



MALTA HOTELS
& RESTAURANTS
ASSOCIATION

INTOUCH

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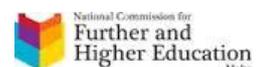


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MALTA HOLDS HIGHEST SHARE OF NIGHTS SPENT BY NON-RESIDENTS IN EU IN 2015 – EUROSTAT (ARTICLE BY THE TIMES)

eurostat  Malta topped the EU rankings last year for the percentage of visitors taking up nights in hotels and other tourist accommodation compared to the nights spent by local residents.

At 96 per cent, Malta was followed by Cyprus scoring 94 per cent and Croatia with 92 per cent. The figures were released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU.

The agency said that, according to its early estimates, the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in the EU last year reached a new record of about 2.8 billion, up by 3.2 per cent over the previous year.

It noted that, since 2009, there had been a steady increase in the number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in the EU, driven by the rise in the nights spent by non-residents. Between 2014 and 2015, the total number of nights spent in Maltese tourist accommodation rose 1.3 per cent to 8.9 million. However, while the share of non-residents rose 1.2 per cent, the increase in nights by residents was of 3.9 per cent.

The number of nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in the EU last year reached a new record

For its size, Malta kicks above its weight in the tourism stakes, beating larger countries like Estonia (5.8 million nights in all) and Latvia (4.1m), but standing still some way off its Mediterranean competitor Cyprus which draws 14.2 million.

Spain took most nights of all in the EU, at 421 million, up by 4.3 per cent when compared to the previous year, ahead of France, Italy and Germany.

France reported an increase of 2.8 per cent, with 413 million nights recorded, while an increase of 1.8 per cent was noted in Italy, where 385 million nights were spent.

In Germany the number of nights spent increased by 3.3 per cent to 379 million.

“In absolute figures, Spain, with 268 million nights, Italy with 191 million nights and France with 134 million nights recorded the highest number of nights spent by non-residents in their tourism accommodation establishments.”

Eurostat said the early estimates include nights spent for both business and leisure.

15% INCREASE IN TOURIST ARRIVAL IN JANUARY 2016 (ARTICLE BY THE MALTA INDEPENDENT)



The Maltese Islands recorded a robust 15.0% increase in total inbound visitors in January 2016 as published by the National Statistics Office. Tourist nights and expenditure also recorded a significant increase, the

Malta Tourism Authority said.

The number of inbound tourists (excluding overnight cruise passengers) in January 2016 was 84,817 reflecting an increase of 10,537 tourists or 14.2%. Nights stayed by tourists in January 2016 feature an increase of 9.0%. The average length of stay declined marginally from 8.1 nights in January 2015 to 7.7 nights in January of this year. Increases were registered by both private and collective type accommodation establishments with the former achieving a stronger growth rate of 24.9%.

Tourists spent €65.3 million, representing an increase of 7.0% or €4.3 million more over January 2015. Tourists spent more money on non-package type accommodation and in the country during their stay.

All the major source markets feature increased tourism flows during the month of January 2016, with the exception of France, which experienced a drop attributed to a decline in air seat capacity on the Paris route.

The Malta Tourism Authority said it is pleased with the double-digit growth rate achieved during the winter month of January. This encouraging result is in line with the Authority's efforts to increase business in the off-peak period.

Inbound Tourism: January 2016

The NSO said that a total of 71,844 inbound tourist trips were carried out for holiday purposes, while a further 9,492 were undertaken for business purposes. Inbound tourists from EU Member States went up by 16.2 per cent to 71,083 when compared to the corresponding month of 2015.

The largest proportion of inbound tourists was aged between 25 and 44, followed by those within the 45-64 age bracket.

Total nights spent went up by 9.0 per cent when compared to January 2015, amounting to 656,561 nights. The largest share of guest nights (62.3 per cent) was spent in collective accommodation establishments.

Total tourist expenditure was estimated at €65.3 million, an increase of 7.0 per cent over the corresponding month of 2015.

INFORMATION SESSION – EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY



Speaking at an information session organized by MHRA and the Employment and Training Corporation (ETC) about the employment of persons with a disability MHRA president Mr. Tony Zahra urged employers in the hospitality sector to 'take chances on others' and 'make a real change'. He insisted that there was no point in increased commercial activity if it did not help those who needed it the most, and achieved positive change in people's lives. He continued that the act had been around for some 40 years, but that it had not been so readily implemented in the sector. Mr. Zahra urged greater awareness and openness about those capable of working in the sector and hoped that the meeting served to show how this industry could be an effective vessel of change.



ETC CEO Mr. Clyde Caruana said that the two organisations had decided to collaborate on the issue of employment of those with a disability in the

sector following the various disagreements that had emerged between employers and the government. He explained that that employing those with a disability should not be a concept of charity, but that it involved added skills and benefits to the workforce, adding that some 40% to 45% of employers in the hospitality sector were already compliant to the 2% disabled staff quota for companies employing over 20 people.

Caruana further explained that companies complying with the quota had increased in a year, with 40% of eligible complying by the end of December 2015, compared to 11% in 2014.

He explained that organisations, such as the Lino Spiteri Foundation, who were present at the session, would offer support to employers and help them learn more about their employees with a disability and to help them to become compliant. Speaking about the corporation's planned re-branding Mr. Caruana added that changes were also planned for the ETC Act to allow employers to know who, if any, of their employees were registered as having a disability, among others. He amplified that there were many employers who had expressed concern at the fact that they did not know which of their employees had a disability given the implications this could have on health and safety at the work place adding that the clause in the Act suggesting that ETC will be able to notify employers about the identity of any disabled employees registered with their companies, would be up for public consultation in the coming weeks.



Mr. Nathan Farrugia, Executive Director, Lino Spiteri Foundation, explained that the Foundation was set up following the Maltese Governments' initiative to encourage companies to create greater employment opportunities for vulnerable groups in Malta & Gozo, and to empower widening scope as the leading provider of such employment. Whilst the Equal Opportunities Act and Employment Quotas for Disabled Persons are legal requirements that should safeguard and promote the inclusion of persons with a disability, mental health problems, other vulnerable groups from gainful employment, the need for greater support, empowerment, training and understanding of the complexities these issues bring is paramount to the successful inclusion in employment.

HOSPITALITY CAN BE A CAREER NOT JUST A JOB FOR SUMMER



The Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association have presented a report to the Prime Minister in a bid to encourage a greater job supply to keep up with positive tourist arrivals.

Mr Zahra, President MHRA stated efforts were needed to show people that tourism and hospitality could be a career not just a summer or in-between job, adding also that the quality of the product was also essential.

Prime Minister, Muscat said that while skills shortage was a matter to be addressed, it was also a good sign that the industry was growing at such a rate that necessitated more jobs.

He indicated however that the void was being filled by employees who might not be providing the necessary service adding that the government's task was to promote the sector as a viable career path. Mr Muscat went on to state that the €50 million investment in the Institute for Tourism Studies (ITS) would create a world-class institution that added prestige to the sector.

Mr Zahra cautioned on the rise of unlicensed competitors stating that competition was healthy, but unlicensed entities presented unfair competition and even underpaid jobs.

Tourism minister Edward Zammit Lewis said 2016 would see a leap in quality, and that better opportunities would give people the opportunity to consider long-term careers in the industry. He highlighted the need to fight the mentality that tourism was a fall-back career that anyone could do but something that could bring more pride to hospitality careers.

MHRA MEETS THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



Losing control of Air Malta would mean the country loses its power to steer its own destiny, Malta Hotels and Restaurants association President Tony Zahra said.

Speaking during a meeting with the Nationalist Party, Zahra spoke about the necessity to ensure that the power to make pertinent decisions was retained by Maltese people and entities, regardless of the foreign companies the airline has to

partner with to survive.

Reassuring that the association has no inkling that this was the case, Zahra added that the association seemed to be very much on the same lines as the PN in terms of the development necessary to the sector.

He amplified that tourism was in an enviable position at the moment, with countries seeking to emulate the figures achieved locally, continuing that it was necessary to look at ways to keep these positive developments in the long term. Mr Zahra added that the aim was to go from growth to development. He indicated that Malta should be a first choice for tourism not just because of the price stressing that the association believed looking towards strengthening human resources could go a long way into this unique experience. He also said that a study carried out during the past year had shown why Maltese people were not considering careers in the sector explaining that one of the necessities was proving to Maltese people that tourism could be a well-paying and satisfying career.

Nationalist party leader Simon Busuttil, spoke to members of the council about the PN's document about the economy; 'An Economy for the people' stating that the document looked at the economy for the next 10-20 years adding that it had taken into account the suggestions made by the MHRA.

Dr Busuttil explained that the party had also discussed Air Malta in its document, and he expressed his hope that the restructuring exercise would be completed soon and that everyone would be informed about the developments.

EU RESTAURANT SECTOR CALLS ON THE DUTCH PRESIDENCY TO ACKNOWLEDGE RED TAPE RISKS FOR SMES IN ITS ROADMAP ON FOOD PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT



HOTREC, the European umbrella association of hotels, restaurants and cafés, raises its strong concerns to the Dutch Presidency about its Roadmap

on food product improvement.

The European restaurant, café and pub industry, which is composed of 1.6 million enterprises (among which 1,5 million micro-enterprises) will not be able to support this Roadmap, as the final text removes a key sentence about the administrative burdens risks faced by SMEs in case of additional legal responsibilities in product composition and consumer information.

“At a time when Europe needs more than ever entrepreneurship, and the contributions of its 1.6 million businesses composing the restaurant, café and pub industry, the deletion of this sentence is a very negative signal sent to entrepreneurs and comes in total contradiction with the Juncker’s plan for Growth and Jobs which has flagged the fight against administrative burdens as a top priority” explains Christian de Barrin, CEO of HOTREC.

The deletion of this sentence means that the Roadmap presented by the Dutch presidency will not be able to list the European restaurant industry as a supporter of the initiative, therefore raising doubts about an initiative which would ignore a key stakeholder in the discussions about the nutritional improvement of the food offered to consumers.

“To be efficient, public policy approaches about nutrition and food product improvement must associate the restaurant sector and take into considerations SME’s specific concerns. For this reason, we call on the Dutch Presidency of the EU to acknowledge our specificities and avoid any potential risk of red tape in the final roadmap to be endorsed this Monday” concludes Mr. Adrian Cummins, CEO of the Restaurant Association of Ireland, and co-Chair of the HOTREC Restaurant & Pub task Force.



Dial 112 in case of an emergency

On 24th February 2016, a partnership has been launched between EENA and HOTREC, with the aim to promote the common European emergency number 112 across Europe. The number 112 can be dialled free of charge, 24/7, to reach the fire brigade, the police or the emergency medical services from mobiles or landlines. It is available in the 28 Member States of the EU, the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), Turkey, Switzerland, Serbia and Georgia. It functions 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“The hospitality industry is pleased to help promote 112 amongst all travellers and citizens using the hospitality services. Emergency situations are rare but might happen, and it is our duty of care to keep our guests informed in case there is a need for special services to intervene”, commented Christian de Barrin, HOTREC CEO.

“EENA is happy to work with HOTREC on the promotion of 112. With 27% of Europeans aware of 112 as the European emergency number and considering that Europe received more than 600 million international arrivals in 2015, it is important to work with the hospitality sector to raise awareness. This initiative will have a great impact and will contribute to save lives”, added Gary Machado, EENA Executive Director.

“I wholeheartedly welcome the active commitment of the hospitality sector is helping disseminate the message across the EU. It is crucial that all stakeholders take their responsibility in such an important safety matter and I am happy to count HOTREC as a key partner in our awareness campaign”, mentioned Adina-Ioana Valean, Vice-President of the European Parliament who initiated this campaign.

EMPLOYEE SKILLS GAP SURVEY



The National Commission for Further and Higher Education (NCFHE) in partnership with the [Employment and Training Corporation](#) (ETC) and [Malta Enterprise](#) (ME) has launched an Employee Skills Gap Survey.

The objective is to gauge the extent of the existing skills gap and to provide policy makers with the information necessary to identify the potential shortcomings of the Maltese labour market that could be hindering companies from finding employees with adequate skills.

This exercise is deemed particularly important in light of the relatively strong and sustained growth recorded by the Maltese economy over recent years which requires an increasingly diversified set of skills to enable companies to meet market demand. Skills are thus crucial for the economy to reach new heights.

A number of companies across all economic sectors will be receiving an email with an electronic link to this survey. Companies are encouraged to participate as the input will be crucial to policy formulation that aims to ensure that Malta's labour market is provided with an adequate set of skills. Any companies that have not received the online questionnaire and would like to participate in the survey are kindly asked to contact at research.etc@gov.mt.

Following preliminary analysis of the responses to the survey questionnaire, a number of representative bodies and industry players will be invited to participate in sector-specific focus groups to discuss selected skills-related issues in more detail. The results of the research will be presented at a conference and will be made publicly available



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