

VISA PROCESSING DEADLOCK CAUSE OF HIGHEST ALARM GRIDLOCKED SYSTEM IS COSTING MALTA'S ECONOMY MILLIONS

The Malta Chamber of SMEs has been for months sounding the alarm and warning the authorities that if immediate action was not taken, Malta would end up in a human resource crisis. Unfortunately, the warnings have not been heeded in time and efforts have been too slow and have lacked any impact as the backlog in the Visa processing system has not been addressed. The pressures businesses are facing in terms of human resources is now unprecedented.

A recent study carried out by the SME Chamber has confirmed that the Human Resource crises stands at par with that of inflationary pressures for businesses. Malta is facing a very serious problem. The estimated cost on business and the economy as a whole runs up to several millions.

The main breakdown in the system rests in the processing by Malta's High Commission Office in India. The High Commission in India handles visa applications from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives, exceptionally important sources of personnel in the current circumstances and these are all in a state of deadlock at present.

Businesses have lost complete trust in the, contracted, appointment management system which is plagued by abuse from the numerous reports received regularly by businesses and visa applicants alike.

ABOUT MALTA CHAMBER OF SMES

Malta Chamber of SMEs (Formerly known as GRTU) is the largest social partner in Malta representing over 7,000 SMEs from over 90 different sectors. The SME Chamber has been established for over 70 years and its aim is of safeguarding the interest of businesses at large.

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The visa processing system is archaic, lacks transparency and falls short, by far, of sufficient resources to handle the pressures required. This part of the process in applying for a work or study visa has paralysed the whole system.

The SME Chamber appreciates that the challenges contributing to this process are not small. We are however also certain that the main problem is that these challenges were already very well-known but have been shoved under the carpet for far too long. The situation is now not only not being managed but is out of control. This crisis needs drastic intervention. If one had to use the analogy of a patient, we cannot just treat a patient in critical condition and requiring immediate surgical intervention with a diet. The time to treat the patient with a diet is long past and the patient is now dying.

The SME Chamber calls on the authorities to immediately deploy the resources necessary to shorten the processing time.

The SME Chamber emphasises that it is in no way calling for any lax approaches or doing away with the necessary checks, but an immediate realisation that the system has broken down and unless we act efficiently and quickly our economy, which is trying to recuperate after two hard years, will continue to be dealt blows with every week of inaction.

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