

THEME 1 CULTURAL & TERRITORIAL VIBRANCY

EVALUATION & MONITORING
Research Findings 2017

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring process is a means through which the Valletta 2018 Foundation gains a deeper insight into the various impacts of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title on different spheres of cultural, social and economic life. The goal of this process is twofold (i) To understand the changes brought about by the ECoC title, and (ii) To address any shortcomings and challenges faced by the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme throughout its implementation.

This process comprises of a series of longitudinal studies commencing in January 2015, three full years before the European Capital of Culture year, and running through to 2019, thereby capturing data before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of Valletta holding the ECoC title.

This process is divided into five themes:

- 1. Cultural & Territorial Vibrancy**
- 2. Governance & Finance**
- 3. Community Inclusion & Space**
- 4. The Tourist Experience**
- 5. The Valletta Brand**

This research is a collaborative, mixed-methods process, involving a number of public entities, collecting and analysing data primarily of a quantitative nature, as well as independent researchers working with data that is predominantly qualitative. These entities and researchers constitute the Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Steering Committee, that was set up to manage and implement this research process.

The public entities forming part of the Steering Committee are:

- National Statistics Office
- Malta Tourism Authority
- Jobsplus
- Economic Policy Department in the Ministry for Finance

The independent researchers participating within this process were selected according to their area of expertise. The areas covered are:

- Cultural Programme
- Branding
- Sociology
- Built Environment
- European Identity

Although each of these researchers, and their respective teams, are carrying out data collection and analysis specifically within their respective fields, various points of intersection and collaboration across the various areas have been established so far. The data being collected throughout each study is being shared with the Steering Committee in order to create synergies between the different fields being analysed.

The research methods adopted throughout the various studies that comprise this process vary greatly, ranging from quantitative surveys to in-depth interviews, focus groups and real-time experience tracking, amongst others.

CULTURAL & TERRITORIAL VIBRANCY

THEME 1

Cultural and Territorial Vibrancy investigates the impacts of the ECoC title on the various forms of cultural participation within Malta, and the extent to which the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme is addressing issues related to cultural engagement, community involvement within cultural activities, and skills development.

This strand is formed of three major studies. These are the Valletta Participation Survey, being carried out by the National Statistics Office, which provides crucial information on the degree to which various groups and individuals participate in cultural activity taking place in Valletta, and identifying the push and pull factors which encourage or discourage further participation.

A second, related study, being carried out by Daniela Blagojevic Vella, analyses the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme in detail, examining how this is devised and implemented, and reflecting upon its effectiveness in fostering international collaboration and community participation in cultural activity.

Finally, the study carried out by Dr Marcello Carammia and Dr Marie Briguglio examines individuals' sense of European identity throughout the Valletta 2018 process, looking into changes in the degree of trust and closeness to European and national institutions through a series of quantitative surveys and qualitative focus group sessions.

Together, these three studies present a comprehensive overview of the current cultural participation and the ways in which Valletta 2018 intends to influence and encourage further involvement within cultural activity and greater participation within artistic, social and civic processes.



VALLETTA PARTICIPATION SURVEY

**Josianne Galea,
National Statistics Office**

INTRODUCTION

The Valletta Participation Survey (VPS) provides an overview of the main issues related to the demand for and participation in cultural activities. This report will be presenting the salient points from the findings on the VPS 2017. For the purposes of consistency and comparability, the questionnaire was kept identical to that used in previous waves. The questionnaire is divided into five parts, namely; (i) questions for Valletta residents; (ii) questions for non-Valletta residents; (iii) questions about cultural participation; (iv) questions about the European Capital of Culture and Valletta 2018; and, (v) demographics.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and population coverage

The target population for this survey are persons aged 16 years and over living in households in the Maltese Islands. Although each district in Malta is equally covered, there is an oversampling for Valletta in order to render the Valletta sample representative.

The selection of the sample is done through a stratified random sampling based on three variables, sex, age group and district. For 2017, the targeted population was estimated to be 365,621, as can be seen in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Population distribution by gender and age group

Age Group	Males		Females		Total	
	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%
16-24	24,638	12.9	22,238	12.2	45,975	12.6
25-44	65,994	35.9	60,518	33.3	126,511	34.6
45-64	65,994	20.5	55,679	30.6	111,956	30.6
65+	37,743	20.5	43,435	23.9	81,178	22.2
Total	183,751	100	181,870	100	365,621	100

Table 2: Population distribution by district or locality

District or locality	Males		Females		Total	
	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%
Southern Harbour (excluding Valletta)	30,854	16.8	30,571	16.8	61,425	16.8
Valletta	2,292	1.2	2,465	1.4	4,757	1.3
Northern Harbour	55,237	30.1	55,803	30.7	111,040	30.4
South Eastern	27,759	15.1	27,568	15.2	55,327	15.1
Western	24,741	13.5	24,463	13.5	49,204	13.5
Northern	29,022	15.8	27,900	15.3	56,922	15.6
Gozo and Comino	13,846	7.5	13,100	7.2	26,946	7.4
Total	183,751	100	181,870	100	365,621	100

As can be seen in Table 3 below, the net sample interviewed was of 1,028 for the September 2017 wave. Of these, 838 were selected randomly from all over Malta, with the exception of Valletta. The rest (that is 190 persons) were selected from Valletta. As in previous waves, the oversampling of Valletta residents ensured the production of good quality statistics for this locality.

Table 3: Sample distribution by district or locality

District or locality	Males		Females		Total	
	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%	Number of persons	%
Southern Harbour (excluding Valletta)	71	14.1	73	13.9	144	14.0
Valletta	90	17.9	100	19.0	190	18.5
Northern Harbour	72	14.3	73	13.9	145	14.1
South Eastern	67	13.3	72	13.7	139	13.5
Western	67	13.3	70	13.3	137	13.3
Northern	69	13.7	69	13.1	138	13.4
Gozo	66	13.1	69	13.1	135	13.1
Total	502	100	526	100	1,028	100

Data Collection & response rates

The survey was launched on 18th September 2017. The data collection process took two weeks and was concluded on 2nd October 2017. Just like the previous three waves, the data collection method was the CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing) method and interviews were carried out by a number of experienced interviewers who were trained specifically for this survey.

Throughout the various waves of data collection, response rates always stood at over 75%. In 2014 the response rate was of 84%, in 2015 the VPS had a response rate of 77%, in 2016 the same survey had a response rate of 81% and in 2017 the response rate stood at 77%.

FINDINGS

Valletta residents

When the residents of Valletta were asked about the activities in which they engage in Valletta, many reported very high engagement levels with all the activities identified by the survey. Accordingly, more than four in every five individuals reported that they shop for groceries, shop for clothes, and use open/public spaces in Valletta for relaxation purposes.

Table 4: Activities carried out by Valletta residents with Valletta

2017						
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	Number of Persons			%		
Shopping for groceries	67	68	135	67	68	135
Shopping for clothes	92	98	190	92	98	190
Relaxing in public places	64	73	137	64	73	137

	16 to 44 years old	45 years old and over	Total	16 to 44 years old	45 years old and over	Total
	Number of Persons			%		
Shopping for groceries	1,503	2,414	3,917	81.0	83.2	82.3
Shopping for clothes	1,571	2,644	4,214	84.6	91.1	88.6
Relaxing in public places	1,630	2,451	4,081	87.8	84.5	85.8

When we look at a time series of the modes of transport that are used by Valletta residents to leave Valletta, the trend is consistent across the four waves of the survey.

The main type of transport used is the private car followed by the public transport.

Table 5: Type of transport mostly used to leave Valletta

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Type of transport	%	%	%	%
Private car	58.6	66.1	56.2	61.6
Public transport	30.7	27.7	39.9	32.2
Other (including taxi or other paid services)	1.8	2.5	2.5	1.9
Do not leave Valletta	8.9	3.7	1.5	4.3

Non-Valletta residents

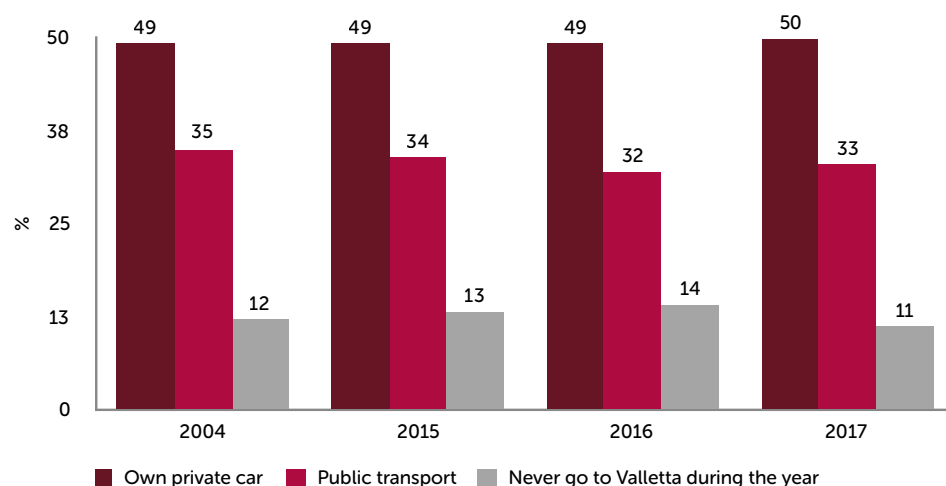
The three main reasons why non-Valletta residents visit Valletta are the same in winter and in summer. Shopping for clothes is the main reason cited in winter, followed by work and administrative services and dining. In summer, the order of these three reasons shifts from year to year, although their prominence remains consistent.

Table 6: Reasons for non-Valletta residents who visited Valletta in a typical winter/summer month (Top 3 reasons cited)

Type of transport	2014	2015	2016	2017	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Winter (%)				Summer (%)			
Shopping of clothes	47.8	33.9	39.9	46.6	38.8	30.9	33.8	39
For Work, administrative services	28.6	32	33.4	30.7	29.7	36.2	31.4	31.9
Dining	19.7	19.7	28.3	27.9	23.1	24.8	35.6	32.8

With reference to the means of transport mainly used by the non-Valletta residents to visit Valletta, one can notice from Chart 1 that the same trend is visible from 2014 onwards. Half of the non-Valletta residents use their own private car to access Valletta. On the other hand, one in three non-Valletta residents use public transport to reach Valletta. The results show that there was a drop in the percentage of people that stated that they never go to Valletta during the year.

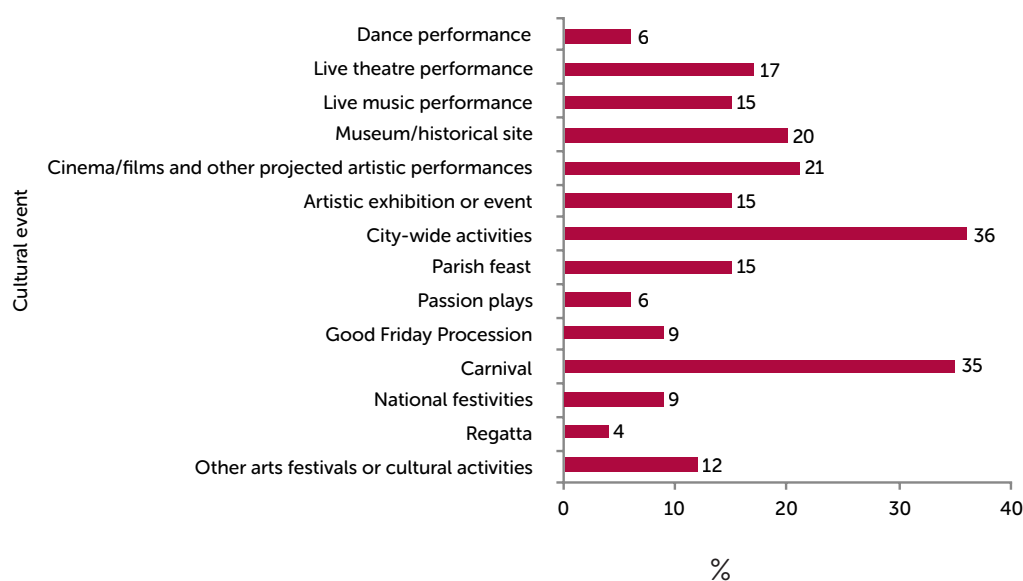
Chart 1: Non-Valletta residents – Type of transport mostly used to go to Valletta



Attendance to cultural events

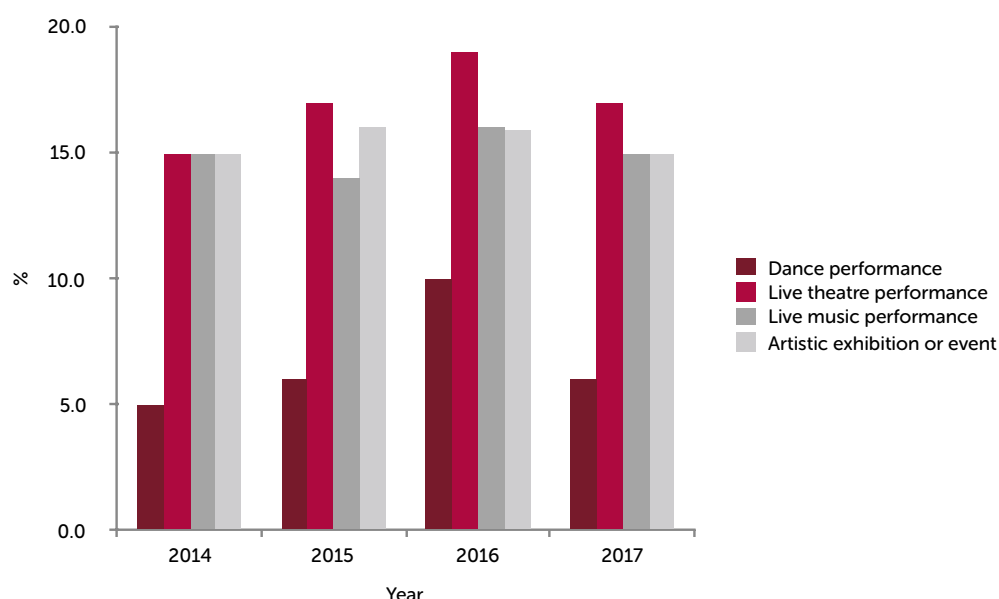
As can be seen from Chart 2, the most popular cultural events in 2017 were those referred to as city-wide activities, such as Notte Bianca and Carnival. These activities were also the main two activities for the four-year period under observation; there was no change in this trend.

Chart 2: Attendance to cultural events attendance in 2017



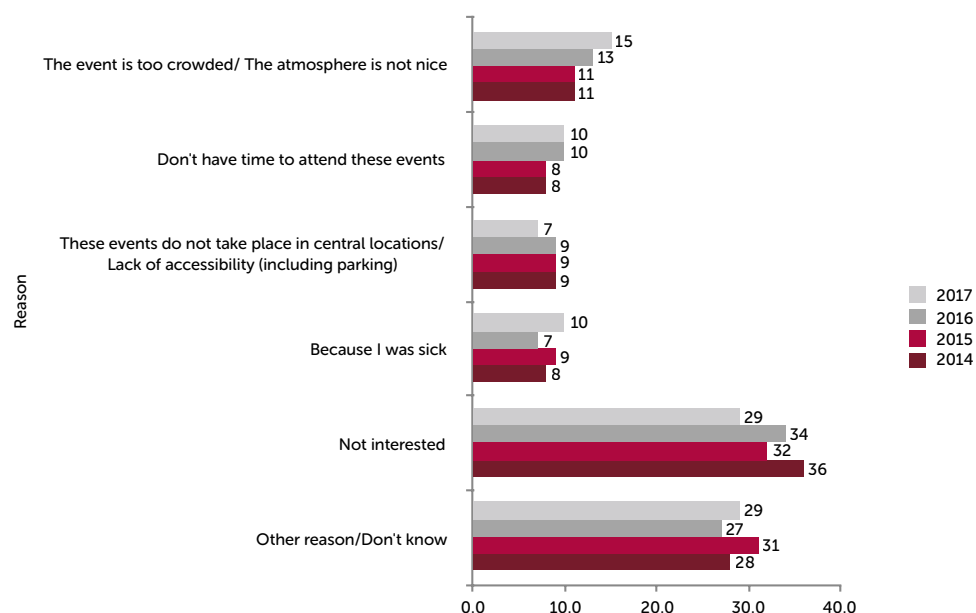
It is also worth noticing that the patronage of live theatre performances recorded an increase of nearly 3% between 2014 and 2017 (see Chart 3).

Chart 3: Live theatre performance increase 2014-2016



Many of those who did not attend any given cultural event in Valletta in the twelve months prior to the time of the last round of data collection (i.e. September 2017) stated that they didn't attend either because they were 'not interested' (29.4%) or for any 'other reason' (27.3%). Besides these two main categories, there were a number of respondents who indicated that they do not attend either because such events are 'too crowded/ atmosphere is not nice' (14.9%) or that they 'do not have time to attend these events' (10.3%). One can find the full breakdown of the responses accounting for non-attendance in Chart 4 below.

Chart 4: Other reasons for not attending



The category 'other reason' in the chart above includes old age (4%), distance (including living in Gozo) (3%), and taking care of relatives/child-minding responsibilities (3%).

European Capital of Culture

The last part of the survey was entirely dedicated to the European Capital of Culture and Valletta 2018.

Table 7: Perceptions of Valletta

	Valletta as a city rich in culture	Valletta as a city which does not offer enough choice for entertainment	Valletta as a city which has too many vacant buildings	Valletta as a city which is accessible to everyone	Valletta as a city which offers cultural diversity	Valletta as a city which needs restoration	Valletta as a city which is changing for the better	Valletta as a city which is changing for the worse
2014	3.2	2.3	3	3.1	3	2.8	3.1	1.2
2015	4.4	2.7	3.9	4.3	4.3	3.7	4.2	1.4
2016	4.5	2.7	4	4.4	4.4	3.8	4.4	1.3
2017	4.5	2.7	4	4.3	4.2	3.8	4.4	1.3

Average scores: 1 = Do not agree at all; 2 = Agree partly; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree mostly; and 5 = Agree very much

Respondents were presented with a set of statements to which they were asked to give their level of agreement. The following statements of Valletta as a 'city rich in culture', 'has too many vacant buildings', 'a city which is accessible to everyone', and 'a city which offers cultural diversity' all received a level of agreement of at least an average score of 4. Such result means that the respondents' views on these statements lie somewhere between 'Agree mostly' and 'Agree very much'.

The statement that Valletta 'has too many vacant buildings' received a higher level of agreement from persons aged 45 years and over than persons aged 16 to 24. Residents of Valletta were also more in agreement with this statement than respondents living elsewhere.

The statement that Valletta 'needs restoration' got an average score of 3.8 from respondents. Such result means that respondents' view on this statement lie somewhere between 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Agree mostly'. Males, persons aged 45 years and over and residents of Valletta are the categories that are more likely to see the need for restoration.

For the third year running, respondents gave an average score of 2.7 to the statement that Valletta is 'a city which does not offer enough choice for entertainment'. This result is somewhere between 'Agree partly' and 'Neither agree nor disagree'.

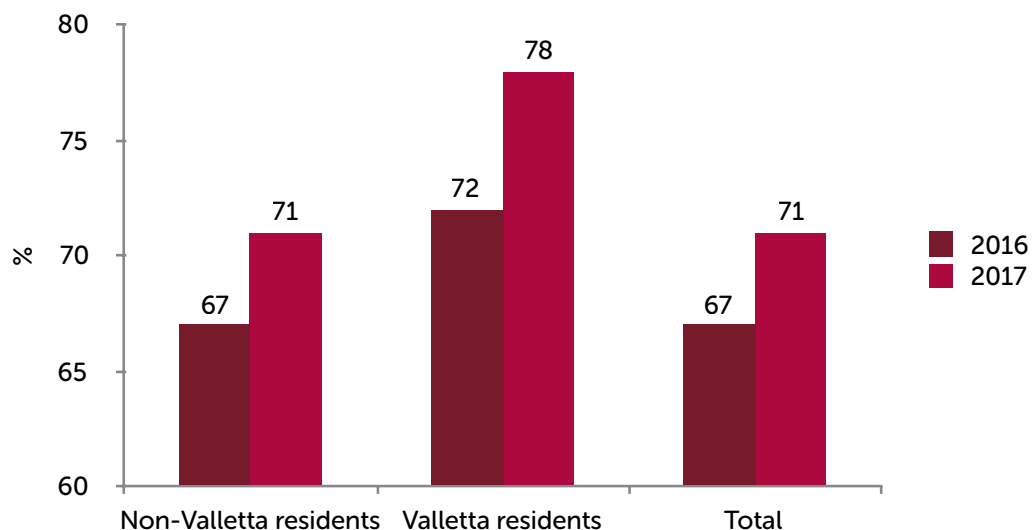
In general, respondents do not agree with the statement that Valletta is a city which is 'changing for the worse'. Conversely, respondents are very much in agreement with the statement that Valletta is 'changing for the better'.

Table 8: The impact of Valletta 2018 on various sectors

	Tourism	Cultural or artistic events	Businesses in Valletta	The visibility of Valletta on a global scale	The image of Valletta	People who live in Valletta
2014	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.3	2.6
2015	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.3	3.5
2016	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.5	3.5
2017	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.4	3.4

Average scores: 1 = Do not agree at all; 2 = Agree partly; 3 = Neither agree nor disagree; 4 = Agree mostly; and 5 = Agree very much

The respondents also identified the impact of the ECoC on a number of sectors. The trends indicate that the population strongly agree on the positive impact on tourism, businesses and Valletta in general. One must also note that there was an improvement in the perception on the impacts of the ECoC title on all these sectors across the four-year period under review.

Chart 5: Awareness of European Capital of Culture

71% of the total respondents of the survey, which included both Valletta residents and non-Valletta residents, stated that they had heard about the European Capital of Culture title. This marked an increase from 67% in the previous year (2016). As expected, Valletta residents demonstrated greater awareness of the title compared to non-Valletta residents. This gap is shown by a difference of 7% with 78% of the Valletta residents stating that they are aware of the ECoC when compared to the 71% of the non-Valletta residents who participated in the survey. Although both these figures represented an increase over the previous year (see Chart 5).

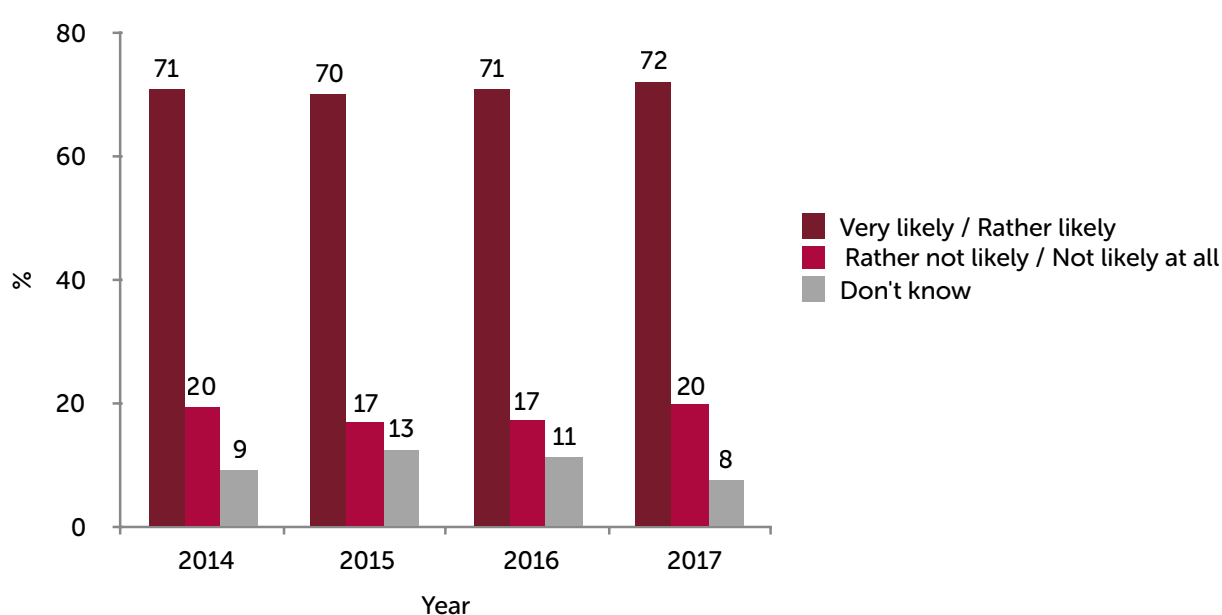
When asked about knowledge about the designation of the ECoC in 2018, the results (Table 9) are very close to those about general knowledge about the ECoC. 81.9% stated that they know that Valletta will hold the ECoC title in 2018, compared to the 57.9% in 2014.

Table 9: Knowledge of Valletta's designation as European Capital of Culture in 2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Correct	57.9	61.7	66.9	81.9
Not correct	10.3	8.7	6.5	1.5
Did not answer or did not know	31.8	29.6	26.6	16.5

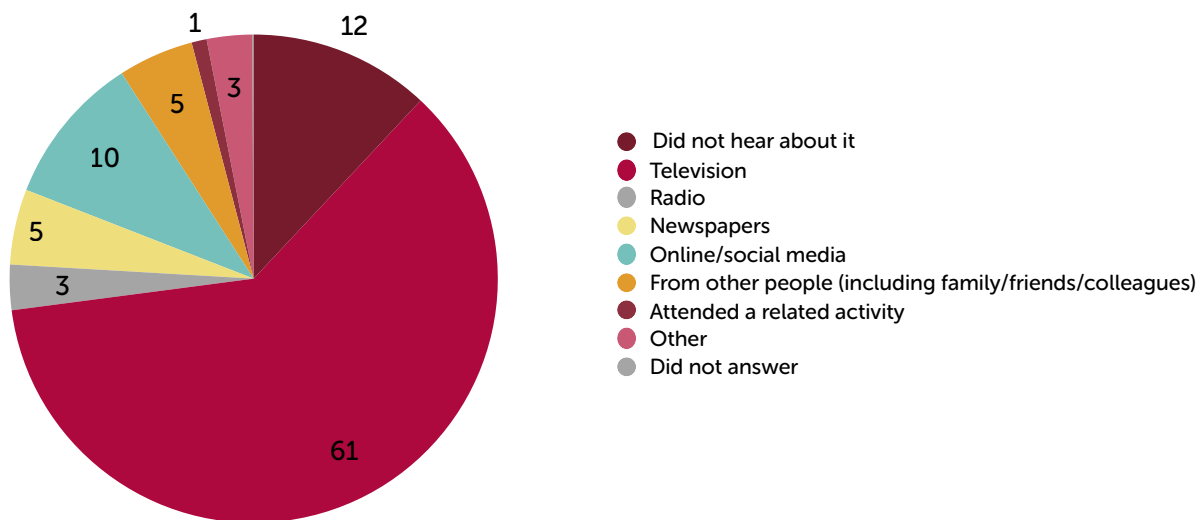
Over the four year-period under review, respondents consistently stated that rather or very likely they will attend to an event organised for Valletta 2018 (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Respondents' likeliness of attending events that take place in Valletta, as part of Valletta 2018



TV remains the channel most widely used to keep informed about Valletta 2018, with 61% using this medium, followed by online and social media at 10% (Chart 7). Other channels, such as radio, newspapers and word of mouth scored similarly, ranging between 3% and 5%.

Chart 7: Primary means through which respondents are informed about Valletta 2018 in percentage (2017)





CONCLUSIONS & WAY FORWARD

Overall trends remained fairly similar throughout the various waves of data collection between 2014 and 2017. However, one must note that there were some significant positive changes in terms of the public's perception of Valletta.

The results also indicate that awareness of Valletta as European Capital of Culture has increased consistently throughout the years. Furthermore, the belief that Valletta is changing for the better remained consistently high, reaching 87% in the most recent wave of data collection.

The Valletta Participation Survey will be repeated in waves in 2018. The Valletta 2018 Foundation has also set an ambitious vision for its Cultural Programme that places cultural participation and citizens at the centre.



A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VALLETTA 2018 CULTURAL PROGRAMME

**Daniela Blagojevic Vella
with Vikesh Godhwani**



INTRODUCTION

On the 27th September 2017, the Valletta 2018 Foundation launched its Cultural Programme for 2018 and presented the 140 projects and 400 events which will take place throughout the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) year. The programme will officially open with a celebration event taking place on the 20th January 2018. However, the Valletta ECOC journey started long before this date.

Valletta was selected as an ECOC on the 12th October 2012. The Foundation, which spearheaded the application process, has been responsible for the organisation of the ECOC and the creation and implementation of the Cultural Programme. As has been identified in various ECOC evaluations (ECORYS 2012, 2013, 2014; Palmer/Rae 2014a, 2014b) the Cultural Programme, is continuously in development and changes are frequent.

Valletta 2018 is no exception as changes within the Foundation and in the development of the programme have been ongoing. Changes in artistic direction and senior management posts throughout these five years were discussed widely and attracted significant media attention and debates within the artistic community. In July 2017 Catherine Tabone replaced Karsten Xuereb as the Executive Director of the Foundation. Joanne Attard Mallia, formerly Programming Officer within the Foundation, replaced Margerita Pulé as Programming Coordinator.

The process of developing an ECOC Cultural Programme can be described in itself as a process of change: revising and redefining objectives; reframing themes and pivoting direction; identifying new target groups; developing ongoing projects, negotiating new ones while abandoning projects that do not work out; negotiating new collaborations while grappling with organisational change and changes in project team members and artistic collaborators. These changes make the research and evaluation of the programme's objectives and effectiveness ever more pertinent.

The study focuses on the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme life-cycle and the changes taking place over the years - from the development to the production stage. In 2015, the focus was the analysis of the programme's vision as reflected in the published material and as experienced by the content programmers. In 2016, the programme was analysed as a work in progress and in 2017 information could be gathered on the final stages of development as the programme now enters into full swing.

The study has 3 objectives (a) to explore development and implementation of the Cultural Programme; (b) to analyse the factors that influence the creation of the Cultural Programme projects; (c) to track the long-term development of the programme's effectiveness in terms of the cultural offer, European dimension and cultural participation.

METHODOLOGY

As illustrated in Table 1, this study adopts a mixed method approach to reflect multi-dimensional aspects of the Cultural Programme and the developments unfolding over the years. Unlike studies that are post-evaluation (ECORYS 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014,2015), the ongoing evaluation implies that members of the research team can directly observe and survey the individual projects as they progress. Previous studies have noted the limitation of conducting interviews after the ECoC event because of the reliance on respondents' recollections and perceptions (ECORYS, 2014). This study has the advantage of analysing the programme while it is still in progress.

Table 1: Methodology 2015 - 2018

Methodology	2015	2016	2017	2018
Institutional analysis	X			X
Focus groups	X	X	X	X
In-depth interviews	X	X	X	X
Online questionnaire		X	X	X
Project visits		X	X	X

Figure 1: Culture Programme development to date:



In 2017, data was gathered primarily through in-depth interviews, focus groups, project visits and an online questionnaire. The interviews and focus group studies were carried out with:

1. Valletta 2018 Foundation Programming team members;
2. Creators, producers and strand coordinators of projects in the Cultural Programme;
3. Independent artists and groups participating in the programme.

The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded according to themes and research questions namely (i) cultural offer and programming balance and engagement; (ii) European collaboration; and (iii) audience participation.

In the first year of study, it was established that ongoing updates are necessary to ensure that the research findings are up-to-date and reflect the changes. Consultation meetings with the Programming Coordinator, Margerita Pulè and Joanne Attard Mallia from July 2017, were organised to ensure that the developments were tracked throughout the year.

The study attempts to achieve reliability by triangulating the data collected from the institutional analysis, interviews, focus groups, project visits and the online questionnaire. This methodology is adequate to gain detailed and in-depth perspectives on the ECoC Cultural Programme. However, in-depth interviews have their limitations because of biases by both the interviewees and interviewers (Blagojevic, 2016). As identified in the first two years of the study, caution is needed so as not to take personal interpretations for granted because of what Tinic refers to as the “situatedness” (Caldwell, 2008, p.8). In interviews, it may sometimes be problematic to filter through the self-promotion. Caldwell (2008) invites production studies researchers to sift through the personal branding and industry parlance (p. 318).

Moreover, studies on events commissioned by event organisers also tend to focus on positive aspects and neglect other critical aspects or do not focus sufficiently on social impact (Richards, 2013). To address this weakness, the research attempts to gather data from a variety of sources to widen its scope to include more critical perspectives.

To address these methodological difficulties, an online survey for project leaders was conducted in 2017 as an additional methodology to ensure coverage of a wide-range of projects happening in 2018. Other studies (ECORYS 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014; Quinn & O’Halloran, 2006) have also used online surveys to ensure a greater response from ECoC contributors. To date, the response to the online questionnaire was low, with 28 responses received out of 72 invitations. Despite the low turnout, the outcomes from the online questionnaire give some interesting insights into the programme, which are included as an Annex to this report.

The online questionnaire method will also be used in 2018 to reach a large number of contributors and artists and to investigate how audience participation strategies are implemented. The research can, therefore, evaluate the progress from the planning phase to the actual execution of the programme. The follow-ups to ensure an improved response rate will be intensified and the questionnaires will be sent individually to the producers on completion of their project, instead of being sent all at once at the end.

FINDINGS

The Development and Diversity of the Cultural Offer

The finalised programme, as launched in September 2017, includes around 400 events and an estimated 140 projects. Palmer/Rae (2004) identify various elements that influence the range and balance an ECoC Cultural Programme including the size, scale and range of different genres. This study looks into these elements to understand the diversity of the Cultural Programme.

Throughout 2017, the Foundation continued to manage its programme by grouping the projects according to genre or type with a coordinator responsible for each strand. The categorisation is made either by the type of artistic discipline or by the theme (e.g. migration) or by the kind of target group and interaction with the audience (e.g. children, young people). The strands are useful to help in the internal management of the programme and to ensure that there are various projects covering different elements and coordinators.

Regarding the cultural offer and programme balance, Programming Coordinator Joanne Attard Mallia spoke of a wide range of projects in the programme, maybe overwhelmingly so (interview October 2017). The programme is taking place in both public and private spaces, and ranges from huge spectacles to community projects, from the contemporary to the traditional and from the local to the international. While the slant of programming efforts have been clearly towards contemporary projects, most online questionnaire respondents described their projects as including elements that are both traditional and contemporary.

In reflecting upon the development of the programme, the Programming Coordinator also spoke of the need for more public participatory events which do not necessarily require long-term involvement but could take place within a day, and therefore encourage more participation. Moreover, she reflected on the need to have more new work that was created by emerging local artists, as opposed to having international new work with the participation of Maltese artists. Additionally, she observed that there was an expected resistance from those artists who position themselves as anti-establishment and a hesitation to approach the Foundation from those who lack confidence. The common thread between artists who are part of the programme is that they know how to present themselves and know how to use the system to their advantage.

Focus group respondents from the Programming team also spoke of the range of projects targeting different audiences. The main concerns centred on whether all the work that is being done has sufficient visibility and is being communicated to the general public widely enough. This difficulty was voiced in various stakeholder interviews with project leaders and creators who recognised a tension between promoting the Cultural Programme in its entirety and promoting the individual productions. The promotion and communication efforts of disseminating information by categories (children, young people) or strand (music) were discussed.

The scale of the programme brings along its challenges, and despite still being approached for new projects, the Foundation has decided to now draw a line and stop accepting more proposals. The large scale of Valletta 2018 can prove arduous especially when it comes to resources, particularly of the more technical roles required to run the programme. The solution to this was to always look at the year and the different elements and phases rather than one whole.

As expressed by Sarah Borg, a member of the Programming team, “the programme is staggered, so resources are shifted that way. You have limited resources, but it’s all about the timing. I feel that it’s working out due to our sense of organisation.”

Furthermore, since the programme is taking place over one year, the various projects are at different stages of their lifespan, meaning that while some are in full production mode, others are still at the contract stage. Therefore, in 2017 the team had the task of both delivering the projects taking place, while simultaneously dealing with future projects. In fact, according to Programming Officer Giuliana Barbaro Sant, one of the most challenging aspects about going into the actual year is trying to keep track of all the paperwork while still being actively engaged with the programme, in order to gauge how people are responding to everything, and whether any last minute changes are required.

Throughout the process of programming, the team have discovered more about the nature of the industry in Malta. For instance, since the pool of people working in the local performing arts sector at a professional level is limited, Valletta 2018 are actually at a stage where several performances are competing for the same people. Moreover, the team encountered a general lack of production knowledge by local artists, such as issues related to VAT or technical requirements needed for their project.

Regarding local artists’ openness to international collaboration, programming interviewees note that the more established artists dealt with such opportunities very well, while others were more territorial over their work. However, they were hopeful that over the past few years there had been a rise in collaborative practices such as curatorship and in creating work of high quality.

In analysing the development of the programme over the past three years, it is clear that change is part of the entire programming process. Reflecting on changes that have occurred in the programme since its inception, the Manager of the Valletta Design Cluster, Caldon Mercieca, believes that even though individual projects have changed since the Bid Book, the core values of the Foundation have remained strong. These include the objectives of incorporating the different sectors of society and expanding the portfolio of artists and that of the classical genres that currently dominate the local scene:

“You can look at a typical arts festival programme that takes place in Malta, and you can contrast it to our programme. A festival in Malta usually veers towards the more traditional in terms of the formatting and the genres and the disciplines. This is completely different. Also, there is a powerful international dimension.”

The European and international dimension of the programme is another critical objective as discussed in the next section.

The European Dimension in Valletta 2018

In the 2016 study, an apparent shift was observed in the programming preparation phase which showed an intensified effort towards the European and international dimension when the team deliberately sought to explore European connections (Blagojevic, 2016).

This conscious effort has continued throughout 2017 so that the Cultural Programme now includes more European elements either through the participation of artists or links made by Maltese artists with international artist networks.

When asked about the European dimension, Programming Coordinator Joanne Attard Mallia pointed towards the number of collaborations and networks that have been created and will have been created by the end of 2018. Moreover, local projects are being encouraged to be exported post-Valletta 2018 to keep the collaborations alive. Regarding its international dimension, Caldon Mercieca also mentioned the focus that there is on the Euro-Med aspect, whereby communities that would normally not work together are coming together for a Valletta 2018 collaboration, as is the case of a project involving Israelite and Arab communities.

Being part of the Cultural Programme can also be perceived as an opportunity to connect to the European community and to showcase work abroad. 46% of online questionnaire respondents stated that their work would be showcased outside Malta. Moreover, both focus group and online questionnaire respondents agreed that their projects covered European themes and/or themes that were relevant to international audiences.

Cultural Participation

From the early stages of the Bid Book phase, the Valletta 2018 Foundation set out on the ambitious task of creating an inclusive Cultural Programme that would engage various target audiences. The Bid Book (September 2012) highlights the concerns on audience participation in the local cultural scene:

"Valletta 2018 also faces a key challenge in breaking down entrenched societal barriers to audience development. Culture Statistics issued by Eurostat indicate that we have among Europe's lowest levels of audience participation in comparative cultural activities."

The Cultural Programme publication published in September 2017, clearly sets this agenda on cultural participation:

"With the community at the heart of island life, encouraging active participation in the arts is one of the highest goals of our ECoC. Valletta 2018's community projects bring culture to everyone's doorstep, uniting the traditional vision of a Mediterranean life enriched by close ties to family, friends and neighbours with the islands' growing creative practices" (p. 46).

The study looks at the Cultural Programme and how it is shaped by the needs of audiences and particular target groups in mind. In 2015 and 2016, programmers, project leaders and artists interviewed for this research study shared a common concern that reaching out to audiences is not without difficulty and that increasing audience participation requires a significant cultural change.

In this year's focus groups, with the Cultural Programme in place, the Programming team members spoke about moulding the marketing strategies or engagement techniques according to the specific projects and target groups, always being sensitive to their particular needs. Different strategies are used depending on the project and locality. For instance, in the Design4DCity Birżebbuġa workshop, the project coordinators worked closely with the Local Council. This was possible because there was a good, positive relationship with the community.

Regarding disadvantaged groups and inclusion, the Programming Coordinator spoke about targeting children, seniors and people with disabilities, and how the Foundation was hiring a specialist to help them in understanding how to be more inclusive in targeting such groups. Most of the questionnaire respondents identified a particular group that their project was targeting. Moreover, the majority of interviewees agreed that reaching out to audiences was a shared responsibility of the Foundation and the individual producers participating in the Cultural Programme. Most interviewees identified ways in which they are interacting with audiences: co-creation and co-design, workshops and training or simply spectatorship.

All the members agreed on the nature of the participation that they wanted for Valletta 2018. One of the Programming Officers clearly stated that the objective of the Foundation has always been that of legacy through participation, "quality participation as opposed to numbers."

Another project leader echoed her sentiments in saying that the experience is central to everything:

"I hope people are transformed from a state of passivity to a state of being active. As someone active, you believe in the power to change things. Ultimately, from an ethical or moral perspective, you are actually spending public money to make people active citizens. That's why a workshop is more effective than a massive spectacle."

In the focus group with the Programming team, the Ġewwa Barra project was often mentioned as an example of a project which adopts a community-based approach and which encapsulates the ethos of Valletta 2018.

Other members of the team agreed that ultimately it was not the brand of Valletta 2018 that needed to be remembered or to stand the test of time, but it was about legacy as is summarised in the words of one of the respondents:

"It's about the effect that you leave behind. What comes after Valletta 2018? We are aiming for this to be a sustainable project [...] People can now see participating in a workshop or creating a work of art as a very tangible possibility."

One of the Valletta 2018 team members, who is a resident in Valletta himself has seen a shift in audience involvement from Valletta's community which he finds encouraging. He stated that for years people from Valletta have not been very interested in much else apart from football and the festa, but more recently he is seeing residents in other types of cultural events, such as a play or a concert: "We are getting there, very slowly, but we are getting there."

As Programming Coordinator, Joanne Attard Mallia echoed these sentiments and she said that her personal target is to have participation by people who would normally not participate in specific events or by those who are only closed off to particular art forms and not others. She also hoped that Valletta 2018 would help Malta move away from rigid ideas of what constitutes being an artist and that more people would be encouraged to take artistic paths in their lives without being held back by the self-imposed boundaries.

Apart from participation from an audience point of view, the Foundation also aims towards a cultural shift in how people perceive opportunities in the cultural sector. The vision is for people to be further encouraged to train in areas such as lighting design, sound design, production management, curation and other skills that would lead to a career in the creative industries.

The Ġewwa Barra project presents a relevant case study (see Annex 4) and was selected for in-depth analysis because of its community based approach with Valletta residents. Project Coordinator Victor Jacono commented on the anthropological approach where the focus was community engagement as opposed to the artistic outcome whereby “the art becomes an instrument to engage the community.” The first step was interacting with the residents and eliciting ideas from them for them to have a voice from its inception. For this project, the Foundation’s main aim was for the project and process to be an empowering exercise for the residents.



CONCLUSIONS & WAY FORWARD

Clearly, 2017 was a crucial year for the development of the Cultural Programme - a hectic year for the members of the Foundation and for the producers as they prepare for the unprecedented range of cultural activities to be held throughout 2018.

In 2018, with the full implementation of the Cultural Programme, the focus will be the onsite evaluation through project visits. At present, a project visit schedule is being drawn up so that different research assistants will be assigned to the individual performances. For each visit, a data sheet will be inputted to a central system so that the information on each project visit is compiled.

The focus groups will be organised in the second quarter of 2018 with the Foundation's Programming team, Strand Coordinators and producers. In-depth interviews will be arranged with foreign producers who will not be able to attend focus groups. An online questionnaire will be sent to all producers soon as their performance is finalised so that data is collected throughout 2018.

The regular meetings with the Programming Coordinator and team members will be organised to ensure periodic updates.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1

Success Criteria to Evaluate ECoC Cultural Programme

ECORYS (2014)	
Category	Criteria
Cultural and Artistic Offer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear and coherent artistic vision for the Cultural Programme; 2. Involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the Cultural Programme; 3. Range and diversity of activities and their overall artistic quality; 4. Combination of local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions.
European Dimension	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding; 2. Scope and quality of activities highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history and European integration; 3. Scope and quality of activities featuring European artists, co-operation with operators or cities in different countries, and transnational partnerships; 4. Strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.
Outreach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involvement of the local population and civil society in the application and implementation of the ECoC; 2. New and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, marginalised and disadvantaged people, and minorities; 3. Accessibility of activities to persons with disabilities and to the elderly; 4. Overall strategy for audience development, in particular the link with education and the participation of schools.

Garcia and Cox (2013) (p.91)	
Category	Criteria
Public Engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence of activity targeted at specific groups; 2. Approaches to audience development and participatory activity; 3. Volunteering programmes.

Source: ECORYS (2014); Garcia & Cox (2013)

Category	Guiding Questions
Background	<p>Ask about confidentiality and recording</p> <p>Interviewees official title, role and experience.</p> <p>Date of Engagement</p>
A. Cultural Offer and Programming Balance (RQ 1, 2,3)	
Objectives, vision and mission	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the main aims and objectives of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme? 2. What is the main motivation of the Cultural Programme?
Development process, Adhering to bid-book application	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please explain the planning in place from bid-book stage to date. 2. How have the objectives changed since 2012? 3. What is the planning work currently in progress?
Selection and consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are projects selected/included? What are the selection criteria? 2. What is the involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the Cultural Programme?
Themes, Orientation, Coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the main themes? how are they being used? How are projects categorised according to theme?
<p>Range and diversity of activities and their overall artistic quality;</p> <p>Programming balance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many projects will be included? 2. What is the length of the Cultural Programme? 3. How are the locations of projects selected (Valletta vs. regional)? 4. How has the Cultural Programme tried to balance between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local and international inputs in such a way as to maximise synergy? - independent groups and public cultural organisations? - tradition and innovation? - different arts forms & genres? - public and private space? - culture and art? - process led and event led? - professionals vs. amateurs - process led and event led? - professionals vs. amateurs

B. Cultural Participation (RQ 4)	
Public engagement, outreach, audience development strategies, city and citizen;	How is the cultural sector engaging in the programme?
	What methods were used to encourage participation?
	How are young people and disadvantaged groups being encouraged to participate?
	What are the strategies being used for audience development? (volunteering programmes, calls, outreach, etc.)
	What kind of participation do you envisage/ are you planning?
	Who are your target groups?
C. European Dimension (RQ5)	
European perspective, European collaboration, mobility, networking, cultural diversity.	How do the project/events reflect the European Dimension?
	How do projects promote cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding?
	How are projects engaging European artists/ collaborators/networks? what strategies are in place to encourage European collaboration?
	What strategies are being used to promote Europe and garner interest in European culture?
D. Challenges (RQ6)	
European perspective, European collaboration, mobility, networking, cultural diversity.	<p>What are the challenges encountered in the delivery of the Valletta 2018 Programme?</p> <p>What difficulties are/were encountered during the planning/development phase and how are/were these overcome?</p> <p>General feedback, comments</p>

APPENDIX 2

Project Visit Sheet

Date of Visit _____

Project Name _____

Project Contact Person _____

Contact Details: _____

A. General

1. Synopsis

2. Project included in bid-Book?

Yes

No

Partially

3. Project Themes/Objectives

4. Frequency of event/project

- a. Once yearly
- b. 2-3 events (performances, workshops, seminars etc.)
- c. More than 5 events
- d. More than 8 events
- e. More than 10 events

B. Culture Offer/Balance

1. Location

Valletta

Other region _____

International

2. Tradition vs Contemporary

3. Genre

- a. Theatre
- b. Dance
- c. Music
- d. Film
- e. Visual Art
- f. Literature
- g. Interdisciplinary

Type

- a. Community
- b. Education
- c. Large Event
- d. Festival

4. Use of Space

- a. Public Space
- b. Private Space
- c. Both

Type

- a. Process led
- b. Event led
- c. Both

Artists

- a. Professionals
- b. Amateurs
- c. Both

PCOs

- a. Public Cultural Organisations
- b. Independent artists
- c. Both

C. Audience Participation

1. Were methods used to encourage participation?

Yes No

Describe

2. Specific Target Group

Yes No

- a. Children
- b. Youths
- c. Seniors
- d. Disabled
- e. Migrants
- f. Artists

Other _____

3. Strategies Used for audience engagement

- a. Volunteering
- b. Regional Coordinators
- c. Outreach
- d. Marketing and Communications
- e. Information sessions

Other _____

4. Type of participation

- a. Development/co-creation of content
- b. Training
- c. Workshop
- d. Attendance

Other _____

5. Media created for particular event

Facebook page
Twitter account
Posters/flyers
Newspaper adverts
Online adverts
Radio adverts
TV adverts

Other _____

6. Number of people participation in single event

- a. 5 to 20
- b. 20-50
- c. 50-100
- d. 100-500
- e. 500-1000
- f. Over 1000
- g. Over 5000
- h. Over 10 000
- i. Over 20 000
- j. Over 50.000

Exact number (if available): _____

D. European Dimension

1. Participation of European Artists

- a. European
- b. International
- c. All of the Above

2. Euro-med dimension

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Collaboration with Leeuwarden

- a. Yes
- b. No

4. Promotion of project in European/International Market

- a. Yes
- b. No

Description

5. Themes relevant to European/International Audiences

- a. Yes
- b. No

Description

APPENDIX 3

Case-Study Ġewwa Barra – A Community Project

Victor Jacono is the co-ordinator of Ġewwa Barra, which is a community arts project working specifically with the residents of Valletta. He has a theatre background as he has been involved in the Maltese theatre scene for the past 20 years, and holds a PhD in Performing Studies.

Jacono was contacted by the Foundation to explore the possibility of working on an existing project in the Bid Book; namely the Valletta Forum. The Forum was created to facilitate communication between the residents and the Foundation, but its dynamic left a lot to be desired. The Forum was often used as an opportunity for residents to make complaints about their surroundings, while the Foundation was using it to communicate their Cultural Programme. After noticing the communicative flaws of the project, the Foundation commissioned Jacono to develop it in order to engage the residents in a more pro-active and creative way.

Jacono was adamant in emphasising that his project's purpose was very different to that of artistic production, particularly about participation. An artistic production goes through a process of using marketing tools in order to reach its target audience, with an expected number of people showing up at the venue at an appointed time, to watch, participate and leave; participation is quantified in ticket sales. However, with a community project, the question of participation is much more complex. The project co-ordinator commented on the low attendance of the second meeting of The Valletta Forum, which led him to go back to the drawing board and emerge with the idea of Ġewwa Barra, meaning that the project needed to change due to the community's initial response to it. He felt like he needed to rebrand the project as the Forum had already established a brand within the community as a place where people went to vent their frustrations.

Jacono's approach is an anthropological one as his focus is community engagement as opposed to the artistic outcome whereby "the art becomes an instrument to engage the community." For instance, despite having a background in performing arts he did not decide on the art form but kept it open for it to be decided by the community itself. In fact, his first step was interacting with the residents and eliciting ideas from them for them to have a voice from its inception. The Foundation asked Victor for this project and process to be an empowering exercise for the residents and with this premise in mind, he defined empowerment as feeling the capability of doing something about your own experience as opposed to simply being a spectator. The residents in Valletta have felt an acceleration of change through the process of the gentrification of the capital; a project such as Ġewwa Barra would allow them to take ownership over their home and give them the power to change their experience.

APPENDIX 4

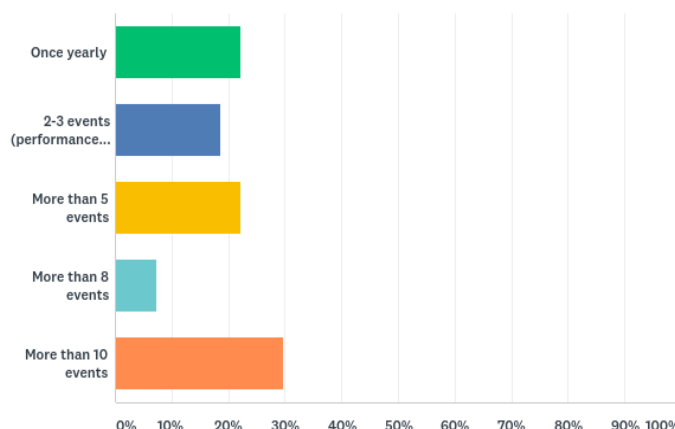
The following is a quantitative analysis based on the responses of 28 project leaders. The following observations are not representative of the Valletta 2018 programme due to the low number of respondents.

Frequency of events

The majority of the 28 respondents confirmed that many Valletta 2018 projects are ongoing rather than one-off events as seen in the chart below. This echoes the conclusions of a report completed earlier this year that analysed qualitative data, and stressed that project leaders were interested in long-term change rather than one-off events that would be forgotten quickly:

The project leaders viewed Valletta 2018 as an opportunity for long-term change, both in infrastructure and in people's attitude towards the arts, one stating even stating that it should be 'a catalyst for cultural change'. The artists agreed that they did not want Valletta 2018 to simply be a year of events; one artist even stating that he would much rather 'forget about events'. He did not suggest to eliminate events completely, but rather to focus on processes that can lead to long-term change. They all believed that Valletta 2018 could be an opportunity for a cultural shift, rather than a year that will come and go without much of an impact.

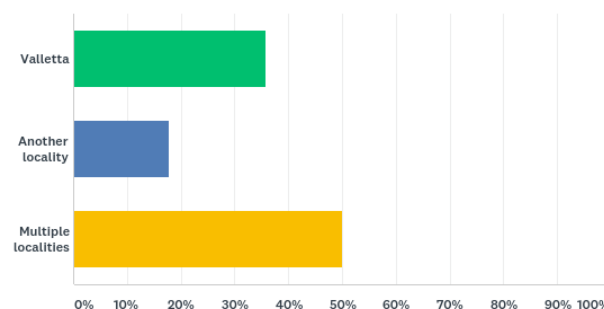
Q3: Frequency of event/project planned for 2018:



Location

While a considerable percentage of respondents had projects solely based in Valletta (37.71%), the majority of respondents (50%) were setting their projects across various localities showing an interest in taking projects across Malta and Gozo, rather than expecting people to just come to the capital to enjoy the cultural activity taking place during the year. This shows a sense of inclusivity that strays away from the usual Valletta-centric activity that is characteristic of projects such as Notte Bianca, ŽiguŽajg, the Jazz Festival, and the Malta Arts Festival.

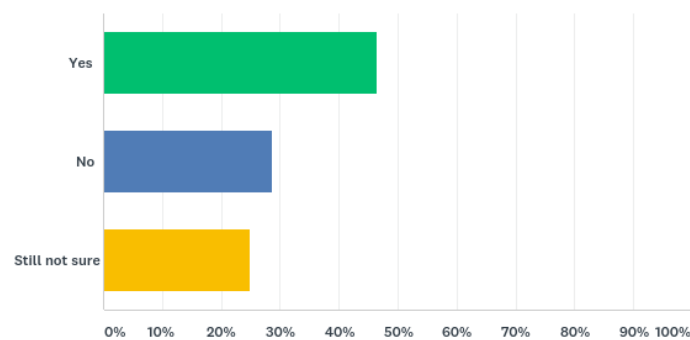
Q4: Location:



International Run

While the majority (46.43%) of the respondents were sure that they would have an international run of their product there were a few which were surprisingly still uncertain considering the proximity of Valletta 2018 when the survey was conducted. However, this could reflect openness to possible future opportunities abroad even after 2018 is over.

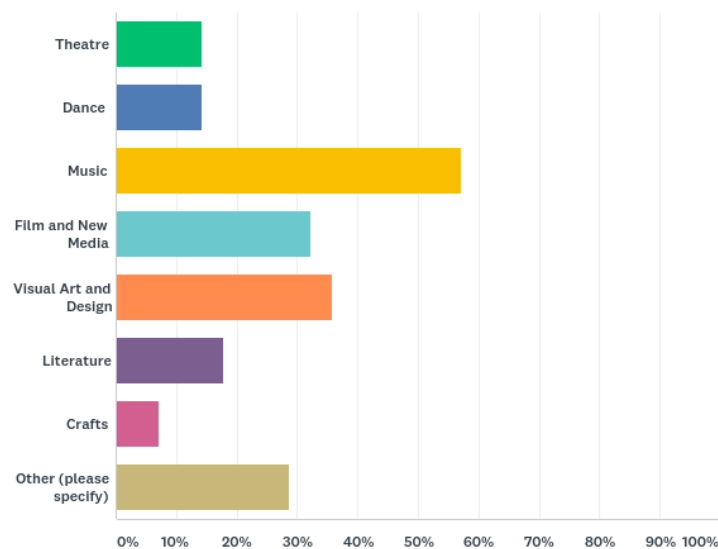
Q5: Is your project also being showcased outside Malta?



Genre

Most projects were described as music projects, although there was also a strong representation of film & new media and visual art & design projects.

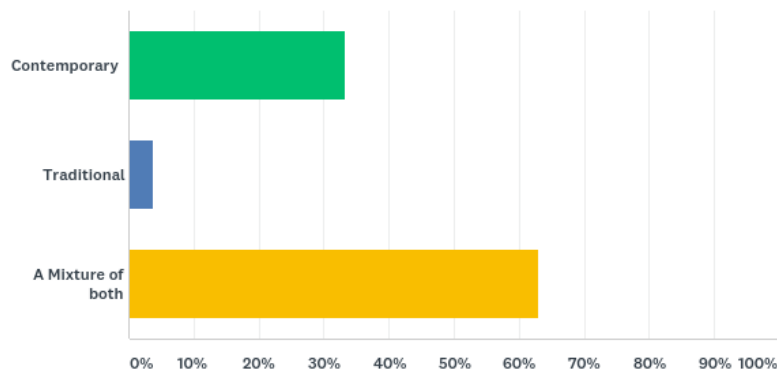
Q6: Genre/Art Form



Contemporary vs. Traditional

Even though previous research has shown that the programme is skewed towards the contemporary, it was surprising to see that so many project leaders actually responded that their projects involved a combination of the two (62.96 %).

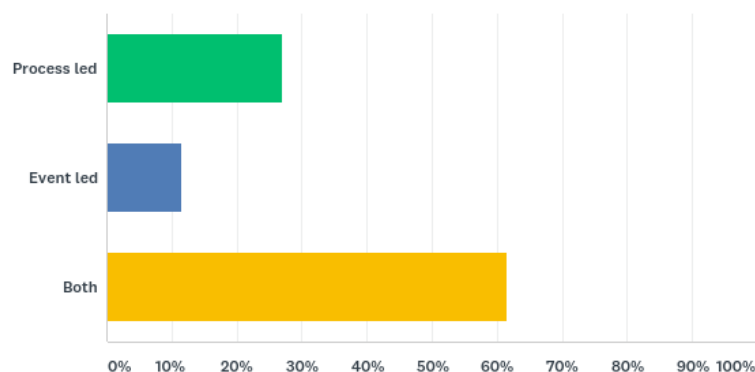
Q7: First Category



Process Led vs. Event Led

Most of the respondents (61.54 %) said that their projects were a combination of both process led and event led which indicates that many projects are ongoing with smaller process led workshops that lead to a final event at their end.

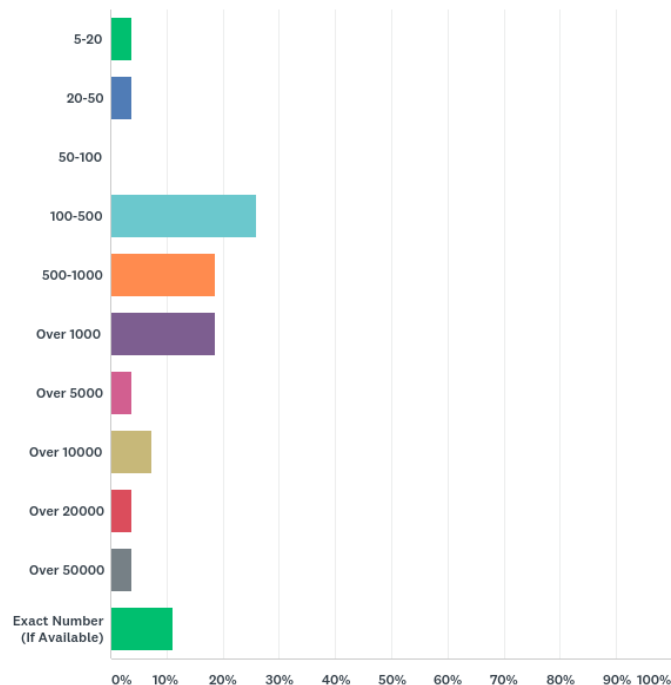
Q8: Second Category



Number of Participants

The varied number of participants expected for each project shows how wide the range of projects actually are, both in terms of scale but also in terms of intention.

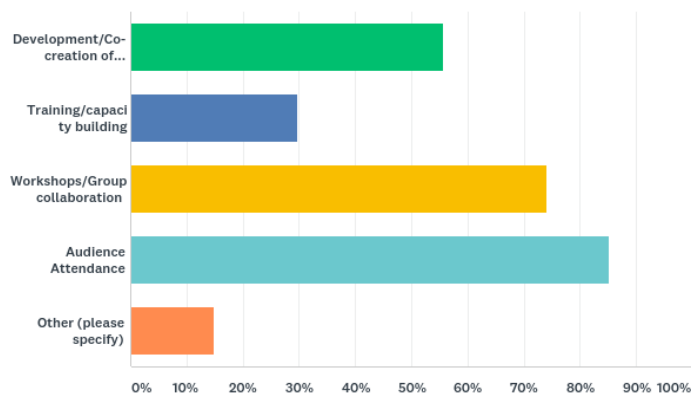
Q9: By the end of 2018, how many participants do you aim to reach?



Type of Participation

Despite there being a varied understanding of audience participation the most common response still involved actual attendance, which shows that even though there are varied capacities in which people are engaging with Valletta 2018 projects, they are still very much dependant on people showing up.

Q10: What type of participation is related to your project? (You can tick more than one box)



Understanding of Audience Participation

The following word cloud shows the words that were most popular when talking about participation, with attending and workshops being among the most popular. This indicates the importance of actual attendance for successful participation and the process-led nature of the programme with workshops being a central component to many projects.

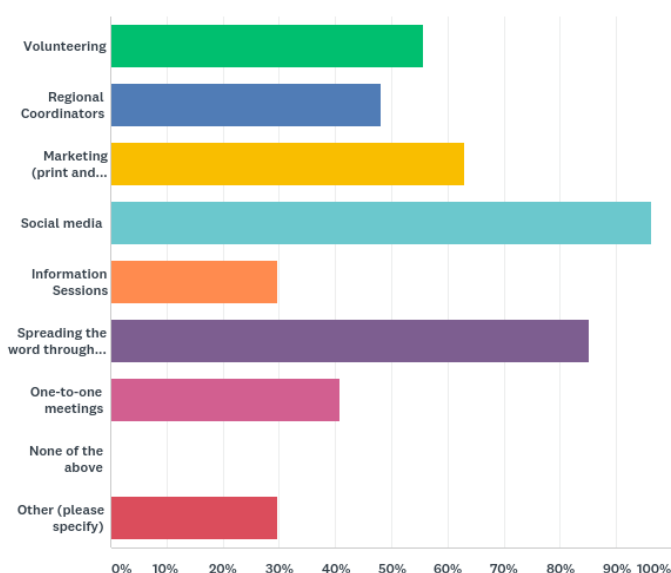
Q11: Briefly describe what you understand by audience participation in light of your project:

Project Stories Attending Musical Participation
Cultural Audience Reading Workshops Active

Methods of Outreach

The most popular way of reaching out to audiences for the project leaders who answered the questionnaire was social media, despite there being a wide range of methods according to the specific project. This was further emphasised in the qualitative analysis with the project leaders as they agreed that marketing needed to vary according to the very specific needs of individual projects, and reflect the eclectic nature of the programme.

Q12: What methods are you using to reach out to audiences (You can tick more than one box)?



Use of Strategies

The following is a word cloud that shows the most common words that were used when talking about marketing strategies which confirms that social media is the most popular method of reaching out among project leaders according to the respondents.

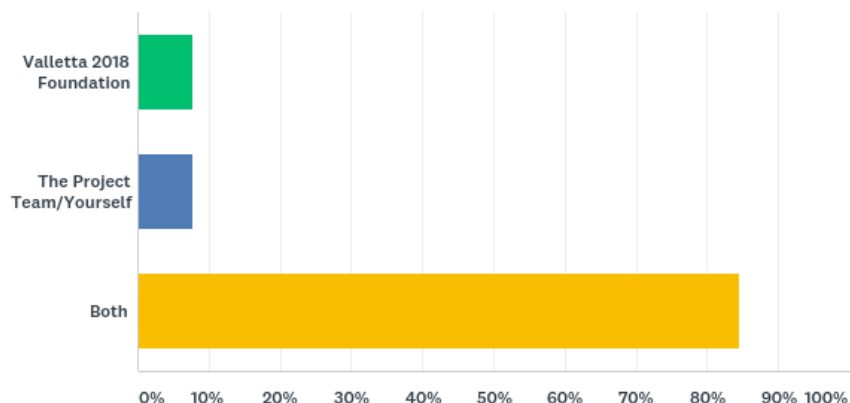
Q13: Briefly describe how you are using such strategy/ies:

Communities Developing Target FB Page
Social Media Posters Local Word of Mouth
Events

Who is responsible for audience participation?

The majority of respondents agreed that the responsibility of reaching an audience was shared among themselves and the Foundation which shows an understanding that for the success of a project, collaboration between artists and the Foundation is imperative.

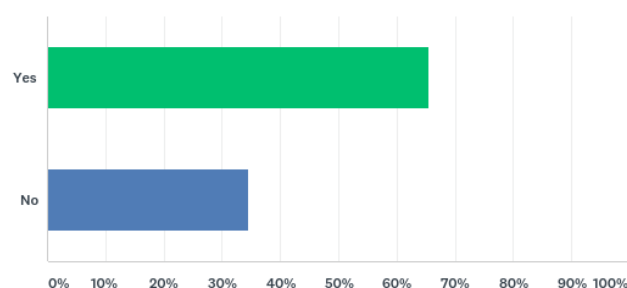
Q14: In your opinion who is responsible for encouraging audience participation?



Target groups

The majority of respondents said they have a specific target group, while a considerable amount said that their projects are more open to a general public, showing that there is a balance of both, in relation to the respondents of the survey.

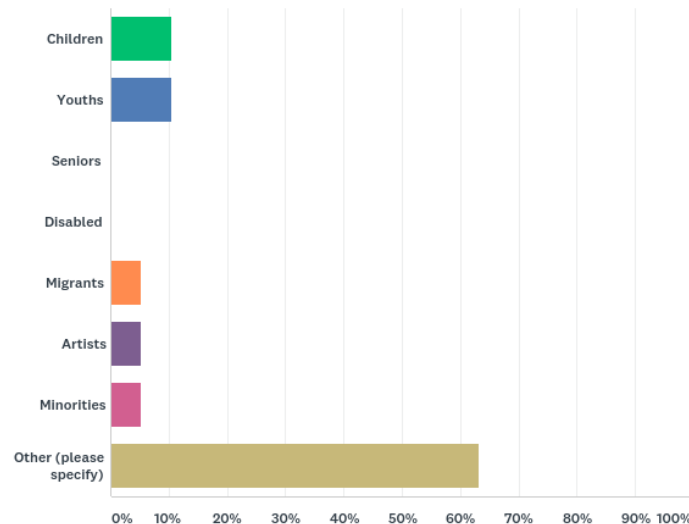
Q15: Do you have any specific target groups?



Specific Target Groups

The targets groups mentioned among respondents included children, youths, migrants, artists, minorities, emigrants, music innovators and civil activists.

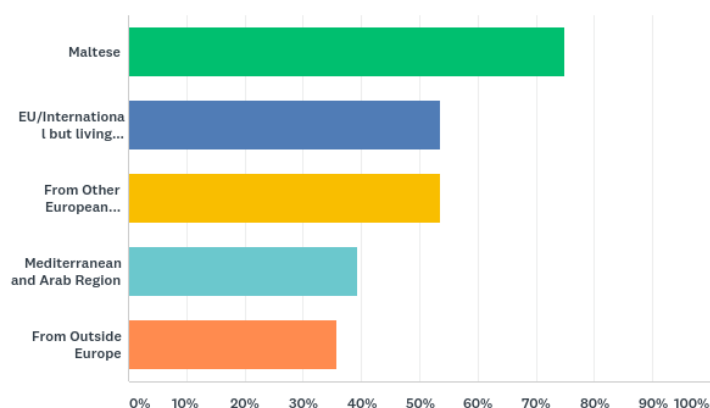
Q16: If your answer was yes, please select one of the following options:



Artists' Nationality

Most of the projects involve Maltese artists but there are also many that have artists from Europe, the Mediterranean and Arab and region and beyond. This shows the unique international element of Valletta 2018, which is not only about getting foreign artists to showcase their work in Malta but to actually collaborate with local artists and share ideas with the aim of fostering international relationships beyond 2018.

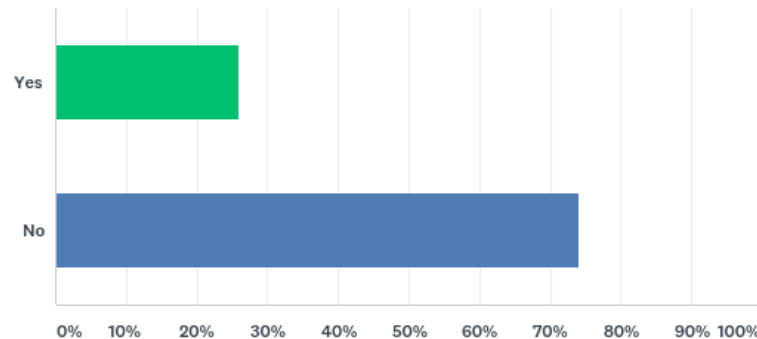
Q17: Artists' Nationality:



Collaboration with Leeuwarden

Most of the artists responded that they did not have a collaboration with Leeuwarden, the other ECoC for 2018.

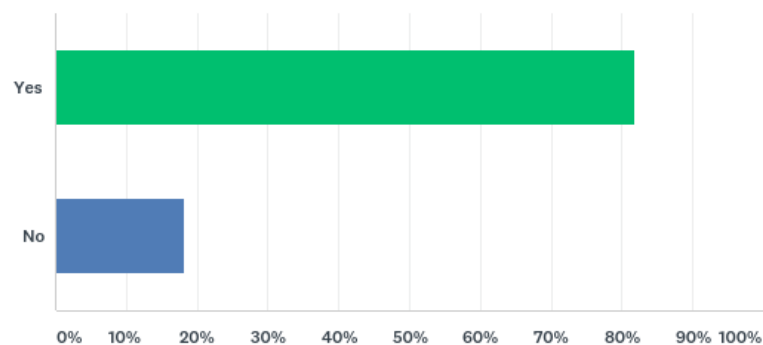
Q18: Does your project involve any collaboration with Leeuwarden?



European Dimension

The majority of respondents who did not already have a European dimension in their project, intended to include one showing that most project leaders understand the importance of the European element of Valletta 2018, and its role as a European Capital of Culture.

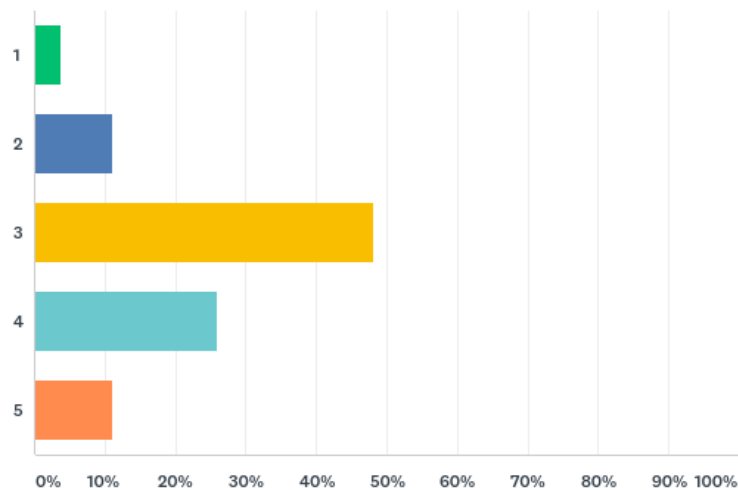
Q19: If you do not have European artists or themes, do you intend on incorporating any in the development of your project?



Awareness of Programme

Unlike in previous qualitative analyses of interviews with project leaders, this study shows that the majority of respondents have at least a moderate level of awareness towards the programme, which might be indicative of the proximity of this study to the actual year as opposed to previous interviews.

Q20: Beyond your project, how would you rate your awareness of the other projects and the broader picture of Valletta 2018? (1 being the least and 5 being the most).





THE IMPACT OF VALLETTA 2018 ON THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY OF THE MALTESE POPULATION

**Dr Marcello Carammia
and Dr Marie Briguglio**



INTRODUCTION

In October 2012, Valletta was selected to be the 2018 European Capital of Culture (ECoC). Participation of Maltese and European citizens was considered to be an integral goal of the initiative and, to this end, the Cultural Programme that envisaged considerable community and outreach components all around the Maltese Islands. The European dimension is also a key aspect of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) programme. ECoC programmes aim to foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from different Member States, to highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe and to bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore (European Parliament, 2006). However, while the development of a European (cultural) identity is a goal of ECoC programmes, there are few studies which provide evidence of this. Consistent, accessible and comparable research and evaluation directly linked to culture is one of the requirements of hosting an ECoC (Garcia and Cox, 2013). In light of this, the present study examines the extent to which European identity in Malta may have been affected by the Valletta 2018 ECoC programme, to what extent, and among what segments of the population.

METHODOLOGY

This study of the impact of Valletta 2018 on the European identity of the Maltese society a mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods and covering a four year period (2015-2018).

The study tests three hypotheses:

H1. The impact of Valletta 2018 on the European-ness of Malta's society is conditional on the definition or dimensions of European-ness: affective dimensions are least likely to change compared to more utilitarian notions of identity;

H2. Participation and involvement in ECoC activities should reinforce the impact of Valletta 2018 on the European-ness of Malta's society;

H3. The impact of Valletta 2018 on the European-ness of Malta's society is influenced by controls and demographics.

During the first year of the study (2015), extensive desktop research was undertaken with a view to determining the baseline scenario on various definitions of European identity, cultural participation and Valletta 2018 exposure, together with data on several socio-economic descriptors of people in Malta. During the second year of the study a large-scale cross-sectional survey was undertaken, employing computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) on individuals aged over 18 years residing in private households. The survey returned 850 responses and revealed interesting behavioural patterns in cultural attendance and participation that echo the findings of the Malta Cultural Participation Survey. A second large-scale survey will be carried out in 2018 to yield a panel of observations. Given the complexity of the notion of European Identity, research in 2017 and 2018 employs focus group methodology (while that in 2016 and 2018 employs a survey). The present report details the findings of the focus group sessions for the year 2017.

Focus Groups

In October 2017 (year 3 of the project), focus group sessions were carried out to obtain qualitative insights into the relationship between cultural participation and European identity. Other focus groups sessions will be carried in 2018 (year 4 of the project). The participants were divided in two groups of 6-7 persons. One session was conducted in English and the other in Maltese. The sessions were organised in the following manner:

- 1) Participants were first shown the list of questions used in the survey carried out in 2016 on a representative sample of the Maltese population, and asked to provide comment. The objective was twofold: to familiarise participants with the if, how, and why of the topic of the discussion, and to obtain additional feedback on the questionnaire used for the quantitative component of the study.
- 2) A semi-structured discussion followed, which took the form of a typical focus group. The discussion revolved around the three questions at the core of the study:
 - a. Do you feel European? What does it mean to be European?
 - b. Are you involved in (informed of, actually participate, intend to participate to) Valletta ECoC?
 - c. Does Valletta as the ECoC make you feel European?

Composition of the group

The group was as indicated above subdivided into two focus groups, which were composed in a way to ensure representation to the following:

- Male-female
- Old-young
- High-low exposure to ECoC
- High-low engagement in society, EU
- High-low education
- Malta-Gozo
- Church-non church
- Artist-non artist
- Valletta - non Valletta
- Married - single
- With young children – without

FINDINGS

The sessions started by handing out the survey questions, which participants read and commented upon. This also served as an introduction to the second part of the focus group sessions.

Focus Groups Discussions

The key concepts that emerged on the question of Europeanness and Europe were: "familiarity", "feeling more European when travelling beyond Europe", "no affinity to the concept of nationality" and "feeling Maltese did not exclude one to feeling European".

Do you feel European?

Feeling European is linked (if in complex forms) to feeling Maltese, and the answers given reflected this connection too, showing how these two concepts live side-by-side.

There were mixed reactions to this question among participants in the English-speaking group. Some showed sentiments of feeling proud to be European or embracing the concept of "Europeanness". This type of response was given by those more exposed through travelling and working or meeting foreigners in Malta. These people also tended to feel comfortable and even proud to be Maltese.

On the other hand, three participants in the English-speaking group expressed reservations about feeling European or feeling Maltese:

"I have sort of mixed feelings ... sometimes I feel that I do not belong in this [Maltese] community ... it depends on the issues ... in respect to the environment, sometimes I am not very proud. But on other issues I feel that I may belong."

Another participant also expressed frustration about environmental issues in Malta, while also stating:

"sometimes I feel neither Maltese or European ... I feel that often we say that we feel European, just to remove our North African and Mediterranean legacy."

She stated that she felt more akin with people sharing the climatic region rather than a politically-defined area. The third participant stated that she was also a bit "confused with the concept of feeling Maltese or feeling European: "I do not know what that means ... I just tend to feel 'me'". She elaborated on this topic by saying that she was unsure about the concept of "being Maltese":

"And if I don't know, on that level, then I do not even know what it means on a European level".

On the other hand, the other four participants were comfortable with feeling European and Maltese at the same time. One participant commented:

"I do feel very strongly about being European, but I think there is also a certain pride about our nationality. But I do feel a strong sense of European[ness], mainly I think because of this bond with [European] friends that I have."

Another participant stated that, "yes I do feel European, because I feel a very big sense of pride and belonging, that I am a European citizen".

Another participant referred to the experience of travelling:

"even when you travel abroad, I mean, you do find similarities [...] but I do feel pride in being Maltese, but also part of Europe".

Similarly, another participant commented:

"I definitely feel European since I was a child ... I trained in Italy and London, so there is always this loose connection to most European countries anyway".

The sentiment of familiarity with Europe was echoed in the Maltese-speaking group, when some expressed the notion that if they ever considered working outside of Malta, Europe would be the immediate choice. The reason was that one was aware of one's rights as an EU citizen and that "you have less hassle" (*għandek anqas 'hassle'*):

"there are many who have done this, people come to Malta and Maltese go abroad and so it is normal" (*hawn hafna nies li għamluha din, jiġu nies jaħdmu Malta, u Maltin marru barra. Allura hija haġa normali*).

However, the same participants who expressed these sentiments took the notion of familiarity a step further. Whereas, similar to the English-speaking group, they associated European-ness with concepts of "way of life", "customs" and "one feels more at home" (*għax tħossok komda*), they attached the idea of Europe to the notion of safety. They expressed unease, if not outright fear, of finding themselves in unfamiliar (non-European) cultures "trid toqgħod attent" (*one needs to be careful*) and therefore choosing to travel only in Europe. Conversely, the men in the same Maltese-speaking group did not agree with this: "for me, part of the enrichment of life is to discover new cultures".

When participants to the Maltese-speaking group were asked specifically "what is the difference between being Maltese or European?" the reaction was similar to the participants of the English-speaking group who had felt positively inclined to feel both Maltese and European. One remarked very explicitly, "I do not see why we have to choose. I am Maltese and European in the EU."

On the other hand there was the feeling that, "every European can feel European, but only Maltese can feel Maltese."

Comments from some of the English-speaking group related to feeling proud to be Maltese and also proud to be part of EU, of a bigger entity. It felt good to go abroad and know that people in other EU countries were more aware about Malta now.

Do you feel Maltese?

When asked specifically whether they felt Maltese, almost all participants in both groups agreed that they do, primarily, feel Maltese, "in my core I feel Maltese, and then European". However, as indicated above, a few participants had some reservations about this. Three participants (one from the Maltese-speaking group and two from the English-speaking group) stated that sometimes they felt that they could not be associated with being Maltese and possibly felt more European than Maltese, when something that went against their values, occurred on a National level. This made them feel that they did not want to

associate themselves with being Maltese. In addition, two participants in the English-speaking group stated that day-to-day, they did not feel any affinity with the concept of nationality and even admitted their confusion with the concept of feeling Maltese or feeling European. One participant stated that she felt “‘without nation’, sometimes I am part of the world, a citizen of the world”.

On the other hand, some people in the Maltese-speaking group who had travelled beyond Europe, stated that when they encountered “non-European” characteristics of a host country, this made them more conscious of their own origins, including being European. It feels as though people need to be out of Europe in order to become conscious of their own “Europeanness”:

“I mean I went to North Africa [...] I did not feel part of it. Because I had left Europe.”

Also, when travelling beyond Europe these people tended to present themselves as coming from Europe, because it made explaining one’s provenance easier due to the fact that Malta may not be well-known outside Europe.

Involvement with Valletta 2018

Only one person in the Maltese-speaking group already knows she will be involved as a participant in Valletta 2018, taking part in the reading sessions that form part of the ECoC programme. On the other hand, two people in the English-speaking group were engaged in some activity. One had just published a book and would also be organising an exhibition. Another was anticipating assisting an organisation with a number of activities. The latter also stated that her school had received information about dance opportunities for students, but on the other hand the school calendars were very full, so it was difficult, for students to participate.

In terms of participating as audiences or attendees to events, there were participants who had already identified one or two events in next year’s programme. This was mainly because some events were already established (like Notte Bianca) or they knew people associated with a particular project, that is, they knew by word of mouth. Three participants were aware of and had visited the website of Valletta 2018 and one had downloaded the programme. Others were not aware that the programme was already online or that events pegged to Valletta 2018 were taking place in 2017. On the other hand, there was a general awareness that numerous events were planned and the attitude of almost all participants was that they would hear or look up particular events as the time drew near. In fact the general feeling was that it was now a bit too early to decide what activities to attend and how much they would participate even as attendees. One person in the English-speaking group, in emphasising a preference for spontaneity, drew parallels to the Fringe Festival (Edinburgh) by stating “I’ve been to the Fringe Festival. I didn’t plan anything.”

On the other hand, one participant in the same group stated that the advertisements or coverage on television was becoming a bit too intrusive. Conversely, another stated that advertisements on the internet were “not in your face.” In the Maltese-speaking group, one person stated that the crowds would keep him away, together with the problems of transport or parking. Indeed, there was agreement within this group that most events in Malta are well-organised, but the organisation did not take into consideration the logistics of dealing with massive attendance.

The impact of Valletta 2018, including on European-ness

The discourse fell on the question of legacy and on feeling European.

There was an across the board discussion in both groups on the legacy that Valletta 2018 would leave on Malta. One participant in the English-speaking group insisted that more attention should be given to this issue. It was important to go beyond the organisation of events. For instance, he stated that although many artists were being given the space and opportunity to exhibit their art for the first time on a national platform, authorities should also consider taking steps to set up an institution to assist artists beyond 2018. Perhaps because the focus groups took place in a public library, one participant in the Maltese-speaking group noted that, "Valletta, as a European City (sic) of Culture does not have a proper public library".

This statement suggests that one of the many buildings in Valletta could be refurbished into a public library that would serve the community beyond 2018. This prompted other participants in this group to talk about buildings and their restoration currently taking place in Valletta. If this restoration were to continue, this could be one of the legacies of Valletta 2018.

The other impact of Valletta 2018 was commercial and social. In both groups, it was noted that many catering businesses had cropped up in anticipation of 2018 and that the general climate for business was clearly good. Another participant in the Maltese-speaking group stated that the value of property was going up for owners. However, as one of the participants in the English-speaking group commented, there was a dark side to this. The gentrification of Valletta was having a less than positive impact on people who eventually would be unable to afford higher rent.

The general consensus within the Maltese-speaking group was that Malta would enjoy a better reputation as a country on a European level, "we will be taken much more seriously now", as long as things are executed well. Most participants in this group shared a common confidence that Valletta would rise to the occasion.

When asked whether having Valletta as a ECoC would make people feel more European, one participant stated that this is a "one million dollar question". Another participant stated that it would make people feel proud to be Maltese and European:

"we never thought about ourselves as Europeans. In the sense that as the others said, we are Maltese, who ... are proud that at least this little island will be known for something done at a certain level."

Another person stated that the fact that Valletta was chosen to be an ECoC, made him feel "proud to be Maltese, recognised by Europe". There was also the idea that having your capital city declared ECoC was proof that Malta was European:

"when I think about Valletta 2018, increasingly, I think that it makes me feel that, listen, we are really European, not just Maltese."

There were concerns among the Maltese-speaking group that once the ECoC programme ended in 2018 things would come to an end. There was consensus that activities should continue on a yearly basis, beyond 2018, even to establish Malta as a global cultural attraction.

When asked whether it made any difference if instead of the “European Capital of Culture, it was simply the Valletta Capital of Culture”? The Maltese-speaking group felt that this was an added feather on one’s cap to have the word “European”. While one participant pointed out that there was the feeling of being part of a European community, since this happened every year, so that Valletta was now part of the legacy of European cities of culture. Another person in the same group stated that without the word, “European”, the bond between Malta and Europe itself would diminish. It will still be there, but it wouldn’t be that strong”.

The response within the English-speaking group was that having the word “European” would make the organisers more accountable and “an obligation to deliver”. There was also a comment that having “European” in the title would make people take the issue more seriously. On the other hand, another participant in the same group voiced her concerns about funds being used simply to showcase a programme of events, and again questioned the social and economic impact on poverty in Valletta.

As indicated above, another point that emerged within the English-speaking group was that artists and artisans, who previously would not have been able to expose their work, will now be given that opportunity. There was a desire that the ‘true’ Maltese identity would come to be accepted on a European level and that certain traditions that are no longer popular would be revived, ideally through exposure during the coming year.

Towards the end of the session with the Maltese-speaking group, there was an intriguing reaction in relation to the other ECoC 2018, Leeuwarden. There was some disenchantment at the news that another city would be an ECoC in 2018. Most were deeply surprised, and asked why there were not more references to this in the Valletta 2018 promotion or programme. Some participants even questioned whether this would go against the spirit of collaboration between the EU states. Some argued that there should have been more references to the ‘other capital’, and combined activities could have been planned,

“How can we go to represent Europe, if there are no attempts made to interact with the other city? [...] Even though there are borders between countries and a sea that separates us, but at the end of the day there is a connection”.

Other comments also reflected that people are not sufficiently aware that the ECoC is a yearly occurrence and that this is not an exclusive recognition for Valletta.

And yet, there was no question that having Valletta 2018 would have a positive impact on whether people would feel more European.

CONCLUSIONS & WAY FORWARD

The focus group sessions provided a more in-depth insight as to feelings relating to being Maltese, being European and how these concepts live side-by-side. It revealed that questions of nationality or belonging were complex issues.

There was consensus within the Maltese-speaking group that European culture has already greatly influenced Maltese culture, which in turn has maintained its own distinctive characteristics. Although people did not seem fully informed about the Valletta 2018 programme, the general feeling was that the information would be there when they need it, and that participation will follow.

Valletta 2018 was perceived to be a good thing. Participants shared the feeling that the Maltese will end up being proud of the event, and thus of being Maltese and forming part of the EU. On the other hand, there was some scepticism as to what will happen beyond 2018, and what will be the legacy of Valletta 2018. Although there were some concerns that few events will survive the programme, both groups expressed the hope that some positive effects of the ECoC, such as the continual restoration of Valletta buildings, will prevail and that structures will be set to enable the cultural community to expand beyond what it is today.

A key finding of the focus groups is that Maltese and European identities do not seem to compete with each other. Quite the opposite, the identification with Europe is likely to be a companion to a strong Maltese identity. There is no evidence of a trade-off between national and European identities, identities at different levels rather seem to reinforce each other. This emerged from discussions in both focus groups, and interestingly it was also a key finding of the quantitative study carried out in 2016.

While the qualitative study was not meant to measure identity, clearly little or no voice against European identification was heard in either group. For some respondents, this may have been a result of some kind of willingness to satisfy the perceived expectations of other focus group participants and the interviewers, rather than fully disclosing their own preferences. Future qualitative and quantitative rounds of this study will look further into this.

Asked about the likely impact of Valletta 2018 on the European identity of themselves and of the society at large, focus group participants understandably responded that this is something that can only be assessed ex post. However, there was consensus in the groups that a successful programme will reinforce the feeling of pride for being 'Maltese in Europe'. There was also generalised agreement on the positive impact on business, commerce and value of property. In contrast, some concerns were raised on the capacity to exploit the legacy of the event and make the benefits permanent.

In general, the study confirmed that identity is perceived as a complex notion. Participants are willing and able to discuss their identities, but they find it more complicated to define what identity actually is. Identity is better grasped than understood, which confirms the importance of complementing quantitative studies with insights from in-depth, qualitative discussions. While the former can provide robust evidence and permit systematic comparison, the latter complements them with essential context and texture.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The studies presented throughout the report allow us trace some of the cultural and social impacts of Valletta 2018 through an understanding of the development of the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme itself, subsequently viewed through the lens of cultural participation and institutional trust.

With the launch of the Cultural Programme at the end of 2017, the full breadth of the programme was publicly revealed for the first time. The increased emphasis on the programme's international dimension – a point highlighted within previous iterations of this research – was ever more prominent, as was the ongoing focus on various other strands of activity, including community, visual arts, and children.

Participation within various forms of cultural activities has been relatively stable over the past years, although knowledge of the European Capital of Culture title has experienced a significant increase. Likewise, appreciation of Valletta, its cultural offer and the changes taking place within the city has remained high and increased further over the past 12 months.

The theme of cultural vibrancy is also to be viewed through the perspective of other issues, aside from participation to cultural activities. Foremost amongst these is the concept of identity and belonging, particularly within the context of a European-wide project such as the European Capital of Culture title. The study presented within this report explores these concepts in great detail, eliciting complex reactions to the ways in which people view attachment and interpret their own identities.



Valletta 2018 Foundation

Exchange Buildings,
Republic Street,
Valletta, VLT 1117

Email: research@valletta2018.org

Telephone: +356 2124 2018

www.valletta2018.org

