



THE MALTA CHAMBER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Having a national airline is crucial for the country – The Malta Chamber**

The Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry notes that Government has reached an agreement with the European Commission on the establishment of the new national airline. The Malta Chamber also notes that Government has committed to decision making that prioritizes the national interest and good governance in the running of the new airline.

The Malta Chamber underscores the vital strategic importance of operating a national airline efficiently, to ensure its viability over the long-term after decades of unsustainable practices stemming out of political interference. These practices have cost the country millions and it is hoped that lessons have been learnt once and for all, both with respect to the national airline and other state-owned entities. The Malta Chamber has repeatedly raised concerns about other state-owned entities falling prey to similar extravagances which, unlike Air Malta, are so far not under European Commission scrutiny. Government should not wait to be in a similar predicament with respect to other state-owned entities before taking a serious look at governance, operational efficiency and recruitment practices in other entities.

The projections presented yesterday by the Minister for Finance acknowledge the unique challenges related to our airline's size and its markets, which also emanates from Malta's peripherality to the European continent. The commitment to swiftly turn-around the current situation needs to be honoured to restore a firmer standing with the European Commission. This requires the eradication of unsustainable operational practices which costed this country dearly, and a periodic review of routes and frequencies to strike a balance between meeting interests of the general public and the business community, and ensuring long-term viability of the new airline.

Conscious of the national airline's paramount strategic importance, The Malta Chamber emphasises the vital importance of sustainable, uninterrupted air connectivity for Malta, to cater for both business and social exigencies, such as flight operations related to healthcare and Just-In-Time provision of critical medicines.

The Malta Chamber calls upon all stakeholders including politicians, and representatives of both workers and the business community to work together to ensure that our new national airline will really break away from past practices and be sustainable in the long-term, as is in the national interest.

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