PRAGUE PROCESS
ПРАЖСКИЙ ПРОЦЕСС



Malta

General Information

Population

579 704 (World Bank 2025)

563 443 (STAT MT 2023)

Immigration

199 466 (UN Immigration Stock 2024)

34 033 (STAT MT 2024)

Emigration

43 940 (UN Emigration Stock 2024)

23 419 (STAT MT 2024)

Working-age population

385 851 (World Bank 2025)

325 631 (STAT MT 2024)

Unemployment rate

3.1 % (World Bank 2025)

3 % (STAT MT 2024)

GDP

27 771 821 560.9 current prices USD (World Bank 2025)

22 462 463 796 current prices EUR (STAT MT 2024)

Refugees, Asylum seekers, IDPs

Refugees

8 306 (UNHCR 2025)

Asylum Seekers

1 390 (UNHCR 2025)

701 (STAT MT 2024)

IDPs

0 (UNHCR 2025)

Citizenship

By Birth

No (GLOBALCIT 2024)

By Descent

Yes (conditional) (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Years of Residency

7 years of residence required (GLOBALCIT 2024)

Territory

316 km^2 (CIA World Factbook)

Data from international sources is updated automatically as it becomes available.

Migration Authorities

Responsible Body

Ministry for Home Affairs, Security and Employment

Line Ministries

Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism

The Human Rights Directorate of the Office of the Prime Minister – European Funds, Equality, Reforms and Social Dialogue

Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector

Agencies

International Protection Agency

International Protection Appeals Tribunal

Agency for the Welfare of Asylum-seekers Regulations

Identity Malta Agency

Residency Malta Agency

Key Policy Documents

Integration strategy and action plan 2025 - 2030

Malta Labour Migration Policy (2025)

Malta Permanent Residence Programme (2021)

Policy regarding Specific Residence Authorisation (2020)

International Protection Agency (establishment) Order, Legal Notice 194 (2020)

Minor Protection (Alternative Care) Act: Chapter 602 & its amendments (2020)

Procedural Standards for Granting and Withdrawing International Protection Regulations, Legal Notice 416 & its amendments (2015)

Common Standards and Procedures for Returning Illegally Staying Third- Country Nationals Regulations, Legal Notice 81 & its amendments (2011)

Status of long-term residents (third-country nationals) Regulations, Legal Notice 278 & its amendments (2006)

Reception of Asylum-seekers Regulations, Legal Notice 320 & its amendments (2005)

Immigration Regulations, Legal Notice 205 & its amendments (2004)

International Protection Appeals Tribunal (Procedures) Regulations, Legal Notice 252 & its amendments (2001)

International Protection Act: Chapter 420 & its amendments (2001)

Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC)

Immigration Act: Chapter 217 & its amendments (1970)

Maltese Citizenship Act & its amendments (1964)

Relevant Publications

Exploring the Potential of Digitalisation in Migration Management in the Prague Process Region

Digitalisation and labour migration: the use of modern technology, challenges and opportunities

How will migration to Europe look in the Future?

Intra-corporate Transferees (ICTs): The benefits for the EU and the opportunity cost

With an area of just over 300 square kilometres and a total population of at the end of 2023, Malta is by far the most densely populated country in the European Union. Overpopulation and unemployment were the main push factors for emigration from Malta for decades. The top destinations in this regard were the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. The picture began to turn around in the 1990s when Malta started receiving refugees from Iraq, the former Yugoslavian states, and East African Asians who had been expelled from Uganda. Since joining the EU in 2002, Malta saw a sharp rise in refugees and migrants using Malta as a gateway to Europe. In recent years, asylum seeker arrivals have declined, while regular migration has grown.

Malta is among the top three countries in the EU in terms of the . According to Eurostat, as of 1 January 2024, Malta hosted 173,700 foreigners, accounting for 30.9% of its total population, representing the second highest share of foreign-born in the resident population in the EU after Luxembourg. Of these, about 132,700 are non-EU nationals (23.6% of the population), and another 41,000 are EU citizens (7.3%). Non-Maltese are predominantly male and younger (almost 25% between the ages of 25-35) compared to their Maltese counterparts.

By the end of 2023, almost 113,000 people held valid residence permits in Malta – a 21% increase from 2022 and a six-fold rise compared to 2015. In 2023, Malta issued close to 42,000 first residence permits, up by 11% from 37,851 in 2022 and nearly triple the 14,358 issued in 2021. The majority of permits in 2023 were granted for employment (27,808), followed by education (7,280), family reasons (3,154), and 'other' reasons (3,685). Most non-EU migrants in 2023 came from India, Nepal, Colombia, the Philippines and China.

Malta is expected to sustain the strong economic growth of recent years. After a 6.0% GDP growth in 2024, the economy is projected to grow by 4.1% in 2025 and 4.0% in 2026. The financial sector plays a key role, contributing the largest share to GDP and around 15% of public revenue. Malta has also become a major iGaming hub, while tourism remains a vital economic pillar, directly contributing around 15% to GDP, one of the highest rates in the EU. Although hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis, the tourist sector has since rebounded. In 2025, Malta's unemployment rate stood at a low 2.7%, with inflation at 2.6 %.

The rapid growth of the Maltese economy drives strong demand for labour force. In 2023, Malta recorded the sixth highest rate of self-employment among non-nationals in the EU. Key sectors attracting both EU and non-EU workers include professional, scientific and technical sectors, as well as administrative and support services. In response to the growing reliance on foreign labour force, in early 2024 Malta launched the 'Specialist Employee Initiative', a fast-track procedure aimed at attracting skilled foreign workers to fill labour market gaps. A year later, the country proposed a new . Building on the recommendations outlined by the government in the National Employment Policy 2021-2030, the new policy aims to align labour migration with future labour market needs and to enhance talent retention.

As of May 2025, an estimated 19 people emigrated from Malta each day. The year 2023 recorded the highest emigration figures in the past five years, with 7000 people departing the country. Between 2013 and 2023, over 118,000 persons emigrated from Malta, according to Eurostat.of them were foreign nationals. In 2023 alone, almost 2,000 Maltese citizens, approximately 6,000 EU citizens, and around 13,500 non-EU citizens left the country. After Malta's accession to the EU, many Maltese settled across the EU, , with new ones being formed even recently. According to UN DESA, 43,940 Maltese were living abroad in 2024, with the largest communities located in Australia (34,451), Canada (5,795), and Italy (2,127). Multiple surveys confirm that the main reasons for emigration among Maltese include limited educational and career opportunities, environmental concerns, and soaring housing costs.

Irregular sea arrivals to Malta have been steadily declining in recent years. According to UNHCR, only 238 migrants arrived by boat in 2024, down from 445 in 2023, 444 in 2022, and over 2,200 in 2020, marking an 89% drop since 2020. As of mid-2025, just 108 sea arrivals had been reported. Most of those arriving in 2024 were nationals of Asian and African countries, predominantly from Bangladesh (47%), Syria (20%), Pakistan (13%) and Egypt (12%). The number of non-EU nationals found to be illegally present in Malta remained relatively stable: 1,780 individuals in 2024 compared to 1,695 in 2023 and 1,405 in 2022. Of those in 2024, 140 were apprehended inland for illegal entry, 655 for overstaying, and the remainder for 'other reasons'. In the same year, 850 non-EU nationals were issued return orders, and 820 non-EU nationals were returned following an order to leave, representing a 96% return rate, well above the EU average.

Since 2014 Malta has received , with the highest number of 4,090 registered in 2019. In 2024, only 700 applications for international protection were recorded, marking a decrease of 82.9% compared to 2019. The also dropped significantly, from 72.6% in 2014 to 43.8% in 2024. The majority of asylum applicants in 2024 were Syrian nationals (31%), a trend consistent over the past three years. Other notable countries of origin included Libya (5%), Sudan (5%) and Bangladesh (3.6%), while Eritrea accounted for only 2% down from 8% in 2022. Approximately 175 people were relocated from Malta to other EU countries in 2024. Since 2019, these relocations continue on an ad hoc basis under informal, non-binding agreements with other EU Member States. This mechanism may be formalised under the upcoming solidarity provisions of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.

By the end of January 2025, Malta hosted 2,235 non-EU citizens under temporary protection who have fled the war in Ukraine. Like other EU Member States, Malta extended the validity of temporary protection until 4 March 2027. The government has yet to clarify its approach to transitioning beneficiaries of temporary protection into longer-term and stable legal statuses.

In terms of institutional development, Malta replaced the Office of the Refugee Commissioner, mandated to receive, process and determine applications for international protection, with the International Protection Agency (IPA) in August 2020. While the IPA is responsible for examining and determining applications for international protection at first instance, the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) examines appeals concerning rejected applications.

As of 1 August 2025, Identity Malta – the government agency overseeing identity management, civil registration, and immigration

services – will take on responsibility for implementing selected measures under the new Labour Migration Policy, particularly those concerning vacancy requirements prior to hiring non-EU nationals and the grace period for terminated non-EU nationals in Malta. The Human Rights Directorate (HRD) recently became part of the Parliamentary Secretary for Reforms and Equality within the Office of the Prime Minister – European Funds, Equality, Reforms and Social Dialogue. It was set up in November 2015 with the aim of creating dialogue with social partners and civil society, as well as promoting civil liberties, equality and anti-discrimination. The Directorate recently published the Integration Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030, the second integration plan that will help strengthen Malta's national integration programme; as well as the National Strategy and Action Plan on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings in Malta 2024-2030, outlining the Government's vision to protect the rights of victims of trafficking and bringing perpetrators to justice.

Malta is a party to several Migration Dialogues, including the Prague Process, the Budapest Process, the Rabat Process and the Mediterranean Transit Migration (MTM).

latest update: 27 August 2025