



## THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER

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### PR GBC08/2023

**Date:** 22/12/2023

#### **Press Release: The new EU Commission Regulation on De Minimis Aid**

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The Gozo Business Chamber welcomes with satisfaction the introduction of the new EU Commission 'De Minimis' Regulation which has increased the threshold for 'De Minimis' aid from € 200,000 to € 300,000 over a period of three years. 'De Minimis' Aid refers to small amounts of aid to companies in the EU within a predetermined threshold which do not count as State Aid, and are therefore exempt from being notified to the European Commission. It also notes with satisfaction the increase in the threshold for De Minimis Aid for Services of General Economic Interest from € 500,000 to € 750,000. Services of General Economic Interest are those services which are intended to promote social and territorial cohesion within the European Union.

During the INSULEUR (the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union) General Assembly held in Gozo on the 24 October 2019, the Chamber had put forward a proposal for revisions to the 'De Minimis' State Aid Framework to better target islands' needs. The Chamber has contributed consistently throughout these discussions, both at a national level, and at an EU level through INSULEUR, where it has advocated consistently for an increased threshold to better assist businesses on islands. This is because though aid is given under this framework to better target the difficulties faced by enterprises on islands, such as for example in the area of transport, this eventually precludes them from applying for other forms of aid given at a national level under this framework. Consequently, it is more difficult for enterprises on islands such as Gozo to reach the level of competitiveness of other enterprises based on the main land or on the main island, such as in the case of the Maltese archipelago. In its representation (see [link](#)) INSULEUR had called for an increased threshold for 'De Minimis' aid, and for an increased flexibility when it comes to island territories.

Though the new revised 'De Minimis' framework does not specifically tackle islands, the increased threshold increases the possibility for assistance to be provided to enterprises based on islands. It also includes in the preamble, a reference to the limited effect of enterprises based in island regions on cross border trade, and therefore calls for such considerations to be made when considering whether a measure is distorting competition.

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**Data:** 22/12/2023

## **Stqarrija għall-Istampa: Ir-Regolament il-Ġdid tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea dwar I-Għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’**

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Il-Kamra tan-Negożju għal Ghawdex tinnota b'sodisfazzjoni l-introduzzjoni tar-Regolament il-ġdid tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea dwar I-għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’, li żiedet il-limitu li jista’ jingħata minn € 200,000 għal € 300,000 fuq medda ta’ tlett snin. L-ghajnejna ‘De Minimis’ tirreferi għal ammonti żgħar ta’ għajjnuna sa limitu stabbilit, li ma jiġux ikkunsidrat bħala għajjnuna statali, u għalhekk jiġu eżentati milli jiġu nnotifikati lill-Kummissjoni Ewropea. Il-Kamra tinnota wkoll b'sodisfazzjon, iż-żieda fil-limitu stabbilit għall-għajjnuna ‘De minimis’ mogħtija lil intrapriżi li jipprovd Servizzi ta’ Interess Ekonomiku Ĝenerali minn € 500,000 għal € 750,000. Servizzi ta’ Interess Ekonomiku Ĝenerali huma servizzi li l-iskop prinċipali tagħihhom huma li jippromwovu il-koeżjoni soċjali u territorjali fl-Unjoni Ewropea.

Matul I-Assemblea Ĝenerali tal-INSULEUR (l-għaqda li tirrapreżenta il-Kmamar tal-Kummerċ u l-Industrija tal-gżejjer fl-Unjoni Ewropea) li kienet saret f'Għawdex fl-24 ta’ Ottubru 2019, il-Kamra kienet ippreżzentat proposta għar-reviżjoni tar-regolamenti tal-għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’ biex din tkun tista’ tgħin b'mod aħjar il-bżonnijiet tal-intrapriżi li jinsabu fil-gżejjer. Il-Kamra kkontribwixxiet b'mod sinifikattiv fid-diskussjonijiet li saru kemm f'livell nazzjonali u kemm fl-Unjoni Ewropea permezz tal-INSULEUR, fejn talbet b'mod konsistenti li l-limitu tal-għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’ jiżdied b'tali mod li jgħin lill-intrapriżi fil-gżejjer. Dan minħabba l-fatt li għalkemm tingħata għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’ lill-intrapriżi fil-gżejjer biex itaffu čertu spejjeż żejda bħal per eżempju fis-settur tat-trasport, din l-għajjnuna tipprekludhom milli jgħawdu minn għajnuniet oħra li jingħataw fuq livell nazzjonali taħt ir-regolament tad-‘De Minimis’, minħabba li l-limitu ta’ għajjnuna jkun intlaħaq qabel. Dan jagħmilha diffiċli għall-intrapriżi fi gżejjer bħal Għawdex li jilħqu l-istess livell ta’ kompetitivita’ ta’ intrapriżi li jinsabu fit-territorju jew għażira prinċipali, bħalma hu l-każ fl-arcipelagu ta’ Malta. Fir-rappreżentazzjoni tagħha (ara [I-holqa](#)) l-INSULEUR kienet talbet għal żieda fil-limitu tal-għajjnuna ‘De Minimis’, u għal flessibilita’ akbar għal gżejjer.

Għalkemm ir-regolamenti l-ġoddha tad-‘De Minimis’ ma jindirizzawx b'mod speċifiku l-gżejjer, iż-żieda fil-limitu ta’ għajjnuna iż-żid id il-possibilita tal-ammonti li jistgħu jingħataw lill-intrapriżi fil-gżejjer. Fil-preamble hemm ukoll referenza għall-effett limitat li għandhom l-intrapriżi fil-gżejjer fuq il-kummerċ internazzjonali, u għalhekk titlob li dan il-fatt jiġi meħud f'kunsiderazzjoni meta wieħed qed janalizza jekk miżura għandhiex effett hażin fuq il-kompetizzjoni.

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