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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER
27, Republic Street, Victoria VCT 101, Gozo, Malta.
Tel: 21550305, Fax: 21563389, Email: info@gozobusinesschamber.org

Editorial

The summer season is once more with us and Gozo is getting ready for the influx of Maltese and foreign visitors who usually come to spend some time here, be it for a day or more.

This seasonal increase in the number of visitors is very welcome as it helps the local businesses to make good for the less profitable months of winter-time.

However, as with all other things, this phenomenon can also have its side effects and, if uncontrolled, can damage Gozo's attraction to the visitors as well as negatively affect the environment. With the government being all out to have Gozo as the ecological island, it is important that steps be taken to ensure that our visitors, as well as the Gozitans themselves, enjoy clean air, safe bays and a certain quiet for an enjoyable and relaxed life.

Many times, this is not the case with our capital city, Victoria, mostly due to the large amount of vehicular traffic which passes through. One has to keep in mind that most of this is unavoidable as it is the result of the very large number of persons visiting. However, one expects that, for the safety of all, better traffic management should be the order of the day.

As a start, we would like to see that heavy vehicles should not be allowed to pass through Victoria carrying uncovered rubble or emitting black smoke. Besides being a danger to health, these are dirtying and damaging the streets. Urgent actions should also be taken to better manage the traffic jams forming in Main Gate and Republic Streets.

Parking is another headache for all. Since space is limited and, as the proposed car parks are not yet ready, the Chamber feels that this problem can be mitigated through the cooperation, good management and the use of common sense by the

traffic wardens. It would be much more profitable for Gozo were the traffic wardens to be more customer friendly and be there to encourage the drivers to obey the rules and to help the unwary visitors (Maltese and foreign) with directions and guidance.

While certain streets of our city are pleasing to the eye because of the street furniture and plants provided by the relevant authorities, it is felt that more can be done, especially along the main and peripheral streets. With a little bit of effort from all concerned, Gozo can benefit a lot.

Forthcoming events

- A one-day course on Employment Law is being organised by the Malta Employers' Association at the Hotel Calypso, Marsalforn, on Friday 18 July, 2008.

Bookings and enquiries: 2123 7585 / 2122 2992

- The Gozo-Malta Air Link will be the subject of a presentation by Mr Roy S. Perry during a public meeting to be organised by the Gozo Business Chamber of Tuesday, 1 July, 2008 at the Grand Hotel, Ghajnsielem,

Bookings and enquires: 2155 0305 / 2156 3389

- Crafts and Wine Festival is being held on 16 – 17 August 2008 with the aim of promoting Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village. It is being organised by the Crafts Sector of the Gozo Business Chamber in collaboration with Gharb Local Council and Marsovin Ltd.

Enquires: 2155 0305 / 2156 0556 / 9947 7866

Malta Enterprise Incentives for Industry Seminar

The various incentives for industry administered by Malta Enterprise were discussed during an information seminar organised by Malta Enterprise in collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo and the Gozo Business Chamber.

The schemes being offered by Malta Enterprise are mainly open to the manufacturing industries that are eligible for assistance as per current legislation under the Business Promotion Act or the Malta Enterprise Act and other incentives under the Income Tax Act.

The seminar was addressed by the Hon Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, Mr Joe Grech, President of the Gozo Business Chamber, as well as by Mr Dennis Vella, Mr Joe Azzopardi and Mr Pierre Theuma from Malta Enterprise.

Minister Debono stressed the need for entrepreneurs and businesspersons to learn more on help offered by the government through Malta Enterprise as this will help industry in Gozo. She said that part of these incentives are financed by the E.U.

The President of the Gozo Business Chamber asked about what is keeping foreign direct investment away from Gozo and what is the reason that Gozo's economic development is slower than that of Malta. He also referred to the fact that less jobs are being created in Gozo and asked why the

number of jobs at the Xewkija industrial estate is almost at the same level as that of April 2005.

This, he said, is mostly due to Gozo's small size and its double insularity. He suggested that there should be continuous upgrading of incentives to industry in Gozo. He continued that, whenever direct attention to Gozo was forthcoming, both with regards to infrastructure and to incentives, Gozo's socio-economic development reacted positively and more jobs were created.

The Malta Enterprise representatives gave details about Incentives for companies to set-up in Gozo; Fiscal incentives; Business Promotion Act, Malta Enterprise Act and Income Tax Act; and Business Support and Innovation. They also answered questions put to them by those attending the seminar.



MCESD Gozo Regional Committee

The Gozo Business Chamber, together with the other relevant stakeholders is having regular talks with Hon. Dr. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary, on the setting up of an MCESD Gozo Regional Committee. Several meetings have already been held with the latest one being also addressed by the MCESD Chairman Mr Sonny Portelli.

The Chamber had always been pushing the idea that Gozo should be represented on the MCESD as no one better than a Gozitan can understand the specific problems relating to Gozo. Although the setting up of the MCESD Gozo Regional Committee may not exactly fulfil the Chamber's wishes, we feel that this is a step in the right direction and augurs well for Gozo.

Your door to a world of financial investments

We make investments throughout lives; we invest time and money in our families, education, job, business and so on. In today's highly competitive business environment, the cliché of *not putting all our eggs in one basket*, takes on greater significance. Besides investing in our business or property, we must also consider financial products as investment options which have the added benefit of being highly liquid.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

As the range of investment products becomes more extensive, and financial markets more global, choosing the right mix of investments becomes increasingly complex. Formal Financial Planning can assist in the mitigation of losses and boost considerably the possibilities of gains/appreciation of financial assets in a portfolio.

Financial Planning is an integrated, holistic approach to analysing financial needs and recommending solutions. It facilitates the journey between two points by adopting a structured approach to an otherwise uncertain scenario.

SELECTING A FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Financial Planning has today become a profession in its own right. A large number of financial advisors are practising the discipline both globally and within the local community. The selection of the appropriate advisor is almost as important as the process itself. It is an important first step that ensures that your portfolio is structured and managed to ensure you meet your objectives. While membership to associations and academic qualifications are important, appropriate licensing or authorisation by a competent regulatory authority is fundamental.

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Opportunity for Craft Entrepreneurs

The Gozo Business Chamber (GBC) shall be managing the project Empowering Gozitan Entrepreneurs (EGE) within the context of the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme.

This was confirmed at a contract Award ceremony held at St James Cavalier, Valletta, organised by the European Union Programmes Agency.

The founding objective of the Gozo Business Chamber is that of improving business opportunities for its members by addressing shortcomings that are linked to the issue of Gozo's regional distinctiveness and double insularity. Furthermore, the GBC is aware of the increasingly competitive business environment and the European objective of increasing entrepreneurial skills particularly among Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The underlying rationale of this project is to enable six members of the GBC craft entrepreneurs to conduct a two-week training programme with a leading vocational training institution in Italy. These six entrepreneurs shall benefit from extensive training that will enhance their entrepreneurial skills and enable them to retain their competitiveness in an increasingly competitive business scenario. Furthermore, these entrepreneurs shall have the possibility of meeting and exchanging ideas with fellow Italian craftsmen.

It is envisaged that the training experience in Italy shall be conducted between February and April 2009.

More information can be obtained by contacting Mr. Joseph G. Grech on 21550305/21563389 or by email on info@gozobusinesschamber.org

ETC / GBC Seminar on Financial Help to Enterprises

The Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) has launched a training aid framework that will extend the financial assistance already being given to a larger number of enterprises.

The announcement was made during a seminar for Gozitan businessmen organised by the Gozo Business Chamber (GBC) in collaboration with the ETC at the Arka Hall in Ġhajnsielem.

The seminar gave businessmen the opportunity to learn more about schemes and services offered by ETC; they were given details regarding this new scheme by Joseph Cutajar, senior manager of the ETC's Training Services Division.

Mr Cutajar said the framework is intended to promote access to training of persons actively participating in the labour market, increase and/or improve employees' skills, and enable undertakings to become more competitive through the adaptation of skills and knowledge.

This seven-year programme has a budget of €13 million and will be partially financed under the European Union's Structural Funds Programme for Malta.

Other ETC officials explained in detail the schemes and services offered by the corporation in its primary task of meeting the demands of the local labour market through increased outreach with employers and skill development of job-seekers.

Raphael Scerri, senior manager at the ETC's employment services division, gave an overview of ETC services and five schemes currently available. Services at ETC offices in Malta and Gozo include vacancy profiling, job brokerage, job centre facilities, Website facilities, and the EURES Malta team that advises employers and job-seekers on recruitment and employment possibilities in Europe.

Mr Scerri focused on the five employment schemes



covering Job Experience, Work Start, Private Sector Placement, Bridging the Gap and Gozo Employment, all intended to help job-seekers find employment.

The Gozo Employment Aid Scheme was specifically designed to encourage job creation in Gozo, especially for the underprivileged or those with special needs.

Through this scheme, Gozitan employers, who employ and train existing or new employees, become eligible for training grants.

Since this scheme was launched by ETC and Malta Enterprise as a Budget measure in 2007, 26 Gozitan enterprises have employed 89 people. Under this scheme, employers will receive relative subsidies amounting to about €420,000, representing half the wage costs for the first 12 months of employment, going up to 60 per cent of wage costs, excluding National Insurance contributions, in the case of persons with disability.

Gozo Minister Giovanna Debono, who also addressed the seminar, praised the initiative taken by the GBC and ETC as well as the interest shown by all participants.

Ms Debono commented on the fruitful co-operation which has developed between the Ministry and the Chamber since it was set up. In fact, the Gozo Employment Aid Scheme was launched after discussions with GBC representatives.

The minister urged all Gozitan entrepreneurs to avail themselves of the opportunities being presented and to use ETC's services in Gozo for the benefit of their enterprises as well as that of those seeking employment or wanting to change their jobs. This will eventually benefit the island's economy, she said.



Meeting with Hon Minister for Gozo

The President and the CEO of the Gozo Business Chamber together with the President and Secretary of the Gozo Tourism Association have recently had a meeting with the Minister for Gozo Hon. Giovanna Debono.

During the meeting, the Minister said that important decisions in the interest of the tourism industry as well as the business community on the island of Gozo taken by Government were influenced by pro-active suggestions coming from both organisations.

The Minister referred to the successful results obtained through the publication of Let's Gozo magazine, an initiative taken by the GTA with the support of the then Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry for Gozo to promote Gozo within the domestic market. This resulted in considerable increases of visitors to Gozo during the lean and shoulder months.



Both the tourism and business sectors were positively effected. However, the Minister said, entrepreneurs on the island have to face particular challenges mainly because of Gozo's double insularity.

The Minister also presented financial assistance to both organisations as a tangible sign of support for the work being carried out.

Gozo 1234

Various members of the Gozo Business Chamber participated in Gozo 1234 by putting up stalls in St. Francis Square during the four-day event. These were all from the crafts sector and their products consisted of artwork, traditional food and drinks, woodwork and parquet, home décor and other.

Other members in the property sector also participated by having different properties around Gozo open to the public. The properties ranged from villas to apartments, and from country houses to town houses of character.

Visit by the Hon. Prime Minister to one of the stalls run by members of the Gozo Business Chamber.



Gozo as an Ecological Island

by Dr. Julian Vassallo
Head
European Parliament Valletta Office

Citizens and members of Civil Society and interested groups met on June 5th, 2008 at Marsalforn, Gozo for a European Parliament Citizen's Forum addressed by MEP Gisela Kallenbach on "Gozo as an Ecological Island".

This is a round-up of the session that draws on the numerous contributions from the floor that characterized the forum:

There is no agreed definition of an "Ecological Island" but those present suggested that it involved, in no particular order, the following elements:

1. Renewable Energy sources.
2. Protection of Water resources including its re-use and the efficient capture of rainwater.
3. Soft Tourism, in terms of limited numbers per km², limited environmental impact, and labour intensive tourist services.
4. Organic Farming.
5. Promotion of Traditional Forms of Employment in agriculture, fisheries etc.
6. Promotion of an Island's Culture and Language.
7. Limiting pollution to the minimum to create an environment which is and which feels healthy.
8. Education of the values that underpin and Ecological Society.
9. Sustainable and low polluting systems of transportation.
10. Conservation of the island's natural habitat and the Biodiversity.
11. Exploitation and refinement of local gastronomy.
12. A general approach geared to creating employment and wealth on the Island.

It was considered that the establishment of an Ecological Island was less one of developing something new than fixing and existing situation.

Citizens also raised, in no particular order, the following issues as challenges to the prospect of turning Gozo into an Ecological Island:

1. The growing tendency to build on virgin land rather than to renovate and use existing properties. Need to financially incentivise re-use of old property.
2. Urban Planning decisions are often inconsistent with the concept of an Ecological Island.
3. A relatively high population density of 400 p/km².
4. Problems to locate the often ugly infrastructure required for renewable energy (wind farms etc).
5. Turning to Organic Farming might require the whole island going organic. Is this feasible and would local farmers agree. Government Guidance is necessary.
6. Present farming at present relies heavily on the water table that is becoming more saline. What are the alternatives other than energy-inefficient desalination? Is the up-grading of the new water treatment plants a solution?
7. Does and Ecological Island create enough employment?
8. Existing tree-pruning practices must be revised.
9. Better use of EU funds including for transportation and the restoration and protection of places of interest.
10. Lack of understanding of light pollution.

Workers' Day National Conference

On the occasion of May 1, 2008, a national conference was organised by the Nationalist Party. The Gozo Business Chamber was represented by its President, Mr. Joe Grech who was one of the speakers, along with representatives of other constituted bodies and unions, to address the gathering.

Mr. Grech based his speech on human rights, the rights of Trade Unions and International Solidarity, relating all this to job opportunities for the worker in Gozo.

Referring to the world becoming like a global village, Mr. Grech said that world economy is affecting the economical growth of the island of Gozo. Together with joining the EU, new technology and new markets have resulted in a change in the Gozo commerce. He said that while 'Business Europe' has forecasted that unemployment in Malta will decrease, in Gozo things are different. Reference was also made that, due to lack of job mobility, the wages in Gozo stand at around 70% those of Malta.

With regards to investment in Gozo, President Grech said that the largest employer is the retail/wholesale sector which employs about 25% of the 4768 workforce. The agricultural and Fisheries sector employs 21% while the services sector employs 18%, tourism 17%, construction 10% and manufacturing 9%. It should be noted that almost all investment is coming from the Gozitan entrepreneur, who is endowed with a strong will, determination and a busy character mostly resulting from having to face the problems caused by double insularity.

The Gozo Business Chamber believes that Gozo has great potential for development and investment if it is presented as a distinct destination. Gozo's strengths include the environment, history, hospitality, the host of cultural, musical and theatrical activities, as

well as the typical food which together can be Gozo's Brand.

The Chamber also believes that there are great opportunities for an increase in the tourist industry, in agriculture, crafts, maritime activities, processing and manufacturing of the island's typical food and beverages. This can succeed if more incentives are created to make good for the constraints facing Gozo like the extra transport costs and administrative bottlenecks due to double insularity.

Thanks to the incentives through the Industrial Development Act (1988), the Business Promotion Act (2000) and the recent incentive schemes for Gozo by Malta Enterprise and the Employment and Training Corporation, more jobs were created in Gozo and several Gozitan entrepreneurs have benefited.

The creation of more jobs in Gozo needs that the entrepreneur be encouraged through special schemes. The Chamber feels that the refund of costs involved with the transport of manufactured and agricultural goods should continue and that separate statistics for Gozo be kept.

To conclude, President Joe Grech made several suggestions for the creation of a new infrastructure for Gozo. These included a "permit-free" industrial park, a business incubation centre for ICT, the enlargement of Mgarr Harbour to create space for new yachts and cruise liners berthing, and an air-strip for fixed-wing planes to help in accessibility to the island.



INSULEUR Executive Training Programme

The first Executive Training of INSULEUR (Network of the Island Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the EU) was held at the University Gozo Centre on 12 and 13 June 2008. It was organised by INSULEUR in collaboration with the Gozo Business Chamber and the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta.

The objective of the Executive Training Programme was to help participants to familiarise themselves with issues of insular developments and to support their organisations to achieve a double mission, namely,

1. to take an active part in the European Union and National Policy Plans for the development of the insular areas of the EU and;
2. to contribute to the development of the insular regions under their jurisdiction, to take an active part in the realization of projects of insular developments and to place at the disposal of their members the services of information and support. In addition, the trained persons will develop personal relations and contacts which will enable them to jointly exploit future plans of co-operation.

All topics discussed were related to how the islands are affected and dealt with Sustainable Development; Economic Vulnerability; Sustainable Tourism; Environment and Climate Change; Alternative Energy Sources; Competitiveness; Indices; and a Simulation Exercise on How to Draft a Proposal for Community Programme.

The seminar was inaugurated by the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo. Introductory speeches were delivered by Mr George Asonitis, from the Technical Committee of INSULEUR, Professor Lino Briguglio, Director of the Islands and Small States Institute and Mr Joe Grech, President of the Gozo Business Chamber.

Hon. Giovanna Debono, welcomed all the participants whilst expressing her appreciation of the endeavours of the organisers as well as for the confidence shown in the island of Gozo by the Board of Directors of INSULEUR. Minister

Debono described briefly some of the unique characteristics and the charms of the island of Gozo and how Government has continuously been addressing Gozo's regional needs. This will be much more evidenced by the holistic approach in treating all policies regarding Gozo within the eco-Gozo vision, which Government has declared to be its vision for the island. This would necessitate various studies in various sectors amongst which alternative energy as well as water and agriculture. Minister Debono said that certain projects, such as the Waste Water Treatment Plant as well as the building of a Waste Transfer Station, can be described as being some of the initial steps taken in this direction.

Mr Joe Grech said the Island regions do appreciate and welcome the fact that the European Regional Development Fund Cohesion Fund 2007 2013 is meant to cover and offset the structural handicaps, which are accelerating the under-performance of the Islands' economy. He proposed that the network of Chambers of Commerce in small EU islands should create a vision, a strategic plan whereby contacts will be established with each and every structure so that, instead of derogations and temporary measures, the EU Commission will provide permanent solutions that address the Islands' permanent structural handicaps.



now you're talking