

Energy Priorities - We need to get it right

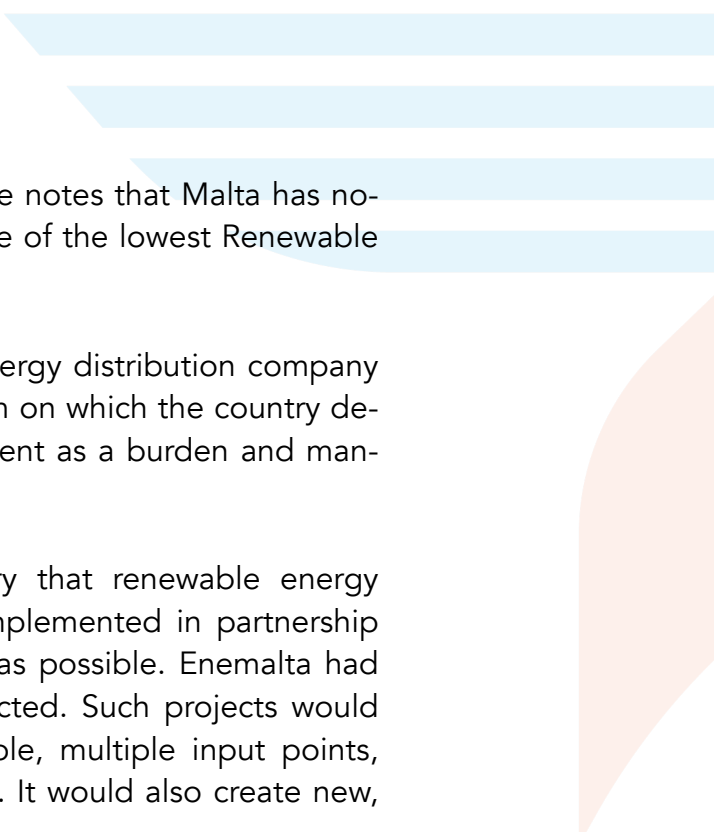
Every problem brings opportunities, as well as motivation to change for the better. The current covid-19 situation is no exception. The Malta Chamber of SMEs believes that Malta should analyze the way it has done things so far and investigate how it can do better on the energy front.

For decades Malta has imported its energy from abroad, in one way or another. This means huge amounts of money being pumped out of the country each day. Money that needs to be earned via other means such as tourism, which in turn consumes more energy and a vicious circle is created. We should be considering the way we produce energy more seriously. We should plan our energy generation based on local production, via renewable sources.

A few days ago we noted comments given by Enemalta to the media, where incredulously, it tried to justify 28 power cuts in 6 days.

One of the reasons given to journalists was that there was a shift of power cuts to residential areas which was attributed to the fact that tourism zones are not as populated due to covid-19. Was Enemalta saying that Maltese people are not living in tourist areas this year, or was it saying that since we have less tourists in tourist areas, power cuts are occurring in residential areas? Both arguments are irrational. Less tourists should mean less demand, thus less power cuts.

It should be noted that the Chamber of SMEs had already pointed out last January, that unless a serious investment was made in the mostly ageing grid, increases in population, air conditioning, and electric vehicles would bring the power distribution system to its knees. Enemalta continues to this day to rely on Renewable Energy projects to upgrade its grid, instead of seeking ways to assist such projects. Each application is met with a hefty bill for a new substation or other grid-related installations and



upgrades. This comes as no surprise when one notes that Malta has notoriously and consistently been classified as one of the lowest Renewable Energy friendly countries in Europe.

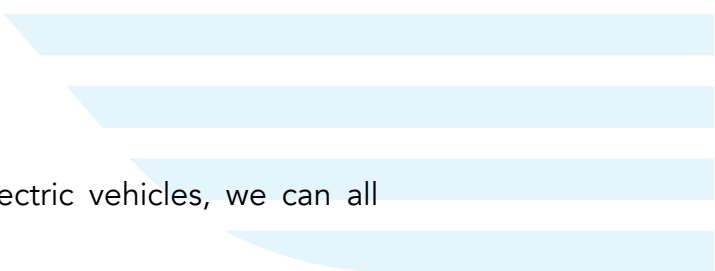
It is unacceptable that in Malta we have an energy distribution company that is treating the most important utility system on which the country depends for its citizens' wellbeing and development as a burden and managing it by crisis.

The SME Chamber had proposed in January that renewable energy projects coupled with energy storage were implemented in partnership with member operators in the sector as soon as possible. Enemalta had shown interest in the proposal, but later retracted. Such projects would ease the strain on the grid by providing stable, multiple input points, modernizing the grid and reducing power cuts. It would also create new, much needed green jobs in Malta.

The Malta Chamber of SMEs renews its call on Government and Enemalta to take the issue of renewable energy seriously. The sector has suffered neglect and vague excuses by numerous legislatures, different governments, ministers and public servants with no interest in making the shift from fossil fuels to renewables. This has been going on for over fifteen years. Even EU regulations intended to promote renewable energy are being used as an excuse to maintain the status-quo.

Draconian regulations, ironically created by agencies that are supposed to promote Renewable Energy, also make it impossible for investors to reasonably plan ahead their projects which would ultimately create jobs in Malta, reduce our energy dependence on foreign countries, and lessen the economic haemorrhage caused by the purchase of electricity and fuels from overseas.

The Malta Chamber of SMEs looks forward to its proposals being taken seriously so that millions of euro wasted each day on the purchase of energy from abroad could be diverted to Maltese families' and investors'



pockets. In addition, with the increase of electric vehicles, we can all benefit from cleaner air, powered by sunshine.

The government should immediately desist from playing its tug-of-war game in this sector. It should stop favoring technologies reliant on high overseas payments and instead start looking on ways to create synergies with local companies which employ Maltese people and seriously promote a cleaner, healthier environment. This has been the Malta Chamber of SMEs' renewable energy sector's mission for at least the last 5 years, and is only being restrained by bureaucracy and inaptitude of Government and its officials.

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