

Valletta hits rock bottom in culture, survey shows

JAMES DEBONO

Valletta residents' emerge as the least satisfied with cultural facilities in their city, a Europe-wide survey of 75 different European cities revealed.

This startling revelation of the capital's lack of cultural facilities comes in the wake of the government's decision to build a roofless theatre in the space occupied by the opera house ruins, and to make the building of a new parliament the main focus of the Valletta regeneration project.

Together with Naples, the Maltese capital emerges from the survey as the only European cities where the number of unsatisfied respondents outnumber satisfied ones. While in Valletta, 42% were unsatisfied and 35% satisfied, in Naples the corresponding split was 46% to 41%.

The survey was conducted by Gallup on behalf of Eurobarometer, and consisted in interviews with 500 randomly selected citizens in each of the 75 selected cities. In total, more than 37,500 interviews were conducted between 30 October and 10 November 2009.

The results show that the proportion of respondents satisfied with Valletta's cultural facilities has fallen drastically, from 62% in 2006 to 35% in 2009.

The lack of satisfaction with cultural facilities in Valletta contrasts with satisfaction in most other European cities. Only 2% of respondents in Cardiff and 3% in Berlin were not satisfied with the cultural facilities offered by their city.

The survey also shows that 52% of Valletta residents think that their city is not clean. This stands in marked contrast with cities like Oviedo, Piatra Neamt and Luxembourg, where almost all respondents agreed that they lived in a clean city (96%-97%).

However, in a third of the surveyed cities, less than half of respondents agreed that their city was clean. The lowest proportions were seen in Palermo, Budapest, Sofia and Athens, where less than a sixth of interviewees in those cities think that they live in a clean city.

Just over half (52%) of Valletta residents were also dissatisfied with the state of their streets and buildings.

Respondents living in Sofia were the least happy with the beauty of their streets and buildings: (73%).

Respondents in Athens were the least likely to be satisfied with the opportunities for

cycling, walking and other outdoor recreation: just 23% of interviewees in Athens were satisfied, while 48% were not at all satisfied. Naples, Palermo and Valletta joined Athens at the lower end of the ranking.

The survey also shows that 38% use public transport in Valletta, compared to just 2% in Paris and 5% in London.

The proportion of respondents who answered that they always felt safe in their city was highest in Oviedo (84%) compared to 55% in Valletta.

Perhaps surprisingly, Valletta was deemed to be less than major cosmopolitan cities like Amsterdam (65%). Other cities where respondents were more likely to say they always felt safe in their city were Groningen (79%), Aalborg (78%), Oulu (77%), Munich (76%), Piatra Neamt and Luxembourg (both 73%).

Significantly only 59% of Valletta residents think that most people living in their city can be trusted. Significantly people living in bigger cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Berlin and Hamburg were more likely to trust people living in their city.
