



THE MALTA CHAMBER

PRESS RELEASE

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Business hampered by draconian travel measures

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry is pleased to note that most remaining Covid-19 restrictions are being lifted, and businesses operating locally will be able to function normally. This will help the recovery at a time when there are other serious economic challenges to be dealt with. Yet some businesses remain severely hampered by what are now excessive travel restrictions.

On 22nd February 2022, the Council of the EU adopted an updated recommendation on non-essential travel from third countries into the EU. This new recommendation states that Member States should allow non-essential travel for persons vaccinated with an EU- or WHO-approved vaccine, recovered persons and all persons travelling from a country on the EU whitelist, while allowing for additional measures such as PCR testing before travel to be requested. It also upholds that reciprocity should continue to be taken into account on a case-by-case basis and indicates that it is appropriate to start moving to an approach that is based purely on the vaccination status of the traveller rather than on the country of origin. The Council recommendation is not legally binding, but most EU countries have adopted it. Yet Malta continues to uphold a long dark red list of third countries, and to apply draconian quarantines to arrivals from these countries even if travellers are vaccinated. This makes it impossible for business-related travel to and from third countries to resume and is placing local businesses who have contractual obligations or potential new business in third countries at a disadvantage compared to their EU counterparts.

Liz Barbaro Sant, Chairperson of TradeMalta which is a public-private partnership between The Malta Chamber and Government tasked with facilitating Maltese business in third countries expressed serious concern about the situation: “It sends the message that Malta is not open for business, and that Maltese businesses are reluctant to service their customers in these countries, which is not the case. On both a commercial as well as a diplomatic level, this has become unsustainable and is drying up the pipeline of international business prospects for Maltese businesses.”

The Malta Chamber therefore appeals to the local authorities to be more sensitive to the economic implications of a draconian approach to travel to and from third countries at this stage. Malta Chamber President Marisa Xuereb stated that “There are significant business interests in third countries that are being put at risk by quarantines that are incongruent with the approach being adopted locally. You are no longer required to quarantine if you have a

positive case within your household, but you need to quarantine if you return from most third countries even if you are vaccinated. An urgent review of these rules is required to allow businesses to resume their international activities without further delay. The smallest country in the EU cannot be the slowest to take-off.”