

National

Over 76,000 asylum seekers benefit from EU protection

The EU granted protection to 76,300 asylum seekers in 2008, according to statistics issued by the European Commission.

The largest group of beneficiaries of protection was Iraqis (16,600 people or 22 per cent of the total), followed by Somalis (9,500 or 12 per cent), Russians (7,400 or 10 per cent), Afghans (5,000 or seven per cent) and Eritreans (4,600 or six per cent).

Nearly 30 per cent of asylum seekers were given a favourable decision the first time round.

Of the 76,300 people who were granted protection status, 40,000 were granted refugee status, 25,500 subsidiary protection and 10,800 were allowed to stay on humanitarian grounds.

Two thirds of all grants of protection status were in France (11,500), followed by Germany (10,700), the UK (10,200), Italy (9,700), Sweden (8,700), the Netherlands (6,100) and Austria (5,700).

Malta had 2,915 asylum applications last year and took 1,410 positive decisions. The largest group granted protection in 2008 came from Somalia, (79.3 per cent) followed by arrivals from Eritrea and Sudan.

The rate of recognition varied considerably among member states. The highest rates of approval the first time round were registered in Poland (65 per cent), followed by Lithuania and Portugal (both 64 per cent), Austria (62 per cent) and Denmark (58 per cent). The lowest were in Greece (less than one per cent), Slovenia



Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi

(three per cent), Spain (five per cent), the Czech Republic, France and Romania (all 16 per cent).

The highest rates of recognition for final decisions were registered in Finland (87 per cent), the Netherlands (52 per cent) and Sweden (49 per cent). The Com-

mission noted that the country of citizenship of applicants and, therefore, their eligibility, differed greatly between member states.

The EU defined asylum applications as meaning requests for international protection including

claims for refugee status or for subsidiary protection status, irrespective of whether the application was lodged on arrival at border or from inside the country and irrespective of whether the person entered the territory legally (say, as a tourist) or illegally.

Immigrants leave for Germany

Eleven immigrants have left Malta for Germany as part of an agreement signed by the two countries.

The nine adults and two children from Somalia and Eritrea, all of whom qualify for international protection, will be reunited with their families, who already reside in Germany.

Their families, along with local authorities, will be supporting them as part of the integration process, which includes 600 hours of German language lessons, followed by 45 lessons in cultural orientation. This will provide them with information on the legal and political systems in Germany as well as its culture and history.

The departure was facilitated with the help of the International Organisation for Migration offices in Germany and Malta. Germany has so far taken in 31 immigrants from Malta.

Trade gap widens slightly

The trade gap widened by €0.6 million in October when compared to the same month last year, according to the National Statistics Office.

There were drops in the value of both imports and exports, to the tune of €48.7 million and €49.3 million respectively.

The visible trade gap narrowed by €186.9 million in the first 10 months of this year, standing at €997.0 million, with a €579.2 million decrease in the value of imports and a €392.2 million drop in the value of exports.

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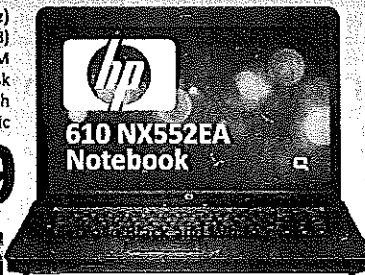
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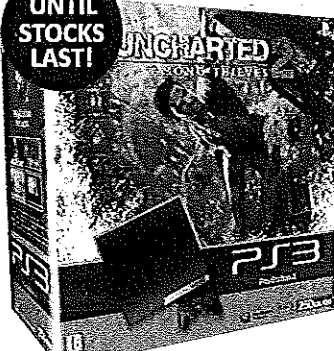
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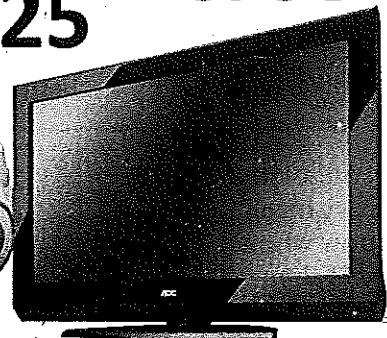
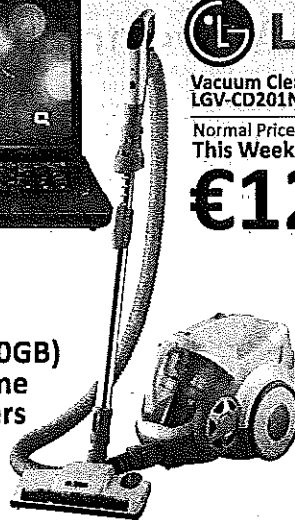
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