

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

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Objectives

This research study aims to analyse the impact of Valletta 2018 by examining whether 'European identity' may be affected by the programme, to what extent, and among what segments of the population.

Methodology

This study applies a four year (2015-2018) mixed-method impact assessment approach to monitor European identity in the Maltese society, and the impact of Valletta 2018 on it. Desktop research conducted in 2015 provided the background for the study. In 2016, a quantitative large-scale survey was carried out to obtain systematic data on European identity and awareness of Valletta 2018 early in the ECoC project. In 2017, focus group discussions were carried out to obtain deeper qualitative insights.

In 2018 the quantitative survey was repeated with interviews conducted in the last quarter of 2018 to provide a systematic comparison of European identity before and after Valletta 2018. This formed the object of the final impact assessment study, which was also submitted at the end of 2018.

Results

The findings from the 2018 wave of the survey confirm and reinforce the results of the first wave. As expected, awareness, active participation and attendance of Valletta 2018 events were higher in wave two compared to wave one. Respondents attending events of Valletta 2018 as a European Capital of Culture tended to be employed, married and of older age. This demographic also correlated with pro-European preferences – audiences tend to be those who perceive the European Union as beneficial. Correlation analysis indicates that indeed Valletta 2018 does relate to European identity. This relationship depends on how European-ness is defined: not all definitions show a relationship with exposure to Valletta 2018 participation. A closer look at the identity variable reveals that attachment to Europe remains at the same average level while a higher share sees Malta's membership to European Union as beneficial and as a good thing both at personal and country level. There were lower preference for intervention on immigration and a weaker positive view on the EU having consequences. Other correlates of "European-ness", include interest in politics, labour status, marital status and age. It is worth noting that knowledge of the EU presidency (which was also held in Malta, and which is also a form of exposure) also correlates with European identity.

Way forward

In addition to providing important insights on exposure to Valletta 2018 and European identity in Malta, the 2018 survey was designed to contribute to the Valletta 2018 final report. Comparative statics between 2016 and 2018 shed useful insights on what changed before and after the event. Correlation analysis enables us to identify the relationships that continue to exist between 2018. Regression analysis (using panel data) will enable us to elicit any causal effects while parsing out the effects of confounding variables. This will constitute the kind of analysis to be conducted, going forward.