have a good time in their family and feel safe at home (Tables 6.8 – 6.10).

Table 6.7 Satisfaction with people they live with by gender

How satisfied are you with the people that you live with?		
	Mean	Std. deviation
Male	3.75	0.510
Female	3.86	0.370

Note: p<0.1

Table 6.8 Satisfaction with people they live with (Primary)

How satisfied are you with the people that you live with? (LP)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-
1	-	-
2	5	2.1%
3	35	14.6%
Completely satisfied	199	83.3%
Total	239	100%

Table 6.9 Satisfaction with people they live with (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with the people that you live with? (S)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-
1	1	0.8%
2	-	-
3	-	-
4	4	3.1%
5	2	1.6%
6	2	1.6%
7	7	5.5%
8	13	10.2%
9	24	18.9%
Completely satisfied	74	58.3%
Total	127	100%

Table 6.10 Satisfaction with family and family members

	There are people in my family who care about me		If I have a problem, people in my family will help me		We have a good time together in my family		I feel safe at home	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	4	1.1%	7	1.9%	3	0.8%	3	0.8%
I agree a little	3	0.8%	10	2.7%	3	0.8%	3	0.8%
I agree somewhat	3	0.8%	11	3%	16	4.3%	9	2.4%
I agree a lot	41	11.1%	65	17.6%	77	20.9%	51	13.7%
I totally agree	315	85.1%	275	74.3%	269	73.1%	301	81.1%
Don't know	4	1.1%	2	0.5%	-	-	4	1.1%
Total	370	100%	370	100%	368	100%	371	100%

The great majority of students (84%) agree that parents listen to what they have to say and take them seriously but 12% are not so sure or do not agree. Students from East Asia believe less that their parents listen to them (Table 6.11). Similarly, whilst around 80% agree that they and their parents make decisions about life together, about 15% are hesitant or do not agree (Table 6.12).

Table 6.11 Children's perception on whether parents listen to them by country of origin

My parents listen to me and take what I say seriously		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	3.49	0.963
Eastern	3.58	0.779
Africa/M.East	3.29	1.042
East Asia	3.04	1.334
Total	3.45	0.964

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 6.12 Children's participation in family decisions

	My parents listen to me and take what I say seriously		My parents and I make decisions about my life together	
	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	9	2.4%	8	2.2%
I agree a little	9	2.4%	15	4.1%
I agree somewhat	27	7.3%	31	8.4%
I agree a lot	92	24.9%	68	18.5%
I totally agree	218	59.1%	224	60.9%
Don't know	14	3.8%	22	6%
Total	369	100%	368	100%

When asked whether they have been hit or called names by their siblings in the past month more than 60% answered in the negative but 11% to 13% answered that it happened more than three times (Table 6.13). About 90% of the Primary School respondents are satisfied with family members who do not live with them. The satisfaction rate is around three fourths amongst Secondary School students (Tables 6.14 - 6.15).

Table 6.13 Frequency of hitting and name calling by siblings

How often in the last month have you been:				
	Hit by your brothers or sisters (not including fighting or play fighting)		Called unkind names by your brothers or sisters	
	N	%	N	%
Never	230	64.4%	222	62.7%
Once	49	13.7%	35	9.9%
Two or three times	27	7.6%	38	10.7%
More than three times	40	11.2%	46	13.0%
Don't know	11	3.1%	13	3.7%
Total	357	100%	354	100%

Table 6.14 Satisfaction with other people in the family (Primary)

How satisfied are you with the other people in your family (the ones that you don't live with)?		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	7	3.1%
1	7	3.1%
2	7	3.1%
3	47	21%
Completely satisfied	156	69.6%
Total	224	100%

Table 6.15 Satisfaction with other people in the family (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with the other people in your family (the ones that you don't live with)?		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	1	0.8%
1	-	-
2	1	0.8%
3	1	0.8%
4	3	2.3%
5	7	5.4%
6	7	5.4%
7	13	10.1%
8	15	11.6%
9	27	20.9%
Completely satisfied	54	41.9%
Total	129	100%

Almost 90% of Primary School students are satisfied with the home they live in, whilst the rate is about 80% in the case of Secondary School students. The great majority (83%) live in a two to three bedroom apartment. Half of the participants live in an apartment with two bathrooms and another 18 have three bathrooms; only four participants said they have no bathroom at home. Slightly more than half share their bedroom with someone else but the remaining half have their own bedroom. Children from Africa/ Middle East (75%) and East Asia (67%) are more likely to share their room with other people than students from other regions. The great majoirty of students have their own bed but 15% share their bed with someone else, the latter are more likely to be from Africa/Middle East (27%) and East Asia (22%). The vast majority of students have a place where to study (Tables 6.16 - 6.19).

Table 6.16 Satisfaction with the house they live in (Primary)

How satisfied are you with the home that you live in? (LP)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	3	1.3%
1	3	1.3%
2	21	8.8%
3	58	24.4%
Completely satisfied	153	64.3%
Total	238	100%

Table 6.17 Satisfaction with the house they live in (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with the home that you live in? (S)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	1	0.8%
1	-	-
2	2	1.5%
3	-	-
4	2	1.5%
5	5	3.8%
6	7	5.3%
7	7	5.3%
8	22	16.7%
9	29	22.0%
Completely satisfied	57	43.2%
Total	132	100%

Table 6.18 Own sleeping room by country of origin

Do you sleep in a room on your own or do you share a room?					
		Western	Eastern	Africa/ M. East	East Asia
I sleep in a room on my own	N	92	50	16	8
	%	60.5%	47.2%	24.6%	33.3%
I sleep in a room that I share with other people	N	60	56	49	16
	%	39.5%	52.8%	75.4%	66.7%
Total	N	152	106	65	24
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: p<0.001

Table 6.19 Own bed or shared by country of origin

Do you have your own bed?					
		Yes I have my own bed	No I share a bed	No I don't have a bed	Total
Western	N	135	17	0	152
	%	88.8%	11.2%	0.0%	100%
Eastern	N	95	11	0	106
	%	89.6%	10.4%	0.0%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	47	18	2	67
	%	70.1%	26.9%	3.0%	100%
East Asia	N	18	5	0	23
	%	78.3%	21.7%	0.0%	100%

Note: p<0.01

On the whole these findings about children's satisfaction with their homes compare quite well with those of Maltese children (Cefai and Galea, 2016); in some instances suggesting better family life for foreign children such as feeling safer and having more space at home. On the other hand the more frequent complaint by some of the foreign children that their siblings pick on or hit them may indicate cultural differences.

6.2 Friends

Tables 6.20 - 6.21 show that more than 90% of the Primary School students are satisfied with their friends, with 61% completely satisfied; similarly the majority of Secondary School students are also satisfied with their friends, though the frequency of completely satisfied is substantially lower than that of Primary School peers. Three fourths of the students agree that they have enough friends but about 20% are not so sure or disagree (Table 6.22). These figures are quite similar with those of Maltese children (Cefai and Galea, 2016) though it appears that foreign children may have less friends than Maltese peers. Only one third agree that their closest friends are Maltese, while about two thirds say that their closest friends are non-Maltese even though they live in Malta. More than one third (38%) have their close friends in other countries. Students who are proficient in Maltese are more likely to have Maltese friends when compared to those with poor knowledge of Maltese (Tables 6.23 - 6.24).

Table 6.20 Satisfaction with friends (Primary)

How satisfied are you with your friends? (LP)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	3	1.3%
1	4	1.7%
2	13	5.5%
3	72	30.4%
Completely satisfied	145	61.2%
Total	237	100%

Table 6.21 Satisfaction with friends (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with your friends? (S)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-
1	-	-
2	-	-
3	1	0.8%
4	-	-
5	4	3.1%
6	7	5.5%
7	20	15.6%
8	25	19.5%
9	29	22.7%
Completely satisfied	42	32.8%
Total	128	100%

Table 6.22 Having enough friends

I have enough friends		
	N	%
I do not agree	25	6.8%
I agree a little	18	4.9%
I agree somewhat	32	8.7%
I agree a lot	85	23.0%
I totally agree	195	52.8%
Don't know	14	3.8%
Total	369	100%

Table 6.23 Nationality of close friends

	My closest friends are Maltese		My closest friends are not Maltese but live in Malta		My closest friends do not live in Malta	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	122	33.2%	58	16.2%	145	41%
I agree a little	57	15.5%	16	4.5%	27	7.6%
I agree somewhat	58	15.8%	43	12%	34	9.6%
I agree a lot	44	12%	61	17%	43	12.1%
I totally agree	78	21.2%	171	47.6%	90	25.4%
Don't know	9	2.4%	10	2.8%	15	4.2%
Total	368	100%	359	100%	354	100%

Table 6.24 Means of Maltese close friends

	Maltese Language Profeciency	Mean	Std. Deviation
My closest friends are Maltese	No knowledge	1.46	1.515
	Poor	1.80	1.609
	Adequate	2.31	1.546
	Very good	219	1.570
	Excellent	2.50	1.915
	Total	1.80	1.584

Note: $p<0.05$

Over 80% of students agree that their friends are usually nice to them and that they and their friends get along well together. Female students are more likely than males to agree that their friends are usually nice to them. Three fourths have a friend to support them if they have a problem but 21% only partially agree or do not agree; Primary School students are more likely to agree with this statement. Thirty percent can meet their friends outside school every day or almost every day and another 30% once or

twice a week, but 24% less than once a week and 10% never see their friends; these are more likely to come from East Asia. Students from Africa/Middle East are more likely to meet their friends more frequently, one of the reasons being that those living in the Open Centres are more likely to come from this ethnic group (Tables 6.25 - 6.28).

Table 6.25 Getting along with friends

	My friends are usually nice to me		Me and my friends get along well together		If I have a problem I have a friend who will support me	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	7	1.9%	6	1.6%	11	3%
I agree a little	9	2.5%	5	1.4%	25	6.8%
I agree somewhat	40	10.9%	35	9.5%	40	11%
I agree a lot	87	23.7%	103	28%	65	17.8%
I totally agree	217	59.1%	215	58.4%	207	56.7%
Don't know	7	1.9%	4	1.1%	17	4.7%
Total	367	100%	368	100%	365	100%

Table 6.26 Having nice friends by gender

My friends are usually nice to me		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	3.31	0.952
Female	3.52	0.911

Note: **p<0.05

Table 6.27 Having supportive friends being supportive by age

If I have a problem I have a friend who will support me		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Primary (5-10 years)	3.41	1.121
Secondary (11-16 years)	3.19	1.168

Note: **p<0.1

Table 6.28 Seeing friends outside school by country of origin

How often do you see your friends (not including when you are at school)?								
		Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day	Total
Western	N	15	33	50	10	18	23	149
	%	10.1%	22.1%	33.6%	6.7%	12.1%	15.4%	100%
Eastern	N	6	23	32	9	16	20	106
	%	5.7%	21.7%	30.2%	8.5%	15.1%	18.9%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	5	12	17	5	14	12	65
	%	7.7%	18.5%	26.2%	7.7%	21.5%	18.5%	100%
East Asia	N	9	8	4	-	3	0	24
	%	37.5%	33.3%	16.7%	-	12.5%	0.0%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

6.3 School

The great majority of Primary School students (88%) are satisfied with their lives as a student; very few are not satisfied at all or very little satisfied; similarly about 95% are satisfied with the things they learn at school. Three fourths are also satisfied with the other children in their class. Whilst only 26% of Secondary School students are completely satisfied with their lives as students, two thirds are relatively satisfied. Although only one third are completely satisfied with the things they learn at school, about three fourths of Secondary School students appear to be relatively satisfied, with a very low level of dissatisfaction. They are relatively less satisfied with their peers in the classroom, but one fourth are completely satisfied and up to about 60% are relatively satisfied. These figures are quite similar to the views of Maltese children (Cefai and Galea, 2016). Secondary School students from Africa/Middle East are more satisfied with things they learn at school. On the other hand, students attending State Secondary Schools are less satisfied with their life as a student, with things they learn at school and with other children in their class than those attending Independent Schools (Tables 6.29 - 6.32).

Table 6.29 Satisfaction with life at school (Primary)

	Your life as a student		Things you have learned at school		Other children in your class	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	3	1.3%	-	-	5	2.1%
1	4	1.7%	2	0.9%	5	2.1%
2	21	8.9%	12	5.2%	45	19.1%
3	78	33.2%	59	25.5%	79	33.6%
Totally satisfied	129	54.9%	158	68.4%	101	43%
Total	235	100%	231	100%	235	100%

Table 6.30 Satisfaction with life at school (Secondary)

	Your life as a student		Things you have learned at school		Other children in your class	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	1	0.8%	2	1.5%	2	1.5%
1	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%
2	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	4	3.1%
3	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	3	2.3%
4	6	4.6%	2	1.5%	5	3.8%
5	8	6.1%	6	4.6%	10	7.7%
6	9	6.9%	3	2.3%	6	4.6%
7	14	10.7%	14	10.8%	18	13.8%
8	26	19.8%	26	20%	25	19.2%
9	30	22.9%	32	24.6%	23	17.7%
Completely satisfied	34	26%	42	32.3%	33	25.4%
Total	131	100%	130	100%	130	100%

Table 6.31 Satisfaction with things learned at school by country of origin

How satisfied are you with the things you have learned at school?		
	Mean	Std. deviation
Western	7.83	2.180
Eastern	8.66	1.516
Africa/M. East	9.20	1.196
East Asia	8.90	0.994
Total	8.36	1.872

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 6.32 Satisfaction with life at school by school sector

How satisfied are you with the following things in your life?			
		Mean	Std. deviation
My closest friends are Maltese	State	7.56	2.450
	Church	8.50	1.225
	Independent	8.34	1.409
	Total	7.95	2.026
Things you have	State	7.92	2.464
	Church	8.17	1.472
	Independent	8.71	1.287
	Total	8.29	1.998
Other children in your class	State	7.15	2.780
	Church	8.33	1.506
	Independent	8.02	1.878
	Total	7.59	2.397

Note: $p<0.1$

The majority of the students feel very safe (55%) or quite safe (33%) on their way to and from school. Similarly 82% feel safe at school but 5% do not and another 9% feel only somewhat safe. The great majority believe that their teachers care about them, help them when they have a problem, and listen to them and take them seriously. One third believe that they have opportunities at school to make decisions, in contrast to 10% who do not think so. Primary School and female students are more likely to report that teachers care about them, listen to them, help them with problems, and that their peers help them when they have problems (Tables 6.33 - 6.36). These findings are similar to those with Maltese students (Cefai and Galea, 2016).

Table 6.33 Feelings of safety to and from school

How safe do you feel on your way to and from school?		
	N	%
Not at all safe	6	1.6%
Not very safe	21	5.8%
Quite safe	119	32.6%
Very safe	199	54.5%
Don't know	20	5.5%
Total	365	100%

Table 6.34 Students' relationship with teachers

	I feel safe at school		My teachers care about me		If I have a problem at school my teachers will help me		My teachers listen to me and take me seriously		At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	6	1.6%	4	1.1%	5	1.4%	10	2.7%	15	4.1%
I agree a little	13	3.6%	14	3.8%	11	3.0%	17	4.6%	23	6.3%
I agree somewhat	33	9%	33	8.9%	28	7.6%	38	10.4%	48	13.2%
I agree a lot	64	17.5%	82	22.2%	93	25.3%	93	25.4%	71	19.6%
I totally agree	235	64.2%	225	61%	221	60.2%	193	52.7%	170	46.8%
Don't know	15	4.1%	11	3%	9	2.5%	15	4.1%	36	9.9%
Total	366	100%	369	100%	367	100%	366	100%	363	100%

Table 6.35 Students' relationship with teachers by school type

How much do you agree with each of these sentences?			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
My teachers care about me*	Primary	3.64	0.787
	Secondary	3.21	1.042
If I have a problem at school my teachers will help me**	Primary	3.60	0.795
	Secondary	3.29	0.996
If I have a problem at school other children will help me***	Primary	3.11	1.233
	Secondary	2.84	1.153
There are a lot of arguments between children in my class	Primary	2.03	1.694
	Secondary	2.06	1.502
My teachers listen to me and take me seriously****	Primary	3.46	1.023
	Secondary	3.14	1.085
At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me	Primary	3.29	1.320
	Secondary	3.28	1.125
I feel safe at school	Primary	3.55	0.958
	Secondary	3.46	0.967

Note: *p<0.001, **p<0.01, ***p<0.05, ****p<0.01

Table 6.36 Students' relationship with teachers by gender

How much do you agree with each of these sentences?			
		Mean	Std. Deviation
My teachers care about me*	Male	3.38	0.956
	Female	3.57	0.877
If I have a problem at school my teachers will help me*	Male	3.37	0.910
	Female	3.58	0.865
If I have a problem at school other children will help me*	Male	2.86	1.228
	Female	3.15	1.173
There are a lot of arguments between children in my class	Male	1.96	1.522
	Female	2.13	1.708
My teachers listen to me and take me seriously*	Male	3.21	1.082
	Female	3.45	1.023
At school I have opportunities to make decisions about things that are important to me	Male	3.17	1.255
	Female	3.40	1.225
I feel safe at school *	Male	3.41	0.999
	Female	3.62	0.914

Note: *p<0.05

About one third of the students agree that the other children will help them at school but 13% hardly think so. The students appear to be divided about the behaviour of their peers in class. Whilst 44% do not agree (or agree a little) that there are several arguments between their peers in their classroom, 30% believe there are lots of arguments. There is more fighting in the school as a whole with 28% agreeing that there is fighting on a daily basis or almost on a daily basis and another 20% at least once a week.

Both classroom arguments and school fighting are more frequent in State Schools when compared to Church or Independent Schools (Tables 6.37 - 6.39).

Table 6.37 Relationships with peers

How much do you agree with each of the below:				
	If I have a problem at school other children will help me		There are a lot of arguments between children in my class	
	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	14	3.9%	81	22.4%
I agree a little	32	8.8%	77	21.3%
I agree somewhat	68	18.7%	67	18.5%
I agree a lot	88	24.2%	46	12.7%
I totally agree	146	40.2%	64	17.7%
Don't know	15	4.1%	27	7.5%
Total	363	100%	362	100%

Table 6.38 Frequency of fighting at school

How often are there fights between children in your school?		
	N	%
Never	71	19.4%
Less than once a week	77	21.0%
At least once a week	75	20.5%
Most days	63	17.2%
Every day	38	10.4%
Don't know	42	11.5%
Total	366	100%

Table 6.39 Frequency of fighting at school by school sector

How often are there fights between children in your school?								
		Never	Less than once a week	At least once a week	Most days	Every day	Don't know	Total
State	N	48	47	49	50	34	25	253
	%	19.0%	18.6%	19.4%	19.8%	13.4%	9.9%	100%
Church	N	5	3	1	1	0	1	11
	%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%	100%
Independent	N	18	27	25	12	4	16	102
	%	17.6%	26.5%	24.5%	11.8%	3.9%	15.7%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

When asked about the experience of bullying at their school, 9% reported that in the last month they have been hit more than three times and another 8% two or three times. Similarly 14% had been called unkind names more than three times, another 11% two or three times, while 10% had been left out by other children in their class more than three times in the past four weeks, and 8% two or three times. Calling unkind names is more frequent in particular regions, namely Southern Harbour and Northern regions (Tables 6.40 - 6.41). These bullying rates are substantially lower than those experienced by Maltese peers (Cefai and Galea, 2016) but they constitute a major cause for concern for a considerable number of foreign students. Minority students are more at risk of discriminatory bullying with short and long term educational and health implications (Downes and Cefai, 2016).

Table 6.40 Frequency of school bullying

How often in the last month have you been bullied?						
	Hit by other children in your school (not including fighting or play fighting)		Called unkind names by other children in your school		Left out by other children in your class	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	226	62.6%	200	55.2%	223	62.1%
Once	57	15.8%	60	16.6%	53	14.8%
Two or three times	28	7.8%	39	10.8%	30	8.4%
More than three times	34	9.4%	52	14.4%	36	10%
Don't know	16	4.4%	11	3%	17	4.7%
Total	361	100%	362	100%	359	100%

Table 6.41 Called unkind names by region

How often are you called unkind names by other children in your school?							
		Never	Once	Two or three times	More than three times	Don't know	Total
Southern Harbour	N	15	4	2	5	0	26
	%	57.7%	15.4%	7.7%	19.2%	0.0%	100%
Northern Harbour	N	69	27	9	11	6	122
	%	56.6%	22.1%	7.4%	9.0%	4.9%	100%
South Eastern	N	21	2	0	3	1	27
	%	77.8%	7.4%	0.0%	11.1%	3.7%	100%
Western	N	7	5	3	1	0	16
	%	43.8%	31.3%	18.8%	6.3%	0.0%	100%
Northern	N	67	19	22	31	2	141
	%	47.5%	13.5%	15.6%	22.0%	1.4%	100%
Gozo & Comino	N	19	3	3	1	2	28
	%	67.9%	10.7%	10.7%	3.6%	7.1%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

6.4 Locality

The vast majority of Primary School children are satisfied with the area where they live with 70% being completely satisfied. The level of satisfaction amongst Secondary School students is relatively lower but their rate of dissatisfaction is very low (Tables 6.42 - 6.43). When asked about the frequency of fights in their area, 12% said it happened every day or most days whilst another 5% say it happens at least once a week (Table 6.44). Table 6.45 shows that more than three fourths feel safe when they walk around the area they live in with half of the respondents feeling totally safe. Seven percent however, do not feel so safe whilst another 10% only partially agree. Almost two thirds of the participants agree that there are enough places to play and have a good time in the area where they live but almost one in five do not agree or only a little; in the South Eastern and Northern regions there are relatively more such places. More than half agree that there are people in the local area who will help but 18% are not sure. The majority of students think that adults are kind to children in the area where they live. When asked whether they have opportunities in their local area to participate in decisions about things that are important to children, there were mixed reactions: one third agreed, almost one third said they do not know, whilst almost one fourth do not agree/agree a little. Those living in the Northern region are more likely to report such opportunities (Table 6.46). Thirty-nine percent agree that adults in their area listen to them and take them seriously in contrast to 19% who hardly think so (Tables 6.45). When compared to Maltese students, foreign children appear to feel safer in their area and to have more sufficient places where to play (Cefai and Galea, 2016).

Table 6.42 Satisfaction with the area where they live (Primary)

How satisfied are you with the area where you live? (LP)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	1	0.4%
1	3	1.3%
2	16	6.8%
3	52	22%
Completely satisfied	164	69.5%
Total	236	100%

Table 6.43 Satisfaction with the area where they live (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with the area where you live? (S)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	1	0.8%
1	-	-
2	1	0.8%
3	-	-
4	3	2.3%
5	4	3.1%
6	6	4.6%
7	11	8.4%
8	24	18.3%
9	25	19.1%
Completely satisfied	56	42.8%
Total	131	100%

Table 6.44 Fighting in the local area

How often are there fights between people in your local area?		
	N	%
Never	175	48.1%
Less than once a week	45	12.4%
At least once a week	19	5.2%
Most days	16	4.4%
Every day	27	7.4%
Don't know	82	22.5%
Total	364	100%

Table 6.45 Sense of safety and belonging in the local area

How much do you agree with each of these sentences about your local area?												
	I feel safe when I walk around in the area I live in		In my area there are enough places to play and have a good time		If I have a problem there are people in my local area who will help me		Adults in my local area are kind to children		In my local area I have opportunities to participate in decisions about things that are important to children		Adults in my local area listen to children and take them seriously	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	15	4.1%	32	8.7%	45	12.3%	16	4.4%	57	15.5%	34	9.3%
I agree a little	13	3.5%	37	10.1%	21	5.7%	13	3.5%	30	8.2%	36	9.8%
I agree somewhat	35	9.5%	47	12.8%	45	12.3%	39	10.6%	42	11.4%	45	12.3%
I agree a lot	106	28.7%	70	19%	67	18.3%	73	19.9%	55	15%	61	16.6%
I totally agree	185	50.1%	165	44.8%	131	35.8%	151	41.1%	69	18.8%	82	22.3%
Don’t know	15	4.1%	17	4.6%	57	15.6%	75	20.4%	114	31.1%	109	29.7%
Total	369	100%	368	100%	366	100%	367	100%	367	100%	367	100%

Table 6.46 Places to play and have a good time by region

In my area there are enough places to play and have a good time		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Southern Harbour	2.27	1.534
Northern Harbour	2.78	1.511
South Eastern	3.29	1.152
Western	3.09	1.485
Northern	3.15	1.295
Gozo & Comino	2.68	1.188
Total	2.95	1.398

Note: $p<0.05$

6.5 Economic wellbeing

On the whole the economic wellbeing of foreign students compares quite well with that of Maltese students. Table 6.47 shows that whilst the majority are not worried about how much money their family has, however, 15% are. Primary School students appear to worry more often than Secondary School students, whilst students from Africa/Middle East also worry more frequently than children from other counties (20% worry frequently or always) (Tables 6.48 - 6.49).

Table 6.47 Concern about how much money family has

How often do you worry about how much money your family has?		
	N	%
Never	156	43.0%
Sometimes	121	33.3%
Often	19	5.2%
Always	34	9.4%
Don't know	33	9.1%
Total	363	100.0%

Table 6.48 Concern about family money by age

How often do you worry about how much money your family has?							
		Never	Some-times	Often	Always	Don't know	Total
Primary (5-10 years)	N	93	68	7	22	27	217
	%	42.9%	31.3%	3.2%	10.1%	12.4%	100%
Secondary (11-16 years)	N	63	53	12	12	6	146
	%	43.2%	36.3%	8.2%	8.2%	4.1%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 6.49 Concern about family money by country of origin

How often do you worry about how much money your family has?							
		Never	Some-times	Often	Always	Don't know	Total
Western	N	69	48	10	13	9	149
	%	46.3%	32.2%	6.7%	8.7%	6.0%	100%
Eastern	N	48	39	3	8	6	104
	%	46.2%	37.5%	2.9%	7.7%	5.8%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	25	16	5	8	11	65
	%	38.5%	24.6%	7.7%	12.3%	16.9%	100%
East Asia	N	7	14	0	2	1	24
	%	29.2%	58.3%	0.0%	8.3%	4.2%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Fifty four percent of the children's families have one car whilst 22% have two, and 17% do not own any means of motor transport. The great majority of families have two or more computers at home (80%); 5% do not possess any computer, mostly Africans/ Middle Eastern and East Asians (Tables 6.50 - 6.51). Three quarters of Primary School students and more than half of Secondary School students are completely satisfied with the things they have, with only few being unsatisfied (Tables 6.52 - 6.53). Primary School and African/Middle Eastern students are less satisfied with the things they have (Table 6.54). The vast majority of students always have enough food to eat each day; a very small number of students particularly from Africa/Middle East said that food to eat is available only sometimes (Table 6.55). The great majority of children (90%+) have access to basic necessities, such as clothes in good condition (97%), enough money for school activities (96%), access to internet (98%), sport equipment (92%), two pairs of shoes in good condition (95%), school equipment (99%) and fresh school lunch (95%). About 2% to 5% of the respondents lack these basic necessities. Eighty four percent have regular pocket money and 71% a mobile (Table 6.56).

Table 6.50 List of items family has

	Does your family (who you live with) own a car, van or truck?		How many computers (including laptops and tablets) does your family own?	
	N	%	N	%
No	62	16.8%	19	5.1%
One	197	53.5%	53	14.3%
Two	79	21.5%	72	19.5%
Three or more	30	8.2%	226	61.1%
Total	368	100.0%	370	100.0%

Table 6.51 Number of computers by country of origin

How many computers (including laptops and tablets) does your family own?						
		None	One	Two	More than two	Total
Western	N	5	19	23	106	153
	%	3.3%	12.4%	15%	69.3%	100%
Eastern	N	3	17	31	56	107
	%	2.8%	15.9%	29%	52.3%	100%
Africa/M.East	N	7	9	9	41	66
	%	10.6%	13.6%	13.6%	62.1%	100%
East Asia	N	2	3	7	11	23
	%	8.7%	13%	30.4%	47.8%	100%
Total	N	17	48	70	214	349
	%	4.9%	13.8%	20.1%	61.3%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 6.52 Satisfaction with things they have (Primary)

How satisfied are you with all the things you have? (LP)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-
1	3	1.3%
2	9	3.8%
3	45	19.1%
Completely satisfied	179	75.8%
Total	236	100%

Table 6.53 Satisfaction with things they have (Secondary)

How satisfied are you with all the things you have? (S)		
	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-
1	-	-
2	-	-
3	1	0.8%
4	3	2.3%
5	4	3%
6	4	3%
7	3	2.3%
8	17	12.8%
9	29	21.8%
Completely satisfied	72	54.1%
Total	133	100%

Table 6.54 Satisfaction with things they have by country of origin

How satisfied are you with all the things you have?		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	3.74	0.628
Eastern	3.79	0.444
Africa/M East	3.50	0.762
East Asia	3.50	0.650
Total	3.70	0.612

Note: p<0.05

Table 6.55 Enough food to eat by country of origin

There is enough to eat at home when I'm hungry					
		No	Sometimes	Yes	Total
Western	N	2	7	141	150
	%	1.3%	4.7%	94%	100%
Eastern	N	-	4	96	100
	%	-	4%	96%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	-	10	51	61
	%	-	16.4%	83.6%	100%
East Asia	N	-	2	21	23
	%	-	8.7%	91.3%	100%

Note: p<0.05

Table 6.56 List of basic necessities

List of basic necessities			
		Yes	No
Clothes in good condition	N	357	10
	%	97.3%	2.7%
Enough money for school trips and activities	N	353	15
	%	95.9%	4.1%
Access to the internet at home	N	351	12
	%	96.7%	3.3%
The equipment/things you need for sports and hobbies	N	334	31
	%	91.5%	8.5%
Two pairs of shoes in good condition	N	349	20
	%	94.6%	5.4%
The equipment/things you need for school (e.g. books, stationery)	N	359	8
	%	97.8%	2.2%
Regular fresh school lunch	N	348	18
	%	95.1%	4.9%
Pocket money/money to spend on yourself	N	307	60
	%	83.7%	16.3%
A mobile phone	N	258	104
	%	71.3%	28.7%

6.6 Leisure time

The vast majority of both Primary and Secondary School students are satisfied with the free time they have like their Maltese peers (Cefai and Galea, 2016). Table 6.57 shows that more than one third of the children help around the house in their free time every day or most times of the week; half of the children from Africa/Middle East help every day (Table 6.58). About 40% take care of their siblings every day or most days of the week. About 15% work or help the family (family business, farm) every day or most days of the week, whilst 10% do other work for money or for food (not with family). Only 10% attend extra classes outside school every day or most days of the week but the vast majority study and do homework every day or most days of the week; very few children never do homework or do it less than once a week. Nine percent go to religious places or services every day or most times of the week, 20% go once or twice a week, whilst about half do not go at all. Children from Africa/Middle East are more likely to attend religious services more frequently (Table 6.59).

Half of the respondents watch TV every day or most days of the week but one quarter hardly watch any TV. About 60% do frequent exercise or sports activities (from 3 to 7 days per week); another one fourth once or twice a week, but almost 15% hardly do any sports or exercise. This contrasts with the lifestyle of Maltese children who spend considerably more time watching TV but less time engaged in physical exercise (Cefai and Galea, 2016). About 70% spend leisure time with family every day or most days of the week. Forty per cent play or spend time outside every day or most days of the week but 36% do so infrequently or not all (7%); the latter are more likely to be found amongst participants from Africa/Middle East and East Asia (Table 6.60). Half of the participants use social media every day or most days of the week, another 20% do so from one to four days a week but 20% never do so. Almost half play electronic games every day or most days of the week. More than one in five students do nothing/rest every day (Table 6.57).

Table 6.57 Use of leisure time

		Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day	Total
Helping around the house (household chores)	N	37	44	103	44	27	108	363
	%	10.2%	12.1%	28.4%	12.1%	7.4%	29.8%	100%
Taking care of brothers or sisters or other family members	N	112	28	38	29	24	124	355
	%	31.5%	7.9%	10.7%	8.2%	6.8%	34.9%	100%
Working with family (e.g. family business, family farm)	N	238	36	22	12	9	43	360
	%	66.1%	10%	6.1%	3.3%	2.5%	11.9%	100%
Doing other work (not with family) for money or food	N	287	23	12	5	5	31	363
	%	79.1%	6.3%	3.3%	1.4%	1.4%	8.5%	100%
Doing extra classes/ tuition when not at school	N	215	27	71	8	10	28	359
	%	59.9%	7.5%	19.8%	2.2%	2.8%	7.8%	100%
Doing homework and studying	N	5	11	16	34	73	225	364
	%	1.4%	3%	4.4%	9.3%	20.1%	61.8%	100%
Going to religious places or services	N	174	72	73	10	13	20	362
	%	48.1%	19.9%	20.2%	2.8%	3.6%	5.5%	100%
Watching TV	N	42	49	39	45	37	153	365
	%	11.5%	13.4%	10.7%	12.3%	10.1%	41.9%	100%
Playing, sports or doing exercise	N	31	21	90	68	40	113	363
	%	8.5%	5.8%	24.8%	18.7%	11%	31.1%	100%
Relaxing, talking or having fun with family	N	8	18	39	46	56	197	364
	%	2.2%	4.9%	10.7%	12.6%	15.4%	54.1%	100%
Playing or spending time outside	N	25	40	92	62	45	98	362
	%	6.9%	11%	25.4%	17.1%	12.4%	27.1%	100%
Using social media (on a computer, tablet or phone)	N	73	33	37	38	40	144	365
	%	20%	9%	10.1%	10.4%	11%	39.5%	100%
Playing electronic games (on a computer or other device)	N	43	37	70	43	52	117	362
	%	11.9%	10.2%	19.3%	11.9%	14.4%	32.3%	100%
Doing nothing/resting (apart from sleeping at night)	N	110	55	58	38	22	80	363
	%	30.3%	15.2%	16%	10.5%	6.1%	22%	100%

Table 6.58 Helping around the house by country of origin

How often do you usually spend time helping around the house (household chores)?								
		Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day	Total
Western	N	15	17	52	17	13	35	149
	%	10.1%	11.4%	34.9%	11.4%	8.7%	23.5%	100%
Eastern	N	13	10	34	14	5	30	106
	%	12.3%	9.4%	32.1%	13.2%	4.7%	28.3%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	4	8	9	7	5	32	65
	%	6.2%	12.3%	13.8%	10.8%	7.7%	49.2%	100%
East Asia	N	4	6	3	3	2	6	24
	%	16.7%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	8.3%	25.0%	100%

Note: **p<0.05

Table 6.59 How often children go to religious places or services by country of origin

How often do you usually go to religious places or services?								
		Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day	Total
Western	N	72	25	33	4	2	13	149
	%	48.3%	16.8%	22.1%	2.7%	1.3%	8.7%	100%
Eastern	N	60	28	13	1	0	4	106
	%	56.6%	26.4%	12.3%	0.9%	0.0%	3.8%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	23	12	18	0	9	3	65
	%	35.4%	18.5%	27.7%	0.0%	13.8%	4.6%	100%
East Asia	N	8	6	7	3	0	0	24
	%	33.3%	25.0%	29.2%	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	100%

Note: p<0.001

Table 6.60 Playing or spending time outside by country of origin

How often do you usually spend time playing or spend time outside?								
		Never	Less than once a week	Once or twice a week	Three or four days a week	Five or six days a week	Every day	Total
Western	N	8	20	38	25	13	43	147
	%	5.4%	13.6%	25.9%	17.0%	8.8%	29.3%	100%
Eastern	N	3	9	22	26	15	31	106
	%	2.8%	8.5%	20.8%	24.5%	14.2%	29.2%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	5	7	21	5	13	14	65
	%	7.7%	10.8%	32.3%	7.7%	20.0%	21.5%	100%
East Asia	N	4	4	8	1	3	4	24
	%	16.7%	16.7%	33.3%	4.2%	12.5%	16.7%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

6.7 Life satisfaction

Table 6.61 shows that around 90% of Primary School students are satisfied (70% totally satisfied) with various aspects of their lives including how safe they feel, their health, their life as a whole and the way they look (70%). However, 7% do not feel safe whilst 11% are not satisfied with their life as a whole.

Table 6.61 Life satisfaction (Primary School)

How satisfied are you with each of the following things in your life?								
	How safe do you feel		The way that you look		Your health		Your life as a whole	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	3	1.3%	2	0.9%	1	0.4%	7	3%
1	-	-	4	1.7%	1	0.4%	-	-
2	13	5.6%	15	6.4%	9	3.9%	19	8.2%
3	52	22.3%	50	21.5%	53	22.7%	46	19.9%
Completely satisfied	165	70.8%	162	69.5%	169	72.5%	159	68.8%
Total	233	100%	233	100%	233	100%	231	100%

On the other hand, the level of life satisfaction amongst Secondary School students is relatively lower even if the majority still feel satisfied and those who are not satisfied are very low. Around one half of the students are completely satisfied with how safe they feel, the freedom they have and their health; 37% with the way they look, 41% with what may happen later in life, 38% with how they are listened to by adults, and 47% with their life as a whole. Another one third or more are also satisfied with these areas of their lives, though not completely. Female students are less satisfied than males with the way they look while African/Middle Eastern students are less satisfied with the freedom they have (Tables 6.62 - 6.65).

Table 6.62 Life satisfaction I (Secondary School)

How satisfied are you with each of the following things in your life?								
	How safe do you feel		The freedom you have		The way that you look		What may happen later in life	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%	2	1.6%
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	2	1.6%
3	1	0.8%	2	1.5%	2	1.5%	1	0.8%
4	-	-	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	3	2.3%
5	6	4.5%	2	1.5%	4	3.1%	5	3.9%
6	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	6	4.6%	5	3.9%
7	7	5.3%	11	8.3%	15	11.5%	10	7.8%
8	18	13.6%	17	12.9%	22	16.8%	25	19.5%
9	27	20.5%	30	22.7%	30	22.9%	22	17.2%
Completely satisfied	72	54.5%	67	50.8%	49	37.4%	53	41.4%
Total	132	100%	132	100%	131	100%	2	100%

Table 6.63 Life satisfaction II (Secondary School)

How satisfied are you with each of the following things in your life?						
	How you are listened to by adults in general		Your health		Your life as a whole	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%
1	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%
2	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	1	0.8%
4	1	0.8%	2	1.5%	2	1.6%
5	7	5.4%	3	2.3%	4	3.1%
6	5	3.8%	6	4.6%	2	1.6%
7	11	8.5%	4	3.1%	9	7%
8	24	18.5%	19	14.5%	14	10.9%
9	32	24.6%	32	24.4%	34	26.4%
Completely satisfied	49	37.7%	64	48.9%	61	47.3%
Total	130	100%	131	100%	129	100%

Table 6.64 Satisfaction with the way they look by gender

How satisfied are you in your life with the way that you look?		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	8.70	1.568
Female	8.16	2.111

Note: $p<0.1$

Table 6.65 Satisfaction with their freedom by country of origin

How satisfied are you in your life with the freedom that you have?		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	9.22	1.010
Eastern	9.00	1.500
Africa / M.East	8.05	2.591
East Asia	8.56	1.236
Total	8.90	1.585

Note: $p<0.05$

Tables 6.66 - 6.67 show that about one half or more of the respondents are totally satisfied with 'the way they are' (53%), feel positive about their future (50%) and are happy with their lives (57%). Around one third or more completely agree that 'they are good at managing their daily responsibilities' (30%) that people are 'generally friendly towards them' (35%), that they have 'enough choice how they can spend their time' (36%) and that they are learning a lot (40%). The rate of those who are not satisfied or hardly satisfied is very low, from less than 1% to 5% particularly in their learning, the friendly attitude of people around them and the way they are. Maltese students scored somewhat higher on a number of these items, suggesting they are relatively happier, more positive about the future and learning a lot (Cefai and Galea, 2016). Compared to other students, African/Middle Eastern students have a higher sense of spiritual belief, with 81% claiming that spirituality is a source of strength in contrast to 47% to 65% amongt students from other countries (Table 6.68).

Table 6.66 Student satisfaction with life and self I

How much do you agree with each of the following sentences about your life as a whole?								
	I like being the way I am		I feel positive about the future		I am happy with my life		I am good at managing my daily responsibilities	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-	1	0.8%	1	0.8%	-	-
1	-	-	1	0.8%	-	-	2	1.6%
2	-	-	-	-	1	0.8%	-	-
3	1	0.8%	2	1.6%	2	1.5%	1	0.8%
4	4	3.1%	3	2.3%	5	3.8%	4	3.1%
5	3	2.3%	8	6.2%	2	1.5%	7	5.5%
6	3	2.3%	6	4.7%	2	1.5%	7	5.5%
7	7	5.4%	8	6.2%	6	4.6%	19	14.8%
8	21	16.2%	9	7%	14	10.8%	19	14.8%
9	22	16.9%	26	20.2%	23	17.7%	31	24.2%
Completely satisfied	69	53.1%	65	50.4%	74	56.9%	38	29.7%
Total	130	100%	129	100%	130	100%	128	100%

Table 6.67 Student satisfaction with life and self II

How much do you agree with each of the following sentences about your life as a whole?						
	People are generally friendly towards me		I have enough choice about how I spend my time		I feel that I am learning a lot at the moment	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	-	-	1	0.8%	3	2.3%
1	-	-	1	0.8%	1	0.8%
2	-	-	1	0.8%	2	1.6%
3	2	1.5%	3	2.3%	2	1.6%
4	5	3.8%	2	1.6%	6	4.7%
5	5	3.8%	6	4.7%	8	6.3%
6	7	5.4%	5	3.9%	3	2.3%
7	11	8.5%	9	7%	15	11.7%
8	23	17.7%	21	16.3%	14	10.9%
9	31	23.8%	34	26.4%	28	21.9%
Completely satisfied	46	35.4%	46	35.7%	46	35.9%
Total	130	100%	129	100%	128	100%

Table 6.68 Spiritual beliefs as a source of strength by country of origin

Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me					
		No	Sometimes	Yes	Total
Western	N	38	38	72	148
	%	25.7%	25.7%	48.6%	100%
Eastern	N	20	26	53	99
	%	20.2%	26.3%	53.5%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	5	6	47	58
	%	8.6%	10.3%	81%	100%
East Asia	N	3	5	15	23
	%	13.0%	21.7%	65.2%	100%

Note: $p<0.01$

6.8 Living in Malta

When participants were asked about the experience of living in Malta, the majority (60%) agree that adults in Malta care about children but 23% do not know. When asked whether Malta is a safe place for children to live, three quarters agree with only about 5% having doubts on this (Table 6.69). Students from Africa/Middle East (76%) are more likely to perceive Malta as a safe place than other nationalities (Table 6.70). The majority of students agree that Maltese adults respect children's rights, but 11% disagree or agree just a little whilst 19% do not know. More than half of the respondents (54%) agree that in Malta children are allowed to participate in decisions affecting their lives but 28% do not know whilst 7% expressed disagreement, the latter more likely to be found amongst children from Western and East Asian groups (6.71). The majority know their rights as children in Malta, but 8% expressed disagreement, whilst 21% did not have enough knowledge to answer this question. Female students are more likely than males to perceive that adults in Malta care about children, that in Malta children are allowed to participate in decisions affecting their lives and that they know their rights as a child in Malta (Table 6.72). When asked whether they are worried about what is happening in Malta when they hear the news, they had mixed reactions, with about 30% being worried, 33% not worrying and 20% not knowing (Table 6.69).

Table 6.69 Children's beliefs about Malta

	Adults in Malta care about children		Malta is a safe place for children to live		I think Maltese adults respect children's rights	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	8	2.2%	6	1.6%	9	2.5%
I agree a little	14	3.8%	11	3%	21	5.7%
I agree somewhat	39	10.7%	40	10.9%	37	10.1%
I agree a lot	93	25.5%	86	23.5%	79	21.6%
I totally agree	127	34.8%	190	51.9%	151	41.3%
Don't know	84	23%	33	9%	69	18.9%
Total	365	100%	366	100%	366	100%
	In Malta children are allowed to participate in decisions that are important to them		I worry about what I hear about what is happening in Malta (e.g. news)		I know what my rights are as a child in Malta	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
I do not agree	12	3.3%	64	17.5%	9	2.5%
I agree a little	12	3.3%	55	15%	19	5.2%
I agree somewhat	41	11.3%	60	16.4%	31	8.5%
I agree a lot	72	19.8%	47	12.8%	68	18.7%
I totally agree	125	34.4%	65	17.8%	161	44.2%
Don't know	101	27.8%	75	20.5%	76	20.9%
Total	363	100%	366	100%	364	100%

Table 6.70 Malta is a safe place to live by country of origin

Malta is a safe place for children to live		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western	3.31	1.115
Eastern	3.63	0.869
Africa / M.East	3.71	0.924
East Asia	3.04	1.083
Total	3.47	1.024

Note: $p<0.01$

Table 6.71 In Malta children are allowed to participate in decisions by country of origin

In Malta children are allowed to participate in decisions that are important to them								
		I do not agree	I agree a little	I agree somewhat	I agree a lot	I totally agree	Don't know	Total
Western	N	8	8	14	30	48	41	149
	%	5.4%	5.4%	9.4%	20.1%	32.2%	27.5%	100%
Eastern	N	2	-	11	25	39	28	105
	%	1.9%	-	10.5%	23.8%	37.1%	26.7%	100%
Africa/ M.East	N	1	3	6	10	23	22	65
	%	1.5%	4.6%	9.2%	15.4%	35.4%	33.8%	100%
East Asia	N	1	-	8	4	6	5	24
	%	4.2%	-	33.3%	16.7%	25%	20.8%	100%

Note: $p<0.05$

Table 6.72 Perceptions about living in Malta by gender

How much do you agree with each of these statements about living in Malta?			
		Yes	No
Adults in Malta care about children	Male	3.44	1.193
	Female	3.68	1.180
In Malta, children are allowed to participate in decisions that are important to them*	Male	3.48	1.339
	Female	3.77	1.188
I know what my rights are as a child in Malta*	Male	3.46	1.246
	Female	3.74	1.140

Note: p<0.1, *p<0.05

CHAPTER 7: SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING II (QUALITATIVE STUDY)

7.1 Methodology

Five focus groups were carried out with 36 foreign children living in Malta. Four focus groups were carried out with children attending State Schools: two in Primary Schools, one at a Middle School and another one at a Secondary School. The fifth focus group was carried out with children who are temporarily living in Open Reception Centres together with their families. The focus groups were held between May and September 2018. Ethical approval was sought from the University of Malta, the Education Directorates and the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS). Consent was also obtained from Head of Schools, the coordinators of the Open Reception Centres, the parents of the children as well as the children themselves. All names of participants have been changed and no names of schools or centres are included.

Participants

Four schools with a relatively large number of foreign children, two Primary and two Middle/Secondary Schools, were identified for the study. The participants in the four school based focus groups were selected by the respective Head of Schools. The Heads were asked to select 10 students for each of the four focus groups in their schools taking into consideration students' gender and country of origin to reflect the population of foreign children within the respective schools. In the case of the two Primary Schools all identified students participated in the focus groups. With regards to Secondary Schools, only six Middle School and four Secondary School students out of 10 turned up for the focus groups. It was advised by the respective Schools to go ahead with the focus group rather than set up a new appointment. The four school focus groups were a mix of both economic and asylum seeking migrants, including EU and East Europeans, African and the Middle Eastern, Southeast Asians, and other countries such as New Zealand, China, India and Pakistan. Seventeen female and 11 male students attended the four school focus groups. The focus groups were held at the respective schools (Table 7.1).

Another focus group was held with children and young people residing at the Open Reception Centres. Eight participants aged 12-18 (four males, four females) from North and sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, who have been living in Malta for less than a year (approximately between three and nine months) were identified by the Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers (AWAS) to participate in the focus group (Table 7.1). The focus groups were held at the respective Open Centres by the research team.

Table 7.1 Participants in the focus groups

Focus Group (FG)	Venue	No. of participants	Age range	Gender	Nationality
FG 1	State Primary School A	10	10 – 11 years	4 females; 6 males	Italy, New Zealand, England, Wales, China, Syria
FG 2	State Primary School B	8	10 – 11 years	7 females; 1 male	Slovenia, Venezuela, Pakistan, Latvia,India/ Sudan, Arab, Macedonia, US (raised in South Africa)
FG 3	State Middle School	6	12 – 13 years	3 females; 3 males	Syria, Pakistan, Thailand, Venezuela
FG 4	State Secondary School	4	14 - 15 years	3 females; 1 male	Macedonia, Nigeria, Turkey
FG 5	Open Centres	8	12 – 18 years	4 females; 4 males	Libya, Syria, Sudan

Instrument and procedure

The focus groups explored participants' views and experiences of their wellbeing, education and social inclusion focusing on such systems as home, school, peer group, and the community. Use was made of a child-centred, qualitative research framework developed by Fattore, Fegter and Hunner-Kreisel (2014). Asking children directly about their own sense of subjective wellbeing is important to understand whether a specific environment allows children to develop to the best of their potential (Ben-Arieh, Dinisman & Rees, 2017).

The focus group started with a mapping exercise, where in small groups, the participants made use of writing, drawing, colouring or pasting pictures, to produce a map illustrating important aspects of their lives at home, school and in their community, as well as what

they like and do not like in their lives. Once they finished working on their maps they were asked to share and discuss their maps with the rest of the groups. The participants later went back to their small groups and used an imaginary wand on their maps to mark the things they would like to change. They then talked about the changes they would like to see in their personal and social lives. The second stage of the focus groups focused on how the participants see themselves as children and young people living in Malta. They were asked to write three statements on a piece of paper about what it is like living in Malta. The common topics were then included on a poster made by a whole group. The session was concluded by processing participants' thoughts and feelings about the focus group exercise. Participants were also invited to suggest any feedback or questions to help improve the study.

Analysis

Two trained researchers led each focus group with one leading the session and the other observing, taking notes and providing support and prompts as required. The maps produced in each focus group and the transcripts of participants describing and explaining their maps were then analysed thematically to identify the common themes across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis sought to capture the participants' views on the various aspects of their experiences and wellbeing at school, at home and in their community, with various themes identified through an iterative process of coding, grouping into themes and reviewing the themes. These were then discussed with the third researcher in the project as part of the verification and validation process.

Themes

Five areas of exploration (home, language, school, community and wellbeing) were developed from the data, with each area consisting of a number of themes and sub-themes (Table 7.2). Some of the themes and sub-themes developed from the Open Centre group differed from those of four school groups. In this respect the following analysis will distinguish between foreign children living in Maltese communities and foreign children living in Open Centres where required.

Table 7.2 Major themes developed from the focus groups

Area	Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Understandings of 'home'	1.1 Family as strong supporting networks (school based groups) 1.2 Place and identity [Home as country of origin] (Open Centres group)	
2. Language issues	2.1 Maltese language as a main barrier (school based groups) 2.2 English language as a barrier (Open Centre group)	
3. School	3.1 School as a place for learning and future success 3.2 Friends 3.3 Frequent Bullying	3.2.1 Friends as a source of belonging and support (school based groups) 3.2.2 Lack of friends as a source of vulnerability (Open Centre group)
4. Community	4.1 Mixed feelings of safety in the community and neighbourhood (school based groups) 4.2 Poor living conditions for children in Open Centres	
5.Subjective wellbeing	5.1 Positive subjective wellbeing (school based groups) 5.2 Negative subjective wellbeing (Open Centre group) 5.3 Resilience and coping (Open Centre group)	

7.2 Understanding of 'home'

7.2.1 Family is Home (school based groups)

For the majority of foreign children their homes represented a 'safe haven' where they felt safe from danger and bullying:

> "What makes me feel good at home...feeling safe" (Zehra, 15 year old female).

Their perception of 'home' was based on the relationships amongst the different family members who provided a significant emotional foundation in their lives. During the discussions, participants reported strong, positive family relationships among parents and siblings, which provided a caring and supportive environment where children felt valued and happy and where they could be themselves:

> "Family is the most important" (Rusul, 13 year old male).

> "Our family, they are important because they are the ones who taught us almost everything, our home where we live" (Pravat, 12 year old male).

> " I feel loved and taken care of (at home) " (Raim, 10 year old female).

> "You can be yourself, your family don't care about things and they know you" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

The physical presence of family members and spending quality time together appeared to be an important aspect of the children's subjective wellbeing. In cases where children suffer emotionally, they experienced prolonged separation from family members who live abroad:

> "I enjoy spending time cooking with my mother, playing with my dogs and watching movies with my father… also spending time with him because I rarely get to see him" (Silvija, 11 year old female).

> "What makes me happy at home is playing with my brother, playing with my family but today I was a bit sad because my brother was in Sicily and my dad is not here" (Atfah, 10 year old female).

7.2.2 Home as country of origin (Open Centre group)

Children living in Open Centres provided a strikingly different view of 'home'. They referred to the host country (Malta) as "Malta ġmiel" ("Malta is a nice place") and a place for refuge and an opportunity for better living and a better life:

> "When you come and live here [Malta], you get rid of the wars" (Aziza, 13 year old female).

However, the majority did not perceive the host country as their 'home'. The short-

term duration since arrival in Malta may also be a contributing factor for such feelings. Instead, they exhibited a strong sense of identity with their country of origin:

> "We drew our country first because our countries are important…it's where we were born and where our parents were born" (Sami, 12 year old male).

Researcher: Does it feel like home here (host country)? P2 & P6: No, no.
Researcher: Where is home for you? P4: My country (country of origin)

Continuous reference to their country of origin as 'our country' reflects the strong sense of belonging and attachment to their country of origin. As already mentioned, the participants living in Open Centres had been less than a year in Malta, they may still need some time to settle down in their new country, particularly as they are still living in the Open Centre waiting for a decision on their future. These children have been forcefully displaced from their country of origin or 'home' and have lost everything that was familiar to them. Given the fact that they cannot return to their countries may induce the feeling of being homesick (Shaheen & Miles, 2017). Furthermore, as highlighted further on in this chapter they were not happy with the living conditions at the centre where they were living.

7.3 Language Issues

7.3.1 Maltese language as a main barrier (school based groups)

The issue of language was brought up by most participants in the school based focus groups. They made particular reference to Maltese as a language barrier and mentioned that this can sometimes prevent them from understanding what their teachers are saying during lessons.

> "Sometimes there are teachers who don't speak in English and they say they are going to translate it in English but then they don't" (Umuto, 15 year old female).

> "The teacher, she always talks in Maltese, always. And then we are asking, can you please talk in English? "Yes, sorry", and she says one sentence in English and then in Maltese again, and when I tell her she tells me to use the notes" (Zehra, 15 year old female).

Although most of these participants were able to speak in English, they remarked that this was generally not enough and Maltese was also needed in order to overcome the language barrier in Malta.

> "If you know English the next thing is to learn Maltese" (Dvesma, 10 year old female).

The students found difficulty in learning Maltese, even more so due to there being a sudden leap from when they start learning the basic Maltese alphabet, to suddenly being asked to complete more challenging tasks:

> "In Maltese, I hate how they teach me the alphabet for 4 years… they teach this word and this word, and then suddenly the comprehension… It gets really hard because it's a sudden change" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

Having good friends at school, however, was found to play an important role in helping them cope with Maltese:

> "I like that I have friends and I learn new things because I don't know a lot of Maltese and they help me" (Souma, 10 year old male).

> "Sometimes when I have difficulties in Maltese, I ask Anastasia, Hannah or Amber" (Dvesma, 11 year old female).

Some students noted that generally the Maltese people around them are not very understanding when they could not understand Maltese.

> "I don't understand Maltese that much so I would like if people were more understanding" (Zehra, 15 year old female).

7.3.2 English language as a barrier (Open Centre group)

On the other hand, children living in Open Centres, who are more proficient in Maltese, had difficulty in communicating adequately in English. They considered their poor knowledge of English as a barrier, both socially and economically. They, for instance, mentioned that sometimes they were unable to communicate with others at school or in hospital without the help of an interpreter since the other persons could not understand Maltese referring to the great number of foreign people living in Malta.[8]

> "When something happens and we need to go to hospital we need someone to come with us [interpreter] because not everyone speaks Maltese" / "Meta jinqalalna xi ħaġa bilfors irid jiġi xi ħadd magħna [interpreter]… mhux kulħadd jitkellem bil-Malti" (Abia, 13 year old female).

> "I have diabetes and have to go to hospital every month and I find it a problem to communicate." / "Għandi z-zokkor u irid immur il-*hospital* kull xahar u problema…biex nifhimhom" (Abd al Alim, 16 year old male).

The lack of communication in English also prevented them from feeling included both at school and when practicing their hobbies such as sports:

> "At school I cannot speak to everyone because they don't understand [Maltese], so I feel excluded." / "L-iskola ma nistax nitkellem magħhom għax ma jifhmunix u jwarrbuni" (Lufti, 12 year old male).

> "If they speak in English, I don't understand anything. For example, during football they more often speak English rather than Maltese." / "Jekk jitkellmu bl-Ingliż ma nifhem xejn… eżempju fil-futbol jitkellmu aktar bl-Ingliż milli bil-Malti" (Saleem, 18 year old male).

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[8] *A study with migrant adults in Malta found similar experiences amongst parents being unable to communicate effectively with schools (Aditus, 2013).*

7.4 School

7.4.1 School as a place of learning and future success

Participants in the school focus groups noted the importance of school as a vehicle for their future success including their career and financial prospects:

> "In school teachers help you decide what job you can get when you grow up which would determine how much money you would get and how happy you are." (Anderej, 14 year old male).

> "No school would be a problem because without school you will not find any work." (Kannika, 12 year old female).

The participants living in Open Centres also underlined the advantages of going to school in order to fulfil their aspirations of achieving success and having a better future. In fact, all participants had high job aspirations and mentioned careers such as architecture, engineering, medicine and law enforcement.

Researcher: "U x'tip ta professjoni tixtiequ meta tikbru - x'xogħol tixtiequ?"
[Researcher: "What kind of profession would you like to do when you grow up? What kind of work do you want?"

P4: "*Designer* tad-djar" - "perit"
P2: "Avukat"
P1: "Tabiba"
P7: "Professional footballer"
P3: "Tabib"
P6: "Engineer"
P8: "Police"

[P4: "House designer" - "architect"
P2: "Lawyer"
P1: "Doctor"
P7: "Professional footballer"
P3: "Doctor"
P6: "Engineer"
P8: "Police"

School based group participants emphasised the importance of school to learn different subjects, particularly languages, and are generally happy with their current education in Malta. This was especially noted amongst those coming from developing countries and conflict ridden countries:

> "Getting better in English and Maltese because I'm already good at maths" (Silvija, 11 year old female).

> "School is basically the second home" (Wei, 10 year old male).

> "I like that my school is very safe and my education is very good." (Manuela, 11 year old female)

Participants at the Open Centres also perceived learning at school as both important and fun, and they enjoy both the lessons as well as the school outings. Some also mentioned that schools in Malta are better than the schools in their home countries:

> "The schools (here) are better." / "L-iskejjel aħjar" (Aziza, 13 year old female).

7.4.2 School Friends

Friends as a source of belonging and support (school based groups)

The students believe that school is an important place where to make new friends, and having good friends is seen as one of the best things about going to school:

> "Going to school is a chance to make friends, socialise." (Mirjana, 14 year old female).

> "At home I feel loved and at school I have friends." (Atfah, 10 year old female).

Friends are especially important for foreign children to feel accepted and included in their schools and making friends with other foreign children at school is considered as a way to cope with living in Malta as a foreigner, due to their shared experiences:

> "My friends and my class accept me and are my friends." [Child had joined the school this year] (Krisha, 11 year old female).

> "What makes me happy... at school it's being with my friends, playing with my friends…" (Souma, 10 year old male).

> "There are a lot of foreign kids, you can find things in common and you can relate." (Umuto, 15 year old female).

Lack of Maltese friends as a source of vulnerability (Open Centre group)

The majority of children living in Open Centres claimed that they do not have Maltese friends, with only a couple of the younger participants mentioning that they have Maltese friends from school. Most of the children's close friends are foreigners or living abroad, either in their country of origin or else friends who used to live at the Open Reception Centre but then moved to other countries:

> "Some of my friends who were in Malta left to Germany." / "Il-ħbieb tiegħi li kienu Malta marru l-Ġermanja." (Wagi, 12 year old female).

7.4.3 Frequent Bullying

Though most of the participants liked going to school many mentioned that they frequently experienced or observed different kinds of bullying taking place at their school:

> "I don't think it (school) is really safe… here you have to be very careful with people" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

> "When Kirsty started bullying me I had low self-esteem, I was thinking less of

myself and I was thinking I wasn't important or beautiful enough" (Virma, 10 year old female).

"In the school there are a lot of bullies – physically almost every day, and psychological bullying" (Kannika, 12 year old female).

"And she pulls my hair and asks if it hurts and it hurts so much" (Eva, 12 year old female).

Although most participants did not specify whether they experienced racial bullying, a small number mentioned that the bullying they experienced was related to their race, religion or inability to speak fluent Maltese or English.

"Well I was bullied and it was a racist thing in this school." (Zehra, 15 year old female).

"Oh learn Maltese because I'm not going to talk to you and tell you" (Jose, 10 year old male).

"Bullying, I went through that twice… in year 3 because of my religion" (Nawar, 11 year old female).

"I notice bullying every day, because you're different, because you have a different religion" (Rusul, 13 year old male).

This was reflected also by comments from children in the Open Centres:

"They don't let me play at school because I am Syrian." / "Ma jħallunix nilgħab l-iskola… għax jien Sirjan" (Lufti, 12 year old male).

"I have a problem because the other children exclude me and they talk about us." / "Kelli problema hekk jien… it-tfal iwarrbuni u kienu jitkellmu fuqna" (Abia, 13 year old female).

The students think that schools take physical bullying more seriously than other types of bullying. They believe that schools need to consider and address all forms of bullying and that they should receive more support from teachers and other members of school staff to reduce bullying:

"The school is quite harsh on physical fights but if someone says something to you, they don't really mind it" (Umuto, 15 year old female).

"Take it more seriously. I mean they always say about like bullying is bad and something like that, but it doesn't show, everyone knows that, but they should take action" (Zehra, 15 year old female).

"Some people started bullying us and we reported them, and the only thing that the assistant head told us was to change our place [in class], that is the only thing she said" (Tamara, 14 year old female).

"If you tell the teacher about them, they won't do anything, they'll just tell them to stop and that's it. Then they continue and continue and continue" (Virma, 10 year old female).

The participants believed however, that it is important to take action to stop bullying by telling an adult in order to make them aware of it and to help prevent it from getting worse:

> "Tell people, don't keep it to yourself, tell family members, teachers. If you keep it to yourself it will go on longer" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

> "They don't notice it at first until you tell them about it" (Samata, 11 year old female).

7.5 Community

7.5.1 Mixed feelings about safety in the community and neighbourhood (school based groups)

Foreign students had mixed feelings about the safety or lack of it in their communities and neighbourhoods. The younger participants generally expressed a feeling of safety:

> "It is safe, no crimes" (Wei, 10 year old male).

> "Everybody can know each other well" (Massimo, 11 year old male).

> "Our neighbours, we are friends with them" (Kannika, 12 year old female).

> "I do feel a lot safer here and I feel like I can be alone more when I walk around" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

On the other hand, older female participants were hesitant about their neighbourhoods due to unwanted attention and street harassment particularly from older persons:

> "Sometimes in Malta there are some old guys looking" (Zehra, 15 year old female).

> "I look older than my age, people think I'm older so even when I was 12 I'd have people staring at me and coming on me and I'd be like I'm underage sorry but they don't believe me but it's very annoying when this happens" (Umuto, 15 year old female).

Most participants also raised the issue of having problems with their neighbours, including noise disturbance, shouting and fights which create a feeling of insecurity in the area where they live:

> "You can hear people shouting and fighting" (Anderej, 14 year old male).

> "They were always smoking, shouting at my dad, and the ones who live next to me, they're always shouting the whole time"(Rusul, 13 year old male).

> "My neighbours, they give us so many problems" (Dvesma, 11 year old female).

7.5.2 Poor living conditions for children living in Open Centres

Children living in Open Centres expressed their dissatisfaction about the poor living conditions at the Open Centres, namely poor hygiene, inadequate food and no internet access. They complained about the location of the Centre which is very close to a civic amenity site resulting in unpleasant smells and insects. They recommended planting trees and flowers to embellish the area and more space where to play. Many expressed their wish to relocate to a new residence in another area in Malta:

> "I want to go away from here (Centre)" / "Irrid nitlaq minn hawn (Centre)" (Nawar, 11 year old female).

> "Malta is a nice place...but nobody likes it here," / "Malta tajba u sabiħa…pero hawn hekk ħadd ma jogħoġbu" (Dabir, 14 year old male).

> "Everyone wants their own house" / "Kulħadd jixtieq id-dar tiegħu" (Eva, 12 year old female).

Some participants, particularly males, are involved in sports activities outside the Centre. This allowed them to have a sense of belonging as well as combat feelings of loneliness:

> "I am more happy when I attend football training" / "Meta nittrenja fil-futbol inkun ħafna aktar ferħan" (Abd al Alim, 16 year old male).

7.6 Subjective wellbeing

7.6.1 Positive subjective wellbeing (school based groups)

Overall, the participants in the four school based focus groups had a more positive outlook and reported to feel "loved, safe and happy":

> "We drew the family and our home [on the poster during the mapping exercise], it is full of love and we are happy" (Manuela, 11 year old female).

Some of the most important things which help them to feel good and positive about themselves and the world include education, friendship, health, love and valuing diversity. Reference to the internet, TV and video games were also mentioned during the discussions:

> "To have a nice home, good school to go to and good friends…to be healthy" (Eva, 12 year old female).

> "Respect, caring about others who are different than you or are different nationalities" (Pravat, 12 year old male).

7.6.2 Negative subjective wellbeing amongst participants living in Open Centres

In contrast, children living in Open Centres exhibited more negative attitudes and feelings of frustration and helplessness:

> "Nobody is happy here…because you're coming from abroad (you're an outsider)…

everyone has their own problems" / "Hawn hekk ħadd mhu ferħan, ħadd… għax tkun ġej minn barra… kulħadd għandu il-problemi tiegħu" (Saleem, 18 year old male).

"We want human rights" stated a poster used in the mapping exercise. Researcher at this point asked participants to elaborate further.

P4: Kull ħaga…*hospital*, edukazzjoni, lingwa, ikel [P4: Everything...hospital, education, language, food].

Lack of action from authorities resulted in frustration among some of the participants:

P3: Nixtieq li terġa tiġi il-Miss hawn…
P6: Għax hawnhekk kienet tiġi waħda, teacher tal-*English* u m'għadhiex tiġi.

[P3: I would like the Miss to come back here…]
[P6: Because once a teacher used to come here to teach us English, but she doesn't come anymore] (Abia, 13 year old female).

"Nixtieq… li mhux kulħadd [authorities] jiġi hawn [Centre], ħafna paroli u ma jsir xejn" / "I wish...that everyone [referring to authorities] does not come here just to blab and nothing is done" (Dabir, 14 year old male).

7.6.3 Resilience and coping strategies of children living in Open Centres

During the discussions various coping strategies were identified by participants in dealing with their perceived negative physical and social environment. Some mentioned swimming:

"Swimming, I want to learn how to swim" / "Ngħum, nixtieq nitgħallem ngħum" (Nawar, 11 year old female)

This reflects perhaps the journey that the participants had to go through in arriving in Malta by boat. Practical, active skills such as language acquisition and training were also deemed important by some of the participants. During the discussions and mapping exercises, other coping mechanisms were identified such as good communication and problem-solving skills (females) and a sense of humour (males). Participants also have high job aspirations, aspiring for careers in architecture, engineering, medicine and law enforcement.

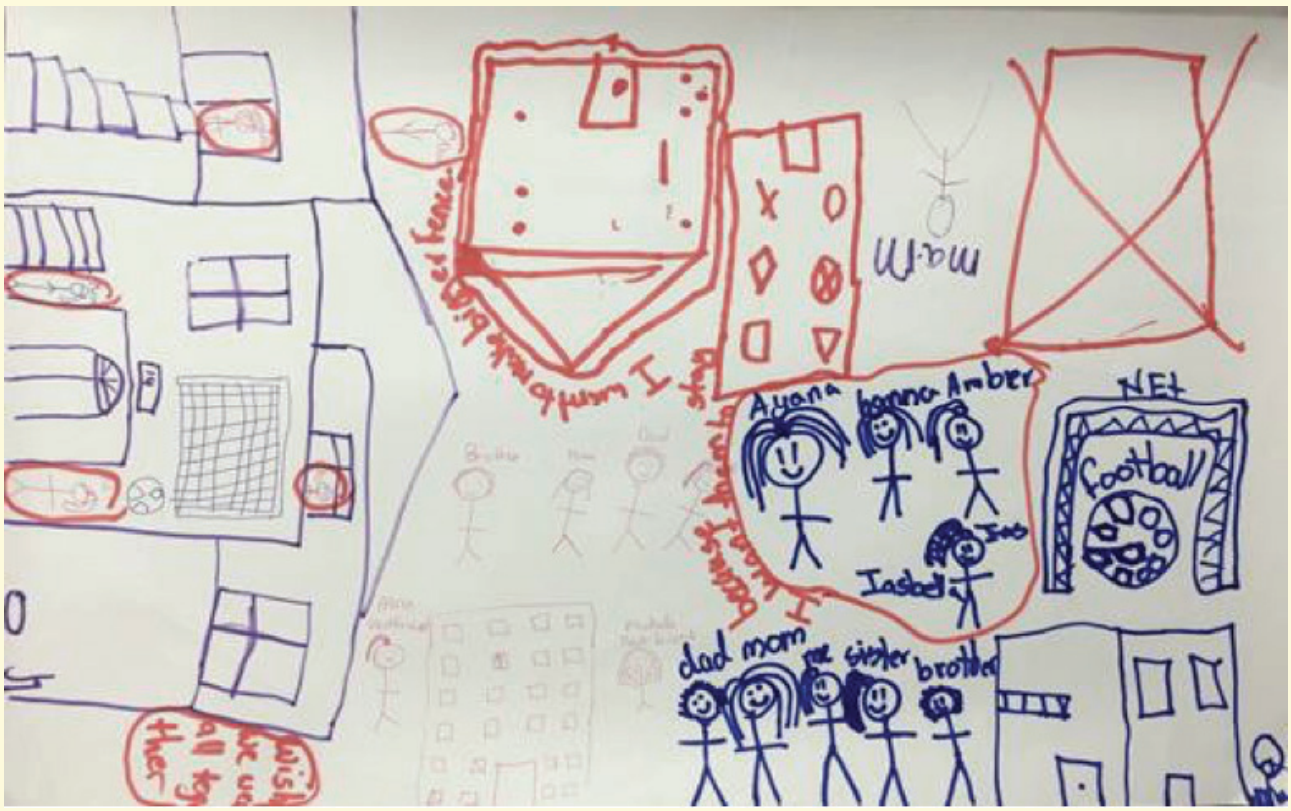

Figure 1. Map by focus group participants

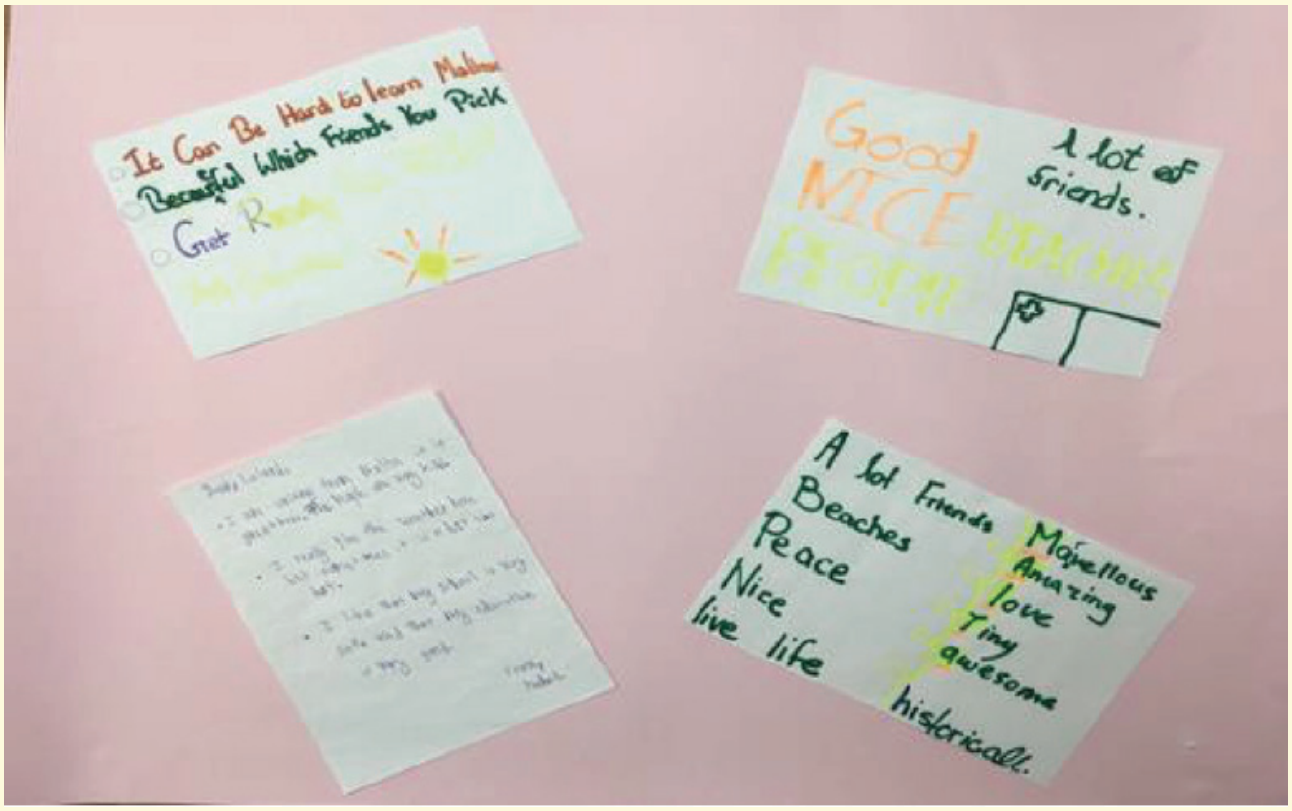

Figure 2. Poster by focus group participants about what it's like living in Malta

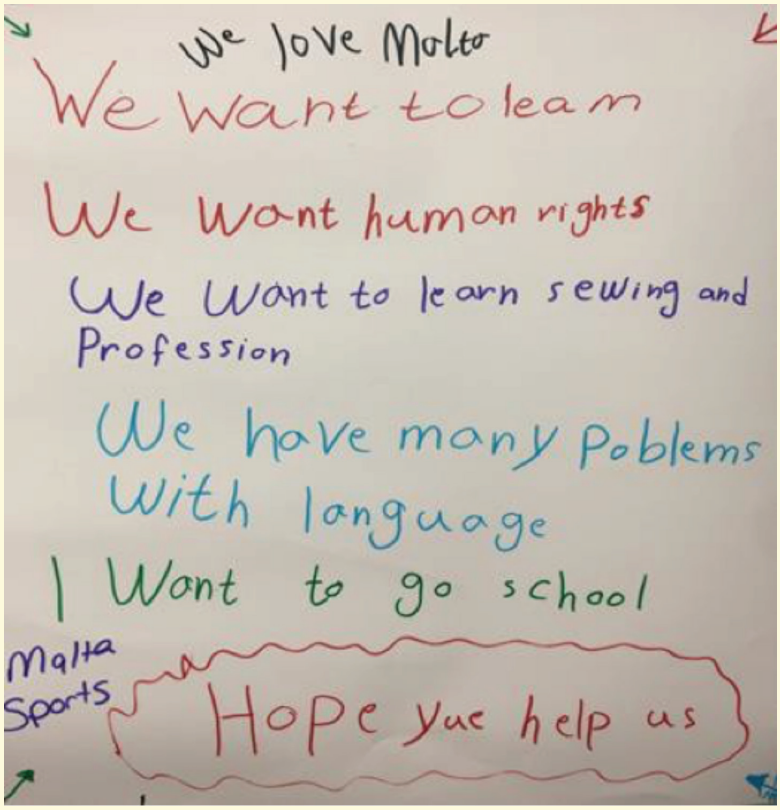

Figure 3. Map by Open Centre participants

Figure 4. Poster by Open Centre participants about what it's like living in Malta

CHAPTER 8: HEALTH, SERVICES AND EDUCATION IN EARLY YEARS (0-3)

8.1 Demographic background

One hundred and five parents completed the Physical Health and Access to Services questionnaires for their children (see chapter 2 for more demographic details of the parents). The age of the children varied from under one year to three years and over with most children being two years old. Fifty-eight percent of the children were females and 42% males. Half of the children came from the Western group, followed by 32% from Eastern Europe and 9% from Africa/Middle East and from East Asia respectively. Half of the respondents live in an environment with an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners, 41% in an environment composed of Maltese people only and 9% in one composed of foreign people only. Nearly all children live in an apartment/house in the community, with only 5% living in a centre. Forty-four percent of the respondents have been living in the present residence for two to three years, and 34% for less than a year. Sixty-four percent of the children live in apartments, while 27% live in a house. Only three families live in a shared apartment. The majority live in a rented residence but 31% own a property. The vast majority of the families live in three to four member households (mean = 3.64) and live in a residence with three to four rooms (mean =3.78), suggesting more crowdedness among foreign families than among local ones. The vast majority of the parents do not have problems with paying the bills while 13% encounter difficulty sometimes (Tables 8.1 - 8.3).

Table 8.1 Population mix in the community

Which statement is most true about the environment/ community where you live?		
	N	%
Almost all people are Maltese	42	41.2%
There is about an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners	51	50%
Almost all people are foreigners	9	8.8%
Total	102	100%

Table 8.2 Type of residence

	N	%
Live in a house/apartment in the community	97	95.1%
Live in a centre, facility or institution	5	4.9%
Total	102	100%

Table 8.3 Number of rooms in the place of residence

	Number of rooms in place of residence	Number of family members who reside in your place of residence
Mean	3.78	3.64
Std. Deviation	2.019	1.056

8.2 Physical health

The vast majority of parents evaluate their children's health as excellent or very good, with only 3% rating it as fair or poor (Table 8.4); similarly the children are not physically limited in their activities or in getting around in their neighbourhood because of their health.

Table 8.4. Perceived child health

In general, would you say your child's health is:		
	N	%
Poor	1	1.0%
Fair	2	1.9%
Good	8	7.7%
Very Good	36	34.6%
Excellent	57	54.8%
Total	104	100%

The vast majority of the children are able to take care of themselves, with only three children having experienced significant limitations. The vast majority had not experienced any bodily pain or parents strongly disagree that their child is less healthy than other children (Table 8.5). Most of the parents (77%) said that their children had never been seriously ill but 16% agreed that their children had experienced serious illness in the past (Table 8.6).

Table 8.5 Comparison of child's health with other children

My child seems to be less healthy than other children I know		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	78	75.7%
Somewhat disagree	6	5.8%
Not sure/neutral	13	12.6%
Somewhat agree	3	2.9%
Strongly agree	3	2.9%
Total	103	100%

Table 8.6 Young children's serious illness

My child has never been seriously ill		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	10	9.8%
Somewhat disagree	6	5.9%
Not sure/neutral	7	6.9%
Somewhat agree	14	13.7%
Strongly agree	65	63.7%
Total	102	100%

Nearly all parents expect their children to have a very healthy lifestyle. Close to one third, however, worry more about their children's health than do other parents. Eleven percent had been emotionally concerned about their children's physical health in the previous six months. More than half evaluate their children's health the same as one year before and about one third think that it is better now. During the previous 6 months, one third of parents had taken their children to the doctor or to a health centre a few times (Tables 8.7 - 8.9).

Table 8.7 Parents' expectations about their child's health

I expect my child will have a very healthy life		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	1	1.0%
Somewhat disagree	1	1.0%
Not sure/neutral	5	4.9%
Somewhat agree	27	26.5%
Strongly agree	68	66.7%
Total	102	100%

Table 8.8 Parents' concern about child's health

I worry more about my child's health than other people worry about their children's health		
	N	%
Strongly disagree	27	26.7%
Somewhat disagree	13	12.9%
Not sure/neutral	29	28.7%
Somewhat agree	24	23.8%
Strongly agree	8	7.9%
Total	101	100%

Table 8.9 Visits to doctor/health centre due to child's illness

During the past six months, how often has your child been ill to the extent that you had to make use of health services such as visit to the doctor/health centre?		
	N	%
None of the time	17	16.3%
Once or twice	46	44.2%
A few times	34	32.7%
Fairly often	6	5.8%
Very often	1	1.0%
Total	104	100%

When asked about the occurrence of a list of 24 different types of disease/health conditions, the parents' responses indicated a very low prevalence of most of the conditions. Whilst, as expected at this age, asthma and chronic respiratory, lung and/or breathing problems, and sinus trouble and diarrheal diseases were slightly more frequent (11% and 8% respectively), other physical conditions such as infections and chronic diseases were very low or had not occurred at all (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, malaria, tuberculosis, polio, hepatitis).

8.3 Access to services

As in the case of school age children, respondents appeared to have very limited knowledge of the many community, educational, social and health services available for children and their families in Malta, with the great majority of parents leaving this section of the questionnaire blank. When asked about the use of community services, such as language classes, arts and crafts, library facilities, IT courses and parental seminars, only a small percentage of parents reported that they and their children make use of these services. The average use ranges from 0% to 6% (arts and crafts). Most of the services attended are provided by Local Councils (15%) and central Government (sport clubs) (13%) (Tables 8.10 - 8.11).

Table 8.10 Young children's use of community services

Does your child make use of any of the following?		
	N	%
Services/activities organised in your community	3	2.4%
Study or Reading Groups	5	4%
Language Classes	2	1.6%
Arts & Crafts	7	5.6%
Library Facilities	4	3.2%
IT Courses	-	-
Parental Education/ Seminars	1	0.8%
Other	26	20.8%

Table 8.11 Service provider of community services for young children

Who is the main provider of the services mentioned above which your child attends?		
	N	%
Local Council	7	15.2%
NGOs (e.g. Malta Emigrants Commission)	1	2.2%
Religious Organisations	2	4.3%
Central Government (e.g. Sports Clubs, Youth Café)	6	13%
Other	18	39.1%
Don't know	12	26.1%
Total	46	100%

When children are sick, the majority of parents prefer to go to doctor's clinics (62%), followed by health centres (18%) and the general hospital emergency service (8%). The doctor/general practitioner is the health care professional of choice (71%), with visits to other professionals, such as specialists (12%) and therapists (0.8%), being of low to very low occurrence. Almost all parents reported that in the previous 12 months they had not experienced any lack of provision of needed care or delayed care. Only 2 respondents said they had needed interpreting services during a doctor/ health care provider visit (Tables 8.12 - 8.14).

Table 8.12 Places usually visited when child is sick

Is there a place that your child usually goes to when he/she is sick or needs medical health services for his/her health?		
	N	%
Doctor's Clinic	64	62.1%
Hospital Emergency	8	7.8%
Hospital Outpatient Department	3	2.9%
Health Centre/Polyclinic	19	18.4%
Friend or relative	1	1%
Locations outside of Malta	2	1.9%
Other	6	5.8%
Total	103	100%

Table 8.13 Instances of delayed/unattended care

During the past 12 months, have you delayed or gone without needed care for your child?		
	N	%
No	96	97%
Yes	3	3%
Total	99	100%

Table 8.14 Use of interpreters to communicate with health carers

During the past 12 months, did you or your child need an interpreter to help speak with your child's doctors or other health care providers?		
	N	%
No	102	98.1%
Yes	2	1.9%
Total	104	100%

Apart from children's allowance (37%), the use of other social benefits such as unemployment and in-work benefits, milk grant and social assistance for single parents, are minimal (1% or below). Similarly social services provided by Aġenzija APPOĠĠ (social workers, psychologists, family therapy), SEDQA (parenting skills, family therapy) and Aġenzija SAPPORT (support for persons with disability) had not been used or were marked by 1% of the participants or less. With the exception of the Breakfast Club (7%), services provided by the Education Directorates such as Migrant Learners' Unit, Early Intervention, school counsellors, school psychologists, social workers, and youth workers, were hardly used at all.

Half of the parents, however, use the State free childcare services, whilst 38% use private childcare services. Among those children attending kindergarten (3 years), attendance is regular (Table 8.15).

Table 8.15 Use of services provided by FES

Does your child make use of any of the below services offered by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES)? (May choose more than one)				
	Childcare Services	Klabb 3-16	NWAR Programme (Literacy Group)	Other
N	63	6	0	7
%	50.4%	4.8%	0%	5.6%

Table 8.16 shows that parents of foreign young children appear to be more informed about health and educational services but more than half are not informed about social and community services. Their satisfaction with the different services is also related to how informed they are about the services. Most participants are satisfied with the education (73%) and health (71%) services, with a dissatisfaction rate of less than 10%. On the other hand, whilst 37% are satisfied with the community services, one third are not; one in five parents are also not satisfied with the social services (Table 8.17). These percentages are reflected in parents' views as to whether enough time and attention is dedicated to their children when they make use of the services, with the high rate of satisfaction with time and attention provided by the educational services (79% and 78% respectively) dropping to between 62% and 66% for health services, and to between 36% and 40% for the social and community services (Tables 8.18 - 8.19).

Table 8.16 How informed parents feel about the services

How informed do you feel about the following services provided for your child?								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Completely uninformed	46	48.9%	14	14.3%	26	27.4%	16	16.2%
2	20	21.3%	12	12.2%	29	30.5%	19	19.2%
3	16	17%	26	26.5%	21	22.1%	24	24.2%
4	6	6.4%	23	23.5%	9	9.5%	22	22.2%
Highly informed	6	6.4%	23	23.5%	10	10.5%	18	18.2%
Total	94	100%	98	100%	95	100%	99	100%

Table 8.17 Parents' satisfaction with services provided

Overall, how satisfied are you with the services provided for your child?								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	8	16.3%	5	6.6%	5	9.6%	3	3.9%
2	8	16.3%	2	2.6%	6	11.5%	2	2.6%
3	15	30.6%	15	19.7%	19	36.5%	16	20.8%
4	6	12.2%	30	39.5%	11	21.2%	21	27.3%
Highly satisfied	12	24.5%	24	31.6%	11	21.2%	35	45.5%
Total	49	100%	76	100%	52	100%	77	100%

Table 8.18 Parents' satisfaction with time provided by services for the child

Overall, how satisfied are you with the time dedicated to your child?								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	9	19.1%	3	4.1%	5	10.2%	3	3.9%
2	7	14.9%	8	10.8%	8	16.3%	3	3.9%
3	13	27.7%	17	23%	17	34.7%	10	13%
4	6	12.8%	21	28.4%	8	16.3%	29	37.7%
Highly satisfied	12	25.5%	25	33.8%	11	22.4%	32	41.6%
Total	47	100%	74	100%	49	100%	77	100%

Table 8.19 Parents' satisfaction with the attention provided by services to their child

Overall, how satisfied are you with the attention provided to your child's needs?								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	8	17%	4	5.3%	5	10.2%	3	3.8%
2	6	12.8%	4	5.3%	6	12.2%	1	1.3%
3	14	29.8%	18	23.7%	20	40.8%	13	16.7%
4	6	12.8%	24	31.6%	7	14.3%	27	34.6%
Highly satisfied	13	27.7%	26	34.2%	11	22.4%	34	43.6%
Total	47	100%	76	100%	49	100%	78	100%

Most parents are satisfied with the language and communication used by the service providers, particularly for health and educational services (around three-fourths), and close to one half for social and community services. In general the majority are satisfied with the sensitivity shown by the services to the families' values and traditions and the services' openness to different cultures, but again this was more evident in the educational and health services (between 68-76%), with the level of satisfaction with the community and social services in this respect being below 50% (Tables 8.20 - 8.22).

Table 8.20 Parents' satisfaction with language and communication at the services

Overall, how satisfied are you with language and communication?								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	9	19.1%	3	4.1%	4	8.2%	3	3.8%
2	5	10.6%	2	2.7%	4	8.2%	1	1.3%
3	11	23.4%	15	20.3%	17	34.7	13	16.7%
4	8	17.0%	28	37.8%	11	22.4	26	33.3%
Highly satisfied	14	29.8%	26	35.1%	13	26.5	35	44.9%
Total	47	100%	74	100%	49	100%	78	100%

Table 8.21 Services' sensitivity to family's values and traditions

Sensitivity to your family's values and traditions								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	12	24.5%	7	9.7%	5	10.4%	5	6.7%
2	7	14.3%	4	5.6%	7	14.6%	3	4%
3	9	18.4%	12	16.7%	14	29.2%	11	14.7%
4	11	22.4%	24	33.3%	12	25%	23	30.7%
Highly satisfied	10	20.4%	25	34.7%	10	20.8%	33	44%
Total	49	100%	72	100%	48	100%	75	100%

Table 8.22 Services' openness to different cultures

Satisfaction about openness to different cultures								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Highly dissatisfied	10	20.8%	6	8.2%	7	14.6%	6	8%
2	9	18.8%	6	8.2%	4	8.3%	-	-
3	10	20.8%	11	15.1%	16	33.3%	12	16%
4	10	20.8%	24	32.9%	11	22.9%	21	28%
Highly satisfied	9	18.8%	26	35.6%	10	20.8%	36	48%
Total	48	100%	73	100%	48	100%	75	100%

Parents were then asked about various aspects of service provision which might impede their children's access to services. The majority do not think the services are too expensive, but it is interesting that the participants considered the most used services as most expensive, namely health (19%) and educational (16%) services. The majority of the participants agree that services are available in their area but 16% to 28% disagree (Tables 8.23 - 8.24).

Table 8.23 Service too expensive

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Service too expensive								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	37	66.1%	36	56.3%	36	66.7%	38	60.3%
2	7	12.5%	7	10.9%	7	13.0%	7	11.1%
3	5	8.9%	9	14.1%	5	9.3%	8	12.7%
4	1	1.8%	3	4.7%	1	1.9%	3	4.8%
Strongly agree	6	10.7%	9	14.1%	5	9.3%	7	11.1%
Total	56	100%	64	100%	54	100%	63	100%

Table 8.24 Service not available in the area

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Service not available in the area								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	23	43.4%	37	57.8%	26	49.1%	38	61.3%
2	6	11.3%	8	12.5%	5	9.4%	8	12.9%
3	9	17%	6	9.4%	9	17.0%	6	9.7%
4	4	7.5%	5	7.8%	5	9.4%	3	4.8%
Strongly agree	11	20.8%	8	12.5%	8	15.1%	7	11.3%
Total	53	100%	64	100%	53	100%	62	100%

Transportation to the services is not considered a problem by the majority of the participants, but again about 20% are not satisfied with the transport, with 63% expressing dissatisfaction with transport to educational services. The times the services are offered is considered convenient by the vast majority of participants, though around 17% to 21% prefer a more convenient time (Tables 8.25 - 8.26).

Table 8.25 Transportation problems to the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – transportation problems								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	24	48%	32	54.2%	28	54.9%	37	62.7%
2	6	12%	8	13.6%	5	9.8%	5	8.5%
3	8	16%	7	11.9%	7	13.7%	5	8.5%
4	3	6%	5	8.5%	5	9.8%	5	8.5%
Strongly agree	9	18%	7	11.9%	6	11.8%	7	11.9%
Total	50	100%	59	100%	51	100%	59	100%

Table 8.26 Service provided at inconvenient times

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – service provided at inconvenient times								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	24	47.1%	33	55.9%	21	42.9%	37	62.7%
2	4	7.8%	7	11.9%	8	16.3%	6	10.2%
3	12	23.5%	8	13.6%	10	20.4%	6	10.2%
4	3	5.9%	5	8.5%	3	6.1%	7	11.9%
Strongly agree	8	15.7%	6	10.2%	7	14.3%	3	5.1%
Total	51	100%	59	100%	49	100%	59	100%

The majority of parents are not concerned about discrimination by the service providers, though about 10% are highly concerned whilst more than one fourth expressed concern with discrimination by the social services (Table 8.27). The vast majority do not think that services are not sensitive to family values and do not see language as a barrier in any of the four services. About 15% indicated language as a barrier at community and social services (Tables 8.28 - 8.29).

Table 8.27 Prejudice and discrimination at the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – fear of prejudice and discrimination								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	24	46.2%	36	57.1%	24	48%	36	57.1%
2	9	17.3%	10	15.9%	8	16%	10	15.9%
3	9	17.3%	5	7.9%	5	10%	5	7.9%
4	5	9.6%	5	7.9%	8	16%	6	9.5%
Strongly agree	5	9.6%	7	11.1%	5	10%	6	9.5%
Total	52	100%	63	100%	50	100%	63	100%

Table 8.28 Services not sensitive to family values and traditions

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – not sensitive to family's values and traditions								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	25	53.2%	38	62.3%	27	57.4%	37	64.9%
2	9	19.1%	12	19.7%	8	17.0%	12	21.1%
3	9	19.1%	5	8.2%	8	17.0%	6	10.5%
4	-	-	3	4.9%	1	2.1%	1	1.8%
Strongly agree	4	8.5%	3	4.9%	3	6.4%	1	1.8%
Total	47	100%	61	100%	47	100%	57	100%

Table 8.29 Language barriers at the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – language barriers								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	26	47.3%	38	59.4%	24	46.2%	37	58.7%
2	9	16.4%	13	20.3%	11	21.2%	10	15.9%
3	11	20%	7	10.9%	9	17.3%	12	19%
4	5	9.1%	2	3.1%	5	9.6%	1	1.6%
Strongly agree	4	7.3%	4	6.3%	3	5.8%	3	4.8%
Total	55	100%	64	100%	52	100%	63	100%

The vast majority of children have no problem visiting the services; quite understandably, in the case of very young children, the highest rate of reluctance (7%) was in relation to health services. More than half of the participants are not aware of the community and social services but this decreases to around less than one fourth in the case of health and educational services. A similar pattern emerges when they were asked about the lack of available information about the use of services with about 60% agreeing on the lack of information on community services followed by 41% in the case of social services; only 28% and 21% complained about lack of available information on the health and educational services respectively. The vast majority hold positive views about the services with only 6% to 20% looking at the four services in a negative way. Similarly, with the exception of community services (21%), less than 10% of parents are not interested in using the services (Tables 8.30 - 8.34).

Table 8.30 Child refuses to go to service

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – child refuses to go								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	33	71.7%	47	77%	36	73.5%	48	81.4%
2	10	21.7%	9	14.8%	9	18.4%	7	11.9%
3	3	6.5%	1	1.6%	4	8.2%	3	5.1%
4	-	-	1	1.6%	-	-	1	1.7%
Strongly agree	-	-	3	4.9%	-	-	-	-
Total	46	100%	61	100%	49	100%	59	100%

Table 8.31 Parents not aware of service

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Not aware of service								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	12	20.3%	28	44.4%	13	22.8%	33	52.4%
2	8	13.6%	13	20.6%	8	14%	14	22.2%
3	5	8.5%	7	11.1%	7	12.3%	2	3.2%
4	5	8.5%	5	7.9%	7	12.3%	3	4.8%
Strongly agree	29	49.2%	10	15.9%	22	38.6%	11	17.5%
Total	59	100%	63	100%	57	100%	63	100%

Table 8.32 Lack of available information on the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Lack of available information (e.g. don't know how to apply for service)								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	16	26.2%	28	43.1%	19	32.8%	29	46.8%
2	4	6.6%	14	21.5%	7	12.1%	15	24.2%
3	5	8.2%	5	7.7%	8	13.8%	5	8.1%
4	9	14.8%	5	7.7%	6	10.3%	5	8.1%
Strongly agree	27	44.3%	13	20%	18	31%	8	12.9%
Total	61	100%	65	100%	58	100%	62	100%

Table 8.33 Negative views about the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Negative views about service								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	22	46.8%	36	60%	25	50%	38	64.4%
2	12	25.5%	14	23.3%	14	28%	12	20.3%
3	9	19.1%	3	5%	5	10%	5	8.5%
4	-	-	1	1.7%	2	4%	1	1.7%
Strongly agree	4	8.5%	6	10%	4	8%	3	5.1%
Total	47	100%	60	100%	50	100%	59	100%

Table 8.34 Lack of interest in the services

Aspects which may impede your child's access to services – Lack of interest / motiviation on my part								
	Community Services		Health Services		Social Services		Educational Services	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly disagree	27	50.9%	43	71.7%	28	54.9%	42	71.2%
2	8	15.1%	9	15%	9	17.6%	9	15.3%
3	7	13.2%	4	6.7%	9	17.6%	4	6.8%
4	5	9.4%	1	1.7%	3	5.9%	3	5.1%
Strongly agree	6	11.3%	3	5%	2	3.9%	1	1.7%
Total	53	100%	60	100%	51	100%	59	100%

8.4 Engagement and inclusion

One hundred and fourteen childcare carers completed the Children Engagement Questionnaire, with most of these coming from private centres (68%) followed by State (21%) and Church (11%) centres. The age of the children varied from under one year to three years and over with most children being two years old (43%). Fifty-five percent of the children are females and 45% males. Close to one half of the children came from the Western group (47%), one third (33%) from Eastern Europe, whilst 10% are from Africa/Middle East and East Asia respectively (Table 8.35).

Table 8.35 Demographic details on the children at the childcare centres

Child's age	N	%
Under 1 year	7	6%
1 year	32	28%
2 years	49	43%
3 years and over	26	23%
Total	114	100%
Child's gender	N	%
Male	51	45%
Female	63	55%
Total	114	100%
Child's nationality	N	%
Western	42	47%
Eastern	29	33%
Africa/M East	9	10%
East Asia	9	10%
Total	89	100%

Table 8.36 shows that, with the exception of 'Child engages in conversations with peers', all mean rating scores exceed three indicating that on average the occurrence of each statement was somewhere between 'Most of the time' and 'Always'. The vast majority of children participate actively in the activities and are included by their peers. They attend the centre regularly (97%), are well groomed and cared for (93%), have regular fresh lunch (95%), have the equipment and material required for the activities (100%), enjoy themselves and have fun during the learning activities (95%), participate actively in the activities (90%), and complete set tasks without much help (78%). The majority play with others (86%), work collaboratively with others (70%) and engage in conversations with peers during activities either regularly (58%) or occasionally (24%). The majority are socially included in their groups. The vast majority have friends in their group (76%), feel included by their peers in the activities (79%), play with their peers (89%) and engage in conversation with them (68% regularly). All carers agree that children are treated equitably by the adults at the centre. Only a very small number of children

are rarely engaged or included. It could be that these are also the younger children in the group who may need more adult attention (Table 8.37).

Table 8.36 Mean scores of children's engagement at the childcare centres

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attendance at the centre	3.75	0.493
Child appears well groomed and cared for	3.64	0.693
Fresh lunch regularly	3.73	0.584
Equipment/material needed for activities	3.82	0.383
Child enjoys himself/herself during activities	3.66	0.577
Child plays with others	3.42	0.799
Child participates actively in the activities	3.53	0.721
Child completes tasks without much help	3.12	0.857
Child works collaboratively with peers	3.01	0.929
Child engages in conversations with peers	2.75	1.139
Child has friends in the group	3.22	0.917
Child included by peers during activities	3.24	0.907
Children play with the child	3.38	0.736
Children engage in conversation with the child	3.00	1.023
Child treated equitably by the adults at the centre	3.98	0.132

Note: $X^2(14) = 268.03$, $p < 0.001$

Table 8.37 Children's engagement at the childcare centres

		Attendance at the Centre	Child appears well groomed and cared for	Fresh lunch regularly	Equipment/ material needed for activites	Child enjoys him/herself during activities
Rarely	N	-	3	1	-	-
	%	-	2.6%	0.9%	-	-
Occasionally	N	3	5	5	-	6
	%	2.7%	4.4%	4.4%	-	5.3%
Most of the time	N	22	22	18	18	27
	%	19.6%	19.3%	15.8%	17.6%	23.7%
Always	N	87	84	90	84	81
	%	77.7%	73.7%	78.9%	82.4%	71.1%
Total	N	112	114	114	102	114
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Child plays with others	Child participates actively in activities	Child completes tasks without much help	Child works collaboratively with peers	Child engages in conversations with peers
Rarely	N	3	2	5	7	20
	%	2.7%	1.8%	4.4%	6.3%	18.9%
Occasionally	N	13	9	20	26	25
	%	11.5%	8%	17.7%	23.4%	23.6%
Most of the time	N	31	29	44	37	23
	%	27.4%	25.7%	38.9%	33.3%	21.7%
Always	N	66	73	44	41	38
	%	58.4%	64.6%	38.9%	36.9%	35.8%
Total	N	113	113	113	111	106
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
		Child has friends in the group	Child included by peers during activities	Children play with the child	Children engage in conversation with the child	Child treated equitably by the adults at the centre
Rarely	N	5	6	2	10	-
	%	4.5%	5.4%	1.8%	9.3%	-
Occasionally	N	22	17	11	26	-
	%	19.6%	15.3%	9.7%	24.1%	-
Most of the time	N	28	32	42	26	2
	%	25%	28.8%	37.2%	24.1%	1.8%
Always	N	57	56	58	46	111
	%	50.9%	50.5%	51.3%	42.6%	98.2%
Total	N	112	111	113	108	113
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

CHAPTER 9: ATTITUDE OF MALTESE CHILDREN TOWARDS FOREIGN CHILDREN

9.1 Methodology

9.1.1 Participants

This study explores the attitudes of Maltese students in Primary School (Year 6), Middle School (Year 8 i.e. Form 2) and Secondary School (Year 10 i.e. Form 4) towards their foreign peers. By definition, Maltese students include students who have at least one Maltese parent. It was planned to include 500 representative students from each cohort in State, Church and Independent Schools. In the case of State Schools, around two to three schools from each of the ten regional colleges were selected with preference given to schools having a high percentage of foreign students. In the case of Church and Independent Schools, selection was based on schools having a relatively high percentage of foreign students. Forty five schools were selected (18 Primary / 8 Middle / 19 Secondary Schools) to participate in the study, but 10 did not participate, with the final number of participating schools being 35 (15 Primary / 5 Middle / 15 Secondary Schools). Three classes consisting of around 60 students from the respective school year were selected from each of the identified schools. Classes were selected by the respective Head of Schools according to instructions given by the research team to ensure a representative sample of the year group at the school. Parental consent was obtained through the schools.

Data was collected between October and December 2018. Out of the 2,234 questionnaires distributed, 1,359 were returned, 411 from Year 6 (30.4% of the sample); 459 from Year 8 (35.9% of the sample) and 489 from Year 10 (33.6% of sample) constituting a total response rate of 61% (Table 9.1). 50.7% of the respondents were males and 49.3% females (Table 9.2). Most of the respondents attend State Schools (53.8%), followed by Church (37.9%) and Independent (8.3%) Schools respectively. The most frequent home districts were Gozo (23.7%) and the Northern Harbour (21.9%) followed by the Northern (15.7%) and South Eastern (14.2%) regions with 12% from the Western and Southern Harbour regions, respectively (Table 9.3).

Table 9.1 Number of Maltese participants

	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned	Response rate
Year 6	773	411	53%
Year 8	700	459	66%
Year 10	761	489	64%
Total	2,234	1,359	61%

Table 9.2 Participants by gender

	N	%
Male	685	50.7%
Female	666	49.3%
Total	1,351	100%

Table 9.3 Students' home region

Name of town or village where students live		
	N	%
Southern Harbour	170	12.6%
Northern Harbour	295	21.9%
South Eastern	191	14.2%
Western	162	12%
Northern	211	15.7%
Gozo/Comino	319	23.7%
Total	1,348	100%

9.1.2 Research instrument

The instrument used for this study was adapted from the Intercultural Relations Questionnaire used in the international project Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS) (Berry, 2014). The questionnaire covers basic demographic data and then explores participants' attitudes and sentiments towards migration and their interactions with foreign children living in Malta. The adapted questionnaire consists of the following five subscales: Acculturation Attitude and Expectations, Intercultural Ideology, Tolerance/Prejudice, Perceived Consequences of Migration and Perceptions of Different Ethnic Groups. The students were asked to rate their feelings towards a number of statements related to neighbourhood and school ethnic composition, social contacts, acculturation expectations, intercultural ideology, tolerance and prejudice, perceived consequences of migration and attitudes towards ethno-cultural groups. Answer categories on each item of the scales are from "totally disagree" (1) to "totally agree" (5).

Two focus groups, one with Year 6 students and another one with Year 10 students, were carried out to pilot the questionnaire. The focus groups were carried out with 25 students (10 students from Year 6 and 15 students from Year 10). The questionnaire was revised in light of the feedback received from the piloting. Overall the questionnaire has good reliability, with the exception of Acculturation Attitudes and Expectations (poor reliability), including Intercultural Ideology (.800), Tolerance and Prejudice (.779) and Perceived Consequences of Immigration (.710).

Data collection was carried out in schools with students choosing whether to answer in Maltese or in English. In Year 6, paper-based questionnaires were administered by a member of the school (usually the class teacher) in the classroom, with written instructions for the teacher so as to ensure consistency as well as confidentiality during data collection. Data collection with Year 8 and Year 10 students was administered online in ICT Labs during school hours by the ICT or Form teachers, with written guidelines provided by the research team as in the case of the younger students. When necessary questionnaires were also administered by the project's research team.

9.1.3 Analysis

We made use of the MIRIPS original questionnaire (Berry, 2014) to create the following subscales for analysis: Acculturation Expectation Segregation, Interculturalism, Melting Pot, Intercultural Ideology: Positive, Intercultural Ideology: Negative, Intercultural Ideology: total; Tolerance: Positive, Tolerance: Negative, Tolerance: Total, Tolerance: Ethnic Tolerance, Tolerance: Attitude on Social Equity; Perceived Consequences: Positive, Perceived Consequences: Negative, Perceived Consequences: Total. In view of the poor reliability of the subscale Acculturation Attitudes and Expectations in this study, only refer briefly to overall trends in this subscale.

In the first part of the analysis, descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequencies for each of the subscales. Correlational analysis provides data on the relationships amongst the various subscales. The various subscales are then anlaysed by participants' socio-demographic background, such as level of education (Year 6, 8, 10), gender, school type, home district, number of non-Maltese friends and non-Maltese children at school and in the neighborhood using t-test and ANOVA. For all tests, a 0.05 level of significance is employed.

9.2 Neighbours, peers and friends

Table 9.4 shows that two thirds of the students claim that most of people in the neighbourhood where they live are Maltese, with a higher preponderance of Maltese residents in the Western and Southern Harbour regions respectively. Around one in five students say that there are about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese living in their neighbourhood, this being reported mainly in the Northern Harbour and Northern regions. Only 9% live in areas predominantly inhabited by non-Maltese residents, primarily in the Northern region (29%) (Table 9.5).

Table 9.4 Maltese and non-Maltese in the neighbourhood

Which statement is most true about the neighbourhood/village where you live?		
	N	%
Most of the people in my neighbourhood/town are non-Maltese	116	8.6%
There is about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese	289	21.5%
Most of the people are Maltese	890	66.1%
There are no non-Maltese children	51	3.8%
Total	1,346	100%

Table 9.5 Maltese and non-Maltese people in the neighbourhood by home region

Name of town or village where student lives									
			Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo/ Comino	Total
Which statement is most true about the neighbourhood / village where you live?	Most of the people in my neighbourhood/ town are non-Maltese	N	9	35	13	6	33	18	114
		%	7.9%	30.7%	11.4%	5.3%	28.9%	15.8%	100.0%
	There is about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese	N	29	86	38	15	60	60	288
		%	10.1%	29.9%	13.2%	5.2%	20.8%	20.8%	100.0%
	Most of the people are Maltese	N	118	168	131	135	114	221	887
		%	13.3%	18.9%	14.8%	15.2%	12.9%	24.9%	100.0%
	There are no non-Maltese children	N	12	4	7	6	3	18	50
		%	24.0%	8.0%	14.0%	12.0%	6.0%	36.0%	100.0%

Note: p<0.001

Two thirds of the students reported that most of the students in their classrooms/ schools are Maltese; 18% that there is about the same amount of students who are Maltese and non-Maltese, while 5% said that most students are non-Maltese. The higher frequencies of non-Maltese students in school/ classrooms are more common in the Northern Harbour (39%) and Northern (24%) regions (Tables 9.6 - 9.7). Church Schools have the least number of non-Maltese students in their classrooms (Table 9.8).

Table 9.6 Maltese and non-Maltese at school

Which statement is most true about your school/classroom?		
	N	%
Most of the students in my school/classroom are non-Maltese	61	4.5%
There is about the same amount of students who are Maltese and non-Maltese	244	18.1%
Most of the students are Maltese	911	67.6%
There are no non-Maltese students	132	9.8%
Total	1,348	100%

Table 9.7 Maltese and non-Maltese students by home region

Which statement is most true about your school/classroom?								
		Name of town or village where student lives						
		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo/ Comino	Total
Most of the students in my school/classroom are non-Maltese	N	3	23	6	3	14	10	59
	%	5.1%	39.0%	10.2%	5.1%	23.7%	16.9%	100%
There is about the same amount of students who are Maltese and non-Maltese	N	16	63	29	30	65	40	243
	%	6.6%	25.9%	11.9%	12.3%	26.7%	16.5%	100%
Most of the students are Maltese	N	132	186	131	109	116	236	910
	%	14.5%	20.4%	14.4%	12%	12.7%	25.9%	100%
There are no non-Maltese children	N	18	20	24	20	16	32	130
	%	13.8%	15.4%	18.5%	15.4%	12.3%	24.6%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

Table 9.8 Maltese and non-Maltese students at school/classroom by school sector

		Which statement is most true about your school/classroom?				
		Most of the students are non-Maltese	There is about the same amount of Maltese and non-Maltese students	Most of the students are Maltese	There are no non-Maltese students	Total
State	N	49	173	465	40	727
	%	6.7%	23.8%	64%	5.5%	100%
Church	N	5	20	393	90	508
	%	1.0%	3.9%	77.4%	17.7%	100%
Independent	N	7	51	52	2	112
	%	6.3%	45.5%	46.4%	1.8%	100%

Note: $p<0.001$

About one half of Maltese students have a number of non-Maltese friends, whilst close to one third do not. In sharp contrast, over 90% say they have Maltese friends, with less than 1% having no Maltese friends at all (Table 9.9). More than half of Maltese students never or rarely play with close friends who are not Maltese, but close to one fourth do so daily or frequently. On the other hand, the great majority play with Maltese friends on a regular basis (Table 9.10). Similarly, the great majority (80%) never or rarely work or study with friends who are not Maltese, in contrast to only about 7% who do so regularly. On the other hand, 41% of Maltese students work and study with Maltese friends regularly though 31% never or rarely do so (Table 9.11). More than half of the respondents never meet and go out with close friends who are not Maltese whilst an additional 23% rarely do so. Conversely, over half of the respondents (53%) meet and go out regularly with Maltese friends (Table 9.12).

Table 9.9 Close friends who are Maltese or non-Maltese

	How many close friends do you have who are non-Maltese?		How many close friends do you have who are Maltese?	
	N	%	N	%
None	429	31.8%	7	0.7%
Only one	214	15.9%	21	2.2%
A few	435	32.2%	96	10.3%
Some	181	13.4%	210	22.5%
Many	90	6.7%	600	64.2%
Total	1,349	100%	934	100%

Table 9.10 Frequency of play with close friends who are Maltese or non-Maltese

	How often do you play with close friends who are non-Maltese?		How often do you play with close friends who are Maltese?	
	N	%	N	%
Never	356	26.4%	35	2.6%
Rarely	363	26.9%	51	3.8%
Sometimes	327	24.2%	138	10.2%
Often	180	13.3%	358	26.5%
Daily	124	9.2%	767	56.9%
Total	1,350	100%	1,349	100%

Table 9.11 Frequency of working and studying with close friends who are Maltese or non-Maltese

	How often do you work and study with close friends who are non-Maltese?		How often do you work and study with close friends who are Maltese?	
	N	%	N	%
Never	768	57.2%	185	13.7%
Rarely	298	22.2%	234	17.4%
Sometimes	185	13.8%	381	28.3%
Often	59	4.4%	348	25.8%
Daily	32	2.4%	199	14.8%
Total	1,342	100%	1,347	100%

Times 9.12 Frequency of meeting and going out with close friends who are Maltese or non-Maltese

	How often do you meet and go out with close friends who are non-Maltese?		How often do you meet and go out with close friends who are Maltese?	
	N	%	N	%
Never	731	54.2%	99	7.3%
Rarely	305	22.6%	208	15.4%
Sometimes	170	12.6%	326	24.1%
Often	111	8.2%	502	37.2%
Daily	31	2.3%	215	15.9%
Total	1,348	100%	1,350	100%

When students were asked to indicate how they feel towards children coming from different countries living in Malta (grouped in 10 categories), Maltese students exhibit a very clear bias in favour of the Western countries (Australia, Western Europe and North America) and Latin America, and against countries in Africa and the Middle East (Maghreb, Middle East and sub-Saharan countries) with Maghreb and Middle East countries having the lowest means. There appears to be mixed feelings about Eastern Europe and East Asia and ex-Soviet Union countries (Table 9.13). Students from Independent Schools and students in Primary Schools have more positive views of foreign children, with those from Gozo having the least positive views (Table 9.14-9.16). The views of Maltese children resonate with those of Maltese adults as reported recently by Sammut and Lauri (2017). It is interesting to note that the parents of African/Middle Eastern children

are in fact the ones who also report more prejudice and discrimination by the services, though the children themselves feel relatively safer in Malta than do children from the Western group and from Europe.

Table 9.13 Maltese students' attitudes towards foreign children

Country of Origin	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western Europe (e.g. Italy, UK, France, Germany, etc)	7.41***	2.453
Eastern Europe (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, etc)	5.40***	2.857
Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia)	5.10***	2.867
Maghreb (e.g. Tunisia, Libya)	4.70***	2.938
Middle East (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Turkey)	4.90***	2.911
Ex-Soviet Union countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine)	5.70***	2.755
East Asian countries (Philippines, Korea, China, Thailand)	5.89***	2.912
Australia	7.57***	2.545
North American countries (Canada, USA, Mexico)	7.41***	2.453
Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)	5.40***	2.857

Note: ***p<0.001

Table 9.14 Views of Maltese children by school type

Country of Origin	School type	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western Europe (e.g. Italy, UK, France, Germany)	State	7.45***	2.430
	Church	7.11***	2.505
	Independent	8.54***	1.975
Eastern Europe (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia)	State	5.54***	2.921
	Church	5.02***	2.709
	Independent	6.32***	2.841
Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia)	State	5.33***	2.841
	Church	4.60***	2.807
	Independent	5.89***	2.976
Maghreb (e.g. Tunisia, Libya)	State	4.88***	2.921
	Church	4.32***	2.881
	Independent	5.31***	3.134
Middle East (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Turkey)	State	5.00***	2.898
	Church	4.53***	2.826
	Independent	5.95***	3.098
Ex-Soviet Union countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine)	State	5.85***	2.753
	Church	5.20***	2.670
	Independent	7.01***	2.606
Eastern Asiatic countries (Philippines, Korea, China, Thailand)	State	6.18***	2.887
	Church	5.24***	2.807
	Independent	7.01***	2.933
Australia	State	7.63***	2.511
	Church	7.30***	2.606
	Independent	8.36***	2.302
North American countries (Canada, USA, Mexico)	State	7.34***	2.552
	Church	7.02***	2.704
	Independent	8.12***	2.437
Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)	State	6.81***	2.716
	Church	6.16***	2.776
	Independent	7.55***	2.616

Note: ANOVA ***p<0.001

Table 9.15 Views of Maltese children by school level

Country of Origin	School type	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western Europe (e.g. Italy, UK, France, Germany)	Year 6	7.85***	2.324
	Year 8	7.30***	2.436
	Year 10	7.17***	2.493
Eastern Europe (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia)	Year 6	5.61	2.942
	Year 8	5.42	2.865
	Year 10	5.22	2.756
Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia)	Year 6	5.29	2.890
	Year 8	4.96	2.935
	Year 10	5.09	2.759
Maghreb (e.g. Tunisia, Libya)	Year 6	4.97	3.022
	Year 8	4.56	3.004
	Year 10	4.62	2.773
Middle East (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Turkey)	Year 6	5.20*	2.963
	Year 8	4.82*	2.947
	Year 10	4.74*	2.797
Ex-Soviet Union countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine)	Year 6	6.23***	2.719
	Year 8	5.50***	2.785
	Year 10	5.44***	2.680
Eastern Asiatic countries (Philippines, Korea, China, Thailand)	Year 6	6.35***	2.974
	Year 8	5.61***	2.971
	Year 10	5.80***	2.727
Australia	Year 6	8.09***	2.480
	Year 8	7.38***	2.572
	Year 10	7.33***	2.471
North American countries (Canada, USA, Mexico)	Year 6	7.53	2.652
	Year 8	7.19	2.635
	Year 10	7.18	2.526
Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)	Year 6	7.19***	2.709
	Year 8	6.13***	2.885
	Year 10	6.68***	2.551

Note: ANOVA, *p<0.05, ***p<0.001

Table 9.16 Views of Maltese children by home district

Country of Origin	District	Mean	Std. Deviation
Western Europe (e.g. Italy, UK, France, Germany)	Southern Harbour	7.81***	2.291
	Northern Harbour	7.80***	2.418
	South Eastern	7.50***	2.315
	Western	7.32***	2.415
	Northern	7.53***	2.414
	Gozo/Comino	6.77***	2.532
Eastern Europe (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia)	Southern Harbour	5.36*	2.899
	Northern Harbour	5.90*	3.158
	South Eastern	5.35*	2.663
	Western	5.33*	2.770
	Northern	5.22*	3.013
	Gozo/Comino	5.18*	2.521
Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia)	Southern Harbour	5.13**	2.788
	Northern Harbour	5.61**	3.022
	South Eastern	4.93**	2.777
	Western	4.89**	2.715
	Northern	5.29**	2.988
	Gozo/Comino	4.72**	2.718
Maghreb (e.g. Tunisia, Libya)	Southern Harbour	4.54**	2.795
	Northern Harbour	5.13**	3.207
	South Eastern	4.93**	2.927
	Western	4.48**	2.720
	Northern	4.78**	3.021
	Gozo/Comino	4.34**	2.741
Middle East (e.g. Syria, Lebanon, Turkey)	Southern Harbour	4.69*	2.812
	Northern Harbour	5.26*	3.115
	South Eastern	5.01*	2.870
	Western	5.02*	2.803
	Northern	5.00*	3.062
	Gozo/Comino	4.52*	2.669

Table 9.16 Views of Maltese children by home district (cont.)

Country of Origin	District	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ex-Soviet Union countries (e.g. Russia, Ukraine)	Southern Harbour	5.82	2.489
	Northern Harbour	5.93	2.896
	South Eastern	5.58	2.782
	Western	5.57	2.607
	Northern	5.71	2.916
	Gozo/Comino	5.55	2.665
Eastern Asiatic countries (Philippines, Korea, China, Thailand)	Southern Harbour	6.32***	2.797
	Northern Harbour	6.37***	2.990
	South Eastern	5.96***	2.894
	Western	5.73***	2.783
	Northern	5.80***	3.003
	Gozo/Comino	5.37***	2.786
Australia	Southern Harbour	7.93*	2.359
	Northern Harbour	7.64*	2.505
	South Eastern	7.33*	2.581
	Western	7.40*	2.467
	Northern	7.95*	2.565
	Gozo/Comino	7.35*	2.580
North American countries (Canada, USA, Mexico)	Southern Harbour	7.51	2.530
	Northern Harbour	7.52	2.582
	South Eastern	7.05	2.639
	Western	7.03	2.584
	Northern	7.47	2.519
	Gozo/Comino	7.12	2.678
Latin American countries (Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)	Southern Harbour	6.71**	2.733
	Northern Harbour	6.93**	2.748
	South Eastern	6.40**	2.782
	Western	6.22**	2.741
	Northern	7.11**	2.666
	Gozo/Comino	6.36**	2.745

Note: ANOVA, *p<0.05, **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

9.3 Acculturation Attitudes and Expectations

In view of the low reliability of this sub-scale which could shed doubt on the validity of the findings, it was decided not to present the findings in detail but just give an overview of the main trends which emerge from the data which, however, still have to be treated with caution. The majority of Maltese (50% to 80%) students are against the segregation of foreign students in schools and out-of-school activities, the use of the Maltese language and social interactions; however, about one in five are in favour of intercultural separation. On the other hand, the majority of Maltese students believe that foreign children should assimilate the Maltese culture, language and way of life more and also that they should integrate with Maltese peers as part of an intercultural community. Younger Primary School students are more in favour of interculturalism and assimilation and less pro-separation, with students becoming less open to interculturalism and assimilation as they move from Primary to the end of Secondary School. Female students on the whole have lower separation expectations than male students. Separation expectation is highest in Church Schools, whilst State School students are more in favour of assimilation and interculturalism in contrast to Independent Schools. The regional variations in acculturation expectations suggest that Gozitan students are more in favour of separation and less in favour of intercultural integration, possibly seeing assimilation as the middle way foreward. The Southern Harbour region offers conflicting views with positive views on separation, assimilation and integration, whilst students from the South Eastern region are more in favour of integration and assimilation. Interculturalism expectations are lowest amongst students who do not have non-Maltese children in their environment. Classrooms with few non-Maltese students tend to have stronger views towards assimilation. Students who do not have non-Maltese friends hold lower intercultural integration expectations.

9.4 Interculturalism

Positive views about interculturalism

When Maltese students were asked about interculturalism, the majority hold positive views ranging from one half to three fourths agreeing with statements that Maltese should accept people from different countries living in Malta, should help foreigners preserve their culture, should learn about the customs and traditions of foreign people living in Malta, and that foreign parents should help their children to practise their culture. However, 10% - 20% disagree; for instance, one in five disagree that Maltese people should learn more about the cultures and traditions of foreign people living in Malta. Furthermore, students appear divided over whether Malta is a better place for having people from different countries, with one third agreeing and another one third disagreeing (Tables 9.17 – 9.21).

Table 9.17 Accept that there are people from different countries living in Malta

We should accept that there are people from different countries living in Malta		
	N	%
Totally disagree	70	5.2%
2	97	7.2%
3	149	11.1%
4	215	15.9%
Totally agree	817	60.6%
Total	1,348	100%

Table 9.18 Helping foreigners preserve their culture and traditions in Malta

We should help foreigners preserve their culture and traditions in Malta		
	N	%
Totally disagree	166	12.3%
2	180	13.4%
3	327	24.3%
4	301	22.3%
Totally agree	374	27.7%
Total	1,348	100%

Table 9.19 Malta is a better place when it consists of people from different countries

Malta would be better when it consists of people who come from different countries		
	N	%
Totally disagree	206	15.3%
2	234	17.4%
3	465	34.6%
4	203	15.1%
Totally agree	235	17.5%
Total	1343	100%

Table 9.20 Need to do more to learn about different customs and traditions

We should do more to learn about the customs and traditions of people from different countries living in Malta		
	N	%
Totally disagree	125	9.4%
2	142	10.6%
3	334	25.0%
4	327	24.5%
Totally agree	407	30.5%
Total	1,335	100%

Table 9.21 Foreign parents should help their children practise their own culture

Foreign parents should help their children practise and use their own culture and traditions		
	N	%
Totally disagree	99	7.4%
2	156	11.7%
3	450	33.6%
4	313	23.4%
Totally agree	321	24.0%
Total	1,339	100%

Negative views about interculturalism

In contrast Maltese students hold less intercultural views when responding to negative statements about interculturalism. Whilst the relative majority (above one third but less than one half) do not agree with statements such as 'if foreigners want to stick to their own traditions they should keep it to themselves', or 'interculturalism leads to division', or 'foreign people should change their behaviour to assimilate into the Maltese culture', about one third agree with such statements (Tables 9.22 – 9.26).

Table 9.22 It is best for Malta if foreigners forgot their culture as soon as possible

It is best if all foreigners forget their culture and traditions as soon as possible		
	N	%
Totally disagree	620	46.1%
2	282	21.0%
3	248	18.5%
4	91	6.8%
Totally agree	103	7.7%
Total	1,344	100%

Table 9.23 Malta being less united if foreigners stuck to their own traditions

Malta would be less united when foreigners stick to their own traditions and customs		
	N	%
Totally disagree	262	19.6%
2	210	15.7%
3	354	26.4%
4	215	16.0%
Totally agree	299	22.3%
Total	1,340	100%

Table 9.24 If people from different countries want to stick to their own culture they should keep it to themselves

If people from different countries want to stick to their own culture, they should keep it to themselves		
	N	%
Totally disagree	289	21.6%
2	294	21.9%
3	346	25.8%
4	173	12.9%
Totally agree	238	17.8%
Total	1,340	100%

Table 9.25 A country that has a mix of nationalities has problems with unity

A country that has a mix of nationalities (i.e. people from different countries) has problems with unity		
	N	%
Totally disagree	229	17.2%
2	269	20.2%
3	426	32.0%
4	204	15.3%
Totally agree	203	15.3%
Total	1,331	100%

Table 9.26 People who come to Malta should change their behaviour to become more like us

People who come to Malta should change their behaviour to become more like us		
	N	%
Totally disagree	316	23.6%
2	255	19.0%
3	327	24.4%
4	205	15.3%
Totally agree	237	17.7%
Total	1,340	100%

Table 9.27 shows that younger Primary School students hold more positive views on interculturalism, with a significant decrease registered from year 6 in Primary School to year 10 in Secondary School. Students attending Independent Schools believe more in interculturalism than those in Church Schools; this could be related both to more foreign students attending Independent Schools and also to Independent Schools being more open to interculturalism (Table 9.27). Students from the South Eastern region believe least in interculturalism than students from the other regions, particularly those from the Northern Harbour and Western regions (Table 9.28). Maltese students attending classrooms which include an equal mix of Maltese and non-Maltese students hold more positive intercultural views; in contrast, those Maltese students attending classrooms

consisting of Maltese students only have more negative news when compared to mixed classes (Table 9.29). Similarly, positive intercultural ideology was lowest among those who do not have non-Maltese children around them or whose neighbours are mostly non-Maltese and those who do not have non-Maltese friends. On the other hand, positive intercultural views were higher amongst those who have non-Maltese friends (Tables 9.30 – 9.31).

Table 9.27 Intercultural ideology by school year and school sector

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Intercultural Ideology_total	Year 6	35.42***	7.732
	Year 8	33.49***	7.590
	Year 10	32.98***	7.782
	Total	33.91***	7.761
Intercultural Ideology_total	State	34.45***	7.748
	Church	32.26***	7.503
	Independent	37.99***	6.980
	Total	33.91***	7.755

Note: ***p<0.001

Table 9.28 Intercultural ideology by home district

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Intercultural Ideology	Southern Harbour	33.77*	7.908
	Northern Harbour	34.52*	7.922
	South Eastern	32.25*	7.757
	Western	34.51*	7.274
	Northern	33.86*	8.166
	Gozo/Comino	34.17*	7.436
	Total	33.91*	7.767

Note: *p<0.05

Table 9.29 Intercultural ideology by Maltese/non-Maltese students at school

		Mean	Std. deviation
Intercultural Ideology_total	Most of the students in my school/classroom are non-Maltese	33.53***	7.635
	There is about the same amount of students who are Maltese and non-Maltese	35.23***	7.518
	Most of the students are Maltese	33.92***	7.676
	There are no non-Maltese students	31.69***	8.349
	Total	33.92***	7.759

Note: ***p<0.001

Table 9.30 Intercultural ideology by Maltese/non-Maltese in the neighbourhood

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Intercultural Ideology	Most of the people in my neighbourhood/town are non-Maltese	32.28***	8.382
	There is about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese	34.42***	7.966
	Most of the people are Maltese	34.07***	7.557
	There are no non-Maltese children	32.00***	8.207
	Total	33.91***	7.766

Note:*** p<0.001

Table 9.31 Intercultural ideology by number of non-Maltese friends

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Intercultural Ideology_total	None	31.22***	8.237
	Only one	33.48***	7.554
	A few	34.75***	6.870
	Some	37.16***	6.812
	Many	37.14***	7.229
	Total	33.92***	7.746

Note: ***p<0.001

9.5 Tolerance and Prejudice

Positive views about tolerance

Tables 9.32 – 9.36 show that the majority of children in Malta hold positive views about the integration of foreign children in Malta; around two thirds to three fourths believe that foreign children should be allowed to have a say in the future of Malta as much as Maltese children; that it is beneficial to have children from different countries attending the same school or living in the same area; that foreign children should have equal treatment to Maltese children; that equal treatment between children would result in fewer problems in Malta; and that it is important that foreign children are treated as equal to Maltese children. On the other hand, a small but important percentage of Maltese children, ranging from 10% to 17%, do not agree with these statements, e.g. 14% disagree that foreign children should have equal treatment to Maltese children.

Table 9.32 Foreign children should be allowed to have a say in the future of Malta as much as Maltese children

Foreign children should be allowed to have a say in the future of Malta as much as Maltese children		
	N	%
Totally disagree	109	8.1%
2	123	9.1%
3	232	17.2%
4	265	19.7%
Totally agree	616	45.8%
Total	1,345	100%

Table 9.33 It is good to have people coming from different countries attending the same school / living in the same area

It is good to have people coming from different countries attending the same school and / or living in the same area		
	N	%
Totally disagree	78	5.8%
2	111	8.3%
3	288	21.5%
4	299	22.4%
Totally agree	561	42.0%
Total	1,337	100%

Table 9.34 Children coming from different countries should be treated as equals to Maltese children

Children coming from different countries should be treated equally to Maltese children		
	N	%
Totally disagree	100	7.4%
2	90	6.7%
3	173	12.9%
4	203	15.1%
Totally agree	778	57.9%
Total	1,344	100%

Table 9.35 If all children are treated equally there would be less problems in the country

If all children are treated equally there would be less problems in the country		
	N	%
Totally disagree	60	4.5%
2	79	5.9%
3	192	14.4%
4	228	17.1%
Totally agree	777	58.2%
Total	1,336	100%

Table 9.36 It is important that we treat foreign children as equals to Maltese children

It is important that we treat foreign children as equals to Maltese children		
	N	%
Totally disagree	58	4.3%
2	80	6.0%
3	178	13.3%
4	208	15.6%
Totally agree	810	60.7%
Total	1,334	100%

Negative views about tolerance

The majority of participants (from one half to three fourths) do not agree that it is a bad idea for children from different countries to interact and mix together; that foreign children living in Malta should not involve themselves when they are not welcome; that some people are inferior to others, or that foreign children should not demand the same rights as them. However, a substantial minority of students agree with such statements; for instance, one in five said they get angry when foreign children demand the same rights as them and believe that some people are inferior to others (Tables 9.37 – 9.40).

Table 9.37 It is a bad idea for children coming from different countries to mix

It is a bad idea for children coming from different countries to mix (e.g. play/study/go out) with one another		
	N	%
Totally disagree	809	60.1%
2	191	14.2%
3	159	11.8%
4	83	6.2%
Totally agree	104	7.7%
Total	1,346	100%

Table 9.38 Foreign children living in Malta should not involve themselves where they are not welcome

Foreign children living in Malta should not involve themselves where they are not welcome		
	N	%
Totally disagree	465	34.7%
2	229	17.1%
3	306	22.9%
4	154	11.5%
Totally agree	185	13.8%
Total	1,339	100%

Table 9.39 Getting angry when foreign children demand the same rights as Maltese children

It makes me very angry when I hear foreign children demanding the same rights as Maltese children		
	N	%
Totally disagree	604	45.0%
2	231	17.2%
3	250	18.6%
4	101	7.5%
Totally agree	155	11.6%
Total	1,341	100%

Table 9.40 Some people are inferior to others

Some people are inferior (i.e. less equal) to others		
	N	%
Totally disagree	647	48.5%
2	141	10.6%
3	264	19.8%
4	116	8.7%
Totally agree	167	12.5%
Total	1,335	100%

Table 9.41 shows that female students and students attending Independent Schools hold more positive views and attitudes of interculturalism and social equity and are more tolerant of interculturalism and foreign people living in Malta. Students from the South Eastern region and Gozo hold less positive intercultural views than students in other regions (Table 9.42). Students attending mixed classrooms are more likely to be tolerant towards different cultures and foreign children than those consisting of only non-Maltese or Maltese students. Similarly, Maltese students who have non-Maltese friends are less likely to hold negative tolerance views and more likely to be open to interculturalism; on the other hand, ethnic tolerance and attitudes towards social equity are less frequent amongst those who do not have Maltese friend (Table 9.43 – 9.44).

Table 9.41 Tolerance by school sector and gender

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Tolerance_total	State	35.65***	6.916
	Church	34.67***	7.082
	Independent	37.21***	6.783
	Total	35.41***	6.999
Ethnic tolerance	State	19.22***	4.171
	Church	18.66***	4.372
	Independent	20.26***	3.720
	Total	19.10***	4.234
Tolerance_attitude on social equity	State	16.35*	3.486
	Church	15.98*	3.557
	Independent	16.92*	3.659
	Total	16.25*	3.534
Tolerance_total	Male	34.67***	7.063
	Female	36.18***	6.853
Ethnic tolerance	Male	18.57***	4.226
	Female	19.65***	4.171
Tolerance_attitude on social equity	Male	16.00**	3.626
	Female	16.51**	3.425

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 9.42 Tolerance according to home district

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive tolerance	Southern Harbour	20.74*	4.105
	Northern Harbour	20.82*	4.291
	South Eastern	19.80*	4.531
	Western	20.35*	4.085
	Northern	20.00*	5.015
	Gozo/Comino	19.88*	4.493
	Total	20.25*	4.461

Note: *p<0.05

Table 9.43 Tolerance by Maltese/non-Maltese students at school

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive tolerance	Most of the students in my school/classroom are non-Maltese	18.40**	5.650
	There is about the same amount of students who are Maltese as non- Maltese	20.23**	4.453
	Most of the students are Maltese	20.38**	4.375
	There are no non-Maltese students	20.03**	4.664
	Total	20.23**	4.493

Note: **p<0.01

Table 9.44 Tolerance by number of non-Maltese friends

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Negative tolerance	None	9.29***	3.780
	Only one	9.25***	3.935
	A few	8.72***	3.636
	Some	7.82***	3.253
	Many	8.83***	4.210
	Total	8.87***	3.746
Ethnic tolerance	None	18.40***	4.496
	Only one	18.75***	4.202
	A few	19.39***	3.972
	Some	20.18***	3.773
	Many	19.79***	4.483
	Total	9.11***	4.231
Tolerance_attitudes on social equity	None	15.71***	3.759
	Only one	16.27***	3.353
	A few	16.28***	3.446
	Some	17.25***	3.144
	Many	16.29***	3.478
	Total	16.26***	3.529

Note:*** p<0.001

9.6 Perceived consequences of migration

Positive perceived consequences

Tables 9.45 – 9.46 show that more than one half of Maltese students feel happy in the company of foreigners and do not believe that Malta is suffering because children from different countries attend Maltese schools and live in Malta. However, about one in five Maltese students do not feel comfortable in the company of foreigners and think it is negative for their country that such children attend schools and live in Malta.

Table 9.45 Feeling happy in the company of foreigners

I feel happy when I am with people coming from different countries		
	N	%
Totally disagree	118	8.8%
2	167	12.5%
3	348	26.0%
4	281	21.0%
Totally agree	427	31.8%
Total	1,341	100%

Table 9.46 Malta is suffering because children from different countries attend our schools and live here

I do not think our country is suffering because children from different countries attend our schools and live here		
	N	%
Totally disagree	144	10.8%
2	140	10.5%
3	304	22.9%
4	226	17.0%
Totally agree	515	38.8%
Total	1,329	100%

Negative perceived consequences

On the other hand, Maltese students appear to be more concerned about the negative consequences of Migration. Whilst the majority or relative majority of Maltese students do not believe that Maltese children who grow up with people coming from different countries cannot be considered Maltese, or that foreigners pose a threat to Maltese culture and traditions, or that they feel unsafe as more foreigners settle in Malta, a substantial minority do not share such positive views; around one third see foreigners as a danger to Maltese culture and traditions and do not feel safe as more foreigners are living in Malta (Tables 9.47 – 9.49).

Table 9.47 Maltese children who grow up with people coming from different countries cannot be considered Maltese

Maltese children who grow up with people coming from different countries cannot be considered Maltese		
	N	%
Totally disagree	576	43.0%
2	210	15.7%
3	297	22.2%
4	108	8.1%
Totally agree	148	11.1%
Total	1,339	100%

Table 9.48 People from other countries may pose a threat to Maltese culture

People from other countries may pose a threat (danger) to Maltese culture and traditions		
	N	%
Totally disagree	334	24.9%
2	221	16.5%
3	361	26.9%
4	206	15.3%
Totally agree	221	16.5%
Total	1,343	100%

Table 9.49 Feelings of safety with foreigners living in Malta

I do not feel so safe with more and more foreigners living in Malta		
	N	%
Totally disagree	297	22.2%
2	223	16.7%
3	312	23.3%
4	202	15.1%
Totally agree	305	22.8%
Total	1,339	100%

Younger Primary School children see more positive and less negative consequences in migration when compared to Middle School students, with positive views decreasing from Year 6 to Year 10. The consequences of migration are perceived more positively amongst students attending Independent Schools; on the other hand, negative perceived consequences were more common in Church Schools (Table 9.50). Again students from Gozo and the South Eastern region perceive less positive consequences of migration (Table 9.51). Students attending classrooms composed mostly either of non-Maltese or Maltese only, tend to have less positive and more negative views about the consequences of migration. The perceived positive consequences of migration are higher amongst students whose neighbours are mostly non-Maltese and who have non-Maltese friends (Tables 9.52 – 9.54).

Table 9.50 Perceived consequences by school year and school sector

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived consequences_total	Year 6	17.91***	4.494
	Year 8	16.87***	4.675
	Year 10	16.62***	4.811
	Total	17.10***	4.695
Perceived consequences_total	State	17.05***	4.680
	Church	16.69***	4.522
	Independent	19.39***	4.902
	Total	17.10***	4.687

Note:*** p<0.001

Table 9.51 Perceived consequences by home district

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived consequences	Southern Harbour	7.24**	2.134
	Northern Harbour	7.49**	2.240
	South Eastern	6.94**	2.137
	Western	7.48**	2.059
	Northern	7.20**	2.382
	Gozo/Comino	6.86**	2.383
	Total	7.18**	2.260

Note: **p<0.01

Table 9.52 Perceived consequences by Maltese/non-Maltese students at school

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived consequences_total	Most of the students in my school/classroom are non-Maltese	15.60***	5.205
	There is about the same amount of students who are Maltese and non- Maltese	17.94***	4.875
	Most of the students are Maltese	17.09***	4.517
	There are no non-Maltese students	16.21***	4.995
	Total	17.10***	4.688

Note: ***p<0.001

Table 9.53 Perceived consequences by Maltese/non-Maltese in neighbourhood

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived consequences_total	Most of the people in my neighbourhood/town are non-Maltese	15.91*	5.204
	There is about the same amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese	17.27*	4.712
	Most of the people are Maltese	17.22*	4.607
	There are no non-Maltese children	16.50*	4.528
	Total	17.09*	4.690

Note: *p<0.05

Table 9.54 Perceived consequences by non-Maltese friends

		Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived consequences_total	None	15.65***	4.608
	Only one	16.75***	4.782
	A few	17.37***	4.264
	Some	19.18***	4.490
	Many	19.43***	4.584
	Total	17.10***	4.686

Note: ***p<0.001

Correlational analysis between the different attitude subscales shows that most of the subscales correlate significantly with each other. There is significant positive correlation between interculturalism ideology, tolerance and perceived consequences of migration. Students who have positive intercultural views are more likely to have open and tolerant views towards foreign children and more perceived positive consequences of migration (Table 9.55).

Table 9.55 Correlations amongst the various subscales of the attitude questionnaire

	Acculturation expectations_ Segregation	Acculturation expectations _ Interculturalism expectation	Acculturation expectations _Melting Pot expectation	Intercultural ideology	Tolerance_total	Ethnic tolerance	Attitude on social equity	Perceived consequences of migration
Acculturation expectations_ Segregation	1	-.143**	-.143**	-.033	-.199**	-.217**	-.137**	-.116**
Acculturation expectations _ Interculturalism expectation		1	.550**	.294**	.394**	.335**	.382**	.294**
Acculturation expectations _Melting Pot expectation			1	-.055	.139**	.088**	.168**	-.060*
Intercultural ideology				1	.605**	.605**	.479**	.674**
Tolerance_total					1	.920**	.884**	.612**
Ethnic tolerance						1	.630**	.596**
Attitude on social equity							1	.506**
Perceived consequences of migration								1

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01

CHAPTER 10: OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall picture of the wellbeing of foreign children in Malta that emerges from this study is largely a positive one, with the majority of foreign children living in Malta enjoying good physical and mental health, high levels of resilience and subjective wellbeing, and doing well in school. The majority of Maltese children also hold positive views towards foreign children and intercultural integration. The study shows, however, that there are different layers of reality which we need to look into with the overall positive experiences of the larger group of economic European and North American migrants (close to three fourths of the sample) masking the actual situation of asylum-seeking African, Middle Eastern and East Asian migrants (one fourth of the sample). Similarly, the overall postive attitudes towards interculturalism of the majority of Maltese students are not shared by around one fourth of Maltese students who are still hesitant and resistant towards interculturalism. In this chapter we first give an overview of the major findings from the various phases carried out in this study and then make a number of recommendations for practice and policy development.

10.1 Overall findings

10.1.1 School age children

Families and parents

- Most of the foreign families in this sample (60%) live in two main regions in Malta namely, the Northern Harbour and Northern regions, with the remaining 40% spread in the other four regions. More families from Western/East Europe are found in the Northern region when compared to Africa/Middle East and East Asia, whilst more of the latter are found in the Southern Harbour region compared to the former. Half of the respondents live in an area with about an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners and more than 40% live in an environment composed of mostly Maltese people. Only 7% live in an area composed mainly of foreigners.

- Whilst the vast majority of both foreign parents and children lack an adequate knowledge of Maltese, they have a good knowledge of English. However, there is a great language difference between African/Middle Eastern and the other nationalities. Whilst about 60% of African/Middle Eastern parents have adequate or better proficiency in Maltese, this is dramatically reduced to 11% and less amongst Western and East Europeans. On the other hand, proficiency in English is significantly lower amongst the former with about 30% of African/Middle Eastern parents not having a good knowledge of English in contrast to less than 10% for the other nationalities. Similarly, whilst close to one half of African/Middle Eastern

children have an adequate or better knowledge of Maltese only around 20% to 30% of Western, East European and Asian children do. On the other hand, whilst the great majority of children from Western, East Europe and Asia (84%-91%) have an adequate or better proficiency in English only 58% of children and young people from Africa/Middle East do. The language barrier is one of the greatest obstacles to the successful integration of students with a migrant background (OECD, 2018).

- Half of the foreign parents in the study work full-time, another quarter are working part-time or are self-employed and only 11% are unemployed. Almost half work in an administrative/managerial and professional role. Parental educational level is quite high with almost two thirds having a university or college degree; less than 1% have no education. However, parents from Africa/Middle East are more likely to have a lower level of education and occupation and to be unemployed when compared to parents from other countries. Whilst the great majority of participants do not face any economic difficulties such as paying bills and buying basic necessities, 15% of families from Africa/Middle East do. A recent report by the International Monetary Fund (2019) reported that asylum seekers and low skilled migrants from outside the EU are at risk of poverty in Malta.

- Nearly all participants live in an apartment/house in the community with only 2% living in Open Centres, the latter being mostly asylum seekers from Africa/Middle East. Most of the foreign families in Malta live in more crowded homes and in bigger families than native Maltese. Most live in residences with two to four rooms, most commonly three rooms, though a small number of families live in a one-room residence. The majority live in a two to four-member households, with four-member households being the most common (compared to 2.48 amongst native Maltese); about 10% live in 6 to 10-member households. Participants from Africa/Middle East are more likely to be living in the smaller apartments and with more family members when compared to other nationalities such as Europeans. A recent report by Eurostat (2019) reported that 13% of non-EU foreigners living in Malta live in overcrowded homes, compared to 0.6% for EU nationals and 2% of Maltese.

Educational Engagement and Inclusion

- According to the teachers, the great majority of foreign students (80% and over) are highly engaged and included at school. They are happy to be part of the classroom community, attend school regularly, are taken care of, are highly motivated and participate actively in lessons. They make good academic progress and complete set tasks without much help. They work collaboratively with peers and play with others during breaks, they have friends at school and are included by peers in classroom activities and group work. Most of the other students play with foreign students during the break and invite them to parties; one third also appear to be ready to adapt the rules of the game to them. Primary School and female foreign students are more likely to be engaged and included than are Secondary School and male students.

- In contrast to the overall picture 10% to 20% of foreign students face considerable difficulties in various areas of their academic engagement and social inclusion. Students from low SES are less likely to be engaged and included. Students from Africa/Middle East appear to be less taken care of, less likely to learn new things,

to work collaboratively, to participate actively in classroom activities, to have friends or be included in social activities by their peers when compared to peers from other nationalities. Students who lack proficiency in English and/or Maltese are less likely to be actively engaged and included; conversely those proficient in Maltese are more likely to have Maltese best friends when compared to foreign peers with poor knowledge of Maltese.

Physical health and access to services

- The vast majority of parents evaluate their children's health as excellent or very good with very low frequency of physical conditions. However, the percentages are significantly lower amongst children from Africa/Middle East and East Asia. These parents are more likely than the other parents to be worried about their children's health, to report that their children are at risk of being seriously ill, experience pain and be limited by physical illness, and to take their children more frequently to the doctor/Health Centre. On the other hand, these parents evaluate their children's health as much better now than one year ago when compared to Western/European parents.

- Most of the parents appear to have very limited knowledge of the community, educational, social and health services available for foreign children and families in Malta, with the least awareness and use registered for the community and social services (only one half or less are informed about the latter two services). Parents from Africa and the Middle East are the most highly informed of the services, possibly as they make more use of public services and as they have been living in Malta relatively longer than parents of other nationalities (see also Borg, 2019). Parents would appreciate more information on the services available.

- Various community, social and educational services including breakfast clubs, homework clubs, study/reading groups, language classes, arts and crafts, library facilities, IT courses, and seminars for parents are hardly used by these foreign families. Social services and benefits such as unemployment and in-work benefits, milk grant and social assistance for single parents, and services provided by APPOĠĠ, SEDQA, SAPPORT and Jobs Plus are aslo hardly used.

- When children do not feel well, most parents prefer to take their children to doctor's clinics, followed by Health Centres and the general hospital emergency service. Participants from Africa/Middle East, however, prefer to use the Health Centres rather than doctors' clinics. Those with a good knowledge of English visit the doctors' clinics and Health Centres more frequently than those with poor knowledge. The doctor/general practitioner is the most visited health care professional, with visits to other professionals, such as specialists and therapists, being relatively low.

- One fourth of African/Middle Eastern parents make use of interpreting services in contrast to 5% or less among the other nationalities. Of those who use the interpreting service most are satisfied or very satisfied. Ninety-five percent reported that over the past year they did not experience any lack of provision of care needed or instances of delayed care. Most parents are satisfied with the services provided including adequate time and attention. More than one third, however, are dissatisfied with the social and community services; these are more likely to be from Africa/Middle East and Asia. Most parents are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the language and communication used at the services though

around one fourth are still dissatisfied with the language and communication used at the community and social services. In a study on the use of services by migrant adults in Malta (Aditus, 2013), communication remained a main challenge with some respondents saying that they were not always able to understand the instructions provided by some service-providers.

- Most parents do not think that services are too expensive, but it is interesting to note that participants considered the most used services as the most expensive (health and educational). Parents from Africa/Middle East are more likely to perceive the services as expensive.

- Most participants agree that services are available in their area, transportation to the services is adequate, and the opening times of the service centres are convenient. However, when compared to the Western group/Europeans, parents from Africa/Middle East and East Asia are relatively less satisfied about the services' accessibility.

- The majority of parents are not concerned about discrimination or lack of sensitivity to family values and beliefs, but 14% to 20% expressed concern about discrimination, particularly at the community and health services. Parents from Africa/Middle East are more likely to perceive discrimination and lack of sensitivity to family values and traditions particularly at the community and social services, with frequencies ranging from one fourth to one half of the parents (cf. Fsadni and Pisani, 2012; Sammut et al, 2017). Studies with migrants living in Malta, particularly those from Africa and the Middle East, show lack of trust in the authorities in protecting their rights (auditus, 2013; Zammit, 2012).

- Ninety percent or more of the parents hold positive views about the services provided. Participants from Africa/Middle East are less likely to do so when compared to other nationalities.

Mental health and resilience

- On the whole foreign children and young people enjoy good mental health and wellbeing with indications of less emotional and behavioural problems than among Maltese students themselves. Less than 8% of foreign children and young people exhibit social, emotional and behavioural difficulties compared to the 10% international prevalence rate (Goodman, 1997). This could be partly explained by the higher share of high SES families in the study, particularly those coming from Western and East Europe (close to 75% of the sample). On the other hand, the rate of prosocial behaviour is very similar to that of Maltese peers. However, 14% of students from Africa/Middle East experience significant social, emotional and behavioural problems according to parents and teachers, a rate higher not only than that of other foreign children in Malta but also than the Maltese and international prevalence rate. This reflects also some previous qualitative studies carried out with ayslum seekers in Malta (eg. Camilleri 2008; Calleja Ragonesi and Martinelli, 2013).

- Both teachers and parents indicate more behavioural than emotional difficulties amongst foreign students, with parents' evaluations suggesting more difficulties when compared to those of teachers. Male students are more likely to exhibit difficulties, particularly behavioural problems and less prosocial behaviour, whilst

females have higher levels of emotional difficulties. There are more difficulties in State Schools and in Primary Schools and early years, possibly as the younger students may have had less time to adjust in contrast to those of Secondary School age who might have been here longer.

- Students proficient in English exhibit fewer difficulties, both internal and external, and more prosocial behaviour than those with a poor or limited knowledge of English; those with high proficiency in both English and Maltese also manifest fewer difficulties, particularly behavioural ones. Low socio-economic status (low level of education and occupational status/unemployment) is related to higher emotional and behavioural difficulties and lower prosocial behaviour. Again students from low SES are more likely to be found in the asylum-seeking group than in the European and North American economic migrants' group. Clearly the foreign children most at risk of mental health difficulties are those from Africa/Middle East, those with little or no knowledge of English (and Maltese) and those from a low SES background. Socio-economic disadvantage and language barriers are two of the greatest obstacles to the successful integration of students with a migrant background (OECD, 2018). Research on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) shows that an ACE score over two is associated with a three-fold risk of academic failure, a six-fold increase in behavioural problems and a five-fold increase in attendance problems (Stevens, 2012).

Resilience

- Foreign children and young people appear to enjoy a high level of individual, relational and cultural resilience with young and female children scoring higher on a number of resilience sub-scales.

- Eastern European children are more resilient in both individual and relational resilience; African/Middle Eastern children have lower levels of relational resilience but a relatively high level of contextual resilience, particularly spiritual; whilst East Asians have low levels of individual and educational resilience.

- Children whose parents are unemployed are less resilient in individual and relational skills than those of employed parents.

- The relatively high level of resilience amongst foreign children residing in Malta reflects the findings of the recent OECD study on the resilience of 15-year old migrant students in Malta (OECD, 2018). The study found that contrary to the international trend, migrant students in Malta are more academically resilient (67%) than Maltese students (58%), their mean scores exceeding those of Maltese students in Science, Reading and Mathematics respectively. On the other hand migrant students are less likely to be socially resilient (sense of belonging) (47%) compared to Maltese native students (66%), with 1.42 times more probability of not being socially resilient in comparison with native students (OECD, 2018).

Subjective wellbeing (quantitative)

- The vast majority of foreign students live in the same home with their family, most of them with another sibling. Students from Africa/Middle East live in significantly bigger families. The vast majority are satisfied with the people they live with, feel cared for and safe at home with younger and female students feeling more

satisfied. They agree that parents listen to them and to their views when making decisions about them. A small minority however, complain that they are hit or called names by their siblings.

- The vast majority are satisfied with the home they live in, most of them living in two to three bedroom apartments and two thirds in homes with two or more bathrooms. Almost half have their own bedroom and the great majority their own bed, but children from Africa/Middle East and East Asia are more likely to share their rooms and their beds with others. In some instances the findings suggest a better family life for foreign children (European/Western) such as feeling safer and having more space at home, than for native Maltese children.

- The great majority of foreign children are satisfied and get along well with their friends, have enough friends, and believe that they have a friend to support them if they need. About one in five, however, do not think they have sufficient friends suggesting fewer friends than for their Maltese peers. Most of their friends are non-Maltese living in Malta, but one third said that their close friends live abroad. Students who are proficient in Maltese are more likely to have Maltese friends whilst female and younger students are more likely to have supportive friends.

- Most students are satisfied with their school experience, with the things they learn, and with the other children in their class. Students from Africa/Middle East appear to be happier at school than those from other nationalities. State Secondary School students are less satisfied than those in Independent Schools. The majority feel safe on their way to and from as well as at school, and believe that the teachers care about them, listen to them and support them in their learning. Primary School and female students enjoy more positive relationships with their teachers than the older and male peers.

- About one third of the students complained about frequent arguments in their classrooms (particularly those attending State Schools and those from Africa/ Middle East). More than one fourth complained about frequent fighting at school (particularly in State Schools). Though the frequency of bullying reported by foreign students appears to be less than that reported by native Maltese students (Cefai and Galea, 2016), bullying is still a major cause for concern amongst students. Seventeen percent are victims of physical bullying, about 20% feel left out and 25% called names; the latter occurs more frequently in the Northern and South Harbour regions.

- The great majority of students are satisfied with the area where they reside, feel safe when they walk around and feel there are enough places to play. However, some students report frequent fights and do not feel safe in their neighbourhood, whilst one in five do not think there are enough places to play and have a good time in their area, particularly in the Harbour regions and Gozo.

- More than half of the students agree that the adults in their community are friendly and helpful, whilst about 40% think that they listen to them and take them seriously, in contrast to about 20% who hardly think so.

- Whilst the majority are not concerned about their families' financial situation, 15% expressed concern, especially Primary School students and students from Africa/ Middle East. Most of the families possess the necessary amenities for a good quality

of life, such as means of transport, computers and washing machines. Most of the students are satisfied with the things they have, which is comparable to Maltese students. The vast majority always have enough food to eat, have access to basic necessities such as clothes in good condition, enough money for school activities, access to the internet, sport equipment, school equipment and fresh school lunch. However, a small percentage, who are more likely to come from Africa/Middle East, lack these necessities. Primary School students from Africa/Middle East are also less satisfied with the things they have.

- The vast majority of both Primary and Secondary School foreign students are satisfied with the free time they have. Whilst doing homework is a regular feature amongst the vast majority of children, only 10% take extra lessons on a frequent basis (compared to 75% of Maltese children). They spend most of their time with their families, doing exercise and using social media/electronic games/TV, but 40% hardly play or spend time outside. Fifteen percent work or help with the family business, whilst 10% do other work (not with family) for money or for food. It is also worth noting that more than one fourth spend their free time doing nothing or resting every day or most of the days, possibly due in part to lack of opportunity to spend their time more productively. The relative lack of social interactions in the community reflects somewhat the views of some of the adult migrants in Malta, with around two thirds of asylum seekers in a study by Aditus (2013) reporting that they do not have any Maltese friends or acquaintances, with many saying that they lived their lives separately from the locals, rarely engaging in social interaction; a number also reported that they do not attend local events due to racist or xenophobic attitudes.

- The great majority of foreign students are satisfied with the various aspects of their lives and their future, including how safe they feel, the way they look, their health, and their life as a whole. They are also satisfied with the freedom they have, the way they are listened to by adults, and generally feel positive about the future. These findings are quite similar to the views of Maltese children, though Maltese children are considerably happier with the way they look and somewhat more positive about their future (Cefai and Galea, 2016). Secondary School students agree that people are generally friendly towards them and that they have enough choices on how to spend their time, and that they are learning a lot in Malta.

- Most students have a positive view of Malta. They agree that adults in Malta care about children (though 40% do not know or do not have an opinion). Three fourths see Malta as a safe place where to live, with only 5% having doubts about this; students from Africa/Middle East are more likely to perceive Malta as a safe place than other nationalities. The majority agree that Maltese adults respect children's rights, that children in Malta are allowed to participate in decisions about their lives, and that they know their rights as children living in Malta - but almost one third do not know or do not agree[9]. Female students are more likely to have positive views of children's rights in Malta. Almost one third are worried about life in Malta; this may be related to the issues of inclusion, instances of prejudice and racism as indicated earlier and possibly also to what is going to happen to them in the future.

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[9] Studies with migrant adults in Malta show that most are not aware of their rights and ways to seek redress in cases of discrimination (Aditus, 2013).

Subjective wellbeing (qualitative)

- *Different meaning of 'home'*: For the majority of foreign children living in the community their home is perceived as their immediate family in Malta and represents a 'safe haven' where they feel safe and protected. They report strong, positive family relationships with parents and siblings, who provide a caring and supportive environment where they feel valued and happy. The physical presence of family members and spending quality time together is an important aspect of their wellbeing and they suffer when they experience prolonged separation from family members who live abroad. On the other hand, foreign students living in the Open Centres do not perceive the host country as their 'home', exhibiting instead a strong sense of identity with their country of origin. They refer to Malta as "a nice place" and a place of asylum and opportunity for better living and a better life.

- *Language Barriers*: Students living with their families in the community refer to the Maltese language as a barrier, sometimes preventing them from understanding their teachers during lessons. Although most are able to speak English, they remark that Maltese is needed as well, particularly in written work at school. Having good friends at school is helpful as they help them whenever they have difficulties in understanding. They also wish that the Maltese people around them would be more understanding of the language issue that they are facing. On the other hand, whilst many asylum-seeking children who are able to speak Maltese have problems in communicating adequately in English. Some mention that they and their families are not able to communicate with others at school or in Health Care cCntres without the help of an interpreter. Lack of ability to communicate in English also prevents them from feeling included both at school and when practising their hobbies, such as sports.

- *Positive school learning experience, but need for Maltese friends and less bullying*: Foreign students appreciate the importance of school as a medium for their future success and career. All participants have high job aspirations. They emphasise the importance of school in learning different subjects, particularly languages, and are generally happy with their current school and education in Malta. This is especially evident amongst those coming from developing and conflict-ridden countries. Students living in the community believe that school is an important place where to make new friends, and having good friends is one of the best things about going to school. Friends are especially important for foreign children to feel accepted and included at school, and making friends with other foreign children at school is considered as a way to cope with living in Malta as foreigners. On the other hand, the majority of students from the Open Centres claimed that they do not have Maltese friends with most of their closest friends being foreigners or living abroad, either in their country of origin or else friends who have now moved to other countries.

- Though most of the participants like going to school, most mentioned that they frequently experience or observe different kinds of bullying in their school. Although most students did not specify whether they experienced racial bullying, a small number, including those in Open Centres, mentioned that the bullying they experienced is related to their race, religion or inability to speak fluent Maltese or English. Overall, they suggest that their schools need to take all types of bullying more seriously, including psychological bullying, and that they should receive more support from teachers and other members of staff to prevent and reduce bullying,

including discriminatory bullying.

- *Community*: *lack of safety in neighbourhood and poor living conditions in Open Centres:* Students living in the community have mixed feelings about safety in their communities and neighbourhoods. The younger participants generally express a feeling of safety, but some older female students are concerned about unwanted attention from adults in the neigbhourhood. Many students also mentioned problems with their neighbours, including noisy disturbances, shouting, and fights. Students living in Open Centres expressed their lack of satisfaction with their living conditions, such as poor hygiene, inadequate food, lack of internet access, lack of greenery and lack of space where to play. Many wish to relocate to a new residence in another area of Malta. Some students, particularly males, are involved in communities outside the centre through sports. This allows them to have a sense of belonging to a group as well as to combat feelings of loneliness.

- *Subjective wellbeing: positive feelings in the community, negative experiences and resilience in Open Centres*: Overall, foreign students living in Maltese communities have a positive outlook and feel 'loved, safe and happy', but those living in the Open Centres exhibit more negative attitudes and feelings, with the Centres risking becoming zones of marginalisation and alienation. They underlined the need for basic needs and rights and for more State intervention to improve their living conditions. Various coping strategies were identified by the latter students to deal with their perceived negative physical and social environment and build their resilience. These include swimming, language learning, sports, high career aspirations and good communication and problem-solving skills.

10.1.2 Early years

- The study focusing on foreign children aged 0 to 3 and who are attending childcare centres, is based on 125 out of the identified 798 children, attending 27 out 109 childcare centres. Most children come from Europe (EU and Eastern European countries) with only 9 children coming from Africa, the Middle East and East Asia. More than 70% attend private centres. The findings of this part of the study need to be treated with great caution as the sample is not representative of young foreign children in Malta and is primarily focused on a sample of European children attending childcare centres, from average to high socio-economic status families. For instance the OECD report (2018) shows that more Maltese (90%) than migrant children (80%) attend preschool education in Malta.

- The great majority of parents live in an apartment or house (60% rented, 30% owned), work either full-time or part-time, and come from a high socio-economic level. The vast majority live in an environment either with an equal mix of Maltese people and foreigners or composed primarily of Maltese people. The mean for household members is 3.64 while that for the number of rooms in residence is 3.78. The great majority do not face any economic problems.

- Most of the parents evaluate their children's health as excellent or very good, the same as or better than one year ago, with no physical limitations, pain or discomfort. The great majority of children did not experience any physical health condition, except for a small percentage with conditions that are common at this developmental stage, such as respiratory, lung and/or breathing problems and sinus trouble.

- Most of the parents have very limited knowledge of many of the community, educational, social and health services available for children and families in Malta. They are more informed about the health and educational services, with more than half being unaware of the available social and community services. Various community services (language classes, arts and crafts, library facilities, IT courses, and parental seminars) and social services provided by APPOĠĠ, SEDQA and SAPPORT, are hardly used.

- Most parents use mainly the doctor's clinics for their children's health needs, followed by Health Centres. There are hardly any experiences of lack of provision of care or delayed care. Most participants are satisfied with the educational and health services, but a substantial number expressed lack of satisfaction with community and social services, such as lack of time and attention as well as language and communication issues.

- In general most parents are satisfied with the sensitivity shown by the service providers towards family values and traditions and with openness to different cultures, but again this was more evident in the educational and health services than in the community and social services. The great majority are not concerned about discrimination but about 10% are highly concerned and more than one fourth indicated there was discrimination at social services.

- On the whole parents are satisfied with issues like cost of services, availability in the area, transportation and times of service, but around 20% would like an improvement in these areas. About 15% also saw language as a barrier to accessing community and social services. Parents also would like more information about the use of the services provided, particularly those in the community and social services.

- According to the childcare educators, the vast majority of the children attending the centres participate actively in the activities and are included by their peers. They attend the centre regularly, are well cared for, are regularly provided with lunch, are provided with resources required for activities, and interact and participate actively in the activities. They play and work collaboratively and are socially included in their groups with most having friends in their group. They are also treated equitably by the adults at the centres.

10.1.3 Attitudes of Maltese students

- The study about the attitudes of Maltese Primary and Secondary School students towards foreign children shows overall positive, open and tolerant views towards foreign children and intercultural integration and inclusion. However, a closer look at the data, suggests that a substantial minority of students are still hesitant and/or resistant towards integration, preferring assimilation and in some instances separation. Primary School students, female students, students in State and/or Independent Schools, students with non-Maltese children in their neighbourhood and in their classroom/school and students from particular regions, are more likely to be in favour of cultural diversity and interculturalism.

- Maltese students refer to the changing face of 21st century Malta, as regions, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, communities, and schools are becoming more diverse and intercultural. One in five students report that there are about the same

amount of people who are Maltese and non-Maltese living in their neighbourhood and in their classrooms. About one half of Maltese students have a number of non-Maltese friends. However, social interactions with foreign children are still limited overall, with the majority of Maltese students still spending most of their work and leisure time with native peers.

- The attitudes of Maltese students to foreign students vary according to the latter's nationality, with the majority preferring peers from the Western world, namely Western Europe, North America and Australia, followed by those from Latin America. On the other hand, children from the Maghreb, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are the least liked, with apparent prejudice being registered against children from these regions. There are mixed views about children from East Europe and the ex-Soviet Union and East Asia[10]. Students from Independent Schools and in Primary Schools have more positive views of foreign children; those from Gozo have the least positive views.

- There are indications that the majority of Maltese students are against the segregation of foreign students in school and out of school activities, and in favour of assimilation and integration in Maltese society. However, a substantial number of students are still hesitant and resistant to intercultural integration. These are likely to attend Church and Secondary Schools and have few non-Maltese children in their community or school or as friends. Younger Primary School students, female students and students in State Schools are more in favour of interculturalism and assimilation and less pro-separation.

- The majority of Maltese students (one half to three fourths) hold positive attitudes about interculturalism, agreeing that the Maltese should accept people from different countries to live in Malta, should help foreigners preserve their culture, and should learn about other customs and traditions of foreign people living in Malta. They also agree that foreign parents should help their children to practise their native culture. A relative majority do not agree that interculturalism leads to division or that foreign people should change their behaviour to assimilate into Maltese culture. However, one fourth to one third of the students appear to be cautious or against full integration of foreigners in Malta. The positive attitudes are more common in Primary Schools and decrease significantly from Year 6 to Year 10 in Secondary Schools. Students attending Independent Schools believe more in interculturalism than do those in Church Schools, whilst those who attend culturally diverse classrooms and who have non-Maltese friends and neighbours also have more positive views. Students from the different regions of Malta and Gozo believe more in interculturalism than do students from the South East region.

- Most of the students (from one half to three fourths) have a tolerant and open approach towards migration, with the majority believing that foreign children should be allowed to have a say in the future of Malta as much as Maltese children; that it as beneficial to have children from different countries attending the same school or living in the area; and that foreign children should have equal treatment to Maltese children. On the other hand, a small but substantial percentage (10% to 20%) do not agree with these statements. One in five get angry when foreign children demand the same rights as themselves and believe that some people are inferior

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[10] *Similar anti-Arab prejudice has been reported amongst Maltese adults by Sammut and Lauri (2017) and Sammut et al. (2017) and by Fsadni and Pisani (2013).*

to others. A substantial number of Maltese children show evidence of intolerance and prejudice against non-Maltese peers, possibly reflecting fear, anxiety and mistrust resulting from lack of information, interactions and experience. Female students and Independent School students have more positive attitudes towards interculturalism and social equity and are more tolerant of foreign people living in Malta. Students attending mixed classrooms and who have non-Maltese friends are more likely to be tolerant towards different cultures and foreign children than are those in homogenous classrooms and without non-Maltese friends (cf.Crisp, 2010).

- More than half of Maltese students feel happy in the company of foreigners and do not believe that Malta is suffering because children from different countries attend Maltese schools and live in Malta. On the other hand, 20% to 30% appear to be somewhat concerned about the negative consequences of migration. Whilst the majority or a relative majority do not believe that foreigners pose a threat to Maltese culture and traditions and do not feel unsafe as more foreigners settle in Malta, a substantial minority do not share such positive views. Around one third see foreigners as a danger to Maltese culture and traditions and do not feel safe as more foreigners are living in Malta; one in five do not feel comfortable in the company of foreigners, and think it is negative for their country that such children attend schools and live in Malta. Primary School children perceive more positive and less negative consequences of migration when compared to Middle School students. The consequences of migration are perceived more positively amongst students from Independent Schools, and more negatively among those attending Church Schools and those from Gozo and the South Eastern region. Students attending culturally diverse classrooms who live in culturally diverse neigbourhoods and who have non-Maltese friends entertain more positive views about the consequences of foreigners living in Malta.

10.2 Recommendations[11]

On the whole, the majority of foreign children living in Malta enjoy positive physical and mental health, a high level of resilience and wellbeing, a stable family life, good economic wellbeing, a positive school experience, good relationships with teachers and peers, and social inclusion at school and in their communities. In some areas, they are better off than native Maltese children, such as in the lower level of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, less bullying, more participation in physical activity and sports and less time spent on private tuition. They can thus be a positive influence in the lives of Maltese children, not only in terms of the rich cultural diversity they bring with them, but also in encouraging Maltese peers to adopt healthier lifestyles, to appreciate and take better care of what we have, to protect and promote the Maltese language whilst exploiting our expertise as an international centre for the teaching of English, and to be more understanding of neighbouring people. On the other hand, many foreign children are living in overcrowded apartments and centres, are struggling with language barriers, particularly Maltese, and are encountering problems with access to various services, with few Maltese friends, and limited open spaces in their community.

The study also shows that foreign children in Malta cannot be construed as one homogenous group as there are striking differences, particularly in terms of ethnicity.

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[11] Some of these recommendations have been adapted from Cefai et al. (2018), Downes and Cefai (2016), Herzog- Punzenbregger et al. (2017), OECD (2018).

There are indications of a 'north/south' divide, with the larger group of economic European and North American migrants masking a strikingly different reality of asylum-seeking children from Africa, the Middle East and East Asia. Children from Africa and the Middle East and to a lesser extent East Asia appear to be a vulnerable and marginalised group, have relatively high levels of mental health and economic difficulties, such as having limited access to basic necessities, poor housing conditions, language barriers, lack of active engagement and success at school, poor access to and little use of various services, some are facing prejudice and discrimination in community, social, health and educational services. Different groups of foreign children have different needs which should be addressed accordingly. European children are facing Maltese language barriers, African/Middle Eastern children are having problems with English. Europeans and North Americans appear to have relatively comfortable and spacious accommodation whilst children from the Maghreb, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to be living in overcrowded residences and Open Centres. Most foreign children would like more social spaces and friendlier neighbours, children in Open Centres would like to connect more with the local communities. A high number of parents from the Western group have a tertiary level of education and are found in well paid jobs whist low SES is more common amongst families from Africa/ Middle East and East Asia. Maltese children are more prejudiced against Arab and African children than against Europeans, Americans and Australians, and more prejudiced against Eastern Europeans and Russians than against Western Europeans.

The study has also explored the attitudes of Maltese children and young people towards foreign children in Malta, and the traditional dualism of Maltese society emerges in this microstudy of the children's world as well. Whilst the majority of Maltese children hold postive views about foreign children and mutliculturalism, a substantial percentage expresses hesitation and concern. Whilst Maltese students express positive attitudes towards children from the Western world (Western Europe, North America, Australia), they appear to harbour deep-rooted and long-standing prejudices againt children from the Maghreb, the Middle East and sub-Sahran Africa.

This study suggests four major areas for action to improve the wellbeing, quality of life, education and social inclusion of foreign children in Malta, namely the creation of healthier physical and social spaces for diverse, intercultural communities; the provision of more accessible, sensitive and inclusive services for healthier and resilient foreign children; the promotion of a more accessible, inclusive and multilingual educational system; and the removal of spaces which deepen difference and nurture prejudice and discrimination to enable the upcoming Maltese generation to develop more tolerant, open inclusive attitudes towards cultural diversity and interculturalism. These spaces, systems and services would also help to maximise the benefits of interculturalism as Maltese society is becoming more diverse and intercultural.

10.2.1 Healthier physical and social spaces for diverse, intercultural communities

- Provision of safer, child-friendly open spaces where foreign children and young people can go out and enjoy themselves, particularly in the Harbour regions and for those living in the Open Centres. Upgrading of the living conditions for children living in the Open Centres, with the possibility of relocating to a more suitable place of residence.

- Need for more residential space for a number of foreign children and families,

primarily asylum seekers from Africa/Middle East who are more likely to be living in overcrowded, smaller apartments. This would also avoid the potential development of ghettos in Malta.

- In view of the high number of foreign children who hardly play or spend time outside and who spend their free time doing nothing, reflecting perhaps lack of available space and lack of friends and inclusion in local communities, there is a need for the creation of shared communal spaces to bring different children together, including arts, drama and sports facilities, social networking spaces, afterschool centres, and family resource centres. Schools can also work together with the local community and civic society to organise extra-curricular activities after school hours, such as sports, socio-cultural, creative as well as language/study/homework activities. Besides facilitating the inclusion and social capital of foreign children in Malta, these activities also help to build the resilience of children facing adverse circumstances such as asylum-seeking children.

- Families, particularly asylum seekers, should be supported to strengthen their cultural identity through activities underlining the unique characteristics of the family's culture of origin.

- About one third of foreign children either do not know or do not have an opinion about their rights in Malta or whether adults in Malta care about children and respect their rights. This calls for more education and awareness about the voice and rights of foreign children living in Malta as well as those of their families. Adults in Malta may also listen more actively to foreign children and take their ideas into consideration in families, communities, schools, services and other organisations. In the case of marginalised children, such as those in Open Centres, this would help to promote fairness and equity and avoid marginalisation and alienation.

- Asylum-seeking children from Africa/Middle East may be living in poor housing conditions and lack basic necessities. Additional resources will help to overcome such adversity and promote equity. These include support welfare schemes in the community and schools to ensure that all children and families have access to all the basic necessities and amenities to enjoy a good quality of life.

- One fourth of foreign school age children and young people work or help with the family business or work for money/food outside the family. This raises issues regarding child welfare and wellbeing, which need to be addressed and monitored by the child protection services.

10.2.2 More accessible, sensitive and inclusive services for healthier and resilient children

- Increasing awareness of existing services particularly community and social services available for children and families, including the provision of user friendly, multiple-language, multimedia information regarding services for foreign children and their families both at the service centres themselves and also in the community, schools and health centres.

- Building capacity and diversity for more community-based and accessible services and more culturally sensitive staff, particularly with regards to African/Middle Eastern and East Asian families. This entails staff training in interculturalism and

socially inclusive customer care service, particularly at the community, social and health service centres.

- Increasing access to services in the community, such as a one-stop shop where multidisciplinary services across health, educational and social services are available particularly in locations where asylum-seeking communities live. Some of the services, particularly community and social services, may be improved with more time and attention given to foreign families, enhanced communication and language, and more sensitivity to different cultures and family traditions. A more inclusive approach to service delivery would help to address the concern of African/ Middle Eastern and East Asian parents about discrimination and lack of sensitivity to family values and traditions.

- Programmes providing foreign children particularly those from asylum-seeking countries with adequate access to pre-school services.

- More support at family, school and community levels for children from low SES and from Africa and the Middle East to reduce their risk of manifesting social, emotional and mental health problems. Psychological support may also need to be provided through schools and/or community based programmes to children who may have experienced trauma prior to arriving in Malta. This calls for a broad and multidisciplinary approach encompassing education, health, and social welfare systems.

- Additional support for children facing multiple risks such as low SES, language barriers, traumatic experiences, social isolation and exclusion, to build their resilience from an early age. Resilience and social and emotional learning programmes in formal and non formal education contexts need to start from an early age.

Article 14(1) of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council provides that children of asylum seekers and minor asylum seekers should be granted access to the education system 'under similar conditions as nationals of the host Member State'.

10.2.3 A more accessible, inclusive and multilingual educational system

- Additional resources for schools with a high number of foreign students, particularly asylum- seeking ones, to address language issues among newly-arrived students. These include teacher training, pedagogical resources and programmes, and the provision of learning support educators (LSEs) where necessary to facilitate learning and inclusion.

- Possible redistribution of foreign students in schools to reduce the concentration of students, particularly low SES asylum seekers, into particular schools so as to avoid these becoming disadvantaged ghetto schools. Presently the majority of low SES students from asylum-seeking families are found in State Schools and particularly in two of the six regional areas where their families live. Such contexts may serve to amplify social inequalities rather than address them. The State may provide more incentives to schools to encourage them to take more low SES foreign students. For instance, in view of the relatively few foreign students in Church

Schools and the higher frequency of negative attitudes towards diversity and interculturalism amongst Maltese students at these schools, Church Schools may be offered incentives to provide more places for foreign students from low SES and asylum-seeking families. On the other hand, there is a need for continued State investment in State Schools to facilitate the integration and inclusion of foreign students attending these schools, including provision of additional resources to classroom teachers as in the case of individual educational needs. This would also help to avoid separated classes for extended periods of time which are likley to have a negative impact on children's achievement and inclusion.

- Immediate entry into schooling for newly-arrived children, including unaccompanied minors.

- Policy and structures to evaluate previous educational achievements to connect the present system with previous education and learning, to facilitate a smoother transition from one educational system to another.

- Provision of culturally and linguistically responsive education where schools may engage in more initiatives to promote intercultural diversity and provide a more connected and relational pedagogy and inclusive climate particularly for students with language difficulties and from Africa/Middle East. Mentoring by teachers and university students would also be useful to facilitate these students' engagement in learning.

- More efforts by schools to engage those who are less likely to participate in classroom and school activities, particularly students from low SES, students who lack language proficiency in English and/or Maltese, and students from Africa/Middle East. Active engagement is set to increase social inclusion. Students from Africa/Middle East in particular may benefit from more support at school such as material support and individual learning programmes building on their previous educational experience, including language support and provisions for continued monitoring as they move from one class and school to another. Some of these students may also need tailored, quality psychosocial support in view of their higher rate of emotional and behavioural difficulties, some of which may also be trauma-related.

The Intercultural School Seal distinguishes public, private or co-operative schools that, through educational programmes and practices, promote the recognition and enhancement of cultural and linguistic diversity as an opportunity and a source of learning for all (European Commission, 2018).

- Teacher education, at both initial and professional learning stages in inclusive education, cultural diversity and multilingual competence where teachers have the opportunity to explore their own biases and prejudices as well as develop the competence to teach culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms (cf. OECD, 2019, PPMI, 2017). Teachers, Kindergarten educators (KgEs), learning support educators (LSEs) and childcare workers also need training on how to support children who experienced trauma and manifest emotional and behavioural difficulties. All educators who are teaching and supporting the education of foreign children but lack the required intercultural and linguistic competences need to be provided with inhouse training. Recruiting educators with a migrant background would also help to provide positive role models for the students.

- Mentoring by teachers and other members of staff and university students (eg Education, Psychology, Counselling and Social Work students), peer mentoring and befriending systems to support foreign students' engagement and inclusion.

- Action by school authorities to reduce peer violence, promote a culture of peer respect and support, collaboration, and constructive conflict resolution in relation to foreign students.

- Putting in place bullying policies in schools that specifically address discriminatory bullying against minority children including foreign children and promoting school cultures that enhance respect for diversity, tolerance, and inclusion.

- Provide support for foreign children to develop more friendships with Maltese peers such as overcoming the language barrier through the teaching of Maltese, finding English-speaking Maltese friends and participating in peer mentoring and friendship schemes at school and in the community. This would also help to address the lack of social capital due to the abscence of Maltese friends and the loss of previous friends living abroad, and to help them develop a sense of belonging within their school and community.

- More tailored career education for foreign young people residing in Malta. Asylum seekers in particular may have missed years of education, experienced lack of continuity from one educational system to another and faced language barriers, and thus may be provided with affirmative actions to facilitate their access to post-secondary, vocational and tertiary education. The University of Malta and MCAST may have in place policies which help to broaden their access to tertiary and vocational education in this respect. It is encouraging that students who may be particularly vulnerable in their educational achievements and uncertain about their future, such as those living in the Open Centres, have high career aspirations.

- Proactive engagement with parents of foreign students, such as the provision of accessible information on the school and support services for children and families as well as community resources, the organisation of culturally and linguistically sensitive parental education initiatives in collaboration with, and led by, the parents and community leaders themselves. Parents and community leaders may also be helped to organise language and other learning activities for foreign children and their families in their community. Parents may also be supported in selecting schools for their children through more accessible information and possibly increasing their choice of schools, especially to those schools with low intake of foreign children.

- Rather than seeing multilingualism as a problem, introduce a 'multilingualism for all' policy as a resource for all students in the classroom. This requires that all teachers will have an adequate knowledge of the language, language learning and support within a school culture which embraces multilingualism and values the multilingual resources of foreign children.

- Early assessment of the language proficiency of students so as to identify the need for additional language support in Maltese and/or English as soon as their educational programme (preschool/school) starts. Where possible targeted language support is provided in mainstream classes rather than in separate classrooms, providing classroom practictioners with the necessary in-class support and resources to cope with cultural/linguistic diversity. Attending mainstream classrooms would also

facilitate children's sense of belonging to school and their social inclusion making it more possible for them to make Maltese friends. Language support may also be organised after school hours.

- Support for students in transition from one linguistic culture to another is necessary to successfully transfer their existing knowledge from one language to another and to learn how to communicate successfully and learn different subjects through the medium of new languages. They will benefit from making use of their literacy and thinking skills in their first language(s) along with the additional language(s) for as long as possible.

- Valuing the unique language and cultural background of each student to promote academic success by boosting self confidence and self esteem. This is particularly true of asylum seeking children who still speak of their country of origin as their home.

- Maltese and English language programmes for foreign children as well as their parents in the community, particularly in the areas with a high concentration of foreign families. Families from Africa and the Middle East would particularly benefit from lessons of English, whereas Europeans and Asians would benefit from lessons of Maltese. Such programmes may also include peer mentoring by Maltese children at school and in the community in the learning of both Maltese and English.

- Setting up a national foundation for the promotion of the Maltese language and culture similar to those in other countries such as on the British Council in the UK and the Dante Alighieri Society in Italy.

10.2.4 Removing spaces to come together

One of the key principles of integration is that it is a two-way process that requires changes in both migrant and native communities. The finding that a considerable number of Maltese children are still hesitant and resistant to the inclusion of foreign children in Malta and perceive interculturalism as a negative experience, suggests that there is a need for more effort and initiatives to promote more tolerant and inclusive attitudes and provides positive experiences of a intercultural approach in both formal and non-formal education. There is also evidence of prejudice particularly towards children coming from North Africa, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, and to a lesser extent towards children from Eastern Europe, ex-Soviet Union countries and East Asia, in contrast to more positive attitudes towards children hailing from the Western world. Prejudice that is adequately addressed may lead to discrimination. Moreover, prejudice appears to be greater among those who do not interact or have experience with non-Maltese peers.

As suggested in prejudice reduction programmes, this calls for:

- More opportunities for Maltese and non-Maltese students to interact interpersonally and work together on common tasks and goals in an atmosphere of mutual respect. More school related initiatives and projects organised together by Maltese and foreign students, projects with other schools and with schools in other countries, particularly those countries perceived negatively, as well as peer mentoring and befriending schemes, would be useful in this regard.

- More opportunities for all students to reflect on their concerns and attitudes towards

non-Maltese in a safe environment where they can also learn to appreciate the dignity of others and recognize the injustice of discrimination.

- More opportunities for educators, such as Heads of school, classroom teachers, support teachers, LSEs, KgEs, childcare educators, leaders of children and youth organisations and community leaders (such as Local Council Mayors and Parish Priests), as well as parents of Maltese children, to reflect on their concerns and attitudes towards non-Maltese in a safe environment where they can also learn to appreciate the dignity of others and recognize the injustice of discrimination.

- More pro-active action for particular groups of children who are more likely to harbour negative attitudes towards interculturalism and foreign children, such as students in Middle and Secondary School, students in Church Schools, students from the South Eastern region and Gozo, and children from neighbourhoods and schools where there are only a few non-Maltese children and families. In view of the decrease of positive attitudes from Year 6 to the Middle Schools and Secondary Schools more effort may be needed to turn Middle and Secondary Schools into more inclusive and culturally responsive communities.

- Including specific learning and teaching about the benefits of interculturalism and of intercultural competence in such curricular subjects such as Ethics (one might consider whether this becomes a mandatory subject for all school children), Citizenship and Personal, Social and Career Development.

- Finding ways of achieving a more balanced distribution of foreign children in the schools across regions and school sectors (State, Church, Independent) in view of the finding about the positive impact of interactions between Maltese and non-Maltese students and the large concentration of non-Maltese students attending particular schools.

- Teacher education (including LSEs, KgEs and Head of Schools) in intercultural competence and inclusive and culturally responsive education at both initial and inservice levels to lead to the creation of more inclusive and intercultural communities.

- Education programmes for leaders of communities and youth organisations in order to promote more diverse and friendly non-formal social environments too and address the tendency of young adolescents to become less welcoming of foreign peers as they grow up.

- School and community based activities to encourage Maltese parents and families to value diversity and appreciate its benefits, including activities for and by Maltese and foreign parents in schools and intercultural community hubs where Maltese and foreign families, children and young people can come together and spend quality time together.

10.3 Conclusion

This study provides a snapshot of the lives of foreign children living in Malta in all their diversity together with recommendations for how their different needs may be addressed so as to enhance their health, quality of life, wellbeing, education, inclusion and future prospects. However, the present situation, is dyamic, fluid and ever-changing, with

children hailing from various countries and from very different circumstances arriving and leaving the island. This requires holding a periodic national study of this nature to ensure that the portrait provided in this study is regularly updated and reflects more accurately the situation of foreign children in Malta in the coming years. The phenomenon of unaccompanied minors also needs to be addressed through such a study. In this study we were constrained to group foreign children into four ethnic groups for statisitical analysis purposes. It is recommended that, given the sufficient number of participants, future studies split the sub-Saharan group from the Maghreb/ Middle Eastern group, as these two groups may have different needs. In view of the limitations of the early years study and the critical importance of the early years for children's healthy development it is strongly recommended that a more representative study is carried out in this area. We have also been unable to complete the study with post-secondary students due to the low response rate and it is therefore recommended that further efforts should be made to engage with foreign young people living in Malta in exploring their health, wellbeing, education, inclusion and future prospects.

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An open and child-friendly country as Malta aspires to be, can never be a passive recipient of immigratory flows. The physical passage to Malta desired and accomplished by thousands of foreign children and their families needs to be followed by Malta's social and cultural passage to embracing the needs and diversity of these people. May this study and the findings and recommendations it presents be a further step in this passage.

Pauline Miceli, Commissioner for Children, Malta

This is an impressive piece of work. Notable in its attempt to be as comprehensive as possible about the largest social transformation ever to be experienced by our country, and its inhabitants, throughout its recent history. The 'passage to Malta' is fraught with danger at the hands of human and natural elements. Once landed in Malta, a different set of challenges kicks in: settlement, employment, education, decisions as to whether to leave or stay . . . This study, probably the first of its kind, sheds significant light on the state of health of immigrants living in Malta.

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino, Pro Rector, University of Malta

An excellent overview of the situation of migrant children and their peers in Malta, providing insights into important aspects and details which sometimes would not be expected. The report manages to clearly define the problems and offer explanations, but also recommends a plethora of useful and important interventions and policies that could help improve the present situation.

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