



The culprits behind the *Anna Catania* – EMN officer EMN MALTA national conference

EMN Malta organised the 2022 national conference on the 28th October in collaboration with the European Consortium for Church and State Research and the Faculty of Laws, University of Malta. This was the first conference after three (3) long years of covid restrictions. It was also the first time the new EMN Malta team coordinated together all the logistics of the national conference.

There were two new members to the team, John Testa, the new EMN Malta Coordinator with his 12-year expertise on Migration Policy, and Xylona Spiteri, the youngest of the team, with a Masters in Diplomatic Studies was the new EMN Officer – this year’s EMN national conference was their baptism of fire!

We worked with dedication as from February 2022, determined that we did not want the usual rhetoric. Our aim was that the participants would leave the conference with more questions than replies.

The EMN Malta team shared the same beliefs. That migration is not just about security, employment numbers and enforcement issues. We wanted to go deeper and touch the

malaise afflicting societies globally. What happened to solidarity, to transcendental values which were shared by different religions and political ideologies? Why is there so much ambivalence in beliefs and morals that society cannot distinguish anymore between what is the truth and what is false? Fortunately for us Dr Alan Xuereb crossed our path, and we invited him to be the keynote speaker of the conference. We knew that Dr Xuereb would take us to trails not previously explored in a migration conference.

On Thursday 24 February, Russia invaded Ukraine, civilians were being killed while many young Russian soldiers were surrendering themselves to a warm plate of soup offered by Ukrainian women. The young Russian soldiers were told that they were participating in a military exercise, and not that they were being sent to kill their neighbours.

This was the point when our conference took a different twist. It was then that we chose the theme for our conference, ‘The New Geopolitical Challenges in Migration tackling Cultural and Religious diversity’. We were bold and we invited foreign speakers who would question, 1) whatever has happened to international human rights? 2) How can we create a legal system of how to ask for asylum so that no migrant is discriminated against? In a virtual presentation, Mr Denys Sphak representing EMN Ukraine, depicted the crude facts of a population scourged by war and desperately needing help. We asked the speakers to give forward



looking presentations, giving proposals and if possible, even solutions. We were interested to hear how we can work towards a Peace Building society. All our speakers were excellent, and it was thanks to their honest view of migration that our conference was successful.

We were not just the conference organisers, we also sought to be the conference participants. We, like the rest of societies around the globe, yearn for a better world. This experience has made us better team players, using each other’s strengths while supporting each other when the climb was getting tougher. Revealing each other’s limitations has not made us weaker but stronger, making us grow in a more cohesive team. As the year comes to an end, our EMN journey continues...

John, Xylona and myself, would like to wish all our readers, stakeholders and migrant persons living in Malta, a blessed Christmas and a year in which we can all work together for Peace to triumph over war in every country and in every heart of each individual, irrespective of political and religious creed and ideology.



REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE

By pursuing the Opportunities and Benefits of Cultural Diversity

*Michael Cluett – Research Manager,
Human Rights Directorate*

We live in a world going through a perfect storm threatening to undo decades of economic, social, and environmental progress. Within this storm, those fleeing war, persecution, and joblessness are received by countries grappling with their own struggles, changing demographics, and fears that their values and way of life are being eroded.

What is within our control to reframe this turbulent narrative? How can we capitalise on the opportunities of cultural diversity derived from migration, to build more compassionate and just societies? How can we allocate human and financial resources in more transformative ways?

Work, skills, access: Dignity

In 2021, one in every four persons living in Malta was born abroad. 78% of migrants were 25 to 54 years old – peak working age. Getting the most out of this diversity requires that migrants not only participate in the labour market but can find and maintain well-paid jobs with decent conditions. For migrants, this provides financial stability, opportunities for socialisation and learning, and multiple psychological benefits. For host countries,

this boosts economic output, consumption, and productivity, while pulling these persons away from crime, making our streets safer. Labour market participation has also been found to support positive perceptions of migrants within host communities, reducing social tensions and promoting compassionate understanding of the fact that for all our differences, we are fundamentally the same.

We must therefore continue working to remove barriers that migrants face in finding



Michael Cluett



such opportunities. These include gaps in language skills, abusive practices by recruiters and employers, and limited understanding of job markets. Locally, there are positive efforts to build on - the I Belong programme administered by the Human Rights Directorate, the recently published Digital Platform Delivery Wages Regulation Order, and targeted employment initiatives implemented by JobsPlus.

Nevertheless, migrant communities here and across Europe often have problems understanding and accessing information and services provided by the labyrinth of public entities and NGOs. Besides limiting migrants' ability to maximise their contribution to society, unnecessary bureaucracy and



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2nd Conference session, moderator: Mr Joseph St John

fragmented structures also represent inefficient use of human and financial resources. Similarly crucial is ensuring migrants' inclusion within mainstream education and access to adequate healthcare – especially mentally healthcare, which remains a stigmatised issue within many migrant communities.

Global transformation for the future

All of these issues highlight the greater challenge of transforming international frameworks to create a predictable system that can match people's skills with job markets, enable countries to better allocate their resources, and ensure stronger minimum standards of protection.

As the global number of migrants doubled over the last decade, so too has states' management of these flows grown fraught with difficulties. Add climate breakdown and top-heavy demographic shifts to the mix, and we are on course for unprecedented movements – even competition between states to *attract* migrants to meet their economic and social needs.

Taking inspiration from Europe's swift, united response in triggering the Temporary Protection Directive in support of Ukrainian

refugees, it is clear that we need to replace outdated treaties and incoherent *ad hoc* arrangements with a strategic and deliberate system for managing migration - one unlike anything previously agreed.

By enabling governments to accurately forecast and plan for inflows of migrants, we can then turn to designing new ways of feeding our people, powering our settlements, and sustaining our lifestyles.

So, what does this predictable system look like? How do we realise the mirage of mandatory relocation schemes, not only at EU level but also UN level? Should there be a common mechanism for legal migration and mobility, featuring a global system for matching people with job markets while maintaining sovereign border control? How can this be designed to destroy the business model of human traffickers and people smugglers, who profit off the misery of those seeking a better life?

While recognising the complexities of these questions, they are all starting points for stimulating the transformation that is needed, and for identifying, dismantling, and rebuilding inherited structures that simply do not work.





NO PEACE WITHOUT TRUTHFULNESS Authentic Knowledge as a Common Good Pre-Requisite

Dr Alan Xuereb – Keynote speaker

Lawyer Linguist at the European Court of Justice, Political writer and thinker

The world is not well!

It is an understatement to declare that we are living in very dark times. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian war have engulfed humanity.

The only hope left is to make a paradigm shift in the search for authentic knowledge. To turn to what one may call “truthfulness” and make it itself part of that mechanism coordinating individual and collective well-being of society.

Perhaps, this may be done through a change of heart. Such must be the change as to equip us with authenticity in our actions. Such authenticity may hopefully, help in creating a climate of trust.

For this change of heart to happen, we have to start thinking more like a community. We need a common ideal to follow. We need values that are transcendental. We need to be idealists “without illusions”. Nevertheless an ideal, in order not to be just an illusion, needs also a reference point: We need true understanding that leads us to an authentic knowledge, to truthfulness and, thus, to a build a climate of trust, which in turn will bring us to acceptance of ‘others’ not just tolerance of others. Acceptance comes from the humble idea that we are created equal in dignity but we are not the same. In this sense, acceptance needs to be reciprocal. Whilst the host State is under the moral and legal obligation to save, assist and care for all those in danger, the process of acceptance



Dr Alan Xuereb

is synallagmatic- it needs both host and guest to contribute something - their mutual trust and their acceptance of the “other”. Our diversity also needs this common convergence reference point: the common good. This ideal needs authentic truthfulness as its essential pre-requisite. As without truthfulness, there is no trust, without trust there is no acceptance, without acceptance there is no justice and without justice, there is no peace! Without peace there can be no common good!

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He Ain't Heavy,
He's My Brother

