

Formosa, M. (2015). *Ageing and later life in Malta: Issues, policies and future trends*. Malta: Book Distributors Limited, 286 pp. ISBN: 978-1-44730-057-1

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Everything in the international arena is geared towards young people, ranging from products to services to advertisements to television content, to mention some prime examples. One can safely say that the entire market is youth-centric! Yet, many nations are waking up to a new reality, that of increasingly ageing nations. Barring a few countries like India, which will have more than 60 per cent of its population below the age of 35 in 2020, the world is heading into a scenario, whereby a majority of the population will be older adults - persons, who are, as per international standards, older than 60 or 65 years, depending on individual countries. Formosa has made a painstakingly detailed study on the subject, with a specific focus on the Maltese Islands, which are situated in the Mediterranean and form part of the European Union. *Ageing and later life in Malta* is a timely and necessary book that reviews the evidence base of the Maltese Islands. This research publication is without doubt a valuable mirror to all European countries, since they are also facing similar patterns of ageing population. Considering that Malta only achieved its independence, the book is in a unique position of demonstrating the way ahead to other newly-independent nations irrespective of their geographical position and political system.

Ageing and later life in Malta includes 13 chapters that address various aspects of the Maltese population ageing scenario by using a vast range of data sources. The book also comes with a strong foreword and a preface which gives an excellent context and background to the issues discussed in the subsequent chapters. This is a beneficial starting point especially to readers who are not so acquainted with Malta, its socio-political history and its geography. The book features a very helpful section for the reader on 'Structure of the book', which is found at the end of chapter one though, perhaps, this section could have been better placed in the preface.

Chapter one, 'Introduction', starts by questioning whether older persons are a burden to the society at large or whether older people are seen as valuable members of the community, who can still contribute actively to society even in their later years and hence seen as a resource. As the author shares, the aim of this book is to uncover the relationship between ageing on one hand and demographic trends, the family, the labour force, income security, social services and mortality, morbidity and health care on the other. Formosa gives a clear and detailed description of the phenomenon of an ageing population and what will be the consequences once it becomes a reality. Better health care, lower fertility rate and a higher life

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expectancy have led to an increased percentage of older persons in the last twenty years. In the second chapter, 'The international context', Formosa discusses the global context as a critical discussion to the ageing situation in Malta, while highlighting both the demographic patterns and policy implementations. Chapters three and four, titled 'Demographic trends' and 'The economics of ageing' respectively, addresses the demographic and the economics of ageing in contemporary times. Here the author presents the reader with a demographic profile of the ageing population in Malta, and further on, discusses the effect that this has on the economic growth. He does this by exploring the overall consequences of population ageing on state expenditure and financial costings, as well as the effects of labour supply and income security.

In the fifth chapter, 'Healthy ageing', Formosa examines the trends and differentials in the health conditions of the Maltese ageing population, whereas chapter six, 'Active ageing', deals with the importance of social contact and relations in an older person's life. In chapter seven, 'Older adult learning', the author explains the importance of lifelong learning from a sociological point of view, and then discusses related policies and data on older adult learning in Malta. He concludes that a critical scrutiny of present ideologies and trends finds that present policies on older adult learning as being no more than seductive rhetoric. Chapter eight, 'Poverty and social exclusion', discusses those issues and situations which may deprive older persons from not experiencing material affluence and social inclusion. This leads us to chapter nine, 'Ageism, age discrimination and elder abuse', whereby Formosa highlights the difficulties that older people are faced with when they end up as the victims both in their own homes and in care homes, and hence, the need for stronger legislations and policy implementations. The three subsequent chapters focus on care. The care given at home by the family to an older person/s is discussed in chapter ten, 'Informal care'. The care provided by the formal (paid) carer in the community is discussed in chapter eleven under the heading of 'Community care', whilst 'Long-term care' is described in detail in chapter twelve. In these three chapters, the author speaks about the difficulties that formal caregivers face when caring for a loved one at home and the government's initiatives towards dependent older persons residing both in the community and in residential settings. The book concludes with the final chapter on 'The future of ageing policy'. Here, Formosa puts forward suggestions of what policies are still needed to be implemented as part of the ageing policy in Malta, so that social justice, social equity and empowerment prevails, even among older persons and their caregivers.

Formosa's efforts towards producing *Ageing and later life in Malta* should be applauded for presenting a timely, needed and important text book on the various aspects of ageing in Malta. A key strength of the book is the use of huge breadth of published and constantly evolving evidence available on the topic, which are covered in each of the chapters. Formosa draws on a range of policy, seminal texts, websites and research evidence in putting forward his thesis. Some chapters reproduce extensive quotes from academic sources. Moreover, the writing style Formosa adopts is accessible throughout and the background information about Malta's socio-political history is a bonus for readers who are not so familiar with the Maltese Islands. Excellent referencing and index. Overall, this book is an authoritative source of information to rely on. I sincerely believe that this makes the book as an important resource / academic

text for those who are studying social gerontology, are involved in geriatric/gerontology research or are in a position to influence policies revolving around older persons. As Thomas Scharf, Professor of Gerontology, Ireland, pointed out in his blurb for the book - "Formosa makes a compelling case for a reorientation of ageing policy and practice to better meet the needs of an increasingly diverse older population, not only in Malta but in other western nations".