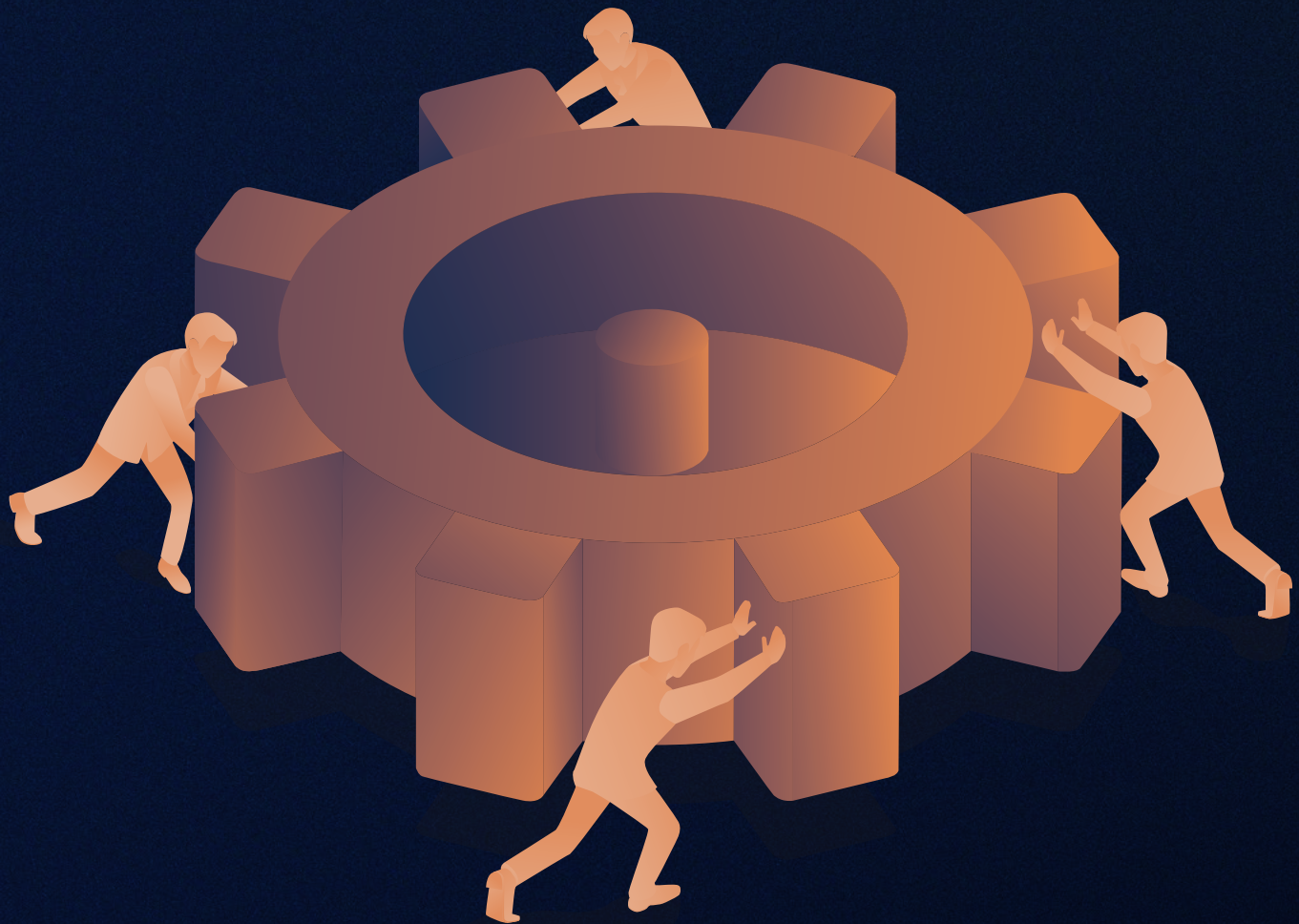


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MOVERS & SHAKERS

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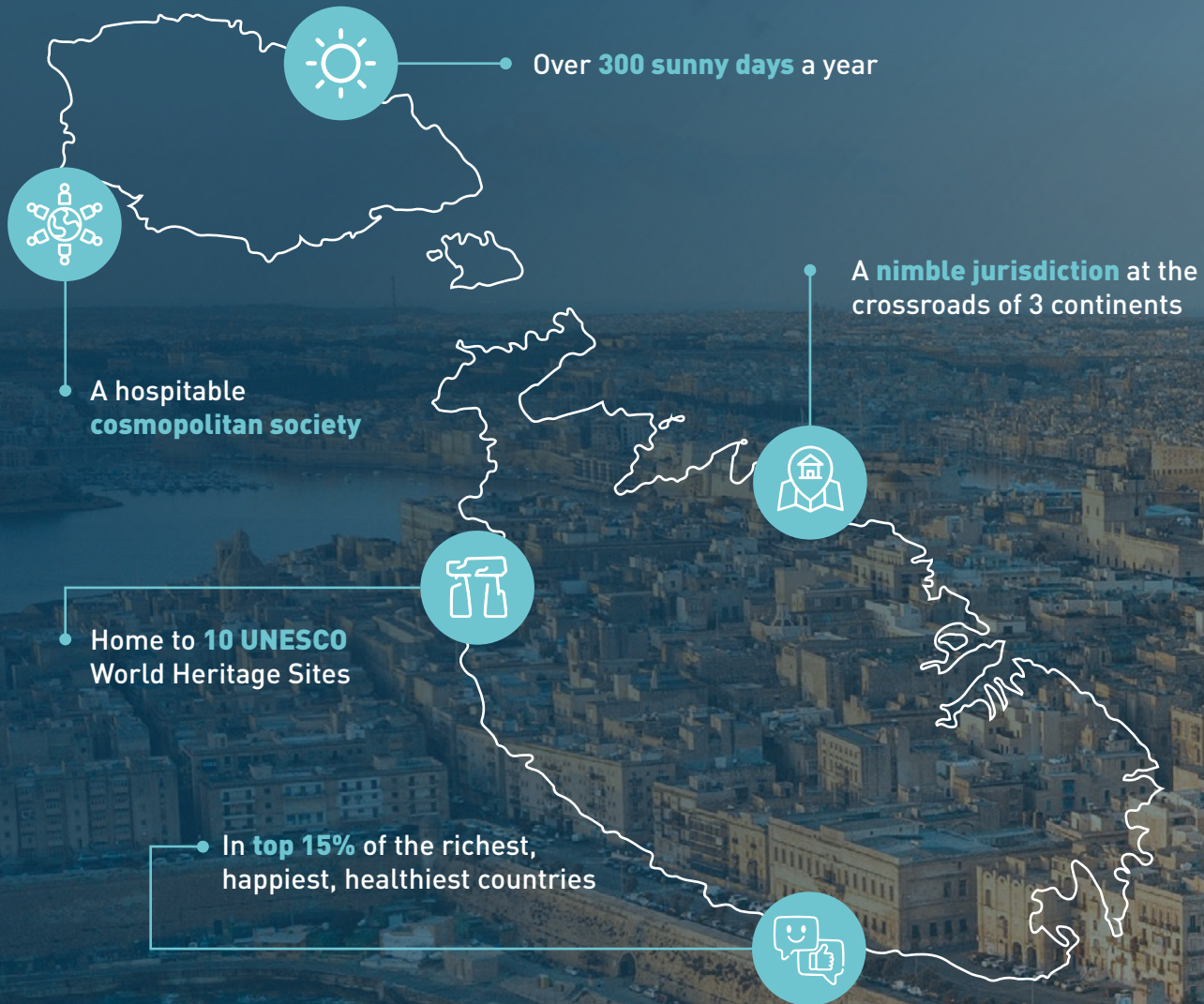


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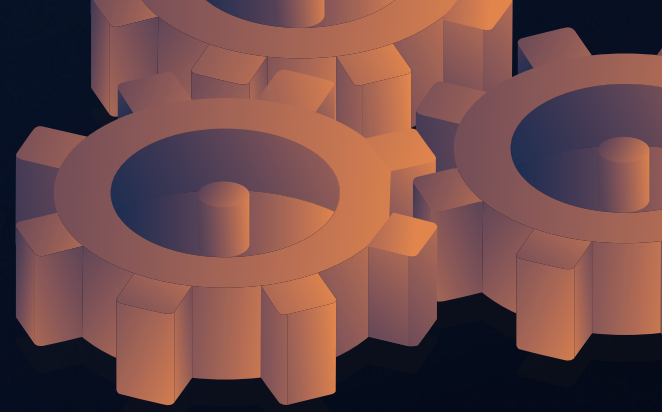
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64, The Exchange Buildings
Republic Street Valletta,
VLT, 1117 – Malta
T +356 2123 3873
E info@maltachamber.org.mt
www.maltachamber.org.mt



Editor
Rachel Bondi Attard
Content Writer
Coryse Borg & Sylvana Debono
Production
Petra Urso
Sales
Antoinette Cefai, Clara Garroni
& Marija Engerer
Photography
Albert Camilleri & Daniel Cardona
Design
mustard creative



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Chris Vassallo Cesareo,
President, The Malta Chamber,

“As the leading voice of the business community in Malta, The Malta Chamber has continually advocated for greater transparency, integrity, and corporate responsibility.”

CALL TO ACTION: ELEVATE GOVERNANCE IN MALTA'S BUSINESS

In today's dynamic global economy, businesses are facing an unprecedented level of scrutiny. Stakeholders, from consumers to investors, expect organisations to not only meet financial goals but also demonstrate transparency, accountability, and integrity in their operations.

Good governance and ethical business practices have become the cornerstones of sustainable growth, and The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry has been at the forefront of promoting these values among our business community.

The Malta Chamber has long recognised that good governance is essential for any business to thrive, particularly in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

Ethical businesses build trust, which is not only a competitive advantage but also a critical factor in maintaining long-term relationships with customers, suppliers, and employees.

In fact, studies show that businesses with strong ethical foundations are more resilient during times of economic uncertainty, as stakeholders feel confident in their ability to adapt and prosper without compromising their core values.

As the leading voice of the business community in Malta, The Malta Chamber has continually advocated for greater transparency, integrity, and corporate responsibility.

Over the past years, we have taken concrete steps to promote good governance and ethical standards within the business sector. Our key initiatives have focused on education, advocacy, and collaboration to ensure that these practices are not only discussed but also implemented effectively.

Through a series of documents, press releases, seminars, conferences, we have provided our members with the tools and knowledge to embed good governance into their corporate structures.

Our collaborations with national organisations and governance experts have brought valuable insights to Maltese businesses, ensuring that they are aware of the latest global trends and best practices. Furthermore, The Malta Chamber, through its various publications, has outlined clear principles that encourage transparency, fairness, and responsible decision-making.

In addition to providing educational resources, The Malta Chamber has been a strong advocate for legislative reforms that support ethical business practices.

We have worked closely with government bodies and regulatory authorities to ensure that Malta's legal framework encourages and enforces good governance.

For instance, we have supported the introduction of stronger corporate governance regulations and more stringent anti-corruption measures. These efforts reflect our commitment to fostering a business environment that rewards ethical behaviour and discourages malpractice.

However, good governance is not just about complying with regulations—it is about creating a culture of accountability. It is essential that business leaders lead by example, setting the tone from the top.

At The Malta Chamber, we have consistently emphasised the importance of leadership in driving ethical change. A company's values are only as strong as its leadership's commitment to upholding them, and we encourage all business leaders to take personal responsibility for the governance standards within their organisations.

Looking ahead, The Malta Chamber remains committed to building a business community that upholds the highest standards of ethics and governance. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, we believe that Malta's future prosperity depends on the integrity and accountability of its businesses.

It is our responsibility, as leaders, to ensure that we continue to foster an environment where good governance is not only expected but celebrated.

As we continue this journey, I urge all businesses in Malta to join us in our commitment to ethical excellence. Together, we can create a more transparent, responsible, and sustainable future for our economy and society.




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TRANSITIONING TO A HIGH-VALUE ADDED ECONOMY

*Dr Marthese Portelli,
CEO, The Malta Chamber*



“The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry believes that to achieve a sustainable and resilient economy, we must move up the value chain and develop economic activities that add real substance to our economy.”

In today's public policy discussions, the importance of creating a high-value added economy is widely accepted. But what does this term actually mean, and what outcomes are we aiming for?

A high-value added economy focuses on activities that generate a significant margin between the final price of a product or service and the cost of the inputs used to produce it. This results in higher profits for businesses and better wages for workers.

Sectors like pharmaceutical development and advanced engineering are clear examples of high-value added industries, but the concept extends to a much broader range of activities.

One key factor to consider is that the global accessibility of inexpensive labour means that businesses cannot compete in markets for internationally traded goods and services on the basis of low labour costs alone. Therefore investing in skills, knowledge, technology and innovation remains very important.

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry believes that to achieve a sustainable and resilient economy, we must move up the value chain and develop economic activities that add real substance to our economy.

While attractive regulation and a favourable fiscal framework have served us well for many years, maintaining and attracting new industries in the future will require innovation in other areas, including technology development.

A strong manufacturing sector is essential for a high-value added economy. Currently, the manufacturing sector operates somewhat in a vacuum due to the lack of an industrial policy.

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry advocates for the development of an industrial policy focused on high-value added manufacturing.

This sector drives demand for supporting industries and services, creates jobs, and is crucial for developing technologies to address issues like reducing greenhouse gases, proper water treatment, and proper waste disposal.

The services industry also plays a vital role. Specialisations should be built on knowledge and value-added. Financial services can benefit from smart regulation, and creative industries can contribute significantly.

The global shift towards cleaner and more efficient energy usage opens up new markets for energy generation and other low-carbon or post-carbon goods and services.

Digital transformation is another important phenomenon. It improves product and service quality, enhances customer experience, targets clients more effectively, shortens time-to-market, drives growth, supports sustainability efforts, and improves internal communication and collaboration.

It also automates processes, streamlines operations, and increases operational efficiency.

Digital transformation converts sporadic and siloed information into meaningful structures, providing decision-makers with comprehensive knowledge.

It addresses labour shortages and reduces human error. However, successful digital transformation requires careful planning and a four-pronged approach involving process transformation, business model transformation, domain transformation, and cultural/organisational digital transformation.

This can be challenging due to potential lack of in-house technology experts, organisational agility, and resistance to change from employees and customers.

In conclusion, investment in research and digital transformation offers a unique opportunity to accelerate high-value added economic growth.



William Spiteri Bailey,
Vice President, The Malta Chamber

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CEO? THE ESSENTIAL TRAITS FOR SUCCESS

“Communication is the backbone of effective leadership. Good CEOs must articulate the company’s vision, goals, and achievements distinctly and persuasively. Successfully communicating these points builds trust and confidence among employees, shareholders, and customers alike.”

In the fast-paced world of business, the role of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is one of the most challenging yet rewarding.

A successful CEO does more than just steer the ship; they set the tone, shape the culture, and drive long-term growth through vision, leadership, and adaptability. Here, I dissect the fundamental traits that separate good CEOs from great ones.

Visionary leadership

At the core of every effective CEO lies a clear and compelling vision for the company’s future. This isn’t just a dream; it’s a strategic roadmap that guides the organization toward success. Great CEOs can look beyond today’s challenges and anticipate market shifts, positioning their companies proactively to meet future demands.

However, vision alone is not enough. Exceptional CEOs communicate this vision effectively, ensuring that every employee, stakeholder, and customer is aligned and motivated. A palpable sense of purpose unites the organisation, driving collective efforts toward a common goal.

When CEOs blend visionary thinking with strategic acumen, they make decisions that resonate with the company’s mission and values, fostering innovation and relevance.

Decisiveness and adaptability

The business landscape is ever-changing, influenced by technological advances, market fluctuations, and global events.

A successful CEO must exhibit decisiveness, making tough calls even under uncertainty. But equally important is the quality of adaptability. Stubbornness can lead to failure; flexibility allows leaders to pivot in response to unforeseen challenges, seizing new opportunities in the process.

The most effective CEOs blend these traits, navigating their organizations through turbulent waters while maintaining a focused trajectory. Their ability to adjust strategies on the fly while making informed decisions ensures the company remains resilient amidst change.

Emotional intelligence and people management

In today’s corporate environment, emotional intelligence is as vital as traditional business acumen. Great CEOs possess a heightened awareness of their emotions and those of others, fostering strong connections with their employees. This empathetic approach cultivates a positive workplace culture where team members feel understood and valued.

Indeed, a CEO’s success is intrinsically linked to the strength and satisfaction of their workforce. I like using the phrase that ‘You are as good as the people around you.’ By investing in their teams, nurturing talent, and fostering inclusivity, effective

CEOs inspire employees to perform at their best. This empowerment leads to a dedicated, motivated workforce that drives the organisation forward.

Strong communication skills

Communication is the backbone of effective leadership. Good CEOs must articulate the company’s vision, goals, and achievements distinctly and persuasively. Successfully communicating these points builds trust and confidence among employees, shareholders, and customers alike.

In times of crisis, communication becomes even more critical. Whether explaining difficult decisions or reassuring stakeholders, a CEO’s ability to maintain open, honest dialogue establishes a culture of trust - essential for navigating turbulent waters. Such transparency strengthens relationships with customers and investors, fortifying the company’s standing in the market.

Strategic thinking and execution

While visionary leadership sets the course, strategic thinking is the engine that drives execution. A good CEO balances short-term needs with long-term goals, ensuring competitiveness while preparing for future growth. They set clear, actionable objectives that delineate the pathway to success.

Equally important is the ability to hold teams accountable. Great CEOs monitor progress, make data-driven adjustments, and ensure their strategies are effectively implemented. This rigorous accountability not only keeps the company on track but also lays the groundwork for sustainable growth.

Resilience and integrity

The pressures of a CEO’s role are immense, from economic downturns to fierce competition. Resilience, having the ability to maintain composure under pressure and persevere through challenges is indispensable. Moreover, a commitment to integrity creates a solid foundation of trust within the organisation and with external stakeholders.

A CEO who embodies ethical behaviour fosters a culture where loyalty and credibility thrive. Such integrity not only leads to enduring business relationships but also amplifies overall company morale.

Winning in the workplace

Ultimately, to win in the marketplace, a company must first respect and empower its employees. Great CEOs recognise that treating their teams well translates into improved business outcomes. They prioritise building a culture where employees feel valued and motivated to excel.

By combining visionary leadership, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and integrity, exceptional CEOs set their organisations on the path to long-term success. Their blend of strategic execution and a deep understanding of people is what truly differentiates them in today’s competitive landscape. In an increasingly complex world, these traits are not just valuable, they are essential.

ARE WE STILL IN TIME TO ASPIRE FOR QUALITY EXPERIENCES IN TOURISM?

With rising population numbers, the increased influx of tourists at the height of summer has once again triggered the debate on whether Malta can really afford the current number of incoming tourists.

Tourism remains an important economic pillar for the Maltese Islands, so any debate must consider the significant challenges and opportunities in promoting and regulating this industry.

The Ministry for Tourism has publicly stated that its strategic focus is on managing and formulating the future development of tourism to Malta in line with sustainability principles.

But the question that needs to be asked is whether the decisions being taken are actually geared towards ensuring that sustainability is at the core. The country's natural and cultural attractions must find the right balance between the welfare of residents and visitor satisfaction.

“The debate over whether Malta should prioritise quality over quantity in its tourism is not new. Quality is subjective and varies from person to person. Malta’s tourism strategy should balance scale with the quality of experience, understanding that niche markets alone cannot sustain the economy.”

A key concern is Malta's strained infrastructure. The increased number of permits for new accommodations, while not the sole factor, contributes to challenges in traffic, health services, waste management, and the provision of water and energy supplies, as planning for these essential services has not kept pace with the surge in permits.

According to Ministry's 'Recover, Rethink, Revitalise' strategy, accommodation capacity is expected to double by 2030.

This raises serious questions about infrastructure sustainability and alignment with broader strategic goals. The Ministry for Tourism must update its laws and regulations to ensure that all operators in the value chain as well as new developments adhere to higher standards, preserving the quality of both existing and new tourism operations.

Tourism expenditure per tourist for 2024 so far has decreased to €664 from €692 for the same period in 2019, adjusted for inflation. Higher expenditure

due to rising consumer prices is not a reliable measure of success. Not accounting for inflation masks underlying issues, such as the diminishing value tourists perceive in their experience and the resulting pressure on local businesses to sustain operations.

The government's focus on matching tourist numbers has inadvertently led to reduced real spending per tourist. The challenge is to enhance product offerings and promote Malta as a destination providing better value while improving residents' quality of life.

Local businesses have a critical role in this shift towards quality experiences. With labour shortages, local operators should invest in digitalisation to boost productivity. Authorities should incentivise this shift and support businesses in leveraging emerging technologies.

Sustainability also remains a hot topic in Malta's tourism discussions. The Malta Chamber has long warned that current tourist numbers are financially, environmentally, and culturally unsustainable.

Malta's government should rethink its incentives, focusing less on increasing volume and more on increasing value through sustainable practices that ensure long-term viability.

The levers that the government needs to pull extend beyond the Ministry of Tourism and cut across every government ministry, department and entity, as emphasised in The Malta Chamber's Rediscover document – tourism thrives on this cooperation.

One such lever is applying the planning principles that discourage further building or conversion of accommodation options. In 2021, The Malta Chamber had already highlighted the issue of oversupply, a problem that will only worsen as capacity doubles under the current permits.

Responsibility extends beyond the Planning Authority to include Regions, Local Councils, and various Ministries managing waste, cleanliness, infrastructure, and regulation enforcement. These factors significantly affect the experience of both residents and tourists.



Alan Arrigo,
Member of The Malta Chamber Board of Management and former Chairperson of the Tourism Operators Business Section within The Malta Chamber

Malta could look to examples like Amsterdam, which has halted new hotel developments unless they replace existing ones, maintaining a balanced supply.

The debate over whether Malta should prioritise quality over quantity in its tourism is not new. Quality is subjective and varies from person to person. Malta's tourism strategy should balance scale with the quality of experience, understanding that niche markets alone cannot sustain the economy.

Government and its agencies need to ensure that this balance is achieved, sometimes by slowing growth in tourist numbers while maintaining or increasing real spending for every tourist visiting.

If up to a few years ago, Malta's focus was to keep attracting even more tourists, this trend will be at the expense of attracting lesser real spend. At the same time, Malta cannot compete for high-value tourism without the proper infrastructure.

The time to act on our long-term vision for tourism is now. The Rediscover document, serving as the blueprint for this vision, outlines 120 action points agreed upon by 29 stakeholders across the tourism value chain. It remains as relevant today as when it was launched in 2021 - what is needed now is the willingness to put it into action.



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THE FINE LINE OF MANAGING MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Rachel Bondi Attard,

Head of Media and Communication Strategist, The Malta Chamber

The world of successful products and businesses thrives on the interplay between Movers and Shakers. It is the balance between these two roles that propels industries forward while maintaining a mindful approach to potential risks and challenges.

As we continue to innovate and reshape our world, recognising and nurturing the unique qualities of both Movers and Shakers will be key to fostering a bright and sustainable future.

Striking a balance

Movers and Shakers are both essential to the success of any industry. While the Movers push for innovation and progress, the Shakers keep them grounded, ensuring that risks are carefully considered and potential consequences are addressed.

Together, they create a dynamic environment where groundbreaking ideas can flourish, and industries can evolve in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Being able to play both the Mover and Shaker roles is a rare talent. Most individuals excel in one role but struggle to find the right balance between the two.

Striking that delicate balance means recognising when to challenge the status quo and when to drive progress, knowing when to heed warnings and when to push forward fearlessly.

Elon Musk is a prime example of someone who embodies both the Mover and Shaker roles. As a Mover, he revolutionised the electric vehicle (EV) and space industries through Tesla and SpaceX, driving forward innovation and pushing the boundaries of what is possible. He has motivated countless others to pursue a sustainable future and explore the cosmos.

On the other hand, Musk is also a Shaker when it comes to artificial intelligence (AI) and the development of artificial general intelligence (AGI). He has repeatedly called for caution and regulation in the AI field, warning of the potential dangers associated with unchecked advancements. In this role, Musk serves as a voice of reason, urging the industry to proceed with care.

However, Movers can also introduce systemic risks and cause unintended consequences. By pushing for rapid progress, they may overlook potential pitfalls and inadvertently create new problems.

Movers are visionaries who forge ahead, transforming industries by aligning resources and creating progress. They often ignore the Shakers, choosing to focus on making things happen rather than dwelling on potential problems. Movers motivate others to embrace change and help reshape entire industries.

Contrasting example: Warren Buffett

In contrast to Elon Musk, Warren Buffett is a quintessential Shaker in the business world. Known as the 'Oracle of Omaha', Buffett has built his legacy on careful, calculated investments and a deep-seated understanding of financial markets. His investment philosophy is grounded in value investing, which focuses on long-term sustainability and risk management.

Buffett's approach contrasts sharply with Musk's bold, risk-taking ventures. Where Musk pushes the envelope with groundbreaking innovations and ambitious projects, Buffett exercises patience and prudence.

He has long warned against speculative bubbles and the dangers of excessive risk-taking in financial markets. Buffett's emphasis on caution and due diligence serves as a stabilising force in an industry that can often be driven by the allure of quick profits and short-term gains.

While Musk embodies the spirit of a Mover with his relentless pursuit of innovation, Buffett represents the Shaker's critical role in maintaining balance and stability. His investment strategies have consistently outperformed the market, proving that a thoughtful, measured approach can yield significant success over time.



"Movers and Shakers are both essential to the success of any industry. While the Movers push for innovation and progress, the Shakers keep them grounded, ensuring that risks are carefully considered and potential consequences are addressed."

Balancing act

The dynamic interplay between Movers and Shakers like Elon Musk and Warren Buffett highlights the importance of balancing innovation with caution in the business world.

By learning from both types of leaders, we can foster a sustainable and prosperous future for industries worldwide.

In this edition of The Malta Chamber Movers & Shakers, we aim to explore how businesses in Malta perceive themselves: Are they Movers? Are they Shakers? Or a blend of both?



SHAPING MALTA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

George Gregory,
CEO, Malta Enterprise

Married with three children, George Gregory balances a family life with his passion for sports, having transitioned from active participation to a leadership role in sports administration. During his first interview as CEO of Malta Enterprise, Movers & Shakers uncovers his professional journey that defines him as a key player in Malta's economic landscape.



Head Office Malta Enterprise.

An accountant by profession, Mr Gregory has spent the last 30 years in private practice, honing his skills in financial management and strategic planning.

Over the years, his career evolved in line with a core belief: "Goals need to be achievable within a reasonable time frame." This principle guided him through decades of private practice.

Once he felt that those goals were met, Mr Gregory sought a new challenge - and found it at Malta Enterprise (ME), the national economic development agency.

"When the opportunity at Malta Enterprise presented itself, it was a perfect fit for the next chapter of my career," he explains.

Malta Enterprise, known for its pivotal role in both attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and fostering the growth of local businesses, has become central to his vision of Malta's future.

According to Mr Gregory, Malta Enterprise is a strategic player in shaping Malta's future.

"Over the years, Malta Enterprise has evolved into a central player in shaping Malta's economic landscape, particularly through its efforts to foster high-value industries that align with the country's long-term growth strategies," he explains.

The agency's role became even more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic when it managed crucial financial support schemes for businesses, further embedding itself within Malta's business ecosystem.

"Working with ME in my previous roles gave me a clear understanding of its importance," Mr Gregory adds. "With a strong focus on innovation and collaboration, the agency is committed to maintaining Malta's competitive edge in global markets.

Now, as a key decision-maker within the agency, Gregory is focused on further strengthening its collaboration with stakeholders across various industries.

In leadership, Mr Gregory emphasises the importance of listening and decision-making.

"It's imperative to listen to all stakeholders, even those with differing views, but decisions must be made within a reasonable timeframe," he notes. His approach to management - taking timely decisions while being open to diverse opinions - has shaped his philosophy of progress.

As the new CEO of Malta Enterprises, Mr Gregory is particularly focused on four strategic sectors:

Digital Innovation and Technology

Malta is positioning itself as a digital hub within the EU, focusing on sectors like artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and fintech. "Our goal is to attract global leaders while also nurturing local startups to scale internationally," Gregory says.

Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals

Malta has established itself as a center of excellence in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and medical research. Gregory's vision includes driving research and development while ensuring a skilled workforce for the sector.

"Over the years, Malta Enterprise has evolved into a central player in shaping Malta's economic landscape, particularly through its efforts to foster high-value industries that align with the country's long-term growth strategies."



Signing of the Collective Agreement 2024-2027.

"It's imperative to listen to all stakeholders, even those with differing views, but decisions must be made within a reasonable timeframe."



Green Energy and Sustainability

With the global shift toward sustainability, Mr Gregory sees renewable energy and green technologies as critical to Malta's future. "We are committed to industries contributing to Malta's environmental goals, especially those involved in clean energy and electric mobility," he says.

Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced manufacturing remains a vital part of Malta's economy. Mr Gregory's focus is on transitioning Malta towards Industry 4.0 standards, promoting automation and digitalisation.

One of the highlights of the year will be the upcoming Startup Festival, now in its fourth year.

"This year's festival will highlight Malta's evolving startup ecosystem, showcasing success stories and providing networking opportunities for startups, investors, and corporate leaders," Mr Gregory reveals.

There will be a number of workshops where attendees will have the chance to participate in a variety of interactive workshops and masterclasses led by industry experts. Topics will range from funding strategies and scaling businesses to navigating regulatory frameworks and leveraging emerging technologies.

There will also be several masterclasses and dedicated panels on youth entrepreneurship aimed at creating an inclusive and vibrant business environment.

The close working relationship between Malta Enterprise and The Malta Chamber of Commerce is another priority for Mr Gregory.

"We have regular meetings and collaborate on several fronts, from addressing current challenges to explaining Malta Enterprise incentives to The Malta Chamber members," he says.

As Mr Gregory takes the helm at Malta Enterprise, his vision for the future is clear: to ensure that Malta remains competitive in the global market by focusing on innovation, sustainability, and the creation of high-value jobs.

Through his leadership, Malta Enterprise will continue to play a pivotal role in the nation's economic growth, ensuring that Malta is well-positioned to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.



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Transport Malta

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT MALTA

VISION AND ROLE OF THE CEO



Kurt Farrugia,
CEO, Transport Malta

Stepping into the role of CEO at Transport Malta presents both challenges and opportunities. With optimism and commitment, I aim to build upon the solid foundation already in place while driving the necessary changes to ensure Transport Malta continues to meet its objectives effectively.

My focus is on innovation, advancing projects, and implementing beneficial measures to strengthen the transport industry in Malta.

Vision for Transport Malta's future

The future is promising, with both challenges and opportunities ahead. Transport Malta is positioned to offer more to the public by ensuring regulatory functions are met, guaranteeing road and port safety, and maintaining accountability and transparency.

A critical element will be enhancing communication with the public through social media and project initiatives. Additionally, we will strengthen our digital framework to simplify and facilitate services, ensuring efficiency and client satisfaction.

Strategic importance of the transport sector

Malta's transport sector is vital in the European context due to its strategic Mediterranean location, serving as a hub for maritime and aviation routes. While strengths include modern ports and airports, challenges in 2024 focus on reducing congestion and moving towards greener transport.

Transport is a priority in the government's budget, underlining its role in national growth and sustainability.

Transport Malta's role

Transport Malta is committed to regulating and promoting the transport sector across land, sea, and air. Recent achievements include implementing new maritime safety regulations and progressing infrastructure projects.

The 2025 strategy aims to enhance connectivity and safety, while the 2050 vision focuses on creating a fully integrated, sustainable transport network. Ongoing efforts in 2024 are aligned with these long-term goals to modernize Malta's transport system.

Innovation and digital transformation

Transport Malta is leading digitisation efforts in the transport sector. Initiatives such as the Malta National Transport Awards reflect our focus on recognizing excellence.

We are exploring autonomous vehicles and smart infrastructure, which will transform local transportation.

Sustainability and carbon footprint targets

Carbon footprint reduction targets are reshaping transport policy. Transport Malta is partnering with financial and technical stakeholders to drive green transport solutions, including incentives for e-vehicles and sustainable infrastructure.

These initiatives aim to position Malta as a leader in environmental sustainability.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in transport

Foreign Direct Investment plays a critical role in Malta's transport development. We offer opportunities for global investors in areas like innovation and technology.

By fostering international collaboration, we aim to attract investment that will drive growth in our transport infrastructure.

CEO's current priorities

My immediate priorities as CEO include improving operational efficiency, fostering innovation, and ensuring that transport infrastructure meets future demands.

My vision is to make Transport Malta a European benchmark for excellence in sustainability, safety, and service quality.

Transport Malta is dedicated to a sustainable and innovative future. By capitalising on Malta's strategic location and commitment to green growth, we aim to create a dynamic and efficient transport sector that benefits both local and international stakeholders.

CAMPAIGNS

Road Safety Campaign

Transport Malta will be upgrading its way of conducting Road Safety Campaigns, and going from seasonal ad-hoc campaigning to a yearly ongoing programme that will tackle items and topics to keep Malta's Road Safe.

The nationwide Road Safety Campaign underscores its commitment to enhancing road safety and protecting all users. This comprehensive campaign aims to prevent and reduce road accidents, injuries and will promote safer behaviours across the board.

Back to School Campaign

As students headed back to school, the campaign aimed to reduce traffic congestion, especially during peak traffic hours.

Key messages included information on what to do in case of a bumper to bumper collision, the implementation of a tow truck services by Transport Malta, indicator use and opting for school transport or carpooling. Double yellow-line parking must be avoided to keep roads clear for emergency vehicles.

The campaign also encouraged the use of the Harbour Ferry Service, offering a practical alternative for reducing road traffic and ensuring smoother commutes for everyone.

Safety at Sea Campaign

Transport Malta has launched its annual sea safety campaign titled 'Meta Tkun Traskurat Taf Tkisser Hajja – Kun Prudenti fil-Bahar' ('Being Reckless Wrecks Lives – Be Safe at Sea').

The campaign highlights the shared responsibility for ensuring safety at sea. It addresses key topics such as life jacket use, responsible pier usage, fairways, safe waste disposal, speed limits,



Shore-to-Ship OPS reducing emissions at the Grand Harbour.

"Strengths include modern ports and airports, challenges in 2024 focus on reducing congestion and moving towards greener transport."



Enforcing road safety for safer driving.



Malta leading the way in maritime excellence and innovation.

swimmer zones, alpha flags, vessel cleaning, and navigational aids, aiming for safer experiences for boat owners, swimmers, and divers alike.

Conferences on aviation and maritime (OPS and MSD)

Transport Malta, especially the Merchant Shipping Directorate attend several expos and international conferences such as the Monaco Yacht Show to publicise the Maltese maritime jurisdiction.

“My vision is to make Transport Malta a European benchmark for excellence in sustainability, safety, and service quality.”

The Civil Aviation Directorate attends MAViO and EBACE to publicise the 9H-registry and the Maltese aviation jurisdiction.

The Shore-to-Ship initiative allows cruise liners to plug into Malta’s electric grid when docked in the Grand Harbour. This project will mean 90% less pollution for the roughly 17,000 people who live around the Grand Harbour.

As of 2024, just one-third of the ships that call at the Valletta Cruise Port are equipped with OPS technology, allowing them to draw power from the grid and switch off their engines while docked.

European Mobility Week

Local Councils and NGOs were invited to submit initiatives for the European Mobility Week 2024 campaign, with selected projects receiving financial support from Transport Malta.

This year’s theme, ‘Shared Public Space’, emphasised the importance of sustainable mobility, road safety, and improving the quality of life in urban areas.

European Mobility Week, which ran from the 16th to the 22nd of September, encouraged practical solutions to challenges like traffic congestion and air pollution, promoting more accessible and safer public spaces.



Promoting sustainable urban transport.

THE NEW ONLINE PLATFORM



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Digitalisation*



*Enhancing
Efficiency*



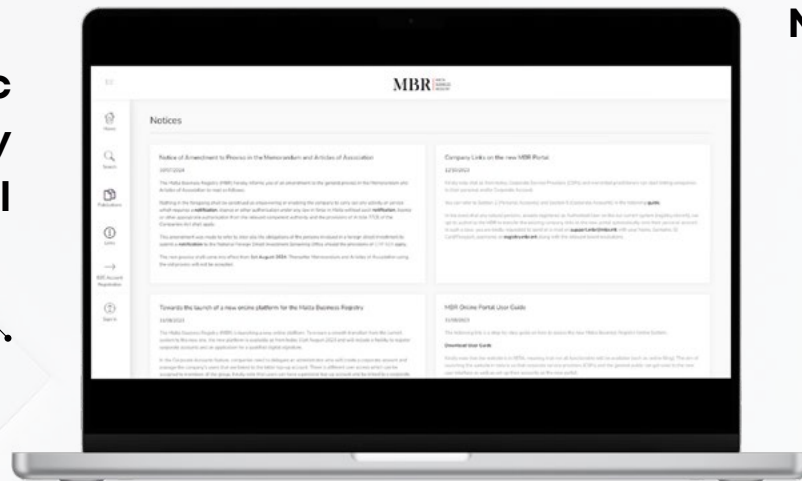
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"It is my task to weave the mentalities and perspectives of the young team members into the ethos of the agency and harness their energy and dynamism into a sense of purpose[...]"



THE GREEN RE-ALIGNMENT

Joseph Cuschieri,
CEO, Project Green

Green is one of those colours - it can be a positive thing as in green fingers, green areas, green countryside and green spaces. But “You’re so green” can have negative and different connotations. While this may be true for many, it is not so for the CEO of Project Green, Joseph Cuschieri who has been at the helm for just over eight months. For him, green is the colour to be and which Malta needs.

Heading a government entity which is still in a quasi-embryonic phase, Mr Cuschieri marshals not only a concept that, while lauded by many may also be equally alien, that of developing and implementing open green spaces. He also leads a team of people who may, by some greybeards, be called ‘green’.

“The average age of the team is the mid-30s,” smiled Mr Cuschieri. While they may in the early stages of their career development, he praises not only their professional abilities but also their commitment, passion and enthusiasm.

Acknowledging that he is from an earlier generation at age 56, he still feels that this is not a hindrance.

“It is a question of assimilation of mentalities and ideas. It is my task to weave the mentalities and perspectives of the young team members into the ethos of the agency and harness their energy and dynamism into a sense of purpose,” said Mr Cuschieri earnestly, adding “the dynamics of the team are very encouraging and young people with motivation create an infectious buzz which is ingrained in our culture. This gives me peace of mind and optimism that the future of the Agency looks bright”.

As CEO, leadership is certainly his priority but Mr Cuschieri prefers the mentoring and coaching style of management rather than management by diktat.

"We are a performance-driven organisation and as a management team we continuously seek to optimise our performance, fully aware of the high expectations of our stakeholders."

Executive Committee at Project Green:

*Left to Right standing: Keith Buttigieg, Beverley Costa, Georvin Zammit, Joseph Cuschieri, Nadya Farrugia, Gordon Penza
Left to right seated: Adrian Xuereb, Françoise Chetcuti, Maria Filippa Farrugia*

Not in photo - Beverly Cutajar & Melissa Vella Buhagiar

"I avoid micro-management at all costs because it kills motivation, so I focus on the big picture. We have an amazing team of technical specialists and professionals who engage with other agencies in the delivery of our projects. The team is full of ambition and passion in what we stand for as an Agency and is focused to deliver the projects we have in the pipeline."

My role is to see that our targets are achieved and to be always there to support the team in the execution of our plans and troubleshooting when needed" observed Mr Cuschieri.

Listening and engaging

This management style, while not unique, may not be very widespread. It comes with an added onus, availability.

"I enjoy listening to the young team members and to engage with them. The different ideas come out when open discussions take place and my role is to find a common denominator which makes proposals and ideas workable and unifying. This is why I believe strongly in mentoring" said Mr Cuschieri.

This mentoring approach is critical, he added, to maintain the focus on a sense of purpose, in this case the emphasis on improving the quality of life of Maltese citizens. Mr Cuschieri said that just as charity begins at home, so does quality of

life. He explained how the agency has adopted an outcomes-driven 'management by objectives' rather than a 'management of persons' style of management.

He explained that at Project Green, the employees enjoy flexible hours as well as the option of remote working as a family friendly measure.

"We need to re-align our thoughts in favour of a broader National Greening Agenda"

"This has, so far, been a very positive experience and the engagement of the team is high," enthused Mr Cuschieri. "We are a performance driven organisation and as a management team we continuously seek to optimise our performance, fully aware of the high expectations of our stakeholders."

Meeting public aspirations

Engagement is a key term. A major drive for Project Green is indeed engagement and resonance. As an agency, Project Green is only 18 months old and, even if it has an impressively large portfolio of projects on its conveyor belt (€350m worth of projects covering 1.7 million

square meters), it's public profile is still not visible enough on the national radar.

"If there is a vibe which is currently sweeping Malta it is that of the need for a better quality of life, translated into more greenery and open spaces," mused Mr Cuschieri. Project Green, he continued, cannot fulfil its role on its own, it needs the engagement of the public and the collaboration of other entities in order to deliver and make a difference.

"We need to be attuned to the needs and aspirations of the public. Unless that happens, we shall confine ourselves to a 'thinking capsule' and this will not enable the creation of a true experience for a better quality of life" said Mr Cuschieri.

He cited the current debate on pedestrianisation with all its pros and cons. While this may be achievable in some places and not in others, the underlying "leit motif" is the same: a desire to enjoy public open spaces.

"We need to rethink our national policies so that the public really gets to experience a better quality of life through the creation of more open environments," stressed Mr Cuschieri.

Bringing people together

This openness to listening and rethinking is a characteristic which underscores the management



ethos which Mr Cuschieri lives by. On different levels he explained how Project Green conducts dialogues with the public and its representatives such as the Local Councils.

“Consultation is key. We try to listen as much as possible to our stakeholders and then adapt our proposals and designs so that the project fits into and around the community” said Mr Cuschieri. He smiled, adding that Project Green often has to manage ‘shopping lists’ but through constructive dialogue, this too can be achieved.

The Agency also engages with local experts and foreign educational institutions in order to develop its expertise and knowledge. In this way, Mr Cuschieri said that the ideas remain fresh, updated and innovative.

A Green Revolution

“We need to re-align our thoughts in favour of a broader National Greening Agenda” said Mr Cuschieri earnestly. This makes the measurement of success somewhat more challenging considering the expectations of our stakeholders.

Mr Cuschieri explained what success looks like for him. “In the first place we need to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, mainly, the general public. While this may not be completely possible all the time, we can easily gauge whether we are on the right track,” said Mr Cuschieri.

The key objective for Project Green is the development and implementation of more green open spaces which can be enjoyed by the public added Mr Cuschieri.

To this end, Mr Cuschieri explained that Project Green is currently working on 110 projects which cover more than 1.7 million square metres with a total investment of €350m.

In 2025 alone, we are planning to open 27 new parks and valleys with an investment of €31m. Our challenge and focus is to deliver with more agility by shortening the turnaround time in project delivery. A key element in our projects is sustainability and environmental friendliness in the methods and materials used.”

He added that sustainability has been dovetailed into our designs and tendering processes, to make sure that all our projects are respectful of the environment in all its aspects.

“I would like to see Project Green being a key driver for a change in culture towards the environment and quality of life. My objective is to work closely with other Government agencies to make a difference in people’s lives through the implementation of new green initiatives and projects. This needs an “all hands-on deck approach” by all entities involved and Project Green is willing to take the lead” concluded Mr Cuschieri.

“Consultation is key. We try to listen as much as possible to our stakeholders and then adapt our proposals and designs so that the project fits into and around the community”



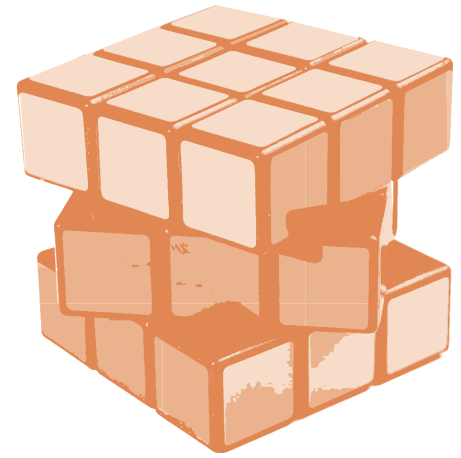
REIMAGINING THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

Oliver Magro,
Executive Chairperson, Planning Authority

With a career spanning over 18 years within the Planning Authority, Executive Chairperson Oliver Magro's unique experience has positioned him as a key figure in navigating the complexities of urban development, environmental stewardship, and regulatory enforcement. In this interview, Mr Magro shares his insights on the challenges, reforms, and future direction of the PA, shedding light on his vision for transparent governance and sustainable growth.

Oliver Magro took on the role of Executive Chairperson of the Planning Authority in December 2022, bringing with him extensive experience across various sectors within the Authority. His career includes roles ranging from corporate operations to legal compliance, enforcement, and hands-on fieldwork. This broad skill set uniquely qualifies him to lead an organisation responsible for managing development, enforcement, and compliance in Malta.

The Planning Authority, which encompasses 4 directorates and employs 450 people, plays a crucial role in shaping Malta's urban landscape.



While development management, forward planning and enforcement remain its core functions, the Authority has other responsibilities. Teams such as the mapping unit, responsible for charting the Maltese Islands, also play a critical part, even if their work does not directly impact applications or sanctions.

One of the key challenges Mr Magro highlights is the difficulty in attracting new recruits to the sector. Despite maintaining relationships with educational institutions and students, recruitment remains a pressing issue. To address this, he has implemented initiatives focused on creating a more engaging workplace culture, emphasising team building, flexible work arrangements, and a sense of belonging. Mr Magro is determined to rebuild public trust in the Planning Authority. He practices an open-door policy, regularly meeting with stakeholders and the public.

Despite his busy schedule, he has received only a handful of meeting requests from objectors during his tenure, which he attributes to the transparent nature of the Authority's operations. Mr Magro encourages objectors and the public to engage with the Authority, stressing that the planning process is fully accessible online and open to scrutiny. "The planning process is very transparent and accessible to the public. Through the Authority's online digital platforms one can easily follow, understand and where necessary object to all planning applications, both from personal capacity to the community at large" he explains.

Reflecting on the evolution of the Planning Authority, Mr Magro notes significant changes since its inception. Originally part of the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), the entity was restructured in 2016, separating into the Planning Authority and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA). Under Magro's leadership, the PA has focused on improving

operational efficiency, transparency, and public engagement through technological advancements.

"The Authority is determined to place people before development and ensure that the environment is elevated to its rightful place. The challenges ahead are big and the yardstick is high to regain the trust of the people and show that planning decisions are made fairly and do not depend on who the person applying for the permit is."

Despite this progress, the PA often faces public criticism. "The PA seems to take the blame of many things in Malta be it air pollution, cleanliness, roadworks, traffic jams, safety at the workplace construction site management and much more. A substantial amount of criticism that is levelled at the Authority relate to issues and responsibilities that fall outside our remit" he says.

Mr Magro acknowledges that the Authority's remit intersects with multiple entities, leading to misconceptions about its role. He remains committed to listening to the concerns of the

public and implementing solutions that reflect two-way communication between the Authority and the communities it serves. "The Authority is determined to place people before development and ensure that the environment is elevated to its rightful place.

The challenges ahead are big and the yardstick is high to regain the trust of the people and show that planning decisions are made fairly and do not depend on who the person applying for the permit is."

One of the significant strides under Mr Magro's leadership is the digital transformation of the PA's systems. Since 2007, the Authority has embraced technological advancements, including the e-Apps system, which provides real-time updates on planning applications and ensures transparent access.

"Each stakeholder is directly linked to this system, whether it is a government entity which has to give its green light or whether it is additional paperwork required by the architect or client to be uploaded," he explains.

Looking ahead, Mr Magro is exploring the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the application process to further enhance efficiency and streamlining of resources. However, the PA still operates under a legislative framework established in 2006. Mr Magro cautions that the current construction boom may soon give way to a natural slowdown. While a significant amount of land remains within the development scheme, many of these plots are complicated by ownership issues.

While submitted development applications has stabilised over the past 2 years to average close to 7,900, the Authority has witnessed a heightening in the number of appeals, further slowing the construction process.

Beyond its regulatory duties, the Planning Authority also contributes to public infrastructure through the Development Planning Fund, (DPF) which channels fees and penalties into local projects.

The Fund offers financial aid to local councils and NGOs to implement urban improvement projects in their respective localities, improving the quality of life for residents. The DPF sustains its initiatives through a diversified funding model, leveraging contributions from three main sources - parking fees, regularisation applications, and planning gains.

Mr Magro believes that the DPF funds are having a beneficial effect on the community. "Over the past three years, the planning authority has financed various initiatives that have significantly improved the quality of life in the community and restored buildings to achieve architectural excellence. Notable projects include the Soup Kitchen in Valletta (a winner of the 2022 MASP Award), the new cultural center at Gnien L-Istazzjon in Attard, a state-of-the-art aquatic sports facility in the north of the Island, and the restoration of Teatru Salesjan in Sliema."

Other remarkable projects that are currently ongoing, include the creation of a large recreational garden area at San Anton School in Mgarr and a new professional Music Academy space and cultural hub in Qormi.

Additionally, the Authority encourages property owners to care for their properties either scheduled or within an urban conservation area by regularly launching financial assistance schemes known as Irrestawra Darek.

Mr Magro has made it a priority to streamline internal processes, improve skills within the Authority, and align departments to work more effectively with external stakeholders. Recent reforms within the enforcement department are just the beginning, with further changes expected across the organisation.

At the core of Mr Magro's leadership philosophy is a commitment to placing people before development. Under his guidance, the Authority is focused on ensuring that environmental considerations are central to its decision making.



"Over the past years, the PA has financed various initiatives that have significantly improved urban neighbourhoods and provided communities with new spaces to foster wellbeing and a quality of life"

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"I have met incredibly knowledgeable and down-to-earth people who have been like beacons guiding me. Observing and learning from these people has been invaluable. Key lessons I've learned from them include always keeping students as the primary focus and remaining grounded."

Dr Rose Anne Cuschieri,
CEO, the Malta Further and
Higher Education Authority

FROM PUBLIC SERVICE TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A JOURNEY OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Movers and Shakers speaks to Dr Rose Anne Cuschieri, CEO of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority about the MFHEA's mission to promote quality education and lifelong learning.

Dr Rose Anne Cuschieri has worn myriad hats during her working life. She began her career in public service many years ago. After taking a break to get married, she returned to work in the education sector, eventually transitioning into teaching and becoming a school counsellor, and later, a director for Catholic schools.

During this time, over 13 consecutive years, Dr Cuschieri was also studying. With very young children at the beginning of her studies, she studied at night, becoming something of a night owl - a habit she has maintained. Her journey eventually led her to her current position as CEO of the MFHEA.

The MFHEA's mission to promote quality education and lifelong learning is comprehensive and dynamic. The Authority continually ensures that all educational providers meet high standards, keeping their programmes relevant to both local and international job markets.

“By engaging with education industry representatives and students, we remain responsive to the sector's ever-evolving needs, ensuring that

education stays relevant and effective. We must adapt to emerging trends and practical realities, identifying what the needs are and how they can be met” Dr Cuschieri says.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, education changed significantly. Educational institutions had to adapt to these changes by making education more accessible while maintaining quality.

“Initially, when there was the shift to online learning, quality suffered across the board,” Dr Cuschieri admits. “However, we quickly ensured that everyone improved their standards by setting clear standards and eventually regulations for online teaching and learning.”

The Authority employs several strategies to uphold educational standards. Regular evaluations and monitoring of institutions, including audits, reviews, and compliance checks, ensure licensed institutions meet quality standards and fulfill their commitments. The MFHEA also stays attuned to current job market requirements and tries to anticipate future needs.

“Through international cooperation and benchmarking, we ensure that Maltese institutions remain competitive on a global level. We actively encourage institutions to pursue international cooperation, including exchange programmes,” Dr Cuschieri states.

The Authority is committed to making information as accessible as possible to prospective students. For instance, if someone wishes to pursue an accredited course in educational leadership, the MFHEA's website provides details on who offers such a course, the learning outcomes, and at what level the course is offered. Any prospective applicant, regardless of age, can also check if a course is recognised by the Authority within both the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The Authority involves students at many levels, including having two student representatives on the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Students are also part of institutional or programme audit teams, and are also involved in accreditation of programmes. This ensures that students themselves have a significant say in any processes and can genuinely influence outcomes.

According to Dr Cuschieri, the Authority's current strategic priorities focus on the continuous development of quality assurance.

“We are refining our accreditation process to ensure that institutions uphold the required standards,” she says. “Promoting lifelong learning and creating more accessible pathways, regardless of age, nationality, or socio-economic status, is also a key focus. We aim to ensure that the workforce remains relevant in today's rapidly changing environment.”



“Many opportunities for learning are available, and everyone should be encouraged to take advantage of them. Education is beautiful, and it’s important to stay in touch and keep abreast of developments. The more you learn and read, the more you realise there is an entire world out there to discover.”

Meanwhile the Authority is also driving the digital transformation of education by integrating a more digital and blended approach, with the appointment of experts who have helped it develop processes that have now become regulations.

“It’s crucial to keep pace with change, making learning more flexible, such as through fully online courses,” Dr Cuschieri asserts. “We are also strengthening international relations, including student mobility programmes, and extending our ties beyond Europe.”

In order to meet the sector’s evolving needs, the Authority strives to stay proactive, flexible, and responsive to change through constant communication with students, industry leaders, and other stakeholders.

“We encourage educational institutions to embrace new teaching methods, such as online and blended learning, and to stay ahead in areas like AI, which should be used intelligently,” she explains. “While we remain as flexible as possible, we also adhere to regulations, ensuring that our education system remains relevant and competitive on an international scale.”

Dr Cuschieri’s background in education and leadership has undoubtedly influenced her approach as CEO. She says that her teaching and lecturing experience, as well as her leadership roles in the Catholic schools sector and involvement in the Council of Europe, have all shaped her leadership style, as have her roles as a parent and grandparent.

“My entire life, including my childhood and time as a student, has influenced my approach. My mentors, both in compulsory education and as a mature student, also played a significant role.”

At the University of Sheffield, where she earned her Masters and Doctoral degrees, Dr Cuschieri learned what it truly means to be a leader and facilitator.

“I have met incredibly knowledgeable and down-to-earth people who have been like beacons guiding me. Observing and learning from these people has been invaluable. Key lessons I’ve learned from them include always keeping students as the primary focus and remaining grounded.”

Education, she says, is pivotal not only for professional development but for personal growth as well and it should be accessible to everyone who desires it. But it is important that these opportunities are made as accessible as possible for people of all ages to be able to access them.

“Many opportunities for learning are available, and everyone should be encouraged to take advantage of them. Education is beautiful, and it’s important to stay in touch and keep abreast of developments. The more you learn and read, the more you realise there is an entire world out there to discover.”

A NEW CHAPTER FOR CLA MALTA

In a historic development for Malta's professional services industry, KSi Malta and CSA Group have merged, forming CLA Malta as part of the CLA Global network. We sat down with Bernard Charles Gauci and Charles Scerri, two of the four leaders who have been instrumental in making this vision a reality.

This partnership brings together two highly respected firms with deep local roots and global ambitions, offering new opportunities for clients and professionals.

"This isn't just a merger," Bernard begins. "It's an evolution. By coming together, we combine decades of experience and expertise to create something unique for our clients."

Charles agrees and explains, "Both KSi Malta and CSA Group were already well-established, but by joining CLA Global, we've unlocked the ability to offer a much broader range of services. We now have access to a global network to meet our clients' needs wherever they are."

The merger reflects a shift toward a more interconnected world, where local firms must think globally. For Bernard, the union represents an opportunity to bridge the gap between Malta and international markets. "Malta has always been a gateway between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. With CLA Global, we can position ourselves as an even stronger player on the world stage."



Bernard C. Gauci,
Partner, CLA

CLA Malta's membership in CLA Global opens new avenues for existing and prospective clients. With access to a global network, the firm is better equipped to handle increasingly complex challenges in tax advisory, audit, or international business consultancy.

"We've always prided ourselves on our ability to provide personalised service," Charles explains, "but now we can back that up with resources from across the world. Our clients, particularly those with international operations, will benefit tremendously from this expanded reach."

"We're still the same firm our clients have come to trust over the years."

Bernard adds, "It's not just about providing services. It's about providing solutions. Our clients face global challenges, and we can now offer them the insight and expertise that only a network like CLA Global can provide."

Despite this new global footprint, Bernard and Charles quickly emphasised that their focus on the Maltese market remains unchanged.

"We're still the same firm our clients have come to trust over the years," Bernard assures. "The personal relationships, the attention to detail—that's not going anywhere. What's changing is the breadth of what we can offer."

The merger also strengthens Charles's ability to contribute to the local business community. "We're still very much committed to Malta. Our clients here will continue to see the same faces, but behind those faces will be an even more robust infrastructure."

The local talent pool also stands to benefit. By aligning with CLA Global, CLA Malta can offer young professionals previously unavailable opportunities. "The growth opportunities are immense," Bernard points out. "Our staff will have access to international projects, knowledge-sharing platforms, and a wider career path."



Head office in Msida

As the conversation turns to the future, Bernard and Charles are optimistic about the path ahead.

"We're thinking about long-term sustainability, digital transformation, and how we can continuously innovate," Charles says with a confident smile. "It's about making sure we're not just reacting to changes in the market but staying ahead of them."

Bernard adds, "We've always had a vision for the future, but now we have the resources to back it up. The merger is just the beginning. We're built differently now, and we're ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow head-on."

As CLA Malta moves forward, Bernard and Charles' message is clear: the firm is not just merging - it's transforming. With a strengthened global reach and an unwavering commitment to local service, CLA Malta is poised to lead the way in the professional services industry, both in Malta and beyond.



Charles Scerri,
Founding Partner, CLA



Esplora education team preparing to welcome international delegates ahead of the 2023 Ecsite Conference.

A NEW ERA FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN MALTA



On the 1st of July 2024, Xjenza Malta was officially launched as the successor entity to the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST).

One might ask, ‘What’s in a name?’, but in reality, this was much more than a simple name-change. In fact, the establishment of this Government Agency, by means of L.N. 112 of 2024: Public Administration Act (Cap. 595); Science Malta (Establishment as an Agency) Order, 2024, was induced by the structural need to have in place a stronger institutional set-up to drive forward the R&I agenda.

This includes the amalgamation of the Foundation’s contribution to nation-wide scientific research elements, with the operational administration of the flagship National Science Interactive Centre, Esplora, so crucial for outreach and interaction with all of the Maltese society, previously managed by an Agency of limited scope.

Xjenza Malta will therefore henceforth bring together under its responsibility all activities related to research and innovation, including

policy development and implementation, funding programmes and space-related matters, and the day-to-day running and enhancement of Esplora services. This represents thus representing an institutional shift in the centrality of research and innovation policy-making within the public administration, the due attention that this policy needs within the macroeconomic narrative of the country and, through Esplora, the annual public interaction with thousands of people, presenting science in a popular and palatable manner to all and sundry.

This major development did not come about by chance. Upon Silvio Scerri’s taking over the Chief Executive role within MCST, 18 months ago, it became immediately apparent that the loose administrative and legal set-up of the MCST as a Foundation was simply not enough.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, he reiterates that sterling work had been done up until then, but that the frailty of the set-up might prove to be a stifling and hindering factor for the future ambitious plans they have for this sector.

The formal Agency structure will mean it shall be a ‘body corporate’, with a distinct legal personality, capable of entering into contracts, acquiring, holding and disposing of property for the purposes of its functions, and other provisions emanating from this transition into a fully-fledged Government Agency, with all that entails.

This will give Xjenza Malta a freedom of operation, within its legal and operational parameters of course, that will serve as a major boost to the research, innovation and space sectors in Malta and will give it a freer hand in developing and improving Esplora as both a commercial product and an educational service to the populace.

In anticipation of these increased and enlarged responsibilities, administrative and technical structures were beefed-up over the last few months.

“These efforts were officially recognised, culminating in our significant achievement of the ‘Best Practice in Good Governance Award’ from among all public entities, as adjudicated by the National Audit Office (NAO), following

an extensive auditing exercise conducted on several random samples of our public fund administration,” the CEO states.

The NAO concluded that the processes and documents vetted were not only fully in accordance with the principles of good governance, demonstrating accountability and transparency in administration, but a ‘Best Practice’ example in the administration and governance of public monies.

“This augurs well for the work of the Agency, the work ethic ingrained in our staff being the major asset that we will carry forward into the future,” Mr Scerri explains. “This certificate of competence, indeed excellence, awarded by the Parliamentary body entrusted with rigorously monitoring the administration of public resources, the National Audit Office, is ample proof of the success of the dedicated groundwork made in these last months as preparation for the planned expansion of the plethora of services we are offering the public and the scientific community.”

Xjenza Malta will act as the national research and space policy development and programming arm of the Government, with a robust and clear mandate to engage in a sustained growth and diversification of its portfolio, including the vital research funding.

The Xjenza Malta FUSION research funding programmes currently offer seven unique schemes aimed at developing and commercialising innovative technologies through a budget that has steadily risen from €3.5 million in 2021 to €5 million in 2024. Xjenza Malta will be spearheading the Government’s goal to reach an annual FUSION budget of €8.2 million per year by the end of the current legislative period in 2027, as per its pre-electoral pledge.

This increase in funding is complemented by a diversification of its services, primarily through an enhanced effort on R&I internationalisation endeavours.



Visitors immersed in one of the films at the Esplora Planetarium's 4K theatre.

“Over recent months, we have put in place several new collaborative agreements, notably with the UAE, Spain and, more recently, through a Memorandum of Understanding which introduced a new mobility scheme, with Italy’s renowned Centro Nazionale della Ricerca,” Mr Scerri says.

Xjenza Malta has also doubled its funding for the flagship Sino-Malta R&I Programme and the joint funding programme with the Turkish Research Council (Tubitak), and tripled its participation in joint and scoping actions through the Joint Programming Initiative on Oceans (JPI Oceans).

Horizon Europe – the EU’s Framework programme for R&I – also offers myriad opportunities, and Mr Scerri is proud to point out that, with the help and guidance the Agency has offered to academic, public and private entity players in the sector, participation in collaborative calls has been improving.

Xjenza Malta is also currently coordinating Malta’s participation in three co-fund partnerships – the Transforming Healthcare Systems Partnership (THCS), the Clean Energy Technologies Partnership (CETP) and the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership

“Xjenza Malta will act as the national research and space policy development and programming arm of the Government, with a robust and clear mandate to engage in a sustained growth and diversification of its portfolio, including the vital research funding.”



Sun-and-fun with water experiment.



Visitors engage with the Planet Earth exhibit

(SBEP), and striving, and looking forward, to increasing Malta's participation in new Co-fund Partnerships in the areas of brain health and resilient cultural heritage.

The new legal mandate for Xjenza Malta also strengthens the organisation's remit in the area of space policy, establishing it as the institutional liaison body with the European Space Agency (ESA), and brokered Malta's elevation to membership of the Plan for European Cooperating States (PECS), backed by an unprecedented annual €1.5 million investment for a five-year period of competitive funding calls for Maltese entities.

Xjenza Malta shall, in close collaboration with the Parliamentary Secretariat for Youth, Research & Innovation, be spearheading the ushering in of a public consultation exercise on a new legal framework for Space activities.

"All these developments underline the fact that the step we have taken is, in substance, a giant leap - with apologies to the late Neil Armstrong - for the Research, Innovation and Space sectors in Malta," he asserts.

All these achievements did not take place in a vacuum, in isolation from other efforts or in some elitist environment that is out of touch with the population.

"We have complemented investments at the cutting edge of the scientific sector, with parallel STEM education efforts in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Public interaction with all levels of our society, for Maltese and Gozitans of all academic backgrounds and levels, and of all ages - from grandchildren to grandparents - is coordinated and executed by Explora, the national science interactive centre in Kalkara that welcomes an annual influx of over 200,000 visitors," he says.

As a Government agency with the responsibility for its running, Xjenza Malta will now have boundless possibilities to take what is currently on offer at Explora to new heights, making it more than ever a must-visit for Maltese and foreigners alike.

Mr Scerri says that the past 18 months have been exciting, to say the least, but surely fruitful and productive.

"We now look forward to move ahead at increased rhythms, speeding up and strengthening our technical, financial and supportive presence in the field, using all the resources that we now enjoy for the benefit of the Research Innovation and Space sectors. We will continue to increase our investment in the number and type of exhibitions that the public has learnt to enjoy and appreciate at Explora. The future looks bright for our contributions to the whole scientific spectrum and to living up to our new name, Xjenza Malta, having ownership and responsibility for all things science in Malta," Mr Scerri concludes.



Signing of Xjenza Malta Collective Agreement for Employees.



Xjenza Malta CEO, Silvio Scerri, receiving National Audit Office 'Best Practice in Good Governance Award' for administration of public funds.



Team members from Xjenza Malta and Explora participating in a customised workshop focused on enhancing public engagement strategies.

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NAPA's staff during the launch in September 2024, photo by Lindsey Bahia.

A NEW ERA

FOR PERFORMING ARTS IN MALTA

The National Agency for the Performing Arts (NAPA) is a public agency launched in June 2023 with the aim of providing a joint legal, administrative, and organisational framework for Teatru Malta, KorMalta, and ŻfinMalta.

NAPA was established with the distinct aim of raising the profile of performing arts in Malta, both locally and internationally.

As the go-to agency for the performing arts, its aim is to have an active role in policymaking and advocacy for the performing arts as a discipline in all its facets – from backstage to onstage, from administration to performance and from development to legacy – through the creation of a sustainability strategy for itself and the sector it operates within, as well as synergies with other Public Cultural Organisations (PCOs) and the private sector.

In its contribution towards fair and sustainable opportunities for engagement within the arts, NAPA administers and sustains the three national companies of theatre, dance and choir – Teatru Malta, ŻfinMalta, and KorMalta.

Its organisational structure has been designed to strengthen the respective artistic visions, development, brands, and identities of KorMalta, TeatruMalta and ŻfinMalta, ensuring that they are uniquely distinct and each produce a yearly stand-alone artistic programme, but synergised through co-productions and collaborations for a local and international audience.

NAPA is led by a Chief Executive Officer, Dominic Galea, a composer, musician, lecturer, and musicologist. Galea developed a taste for Jazz music at an early age and studied jazz piano with his father Sammy and later in London with Godfather of British Jazz Stan Tracey.

Since then, he has demonstrated great versatility in his body of work, playing in numerous prestigious jazz clubs and festivals in Malta, England, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy, France, Belgium and Germany.

Galea recorded and performed with international jazz artists such as Clark Tracey, Wayne Naus, Alan Barnes, Mark Armstrong, Martin Shaw, Mark Lewandowski, Brandon Allen, and Bodek Janke to mention a few. Recently, Dominic was promoted as one of Europe's leading jazz pianists at a famous jazz club in London.

He took part in the “Bratislava Jazz Days” (1985), where his composition ‘Horizon’ was recorded on a double album featuring international jazz musicians such as Stanley Clarke, Terje Rypdal and John McLaughlin.

His vast experience in music and production drives Galea to improve the conditions for local performing artists, promote national and international recognition for their work, and increase opportunities for engagement and education.

He is supported in his mission by a Director for Administration, Christabel Borg Preca, and three Artistic Directors, Sean Buhagiar who leads Teatru Malta, Matthew William Robinson who leads ŻfinMalta and Riccardo Bianchi, leading Kor Malta.

“Often the cultural and creative industries are criticised for working in silos, NAPA is challenging this and challenging its Artistic Directors to find areas of convergence, areas of support, and areas of innovation whilst maintaining their distinct characteristics.”



CEO Dominic Galea and Deputy Director Christabelle Borg Preca during NAPA's first season launch.



Dominic Galea, CEO of NAPA.

CEO Galea and the executive team aim for NAPA to focus on three priorities; collaboration, infrastructure and human resources.

“We strive for NAPA’s legacy to first and foremost be collaboration. This is a historical example in which administratively three entities with similar challenges and opportunities work together on an administrative and artistic level. Often the cultural and creative industries are criticised for working in silos, NAPA is challenging this and challenging its Artistic Directors to find areas of convergence, areas of support, and areas of innovation whilst maintaining their distinct characteristics. Over the coming years, we want collaboration to be ingrained within our very operative framework, between our companies, with other PCOs and other executives. Let’s work together to give this sector the attention it deserves,” Dominic Galea highlighted.

The second and third interlinked priorities for the agency are infrastructure and human resources, having adequate rehearsal venues has been on the national agenda for well over a decade.

Our contribution will be the creation of a Rehearsal Hub for NAPA, this will offer its members safe, adequate, and sustainable working conditions and allow us to provide learning opportunities for students in the creative industries.

We are also in conversation with the government to provide performing artists with more stable working conditions in the sector.

For the first time in history, our national companies are engaging 15 full-time artists, ten dancers and five actors together with two apprentice dancers and an ensemble of eight committed choristers.

We want to make sure that this cohort is given the best possible conditions to thrive, promoting job satisfaction and dignified working conditions.

We would like our students within the educational system to aspire to become performing artists and have sufficient opportunities to embark on a career in the arts in Malta.

In addition, the entity will promote research and documentation, as a small nation we cannot afford to lose any of our collective memory.

The first project that championed this concept was Jazz Assemblea, a multimedia project that celebrates the history, present, and future of Jazz in Malta, this project with the support of the Malta Tourism Authority, APS bank, and the Ministry for Heritage, the Arts and Local Governments was held at Spazju Kreattiv between the 17th of September and 29th of October.

Throughout this period Spazju Kreattiv hosts a photographic exhibition, a film premiere, jazz concerts, workshops, discussions, and jam sessions, all of which will be documented for future generations.

Through a stronger collaborative network, NAPA aims to widen the engagement with the performing arts through a vast programme of events.

For its first season NAPA, together with the three national companies launched programmes varied from classical events such as choral concerts and opera to innovative game-based theatrical productions, and choreographies celebrating new emerging talent and internationally renowned artists.

Projects for children, with children, with the elderly and people who simply want to experience the magical world of performing arts, be it through a movement session, an informative discussion or a night at the theatre.

These programmes were given the distinguished patronage of Her Excellency, President of Malta, H.E. Myriam Spiteri Debono.

This is an important milestone for the agency as it validates further and recognises the importance of our mission, that of advancing the status of performing arts within local society.

THE DIGITAL MATURITY ASSESSMENT: A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR MALTESE BUSINESSES

In today's fast-paced digital world, Maltese businesses must adapt, or risk being left behind. Embracing digital tools and strategies is no longer optional – it is essential for survival and growth.

The European Commission's Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) offers a roadmap for Maltese enterprises to navigate their digital transformation journey. At DiHubMT, we leverage this powerful tool to empower local businesses to succeed in the digital age.

The ability to assess and improve digital maturity has become crucial for maintaining a competitive edge. This is where the DMA tool, developed by the European Commission in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre, comes into play - offering a structured and comprehensive approach to understanding and enhancing an organisation's digital capabilities.

"By conducting a DMA with DiHubMT, you can gain the insights needed to drive your digital transformation forward, ensuring that your business remains competitive in a rapidly evolving landscape."

At the Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA), specifically through DiHubMT – Malta's European Digital Innovation Hub (EDIH) – we have been leveraging this tool to guide local enterprises on their digitalisation journey, ensuring they are equipped to thrive in a digital-first world.

The DMA tool is designed to help businesses assess their digital maturity across various key domains, including technology, processes, culture, and strategy. By providing a clear and detailed evaluation, the DMA identifies where an organisation stands in its digital journey and highlights areas that require improvement.

For example, the tool examines how well a business integrates digital technology into its operations, the level of digital skills within the workforce, and the strategic alignment of digital initiatives with overall business goals.

By understanding these critical areas, businesses can implement targeted strategies that not only improve efficiency but also drive innovation and growth. Embracing this tool ensures that businesses are not just participants in the digital economy but leaders in their respective industries.

As a cornerstone of Malta's digital innovation landscape, DiHubMT plays a pivotal role in fostering digital transformation among local enterprises. As part of the MDIA, our mission is to support businesses in their digitalisation efforts, and offering the DMA complimentary is a key component of this strategy.

At DiHubMT, we bring extensive experience in conducting DMAs with a variety of local enterprises, ranging from SMEs to larger organisations. These assessments have provided invaluable insights into the digital strengths and weaknesses of these businesses, enabling them to make informed decisions about their digital strategies.

Through our tailored approach, we ensure that each business receives a comprehensive analysis that reflects its unique circumstances and goals. But our support doesn't end with the assessment.

We provide a full spectrum of services to help businesses implement the recommendations that arise from the DMA. This includes developing customised digitalisation roadmaps, offering access to funding opportunities, and delivering specialised training programs.

Our goal is to ensure that Maltese enterprises are not only able to assess their digital maturity but also to take actionable steps towards enhancing it.

Moreover, the DMA serves as a strategic tool that allows businesses to prioritise their digital investments. By understanding where your organisation stands in terms of digital maturity, you can make more informed decisions about where to allocate resources, ensuring that your digital transformation efforts yield the maximum return on investment.



Rachel Camilleri,
Entrepreneurship Service Development
Manager, MDIA

Digital transformation is a journey to become a digital business. On that journey, the relationship between IT and business changes, evolving from supporter to full partner. This evolution is key to driving sustainable business growth in the digital age.

In an era where digital maturity is becoming a key differentiator in the marketplace, understanding your business's position is more important than ever.

By conducting a DMA with DiHubMT, you can gain the insights needed to drive your digital transformation forward, ensuring that your business remains competitive in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Don't wait until your competitors outpace you - take action now.

Getting started is easy. Simply reach out to us at DiHubMT on dihubmt@mdia.gov.mt to schedule your assessment.

Our team of experts is ready to guide you through the process and help you unlock the full potential of your digital capabilities. Contact us today to take the first step towards a brighter, more digital future for your business.



A NEW VISION

Steve Ellul,
CEO, Infrastructure Malta

Since stepping into his role as CEO of Infrastructure Malta in July 2024, Steve Ellul has embraced a forward-thinking approach to modernising Malta's infrastructure.

Despite his recent appointment, Mr Steve Ellul has hit the ground running, challenging the conventional understanding of infrastructure: that of roadworks and their inconveniences.

Instead, he envisions infrastructure as the driving force behind upgrading Malta's road network while also integrating environmental sustainability.

Mr Ellul brings a wealth of professional expertise to this role and emphasises that infrastructural projects under his leadership prioritise environmental considerations.

"Infrastructure is not just about getting from point A to point B. It's about creating better facilities for the public," Mr Ellul explains. "We

are collaborating with both public entities and private companies, such as telecom operators, to ensure that road infrastructure is holistically upgraded to benefit all users."

The organisation is also placing the public at the centre of these changes. Infrastructure Malta's community engagement team has begun meeting regularly with local communities and mayors across the island, ensuring that the public is actively involved in the decision-making process. This outreach has already proven effective in localities such as Valletta, Sta Venera, Gżira and Gudja, where residents have provided valuable feedback.

"Infrastructure is not just about getting from point A to point B. It's about creating better facilities for the public."

He explains how he sent several projects back to the drawing board to incorporate more green spaces, such as the Tal-Barrani reorganisation project, which will now feature 500 square metres of green space along the avenue for the first time in decades.

Community engagement team meets public to explain upcoming road projects.



Mr Ellul's strategy extends to external stakeholders. He stresses that all parties involved in these projects must meet elevated standards to ensure that Infrastructure Malta delivers solutions, not inconveniences.

Contractors are being held to higher standards. Ellul notes that the organisation's commitment to quality and timely project delivery is second to none.

"Our coordination efforts are working, and we are seeing results. If commitments by contractors aren't met, we take action which could lead to fines" he stresses.

Moreover, the organisation is appealing to NGOs and local councils to come forward with their ideas about upgrading road infrastructure in their localities.

"We are maintaining good relationships with various NGOs, such as ROTA, Din l-Art Helwa and Moviment Graffiti, as well as local councils. Our infrastructural projects do include the concerns of these NGOs, such as the high number of unconnected cycle lanes," he explains.

Ellul is focusing on expanding Malta's cycling infrastructure, with plans to increase the number of cycling lanes and connect them across towns.

He says that it is essential to provide better infrastructure for alternative mobility. Creating a large network of cycle lanes is part and parcel of the shared mobility concept which brings to light the recently launched scheme called Vjal Kulhadd.

This initiative, a €10 million investment, focuses on ensuring that local road design moves beyond the conventional approach of solely accommodating vehicular movement but creates inviting and enjoyable street environments for all users.

"We are appealing to the local councils and NGOs; adopting a bottom-up approach to come forward with their ideas to upgrade road

infrastructure in their localities. The rest is in our hands, but we need their input to ensure that the infrastructure does feed into the aspirations of the people", explains Mr Ellul.

The scheme focuses on ensuring that local roads design moves beyond the conventional approach of solely accommodating vehicular movement but creates inviting and enjoyable street environments for all users. The proposals may include expanding semi-pedestrian zones, temporary pedestrianisation, shared mobility, cycle lanes, alternative mobility routes, improved accessibility for vulnerable people, and planting more trees to provide shade.

"Streets are not just conduits for cars; they are vital spaces that connect us as a community. Through this project, we seek to develop a holistic, people-centred approach to urban infrastructure that promotes accessibility, sustainability, and aesthetic appeal," remarks the CEO.

At the same time, his team is working on planting more trees along pedestrian routes to encourage walking and reduce reliance on cars.

"The infrastructure itself will drive a change in mentality. We need to provide alternatives to car dependency," he says.

A notable example of Infrastructure Malta's environmental commitment is the current collaboration taking place with the Energy and Water Agency, at Chadwick Lakes, an important water catchment and agricultural area. The €3.2 million investment aims at strengthening the walls of the basins through which rainwater flows. The work also includes stronger foundations of the road to improve safety and accessibility.

Public outreach extends beyond land-based projects. Infrastructure Malta is also spearheading efforts to enhance maritime infrastructure.

The agency has completed significant projects, including the reconstruction of the Sally Port at Birgu and the Bormla Ferry Landing Site, which

"Streets are not just conduits for cars; they are vital spaces that connect us as a community. Through this project, we seek to develop a holistic, people-centred approach to urban infrastructure that promotes accessibility, sustainability, and aesthetic appeal."

have improved safety and revitalised historic waterfronts.

A major project in the pipeline is the construction of a new breakwater and passenger ferry facilities in Buġibba, an EU funded project which aims to extend maritime transport services to St Paul's Bay. This initiative aligns with Infrastructure Malta's vision of promoting sea transport as a viable alternative to road travel.

Ellul is determined to make infrastructure a tool for environmental progress. His teams are constantly encouraged to incorporate greener elements into their projects, from sustainable energy solutions to green spaces in underutilised areas.

"Infrastructure used to be seen as the counter to the environment," he says. "We want it to be a tool for environmental sustainability," he concludes.

The construction of the new breakwater and passenger ferry facilities in Buġibba is at an advanced stage.



WORKING TOWARDS A CLEANER MALTA

Ramon Deguara,

*Director General, Cleansing and Maintenance
Division*

The Cleansing and Maintenance Division (CMD) is the Government entity responsible for the general cleaning of streets around Malta. It falls under the remit of the Parliamentary Secretariat for Public Cleanliness and the Ministry for Tourism and Public Cleanliness.

The division has many heavy vehicles and machinery to accommodate its vast services. The CMD has started the transition to electric vehicles and is investing in new and modern machinery.

Some of its recent investments include electric vehicles, electric sweepers of different sizes, electric pedestrian sweepers, electric robotic equipment (such as robot sweepers and robot scrubbers), amongst others.

The CMD is always on the lookout for new equipment which will help in carrying out its' work in a more efficient and environmentally safe manner.

It has a large workforce to accommodate the necessary cleaning and maintenance required on our streets. The CMD has introduced various shifts to compliment the demand of work, and the Division is continuing investing in its resources with works ongoing on a 24x7 basis from Monday to Sunday.

The CMD has invested in a Control Centre to monitor the new electric vehicles and machinery, whereby tracking signals can be monitored by the Division such as routh tracking and fault signals, amongst others.





Fully Electric Sweeper on Maltese roads.

It has also expanded its assistance to any Local Council wishing to collaborate with CMD. Voluntarily, local councils are able to reach out to the CMD requesting its intervention and such intervention may include street sweeping, removal of illegal dumping, power washing of streets and so on.

The CMD assists in many emergency situations that occur during the year. These include the immediate cleaning after storms, cleaning of debris after car accidents, cleaning of oil spillage on the roads, removal of fallen trees, amongst others.

The CMD also offers its services after events, including cleaning after feasts and other public events.

It has also expanded its assistance to the Local Councils with regards to cleaning. On a voluntary basis, local councils are reaching out to the CMD requesting its intervention, including sweeping, removal of illegal dumping, power washing of streets and so on.

The CMD has embarked on innovative projects that work by means of AI and other technology. These are currently in testing phases and will be

“The CMD assists in many emergency situations that occur during the year. These include the immediate cleaning after storms, cleaning of debris after car accidents, cleaning of oil spillage on the roads, removal of fallen trees, amongst others.”

launched in the near future. It is also working on a project to detect and identify litter by means of technology.

Other projects include the identification and introduction of modern and electric equipment, as well as robotic equipment.

All the CMD’s services are supported by the Customer Care unit which can be reached by telephone on 1718 or by means of the mobile app ‘Clean and Upkeep’.

The CMD strives to address any cleaning and maintenance requests that fall under its remit in a timely manner.

Currently there is an ongoing educational campaign, whereby the CMD has re-introduced the character of ‘Xummiemu’. This educational campaign emphasises the importance of keeping our island clean, disposing of waste in a responsible way and reporting any illegal dumping.

The government is doing its part to keep the island clean – the public should also do its part in complimenting this ongoing work by keeping the environment clean and tidy by disposing of waste properly.

EUROPEAN MOBILITY ~~WEEK~~ YEAR

Another European Mobility Week rolls out – this time to last for a whole year. Transport Malta is supporting Local Councils, NGOs and schools in their activities.

European Mobility Week seeks to promote clean, alternative, and sustainable urban transport with the main aim being to encourage a shift in the way people commute while also promoting healthier options such as walking and cycling.

The proposed actions as part of this campaign should not be limited to the timeframe of the European Mobility Week, that is between 16th and 22nd of September.

The EU Commission has extended the campaign through the MOBILITYACTION label, to further encourage the implementation of sustainable mobility promotional actions throughout the entire year.

The campaign gives localities the chance to explore the role of their respective streets and to look at, and possibly implement practical solutions to tackle issues related to urban challenges, such as traffic congestion, air pollution, lack of accessibility and lack of street liveability in urban village cores.

It also enables localities to focus on the increase of pedestrianised zones in urban village cores as well as the introduction and promotion of cycle lanes in the respective town/village.

Each year, the European Commission selects a theme to celebrate the European Mobility Week, which helps to further emphasise the sustainable transport actions to be promoted in European towns and cities, during September.

This theme for this year is Let's work together to improve Shared Public Space!

With over 70% of Europeans living in urban areas, public space has become scarce in many cities. A place where all people, transport modes and activities have sufficient space offers more social equity, more road safety, less noise, less air pollution, and a better quality of life. Therefore, sharing public space brings many benefits to society.

Vulnerable road users account for 70% of urban road fatalities, so it is essential to prioritise this group when allocating public space. To encourage people to walk and cycle more often, there should be more high-quality dedicated infrastructure, and traffic rules which prioritise pedestrians and cyclists. Public authorities have the tools to implement policy and infrastructure changes that support a permanent shift to sustainable mobility.

Local Councils and NGOs are strongly encouraged to use this week to also pilot innovative sustainable and alternative mobility measures and, to gather feedback from residents on same.

Furthermore, European Mobility Week is also an excellent opportunity for local stakeholders to work together and discuss the different aspects of sustainable mobility and air quality, find solutions to reduce car-use, parking problems and, by default transport emissions. Possibly, one can also, in the process, test new technologies and planning measures.



THIS YEAR'S THEME INCLUDES VARIOUS INITIATIVES UNDER

4 MAIN PILLARS

1 EXPERIENCING PUBLIC SPACE IN DIFFERENT WAY

Making sure everyone can enjoy it and use it safely, allowing for personal mobility as well as social interaction.

2 PLANNING AND DESIGNING SAFER STREETS

Mobility management plans and urban planners should seek how to balance road space allocation, and to protect vulnerable road users.

3 REDEVELOPING URBAN SPACE TOGETHER

Ensuring the involvement of the local community, with consideration given to the different users and transport modes.

4 SCHOOL STREETS

Creating safe school streets while supporting a generational transition towards safer active mobility.

To assist Local Councils and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to be part of this EU-wide campaign, Transport in Malta in conjunction with the Ministry for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, launches two annual packages, namely the Package for Permanent Sustainable Mobility Measures, and the Package for European Mobility Week Small Events and Activities, which are open till 15th October, as well as an open call for Partnerships with Schools.

These packages cater for the initiatives under pillars identified above, among others, and organisations are encouraged to reach out to the Authority as well as consult the website futuremobility.com for further information throughout the year.

PACKAGE FOR EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK SMALL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Open till 15th October

Type of Assistance:

Financial Assistance

- Local and Regional Councils could benefit from these funds to organise activities within their communities through which the public is encouraged towards active mobility

PACKAGE FOR PERMANENT SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY MEASURES

Open till 15th October

Type of Assistance:

Financial Assistance

- Local and Regional Councils could benefit from these funds so as to apply new services which lead to lesser use of private vehicles, such as analysing and introducing new routes of transport, as well the modal shift towards using transport at sea

OPEN CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

Type of Assistance:

Facilitation & Coordination – open all year round

- Safer use of bikes and bicycles
- Safer use of roads for everyone including vulnerable people,
- Maximising the use of open & public spaces



MALTA'S APPROACH TO RESPONSIBLE CANNABIS USE

Dr Joey Reno Vella,
Executive Chairperson, Authority for
the Responsible Use of Cannabis (ARUC)

Dr Joey Reno Vella, Executive Chairperson of the Authority for the Responsible Use of Cannabis (ARUC), discusses the transformative journey of cannabis legislation in Malta, emphasising the balance between regulatory precision and adaptive governance.

In the ever-evolving landscape of cannabis legislation, Malta has emerged as a pioneer, crafting a model that harmonises legal reform with social responsibility.

At the forefront of this transformation is Dr Joey Reno Vella, CEO of the Authority for the Responsible Use of Cannabis (ARUC). He underscores the shift in how Malta addresses cannabis use, pivoting from punitive measures to a more compassionate, health-focused approach.

"In 2021, I formed part of a group of lawyers given a seemingly impossible brief: to propose legislation which would allow cannabis users to procure their needs without infringing Malta's

European and international obligations," recalls Dr. Vella, "Throughout my legal profession, I had witnessed first-hand the social and legal injustices suffered by cannabis users."

The illicit market's unsafe conditions and the psychological toll on users highlighted the urgent need for reform.

"Degrading and unsafe treatment at the hands of dealers caused untold psychological damage whilst it was common knowledge that the cannabis procured from the illegal market was tainted with chemicals which cause infinitely more harm than cannabis itself," he says.

"I believe that if these targets are achieved, I would have contributed my part towards the aims of the legislative reform: to allow cannabis users to have access to a safe and regularised source from within which they obtain cannabis while still advocating that healthier choices should be opted for."

Dr Vella says that he is pleased to note that Malta's government recognised these issues and took bold steps to address them, in spite of the legal conundrums relating to tolerating the consumption of a product which was – and still is – listed as a prohibited drug.

The result was a comprehensive legal framework that served as a blueprint for reforms in other countries around Europe.

“The eagerness, dexterity and skill of all those involved produced a very successful result from a legal point of view. Indeed our legal framework has served as a blueprint for the new wave of EU reforms,” he asserts.

However, Dr Vella stresses that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without robust administrative support.

“The eagerness, dexterity and skill of all those involved produced a very successful result from a legal point of view. Indeed our legal framework has served as a blueprint for reforms in other countries around Europe”

The legislation mandated the creation of ARUC to oversee the formation of Cannabis Harm Reduction Associations (CHRAs). These associations enable members to share costs and cultivate cannabis for personal use in a regulated environment.

“I played a background role in this Authority since its inception as a board member where I had the opportunity to contribute towards the introduction of more detailed legal and administrative mechanisms which govern how the Associations must function,” Dr Vella explains.

Prospective applicants were given a platform to voice their concerns, ensuring the new system was both inclusive and supportive.

When the opportunity arose for Dr Vella to lead ARUC, he embraced the challenge, aiming to build on the foundations laid by his predecessors and drive the authority towards greater achievements.

“I accepted to embark on this new chapter to not only continue building on the foundation blocks set by my predecessors but also endeavour to reach higher heights,” he says.

Upon taking the helm, Dr Vella identified two primary goals for ARUC:



First of all, implementation of the Regulatory Framework, as ensuring the highest standards among licensed associations was paramount. Dr. Vella quickly worked to stabilize and expand ARUC's small but dedicated team, recognising that their success hinged on this stability. Building a robust governance structure became a central focus to deepen and enhance operational effectiveness.

“It is now my main aim to continue building this team and the Authority's governance to obtain the desired level of depth and robustness in its operations,” he stresses.

Secondly, adaptive and progressive evolution - Cannabis regulation is an ever-evolving field. Dr Vella's tenure aims to keep ARUC agile and forward-thinking, ready to respond to new

developments and external threats. His vision is for ARUC to remain relevant and proactive, ensuring the authority can adapt to changes swiftly and efficiently.

“Cannabis has been around since old age, yet the actions of the various actors in this field move like quicksand,” he says, “I will strive to ensure that the Authority's setup is agile and outward looking to quickly respond to new developments as they arise, and to remain ahead of any external threats to its functioning.”

Navigating the complexities of cannabis regulation is no small feat. Balancing legal obligations with public health and safety requires continuous vigilance and innovation. Dr Vella acknowledges the colossal task ahead but remains steadfast in his commitment to fostering a responsible cannabis use culture in Malta.

“I believe that if these targets are achieved, I would have contributed my part towards the aims of the legislative reform: to allow cannabis users to have access to a safe and regularised source from within which they obtain cannabis while still advocating that healthier choices should be opted for,” he states.

The ARUC's role in licensing non-profit associations and providing education will be critical in shaping Malta's cannabis landscape. Ensuring these associations operate within the highest standards of safety and legality remains a top priority.

Under Dr Vella's leadership, ARUC is not just regulating cannabis use but redefining it within the context of public health and social equity.

As Malta continues to navigate this revolution, the lessons learned and the frameworks established here may well serve as a guiding light for other countries grappling with similar challenges.





FINANCEMALTA 17TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024: EMPOWERING FINANCIAL SERVICES

The highly anticipated FinanceMalta 17th Annual Conference, themed 'Empowering Financial Services', is set to take place on the 29th of November 2024 at the Hilton Conference Centre in Malta, bringing together top industry leaders, policymakers, and academics for a day of insightful panels, keynotes and networking.

With over 600 delegates, 40 prominent local and international speakers and increased foreign attendance, FinanceMalta's Annual Conference is set to confirm itself as Malta's largest financial services event.

The event will be chaired by Sorcha Hellyer, Founder of Image Diplomacy and iD creative solutions, and an official representative for BBC news.

The conference will be addressed by the FinanceMalta Chairman, Mr George Vella, the Minister for Finance and Employment, Hon Clyde Caruana, and the Shadow Minister for Finance, Hon. Jerome Caruana Cilia. The Prime Minister of Malta, Hon. Robert Abela will be concluding the event with his closing remarks.

Notably, futurist and author Emmanuel Daniel will deliver a keynote address on 'The Future of Financial Centres' exploring the evolving landscape of global financial hubs.

Some of the main speakers at this year's event include Carmine di Noia, Director for Financial

and Enterprise Affairs at the OECD, Kotaro Ishi, Mission Chief at International Monetary Fund, Panagiotis Polydoros, Mastercard's Country Manager for Greece, Cyprus and Malta, Fabrice Demarigny, Chairman, European Capital Markets Institute as well as several leading local exponents from the banking, fintech and legal sectors.

Keynote speakers from prestigious authorities such as the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA), the Malta Business Registry (MBR), the Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit (FIAU), and the Malta Financial Services Advisory Council (MFSAC) will share insights on the latest trends and challenges in the financial services sector.

All ticket holders will also be invited to attend a pre-conference networking event on the 28th of November, the day before the conference, at the Casino Maltese in Valletta.

For more details on the agenda and speakers or to purchase tickets, visit:

www.financemalta.org/financemaltaconf.

Empowering Financial Services

In collaboration with BRND WGN

> 29th Nov 2024

> Hilton, St.Julians

The FinanceMalta 17th Annual Conference

Non-Member Early Bird

€220/ticket

10/07/2024 until 31/08/2024

Member Early Bird

€170/ticket

10/07/2024 until 31/08/2024

Non-Member

€300/ticket

Member

€240/ticket

UOM / MCAST Student

€10/ticket

Group Discount (6+)

€150/ticket

Startup

€170/ticket



Scan the QR Code for
more information

PROTECTING THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Christopher Magri,
Director General of Customs Operations

The 2023 merger of the Tax and VAT Departments with Customs to form the Malta Tax and Customs Administration (MTCA) marked the beginning of a transformational journey, aimed at enhancing the services provided to its numerous customers. This consolidation has already streamlined several processes, and further improvements are on the horizon.

A core element of MTCA's strategy, introduced in 2023, focuses on leveraging information and intelligence to enhance risk assessments, thereby maximising the effectiveness of its resources.

These changes in Malta will be further supported by upcoming reforms within the European Union, where the Customs Union Reform will introduce initiatives designed to reduce costs and bureaucracy.

Locally, Customs is planning to decrease the number of controls on imports and exports over the coming years by using advanced IT systems being implemented across MTCA.

These systems will integrate data from various sources, offering a more comprehensive picture of economic activity, including areas that may have previously gone unnoticed by Customs. This initiative also aims to increase compliance by serving as a stronger deterrent against non-compliance.

“There will always be random checks to uncover the unknown, but risk assessment otherwise operates like clockwork,” said Customs Director General Chris Magri.

While a risk-based approach is not new - Malta significantly reduced the previous 100% control rate upon joining the EU and adopting the



Community Customs Code - the methods have evolved significantly.

Today, electronic declarations enable the verification of product profiles by type, sector, and country, all of which determine the required level of scrutiny.

Importers are already familiar with the Green Channel, which allows goods to be released as soon as customs dues are paid, and the Red Channel, which is used for goods requiring physical inspection.

The Yellow Channel serves as an intermediary, where goods may be released either through the Green or Red Channel depending on the documentation provided or if further physical inspection is deemed necessary.

Looking ahead, a new Blue Channel will be introduced.

"If a consignment, such as a container of toys, requires physical inspection, rather than holding the entire container, the goods will be released from Customs, and the importer or representative will have 10 days to present the necessary documentation - or a sample for inspection - so Customs can determine the next steps," Mr Magri explained.

All these systems reflect a risk-based approach: importers who consistently demonstrate compliance can expect fewer controls.

The Union Customs Code will build on these initiatives, taking them even further. Following the first reading and feedback from Member States and other stakeholders, revisions will be incorporated for a second reading.

The reforms are set to be phased in from 2028, with initial voluntary adoption transitioning to mandatory compliance.

To illustrate the scope of this reform, the document comprises 265 articles, plus an annex with interpretation rules. However, it represents a significant step forward for this vital sector, which currently enforces over 350 EU laws at external borders.

Enhanced by Artificial Intelligence, the proposed Data Hub will offer a 360-degree overview of supply chains and goods movements, potentially saving €2 billion in costs for businesses across Member States.

"Companies will only need to interact with a single, centralised, and harmonised portal when submitting customs information, reducing the need for repeated data entry."

"Companies will only need to interact with a single, centralised, and harmonised portal when submitting customs information, reducing the need for repeated data entry," Mr Magri explained. "This is crucial for boosting EU competitiveness by eliminating duplicated costs."

The European Customs Reform will also expand the channels available to verified Authorized Economic Operators, elevating collaboration to new levels. These operators, typically major players with advanced logistics systems, are already accessible to customs authorities.

The reform also proposes the elimination of the current €150 customs duty exemption for items imported from outside the EU, often exploited to undervalue goods or break them into smaller consignments to avoid duties.

"The new proposal will require declarations and applicable VAT and import duties to be charged at checkout for all imports, regardless of value," Mr Magri noted. "This makes sense, as suppliers are better positioned than customers to determine product codes and specifications."

Additionally, there is a proposal to categorise the numerous HS product codes into four or five simplified groups, ranging from items exempt from VAT, customs, or excise duties to those subject to increasing rates.

Another initiative is the proposed 'Trust and Check' system for approved Economic Operators, which would minimise entry-point controls. Customs authorities could access a trader's system for checks, but formal declarations and fees would only be required within a specified period after the trade.

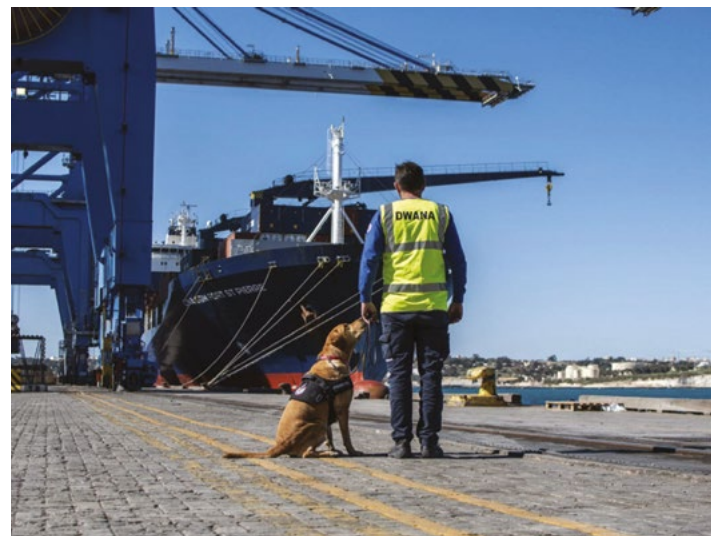
"All of this aligns with MTCA's approach, which uses information-based systems to facilitate trade while maintaining adequate controls where necessary," Mr Magri said.

However, the role of Customs extends beyond trade. The unit remains vigilant at all entry points into the country, safeguarding society against restricted or banned goods, from drugs to counterfeit items.

This includes enforcing safety standards: "For example, toys without proper safety certifications could pose a danger to children," he emphasised. "Our risk-based approach enables us to allocate more resources towards protecting both our economy and our society."



Customs officials wearing high-visibility vests marked 'DWANA', gathered during a routine inspection at a maritime port.



A customs officer with his detection dog overseeing the arrival of a large cargo ship at the port, ensuring border security and compliance.



THE FUTURE IS NOW

BOV SOFTPOS PAYMENT SOLUTIONS



The advent of SoftPOS (Software Point of Sale) solutions has brought about a transformation in the payment acceptance business, with more shop owners and sales merchants nowadays opting for this latest technology to accept payments from customers. These technologies offer businesses more freedom, greater flexibility and more cost-effective means of accepting and managing customer payments.

Innovative Payment Solutions

SoftPOS is an innovative technology that allows merchants to accept payments directly on mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets.

This technology is software-based, transforming mobile devices into contactless payment terminals through a specific payment app, thereby doing away with hardware like physical card readers and ePOS machines, that are more costly and cumbersome to maintain.



These developments promise to enhance the payment experience for both businesses and customers, offering the additional benefit of reducing the reliance on cash as a payment method.

In the local market, Bank of Valletta has become the first local bank to offer this service to its extensive network of merchants, who continue to place their trust in the Bank, following years of positive relations through BOV's payment acceptance business.

For bank customers, be they businesses offering their services or their customers paying for such services, using BOV mobilePOS is as straightforward as tapping a card or a mobile device on the conventional POS.

The difference is that instead of the conventional POS, customers now tap on the merchant's mobile phone – simple as that. Once this is done, the transaction is processed instantly.

Every transaction is encrypted and complies with stringent security standards, providing a high level of protection to both merchants and customers. The simplicity and speed of this technology are designed to enhance the shopping experience, making payments seamless, efficient and secure.

What's in it for merchants?

Merchants can accept payments anywhere. BOV mobilePOS offers unparalleled mobility and flexibility, making it an easy choice for those businesses that operate outside the traditional brick-and-mortar settings, or for those who want to offer a more dynamic customer service experience.

To name a few examples, this solution is ideal for those businesses that offer delivery services directly to customers in the comfort of their homes, service providers and salespersons who are always conducting their business on the go.

The solution also spells greater flexibility to those brick-and-mortar businesses that opt to have multiple points of sale within their store, points of sale that are mobile and that can be used by salespersons roaming around and assisting customers.

An additional benefit of embracing this technology is the alignment with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. By doing away with the traditional EPOS hardware and reducing the need for paper rolls and receipts, this technology helps minimise negative environmental impact.

Customers who still wish to have a receipt may scan a QR code from their mobile, making the

transactions fully digital. Merchants who take up these solutions are thereby contributing to sustainable business practices and can use this strategy to reach their own sustainability goals.

Convenience, enhanced security and beating cash

For customers, this solution means faster and more convenient transactions. This is especially relevant in today's digital age, where in today's faced-paced and busy lifestyle, convenience and speed of service is paramount.

Customers can complete their purchases quickly, without reaching into their wallet and without the need to carry cash.

An additional benefit for customers is that transactions processed through BOV mobilePOS are highly secure. This technology adheres to international payment security standards, ensuring that all sensitive information is encrypted and protected.

In an age where scams and fraud are increasing as the pace of technology advances, such solutions offer peace of mind and give customers the comfort of knowing that their finances are safe and protected.

Ready to embrace the change?

BOV mobilePOS is poised to be a game-changer. As we continue to embrace digital innovation, it stands out as a powerful tool that is changing the local payment ecosystem.

It provides a practical and efficient alternative to cash, addressing many of the issues associated with cash handling such as security risks, the need for small change, and the inefficiency of counting and storing money.

BOV mobilePOS is also a practical and efficient alternative to the traditional POS terminals, moving away from large and cumbersome machines to modern and sleek alternatives.

By offering a secure, flexible, and cost-effective solution, it empowers merchants to enhance their service capabilities. It allows for salespersons, delivery persons, technicians and other mobile service providers to accept payments on the go, thereby also meeting the evolving demands of their customer base.

"BOV mobilePOS is poised to be a game-changer. As we continue to embrace digital innovation, it stands out as a powerful tool that is changing the local payment ecosystem."

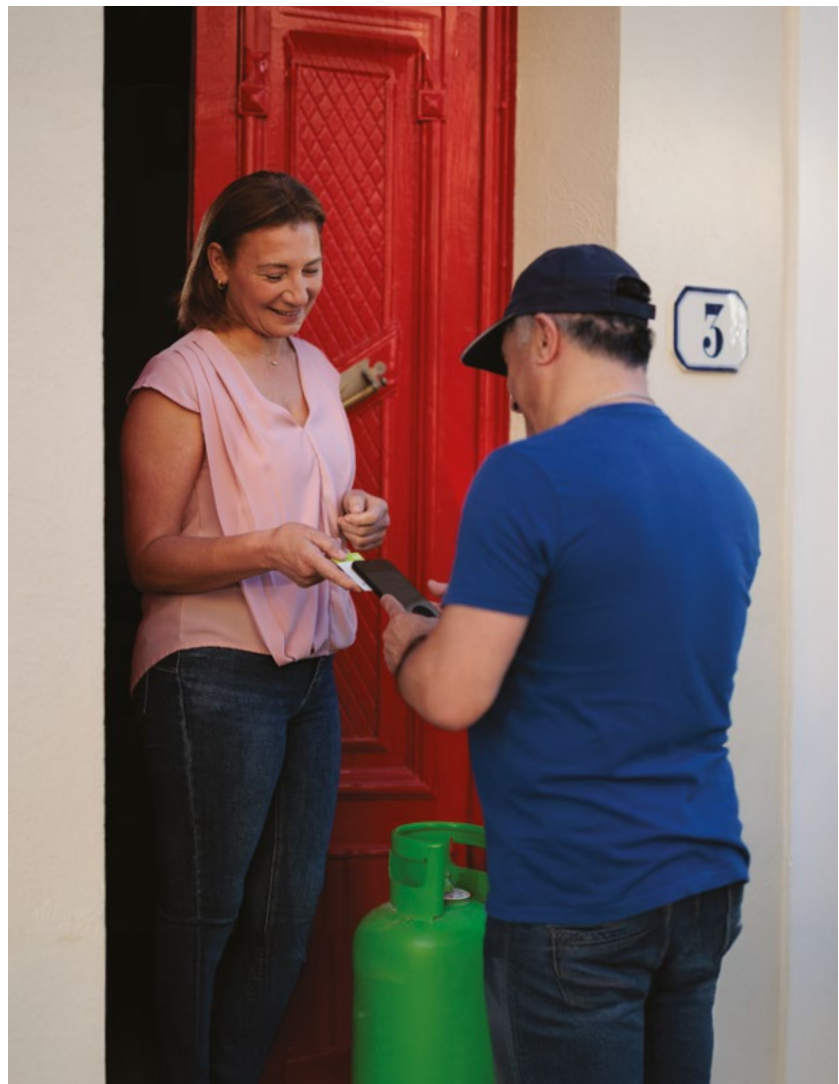
Embracing this technology will surely be a catalyst for change as it drives us closer to becoming a truly cashless society.

The BOV mobilePOS app can be downloaded from the Google Play Store. Merchants and businesses wishing to apply can use the QR code on the next page and fill in their details on the form. A BOV representative will get in touch and set up everything in a very short time.

In case of inquiries, one may also contact the Bank's Customer Service Centre on 21312020 or submit a query from:

<https://www.bov.com/help-support>.

Issued by Bank of Valletta p.l.c., 58, Triq San Zakkarija, Il-Belt Valletta VLT 1130. Bank of Valletta p.l.c. is a public limited company regulated by the MFSA and is licensed to carry out the business of banking in terms of the Banking Act (Cap. 371 of the Laws of Malta).





EU GLOBAL GATEWAY EVENT MALTA

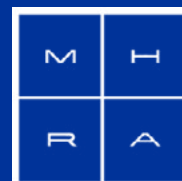


Join the EU Global Gateway Webinar on 22nd October at 10.00am, to learn more about business opportunities of participating in EU development projects in third countries.

For more information contact info@mbb.org.mt



THE MALTA CHAMBER



MALTA HOTELS
& RESTAURANTS
ASSOCIATION



BUILDING BRIDGES AND FOSTERING GROWTH

Helga Mizzi,
International Relations Advisor, The Malta Chamber

It is a great pleasure for me to address Movers and Shakers readers for the first time since my joining The Malta Chamber. This gives me a perfect opportunity to introduce myself and to expand upon my recent responsibilities as International Relations Advisor at The Malta Chamber.

I gladly do so in the hope of encouraging and motivating members to come forward with ideas or challenges encountered in tapping existing and emerging potential in other countries and regions.

It is fitting to explain how we go about our international business at The Malta Chamber.

First of all, we listen to what our members need, examine their particular characteristics, understand what helps or hinders them in fulfilling their international aspirations, and then, act.

We absorb these insights and use all available avenues to address them through our very robust network of contacts that includes diplomatic representation, local

and foreign trade government agencies, and of course our counterparts spread all over the world.

The Malta Chamber boasts of close to 90 Memoranda of Understanding that promote cooperation with other national or regional Chambers abroad. There are various other frameworks through which we plan and implement our international work.

Our International Relations Department supports all initiatives related to diplomatic exchanges and supports business on internationalisation efforts. In-house structures also include three Business Councils that operate as an integral part of The Malta Chamber, presently focussing on Germany, Ireland and Turkey.

“The Malta Chamber boasts of close to 90 Memoranda of Understanding that promote cooperation with other national or regional Chambers abroad. There are various other frameworks through which we plan and implement our international work.”



Meeting with High Commissioner Gloria Gangte.



Trade UnityMalta and Germany, Linked For Success.

When it comes to representation abroad, The Malta Chamber is active in the prominent Eurochambres and Business Europe formats, while participation in the European Enterprise Network gives us additional tools to assist businesses to innovate and grow on an international scale.

On the international front we are active within the International Chamber of Commerce.

The Malta Chamber makes best use of these structures to carry out its advocacy work especially on EU competitiveness, over-regulation, a business-friendly green transition, human capital and Malta's insularity.

In parallel, through our close collaboration with entities like Trade Malta and Malta Enterprise, we advocate for favourable trade policies and agreements that benefit local businesses.

There is also a more 'hands-on' aspect of our internationalisation work.

We very often take this forward on a one-to-one basis with our individual members, and on a strong relation based, above all, on trust.

I find this to be the most rewarding aspect of our internationalisation endeavours as it is hugely gratifying, to both businesses and Chamber alike, to see results taking shape.

Sometimes it is just about making the right connections – and this is what we are here for.

The Malta Chamber complements its bespoke approach with a very active calendar of engagements, we also provide ample opportunities for its members to network around specific themes or countries of interest.

Our 'Doing Business With' events are highly appreciated as the ideal setting to connect with potential partners, suppliers, clients, and other stakeholders ranging from other countries.

Guidance is also provided, either through members' events or on a case-by-case pattern, by providing market information and related research to enable our members to determine market trends, consumer behaviour, business cultures and customs and regulatory frameworks.

In conclusion, I invite readers to consider the insights I have shared and consider how they can be applied to your internationalisation goals.

Whether through advocacy, networking, access to markets or establishing foreign partnerships, The Malta Chamber is there to help you make a positive impact and register success.



Diplomatic Networking Event.



Meeting with H.E. Roberto Buontempo, Ambassador of Malta to Hungary.



Doing business with Türkiye.



THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Judge Emeritus Joseph Zammit McKeon,
Parliamentary Ombudsman

The objective of the Office of the Ombudsman (which includes the Commissioners) is not simply to investigate complaints submitted in writing by persons with regard to the exercise of administrative functions by Government or any public authority or public body to which Chapter 385 applies, but also to promote a public service culture based on fairness and accountability by democratic scrutiny and control that counters malpractice and misplaced bureaucracy.

Any physical person of any nationality, and any 'legal' person, can submit a written complaint against a public authority to which Chapter 385 applies. This point of law and of fact should encourage the business community to come forward to the Office of the Ombudsman and file written complaints when public authorities fail to give redress.

I very much hope that what I shall be stating today will suffice to satisfy the business community that the Office of the Ombudsman is there for them as well when they feel that public authorities have failed them.

First and foremost. The fact that at law the Ombudsman (and the Commissioners) make recommendations and not executive orders does not in any manner whatsoever make the Office a useless or toothless institution as some mistakenly think. Experience has disproved this wrong impression.

"In its investigations, the Office strives to ensure fair treatment, promote transparency, and facilitate resolution in a neutral manner. The Office operates according to principles of secrecy and confidentiality, meaning that persons can share their concerns without fear of reprisal."

The majority are the cases where the public administration endorses and implements recommendations. Where in the minority of cases the public administration holds back, the Ombudsman can react by referring the matter ultimately to the House of Representatives.

The Commissioners and myself have used this discretion with prudence and attention on numerous instances where it was felt that the matter or the issues involved were of public interest. There have been cases on record where recommendations were applied at that final stage.

The Office considers non-implemented recommendations as missed opportunities for the public administration to put its act in order. When the Office recommends against the public administration in individual complaints, the public administration would be wrong to consider the Office as an adversary of some sort.

Many a time recommendations push towards changes in 'red-tape' methodology that could have been acceptable years back but which are no longer relevant today.

In its investigations, the Office strives to ensure fair treatment, promote transparency, and facilitate resolution in a neutral manner. The Office operates according to principles of secrecy and confidentiality, meaning that persons can share their concerns without fear of reprisal.

This unique approach that is required at law fosters trust, as persons feel secure in discussing sensitive issues without the concern that information could be disclosed to others. Ombudsmen are expected to be impartial and fair in their assessments and interventions.

In my 18 months in office, I have seen this happen and can therefore convincingly state that complainants and the public administration are treated alike equitably.

Accessibility of the Ombudsman is crucial. At the Office we have done our very best to be approachable and available when needed. Knowing that there is a reliable and responsive channel for conflict resolution contributes to a sense of trust in the Office.

Another positive fact is that the operations of the Office are clear and understandable because in essence they are open to scrutiny.

The independence of the Office is its benchmark. Because it is a constitutional institution, that is separate and distinct from the other organs of the State, the Office has been decisive in identifying weaknesses, malfunctions, failures and bad practices in the administration of public bodies.

The Office has proved itself to be fast, resolute, informal and inexpensive. As an overseer of Government, the Ombudsman has the tangible ability to ensure that the public administration conducts itself lawfully, makes decisions reasonably, and treats all persons equitably and fairly.

I strongly believe that in the public service there are officials who are professional and sensitive enough to decide what is right (and oppose what is wrong) not simply in order to make better the workings of Government but also to improve really and truly the everyday lives of people who knock at the doors of the public administration.

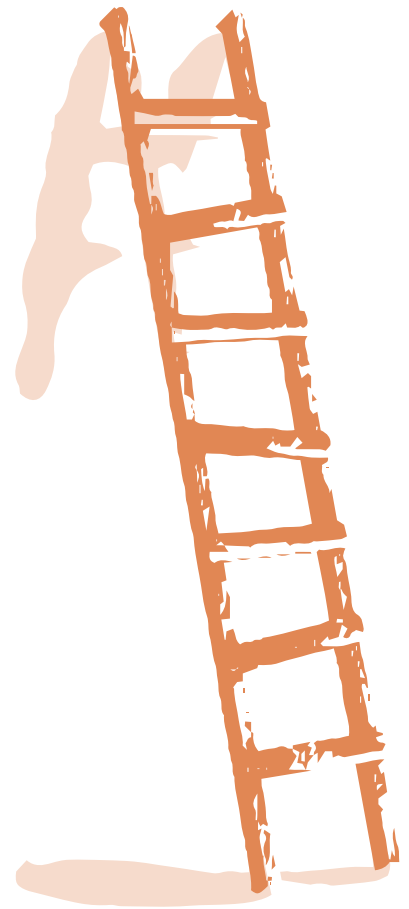
I have done my fair share to convince Government and the public administration to move away from arguments that favour a status quo approach.

The Ombudsman has proved to be a successful mechanism for holding the Executive to account because people trust the institution.

People will vouch for the Office when it shows that it will not give in to pressure of any sort from the public administration, although a respectful non-necessarily confrontational relationship with the public administration does not affect trust. The Office has to continue to be innovative and adapt to changing challenges and opportunities.

The Office is there for all without any distinction whatsoever to avail oneself of its services. Our commitment is there for all to experience.





Silvan Mifsud,
Chairperson, The Malta Chamber
Family Business Committee

“... those family businesses that take corporate governance seriously and invest in are very likely to be led and managed much better than family businesses that do not.”

THE PROFESSIONAL IMPERATIVE

CULTIVATING PROFESSIONALISM IN FAMILY BUSINESSES

Following the survey amongst family businesses done in November – December 2022, by the Family Business committee within the Malta Chamber, whose results were presented in February 2023, a further family business survey was conducted in March 2024, amongst 160 different family businesses, with the results presented during a conference held in May 2024.

The main findings were the ones listed below:

- A majority of family businesses (67%) declared that they do not have a functioning board of directors.
- Those that declared to have a functioning board of directors, the majority (69%) have no independent non-executive director on the board.
- Only a third of family businesses have a written strategic plan, with a substantial chunk (50%) declaring that they still need to get it done.
- Just over a third (35%) declare that they have a written succession plan.
- When analysing what occupies a typical day of a family business owner and leader, around 86% of it is linked to daily operational matters.

- The vast majority (64%) declare that decisions in the family businesses are not taken according to data and research, but are taken after an internal discussion (75%).
- That the top priority of family businesses today is to improve their financial performance, while two years ago when a similar survey was held, the top priority was retaining their labour force.
- With regards to training, family businesses declare that their top priority is that family business owners and directors get trained on how to lead a family business.

When putting together all the data gathered from this survey, it becomes very clear that those family businesses which have a functioning board of directors with independent non-executive directors are more likely to have a written strategic plan (52%), more likely to have a written succession plan (48%) and more likely to have decisions based on data and research (55%).

The conclusion is simple and obvious - those family businesses that take corporate governance seriously and invest in are very likely to be led and managed much better than family businesses that do not.

In line with the above findings, EMCS Academy, together with The Malta Chamber and the Family Business Office have launched a unique course set up for family businesses.

This course accredited course at MQF Level 5 and called an ‘Award in leading a family business’ is solely intended to help present and future family business owners and leaders gain all the skills needed to lead their family businesses in a better and more professional way.

The course is made up of three modules, covering the subjects of corporate governance, strategic planning and other policies needed to lead a family business in the proper way.

Core textbooks are assigned for each module, which are all given as part of the course in a soft copy version. This course also includes 1-2-1 coaching to allow participants to apply what has been learnt to their family business reality.

Full details of this unique accredited course can be found on the EMCS academy website. The next cohort kicked off on the 1st October 2024.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

CELEBRATING MALTA'S COMMERCIAL LEGACY

James Debono,
Manufacturing Director, Maypole Group

For any business to thrive, it must maintain a daily balance between its commitments to customers, and the many resources it can deploy to deliver on those commitments.

Development and growth happen regularly, with significant changes taking place over long periods of time often making them barely noticeable.

However, at certain stages in an enterprise's evolution, there come times when, over and above quotidian progress, giant strides forward need to be thought up, planned for and taken.

These milestones, being extremely substantial and weighty, are few and far between, but mark significant moments in the development of a successful business enterprise like Maypole.

Looking back to May 2012, we took the bold step of moving to The Bakery in Handaqa, investing over €6 million in this state-of-the-art complex which is the heart and mind of our operations - the production and distribution centre for all our products.

This investment was key to the expansion that Maypole has experienced since then. However, notwithstanding the successes achieved so far, we do not intend to sit back and rest on our laurels.

Our growth has not been solely quantitative, but even more so, qualitative. Our core product, the *Hobza tal-Malti* or Maltese loaf, is increasing in popularity from day to day, but even in our bread-types, we have diversified, with our range of bread now including a wider selection to suit all tastes - from the traditional sourdough bread in six presentations, to a selection of sliced breads catering for health-conscious clients, including those living with diabetes.

We are reaching out to even more communities with our distinctive 'round-the-corner' retail outlets in new localities, offering a wider choice of products in a one-stop-shop scenario for households.

We have widened our HoReCa activities with the 'Nenu the Artisan Baker' restaurants in Valletta and Mgarr being joined by Granelli and the more-recent FIDI burger joint in Qormi, not to mention our popular outside catering for special and family occasions.

This surge in type and number of commodities that we provide for our clients has meant that our production facility at The Bakery has now become smaller by comparison to the demands placed upon it.

Our plans for further development and forecasts for the future have sent clear signals that what was then more than ample space for requirements, will soon start becoming cramped.

This is a situation that we wanted to avoid at all costs. So, we have now arrived at a point where a new milestone is soon to be firmly laid down in the Maypole journey, and have once again courageously decided to invest in our physical infrastructure.

The Maypole group has acquired ready-built property measuring circa 8,000 square metres contiguous to our existing 4,000 square metres, a 200 percent increase of floor space.

Planning even further ahead, we have acquired an adjacent yard measuring another 3,000 square metres, and purchased 3,500 square metres of land fronting The Bakery, which, when developed vertically, could add up to

an additional 14,500 square metres of operating/manufacturing space, and 1,500 square metres of open space.

Large storage facilities will be a priority, especially chill and freeze areas, helping us to address issues like economies of scale and production-planning for longer periods, mitigating the upward-spiralling costs we are facing.

This additional space will also positively impact on the role of the complex as our distribution hub, making it more efficient, and contributing to having more frequent, faster and fresher deliveries to all our retail and catering outlets, and to our wholesale clients.

Quality-wise, this also means that we can have a much clearer and spacious definition of production areas.

Our floor-activities, such as bread-

"The Maypole group has acquired ready-built property measuring circa 8,000 square metres contiguous to our existing 4,000 square metres, a 200 percent increase of floor space."

making, packing, preparation of savouries, cakes and other pastries will all have their discrete space, contributing even further to our prioritisation of quality control, and the important Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) requirements, since we want quality, hygiene and food safety to continue to be the hallmark of the Maypole brand. Our customers deserve no less.

Our administration and customer-care departments also operate from our Handaq base, and grow in parallel with our business, requiring more space that is distinct from production and distribution areas.

This increase in space to meet our diverse needs is a reflection of our corporate philosophy of ensuring that we match the demands we face, with what we supply to meet them, by a healthy programme of reinvestment. Our business grows in parallel and in synergy



Preparation of pastry and packaging at the Maypole facility.

with our resources, one supporting and strengthening the other.

In 1973, George Ainsworth-Land published his transformation theory for businesses, which has since become cornerstone publication for the strategic planning and organisational transformation of major corporations. He named his publication, 'Grow or Die'.

We choose to grow.



FINANCE

Finance Incorporated Limited

FRictionless PAYMENTS FOR ALL: HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN DRIVE FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Mina Mitkova,
Chief Operating Officer, Finance Incorporated Limited (FIL)

We spoke with Mina Mitkova, Chief Operating Officer of Finance Incorporated Limited (FIL), about her views on the payments landscape and the way FIL sees its role in helping shape the future of the industry.

"We believe the future of finance is about offering choice and flexibility, and we are fully committed to helping our customers stay ahead of the curve. We want to empower them to not just manage their money, but to thrive in the new financial landscape."



Brands/Products of Finance Incorporated Limited

Mina leads the organisation's sales and operations across all its brands, ensuring smooth and efficient business operations as well as client satisfaction. She joined FIL during its inception year and has been instrumental in the fast-paced growth of the institution from a startup to one of Malta's leading financial institutions.

Q: What sets Finance Incorporated Limited (FIL) apart in the competitive financial services landscape?

Mina: We are about building relationships, not simply onboarding clients. We understand the changing demands of today's customers - people want speed, ease, and security in their financial transactions. Our core philosophy is to provide these through a customer-centric approach, cutting-edge technology, and innovative strategies for frictionless payments. By understanding our customers' unique needs and tailoring services just for them, we help them grow and evolve alongside us. That commitment to exceptional service is what makes FIL a trusted partner for businesses of all sizes.

Q: That focus on customer service is clear. You have also been vocal about speed or the need for near-instant payments. What role do you see FIL playing in the shift towards real-time transactions?

Mina: We are working tirelessly to fully integrate with payment infrastructures such as

SEPAInstant. This means ensuring our systems exceed the requirements: streamlined transactions confirmed within seconds and robust transaction monitoring that leverages the latest AI and machine learning tools, all while offering fair and transparent costs. We believe that speed should not come at the expense of security, and that is why we invest heavily in building a robust infrastructure that protects our clients' financial wellbeing.

Q: You mentioned intelligent systems for compliance and screening. Could you elaborate on that?

Mina: Real-time payments demand real-time security. We believe in the power of in-house technology development. Our expert team creates refined compliance systems that not only meet today's standards of regulatory scrutiny but anticipate the future. We want the experience to be seamless and secure for all customers and by leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning, we can automate a significant portion of compliance checks, while reserving human expertise for complex cases. This allows us to maintain the highest standards of security while ensuring a frictionless experience for our customers.

Q: You advocate for fairer transactions, especially for those with limited resources who often rely on cross-border payments. How does your technology address this?

Mina: We see the promise of a more economically equitable world, and we are determined to be a part of shaping it. This is especially important for those who would typically struggle to obtain even the most essential of financial services, such as migrant workers and individuals supporting families overseas. New and fast systems are inherently more efficient, driving down costs compared to older methods. For those sending money internationally, every cent counts. We are not here to just deliver a service, but to deliver a service that actively makes a positive social impact. By offering transparent fee structures and leveraging efficient technology, we can make cross-border payments more affordable for everyone.

Q: Finally, what's next for FIL? What are your key objectives for the coming year?

Mina: Our goal is continued innovation for our customers. That means embracing new payment methods, diving into emerging technologies, and always looking for ways to make the process of managing money easier. We believe the future of finance is about offering choice and flexibility, and we are fully committed to helping our customers stay ahead of the curve. We want to empower them to not just manage their money, but to thrive in the new financial landscape.

THE MALTA CHAMBER'S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE MALTA COUNCIL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise, and Industry has played a pivotal role in shaping national policy through its active participation in The Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD).

As the constituted body representing the private employer's interests, the Chamber has consistently provided researched, well-structured positions on many key national issues, also by being represented by its highest officials on this national Council.

By leveraging its extensive expertise and industry knowledge, The Malta Chamber contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of the country.

The role of the MCESD and The Malta Chamber's representation

The MCESD is a consultative body tasked with bringing together representatives from various sectors of society to discuss and recommend policies and strategies that affect Malta's economy and society.

It encompasses stakeholders from employers' groups, unions, civil society, Gozo and government, and serves as a forum for dialogue and consensus-building.

In this regard, the Malta Chamber, as one of the key employers' representatives, has a significant voice in advocating for policies that promote sustainable economic growth and improve the competitiveness of the Maltese economy.

Through its membership in the MCESD, The Malta Chamber has consistently upheld its mandate to advocate for the interests of the business community while aligning these interests with national priorities.

This collaboration has enabled The Malta Chamber to engage in discussions on various pressing issues, contributing tangible and research-based recommendations to guide government decision-making processes.

Thought leadership on public procurement

One of the areas where The Malta Chamber has been particularly active is public procurement reform. It has long stressed the importance of a transparent and efficient public procurement system, which not only ensures the best value for taxpayers but also creates a fair playing field for businesses.

In recent submissions to the MCESD, The Malta Chamber emphasised the need for a more modernized approach to public procurement that promotes innovation and sustainability.

It has called for policies that foster greater accountability and transparency in awarding government contracts, while also advocating for processes that are inclusive of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Malta Chamber has proposed several initiatives, including the use of digital platforms to streamline procurement procedures and reduce bureaucracy.

These recommendations are rooted in extensive research and align with best practices from across Europe, aiming to ensure that Malta's public procurement system is both competitive and equitable.

National energy supply and distribution grid

Another crucial issue attracted The Malta Chamber's priority is Malta's energy supply and distribution grid.

With the growing demand for energy and the need for sustainable solutions, coupled with the shortcomings experienced with increased demand The Malta Chamber has been a vocal proponent of a forward-looking energy strategy.

It has actively contributed to discussions on how Malta can diversify its energy sources and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, which are not only environmentally damaging but also financially burdensome due to fluctuating global prices.

The Malta Chamber's research-backed position advocates for greater investment in renewable energy sources, and the enhancement of Malta's energy storage infrastructure.

It has also highlighted the need for upgrading the national distribution grid to make it more resilient and efficient, particularly in the face of increased consumption and the challenges posed by climate change.

By focusing on energy efficiency and the adoption of green technologies, The Malta Chamber's input in the MCESD deliberations alongside other social partners aim to secure Malta's long-term energy needs while contributing to the country's environmental sustainability targets and economic ambitions.

Budget proposals and economic sustainability

Each year, The Malta Chamber presents its budget proposals to the government, reflecting the concerns and aspirations of the business community.



Perit David Xuereb,
Chairperson, MCESD

Through its involvement in the MCESD, The Malta Chamber plays a key role in shaping fiscal policy, ensuring that it addresses the needs of businesses while promoting broader economic growth.

The Malta Chamber's budget proposals are always underpinned by thorough research and reflect its commitment to economic sustainability. The Malta Chamber has advocated for tax reforms that encourage investment, particularly in digitalisation and innovation.

It has also pushed for incentives to help businesses transition to more sustainable practices, especially in light of Malta's commitments to reduce carbon emissions.

Moreover, The Malta Chamber consistently promotes policies that support workforce development, including investments in education and training to address skills shortages in key sectors.

The Malta Chamber's participation in the MCESD is a testament to its commitment to contributing to Malta's socio-economic development.

By presenting well-researched and forward-thinking proposals the Chamber ensures that the interests of the business community are represented at the highest levels of national decision-making.

Moreover, its focus on fostering transparency, innovation, and sustainability reflects its dedication to promoting long-term economic growth that benefits both businesses and society as a whole.

Through its active engagement with the MCESD, The Malta Chamber continues to play a vital role in shaping the future of Malta's strategic ambition.



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THE MALTA CHAMBER PRESENTS

ITS PRE-BUDGET 2025 PROPOSALS

The country urgently needs a cohesive Economic vision with clear milestones and deliverables,” stated CEO Dr Marthese Portelli during the presentation of The Malta Chamber’s Pre-Budget 2025 Document in Valletta, urging the Government to Connect, Plan and Reform.

Accompanied by The Malta Chamber President Chris Vassallo Cesareo and several Council Members, CEO Dr Marthese Portelli emphasised that while economic indicators such as GDP growth, per capita income, and unemployment rates are important, they often fail to capture the broader societal costs of pursuing growth at any cost — a hallmark of the current economic model.

Dr Portelli stressed the importance of shifting from a superficial assessment of economic performance to a broader and deeper analysis of the population’s well-being, now and in the foreseeable future, to ensure that economic policies prioritise sustainable development and enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

She further highlighted the need for diligent management of taxpayer funds, underscoring the Government’s obligation to ensure a good return on investment and avoid wasteful spending that provides little or no value to taxpayers.

In his opening statement, The Malta Chamber President Chris Vassallo Cesareo stated that it is crucial to move away from labour-intensive activities

to an economic model that is not dependent on population growth. It is also critical to invest in worker training and upskilling, as well as to invest in technology to boost efficiency and increase productivity.

The Malta Chamber has identified 12 key policy areas requiring urgent attention, with three critical proposals outlined for each. A summary of these priorities is presented in the accompanying graphic.

Throughout the presentation, The Malta Chamber conveyed a strong sense of urgency, calling on the Government to move beyond mere listening and adhere to principles of good governance.

“The erosion of good governance is severely impacting ethical businesses and society at large. Government must decisively address unethical practices that undermine fair competition due to inadequate enforcement. Ethical businesses have had enough of this unfair competition,” Dr Portelli asserted.

This year, The Malta Chamber’s focus is twofold: first, the tangible transformation of the current economic model into a well-being economy that benefits society

as a whole; and second, the elimination of unethical operators whose misconduct is undermining ethical businesses.

The Malta Chamber has consistently raised these issues in various fora year after year. While there have been sporadic improvements, much work remains to be done.

The table below outlines the status of the proposals presented in last year’s pre-budget document. Of the 219 proposals submitted last year, only 1.8% have been fully implemented, 18.7% have been partially implemented, while 74.9% remain pending without a decision. Only 4.6% were rejected.

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry insists that “time is up” and that Government needs to go beyond ‘listening’.

Timely action to address genuine concerns is required. Weak policy responses to major red flags have induced a culture of complacency and lack of healthy ambition within the public sector that is impacting the performance of businesses and ordinary citizens as well.

Critical issues need to be dealt with expeditiously: CPR is called for.



COMPETITION

- Transport links and the cost of transportation
- Fair and competitive environment within the local economy
- Infrastructural investments

FISCAL DISCIPLINE

- Fragmentation within departments, agencies, authorities, and Ministries
- Independent review of the public sector
- Capital investment over recurrent expenditure

UTILITIES

- A 5-10 year Energy Investment Plan
- Reduction in Energy subsidies
- Rainwater harvesting for business and households

RENEWABLES

- A well-designed feed in tariff (FIT) for businesses
- Reduction in Energy subsidies
- Rainwater harvesting for business and households

TRAFFIC CONGESTION

- E-mobility wallet
- Promotion of shared transport
- Public transport access

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- Moratorium on applications for tourism accommodation
- Clear plan for tables and chairs
- Invest back a % of VAT generated by locality



PLANNING AND UPKEEP OF PUBLIC AREAS

- SPED 2015 to be reviewed
- Systematic and regular proper maintenance and cleansing of all public areas
- A centrally managed permitting system

LOW-INCOME EARNERS & PENSIONERS

- Incorporation of any planned tax refunds by cheque into the revised tax bands
- Correction of the anomaly in the 2nd 25% tax band
- Encouragement of the uptake of supplementary pensions with op-out mechanism for employees

VALUE-ADDED EMPLOYMENT

- Tax exemptions for highly qualified Maltese people who return to Malta
- Revision of the corporate taxation structure
- Encouragement of inquisitive minds

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

- Publication of a publicly accessible public procurement outlook
- Setting up a publicly accessible and easy to use 'Public Contracts Register'
- Introduction of a whitelisting system

THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS (TCN)

- Cap the percentage of TCNs that a business can employ at any point
- Extension of employment licenses after the first year of successful employment
- English Language Teaching visa policy

PROPER ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS & REGULATIONS

- Overlapping and excessive bureaucracy between public entities
- Fully digitalise the law courts, increase judicial and court efficiency
- Stop propagating culture of clientelism

OUR MEMBERS

SAY IT BEST!



Alistair Buttigieg Vella,
CEO, Universal Import & Export
Ltd

Universal has been around since 1972 and, more recently, transitioned into a group of companies in 2020. However, despite being registered members for years we became active members of The Malta Chamber recently in 2019. Engaging with The Malta Chamber was a critical part of our recent growth strategy. Despite being a small group, our involvement gave us a platform to voice the concerns of businesses of similar size and market position. Through our participation, we were able to establish valuable connections and networks that helped us exceed our initial goals. Whether it was forming new partnerships, opening new markets, or staying informed about local business environments and policies, the Chamber provided us with the resources needed to move from being reactive to proactive.

For any business, The Malta Chamber is vital. It offers companies the opportunity to be part of something bigger, encouraging them to think bigger and create a broader, more responsible, sustainable, and strategic impact.



David Valenzia,
Territory Senior Partner, PwC Malta

The Malta Chamber plays a crucial role in society by supporting business interests, promoting good governance and encouraging innovation.

Our Gold collaboration agreement has been beneficial for the firm as it provides insights into various business sectors through our presence on various boards while delving into different topics of interest. This visibility helps our subject matter experts to understand the views and opinions of the business community, thereby increasing our understanding of the issues facing the business community that will allow us to add more value in the services that we provide. By collaborating with The Malta Chamber, we can stay ahead of industry trends, gain networking opportunities with key stakeholders, and play an important role in shaping the business landscape in Malta. This strategic involvement remains in line with our New Equation - delivering sustained outcomes.



George Debono,
CCO, BNF Bank

The Malta Chamber allows different players across many business sectors to come together on various topics, spending time together to think about its communities. As members of the Family Business Committee, we collaborate to understand the main concerns, areas for development and opportunities for the family-owned business, engaging with various stakeholders and devising an agenda that helps the same community to prosper collectively. BNF Bank is the proud sponsor of this committee and we are highly encouraged by the quality of the events and the participation of the business community.

As an individual it allows me to participate and contribute positively to the well-being of the business community irrespective, albeit not in contrast, with individual goals and aspirations, whilst protecting the legacy we all inherited through the history of the Malta Chamber, enabling it to continue to serve its purpose for this generation and beyond.



Liz Barbaro Sant,
Co-CEO, Alberta Group

The Malta Chamber plays a vital role in Malta's economic landscape by representing business interests and advocating for policies that foster economic growth and competitiveness. It acts as the ethical voice of the private sector, influencing government decisions and regulatory frameworks.

The Malta Chamber organises networking events, facilitating connections and collaboration among businesses. It also promotes Malta as a hub for international trade, assisting companies in expanding their markets through their sister company, Trade Malta. As the joint CEO of Alberta Group, which includes ISTC and PT Matic, I feel that we have a home for our business in times of crises. The Malta Chamber's support and guidance during challenging times are invaluable. It serves as a consultant to the government and provides critical economic insights, helping businesses like ours navigate complex environments.



Maria Micallef,
CEO, The General Soft Drinks
Company Ltd

The Malta Chamber plays a crucial role in representing the interests of local businesses to the relevant authorities. Through its Economic Groups and Business Sections, The Malta Chamber offers multiple platforms for the business community to collaborate and discuss pro-business initiatives. These platforms allow businesses to unite under The Malta Chamber's guidance, providing valuable feedback on regulatory policies both at the local and EU levels.

The Malta Chamber's dedication to promoting pro-business policies fosters a stable regulatory environment, while its focus on sustainability and innovation, it aligns with our commitment to responsible growth. As a CEO, I highly value The Malta Chamber's efforts to protect and represent businesses like ours, while also benefiting from the networking opportunities it provides. These connections are instrumental in helping us thrive and contribute to the Maltese economy, ensuring long-term growth and success.



Matthew Sullivan,
CEO, Sullivan Shipping

The Malta Chamber brings together key business stakeholders to promote principles and values essential for a healthy business environment. It advocates for the interests of ethical businesses across various forums within the government and civil society. Recognising that a sustainable approach to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) factors is crucial for building resilient and future-proof businesses.

The Chamber also emphasises the importance of innovation and technology to propel Malta's business sector over the next 20 years. The Malta Chamber supports businesses, both large and small, in achieving their goals by offering a knowledge base and best practices from local and international industries. Additionally, it serves as a strong voice on pressing business issues, which today include labour market shortages, rising business costs, and the need for government transparency. What sets The Malta Chamber apart is its consistent and fair approach, ensuring that all positions are weighed not only for their benefits to businesses but also for their impact on society at large.



Nadia Giordimaina,
Director Regulatory & International
Affairs, KM Malta Airlines

Membership in The Malta Chamber provides the local industry with a birds' eye view of developments at the national, international and EU level. The various sub-committees provide the opportunity to discuss or give feedback on any impacts and provide a unified industry position. This is elevated by The Malta Chamber to the national level.

This awareness allows industry to prepare and where applicable take timely mitigating action including putting forward its position where national planning is required. Given that 80 percent of legislation impacting companies with an international exposure emanates from the EU, it is crucial for the local industry to be organised and raise the issues which are particular to the local context. In this area a European one-size-fits-all solution might not necessarily be the right fit and might create unnecessary burdens if the industry position is not put forward. Fragmentation should be avoided at all costs, hence why The Malta Chamber provides the forum to bring the aviation voice under one roof.



Pierre Stafrace,
General Manager, Farsons Beverage
Imports Co Ltd

The Malta Chamber is an excellent platform which represents Malta's diverse economic sectors and brings together a network of people from various industries. It evaluates and questions any new challenges hitting our country, seeking feedback from its members to accurately embody different businesses.

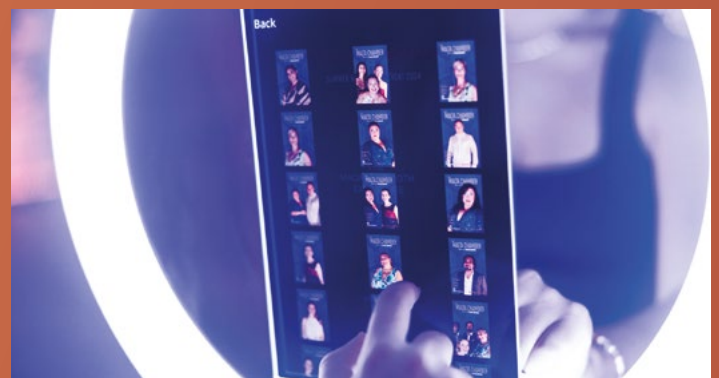
The Malta Chamber provides its community with valuable information on emerging business trends, both local and global, and assists companies to arrange meetings with relevant authorities to resolve any issues. It also creates opportunities for individuals to network with a variety of business colleagues, both in formal and social occasions, assisting potential future collaboration between industries. The Malta Chamber is a vital entity which openly provides our government with positive criticism and well-thought ideas and suggestions to develop and improve the infrastructure and the economy of our island, both for the short- and, particularly, the long-term.



THE MALTA CHAMBER SUMMER NETWORKING EVENT 2024

The Malta Chamber Summer Networking Event was a premier gathering that successfully fostered connections and collaboration among business leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs. The evening was filled with engaging conversations, insightful exchanges, and numerous opportunities for attendees to expand their professional networks. The event proved to be a valuable occasion for participants to build meaningful relationships and share ideas in a dynamic and supportive environment.





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THE POTENTIAL FOR BUSINESS GROWTH WHEN INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITISATION CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED



"Regardless of the industry or nature of the job, competency with digital tools and services is required. The Malta Chamber argues that one critical prerequisite is for the school system to provide all pupils with a basic awareness of technology, which is unfortunately still lacking today."

During this year's Tech.mt AGM, The Malta Chamber CEO Dr Marthese Portelli highlighted that Malta is well-positioned to be an incubator for innovative tech ideas.

"The small size of the market can be an advantage in this sense. Another advantage is the high degree of diversification of our relatively small economy. This provides endless possibilities for product and service development. Whether it's tourism, financial services, manufacturing, transportation, media, telecoms, energy, health – the Maltese economy provides ample opportunities for highly diverse economic activities, all of which can be enhanced through creative digital solutions."

Dr Portelli added: "This does not mean that we do not have our challenges. One of the obstacles to our progress with digitisation is a shortage of properly skilled staff in the subject area. Modernising current employment and skills

regulations is also critical to meeting the demands of a digitally transformed world. Regardless of the industry or nature of the job, competency with digital tools and services is required. The Malta Chamber argues that one critical prerequisite is for the school system to provide all pupils with a basic awareness of technology, which is unfortunately still lacking today."

The Malta Chamber has a proven track record of over 176 years representing commerce, enterprise and industry – our commitment remains and we will continue giving all our energy to see continued success.

BUSINESSES MUST ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES ARE TECHNOLOGICALLY WELL-EQUIPPED

On the 13th of September 2024, misco in collaboration with The Malta Chamber held a Misco Talks event to present the report titled 'Insights into Job Seeker Dynamics'. This was followed by a presentation delivered by Lawrence Zammit on the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies as adopted by The Malta Chamber.

This event provided a deep dive into the evolving landscape of job seekers, offering crucial insights into the trends shaping the workforce. During this event misco shared knowledge from a survey which is conducted on a yearly basis with the aim of providing companies with information on job seeker requirements, trends and expectations.

The event brought together a panel of HR professionals, who shared their expertise and practical experiences on this topic. The focus of the discussion was to explore how current trends in the job market are being integrated into daily operational strategies by various companies and organisations.

These trends, particularly in a post-pandemic world, have significantly impacted the way companies engage with potential employees, with key shifts in job-seeking behaviour, the adoption of technology in the recruitment process, and the growing emphasis on flexibility and well-being.

The panel discussion was the highlight of the event, where human resource professionals delved into the dynamic and changing job market. The panellists were asked how they are applying these trends to their daily operations and recruitment strategies.

Among the topics discussed were the rising importance of digital platforms in recruitment, the shift towards remote and hybrid work models, and the need for companies to focus on employee well-being as a means of attracting top talent.

The panel emphasised the importance of being adaptable to the changing needs of job seekers, particularly younger job-seekers, who value work-life balance and meaningful work experiences over traditional job security.

One of the panellists spoke about the increasing importance of employer branding and how organisations need to position themselves as desirable workplaces in order to attract skilled candidates.

There was also a focus on the demand for upskilling and reskilling, as businesses must ensure that their employees are equipped to handle the rapid technological advancements that are reshaping economic activities globally.

Adding depth to the discussion was Lawrence Zammit's presentation on the Code of Practice for Employment Agencies. This presentation provided valuable insights into the standards which employment agencies should adhere to, ensuring transparency, fairness, and ethical practices when dealing with job seekers.

This code of practice also highlights the importance of maintaining a balance between the interests of employers and job seekers, ensuring that recruitment processes are not only efficient but also respectful of the rights and expectations of candidates.

Mr Zammit also discussed the legal and ethical responsibilities of employment agencies, and

"The panel emphasised the importance of being adaptable to the changing needs of job seekers, particularly younger job-seekers, who value work-life balance and meaningful work experiences over traditional job security."

how adhering to the code of practice can help enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of recruitment agencies in the eyes of both employers and candidates.

This event was an informative and thought-provoking session that shed light on the changing dynamics of the job market and the crucial role of recruitment agencies in navigating these trends.

By collaborating with The Malta Chamber and bringing together HR professionals, misco successfully provided a platform for knowledge-sharing and professional development, equipping attendees with practical strategies to implement in their organisations.





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THE MALTA CHAMBER

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THE MALTA CHAMBER'S

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for 2025

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RSM Malta, Mdina Road,
Żebbuġ, ŻBG 9015, Malta

T: +356 2278 7000
E: info@rsm.com.mt

rsm.com.mt