

22nd December 2021

Media Release

MEA calls on Government to issue clear policy guidelines on Covid

The Malta Employers' Association stated that the current surge in COVID cases is worrying many employers, and warned that inaction on the part of government might lead to a serious economic slowdown during the first quarter of 2022.

The Association said that that public health should never be subject to popular opinion. In such emergencies, all necessary actions need to be taken to ascertain that the negative effects of the pandemic are not prolonged. Contrary to what some may believe, there is no trade-off between public health and economic imperatives, and any attempt to enforce such a trade-off may only yield short term gains which will certainly be paid for with interest in the medium to long term. The current spike in cases is a worrying trend which, if sustained, might lead to strong disruptions in business activity in all economic sectors in 2022. These disruptions will be caused due to absences caused by illness, more people under quarantine, possible school closures and stricter measures to compensate for the postponement of decisive actions which are currently needed. MEA added that queries which have been repeatedly sent to the Ministry for social Dialogue and the Ministry for health about COVID and employment related issues have remained unanswered, and meetings at the Employment Relations Board remain inconclusive.

MEA appealed for leadership to prevail over populism through measures that prevent dense public gatherings, strict enforcement of such measures and setting the right example. There have been too many reports of lax enforcement in public gatherings, even those organised by politicians themselves which are giving the wrong impression that COVID is not to be taken seriously because many people have taken the vaccine. People have to be made conscious of the reality of the situation, and that 2022 cannot be another year where government will have to retain the wage supplement with all the fiscal consequences it entails, and where enterprises will continue to struggle against the difficulties brought by COVID, especially if such situations are self-inflicted.