Dear MEA members,

To say that we are passing through difficult times is an understatement, and the MEA council and secretariat is well aware of the hardships that our membership, and society in general are passing through in these turbulent circumstances caused by the onset of COVID-19.

As an employers’ association, we are doing our best to be of service to our members. We are lobbying with government to enhance its assistance to firms in all sectors of the economy. We have a strong media presence to communicate employers’ view across to the general public. Our secretariat is working in overdrive to keep up with the daily flood of emails and telephone calls requesting clarifications about the assistance schemes, or liaising with the authorities in their behalf, and discussing options with individual members on how to deal with the shortfall in business resulting from this crisis. Our fears of ‘how long will COVID 19 last?’ haunt us every day, and while looking at our diminishing business figures, and coping with a frightened and unsettled staff, we are forming our contingency plans B and C, and wondering whether to start the 3 or 4 day week to stretch it out, to avoid having to lay off our best investment….our employees. This is a test for us all, as we seek to survive, to adapt and to face this crisis determined to emerge from it stronger than before.

The present situation is bleak as there is a chain reaction which has extended from businesses that were immediately hit when the outbreak started, to others across the B2B networks. Consumer demand has also been affected due to curtailment in activity together with a fall in purchasing power which is impacting more employees and
families. The ripples of this crisis spread deep and wide.

We cannot remain passive when faced with this state of affairs, and after discussion among our council members, we have agreed on the need to show empathy and support to employers in any way we can. Therefore, I am bringing to your attention that for the year 2020, our subscription rates will be reduced by 50%. We feel that, under these circumstances, this is the right thing to do. This is a token of support to our members as part of our corporate social responsibility in such dire times. Companies that have already paid the full subscriptions for 2020 – and I am glad to see that many have already done so - will have the 50% credited for 2021. Members who want to pay the full subscription rate are free to do so.

I am fully aware - as a business owner myself - that the amount involved, although substantial for the Association’s budget, will not in itself solve the financial woes many of us are experiencing. However, we believe that these times call for a gesture of solidarity, and that there is pain which needs to be shared. It is also a tangible sign that the Malta Employers’ Association will always be there for you, through thick and thin.

Halving our subscription revenue for 2020 will not affect the quality of our service. Rather, this strengthens our resolve to be more relevant to you than ever before. Indeed, the Association is in a position to take this measure only because although our subscription rates have not been revised for the past twenty years, membership has increased steadily over the years. It pleases me to report that even in recent weeks, more and more organisations are approaching us to become part of the MEA community.

In the coming days, our secretariat shall be launching an online comprehensive handbook (Dealing with COVID-19 – An Employers’ Manual) with all the details of the schemes available, useful contacts, and replies to frequently asked questions that many members are encountering. This resource will be a work in progress and will be constantly updated with new FAQs and any other relevant information.

I do not have enough words to thank the admirable and hardworking staff at MEA, led by our Director General, Joseph Farrugia. They have my full admiration and respect, in the way they are handling the influx of calls and emails and absorbing all updates. They are doing their utmost, working many more hours and, as in any other business, they were also affected by having to modify their workplace and work remotely. Challenges all businesses have to face.

In conclusion, I think that this is truly a time when we have to stick together, not just as a business community but also as a society. We will work together so that when we come to the light at the end of the tunnel, we will shine brighter than ever.

Regards,

Doris Sammut Bonnici
President