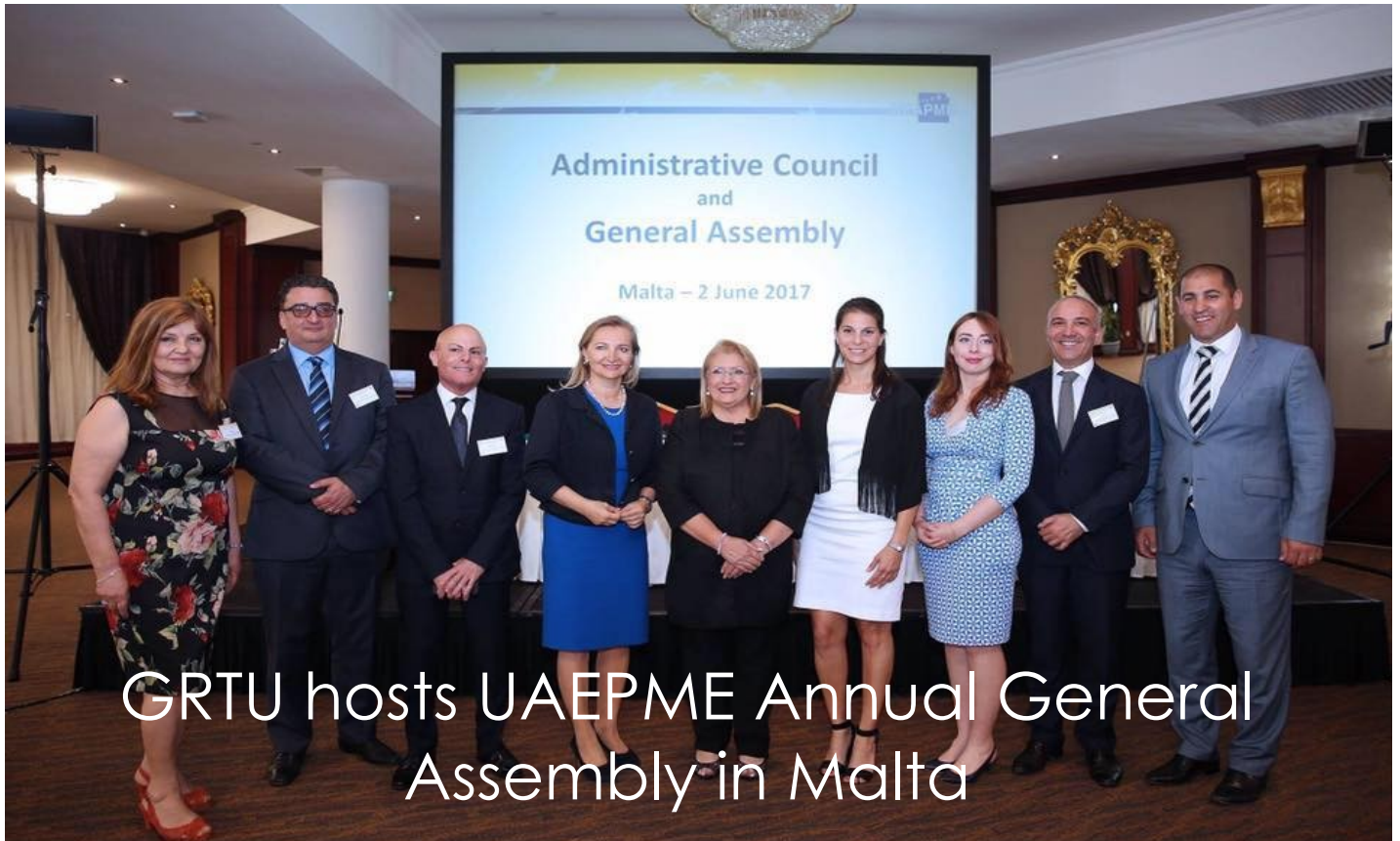


June 2017

www.grtu.eu

GRTU NEWSTRING



GRTU hosts UEAPME Annual General Assembly in Malta

This year GRTU was selected to host the UEAPME Board of Directors Meeting, the Administrative Council and General Assembly. This event was held between the 1st and 2nd of June 2017. UEAPME which stands for Employer's organisation representing the interests of European crafts, trades and SMEs at EU level is an umbrella organisation of European business representatives. Being a member for over 10 years and given that Malta was for the first 6 months entrusted with the EU presidency, The UEAPME official suggested that this year Malta through GRTU, should host this event.

On the 1st of June, GRTU hosted the board of directors meeting which took place at Dar L'Ewropa. GRTU President Mr. Paul Abela was invited to this

meeting. During this meeting a number of topics on the running of UEAPME were discussed.

On the 2nd of June the UEAPME Administrative Council and General Assembly took place. During this event UEAPME Secretary Véronique Willems and UEAPME President Ms. Ulrike Rabmer-Koller presented the work done throughout the last year. These included a number of committee meetings held and also a number of position papers issued.

During this event GRTU CEO Ms. Abigail Mamo presented and gave a brief overview on the work GRTU conducts throughout the year and also outlined the main issues local businesses are currently facing. This presentation was welcomed by members pre-



sent and UEAPME President thanked Ms. Abigail Mamo for successfully hosting this event.

As part of the General Assembly a number of members present gave presentations on good practices. During this session GRTU Vice-President for Finance and Administration Mr. Marcel Mizzi, presented the work conducted by GRTU on this issue. During this Presentation Mr. Mizzi presented the publication on the digital agenda and also outlined a number of good practices businesses and organisations can adopt in order to promote the use of digital media everyday life.

During the General Assembly H.E The President of Malta Marie Louise Coleiro Preca gave a speech and welcomed delegates during the Assembly. H.E. The President of Malta in her speech Ms. Coleiro Preca highlighted the importance of Safeguarding SMEs and insisted that the role of SMEs is crucial to the prosperity of our economies. Ms. Coleiro Preca

also mentioned the importance of promoting a stronger support for SMEs, during vulnerable periods of their establishment and growth and the inclusion of minorities and women, who must have full and equitable participation in economic opportunities. H.E. The President of Malta ended her speech by emphasizing the necessity to promote a healthy socio-economic path, for the benefit of all the citizens of Europe.

This event has been another successful one for GRTU. GRTU was able to show its European counterparts the daily activities conducted by GRTU and also showcase some of the work done in order to ensure a more active and competitive business environment.



Attention! Information Session on ERDF Grant Schemes

The Measures and Support Division (MSD) will be organising its second information session regarding the Business Enhance ERDF Grant Schemes Initiative. Explanation of schemes covered during the information sessions include; Start-up Investment Grant Scheme, SME Growth Grant Scheme, SME Diversification and Innovation Grant Scheme and SME Internationalisation Grant Scheme

Date and time: Next **Monday, 3rd July** between 15:00 and 17:30 hours

Venue: Mediterranean Conference Centre, Triq l-Isptar, Valletta.

Interested participants are kindly requested to **register for the Information Sessions by accessing the following link** https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdS_jH_aFtiWHd6Anb7V8JUTLZ2dDe3gKAorpiaI5loVbHqbw/viewform?c=0&w=1 On a first come first served basis. Additional Information can be obtained via email to msd.meaim@gov.mt.

GRTU formally introduced to the new Parliamentary Secretary, Hon Deo Debatista



This month, GRTU has welcomed Dr Deo Debatista, Parliamentary Secretary responsible for V18, Consumer Affairs and the Malta Consumer and Competitiveness Affairs Authority (MCCAA), the Cleansing Directorate and the Medicines Authority. President of GRTU Paul Abela, GRTU CEO Abigail Mamo, as well as members of the council had the opportunity to discuss oncoming matters and ongoing disputes which matter the most to its members. Ms Mamo started off by introducing the remit of GRTU and the boards on which GRTU is represented.

Dr Debatista and GRTU officials discussed the realm of MCCAA. GRTU voiced its concern about the lack of coherent and assertive action taken by the regulator of competition law in Malta. Considering the importance of competition law, the Authority must become active and act in a fair and just manner among all players in the economy especially with the big boys. GRTU also brought to the attention of Hon Debatista that a recent court ruling has disabled an important part of the powers of the MCCAA to impose fines. As the voice of SMEs, GRTU has vociferously pledged to MCCAA about the wrongdoings of the 4 main insurance companies in Malta in respect to panel beaters

who lost their clients and clients who were forced to repair their vehicle at QVR approved panel beaters only. GRTU informed Dr Debatista that MCCAA have issued their preliminary decision which are positive and GRTU awaits interim measures following the official submission and hearing.

Mr Abela also highlighted that there are two issues that are causing great grief amongst businesses because of unfair competition. First of all the lack of enforcement on imports coming by sea and not paying VAT and excise tax. Another issue is the 6/7th tax incentive given to any foreign owned enterprise, in competition with Maltese businesses that have to pay the full 35% tax.

Mr Mario Debono, GRTU council member explained to Dr Debatista that the falsified medicines directive, is costly and bureaucratic to implement, driving businesses to increase the prices of medicines across the board. Moreover, the legal penalties envisaged by the Medicines Act 2008 were introduced without prior consultation, and minimal offences can spike up to €13K per offence. An agreement on their revision has been reached and a legal notice for the consideration of the cabinet is in the pipeline.

On a different note, GRTU Vice President Mr Philip Fenech suggests that jazz music activities should feature in the timetable of international jazz events. Furthermore, Ms Mamo underlined the two of GRTU's unique proposals that have found themselves in the PL manifest: the campaign for consumers to purchase locally and a quality certification for genuine Maltese products. GRTU expressed its willingness to be involved in the implementation of such measures.

Finally Dr Debattista, asked for the GRTU's feedback regarding waste collection in Valletta. GRTU has in the past year, carried out a study amongst all catering establishments in Valletta identifying the different times and operators that collect waste. These have been passed to the Cleansing Department and the Valletta Local Council. GRTU informed Dr Debattista that it is awaiting a meeting to discuss a way forward.

GRTU signs cooperation agreement with CNA Ragusa

This month, GRTU President Paul Abela and CEO Abigail Mamo attended the CNA conference 'Commissi al cambiamento'. The aim of GRTU's participation was to make GRTU's presence felt in a place which is so close to Malta in many ways and has close business ties. GRTU has in fact signed an agreement of cooperation with CNA Ragusa which is aimed at improving business synergies between enterprises and creating new business opportunities. The agreement also serves to ensure that all laws and regulations are adhered to when entering the Maltese and Sicilian market to ensure fair competition.

GRTU believes that this agreement will be mutually beneficial since its main aim will be of creating projects in both countries that create value added to businesses, new innovative economic activities that we are currently lacking and partnerships that will build on the strengths of businesses in both countries that will help in complementing each other.

GRTU and CNA Ragusa are already working together on a number of EU funded projects that benefit members of both organisations.



How will Brexit affect us on the ground?

This month's MEUSAC meeting saw the participation of the Prime Minister ahead of the European Summit.

The Prime Minister said that now that Malta is at the end of the Presidency, conclusions can start to be drawn. Dr Muscat said that Malta has increased its capacity significantly during the Presidency, which has opened many doors that were previously unavailable to us. The Prime Minister emphasised on the need to continue building on the ground gained so that we continue reaping the benefits out of these opportunities.

GRTU President Paul Abela congratulated the PM on his electoral victory and he congratulated the departments and authorities that have risen to the occasion to make Malta proud. Mr Abela said that

this is the kind of attitude we expect from the public service not just during the presidency but during their day to day business when dealing with Maltese citizens.

Mr Abela stated that it is now time not only to deal with Brexit at high level but also to start seeing how this will affect us on the ground.

The Prime Minister said that what Malta could do about Brexit whilst working on the Presidency was limited. Dr Muscat assured GRTU that once the Presidency is over Malta will become more aggressive and push its national agenda forward. The Prime Minister explained that there already is a task force chaired by Louis Grech but there will be the creation of another, micro level, task force for the private sector. Dr Muscat explained that he feels that we are facing a challenging timeframe to close discussions in 18 months.



GRTU aids the Association of Childcare Centre Providers reach Interim Agreement

Following lengthy discussions between GRTU on behalf of Childcare Centres Providers Association (CCPA) and the Ministry for Finance on the negotiations for a new agreement for the provision of their services paid by public funds, the parties have now reached an interim agreement that was signed on the 1st of June 2017.

Childcare service providers had already conducted a study themselves and came to the conclusion that with the increases in COLA and also the increases in wages due to lack of human resources, the rates they were being paid at were not sufficient to cover their costs to render a good service and also maintain a reasonable profit.

The interim agreement stipulates a basic increase



in the rate child care centers were currently being paid during the previous contract that closed at the end of 2016 until an independent audit is conducted that would establish the proper rate.

This will be the first step that will lead to negotiations that will determine a contract for the coming three years. Officials representing the Childcare Centres Providers Association, the Malta Chamber for Small and Medium Enterprises (GRTU), and the Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for Finance were the signatories of the interim agreement as visible in the picture.

Valletta New Waste Collection System

During a meeting with the Hon Parliamentary Secretary Dr Deo Debattista, responsible for the Cleansing, GRTU was informed of government's intention to **restrict waste collection in Valletta to just one collection a day at 6am for all types of waste.**

Businesses will of course not be allowed to leave their waste outside for collection during the evening or afternoon hours but must adhere to this one time slot. The aim is to introduce this gradually and having it up at running by September, by which time businesses that do not comply would be penalized through increased enforcement.

GRTU has requested time to meet its members and following this submitting official feedback to be able to represent your views better. GRTU will be organizing two meetings to accommodate different business opening hours. Meetings are only open to GRTU members.

Date: 10th July, Time Slots: 13.30 pm –15.30pm OR 15.30-17.30pm

Venue: Europe House, 254 St Paul Street, Valletta.

Due to seating restrictions registration with Ms Rakel Cilia is required on 21 232 881/3 or rakel.cilia@grtu.eu. *If you are not currently a member of GRTU you can enroll prior to the meeting.*

GRTU and Shop Opening Hours Act

GRTU, as the national organization representing shop owners and service providers, most of which are family run businesses, has for the past years worked upon the issue of shop opening hours with the aim to find the best solution that is suitable for all concerned.

At the time GRTU was on its own fighting this issue with no support from other entities unions etc. It was only when GRTU reached an agreement with the then Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Small Businesses, that decided on a step approach effectively giving in to the strong opposition. GRTU organized various surveys and meetings for retailers and service providers with the aim to identify those firms who wanted to open on a Sunday and those who rejected the whole concept.

Changes were made to the shop Opening Hours Act where GRTU ended with a situation where those who did not want to open on a Sunday were not forced to open, others who wanted to open were allowed. Until a few years ago a number of shopping

62% of the shop owners interviewed disagreed with restrictions on opening hours

outlets who have invested millions of Euros still had restrictive operating hours and were being forced to pay €700 per shop to open on Sunday and Public Holidays.

The situation faced by GRTU and its members at the time was that



the law was discriminating between businesses, those who can open because they happen to be located in tourist areas and others that cannot because they are located elsewhere. Retailers that sell one range of products against others who sell another range of products. Discrimination as some open irrespective of the prohibition while the law-abiding stay closed and the law became a farce. It is indeed unfair that one business licence is restrictive and another is not.

While GRTU continued to educate its members that money and profit is not an end in itself but a means to better quality of life, GRTU called on government to resolve for good the issue relating to shops opening on Sundays and public holidays.

GRTU argued that it was not right that those who could afford it would open for business, and those who do not afford it could not. The choice whether a shop opens or not should lie with the shop owner. All that was needed was for the government to remove the €700 fee for opening. Government accepted GRTU's request to waive the €700 and for the past years it was up to the shop owner discretion to decide whether or not to open on selective dates.

In 2014 GRTU conducted an extensive survey amongst its members after government announced plans to amend the law regulating opening hours restrictions. It transpired that six in every ten GRTU members surveyed claimed they do not agree that shop opening hours should be restricted. 62% of the shop owners interviewed disagreed with restrictions on opening hours, claiming amongst others that today's consumers need to be able to shop at different times of the day. Others claimed that during the weekend, customers are more relaxed and likely to make a purchase and thus, opening on Sundays will likely improve business.

Following presentation of GRTU survey results, today shop owners are free to open on Sundays, independently of their locality without conditions and extra payments. Shop Opening Hours Act came into force recently thanks to the work carried out by GRTU and the continuous support of its members together with the backing of Economic Affairs Minister Chris Cardona and Consumer Affairs Minister Helena Dalli.



A closing conference for the Single Market in Europe, was organised by the European Commission, on the 19th of June 2017 in Malta. The commission presented an array of topics related to the Single Market up for discussion and further analysis.

In each of the eight expert workshops, a panel of experts coming from different spheres of civil society brought fruitful analysis and conclusions to different topics of importance within the conference. The EU commission is required to set up an SME Policy and cross border tools to improve Single Market transfer for SMEs.

Innovation in international market is the most common practical issue that SMEs face. A balance between the protection of EU data and the need to further improve the digital gateway is required. Furthermore an efficient complaints system for SMEs in the EU commission is to be put implemented.

Furthermore, social partners asked for a digital oriented solution to harmonise the member states' systems of data sharing to overcome costly administration caused by the overlap of parallel systems. Such as the 'once only' principle, whereby service providers are asked to provide information to one structure which then grants access to all other structures.

Following this discussion, three diverse Maltese enterprises presented a **set of challenges they face in accessing the European Single Market**. The most common barriers are regulation and legislations in the country to which they export to. For example the CE Mark in Germany. Secondly, access to business start up finance is limited and legislation eats directly from the capital gains tax invested. Thirdly, due to Malta's size and capacity certain services available to SMEs such as the stripe payment system and the Youtube monetization system are not available to Maltese SMEs. This creates inequalities in digital market competition. In addition limited human resources and transport logistics issues are also identified barriers to the single market.

Finally, experts highlighted that the European Union needs to embark on **the collaborative economy** similar to a shared neighbourhood for the Single Market in Europe to function properly. Trust amongst member states' administration is eminent should they wish to work together. Moreover if start-up businesses are required to adapt quickly in the Single market, a proper communication platform among different sizes of SMEs is required. Experts also highlighted the need for a data sharing platform of all best practices among SMEs in all member states, followed by a harmonised definition of collaborative economy for each state to understand what is required from its end.

It was concluded that the Single Market in Europe, can never function to perfection, but we can at least ensure that all aspects of life which influence its output (such as political, economical and social factors) work in favour of its progress.

Laqgħa ta' konsultazzjoni bil-ghan li titjeb is-sikurezza stradali

Aktar kmieni din is-sena, Il-GRTU attendiet għall-Laqgħa ta' Konsultazzjoni dwar titjeb u sikurezza stradali organizzata mill-Kumit Settorali għat- Telekomunikazzjoni, t-Trasport u l-Energija. F'din il-laqgħa giet diskussa l-proposta għal Direttiva tal-Parlament Ewropew u tal-Kunsill li temenda d-Direttiva 2003/59/KE dwar il-kwalita inizjali u tahrig perijodiku ta' sewwieqa ta' certi vetturi tat-triq għat-trasport ta' prodotti jew passigiera u d-Direttiva 2006/126/KE dwar il-licenzji tas-sewqan (COM (2017) 47).

L-ghan tad-Direttiva huwa li tgholli l-*standards* fost is-sewwieqa l-godda u li jinzammu u jittejbu l-hiliet professjonali tas-sewwieqa tat-trakkijiet u x-xarabanks ezistenti madwar l-UE kollha. Id-Direttiva timmira specifika li s-sewwieqa jsiru aktar konxji tar-riskji, bil-hsieb li jtnaqqsu r-riskji u tizzied is-sikurezza stradali. Barra minn hekk, id-Direttiva tistabilixxi *standards* dwar il-hiliet professjonali biex tkun zgurata kompetizzjoni gusta madwar l-UE kollha.

Din l-proposta qed tikkunsidra l-izviluppi fit-tahrig u fl-edukazzjoni, sabiex tittejjeb il-kontribuzzjoni tad-Direttiva 2003/59/KE għas-sikurezza stradali u r-rilevanza tat-tahrig għas-sewwieqa, is-suggetti relatati mas-sikurezza stradali, bħall-percezzjoni tal-perikli, il-protezzjoni tal-utenti vulnerabbli tat-toroq, u s-sewqan efficcjenti fl-uzu tal-fjuwil għandhom jissahhu fil-korsijiet ta' tahrig.

Dan għandu jinkiseb billi l-Istati Membri għandhom jigu pprovduti



b'għazla cara biex itejbu u jimmodernizzaw il-prattici ta' tahrig bl-uzu tal-ghodda tal-ICT, bħat-tagħlim elettroniku u t-tagħlim imhallat, għal parti mit-tahrig, filwaqt li tkun zgurata l-kwalita' ta' tahrig.

Sabiex tkun zgurata l-konsistenza bejn il-forom differenti ta' tahrig mit-lub skond il-ligi tal-Unjoni, l-Istati membri għandhom jingħataw il-possibilita' li jikkombinaw tipi differenti ta' tahrig rilevanti, bħat-tahrig dwar it-trasport ta' oggetti perikoluzi, dwar is-sensibilizzazzjoni għad-dizabilita' jew dwar it-trasport tal-annimali, mat-tahrig previst fid-Direttiva 2003/59/KE.

Tagħrif dwar id-Direttivi

Direttiva 2003/59/KE tistabilixxi r-rekwiziti ta' kwalifiki inizjali u tahrig perijodiku għas-sewwieqa professjonali ta' trakkijiet u xarabanks, biex b'hekk titjeb is-sikurezza fit-toroq Ewropej. Il-mizuri tad-Direttiva jibnu fuq l-oġettiv tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea "vizjoni zero" sabiex sal-2050 jigu fix-xejn il-fatalitajiet tat-trasport fit-toroq.

Barra minn hekk, il-Kummissjoni, fil-Komunikazzjoni 2010/389 tagħha dwar l-orjentazzjonijiet ta' politika dwar is-sikurezza fit-toroq għall-perjodu 2011-2020, ipproponiet li tnaqqas bin-nofs l-ghadd globali ta' mwiet fit-toroq fl-UE sal-2020. Bil-hsieb li jintlahaq dan il-ghan, il-Kummissjoni stabbiliet seba' għanijiet strategici, inkluzi t-titjeb tal-edukazzjoni u t-tahrig tal-utenti tat-toroq u l-protezzjoni tal-utenti vulnerabbli tat-triq.

Din id-Direttiva hija parti integrali mill-qafas general tal-legislazzjoni tal-UE dwar is-sewwieqa professjonali ta' trakkijiet u xarabanks. Hija marbuta wkoll mill-qrib mas-sikurezza stradali, u taħdem flimkien ma' leġislazzjoni oħra tal-UE, bħad-Direttiva dwar il-licenzji tas-sewqan (Direttiva 2006/126/KE), id-Direttiva dwar it-trasport ta' oggetti perikoluzi (Direttiva 2008/68/KE) u r-regoli dwar il-hinijiet ta' sewqan u mistrieħ (Ir-Regolament (KE) Nru 561/2006) taħdem ukoll id f'id mal-ligi tal-UE dwar l-access għas-suq.

GRTU President Paul Abela addresses the MFCC Opening Ceremony



On the 21st of June, at the opening ceremony of the MFCC Trade fair, GRTU President Mr Paul Abela delivered an opening speech. Mr Abela explained to the audience that in 1952 it was GRTU's first President himself Mr Grixti himself who brought alive the concept of trade fairs in Malta as with limited resources, the GRTU team organised the first fair in San Anton Gardens and later on the concept was expanded to a larger open space location in Naxxar. Local businesses did indeed gain market visibility and in turn expanded their market share and are nowadays thriving businesses.

Mr Abela emphasised that it was national duty to see that the role of trade fairs in Malta were safeguarded due to the opportunities they present and their economic value. No wonder this event is very sought after by Maltese businesses on an annual basis, exclaimed Mr Abela. Also Maltese consumers, see this event as a traditional family outing in which they can avail of

offers and compare prices in one outdoor space.

Mr Abela gave examples of how GRTU has in the past years worked closely with Government to achieve better work environment for the business community. Most recently, GRTU has been successful in removing the €700 charge to businesses to open on a seven day week basis.

In the presence of the Prime Minister Dr Muscat, Mr Abela pointed out that GRTU will continue to work hand in hand with the Government to ameliorate the current pro-business climate in Malta. In the name of GRTU members, Mr Abela exclaimed his enthusiasm regarding the creation of the Second Chance Foundation and the legally enforceable Small Business Act; both of which being GRTU proposals that have Government' commitment and support.

In conclusion, Mr Abela acknowledged the hard work and dedication of so many businesses as well as the local authorities and organisers of the event without which this event wouldn't have been possible.

Contact GRTU Malta Chamber of SMEs on **21232881 / 3** or e-mail **admin@grtu.eu**



Operational Programme II – Cohesion Policy 2007 – 2013
Empowering People for More Jobs and a Better Quality of Life
Project may be part-financed by the European Union
European Social Fund (ESF),
Co-financing rate: 85% EU Funds; 15% National Funds



Investing in your future