



THE GOZO BUSINESS CHAMBER

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The Gradual Re-Opening of Businesses and Other Services to the Community

The Gozo Business Chamber notes the gradual and staggered approach adopted by the Government in the opening of businesses and other services. The Chamber agrees with this approach, though Gozo will still continue to be affected negatively because of the restrictive measures to board the Gozo ferries. As highlighted on other occasions this continues to show the dependence of Gozo on tourism. During the present situation Gozo's economy has been buoyed by the domestic tourism sector, which helped in some small measure to make up for some of the heavy losses the tourism sector has experienced. This sector has stopped completely since December, as crucial periods such as Carnival and Easter have been lost. The Chamber is aware of the critical moment being experienced, and hopes that the measures being adopted will have the long term effect of sustaining a gradual reopening while ensuring the safety and well being of the community at large.

This is a moment where everyone is important. One must understand that all the sectors have suffered greatly, though some have suffered more than others even within the same sectors. This applies for example to small bars, which are many a times family run concerns, and which have been closed for longer periods.

In its considerations the Health Authorities should note that, even if certain measures are reintroduced, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- The categorisation of what constitutes a non-essential service, given the fact that established health protocols are in place, and therefore some activities can remain open, if the existing protocols are implemented. This applies for example to retail outlets selling soft furnishings, and furniture showrooms and shops, which have been closed while other similar related retail activities have been left open;
- The continued monitoring of health measures and established protocols to ensure that the measures being adopted yield the targeted results; and
- The obligation to have a PCR COVID-19 negative result when coming from abroad to be extended for a longer period, and not depending on the health situation of particular countries. This would ensure a safe and secure reopening of the tourism sector, and that the positive measures adopted in order to stimulate one sector, do not impinge negatively on other sectors. The tourism sector merits a clear plan which can be formulated if safety measures are implemented.

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One should ensure that the gains made through this staggered approach are not dissipated. To this end the Chamber is of the opinion that the considerations outlined here should be taken into account.
