



Daily Message by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs, Hon. Evarist Bartolo

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What do these places have in common?

Andros, Brac, Chios, Corfu, Cres, Djerba, Euboea, Corsica, Crete, Cyprus, Ibiza, Karpathos, Kefalonia, Krk, Lesbos, Limnos, Mallorca, Menorca, Naxos, Rhodes, Samos, Sardinia, Sicily, Thasos, Zakynthos

They are all bigger than the Maltese islands. Think about it. There are 25 Mediterranean islands bigger than the whole Maltese archipelago: Malta, Gozo and Comino.

Some of them are very big, others are not so big, but every one of them is bigger than Malta, Gozo and Comino together!

Outside the Mediterranean islands bigger than the Maltese islands include: the Isle of Wight, the Isle of Man, the Faroe Islands, Madeira, and the "small" German/Polish Island of Usedom in the Baltic Sea.

Many Germans (and also many French, Swiss etc...) think that Malta is much bigger than it actually is, I suppose because its reputation is disproportionate to its size. They know it's small, but they don't think it's that small. (It always struck me how, especially on old maps, Malta is often depicted larger than is.)

When my friend used to tell Germans that Malta is only two-thirds of Usedom (they all know the island of Usedom in the Baltic Sea) they didn't believe him or were very surprised.

Once, during a meeting with about eight members of the Bundestag of the cross-party group called "Sea Rescue", led by the deputy speaker of the Bundestag Claudia Roth (Greens), the Bundestag deputy Frank Schwabe, SPD, who is also the head of the SPD Group in PACE in Strasbourg (he often criticised Malta in the areas of human rights and crime), challenged him and said that he had been to Malta and Usedom more than once, and Malta was much bigger than Usedom! In front of everybody, he took out his mobile phone and checked. Then he turned red and said "tatsächlich!" (indeed!).

To be fair to him he believes that migrants should be shared fairly among all EU member states.

Malta is 316 km², and Usedom is 445 km², of which 373 km² are German and 72 km² Polish. (The island used to be German, but after WW II the Poles kept a part of it.)

In our migrant centres we have 4000 migrants and we have no room for anymore. In proportion to our size, we have the equivalent of 4,000,000 migrants in Europe.

Besides we only have these small rocks/islands to call our own.

If Lampedusa continues to overflow with migrants as it is doing right now, the mayor can ask Rome to take the surplus and spread them across centres all over Italy.

If Greece wants to reduce the number of immigrants squashed together on the island of Lesbos, it can build new centres across Greece. But where are we going to put the migrants who keep coming?



This year alone, in the first three months, we rescued and took in 1,200 migrants -

Four times as many as last year in the same period.

Still the boats come. And this is before the advent of summer and fine weather.

No wonder the European Union, the United Nations, the Vatican, the voluntary organisations who work with migrants all tell us we are carrying a heavier burden than we can bear.

We are pleased that they support our position in theory. But what are they going to do to help us in practice?

And if they don't want to help us, are they also against us helping ourselves?

Evarist Bartolo

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