

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER
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SA MAISON CARGO FERRY SERVICE

Once again, the Sa Maison Cargo Ferry Service is worrying Gozo hauliers.

The Gozo Business Chamber has drawn the attention of the authorities many times over and has recently held another meeting to discuss further.

It is important to point out that this service is very important and should be looked upon as the lifeline for Gozo. One has also to keep in mind that any increase in the expense incurred by the hauliers will later on reflect itself on the Gozitan consumer.

The latest information we have is that the Sa Maison berth will now be transferred to the Grand Harbour to a berth which has not yet been decided upon. This begs the question of whether there will be an increase in the expenses to be borne by the individual hauliers and also by Gozo Channel or whichever company may be operating the service. Although we have been “assured” that a solution will be found so that the Gozitan hauliers will not have to incur further expenses, we still have our doubts.

The cargo ferry service is a must for Gozo as this will separate cargo from the passenger ferry service. As things stand, with Gozo Channel Co. Ltd. operating with three vessels, one can say that the company is performing miracles to provide the inter-island service. However, one has to think about the difficulties faced by the hauliers, industrialists and others when it comes to carry normal and hazardous goods.



It is not the first time that Gozo industries and other public entities were short of precious fuel needed for their running. Needless to say, such cargo is classified as “hazardous goods” and, hence, cannot be transported along with passengers. This situation becomes more serious whenever one of the Gozo Channel boats is taken in for maintenance, leaving only two boats to carry out all the service needs.

Making use of the Sa Maison cargo service is also important as it helps to have the large lorries / trailers crossing the Channel by sea rather than crossing the whole of Malta overland to Cirkewwa before crossing over to Gozo. One has to realise that such heavy vehicles cause traffic jams on the roads (especially since most of the roads are single carriage) and are also potentially dangerous if they are carrying hazardous goods.

Trade Delegation to the Gulf Region

The Gozo Business Chamber was represented by President Joe Grech in a Business Delegation to the Gulf Region, which included a visit to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Abu Dhabi from 8th to 15th April, 2010.

Prior to the visit, the President had the opportunity to meet on a one to one basis with Chamber members interested to have contacts with business partners in the Gulf Region. The information collected proved beneficial especially during the time the President had meetings with the various business representatives from the Gulf countries.

This was the first time that the Chamber was represented in a delegation to the Gulf Region and, from feedback received, there are good trade prospects.



According to President Grech, it is expected that a trade delegation from Qatar will visit Malta and Gozo in the near future.

MEUSAC / MCESD Gozo Regional Office

The Regional Office of the MEUSAC / MCESD Gozo Regional Committee has been officially inaugurated by the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, during a short ceremony held in Victoria. Also present for the inauguration were the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Giovanna Debono; the MCESD Chairman, Mr Sonny Portelli; and the Head of MEUSAC, Dr. Vanni Xuereb.

The scope of the Gozo Office is to make things easier for SMEs and NGOs as well as for self employed to find help in applying for EU funds; to strengthen dialogue and discussion in the area of development for Gozo; as well as to strengthen the concept of Gozo as an island region.

The inauguration of the GRC office was preceded by a Business Breakfast during which the main speakers were the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary, and Mr Alan Camilleri, Executive Chairman of Malta Enterprise.



The topic of the Business Breakfast was: Making the most of EU Membership for SMEs in Gozo. Dr. Said said that in the coming months tenders will be issued for various proposals approved from EU funds for Malta and Gozo. He encouraged the Gozitan entities to start preparing themselves and plan their projects and submit them at the right time.

Reference was made to the Xewkija Industrial Zone which is one area to benefit from the EU funds. Besides, Dr. Said said, a micro-enterprise park is in the process of being built in Xewkija too.

Dr. Said also announced that the government will soon be introducing the Gozo Business Award as a sign of appreciation to those Gozitan enterprises which do their utmost to make use of schemes funded by EU in the best possible way.

Gozo Action Group (LAG)

After a call for applications, the Gozo Action Group (LAG) of which the GBC is a member, has recruited a manager to implement the Local Development Strategy and manage the entire operations of the same Gozo Action Group that has been set up to manage 'LEADER' under the Rural Development Programme for Malta (2007-2013).

Seven persons applied for the job and were interviewed by an interviewing board in the presence of the EU Funds Officer from the Managing Authority within the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

The selected applicant is Ms. Katya Scicluna who is expected to take up the position soon.

Presentation to the Chamber



At a short ceremony held at the Gozo Business Chamber, Mr Ryan Mercieca has presented a copy of his dissertation which he made in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Geography.

Mr Mercieca's research was to answer the question "Do Economic Benefits Outweigh Health and Environment Costs in the Development of a new Airport?" and to gauge the "People's perception of a possible airport in Gozo".

The study looked at the possibility of an airport development on the island of Gozo and its aim was to establish an area of impact, establish noise levels generated and assess perceived attitudes towards the development of an airport.

Among the conclusions of the study one notes that "both the interviewed authorities and the sample of the population are in favour of another air link" between Gozo and Malta. Also, it was found out that the people's perception is significantly influenced according to their proximity to the proposed area and that, while the older generation is against the possible development and also against a referendum, the younger generation is more open to new ideas and possibilities.

EU legislative proposals related to Maternity and Paternity Leave

The possible introduction of EU legislative proposals related to paternity leave including the extension of maternity leave and the introduction of paternal leave is one of the topics which concerns the business community. As with everything else, the proposed changes come at a cost. The Malta Business Bureau (MBB) had undertaken the task of producing a report about “The Estimation of the Costs to the Maltese Economy of Implementing EU Legislative Proposals related to Maternity and Paternity Leave”.

According to the MBB report “The economic benefits of these legislative changes on the Maltese economy can be considered to be relatively marginal, given that there is already a significant extent of maternity leave being granted, while the costs tend to

increase per week of additional parental leave granted”. It is also pointed out that while benefits can only be estimated “with a very high degree of uncertainty”, the direct costs in terms of output “can be quantified statistically”.

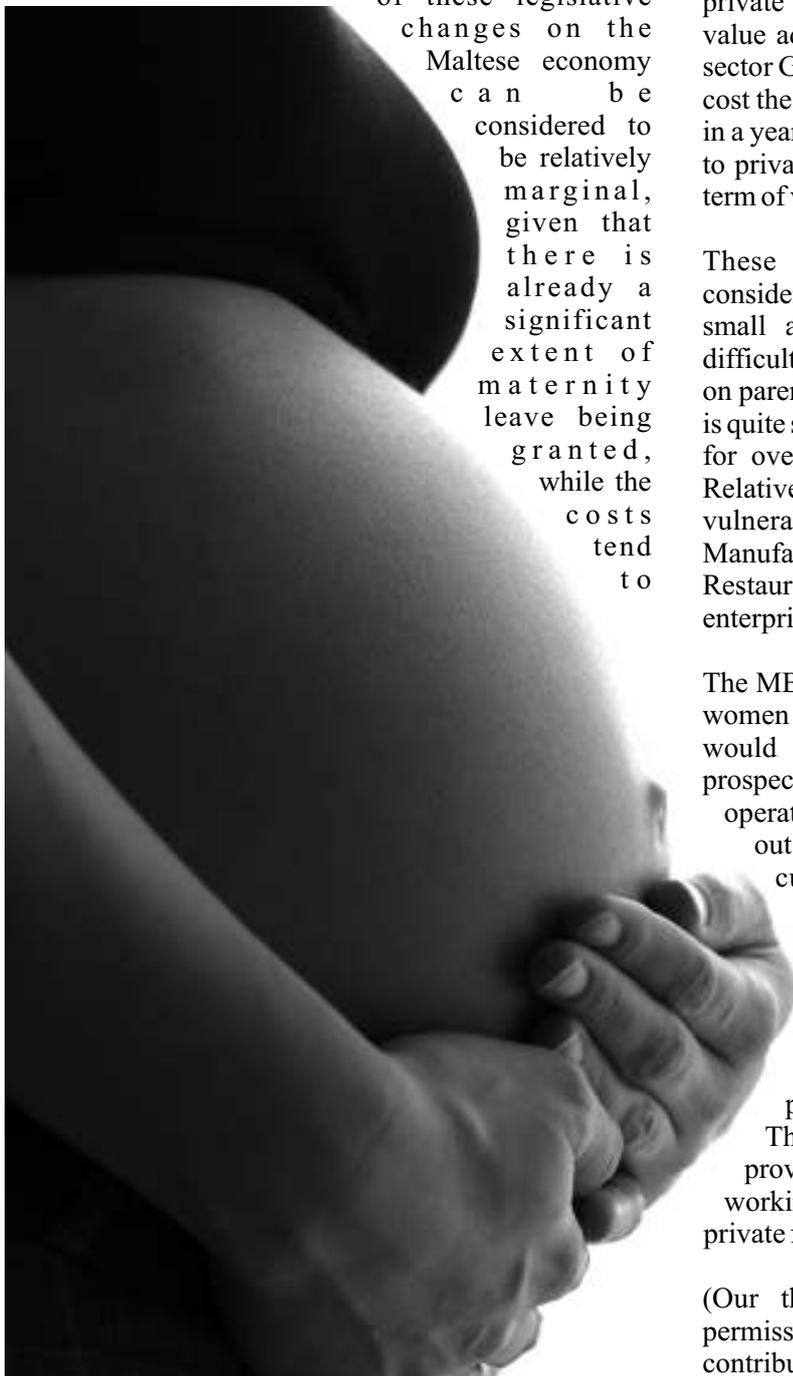
The EU legislative proposals suggest increasing the maternity leave from the current statutory 14 weeks to 20 weeks and the introduction of two weeks paternity leave. The report states that the former will “potentially cost the economy €7.5 million worth of value added in a year, equivalent to 0.18% of GDP” with the cost to private business amounting to “€5.3 million worth of value added in a year, equivalent to 0.14% of private sector GDP. On the other hand, the latter is estimated to cost the economy “€4.8 million in terms of value added in a year, equivalent to 0.12% of GDP, of which the cost to private business would be €3.7 million in a year in term of value added, equivalent to 0.1% of GDP”.

These costs will be relevant especially when considering that the majority of enterprises belong to the small and micro category and will have to face difficulties to substitute for absent workers who will be on parental leave. The role played by these enterprises is quite significant when one considers that they account for over 70% of employment in the private sector. Relatively large firms will also be affected as they are vulnerable to competitiveness pressures. Also, Manufacturing, Wholesale and Retail and Hotels and Restaurants sectors depend heavily on small and micro enterprises and on female employees.

The MBB's report considers that the proposals “render women less competitive in the market-place for jobs and would overall lead to deteriorating employment prospects for everyone by increasing the costs of operation to business”. Another serious risk pointed out by the report is the wage discrepancies that currently exist between male and female employees which may widen as employers will look at the potentially increased burden of employing a woman.

The report finally makes proposals for alternative policy approaches which can positively affect work, family and private life. These include increasing nursery and day-care provision; introducing incentives to promote home working practices; and incentives to encourage private firms to provide better family friendly measures.

(Our thanks to the Malta Business Bureau for permission to use the report as the basis for this contribution).



Meeting with the Hon. Dr. Jason Azzopardi

The Council of the Gozo Business Chamber has recently held a meeting with the Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Land, the Hon. Dr. Jason Azzopardi LL.D., M.A., M.P., at the Chamber's office.

Among the topics discussed were Gozo's representation on the Malta Enterprise Board; Parking in Victoria; Better use of abandoned land; GBC premises; SMEs park; Sa Maison Cargo Service; and the ME and ETC Schemes. Other difficulties specific to Gozitan businessmen were also mentioned and various suggestions were put forward to try to find a way out to mitigate the extra problems that Gozitan businessmen meet with.



EESC Conference in Gozo

The European Economic and Social Committee, Various Interests Group III "SMEs, Crafts and Professions" category has held a conference in Gozo in May to discuss the topic "Delivering SME policies in remote areas of the EU: from good practices to more effective development models".

Infrastructure, e-services for all, access to credit and business networking, energy efficiency and sustainable development, SMEs, crafts, professional qualifications and quality of services of general interest were some of the interesting topics discussed.

According to the Spokesperson of the SMEs, Crafts and Professions Category "the conference objectives were successfully achieved and should be followed up in the priorities of the EESC SMEs, Crafts and Professions category in the autumn".

The conference was organised by the EESC together with the GRTU and the cooperation of the Gozo Business Chamber and the collaboration of the Ministry for Gozo and the Parliamentary Secretariat for

Consumers, Fair Competition, Local Councils and Public Dialogue. The Chamber's President, Mr Joe Grech, and Council Member, Joe Borg, made presentations and formed part of a Round Table.

The conference was opened by the Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Dr. Chris Said, and closed by the Minister for Gozo, the Hon. Giovanna Debono. Other speakers included Mr Paul Abela, GRTU President, Mr Vince Farrugia, GRTU Director General, as well as Mr Michael Cohen and Prof. Gordon Cordina. Ms. Sylvia Gauci, member of EESC, was the moderator.





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GBC Sponsors the Gozo Branch of the English-Speaking Union of Malta

On Sunday, 30 May, 2010, the Gozo Branch of the English-Speaking Union of Malta was launched during an official ceremony held at the Exhibition Hall of the Ministry for Gozo.

The English-Speaking Union (ESU) is a worldwide charitable organisation which exists to promote the use of English at all levels.

The Gozo Branch is sponsored by the Gozo Business Chamber, with the active support of the Ministry for Gozo, the Gozo College, BOV and the Gozo Centre for Art and Crafts. The Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, is the Patron.

Over 50 members from 12 different countries together with members from Malta and Gozo, attended the launch ceremony which was held under the patronage of the Hon. Minister for Gozo.

The Lord Watson of Richmond, emeritus chairman of the English-Speaking Union International Council, and the Minister for Gozo witnessed the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the ESU Malta and Gozo.

The overseas guests represented seven branches from England and Scotland as well as from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Latvia, New Zealand, Romania, Tajikistan and the US.



The signing of the memorandum was followed by the reading of the winning essays of a competition for students in three categories: upper Primary School and Form 1; Forms 2 & 3; and Forms 5 & 6. Ms Silvana Sultana then led students in a public speaking presentation about ECO Gozo.

After lunch, the visitors had the opportunity of attending for a choral concert by the Schola Cantorum Jubilate Choir at Xaghra Basilica and a tour of Ggantija Temples.

Members of the business community in Gozo will soon have the opportunity of taking part in courses in English for Business to be held by the ESU Gozo Branch in Gozo.

The Malta Trade Fair 2010

Fifteen members from the Gozo Business Chamber are taking part in the Malta Trade Fair 2010 utilising the space within the Gozo pavilion.

This was made possible through the efforts of the Hon. Giovanna Debono, Minister for Gozo, who once again offered the space to the Chamber's members.

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Positioning Proposal

On the initiative of Dr. Michael Refalo, a former Cabinet Minister who also served as Malta's High Commissioner in the UK, a document "Creating the Malta Story" was commissioned in order to position our country as a winning destination for both business and tourism.

The idea stemmed from Dr. Refalo's efforts of "finding ways of making up for the British public's lack of knowledge about Malta", a concern which worried him during his term as Malta's High Commissioner in the UK.

The Gozo Business Chamber was privileged to be chosen as one of the contributing organisations to help in this project.

The Chamber's participation consisted in having its representative on the organising committee and also by taking part in a survey as well as in a workshop and interviews carried out by The Communications Group plc. (TCG) who were entrusted with the production of the document.

The presentation of the document, which was attended by all stakeholders, stressed that Malta must be presented as a brand. It also pointed out that Malta's human resources should be united in order to promote the country's image. Also, information about Malta's competitor markets should be treated as valuable. The report further stated that the "great and good" of Malta's business and tourism community should come together as an influential group of international ambassadors to champion Malta.

Other recommendations made in the report include the setting up of an organisation "Malta First" that would project Malta's leading employers from all sectors and be responsible for key messages and guardianship of the "Malta Story" as well as the creation of a dynamic website.

The report also deals with Malta's competitiveness as a tourist destination and evaluates its strengths and what needs to be improved. It says that Malta's unique position at the most southerly point of Europe and within the secure governance of the EU make it the perfect gateway to Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Apart from the Gozo Business Chamber, the other sponsors of the document were the Institute of Financial Services Malta, the Lottery and Gaming Authority, Finance Malta, Smartcity Malta, the Federation of Estate Agents Malta, Malta Enterprise, The Malta Stock Exchange, Visit Malta, the Rent-a-Car Association, Air Malta, Malta International Airport, the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association and the Valletta Waterfront.

Insuleur Voice

Insuleur Voice is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce of the European Union. It can be accessed on <http://www.insuleur.net/eng/newsletter.html>

Consultative Council for Enterprise

A consultative council for enterprise has been set up to act as a dialogue forum between the administration, the regulatory authorities, and the business sector representatives.

The intention of Government is that this Council ensures effective cooperation between constituted bodies and government authorities. The Council is intended to act as a platform through which information on the current issues and challenges faced by enterprises could be brought to the authorities and discussed, whereas the Government would have the role of making available the necessary tools to help enterprises address such challenges.

The Gozo Business Chamber, along with the other constituted bodies, had been invited to form part of the consultative body and the first meeting took place in the beginning of June, 2010. The meeting was also attended by members forming the Heritage Expert Group, the Arts Expert Group and the Media Expert Group.

The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, Mr Alfred Camilleri, opened the meeting and explained the aims and working schedule prepared by the working committee. It was also addressed by Minister Tonio Fenech and Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Mario De Marco before a presentation was made by the Creative Economy Working Group. This was followed by a discussion.

European SME Week 2010

European SME Week 2010 was marked in Malta, as well as in the other EU Member State, by the holding of various activities designed to promote and support entrepreneurship.

One such activity for which representatives from the Gozo Business Chamber attended, was a Business Breakfast with the theme "Training Business Champions" focusing on the direct incentives aimed at small and medium sized businesses.

Minister Tonio Fenech said that the vast majority of business in Malta and Gozo fell within the SME category and explained how Government has identified those measures that specifically targeted small businesses. The Minister mentioned the 40% tax credit to support new investment and creation of jobs as well as the allocation of €37 million in EU funding towards areas that stimulate growth.

Various policies and reforms are being implemented along with renewed and sustained dialogue with the parties involved. This was stated by the Parliamentary Secretary Jason Azzopardi. He mentioned the establishment of the MicroInvest scheme; the work going on for the creation of a new Act for Small Business; and the setting up of an Enterprise Consultative Council.

Malta Enterprise will be expanding its support services through the setting up of the Business Support Centre which is aimed to provide a one-stop-shop where entrepreneurs can set up their venture without having to run from one government entity to another. The Executive Chairman of Malta Enterprise, Alan Camilleri, also said that the corporation is in the process of absorbing the Government Services Unit in order to become the single contact point for business.

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10th Insuleur Forum – Mallorca, Spain

The 10th Insuleur Forum was held in Mallorca, Spain between the 10th and 12th June 2010 to debate the subject “For a Europe of Green Islands: Businesses and Sustainable Development”.

Two of the speakers were from Malta – Mr. Omar Cutajar, who is a permanent delegate from Malta Business Bureau in Brussels who delivered a speech about “Sustainable Development: a Maltese Perspective” and Mr. Anton Borg, who was representing the Minister for Gozo, who spoke about Gozo as an Eco Island and the policies being adopted by the Gozo Ministry to turn Gozo into an ecological island.

The Gozo Business Chamber participated in this forum through the presence of Mr. Joe Grech, President and Mr. Anthony Bezzina, Treasurer.

The theme of the forum was built on the following considerations:

“Islands have always evoked the image of a paradise, but today their green landscapes and the blue sea surrounding them are increasingly threatened. In their search to keep up a good standard of living for insular populations and to compete in a complex European and world economy, island economies often undergo sacrifices in their ecosystems, which are one of their best assets. The shortage of resources has significant repercussions for island economies.

Right now the islands are also facing up to the challenge of sustainable development. What might the mode of sustainability adapted to an island be? What kind of sustainable development should be got under way in a small insular area. What is the role of island companies in this process? What are the limitations and difficulties that an insular company has to face on the island during this process? These were some of the questions tackled during the debate.

Sustainable development is a model which seeks to maintain the objective of growth, reconcile economic progress and social development and the preservation of the environment, considering this to be a legacy for passing down to future generations.

The sustainable strategies of insular areas must take into account that there are limits to growth through the



insular situation.

More than just a concept, sustainable development has in fact become a new structure of business management integrating both strategic decisions and operative management. Economic profitability, social balance and environmental responsibility are no longer seen as opposing elements. Most companies consider sustainability as an opportunity to cut down operating costs, setting them apart from competitors, increasing staff's motivation and promoting loyalty in a clientele increasingly sensitive to environmental and ethical arguments.”

The last session of the Forum was held in Majorca's Environmental Technologies Park. This park is the waste separation and recycling centre of the island. After having been offered a dinner in the Park, the attendees had the opportunity to be driven around the park to see the whole waste separation and recycling processes.

During their stay in Mallorca the representatives of the Gozo Business Chamber also attended a meeting of the Observatory in Tourism in the European Islands. A representative from the Chamber of Commerce of Bornholm (Denmark) gave a detailed description of how they had a vision, that they succeeded in materializing, by turning this island in the Baltic sea into a “Bright Green Island” aimed at establishing the island as a global example for the use of clean technologies and renewable energies.

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