

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Time to change procedures on employment of Foreign Nationals

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and the Malta Employers Association call on all relevant authorities to take action to simplify procedures in relation to work and residency applications for foreign workers, especially Third Country Nationals. Malta's unprecedented economic growth has led to an equally unprecedented increase of foreign workers actively participating in the labour market without affecting employment figures of Maltese citizens. The latest statistics show that Malta has the lowest unemployment within the European Union.

The two organisations urge government to formally acknowledge the opportunity at hand and implement a complete overhaul to the formal work and residency permit application procedures. It is imperative that said procedures satisfy the European Union Directives but also introduce the efficiency and flexibility that Malta's growing economy desperately requires. The present situation where most employers have reported a loss of business in recent months due to delays in the processing of work and residency permit applications for foreign workers must not be allowed to persist if economic growth is to be sustained. As long as work and residence permit procedures are not restructured and realigned to present needs, the demand for such workers will continue to outweigh the supply.

In calling for a complete overhaul the two organisations are requesting the following measures:

1. Reduce average processing time to an average of 4 weeks
2. Establish a one stop shop for processing work and residence permits
3. Remove duplication and repetition of work in extending VISAs
4. Simplify the labour market test to employ foreign employees
5. Minimise the administrative burden on employers and employees

It is the organisations' belief that the integration of foreign workers must be regarded as a viable roadmap to sustainable economic growth, particularly in sectors where widening skills gaps amongst the local workforce exist.

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